

The State of Multi-Channel Donor Communications

How 119 Organizations Are Using Online and Offline Channels to Engage New Donors

Presented by

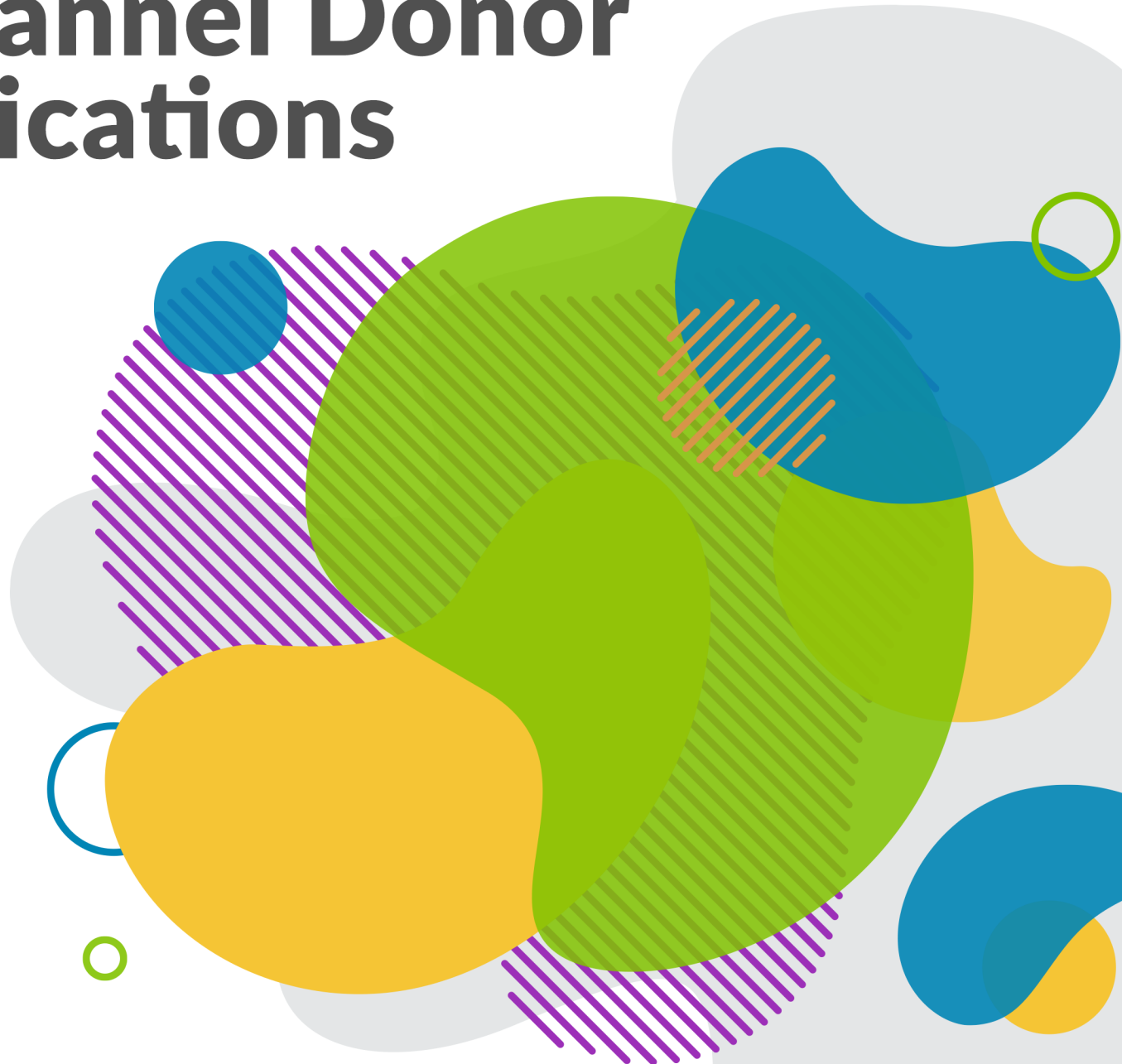
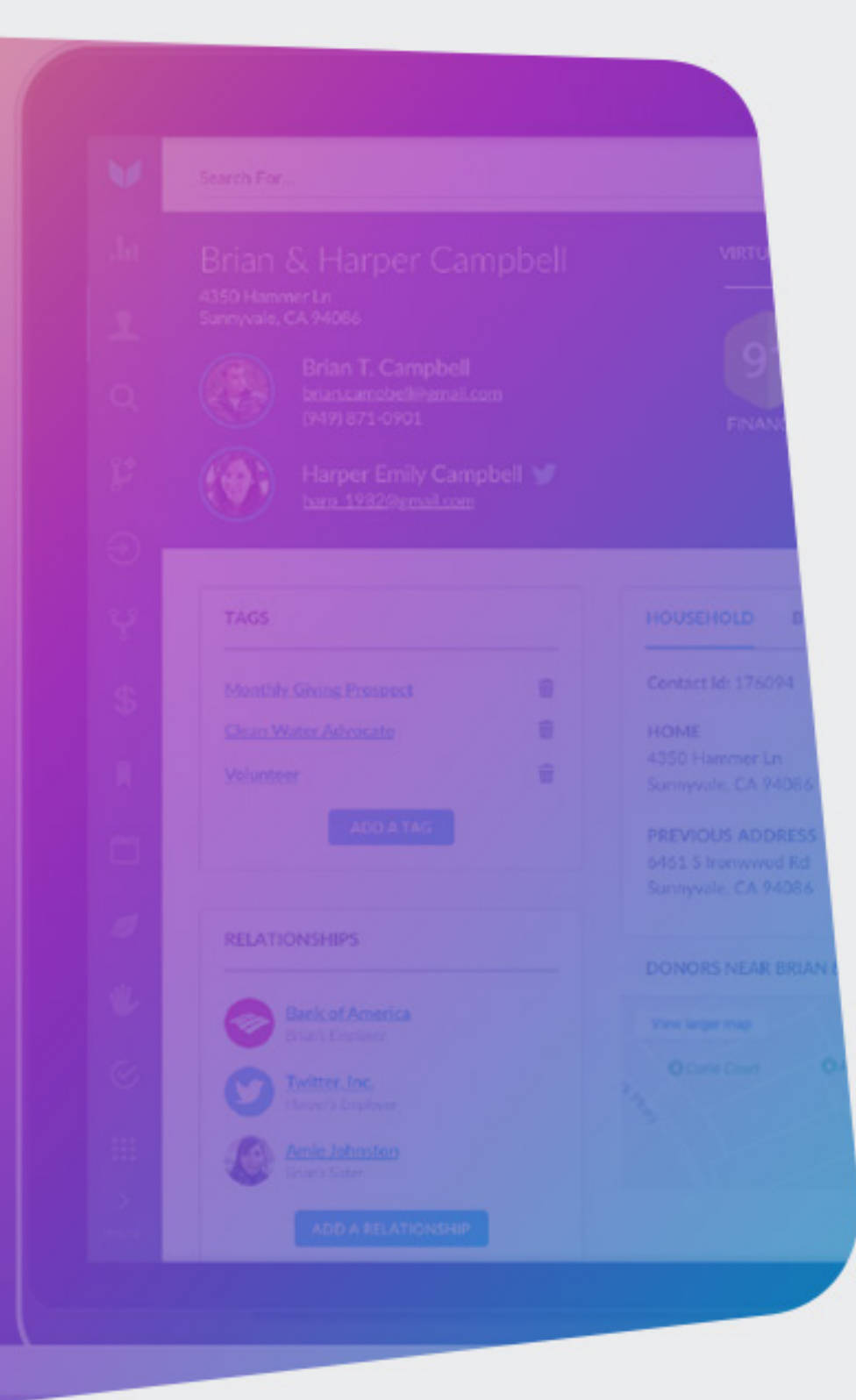


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Executive Summary





Multi-channel donors — those who give both online and offline — are worth 3 times more than online only or offline only donors¹ and their first year donor retention rate is 2 times higher². So there is some good evidence that nonprofits should be intentionally trying to secure multi-channel donors but are they? And if so, how?

To better understand this question, we made \$20 donations both online and offline to 119 organizations at the same time. Two separate donor persona's were created with a unique mailing address, email, and phone number which were shared with the organizations when we made the gifts in each channel. We then tracked and classified all communications as a solicitation (primary purpose was to ask for money) or cultivation (primary purpose was anything other than an ask for money), to each persona in all 4 channels for 4 months.

We also visited each organization's website to analyze at their 'Ways to Give' page (if they had one), captured the donor's ability to choose their communication preferences while giving online, and did a deeper analysis on the first solicitation we received via mail and email.

In the end, we were able to successfully give online and offline to 102 organizations and after reviewing the 2,297 communications they sent, here were the key findings.

¹Analysis of 20 NextAfter clients, U.S. nonprofit organizations, across verticals including faith, education, politics/advocacy, and health/human services

²Blackbaud Target Analytics

Key Findings

1 Very few organizations are communicating to their smaller online and offline donors in multiple channels

Only 14% of organizations sent at least one email to the offline donor and 55% of organizations sent at least one mailed message to the online donor in 4 months.

2 Offline donors are getting lost

1 in 5 organizations did not communicate to the offline donor at all, in any channel, in 4 months and the online donor received 10 times more communications – 5x solicitations and 5x cultivations – compared to the offline donor.

3 Online donors are more likely to get multi-channel communications

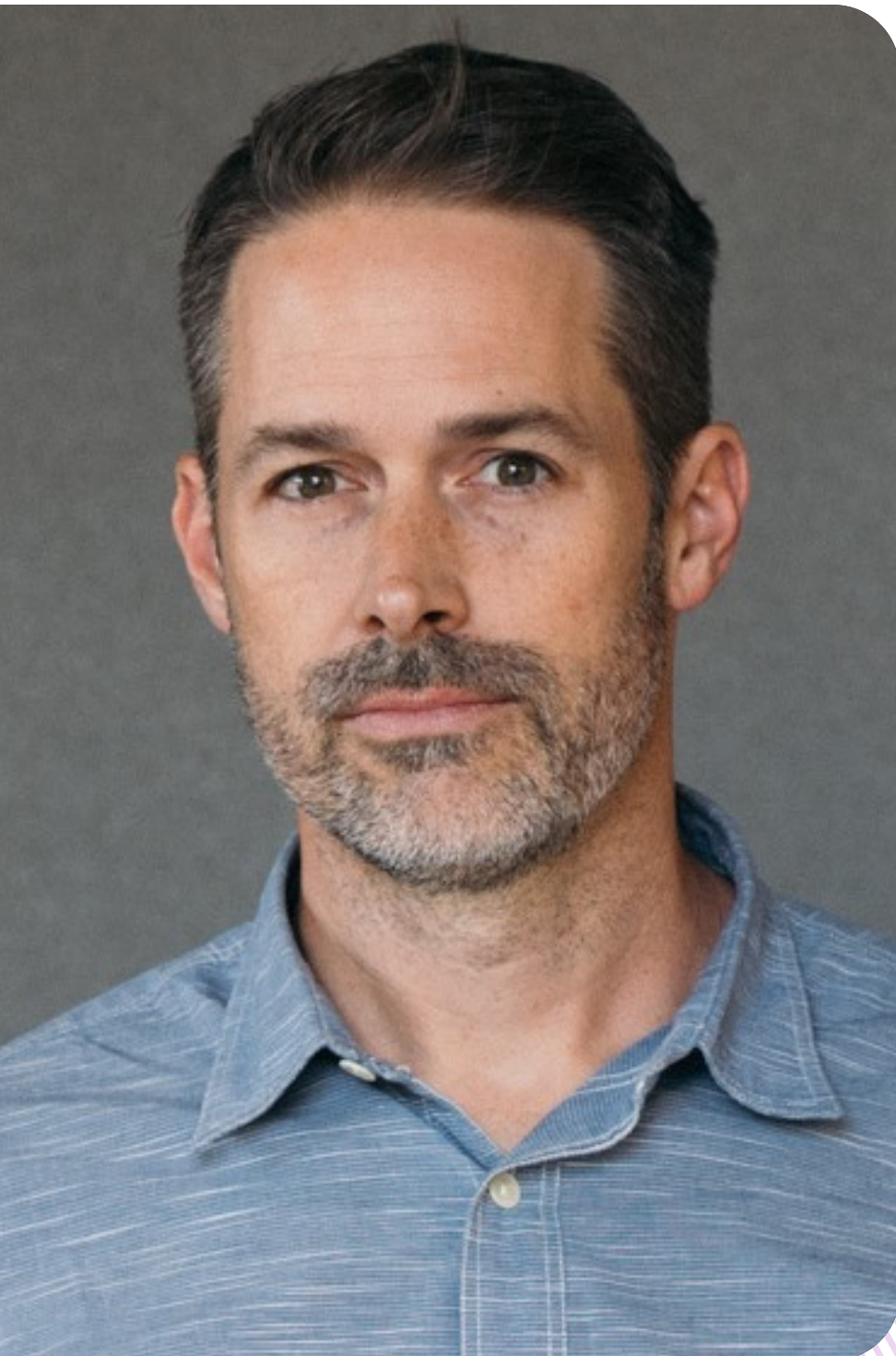
55% of organizations sent at least one email and mailed message to the online donor (compared to 14% who did so for the offline donor) and of those who sent at least one communication, 40 organizations (40%) were single channel communicators – meaning they only communicated to us in the channel in which we gave – to the online donor compared to 72 organizations (88%) who were single channel communicators to the offline donor.

4 Very few organizations are using the phone (calls, voicemails, texts)

Only 1 in 12 organizations called either the online or offline donor and just 1 organization out of the 102 sent a text message in 4 months.

Introduction





A note from Gabe Cooper, CEO at Virtuous

Today's donor is more distracted than ever. Your donors are connected to their community through their iPhone. They receive personalized content streams from Netflix, Amazon, and their other favorite brands. And they are bombarded by new, relevant media and marketing messages at every turn. In fact, experts estimate that Americans see or hear between 4,000 and 10,000 ad messages every day across multiple marketing channels.

As nonprofits, it's becoming increasingly difficult to earn the attention of our donors. In our new hyper-connected world, successful nonprofits understand that communicating with donors in more personalized ways across multiple channels is the key to earning attention and building trust.

The research tells us that touching donors on multiple channels, starting with email and traditional mail, is critical to increasing donor retention and average gift. We also know that unlocking growth requires a coordinated strategy where your fundraising channels 1) compliment one another and 2) are driven by each donor's timing and preferences. It's not enough to blindly send out both email and mail. Our donors expect and deserve more. As nonprofits we have an opportunity to create true multi-channel experiences that break through the noise and create predictable, sustainable growth for our cause.

Our hope is that this research with the amazing team at NextAfter will help you discover insights that grow your giving and transform how you think about multi-channel fundraising.

Thanks for all the amazing work you do!

Gabe Cooper

CEO

Virtuous Software

A note from Brady Josephson, Managing Director at the NextAfter Institute

This was a fun one. Trying to figure out how to make 119 online and offline donations to the same organizations at the same time at the start of a global pandemic was an interesting challenge. Then tracking all the communications we received for 4 months in 4 channels during a global pandemic was demanding. And all of that was just to get the data we wanted to do the analysis and highlight the key findings!

Obviously I didn't do this on my own so I have to give a big thanks firstly to Virtuous for sponsoring this research and trusting us to deliver quality insights. On the NextAfter side, many thanks to Kevin Peters, our CTO who helped ensure data integrity throughout, Kristen Allcorn, one of our Data Analysts who helped make the data accessible, and Paul, our COO who... well he picked up the mail every week which was hugely important and about as glamorous as it sounds.

The goal of this report was to shed more light on something a lot of people have been talking about for a long time in the world of fundraising — multi-channel communications — but not something there was a lot of cumulative research on. Not that I could find or see and certainly not from a more 'digital first' perspective that we have and take.

As you'll see, there are a lot of opportunities here for nonprofits. To improve their multi-channel communications. To review their systems and processes for online and offline gifts. And to assess how they use different channels like email, mail, and the phone to engage new and lower-level donors.



My hope is that you find ideas to try, inspiration to think, and items to do to better engage your donors and, ultimately, grow your fundraising revenue to fuel the incredible work that you do.

Good luck!

Brady Josephson

Managing Director

NextAfter Institute for Online Fundraising

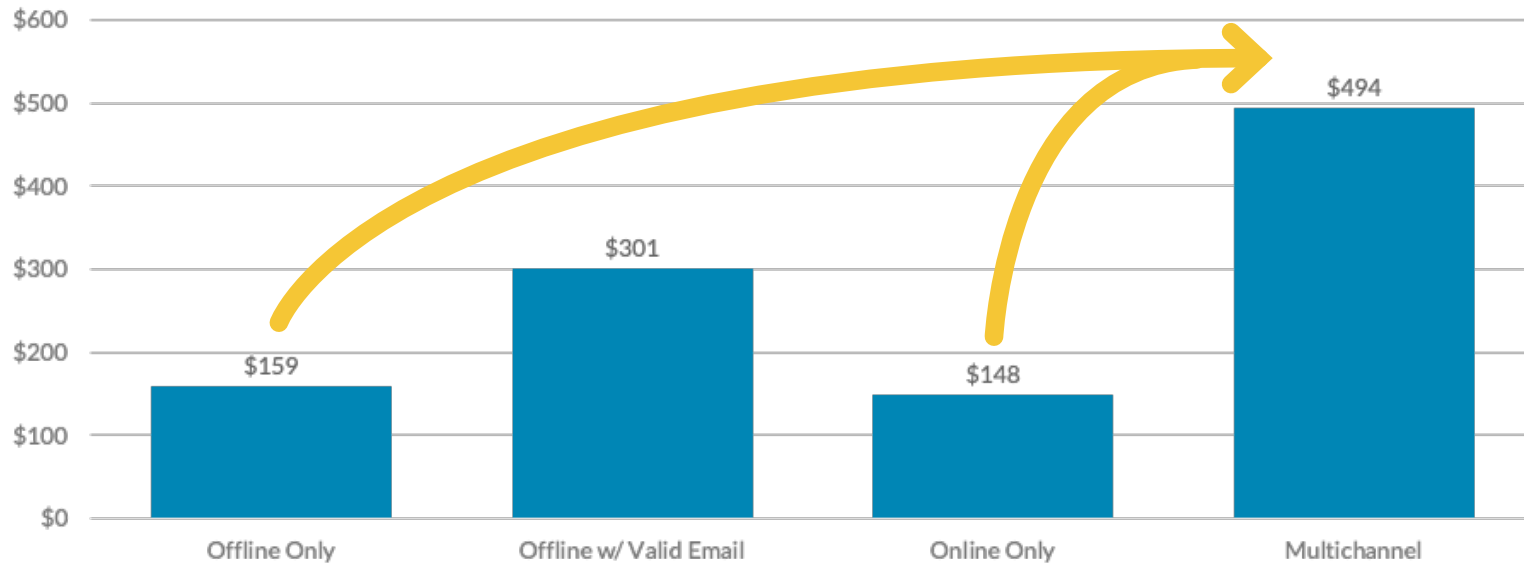
Why Multi-Channel Matters



When we work with clients, and for the purposes of this study, we will define multi-channel donors as those who make at least one online and offline gift in a year. We also look at online only donors and offline only donors as well as offline only donors with an email, where those folks only give through offline methods but the organization has an email for them.

So when we look at giving behaviors for these four groups across NextAfter clients, we see something like this:

Average Revenue by Donor Cohort

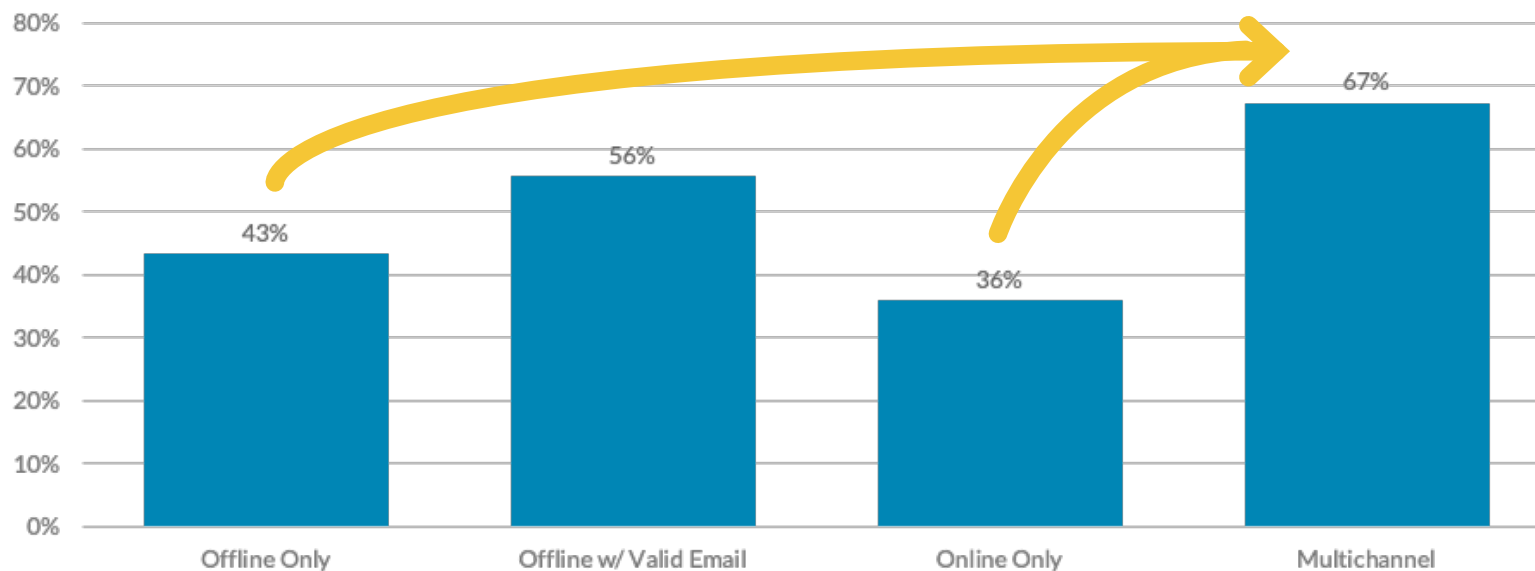


You can see that multi-channel donors are 'worth' more than 3 times more than online only or offline only donors.

Multi-channel donors aren't just more valuable but they're more likely to give again and over time.

The donor retention rate for offline only donors, 43%, and online only donors, 36%, jumps up to 67% when they also give in another channel. And it's not just our clients and data that shows this.

Average Retention Rate by Donor Cohort



The Blackbaud Institute found that multi-channel donors had a donor retention rate more than 2 times higher than online only or offline only givers across every age demographic.

FIRST YEAR DONOR RETENTION BY AGE

AGE	ONLINE ONLY	OFFLINE ONLY	MULTICHANNEL
18 - 24	19%	24%	50%
25 - 34	22%	25%	55%
35 - 44	21%	24%	54%
45 - 54	21%	24%	52%
55 - 64	22%	26%	58%
65 - 74	24%	29%	62%
75+	26%	26%	59%

So getting donors to give in multiple channels is a way to increase revenue in the short-term as well as longer-term.

Those data points clearly show the bottom line value when donors give in each channel but there is value in multi-channel communications even if the transaction may not occur in that channel. For example, in the charts showing the 4 donor cohorts (offline only, offline with email, online only, and multi-channel) you can see that offline with email donor's are worth more and more likely to be retained compared to offline only donors. Meaning, even though these folks *only* give offline they are influenced in a positive way by the online communications they receive.

This multi-channel communications impact isn't just limited to email. Penelope Burk in her *Donor Centered Fundraising* work shares an experiment where she found that donors who received a phone call within 48 hours from a board member that simply said thanks — it was not asking for anything else — gave 39% later on.

And more recently, the folks at Bloomerang did an analysis of almost 2 million donors from 3,700+ organizations in Canada and the United States who made gifts between 2012 and 2018 to see the effect of a phone call within the first 90 days after giving. The result? The donors who received a call were more likely to be retained (8% points increase), more generous if they gave a second gift (100% larger), and were much quicker to make that second gift (203 days quicker).

So communicating to donors in multiple channels is a way to increase revenue in the short-term as well as the longer-term.

Donors who received at least one phone call within 90 days of their gift were more likely to give again, more generous if they did, and 203 days quicker when they did.

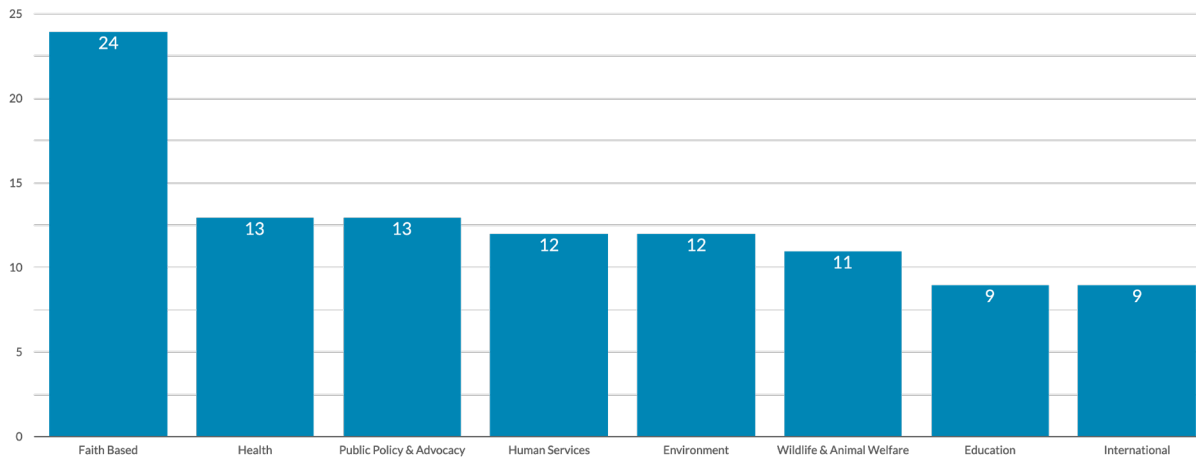
How We Did the Study



**On March 27, 2020 we made \$20 donations,
both online and offline, to the same
119 organizations using two separate
donor personas with unique phone numbers,
emails, and mailing addresses.**

We collected mail each week to be scanned, and uploaded and monitored the email inboxes for double opt-in's and any other questions around our donation and communication preferences. We also opened and clicked at least one email from every organization in the 4 month time period.

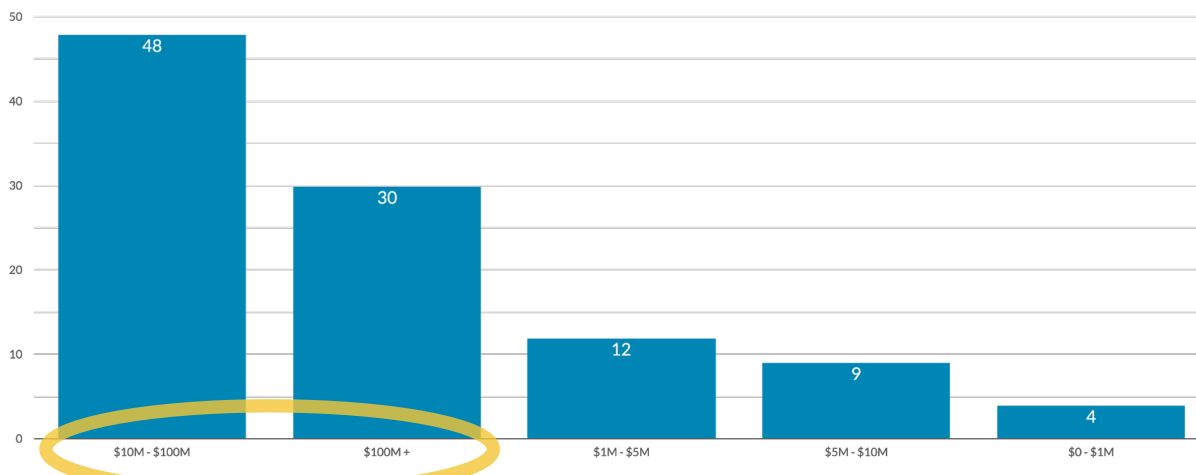
During the giving process we answered 12 questions related to our communication preferences, the thank you message on the confirmation page, and if there were any other actions to take on that page. We also visited each organization's "Ways to Give" page to see if they had one and which methods of giving they encouraged and/or accepted.



Organizations in the Study by Vertical

In the end, there were 102 organizations that we were able to successfully give both online and offline spread out among 8 different verticals.

The majority of these organizations have revenues greater than \$10M.



Organizations in the Study by Size

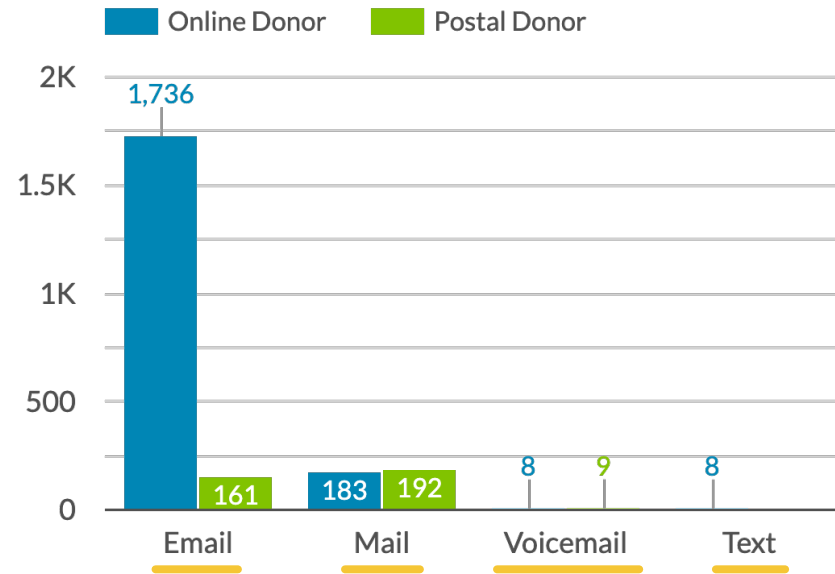
After making the online and offline donations, we collected the emails, mailed messages, voicemails, and text messages from these 102 organizations through July 31, 2020. In the end across the two donors we received 2,297 communications:

1,897 emails
375 mailed messages
17 voicemails
8 text messages

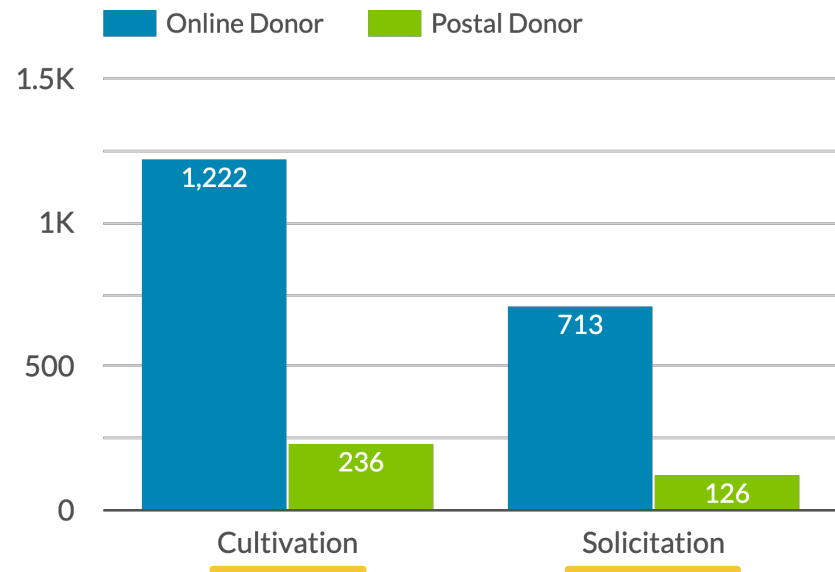
We then classified all of those communications as either a solicitation – where the perceived primary purpose of the messages was to give money – or a cultivation – anything other than a solicitation – to perform our analysis.

Finally, once all the communications we received were classified, we found the 1st solicitation we received via email and mail and did a deeper analysis on those messages, answering an additional 18 questions related to the sender, personalization, ask type, and more.

Communications by Channel



Communications by Type



A Note on COVID-19

When we planned this research study, we had no idea we'd need to be doing it in the middle of a global pandemic. Even while we were doing the study we were unsure on what the impact would be or how long it would last.

We did look at if COVID-19 was mentioned while we made the online gifts and found that 20% of organizations had some mention of COVID-19 during the giving experience.

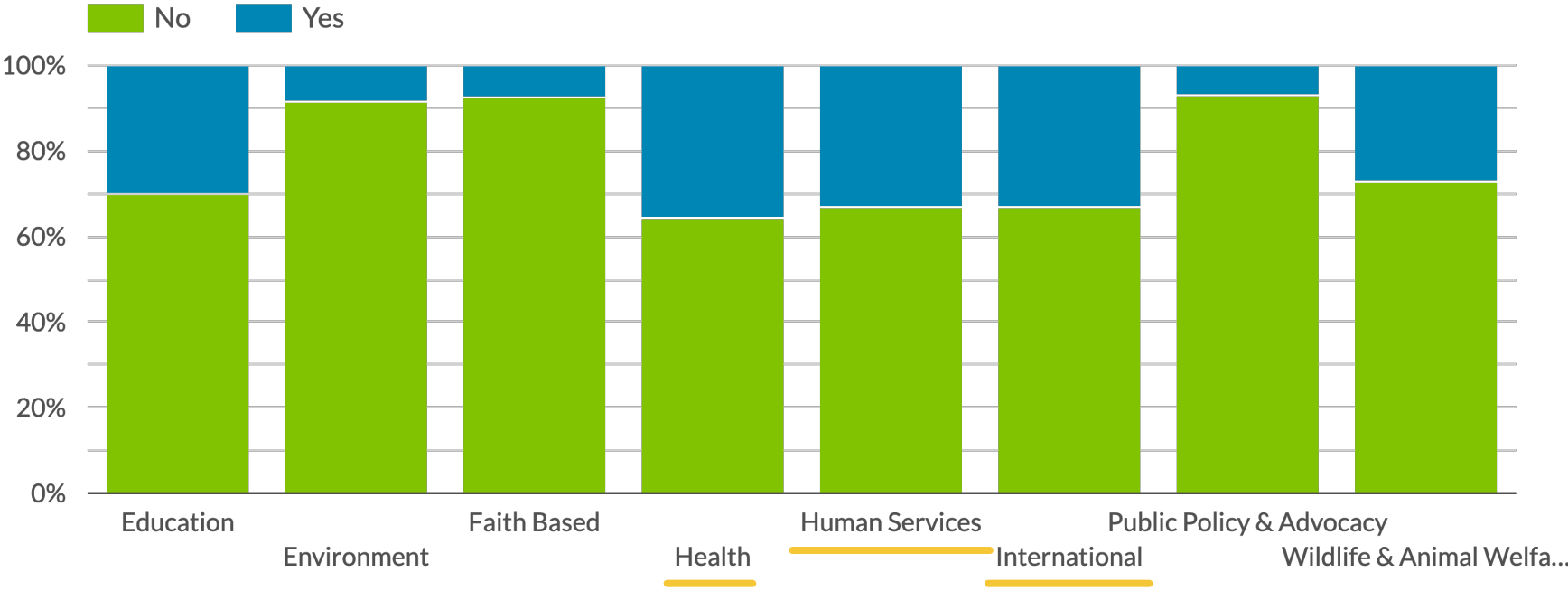
Some organizations, like Health, Human Services, and International, were twice as likely to mention COVID-19 compared to the overall average.

We also started tracking the email and website activity of over 200 nonprofits so organizations and this study would have a benchmark or frame of reference and we found that email volume was up overall and significantly up in the period of this research so, if anything, we should experience higher than normal email volumes.

And thanks to folks like Merkle, who did something similar in terms of tracking direct mail, we can see that the response rate was up 4.9% from February through mid-June and up even more during this research period. So while that doesn't show us volume we know that donors were receiving mail and giving at a rate higher than in 2019.

So did COVID-19 impact the results of this study? Certainly. COVID-19 has impacted all facets of our lives and giving and nonprofits weren't isolated from that. But it's really hard to say how COVID-19 has impacted the results of the study. We just don't know. We do know giving didn't stop. We know donations, particularly online, were still being made (and in many cases more were made) and we know communications were being sent (and in many cases more were sent). So keep in mind that this study was done during COVID-19 but dismiss the insights, ideas, and opportunities that come from it at your own peril.

Organizations that Mentioned COVID-19 During the Online Giving Process



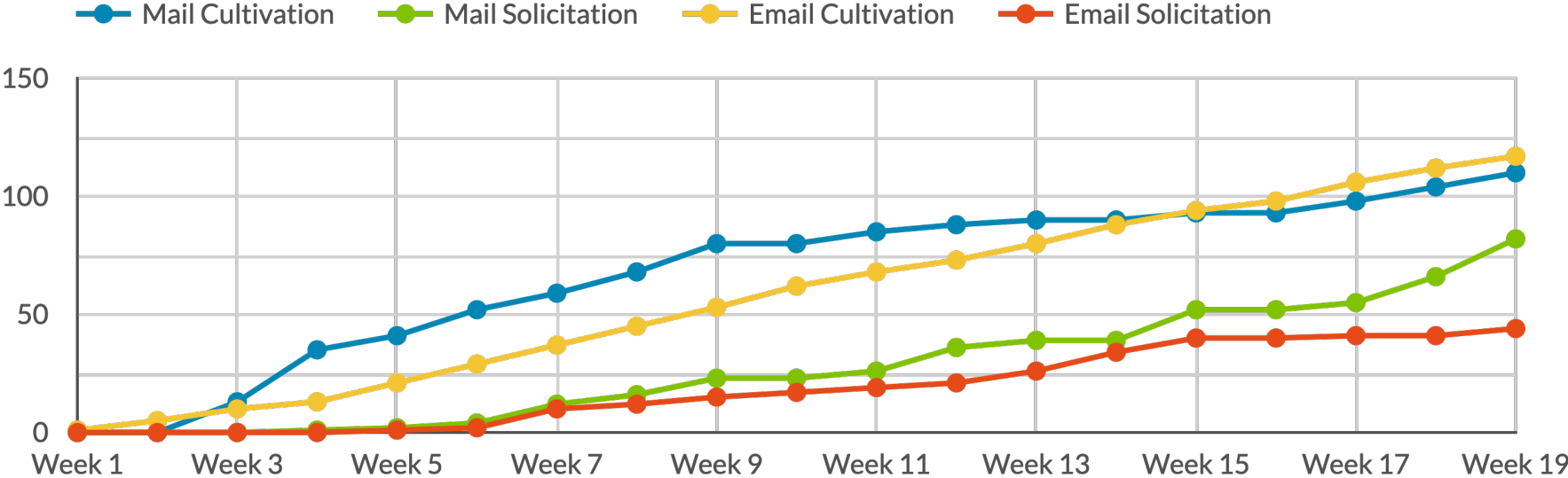
The Online and Offline Donor Experiences



After collecting and classifying all the communications we received over 4 months, here was each donor experience in terms of the communications we received to each donor persona and its focus.

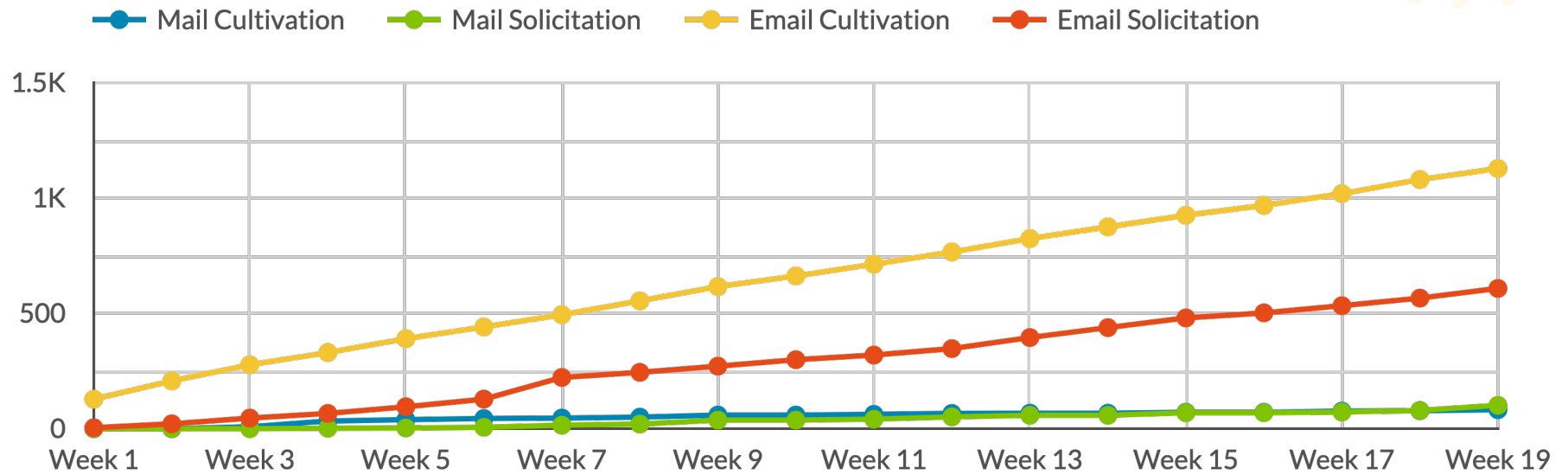
Note: voicemails and texts have been removed from these charts and analysis as the volume was so low from and came from few organizations.

Offline Donor



	Messages	Solicitations	Cultivations	Cultivation Ratio	Organizations
Email	11.5	3.1	8.4	2.7	14
Mail	2.6	1.1	1.5	1.3	73
TOTAL	4.4	1.5	2.9	1.9	86

Online Donor



	Messages	Solicitations	Cultivations	Cultivation Ratio	Organizations
Email	18.1	6.3	11.8	1.9	96
Mail	3.3	1.8	1.5	0.8	56
TOTAL	19.5	7.2	12.3	1.7	99

What We Learned

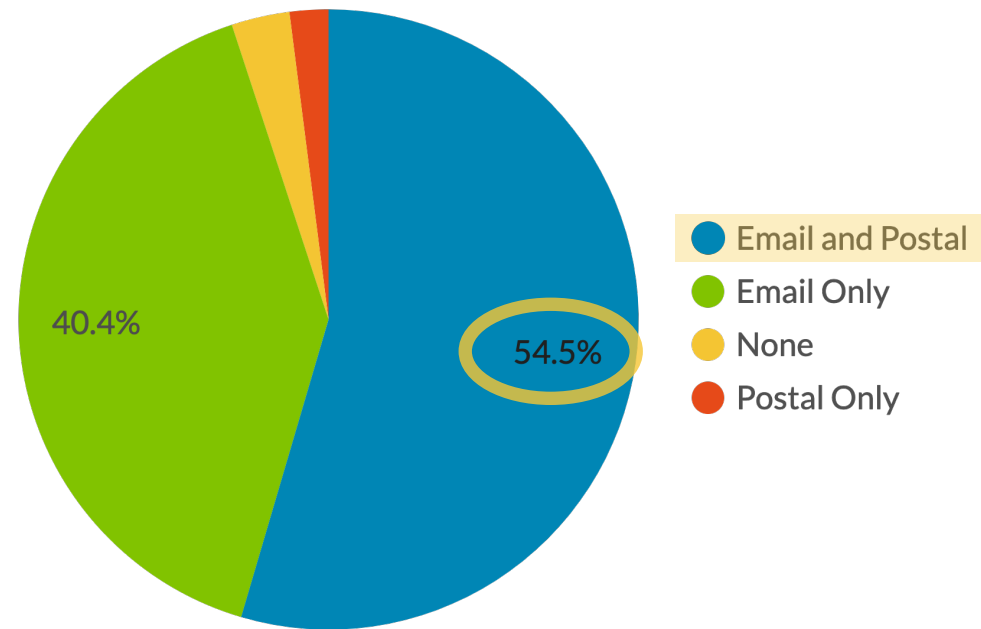
Based on our experience as the online and offline donor to the same 102 organizations and the communications we received over 4 months, here were the key findings.



Key Finding #1: | **Very few organizations are communicating to their smaller online and offline donors in multiple channels**

When it came to communicating to the online and offline donors in multiple channels, 55% of organizations did so to the online donor but only 7% did so with the offline donor.

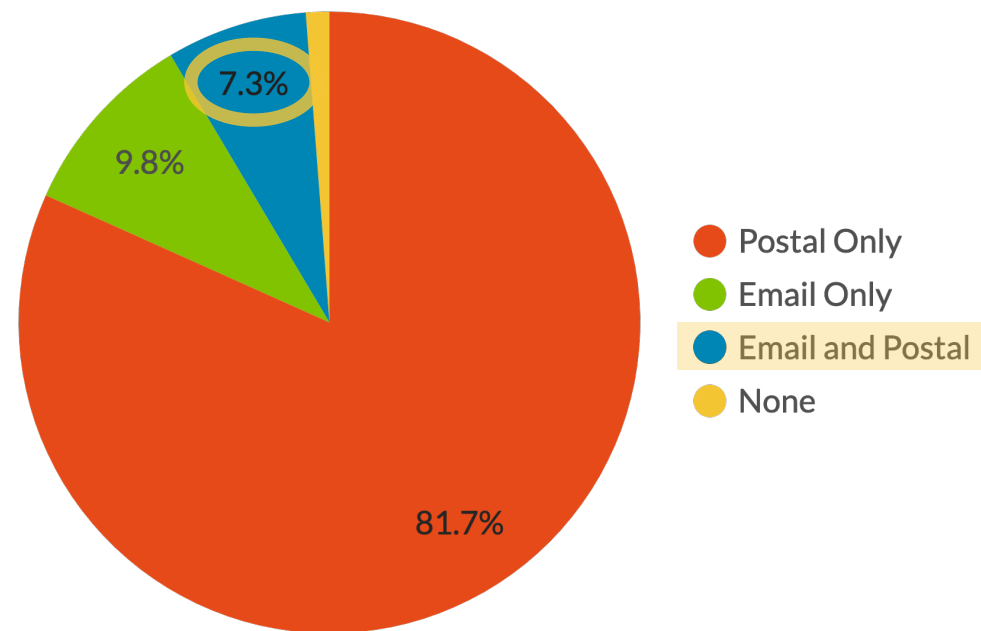
Percent of Organizations Communicating by Channel to the Online Donor



In the end, only 3 of the 102 organizations sent multi-channel communications to both the online donor and the offline donor.

Communication in different channels improves the likelihood of someone giving again and also giving more when/if they do but it appears that many organizations are simply hoping donors give in multiple channels on their own making it much less likely to occur.

Percent of Organizations Communicating by Channel to the Offline Donor



Key Finding #2: | Offline donors are getting lost

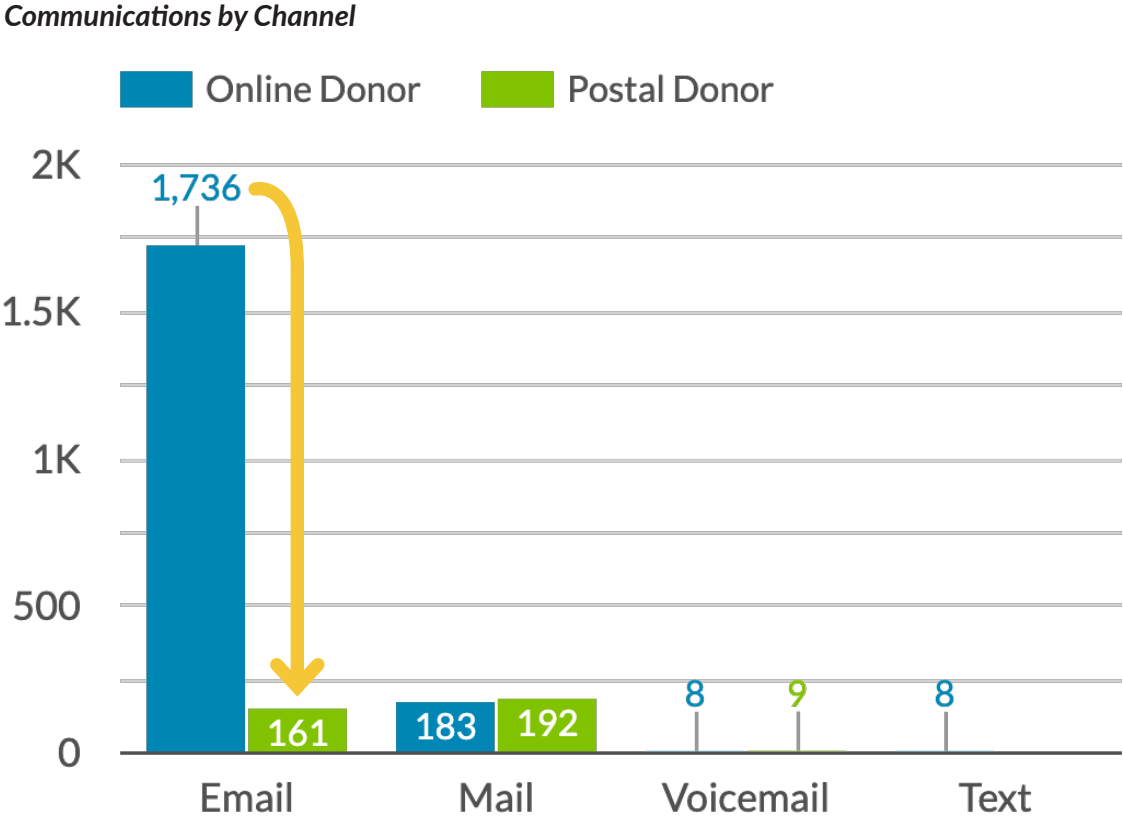
The offline donor received 10 times fewer communications than the online donor because they received 1,575 fewer emails.

This is partly because just 14% of organizations sent at least 1 email to the offline donor but even for those that did send email to the offline donor, on average they sent 11.5 emails in the 4 months compared to 18.1 that were sent to the online donor.

When we analyzed the 1st solicitation we received in the mail in more depth, we found that only 28% of organizations asked for our email when giving offline which would make it harder for organizations to then email the donor as well as communicate via mail.

This is crucial because, as shared earlier, offline donors who simply receive email, are more likely to give again and give more offline when they receive email. And receiving emails also makes them more likely to give online as well and becoming that incredibly valuable multi-channel donor.

Of those who communicated to the offline donor, 49% of organizations sent at least one solicitation and 93% sent at least one cultivation.



The offline donor did receive 30 solicitations from organizations not included in the study which hints at some organizations in the study being a part of a co-op or renting/selling names.

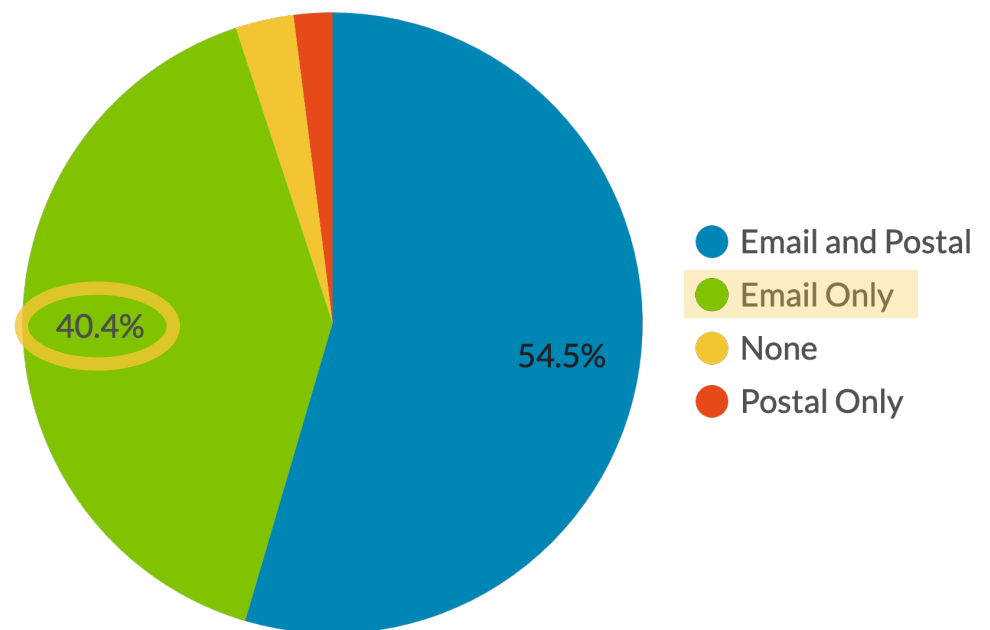
Key Finding #3:

Online donors are more likely to get multi-channel communications

55% of organizations communicated to the online donor both through the mail and email compared to just 14% for the offline donor.

The online donor was two times less likely to only be communicated to in the channel in which they gave (online/email) compared to the offline donor (offline/mail).

Percent of Organizations Communicating by Channel to the Online Donor



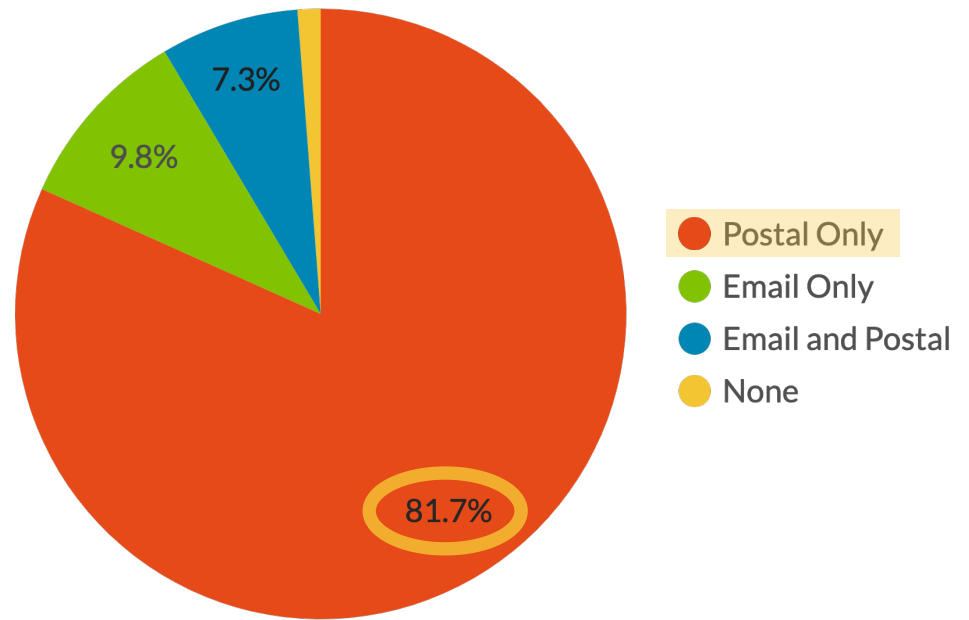
This is partly because when we give online the organization received all of our information, including postal address, quickly and in a digital format that is easier to get into a database or CRM. Getting offline information, quickly, and being able to communicate, and ask, offline is one of the reasons why we've found that **online acquired donors are 463% to 14,400% more likely to become a multi-channel donor compared to offline acquired donors.**

So while the online donor was more likely to receive multi-channel communications than the offline donor, this also remains an opportunity as 6 out of 10 organizations only sent 1 message through the mail, often a thank you letter.

This means that the majority of organizations are not communicating offline to their online donors in a more ongoing way and potentially losing out on the high value multi-channel donor.

Of those who communicated to the online donor, 78% of organizations sent at least one solicitation and 100% sent at least one cultivation.

Percent of Organizations Communicating by Channel to the Offline Donor



The online donor did receive 28 solicitations from organizations not included in the study which hints at some organizations in the study being a part of a co-op or renting/selling names.

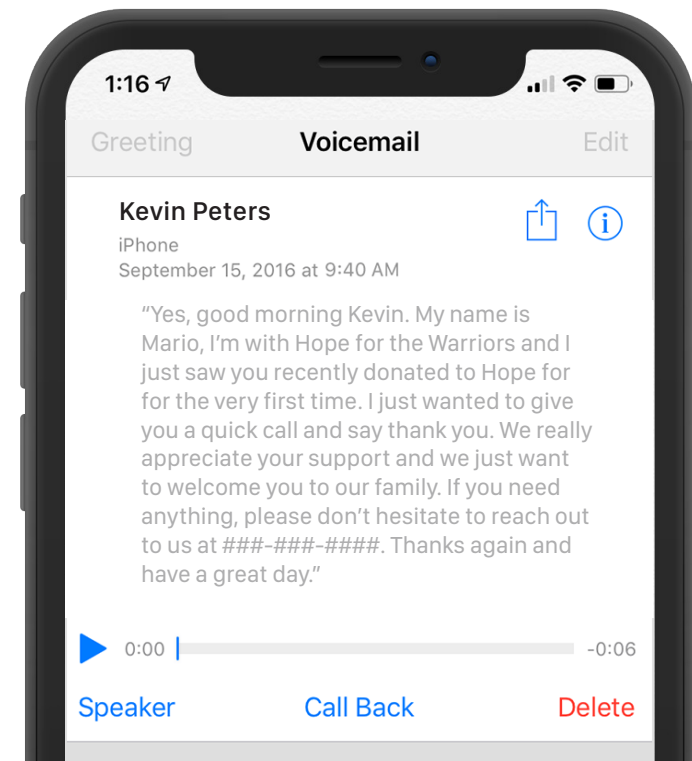
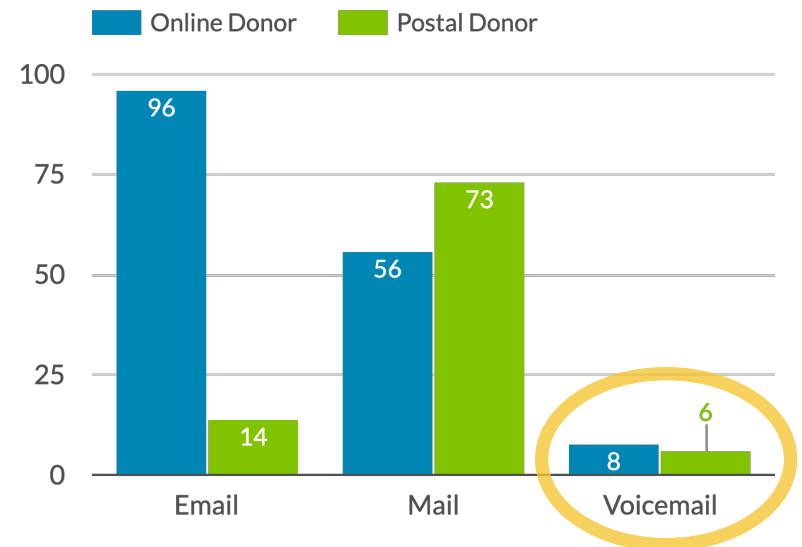
Key Finding #4: Very few organizations are using the phone (calls, voicemails, texts)

*Only 1 organization texted us
and just 8 organizations left a
voicemail for the online donor
and 6 for the offline donor.*

As we went through the voicemail's we received, we discovered that all but one of the organization's that called the offline donor were calling to determine the gift designation. None of them said the word's "Thank You".

Compare that experience — not getting called at all or called and not thanked — to this voicemail we received from the Hope for the Warriors:

Number of Organizations Communicating by Channel



Donor Journey Case Studies

The overall numbers are just that: numbers that represent our overall experience as the online and offline donor. The numbers don't tell the whole story or all the stories of the communications being sent by the 102 different organizations. So in order to dive a bit deeper, we will highlight 4 organizations and how 2 of them communicated to the online donor and the other 2 to the offline donor.



Offline Only Communications to the Offline Donor

Feeding America was one of the 67 organizations (82%) who communicated to the offline donor only through the mail, the channel in which we gave. They at least communicated something to the offline donor –

whereas 20 organizations sent the offline donor zero communications in 4 months

– and the 5 communications through the mail was above average (3).

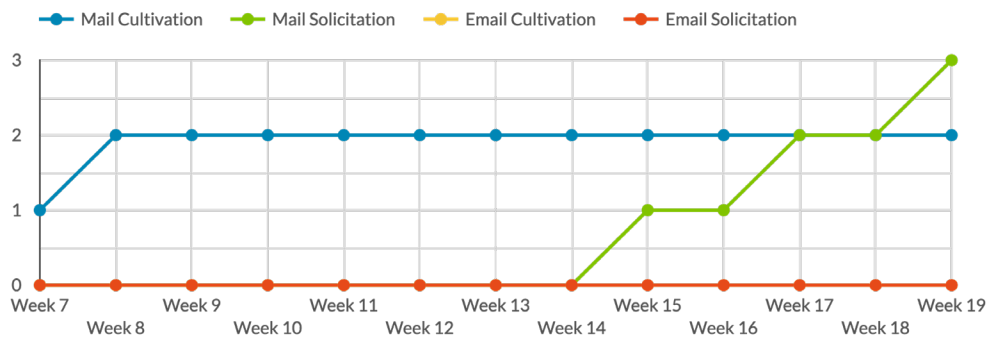
Their first communication was a thank you letter and receipt which came 38 days after we sent our check. It took them 5 days to process the check and then 33 days to get us the thank you letter.

A week later we received a postcard with some personal handwriting on it thanking us for our gift and a soft ask to give again. We determined that the main focus of the communication was to cultivate so the first solicitation we received came 51 days later which was 96 days after we gave, quite a bit higher than the average in our study of 64 days. NOTE: You can see the solicitation example and direct mail solicitation stats later in this report in the A Deeper Look: Direct Mail Solicitations section.

We then received another solicitation two weeks after that and another one two weeks after that. In the end, we were asked to give 3 times so the cultivation ratio was 0.7 which was quite a bit lower than the average in our study for the offline donor of 1.9 overall and 1.3 for just the mail.

82% of organizations communicated to the offline donor only through the mail.

Feeding America Communications by Type and Channel to the Offline Donor



	Messages	Solicitations	Cultivations	Cultivation Ratio	Days to 1 st Solicitation
Email	0	0	0	0	0
Mail	5	3	2	0.7	96
TOTAL	5	3	2	0.7	96

Online Only Communications to the Online Donor

Khan Academy was one of 40 organizations (40%) who communicated to the online donor only online, the channel in which we gave.

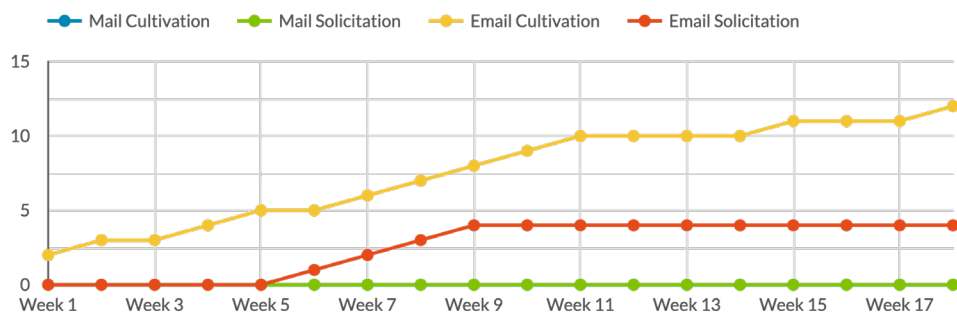
We received 3 emails in the first 4 days which included a thank you receipt and soft ask for an employer match in email 1, a video from the founder, Sal Khan, and social media links in email 2, and an invite to a webinar/call in email 3.

Two weeks later, we received an email with a story of a beneficiary in a video and then another cultivation email – meditation tips – 9 days after that before we received our first solicitation email on day 34. This was slightly higher than the average in our study of 27 days. *NOTE: You can see the solicitation example and direct mail solicitation stats later in this report in the A Deeper Look: Email Solicitations section.*

Over the remaining 12 weeks we received 10 emails spaced, on average, 8 days a part. 3 of those we asks and the rest, 7, were cultivation focused. So in the end, we received 16 emails, slightly below the average in our study (18), which had a cultivation ratio of 3.0 which was higher for the online donor overall (1.7) and for email (1.9).

40% of organizations communicated to the online donor only through email.

Khan Academy Communications by Type and Channel to the Online Donor



	Messages	Solicitations	Cultivations	Cultivation Ratio	Days to 1 st Solicitation
Email	16	4	12	3	34
Mail	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	16	4	12	3	32

Multi-Channel Communications to the Offline Donor

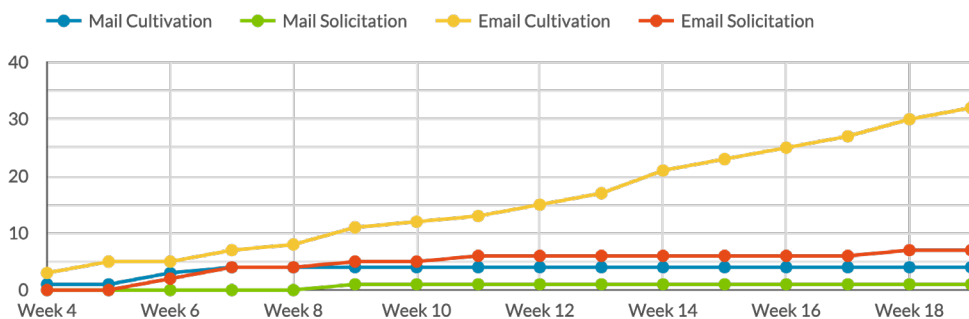
There were only 6 organizations that sent both online and offline messages to our offline donor like Buckner International did. Over the 4 months, they sent 39 emails to the offline donor which was much higher than the average of 11. The majority of those, 32, were cultivation which led to an email cultivation ratio of 2.1 which was below the average in our study (2.7).

On the offline side, they sent 5 messages (higher than the average of 3) which included 1 solicitation (average was 1) and 4 cultivations (average was 1.5) for a cultivation ratio of 3.0 (average was 1.3).

So in total, Buckner International sent 44 messages with a cultivation ratio of 1.9 which was much higher than the overall average of 4.4 messages while the cultivation ratio was the same as the average (1.9).

Only 6 of the 102 organizations in the final study sent at least 1 online and offline message to the offline donor.

Buckner International Communications by Type and Channel to the Offline Donor



	Messages	Solicitations	Cultivations	Cultivation Ratio	Days to 1 st Solicitation
Email	39	7	32	2.1	23
Mail	5	1	4	3	52
TOTAL	44	8	36	1.9	23

Offline Welcome Series Example

Besides the fact that Buckner was one of the few organizations to send the offline donor multiple emails one of the interesting things we observed was their offline donor welcome series.

First, we received a thank you letter and receipt three weeks after our gift was sent and 10 days after it was processed. On the bottom of the Thank You letter they had a tear off 'Give Again' slip to encourage a quicker 2nd gift. Two weeks later, we received a thank you postcard that was personally written – or at least perceived to be personally written – with more information about Buckner and a business card from a stewardship or donor relations manager.

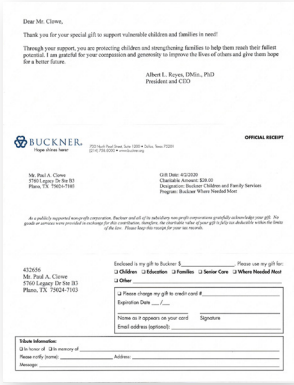
That same week we received another postcard that on the outside said, "Paul, your gift has made this possible." so they found a way to personalize the postcard to us and our name. On the back, they shared a short story and had a QR code you could scan and then go online to watch more of the story. An attempt to both a) report on the type of impact you have when giving b) use a personal story and c) point the offline donor online for more engagement.

One week later, we received another similar 'impact' postcard with a story and QR code to watch more online. 2 weeks after that, and after we've been thanked twice and had two 'impact' focused communications, we received a solicitation letter. This was a pretty short and generic appeal letter that also had a QR code except this one pointed you to a donation page where you could complete your gift. They included a reply device and did not have a suggested gift or gift array, but rather just left it blank and allowed the donor to choose their amount.

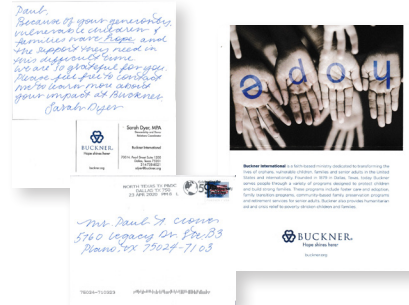
But as you've seen, this wasn't a single channel communication strategy as while we were getting the mailed messages, we also received 12 emails. 5 cultivation focused emails between the thank you receipt and the thank you and first 'impact' postcard. 2 more emails, one of which was an ask, during the week between the impact postcards and then 5 more cultivation emails before we received the ask in the mail 2 weeks later.

So in the end, this welcome series started 17 days after we gave and took 35 days to get the 5 mailed messages (1 solicitation) and 12 emails (1 solicitation).

1 THANK YOU & RECEIPT



2 THANK YOU POSTCARD



3 IMPACT POSTCARD



4 IMPACT POSTCARD



5 APPEAL LETTER



Buckner Offline Donor Welcome

Multi-Channel Communications to the Online Donor

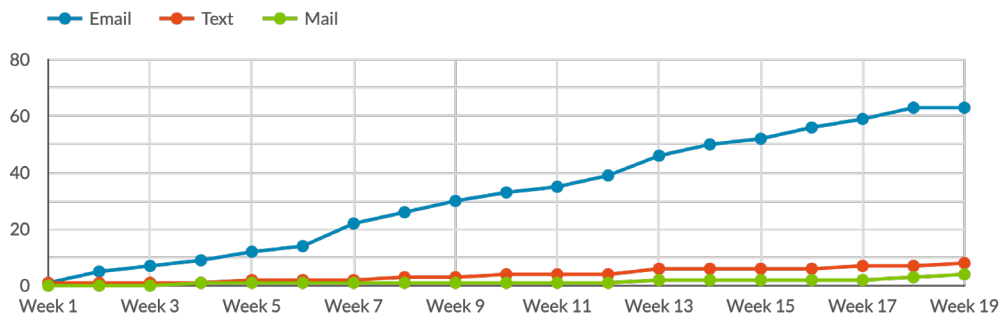
Doctors Without Borders was one of the 54 organizations who sent the online donor at least one email and mailed message. They were also part of the 40% of organizations who sent more than 1 mailed message to the online donor. But we want to look more at their communications because they were the only organization in the study who sent a text message of any kind to any donor.

They sent 63 emails which was way above the average of 18 but 43 of those were cultivation focused so they had a cultivation ratio of 2.1 which was above average for emails to the online donor (1.9). They sent above average mailed messages to the online donor (sent 5, average was 3) but skewed heavier towards solicitations with a ratio of 4 asks to 1 cultivation (0.25 cultivation ratio, average was 0.8).

In the end, they communicated to the online donor 68 times and 44 of those were cultivations for a cultivation ratio of 1.9 which were all above average. But that doesn't account for the 8 text messages that they sent which is what really made them unique in terms of our study.

6 out of 10 organizations sent only 1 mailed message to the online donor

Doctors Without Borders Communications by Type and Channel to the Online Donor



	Messages	Solicitations	Cultivations	Cultivation Ratio	Days to 1 st Solicitation
Email	63	20	43	2.1	9
Mail	5	4	1	0.25	82
TOTAL	68	24	44	1.9	9

Doctors Without Borders Text Messages Examples

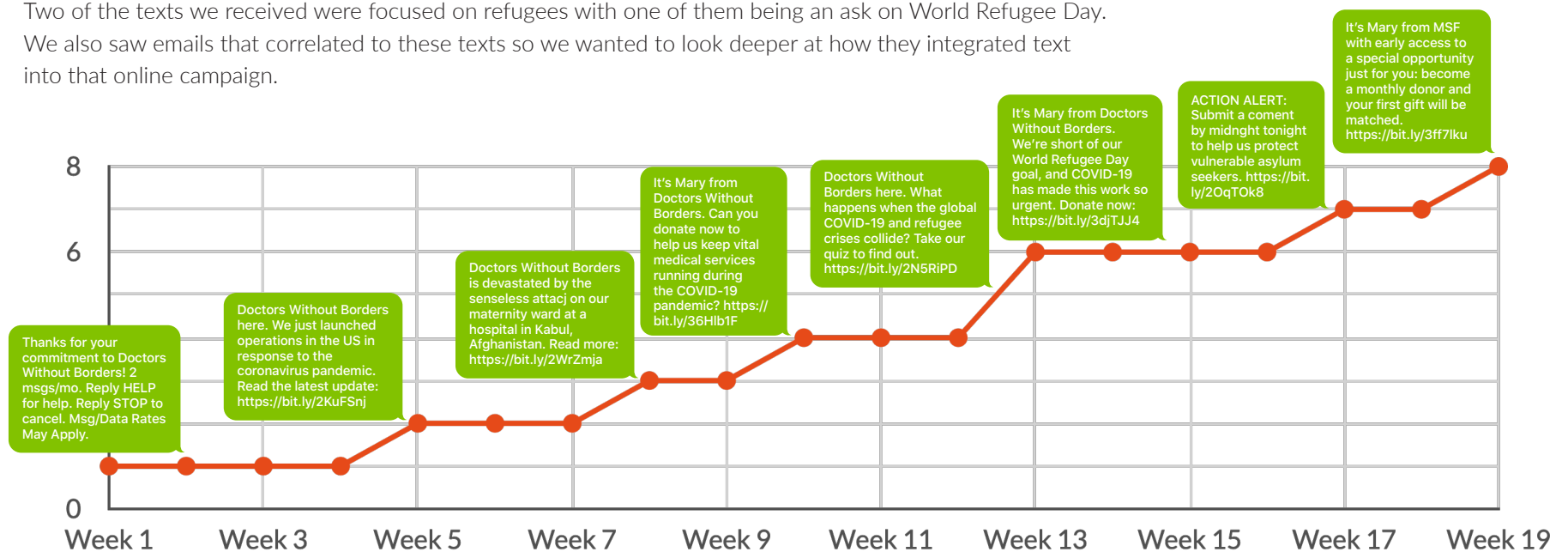
The first text we received was immediately after our donation to say thanks. 4 weeks later, we received a news focused cultivation text about COVID-19 operations in the US. 3 weeks after that, an urgent news alert about an attack in Afghanistan was sent before we received the first solicitation text 2 weeks later with a COVID-19 related ask.

Two weeks later, we received a text about a quiz on the refugee crisis and then 4 days later we were asked to give via text as part of a World Refugee Day campaign (more on that later).

The last two texts we received were an action alert about asylum seekers (25 days after the previous text) and an ask to become a monthly donor (15 days after the previous text).

In total, we received 8 text messages, 3 solicitations and 5 cultivations.

Two of the texts we received were focused on refugees with one of them being an ask on World Refugee Day. We also saw emails that correlated to these texts so we wanted to look deeper at how they integrated text into that online campaign.



World Refugee Day Giving Campaign Example

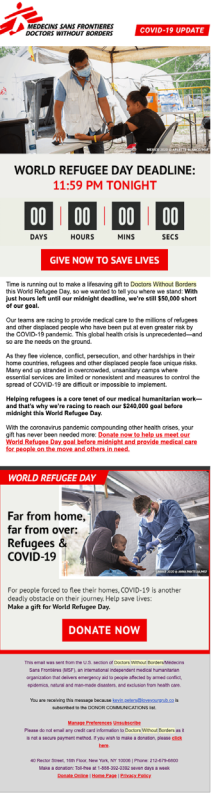
On World Refugee Day they sent 3 emails, 5 hours apart. The 'We're short of our goal' text was sent 2 hours after email 1. You can also see how the emails get progressively shorter as the campaign goes on and also become more time and goal focused. Email 2 uses a countdown clock to emphasize how little time is left to give as part of the campaign and email 3 restates the goal and that the campaign ends at midnight.



2 HOURS

It's Mary from Doctors Without Borders. We're short of our World Refugee Day goal, and COVID-19 has made this work so urgent. Donate now: <https://bit.ly/3djTJJ4>

3 HOURS



5 HOURS



Now if you have done or studied giving days, you may know that what you do leading up to the day is just as important, if not more than, what you do on the day. So if we look at the emails we received a few weeks before and a few days after the giving day campaign it looks like this:

<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Doctors Without Bor.	Inbox	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	We're so grateful, Kevin - Thank you for standing with refugees.	Jun 24		
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Doctors Without Bor. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	This Thursday, June 25, join our discussion to learn how we'r...	Jun 23
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Shannon Miller, Doc. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	We didn't meet our World Refugee Day goal - An important up...	Jun 22
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Doctors Without Bor. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	One final chance - They fled for their safety. What's next? ...	Jun 20
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Doctors Without Bor. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	Only hours left this World Refugee Day - You only have hours ...	Jun 20
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Doctors Without Bor. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	Today is World Refugee Day - Nearly 71 million forcibly displa...	Jun 20
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Doctors Without Bor.	Inbox	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	Tomorrow is World Refugee Day - crisis— Doctors Without Borders is there. Tomorrow is World Refugee Day. ...	Jun 19		
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Shannon Miller, Doc. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	Do you stand with refugees? - They've been forced from hom...	Jun 18
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Avril Benoit, Docto. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	Refugees are far from home. Their crisis is far from over. - yo...	Jun 17
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	MSF	Inbox	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	What would you do, Kevin? - scarce. Doctors Without Borders teams are in those camps, responding to the gl...	Jun 15		
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Doctors Without Bor. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	Join us Thursday, June 18 - Migration in the shadow of a pan...	Jun 13
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Doctors Without Bor. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	[QUIZ] When COVID-19 and the refugee crisis collide - How m...	Jun 11
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Doctors Without Bor. 2	Inbox	CULTIVATION STUDY	CULTIVATION S.../Donations	Multi-Channel 2020	Multi-Channel 2.../Example	Multi-Ch.../Online Persona	An acute and ongoing crisis - Refugees all over the world are ...	Jun 9



You can see that they started laying the groundwork for World Refugee Day almost 2 weeks before with regular cultivation focused emails talking about the refugee crisis, how COVID-19 is impacting them, and getting you, the reader, to engage with the issue through a quiz and interactive experience. They also prime their subscribers about World Refugee Day the day before (which had a soft ask in it as well).

They actually didn't reach their World Refugee Day goal and did another ask 2 days later before wrapping up the campaign with an update and thank you 2 days after that.

So the 3 emails and 1 text message on the day came after 7 cultivation emails and followed by another ask and a thank you/campaign recap all within 3 weeks.

Email Solicitations

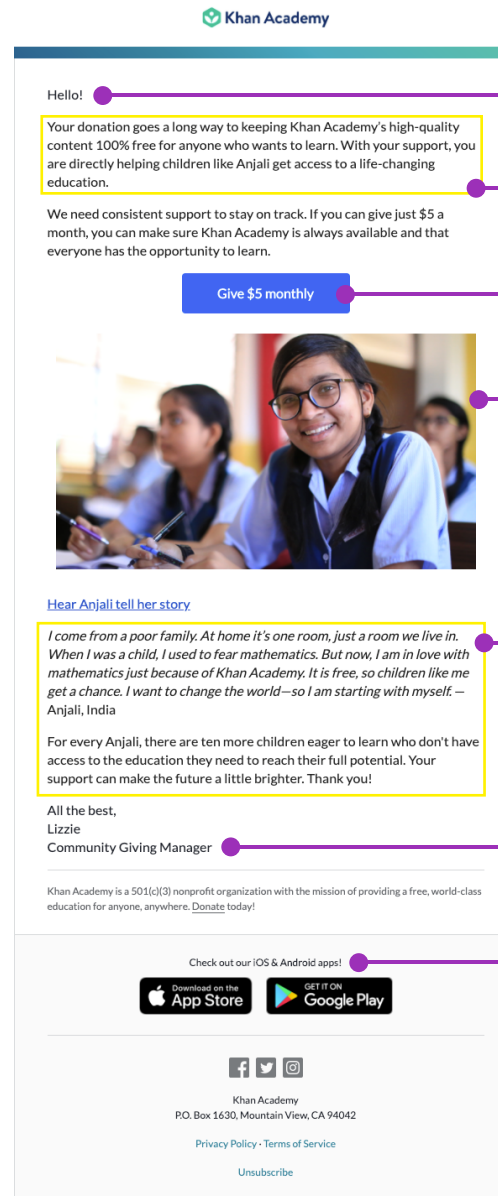
A Deeper Look



According to our work in benchmarking the online fundraising activities of nonprofits, email is the biggest driver of online donations and has the highest conversion rate (by channel). We know that fundraising with email isn't just about asking for money – cultivation content is critical as well – but we were interested to see when we were first asked to give via email, what the email looked like, and what type of ask and other strategies were being used.

Subject: You support education for anyone, anywhere
 From: Lizzie from Khan Academy <lizzier@khanacademy.org>
 To: kevin.peters@loveyourgrub.co
 Date Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2020 8:02:33 AM GMT-05:00
 Date Received: Thursday, April 30, 2020 8:02:36 AM GMT-05:00

17% of emails were sent from a person and organization
 31% from just a person
 51% from just the organization



36% of organizations did not address us by name

92% of organizations did not reference our past gift

18% of organizations asked for a monthly gift

23% of organizations pointed to a donation page that had no congruence

19% had some congruence

58% were congruent

19% of emails had a story or narrative writing

36% of emails were sent from the ED/CEO

31% from just the organization

77% of emails had more than 1 call to action

Average 1st email solicitation was Day 27

Direct Mail Solicitations

A Deeper Look



If you want to get online donors to give offline, they'll most likely need to be asked to give offline. So we were interested to see how organizations were asking offline donors to give, structuring their mailed appeals, when the first one came, and how they were integrating with their website and online giving (if at all).

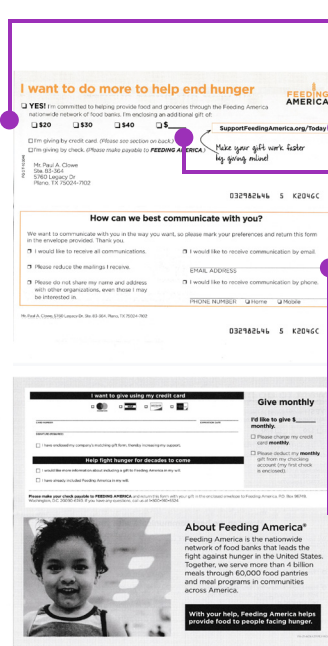
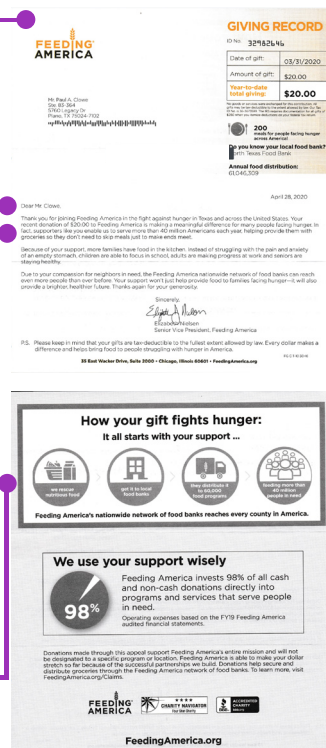
Average 1st mailed solicitation was Day 64

- 87% of appeals were a Personal Letter
- 9% were Newsletters
- 2% were a Pamphlet only
- 2% were a Newsletter & Personal Letter

32% of organizations did not address us by name

15% referenced our past gift

51% had a story or narrative writing



98% of appeals primarily asked for a one-time gift

15% included a URL to a specific landing page

66% had a URL to the main website

19% had no URL

87% had no premium

9% had a 'back-end' premium

4% had a 'front-end' premium

72% did not ask for our email address on the reply device

45% had a clearly congruent website/landing page

28% had some congruence

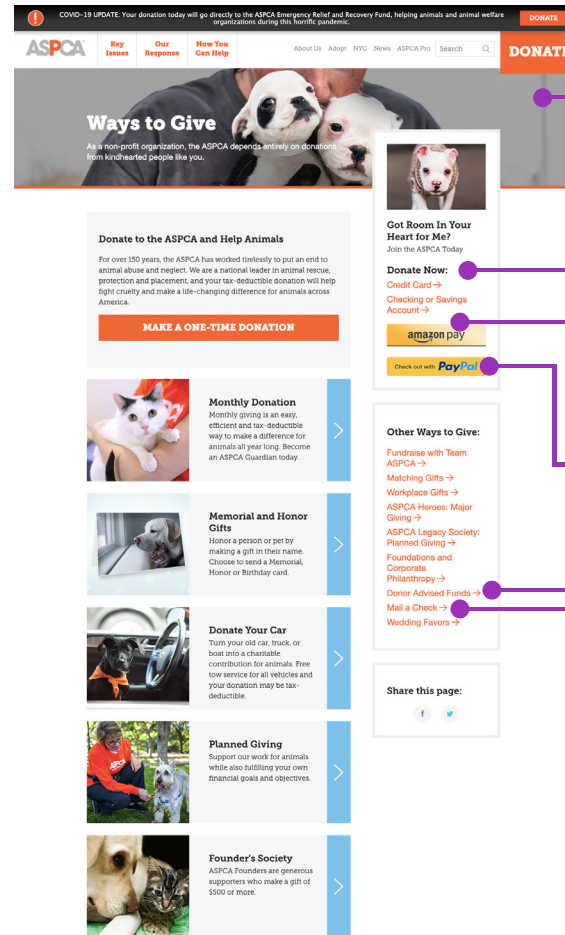
28% had no congruence

Ways to Give Page

A Deeper Look



A 'Ways to Give' page allows the organization to share all the other possible ways someone could support their organization without adding extra confusion or distractions to the actual online giving experience. We were interested to see if they had a 'Ways to Give' type page at all and what other transaction methods, besides online, organizations were accepting.



Did they have a page?

1 in 5 did not have a "Ways to Give" page

What methods of giving were available?

80% had a give online or donate now option

20% included a bank account/direct deposit option

20% had paypal

19% included donor advised funds

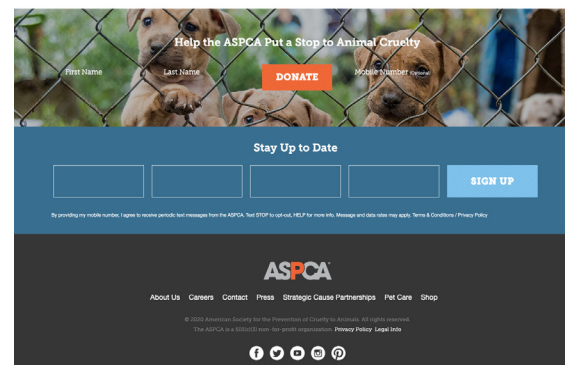
56% shared how donors could send in a check

56% provided stock/brokerage information

29% included phone information

2% had a BitCoin option

1% had a text option

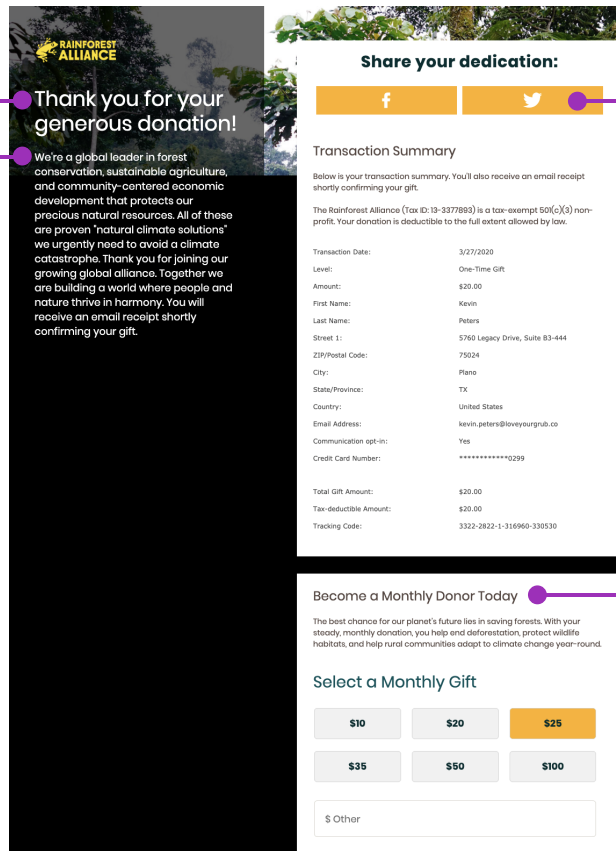


Thank You Page

A Deeper Look



The thank you or confirmation page shown after a donor completes their online gift is the first touch point for new donors so we were interested to see how organizations were using it to engage their donors, move them to action, and/or learn more about them.



What else could the donor do?

- 36%** social share or follow
- 36%** had no next step
- 30%** other
- 14%** employer match
- 10%** give again
- 7%** watch video
- 3%** download/resource
- 1%** survey
- 5%** upgrade to monthly

Could the donor provide some input after their donation?

- 2%** offered chance to choose communication preferences
- 1%** offered a survey

Was the donor thanked?

- 4%** did not thank the donor
- 40%** did not expand the thank you

Could the donor provide some input during the donation?

- 63%** of organizations offered no option to opt-in or choose communications during the giving process
- 31%** had an opt-in
- 7%** allowed you to choose types of communications
- 2%** allowed you to choose channel of communications
- 1%** allowed you to choose frequency of communications

Ideas From the Research Library

Hopefully reading through this study gave you some ideas and inspiration on how you can better communicate and cultivate your online and offline donors through different channels to engage and retain your donors and grow your revenue.



Sending email to mail only donors, sending mail to online donors, and using the phone — calls, voicemails, and texts — are all simple strategies you can try and test for yourself. Software and tools like Enthusem, Zapier, Sly Broadcast, HubSpot and Virtuous (to name a few) make it easier for you to save time, personalize communications, and even automate some of these strategies in cost-effective ways.

But beyond the more 'simple', integrated approaches to communicating with your donors, here are a few more tested ideas from the NextAfter Experiment Library that you can try for yourself.

1. Try Showing Facebook Ads To Your Direct Mail Recipients

[In this experiment](#), the organization was wondering what they could do to boost direct mail revenue without simply sending more mail so they created a Facebook audience that saw ads a few weeks before and a few weeks after the mail piece hit mailboxes.

A key point about the ads here, they were aiming for reach as the goal was to get more direct mail revenue, not online revenue, so getting impressions, in this case, they theorized, could be beneficial even without a click.

In the end they spent just under \$700 to increase offline revenue almost \$10,000!



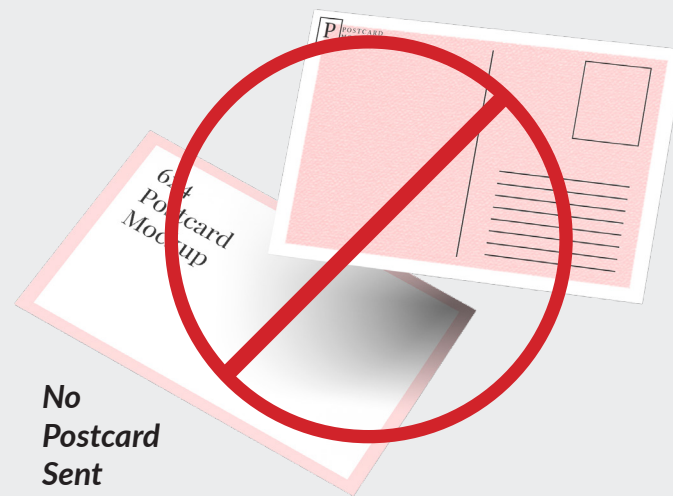
2. Send Donors A ‘Thank You’ Postcard Before Your Year-End Campaign

This experiment is the reverse of the previous strategy — using online to help offline — where this organization wondered if they could use offline communications to help boost their online revenue so they didn't have to send out more emails or spend more money on online advertising.

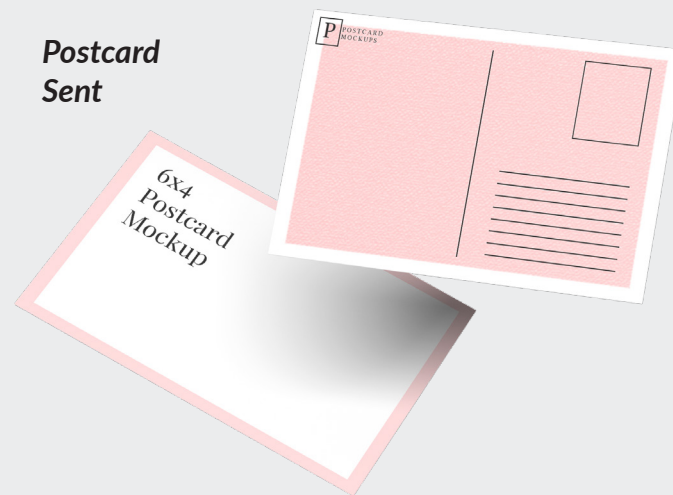
For this experiment, they sent a personalized postcard with the donor's name on the front and a link to a custom video online, which was all trackable to the individual donor, to half of their audience. The video simply said thanks and the postcard was sent just before Thanksgiving and the online campaign started 2-3 weeks later.

The people who received the postcard increased their giving 204% compared to the folks who didn't get it.

There was also a 105% increase in their average gift (although this did not reach statistical significance).



**No
Postcard
Sent**



**Postcard
Sent**

**↑ 204.09%
conversion increase**

3. Send More Cultivation Content Via Email

In this experiment, the organization realized that many of their email subscribers were not engaged (no clicks or opens within the last 6 months), new donors were twice as likely to be disengaged, and they were sending twice as many solicitation emails as cultivation emails. Their online giving was growing so they didn't immediately see the underlying potential downstream issues that this approach was or could cause but once they saw it they decided to do something about it.

For this experiment, they sent out one additional email, each Friday, from one of the authors of the blog that included a link to a blog post or video. The email was personally written and would often ask for replies back to the email.

To validate the impact of this series, they split the email file in half, paying special attention to ensure that there was equal representation of active, lapsed and non-donors and that the average revenue donor was similar between the splits.

The results were good, and they were a bit skeptical, so they decided to keep this test running for another 3 months and in the end saw a 42% increase in online revenue and a 54% increase in email engagement.

Explore other fundraising experiments at nextafter.com/research.



Control



Treatment

↑ 80% in avg. engagement

↑ 8.1% in donors

↑ 21% in revenue

Additional Resources



Transform Your Fundraising Success with the Responsive Fundraising Toolkit

Donor-centric nonprofit teams know giving is deeply personal, and use responsive fundraising strategies to deliver personalized donor experiences and treat all their donors like major donors. The Responsive Fundraising Toolkit will equip your team with the strategies, action plan, and examples you need to do the same.

In The Responsive Fundraising Toolkit, you'll get:

A 30-minute video showcasing the why and how of responsive fundraising

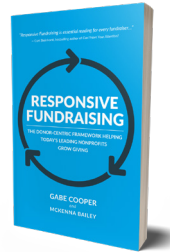
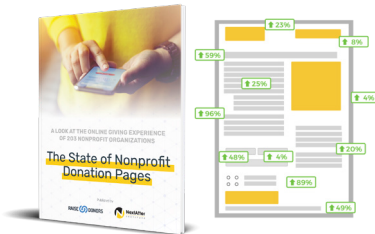
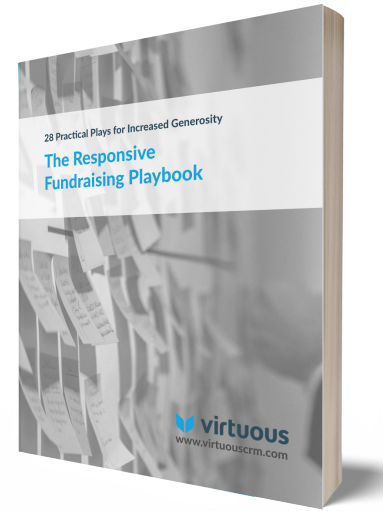
The 100+ Page Responsive Fundraising Blueprint & Playbook

All six (6) on-demand sessions from the latest Responsive Nonprofit Summit

A self-paced Responsive Assessment to benchmark your nonprofit's fundraising

Whether you want to identify the right signals to listen to, find the most important ways to connect or make the next best suggestion for each of your donors, the Responsive Fundraising Kit will help you get started today. The time for change is now. Donors deserve it. Nonprofits need it. And beneficiaries depend on it.

Get the free toolkit now at virtuous.org/resources/ebook/responsive-fundraising-kit



Get the Latest Online Fundraising Research & Real Nonprofit Experiments.

What does the online giving experience to public radio stations look like? How many nonprofits are sending mail to their online donors and vice versa? How are nonprofits trying to keep monthly donors whose credit cards have expired? Those are just a few of the questions asked and answered through first-hand, original research performed by the NextAfter Institute.

You can get them all, for free, at nextafter.com/resources.

Connect with The Modern Donor at Scale, Get Your Copy of Responsive Fundraising Today

Today's donors require a level of personalization, transparency and engagement that many nonprofits don't deliver. Responsive Fundraising provides the strategic framework and practical applications nonprofits need to build more generous relationships with modern donors. Understand the necessary steps to pivot away from ineffective, one-to-many fundraising tactics towards personalized, targeted efforts that create measurable increases in giving.

Learn more and get your copy today at virtuous.org/responsive-fundraising-book/

Improve Your Digital Marketing and Get Certified in Online Fundraising.

Use the code "MULTICHANNEL" to get 50% off any online, CFRE accredited, on-demand course like Email Fundraising Optimization and Donation & Landing Page Optimization or use it to become a member and access any & all courses, all-year long.

View the courses at courses.nextafter.com and join today at nextafter.com/membership

About





About Virtuous

Giving is deeply personal. We believe fundraising should be too, and technology partners should help nonprofit teams create responsive experiences that build better donor relationships and increase impact with confidence.

Much more than CRM, Virtuous is the only responsive fundraising platform and your growth partner in a changing world — unifying your fundraising, marketing, and donor development activities, ridding teams of redundant back-office tasks, and surfacing the insights and signals needed to deliver dynamic donor experiences at scale.

On average Virtuous customers see:

- 10% increase in average gift*
- 12% increase in donor retention*
- 20% decrease in administrative staff time*

Learn more at virtuous.org and get a tour to see how Virtuous can help you at virtuous.org/demo.

*Average improvements observed





About NextAfter

NextAfter's mission is to decode what works in fundraising and make it as accessible to as many nonprofits as possible. We work towards this mission in three ways:

1. A Fundraising Research Lab: nextafter.com/research

Conducting marketplace research, A/B testing, and digital experimentation to discover what works to attract, acquire, and retain more donors and raise more money online.

2. A Digital Fundraising Consultancy: nextafter.com/let-us-help

Working side-by-side with nonprofit organizations to help them develop and execute research-backed digital fundraising strategies designed to generate sustainable online revenue growth.

3. An Institute for Online Fundraising: nextafter.com/institute

Equipping nonprofit fundraisers and digital marketers with data-driven and evidence-based research, resources, and training.

Over the past 6 years, we have:

- Open sourced over 2,500 online fundraising experiments complete with creative samples, data sets, and key discoveries.
- Done 9 mystery donor studies analyzing online fundraising trends spanning 1000+ different organizations across 12 verticals in the United States, Canada and Australia.
- Enrolled over 4,500 people and certified more than 500 students in one of 8 online courses where fundraisers can deepen their knowledge in critical areas based on real evidence.

Learn more at nextafter.com

