



# A GUIDE TO CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

*What to say, when to say it, and how to say it*

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For fundraisers, campaigns unlock a treasure chest of big ideas, energizing messages, and fresh collateral. At their best, campaigns lend themselves easily to powerful communications and creative materials. But they are also guided by structures—phases, sequential solicitation practices, and other rules—that can complicate the marketing team’s job.

*Can I mention the campaign in our newsletter yet? What materials do our major donors want to see? Do we communicate with all donors in the same voice?*

On the following pages is a guide to the “what, when, and how” of campaign communications. And remember—all communications should derive from your organization’s [case for support](#).

DONOR AUDIENCE	WHAT TO SAY?	WHEN TO SAY IT?	HOW TO SAY IT?
<b>Major individual donors</b>	<p>Treat donors like savvy investors—because they are. Your donor is entrusting your organization with a major investment in order to achieve a significant return (e.g., a more vibrant arts sector, food security for the region, or a brighter community). Your communications should reflect the depth of this partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize donor agency. It's not: <i>when you give to us, we use your money to make a difference.</i> It's: <i>your investment makes a difference.</i></li> <li>• Make clear the value proposition. <i>Why us? Why now? Why should you care?</i></li> <li>• Highlight strengths, not needs. Donors don't invest in the organizations with the greatest needs. They invest in organizations with the greatest potential to effect change.</li> </ul>	<p><b>During the preparation and early phases of your campaign</b>—when your campaign vision is formed enough to answer initial questions (“why now? why you?”), but before the general public has specific campaign information.</p> <p>You may even involve your closest donors earlier—inviting their guidance and input as you shape or refine your vision and plans. By encouraging your major donors to share their time, talent, and testimony (not only their treasure!), you strengthen your partnership.</p>	<p>Focus on customized, sophisticated materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Custom proposal template</li> <li>• Campaign video</li> <li>• Brochure or leadership book</li> <li>• Campaign microsite</li> <li>• Naming opportunities</li> <li>• Other specialized information</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate donors</b>	<p>Companies give generously to better their communities and practice social responsibility—but most seek to do so in a way that engages their employees, aligns with their values, and furthers their business goals. Your communications should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight how your campaign or project is connected to the funder's philanthropic priorities—which are typically publicly available.</li> <li>• Illustrate how your campaign or project shares the brand's values.</li> <li>• Emphasize the project's impact on the corporation's consumers and employees.</li> <li>• Highlight recognition opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>During the early phase</b>—when your campaign vision is fully developed (or close to fully developed), recognition opportunities and sponsorship packages are finalized, and you can answer anticipated questions.</p> <p>Of course, corporations are comprised of people. Inviting representatives to serve on your steering committee or cabinet can lead to increased buy-in and deepen your relationship in the same ways as individual donors.</p>	<p>Many of the materials developed for major individual donors can be used here, as well—with an emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A custom proposal template</li> <li>• Naming opportunities</li> </ul>

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<b>Foundation donors</b>	<p>Foundations often have the most narrow, focused priorities for giving. As such, your communications should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly illustrate how campaign priorities align with the foundation's grantmaking areas—which are typically publicly available.</li> <li>Address specific impact metrics.</li> <li>Emphasize statistics, as foundations tend to be more data oriented.</li> </ul>	<b>During the early phase</b> —when your campaign vision is fully developed (or close to fully developed) and you can accurately, comprehensively answer the questions the grant process poses.	<p>The grant application or proposal will be the most important document you develop.</p> <p>But, other materials, focused on impact—stewardship reports, impact reports—can help to nurture the relationship.</p>
<b>Middle and annual donors</b>	<p>With your broad base of donors, emphasize shared goals, the power of community, and how every gift makes a difference. In your communications...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share progress against your campaign goal. Hopefully, your public launch will have occurred after raising <i>at least</i> two-thirds of your campaign goal.</li> <li>Position your donor as part of a broader community—they are “joining a movement,” and “building on the momentum of their peers.” In behavioral science, this is referred to as social norming.</li> <li>Leverage the “follow the leader” effect. When you can point to a respected philanthropist or leader who has invested in your cause, it signals to others that they, too, can trust your organization.</li> </ul>	<b>Following your public launch</b> —during your community phase. During this phase, you will seek to invite every member of your community to participate in the campaign (in ways that are appropriate to their means).	<p>Focus on collateral that can be mass produced, as well as donor acquisition platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct solicitation devices</li> <li>Branded newsletters</li> <li>Campaign website</li> <li>Branded event materials</li> </ul>

Regardless of the type of donor or phase of your campaign, remember an *individual person* is the final decision maker when it comes to giving to your campaign. Along with appealing to the head (with your value proposition, brand alignment, or data points), your campaign communications need to reach the “heart.” They must connect with the human, showing them how their gift will contribute to a better world.

Focus on the cause—the impact of the gift—rather than on your institution. And most importantly, [tell stories](#). Our empathy—and our philanthropy—is greatest when focused on one individual. Tell the story of one person, and if possible, choose a story with the classic elements of hero, conflict, choice, and conquest.

We help you connect your vision with your donors' aspirations. Given a clear strategy and practical tools, you can raise more money today and build your capacity to sustain your mission into the future.



### Megan Simmons

*Consultant & Senior Writer*

Megan Simmons, who began her career at Benefactor Group in 2016, serves as the firm's lead writer. She has written and refined a diverse portfolio of fundraising and communication materials, including cases for support, campaign promotional materials, feasibility and assessment reports, and campaign plans.



### Susan Brekelmans

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Susan is a skilled writer and editor, helping clients tell their stories and target their messages in order to maximize donor engagement and support. With major gifts, annual fund, strategic planning, and special events experience, she supports clients through feasibility studies, campaign planning, and campaign execution.



**Capital Campaigns**



**Endowment Building**



**Leadership and Search**



**Annual Fundraising**



**Strategic Planning**



**Nonprofit Technology**



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