

NONPROFIT CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

Email Marketing Best Practices

Striking the right balance in your email communications is always mission-critical, but finding just the right tone that resonates with your constituents while still conveying your message is more important than ever. In the midst of a crisis, your constituents are likely to be bombarded with emails, and the end result is a lot of noise and potential for confusion. How do you cut through that noise to find the right balance? After speaking with nonprofits across the sector, we have put together these best practices to help you engage and nurture your constituents.

1 DOUBLE DOWN ON IMPACT & VALUE



SHARE STORIES THAT DEMONSTRATE THE IMPACT OF YOUR MISSION

Your mission matters even more than ever, so don't be afraid to continue to share your stories of impact, even if your mission is not directly related to the immediate crisis. Look to inspire and engage new and existing supporters and highlight the importance of your mission.



BE MINDFUL OF VOLUME

People on your list are likely getting emails from every company and organization they've ever interacted with – so keep that in mind when you begin to formulate your messages. With most individuals staying at home, it's possible that your list will likely be able to tolerate a slight increase in email volume, but be mindful of the tone and content of your messages.



BE CAREFUL OF DUPLICATING EFFORTS

While email remains a powerful method of communication, be careful of sending duplicate or conflicting messages. Data from the [Salesforce Connected Customer](#) report found that 78% of constituents expect consistent interactions across departments, and that won't have changed. Work across your organization to make sure that constituent data isn't getting lost in the shuffle, and that each email you send to constituents demonstrates your awareness of any history they may have with you.

2 THINK LONG-TERM



PLAN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

Layout the content, communication cadence and how these things will intersect. Whether you map it digitally or on paper, make a visual guide that outlines the steps constituents should take as they get to know you. Recent Salesforce research found that the average person today owns an estimated 10 connected devices, and nonprofit marketers know it. Salesforce research found that 81% of nonprofit marketers are now prioritizing the creation of connected, constituent journeys. Now is the time to think about how your emails connect to your content across social and web, and how these different channels impact the experiences your constituents have.



BE CONSCIOUS THAT THE WAY WE WORK AND INTERACT HAS CHANGED

The situation in different parts of the world will likely shift dramatically in the coming weeks and months. Be sure to speak to the areas hardest hit as your barometer when considering the tone of your content.

3 CRAFT THE RIGHT MESSAGE



ADJUST YOUR CADENCE

Because your constituents are at home -- some almost all the time -- their habits of consuming information will also change. This means you can test a more frequent email cadence than you did a few weeks ago. If your organization usually sends out three emails a month, test the response to a fourth email by looking closely at open, click and unsubscribe rates. If you're using AI, it can automate this process by giving you responsive insights around the performance of your emails. So if you start to see a pattern that indicates your list doesn't need or want your increased communication cadence, you can scale back and test again.



TEST AND TEST AGAIN

Building relationships online through channels like email starts with personalizing your content and communications to your constituents. Set up A/B tests where you send the same email with different subject lines, or different openings and see which message resonates with which lists. Be careful of the content of your messages as you test - make sure that you're leading with empathetic, supportive language, and use a positive and neutral tone wherever possible. Language analytics can help you identify the right tone by picking out the words comparing the top performing phrases and trends around the emotional tone being used.



DON'T BE AFRAID TO TRY NEW THINGS

It may not seem like it, but it's a good time to experiment with some of the marketing techniques you've always wanted to try. Interactive content in particular is performing really well right now, so if you've always wanted to try to send a video or share an especially engaging social media post in your emails, don't be afraid to give it a go. Another way to engage constituents is to embed forms, polls and other interactive content into your emails. Using a marketing automation platform, you can then pull data from your constituents responses and track how they engage with the content to get insights into how they're feeling, and what their needs are need during difficult times.