



***Ultimate
Guide
To***



***Email for
Nonprofits***

Why email marketing is great for nonprofits

Most nonprofits have adopted email marketing as a part of their marketing activities and budget. Email marketing is not only good to maintain your supporters informed and engaged, but it is great for raising funds as well! Here are a few of the reasons why we think you should be using email marketing for your nonprofit:

It's Fast!

Once you craft your message and you are happy with the layout of your email, you can reach your entire donor database within seconds of pressing the SEND button.

It's Cost-Effective!

Another benefit of email for nonprofits is the cost, printing out mailing materials is certainly more costly than signing up for an email service provider.

It has measurable ROI!

Email marketing services offer tracking options for you to be able to track the actions taken by each user who receives your email. This way you can constantly see what content works best with your donors and you can accurately track your ROI in real-time. Not to mention it has great ROI because if provided with the correct online tools, your donor will be more likely to donate to your nonprofit in a shorter timeframe.

Chapter 1: Choosing your Platform

Why you shouldn't be sending them through regular text email

If your nonprofit is still using outlook or Gmail to send plain text newsletters, you are missing out on the great opportunities of good email marketing. Although Gmail and Outlook are a great for 1-to-1 email conversations with your supporters, these are not designed for sending email newsletters or fundraising appeals to large groups of people.

A few reasons for this:

- Your e-mail design won't look good
- You'll be missing out on all the add-ons email marketing offers
- You will most likely end up in their junk folder
- Your inbox will get clogged up with all the bounce-backs and auto replies
- You won't know if your email was read or clicked on
- You could be [breaking the law!](#)

There are various platforms to choose from for email marketing, we've outlined the facts on the most popular platforms which also integrate directly with CommitChange:

MailChimp

Overview

- Personalized email lists will allow you to segment who you are sending emails to: your recent donors, past donors, volunteers or everyone!
- MailChimp's email designer allows you to easily add content and design emails that fit your nonprofit's branding.
- Collaboration features include multi-user access, campaign comments, and simultaneous editing to help your organization's workflow.
- Mailchimp allows you to track your email performance with reports, you can also connect your MailChimp account with Google Analytics for further tracking of your email campaigns' impact.
- FREE to use if you have under 2000 subscribers!

Bottomline

MailChimp is an easy-to-use platform for email marketing beginners, you can take advantage of its advanced features if you happen to have someone in your organization that has basic HTML knowledge.

Constant Contact

Overview

- List-building tools that allow you to add email addresses to your list from your Facebook page, company website, or a text-to-join message.
- Contact management that allows you to segment recipient lists.
- Customizable templates and drag-and-drop editing.
- Real-Time reporting will allow you to track your email campaign's impact.
- 10-30% subscription discounts available for nonprofits.

Bottomline

ConstantContact is a great platform for email marketing. Their discounts for non-profits are worth exploring, however, they do not have a free option for users under a certain amount of subscribers.

Vertical Response

Overview

- No design or coding skills required!
- Easy and fast to create emails with professionally designed, free templates. You can simply drag image and text blocks right into your email.
- It's completely free to use Vertical Response if you have 1,000 contacts or less.
- Non-Profit Program for 501(c)(3) organizations, Vertical Response will give you 10,000 email credits per month for free or, you can receive 15% off a monthly subscription plan

Bottomline

Vertical Response is yet another great tool for nonprofit marketing. Their Contact Upload feature allow you to create contacts with a .csv file, Excel or even import manually. Bonus: with CommitChange you could automatically get this contact sheet and upload it to this tool. The fact that they have different pricing and even free options for nonprofits means they are committed to helping your email campaigns succeed, at a price your organization can handle.

Feel free to explore other platforms that may better suit your needs. Once you've picked an email platform that you are comfortable with, it is time to start building and growing your email database.

Chapter 2: Building an email database

Having an email database is of course the biggest and most important step in sending out an email campaign. Whether you are a large or small nonprofit, you must have some sort of donor email list that you can begin with. If you have absolutely zero emails to start with, do not panic! We have outlined various ways you can start building or growing your email database.

Building your Contact List Online

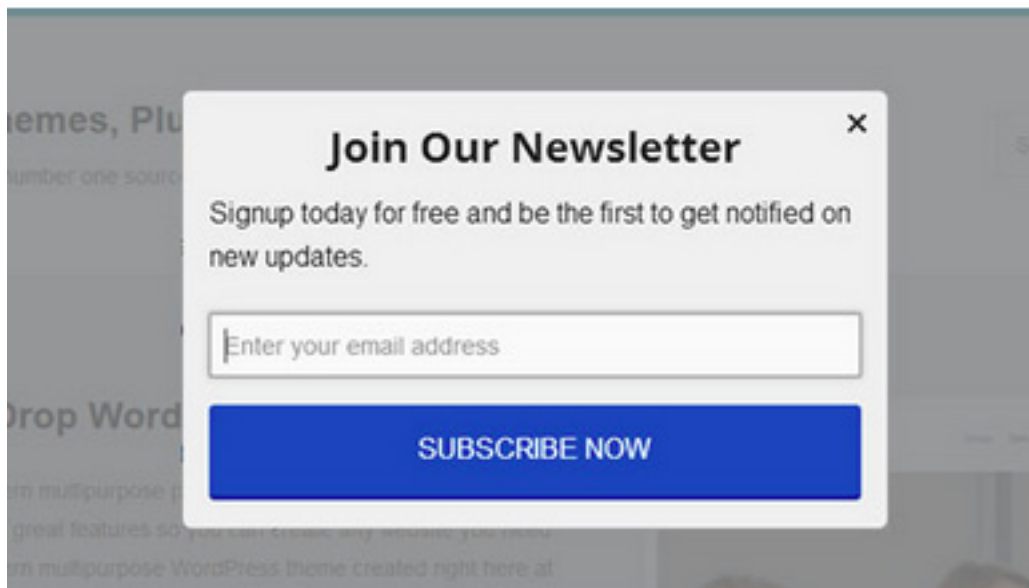
Sign up Forms

Sign up forms on your website are the easiest way of building and growing your email list through your organization's website! However, getting people to sign up for emails and updates is not the easiest thing to do, as you need to write compelling copy that tells your visitors what they are signing up for. Refrain from using standard and broad language such as submit on your signup form button, as this doesn't tell people what they will be receiving.

Tools you can use:

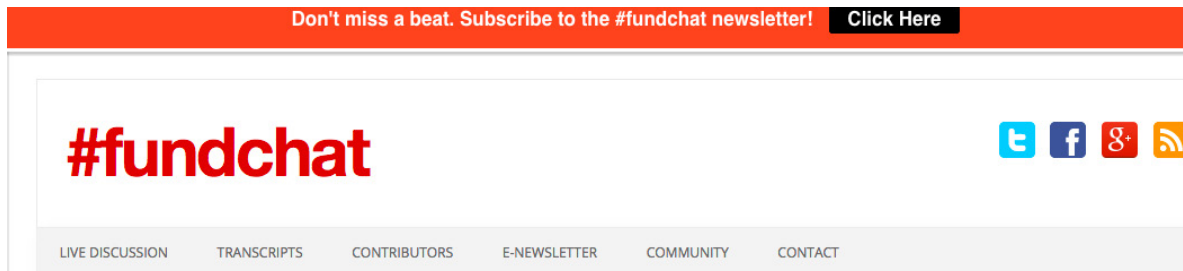
SumoMe:

SumoMe is a suite of free tools that can be used to grow your email contact database and website's traffic. SumoMe tools are easy to install and work on any website.



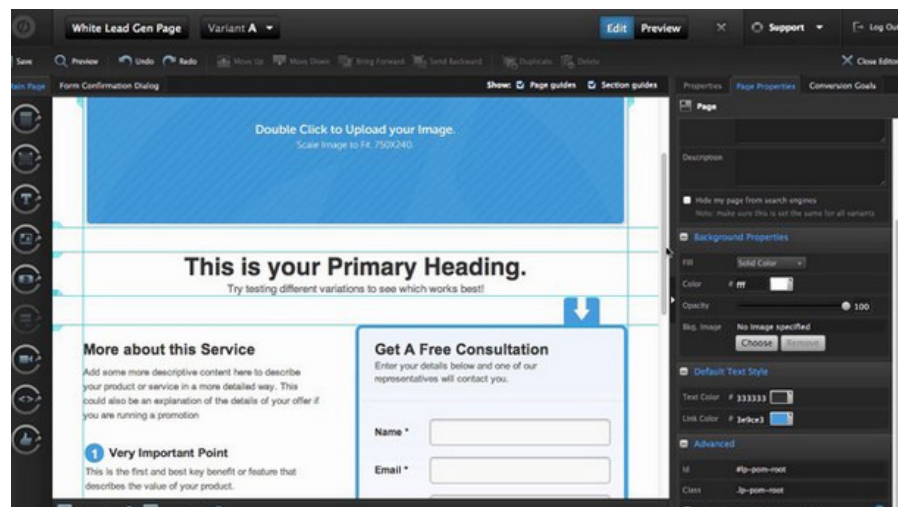
HelloBar:

The Hello Bar is a notification bar that draws web users to an important call to action. You can use this bar to have users submit their contact information. This bar is very visible on your site and it will be hard for your users not to convert.



Unbounce:

Unbounce is a tool that allows you to build effective landing pages and sign up forms. This is a great tool to use if you can allot a bit more time in creating the individual pages. These landing pages are designed to convert users, therefore you will be more likely to collect the data and emails you need.



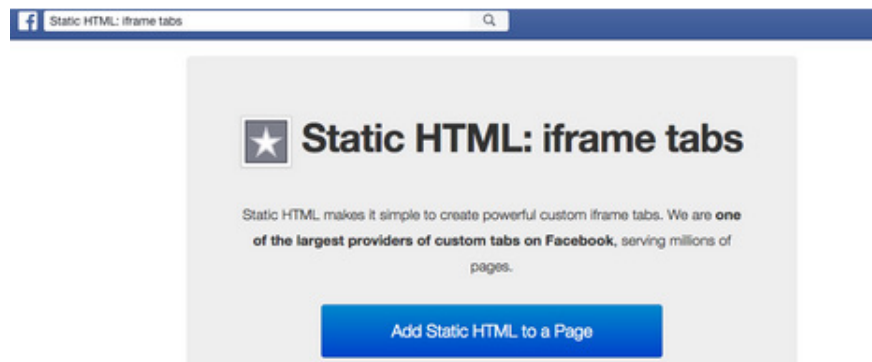
Examples of effective signup forms:

A screenshot of a pink-themed signup form for "nikki, in stitches". The form includes a welcome message, a description of the service, and fields for Name and Email. A "Sign up!" button is prominently displayed. The form also includes a privacy policy link and a signature.A screenshot of a dark-themed signup form with a white envelope icon and a red ribbon banner that says "STAY IN TOUCH". The form includes a heading "SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWS" and a field for "Enter your email here" with a blue arrow button.A screenshot of an orange-themed signup form. The form includes a heading "GET UPDATES AND ON THE EARLY ACCESS LIST" and fields for "Full Name" and "Email Address". A large blue button labeled "Keep Me Posted!" is at the bottom.

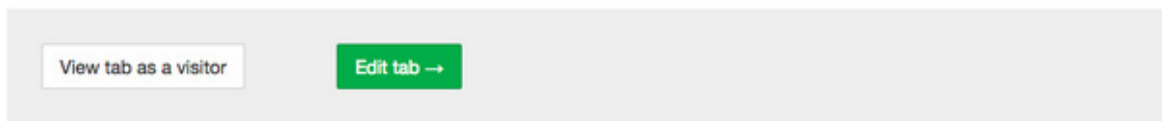
Facebook Sign up

Social media is another crucial platform for receiving emails sign ups. Your Facebook Page can also serve as a sign up form, you must simply insert a tab that allows your Facebook Fans to sign up through the page. For this you will need to follow these steps:

1. Create a Facebook Fan Page
2. Using your email marketing platform of choice customize your form and find your signup form iframe. Copy this and head over to Facebook
3. Using Facebook's search bar, search for Static HTML: iframe tabs. Then, click Go to App. On the next screen, click Add Static HTML: iframe tabs.



Go to Edit Tab afterwards



Paste your iframe code in the index.html box, and click the green Preview tab button to preview your form or the blue save & publish button to push the signup form live. Then click Done editing tab.

Once it's live, test your signup form to make sure it's working and that you are receiving the contact information to the designated email.

Building your Contact List Offline

Building your email contact list can also be done offline. Every time you communicate with current or prospective donors, you most definitely have the opportunity to collect their email address.

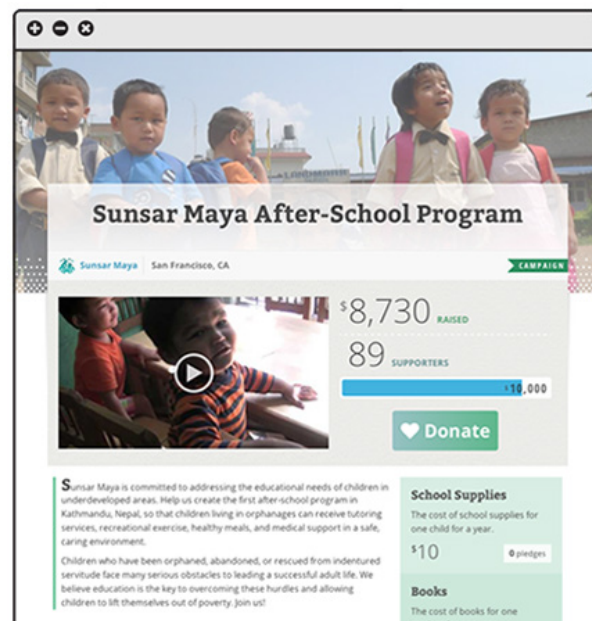
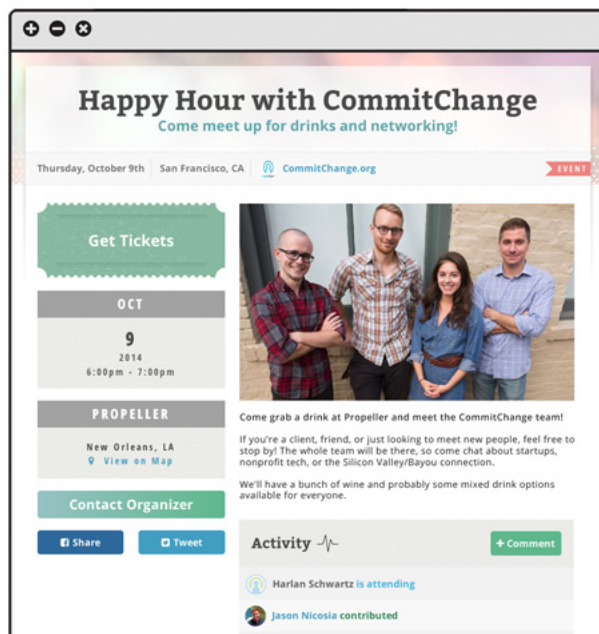
Renewal appeals and events where you will interact with a large number of current or prospective donors are the perfect opportunity to ask for email addresses. Simply set up a signup sheet at registration and add an email address field on it. Remember to emphasize to your audience why it would be beneficial to them provide their email address:

- Your organization can save time and money
- They can also save time and money when sending in their donations
- They will be more informed with the happenings at your organization

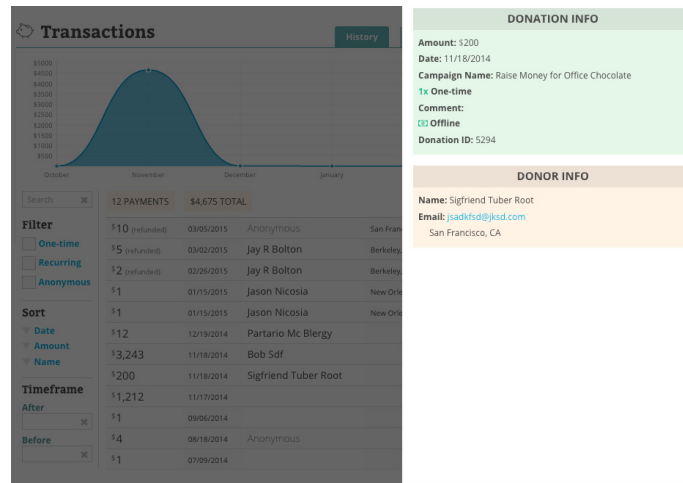
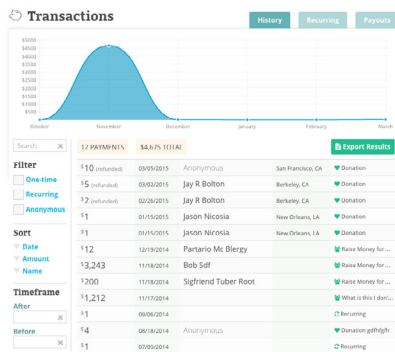
Take Advantage of your Donor Management System

Your donor management system should be the first place you should be going to when building your contact list.

[Your CommitChange profile](#) allows you to create and manage different fundraising campaigns and sell tickets for events. Most importantly, it allows you to manage your donors and their information.



[CommitChange](#) helps you build your email list, as it records information every time someone interacts with your organization. Through your Transactions and Supporters dashboard See the full history of your supporters and their donations, with advanced analytics.



Use the history and data you have on your dashboard to build good segmentation for your different email lists (e.g. recurring donors, one time donors, new donors). The different lists will also allow you to dictate the different campaigns and the schedule for your communication.

The contact profile for Bob Sdf shows the following information:

- ID:** 5889
- RAISED:** \$3,243
- DONATIONS:** 1
- Delete Record** (button)

Contact Info

- Name: Bob Sdf
- Email: @ bob@sdf.com
- Phone:
- Street Address:
- City:
- State: AL
- Zip Code:

Recent Donations

- 11/18/2014: \$3,243
- [View all transactions](#)

Notes

Changes will be automatically updated as you type

Chapter 3: Creating your message

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was any successful email marketing message ever sent! In this section we will cover everything you and your organization needs to know about creating your message. It is important that you take time to consider all of the things we will outline, as these will also determine the success and engagement rates of each of your different email campaigns.

Determine Your Objective

Your objective for each campaign will also determine what you measure success with. We will be covering the different metrics to look for in a different chapter, however, it is important you determine your goal with every email sent out before beginning to craft your message. A few examples of common campaign objectives for nonprofits are:








- Keep current donors connected to increase loyalty
- Furthering an offline campaign with an online ask
- Strictly online fundraising campaign
- Thanking donors immediately after their donation
- Updating donors on any news concerning the organization
- Inviting recipients of email to an event

Determining your objective will also include determining the recipient list for each email. For example, you might send a newsletter to your entire email list but you wouldn't want to send a Thank You email to inactive past donors.

Create a Schedule for communication

Just as you create a fundraising schedule for your nonprofit's calendar year, you must create a communication or content calendar as well. Social media, email software, your website and offline communications are all crucial to create well-rounded campaigns, however these will only work if you work on a solid strategy and schedule.

A schedule for communications will also allow you to keep your content pushes organized and always fresh for your audience. Although there should always be room for spontaneous communication and updates, especially on social media, your “big picture” communications should always be planned ahead.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			<i>Campaign Email</i>			
	<i>Blog</i>				<i>Press Release</i>	
		<i>Newsletter</i>		<i>Blog</i>		
		<i>Blog</i>				
				<i>Thank you Email</i>		

Your Voice

Your nonprofit needs a voice. Your voice is your nonprofit’s personality and it is the best way to identify with your supporters. Developing this voice is not an easy task, but it is very important to define it before you begin creating any sort of messaging or campaigns.

The voice on your email will depend on the type of campaign you are sending out (we will cover the different campaigns later). Make sure your emails always include some sort of actionable request that will prompt the reader to go further into the funnel of your email’s ultimate goals: donate now, share this story, read our blog, register for our event, etc.

Your tone will also vary depending on the content you are sharing. A personal story that should prompt the reader to donate might have a more emotional tone, whereas an Newsletter with positive updates from your organization should have a more upbeat, happy sound to it.

Define your target constituent

This is the hard part.. In an ideal world, everyone would be a potential donor. However, as an organization you must know who will be most likely to identify with your cause. Try to identify as many characteristics as you can about your target donor, as this will definitely dictate a major part of your nonprofit's voice:

- Age: are you trying to appeal to 20-somethings or baby boomers?
- Gender: is your organization focused on a gender-specific issue?
- Location: are your target donors urbanites or do they live in the suburbs?
- Preferred form of communication: do they respond well to telephone calls or do they prefer to communicate through email?

Relate your cause to your target donor

Once you've been able to narrow down who your target donor is and the types of things that define them, it's time to think how your nonprofit's cause and your donor relate.



This example shows an emotional appeal to the target constituent. It clearly relates the cause of helping abused animals with the donor and how they can help.

- Think about WHY it is that your donor is likely to identify with your cause and start tailoring your voice and messaging.
- Keep in mind the people who make a part of your organization, what brings you all together? What things do you have in common?
- How do the people of the organization relate to your target donors?

Be Genuine and Consistent

You don't need fancy words and a thesaurus to create a well-crafted message. Be true to your cause and the people involved with your nonprofit when developing your nonprofit's voice. Because you will be communicating with your target donors both offline and through online media, maintaining your genuinity will allow you to connect with your target donors on an deeper and more personal level.

It is also key to maintain consistency when creating a voice for your nonprofit. Any type of communication your organization distributes must maintain a certain tone and personality. If you opt for a formal tone when writing your website content, your thank you letters and emails must certainly not contain casual vocabulary. Consistency in your nonprofit's voice will allow you to stay genuine in the eyes of your donors.

Creating Different Types of Email Campaigns

Hard Asks vs Soft Asks

As mentioned earlier, your content should be varied and strategically set up in your marketing calendar to not overwhelm and/or bore your readers. Emails strictly focusing on an ask need to be sent out of course, but they won't be your recipient's favorite content if your message is not engaging enough.

Lots of emails out there don't tell the donor explicitly what step to take. You simply HAVE to tell them and in specific words. Give them the next step. For example: "Click to donate". Use words that give a sense of urgency such as "today" and "right now." Remember, your hard asks must pull people in, how do you do this? Use an emotional trigger. Using the word "you" draws them in and makes the email even more personal. Add this word as many times as appropriate in your email.

Hard asks should also be sent out in accordance to your major fundraising campaigns throughout the year, therefore you will be able to tell more about the big picture of the fundraiser and how each individual donor can contribute to the cause. Be creative on how you present a hard ask to engage your donor with your content. Soft asks are best when they are accompanied by a personal story with an emotional appeal.

Don't forget: your call to actions in your other campaigns will be asks too, so keep those varied as well.

Thank yous

Thank yous are the most important piece to a solid email strategy. Thank yous not only reinforce the good feeling your donor gets from giving but it also makes them more likely to continue donating to your cause. There are different types of thank yous you can send through emails, below we'll highlight how you should be thanking your donors through email.

- The immediate thank yous:

As soon as your donor submits an online donation he or she should be receiving a confirmation email and receipt for their donation. Make sure your donation processing platform is capable of doing this otherwise it will require a lot of manual work that could be avoided.

With CommitChange, you are able to send an immediate confirmation email in which you can personalize the thank you message for your donor. Most importantly, we attach a personalized receipt to this message. Saving your organization time and money by automating this process.

We are so excited that you have chosen to support our programs by becoming a donor. Your investment will join hundreds of others in improving lives, building futures, and strengthening our community.

Everyday, I come across children, families, and older adults whose lives have been profoundly changed thanks to the generosity of donors like you who make our programs and services possible. From the children at our First Step Child Development Center who find respite from the trauma of homelessness, to the mother whose Ways to Work vehicle loan helped her narrowly avoid unemployment, to ninety-nine year old Edna who is still loving life thanks to weekly tai chi and yoga classes at our Fair Oaks Adult Activity Center, each one has realized their intrinsic potential through Peninsula Family Service.

With your continued support and passion we can create a community where opportunity, stability, and wellness are secured for all.

Sincerely,

Arne Croce

Executive Director, Peninsula Family Service

P.S. Stay up to date by visiting our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/PeninsulaFamilyService) for information on upcoming events, exciting news, and inspiring photos

This donation will appear on your bank statement as "BAL*Peninsula Family".

Donation Receipt	
Total Amount	\$1
Transaction Date	03/03/2015 07:44am (PST)
Organization Name	Peninsula Family Service
Organization Location	San Mateo, CA
Tax Identification Number	94-1186169
Designation	None
Dedication	None
Transaction ID	11497

The donor received no goods or services in exchange for this contribution

Peninsula Family Service
info@peninsulafamilyservice.org
650-403-4300
San Mateo, CA

- Showing impact thank yous:

You want to keep your donor engaged with your organization all throughout the calendar year, this again reinforces their connection with your nonprofit and will in turn make them a loyal donor that gives regularly.

A great way of engaging them while also thanking them (double whammy!!!) is through an email campaign that says thank you and shows them their donation's impact. Tell the story of what your nonprofit has been doing with the funds received and those who have benefitted from the funds, show photographs, videos, and infographics with data!

- End of the year thank yous:

We all know that the end of the year is the most important time for giving. Take this opportunity to once again engage your donors by thanking them for their continued support year round. End of the year thank yous are another way of showing your impact at a bigger scale.

Tip

NEVER
combine a
THANK YOU
with an ASK.

It confuses
the recipient
and
dilutes the purpose
of your email.

With CommitChange, you are able to send an immediate confirmation email in which you can personalize the thank you message for your donor. Most importantly, we attach a personalized receipt to this message. Saving your organization time and money by automating this process.

Newsletter

A newsletter is a great way of keeping your donors engaged and up to date with the happenings of your nonprofit. This type of email should be sent on a consistent time frame: quarterly, bimonthly or monthly. A newsletter provides a more flexible environment to share updates as well as to ask for continued support for your organization.

Newsletters usually include a big human interest story or update, and smaller pieces of content that revolve around your organization and its impact to the community it benefits. The newsletter also provides a great environment for you to test what content works best with your recipients; perhaps they interact with your email more when you share a long-form story with them, or maybe your recipients like hard numbers and data. Get creative with your newsletter to maintain consistent interaction with your donors.



Dear friends,

We had planned to devote this space to publicizing our campaign to raise funds for several major pieces of equipment and other purchases we need to make.

Well, that turns out to be unnecessary. In less than a week, you, our incredible friends and supporters, fully funded every single need in the campaign. With your help, our sanitation super heroes will be well-protected and looking fresh and in new uniforms, our well will have a pump, and our offices will light up with solar power!

We don't even know what to say, other than: You guys are amazing. In Kreyol, there is an expression, *mil' mési*, which means "a thousand thanks." In this case, even a thousand seems insufficient, so please know that we are so grateful for your incredibly generous response. We look forward to keeping you updated on the progress we're able to make thanks to this equipment!

With love from Haiti,

Sasha and the rest of the SOIL team



Port-au-Prince Sanitation
Supervisor Herby Sanon collects
waste from a local neighborhood
for transport to SOIL's compost
site.

Chapter 4: Design



There are various components that must be included in each one of your emails to get the most out of every single email campaign. As always, you should feel free to customize your emails to your nonprofit's branding and available online profiles.

Below is a checklist of items that you should be including in your upcoming emails:

- Your organization's name and logo
- A title that is consistent with your email's subject
- A main story
- A main call-to-action that links out to the appropriate page
- Supporting content about your organization with less urgent calls to action.

For example: We've added a new team member, visit their profile on our website

- A Donate Now option in the footer
- Links to your social media profiles
- An option to unsubscribe



Before sending make sure you

- ✓ Test email in various browsers and email platforms, including mobile
- ✓ Check who the sender is
- ✓ Check ALL of your links
- ✓ Make sure you are sending it to the correct list

Chapter 5: Measuring Your Results

Boom. You've sent your first email campaign, now what? How do you measure success or engagement? Well, now that you've switched from plain emails to an email marketing platform you can track and measure just about everything!

The important metrics

Open Rate



When looking at your email marketing reports on your platform you will see an Open Rate metric. What does open rate indicate? It is the percentage of recipients to whom you sent your email campaign that actually opened it. As long as either the images in your email load on their device or a tracked link is clicked, the open will be recorded.

A few tips on how to improve this metric as you start sending more and more email campaigns are:

- Create enticing subject lines: short, sweet and to the point, but do not give everything away as you want them to be encouraged to open your email.
- As mentioned before, create a communication calendar and space out your emails. If you are sending 2+ emails a week, your recipients might not be as inclined to continue to open them.
- Make your email recognizable: Users are unlikely to open an email from someone they do not recognize. Make it clear who the sender of your email campaign is.

CTR (Click-Through-Rate)

Your recipients might have opened the email, but did they read it all the way



through? Did they interact with your email? Although unfortunately we can't tell if they read through all the great content they received from you, we can tell if they clicked on it and therefore further interacted with the email. The CTR is the percentage of people who opened the email and clicked at least one link within the email

Here are a few tips on how to improve the CTR and get more users to continuously interact with your email content:

- Review your call-to-action. Make sure it is clear enough for your recipients.
- Review your copy. It may be too long, and readers aren't getting all the way through the email. Use simple words, short phrases and small paragraphs.
- Review your subject line again. Does it match the content in your email?

Opt-Out / Unsubscribe Rate



Unfortunately, some users simply do not want to receive email marketing campaigns and will Opt-Out or Unsubscribe from your list. This rate simply measures the percentage of users that asked to be taken off your email list. Be sure to not be re-adding anyone who unsubscribed from your list as this is an [illegal practice](#). To avoid unsubscribers make sure your signup forms clearly states what type of information they will be receiving from your nonprofit.

We hope you enjoyed learning about email marketing and how CommitChange can support your email marketing database needs. As you learn more about email and our fundraising tools, the interests and behaviors of your supporters you will be able to continue improving your email marketing activities. If you have questions about any of the areas covered in this guide please [contact us](#)! We would be happy to answer your questions and help you review your current fundraising and email strategies.