



An International Group Finds Donors Respond to Frequent Appeals

Room to Read has found that its donors don't mind getting a lot of e-mails from the San Francisco charity. In fact, all the appeals are prompting them to give more and donate more frequently. Steve Cox, online strategy manager at the nonprofit, which builds libraries for children in the developing world, says it conducted extensive tests to figure out how donors responded to multiple appeals and got encouraging results. "It kind of quelled some fears of being too heavy in contact with our donors," he says.

Last year, donors on average got solicited for online gifts about seven times. This year, they're receiving 10 to 12 e-mail solicitations. The charity says very few people are asking it to stop sending the appeals.

The charity started online fundraising just two years ago, but its e-mail solicitations are already producing a lot of money. From January to the middle of October, the total that Room to Read raised online grew 30.1 percent, and the number of online transactions rose 17.1 percent (meaning that more people are giving and some are giving more often).

"We're really happy to see that growth," Mr. Cox says. "We're investing in our online audience by getting comfortable in asking them for money more often."

The charity also reminds people about its monthlong fundraising drives at the beginning of the month, midway, and after the campaign, rather than sending only one e-mail reminder.

"We're fortunate the response rate continues to be steady and strong," Mr. Cox says. "The drop-off rate or unsubscribe [rate] doesn't seem to be affected."

Room to Read is also optimistic about its prospects for the final quarter of the year, a period of time in which about three-quarters of its online fundraising occurs.

So far, the charity has a solid start. The day after it sent its first message seeking year-end gifts, Room to Read attracted donations worth 186-percent more than it last raised from its entire online holiday drive. It also seems to be appealing to more donors, with 72-percent more donation transactions than in last year's holiday campaign.

"We've been seeing some positive numbers all year," says Mr. Cox. "We hope the trend continues."

—RAYMUND FLANDEZ

Room to Read

Growth in online fundraising: 30.1 percent from January to mid-October, compared with same period last year

Growth forecast for 2012's final quarter: 4 percent

Winning approach: Ask supporters to give more often via e-mail