8 Keys to Online Campaign Success

By Emily Garman | TheSocialAnimal.com

What is a campaign?

A well-thought-out combination of images, videos, articles, press releases, blog posts, calls to action and social interaction that has a desired and measurable result.

1. Be Specific

Too often we put out vague statements, like *"it's kitten season and we need help! Please donate!"* This kind of statement, while true, provides basically no information that motivates a donor to act. When you ask people to do something, they subconsciously come up with questions of opposition. *"Why do you need it? How much? Why me?"* and more. You need to anticipate those questions, and answer them as quickly and succinctly as possible in your *"ask."*

2. Make it Easy

Explain what you want people to do, and tell them how to do it. Then tell them again! Make it easy for people to take action, no matter where they are. Make your website mobile-friendly and user-friendly for non-tech-savvy people. Make your forms electronic. Your online donation process must be fast, easy and secure. If you don't have a good system in place to take online donations securely, invest in one—it will pay for itself many times over.

3. Use Powerful Images & Video

Use photos that are close up, tight shots of the animal's face, making eye contact with the camera. Make sure videos are short, well-lit with good, clear audio. Shoot video holding your phone horizontally, not vertically. Put your logo, or at least your URL, on all media so that people can find their way to you no matter where it gets shared.

4. Create Urgency

We see this all the time in retail advertising. *"Limited time offer!" "Only one more remaining on the lot!"* When we give no deadline, donors have no motivation to take action. Even if your campaign has no deadline, create one. It's deadly to just keep trying to raise money indefinitely. The bulk of your campaign should be done in chunks—mini-campaigns, with specific goals, beginnings, endings and success metrics.

5. Set a Goal…Share it…and Meet It

People are much more likely to take a specific action if there is a defined success metric. Goals are also the only way you can internally determine if you have been successful or not, and that accountability is important when it comes to annual budgets, boards of directors, etc.

6. Have a Good Email List

So much focus is on social media these days, that fewer and fewer organizations send email correspondence or cultivate an email list. This is a huge mistake. Clean your list regularly and segment it—make sure people can sign up for different types of emails based on their interest. By sending people content that is relevant, interesting and personalized, you are being respectful of their time and they will be more likely to respond.

7. Tell Stories

We've all gotten those heartbreaking, 3-4 page letters in the mail from big charities, and they are some of the most successful fundraisers out there because they tell stories. Online, it's important to be more succinct, but you can still use words, pictures, videos and even music to tell stories. Lucky for us, every animal (and employee and volunteer and adopter) has a story!

8. Say Thank You / Follow Up

Even though your donor management tool may send out automatic receipts, you should still mail thank-yous to your donors. It's also critical, when fundraising in a campaign, to follow up with results. What did you do with the money you raised? By providing updates, you demonstrate that you are trustworthy stewards of peoples' donations, and they will be more likely to donate in the future.

Campaign Checklist

Ask yourself these questions when you're putting a campaign together. If you have solid answers for all of them, your campaign is much more likely to be a success!

✔ What, specifically, am I asking people to do? What action do I want them to take?

✔ Have I been specific in that request about every single detail?

✔ Have I made it as easy as possible for people to take that action?

✔ Does this campaign have a goal and a deadline?

✔ How have I created a sense of urgency for people to take action?

✔ What is my plan for email communication for this campaign?

✔ Do I have a couple of great stories that can be the "face" of this campaign?

✔ Do I have powerful images—photos or videos or even infographics—that are ready to go to help tell the stories?

✔ What is my plan for following up with donors, either personally or publicly with social media, email etc.?

Emily Garman has been a foster mom and animal welfare volunteer for 15 years and founded **TheSocialAnimal.com** in 2008 to teach animal advocates how to use social media to raise money, recruit volunteers and save more lives. She presents on next-generation fundraising, social media and mega-adoption events all over the world. In 2011, she traveled to Riga, Latvia to present at the Dogs Trust European Summit and to the US Virgin Islands to consult with individual shelters. She received the 2010 Advocate in Action Award from the Oklahoma Alliance for Animals for her work in using social media to pass puppy mill legislation in Oklahoma; she helped Texas organizations do the same in 2011.