

Nathan ([00:00:00](#)):

Welcome. Welcome. Welcome everyone. I see a good amount of people trickling in here. Thank you so much for making time today to join the webinar. Before we dive in, I'm gonna give a few minutes for everyone to, to show up. I think we, I get started and we had two people and now we're up to 37 that number's gonna keep going up. So while we're waiting for everyone to join, I'd encourage you to open your chat tool and let us know a couple of things who you are, what organization you work for and where in the world are you zooming in from today? It's always super fun for me to see, you know, how far reaching this cause of growing giving and generosity is reaching. Normally we have folks from all over the world. So jump in there, let us know who you are, what organization you are from and where in the world you are tuning in.

Nathan ([00:00:44](#)):

From today. We've got John with city of joy international in Phoenix. We've got Lauren from curing kids cancer in Atlanta. Riley, Who's right there in here NextAfter in Plano, Darshan. Welcome Darshan. Great to have you here from seek net based in New Mexico, we've got Rob camp Bethel ministries from wise Virginia. We had a bunch of these coming in here. Lots of folks from Arizona. We've got some Canadian representation, the house we've got Sabrina from Alzheimer's society of Calgary. Welcome, welcome, welcome. Lots of folks joining here. Thank you so much again for being here. Hopefully we could make the absolute most of your time and not waste a moment of it today. So I'm gonna jump right into some housekeeping things and a couple of announcements before. I hand things over to Tracy and to Karen at Mile 19 to talk about direct mail, something we don't talk about all the time.

Nathan ([00:01:40](#)):

But here's a couple things before we do that, number one, you've probably heard of it. If you haven't. The nonprofit innovation and optimization summit is coming in September and September is gonna come way faster than you think. But this is the conference we put on every single year. This is somehow the seventh year for the Neo summit. I would love for you to join us. It's basically two full days of sessions. Many the speakers that we bring in, come from the, for profit space and have really innovative ideas, cutting edge ideas that we think can make a transformational difference for you and for us as fundraisers people working at non-profits to grow giving on top of that, there's a couple preconference workshops where you can get a certification and online fundraising. We've got a post-conference workshop this year to figure out how do you, you know, put all the best ideas from the summit together and put them to work, to grow giving and then it's a ton of fun.

Nathan ([00:02:32](#)):

So I'd encourage you to check out [ni summit.com](#) to learn more one previous attending from this past year, John just posted this on LinkedIn. We didn't ask him to post this. He just went on and he said this after attending Neo summit at my organization raised 35% more from our website at the end of the year in 2021, we can't guarantee results, but I can guarantee that you will walk away from Neo summit with brand new insights that you can apply to help grow your fundraising. So please check it out. I [summit.com](#) and if you get your ticket soon, and very soon you can save 600 bucks which is quite a lot to save on the ticket, use the code super early bird. So check that out. I [summit.com](#) a couple housekeeping things. The most common question we ever get about anything is are you recording this?

Nathan ([00:03:17](#)):

And will there be a video? And the answer is always yes. So we are recording this. Now you probably saw a little pop up on your screen when you joined that we are recording. We'll send you the recording as well as the slides and any other featured resources that we mentioned today in an email later this evening, normally around 5:00 PM central time. So you can be on the lookout for that. And then we also should to have some time for Q and a today. So all throughout today, and through this session, you can, you know, put all your best comments and ideas and, you know, running monologue of what you, you think about what Tracy's presenting in the chat. But if you have questions that you want to be answered in the Q and a time, use that Q and a tool to drop your questions in there, that's the best way for us to see what since you have and make sure that we answer as many as possible.

Nathan ([00:04:03](#)):

So again, use the chat for all of your ideas and commentary. If you've got questions, put 'em in the Q and a, now let's get a little bit into the content cuz today we're talking about how does your direct mail program actually stack up to others and what can you do to optimize it and to improve it, to grow giving. And if you've been on a next after webinar before you probably know that most of the time we talk about online fundraising, digital fundraising, digital channels, using Facebook, using email, all these different digital tools to grow, giving and improve your communications. We don't talk a lot about the mail, but here's why we're talking about it today because what we've found is we look at the different org organizations that we work with is that multi-channel donors are incredibly valuable and they're far more valuable than just a single channel donor.

Nathan ([00:04:48](#)):

You probably know this intuitively, but here's what some of the numbers say. According to the day that we have a multi-channel donor is 210% more valuable to you than someone who own only gives offline. And on top of that, if you look at online donors, a multi-channel donor is 230, 3% more valuable than an online, only donor. So if you get somebody to give multiple channels, they're gonna be that much more valuable to you and they also retain better. So multi-channel donors retain have a 55% higher retention rate than an O offline only donor, 86% higher than an online only donor. So those that, that data is hard to hard to argue with when you see such dramatic increases in value. And so we know that they're more valuable to us, but at the same time, even if someone only gives in one channel there's multi-channel communication and multi-channel fundraising efforts can actually cultivate us longer donor even in a single channel.

Nathan ([00:05:44](#)):

So here's what that data says. If you look here closely, this group here is an offline, only donor who the organization has an email address for, so they can cultivate them in an online channel. And that's a significant amount, more of more value. If you can just cultivate them in multiple channels, even if they only ever give offline or through the mail. And as we run some different experimentation and testing, well, here's what we found. This, this organization ran an experiment where they sent out a direct mail appeal, their typical direct mail appeal. It happened in the month of August. So this wasn't like in a high urgency giving season, like, like the year end season, but they sent out their direct mail appeal to a control group of their donors and, and recipients. And then what they did was they sent out the same appeal to the test group, but they also added in some targeted content ads.

Nathan ([00:06:34](#)):

So these are not like donation ads on Facebook. They're not asking for you to give a gift right away. There are things like eBooks and free content that someone can engage with to try to cultivate the direct mail donor in an online channel. So compare the control group to the test group. What they saw was that using this multi-channel approach actually led to 155% increase in revenue, just through some real simple targeted cultivation ads. And beyond that, you know, this is an experiment. One organization ran a few years ago during the year end season where they wondered can we cultivate our donors with a simple postcard and will that make an impact on giving? And so half of their file receive just the normal cadence of yearend communication and the other half received a personalized postcard on Thanksgiving, it's personalized with a first name on it.

Nathan ([00:07:24](#)):

It says a Thanksgiving message for you. John you'd open the postcard on the inside. It actually had a, a message and a link to go to a page where you could watch a video from the president of this organization, talking about the Thanksgiving holiday and year end, and expressing a, their gratitude for the donor. It's not a direct appeal, it's just a cultivation piece. But what they saw was that by cultivating using a multi-channel approach actually led to a 204% increase in donor conversion when they looked at people's giving patterns over the course of the year end season. So it's, it's, it's pretty hard to argue with the data here that it is far more valuable to you to use a multichannel approach and move donors into a multi-channel relationship, which is why we want to talk about direct mail for a little bit today.

Nathan ([00:08:09](#)):

But there's a core question we should ask, ask as well. Are we just talking about this to talk about it, or is there actually a problem to solve? And the reason we wanted Tracy and Karen from mile 19 to join us today is that some of our most recent research shows that there's so much opportunity for growth. When we looked at the last year end season connected this study with our friends at Virtu called the state of yearend multi-channel fundraising. Here's what we found. 43% of nonprofits send nothing at all to their direct mail donors during the year end CS. And beyond that 47% sent only mail to their direct mail donors, which leaves a very small sliver of this pie chart on your screen that used an online channel to cultivate an offline donor. And then only about 4% actually use both direct mail and email to cultivate the offline donor. So there's very few of us that are actually using a multichannel approach. So from here, I wanna hand it over to Tracy and to Karen. There are good friends at mile 19 that do a lot of work to help nonprofits like yourselves, bring direct mail operations in house to save money and optimize and improve results. And so they have conducted some new research to really analyze the donor journey and donor experience as a direct mail donor. So from here, I'll hand it off to Tracy, Tracy. Sweet. Take it away.

Tracy ([00:09:30](#)):

Thanks, Nathan, let me see if I can share my screen here.

Nathan ([00:09:35](#)):

Yes, please.

Tracy ([00:09:36](#)):

And you can see that. Okay.

Nathan ([00:09:39](#)):

It looks wonderful.

Tracy ([00:09:40](#)):

All right. Awesome. Well as Nathan said, I'm one of the partners at mile 19 and case you guys haven't heard of us, or don't know who we are just sort of our ten second commercial is that we started mile 19 several years ago with the idea that we could be a bit of a different type of agency where we actually seek to teach and empower our clients, our nonprofit clients to raise more money not only for their mission, but then to kind of put that money back into kind of what's next, knowing that direct I you know has probably a, a lifespan that might at some point end. And so we, we love helping nonprofits and what ended up happening pretty recently was we had a couple of clients ask us you know, they say things like, what are your other clients doing?

Tracy ([00:10:38](#)):

Or you know, do you know, what's working for other organizations as they're trying to figure out their strategy for whatever particular piece of mail they're about to put out. And so we obviously have some historical knowledge of what works and what doesn't work. And we have, you know, the clients that we work with currently, and we can see, see what works and what doesn't work. But we had the idea that with, you know, 1.5 million nonprofits in the United States, we had the idea that it would be good to get a bigger sampling of what other nonprofits are doing. And how, how should we go about doing that? They're not our clients. We don't have that behind the curtain look. And so what we did was we decided we were going to donate to over a hundred different nonprofit orgs. And we were going to track the experience that we had with them for 120 days.

Tracy ([00:11:31](#)):

We figured giving them four months from the time of the initial donation to the end of when we would, you know, stop tracking would give us a really clear idea of how they're doing and what we believed were some really key areas. So when we talk about how we were gonna go about this experiment, we wanted to make sure we did a couple of things. We, so here's how we landed. We donated \$28,400 to a hundred and different, or 108 different organizations that basically was 88, \$50 gifts making us a general donor and then 20 gifts of \$1,200 each making us mid-level donor. Cuz we recognize that often the experience of a mid-level donor or even a major donor is different than that of a general donor. And we wanted to be able to compare and contrast that. Like I said, we, I mentioned it was 120 day experiment.

Tracy ([00:12:28](#)):

I'm not, I have continued to sort of watch what's happening, but maybe not track it quite as closely. We wanted to give a very specific timeframe that we had expectations of these nonprofits and all of the gifts were mailed on the exact same day to be able to give a very fair representation of the responses we would get. We out of the 108 nonprofits, we wanted it be kind of widespread in the types of missions that we would give to. So some of them were faith based. Many of them were not, we did animal rescues, we did healthcare. We did food banks and universities, and really tried to get a very wide SWA of different kinds of nonprofits, philanthropic ones, mission related ones, everything kind of across the board. And then for the standpoint of accurate tracking, because all of the response mail was going to come to my house, how would I decipher between, you know, what were nonprofit orgs I had already given to versus what was coming out of this study? And so we did use a pseudonym and so everything that would come in along the way we would know very specifically if it was to me, Tracy Howard

directly, or if it was to the Tracy Howard who had started this study oh, sorry, let me go back here. We got a little ahead of myself.

Tracy ([00:13:55](#)):

Well hold on. There we go. So what did we track? We had five main things that we wanted to watch what they were doing and that was, we wanted to follow receipting. How many organizations are giving receipts out when they get a white male gift in the you know, out of the blue, how long did it take for the receipt to, and in that receipt package, did they give us an easy way for us to become, you know, a second donor, second time donor along the lines of receding, but different. We wanted to track thank yous and how many orgs we're using that as an opportunity to get personal with, with me as the donor. And then of course the biggest piece of direct as the appeals. And so we wanted to follow along on what the appeals were, how soon did appeals come after that first gift.

Tracy ([00:14:45](#)):

And you know, how soon were we getting into the actual cadence of mailings and what did those mailings look like? Was it once a week, once a month, once a quarter. And then we did take a little bit of a look at the creative across the board and tried to note if there was something noteworthy newsletters, you know, that kind of cultivation piece we wanted to know. What's the cadence of those? What, what does that look like? And often our client will ask us how many pages of newsletters should be. So we tucked that away as a data point, you know, are they doing eight pages, 16 pages? What is it? And then also are they containing a ask because it is a cultivation piece. We'll often have clients say like, you know, we really don't wanna ask in their vice versa.

Tracy ([00:15:27](#)):

So we took that look at newsletters and then just as a sidebar, because it wouldn't have anything to do specifically with the orgs we gave to, we recognized that giving to these organizations meant we were gonna become part of a, you know, large acquisition stream. And all of a sudden acquisition was gonna start coming in from, you know, all over the country. And so we did take a look at as, as we could determine who was selling our name quickly you know, what kind of acquisition packages are being sent? What do they look like in sort of a creative look at that as well? So to begin those are the five areas we'll look at and there's a lot of stats in here. I'll do my best to tell you what we saw and then tell you how we feel like those results could have been optimized.

Tracy ([00:16:18](#)):

And then on the tail end of each section, I'll try to give you an idea of things that we are testing or have tested with our own clients so that you can kind of tuck that knowledge away and say, well, here's somewhere we could do better. And maybe here's something we should test. So we'll dive in the first the first thing we did was receding one of the things that we like to tell our clients and I'm sure you've heard this before, is that everywhere in the donor journey from the moment they give, which by the way was March 15th of last year. So it's been exactly one year from the moment they give that they should feel like a hero because really obviously without the donor, there is no, there is no mission. There is no incoming funds, right? And so we believe that receding is the first step in that journey where you acknowledge the donor.

Tracy ([00:17:11](#)):

And so when we took a look at the receipts that were come coming in, we wanted to make sure the donation had been acknowledged. We wanted to check and see what the timing was of that acknowledgement. Was it coming before or after appeals? Was it coming at all? How soon was it coming after the gift, knowing everybody got their first gift on March 15th, how long did it take to get one? And then kind of a little lever that we feel like should be in every receipting package? Is, were they giving you an additional way to give, like, Hey, here's a receipt for what you gave us, by the way, if you'd like to give again, here's a real easy way to do that. I surprisingly, I, I don't know if you're surprised. I was very surprised to find that both in my general donor pool and in my mid-level donor pool, exactly 50% of the organizations actually gave a receipt and is staggering to me when I think about that first touch of acknowledgement.

Tracy ([00:18:16](#)):

And anytime you purchase something anytime you do any kind of, you know, financial or monetary transaction, it feels like a receipt is just like a bare minimum acknowledgement. So I, I would say our first gut reaction was to be a bit disappointed that there were so many organizations that weren't acknowledging gifts at all. And when I think especially about the mid-level donor packages, if somebody's given you \$1,200 out of the blue, they're not an active donor in any way, shape or form to not have any acknowledgement at all that with is kind of tough to swallow. So being the gracious person that I am, I wanted to give them kind of a grading on a curve. Like surely if I don't get a receipt, at least from the ones that didn't give me a receipt, surely they will have given me a thank you card, which is a different form of an acknowledgement.

Tracy ([00:19:10](#)):

So out of the 50% that did not give me a receipt, only eight orgs did actually in fact, send a thank you card, I guess instead which means of my entire pool, 43% of all the organizations made no acknowledgement at all of my gift. So you know, stagger maybe offensive, you might say, if you're a donor, I feel like if I went to a, if I went to a wedding and you know, I put cash in an envelope, you know, in the little bird cage sitting at the, at the gift table and like the bride, you know, never even acknowledges like, Hey, you gave me \$1,200. I don't know that that would be, that'd be, that'd be hard. As an additional salt in the wound of the 46 organizations that never acknowledged our gift, not in 120 days, 16 of those organizations did in fact take my name and put it right in their direct mail held file.

Tracy ([00:20:13](#)):

And then they started sending me appeals. And so again, this is like, if I use that same analogy, if the bride doesn't even thank me for the gift, and then, you know, two months later, she's like, Hey, by the way, could I, you know, can I, do you have any more money? Can you B can I borrow some more money? That would be tough. So that, that, that was a hard stat to find what did I say? It was yeah. 16 of them. Didn't acknowledge it. And then went ahead and just put us in the next file. So actually this is skipping on me. Hang on just a second. Okay. And then the other stat that I told you, we wanted to look at in receding was, is there a way to give again? So as you remember, of the hundred eight, only 54 actually sent us a receipt and of those 54 only 11 gave us an easy way to give again.

Tracy ([00:21:04](#)):

I know there's kind of a push pull on receding. Like, you know, you've acknowledged the gift, is it right to go right back and ask the donor for more money, but, you know, I kind of live and die by the rule. Like, you know, if you don't ask the answer is always no. And I really think in receding, there's a real easy way

to literally just put, you know courtesy envelope or reply in there. They don't have to give again. It might be even a way to, you know, say, Hey, we noticed your gift. If you'd like to be a sustainer. I mean, there's a million different ways you could go about it. That seems like is a kind way to do it, but only 11 thought to give again. So in summary, and you probably gather this from what I was saying, we would say that timely receding is foundational to the donor journey.

Tracy ([00:21:57](#)):

And timeliness is really, really important. The gold standard for a receipt is actually somewhere between 48 and 72 hours. I'm giving you a little bit of grace here and say somewhere between seven and 30 days, but what I, we can't do is have no receipts at all. So if that's a, if that is a you know, one of the places that you guys are struggling, I would highly highly recommend that it is absolutely foundational. And I really do believe it's a critical portion of your direct mail program. And then I would say we would absolutely recommend that you have to find a way to ask them again or not ask them, but at least give them the opportunity. I think how many of them will actually just take a little return envelope and they'll, you know, stick it in their mail file.

Tracy ([00:22:47](#)):

Like, oh the next time I wanna give this makes it very easy. And so I would recommend doing them. I base it on these experiments or tests that we have done with our own clients. So this first client, you know, who shall remain anonymous, client a, they just started receding in November of 2021. So, you know, there's no bad time to make a change. And so they started doing that just a couple months ago. And what we're already seeing is that the receding is netting positive or it's it's netting positive. So this is not a loss of dollars by any stretch of the imagination. And there's, then what we believe will be a long term impact on how the donor is re TAed, because it's a win-win for both the nonprofit and the donor, an acknowledgement, like we said, is the first step in the journey.

Tracy ([00:23:39](#)):

And then client B actually gives a year end receipt. They do other receipting as well, but in this particular instance, they give a re a yearend receipt. And up until recently they had not been including a way to give again by sticking that return envelope or return device in there now that they are including a return device. Their thank you file that they give, which is about 25,000 donors per year is actually generating almost a hundred thousand dollars per year. So receipts seem like, you know, maybe you can do do without them, but when there's a six figure payback on what is really basic, I think it's, it's fundamental to the all right, so that's receding now. Thank yous are a little bit different. They are an acknowledgement in the same way as a receipt, but they're generally a bit more personal.

Tracy ([00:24:35](#)):

And so I would put the, I would put a thank you as the step to a receipt is of acknowledge that I've giving it to you. A thank you is my gosh. What you have done for us was amazing. And we can't be leave. You found us and you thought to give to us, and here's what, you know, your gift is doing. And I go back to my bride analogy, you know, a thank you. A thank you note is really all anybody's asking for. It is sort of the basic of human manners. So when we talk about thank yous the things that are most important to us is it's an acknowledgement that you really are working hard to make the donor, the hero by telling them what their dollars have done and how grateful you are, and that it becomes very personal. I split this out a little bit.

Tracy ([00:25:18](#)):

So in the general donors out of the 88 donations that I sent a gift to 18 of them, me a thank you of some sort. So only 20% 12 of those were thank you. Cards. Three of them had actually sent me a handwritten letter or a handwritten postcard. One of them phone gave me a phone call, which I have to say for a 50 do \$50 gift. I was really impressed with. And two of them, interestingly enough, sent me an email, thank you, which I not necessarily opposed to, but I did think it was interesting that they were given a direct mail gift and then they responded via email, which, you know, there's probably pros and cons to that. Anyway, that's just a note for you. So out of the 88, 70 organizations sent me, no thank you of any kind.

Tracy ([00:26:12](#)):

And then in my mid-level donor group, again, \$1,200 gift. 50% of them thanked me, which I guess is better than what the general donors did of that. I got seven handwritten cards one personalized form letter, wanna be careful and be clear. It was a form letter, but it was personalized to me. One of them called me and one sent an email. So that's three emails across, you know, all the, the donations that were given. So 50% of them, 10 orgs gave me, no thank you of any kind. And we've talked about this, but it, it begs to be repeated of the 108 organizations that we gave to 16 of them sent no receipt. And no thank you of any kind yet began asking for more money by sending me appeals. But I think this is actually more alarming. That's alarming, which it is to me as a donor.

Tracy ([00:27:06](#)):

What's more alarming is that of the 108 organizations that we gave to 25%, 25 of them sent no receipt. And no thank you. But additionally sent no mail at all. And I think that you know, what, what did my grandfather say? You know, stick that in your pipe and smoke it. That's all that one feels to me. Something is AIS and, and, you know, we've talked Karen and I've talked many times, like how can that possibly be that you're getting no mail. We did not give to any organizations that we had an idea had no direct mail program at all. So is there a data issue is there a, a, a cadence issue like their data, you know, stretched past 120 days? I'm not really sure, but that was alarming. So when we want, when we say to optimize your, thank you mailings again, timeliness is really important.

Tracy ([00:28:05](#)):

We think thank you should be very, very personal. And so as best as you can, if you have volunteers that can write, thank you notes. If you have volunteers that can make a phone call if you can give every single person in your org, the task of writing five, thank you notes. Even if they're not in the development team, writing of thank you notes a month, think of how personal that would be to the donor, but also your organization, the people who don't generally even touch direct mail to be like, oh, wow. You know, Susie Smith gave \$1,200. That's amazing people really believe in what we're doing. So those are two ways to optimize. And then a recent test that we did. We have a client who sends a yearly, thank you, mailing every January that has no ask in it at all.

Tracy ([00:28:55](#)):

And we have tested over the last couple of years. What else can we do in the thank you to possibly engage the donor even more? The first year we added a serve bay, which was like, thank you for everything you've done for us. How can we help you? How can we this particular one, how can we pray for you? What would you like to see more of from us? What would you like to see less of? And by just adding that survey and saying, not only am I do I value your donation, but I value your opinion about our organization. They quadrupled their results in what came back to them. And then the next year on top

of it adding a small free this particular one happened to be like a, a poster, you know, that, that you could hang on your mirror.

Tracy ([00:29:41](#)):

Those results then grew again by an additional 25%. So the importance of thank yous just in life, in general, even if you don't do it in your direct mail, I'm here as a mom to tell you, it's kind to say, thank you. Thank yous are incredibly important to the donor. They can be very, very important to your team as well. So the crux of every direct mail program of course is appeals. And so we wanted to take a close look. Now that we've gotten the acknowledgement out of the way. What does it actually look like when the mail starts rolling in the door? And so we like to say in looking at everything that we saw that appeals that work the best are the ones that are like fruits and fresh vegetables, excuse me, fresh is best. I had two takeaways from all of the appeals that I received the first was that timing was everything.

Tracy ([00:30:40](#)):

And we'll, we'll get in to that a, a little bit based on when you get acknowledged timing actually has a really big impact if I haven't been acknowledged and you're sending me an appeal, I feel like that's a bit of an insult. If I have been acknowledged, but I don't get an appeal for four months. That seems strange too. Did you for good about me? So I think there's a real sweet spot in the timing of your appeals. And then number two, take away. When I looked at this wide range of appeals that were coming in my mailbox, I think I got a little heartsick of how uncreative some of them were. And so I would like to, I'd just like to throw it out there that I think another takeaway would be to think outside the box a little bit.

Tracy ([00:31:28](#)):

So I'm gonna break it down and I'll go quickly, cuz you'll get these stats later. Of the general donors the general donor pool ate out of 88 organizations sent me an appeal within the first 30 days, which I feel like that's pretty impressive. Those eight get, they get an a plus plus nine out of the 88 org sent it to me in the first 60 days. And then 15 of the 88 sent me their first appeal in 90 days. That feels a little slow. I'd give that maybe a C so nine is like a B if you like a good grade, it feels like within the first 60 days there, there, I should be getting my first appeal, 21 of the 88 organizations haven't sent me any appeals at all. I will just let that rest right there. Of my mid-level donor group, one out of 20 sent me a first appeal within 30 days, three out of 20, a first appeal in 60 days, four out of 20 sent me their first appeal in 90 days and four of the 20 haven't sent me an appeal at all.

Tracy ([00:32:34](#)):

And I went back and looked well, we'll talk about it later. But I went back and looked just like, now that it's been a year, I actually still have three mid-level of the mid-level group that haven't actually sent me any mail at all. No acknowledgement, no appeal, no newsletter, nothing. And like I said, we'll come back to that. So when it comes to the cadence of appeals, this is an interesting, this was interesting to see, you know, we have clients who are sending out an appeal once every eight weeks. We have some that are sending it every one a month. We have some that are sending multiple per month. And so if you're looking kind of like, where do I, where does my org stack up? 18 out of the 108 organizations. Now this is the total bank, both general and midlevel send at least one appeal every month.

Tracy ([00:33:23](#)):

From what I can tell in their cadence, 14 of the orgs actually send an appeal and a newsletter in the same month. So that's actually two mailings, but you know, obviously one's cultivation and one solicitation and then 13 of the orgs regularly mailed than one appeal per month. I thought that was interesting. And then I had three organizations out of 108 that actually sent me three to four per month. So they're on a cadence of like every, just seven to eight days. They're sending out an appeal letter. That's a lot ways to optimize your appeal. When I take a look at everything that came here's what I, here's what we found and we thought was really noteworthy. The first was variable copy. And I'm sure you've heard this a million times and you know, how important variable copy is because it personalizes the mail.

Tracy ([00:34:18](#)):

It makes the donor feel like you actually are talking to that specifically. It does encourage them to continue to read the letter cuz they see their name in it. And boy do people love to see their name in, in lights? Interestingly we saw a lot of really bright packages at green in particular, although there were plenty of other ones. I don't know if green was a trending for 2021. You know, I thought terracotta was the color of the year, but what do I know? So we saw a lot of green brightly colored packages which actually does stand out quite a bit against the predominantly white number 10 envelopes that you can imagine is what I see the most of lots of inserts. But what I saw the most of was buck slips. And of course I recognized there's a, you know, cost to the insert and that's of course why the buck slip seems like a very easy thing to put in a white number, 10 envelope.

Tracy ([00:35:17](#)):

It keeps cost down. But as we, as we looked at the creative, there was a reason why some of them were so much more compelling and in, in large part that did have to do with inserts that were different, that were eye catching. And then one big standout I would say. And you know, I don't wanna snack anybody's hand and no, I'm not gonna ask you to raise your hand and say, if you're doing this, you can keep this to yourself, but maybe go back to your team if you are using templates. And here's why in my hundred and 20 day study, I received five identical packages from five different nonprofits with says to me that they either use the same, a most likely they use the same agency and they have purchased a template style package because it's a cost saver because for the agency, they can just run the same creative over and over again.

Tracy ([00:36:12](#)):

But if you think about from a donor standpoint, in 120 days to have seen the same thing coming from different people, not only does it not feel personal, it almost feels like, oh, I already saw that I already either threw it away or I already gave to it. So my recommendation would be, it's hard enough to stand out in this giant stack of mail that people are getting, but I believe that you're doing yourself a dis by buying a template. Because if I got five and there's 1.5 million nonprofits in the country, then there's probably, you know, a hundred thousand people using that same template. And I really feel like the cost and maybe you should test it, the cost advantage of using your own career versus a template I think could actually probably quite be quite enlightening. And that's what I would recommend.

Tracy ([00:37:05](#)):

You know, I, I bring it back to the whole where's Waldo can never seem to find him in the crowd cuz he looks just like everybody else. So it's hard to get noticed. And if you wanna get noticed, I wouldn't recommend a template. So it appeals. We wanted to give you just a little glimpse at some of the tests

that we have run that maybe have been surprising to us because you know, Karen and I, we have a combined, what do we always say? I think it's over 40 years of experience in marketing and nonprofit, you know, direct mail fundraising. There are lots of times where especially, you know, an agency will say here's what we know works or the client will say, here's what we know has always worked. And so we feel very strongly about testing because what has always worked, doesn't actually always work.

Tracy ([00:37:58](#)):

And also we find that donors are different for every organization. So what works for organization A very possibly may not work for organization B and so you should be testing it. So in appeals, here's some interesting things that we have found in the last year. Yeah, the last 12 months of testing five, I have arrays versus three arrays in the ask array string. I think that the old thought has always been the more options that you give 'em the better that it is. But we have found recently with one particular client, especially that doing an askray of only three options boosted the response by 9%. Again, we have talked about, you know, do you use an askray versus an open ask? And we found in this particular second experiment when we used an askray, you know, full string of ask arrays versus an open ask in a sustainer recruitment package, it actually boosted the response by 65%, which is really substantial.

Tracy ([00:39:03](#)):

So I would recommend testing that one. And then I think, you know, and I get a ton of mail now, blind OES have kind of always been long thought that they create this, that people were like, oh, you know, who is this white number 10 envelope from? I mean, am I part of the CIA now, is this a government? They create all this intrigue, but we have had two recent tests with two different clients and it's actually proved the opposite. So in that one in particular, I think maybe people are onto us and maybe that one's worth testing. Now that's where we landed on appeals. Now I'm gonna try to whizz through a little bit, cuz I don't wanna take up too much time, but we've got newsletters and acquisition left deep breath, deep breath

Tracy ([00:39:53](#)):

Newsletters. We talk about a lot with our clients. We talk about what is the cadence of them? How often should you be doing them? How many pages should they be? Should they include a letter? Should they not include a letter? Should they come and folded? Should they be open in a regular package? It seems to be an area newsletters where it's kind of like, does anything go or right. So here's my premise on a newsletter. It is a cultivation piece. It is the place where on a, after the thank you, it is the place where you most likely have your opportunity to make your client know and understand that they truly are the hero and, and look what their, the work they are doing, what their dollars are doing to help the mission. And so I believe newsletters are not only incredibly important.

Tracy ([00:40:49](#)):

I believe they should be extremely well executed. And I think that there should be a lot of strategy that actually goes into a newsletter. What we found in, in our general donor pool is that only 19 in 120 days only 19 of the 88 organizations actually sent a newsletter. Eight of them sent it in the first 30 days, which I like, I actually think it's kind of nice and you know, you could test this, but after or an acknowledgement and a thank you is the very first thing the new donor gets an appeal or is the very first thing they get a newsletter. I, I think you could probably make a case either way. So eight of them sent it out in the first 30 days. Six of them sent it out in the first 60 days. Five of them sent it out in the first 90 days.

Tracy ([00:41:37](#)):

And if you do the math, 69 of them have not sent any newsletter at all for my mid-level donor group, three of the 20 are sending newsletters, which that's extremely interesting to me. I have to believe there's some sort of assumption out there that mid-level donors aren't as likely to respond or want to see a newsletter or maybe they're being treated differently somewhere down the road. I haven't experienced that in this group. So only three of 20 sent me a newsletter. One of them in the first 30 days, two in the first 60 days and then 17 out of 20 have not sent a newsletter at all. For the sake of interest. This is something our clients ask us all the time. How long should a, a newsletter be? So of all the newsletters I got, 14 of them used a four page format, which is just what one open eight and a half by what is that?

Tracy ([00:42:32](#)):

17? I don't know, 11, my 17. Yes. one of them used a six page format. One of them used an eight page format. Three of them used more than eight pages. One of them used a six by nine, which I thought that one was kind of interesting. And two of them used an eight and a half by 11. Two-Sided just folded in a number 10. I was pleased to see that out of all of my newsletters. 100% of them did include an ask in some way, whether it was adding an envelope in or putting an actual response device in their a hundred percent of them did, did do that. If I were to recommend how you should optimize newsletters, here's what it, here's what we would say. At least quarterly, at least every, you know, what is that? 90 days a donor should receive feedback on what their gifts are doing.

Tracy ([00:43:25](#)):

So if you're not in a cadence of four newsletters a year and you can make the budget, I would highly recommend that we actually have a client where their newsletters do better than their appeals. So even though it is a cultivation device, for whatever reason, because people can read the stories because they can see what the money does because they can flip through the beautiful pictures. It's more compelling to them to give there. And so the turn of that is of course, to make sure that you ask. And like I said before, if you don't, the answer will always be no some recent tests that we did. And again, these were maybe some surprising things that we found and you can take it or leave it, but in adding a cover letter versus adding just a simple buck slip in a newsletter, we had a client who that lifted response by 15%, which we thought was pretty substantial.

Tracy ([00:44:19](#)):

Now there is an additional cost to a cover letter, but the response clearly allowed for that. This one was interesting that the static arrays versus a very personalized ask askray we saw actually lifted response by 19% and average gift went up by 46%. So I don't know if that's because in a newsletter people, aren't sure, you know, like what are you actually looking for? They wanna be told what to give. I'm not sure, but that was one that you could definitely test. And then for the, I think we talk all the time. How long should it be? This short, too short, too long. We have a client that did a 16 page newsletter versus a 12. And they're looking at the year over year comparison and actually longer is not doing better. So there might be kind of a re a place where you reach, you know, maximum return on investment.

Tracy ([00:45:10](#)):

All right. My, a final portion is acquisition. And so you know, again, these particular 108 orgs that we send money to, I guess they can claim anonymity. I don't really know who put my name out there for sale, but I can make a why I can make a pretty you know, educated guess based on what organizations I

knew gave I gave to. And then when I would get, you know, an acquisition package that corresponded very closely with the same mission, but, you know, I don't know for sure. So here's what I can tell you about acquisition. And I actually have a statin here of how many, how many pieces of mail and I'm actually getting so in acquisition, knowing that all of my first gifts were given on March 15th. That's when 108 organizations received a gift by a direct mail over the course of 120 days.

Tracy ([00:46:08](#)):

I can say with very strong confidence that two, two organizations sold my name without having ever sent me any mail of their own. So no acknowledgement, no receipt, no thank you. I'm not in their appeals list. I've not seen a newsletter, but I feel very confident based on the, or the acquisition packages. I'm now receiving that they sold my name. And I just feel like, you know, when we talk about insulting the donor, this, this donor, this guy that it was insulting to me within the first 60 days after March 15th, I was already re I had already received seven new prospecting or acquisition packages that I had never received before. And because of the pseudonym I had used, I knew were coming out of this study. So that's actually really quick when you think of the data turnaround that some of these organizations struggled with to put me in their own mail, cadence, seven of them figured out, or, you know, handful of them figured out how to sell my name and get it out there real quick.

Tracy ([00:47:16](#)):

So that I was receiving, you know, acquisition in the first 60 days. And then by July 15th, which is, you know, give or take that's 120 days from when, from when this started 46 unique pro prospecting packages, 46 unique organizations where I, I was on their mailing list, which is actually, that's pretty substantial in four months. And now one year later, I can tell you, every day I get between six and 10 pieces of nonprofit direct mail every single day, six days a week. Now some of those are the orgs that I, I gave to obviously I would say it's predominantly acquisition pro prospecting packages that I get. So what kind of acquisition are you doing? Well, here's how you might stack up 18 of the 46 packages that I got had like a freemium in them, whether that's you know, notepads or labels or an ornament, or who knows what little thing that they had put in there.

Tracy ([00:48:14](#)):

Three of the 46 had some sort of engagement device that was like a survey that they wanted me to send back or a petition for me to send to my Congressman. Five of them had some sort of currency in them and we'll come back to that four of which were coins, whether I got, I got dimes, nickels pennies, but I did get Venezuelan dollars as well. No, I thought that one was pretty unique. And then 20 of them were letter only here based on what we saw as well as based on our history and what we know about acquisition. Here's a couple of tips that I would give you a and when it comes to optimizing your acquisition program we know that bouncebacks can be a very effective tool. And they're, they're kind of a tried and true thing.

Tracy ([00:49:01](#)):

Like I send you this stocking and I want you to put a note card in it, and then I'm gonna take the stocking and I'm gonna send it back to some of the guys in Afghanistan or at war. That's an actual one I did receive. So we know that they're tried and true. I would say, I would want you to be very careful with what the bounce back is that it actually is tied to helping the mission. And I say that because I did receive some where it's like, I'm sending you've, I'm sure seen this sending you a rose, and if you will

give your donation and send the rose back, we're gonna make a re out of it and I'm left. Like, I'm not sure how does that re help, right. I get the stocking, you're gonna fill it. You're gonna send it to a soldier.

Tracy ([00:49:49](#)):

I don't understand the rose. So I would just say, be very careful that your bounce backs are quite thoughtful too. We would say to be very creative. You know, now that I'm receiving as much mail as I do six to 10 pieces a day, it's even harder for something to stick out and, and really grab my attention. But the more creative you can be, that's not gimmicky. And the more relevant it is to your cut, I would, I would challenge you to think outside the box. I really would recommend being careful about sending money through the mail for a couple of reasons. It's more expensive, obviously. Like if you think you have a 5% response rate, you have to think about 95% of the people are taking the money or throwing away the money and that's a lot. And so they can be highly expensive.

Tracy ([00:50:40](#)):

The other thing I would say to you is that they can actually turn a donor off. We've heard we've had clients say a couple of things. One that donors will, will write into them or call into them and say, you know, why should I give you, why should I give you money? You're just throwing it out the window. You know, you sent me money. You clearly don't need it. They don't, they don't recognize maybe necessarily, you know, the strategy behind it. I'd be careful for that reason. We did a one client who got a call from a donor saying, you know, I shredded your mail without realizing you'd stuck a dime there and it broke my shredder. And now I'm now not only am I not giving you money, but you owe me a hundred bucks for a new shredder, right? Maybe those are one offs.

Tracy ([00:51:23](#)):

I don't know, but I, I would recommend being careful. And if you do mail a money package, we would recommend highly that you very carefully monitor whatever sub subsequent giving comes out of that to make sure that those donors are actually being retained. Oftentimes they'll be compelled to send you money cuz you sent them money. And it's like, oh geez, I better send them something. But then they don't turn into a second donor or, you know, a Mo multiyear donor. And so is it worth how much it costs to acquire them? And then the last thing I would tell you is that what I noticed is very trendy right now. If green is trendy in appeals, big names are very trendy right now in direct mail acquisition packages. In fact, just yesterday, Iris received this from governor Desant. I received this from Nikki Haley.

Tracy ([00:52:14](#)):

Both of these are just names on the outer envelope and inside as either a lift note or a small note from that person saying, I think you should follow and give to this particular organization. So that appears to be a very trendy right now. If you have a big name who would support your nonprofit, that could be a worthy test to be able to say you know, is, is this worth it? Do we put this person's name on here? And does that lift response? So of our, of our clients, we do have a couple packages that are current winners. We have an address labels package, which I'm sure many of you have tried that particular one right now as at a one to one ROI doing very well. We have a winning control package. That is a survey. So it's that same kind of thing of like, we actually need your feedback that makes the donor feel real important.

Tracy ([00:53:07](#)):

We have one that has is doing, I'm sending you this, I'm asking you to fill it out, send it back to me that one is winning. And then across the board with all of our clients we know for sure that co-ops are

winning. And I know in a lot of organizations co-ops are a bad word. So just food for thought. I'm gonna come back to my final takeaway, which is what you've already heard us say is that the donor is the hero. And we believe that this donor journey shows how often the donor isn't being treated like a hero. And maybe that should be your biggest take is if in every step of the journey as we are mailing things out as money is coming in. Have we made our, oh, I'm sorry. Have we made our donor the hero? So show good manners, be original and be creative.

Tracy ([00:54:01](#)):

Make sure that you're crossing channels in interesting side notes, seven of the a hundred and orgs. They send us regular emails. I give them props. I mean to Nathan's point in the beginning, those are way more of high value donors who will give across channels and you should probably try meeting them in both places. And then finally that data hygiene is foundational to the donor journey. I have to believe part of the reason I'm not receiving mail or Haven is something has gone awry in their data. I was not coded correctly. They don't have my, they don't have my name correct. They, when they do a select, it kicks me out of it because of the pseudonym that I used, I have no idea, but I have to believe that's in large part. Why so many organizations are not on the ball with their, so that is my speech.

Tracy ([00:54:50](#)):

I feel like I kept it to 40 minutes. I tried for 35. One thing I will tell you is if there's in any way that mile 19 can help you. We'd love to. I would say if you would like to know if you were in the study because I took a peak at the list of attendees, and I know that some of them were in our study. I would love to chat with you one on one and tell you how you did. I don't have any problem giving you that feedback. And then also if you'd like to meet with us or talk with us, we would love to meet with you. There is an actual donor journey study book that we wrote that probably has more tidbits in it as well. And we'd love to get one of those in your hands. So that was the donor journey study.

Nathan ([00:55:33](#)):

Thank you so much. Great. That was awesome. It was awesome. I'm jotting down notes things. I mean, I was laughing along the way, tons of really interesting stuff in there. And there are a bunch of questions. I don't know if you've peaked at the Q and a panel at all, but there's a lot. And so I'm gonna right to, to sort of bucket them a little bit and see if we can get some good answers here. And I wanna start with a few just more like technical questions. Cause just in the chat, there are lots of folks that seem to be like direct mail pros and some people that are maybe just starting out and trying to figure out what is this whole world about? And there's a lot of lingo and stuff I don't get. So to ask a question that was asked in the chat what is in an OE?

Tracy ([00:56:15](#)):

Oh, well that's easy. That's the outer envelope. So every direct mail piece, whatever it comes in, right? That's the outer envelope and you know, some of them come with a, oops, sorry. Some of 'em come with a tagline on it or a call to action. This one, you know, I told you, came with Nikki Hilly's name and this is what she wants me to find on the inside. OE literally just stands for the outer envelope that the package comes in.

Karen ([00:56:39](#)):

sometimes referred to as a carrier envelope as well. Okay. Carrier like, like a pigeon.

Nathan ([00:56:47](#)):

So I love it. Okay. So that's what I eat. There's that one. Can you tell us, or maybe you have an example in front of you, what is a buck slip and what does it look like?

Tracy ([00:56:57](#)):

A buck slip is, you know, this is like a number 10 package, right? And often of times it's cheaper to, and I don't know if this one has a buck slip in it. It does actually, it's cheaper to create a re a reply device. That's one third of an eight and a half by 11 so that the printer can basically take in an eight and a half by 11 and chop it into thirds. And so a buck slip is the size of a number 10 envelope or one third of an eight and half 11. It is probably the most, I mean, you'd have to say Karen, but the most inexpensive of inserts, right? Yeah.

Karen ([00:57:30](#)):

And when we say buck slip, we're kind of referring to size buck slip can be the size of a reply card and it could actually be an insert that you call a buck slip insert. So we're kind of using the term in two ways.

Nathan ([00:57:41](#)):

Okay, cool. Okay. Two more, two technical ones. What is an array? You mentioned array gift array. I mean, certainly I know what it is on a, you know, a donation page. Sure. What does it actually look like in a appeal? A direct mail appeal?

Tracy ([00:57:57](#)):

Yeah. An ask array is, I mean, you think about when you look at a, any, it could be online. It could be a risk response device. If I showed this one and maybe you can kind of see it, the arrays are, they're asking, well, I'm reading backwards, so I'm gonna get it wrong. But whatever that is, \$26, whatever these four are, the ask arrays, they're basically saying, would you be willing to give nine bucks? Are you willing to give \$25? Are you willing to give? And so it's basically the array of what I'm asking and I'm giving you your option, an open ask or an open array would just be like the dollar sign with an open sign. Like you fill in the blank. What would you like to give that's an open ask array.

Nathan ([00:58:38](#)):

Cool. Thank you. And then last technical one, at least as far as I found in the chat and in the Q and a you were just talking about co-ops. Can you define what a co-op is?

Tracy ([00:58:48](#)):

That's you Karen, I'm gonna let you.

Karen ([00:58:50](#)):

It's a co cooperative database. So if you've ever heard of Wyland or Abacus or I behavior, I think are the ones we've used most with clients basically you put your names in, they build a model and then you rent names back out. The reason it can be a hangup as Tracy hinted at is a lot of organizations are like, we will not sell our names. We will not trade our names and a co-op feels kind of like that. We have had a client be able to navigate that with their board. Cuz when you think about it, most of those names are probably already in the database. But that's what co-op a co-op is it's different than I just go rent the national geographic list kind of thing. Sure.

Tracy ([00:59:30](#)):

It's like a swap.

Nathan ([00:59:30](#)):

That makes sense.

Tracy ([00:59:31](#)):

Yeah.

Nathan ([00:59:32](#)):

Cool. Thank you. Okay. I think that covers our bases here, so we everyone's got all the, the vocab down. Okay. So scrolling back to the top of the Q and a and it's two o'clock if, if you have to jump off that's okay. We're gonna stick around for a few more minutes and try to, you know, knock out a few of these questions. If you've gotta jump off, we'll send you the recordings. You can get some of these answers too. But there's some questions around receipts versus thank you letters. Can you talk about those a little bit specifically? Like, should you combine them together? Can you send them is one thing, should they be separate? You know, what's the best time to send it? How quickly do they have to get out any further insights there?

Karen ([01:00:09](#)):

Yeah, I think some of it comes down to capacity, you know, Tracy, through out some ideas of, do you have volunteers that can write notes? I, I think it's always great to have a thank you. That feels very separate, sort of like the, you know, the wedding gift. Thank you example. Tracy's where it's a postcard, it's a phone call. It's maybe both. If you can separate 'em that's great. If you can't a combined, thank you with your receipt for tax purposes is still great. It's better than not having anything. So it probably comes down to capacity. How many receipts you're having to mail every week? Things like that. Sure. Cause even the receipt itself should always have a thank you component. But as Tracy said, we like to include the option to send a gift when I'm ready. Yeah.

Nathan ([01:00:52](#)):

Gotcha. Cool. Well, one question I wrote down too that I, it wasn't specifically asked, but seems like again, we've got people on both sides of the spectrum here, some fairly sophisticated in advance, some just trying to hear some things out and sure. So what tools or processes you come to mind as someone is trying to figure out? How do I send receipts and thank yous, like quickly, Short, wind of time without having to go hand, write, you know, a thousand notes every couple of weeks or something like that. Well, how, how do you cut through that and make, make life easy to send receipts and thank yous?

Karen ([01:01:29](#)):

I think, I mean, if you have production partners that can help you again, depending on your volume, if you only send a hundred receipts a week, that's gonna be expensive to outsource that. But we've seen thank yous that it's a, it's like old school mail merge, you know, to use simplistic terms, that's just run on per probably on, they print out the post, they have postcards printed offset, then they go back and laser on it. You get your letter template set up where all you're doing is just changing the data that you're merging in. I think wherever you can create templates and shells for the internal team, that's gonna expedite them getting that out, use a number 10 window. So nothing even has to match on the receipt. I

mean, knowing paper, supply chain, I know I've seen a lot of comments about the paper supply chain. We acknowledge it. It is painful. Yeah. So in things like receding, plain white is probably just fine. But I think the more you can simplify it where it's just a matter of queuing it up each week for receding or thank you is good.

Nathan ([01:02:19](#)):

Perfect. Cool. Thank you. A question from Laurie here around acquisition, I even kind of wrote this down around some of the acquisition stuff, but how are you able to really track, you know, when your names were, your name was being sold? Like what are you kind of looking for? You're just looking at like their brand new organizations we didn't know, donate to, but now they're coming in or was there more nuance, you

Tracy ([01:02:40](#)):

You mean in this particular study right?

Nathan ([01:02:42](#)):

In this study? Yep.

Tracy ([01:02:44](#)):

Yeah. So, I mean, because I used a pseudonym, it was very easy for me to see like if an acquisition package came and it had like a middle initial that was fictitious, I of course knew. Okay. That was born out of this study. And then, because I know what my own personal giving it is. If I had given to an organization that was way off my normal radar and then an acquisition package came in, that was incredibly similar. Then I knew that, that I knew loosely or most likely that that was somebody who had sold my name. Right. Because somebody else is like, oh, well, if they'll give to X, Y, Z you know, food bank, then they're obviously gonna give to my food bank or whatever the example was. But mostly it came because of the pseudonym that I was using.

Nathan ([01:03:28](#)):

Gotcha. Well, how about like the flip side of that? Cause we've seen similar results in, you know, just some of the Multichannel research we've done as well around the, just the pure lack of response and the shocking amount of organizations that don't send you anything. Yeah. So how much of that is like how, how confident can you be that like, these are just organizations that aren't doing anything or how much of that can be attributed to mail, just getting lost. And is there any way to really figure that out?

Tracy ([01:03:55](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I think that's a good question. There isn't really a way, unless I were to call each one and be like, Hey, you look up my name in your file and find out why I'm not getting mail, which by the way, I've actually considered doing, not in an antagonistic way, but just be like, this would be an interesting conversation. I do think. And as we sit and hypothesize it's most likely a data issue. So they were given a white mail gift. Right. And somebody had asked in question answers, was I sure that they cashed the check and the answer is yes. I went back and made sure that all hundred and eight, I had a confirmation that the, the check had been cashed if they hadn't, I would've left them out of the study. But to, but to the point of I just lost my train of thought. The, the reality was that we believe or hypothesize that it's a data issue that when they get white mail, they aren't sure what to attribute it to. And it often can be on

a no mail list or am I coded incorrectly? You know, somehow, like if you give to an appeal, of course it's getting coded to that appeal and you're gonna get direct, you know, but if somebody finds you out of the blue, which is, you know, what some of these were yeah. Somewhere I wasn't getting coded correctly.

Nathan ([01:05:09](#)):

That's really interesting. Seems like a lot of, a lot of opportunity there based on how many organizations, just purely aren't sending anything. It's shocking.

Tracy ([01:05:19](#)):

It was shocking.

Nathan ([01:05:20](#)):

There's a question from an anonymous attendee. I'd love for you to put your names on these questions. Be proud of your question. There's no, no bad questions. But about donor surveys, do you find more people participate those when they're sent through the mail or using something, what digital, like survey monkey or do you have any of that type of data?

Karen ([01:05:41](#)):

We don't have much of that kind of data. What we have found in the direct mail site is they do love to give their opinion. So whether it be about hot issues, you know, in the world or even what parts of what our organization does, do you care about most, do you care most about meals at Thanksgiving versus whatever? I think, you know, many donor files tend older, so they still like the pen and paper and it, it just creates that engagement piece. They send it back. We see a lot of non donor responses come, meaning they've not given a financial gift, but they've chosen to send that back. So it's still an engagement. And then we see surveys work where they also send a gift, a financial guest.

Nathan ([01:06:19](#)):

Yeah. Gotcha. Okay. So Karina is wondering, is there a best practice around how often to send an appeal and how soon Tracy, I think at some point you had said you could make an argument either way for like, should someone get a thank you versus an appeal as their first touch point? What thoughts around that?

Tracy ([01:06:40](#)):

Well, and Karen I'll want you to, to say what you think too, but I, I really struggle with an appeal before a thank you. I really struggle with that. That's maybe that's personal. But I believe it also comes from my history just in direct mail. I feel like if you've, you need to at least acknowledge the gift, at least with a receipt, if you're not doing, doing thank yous before you get into an appeal cadence. Because it really is asking for more money before I've even acknowledged that you gave me any money and there is some bad manners just in that in general. But I was surprised that some of them got me in their appeal cadence within 30 days, that's fast, that's a fast data turnaround to have received a gift. And within 30 days I'm already on your list. Wow. It's amazing.

Tracy ([01:07:21](#)):

60 days maybe, what do you think, Karen?

Karen ([01:07:24](#)):

I think it depends on what kind of intro or welcome series you do. Yeah. I would make, you know, if you're pulling an appeal file and Tracy said, you have a great tight turnaround drop your non donors that, you know, haven't been mailed a welcome or a, or an intro series yet. But I think this, you know, just knowing you wanna, what's the old, the last time I heard data, you know, five to six months, if I haven't converted to a second gift go donor, it's gonna be a lot harder. So you really wanna work hard in that first, you know, three to six months to convert, which is where appeals and newsletters come into play.

Nathan ([01:07:54](#)):

Cool. Thank you. Well, there's a bunch of other questions in here. We could get into one that jumped out to me. Maybe we can wrap up up with is as you were talking about newsletters, there was a question around, you know, should we be sending a direct mail newsletter or should we just rely on an email newsletter? Is there opportunity to send both? Do you have any thoughts on how those two, like online, offline pieces would work together?

Tracy ([01:08:21](#)):

Well, I'd always send both. If you can send both, that'd be great.

Tracy ([01:08:26](#)):

Absolutely no reason to not send both, but I mean, my first and then I'll let you say what you were gonna say, Karen, I didn't mean to interrupt, but I mean to Karen's point with the donor, most donors are boomers and above. That's just indirect mail in particular. I mean, they, they want pretty pictures. They want flips. They're still reading the wall street journal. They're still right. They love this visual representation. So if you can do both, I would do both. But if it's a direct mail giver, I think they should receive a pay happy.

Karen ([01:08:57](#)):

Well, and if you go back to the slides you shared at the beginning, Nathan, we wanna do everything we can to convert to multi-channel. So you just never know it could be, I'm gonna read every email you send me, but I'm still old school and I'm gonna write a check when I'm ready to give. So I think that's where it's hard to know, you know, as a donor engaging with every piece of digital, just not choosing to give on digital, they're choosing to give in direct mail.

Nathan ([01:09:18](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And especially, if you're coming from the, like the online world, and maybe you don't send a direct mail newsletter, but you send an email one. I mean, just thinking about open rates of a email newsletter, if like for a good one, you're getting a 20% open rate. That's 80% of people that aren't actually seeing it. So then can you pair that up with the direct mail strategy to get just pure, more visibility? And then yeah, that your comment about wanting to see more pictures and things like that. I mean, we, what we typically have seen in terms of performance, getting more people to click and engage in an email is actually like less pictures, more text, especially with a letter, just like some quick links out to articles and things. So it's a totally different format to engage and cultivate someone. So yeah, I guess that's what I would say too, as much as you can. Why not both

Tracy ([01:10:08](#)):

That's exactly right, because they're different.

Nathan ([01:10:12](#)):

Well, and then here, the stats shared too, are interesting about the, you know, conversion rates on a direct mail newsletter. I would be, I would be shocked if anyone on this webinar has seen anything close to those donor conversion rates from an online newsletter, right? You don't like newsletters don't really generate much donations in an online format, but they direct mail. So

Tracy ([01:10:31](#)):

Yes, they absolutely.

Karen ([01:10:32](#)):

Well, depending on the goal, it's always, at least in our experience, you want newsletters to be cultivation, but you also wanna break even. And so, yeah. Are you good with a one to one ROI? Are you aiming for a three to one ROI and that can change your newsletter strategy as well.

Nathan ([01:10:45](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Cool. Well, this has been awesome. Thank you both so much. Tracy, thanks for the presentation. Thank to you both for the research and the insights. This has been incredible. If people want to dive deeper, they want find out more, what's the way to reach you both.

Tracy ([01:11:00](#)):

Yeah. I mean, you can definitely email us or, or go to our website and email us. There's a contact form at mile19marketing.com. You can email us. I'm just tHoward@mile19marketing.com, or info@mile19marketing.com. Also, Nathan, I see there's other questions up there. If you want, if you're able to get us a copy, I'd be glad to personally respond to the ones that we weren't able to and answer of those questions, but yeah, they can email us or yeah. Call us for sure.

Nathan ([01:11:30](#)):

That's great. Well, we'll try to get those questions over to you and see if we some responses maybe even simply just we can put a little blog post together to answer some key questions or something like that too. That'd be awesome. That'd be great. Well, thank you again and thank you to everyone who joined. Thanks for sticking around for a few extra minutes, to ask some questions and get some answers. We'll have an email out to you a little bit later today with some extra resources and ways to dive. Thank you so much. We are all rooting for you. You here next after and at mile 19, and we'll see you on the next webinar. Take care.

Tracy ([01:11:58](#)):

Thank You.