



Fundraising Tips for Wildlife Charities

National Wildlife Rehabilitation
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Abstract

Wildlife Victoria was among groups at the front line of efforts to rescue and rehabilitate native wildlife injured during last February's Black Saturday bushfires. With no fundraising staff employed at this time, swift action needed to be taken to set up a team to process the enormous influx of donations coming in from the public.

By managing this process and spending now over a year in the wildlife industry, I have created and implemented many marketing campaigns and fundraising appeals to create awareness, but also retain the donors that were acquired through this period. I would like to share my experience and offer some tips to your delegates on how best to fundraise within this fascinating industry.

Furthermore, I would like to share with them a case study of a direct mail fundraising appeal which Wildlife Victoria has developed and the results of this campaign.

Introduction

Funding is one of the biggest challenges faced by charities around the globe. The aim is to maintain the long term health, security and effectiveness of an organisation. Successful fundraising enables organisations to make long term plans for the future. Devising, implementing and reviewing a fundraising plan is a way for charities to work towards sustainable funding. A fundraising plan will give a total picture of the future costs involved for the organisation and identify the planned sources of income to cover them.

The purpose of a fundraising plan is to show:

- The existing sources of income and the fundraising landscape for the organisation
- Where the organisation wants to be in relation to fundraising to achieve its goals
- How the organisation is going to get there.

The following paper explores briefly some of the different activities which could be included in the mix for an overall fundraising plan for wildlife charities.



Marketing - Image / Branding

There are as many as 700,000 NFPs in Australia who are all competing for a share of the population's disposable income, either from individuals or other organisations. The challenge is to inspire and motivate them to give your charity their money. Your branding is extremely important in order to present the image of your organisation that you want. Your website and promotional material are crucial tools for this. The key here is to keep your brand and style consistent across all mediums. Here are some examples:



It is also very important to know your market. Who are you donors? Where do they come from? How old are they? Are they female or male? Capturing this information will help you plan and target your appeals and donor communication accordingly. If you don't have this information, don't be afraid to ask for it. Speak to your donors and find out why they have made the choice to donate to your organisation.



Grants

Grants from foundations and trusts are the most common method of raising funds for many charitable organisations. Grant writing is an art form. It can be time consuming to research and write applications but these bodies are all about giving money away so with good research and targeting this can be time well spent. Furthermore there are many grant providers who have a specific desire to fund not only animal related causes but more specifically, those undertaking programs relating to our native flora and fauna.



Fundraising Events

Many charities tend to focus on fundraising events as income generators. Events can be useful to draw the public to the organisation, to sell goods, educate and generate good will, however events can often be costly both

financially and in terms of the effort required in the organisation of the event.

If you decide that it is definitely worth running a particular event, be sure to evaluate the experience post event. Look at the number of staff and volunteers involved, their time, as well as actual financial cost. How many people noticed you; how much money was raised; did it help your public image; did it help you achieve your objectives? You must evaluate the opportunity cost of running such an event.

A good approach is to gain corporate sponsorship for an event, ensuring all funds raised go directly to the cause as opposed to administrative costs.



Bequests

“People don't like talking about money and they don't like talking about death, so they really don't like talking about wills and bequests. That's a shame because they really are a constructive way for someone to leave a legacy to an organisation they were involved in during their life. It's a relatively simple thing to do - just ask people if they would like to remember your group in their will and tell them how to do it”

Source: Our Community www.ourcommunity.com.au

Bequests are an important part of our fundraising efforts that allow us to continue our vital work within our community. Developing a bequest program is an important facet of your fundraising plan. For many established charities bequests are in fact the largest single source of financial support. The fact is that there are many donors who would prefer to leave their estate to animal charities rather than human causes or in some cases even their own family.

Although leaving a bequest may sound complicated, it is not. Anyone can organise to include a bequest in their Will, usually in one of the following forms:

- Residual – After family and friends have been provided for, the remainder can be left to a charity
- Percentage – A percentage of the estate could be left to a charity
- Asset – A specific asset, such as real estate or jewellery could be left to a charity
- Specific cash amount – A specific cash amount can be left to a charity

- Alternatives – A provision can be left in a Will dictating that if any specific bequest cannot be carried out (eg. If the beneficiary has passed away or ceases to exist) then that asset can be passed to a charity
- Living bequest – A living bequest is different to a cash donation and a normal bequest. A lump sum of money is invested while the testator is still alive to generate income, the distributions then go to the charity. A living bequest can have tax advantages for an estate
- Conditional – In this circumstance the estate, or a portion of it, would be retained by a spouse or other family member for the duration of their lifetime; after which it could pass to a charity.

As there are many legalities that come with bequests, you should always advise your prospect bequestor to consult a solicitor to make their intentions clear. Even in some cases where this happens, family disputes have arisen following the passing of a loved one, so it is actually good to encourage your prospect to discuss their intentions with their family. Providing them with the appropriate Will wording is also a good technique.



Regular Giving Program

It is important to have a program in place which offers your donors the option to pledge a donation of a nominated sum for a specific or indefinite period, usually by direct debit or automatic credit card deduction. The donor is then provided with a summary tax deductible receipt of all of the donations at the end of the financial year. An example of this is Wildlife Victoria's WildFriends program. In return for their monthly contributions, donors are sent a monthly e-update about the organisation with a profile of an animal which has come into care.



Online Fundraising and Social Media

Fundraising online is the way of the future. With over \$29 billion AUD donated online last year, it is proving to be a powerful and prolific fundraising tool, and, as the “digital” generation matures, online is set become the dominant platform of fundraising. The most important thing is that if you have not started building your capacity to raise funds online, **start now**.

First and foremost, all charities must include an avenue to accept online donations via your website. However, it is not enough to just put a “donate now” button on your website and wait for the money to roll in. Promote your online capacity in your newsletters, on your Facebook and Twitter pages, within your direct mail campaigns and on all of your promotional collateral. Saying that, ensure that your “donate now” button is clearly visible on every page of your website and must be “above the fold” (with no scrolling down required).

When entering the virtual space of social media, be prepared to lose control. There is no way you can monitor every word from every person who follows your cause or joins your social networking group. This is the true beauty of social media, it allows your supporters to feel like they belong to your organisation but contributing online, communicating with other supporters, recruiting new supporters and campaigning socially on your behalf. If you or your lawyers are not comfortable with that fact, social networking probably is not for you. A good way to start is to find out which of your supporters are already well integrate in online communities such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube then invite them to be your friend or join your group.

Furthermore “Peer-to-Peer” fundraising is rapidly growing in popularity with sites like Everyday Hero and GoFundraise making the effort that much easier.

“Over the last 10 year though the term 'Friendraising' has been linked to more positive fundraising terms like 'Peer-to-Peer' fundraising, where fundraisers reach out to their peer network for donations when they are doing a walk, run, a-thon or any of a number of participant based fundraising activities.”

Source: Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friendraising>



Direct Mail Campaigns

Like it or not, every not for profit organisation that relies on individual donors or members practice some form of traditional direct mail fundraising. After all, there's still a limit to how much information you can convey to your donors face-to-face, peer-to-peer or by phone. The fact is that it's impossible to become personal with every single donor on your database and that's where direct mail comes in handy.

Direct mail can be complicated, costly, time-consuming, and requires fanatical attention to detail. There aren't a whole lot of people who think it's fun. When direct mail campaigns are created and executed well, they can be a real fundraising success for an organisation, however, unfortunately, they are extremely easy to get wrong.

It's a complicated process of recipient selection and segmentation, copywriting and design, data preparation, production management, donation processing, financial management and back end analysis, all of this done in time to help you plan for your next campaign.

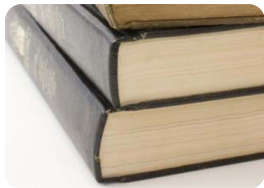
If all of this seems a little too hard and you might be worried about having the resources to deliver such a campaign, there are specialist direct fundraising professionals who can help organisations, small and large with their direct mail efforts.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for a direct mail case study by Wildlife Victoria.



Fundraising Tips

- Don't be afraid to ask.
- People are not giving to your organisation – they are giving to the cause (the wildlife).
- People give when someone they like and trust asks them.
- NEVER forget to thank your donors. Thank them over and over again.
- Be transparent about where your funds are being used!
- Just because they didn't give yesterday doesn't mean they won't give today.
- Make your donors your friends. And make your friends your donors.
- There's no such thing as easy money. Sometimes you need to spend money to make money – so use a professional agency if you have the resources to do so.



Useful Resources

- Fundraising Institute of Australia www.fia.org.au
- Our Community www.ourcommunity.com.au
- Probono Australia www.probonoaustralia.com.au
- Philanthropy Australia www.philanthropy.org.au
- Everyday Hero www.everydayhero.com.au
- Robejohn & Associates, relationship fundraising specialists www.robejohn.com.au

Remembering the past, raising funds in the present

A recent mail out from Wildlife Victoria has drawn on the past to entice both new and existing donors to give

Wildlife Victoria was among groups at the front line of efforts to rescue and rehabilitate native wildlife injured during last February's Victorian bushfires.

Its efforts attracted plenty of publicity and many new supporters.

A mail out to supporters last year asked them to donate prior to the 2009-2010 summer – a time where hot, dry conditions were expected to increase the chance of bushfires again affecting native wildlife.

The mail out not only called for donations, but informed existing supporters of the difference their donations had made. Wildlife Victoria achieved this by featuring in their mail out the story of Matilda, a koala who had been burned in the fires but whose recovery was helped by equipment and supplies purchased through public donations.

Among the factors that made this mail out notable were:

1 Use of past events – Wildlife Victoria makes intelligent use of a past event – last February's bushfires – to show how supporters' donations helped during that crisis, as well as how they would benefit its work during the 2009-10 bushfire season.

2 Relevant – Ensuring the relevancy of your mail out is vital in engaging recipients and eliciting a response.

Supporters who had donated to Wildlife Victoria's bushfire appeal early in 2009 are more likely to donate again when shown the

impact of their previous donation

3 Timely – At the time of the mail out last December, a spell of hot November weather had increased fears of another dangerous bushfire season in Victoria. This made the mail out timely, and helped it take advantage of the increased community awareness of the bushfire threat.

4 Prepared and ready – It's good for any group seeking donations to show how well prepared they are. It shows potential donors it is ready to act in times of crisis, and that it has learned from similar events in the past.

Wildlife Victoria's mail out showed it had taken note of the past and was ready for what might be to come. It reflects well on the group and gives donors and supporters confidence that any money they donate will be used in line with the planning work the group had done.

5 Emotive – Few things pull at the heartstrings more effectively than a sick or injured animal. Wildlife Victoria's mail out follows the recovery of Matilda, a koala horribly burned in the 2009 bushfires.

Through pictures and words Wildlife Victoria charts Matilda's recovery, highlighting the role public donations played.

The pictures and words primarily show the impact of the donations. But a secondary message is also subtly conveyed – one of: "Without your support, Matilda and other injured wildlife would not have survived". This message leads to the next point. ►



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Your donation today can help provide Bushfire Rescue-Ready Kits of bandages, antiseptic cream, saline drips and pain-relief drugs.

I know not everyone can give as much of their time - and home and sleep and energy - as volunteers like Lisa. (After the fires she spent 5 weeks sleeping on a couch in the same room as the dozen rescued animals she had under her care, checking their needs every 4 hours.)

What you CAN do is support Wildlife Victoria to be rescue-ready this bushfire season.

Your gift of \$110 right now can help provide a Bushfire Rescue-Ready Kit of bandages, antiseptic cream, saline drip and pain-relief drugs.

These are the emergency essentials that burnt or injured wildlife need to survive. The pain-relief drugs relieve suffering and can help prevent an animal from going into shock.

The bandages and creams help wounds heal, and the saline drip helps get fluids back into dangerously dehydrated wildlife.

You can help provide all this with your donation of \$110 for a Bushfire Rescue-Ready Kit. A gift of \$75 is vital to offer burnt and injured wildlife pain-relief, while even \$35 can help supply bandages and antiseptic creams.

Simply mail the Donation Slip with your gift, call 1300 859 453 or go to www.wildlifevictoria.org.au to ensure more amazing survival stories like Matilda's.

Our volunteers are on-call, prepared to go wherever they're needed, 24 hours a day ... but because we have ZERO government funding, the only place we can turn for essentials is to people like you.

Please, send your donation today! So together we can rescue and heal desperate animals burnt and injured in the dangerous months ahead.

Yours urgently,



Jon Rowdon
President
Wildlife Victoria

6 Showing the impact of donations – One of the main focuses of Wildlife Victoria's mail out is how public donations can make a difference. Nowhere is this shown more starkly than in the before and after pictures of Matilda.

The pictures are a tangible illustration of the impact of donations, as well as providing donors with a feeling of pride and having helped achieve something.

Showing donors how their support is helping, and doing so

in a way which gives them some level of ownership of the problem, will increase the chance they will continue their support.

7 Helping the helpless – One of the main messages of the mail out is a simple one: "Humans can plan for fire season, but animals can't; they rely on us to help them."

This again gives donors a feeling of responsibility for native wildlife, with a donation to Wildlife Victoria an easy way to fulfil that responsibility.

8 Highlighting volunteers' work – The booklet which tells Matilda's story also highlights the work of Wildlife Victoria's volunteers and helpers.

In showing their contribution, Wildlife Victoria subtly gives potential donors the message of: "We know not everyone is able to make a hands-on contribution like our helpers, but everyone CAN make a donation to support our work".

9 Objects and items – The text of the main letter in the mail out, as well as the tear off form at the bottom of the letter – explain exactly what items donations will fund.

These range from bandages and antiseptic creams (for a \$A35 donation) to a bushfire rescue ready kit containing a variety of medical items (for \$A110).

This gives donors a concrete example of how their money will make a difference, as well as providing an incentive to make a donation of a certain amount. With a bit of thought, any group can do something similar.

10 Urgency – Prominent use of the phrase "Bushfire Emergency" on the front of the mail out envelope and at the top of the main letter convey the urgency with which donations are needed, as well as grabbing recipients' attention.

This has the effect of pressing donors into action. ■

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MAILING MATILDA

Name and organisation: Amy Amato, Marketing and Fundraising Manager at Wildlife Victoria.

Background: Wildlife Victoria was, until last year, a small animal welfare organisation also involved in native animal rescue and rehabilitation. It had two paid staff, a small budget, a donor base of about 2000 and was overwhelmingly volunteer-based.

However, the organisation grew exponentially in the aftermath of the tragic 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. On the back of some unexpected media coverage of its work, Wildlife Victoria was flooded with more than \$3 million in donations from 30,000 new donors located in Victoria, interstate and overseas.

Fundraiser: Late last year Wildlife Victoria launched a direct mail appeal asking existing donors – including those who gave after Black Saturday – to give in anticipation of what was expected to be a dangerous 2009-10 bushfire season.

The group worked with consultants Robejohn and Associates on the mail out. The mail out focussed on how Wildlife Victoria had helped a koala named Matilda recover from burns sustained on Black Saturday.

Prospective donors were asked to give set amounts to the organisation in order to fund specific items – first aid kits, or bandages and antiseptics.

Success levels: Responses to the appeal continue to roll in. The appeal generated a higher than expected level of response from donors – almost 4.5% responded with donations – far above the 2-3% predicted by Wildlife Victoria and Robejohn.

Raising Funds: What were the thoughts behind drawing on your post-bushfire work for the mail out?

Amy Amato:

We knew that the bushfires, and the sadness and suffering that went on, remained in everyone's minds. And because of what we learned from last year we really had a solid understanding of what could happen again and how prepared we needed to be.

That was the message we wanted to get out – the importance of being prepared for this summer. And to do that we knew we needed to equip our volunteers, foster carers and our shelters so they could keep doing their good work.

Timing was crucial. We wanted to get it out with about three weeks of income period before Christmas – had we gone out with that campaign right before Christmas it certainly wouldn't have been as successful as it was.

The mail out also coincided with a spell of warm weather here last November and December, and with media reports about the potential for a very hot summer – something which fortunately didn't occur.

Nevertheless it was ideal timing for us for a fundraising campaign, but more importantly to keep people thinking about the fire danger and how important it was to be prepared.

RF: Are you able to briefly take us through the processes that saw the mail out produced?

Amy Amato:

We started with the message we wanted to convey – that we wanted our carers and volunteers ready and armed with the right tools in time for summer.

We initially had a number of different messages we wanted to convey, Robejohn advised us to focus on a single message.

They worked closely with us to produce the mail out, drilling us for lots of information about the stories we wanted tell, as well as information about our donors aimed at helping us target them most effectively.

It was good working with them even if they ►



didn't have any experience in the wildlife industry because they gave us a real outsider's perspective about what the general public will respond to.

RF: Was it a hard decision to work with an agency? And how did you measure return on investment when you worked with them?

Amy Amato:

To be honest, it's a difficult decision to make, and something each group has to justify for themselves.

Some agencies will work on a retainer arrangement. Some will be a bit more structured and say: "It's x number of hours and x number of dollars".

We have quite a good relationship with Robejohn and have found that for the amount of work they do in terms of writing and "creative" elements, the results we get make it really cost-effective.

Return on investment relies on forecasting donor "behaviour" and looking at how you would expect donors to give, and then the difference having an agency involved

would make.

For us, this forecasting is a bit difficult because we have a large number of new donors and prospects for which we don't have long-term data. So there is a bit of guesswork in forecasting for a coming campaign.

Having said that, agencies like Robejohn have previously looked after "second gift campaigns" – campaigns which are run after people have given to an emergency appeal. They were able to use that experience to give us a good idea of what our forecasts should be.

That said, we managed to get around a 4.5% response rate when we and Robejohn predicted about a 2-3% return.

RF: What did you do to make your mail out as relevant as possible? How did you target specific parts of your donor list?

Amy Amato:

Firstly, you must segment your database for any direct mail campaign. This was a new experience for us because previously we haven't had enough

donors to be able to do segmenting!

What we did know is that we wanted to tweak our mail out message for different types of donors by using a varied letter.

We slightly tweaked our messages to target major donors, those who donated to our last appeal, and those who were on our database prior to the fires but who we've haven't spoken to in a while.

Having a strong database and accurate data are vital for the success of this type of campaign.

RF: Your appeal aimed at preparing your group for any future bushfires. How is showing donors your group is preparing for the future important?

Amy Amato:

Obviously we don't want to keep harping on about Black Saturday, but it was important to show new donors, as well as those we have nurtured for years, that we are running a good organisation where their money is being spent responsibly.

It emphasises what we're doing as an organisation, and that our ►

volunteers are out there doing the best they can to rescue and treat these animals.

RF: What was the logic behind the suggestion to donors they give “set amounts” towards a tangible object – a first aid kit for example?

Amy Amato:

It is really important for donors to visualise where that money is going.

Just saying: “Help us rehabilitate injured wildlife” is too generic. Donors don’t know what it means, and they might not quite understand what is involved in completely rehabilitating an animal.

So putting a dollar figure on specific items shows that we asking them for donations to address a specific need.

RF: The story of Matilda the koala tweaks the emotions – is this important when working with animals? And how did you aim to achieve it without cheapening or devaluing the very real human toll of the disaster?

Amy Amato:

We know that emotion can be a key factor in fundraising, and wildlife does hold a lot of special value to a lot of people in our community, and especially our donors.

We certainly wouldn’t devalue or undervalue the loss of human life – or in fact even compare that to the loss of animal life. All we can do is make our case and do so in the right way.

We said in the mail out that “humans can plan for the disaster, animals can’t”. It was meant to bring

home the fact that we can make decisions, we can try to get in the car and drive away, but animals can’t. They have to stay there and fight – they don’t have that choice like we do.

RF: How do you ensure an appeal like this isn’t seen as exploiting a disaster in order to raise money?

Amy Amato:

This is a really important, and can be a very difficult thing to overcome.

The fact is that bushfires in Victoria are such a real threat that we have to be prepared. To do that we need equipment, and to purchase equipment we need to raise money.

Going out to our donors with this story about Matilda and the Black Saturday fires mean we were telling them a beautiful story, rather than ►



just telling them about the tragedy.

And because we were talking with existing donors and supporters through the mail out, we knew they were more familiar with our messages.

It meant we were able to talk about our past experience with Matilda and about this beautiful story we wanted to share with people who we know and love as supporters.

I think it would’ve been a very different campaign if our focus was to attract new donors.

RF: How are you thanking your donors?

Amy Amato:

We have different methods depending on how much they have given. Everyone obviously gets a tax deductible receipt after a donation

of more than \$2.

For our major donors we also have a little card we insert and write on to say thanks. We might also handwrite a thank you note on the receipt for some of our medium to large donors.

And we call them as well.

RF: What tips would you give to groups intending to use a mail out to retain donors and raise funds?

Amy Amato:

1. Segment your database so you have enough information on your donors.
2. Find a real and powerful story and tell it as best you can. And it should be a single story as opposed to a lot of interlinking ones.
3. Writing copy requires talent.

Find someone within your organisation that can do it or use a contact or use an agency like we did.

4. Consider using an agency. People might think it is too expensive, but I think even smaller organisations can afford these services. It comes back to needing to spend money to make money, and whether you will raise more money through the use of an agency compared to not using one.
5. Develop an engaging and tangible offer.
6. Demonstrate why your organisation is needed and tell donors exactly what their money is needed for.
7. Make sure you have the resources to thank your donors. ■

Elements of Wildlife Victoria’s successful mail out campaign:

