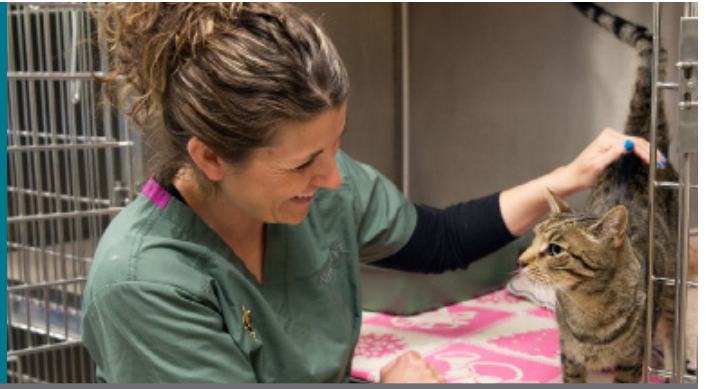




Alley Cat Allies

Start Your Own Organization



CREATING FUNDRAISING APPEALS THAT WORK*

Most organizations receive the bulk of their funding in the form of donations from individual donors. We hope these suggestions will make your fundraising letters and newsletters more effective.

Know yourself.

Put your organization's mission and programs in writing. Keep your audience in mind as you write. The goal is to spark feelings of empathy, compassion, and a desire to join in your efforts to help the animals. This will form the foundation for all your future fundraising appeals.

Why do donors give?

Common responses include: "It feels good," "to serve the community," "to gain recognition," "a sense of duty," "wanted to help out," "a sense of belonging," and "immortality." People give for all kinds of different reasons, but there is one thing that nearly all donors have in common...they were ASKED!



Focus on the beneficiaries.

People give money to help animals and people, not to help organizations. Don't complain about how broke you are; instead, tell donors how you're addressing the needs of the animals and solving the problem with their help.

Don't be boring.

No one wants to read about what you discussed at the last board meeting or how many hours a day you're working. Don't complain about other groups either. Always focus on the good works of your group and the difference that you're making for the animals.

Relate one-to-one.

People can identify with another individual, a person, or an animal that needs help, but it's difficult to relate to "millions." Personalize things; relate the story of one animal as a unique individual, deserving of attention and care.

"A picture is worth a thousand words."

A good photograph and graphics can make a world of difference in conveying your message effectively. The look of your materials is important. Don't crowd too much information onto the page.

Evoke action.

To motivate people you need to engage their emotions. You want to convey a sense of urgency in your fundraising appeal, but not of disaster or panic. It's fine to say, "Your help is especially needed now to meet our goal of spaying 250 cats this spring, to prevent the births of thousands of unwanted kittens..." It's not good form to threaten, "If you don't send money now, we'll have to close the doors next week!"

Fact Sheet:

CREATING FUNDRAISING APPEALS THAT WORK, page 2 of 2

Keep it simple.

Write in clear, simple, and direct language. Avoid using jargon.

Keep it positive.

People like to feel that they're making a difference. Avoid doom and gloom or appeals that rely on guilt. Share your successes with your supporters.

Educate and inspire.

Don't assume that people know about the problems you're working to solve or about your organization's work.

Make a specific request.

People need to know exactly what you want them to do to help. Donors give more when you suggest specific amounts.

Make it easy to give.

Include a donation form and an addressed return envelope.

Stay in touch.

Establish ongoing communication with donors, as you would in any other type of relationship. Fundraising experts advise communicating with donors a minimum of five times a year.

Two powerful words.

There's a simple way to motivate people, to keep them interested, make them feel involved, and encourage them to keep on giving: it's saying "Thank you." Thank you notes are critical to cultivating a relationship with your donors.

*By Bonney Brown. Originally appeared in the Fall 2001 edition of the *Feral Cat Activist*.