



## Planned Giving E-mail Blasts:

# The E-Marketing Tool That Bites You Back

*At* PlannedGiving.Com we're an e-marketing company, and e-mail blasts are a form of e-marketing that many vendors believe works well for their clients. In fact, they make a lot of money selling these e-mail blast services.

### **We do not recommend using e-mail blasts.**

Are we crazy? No. We have our reasons. And we'd like to share them with you.

### **An Equivocal Example**

Here's a little e-marketing "what-if?" Imagine first that you send out an automatic, machine-generated e-mail blast to 10,000 prospects. And let's also say you get lucky and achieve a 0.02% response rate. That's 20 inquiries. And now let's say you close a somewhat likely bequest out of this group in the amount of \$60,000.

Not bad considering your initial investment was less than \$2000 – right?

Wrong.

If you congratulate yourself on that performance, then you're operating under the old rules of e-mail marketing. *That's what most people do. And that's why most of them fail.*

No question: *Short-term success can be intoxicating.* But don't let its dazzle blind you to the importance of long-term considerations.

### **Understanding the Why**

The crucial concept here is non-response is not free. Consider that prospects create value for a non-profit in two ways:

1. Contributing today.
2. Increasing their intent to contribute in the future.

When you sent the example e-mail blast, you sent it to 20 people who responded. But you also sent it to 9,980 prospects who had no interest in the offer.

What if some high-value and high-potential prospects perceived that e-mail – consciously or unconsciously – as spam and as an intrusion on their inbox? If even a fraction of these annoyed non-responders decide to contribute less in the future because they feel you're spamming them, the loss in prospect value and future profits far outweighs the short-term benefits you initially receive from the promotion.

A simple way to clarify your thinking on these issues is to get rid of the idea of ROI. The metric you should use is "Return on Prospect." Because that's where real value and, more importantly, future value, reside. ROP measures the prospect value that's created or destroyed. And this perspective enables a more balanced assessment of your e-mail campaigns and marketing initiatives overall.

### **Statistics of the Living Dead**

*Warning.* These numbers might keep you awake at night. Our research indicates that the open rate of canned, auto-generated planned giving e-mail blasts is very low, some as low as 0.02%. In terms of the example above, that's only twenty responses out of 10,000 e-mails. The click-through rates are pretty scary, too, because they're

**ROI**  
**VS**  
**ROP**

**Warning**

even lower – around 0.003% (3 of a prospect out of 10,000!). And logic tells us that these numbers will decrease yet more as those e-mail blasts keep coming.

To put e-mail in its proper context, remember that 72% of Americans prefer their information via US Mail. I bet when it comes to fundraising, this number is even higher. *And you won't change that by sending them more automated e-mail blasts.*

So before you press that send key, stop and think. You are flirting with alienating your prospects here. Some non-profits – often following the advice of vendors or consultants – send such e-mails on a weekly basis, and see only declining returns.

## Email Fatigue

*It's called email fatigue.* Moreover, if you do not have your prospects' permission to send them e-mail blasts, you could be violating federal regulations by doing so.

### Email is Exhaustive.

We live in a culture of exhaustion. Americans now spend over \$24 billion annually trying to get a good night's sleep (magic foam, adjustable mattresses, massage), and by 2012 the market of insomnia drugs alone is targeted to grow 78%, to 4 billion, even though sleeping pills vs. placebo yield only 11 minutes extra sleep, with side effects. This spending does not include booze. Which

brings me to: smart folks are catching up to e-mail: checking e-mail is exhaustive and makes us stupid (read "Is E-Mail Making You Stupid" in *Entrepreneur Magazine*.)

Why am I covering all this? Don't overdo your e-mail campaigns even if you're using an opted-in list, because after a while, prospects will tune out and think of your e-mails as ... bacon!

## Click & Delete

What's bacon? It's a relative of spam. It's e-mail you want to read — but just not now. *This equals click and delete.*

### Toward A More Prosperous Future

Clear, relevant and timely e-mails not only help boost short-term returns today, but they also enhance the lifetime giving potential of current and future prospects and donors. That's the essence of good e-marketing. And your thinking should be based on Return On Prospect (ROP). Because that's the paradigm for keeping the future in mind.

But we wonder about the e-marketing vendors and consultants who still advise you to lay it on thick with e-blast promotions. Why so they do so when the reasons not to do so are so clear?

Could the answer have something to do with the profit motive?

Rather than speculate, we'll just assume they just don't know any better.

*"You don't need research to succeed in planned giving.  
All you need is common sense."*



Every fundraiser needs this book. Visit [PlannedGiving.Com](http://PlannedGiving.Com) for more information.



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