

Keeping in touch with your congregation, community and donors



Communication is an important foundation stone in fundraising. Communicating the right message, to the right person, in the right way will pave the way to a donation now or in the future. This factsheet addresses four key elements of communication that underpin successful fundraising.

1. Who do you want to communicate with?

There may be a variety of different people you want to communicate with. It is important to adapt your approach and communication style depending on the person or group - one size doesn't fit all. Think about the different groups of people you need to keep in touch with and those that could make a difference to your fundraising:

- **Members of your congregation.** You will know your congregation and therefore what the best approach is when communicating your need for donations during a service or the setting up of a Direct Debit to support the ongoing activity of your church
- **Local people who don't attend services.** This group may support your church as they have a family connection, have a love of local history or share a community concern with your church project.
- **Individual donors.** These are people who have either made significant donations in the past or you are planning to ask for a large donation. It is important for your fundraising to give these individuals time and attention to get the right approach for them. Some donors may want to get regularly involved in a campaign whilst others may want to be left alone once they have given.
- **Trust and foundation grant managers.** Many trust funders are non-religious, but they still support churches that are running projects benefitting their local communities, as their focus is to support people who need help most.

2. Be clear what you want to communicate

Before you think about different ways to communicate the how, you first need to be clear about **what** exactly it is that you want to communicate. Your tone and timing will vary depending on what it is you are communicating:

- You may be **asking for donations** for a range of activities. Asking people to donate now to a food bank project or a befriending service for isolated vulnerable people, will have a more urgent tone than if you are asking for a donation towards a long-term capital project such as a major roof repair.
- You may be **communicating with a past funder**, to keep them up-to-date on a project they supported last year. You will need to show accountability and demonstrate the impact a funder has made. To do this, gather information about completed milestones into a single document, and use positive language even if some things are behind schedule.
- You may be **asking people to act as an ambassador for a fundraising campaign**. When identifying who could be a fundraising ambassador, consider who is a positive influence, good with people, willing to be the face of your campaign, and is in a position to either make a donation, or ask people in their network to donate. This could be someone who already knows and supports your church, or someone new to your church who plays a key role in local community work or civic life.

- You may be **asking for more**, by either asking for another donation from someone who has already given or asking for a further grant from a funder. In both cases, it is important to get the timing right. If you have only recently made a request for a donation don't ask again too soon. For grant funders, check when you can go back to ask for a further grant. It is important to be clear about why you are asking for more. For example, it might be that the first community befriending project that people funded last year was so successful that you want to run it again and to do that you need support and hence your request for a further donation.

3. Telling your story

A powerful way to communicate is by telling your story. By bringing people along on a journey through telling a story you are enabling them to feel invested in a project, emotionally and spiritually. In fundraising, the term 'case for support' is used. Put simply, this is another way of telling your story. Further guidance on writing your case for support can be found on the Ecclesiastical fundraising hub <https://www.ecclesiastical.com/church/fundraising/case-support-guidance/>.

4. How to keep in touch

There are several formats in which you can communicate , including:

- ✓ Displayed posters on your own church building
- ✓ Emails, newsletters
- ✓ News page on your website
- ✓ Contacting by phone or letter

To help you organise your time and efforts, think about tracking your communications. This is helpful because you will be able to see your progress in securing donations, judge the success of a particular kind of approach, and schedule when to make further asks.

Tracking your communications – **example table**

Who was contacted?	When?	What did you ask them for?	Method of contact?	GDPR consent (Yes/No)	Response	Gift aid on donation (Yes/No)	Next action?
Miss Taylor	1 Oct 2020	Roof repair support	Phone call	Yes	Indicated she would like to support it.	No	Send appeal letter from the Rev Jones.
The Smith Charitable Trust	1 Nov 2020	A grant towards the roof repair project	Online application form	N/A	Automatic email response saying they will let us know in December.	N/A	Call in early December if we have not had an answer by then.

Top tips

- The GDPR column on the table above is a simple way to make sure you are GDPR compliant. Record whether the person has ticked the consent box for their data to be kept by you and agreed to be added to your mailing list.
- Make sure to include a Gift Aid column to record whether the person has given permission to collect Gift Aid on their donation.
- It can't be overlooked how important it is to thank your supporters and donors. It's about making your donors feel acknowledge, appreciated and important e.g. 'we couldn't have done it without you'. Thanking also enables you to ask again with confidence. There are several ways you can thank donors; consider which is appropriate for your church and individual supporter:
 - ✓ Physical recognition – e.g. a donor board or book
 - ✓ Letter from a key person at the church
 - ✓ A mention in project materials or newsletter
 - ✓ A mention on social media or in the local press
 - ✓ Benefact Trust have some helpful tips on how you can get your story in the media and how you can thank donors via social media on their advice and resources hub: <https://benefacttrust.co.uk/advice-and-resources>.

Want to find out more?

A dedicated helpline has been set up to help support churches with the fundraising hub.

If you or your church would like support with our online resources please request a call back via the church fundraising helpline on **0345 601 9959** or the online form on the fundraising hub and we will be in touch.

And don't forget to keep checking the fundraising hub for more updates.

www.ecclesiastical.com/churchfundraising

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