



Kirsten was one of our volunteers who rocked her fundraising efforts! We asked her to share her great ideas!

Fundraising Letter Ideas

by Kirsten Glass

I don't know how to fundraise. I have done it once about 15 years ago, but that's it. For Mothers Without Borders I raised over \$8,000 in just a couple of weeks and it was easy and I could have raised more if I hadn't had to pack my bags and go on the long flight to Zambia....

Here is how I did it:

1. Get your contacts in order:

- a. Simply think about everybody you know. Make a list of all of your friends, Facebook connections, Co-workers, former co-workers, LinkedIn contacts, neighbors, former neighbors, family, acquaintances, kids' friends' parents, landlords, mechanics, vets, dentists, spouse's friends, etc. Don't think about if they might or might not give you money, just put them on the list. Also include businesses that you frequently (or not so frequently) go to. I included my favorite sushi restaurant, grocery store, hair dresser, nail salon, my children's school & daycare. And I didn't stop there.
- b. Now include everybody you don't know: I hit-up the lady working at the library, and my dry cleaner. I literally had "guy at gas station" on my list. And then go even further: I wrote to Michelle Obama. And even though I didn't get a donation, I did get a letter from her secretary typed on pretty White House stationary. You might be surprised with how many people you come up with. I had no idea I was that popular, or sorta know 600 people.

2. Find the best contact information: Once you have created a list of everyone you know (and don't know), get their email addresses or mailing addresses. There is nothing more frustrating than being ready to hit the send button with your great letter and not being able to find the email address, which you know you have somewhere. Frankly, posting your cause on Facebook won't bring in the amount you need because it's not personal (though it can help). I added everybody's email to my list and if I didn't have it I contacted each person asking for it. For the rare cases of people without email I noted down their mailing address.

3. Write a great letter: I used the Mothers Without Borders letter draft and personalized it. A lot of people do not want to read about the facts/statistics in Africa, but care more about your connection/reasoning why you are doing this. Put in some humor if you can and keep it short. Include only the credit card info (most people will pay by credit card), otherwise it gets too long. If somebody wants to send a check they'll come to you.

4. Time to send emails: I copied and pasted the main letter into each email individually (I suck at merging), and also added a **personal note to each and every single email**. It took me about 8 hours to send my close to 600 emails. Time well spent! For people whose email I didn't have I printed the letter, included the payment slip and a **prepaid envelope** with my return address. I told them to just mail a check to me made out to MWB, and that I'll do the rest. You want to make it easy and convenient for people.

5. Most important: Follow up

- a. **I cannot stress enough how important follow up is.** I followed up with each of my contacts, sometimes up to 10 times if they were stubborn and didn't want to hand over the cash. And keep in mind that you only have a short window of follow up time. You don't want your email to be buried in their inbox. I deleted all of my old, non-donation emails in my "sent" folder before I started. Then every few days I would bother my team leader to get an updated donation list because if you don't know who sent money you can't follow up. I then deleted everybody in the sent box who sent money (after sending them a heartfelt thank you note of course). And then I went every other day into the sent box and resent the emails to people I didn't yet get donations from. At the beginning there were many, many, many emails to resend and very few people sent money right away. **Most people need 2-3 reminders.** But the list got shorter and shorter. I didn't stop until I had a 100% response rate. Most people I asked for money sent me money. I know some of them did just so I would leave them alone. Keep in mind: you have nothing to lose. You already have the no, so why not go for the YES.
- b. I also noticed that a good time to send your follow up email is on a **late Friday night** (this shows you my busy social life). That way people will have it on Saturday morning when they don't receive as many emails as they do on a weekday. And, with nothing else to do that morning and in a good mood because they slept in, they will pull out their credit card and get it over with.

6. What to do when you get rejected: When you receive a "No, sorry I can't donate" – don't panic! It's okay. Life goes on. However, I would reply by saying "Ok. I understand. Times are tough. However, enough about you, could you be so kind and forward my email to a handful of your friends, maybe they will donate." This way I received donations from people who I didn't even know and it took some detective work to find out where they came from (you then want to also thank that person who set this up).

7. Don't be afraid to ask! And don't be afraid to ask for more:

- a. I had a case where a wealthy person gave me a generous yet lower than expected donation. When I called him to thank him I respectfully suggested doubling his donation and he did! I know not everybody is comfortable by doing that, but maybe try it out. Get out of your comfort zone (there is no learning in your comfort zone and very little comfort in your learning zone – just one of the brilliant principles I learned in Zambia).
- b. Also some people might surprise you. I got donations from around the world, some from people I had only met once or twice, some so generous that it blew my mind.

8. Send updates: I sent monthly updates to my supporters (countdown how much longer until my trip and how much money I had raised) and that prompted a few people to donate again when they saw that I still needed more money. (Also remember to send them a report and pictures upon your return)

9. Final thoughts: Newsflash: It turns out: People are good. People want to help. Mothers Without Borders is such a great cause, it speaks to everyone. My largest donation surprisingly came from a hard working Argentinian woman who doesn't have children and barely knows me. I learned that people do not necessarily want to make the trip to Zambia (in fact very few do), but are thankful that you will and therefore will support you.

That is my input. I know this sounds like a lot of work, but if I can do it (busy mom of 3 with a full time job) you can do it. And it's time well spent. Trust me! I hope you find it helpful. Please contact me directly at Kirstenglass2010@gmail.com if you have any questions and/or if I can help you in any way--it would be my pleasure! **Much Love, Kirsten**