

How Text Messaging Improves Multichannel Engagement for Nonprofit Fundraising



Presented by

mobile
commons 



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Introduction

Is your nonprofit looking for better ways to improve your fundraising results?

Well, you've come to the right place. Text messaging is the best way to engage your supporters, move them up the ladder of engagement, and drive real fundraising results.

This eBook will guide you through all the whys, how tos and best practices of using text messaging to make your next fundraising campaign the best it's ever been.

Here are just a few examples of nonprofits who have seen amazing results by using text messaging as part of their fundraising strategy:

- ✓ **The Human Rights Campaign** found that text message subscribers were 2.5 times more likely to donate than a non-text message subscriber
- ✓ **The Humane Society of the United States** found that members who received a text message reminding them to donate were more likely to give by 77 percent.
- ✓ **The Jewish Federations of North America** raised thousands of dollars with a text to pledge campaign.

Text message
subscribers are 250%
more likely to donate.

Members who received a
text message reminder to
donate were 77% more
likely to donate.

Why You Should Read This eBook



If you're a nonprofit, a big part of your focus is progress. Progress towards a well-informed public, towards a cleaner planet, towards a better quality of life for everyone.

Text messaging is the most direct, accessible, and important communication channel available today.

Everyone has a mobile phone that they use on a regular basis, and the popularity of text messaging continues to rise. By building a mobile list, your organization can open up a whole new universe for interacting with your supporters. We don't speak lightly when we say that text messaging truly is the key to successful nonprofit engagement.

In this **eBook**, we will explain how text messaging integrates with your other outreach channels to optimize the results of your fundraising campaigns. We will then take you through our step-by-step guide on how to incorporate text messaging as a crucial part of your fundraising process. You will also find case studies and examples throughout on how nonprofits have successfully integrated text messaging in their fundraising campaigns.

Finally, keep your eyes peeled for our “**Pro Tips.**” These tidbits will help you bring your A-game to your fundraising campaign!

Nonprofits + Text Messaging = Fundraising Success!

Q: How do you move supporters up your ladder of engagement?

A: With multi-channel engagement!

To maximize your outreach efforts, your nonprofit should be connecting with supporters on every rung of your ladder of engagement. In this day and age, there are hundreds of platforms nonprofits can utilize to reach supporters: **email, social media, radio, television, print - and, of course, text messaging!**

Unfortunately, the effect of stacking one channel on top of the other can often fracture your message rather than reinforce it. That's what makes text messaging so singularly remarkable. Instead of adding another layer to your marketing mix, text messaging synthesizes your pre-existing channels to amplify your core message and reach people in a more effective and concise way.

In other words, by adding text messaging to your outreach, you can effectively drive your subscribers to becoming better supporters, and ultimately, better donors.



Amplify Your Message with Text Messaging!

Text Messaging's One-Two Punch for Engagement

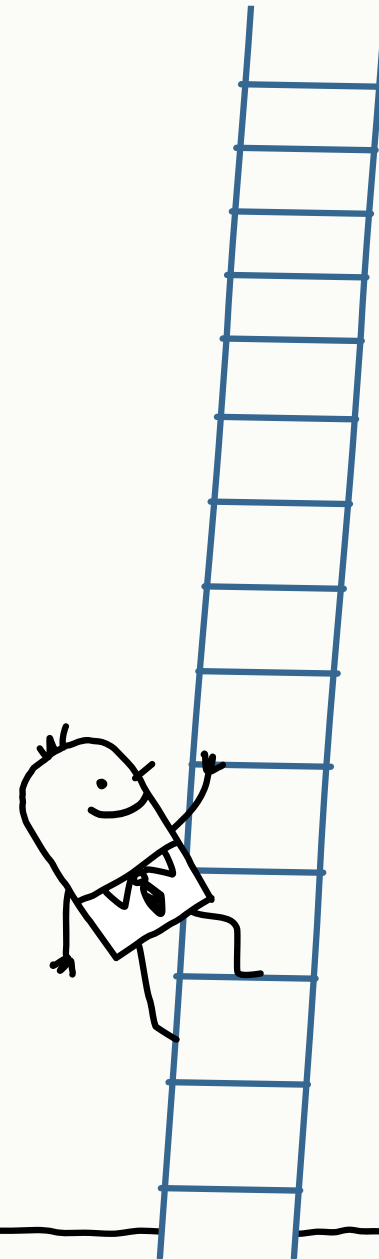
By adding text messaging to your multi-channel engagement strategy, your fundraising campaign will accomplish two goals:

1

Connect with supporters wherever they are on your ladder of engagement.

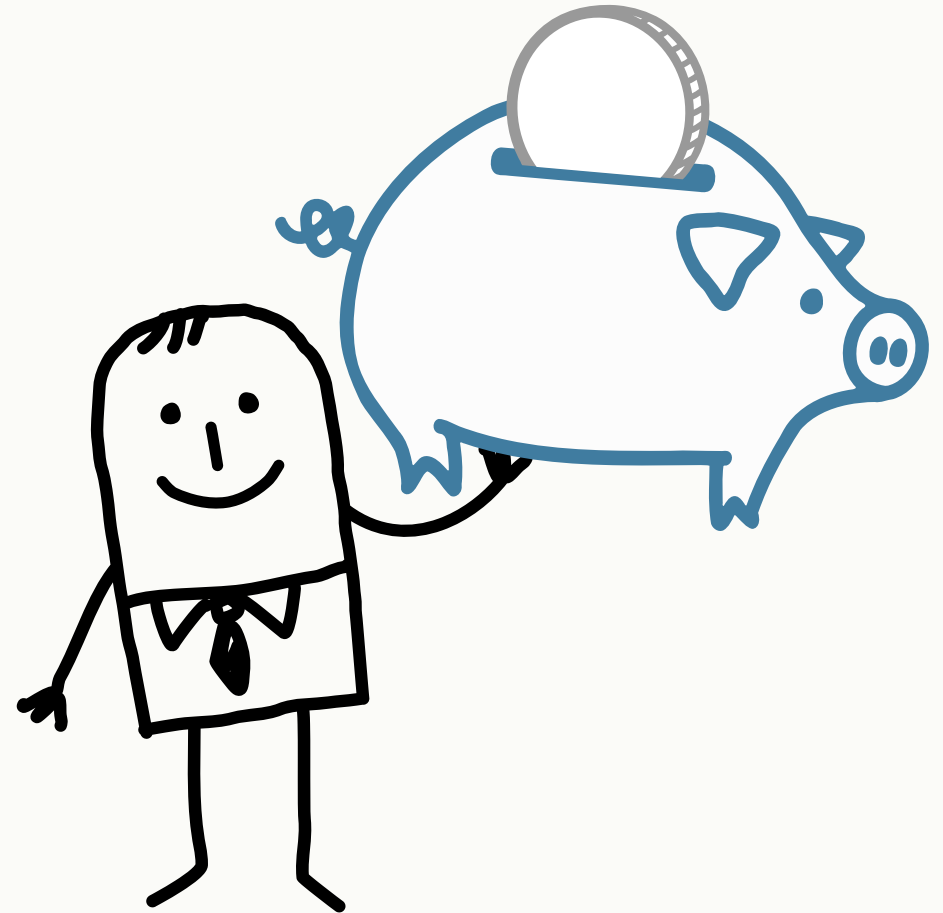
2

Move supporters up your ladder of engagement to become recurring, large gift donors and evangelists for your cause.




Just Consider These Statistics:

- ✓ Text message calls to action are **five times as successful** than email calls to action.
- ✓ Studies show that the conversion rate for an email call to action is just 8.22%. With text messaging, that number jumps to **14.06%**.
- ✓ Nonprofit mobile lists **grow twice as fast** as email lists.
- ✓ The Human Rights Campaign found that text message subscribers are **250% more likely to donate** than email-only subscribers.



More likely to donate!



The value of a mobile subscriber is 3x higher than the value of an email-only subscriber.

Source: The Human Rights Campaign



Case Study: The Human Rights Campaign

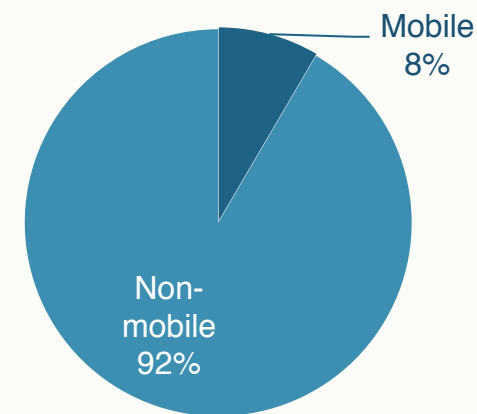
The Human Rights Campaign, an advocacy group fighting for LGBT rights, worked to build its mobile list and saw substantial success in promoting its brand across a wide supporter base over the past two years. Although contributions made over mobile web forms weren't driving a significant amount of donations, the HRC wanted to find out whether being on the mobile list had any impact on actual donations.

A comparative analysis of the HRC's fundraising data for its mobile and email lists from 2013-2014 revealed some amazing insights:

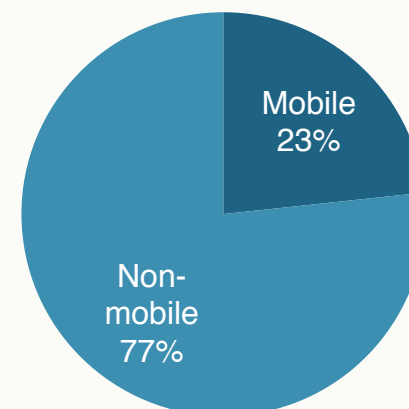
- ✓ Supporters who are text message subscribers are 250% more likely to donate, compared to supporters who are email-only subscribers.
- ✓ The value of a text message subscriber was three times higher than the value of an email-only subscriber in 2013.

The HRC's findings prove that having a mobile list is in fact extremely valuable for nonprofit fundraising. Even though text message subscribers may not be making donations with their mobile phones, engaging them over multiple channels affects their actions and significantly increases their likelihood of contributing to fundraising campaigns.

January 2013
Subscribers



January 2013
Donations



FAQ: Text Messaging 101 Basics

1. What are do SMS and MMS stand for?

“SMS” stands for “short message service.” It’s more or less a fancy way of saying text message. “MMS” stands for “multimedia messaging service.” SMS pertains to messages that carry only text; MMS refers to messages that contain additional content, such as pictures or videos.

2. How long is each text message?

Text messages are limited to 160 characters. Organizations also need to include opt-out messaging, i.e. Reply STOP to quit, HELP for info, and Msg&DataRatesMayApply, at the end of text messages at least once a month. You can read more about messaging requirements in the CTIA handbook.

3. What is a shortcode?

A shortcode is a special 5 or 6 digit phone number designed for companies and organizations to send SMS and MMS messages. Just as you text with your friends from your own mobile number, you can text back and forth with organizations using a shortcode.

4. What is a keyword?

A keyword is the word that people type in the body of their text message and send to your shortcode in order to opt in to your mobile list. Keywords must be between 2 and 20 characters, with no accents or apostrophes allowed. Provided that the keyword isn't already taken by other organization or otherwise reserved on your shortcode (like STOP & HELP, for example), it should be available for use.

5. How do I get a keyword and shortcode?

Shortcodes can be purchased from the Common Short Code Administration (CSCA). A shortcode can be leased for three, six, or 12 months for a set price. There is no cost or approval process for keywords: if a keyword is available on your shortcode, you can use it.

6. Can I text anyone with a shortcode?

No, in order to text a mobile user you must first receive express permission from him or her. One way for a mobile user to express consent to receive text messages is for them to text your keyword to your shortcode. People can also opt in to your mobile list online or in person.

7. Is text messaging only a one-way communication channel?

Text messaging is a two-way communication channel, whether you are using a mobile platform to send and receive messages, or your personal phone. In other words, your subscribers can text back and forth with you the same way they do with their friends and family. You can send the same message to everyone on your list, segment them into groups that each receive a different message, or even send messages to individual users. You can also run a live SMS chat with your subscribers to facilitate a personal, direct, two-way conversation.

How to Incorporate Text Messaging Into Your Fundraising Strategy

1. Start by Building a Mobile List

Promoting your text messaging campaign is a great way to reach new supporters and start moving them up your ladder of engagement. The easiest way to attract subscribers is to promote your text message call to action on all your existing media channels, advertising, and outreach. From billboards to flyers, emails to social media, TV commercials to radio ads - display your call to action everywhere so that more people can see it and opt in to your mobile list.

2. Craft the Perfect Call to Action

A text message call to action is how you ask people to join your mobile campaign. In other words, you ask them to text a keyword to a shortcode, such as text "JOIN to 662266."




Human Rights Campaign · 1,344,334 like this
37 minutes ago · 🌐

To sign-up for critical text message updates from HRC, text MARRIAGE to 30644 from your mobile phone.

Like and Share this if you'll be looking for the latest news to come out of the Supreme Court from HRC.

Like · Comment · Share

👍 1,163

Pro Tip: CTA Strategies

A good call to action should do four things:

1. Address your target audience.
2. Identify a clear purpose.
3. Make it easy to take action.
4. Let the users know what they are signing up for

There are many different strategies that you can use to design an effective call to action. United We Dream, for example, appealed to the emotional side of their supporters by asking them to share their mom's story over text message on Mother's Day. Reform Immigration for America, on the other hand, used humorous images as the backdrop to their calls to action on Twitter to catch people's attention.

Ultimately, you want to make sure your call to action is clearly visible, bright, and catchy. Choose an easy to spell keyword that relates to your organization or campaign. Simplicity is key!



Engaging Your New Text Message Subscribers

Q: Great, now that I have a mobile list what should I do with it?

A: Now that you have a mobile list, the first hurdle is over. Now you can start using text messaging to foster engagement, increase supporter donations, and move supporters up your ladder of engagement.

Once your supporters opt in to your mobile list, you'll want to engage them consistently throughout the year - not just during fundraising season. Here are three tips on how to use text messages to interact with your subscribers and keep them invested in your cause.

1. Welcome your new subscribers
2. Plan your text messages
3. Make it personal and relatable

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Welcome Subscribers

Plan Your Text Messages

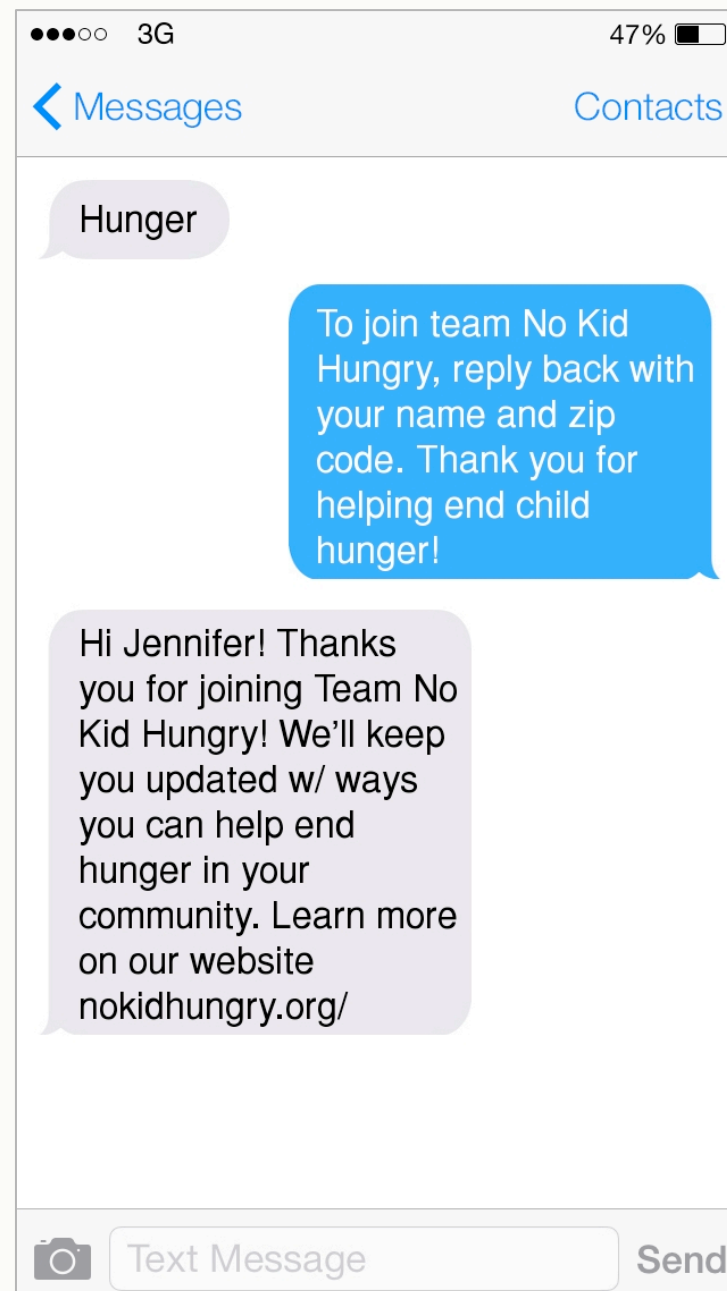
Make it Personal and
Relatable

1. Welcome your new subscribers

Make a great first impression by thanking your new subscribers for signing up for your text messages. Be sure to tell them what and how often they can expect to hear from you in the future, and gather their personal information such as **name, email address and interests**. This data will allow you to segment your subscribers into groups in order to target your future outreach and yield better results from each campaign. Conclude your welcome messaging with a mobile-friendly web link to an online resource so you can continue to engage supporters over other channels!

2. Plan your text messages

Timing is everything when it comes to using text messaging in your fundraising campaign. Typically, we recommend that nonprofits message their subscribers 2-3 times per month with varied content. People won't give if the only time that you message them is to ask for money!



3. Make it personal and relatable

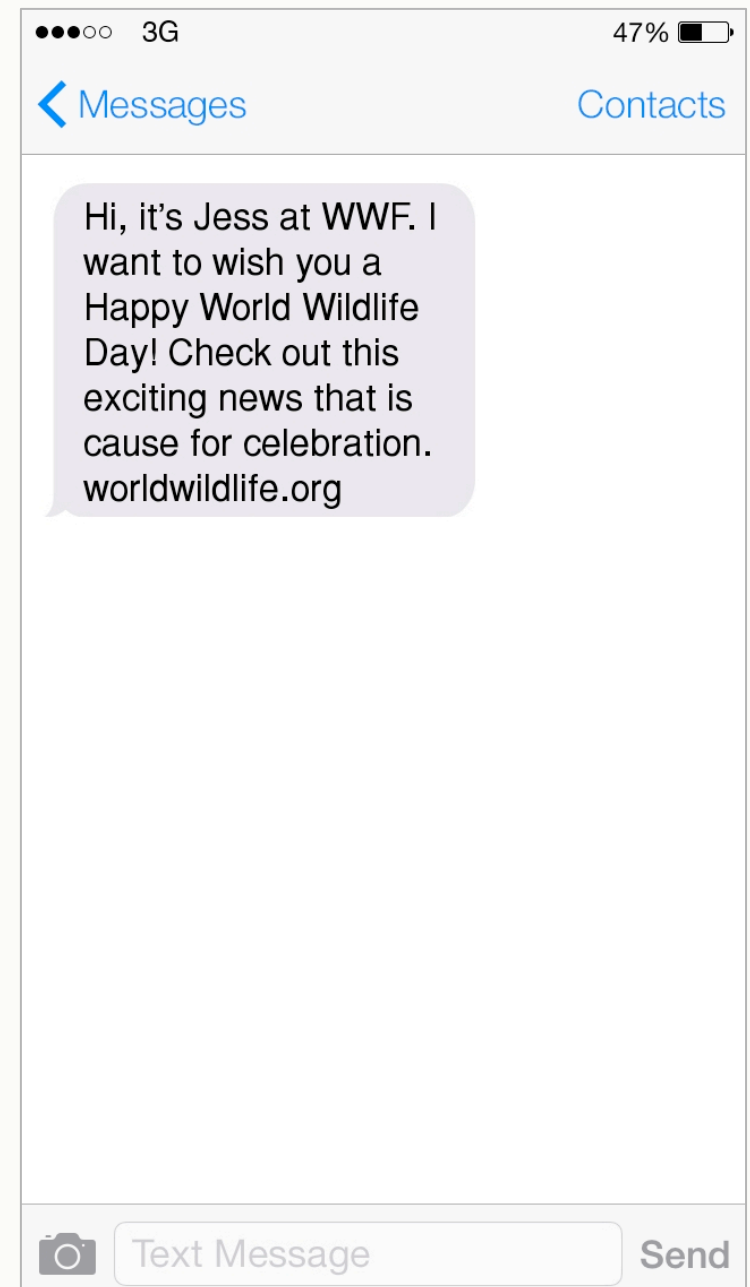
Receiving a personal message is always better than receiving a generic one. Whenever possible, address the person you are texting and sign off with your own name rather than the name of your organization. Personalized texts encourage recipients to respond more so than mass texts. **The World Wildlife Fund found that by signing off their text messages with a personal name, response rates increased by up to 250%!**


Another way to engage subscribers is to tie in topical events in your text messages, especially if they relate to your organization. For example, Greenpeace used the International Day of Peace as a springboard for reaching out to supporters. The Sierra Club saw the summer solstice as a chance to wish people a happy solstice and ask if they were interested in solar power. Be creative in your messaging! Think about your texts as personal conversations rather than mass broadcasts and you'll achieve better results.

Finally, try to highlight your campaign's narrative in your messaging.

- ✓ What are your organization's overall goals?
- ✓ How does the work you're doing right now relate to them?
- ✓ Why is your work important, not just in the long run, but also in the here and now?

Educating your subscribers about your organization will keep them invested in your cause and more likely to give during fundraising season.



An illustration showing a variety of hands in different colors (blue, green, orange, purple, pink, yellow, and grey) holding up white smartphones. The hands are arranged in a fan-like pattern, pointing towards the top right. Each smartphone has a different colored screen that matches the hand it is being held by. A blue speech bubble is positioned in the upper right area of the image.

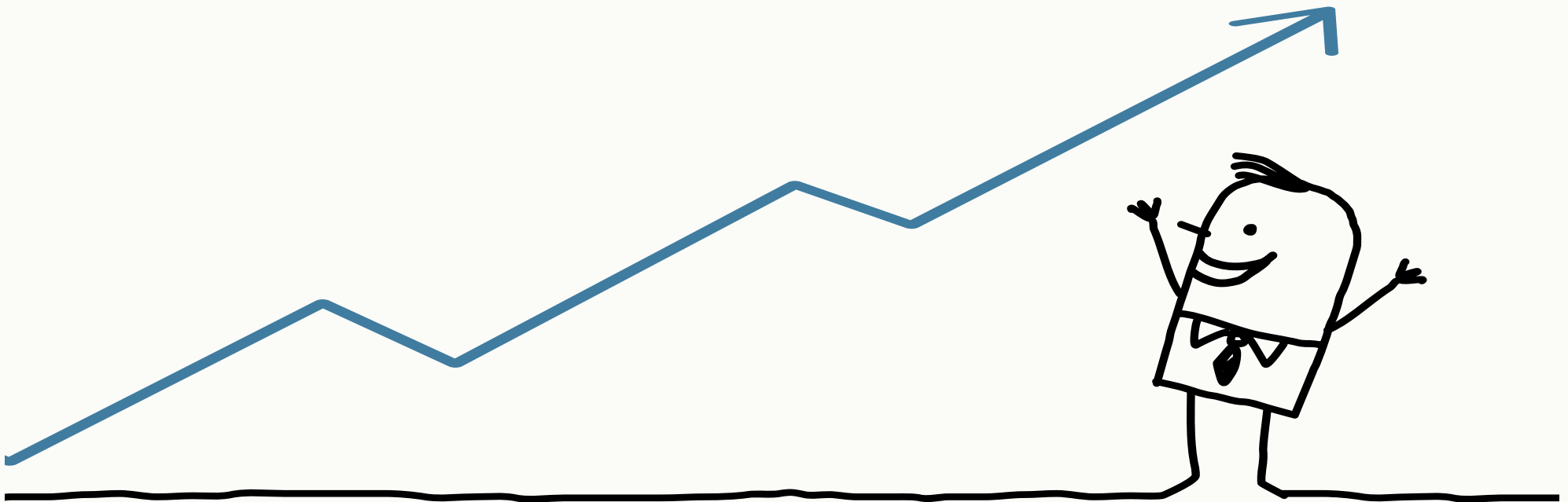
Text message
subscribers are 250%
more likely to donate.

Source: The Human Rights Campaign

Increasing Donations

After welcoming your supporters, sending creative messages that engages them on a personal level, and keying them into your campaign's overall narrative, you're ready to start using text messages to increase your donations. Here are three ways you can accomplish this next step:

1. Send a simple text message reminder to make a donation.
2. Ask for a donation pledge over text message.
3. Include a link to a mobile-optimized web form directly in your text message.



1. Send a simple text message reminder to make a donation

The easiest way to tie in text messaging to your fundraising campaign is to send out a simple reminder to donate. Sometimes people just need an extra nudge to take the final step. A text message is a short, timely way to bypass all the clutter of emails and voicemails and send that reminder without overwhelming your supporters.



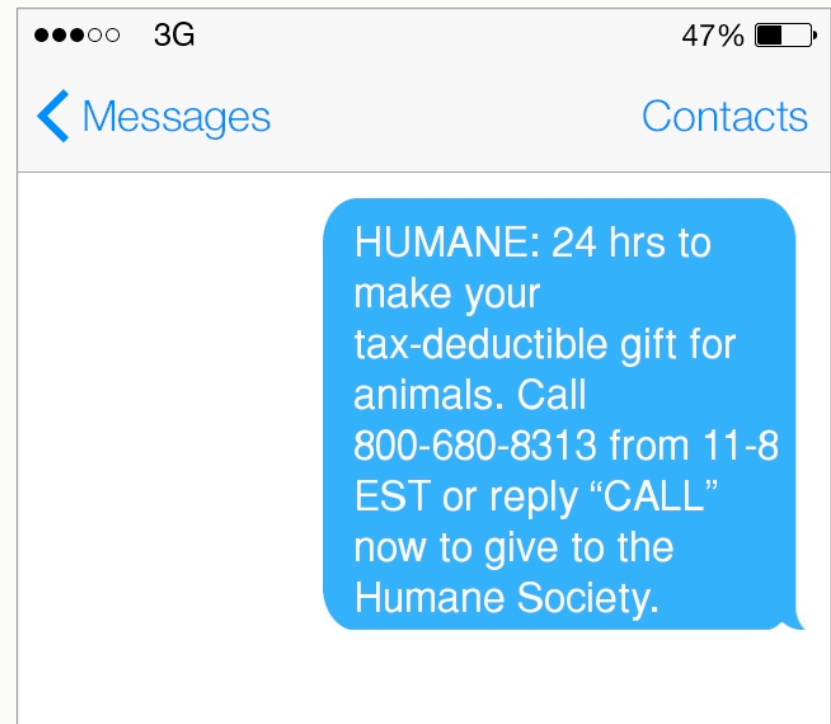
Case Study: The Humane Society of the United States

The Humane Society of the United States is one of the nation's largest and most effective animal protection organizations.

They decided to test their end-of-year fundraising campaign reminders by splitting supporters into two groups: one who received both text message and email reminders to donate online, and one who only received email reminders.

HSUS found that the first group was 77% more likely to donate online than the second group!

By using both email and text messaging, HSUS was able to increase the likelihood that supporters would make an online donation.



2. Ask for a donation pledge over text message

It's not always convenient for supporters to make a donation the minute they receive your fundraising ask message. However, you can make it easier by asking them to respond with a pledge to donate a specific amount that they can finalize later. You can then remind them of their pledge when they decide to make the donation online, over the phone, or in person.

Regardless of whether or not a supporter makes a donation, it's important to remember that every conversation with a supporter helps to move him or her further along the path to donating.

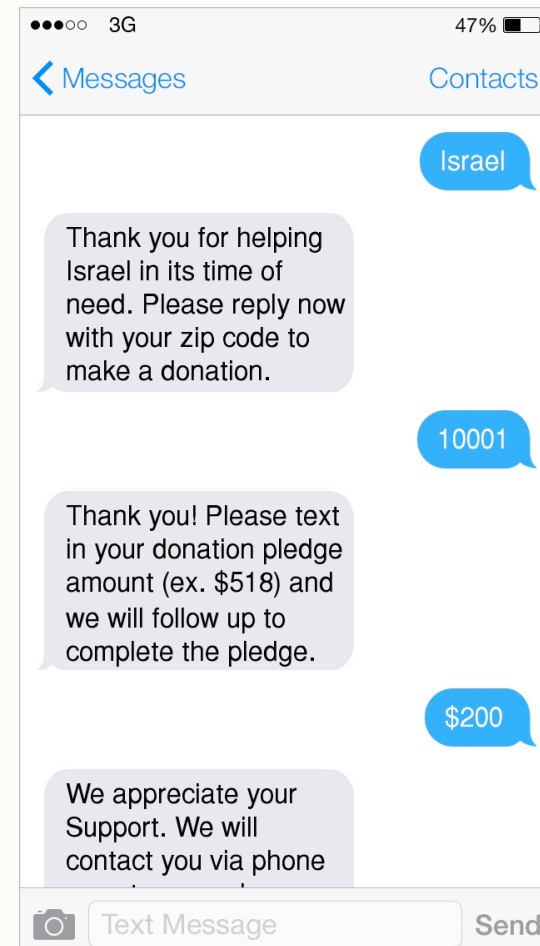


Case Study: Jewish Federations of America

In late 2012, the Jewish Federations of North America needed to raise crisis funds to help Israelis recovering from the conflict with Gaza. To make it as easy as possible for people to give without setting arbitrary limits on the size of their donations, JFNA decided to set up a text to pledge campaign. By asking supporters to text in donation amounts, JFNA received over \$6,000 in pledges.

Ultimately, they raised \$3,377 from the follow-up phone calls with the pledgers!

By leaving the gift amount up to their supporters, they were able to receive much larger contributions than if they asked for donations on the spot.



3. Include a link to a mobile-optimized web form directly in your text message

The key to getting supporters to give is minimizing the number of steps they need to take in order to make a donation. By adding a link to a mobile web form that autofills their basic information, such as name, email, and address, supporters simply have to fill out their credit card information to make a contribution. It doesn't get much easier than that!



The No Kid Hungry campaign, run by Share Our Strength, seeks to end childhood hunger in America. Their fundraising strategy includes using Convio forms to allow supporters to make donations using their mobile phones. By testing various layouts for their online donation page, they were able to **increase the donation rate for visitors from 17% to 25%!**



Pro Tip: Optimize your mobile donation web forms

Here are some best practices for mobile donation forms, courtesy of the No Kid Hungry campaign:

- ✓ Make it thumb friendly with large buttons. If your users can't complete the whole donation with one thumb, chances are they aren't going to give.
- ✓ Have fewer fields and plenty of space in between them. A phone screen is small, so the fewer fields, the cleaner and less cluttered the space looks.
- ✓ Customize your follow up communication. If the supporter made the donation by clicking on a text message link, thank them with a text message. If they clicked on an email, follow up with a thank-you email.

FAQ: What About Text to Give Campaigns?

Text to give, or text to donate, is a way for people to make a donation to a nonprofit organization directly by sending a text message. Text to give is reserved for nonprofits that are registered as a 501(c)(3) and have annual revenues exceeding \$500,000. Donation amounts are limited to \$5 or \$10 per donation and are added to the mobile user's next phone bill. Text to give is closely regulated by the Mobile Giving Foundation, and organizations cannot use mobile giving shortcodes to send additional text messages to donors. For more information, you can visit <http://www.mobilegiving.org/>.

Generally, we only recommend a text to give campaign in very limited situations, such as emergencies or natural disasters, for the following reasons:

1. Text to give limits the amount that your users can donate at one time, thereby undercutting your fundraising efforts. No Kid Hungry received seven times as many donations over mobile-friendly donation web forms compared to a text to give campaign. The Jewish Federation of America was also able to quickly raise much more money with text to pledge than they would have with a text to give campaign.
2. Text to give is a one-time interaction between your nonprofit and the donor. With a text to give campaign, you cannot use the text message conversation to gather any additional data on your donors, such as name or email address. This makes it difficult to continue the relationship with them after the donation has been made.
3. Not everyone can donate with his or her cell phone, and donors sometimes choose to cancel their donations. Some phones are blocked from making donations due to phone plan limitations or carrier policies. No Kid Hungry reported that about 30% of text to give donations never made it to their organization!
4. Text to give donations take time to process. Typically, donations are transferred to the nonprofit organization from the carriers three months after the campaign. For many nonprofits, three months might as well be a whole fiscal year.

Given these limitations, we believe nonprofits can enjoy much more success from other kinds of text messaging engagement rather than simply running a text to give campaign.

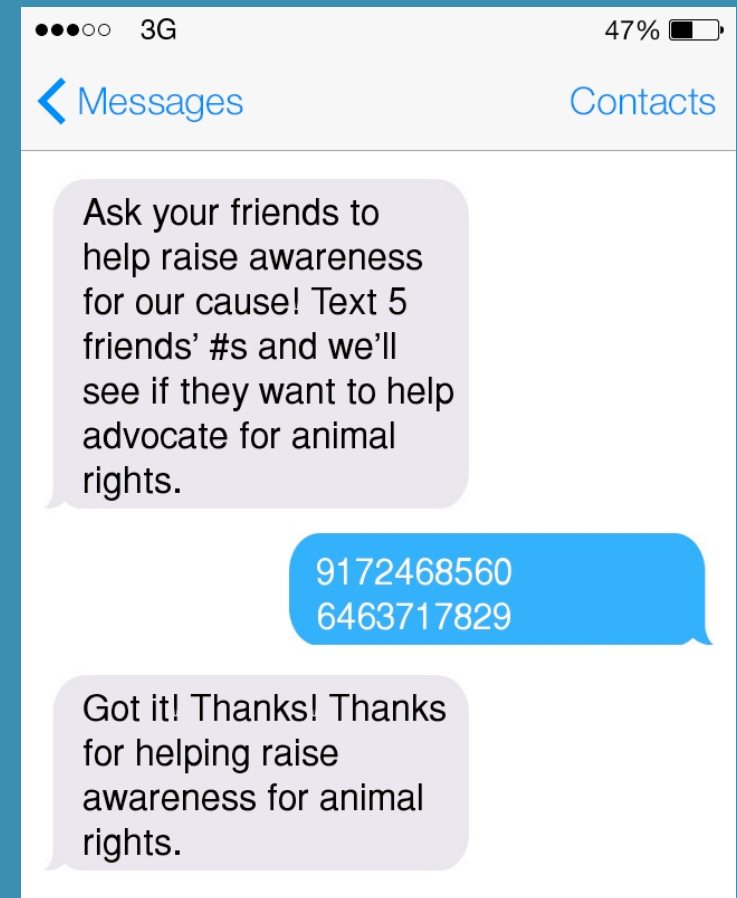
Continuing the Relationship

One of the most important parts of a fundraising campaign is thanking your donors. With text messaging, you can send personal thank yous to each of your donors to show them how much you appreciate their support. You should also use this opportunity to continue to build your relationship with donors by sending them text message updates showing what your organization has achieved with the help of their donations. Recurring donors give more money than those who simply gift once, so it's definitely beneficial for your nonprofit to keep your text message subscribers engaged!

Pro Tip: Spread the word with Tell-a-friend

Word of mouth is a powerful tool for raising awareness for your fundraising campaign. Tell-a-friend is a text messaging feature that lets your subscribers text in the mobile numbers of their friends to ask them if they want to join your campaign. Once those friends accept, congratulations! You now have more valuable supporters that you can engage and start texting. Tell-a-friend is a great way to grow your mobile list while giving your supporters an outlet for sharing their excitement about your cause with their friends. It's the perfect opportunity for supporters to become evangelists for your organization and reflects well on the great work you do!

Lastly, it is normal to experience higher-than-normal opt-out rates during fundraising season. Don't worry: as long as your incoming donations outweigh your drop-outs, you're doing fine. However, keep an eye on your best supporters - if they start opting out of your campaign, you might want to reconsider your text messaging tactics



Conclusion & Considerations

Thank you for taking time to read our eBook!

We hope you enjoyed learning about how multi-channel engagement turns newcomers to your organization into invested supporters and recurring donors, and the exciting results that text messaging can bring to your fundraising efforts.

Now that you have an idea of how to incorporate text messaging into your fundraising campaign, here are a few considerations before you embark on your first campaign:

- ✓ **Adding text messaging to your fundraising campaign is not an overnight process.** It takes time to build your mobile list, to experiment with different types of messaging in order to find what works best for your nonprofit, and to start seeing some of the amazing results like those experienced by the Humane Society of the United States and the Human Rights Campaign. The hardest part of your campaign is going to be that initial and ongoing step - building your mobile list - but it will also be the most rewarding!
- ✓ **Small donors are worth your time and energy.** Most people do not immediately start out giving in large increments. With text messaging, you can gradually nurture new supporters into large gift recurring donors. Each subscriber is valuable - you never know who might end up being your biggest supporter!
- ✓ **Text messaging is about more than raising money.** It's about nurturing relationships between your organization and your donors. By creating a personal connection with each of your supporters, you are opening up the possibilities in which your organization can engage with them. Text messaging also allows you to give back to your supporters just as much as they give to you. Goodwill between you and your members extends much further than the dollar amount of their donations!
- ✓ **Every nonprofit can use text messaging to engage supporters.** We hope that the diversity of the case studies that we presented throughout this eBook has illustrated the fact that the size and purpose of your nonprofit does not matter when it comes to using text messaging. The step by step process and Pro Tips that we provided throughout this book can be used by all kinds of organizations to achieve success with fundraising!

Ultimately, using text messaging in your next fundraising campaign isn't a matter of if, it's a question of how. And remember: this is just the beginning! You can use text messaging for all kinds of engagement, from volunteer management to advocacy campaigns to community programming.

About Mobile Commons

Upland's Mobile Commons is a leading mobile strategy and mobile messaging platform serving some of the biggest brands, government agencies, healthcare groups and nonprofit organizations in the world, including the National Cancer Institute, Bowling Green State University, New York Presbyterian Hospital, the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Share Our Strength and Viacom. With our easy-to-use platform and best-in-class features, Mobile Commons transforms the way society uses mobile to communicate. Whether you want to help mothers quit smoking, enroll students in college, protect the environment or engage with consumers, Mobile Commons helps organization drive mobile engagement and see real results.

To learn more about Mobile Commons, please visit us
www.mobilecommons.com or email us at info@mobilecommons.com.



Presented by



Resources

2013 eNonprofit Benchmarks Study

Direct Marketing Association

MMA Global, Achieving Tangible ROI Multimedia Text Message Marketing

Mobile Giving Foundation

Pew Research Center, Smartphone Ownership

Mobile Commons case studies:

- Human Rights Campaign
- Humane Society of the United States
- Jewish Federations of North America
- World Wildlife Fund
- No Kid Hungry (Share Our Strength)