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The Critical Piece That's Probably Missing from Your Fundraising Multiplier Offer

by [George Crankovic](#), on 9/20/18 8:00 AM



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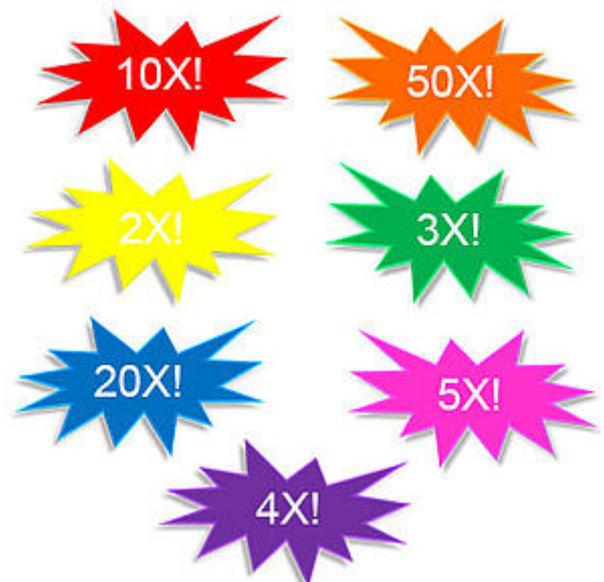
An email from an international relief charity trumpets, “Your gift will multiply 5 times in impact!”

An appeal letter from a military charity bears a stamp at the top that shouts, “\$1 = \$41!”

No doubt, you recognize offers like these—they're multipliers. And, as we know, multipliers are generally pretty effective in fundraising appeals, for a good reason—donors tend to like them.

And why not? An offer that's built around a multiplier is a good deal for donors, and everybody likes a good deal. But sometimes, multipliers aren't as effective as they could be when they fail to include a basic piece that's necessary for response: credibility.

Your donors have to believe your offer, no matter how enticing it might appear on paper, or you're lost.



If, in your appeal, you say something like, “Your gift will do 10 times more good,” but then stop there, without explaining how it might be possible that the donor’s gift can multiply 10 times, you’re failing to provide the credibility that will give your donors the confidence to give.

You risk undercutting the very offer you’re making to your donors, because you’re presenting what amounts to an unsubstantiated claim. That’s a blunder in the world of commercial advertising, and it should be considered the same in fundraising.

Naturally, some donors will take your offer at face value and simply believe what you say. But it’s likely that many other donors won’t.

Presented with your appeal, they’re thinking, “Wow, this is great. My donation is going to do 10 times more good.” And then, a second later: “Wait a minute. How is that even possible?” And if you’re not there with a plausible reason that explains why it’s possible, then you could lose that donor.

Your appeal has taken your donor away from thinking about doing good and instead started her thinking about the veracity of your claim. Is all this too good to be true? Your appeal has stopped being honest fundraising and has descended into something like hucksterism. Your donor might start questioning what you say in your appeals from that point on. You’ve injected suspicion into the relationship with your donor when it never had to be there.

The solution is simply to explain the reason behind the multiplier, but it’s surprising how often this doesn’t happen. Maybe it’s because multipliers are so ingrained in fundraising that we just get used to using them and forget about giving donors a credible reason.

But the reason behind the multiplier is needed. Consider a simple piece of marketing like an advertising circular for a local retail store that arrives in your mailbox. It says something like: “SALE —Everything 50% Off!” And then, immediately after, it says: “We’re overstocked!” Or “We’re Moving.” Or, if you’re the consumer electronics chain Crazy Eddie, it would be something like, “We’ve gone INSANE!” There’s virtually always a reason given. Most advertisers wouldn’t think of making an unsubstantiated claim.

It’s the same in fundraising, or at least it should be. What’s more, it almost doesn’t matter what the reason is, as long as it’s there and basically credible.

Of course, for some multipliers, there’s a built-in reason. Take the example of a matching grant. You tell donors that their gifts will be doubled with matching funds. That’s perfectly reasonable. You may even go a step further and say who donated the funds. But even if you don’t, you’ve still given a reason for the multiplier. You’ve closed the loop and eliminated the “it’s too good to be true” reaction.

With other types of multipliers, it may not be as straightforward.

Take the example of a rescue mission that says in its appeals, “Just \$1.25 provides a meal for someone who’s homeless.” Here the multiplier is baked in to create the offer. On its face, a meal for \$1.25 is a big claim to make to any donor who’s ever been in a grocery store. It’s hard to expect donors to accept something like that without a credible reason, yet in many cases, no reason is given. That’s surprising, given that believable reasons are generally right at hand.

A rescue mission could provide a meal for \$1.25 because it receives donated food, or because it can buy food below wholesale prices, or because it relies heavily on the work of volunteers. Any one of those reasons—or all of them—could be used to give credibility to the offer.

Or take the example of an international relief nonprofit that provides, say, medicine to third-world countries. It might say in its appeals, “Your gift multiplies 50X to save lives.” But for credibility’s sake, the appeal would also have to explain that the charity receives the medicine free of charge—it’s donated to them—so all the donor has to do is cover the cost of shipping, and in doing so, the donor’s gift multiplies 50 times. That’s a believable reason that donors would readily accept, and it eliminates the potential “it’s too good to be true” reaction.

In many cases, it’s a simple matter to come up with a credible reason for a multiplier. In other cases, you may have to look into the operations of your nonprofit and comb through budget numbers to find it. But the effort is worth it.

Providing a credible reason for a multiplier is not just something you would do in communications with donors who may be unfamiliar with your nonprofit. Ideally, you want to include one in every appeal with a multiplier, including those you’re sending to established donors. Each time you do, you’re building up the credibility of your nonprofit and demonstrating to donors that your charity is transparent in how it operates. And that can only lead to more donations.



George Crankovic is an experienced, award-winning fundraising copywriter and strategist. He helps nonprofits engage their donors through multichannel direct response, combining strategy, messaging, offer, and audience to maximize results. An in-demand writer, George has published articles in Fundraising Success magazine, Nonprofit Pro magazine, and other national publications. He is a guest blogger at Jeff Brooks’s Future Fundraising Now site, and he blogs at www.marketing-fundraising.com.

Tara Sudbury

Thank you I’ve been a preacher of this forever good to hear this

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