



5 Online Fundraising Habits to Quit in 2021

2021

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of several yellow streamers and confetti pieces radiating outwards from a central point, partially overlapping the '2021' text.



PART 1

5 Online Fundraising Habits You Need to Stop in 2021

1. Stop Using Heavily Designed Email Templates

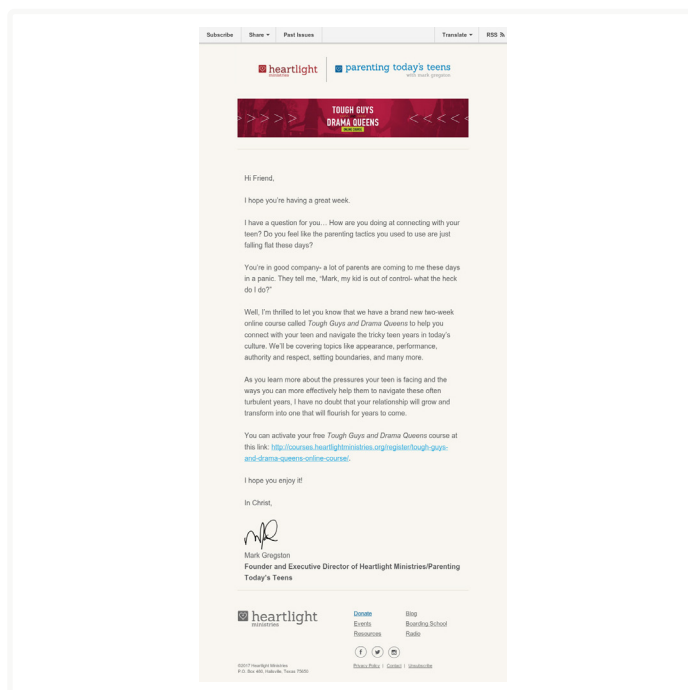
Time and time again, our ongoing testing and research has shown that personal, humanized emails greatly outperform heavily designed email templates.

People give to people, not email machines. So when an email looks like marketing that was sent to thousands of people, donors tend to ignore or delete it.

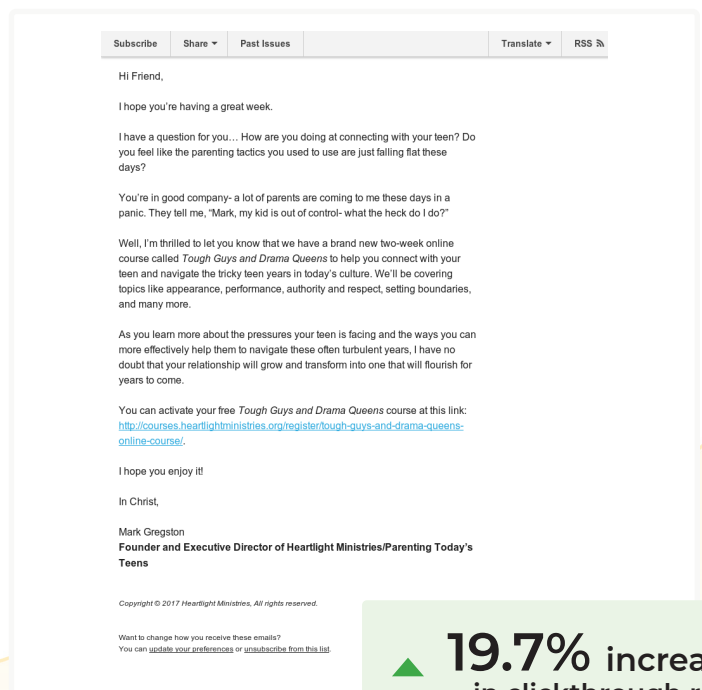
In experiment 7466, this organization wondered how dropping their heavily designed email template would affect clickthrough rate.

Using a plain-text style email led to a 19.7% increase in clickthrough rate.

Control



Treatment



▲ **19.7% increase**
in clickthrough rate

2. Stop Using “Donate” Short-Cut Buttons on Your Donation Pages

Not every donor visiting your donation page has actually decided to give. This seems like a generally understood idea, but most fundraisers create opportunities to short-cut donors right to the donation form.

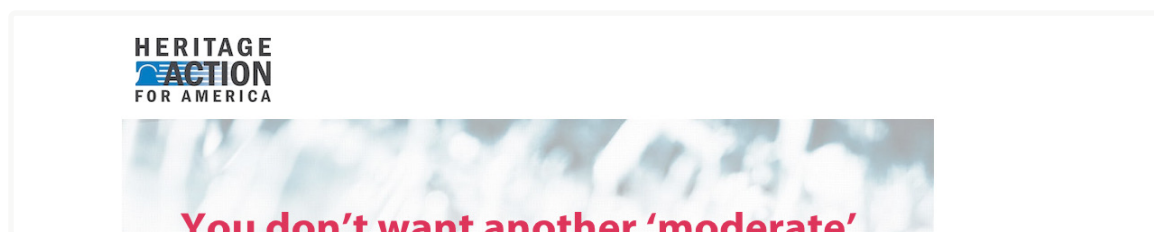
The most common example of this is a page with a “Donate Now” button in the navigation that jumps the visitor right to the form. The problem here is that it lets the visitor bypass the reason why they should give, and decrease the likelihood

of them actually donating.

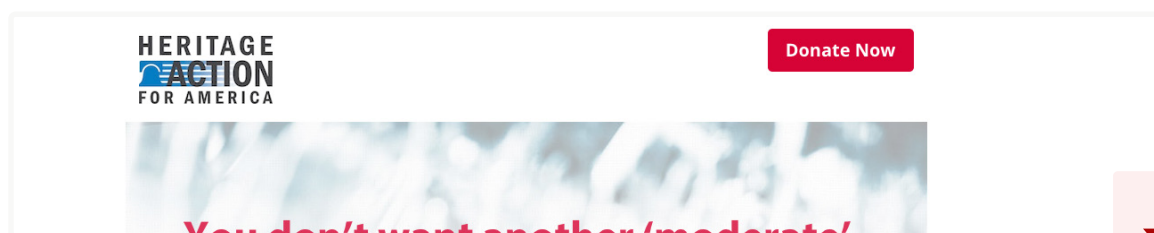
In experiment 2107, this organization wondered if they could increase donations by letting donors bypass the copy and jump straight to the donation form.

Using a donation shortcut button actually led to a 52% decrease in revenue.

Control



Treatment



▼ **52%** decrease
in donation revenue

3. Stop Calling Your Donors “Friend” in Your Emails

The quickest way to let your donor know that you don't actually know them is by starting your email with “Dear friend.” Nearly every email tool on the market today allows you to insert the recipients first name. And as it turns out, when we call our donors by name, our email performance improves.

In experiment 5707, this organization wondered if they could improve their

email response by calling the donor by their first name.

Personalizing the email by calling the donor by their name led to a 270% increase in clicks.

Control

At the beginning of October, our goal was to reach as many women as possible with our new eBook, *What Every Woman Needs to Know*.

Now that Breast Cancer Awareness Month has come to an end, we just wanted to let you know that we exceeded our expectations.

Thanks to the generosity of donors around the country, the campaign was a massive success!

But that doesn't mean we can stop working hard to educate and empower women to take control of their own breast health.

You can help us do this at any time—[every dollar you give](#) means that more women can be proactive about their health.

We'd also love it if you shared *What Every Woman Needs to Know* on Facebook...just [click here](#) and share it with your friends!

Thanks for joining us!

Candice Boeck
Donor Relations Manager
National Breast Cancer Foundation

Treatment

Hi Jeff,

At the beginning of October, our goal was to reach as many women as possible with our new eBook, *What Every Woman Needs to Know*.

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We'd also love it if you shared *What Every Woman Needs to Know* on Facebook...just [click here](#) and share it with your friends!

Thanks for joining us!

Candice Boeck
Donor Relations Manager
National Breast Cancer Foundation

▲ **270% increase**
in email clicks

4. Stop Using Words That Every Other Organization Uses

If you were to go look at the donation pages of 10 different organizations, chances are that you would see several common phrases across all of them. “Give hope.” “Stand with us.” “Join the fight.”

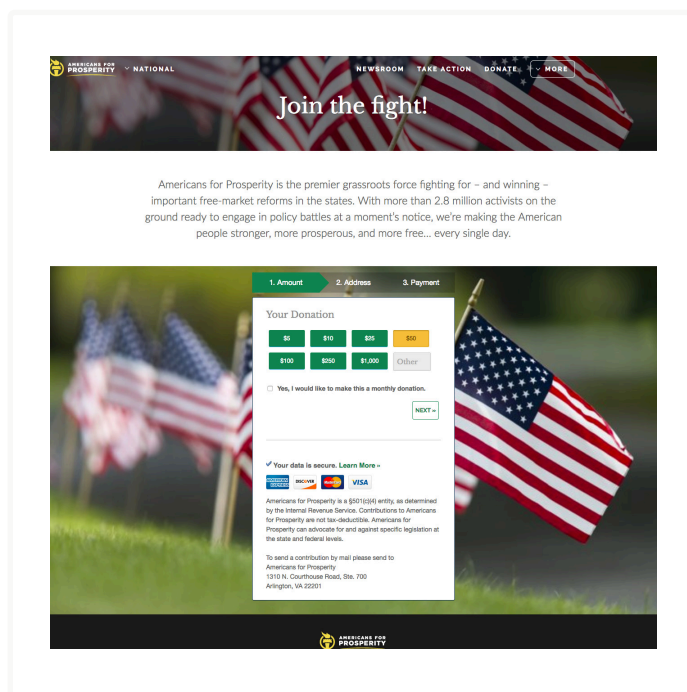
Phrases like these are generic, and can apply to almost any cause. To improve donations, we need to communicate our the reason to donate in a way that is unique. The way that your organization solves a particular problem or fills a

specific need is exclusive to you, and your copy should communicate this.

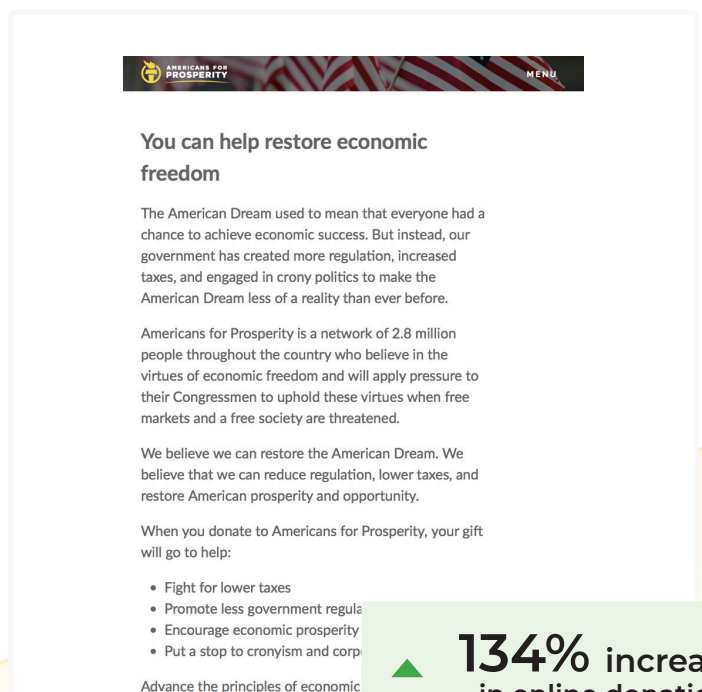
In experiment 5729, this organization wondered if a more exclusive value proposition would impact donations.

By streamlining the page design and making their value proposition unique to their organization, they saw a 134% increase in donations.

Control



Treatment



▲ **134% increase**
in online donations

5. Stop Using Donation Verification Pages

Once someone fills out your donation form and clicks the “Make my donation” button, that natural assumption is that they’ve completed their donation. Yet, many donation pages include a confirmation or verification page for a donor to review their gift before making it is final.

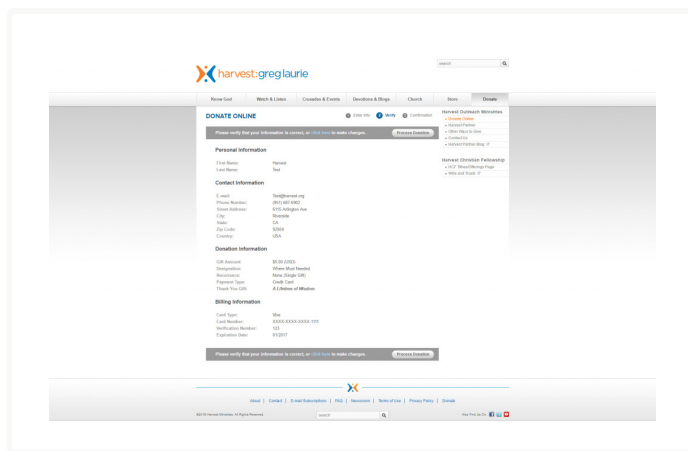
This extra step creates unnecessary confusion because most donors will click the “X” and assume their donation is complete – causing you to lose a

donation without your donor ever knowing it.

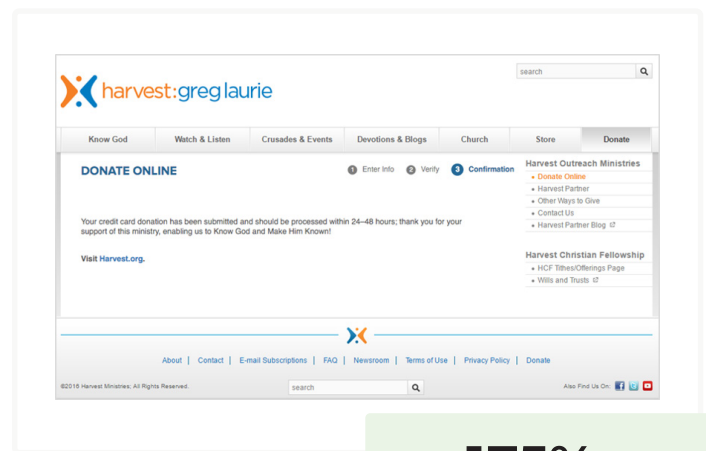
In experiment 3712, this organization wondered if they could increase donations by simply removing the gift verification step.

Removing the gift verification step led to 175% increase in donations.

Control



Treatment



**175% increase
in online donations**



PART 2

5 Online Fundraising Strategies You Need to Start Using in 2021

1. Start Personalizing Your Fundraising Emails

Personalization is more than just inserting a first name here and there. It's about making the entire email feel personal to the recipient – as if you sat down and wrote an email specifically to them.

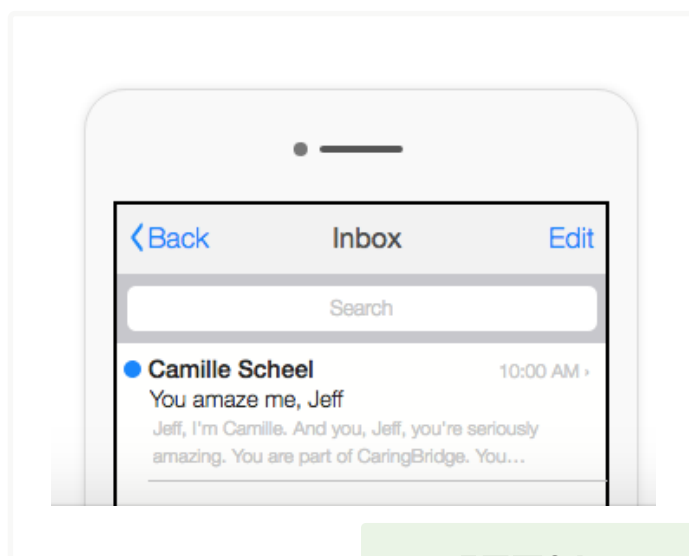
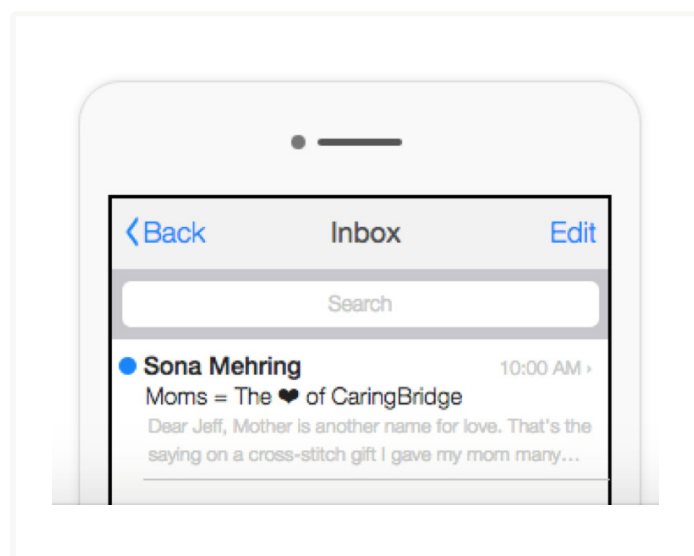
This includes personal sender names, subject lines, and copy.

In experiment 4307, this organization wondered if they could increase email results by making the whole email feel more personal.

Making the email feel more personal led to a 137% increase in clicks.

Control

Treatment



▲ **137%** increase
in email clicks

2. Start Writing Emails Like a Human Being

It's not always just the details of your email appeal that make a difference in donations. The tone of your email has a huge impact on the likelihood that someone will open, clicks, and respond.

Use a tone that sounds like a human wrote it, rather than a brand or marketing machine.

In experiment 4171, this organization wondered if a more personal tone in their email copy could increase donations:

Using a more personal tone in the email copy led to a 145% increase in donations.

Control

CARING BRIDGE

Hello First name,

When your world has been turned upside down, every connection counts. Every bit of strength. Every heart brought together.

Erica, whose 6-month-old son Graham was diagnosed with a serious cancer, says she couldn't imagine taking this long, sometimes scary journey without CaringBridge to share news and receive strength.

[You can make sure CaringBridge is here for them](#), and for everyone who needs calm seas in times of turbulence, with your donation today—a **donation that will go twice as far on March 16 with a \$15,000 matching gift opportunity** from our generous friend and donor, Rik Lalim.

Your compassion ensures that Erica's family can continue to rely on us for a safe, protected, ad-free space to share their successes and frustrations, hopes and fears—their journey. And family and friends can be there every step of the way.

[Yes! Match My Gift Now!](#)

Yours in hope,

Kelly Espy
CaringBridge Senior Development Specialist

P.S. There's no time like the present to bring hearts together. Together, we can be stronger. [Donate now and double your impact!](#)

Treatment

Hello First name,

I know you've been using CaringBridge recently to stay connected to your loved ones, and I hope it's been a source of strength for you.

Right now, we're in a short campaign to raise money to keep CaringBridge there for you, and those like you who need a safe, protected place to connect during life's most challenging times.

As a nonprofit, CaringBridge is supported by donations from the people who use and appreciate the site.

If you'd like to support this campaign right now, your gift will be doubled by a generous donor, up to \$15,000, if you use this link to make your gift by midnight, March 16.

[Click here to have your gift matched today >>](#)

It's the safest, most secure way to make sure CaringBridge will always be here when your loved ones need it most.

We appreciate your support – thank you!

Kelly Espy
CaringBridge Senior Development Specialist

CARING BRIDGE

145% increase
in online donations

3. Start Writing More Copy for Your Donation Pages

Most fundraisers want to keep their donation pages short and sweet. Maybe this is because of the common notion that “people don’t read online.”

Or maybe we assume that people coming to our donation pages are already fully motivated to give.

But testing says that using copy to thoroughly explain why someone should give to you will increase conversions and revenue.

In experiment 6623, this organization wondered if more value proposition copy on their donation page could impact donations.

Adding more value proposition copy to the donation page led to a 150% increase in donations.

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4. Start Focusing on Growing Your Recurring Giving

The lifetime value of a recurring donor can be up to 4x as much as a one-time donor (that's according to Target Analytics).

And Blackbaud says recurring donors are 4x more likely to still be giving to you 10 years down the road.

The question is...how do you actually increase recurring donors?

Tip #1 – This may sound overly simplistic...but just send an email and ask people to become recurring donors.

Tip #2 – Try defaulting to a recurring gift on your donation form.

Defaulting to a “monthly gift” with a tabbed donation form increased recurring donations by 366% and total donations by 91%.

Control

Make your donation today

Your Donation

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$ Other Amount

Make this a monthly recurring gift.

Treatment

Make your donation today

Single Gift Monthly Gift

Your Donation

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$ Other Amount

This month's donation will be processed today. The same amount will process every following month on the day selected. 1st

And a 91% increase in donations overall.

366% increase in recurring donations

5. Start Optimizing and A/B Testing Your Online Fundraising

The only way we know that any of the strategies above actually work is because they've been a/b tested, and proven to increase (or decrease) donations and revenue.

You can blindly implement changes to your emails, donation pages, website, and advertising and hope they lead to growth. But the only way to actually know what works to increase generosity and giving is to use test.

Make it your new year's resolution this year to start a/b testing and optimize.

Get tested and proven strategies to grow your revenue in 2021.

A NextAfter Institute membership will get you unlimited access to 8 online fundraising certification courses covering topics including:

- Email fundraising
- Donation pages
- Online donor acquisition
- A/B testing
- Copywriting
- and more.

Learn more at nextafter.com/membership

You can even start small: plan to run a simple a/b test this month in your email fundraising just to get the hang of it.

Not sure quite how to start?

You can dive into a **certification course** that walks you through every step of launching an A/B test in your online fundraising efforts.

Just head to courses.nextafter.com to explore all our online fundraising training courses and see where to get started.

