

The State of Year-End Multichannel Fundraising

*How 119 Organizations are
Engaging with Donors During
the End of Year Campaign*

PRESENTED BY



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	5
<i>A note from Noah Barnett</i>	6
<i>A note from Kevin Peters</i>	8
Why is Year-End Giving Important	11
How We Conducted This Study	15
The New Year-End Study	17
Common Terminology	19
Study Overview	23
Study Comparison: Multichannel vs. Year-End Studies	29
Persona Comparison	37
Giving Tuesday vs. December 31st	47
Message Volume & Type	57
Online and Postal Donor Experience	67
Donor Journey Case Study	73
Other Findings	93
Additional Resources	97
About	101
<i>About Virtuous</i>	102
<i>About NextAfter</i>	103

Executive Summary



The year-end season is a critical time for fundraising across the nonprofit community. We define the year-end season as the 45-day period from November 15th **through the end of the year**, which includes two critical times: **Giving Tuesday** and **December 31st**. According to our research, 23 NextAfter clients saw **35%** of their total online revenue come from this timeframe.¹ Additionally, **50%** of nonprofits received most of their donations during the 4th quarter, which encompasses October thru December.² Lastly, **1/3 of annual giving** occurs in **December** alone.³

The **year-end multichannel study** is a continuation of a previous research study done in collaboration with **Virtuous**. The **original multichannel study** analyzed how organizations utilized multichannel communications to engage with their donors from **March to July 2020**. We created **two donor personas**—each with a unique mailing address, email, and phone number. Each persona made a **\$20 donation** to 119 organizations. One persona donated online, and the other donated through the mail. For four months, we tracked all communication received by the donor personas across all channels and classified each correspondence as a **solicitation** (primary purpose was to ask for money) or **cultivation** (primary purpose was anything other than a request for money).

In the end, we successfully made online and offline donations to **102 organizations** and received a total of **2,297 communications**.

¹ Based on 23 NextAfter clients with an online revenue greater than \$1million

² According to a study by Bloomerang and Pursuant

³ According to a study by Neon One

For this year-end multichannel study, we focused solely on how these same organizations communicated with both donor personas during the **year-end season**. As a result, we successfully made donations to **103 organizations** and analyzed **1,525 communications**. Here are the key findings.

KEY
FINDING
#1

65% of organizations did not communicate with their online and offline donors in multiple channels.

Only 35% of organizations engaged with donors utilizing both mail and email.

KEY
FINDING
#2

There was little difference between the number of organizations that made solicitations during Giving Tuesday and the week of December 31st.

The number of organizations sending solicitations during these two critical periods was relatively the same. This means that Giving Tuesday and December 31st are of equal priority to most organizations—despite December 31st being much more valuable in terms of overall revenue.

KEY
FINDING
#3

Many organizations did not cultivate their donors during the year-end season.

62 organizations did not cultivate the online donor, while 21 organizations did not cultivate the postal donor.

Introduction





A note from Noah Barnett, *Chief Marketing Officer at Virtuous*

Distraction has become a way of life for today's donors, and that's especially clear during the year-end fundraising season. All year long, your donors receive personalized content streams from their favorite brands and a daily deluge of media and marketing messages. Still, at the end of the year, the volume turns up even louder. Family commitments, social obligations, and, of course, endless communication from brands and nonprofits alike fracture donors' attention even more than usual.

But the end of the year is also a time of incredible generosity. Your donors want to give to the causes they care about. They want to hear inspiring stories of making the world a better place. You just need to engage and activate them.

Growing nonprofits know that the key to cutting through the noise and earning donor attention is to communicate in more personalized and responsive ways across multiple channels. Research shows that having one conversation with multiple touches on multiple channels increases donor attention and average gift size. Outdated traditional fundraising tactics that focus solely on one channel at a time and don't respond to donors' timing and preferences simply won't deliver the same kind of results.

With multichannel communication, you can build better connections and stronger relationships with your donors based on the things they care about most. You can increase their confidence in your organization by consistently engaging them in relevant ways that speak directly to their heart for your cause.

Our hope is that this research with the amazing team at NextAfter will help you transform how you think about multichannel fundraising, both at year-end and year-round.

Noah Barnett, CMO
Virtuous Software



A note from Kevin Peters, *Chief Technology Officer* at NextAfter

Over the past 6 years, we have created over a dozen different studies starting with the original *Nonprofit Online Fundraising Scorecard* and ending with this most recent work. During this time, I have realized that they do not get any easier to create. In fact, these studies seem to grow more complex and, dare I say, more insightful with each iteration.

This most recent study is no exception. It took a monumental amount of work from some of the most brilliant people I have ever had the pleasure of working with, and I could not be happier with the results.

I want to call out the work of a few key people specifically. Firstly, I want to extend particular gratitude to Gabe Cooper and the fantastic people at Virtuous. They have been faithful partners over the years without whom this work would not be possible.

On the NextAfter side, this could not have been done without the leadership of Beatriz “Bea” Jimenez and the keen insights from Kristen Allcorn, who have both spent an untold number of days combing through the data to produce this report. I also want to extend my appreciation to our leader, Tim Kachuriak, who originally started this research method and consistently pushes us to think bigger.

Our vision at NextAfter is to unleash the most generous generation in the history of the world. The only way we can do that is through the hard work of innovators and optimizers like yourself who are willing to try new things. People like you are moving the nonprofit industry forward and, for that reason, I also want to thank you.

This study seeks to analyze the disparity between digital and direct mail donors during the most important fundraising event of the year: calendar year-end. While compiling the research, there were days where I would be shocked at the untapped potential of the 119 organizations that we studied. But I would also feel inspired by the innovative approach taken by those same groups.

I'm confident that you will find new ideas within these pages to guide your efforts in the coming year-end fundraising season. I hope that you can use what you learn here to retain more donors, increase your revenue, and ultimately expand the mission of your amazing organization.

Good luck!

Kevin Peters, CTO
NextAfter

THE RESEARCH TEAM



Kristen Allcorn
Data Analyst, NextAfter



Beatriz "Bea" Jimenez
Research Associate, NextAfter

Why is Year-End Giving Important



The year-end fundraising season is a critical time for nonprofit organizations. We define the year-end season as the 45-day period from November 15th through the end of the year. There is a lot of revenue that comes from that short period.

For example, when we analyzed 23 NextAfter clients with online revenue greater than \$1 million,

35% of their total online revenue came from the year-end season.

To further emphasize how vital the year-end season is, Bloomerang and Pursuant conducted a study where they found that

50% of nonprofit organizations receive the majority of donations during the 4th quarter.

Although the 4th quarter includes October through December, it is still indicative of how critical the end of the year is for donations.

One last statistic that will hopefully blow your mind:

According to Neon One, a CRM provider, nearly

$\frac{1}{3}$ of annual giving occurs in the month of December.

We understand that these numbers may vary from nonprofit to nonprofit, but the data and the current trends clearly indicate that there are many donations at stake during the year-end season.

How We Conducted This Study



Last year, we collaborated with Virtuous to understand how organizations utilized multichannel communications to engage with donors.

Before we discuss the new study, here's how we conducted the original multichannel study and captured that data used in this year-end research. In the original study, we:

1

Donated \$20 online and by mail to 119 organizations

We were successful with 103 organizations

2

Captured 12 key data points in the giving process

Includes analysis of the donation page, thank you page, and Ways to Give Page

3

Analyzed how these organizations followed up and communicated with the online and postal donors over 4 months

4

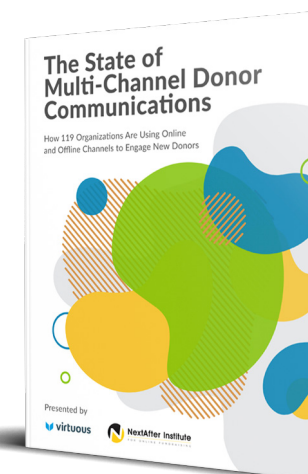
Tracked a total of 2,297 messages

Includes email, phone, mail, and text messages

5

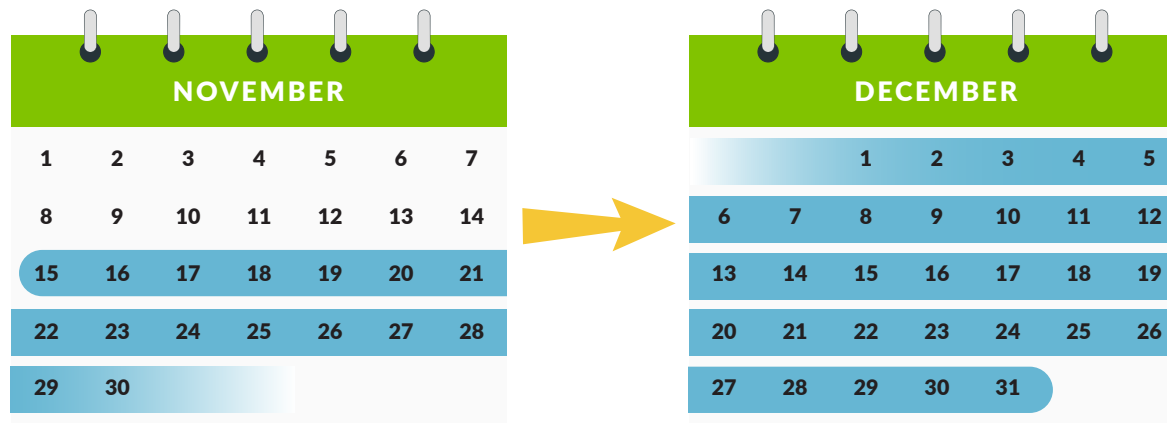
Classified each message as cultivation or solicitation

As a result, we ended up analyzing 47 direct mail appeals and 64 email appeals.



The New Year-End Study

We analyzed the same organizations from the original multichannel study but focused solely on messages received from November 15 to December 31, 2020



Utilizing the same two personas

Online & Postal

Common Terminology



Before we dig deeper into the year-end study, here is some of the key terminology you will see throughout:

Donor Types

How the two donors gave



POSTAL



ONLINE

Communication Channels

How the organizations engaged with the donors



MAIL



EMAIL



MAIL & EMAIL



NONE

Types of Communication

Types of messages received



SOLICITATION

The perceived primary purpose of the message was to give money



CULTIVATION

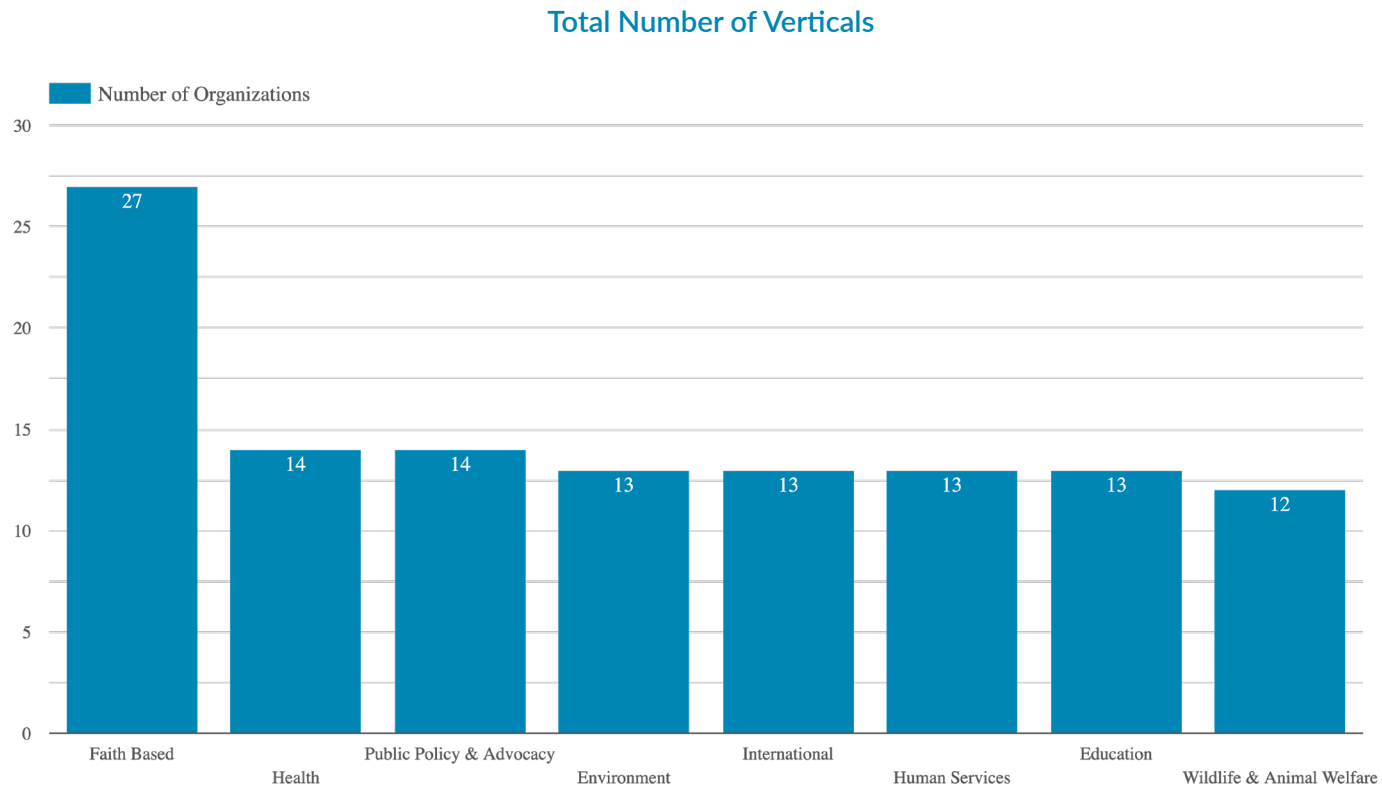
Anything other than a solicitation

Study Overview



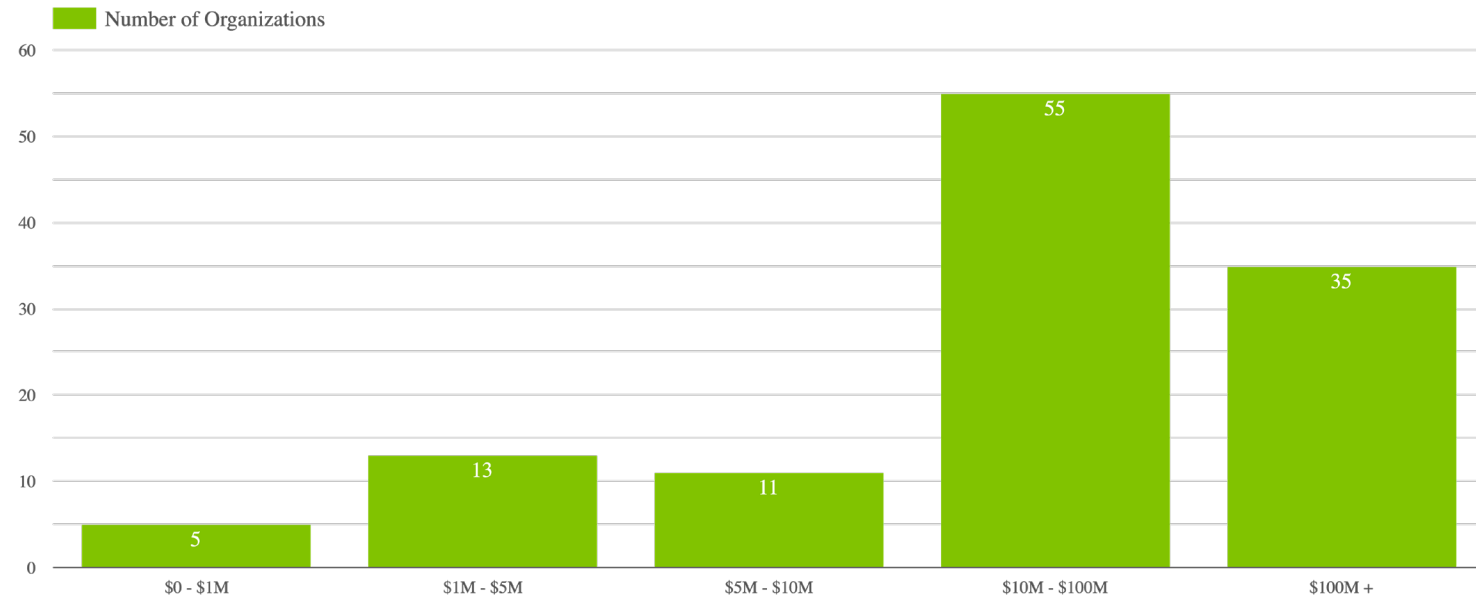
Who's in the study?

8 VERTICALS TOTAL



There was an equal representation across the verticals, with the exception of “Faith-Based” organizations, which had double the average number of organizations.

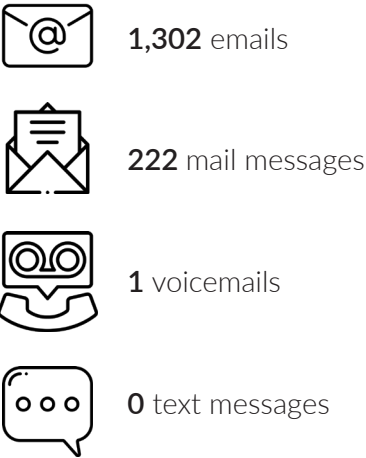
Number of Organizations by Revenue



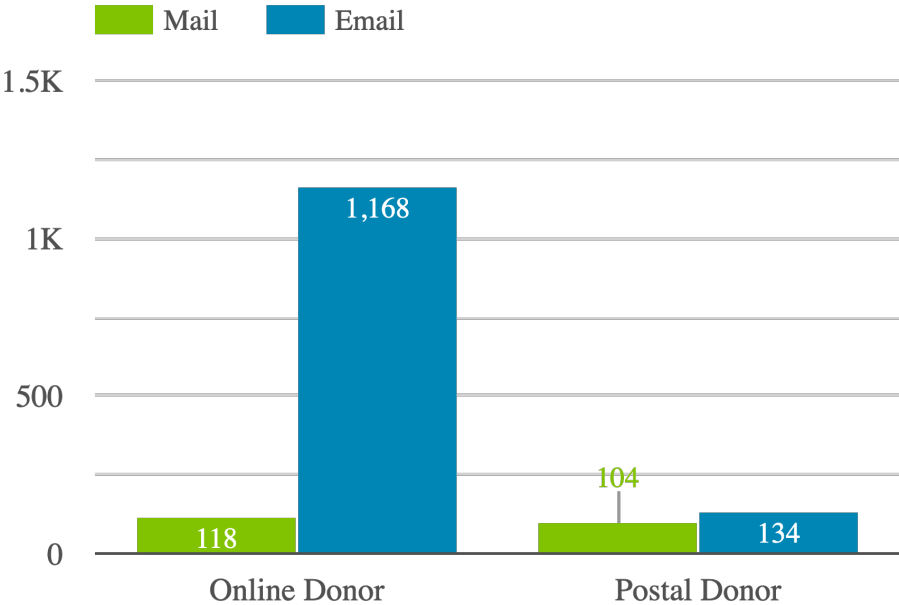
The majority of these organizations have revenues greater than \$10M.

After making the online and offline donations, we collected the emails, mailed messages, voicemails, and text messages from **103 organizations** from November 15th to December 31st.

Between the two donor personas, we received **1,525 communications**:



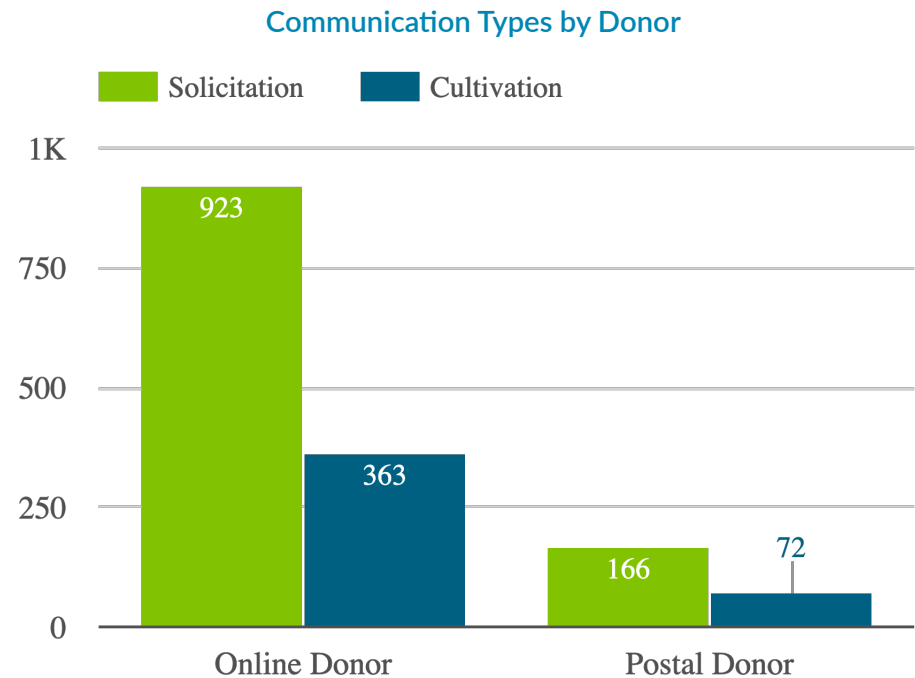
**Voicemails and texts have been removed from this analysis as the volume was statistically insignificant and came from few organizations.*



We then classified all of those communications as either a solicitation — where the perceived primary purpose of the messages was to give money — or cultivation — anything other than a solicitation — to perform our analysis.

Here we can see that the online donor received a significant amount of solicitations: 923 vs. 363 pieces of cultivation.

On the other hand, the postal donor received a relatively balanced amount of solicitation vs. cultivation messages.



Solicitation messages accounted for 73% of all messages received.

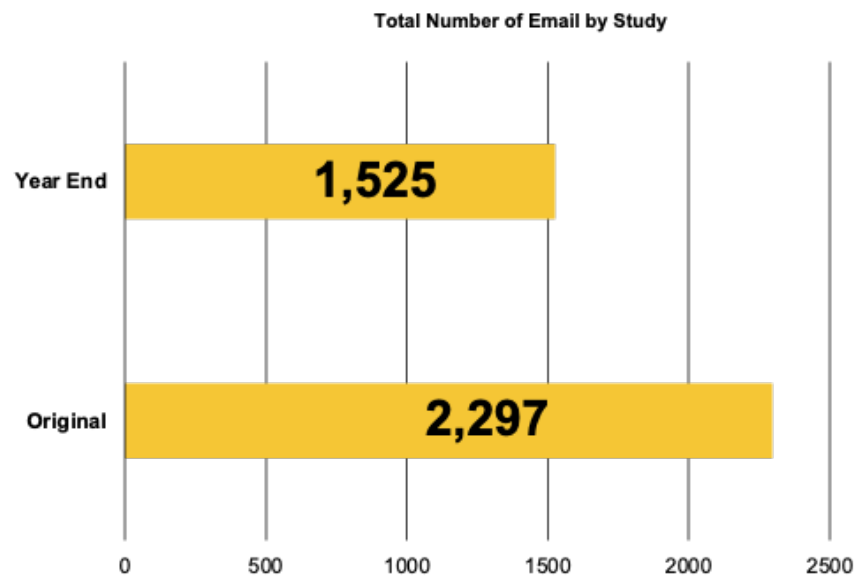
This means that 3 out of the 4 times the donors heard from the organizations, they were being asked for donations.

Study Comparison: Multichannel vs. Year-End Studies



Original vs. Year-End Study Comparison

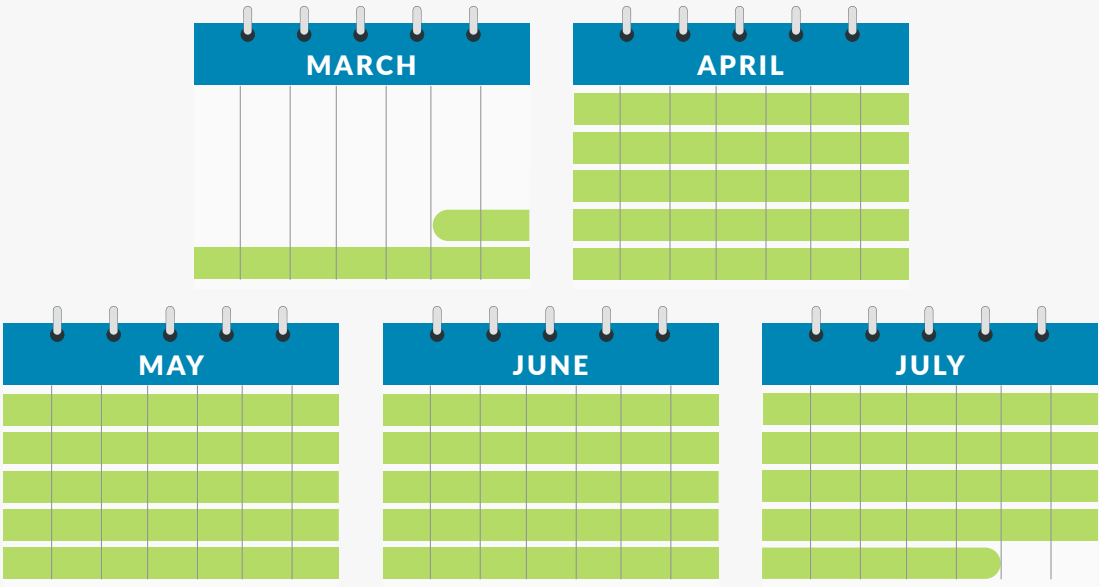
Here is a comparison of the original multichannel study and the year-end study



Year-end had **more than half as many emails** than the original study

While the original study was more than 2x as long as the year-end study

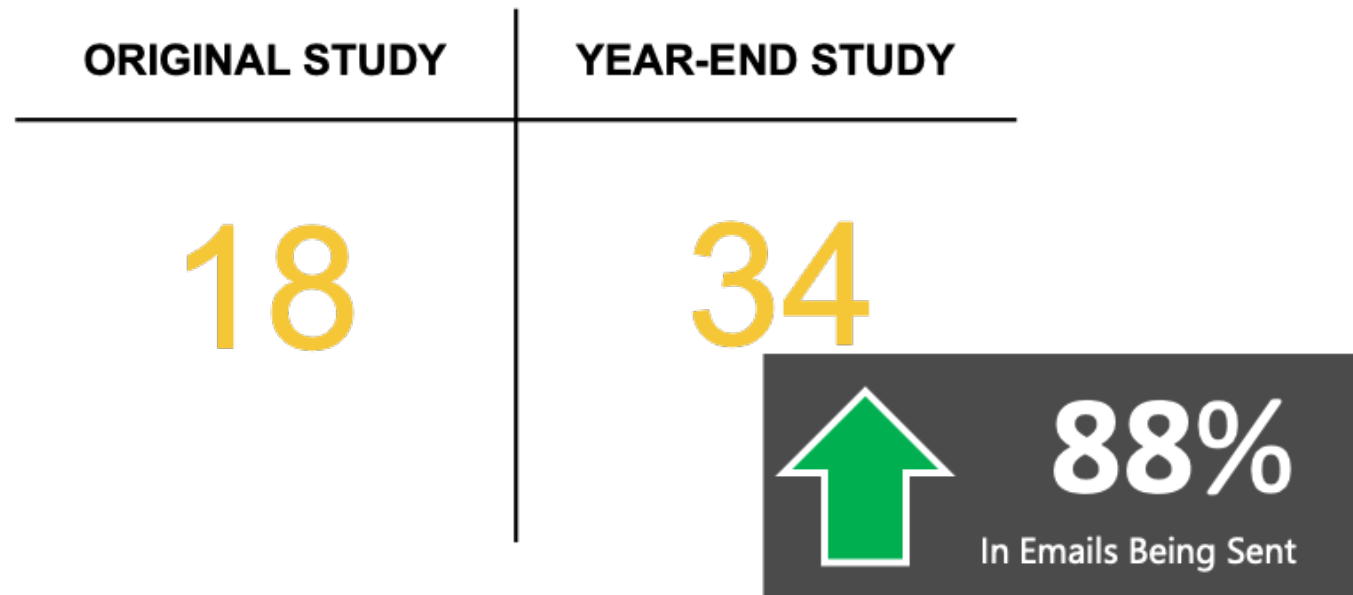
Original MultiChannel Study



Year-End MultiChannel Study



AVERAGE AMOUNT OF MESSAGES RECEIVED PER DAY



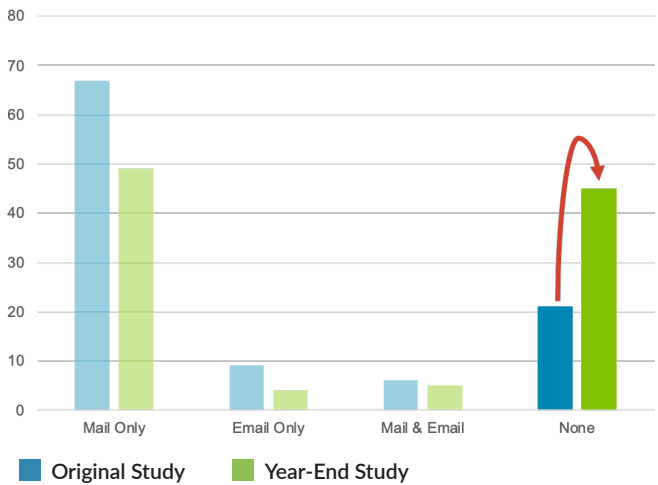
When we calculated the total number of messages each study received and divided it by the length of each study, the average number of messages received during the original multichannel study came out to 18 messages per day. In comparison, the year-end study saw an average of 34 messages per day. That is a 88% increase in the number of messages sent to donors during the year-end season.

POSTAL DONOR

Next, we wanted to understand how communication differed between the two studies. We classified each study into **four different categories**. Each category shows how many organizations communicated with the **postal donor**:

1. Mail only
2. Email only
3. Both mail and email
4. Nothing

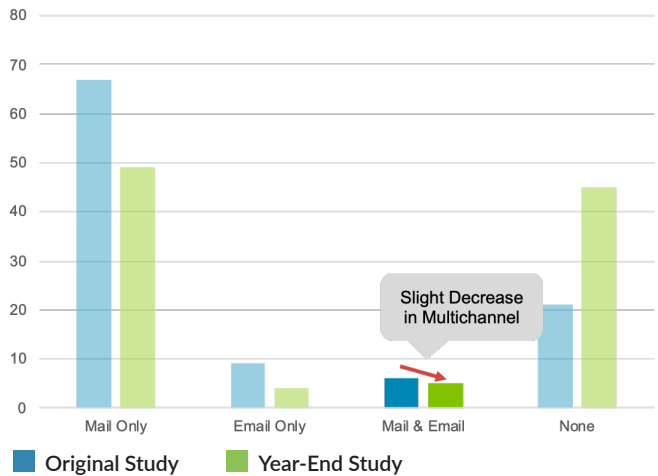
Number of Organizations by Communication Channel



24 more organizations did not communicate with the **postal donor** during year-end.

There was a **slight decrease** in the number of organizations that communicated with the **postal donor** using **multichannel** tactics.

Number of Organizations by Communication Channel



ONLINE DONOR

For the online donor, we saw very similar trends in the number of organizations that did not communicate during the year-end study and the use of multichannel tactics.

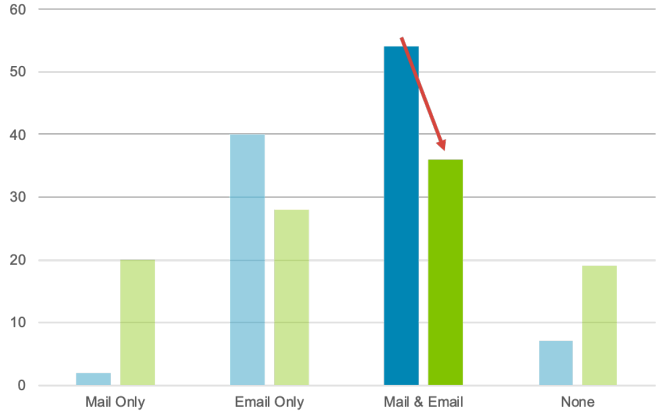
Number of Organizations by Communication Channel



12 more organizations did not communicate with the **online donor** during year-end.

■ Original Study ■ Year-End Study

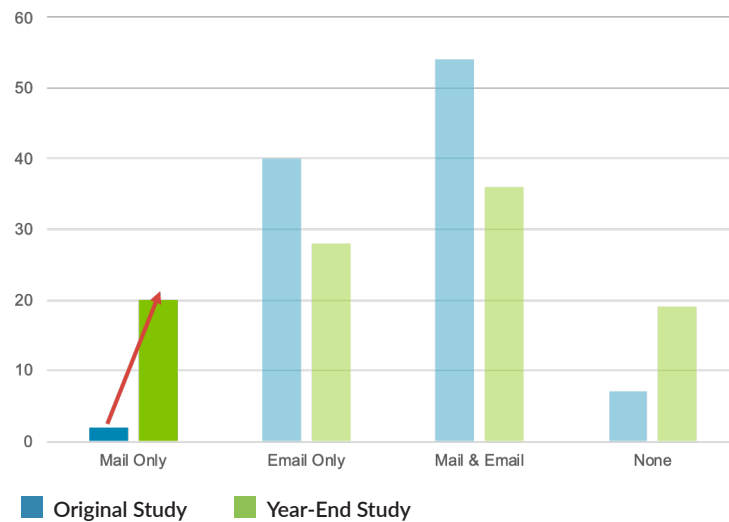
Number of Organizations by Communication Channel



18 fewer organizations communicated with the **online donor** via multiple channels.

■ Original Study ■ Year-End Study

Number of Organizations by Communication Channel



There was a significant increase in the number of organizations that sent the **online donor direct mail only**, while those who sent **emails** decreased.

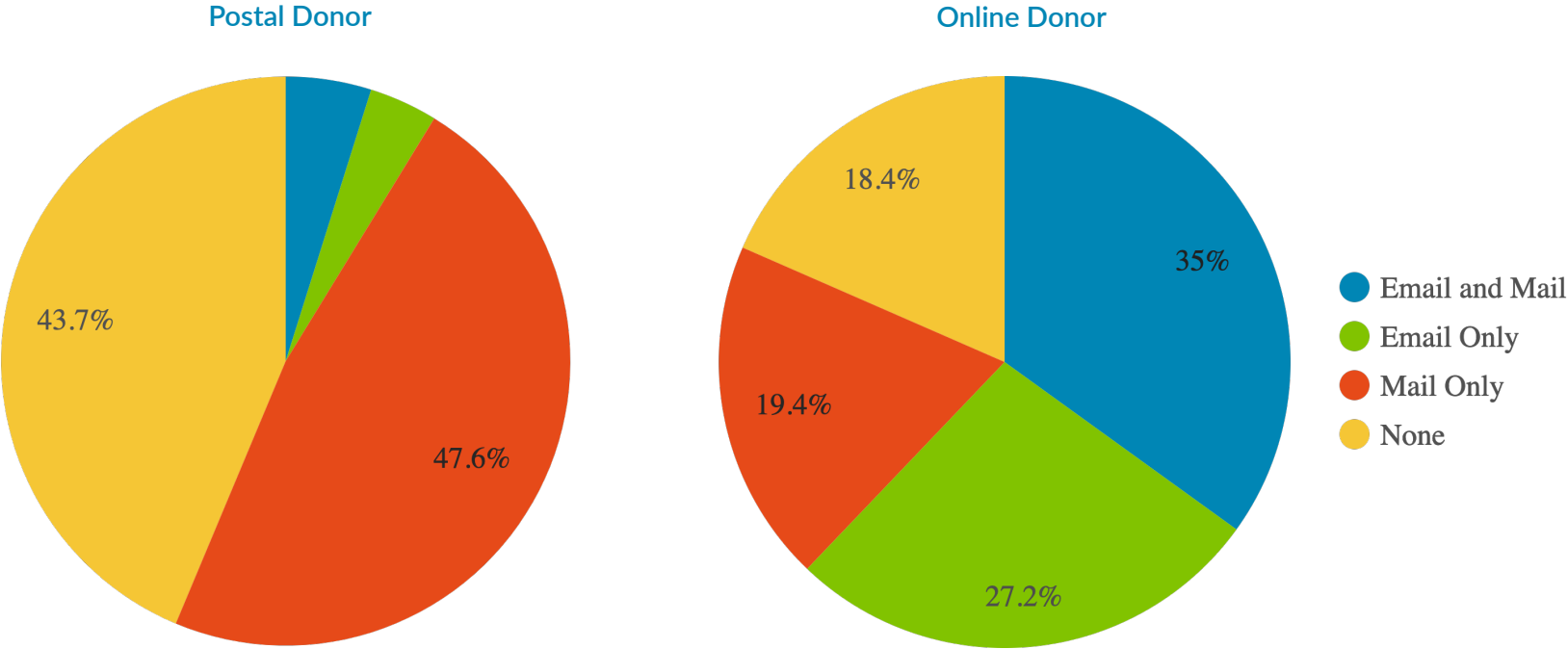
This is the opposite of what we expected, so it was interesting to learn that more organizations sent **mail to online donors during the year-end season**.

Persona Comparison



This section dives deeper into how organizations communicated with each donor persona during year-end.

What types of communication did organizations send to each donor persona?



Quick Insights

- 1** *43% of organizations did not communicate with their postal donors at all.*
- 2** *7.5% of organizations communicated with postal donors via online channels.*
- 3** *35% of organizations sent messages to both donors.*

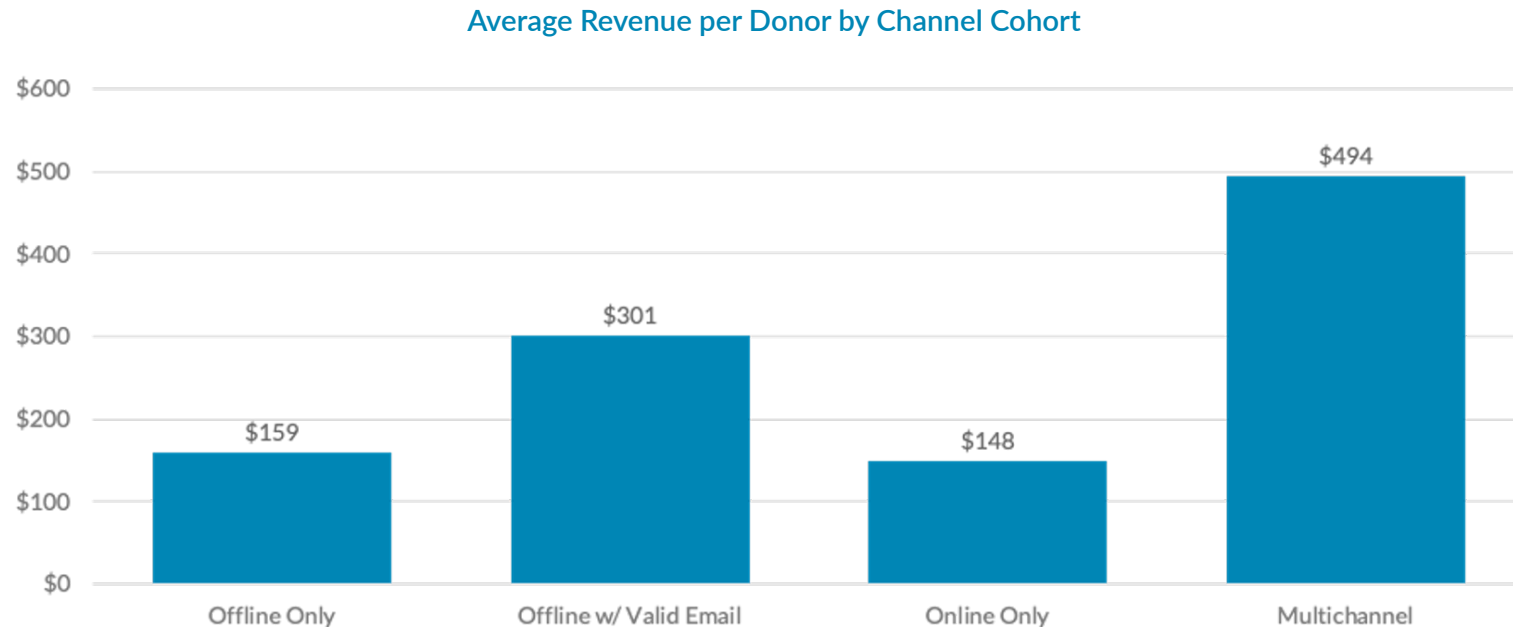
KEY FINDING #1

65% of organizations did not communicate with their online and offline donors via multiple channels

But why is multichannel important?

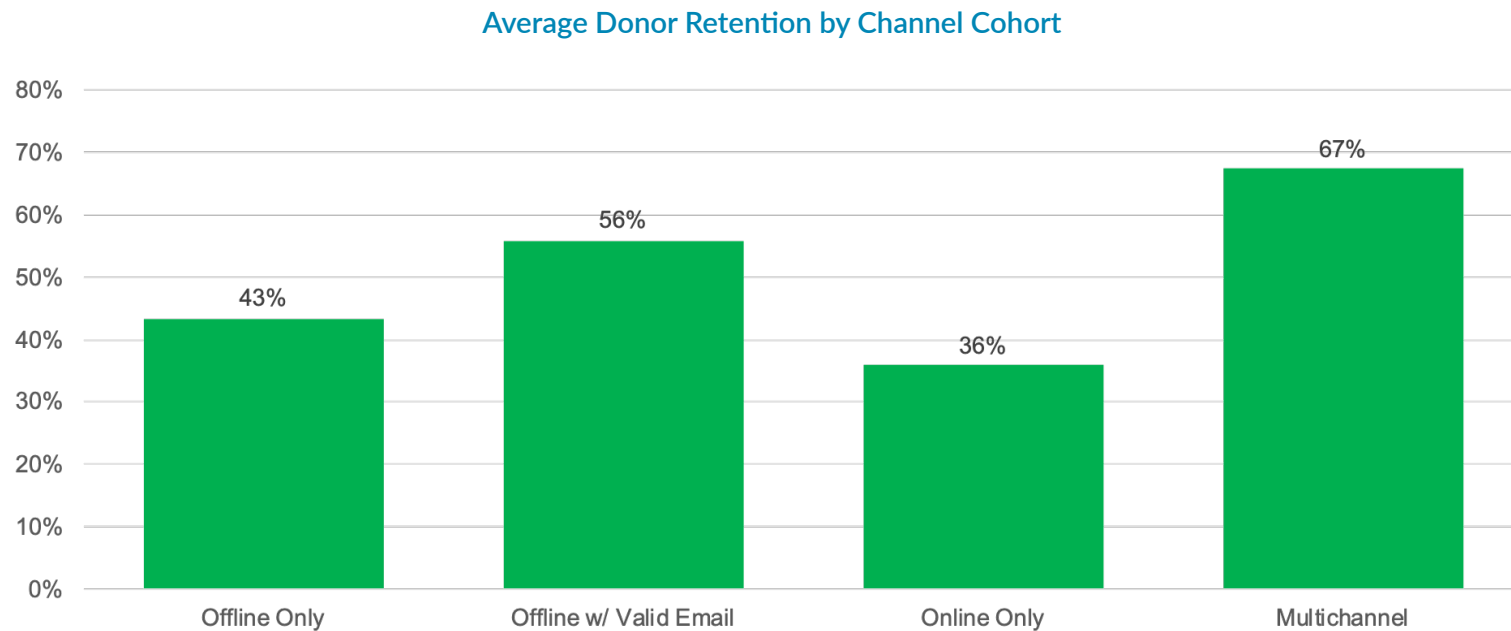
We define **multichannel** donors as those who make at least one online and one offline gift in a year. When analyzing the value of donors, we also look at **online-only** donors, **offline-only** donors, and **offline-only donors with an email** — folks who only give through offline methods, *but* the organization has an email for them.

Below you see the average revenue per donor (based on 20 NextAfter clients), broken down into these 4 primary donor categories:



You can see that multichannel donors are ‘worth’ 3 times more than online-only or offline-only donors.

Multichannel donors aren't just more valuable, but they're more likely to give again and over time.



The donor retention rate for offline-only donors (**43%**) and online-only donors (**36%**) jumps to **67%** when they give through another channel.

In this case, a multichannel donor is **210% more valuable** to your organization than an offline-only donor and **233% more valuable** than an online-only donor.

And it's not just our clients and data that shows this.

The Blackbaud Institute found that multichannel donors had a donor retention rate **more than 2 times higher** than online-only or offline-only givers across every age demographic.

FIRST YEAR DONOR RETENTION BY AGE

AGE	ONLINE ONLY	OFFLINE ONLY	MULTICHANNEL
18 – 24	19%	24%	50%
25 – 34	22%	25%	55%
35 – 44	21%	24%	54%
45 – 54	21%	24%	52%
55 – 64	22%	26%	58%
65 – 74	24%	29%	62%
75+	26%	26%	59%

**Getting donors to give in multiple channels
is a way to increase revenue in the short-
term and long term.**

Looking at NextAfter Clients

When analyzing the likelihood of various donor types to become a multichannel donor, we've found that

**Online acquired donors are 463%
to 14,400% more likely to become
multichannel donors than offline
acquired donors.**

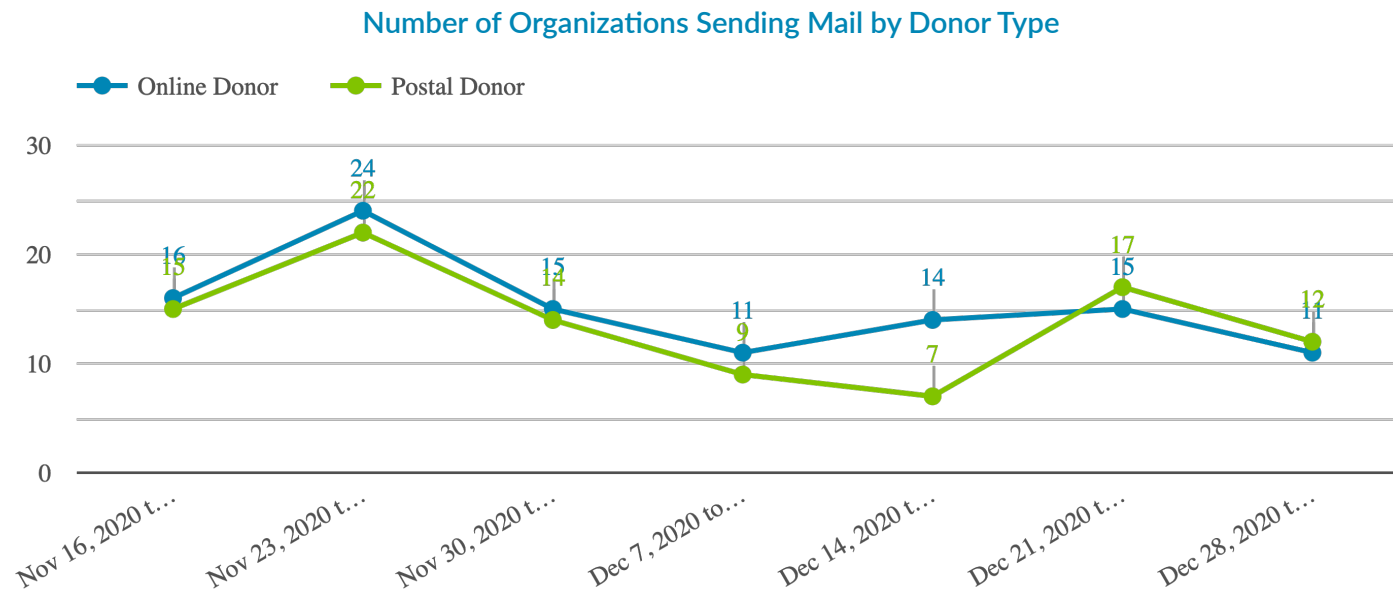
TIP



SEND MAIL TO YOUR ONLINE DONORS.

We then took a look at how many organizations sent each donor mail during each week of the study.

The number of organizations that sent mail to the online and postal donor was in lock-step, **except for the week of December 14th.**

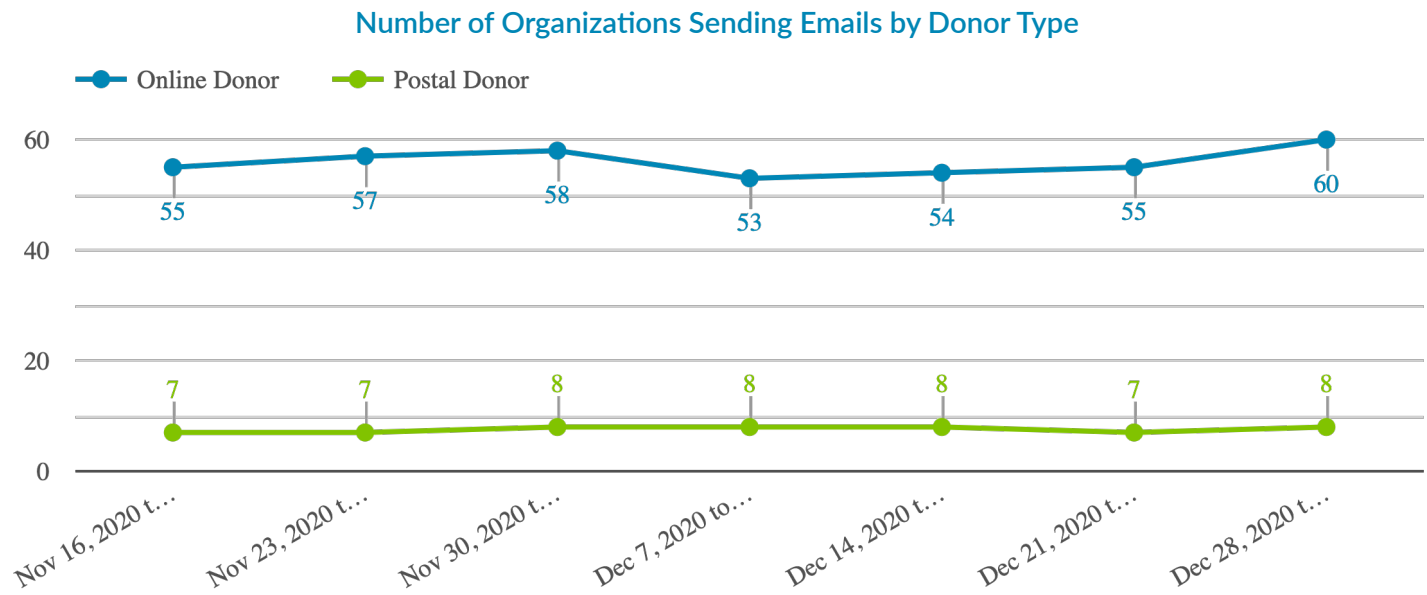


While we do not have a conclusive explanation behind why there was a difference during the week of December 14th, it is still important to note that organizations consistently send mail to both types of donors, which is a great thing!

However, the volume of mail is still pretty low. This brings us back to our original suggestion of sending more mail to your online donors to engage them through multiple channels. Because again, if you can get an online donor to become a multichannel donor, they will be much more valuable to the organization over time.

Subsequently, we analyzed the number of organizations that sent emails to each donor.

The number of organizations that sent **emails** to the **online** and **postal** donors **remained drastically different** during the 7 weeks.



Significantly more organizations sent email to online donors compared to postal donors. While many organizations may not have email addresses for their postal donors, we provided the email address when we mailed in our donation. So these organizations actively chose not to email the postal donor. They did not engage the postal donors via online channels to cultivate them in a multichannel way.

TIP



EMAIL YOUR POSTAL DONORS.

Giving Tuesday vs. December 31st





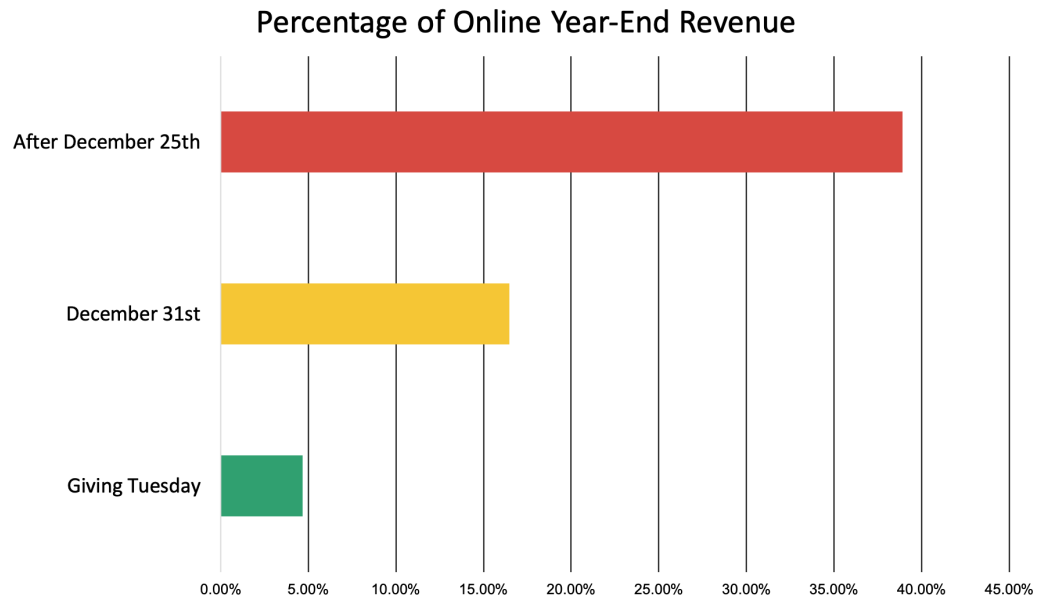
GIVING TUESDAY

VS



DECEMBER 31

In this section, we will break down how communication differed between the weeks of **Giving Tuesday** and **December 31st**. Before doing so, we must first understand the difference between these two critical donation days.



While each day is vital in its own ways, our analysis of 25 NextAfter clients shows that significantly more online revenue comes from **December 31st**.

Let's break down the data:

1. **4.6%** of online year-end revenue comes from **Giving Tuesday**.
2. **16.5%** of online revenue comes from **December 31st**.
3. Almost **39%** comes in during the **last week of the year**.

This means that:

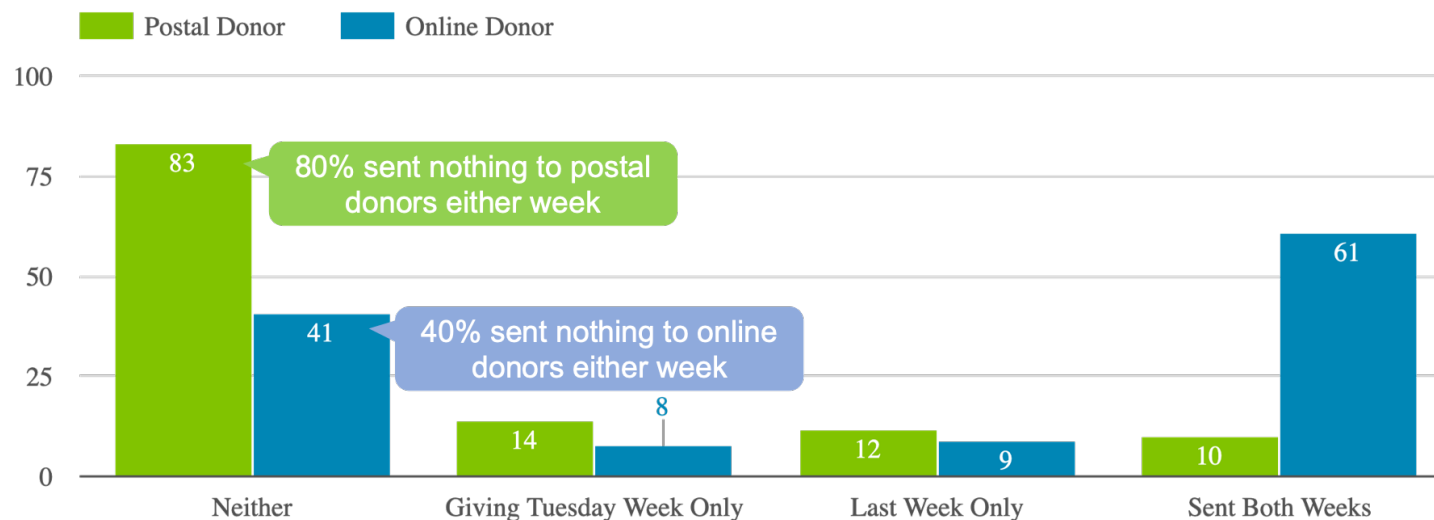
253% more revenue comes in on December 31st over Giving Tuesday.

734% more revenue comes in during the last week of the month than during Giving Tuesday.

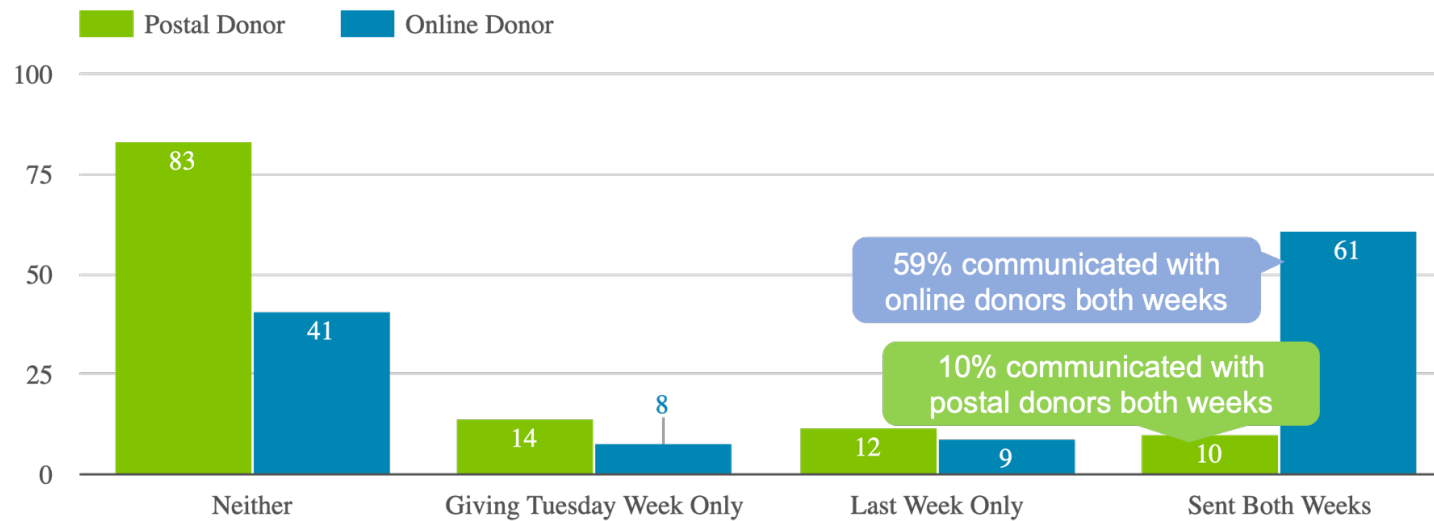
This led us to evaluate what days the organizations in the study were prioritizing. The first observation that jumped out was that **74 organizations chose not to send anything to either donor during the weeks of Giving Tuesday and December 31st**. This is important to note because 74 organizations missed out on the most significant donation opportunities of the year!

74 organizations did not send messages to either donor during Giving Tuesday or December 31st.

Number of Organizations Participating in Giving Tuesday vs. December 31st

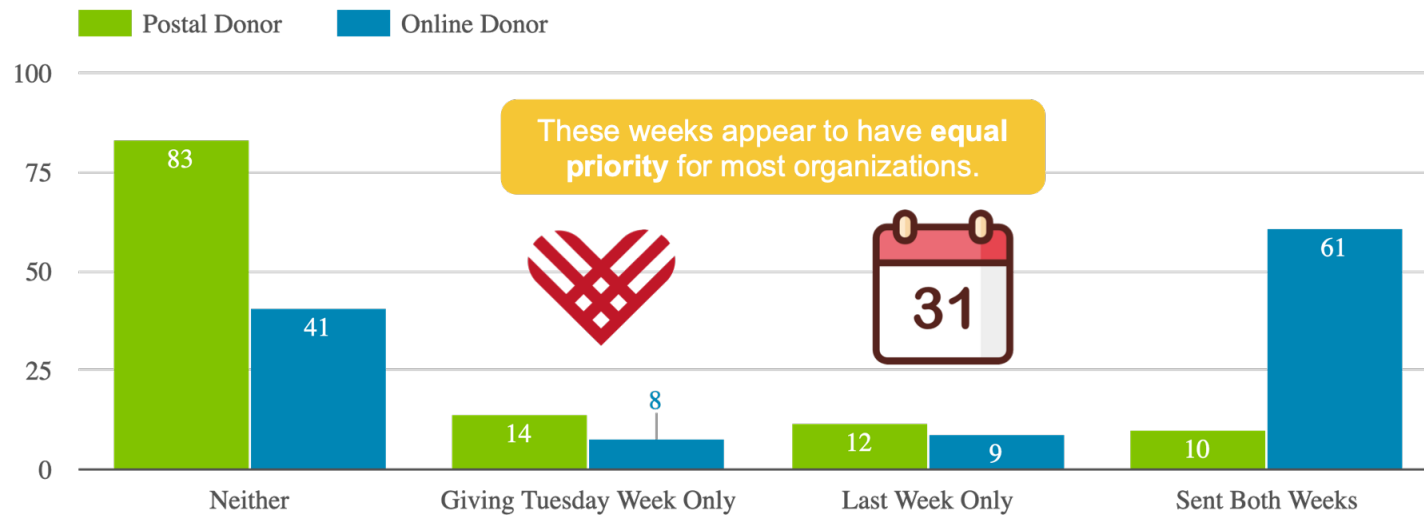


Number of Organizations Participating in Giving Tuesday vs. December 31st



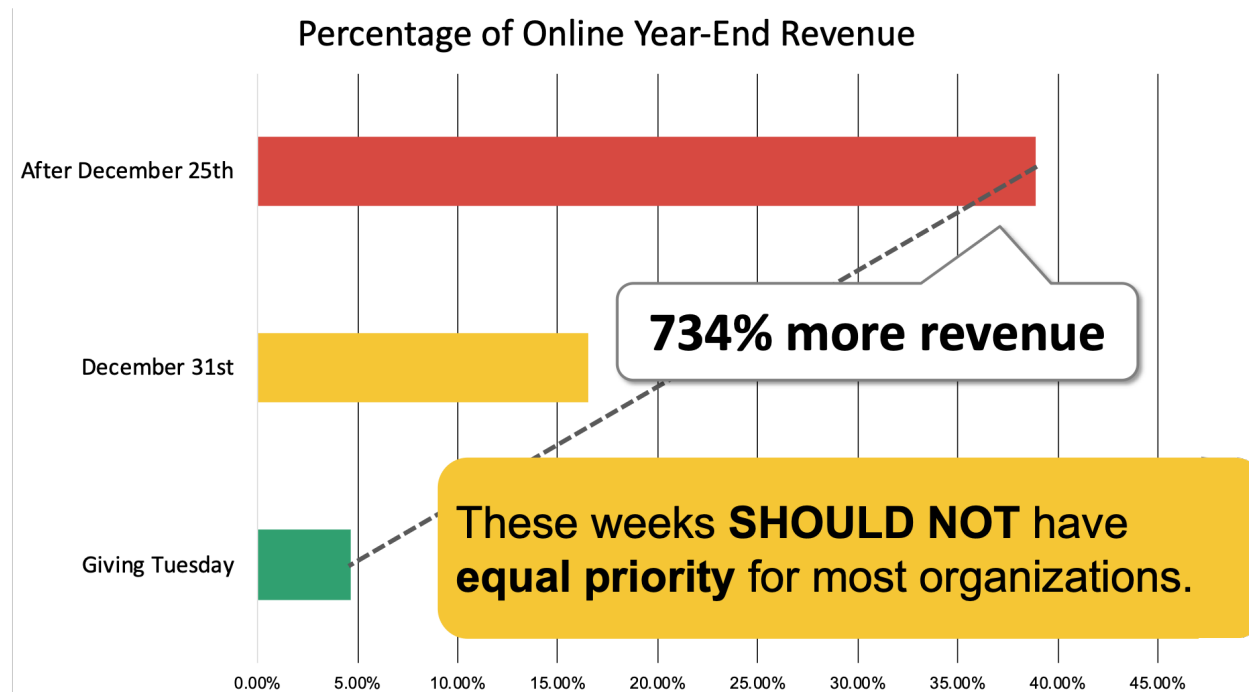
Vice versa, we observed that **59%** of organizations communicated with the **online** donor during both weeks. But only **10%** communicated with the **postal** donor during the weeks of **Giving Tuesday** and **December 31st**.

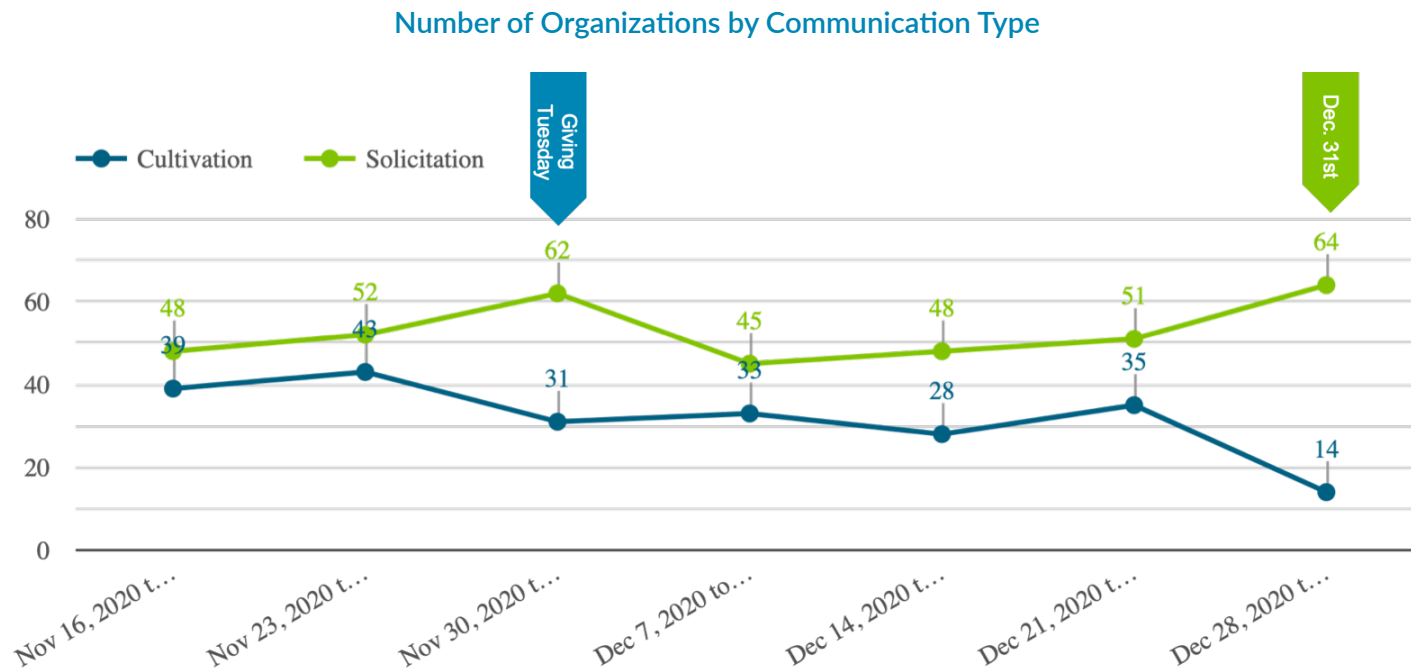
Number of Organizations Participating in Giving Tuesday vs. December 31st



Another key observation is that there was **little difference** between the number of organizations that communicated with either donor during the weeks of **Giving Tuesday** and **December 31st**. As we discussed earlier, if organizations prioritize one day over another, priority should be given to **December 31st and the last week of the year***. But the data above indicates that some organizations are giving them relatively equal prioritization.

*It is important to consider what works best for your organization. But we use this suggestion as a general rule of thumb based on data.





As we continued to compare **Giving Tuesday** and **December 31st**, we took a look at the number of organizations **cultivating vs. soliciting** over time. **Cultivation saw a steady decrease** during the week of **Giving Tuesday**. As we expected, **solicitation spiked** during both of these critical days, while **cultivation** continued on a downward trend throughout the whole season. But that brings us to another key finding, which is:

KEY FINDING #2

There was little difference between the number of organizations soliciting during the weeks of Giving Tuesday and December 31st

Message Volume & Type

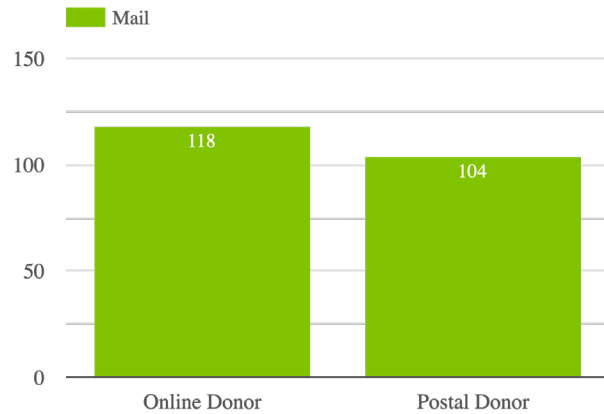


VOLUME OF MESSAGES BY DONOR

In this section, we will talk about the volume from each communication channel received.

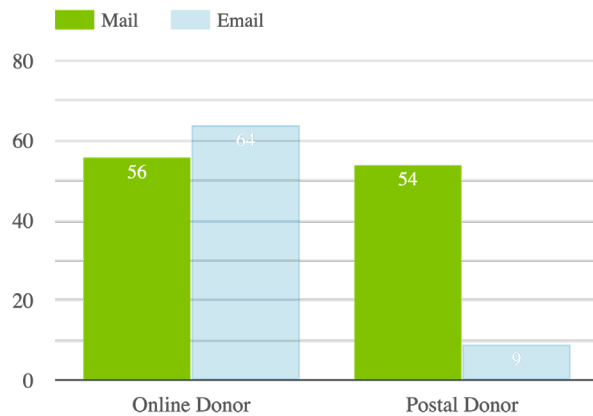
MAIL

The Volume of Mail by Donor Type



When we compared the volume of **mail** each donor received, we observed that the **online donor received slightly more pieces of mail than the postal donor**. This was interesting since we would assume that organizations would send the postal donor more mail.

Number of Organizations by Communication Channel



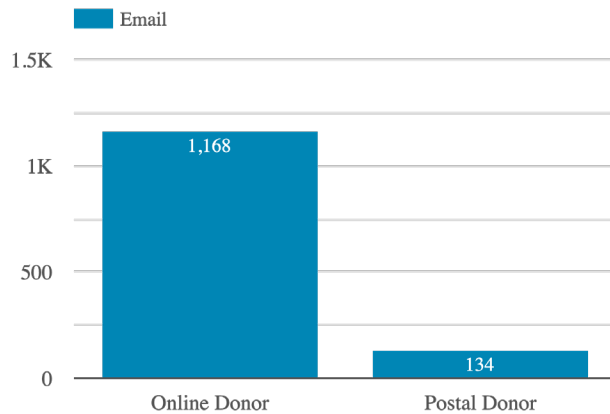
At the same time, the number of organizations that sent mail to both donors was **relatively the same**.

We identified **eight organizations** that chose to only send mail to the **online donor** over the **postal donor**. We questioned why the online donor would receive more mail than the postal donor. We couldn't come up with a definitive explanation for this observation, but some questions that arose include:

1. Was this part of an overarching strategy to convert online donors to multichannel donors?
2. Was there an error in scanning in the postal addresses from white mail donations?
3. Was there user error from individuals entering postal addresses by hand?

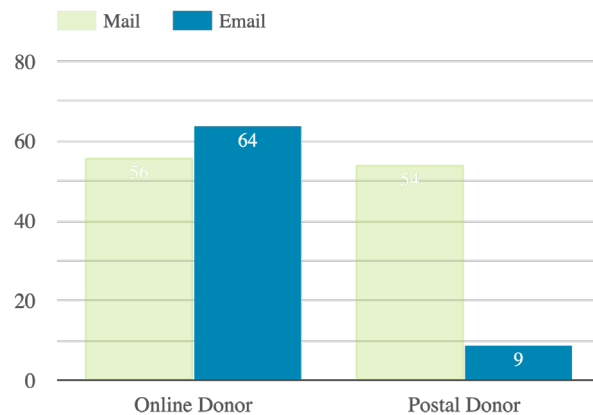
EMAIL

The Volume of Email by Donor Type

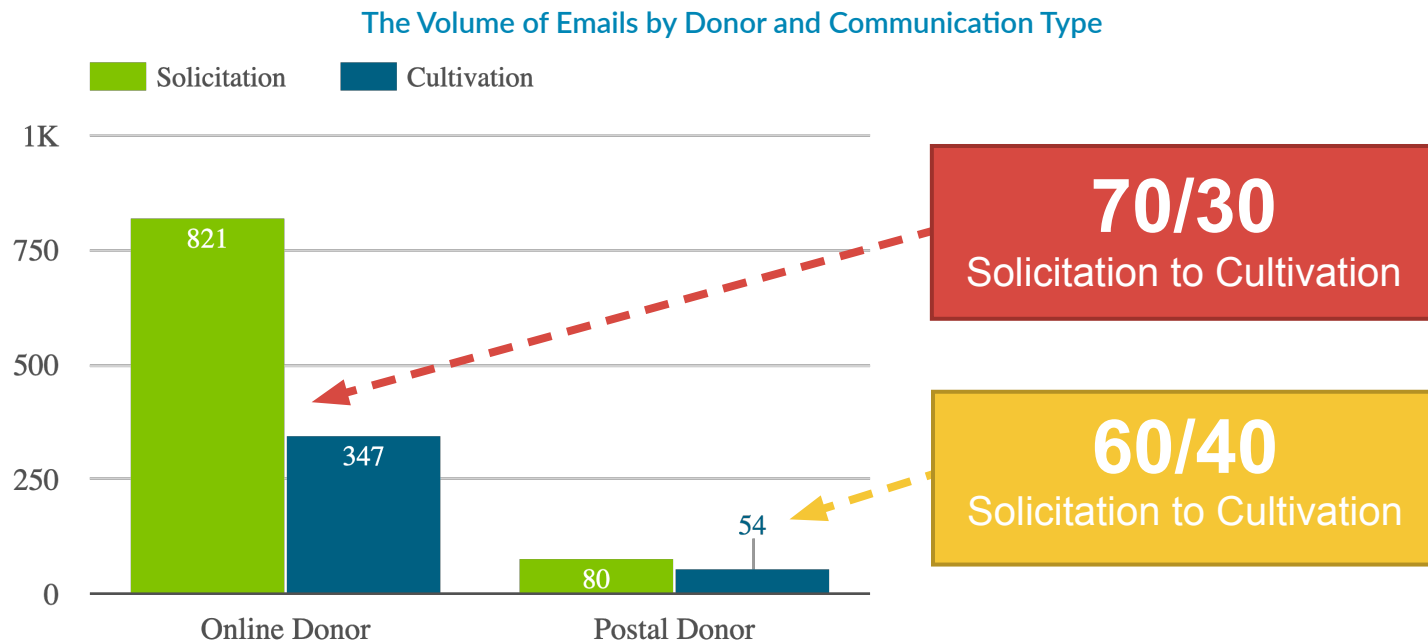


Next, we compared the volume of emails sent to each donor. The **online donor received 9x the number of emails than the postal donor.**

Number of Organizations by Communication Channel



7x more organizations chose to send **emails to the online donor over the postal donor.**



Next, we broke down the emails into two different communication types; **solicitation and cultivation**. The **online donor received far more emails**, but they also received a **higher ratio of solicitations to cultivations**.

If we look at it in percentages, the **online donor received a 70/30 split of solicitations vs. cultivations**. That equates to **70%** of messages asking for money and **30%** building relationships.

The postal donor saw a slightly more balanced ratio. **60%** of messages sent to the **postal donor** were asking for money, while **40%** were trying to build relationships.

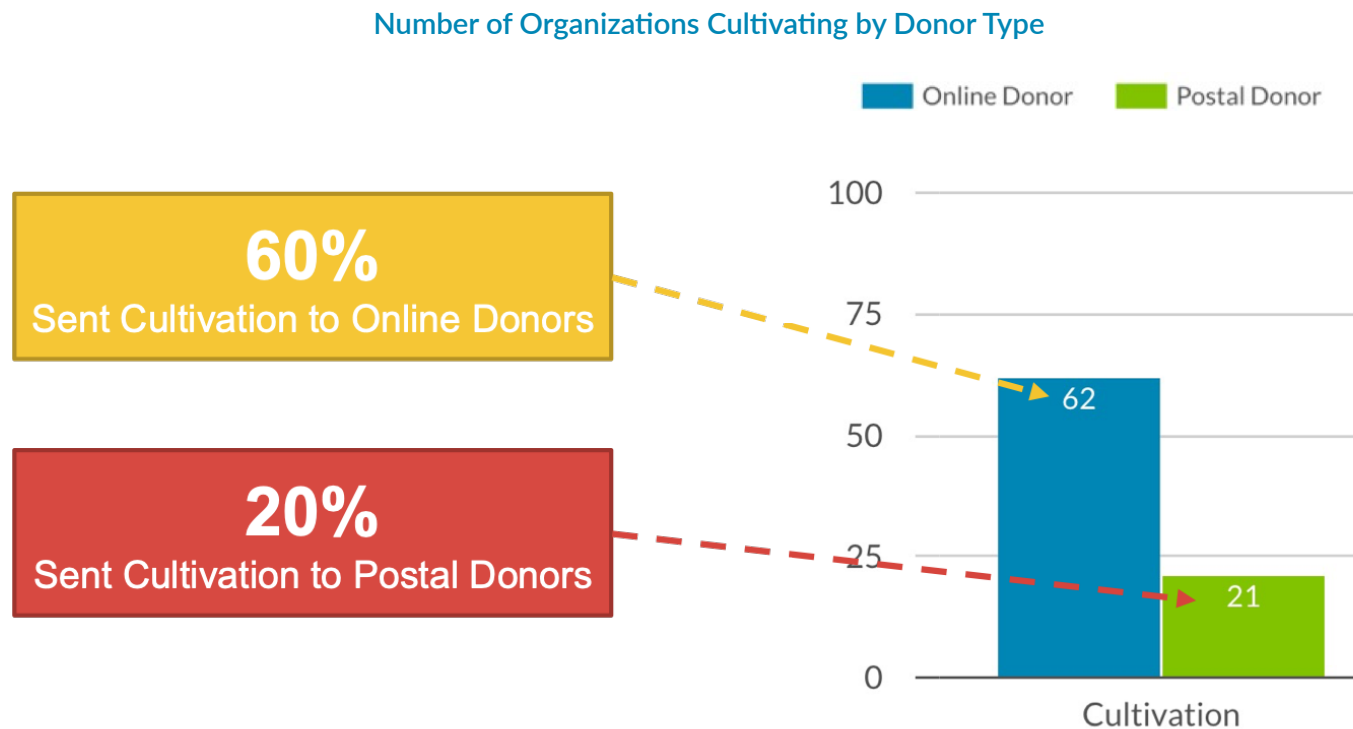
In the **online donor's** case, we see the ratio of solicitations go up as the volume of messages increased. But, the real question is:

How often should an organization be asking for money vs. cultivating a relationship during year-end?

There is no definitive rule as to how many solicitations and cultivations should be sent during the year-end season. However, when using our same research methodology to score the year-end training provided by the NextAfter Institute, **we typically recommend 60% solicitation and 40% cultivation** during this year-end season.

We were interested to see how many organizations cultivated both donors, and we observed that 60% cultivated the online donor, while 20% cultivated the postal donor. This means that

40% of organizations did not cultivate the online donor.
80% of organizations did not cultivate the postal donor.



KEY FINDING #3

Many organizations did not cultivate their donors during the year-end season.

Why is cultivation important?

Experimentation, like this one from the **NextAfter Experiment Library**, continually shows us that cultivating your donors is essential. This experiment was from an organization that was experiencing low engagement rates on emails.

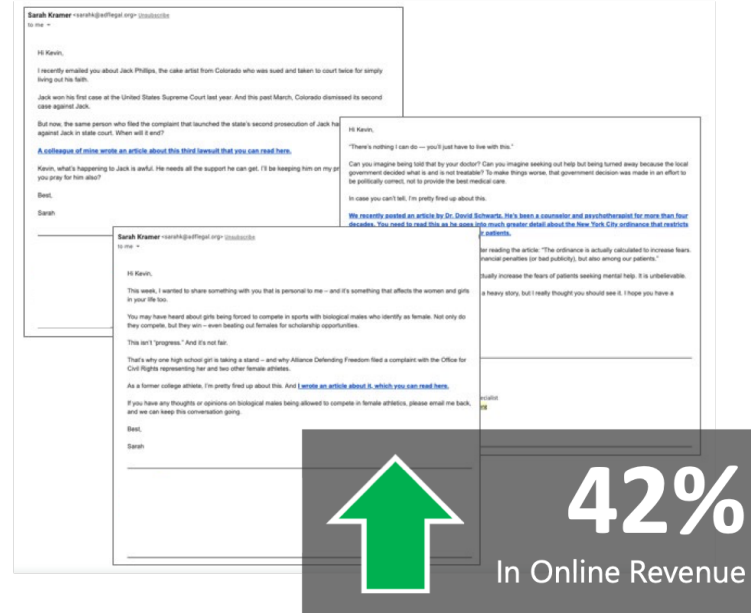
To test how cultivating their donors could affect their revenue, they split their email file in half: **50% of their file got the regular email cadence, while the other half started receiving an additional cultivation email every Friday.** These emails included links to their content, such as blogs and articles from their website.

No Additional Cultivation



No Additional
Cultivation Emails

Additional Cultivation Group



This organization saw a **42% increase in online revenue** from the cultivated group over a six-month period. They were not sending additional solicitation emails or asking for more donations. They simply took the time to share meaningful and valuable content that helped donors gain a deeper understanding of the organization and their impact on their cause.

***How you cultivate your donors
can affect your revenue.***

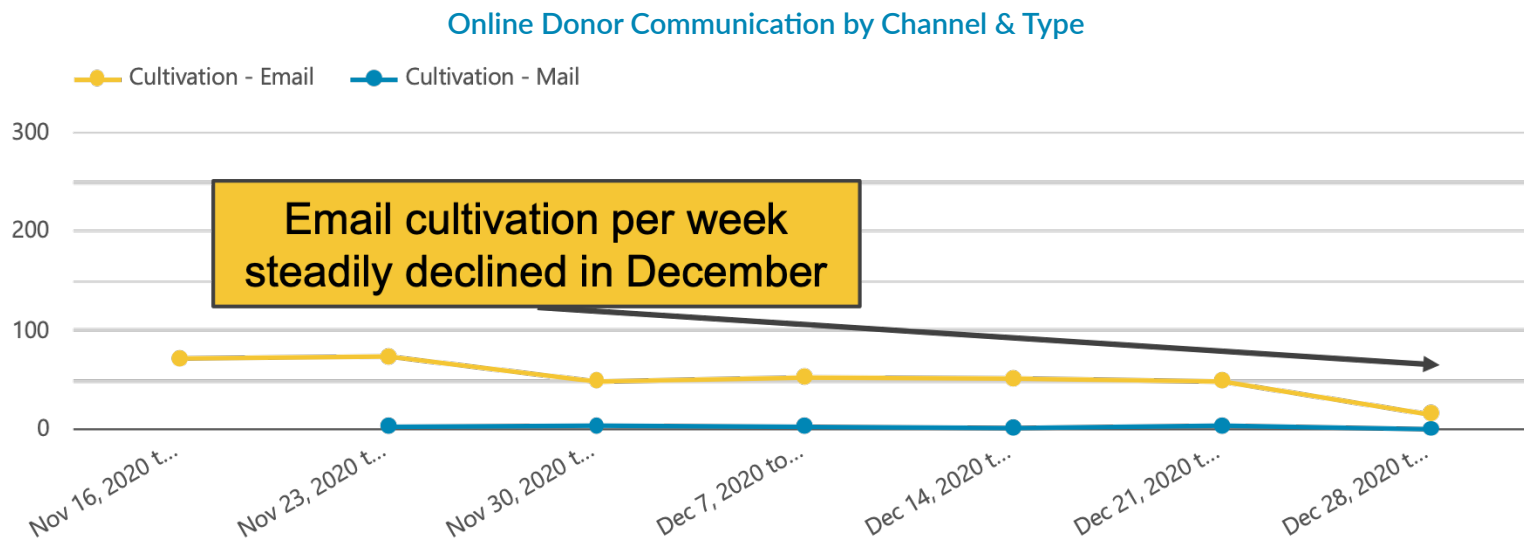
Online and Postal Donor Experience



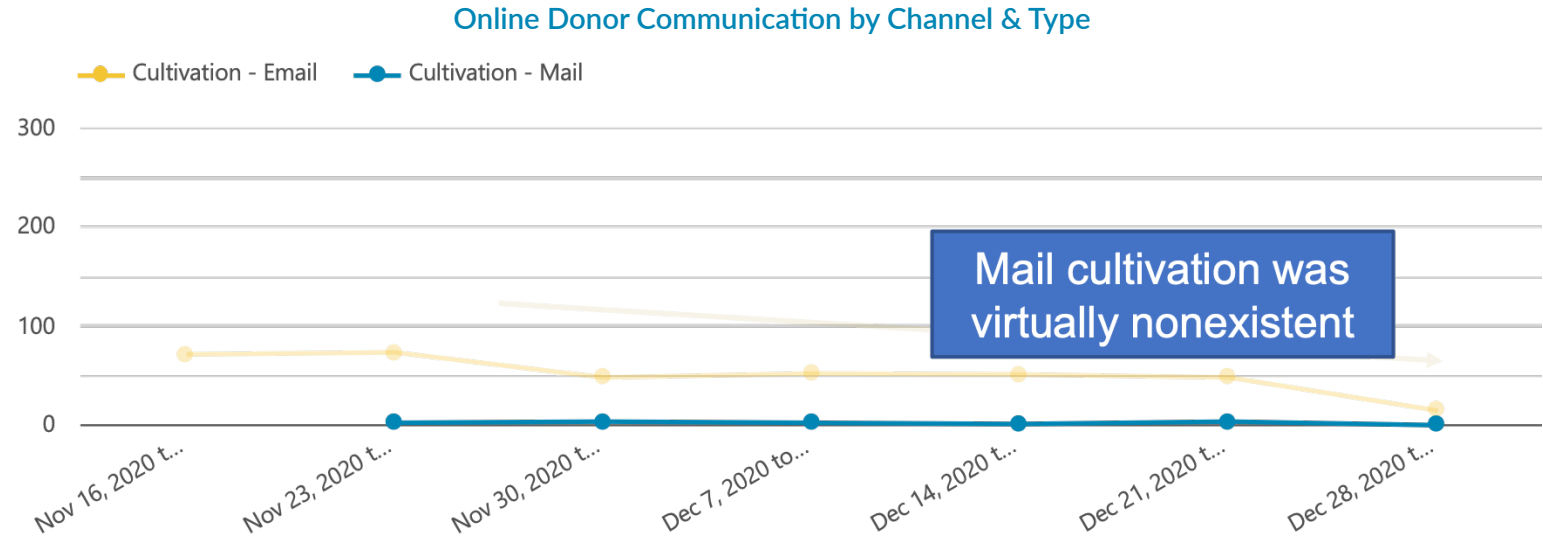
The Online Donor Experience

Now we will dig deeper into what the overall experience looked like for the **online donor**.

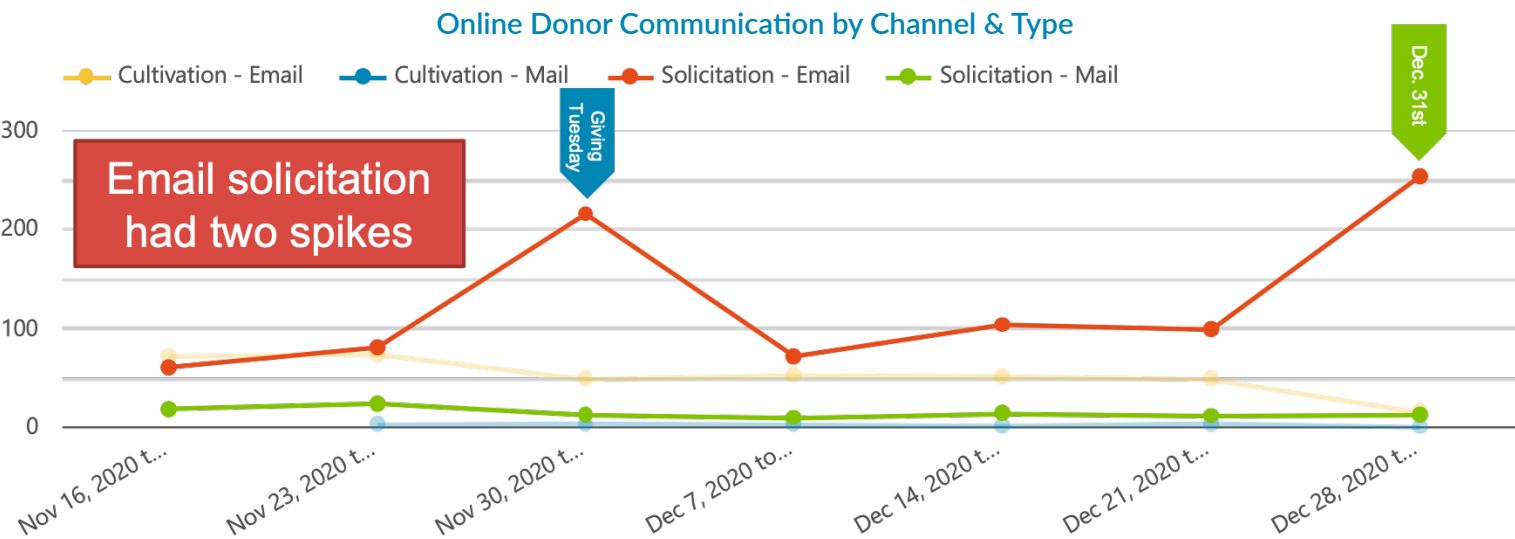
Email cultivation saw a downward trajectory throughout the seven weeks. This coincides with what we typically observe since organizations tend to **increase their email solicitations** as they get closer to the end of the year, thus making cultivation less of a priority.



Interestingly enough, we observed almost **zero mail cultivation** for the **online donor**. This indicates that organizations were relying on cultivating their **online donors using email over direct mail**.



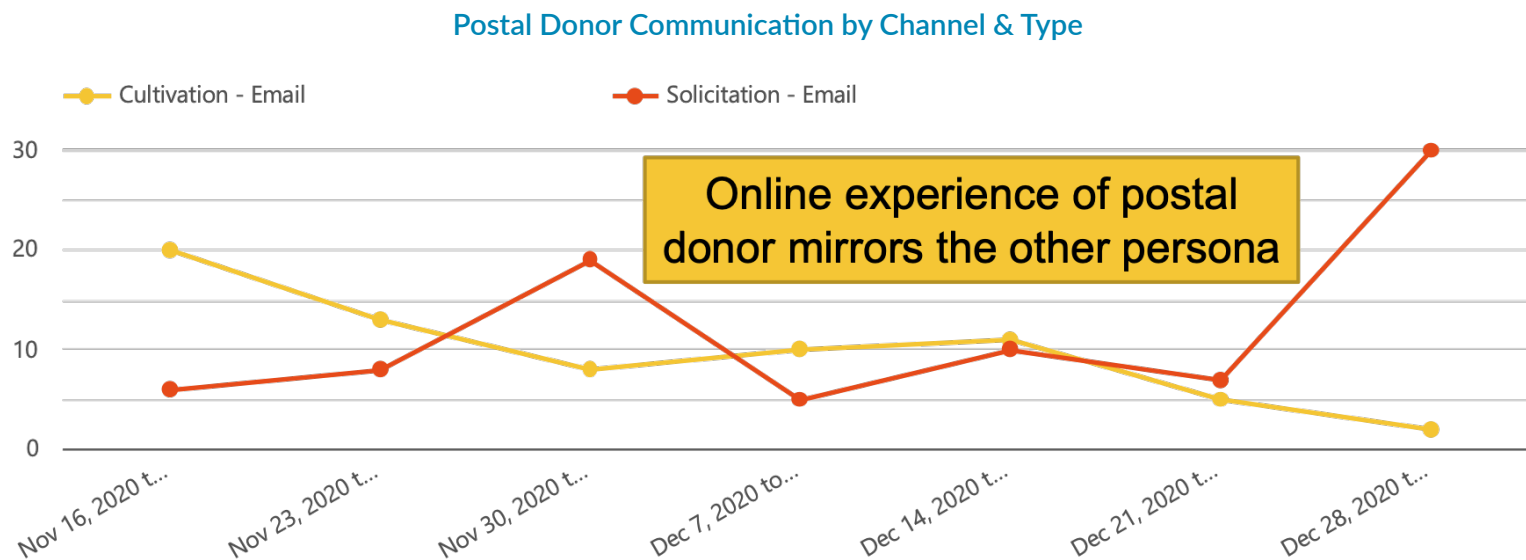
We start to see the whole picture when we look at **email solicitations** for the **online donor**. Essentially, **email solicitations saw an upward trend**, with upticks during two critical times: **Giving Tuesday** and **December 31st**. On the contrary, direct mail solicitation was fairly flat.



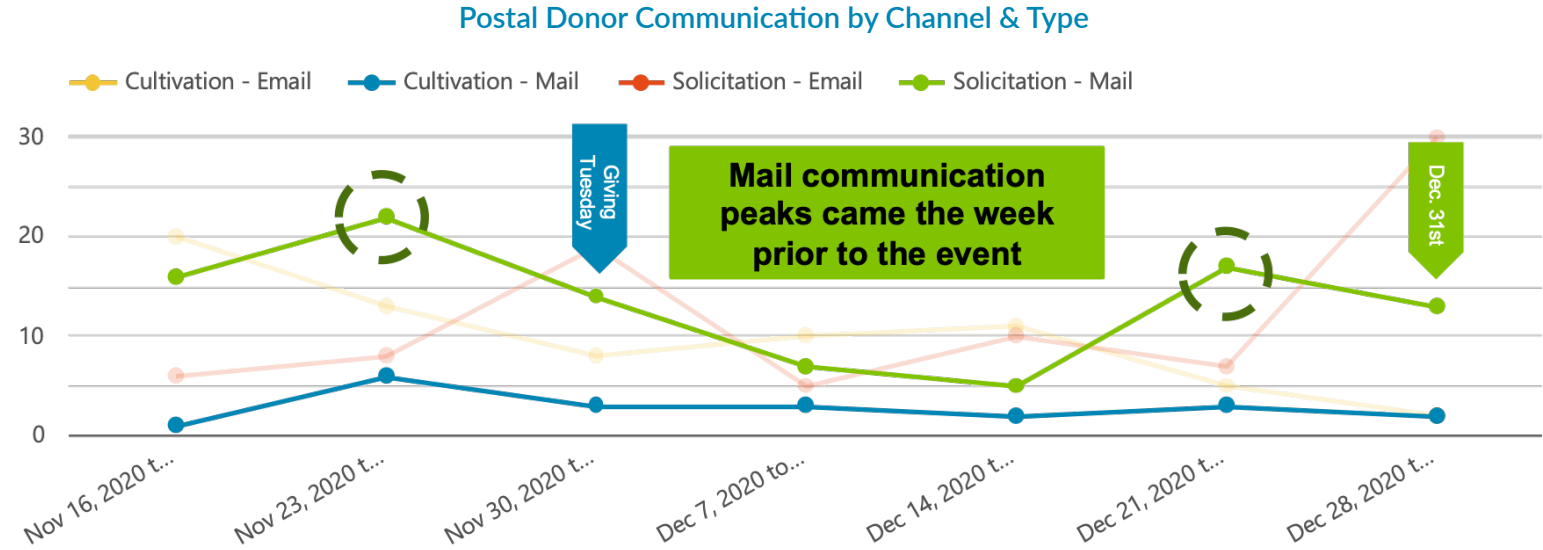
The Postal Donor Experience

Next, we naturally wanted to know what the overall experience looked like for the **postal donor**. We were curious about how much it would differ from the **online donor's** experience.

Overall, there was a **lower volume of messages** compared to the **online donor**, especially when it came to **emails**. **Cultivation emails saw a steady decline** over the seven weeks, while **solicitation emails followed a similar pattern** to the **online donor** experience. There were significant spikes of solicitation emails during the weeks of **Giving Tuesday** and **December 31st**.



As for direct mail, both **solicitation and cultivation mail declined**. But we observed a surge for both types of mail leading up to the two most important times of the season. This makes sense considering that organizations want to ensure that the donor receives mail before **Giving Tuesday** and **December 31st**.

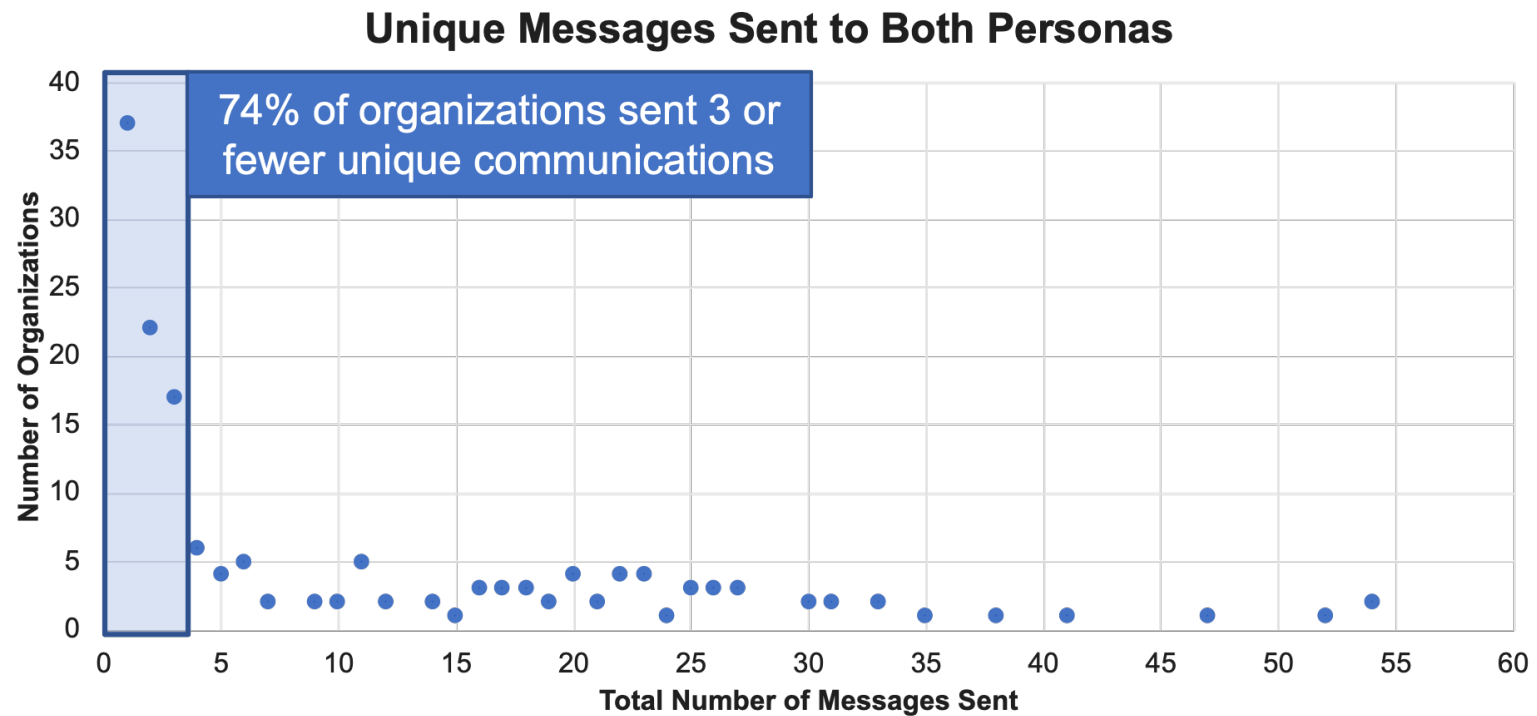


Donor Journey Case Study



Finally, we wanted to examine how specific organizations communicate with their donors and see what insights could be gained.

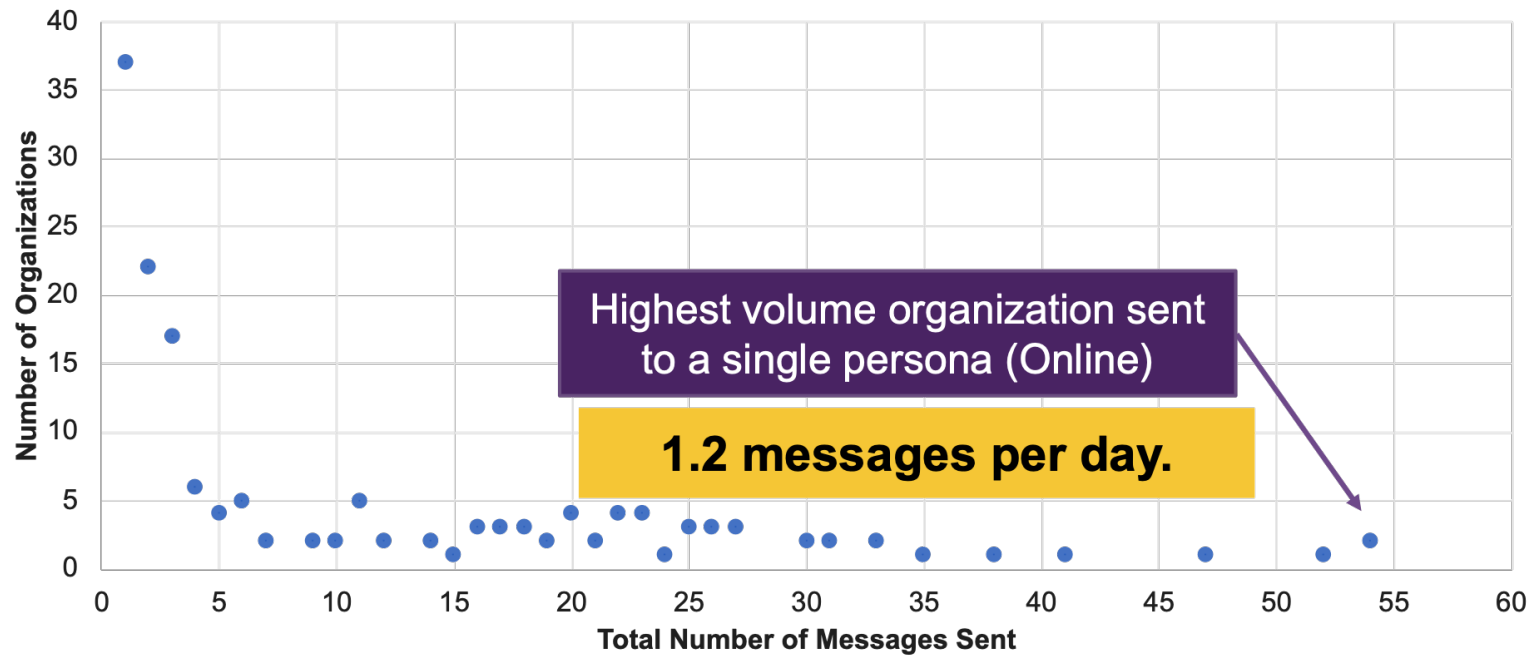
But first, here is an overview of the **total number of messages** sent from all the organizations in the study. **74% of organizations sent three or fewer unique messages (email and mail) to both donors.**





The median number of messages sent to both donors was **four**. This equates to about **one message** (either by mail or email) **every week and a half**.

Unique Messages Sent to Both Personas



Looking at the other end of the spectrum, one organization sent **54 messages** to the online donor, which comes out to about **1.2 messages per day**. This organization, the **Alzheimer's Association**, sent the **highest volume of messages to the online donor**.

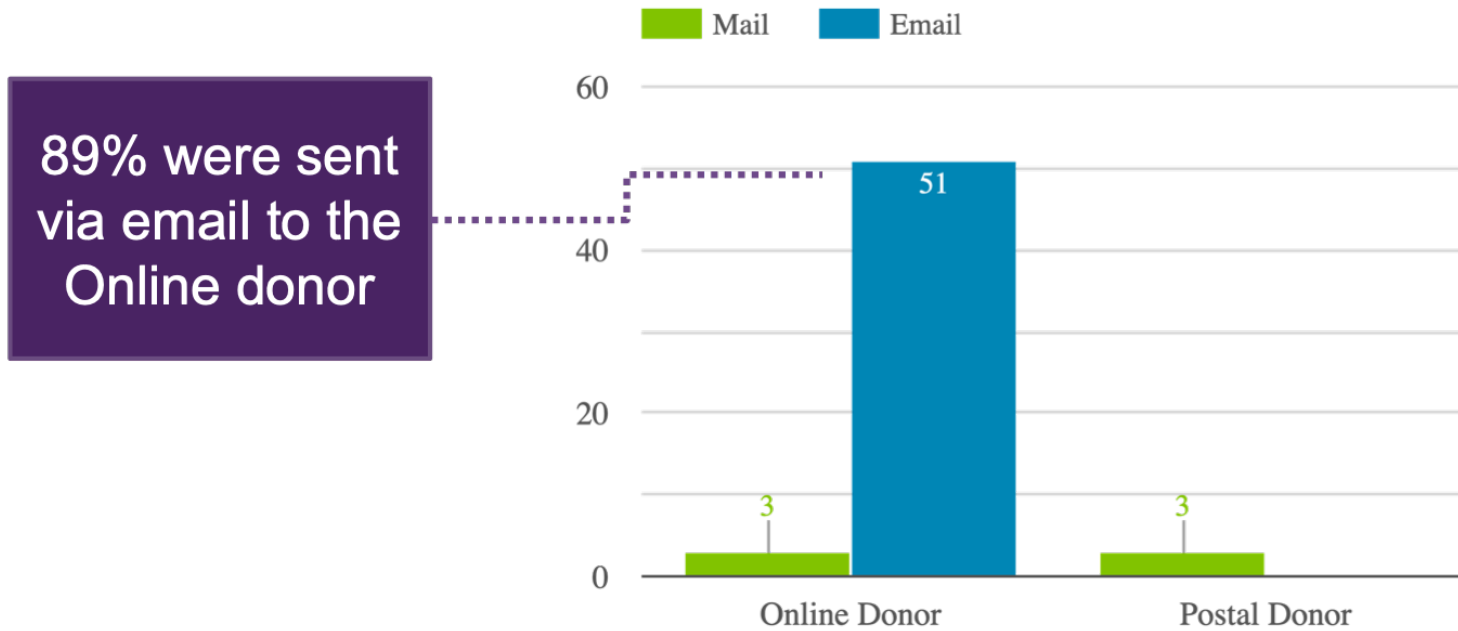


- 57 total messages
- 95% to the online persona
- 88% were solicitations

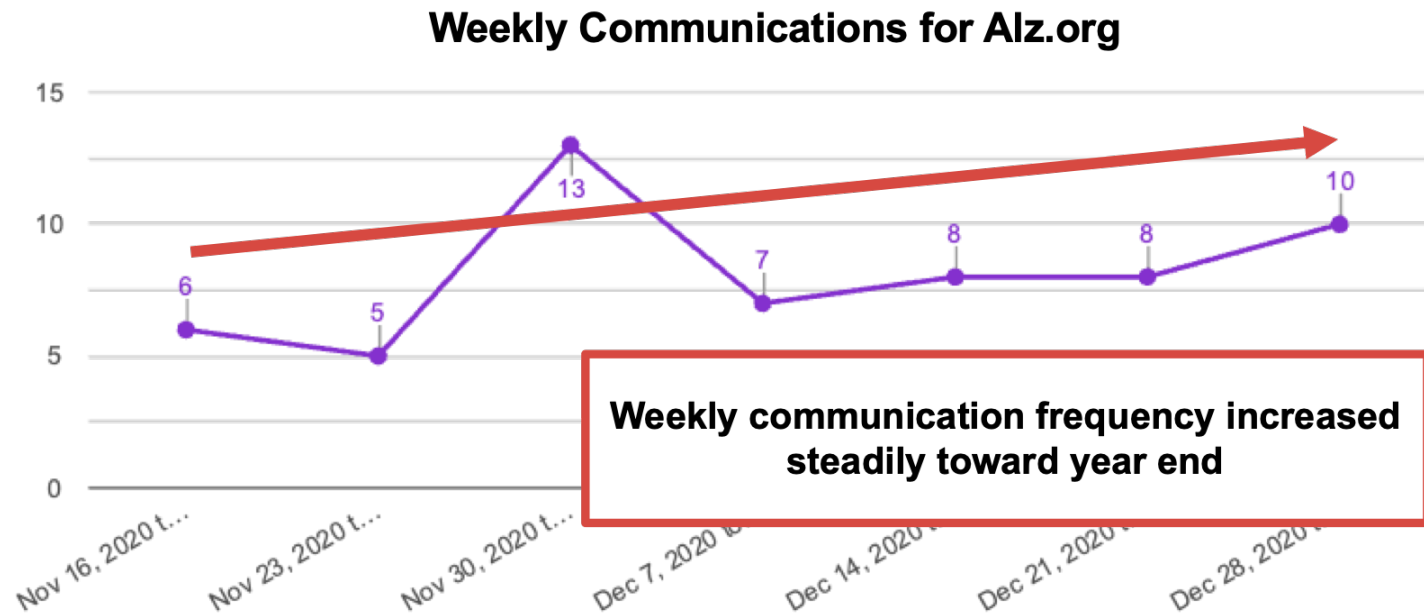
First and foremost, the purpose of analyzing the **Alzheimer's Association** data is to provide a real-world example of how specific organizations choose to communicate with their donors. Our goal is not to cast a judgement on a specific strategy, but rather to see what we can learn.

Overall, the **Alzheimer's Association** sent **57 messages**, **95%** of which were sent solely to the **online donor**, and **88%** of all the messages were **solicitations**. This meant that the donor received around **9 out of 10 messages as a solicitation for donations**. While we do not have insight into their overarching strategy, it was interesting to see how the donors for this study were treated in this 45-day window.

Communication Channel by Persona

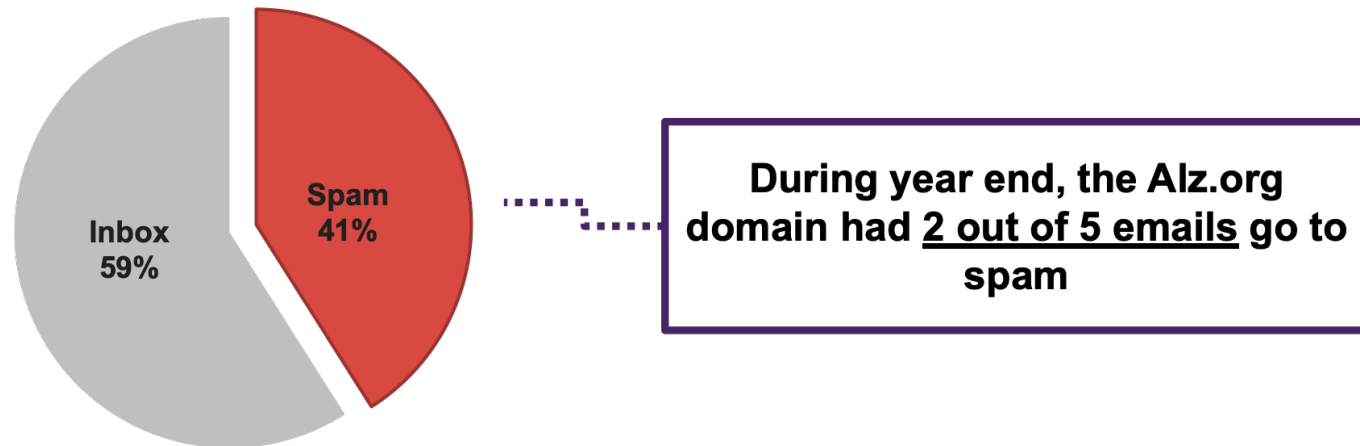


Breaking it down further by the donor, we see how much more the online donor received than the **postal donor**. **89% of messages** sent to the **online donor were email**, while the **postal donor received no emails**.



As we look at weekly communications over time, we noticed an **upward trend** in the number of messages sent each week. There was also a spike during the weeks of **Giving Tuesday** and **December 31st**. Interestingly enough, more messages were sent during **Giving Tuesday**, which leads us to believe that they prioritized **Giving Tuesday** over **December 31st**.

Year End Spam Rating for Alz.org



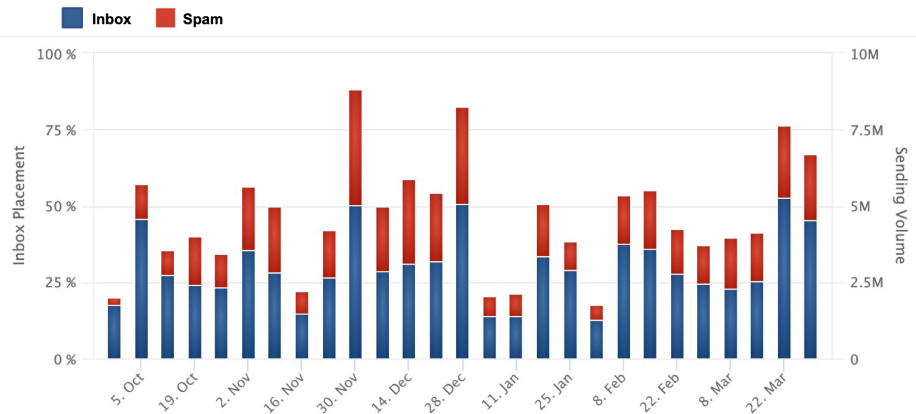
Next, we analyzed how many of their emails were making it into our inbox instead of being labeled as spam by the email server. **2 out of 5 emails** were marked as spam. This means that **41% of all emails sent did not make it into the donors main inbox.**

Does that mean that there is a correlation between the volume of emails sent and the amount being labeled as spam?

Again, while we do not have insight into their strategy, we can make some observations from the data. Some initial thoughts include:

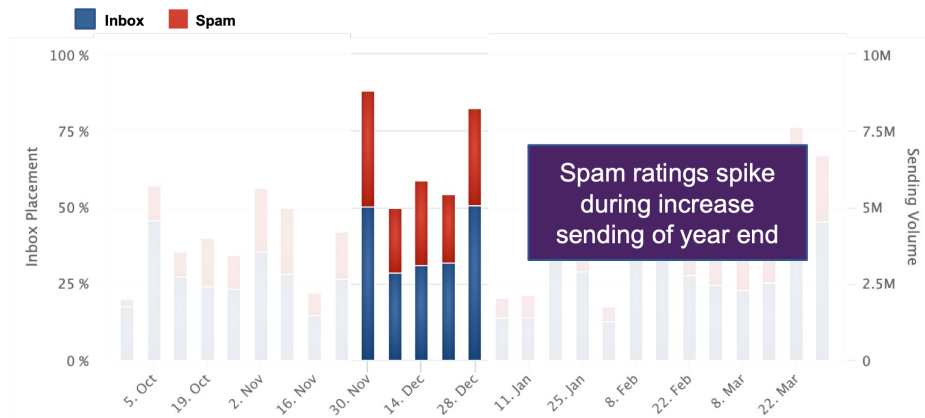
1. Do organizations send more emails to overcome the 'spam barrier' to reach their donors?
2. Or does sending more emails exacerbate the issue, as organizations keep sending content that people are not engaging with?

Alz.org Weekly Spam Rating vs. Emails Sent



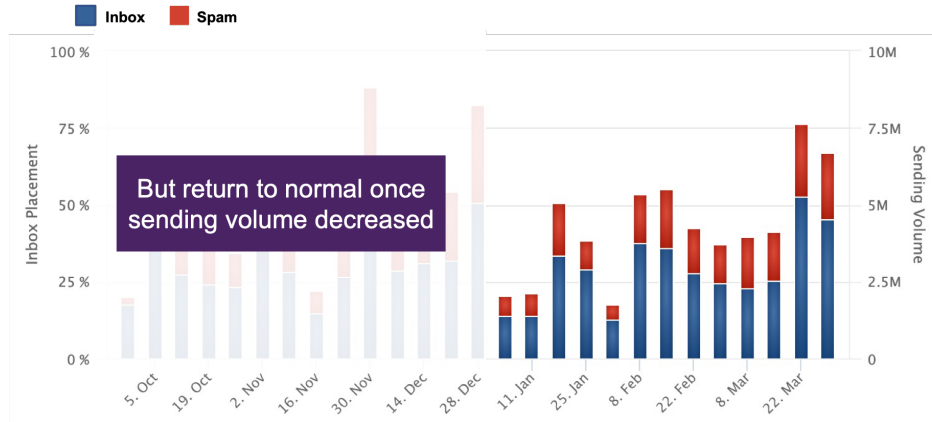
To get a better idea, we then took a look at their **inbox to spam ratio** from **October 2020 to March 2021**.

Alz.org Weekly Spam Rating vs. Emails Sent



We observed that during periods of **high volume** (i.e., year-end season), **spam rates increased**.

Alz.org Weekly Spam Rating vs. Emails Sent

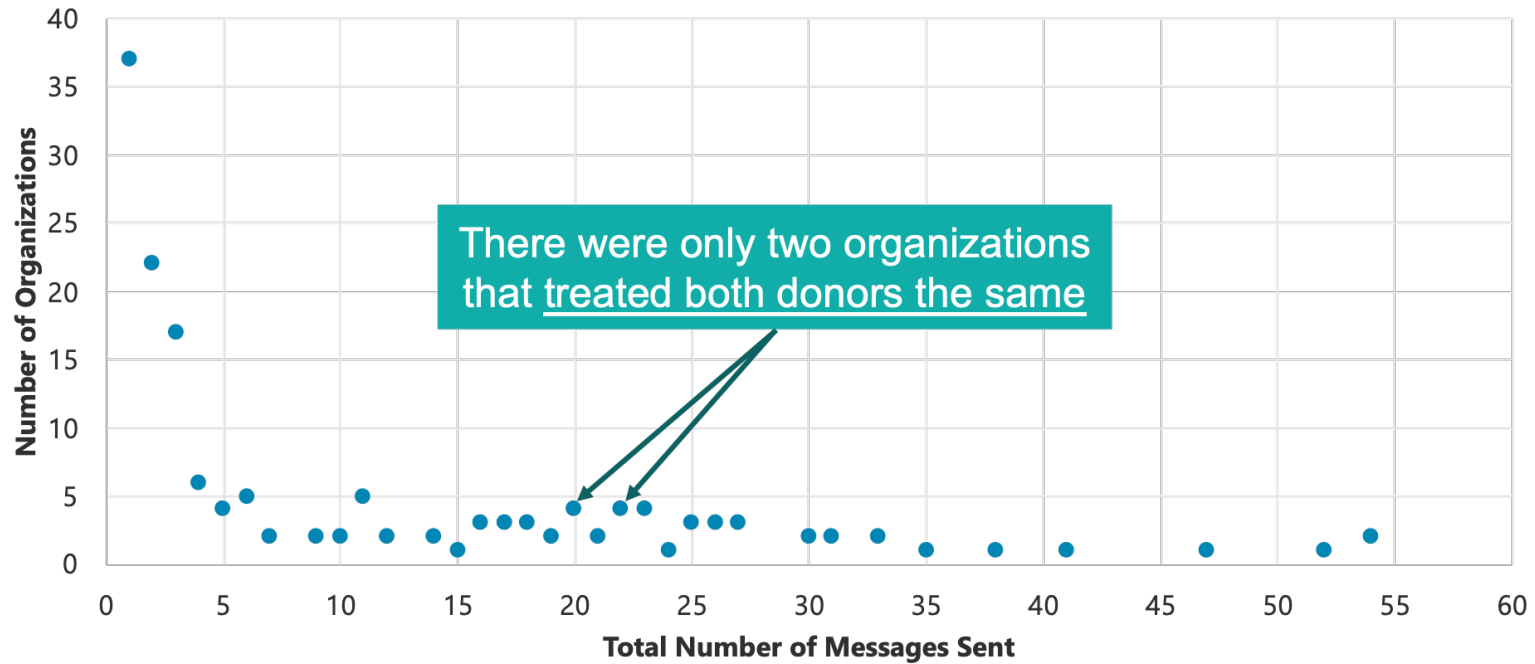


Once the year-end season ended and they sent fewer emails, we started to see **spam rates decrease**.

With all that being said, here are some questions to consider for your organization's strategy:

1. Are you **cultivating** your donors enough?
2. Are you **prioritizing** the right giving day? (Giving Tuesday vs. December 31st)
3. Are you **sending** emails that people want to open?

Unique Messages Sent to Both Personas



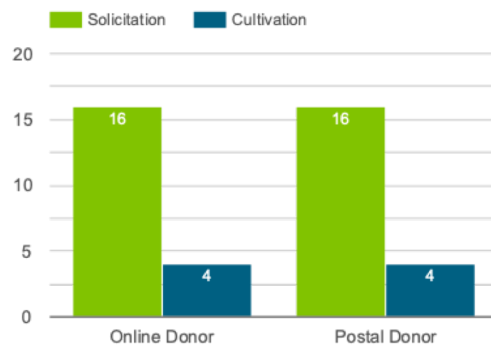
**Hearing Health
Foundation**

Prevention | Research | Cure



Another case study we chose to examine was from one of the two organizations that communicated **in the same manner to both donors**. One of those organizations is the **Hearing Health Foundation**.

Communication Types by Persona

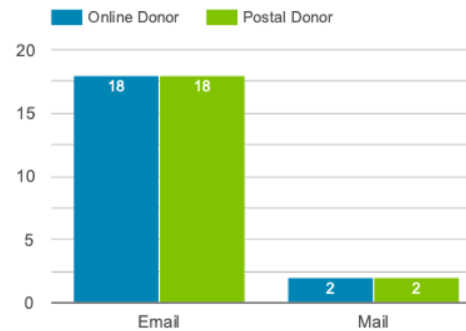


There was a 4:1 ratio of solicitation to cultivation for both donors

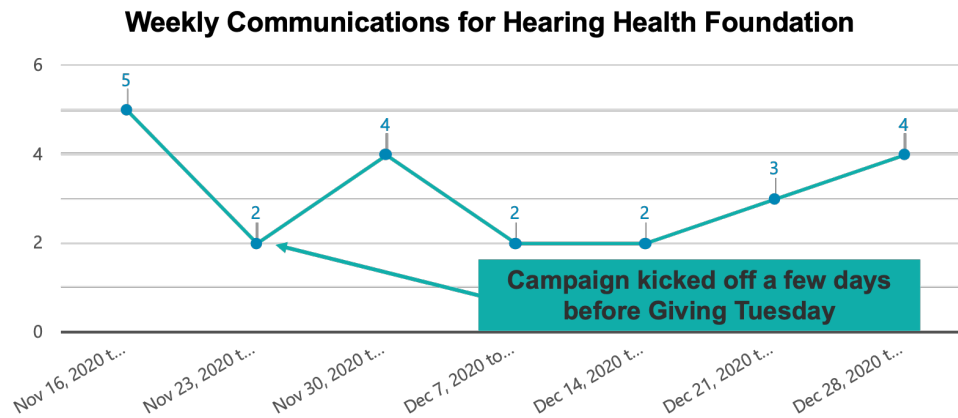
The **Hearing Health Foundation** had a **4:1 ratio of solicitation to cultivation** for both donors. This is higher than the average ratio of solicitations to cultivations that we observed.

And both donors received multichannel communications

Communication Channels by Persona

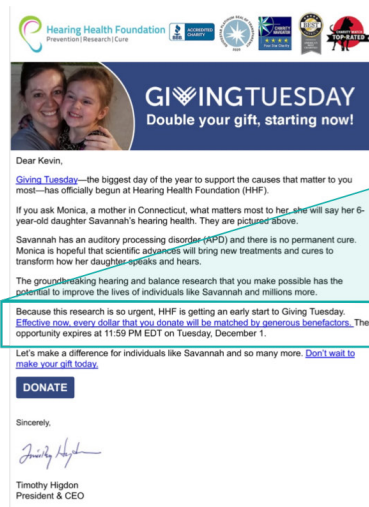


We see this again when we analyze the communication channels by donor type. Both the **online and postal donors** received the **same amount of email and mail**.



Their **Giving Tuesday** campaign started at the end of Thanksgiving, with an expected **increase in messages** sent during **Giving Tuesday**. We observed a similar **increase** leading up to **December 31st**, with a total of **four messages** sent during the last week of the season.

Here is an example of one of the emails they sent during their **Giving Tuesday** campaign. They chose to get an early start on their campaign because of the **high urgency** behind their research.

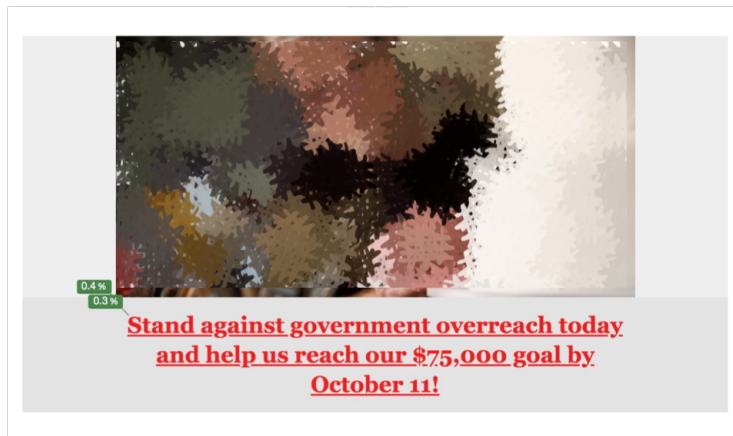


Because this research is so urgent, HHF is getting an early start to Giving Tuesday. Effective now, every dollar that you donate will be matched by generous benefactors. The opportunity expires at 11:59 PM EDT on Tuesday, December 1.

Two effective tactics are being employed here:

1. Including a matching challenge
2. Utilizing a specific deadline

No Matching Gift



Matching Gift



88%
In Donations

Regarding the tactic of **gift matching**, here's an example of an experiment from **NextAfter's Experiments Library**. We hypothesized that **matching gifts** would lead to an **increase in donations**. One version of the campaign focused on raising \$75,000, while the other focused on **tripling the donor's gift**. The second version saw an **88% increase in donations!** Consider this tactic in your campaign for **Giving Tuesday** and around the year-end season.

Control

FAMILYLIFE
Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.
[A Cru Ministry]

**You Can Help Create Godly Homes Through
Biblical Guidance and Practical Resources**

Your support today **DOUBLES** through
a \$645,000 Matching Gift

Goal: \$645,000
\$589,746

Families need the help and hope found in Christ now more than ever. But they can't do this alone. God has called us to provide the biblical guidance and practical resources to empower them to pass that legacy on to the families around them.

To help with this, FamilyLife has received an amazing Matching Gift that will help reach twice as many families! But this limited-time opportunity ends May 31.

When you make a gift today, it will be matched dollar for dollar—up to \$645,000—to reach families with biblical truth. Your generous gift will go directly towards...

Sticky Bar

Reminder: A generous donor will match YOUR donation today, up to \$645,000.

FAMILYLIFE
Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.
[A Cru Ministry]

**You Can Help Create Godly Homes Through
Biblical Guidance and Practical Resources**


Your support today **DOUBLES** through
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Goal: \$645,000
\$589,746

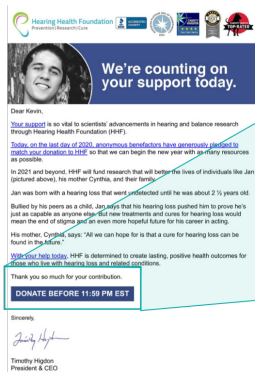
Families need the help and hope found in Christ now more than ever. But they can't do this alone. God has called us to provide the biblical guidance and practical resources to empower them to pass that legacy on to the families around them.

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When you make a gift today, it will be matched dollar for dollar—up to \$645,000—to reach families with biblical truth. Your generous gift will go directly towards...

 **44%**
In Donations

Here's another example from **FamilyLife**. In this experiment, both versions have identical copy, and both include an option to match the donations. The difference is that the second version further **emphasized the message by placing it on a sticky bar** on top of the page in a contrasting color. This tactic led to a **44% increase in donations!** So, it is effective to use matches in your campaign and make sure that people know about it along with the value that their donations bring.



Thank you so much for your contribution.

DONATE BEFORE 11:59 PM EST

The second tactic to discuss is the use of a **specific deadline**. Deadlines, like the one above, bring a **sense of urgency** to the donation appeal. Specific **deadlines** and **countdowns** effectively urge donors to donate now instead of donating at another time.

No Countdown Clock

Dear << Test Salutation >>,

I wanted to send you a quick reminder to make your online gift to Dallas Theological Seminary today. Your gift is an investment that will produce a return greater than any worldly investment you could make.

Generous donors have already helped DTS meet the Challenge Gift of \$450,000, but it's not too late to make your gift! *Every penny counts* to help DTS equip servant-leaders to boldly proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

Before you help ring in the new year, help lay the groundwork to advance God's kingdom in 2015.

Make your year-end gift now.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Bailey, PhD
President
Dallas Theological Seminary

You are receiving this email because you donated to DTS and opted to receive emails.
unsubscribe

Countdown Clock

Dear << Test Salutation >>,

DEADLINE: MIDNIGHT 12/31/2014

I wanted to send you a quick reminder to make your online gift to Dallas Theological Seminary today. Your gift is an investment that will produce a return greater than any worldly investment you could make.

Generous donors have already helped DTS meet the Challenge Gift of \$450,000, but it's not too late to make your gift! *Every penny counts* to help DTS equip servant-leaders to boldly proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

Before you help ring in the new year, help lay the groundwork to advance God's kingdom in 2015.

Make your year-end gift now.

Sincerely,

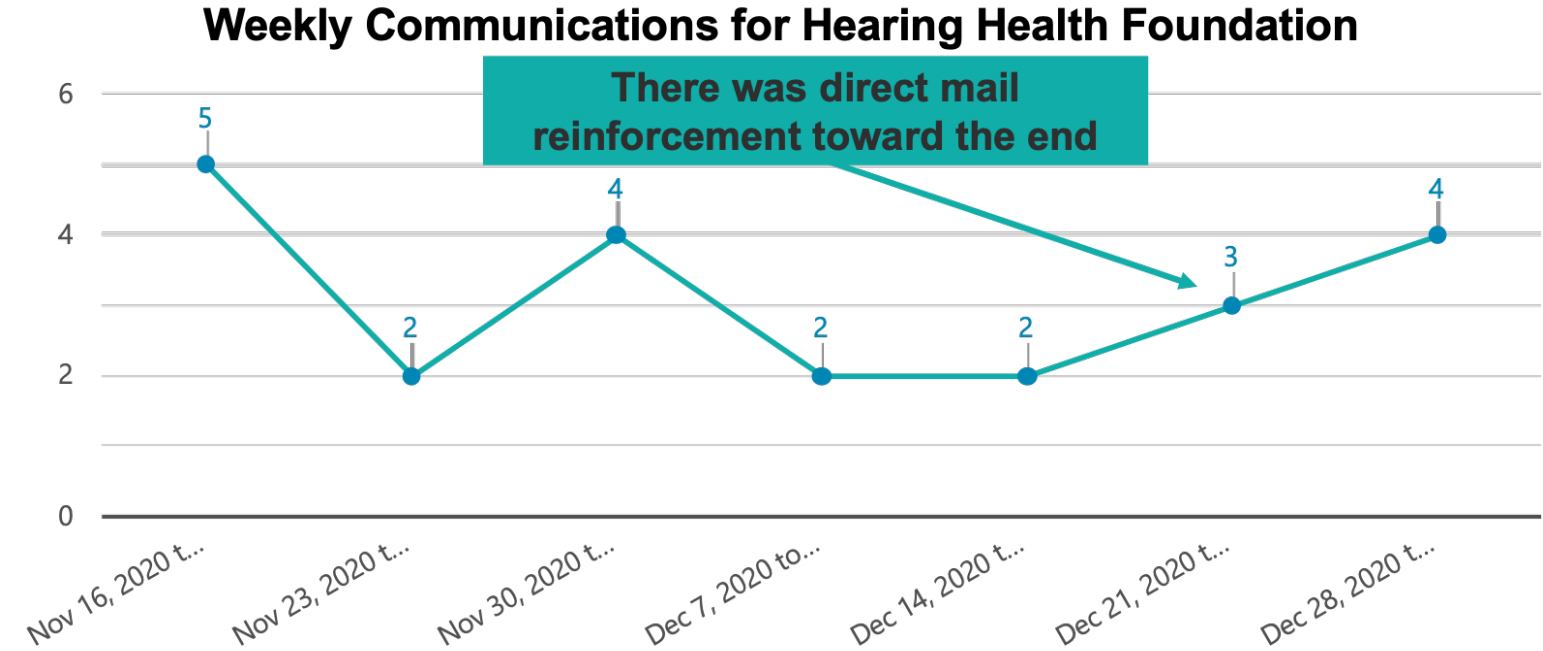
Mark L. Bailey, PhD
President
Dallas Theological Seminary

You are receiving this email because you donated to DTS and opted to receive emails.
unsubscribe



In this experiment, the first version was a simple email appeal. The second version included the same copy but had a **countdown clock** leading up to the deadline, leading to a **63% increase in conversion**.

Another observation to further analyze are the messages sent to **prime the donors prior to key giving days**. The **Hearing Health Foundation** sent direct **mail** leading up to the last week of the season, priming their donors for the final donation request on **December 31st**.

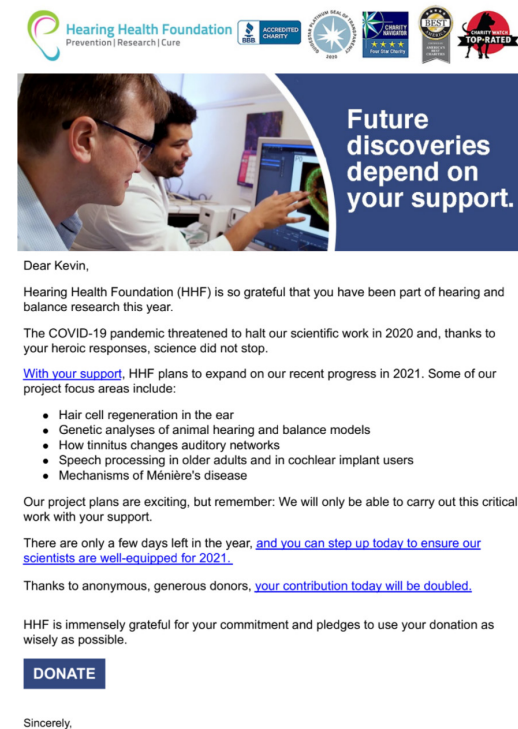




Then, on **December 28th**, we received a direct appeal **email**. The email discussed their focus areas and included a direct call-to-action and a donate button.

The **postcard** and the email lead us to believe that they **primed their donors via direct mail, then followed up via email** one week later. We can see this being an effective strategy to employ.

We received a postcard on **December 21st** from them, priming us for **December 31st**. The postcard emphasized the **deadline** and reminded us that contributions are **tax-deductible**.



No Post Card

No Postcard
Sent

Post Card



Here is an example of an organization **that primes and cultivates** its donors for the year-end season. In this experiment, **half of their donor file did not receive a Thanksgiving postcard. But the other half received a personalized postcard**, which also included a link to watch a video online. Not only did they cultivate their donors, but they also utilized **multiple channels** on the same piece of communication.

By priming someone for the campaign, it led to a **204% increase in donor conversion**.

Other Findings



Interesting Finding #1

This research study has provided us insight into other unexpected findings.



We received **233 MAILERS** from 132 organizations that we **did not donate to** that accounted for 44% of all the mail we received.

We found it interesting that we received a significant amount of **mail from organizations that we did not donate to**. Taking a further look at what the **postal donor** received, we found that:

1. The **postal donor** received mail from **58** out of the **103 organizations** that they originally donated to, and
2. They also received mail from **90 other organizations** that they did not donate to.

During year-end, postal donors are more likely to receive direct mail from unknown organizations than those they already give to.



We received **10 EMAILS** from an organization that we **did not donate to**.

On the other hand, we received **ten emails** from one organization that **we did not donate to**.

How?

Organizations are actively buying or renting out direct mail or email lists to contact new potential donors.

And if your organization is not actively engaging your donors, you may risk losing donations to other organizations that are proactively reaching out to your donors.

1. Make sure that you are **engaging** your existing donors
2. Consider **renting direct mail or email** lists to acquire new donors during the year-end season



TIPS

Additional Resources



Transform Your Fundraising Success with the Responsive Fundraising Toolkit

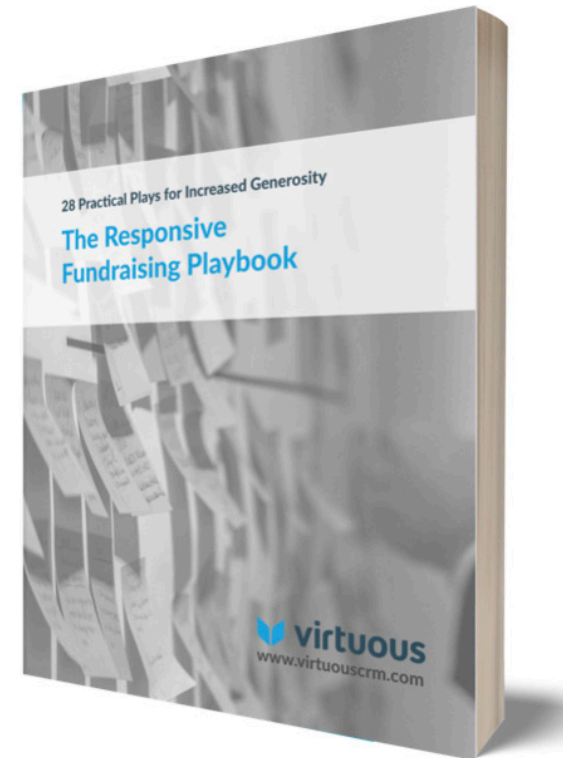
Leading nonprofit teams understand that giving is deeply personal and use responsive fundraising strategies to deliver personalized donor experiences and treat all their donors like significant donors. The Responsive Fundraising Toolkit will equip your team with the strategy, action plan, and examples you need to do the same.

In The Responsive Fundraising Toolkit, you'll get:

- A 30-minute video showcasing the why and how of responsive fundraising
- The 100+ Page Responsive Fundraising Blueprint & Playbook
- All six (6) on-demand sessions from the latest Responsive Nonprofit Summit
- A self-paced Responsive Assessment to benchmark your nonprofit's fundraising

Whether you want to identify the right signals to listen to, find the most important ways to connect, or make the next best suggestion for each of your donors, the Responsive Fundraising Kit will help you get started today. The time for change is now. Donors deserve it. Nonprofits need it. And beneficiaries depend on it.

Get the free toolkit now at virtuous.org/resources/ebook/responsive-fundraising-kit





Maximize your Online Fundraising Revenue During the Last Week of the Year

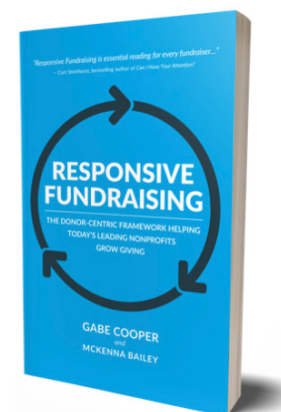
The final week of the year can bring in upwards of 37% of your total online year-end fundraising revenue. But to see this kind of result, you need the right strategy. Whether you've started your year-end fundraising campaign or not, this guide will equip you with field-tested and proven strategies to maximize donations during the most significant giving week of the entire year.

Get your free year-end guide at nextafter.com/maximize-your-online-fundraising/

Connect with The Modern Donor at Scale, Get Your Copy of Responsive Fundraising Today

Today's donors require a level of personalization, transparency, and engagement that many nonprofits don't deliver. Responsive Fundraising provides the strategic framework, and practical applications nonprofits need to build more significant relationships with modern donors. Understand the necessary steps to pivot away from ineffective, one-to-many fundraising tactics towards personalized, targeted efforts that create measurable increases in giving.

Learn more and get your copy today at virtuous.org/responsive-fundraising-book/



Improve Your Year-End Fundraising with this Certification Course

In this year-end certification course from the NextAfter Institute, you'll learn all of the essential ingredients needed for a successful year-end campaign, as well as ideas on how to optimize each part based on data, research, and learnings from thousands of online fundraising experiments. It will teach you about the campaign timeline, email optimization, how to support your appeals on your website, and so much more!

Get access to the year-end fundraising course by becoming a member of the NextAfter Institute today at nextafter.com/membership.

About





About Virtuous

Giving is deeply personal. We believe fundraising should be too, and technology partners should help nonprofit teams create responsive experiences that build better donor relationships and increase impact with confidence.

Much more than CRM, Virtuous is the only responsive fundraising platform and your growth partner in a changing world —unifying your fundraising, marketing, and donor development activities, ridding teams of redundant back-office tasks, and surfacing the insights and signals needed to deliver dynamic donor experiences at scale.

On average Virtuous customers see:

- 10% increase in average gift*
- 12% increase in donor retention*
- 20% decrease in administrative staff time*

Learn more at virtuous.org and get a tour to see how Virtuous can help you at virtuous.org/demo.

*Average improvements observed



About NextAfter

NextAfter's mission is to decode what works in fundraising and make it as accessible to as many nonprofits as possible. We work towards this mission in three ways:

1. A Fundraising Research Lab: nextafter.com/research

Conducting marketplace research, A/B testing, and digital experimentation to discover what works to attract, acquire, and retain more donors and raise more money online.

2. A Digital Fundraising Consultancy: nextafter.com/let-us-help

Working side-by-side with nonprofit organizations to help them develop and execute research-backed digital fundraising strategies designed to generate sustainable online revenue growth.

3. An Institute for Online Fundraising: nextafter.com/institute

Equipping nonprofit fundraisers and digital marketers with data-driven and evidence-based research, resources, and training.

Over the past 6 years, we have:

- Open sourced over 3,000 online fundraising experiments complete with creative samples, data sets, and key discoveries.
- Conducted mystery donor studies analyzing online fundraising trends spanning 1000+ different organizations 9 countries.
- Enrolled over 4,500 people and certified more than 500 students in one of 8 online courses where fundraisers can deepen their knowledge in critical areas based on real evidence.

Learn more at nextafter.com

