

Year-End and Special Asks: Burden or Opportunity?

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More**
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The below tips are for a letter appeal to regular donors. There are certainly other approaches that may prove more effective in your staff's individual situations. For example, staff sending to younger audiences may have more success using social media and text-based asks. However, as with monthly support raising, the most effective asks will always be 1) face-to-face followed by 2) voice-to-voice. You may want to advocate a multi-pronged approach using all of these methods.

For large donors, you may need to think differently based on what you know of their individual situation. For example, many major donors begin allocating their year-end giving at the start of the 4th fiscal quarter (Oct 1). For these donors, if you miss their deadline, you may have missed the opportunity to mobilize them to invest in your ministry.

The reality is that it takes a lot of time and effort to get your ask letter prepared and sent on time. You'll need to comb through your database to select recipients, write and edit your letter, print and sign, and prepare your envelopes, etc. And that's to say nothing about lifting your needs up to the Lord and asking Him to provide. In order to mail letters by Thanksgiving, you'll need to start the process weeks if not months early. Consider working together with a teammate an hour or so a week to hold each other accountable and have fun in the process.

Tips on a Successful Year-End Ask

- Send to all regular donors as well as past special donors. Spread the net wide!
- Exclude new or recently-increased donors to your team since June. Don't worry, you can add them back in next year.
- This should be a special letter, not your regular prayer letter.
- Letter should be no more than one page, front side only.
- Individually sign each letter and, if possible, hand address envelopes.
- Send via snail mail, not email. Overseas staff should use a prayer letter service – cost is easily outweighed by benefits.
- Postmark by Friday or Saturday after Thanksgiving – deadline is critical!
- Send a passive reminder (Christmas card/gift, family photo magnet, prayer letter, etc.) around Dec. 8-10. Don't mention your ask.
- Call top 10 or so key recipients who haven't given by mid-December.
- For everyone else, send mail-merged email reminder on the first business day after Christmas. Communicate how much God has provided and how much you still lack; also provide a link for online giving.
- Send timely hand-written thank-you.