
Shallow Review of Flyer Fundraising



The idea behind flyer fundraising is to take a technique that is commonly used in other non profit spheres (such as animal rights and political) and apply it to nonprofit fundraising. This can be done in a few different ways, including soliciting emails, donations, and spreading a message with the hope it will change action later. Flyer fundraising seems to be a cost effective but not time effective, method of acquiring new supporters. Larger nonprofits normally do more direct street solicitation, which seems like it would work better.

Research

As always, the research is disappointingly barren. There are a few claimed successes in other movements, but none directly tied to fundraising. I would guess the ratios are not that far off from direct mail which is about \$0.75 raised per \$1.00 spent. Direct mail seems somewhat comparable, as a charity would likely send very similar content over both mediums. Although if someone is handed a flyer they likely have a higher chance of reading it, it still seems to be in the same general area. The time cost for flyering is much higher than the time cost for direct mail, but the monetary cost, assuming volunteers are handing out the flyers, is much less.

Many who personally participate in handing out flyers are paid fundraisers trying to collect donations on the spot. This might suggest that 1:1 returns are not achieved if you pay someone to hand out flyers.

The most similar case I could find good data on is animal rights flyering, where studies show generally few to no effects on diet change. I would expect flyers to have a stronger effect on diet than they do on donation preference.

One rare but encouraging fact is that other organizations are experimenting in this area (TLYCS and GWWC). We look forward to reading this research and would weight it fairly heavily as it's much more directly connected to the causes and charities that Charity Science would be fundraising for.

Anecdotally Charity Science employees have tried flyering in the past (for a poverty meetup) with no success.



Flyering seems like it would work best for an organization with many volunteers, particularly if they are not comfortable with more direct fundraising. After a brief search, I could not find many similar international global health organisations doing flyering. It seems possible that it's a good way to spread ideas like charity evaluators instead of more specific causes or tasks.

Estimated Potential

I would expect to raise less than 1:1 and also acquire only a few long term donors using this approach. It seems fairly dominated by street fundraising. I think this approach would only be effective if we had over 100+ volunteers and even then something like P2P fundraising would likely work better.

Further Research

Getting more information from GWWC and LYCS to see how their experiments went is the next natural step.

Subjective Sense

My subjective sense is pretty negative. Direct mail, which is somewhat similar, might be expected to have a 0.5% response rate, with most of its \$ moved coming from warm contacts

(e.g., people who have already donated, with flyering you are less likely to get address information) which lowers the effectiveness. Flyering seems like a comparably weak acquisition strategy.

The general fundraising community does not talk much about this as a strong option, and it was not brought up by any of our consultants. Simultaneously, it does not seem unique or original enough that organizations would not be doing it if it did yield better returns than other more conventional options.

References

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