**Here’s A Real, Live “Donor-Centered” Appeal Letter**

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*[](http://www.gailperry.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/dog-love.png)*

*Donor-centered means it’s all about the donor!*

You’ve probably heard all the talk about making all your appeals in a “donor-centered” fashion.

**But what does “donor-centered” really mean**? What does it look like in action?

We all know what we are supposed to do.

We’re supposed to make it all about the **donor**and not about our **organization.**

It’s easy to pay lip service to this idea, but putting it into practice is much harder than it may seem.

How do you actually implement donor-centered communications?

This letter was a huge hit in my FREE webinar this week, “[**Where to Find the Donors This Fall: Fine Tune Your Year-End Appeals**](http://www.gailperry.com/webinars/).”

Everybody wanted a copy of the letter so I wanted to make it available on my blog.

And the webinars were so popular and heavily subscribed that I added an[extra session](http://www.gailperry.com/webinars/) next Monday night, November 7, at 7pm ET. Join me!

Here’s what a donor-centered appeal looks like.

I wrote this last week for one of my favorite consulting clients – a  hospital foundation.

The smart development staff there is eager to learn everything I’m teaching them about fundraising for today’s donor.

And we’ve been working on best practices in direct mail – how to make letters sound personal, more casual and friendly.

The original unedited letter we developed went a bit like this:

*Dear Mr. Donor:*

*Did you know that last year Smith Hospital:*

* *got this award expanded*
* *this center of medicine*
* *brought in xx number of new doctors*
* *did this, did that, etc.*

It was a nice letter, written in the correct tone we had been working on, with bullets and white space.

And I liked that the word “you” showed up immediately in the first sentence.

But the letter seemed all about the hospital, and not about the donor.

[](http://www.gailperry.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/medical-doc-and-kid.jpg)

*What the donor wants to hear, and what you want to say are probably totally different.*

So I sat down and, just brainstorming with the staff, came up with this letter instead.

And I think this is a **true sample** of what people mean by “donor-centered.”

Can it be improved? Sure it can.  I’d like to see it be much more specific. But it’s a step in the right direction.

Here is a letter that’s is friendly, casual, heart-felt and even a bit intimate.

Its tone is very personal. It has short sentences, action verbs, lots of white space.

And it talks about the donor and what she wants out of the hospital.

My “donor-centered” appeal letter is all about the donor.

And I’d be pleased if you’d like to knock off any part of this letter.

If any **words or phrases seem to ring true to your cause** and for your donors, **by all means USE THEM.**

Please don’t feel like you have to reinvent the wheel.. It’s a waste of your time.

Any nonprofit can use words or phrases like:

*“Your donation will make a world of difference.  I promise you.”*

And this letter uses the word “you” 16 times. It uses the pronoun “your” 9 times.

Knock this letter off. Adapt this and USE IT!

*Dear Name,*

*When you or a family member is ill or injured, where do you turn?*

*If you’re like most in our community, you go to Smith Hospital.*

*Why?*

*Because you know you will receive absolute top notch medical care.*

*And you also know that you’ll be treated like a real person, by dedicated, compassionate health professionals in a warm, caring environment.*

*Your contributions have helped make Smith Hospital the leading regional health care provider that it is.  We are so grateful to you for supporting our committed team of care givers.*

*Thanks to you, our caregivers have touched the lives of thousands – whether they faced an urgent need, a devastating disease or sought to improve their quality of life.*

*Smith Hospital is your community hospital.  We exist to serve you and your loved ones – to provide hope, healing and recovery.*

*In this uncertain economic time, the Hospital counts on your support – now more than ever.*

*Your gift is extremely important to Smith Hospital because it provides resources that make an immediate impact – that will help us through these interesting – and tough – times.*

*Your gift of $100, $500, $1,000 or $5,000 can make all the difference…… to our doctors, our nurses, our therapists, our pharmacists, our dietitians, our technicians, our Emergency Department staff – to everyone here who works to serve you.*

*And if you’d like, you can specify your gift to a particular department or program – The Cancer Institute, Breast Center, Cardiology, Emergency Department, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Pediatrics, Community Health, Integrative Medicine – where ever you choose.*

*Please consider making as generous a gift as you can.*

*As medical care advances, your hospital is committed to staying at the cutting edge – for you, for your loved ones, for every person in the community.  Please help to make this possible with your contribution.*

*Your donation will make a world of difference.  I promise you.*

*Thank you so much for your help.*

*Sincerely,*

*Xx*

*President and Chief Executive Officer*

Can you knock off parts of this letter? Tell me what you like about it and what would make it better!Leave a comment!