



FEBRUARY CONFLUENT E-NEWSLETTER

Tip of the month: Using new technology to increase response rates

Christa Heibel

Every year we do our typical Annual Giving Appeal followed by a few additional special appeals. We complement those efforts with rounds of direct mail, multiple phone calls, monthly or quarterly newsletters or e-newsletters. Year after year we ask supporters again, and again, for money.

Every day I talk with Development Directors and Administrators that tell me they are happy with their direct mail and phone programs. It often strikes me that many of these managers settle for status quos or slow-decline results because they have "always done it that way." Unfortunately, I see all too often that all of a sudden, the board, CFO or CEO looks at the results and identifies a slow decline in donors. The sudden wakeup call sets clients and vendors into panic mode because year-end numbers look to suffer. The comfortable/limited-effort programs will only then seem to be failing.

Don't let your mindset become, "Everything is fine because no one has complained yet." Ask yourself:

1. When is the last time we focused on reactivating lapsed donors?
2. When is the last time we looked at data enhancement for prospecting?
3. Have we tried to complement our traditional fundraising outreach with new technologies?

Confluent Impact Communications is here for those of you that know there is more to annual appeals than just direct mail, and that even tele-fundraising/direct mail efforts need a FRESH approach on occasion. We want to partner with those of you looking to improve your donor communication and fundraising efforts.

Let's face it – the economy is tight, grants are hard to come by and foundation funds are not endless. You need supporters that understand your critical missions, feel educated about what you are doing, are engaged as part of the team and donate maximum dollars. You need some creativity in how and why you reach out to them, along with cost effective ways to make it happen.

Confluent delivers the latest technologies and provides fresh insight on ways to update, engage and educate your constituents. Here are just a few:

- **Auto calls** - For less than a dime, a donor can receive calls that remind them about events, follow up on direct mail appeals or simply say "THANK YOU".
- **Custom Call** - For a few pennies more, personalize the auto message with the individual's name. Getting a personal greeting from an important figure, somebody that benefitted from their gift or an executive update makes donors feel good!

- SMS** - Follow up with supporters on the device they keep close at all times, their cell phone. Send a reminder about an upcoming event or deadline with this convenient outreach tool.

- Direct Connection** - An interactive call, like a Live Radio Talk Show, that allows you to update, appeal, educate and poll your supporters. This phone call also gives you real time stats and reporting that allows for targeted and effective follow up.

This month we are going to be sending out a sample automated call, Custom Call and SMS while also hosting a Direct Connection event so that you can understand how these tools look, feel and work. Test it out yourself to see how convenient, affordable and easy to use these communications can be for you and your audiences.

Contact Christa at cheibel@callconfluent.com

Product Highlight or Case Study: Out of the Box SMS Usage Jack Tracksler

One of our clients recently attended a conference and conducted a number of seminars for attendees. They wanted to make sure that attendees were reminded about the seminars and showed up on time to get good seats.

They had attendees pre-register for the sessions so they knew who should be "where" and "when". We set up a schedule to text each attendee 15 minutes before their sessions started. The message provided the attendees with the title of the session, location and a reminder that it was scheduled to start in 15 minutes.

We were able to reach 98% of the individuals who had pre-registered and amazingly everyone showed up on time! With all that is going on at conferences, it's important to be able to remind folks where they have to be and when. We all know how easy it can be to bump into a colleague at such events and very quickly lose track of time.

Wouldn't it be great if it were available at every conference or convention? We think it would also work well for college orientation programs, reunions, alumni weekends and so much more. Maybe we could remind students of the time and location of their first class on their first day? I could certainly have used that, but when I was in college we didn't have this technology. We considered it a luxury to have one pay phone on each floor of the dorm.

I'm sure there are many more uses that are running through your head. Why not bounce them off of us? We just love to figure out ways to build a better mousetrap.

Contact Jack at jack@callconfluent.com

Since 2003, EPIC Connections (EPIC) has been providing a no-cost advisory service to both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, assisting them with customer contact outsourcing initiatives. Our consultative process assesses a company's goals and objectives, and aligns them with a best-in-class outsourcing provider.

Confluent is a valued partner of EPIC Connections, offering effective contact center solutions for not-for-profit organizations. We have found that most not-for-profits want to expand fundraising activities while improving relationships with their existing membership base. However, expanding on internal capabilities can be a challenge, which is why they may turn to EPIC for a better understanding about how outsourcing may benefit them.

EPIC has identified three key benefits and three key selection criteria for engaging in any contact center outsourcing discussions, as they relate to not-for-profit groups.

Benefits of Outsourcing:

1. Operational Flexibility

Like all organizations, not-for-profits need to be flexible, especially in a down economy. Opportunities and challenges constantly present themselves, and not-for-profits need to be able to react quickly. Outsourcing enables an organization added flexibility to increase or decrease activity when needed.

2. Expertise to Improve Results

Not-for-profits know their business and are focused on their core activities. However, keeping up with the latest fundraising techniques and technology can sometimes be a challenge. A good outsourcer is well versed on industry best practices and utilizing the latest technology to improve fundraising results. Outsourcing allows a not-for-profit to focus its energy on its core mission, while supporting and expanding the current membership base.

3. Cost Savings

Many organizations turn to outsourcers to reduce costs. Typically an outsourcing partner will provide operational efficiencies and economies of scale that allow a not-for-profit to experience cost savings over internal operations. These cost savings are critical to many not-for-profits trying to survive in a struggling economy.

Although outsourcing provides many benefits, choosing the wrong partner can lead to a failed initiative. That is why so many companies turn to EPIC Connections. We offer a no cost, no

obligation service to organizations to guide them through the process of selecting the right outsourcing partner.

Based on our years of experience and expertise, we have identified three critical factors that lead to a successful outsourcing initiative.

Key Outsourcing Selection Criteria:

1. The Right Outsourcer for You?

A not-for-profit should first understand its own needs and target goals. Only then can they effectively communicate those requirements to a potential outsource partner. In many cases, a company may select an outstanding outsourcing provider, but that partner may not necessarily have the right locations, expertise, or flexibility needed for it to be a good fit. Too often, organizations choose outsourcers for reasons that are not directly related to their own goals.

Working with EPIC Connections eliminates the question of whether the outsourcer is a right fit for your organization. We align our clients' goals and objectives with the provider that has the core competency and industry expertise so they don't have to second guess if they are partnering with the right outsourcer.

2. Proven Experience

Experience in supporting similar business is critical when selecting the right outsource partner. Many times companies select very good outsourcing companies that claim they will be successful. However, if they do not have demonstrated results, your business is at risk. Too often outsourcers want your business and they claim to be experts. But the best test of its expertise is proven results.

3. Good Communication

Good communication between both the not-for-profit and the outsourcer is often overlooked in the selection process. The two parties need to understand each other. If the not-for-profit does not take the time to fully explain its needs and opportunities, the outsourcer will be left guessing. Likewise, the outsourcer has to ensure they understand the not-for-profit and ask intelligent questions about the business.

EPIC Connections has successfully helped more than 125 organizations select the right outsourcing partner that has met their specific needs. Outsourcing can be a great opportunity for not-for-profits, but they need to remember to use effective selection criteria to be successful in their outsourcing initiatives. Please reach out to us if you have any questions regarding outsourcing.

If you would like to learn more about EPIC Connections, or simply wish to discuss your outsourcing strategy, please give us a call at 402-884-4700 or visit our website at www.epicconnect.com.