



Relay For Life Fundraising

The Art and Science of Asking for Donations



Relay For Life
Online Committee

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Introduction

Donations are among the largest contributors to fundraising during the Relay For Life season. It is important that we do the absolute best job when seeking donations to ensure we raise as much money for the American Cancer Society as possible.

The intent of this document is to cover not only the technical aspects of fundraising, but more importantly, the way in which you ask for donations.

Since the arrival of internet-based fundraising on the scene, there have been debates about the effectiveness of letter writing vs. email campaigns. The truth is it has less to do with the technical method than it does with the basics of asking: making it personal.

Please take a few moments to review this important document before beginning or completing your fundraising efforts. A small amount of time planning your donation requests will pay off BIG for the ACS *and* your team!!!

The “Art” or Human Side of Asking

In talking to the leaders and top performers in fundraising, there is a common thread when they describe how they went about asking for donations: they made it personal. What does that mean? It means telling the person you are asking for a donation some of the following:



- Why are YOU doing it?
- Why is this important to YOU?
- Tell YOUR story. Tell your audience why YOU Relay... it will make a difference.

It is also about understanding the perspective of the person you are asking:



- How has cancer affected their life?
- What is the best reason for THEM to participate or donate?
- It isn't the same for everyone, so break it down to a personal level helping them understand the importance of Relay For Life

Finally, and on a lighter note, the way you address someone with greetings and salutations are very personal and your recipients will recognize whether they have been sent a personal communication or a form note.

There are really only a few key components to a personal communication:

- 1) Greeting (Dear Bob or Hey Mary!, whatever you normally do for that person)
- 2) A quick, but personal lead-in to why you have contacted them
- 3) Tell your story (this is generally common for all of your communications so you should only write this one time and save it, but it should be personal)
- 4) Closing (Sincerely or Later Dude, whatever you normally do for that person)

That is pretty much the size of it. People will take you as seriously as it sounds personal when responding to a request for a donation. Your reasons or your story does not have to be long-winded, just that it is clearly from you – to them.

Whether you write letters, send e-mails, post to social networks or blogs, build websites.... whatever you do, taking a moment to be personal makes all the difference in the world.

There is no Silver Bullet “Science” when Asking for Donations

What in the world does that title mean?!!! It means that the best way to communicate when asking for donations COMPLETELY depends upon your audience.

We could not say this strongly enough. The best “science” or “technology” to use when asking someone for a donation is what THEY would prefer. If the person you are asking does not own and/or use a computer, email is probably not the way to go for them, but PLEASE do not leave them out. Send them a letter or pick up the phone. They might be one of your largest donors!!!



The key message here is hopefully obvious: **Don't pick a single vehicle to ask for your donations.** It is tempting to just blast a form email out to 200 people in 3.4 seconds and consider your job done, but this will not produce good results. Study after study shows that it is **QUALITY** not **QUANTITY** that produces solid donation results.

Having said that, here is a basic process to go through when asking for donations:

- 1) Write the “personal story” portion of your communication and save this in whatever formats you will be using. You will be re-using it constantly.
- 2) Evaluate the list of people you will be asking for donations determining the best possible method of communication for each. There are some typical methods such as letters and email, but others have arrived on the scene:
 - a. Letter writing (very effective for those without computers ;)

- b. Email (very effective for those who eat, sleep, breathe email daily)
 - c. Social Networks such as MySpace (who'd have thought....)
 - d. Blogs (some people have large, personal followings....)
 - e. Websites (many companies and individuals have sites)
- 3) Construct your personal donation requests telling them in closing you will follow-up with a call in the near future.
 - 4) Actually follow up with a call!

Steps 1 -3 are essential to produce the best results. Step 4 will simply increase your total by capturing people that were probably very busy and have not "gotten around to it yet."

That's it. No magic. No secrets. Just communicating personally the way people want to be communicated with.

Asking for Donations is a Small Time Investment

The exercise of asking for donations is a small investment of time, but there is a high correlation between the amount of time invested and the results obtained.

Technology such as email systems are nice and do save time and money, but ultimately only a part of a good donation asking effort. It is the combination of the right message delivered with the right technology for the *recipient* that will get the best results.

It takes very little time, particularly with email, to communicate on a personal level. You can literally send an email every minute that includes a well thought out section on why you Relay and a brief, but VERY important personal introduction to the recipient.

The following sections cover various internet-based methods used to ask for donations.

Requesting Donations via Internet-based Tools

There is a good reason, one that really continues to develop, that we say “Internet-based Tools” in the title. For the last years, there really has been only phone, letters, and email. This is changing, particularly for the younger generations. Yes, we said it, and now I am feeling old!!!

The common thread and key to any Internet-based campaigning is getting the person you are asking for a donation to do one of two things:

- 1) Contact you directly
- 2) Make an online donation

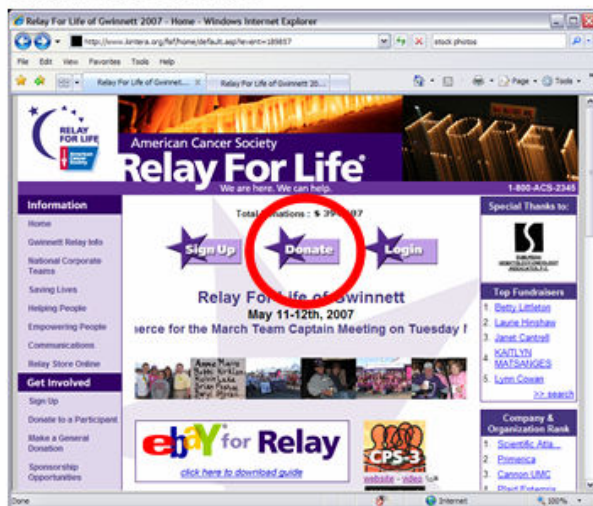
If the person contacts you directly, that is a good sign that you will get a donation, you just have to arrange the best way to receive the donation from that person.

More and more people are becoming comfortable with online transactions and the key goal here is to provide them with a link to either your personal donation page or your team donation page. The following sections describe and demonstrate various ways of getting people to your donation page(s).

Verbal Referral to Your Donation Page (word of mouth)

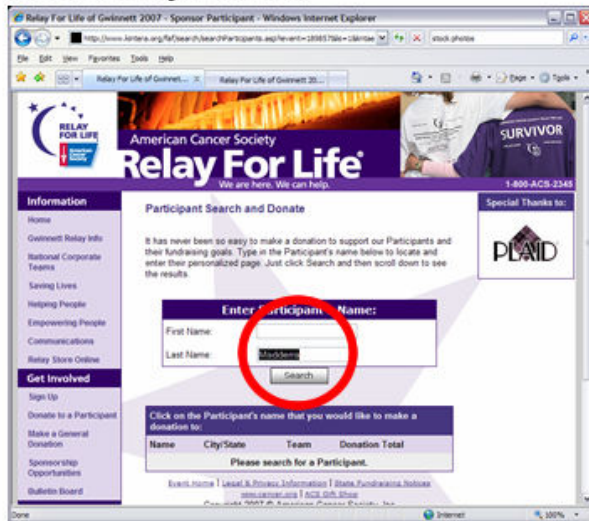
I know that sounds crazy, but many times we miss the opportunity to drive people to an online donation in day-to-day conversation. If you are speaking to someone, simply tell them to go to your Relay For Life site and click the Donate star button at the very top of the home page (you can't miss it!).

1. Donate Button



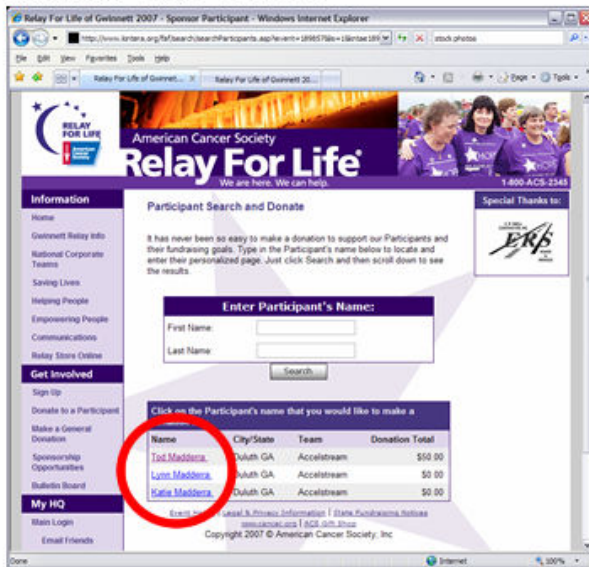
Instruct them to search on your first and/or last name,

2. Search by Name



They will then select you from the returned list and viola, they are there.

3. Select Your Name



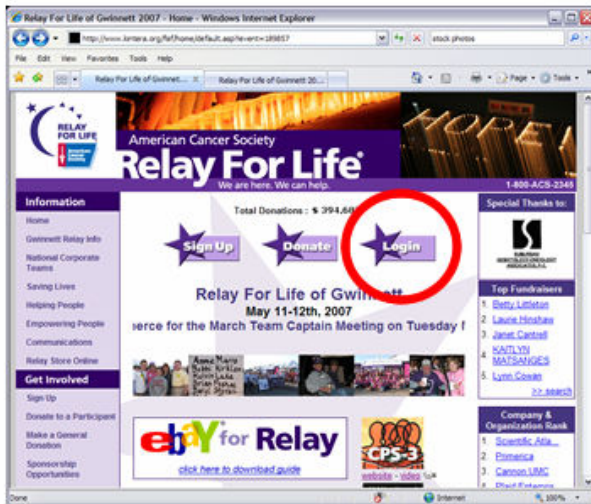
Most people with even average computer skills can get there from those instructions. Just tell them you will follow up later with an email or a call.

Relay Website E-mail

The Relay website email system is actually very easy to use, particularly if you are sending personal emails one at a time. There are some very useful features provided with the Relay website email system that allow you to see if someone has read your email, etc. Follow the simple steps below to send a personal email from your Relay website account:

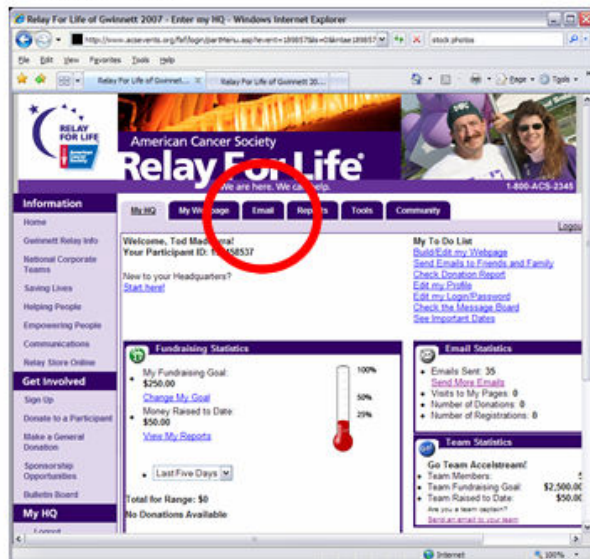
First, login to your Relay account by going to your Relay For Life website and clicking on the “Login” star button on the home page.

1. Login



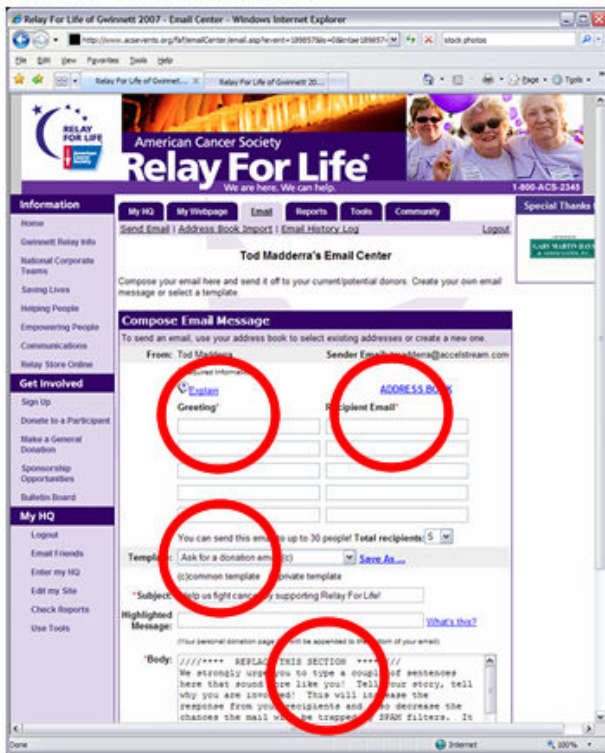
Once logged in, click on the Email tab:

2. Email Tab



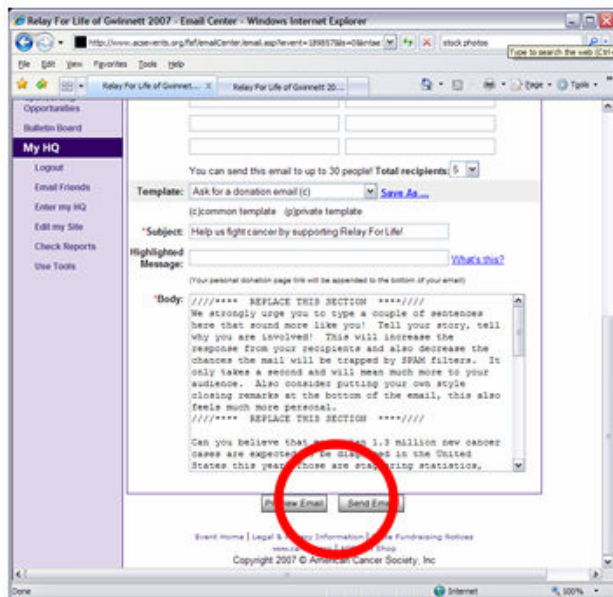
Once on the Email tab, it is as simple as typing in a greeting, an email address, selecting the email template, and editing the introduction to make it personal.

3. Enter Information



Finally, preview and send the email by scrolling to the bottom of the page and pressing the appropriate button.

4. Preview/Send Email



Some people are faster on computers than others, but those 4 steps generally take anywhere from 1-2 minutes per email.

You will be far more successful at fundraising for the American Cancer Society if you spend 1-2 minutes on personal relationships than spending 5 minutes sending a form email to 500 people.

Personal E-mail

Some of you will prefer to use your personal email system such as Outlook or Outlook Express to send donation request emails. This is absolutely fine and the only additional step you have is obtaining your donation page link to put inside your email.

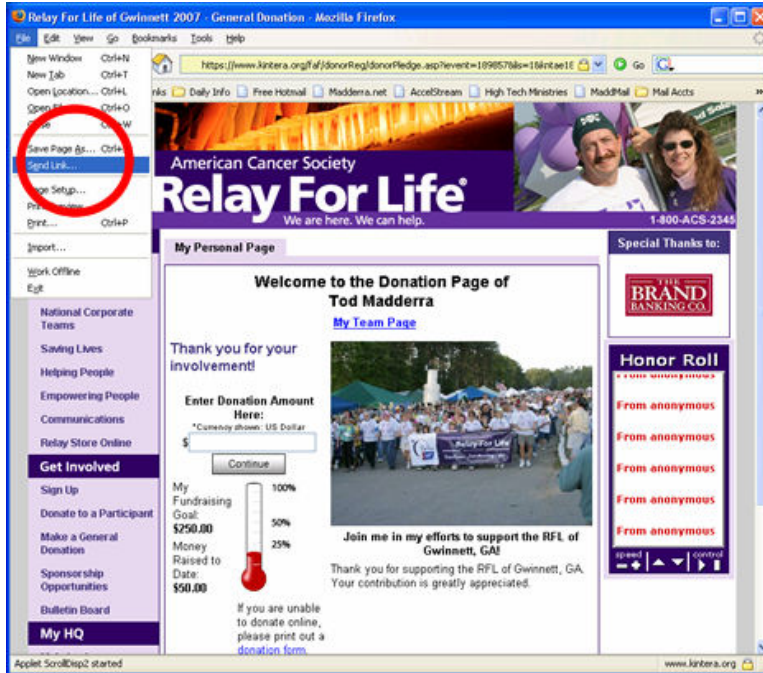
Obtaining Your Donation Page Link (URL)

- 1) One method is to follow the above section on sending a Relay Website Email, but instead of sending it to someone else, send it to yourself. The email that comes to you will contain your personal donation page link at the bottom.
- 2) The other way to obtain your link is to actually go to your personal donation page and instruct your browser to send the link to an email address (yours). This method is covered below for Microsoft IE and for Firefox. Other browsers operate similarly:

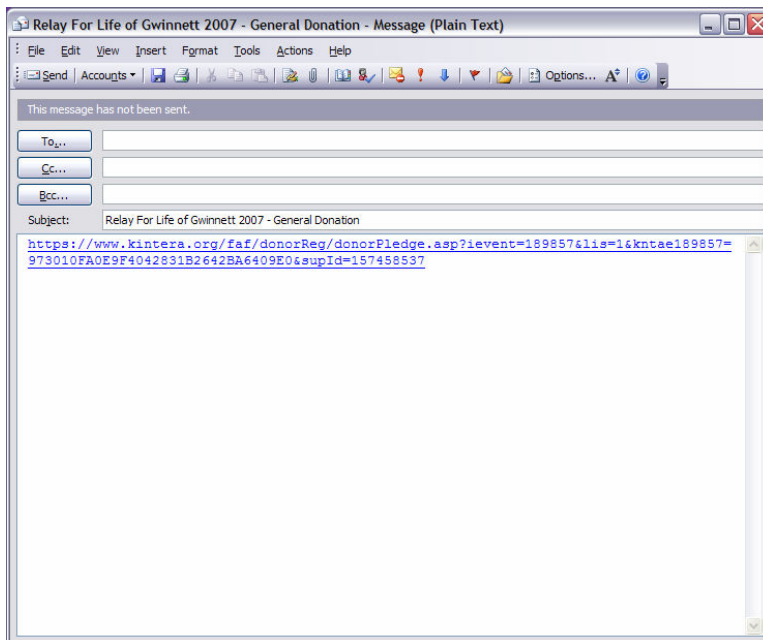
Microsoft Internet Explorer (IE) (File... Send... Link by Email)



Firefox (Mozilla) (File... Send Link...)



After selecting "Send Link..." from your browser, you should have a blank email with a link in it (your donation page) as shown below:



You can then send that email to yourself, others, etc. Our recommendation is to craft your personal story about why you relay into a mail with a link in it and save it to use repeatedly for your various donation requests. All you would have to do then is add the greeting, a couple of personal lines to that person and a closing.

Other Internet-based Tools

Regardless of whether you are posting to a blog, a bulletin on your MySpace account, or adding to a website, you need to obtain the link to your donation page(s). If you are using one of these “advanced” internet methods, it is assumed that you have a working knowledge of copying, pasting, etc. so we will not describe those details.

This area of the internet space is growing and should be considered if it is the primary way that you interact with your personal network of contacts. Again, the message is the same: Make it personal and communicate with people in the way they are most likely to respond.

The image shows three overlapping browser windows from the early 2000s. The top window is MySpace, the middle is a Blogger blog for 'Stop Cancer', and the bottom is a Wikipedia article titled 'List of social networking websites'.

Name	Description/Focus	User count	Registration
43 Things	Tagging	627,000 ^[1]	Open
Advogato	Free Software and Open Source developers	11,000 ^[2]	Open
aSmallWorld	European jet set and social elite	150,000 ^[3]	Invite-only
AmieWorldIt	Mutually good-looking students	Hundreds ^[4]	Open to students but approval based
BlackPlanet.com	African-Americans	16,000,000 ^[5]	Open
Bebo	Schools and colleges	22,000,000 ^[6]	Open
Blue Dot	Link sharing	80,000 ^[7]	Open
Broadcaster	Video sharing and webcam chat	26,000,000 ^[8]	Open
Blurty	Blogs, based on LiveJournal	947,169 ^[9]	Open
Bolt	General (music and video)	4,000,000 ^[10]	Open
CarDomain	Car enthusiasts	1,600,000 ^[11]	Open
Care2	Green living and activism	6,900,000 ^[12]	Open
Classmates.com	School, college, work and the military	40,000,000 ^[13]	Open
Consumating	"Consumemeetings"	21,000 ^[14]	Open
Cyworld	Young South Koreans	15,000,000 ^[15]	Open
Dandelife	Collective narratives or "shared biographies"	Unknown	Open

Summary

The exercise of asking for donations is a small investment of time, but that is not too much to ask to contribute to the incredible work performed by the American Cancer Society in the fight against cancer.

Please take the time this season to tell your story. Make it personal. Follow up. Let the people you ask for donations know that you are serious about this fight and that you need their help.

The Relay Online Committee and everyone at the American Cancer Society wish you the best of luck in your fundraising efforts.