



THE NON-PLEDGE CAMPAIGN: *On The Frontier of Public Radio Fundraising.*

December 2004



THE UNTHINKABLE

WUWM Milwaukee Public Radio did something most public radio stations would not think was possible.

We canceled our fall pledge drive this year.

THE IDEA

The idea was developed after we analyzed pledge drive numbers from fiscal year 2003/2004. The statistics presented the following information:

- The number of donors for the fall pledge drive were decreasing.
- The total dollars received for the fall pledge drive were decreasing.
- Half of the people that participated in the fall pledge drive were renewing their gift. These same donors were receiving their renewals in the mail, but were waiting until the pledge drive to give.
- Special gifts of additional support were the lowest during the fall pledge drive.
- New donors contributed an average of 30% of the total dollars received and total number of donors for the fall pledge drive. This was the lowest number of the three pledge drives during fiscal year 2003/2004.



Time to change the trends.

WAS IT FEASIBLE TO CANCEL THE FALL DRIVE?

Questions of concern:

1. How do we get donors to renew by mail instead of responding during the pledge drive?
 - *Continue our direct mail campaign.*
 - *Explain on air why they should send their renewal now.*
 - *If the donor understood they did not need to wait for a pledge drive, this would increase our renewals.*
2. How do we increase our special gifts of support?
 - *Send a special gift mailing announcing the cancellation of the fall pledge drive, asking people to support our new idea with a special gift in addition to their renewal amount.*
3. Can we still maintain the new donor numbers, without having a fall drive?
 - *No.*
 - *However, if we targeted just new donors and donors that have not yet renewed in the spring pledge drive, the numbers would increase in the spring and be comparable to last fiscal year.*

WHY NOW?

- Donors have told us that they do not like pledge drives.
 - This was an overwhelming consensus from donors during listening sessions
 - We wanted to let listeners know that we were listening to them and trying to come up with solutions that would work for both the station and the listeners.
- It's our 40th Anniversary.
 - A perfect time to launch our unthinkable idea as we turned 40.
- The Election.
 - We were also beginning to think of the election and the impact that would have on the amount of news coverage in Wisconsin.



**All of these factors led us to the decision,
this was the perfect time to go against the norm.**

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

The non-pledge campaign consisted of:

- A mailing announcing the plan to donors and asking them to send back their renewal and/or special gift via the mail or internet.
 - Arrival of letters in donors' homes coincided with the first on air announcement of the cancellation of the drive. (9/20/04)
- **Announcements on the air**
 - * *We did not announce any telephone numbers. Spots were all 30 second spots and ran every hour in morning and afternoon drive times, and every other hour in afternoon and evening. We did not want to saturate the airwaves with these announcements or it would defeat the purpose of canceling our pledge drive.*
 - Messages ran every two weeks from September 7 through October 24.
 - First interval (began 9/7):
 - Created excitement surrounding our 40th Anniversary with a tease of exciting things to come.
 - Second interval (began 9/20):
 - Announced the cancellation of the on air drive.
 - Third interval (began 10/4):
 - More focus on our 40th Anniversary.
 - Fourth interval (one week only; began 10/18):
 - Thank you spots.

THE RESULTS

Total donors increased by 56%.

Total dollars given increased by 73%.

Average gift increased by 11%.

SPECIAL GIFTS

Special gifts received were 24 times greater than FY03/04.

Special gifts total dollars were 30 times greater than FY03/04.

Special gifts average gift increased by 30%.

RENEWALS

Renewing donors increased by 296%.

Renewing donors' total dollars received increased 249% over FY03/04.

Renewing donors average gift decreased by 16%.

NEW DONORS

New donors decreased by 49%.

New donors total dollars received decreased by 44%.

New donor average gift increased by 9%.

LAPSED DONORS

Lapsed donors decreased by 74%.

Lapsed donors total dollars received decreased by 71%.

Lapsed donors average gift increased by 11%.

INCREASES

Tremendous response in donor's renewals.

Tremendous response in special gifts in addition to renewals.

The average gift from new and lapsed donors.

DECREASES

Number of donors from new and lapsed.

Dollars received from new and lapsed donors.

* *These decreases were expected and will be a focus during the spring pledge drive.*

COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS

- Benefits

- No listener turn off.
- Consistent quality broadcast.
- Better cash flow, received cash rather than pledges.
- No bumped underwriter spots. Increased revenue.
- No interruption in regular duties for staff.

- Costs

- Decrease in numbers and dollars from new donors in the fall.
- Decrease in numbers and dollars from lapsed donors in the fall.

* *These costs will be evaluated at the end of our fiscal year to determine if this trend continues.*

CONCLUSION

The decision regarding continuing the “Non-Pledge” drive in the fall 2005 will not be made until our fiscal year ends on June 30, 2005.

We are anticipating the decreases that we experienced will not be true overall when the fiscal year is complete.

Therefore, we are already discussing ideas of how we can continue this innovative campaign for our next fiscal year.

DONOR CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

Special gifts are gifts received from donors that were given over and above their renewal gift.

Renewal gifts are from donors that gave their last gift within the last 12 months.

New donors are gifts received from donors not in our database who have never given before.

Lapsed gifts are from donors that gave their last gift in FY00/01 to FY02/03 (7/01/00 to 6/30/03)

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