

# Overkill Marketing:

Too Much of the  
Wrong Stuff

Or, “How To Make  
Your Prospects  
Tune Out Without  
Really Trying”

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When does an advantage lose its value? In marketing as elsewhere, it's when you are promised more for your money - and don't really need more.

Take for example donor e-newsletters, a growing Internet product available to the planned giving industry. These newsletters are automatically mass e-mailed to your prospects, sometimes on a weekly basis. They often feature a header and footer personalized for your program. The vendor usually provides the content.

So what could be the problem? The problem is that if your prospects get too many e-mails that are too full and too often, you may lose your readership. Have you ever received so many newsletters and bulletins within a week, that you have not had time to read them all?

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## The Subtle Flavor of Spam

Promotional material that is automatically mass-mailed to a list of email addresses - sounds like spam, doesn't it? Especially when it's received with mechanical frequency. Like us, our prospects are unlikely to respond to that approach.



They're more likely to reach for the delete key and tune you out.

Dressing pseudo-spam up in a suit and tie and calling it a newsletter doesn't fool anyone. Prospects aren't dumb, and you don't want them to be. Your most powerful argument in favor of their giving engages their mind with persuasive content. The mind of our donors is the marketing battleground.

Often, the content provided for e-newsletters consists primarily of droll generic gift-planning and investment advice. That comes as no surprise. Canned information has to be "cookie-cutter" generic so it can be plugged in to e-newsletters for multiple organizations. Regardless of how much information that you are providing for free, on the receiving end, your prospect will notice that such content is being duplicated by other organizations, is dry, and is uninteresting. For those reasons, you may lose their attention. Forever.

### Whose Specialty Is This, Anyway?

Consider the following: The big boys in the finance industry do investment advice - and turn profits - better than anybody else. So when you send canned investment advice to your prospects, you're competing with the mega-financial institutions on their home turf. Does that make sense?

Your institution possesses a unique advantage over the financial and investment giants. It is not just a retail investment-profit generator. Your organization already has a special relationship with its prospects. You can harness the power of this relationship with mission-driven messages.

### Mission-driven vs. Profit-driven

For fundraising professionals, understanding this distinction is crucial, and it reveals the fundamental flaw in the automated donor e-newsletter product.



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### Profit-driven marketing

- Puts you at a disadvantage. It reduces your message to generic investment advice, and
- Limits your pitch to, "Invest now, lock in great rates, save taxes!"

### Mission-driven marketing

- Empowers your organization in its unique relationship with prospects, and
- Personalizes your message. For example, "Your special legacy to our institution enables us to further the goals that we support together, far into the future. You can make a difference in the lives of those that we serve."

Which works better? Which one grabs the prospect's attention and emotions, and which doesn't? The answer should be obvious.

### Vision-driven Promotion

The profit-driven e-newsletter is weakened as a marketing tool because it is mechanical, impersonal, and generic. It dilutes quality with quantity in the name of convenience, and drives prospects to tune out.

A mission-driven e-newsletter, on the other hand, succeeds because it trumps quantity with a unique, compelling, campaign-specific message. It engages prospects on a personal level. Moreover, prospects see this kind of e-newsletter as a genuine communication from their favored institution - not a canned marketing-product served up by a machine - so their minds will be open to receiving the message it brings, the message about how their legacy can make a difference and have an impact on the community.

That's how you avoid marketing overkill! That's how you prevent your prospects from tuning you out. And that's how you build on relationships and achieve real success for your organization through its planned giving program.

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