

Banner: Fundraising by Erica Waasdorp

When To Hire A Fundraising Consultant

None of us thinks twice about hiring an accountant if our taxes get too complicated. We gladly pay their fees. None of us balks at the hourly rates that attorneys charge us for the closing of our home mortgage. We just know that we need their services.

So, why do things suddenly change when it comes to hiring a fundraising agency or consultant? What causes us to balk at their rates and why do we question their integrity and know-how?

For some mysterious reason, direct mail and fundraising seem to have this aura that “We can do it ourselves, no need to hire someone who has the experience.” After all, how difficult can it be to write a letter? How hard could it be to find the right names to mail to? And, why would it be more difficult working directly with a printer or letter shop than with anybody else that we use?

So, why *would* you outsource your direct mail? Why *would* you outsource the copywriting and design... it's the most fun there is! “We can really show how creative we are. We'll put some great pictures in 4-color on the envelope, use some funky type faces for the letter, think of a great teaser and, yes, the clients and donors will come!”

Well, think again!

Let's look at an example of how outsourcing benefits your organization and results!

An advocacy organization in Boston had always done their mailings in-house. Their list was small, about 1,800 people. They did not have much money to spend, but because they're a lean organization, they simply did not have the staff to keep up with the

legislative efforts and get the direct mail out the door. So, they turned to us. They were not quite sure how this was going to work. After all, with somebody else writing the letter, would our writers really know what their organization was all about? We ended up working within their budget and were able to get a survey appeal out to their names before the end of the year. It generated over \$12,000 in just a few weeks. Their investment almost tripled. Well worth the effort!

The above is just one example of how using a fundraising consultant could benefit your organization. If you want to grow your organization, get some new ideas, try things that have been tested before, using a consultant is the way to go. If you want to keep doing what you're doing, then maybe a consultant is not for you.

Sure, if your organization is fortunate and big enough to have its own in-house creative and production specialist staff, you may only want to talk to a consultant to get some new ideas, have him or her review results, and see if those are comparable with what they experience with other clients.

But, if you're the average size organization, outsourcing some or all of your direct mail is really the way to go. Working with a consultant or agency can:

- Prevent you from having to add staff
- Save you time, which you can spend on running your organization or department
- Give you many new insights into your business
- Save you money because they will get pricing from different vendors that they know are reliable
- Provide you with budgets and tracking systems that you never knew existed
- Help analyze your data and come up with different ways to approach them, new lists to try, new selects to make
- Help review any other areas that may need improvement

Working with an agency or consultant can benefit your organization in many ways. After all, you know the organization inside out. The consultant has his or her direct mail industry and fundraising experience. What a great team!

Erica Waasdorp is President of A Direct Solution. You can contact her at 508-428-4753 or via adirectsolution@comcast.net

A Direct Solution provides fundraising and direct marketing services and is located in Marstons Mills, Massachusetts.