

EMAIL #1 COPY CRITIQUE

All your writing I've reviewed features strong elements that reflect a lot of good, hard work, expertise, and heart. This is a solid foundation on which to build. Even though an email that you've already sent is only a "snapshot," it's worth looking at closely to see what you can learn from it for your future projects. For Email #1, here's what I suggest:

Suggestions:

- Your subject line should be more urgent. Urgency drives action. (The only job of the subject line is to get the email opened.)
 - "What a wonderful world... we could live in" is hopeful and positive. This is ideal for everyday life. For fundraising, however, it's not urgent enough.
 - Most people are busy. When going through emails, they tend to skip over what does not seem urgent.
 - Also, the preview text that completes your thought may not even be seen by everyone (depending on their email settings).
 - For your subject line, try something like: "2X your impact today in the fight against unfair sentencing!"
- "Losing millions of people" represents an extremely urgent problem... but it's terribly overwhelming. When we are overwhelmed, we're likely to throw our hands up and move on without taking action.
 - Therefore, instead of highlighting a seemingly insurmountable problem as you've done here, focus on one powerful, representative story of a person trapped by such circumstances.
 - Weave strands of this brief and moving story about one person throughout your email. Punctuate the story with 3 or more asks. (And make sure that at least 2 of those asks, including the first one, mention the match offer.)
 - "I'm writing today to ask you..."

- “Will you give today?”
 - “Your gift today will...”
 - “With your gift today...”
 - Notice the repetition of the word “today,” for urgency.
- You may need to interview someone in order to get the details you will need for your story.
- You can call attention to the scope of the problem later, with something like the following:

With your gift today, you can help a person like Henry or the countless others like him who are still unjustly locked up.

With your help, they can be free at last...

They can breathe free at last...

They can hug their families again...

Be productive members of society again...

Just as they deserve.

- Notice that the text I suggest frequently uses “you” and “your.” This is meant to engage your readers and encourage and empower them to act.
 - I count 7 uses of “we,” “us,” or “our” in this email. I count 3 uses of “you” and “your.” These numbers are lopsided in the wrong direction.
 - For best results, be sure to celebrate “you” — and let “we” recede into the background.
- You should delete the three checkmarked paragraphs, for several reasons:
 - The paragraphs are too long.

- They focus on too many different ideas.
- They seem intended to educate the reader, which is not the purpose of an appeal.
- The purpose of an appeal is to convince donors to donate by showing them an urgent problem with a clear, manageable solution. Give your donors a “donor-size” problem to fix!
- Sharing too much information works against you. It makes the problem seem less clear — less manageable.
- Some of the pieces of information in these checkmarked paragraphs you might be able to include within a personal story (if they are a part of that person’s narrative).
- What you need to do is put your readers in a heartfelt, caring mood...
- And then persuade them that they can make a difference by donating...
- And that the difference they make is NOT because of you... but because of THEM... because of their goodness... because of the action they are about to take, right now.
- This is why you should tell one person’s story, whenever possible. Don’t be afraid to reuse the same story. For variety, you can change the angle of the story. For example, tell it from the parent’s perspective, from the spouse’s perspective, from the child’s perspective...
- For these same reasons, delete “Each of your three focuses...” because the line makes your appeal more complicated than is helpful to your cause in this context (even though these three reasons are indeed very important to what you do).
- Consider changing the valediction (closing) from “Onwards” to something more specific to you, such as: “Steadfast in Compassionate Justice.”