

EMBARK

on your way to effective marketing and fundraising

*Thank you for
a breakthrough 2017!*

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Donor Database Cleanup

How good would it feel to start 2018 with a clean database?

Perhaps one of the most valuable items at your organization, your database can provide you with a treasure trove of information if you are maintaining it correctly. What better time to breathe new life into your database than at the beginning of a new year?

It is crucial to update your database regularly to avoid wasting money and time on undeliverable, returned or duplicate mail. Over time, your database collects a lot of information and eventually some of this information becomes obsolete, incorrect, or duplicated.

Continuing to add new donor information without updating existing data can leave you with a mess. National Change

of Address, possible duplicates and address correction reports ensure each donor record is an up-to-date, mailable address and each donor has only one account in the database.

Database cleanup may not be the most fun part of your job. However, not spending the time or focus to fix issues can hurt your fundraising efforts. Your donors and supporters are your most valuable assets so to send them duplicate pieces of mail or incorrectly spell their name can cost you more than you think.

The next few pages will give you a few guidelines for starting a successful database cleaning, our best practices for keeping your files in shape, and a list of frequent file formats and fundamentals.

Consider your acquisition mailings throughout the year and how hard your organization works to recruit valuable new donors to your mission. Now think about how easy it is for someone to stop donating just because they were not asked for a forwarding address or they received three pieces of the same appeal.



Donor Database Cleanup

1. Update Addresses

Remember to go into your database and update donor accounts using the National Change of Address report provided after each mailing - it's easier to update a handful of records than let these changes pile up.

2. Remove Duplicates

From time to time, multiple accounts are created for the same donor - maybe a name was spelled wrong or a donor got married. Use your "Possible Duplicate Report" to find those duplicates, decide which account to keep, and merge the records.

3. Correct Undeliverables

Another headache inducer is mailing to undeliverable addresses. Using your corrected address files, update donor accounts with the deliverable addresses provided to ensure you won't receive the dreaded returned mail.

4. Conduct Data Overlay

Data overlay matches your donors to a national database containing demographic info about your donors. This allows you to strategize how to increase contributions and commitments from your donors. You can also run phone number and email appends to build your email and phone number list.

Once you have your current donor accounts deduped, corrected and updated, there are a few ways to maintain a tidy database:

Run Important Reports Regularly

Regularly run NCOA and address correction reports as this is the most effective way to find outdated and incorrect addresses. Consider implementing a barcode and handheld scanner for future mail packages to minimize data entry time and error. Create a best practices document and train staff on entering information into your database to ensure consistency and accuracy. Verify your data management software is up-to-date and is the correct database for your organization's needs.

Prioritize, Train, Backup, and Evaluate

Rank and segment your records by major donors, volunteers, monthly donors, and other key groups. This will let you update the most relevant information efficiently and in an organized manner. Train personnel to enter new donor information correctly. If donor data is entered the same way every time it will make cleaning up files next time that much easier. As always, feel free to contact us - we can provide great cleaning tips or can help you start a database rejuvenation.

USPS Pricing Changes for 2018

The US Postal Service recently announced price changes effective January 21, 2018. First class stamps will be increasing to \$0.50 each. While new postage rates can affect RKD Alpha Dog's nonprofit partners, we are, as always, committed to helping you keep costs down and increase the value of your mailings. Our account services team is ready to help you make the most of your fundraising efforts in 2018 and we look forward to serving you. If you have any questions about this change, please contact us to discuss your specific plan.

Frequent File Format Fundamentals

Our data specialists use many different kinds of files for your campaigns throughout the year. The following is a list of the types of data files we frequently work with as a part of your direct marketing plan and how the different files are used.

Donor Mail File

This group of donors has given to your organization in the past five years. For each project, your selections within the file will vary depending on the audience you want to reach. For all donors, the selection would be \$.01+, 0-60 months. Or for example, if you wanted to reach out to a targeted group, you could select donors \$50+, 13-36 months.

Donor Suppression File

When a suppression file is needed, it means that we need a list of names to not include when we purchase "new" prospect names for an acquisition mailing. A suppression list is made up of those donors who regularly gift financial support and those who appear on a Do Not Mail file.

Do Not Mail File

Those donors you have flagged or coded in your database to not receive any direct mail. If the person who is requesting to not receive mail from you is a donor, you can mark the record with a Do Not Mail Flag.

House File

These are records of those you already have a relationship with, but to whom you don't send direct mail. These can be people who have participated in an event you hosted, people who have not donated money but may have donated "in-kind" products, volunteers who have never been asked to give a financial gift, or exchange lists from other agencies. During acquisition times, we will often discuss these individuals with you and include them in your direct marketing plan.

Email File

Due to the growth opportunities in email appeals, you want to expand this list at every touch point you have with your donors. Ask for email addresses in your online giving, on remits, at events, and every chance you get.

Duplication Report

This report matches each record to the other records in your database. Should a match of name and address be found for any two or more records, this report allows you to determine if a donor does indeed exist on your database more than once. The next step is to determine which of the two or more records you want to keep and then merge those records back together using the option provided by your donor management system.

#GIVINGTUESDAY™

2017 Record Breaking Results

Last year, #GivingTuesday generated 1.64 million gifts with an average gift amount of \$108 and raised a combined \$177 million online. *But, this year put 2016 to shame.* Check out the initial results reported by The NonProfit Times:



More than
\$274 million
raised



Estimated
2.5 million
donations

1 in 4
Gifts were made
on a mobile
device



\$134
Average gift



RKD #GivingTuesday Results

While we are still tallying the final fundraising results for our nonprofit partners for this year's #GivingTuesday, we wanted to share an exciting milestone with you!

This year, our digital team was able to help raise

Over \$1 Million

for our nonprofit partners in one day from all digital channels and strategies!

Need to boost your current digital fundraising or want to include a digital bundle in your 2018 plan? We are the leading fundraising and marketing agency to over 250 regional and national nonprofits. We have a team of more than 180 experts with deep skill sets in direct response marketing. Call or email us any time for a consultation. 800.730.0668 or info@rkdalphadog.com

New Year, New Brand

Same Great Partner

We are so excited to announce that we will have a new, fresh look for 2018. Our logo and updated brand align with our parent company, RKD Group. This brand alignment gives us the ability to continuously grow and learn from one another as well as provide our partners with services that further their missions and strengthen communication with supporters.

Starting in 2014, three separate agencies were brought together under the RKD Group master brand. We are now 180 people strong. We have around 250 nonprofit partners across the country. And we have grown year-over-year to establish a superb reputation as the largest privately held, multi-channel direct response fundraising agency in America.

RKD Alpha Dog is proud to continue to offer the creative strategies and effective solutions that provide you with the resources necessary to continue advancing your mission. We could not be where we are today without your trust and partnership. Because of you, communities across the country have access to vital programs and services that change lives and brighten futures.

Thank you!

We are deeply appreciative to each of you for choosing RKD Alpha Dog to support your mission and fundraising efforts. Your continued trust in us to help you meet your goals means so much to our entire team.

Thank you to our Animal Welfare partners who endlessly strive to create communities where every animal is treated with compassion and respect.

Thank you to our Food Bank partners who work tirelessly to fight hunger by providing a multitude of programs and services from mobile food pantries to backpack programs to SNAP assistance and more.

May the joy of the holidays extend to you and your family now and throughout the coming year.

YOU are the most important aspect of our work.

Our partners are the foundation of RKD Alpha Dog. Every day, we give our best effort to show you that our relationship is valued and appreciated. The following is our pledge to you, our partner:

- **Every day,** our team of professionals will provide you service that exceeds your expectations.
- **Every day,** we will listen to your needs and respond to your requests.
- **Every day,** we will give your projects, packages, and programs the attention to quality they deserve.
- **Every day,** we are committed to your success and ensure that all details are attended to without error or oversight.
- **Every day,** we will ensure that your activities are aligned with your organization's strategic vision. We will know your organization as a whole in order to support your mission.
- **Every day,** we will continue to grow and learn to make ourselves experts in our field in order to serve you better.
- **Every day,** we will go the extra mile to get you the results you need to advance your mission.

RKD Alpha Dog began with a vision of a company that would serve nonprofit organizations with the same passion that they each demonstrate in their communities. What does that mean for you?

It means you get our best every day. Why do we do it? Because you give your best every day to make your community better.



EMBARK IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

Thank you for another fantastic year and for your loyal readership of our newsletter. We strive to share new ideas, celebrate breakthrough results, highlight industry trends, and offer strategy best practices. Please do not hesitate to tell us about a topic you would like covered in our newsletters, webinars, blog posts or educational videos.

We look forward to another year of supporting your mission!



NEW IN THE PACK

RKD Alpha Dog is pleased to welcome Katie Bruns, Account Coordinator, Alex Gallardo, Account Coordinator, Tim Gilman, Data Coordinator, Lindsey Kortum, Account Executive, Alissa Prochaska, Graphic Designer; and Heather Springer, Production Artist, to the team!



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