

# THE GUIDE TO NURTURING GIVING TUESDAY DONORS

WITH WELCOME EMAILS



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# Introduction

While Giving Tuesday is a huge opportunity to acquire new donors, the day's power can extend well beyond a mere 24 hours.

Giving Tuesday donors are uniquely more inclined to re-engage with your organization. According to Classy's platform data, Giving Tuesday donors are 3 to 4 times more likely to become fundraisers after Giving Tuesday compared to donors who give during year-end.<sup>1</sup> But without the right follow-up communications, your organization will miss out on their future support.

To solidify your relationships with first-time givers acquired on Giving Tuesday, follow up with a welcome email series. This 3 to 4-part email series properly welcomes new donors to your community, helps them get to know your organization, and affirms the value of your work. More importantly, it kicks off your efforts to nurture these donors to deeper levels of commitment, like peer-to-peer fundraising or recurring gifts.

In this guide we will dive deeper into the purpose of your email series, and cover best practices on how to craft targeted communication strategies for three types of new donors:

1. **First-time donors**
2. **Third-party donors**
3. **Event attendees**

It's time to up your welcoming game. Let's get started!

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<sup>1</sup> Classy, "The State of Modern Philanthropy." [https://go.classy.org/reports/the-state-of-modern-philanthropy?sfdc\\_cid=701440000003kN7](https://go.classy.org/reports/the-state-of-modern-philanthropy?sfdc_cid=701440000003kN7)

# 1 | The Purpose of a Welcome Series

A welcome email series is your chance to make a positive first impression and connect new supporters to your mission. To create an effective email series, however, you need to first understand its purpose within your organization's donor cultivation process.

## A Springboard to Your Larger Goal

Think of your onboarding series as the first piece of a larger nurture track you want new donors to follow. It provides an opportunity for you to both strengthen the relationship and, by delivering strategic content, start guiding donors toward specific levels of commitment. In other words, your welcome series acts as a springboard to your larger goal.

As you piece your emails together, it's important to think about what your ultimate goal is with your new donors. Beyond your welcome series, do you want to push new donors into your regular communications cycle, like your newsletter? Do you want them to give again? To become a volunteer? To attend a special event?



Think about your ultimate goal for new donors. What level of commitment do you want them to eventually reach?

There's no single correct answer to this question, as it depends upon your organization. The point is that you should think about how you will guide these donors to deeper involvement. Identifying this ultimate goal will help you create an onboarding email series that will help move new donors in the right direction.

## Talk to Donors According to Different Entry Points

While you want to onboard all of your newly acquired donors, you can't treat them all the same. New supporters come in through different channels so they don't all share the same connection to your organization.

Like any other relationship, your first-time givers are likelier to stay in the conversation when you communicate in a way that's relevant to them. That means you should tailor your onboarding series according to the context in which they donated.

For example, did they respond to a direct appeal? Or did they give to a friend's personal fundraising page? You wouldn't talk to the latter—a third-party donor who gave primarily because of the person asking, and not because of an independent connection to your nonprofit—the same way you'd talk to someone who directly supported your mission. That would turn off a third-party donor, and you'd wind up losing a potential supporter.

To engage as many first-time givers as possible, you need to build separate welcome email series for new donors based on their channel of acquisition. There are three main segments of new donors you should target:



**First-time donors** who give directly to your organization



**Third-party donors** who give to a friend or family member's personal fundraising campaign



**Event attendees**

This allows you to communicate with your new supporters based on how the relationship was established. The content each group receives through the onboarding email series should vary depending on their entry point to your organization. This targeted approach will help you keep donors engaged, strengthen relationships, and retain as many new givers as possible.

## 2 | First-Time Donors

These **first-time donors** have made a direct gift to your organization. They were interested enough in your mission to donate, but they may not feel very committed yet. Before looping them into your regular communication cycle, you need to make a proper introduction, emphasize the value of your organization, and nurture them into deepening their involvement.

### Tips to Engage First-Time Donors

As you craft your welcome series, there are three main things you should do:

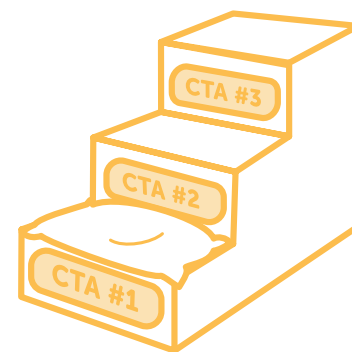
#### INFORM AND INSPIRE

While your first-time donors might have done some research before making their gift, you should still use your welcome series to inform them about your cause and inspire them to adopt your mission as their own. Share important facts and details about your nonprofit and how it's making an impact.

Accomplish this through visual content. Photos and videos are digestible and instantly make connections with your readers. Also include them when sharing impact stories about the people you serve.

#### INCLUDE A CALL TO ACTION AT THE END OF EACH EMAIL

Each email in your welcome series should give your donor a next step to take. Keep in mind your first email or two should make softer asks, whether it's to follow you on social media or watch a video.



After your first couple messages, the final message in your email series can make a more direct offer, such as inviting them to subscribe to your blog, join you at a special event, or donate.

## MAKE YOUR EMAILS SCANNABLE

You want to educate new donors about your organization, but that doesn't mean you should dump tons of information into each email. People don't want extensive letters in their inbox, especially from someone they're just getting to know.

Keep each message short and sweet. You can link to blog posts or other content to provide more information. This will also help direct more traffic back to your website, where donors can learn more about your programs.

## What to Include In Your Emails

The content you choose to offer in your emails should be specific to your organization, but here are some basic guidelines to get you started.

### EMAIL #1: SAY THANK YOU

1. **Focus on thanking your donors in this first email.** Express your genuine appreciation for their gift and how it will make a difference.
2. **Include a soft ask.** You might ask them to:
  - a. Follow you on social media.
  - b. Watch a video to learn more about your work.



## EMAIL #2: EDUCATE AND DEMONSTRATE IMPACT

1. **Use this email to show readers how your organization is making strides in its mission.** Remember, keep your copy short and scannable—you can link out to further content.
2. **Include high-quality images to keep your readers engaged.** Consider sharing an awesome infographic or photos of your beneficiaries.
3. **Include a call to action.** Depending on the email's content, you can ask readers to:
  - a. See their impact by checking out a photo blog.
  - b. Watch a filmed testimonial from a beneficiary or staff member.
  - c. Read a full impact story on your blog.
  - d. Share an infographic included in your email.
4. **Display social share buttons in your email footer,** so readers can choose to follow your social channels.

## **EMAIL #3: INSPIRE AND GIVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACT**


1. **Use the last email in your onboarding series to inspire donors to take further action.** Show how supporters have a direct hand in driving your nonprofit's results. You might choose to:
  - a. Use a graphic to connect a single gift with its tangible impact.
  - b. Share how your work has changed one beneficiary's life.
  - c. Show before and after images of your organization's impact.
2. **Include a call to action to get more involved. Your offer depends on the specific goal of your organization's welcome series.** You might ask readers to do one of the following:
  - a. Subscribe to your blog for more updates.
  - b. Subscribe to your newsletter (if you haven't already added them to your newsletter list).
  - c. Join you at an upcoming event.
  - d. Volunteer.
  - e. Donate or start a fundraising page.
  - f. Learn more about your recurring giving program.
3. **Display social share buttons in your email footer.**

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*See the following page for an example.*

These are all general suggestions, so be sure to adapt them to your organization's preferences, audience, and welcome series' ultimate goal.

o o o

 **GROSSMONT**  
ANIMAL SHELTER

## This is Buckley.



Four months ago, Buckley was found in an abandoned parking lot in search of scraps to eat. He was rescued, nursed back to health, and adopted by loving parents at the Grossmont Animal Shelter.

Because of **your contribution**, we were able to save over 70 animals just like Buckley last month alone. But we know our community is full of awesome people like you and we believe we're capable of doing even more. [Start a fundraising page today](#), and tell your friends of the great work we're doing. If we raise at least \$100,000 in the next 3 months, we can save over 600 animals living on the street.

[START A FUNDRAISING PAGE](#)

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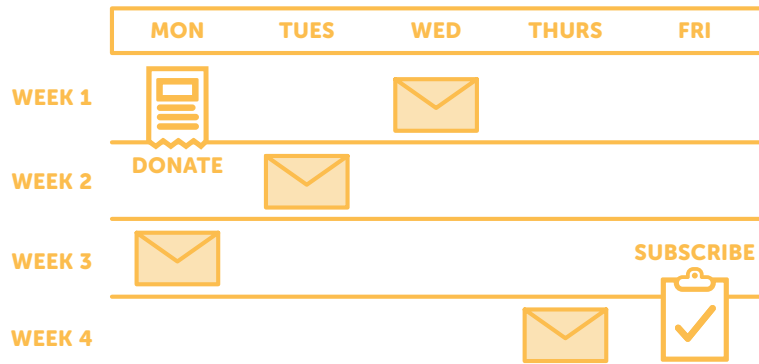
[GROSSMONTANIMALS.ORG](#) | [DONATE](#) | [FUNDRAISE](#) | [GET INVOLVED](#)

This organization used **Email #3** to push donors to create a fundraising page.

They use Buckley's success story to show how the donor's actions create real impact. They also provide concrete data on what else they've been able to accomplish and outline their goals for the near future, incentivizing the donor to get involved.

## Timing and Frequency

When it comes to timing, send one email per week. You don't want to spam your new donors, but you do want to stay top of mind. You also want to finish onboarding them and have them enter your regular communication cycle within a month of making their first gift.



## 3 | Third-Party Donors

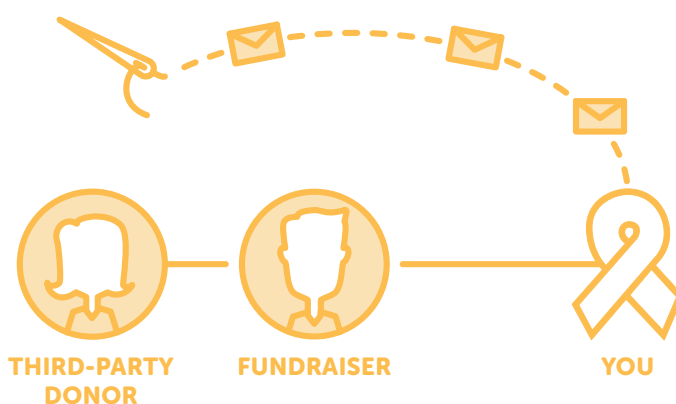
If you've ever run a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign, you know that it tends to bring in a lot of first-time donors. It allows you to access your network's network. Your existing supporters ask their friends and family members for donations, and many of these people ultimately make gifts to your organization.

These people form a very special group of new donors. They are your **third-party donors**—people who donate to an organization because of a personal connection to the individual asking for a gift, and not because they were necessarily moved by your cause.

### Why You Need a Strategy for Third-Party Donors

Therein lies the challenge with third-party donors. They gave to support their friends and family, and not because they were independently pulled by your mission. Therefore, you can't treat them the same as first-time donors who respond to your direct appeals. Most third-party donors haven't built enough trust or familiarity with your nonprofit for you to hit them up for another donation, or flood them with emails about your work. You would just wind up annoying them and losing a potential supporter.

Instead, you must develop a targeted engagement strategy that will gently nurture these brand new relationships. Tailor your welcome email series to gradually build more trust and rapport with these donors, and you can help them start to understand the unique value of your organization.



*Remember, third-party donors may have never heard of your organization. Construct a well-tailored email series to build trust and nurture these relationships.*

## Tips to Engage Third-Party Donors

You're just beginning a potential relationship with these donors, so the tone and content of your welcome series should reflect this early stage. There are a few ways you can do this.

First, wait until the campaign is over to send your first message. It should be a short, personal thank-you email from a staff member, particularly a leader. The email should thank the donor for giving to your organization, and if possible, **refer to the fundraiser he or she donated to**. Not only does this show that you paid attention to their gift, but it also reminds them that someone they trust is already confident in your organization. Then offer a soft way for them to learn more about your cause and work.

This personal thank you is a great way to start the conversation off on the right foot. As the relationship develops, and you gradually build more trust with the donors, you can slowly ask them to increase their involvement. Here are some best practices for nurturing these relationships over the course of your welcome series:

- **Keep your emails short.**
- **Lead in by offering valuable information and resources** on your organization's cause via blog posts, videos, infographics, or impact reports.
- **Gradually weave in soft asks to your emails** (e.g. ask the donor to follow you on social media, share a blog post with friends, or share a video on their social profile).
- **Brand your emails consistently** (logo, graphics, colors, font, voice) to become more memorable and recognizable.
- **Consider adding donors to your newsletter cycle**, but only after you've built initial rapport and trust.
- **Don't send another donation appeal until you've had several positive interactions** (e.g. they liked your Facebook page, opened and clicked through your emails, and signed up for your newsletter).



*Be sure to avoid donation appeals to third-party donors until they've made several actions demonstrating their interest in your organization. For example, you might wait until they have liked your Facebook page, opened and clicked your emails, and subscribed to your newsletter.*

## What to Include in Your Emails

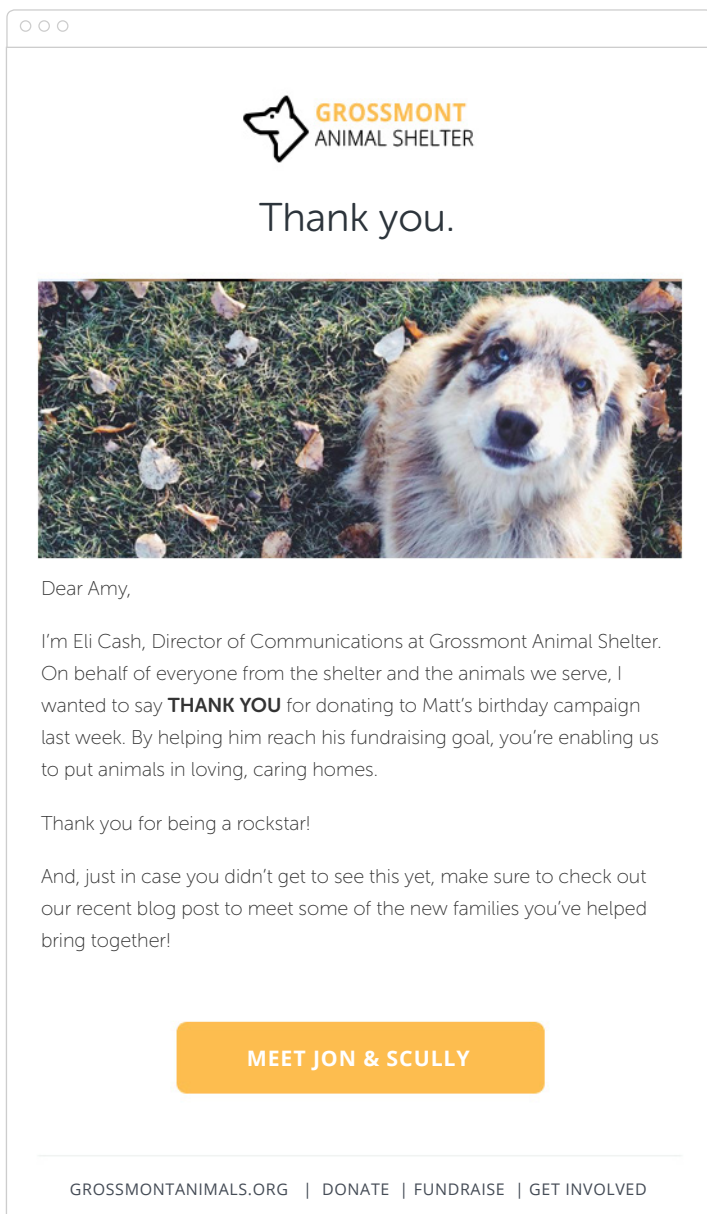
Based on the suggestions above, here's an outline of a sample welcome email series for your third-party donors. Send one email per week.

### **EMAIL #1: SEND A PERSONALIZED THANK YOU**

1. **Thank the donor for their gift.**
2. **Refer to the fundraiser the person gave to.**
3. **Offer valuable materials** to help them learn more about your cause and organization. You might link to:
  - a. A blog post of a beneficiary's story.
  - b. An impact report about your work.
  - c. News on the cause sector.
4. **Thank the donor again.**

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*See the following page for an example.*



In this example (**Email #1**), the organization sends a personalized thank you message from a staff leader.

They make sure to say thank you more than once and explicitly name the fundraiser the third-party donor contributed to. This shows that you have a keen interest in what all your supporters are doing. The email also links to a blog post to further illustrate the Shelter's mission and impact.



## EMAIL #2: CONNECT THEM TO THEIR IMPACT

1. The campaign might be over but **continue to update donors about the impact of their previous gift.** You can connect the dollar amount to a tangible outcome or translate the campaign's total results into its concrete effects on the ground.
2. **Display photos and visuals** of how their gift is driving your organization's impact.
3. **Include a soft ask.** You might ask them to:
  - a. Check out more photos of the campaign's impact.
  - b. Watch a video about your fieldwork.
  - c. Read a blog post.

## EMAIL #3: INFORM THEM ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

1. **Educate them further about your organization and its programs.** You can give descriptions and updates about your latest initiatives.
2. **Include a soft ask. You might ask them to:**
  - a. Follow you on social media.
  - b. Share a petition or impact report online.

## EMAIL #4: SHOW THEIR IMPACT

1. **Thank them** for being a part of your online community.
2. **Give descriptions and updates** about your latest initiatives.
3. **Let them know** you'll be sharing a monthly newsletter with them.
4. Depending on how they've responded to your previous emails, **ask them to take another step**. You might ask them to:
  - a. Subscribe to your blog.
  - b. Join you at a special event.
  - c. Volunteer.

## Experiment and Test

When it comes to finalizing your own emails, get creative and run some tests to see what works and what doesn't. Experiment with different "soft" asks to see what your third-party donors respond best to. By creating a highly targeted communication strategy, you can continually nurture these relationships and retain more third-party donors beyond their initial gift.

## 4 | Event Attendees

Then you have your **event participants**. These are the people who have first interacted with your nonprofit by attending one of your fundraising events. Increase your chances of retaining these donors by sending a targeted welcome series to help solidify the relationship after the event.

### Tips to Engage First-Time Event Attendees

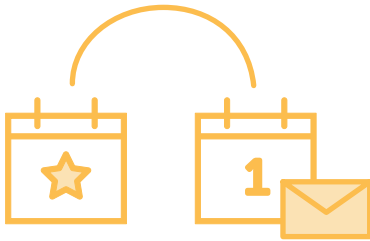
When crafting your email series, make sure to customize your content and schedule it appropriately. Here are a few tips on how to do so.

#### CREATE A CUSTOM WELCOME EMAIL SERIES FOR EVERY EVENT

To keep the conversation going with these donors, you need to reference their interests and talk to them in a targeted manner. That means your welcome series should reference the specific event they attended.

Let's say your donor is passionate about running and participated in a 5K, however, your follow-up email immediately invites them to an upcoming black-tie gala. By ignoring the event they attended, you've missed a chance to emphasize the importance of their participation and what it means for your organization. And if they aren't interested in galas, they might bypass your entire email altogether.





You have a better chance of keeping donors interested when you offer targeted content based on the fundraiser they attended. Create a specific onboarding email series that follows up every event that you host. This allows you to capitalize on the emotional momentum that got donors to participate, and keep them interested in your organization.

### SCHEDULE YOUR FIRST EMAIL TO GO OUT WITHIN A DAY OF THE EVENT

Your first email should thank people for attending and joining your mission. It's a good idea to prepare this message beforehand and schedule it to go out right after the event. You can save fundraising totals for your second email; focus on thanking people first in a timely fashion.

### INCORPORATE A SURVEY

Surveys are a great way to keep your first time donors engaged, while also learning what your participants did and didn't enjoy. You can include it with your thank-you email, or in your second email detailing the event's success. It just needs to be within the first couple emails, when your donors' memory of the event is still fresh.



You can incentivize donors to take your survey by offering a discount for your next event. This can help you both receive feedback and secure their future participation.

## What to Include in Your Emails

While the content and calls to action you include in each email will be specific to your organization and its goals, here are a few ideas that can help shape your welcome series for first-time event participants. Send one email per week.

### **EMAIL #1: THANK THEM FOR COMING**

1. **Thank your donor** for coming and being a part of the special occasion.
2. **Emphasize the meaning of the event in relation to your cause.**
3. **Include a call to action, such as:**
  - a. Follow you on social media.
  - b. Donate. Make sure this is not the main point of your message. You can simply include it at the bottom of your email. For example:  
“The event might be over, but there’s still time to give. Click here to donate and get involved.”

## **EMAIL #2: REPORT THE EVENT'S SUCCESS**

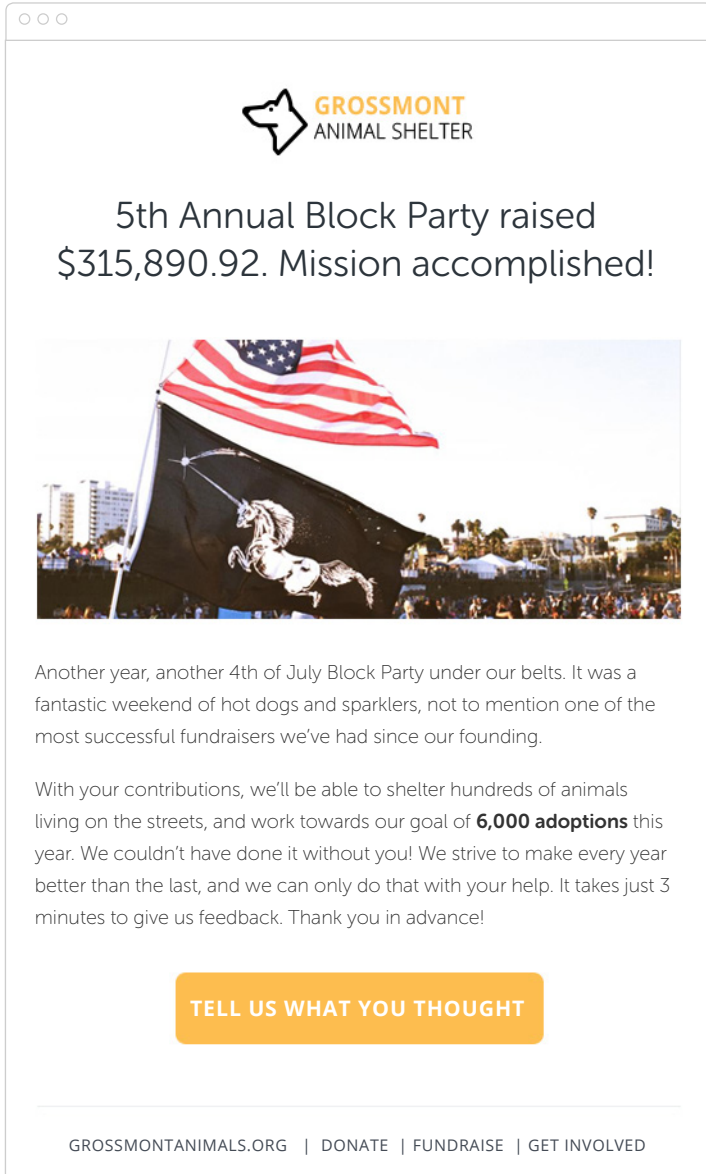
1. **Give a synopsis of your event and its success.** Share and celebrate your fundraising totals.
2. **Explain how the funds will be used** to support your mission.
3. **Include photos or a video from the event.**
4. **Let them know you'll keep in touch** with impact and event-related updates.
5. **Include a call to action.** Choose one of the following:
  - a. Take a short survey about the event.
  - b. Check out a larger photo gallery from the event.
  - c. Watch a video to relive the event and its success.

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*See the following page for an example.*

## **EMAIL #3: OFFER OTHER MISSION OR EVENT-SPECIFIC UPDATES**

1. **Provide mission-related content or news.**
2. **If you conducted a survey, mention its results and your future plans** to implement feedback.
3. **Announce any upcoming events.**
4. **Include a main call to action.** You might ask them to:
  - a. Register for an upcoming event.
  - b. Fundraise for your upcoming event.
  - c. Save the date and pre-register for the same event.



This organization includes the event's success right in the headline of **Email #2**.

They explain how the funds raised during the event will be used and how their attendees were instrumental in achieving that goal. They also include a call to action to fill out a survey and thank the attendee in advance for completing it.

## 2 | So...Where Do I Start?

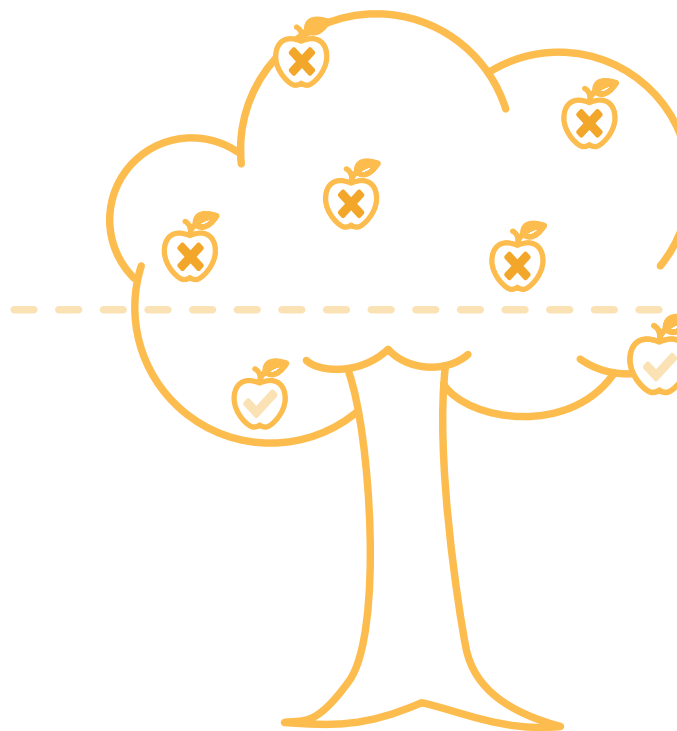
There you have it—a rundown of three types of onboarding email series. We know that creating an effective email series takes time, testing, and effort, and it can feel overwhelming to try and tackle all of these at once. This is why you should take it one step at a time.

### First Things First

If you already have some version of a welcome series, use these ideas to refine and develop it further.

If you don't have any onboarding communications, choose one of the three audiences to focus on first. When prioritizing donor groups, determine who your warmest leads are, and where it would be most valuable for you to focus. Do you want to start with an email series for first-time donors? Do you conduct peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns, and want to focus on retaining third-party donors? Or do you fundraise mainly through events, and want to strengthen relationships with participants?

Ultimately you want to create a targeted series of emails for every new donor. But start by honing your first welcome series, gathering that low-hanging fruit, and then move on to the next.







## Test, Test, Test

Use the tips and sample email breakdowns in this guide as starting points for your own welcome email series. From there, you should refine the emails based on what you know about your donors and your organization's specific goals. Try a variety of engagement strategies and experiment with different content offers. Track open and click rates to see what your donors respond to. By spending the time to optimize your welcome series, you'll be able to keep as many donors as possible beyond their initial gift.

## 2 | Conclusion

An effective welcome email series is an invaluable tool. Make no mistake; a targeted communication strategy gives you a serious leg up on donor retention. It allows you to put your best foot forward and gradually deepen donors' connections to your mission.

As you craft your emails, remember that their content should hinge on your organization's ultimate goal. Your welcome series should be part of a track that new donors follow as you nurture the relationship, drawing them to the level of commitment you intend. With these best practices in hand, you can turn your brand new donors into long-term supporters of your mission.



## *Classy*

# Motivate your fundraisers with the click of a send button

Hone your email skills even further with this FREE guide. Learn the basics of designing, segmenting, and branding your emails to guide your peer-to-peer fundraisers to success.

[Get Your Resources →](#)