

Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation

When every dollar counts, direct mail drives the donations and awareness this charity needs.



Raising money for a cause

Success in the charitable sector isn't easy.

There's the challenge of generating brand awareness in a marketplace full of worthy causes and the challenge of continually finding new donors. Spotting those potential new donors must be a strategic exercise. "We have to make sure we're not spending money on methods that don't result in new donors," says Karina Dixon, Director of Annual Programs and Fulfillment at the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation in Edmonton. To get results, "We know direct mail works," she says.

Annual campaigns with direct mail at the centre are a key part of the foundation's acquisition strategy. By including a new mix of services, could the charity improve its campaign results? The answer is yes.

Finding the right people

Dixon's Canada Post sales representative suggested conducting a demographic analysis to improve targeting. The study identified areas in the city that had high numbers of donors and also those areas where the population was high, but not many people donated to the foundation.

Using those new data insights, Dixon applied a strategic approach to target the right audiences to drive maximum impact.

Using their own list, Dixon and team identified the postal codes where their best donors lived. Using Postal Code Targeting (PCT) allowed the charity to target other prospects in those areas – the neighbours of their best donors. Dixon sent 30,000 pieces to those areas.



Case study

The standout result was the \$130 average donation from each donor. “For a first gift, it was higher than what we ever expected and proved we’re getting into areas that are fruitful for us,” says Dixon. PCT offered another benefit: “We could get into areas where we do well, and be more personal without the costs of a personalized mailing.”

Re-engaging past donors with a one-to-one communication, Dixon executed a Canada Post Personalized Mail™ campaign, sending nearly 24,000 pieces to this valuable audience. And that investment paid off too, generating over \$88,000 and spurring 764 past donors to contribute again.

They also did a Canada Post Neighbourhood Mail™ campaign that saw 20,000 pieces delivered to households in four postal codes around Edmonton. “We chose them based on the demographic study performed by Canada Post,” says Dixon, who selected PRIZM areas based on where the foundation currently performs well and areas where there is room for growth. In the end, that outreach generated just over \$3,000 with an average gift of \$97.

“All three campaigns tick every box for acquisition,” says Dixon. “The mix of them all is my happy place because I know I’m getting in doors where I need to be.”

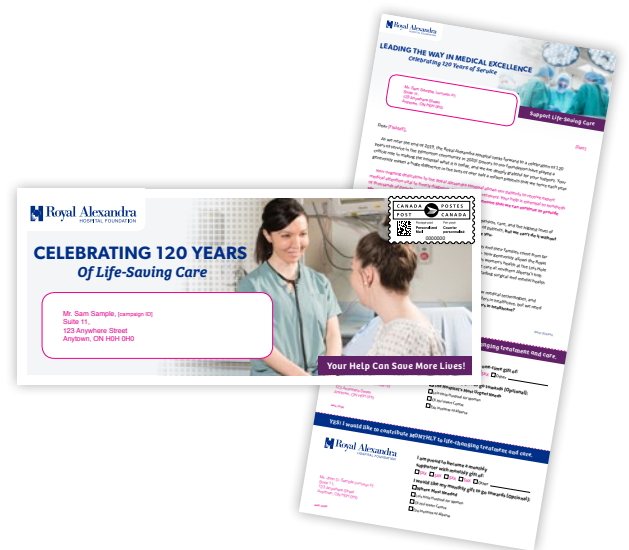
Direct mail anchors Dixon’s marketing campaigns, but digital comes into play as well. The foundation always sends an email, pre- and post-campaign, and uses social media advertising too. “For us, integration is key,” Dixon says.

Then COVID-19 changed everything

The foundation needed to adapt to this new environment and make changes to their fundraising model. The summer race became a virtual run; the annual gala, a 600 persona event was replaced with a television special featuring Canadian luminaries. “That’s not anything we would have done prior to COVID, but we didn’t have a choice,” says Dixon.

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Karina Dixon

Director, Annual Programs and Fulfillment, Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation

The Royal Alexandra Foundation held its spring direct mail campaign as usual, but focused on the need created by the pandemic. The campaign supporting the event generated a return of 9.5%, bringing in \$86,400. No matter what new marketing approaches may be needed, direct mail will stay part of Dixon’s mix.

“I love direct mail, because it sits on their table for days and they see our logo and it triggers their thoughts. Direct mail just works,” says Dixon.



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