

Gifted Webinar 5 | Christmas Appeals Transcript

Chris: Welcome everybody to our fifth lockdown webinar. My name is Chris Goldie from Gifted Philanthropy a director of the company and with me is my colleague Andrew Day, another director.

Andrew: Hi, good to see you all well at least virtually. It's surprising it's not long until Christmas! I know that sounds frightening even though we're in a very warm summer just at the moment.

Chris: Indeed, indeed. So, let's talk about Christmas appeals which is what we're here to talk about. It may seem a bit odd as Andrew says, it's midsummer, Christmas seems a long way off. But nevertheless, now is the time to start thinking about what you might do from a fundraising perspective at Christmas time. So, we'll kick off maybe with a little quote from the author of Peanuts. Charles M. Schulz who says 'Christmas is doing a little extra for someone' I think that's quite a clear message for all of us when we think about what we might do philanthropically at Christmas time. Of course, Christmas appeals come in all shapes and sizes. We know that national newspapers run big Christmas campaigns for other charities. Very often they'll select two or three charities each year and look to raise a lot of money for those particular causes. National charities will very often run campaigns themselves but at more local level Parish churches schools' theatres community groups, they'll very often run Christmas appeals not just for themselves but very often for other causes as well. And a few examples from 2019 the main national UK newspapers raise more than £4.5m through their Christmas appeals last year. The book trusts on the other hand, £240,000, smashed previous records, we're very pleased with that but a much smaller campaign in terms of volume. The royal Marsden the big cancer charity hospital in London, £103,000 specifically through a Christmas appeal. Alzheimer's research £85,000 and then down at a much more provincial regional level, the theatre by the lake up in the lake district £22,544 for their outreach work the following year. So why do we make appeals at Christmas time. Well, we all know and it's a bit of a cliché, but it is the season of good will and it's a proven fact that 36% of the public will give to charity in the approach to Christmas. This is because donor motivation is usually very high. We recognise and very often we're spending a lot of money on presents and foods and alcohol and maybe it's a touch of compensation here you know it's a time to give back to the community because you recognise that we are perhaps over spending on luxury items for our own families. But of course, it's also a time when we really appreciate there are some people for whom Christmas is not the luxurious affair that it is for most of us. Perhaps it becomes a very appropriate time for us to think about giving support to those who genuinely need it most. It also reflects the true meaning of Christmas. Whether you're religious or not, and as we all remind our children time after time, Christmas is primarily a time to give and not receive you know when they get that Christmas present they're not particularly happy about, it was always an opportunity to say well "this is not about receiving all the time, this is about giving' and nothing could be more true in terms of people's motivation to give philanthropically. Christmas appeals also offer great opportunity for us to be creative. First to be able to get people to make gifts rather than just presents and gifts in a charitable sense means something that considered. Something that they've thought about. Something

that they've thought through just as you think about making a present "what am I going to buy my wife" well actually "what am I going to give to charity and who do I want to support?" And the final point here which I think is really important is that you know a new dawn just after Christmas. It is a time for great optimism. We'll look forward to the new year just as at the moment going through the recent COVID pandemic maybe we're looking forward to what's going to happen when we return to some sort of normality but in the case of Christmas appeals it's a new year a fresh start, time for you to introduce new initiatives, time for you to give charitably. Andrew anything you want to add to that.

Andrew: No, I quite agree. I think particularly this year we need to re-examine what our traditional Christmas appeals have been in the past. This is an unusual reflective time many people are if you like re-examining core values, coming to terms again with the things that are really important in life and that they value the most and I think this Christmas above many recent years will be an excellent opportunity to revisit and have a very effective Christmas appeal. As we've seen in the past here Chris these traditional Christmas appeals have ranged, just to remind everybody, you know around charity Christmas cards and by the way that's the lion share of the Christmas card market in Britain is people buying charity Christmas cards and therein supporting their charities. Obviously, it's around buying gifts for charities paying for much needed items, and very specifically targeting if you like to fund a goat for Oxfam or a you know a meal for someone homeless at Christmas that sort of thing. And also, there's enormous amounts of fundraising done through carol services and other events. Chris I know your cricket club for example has an excellent Christmas celebration of singing carols at the club house and so it's not just the cathedrals that run or churches that run these carols services right across the community again this year one wonders how that's going to happen. The direct mail direct response appeal is very common as well and we're very familiar with that and we'll be looking at some examples of that sort of material in a moment. More and more we're seeing online giving campaigns usually linked to a Public relations program where there's a community awareness or a specific call to action if you like so getting people to respond immediately by text giving you know and we're seeing more and more of these credit card touching giving in shopping centres for examples. And the fun things I love these ones are the themes days where there's Christmas jumper days or you know whatever they're always a bit of a giggle maybe in a zoom context that will take a very different approach this year. But anyway, they're the things that we've done in previous years certainly so far as our Christmas appeals are concerned.

Chris: Absolutely. What of the impact then Andrew?

Andrew: Well the impact of a Christmas appeal is that its important obviously for raising money and it usually I should stress is unrestricted funds it's not focused on a capital project where you must spend it on that particular item so it's you know it can offer headroom if you like financially for many charities and respond to immediate needs. It also though brings a community together you know shared giving and success with that in a full appeal context can be very endorsing and strengthening for a community. And therein it actually proves our fitness philanthropically it strengthens our culture of fundraising and of giving it's a way very often the corporates will support and it's an excellent opportunity to attract new donors. And therein the trick there is not just about capturing obviously financial support but getting the data behind that support so getting people's names and details and seeing

them as if you like their first gift to your charity maybe through the Christmas appeal and that opens opportunities for you through the rest of the following year. And that's very much around building your donor network for the future. It's also a moment when there can be great publicity particularly if you're doing something fun or funky and a bit different where even just locally you shouldn't miss that chance to raise the profile of your charity through your Christmas appeal.

Chris: Absolutely so I think it's very important when you think about your own Christmas appeal and here, we are in July, you may be thinking: what are we going to do at Christmas time? How are we going to use Christmas to generate income? So, first thing: what do you hope to gain most from your Christmas appeal? Is it money? And it could be, if it is money then that's great. But is it, as Andrew was just talking about, is it making sure you get new donors to your cause? Is it new volunteers? Do you need people to man food banks, soup kitchens, distribute clothing, distribute much needed goods? Is that actually a more important outcome for you? Ultimately is your charity little loan? Could this be the opportunity to take the next step in terms of publicity? It's probably a combination of all of them but it will help you I think in your planning to really try and focus on what your priorities will be. What is it you're going to raise money for? If it's your own cause, what is the case for support? Andrew talked a moment ago about it's a great time to raise unrestricted funds and of course it is, but your core still needs to be a strong one, people still need to understand very simply what it is you need money for, what it is you're hoping to achieve through fundraising. If on the other hand you always need money for a different cause, again, what will that cause be? You know we know that a lot of parish churches for example will use Christmas as a time to raise money for good causes linked to their mission overseas perhaps. For other businesses particularly it might be around homelessness or education or disability causes, and part of that context is who is likely to be important? What is it that you're hoping to achieve? Who is going to support you? Try to think about in your planning of your Christmas appeal, those particular elements. What do you want to gain from it, what are you raising the money for? And who is going to support you? So having determined who is going to support you and what your broad parameters of your appeal are going to be you've got to start planning it now it may be midsummer but Christmas is only 20 weeks away and that time is going to fly past if you leave it too late you'll be too late to launch. And the things you need to think about at the moment are which mechanisms you're going to use, who your target audience is and who your partners might be. Mechanisms can be anything from personal hand collections to online giving to phone apps to texting the whole host of different mechanisms available to you, but you've got to be very clear in your own mind about who it is you're likely to be getting support from. For example, if the majority of your supporters are the older generation, how comfortable are they with giving online or giving through apps? It may well be that you'd be better suited with a direct mail approach. If on the other hand they're younger they're much more likely to just respond very quickly through a text giving campaign or an online giving campaign. The other key factor in your play at this stage is who might your partners be? Corporate partners in the context of Christmas appeals are very exciting because they can very often help to supply the goods or the distribution channels or the sponsorship of your appeal to make sure that all your costs are covered so you're able to say to your donors "actually every penny raised is going to the good cause". Because, WHSmith's have paid for the running of the appeal. These are all mechanisms that you've got to start

planning now to get in place so that you can launch your appeal with the maximum impact. Now when should that be? It shouldn't be too early. We mentioned a moment ago, seeing Christmas in the shops in September is not something that most of us like. Christmas ads on the TV, so don't go too early. Perhaps the start of November just after half term is a great time to do it. But equally maybe there's a special date for your organisation, there's a landmark, there's an anniversary there's some reasons for you to go perhaps a week earlier or a week later than the start of November. It's also a time to think about just you know when do you factor in or what can you factor into your campaign to give it a boost? And actually, giving Tuesday which this year's on the first of December is a very useful mechanism national recognised encouragement for people to give, a really useful mechanism for slotting into a Christmas appeal and giving it some oomph when you're halfway through. It can even be the hard launch. And what do we mean by soft launch and hard launch? Well just as with a capital campaign what you're looking to do at Christmas is get some early runs on the board, get some early money in the bank so actually you can go out say "we need to raise £20,000, we've already raised £10,000 so will you help us get to Christmas by giving another £10,000 pounds?" That's your soft launch, it's your closest supporters your potential partners, it's the work that's done leading up to your campaign launch the hard launch is the big public splash about what is you want to do what you're going to achieve what your targets are and if you've already raised some money towards that target it's going to be much easier to raise the rest of it.

Andrew: Actually Chris just to be clear to the mechanisms you're using will be different between those two types of launches so with your soft launch its about one-on-one personal engagement with your closest major donor or key donor supporters asking them to give you the leadership so that your main public appeal starts with that success factor that will give a momentum to go through and achieve its target within a relatively short space of time. You know, you see this all the time with these you know national telethons and other things. A lot of the fundraising that is done is done in the year before that event happens and obviously we get given the news during the evening and it builds up a momentum and that's what encourages on the night the public to respond so this is a very similar method or approach between the soft launch and the hard launch.

Chris: Absolutely.

Andrew: as far as your Christmas cause is concerned, it's important your case has some sense of urgency that at it is compelling that there is a specific focus to it around Christmas. It's not about just doing the same old thing. And so, whilst it can be unrestricted in its funding, it's important that it has the capacity to reach people's hearts, that encourages them to give now rather than not do it or give later. So, really think carefully about how you're going to present your Christmas cause and write that case that is both urgent and compelling, prompting action now rather than later. A good way to do that is to focus on people and who will benefit and tell their story of what the giving will do. And that motivates action amongst prospects as well, obviously. You need to be very particular about how money money you actually need. I mean, don't be silly, greedy, of course you won't but it is important that people understand what the, if you like, the investment that is need because now you're moving the argument from where people's hearts are to the way they're thinking rationally financially about getting the outcome that their heart has already

bought into. If you need goods, it may be that there's a particular set of things or coats or other you know items for homeless people that you're looking for. Say that. You know, and make it as clear, exactly what you're after here. It's crucial really here to appeal to that festive spirit. The spirit of people coming to the end this year I think of a real, a long period of reflection, embracing hopefully a year of brighter prospects in 2021 and wanting to respond positively to drawing – it's talked about as Christmas spirit – if you take my point it's a sense of love you know, agape, in the sense of community love that they're wanting to express at this time of year and just make it easy for them to respond positively to actually support you. Don't make them fill in 55 different forms or go through 6 pages on your website to make the gift. Put it up front, clear clean and easy to say yes.

Chris: We thought at this stage we'd just throw out a few examples of the sort of imagery that people have used previously for Christmas appeals and we start with a couple that we like the first of missing people is one of those sort of almost nightmare scenarios but it's very important to what they are seeking to raise money for. You know, the image of a bike, a child's bike, still wrapped, all the other presents have gone, no Christmas tree in sight, but it's still there: why is it still there? Because the child is missing. That's a horrible, horrible scenario but it happens and as the text says, every 5 minutes a child goes missing in the UK. And if you imagine that happening at Christmas that is incredibly emotional and that's a really strong message, we believe that is very well demonstrated through a pretty simple photo and some fairly simple words. The one from Birmingham's children's hospital "magical messages" is a different type of technique because what that's really doing is saying "don't send Christmas cards "use this little form, write a nice little message on our snowballs or our snowdrops and give us the money instead". You can download it, doesn't cost you anything to get it, you don't have to send it in the post, but it's a different way of dealing with the sociability of Christmas, saying hello to loved ones but also getting the message across that you're making a donation to what is a very good cause and children's hospitals clearly are very good causes. You can, equally if you don't want to do that, you text £5 or more as a result it's a very simple way of doing it and its all contained in what is not a too busy an advert too busy a poster.

Andrew: And I love that response: do more! You know the text: "do more" I just think you know you're reinforcing positively a positive action that you're asking your reader or recipient to take here. I think that was a really clever campaign.

Chris: And in the missing people, they've got the same hope. If someone's missing, hope is what you cling on to.

Andrew: 1 hope, 5 hope, 10 hope, whatever.

Chris: Really tapping in to what people are feeling at that time and what you can do as a result of your gift. On the other hand, we've got one here Toys for Kids Christmas gift appeal. It's I found this one quite difficult because none of the imagery is particularly emotions, it's all quite small, it's not very convincing. Yes, you have toys you've got a few kids there, I think it could be explained so much better. It doesn't inspire me, I don't think Andrew it inspires you either.

Andrew: Well the difference is, it doesn't speak to me emotionally first. You know in this case it was a brilliant opportunity to actually show the face of a child receiving a gift. That's the most extraordinary expression normally, that excited, and what it would mean, what you could do for just £6 is give this sort of smile to a child. Now, and third we've got these what I would describe as very functional photographs and messaging and it's quite confused, there's a lot going on, I'm not clear as easily: the mechanism for donating isn't as easy as text. You know, gift £6, do you see what I mean – my response, I've got to donate now, how do I do that? I mean what... it's not as clear to me

Chris: Absolutely and I think that's, that's, so we stuck them as an example as maybe one that you know I'm sure it's been put together for all the right reasons, it just doesn't quite work. It obviously, you know, online, you click the donate button you go through, but it still is not as powerful, as emotive as it needs to be at Christmas. The salvation army on the other hand, we both quite like because actually it is very clear about what your money is going to achieve. And you know it's a mechanism used by a lot of charities throughout the year but at Christmas it's particularly relevant because we're thinking about what we're spending in the broader context. And therefore when you put into context that £28 will support five lonely older people to enjoy a proper Christmas lunch and friendship and you've just come back from Tesco's and you've spend £250 on your Christmas shopping, you can sort of understand that that guilt complex, that compensation motivation for giving it kicks in and if you see that, you're thinking "well crickey if I can't afford to give £28 to this, what sort of person am i?" And I like that. It's not the most exciting image, it's got a lot of writing in it, but it does what you're drawn to all the time is the numbers and the values and what your support will actually look like.

Andrew: And it prompts you to think about different types of gifts so Chris you could go to your wardrobe and get your party dress out and donate it, you know.

Chris: Absolutely.

Andrew: But the point is, it does make you think "hang on I've got these extra things I don't ... how many coats do I need this winter?" Well actually through the salvation army I could give them, and I know they'd be needed and appreciated, it's topical it's timely, it's responding to a specific need.

Chris: So, a few pictorial examples of three good and one less good. Digital Marketing then becomes really important. You know: how you use your digital channels. We have talked earlier about the older generation not being as proficient with technology. But of course, more and more people, and I'm nearly 60, more and more people of my generation are using digital communications. Email is a regular part of daily life. Website is where you go to first. Twitter, some do some don't, but for a lot of people it is really important. Facebook again a great mechanism. Instagram, particularly for younger people. Just ways of getting good imagery out and at Christmas time good imagery is really important. Why? Because what you're really trying to get across here and use is a headline that is punchy and appealing. You want to grab somebody's attention straight away. We talked a moment ago about the image that we didn't like. It didn't grab us, it didn't shake us up and go "give" emotive imagery. Same reason. It wasn't saying to us "you give" As Andrew rightly said, the

picture of a child with a beaming face clearly in a hospital ward in a disadvantaged circumstance opening a present, the wide eyed wonder of present would have been a far better image in our view for that. Can you afford a short video? You know big national charities of course they will use videos and maybe even use national television to promote their campaigns. But even locally if people come to your website, could you produce a video that goes on your website that is shared on YouTube and through other channels that actually explains what it is you do and why you need to raise money. And the final piece it's really important to link directly to the giving page on your website. Andrew mentioned this before. You do not want to be going through layer after layer of webpages and information because you will lose people. It has to be direct and there is some really good programs available now to embed in your website that you can use to make it look like your donors and feel like its your website, they're your donors, they're giving directly to you as a result. They're not going to go through a just giving or somebody else.

Andrew: And that's a really good point Chris and I love the thought around the video because we've all got these phones these days or someone has and you know those amateur videos sometimes are more powerful than the slick corporate polished jobs and they're a great way to say thank you event to an individual donor by the way is to take a video and share it on YouTube and say thank you to so and so and it just builds a bit of a following, it makes it more immediate, you've got a faster levels of response and in a public appeal you've got to keep it fresh you can't just go with the same comms message that you started with at the beginning of the 10 weeks. You've got to keep introducing updates, saying thank you letting people know where you are with your target, and how you're going you know encouraging them to come on board and support so I really encourage you to use your mobile phone and get those videos out.

Chris: Absolutely and if we've learnt one thing from the last four months it's that we can do so much more virtually and do it well and I just think just sitting here now one is thinking of all sorts of ways for a health charity to engage with patients potentially. Or nursing staff or whoever it might be recording short messages putting them all together. There is your video its very simple it costs you little to nothing, but it can be put out and then really emphasise your message and how you get it across.

And I guess that leads into doesn't it being creative you know you want your appeal to stand out from the crowd there's going to be a lot of competition out there at Christmas time lots of charities both nationally and regionally are doing Christmas appeals. Why is yours going to be different and better? We've talked before and we'll reinforce it. Your messaging and your imagery has to inspire people. It could literally be what grabs somebody's attention in the first 5 seconds if it's your image, it's your message they're going to your website. If it's not, they're going to go to somebody else's. And part of that is the name. You know a long winded and again go back to the one we didn't like you know "give a gift of a toy at Christmas time" appeal. It's not particularly catchy. Think of something that absolutely resonates and will resonate both with your own organisation but also with your target audience. One or two words. Snappy, sharp. You can put it on the bottom "our 2020 Christmas appeal" or "2020 seasonal appeal" whatever it might be. But make the name catchy and appealing just like the messages and just like the imagery. All of that remembering why people give more at Christmas time. You know you're tugging on the heart strings, you're tapping into their desire to be generous at Christmas. So, don't be

schwarzy. Be quite direct, be quite confirm and by the same token don't be too Christmassy even if you've got a Christmas theme. So what do we mean by that? Don't go overboard with the Christmas imagery. Use it appropriately. It might be a red nose on one of your doctors if you're a hospital or it might be a Christmas hat on a couple of the kids who are enjoying stuff. Make sure people are aware its Christmas and it's the festive season but it's not too overtly Christmassy.

Andrew: Too much tinsel does not work. And we all get I think a bit nauseated with that, in that final run so yeah. I think you need to signal its Christmas and encourage that response but equally just show some moderation in how that's presented.

So, Five tips for a successful Christmas appeal. Of course, there would be five. Right. You really need to focus on your charity's mission tie the appeal back to your core mission. Make sure it has got a direct relevance to that. Keep your messaging simple and make the whole engagement as social as possible. Ask for what you really want you know imagine you are as a charity writing your letter to father Christmas this year. Say what you want. It doesn't mean you're going to get it but you should really put it out there and you may be pleasantly surprised. And just remember, think about the people that you're appealing to in the sense that imagine you are talking with them face to face and they're receiving this message around their kitchen table or in their home. So that you keep it really personal so, first person language not third person language. Short simple sentences. Avoid long words or large you know, challenging people's vocabulary. And you'll get a much better response. So, they're really important tips when you're designing your Christmas appeal this year.

Chris: So! That's our thoughts on how you plan your Christmas appeal. The key elements of it. Do we have any questions? Andrew, we have one here that says, "I'm from Bradford we have a multicultural community, is Christmas the right message to be communicating to our supporters when actually our supporters come from all faiths and all communities"?

Andrew: oh, so true. And the great thing is I think that of all the religious ceremonies Christmas is about the most secular one you could possibly imagine in the sense that it's also Diwali, there are opportunities at this time of year for all faiths to be coming together to celebrate the values of family life and community life and so on. So, whilst we talk about a Christmas appeal, it is really a community appeal that is focused around this Christmas holiday season. And so, it's for you to decide in your own charity just how religious a focus you want to bring to it but as you can recognise from what I'm saying, there are many people from different faiths who celebrate Christmas, regardless of whether they're Christians or not. And there is I think great opportunity to demonstrate that in Bradford in the messaging and imagery that you use for your appeal and I would show the full diversity of what it means to come together at Christmas as a community in Bradford or elsewhere across the country it's not about faith, it's not about ethnicity it is all about celebrating our diversity and our community. And that's the core message of a Christmas appeal.

Chris: Absolutely, it is you know the season of good will isn't it, it doesn't matter irrespective of what religion you follow, what creed, what ethnicity background it is about being friendly and part of a community and it's a great opportunity for a community to come together. Okay, if there aren't any more questions, we're going to love you and leave you just a little part, if any of you haven't yet got a copy of our book Gifted Fundraising, please do get in

touch with Julie, you've got her email address and she'll be happy to send you a complimentary copy you might find it useful bit if there are no more questions..

Andrew: Click onto the next slide Chris there's some contact details there I think and so you can reach out to either me or Chris there's our email details and there's Julie's email if you'd like a complimentary copy of gifted fundraising please do that – could be under your Christmas tree this year, who knows. But it's been great Chris, thanks for inviting me to join you today. I've enjoyed... can't believe Christmas is only a few weeks away.

Chris: it feels very strange doesn't it, planning Christmas when the sun is shining but look thank you ever so much to everybody who's attended today. If it's your first gifted webinar, welcome and we hope you've enjoyed it. If it's your second third fourth or fifth of the lockdown period, we hope they've been of great interest to you. Do please get in touch if you need us. Otherwise, enjoy the rest of the summer and very importantly, eventually have a great Christmas.

Andrew: here here.

Chris: All the best.