



CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

**MESSAGING GUIDANCE
FOR COMPANIES
AND UNITED WAYS**

MUST HAVES FOR ALL COMMUNICATIONS

Campaign communications should be consistent across emails, donation pages, websites, gift processing platforms, social media, event signage, and more. A cohesive look, feel, and message is more likely to resonate with employees.

Include these items in all campaign communications

- Campaign Start and End Dates
- Campaign Goals for Participation (%) and/or Giving (\$)
- Name of United Way(s) near company and/or employee locations
- Names of Campaign Leaders and/or Key Contacts
- Company Match Details, if applicable

Brand Standards and Guidelines

Telling a unified story shows the difference we're making together. These tools help align the look and feel of your communications with the United Way brand, protecting and promoting the reputations of both United Way and our corporate partners.

- [Brand Standards and Guidelines on unitedway.org](https://www.unitedway.org/brand-standards-and-guidelines)
- [United Way Logo Files on unitedway.org](https://www.unitedway.org/logo-files)

COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING: COMPANIES AND UNITED WAYS

Lead with Participation: Center Your Campaign on People, Not Dollars

When announcing your campaign, list participation goals before revenue goals. (Follow the same pattern when reporting on campaign progress and final results.) If possible, acknowledge participation across business units, geographic markets, company tenures, seniority levels, or other groupings of employees.

TIP FOR COMPANIES: Ask your United Way for examples of services or resources that common gift amounts could support. Use these examples to reinforce the importance of participation through gifts of any size.

Educate Along the Way: Provide Multiple Ways to Engage

Choosing a charitable cause is a personal decision and some employees may need more time before they are ready to make their gifts. If possible, highlight other ways to learn about and experience United Way, such as upcoming volunteer events.

TIP FOR COMPANIES: Ask your United Way for links to their social media accounts or newsletter sign-up form. Offer these resources as ways that employees can stay informed throughout the year.

Connect to Causes: Build Investment in Impact

Consider natural connections between your company, industry, or CSR goals and United Way impact areas, for example banking and financial education programs or agriculture and hunger relief initiatives. Or use pre-existing surveys or feedback groups to determine what is most important to your employees, such as disaster preparedness or out-of-school time programming.

TIP FOR COMPANIES: Ask your United Way for descriptions of their ongoing programs and partnerships in these overlapping areas. Highlight these similar interests - and shared commitment to impact - in your campaign messages.

NAVIGATING A CHANGING LANDSCAPE: WORK ENVIRONMENT

“No one works in offices anymore. It’s difficult to reach employees.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in January 2025, the share of the workforce working from home remains almost double what it was before COVID-19.¹ While this is a common news narrative, there are many industries or roles that remain highly placed based and others that have a mix of onsite and remote employees. It’s important to develop campaign messaging and engagement activities with all types of employees in mind.

TIPS FOR COMPANIES:

If your company offers individual donor recognition or group campaign celebrations, consider what is most meaningful to your employees.

- Perks like casual dress day, preferred parking, or a catered lunch are an opportunity for companies to show their appreciation for employee participation.
- Increasingly, donors prefer experiences to tangible benefits. Consider working with your United Way to provide a behind-the-scenes look at local programs and partnerships through tours, visits, or informal photo and video updates for donors.

Volunteering is a great way to increase employee engagement and can be done individually or in groups, in the office, in local settings, or remotely in employees’ home communities. Volunteering has been shown to increase giving.

- Volunteers of a nonprofit are 14.5% more likely to donate to its mission ²
- 70% of corporate volunteers feel that volunteering boosted employee morale ³

TIP FOR UNITED WAYS:

Match the delivery of your campaign materials to company and workplace types, and leverage the opportunity as a stewardship and relationship-building touch.

- *For Onsite and Local Workplaces:* Consider hand delivering materials such as campaign posters, promotion items, or thank-you gifts. Connect with new and returning campaign ambassadors during your visit, if possible.
- *For Remote and Non-Local Workplaces:* Send personal follow-up emails to encourage corporate partners to view and download campaign materials. Offer assistance customizing for their needs, if possible.

NAVIGATING A CHANGING LANDSCAPE: NONPROFIT CHOICE

“Workplaces and giving have just changed too much. We should move on.”

United Way is a proud and trusted philanthropic partner in the workplace. Workplace campaigns remain strong sources of revenue for many United Ways, contributing about half of current year support to the network, and strong drivers of employee engagement for companies.

While workplace campaign counts and revenue have been decreasing over many years, the rate of decline is slowing. Non-workplace-campaign sources of revenue, such as corporate impact investments, continue to increase in importance.

TIPS FOR COMPANIES:

Promoting your partnership with United Way as a cornerstone of your commitment to corporate citizenship can strengthen relationships.

- *With Employees:* 55% of Gen Z respondents say it's important work for companies that align with their social and political beliefs ⁴
- *With Customers:* 77% of consumers prefer buying from companies with CSR initiatives ⁵

Promoting donor choice within your campaign, such as allowing employees to support United Way programs in education, youth, food security, health, or other interest areas can increase campaign participation.

- This model provides employees the opportunity to support causes they care about while also ensuring that all contributions are part of a coordinated, high-impact giving strategy.
- Higher participation rates strengthen company culture and demonstrate shared commitment to giving back.

TIP FOR UNITED WAYS

Emphasize how United Way makes a single gift into a strategic, local investment

- Streamlined, transparent giving and reporting
- Proven, measurable impact in your community
- Equitable distribution across needs
- Programs and partners in many impact and interest areas
- Guidance on effective giving choices

NAVIGATING A CHANGING LANDSCAPE: GENERATIONAL SHIFT

“We’re having a hard time reaching younger employees through our campaign.”

Industry research on younger donors is promising: 74% of millennials (individuals born between 1981 and 1996) consider themselves philanthropists compared with just 35% of baby boomers ⁶ and 33% of Gen Zers (individuals born between 1997 and 2012) plan to increase their giving in the coming year. ⁷

Younger donors value clear communication: 66% of millennials track results for most or all nonprofits they support compared to just 32% of baby boomers ⁸ and 18% of Gen Z said they stopped giving to charity because of trust issues. ⁹

TIP FOR COMPANIES: Emphasize leadership trust in United Way

- Highlight key partner relationships and the number of years of partnership
- Describe additional facets of partnership, such as volunteerism or board service
- Promote United Way as a hyper-local, highly effective corporate and employee gift option

TIP FOR UNITED WAYS: Use the advice in the Campaign Communications section to

- Deepen and expand campaign messaging that connects mission to lived experience and donor gifts to real impact
- Create engaging, year-round communications plans that promotes transparency and responsible stewardship

Research

1. [U.S. Census Bureau](#)
2. [University of Maryland School of Public Policy Do Good Institute](#)
3. [VolunteerHub](#)
4. [United Way of the National Capital Area](#)
5. [Double the Donation](#)
6. [Fidelity Charitable](#)
7. [The Blackbaud Institute](#)
8. [Merrill Private Wealth Management, via Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship](#)
9. [Wise Giving Alliance](#)



BEST PRACTICES

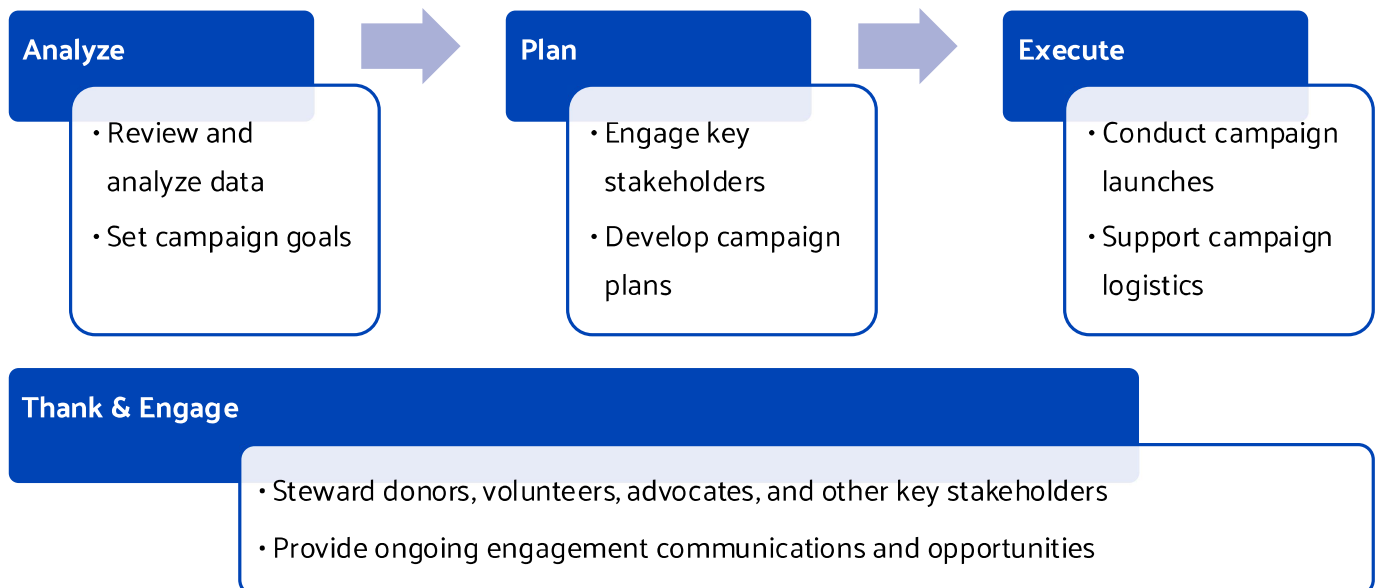
TIPS FOR COMPANIES
AND UNITED WAYS

THE UNITED WAY WORKPLACE CAMPAIGN CYCLE

A workplace campaign is an organized effort within a company to encourage employees to support a shared cause, most often through charitable giving, volunteering, or other forms of engagement.

Workplace campaigns are a powerful way to:

- Unite employees around a meaningful cause
- Support your communities through collective impact
- Boost company morale and team spirit
- Build company reputation for social responsibility



Use Events Wisely

Employee engagement events should enhance – not distract from – campaigns.

- If you host events, set participation and awareness goals, not revenue targets.
- Use existing signature events to also support workplace campaign education.
- Some companies partner with United Ways to host employee volunteer activities for campaign kick-offs instead of traditional events like breakfasts or meetings.

FEATURES OF STRONG WORKPLACE CAMPAIGNS

People

- ☐ **Strong Corporate Partner Campaign Leadership**
Complement executive commitment with ambassadors at all staff levels.
- ☐ **Strong Relationship Between Corporate and United Way Executives**
Leverage trusted reputations and local knowledge to develop a more robust campaign.
- ☐ **Centralized Campaign Operations**
Make it simple and easy for employees to participate.

Process

- ☐ **Strategic and Achievable Campaign Goals**
Use data to set participation and revenue goals, and other engagement milestones.
- ☐ **Defined Campaign Period**
Most campaigns run 2-4 weeks, with advanced notice helping build interest.
- ☐ **Year-Round Stewardship and Engagement**
Create a full-year plan for updating employees on the impact of their gifts to United Way. Start small by including photos and stories from United Way programs and volunteer events in existing employee communications like quarterly newsletters or by sending a special appreciation message around the holidays.

Leverage Matching Gifts

Many companies match their employees' giving to United Way. This is an effective strategy for increasing both participation rates and gift amounts. Research from [Double the Donation](#) shows:

- One in three donors would make a larger gift if they knew it would be matched
- Matching gifts can increase overall donations by over 50%
- Matching gifts can increase response rates by over 70%

GENERAL TIPS FOR EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Sent From a Person, Not an Institution: When you send an email “from” a person it increases recipient trust, confidence, and engagement. Include the sender’s role and the name of your company or United Way to improve recognition, such as “Mary Sample, Company President” or “John Blank, United Way CEO.”

Compelling: Subject lines are your first impression! Keep them short (under 50 characters), intriguing, and relevant. Consider a question or a local reference.

Personalized: If possible, address recipients by their preferred names. Tools in your email or gift-processing platform can help you tailor your messages as appropriate.

Segmented: If possible, create and send different versions of each email to key groups, such as past supporters, new employees participating in their first campaign, and not-yet-donated employees.

Timely: Try to avoid recycling emails from prior years. Consider emerging priorities in your company or changes in your community since last year’s campaign and connect them to United Way programs and impact.

Clear: Emphasize your call to action and make it easy for employees to complete that action (e.g., include a donation button or a link to gift-processing platform).

Frequent: Sustain your campaign momentum by sending reminder emails, recommended once per week for campaigns that are four to six weeks long.

Responsive: Ensure your email messages display well on the device that most recipients will use to read them. If possible, test messages on desktop and mobile devices and different operating systems.

Inspiring: Tangible community impact and emotional connection drive giving. Use the power of creative storytelling to enrich your messaging and help it stand out.

GENERAL TIPS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Incorporate Relevant Hashtags: Join the conversation and help inspire others by using your campaign hashtag or #UnitedIsTheWay, our core hashtag for the refreshed brand. Research and include relevant issue-based hashtags to expand your reach and connect with new audiences. Aim for three to seven hashtags per post.

Share Content More Than Once: It often takes two or three posts for your audience to notice and engage with your content. Don't hesitate to share the same information multiple times across different channels, at various times of day. This increases the likelihood of engagement.

Post at Optimal Social Media Times: Timing matters. To maximize engagement, post when your audience is online. Review your account's analytics to see when your top-performing content was posted in the past and try posting at similar times.

Not Every Post Needs a Link: Sometimes simplicity works best. Test posts that feature only text and visuals. If you do include a link, make sure it's short and trackable by using URL shorteners like Bitly.

Simplify Your Content: Keep your content clear and concise. Use simple language and avoid jargon to make your message accessible to everyone.

Tag Partners and Established Brand Ambassadors: Extend your reach by tagging United Way accounts, partners, and local ambassadors. This not only amplifies your message but also fosters collaboration and community support.

Include a Call to Action (CTA): Drive engagement by incorporating a clear and compelling call to action, such as asking people to watch a video, share a post, or donate.

Utilize Trends and Challenges: On platforms like TikTok on Instagram, leverage trends, challenges, or viral sounds that align with your message. This can help expand your reach and make your content feel more relatable.

Keep it Local and Authentic: The more personal your content is, the more it will resonate with your community. Share stories, quotes, and data that reflect your local impact and highlight the real lives your campaign supports.

Engage with Your Audience: Social media is a two-way street. Respond to comments, like posts, and engage with your followers to build a sense of community and deepen engagement with your mission.