Giving Tuesday Is No Longer Just One Day

How to turn one day of giving into a season of donor connection

By Donor Outreach by JMA

Giving Tuesday falls on December 1, 2026. For nonprofit leaders, the preparation starts well before that date—and the relationship work continues afterward. A campaign should help supporters understand the need, recognize what their past generosity accomplished, and see how they can participate now.

That requires more than a schedule of appeals. It requires a shared plan for donor conversations, clear responsibilities, and timely follow-up. Start with the relationships you already have, then build a campaign your staff and volunteers can deliver consistently.

Begin with a clear and credible purpose

Choose the specific work this campaign will support. Describe the people or programs involved, the funding needed, and what your organization expects to accomplish. Use a verified story and approved figures. If gifts support a broader program rather than a fixed unit of service, explain that accurately instead of attaching an unsupported dollar amount to a promised outcome.

Agree on how you will report results. Dollars received matter, but so do the number of participating donors, new and returning supporters, conversations completed and thank-you messages delivered. Set targets that fit your organization's capacity and recent experience. Avoid promising a matching gift until the donor's commitment, limit, and terms are confirmed.

Use four weeks to prepare the relationship

November 2–8: Reconnect. Begin with appreciation for loyal supporters and recent first-time donors. Share one short, accurate example of the work their support made possible. Make the initial stewardship conversation a thank-you, without adding a fundraising request. Check contact information and communication preferences as questions arise.

November 9–15: Educate. Explain the purpose of the campaign and the result you hope to achieve. Make the connection between generosity and mission clear. Prepare the donation page, confirm who answers donor questions, and test the giving experience on a phone. Keep email, direct mail, social posts, and callers consistent about the campaign's purpose.

November 16–22: Build anticipation. Invite supporters to share the campaign if they wish. Give board members a short briefing, approved impact language, and named assignments. If a confirmed match is part of the campaign, explain its actual terms. A donor should not have to reconcile conflicting messages from different channels.

November 23–29: Invite participation. Make the ask understandable and easy to act on. Explain how to give and whom to contact for assistance. Coordinate around Thanksgiving and donor preferences. Avoid concentrating every call or message into the holiday weekend. On November 30, check final lists, staffing, links, and acknowledgment arrangements for December 1.

Match the message to the relationship

Loyal annual donors need appreciation for their continuing support. LYBUNT donors—those who gave last year but not yet this year—need a respectful opportunity to reconnect. Check current gift records before treating someone as lapsed; a recent gift may not yet have been entered.

First-time donors benefit from knowing what their initial gift supported. Monthly donors should receive recognition for their ongoing commitment; this plan does not add an extra solicitation to their appreciation message. Major and mid-

level donors may need a personal briefing from the staff member or leader who already knows them. Give callers a purpose and a next step

Before making calls, decide which conversations are for appreciation, and which include an invitation to give. Equip callers with a short opening, one approved impact statement, and a place to record questions. A stewardship call should not unexpectedly turn into a solicitation.

For example: "I'm calling from [organization] to thank you for your support. Your generosity helped make [verified impact] possible. We appreciate being able to share this work with you." Pause and listen. If the donor raises a question the caller cannot answer, record it and assign a staff member to respond.

Use the donor's preferred channel and honor requests to stop contact. Assign one relationship owner when someone belongs to several segments so that a monthly donor who is also a major supporter does not receive competing calls. Give volunteers only the information they need and return notes to the organization's secure donor system.

Prepare the thank-you before the gift arrives

Write and test acknowledgments before December 1. Decide who will handle personal thank-you calls, new-donor welcomes, major donor follow-up, and questions. Arrange backup coverage so a successful campaign does not create a backlog of unacknowledged gifts.

Use a practical internal target: confirm gifts promptly and aim for personal follow-up within two business days where staffing allows. This is an operating target to adapt, not a promise about fundraising results. The first message should express appreciation and explain what comes next, without immediately asking for another gift.

Share campaign results after your team reconciles them. Distinguish money received from pledges, and planned work from outcomes already achieved. If the campaign misses its goal, thank supporters honestly and explain how their gifts will still advance the mission.

Carry the relationship into December

Record what donors tell you: preferred contact methods, program interests, unanswered questions, and any follow-up they requested. Assign an owner and due date for each commitment. Offer an appropriate next connection, such as a program update, rather than assuming every donor is ready for another appeal.

At the campaign review, examine both fundraising and stewardship. How many donors participated? Which segments responded? Were acknowledgments timely? Were questions resolved? Schedule a later review of repeat giving; immediate campaign results cannot establish long-term donor retention.

Giving Tuesday can bring attention to your mission. The work before and after it helps turn that attention into an ongoing relationship.

Put the strategy to work

Download the Giving Tuesday Success Planner to organize the four-week calendar, donor segments, scripts, assignments, and follow-up in one place.

Download destination: https://donoroutreachbyjma.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Giving-Tuesday-Success-Planner-2026-Fill-In-Form.pdf

Donor Outreach by JMA helps nonprofits plan personal outreach and thank-you calling campaigns. Contact our team to discuss your campaign and the conversations your supporters need.

Contact us: https://donoroutreachbyjma.com/contact/