



CASE STUDY

Why the Pablove Foundation Chose Text Messaging Over Email

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“I got into fundraising and development work because I want to help others ... Just seeing that genuine happiness makes my day.”

-Breeana Gumpert

Associate Director of Development

What They Do:

Fight childhood cancer with love.

Founded:

2009

\$3.5 million

awarded by Pablove for cancer research.

54

seed grants funded.

392%

return on investment.

Learn more:

Pablove.org

ABOUT:

The Pablove Foundation helps kids with cancer live a love-filled life today and a cancer-free life tomorrow. They do that through art and science:

Art: They unlock creativity and joy for kids in cancer treatment or remission with their Shutterbugs photography program.

Science: They also award grants to new and novel approaches to pediatric cancer research.

“Our photography classes, Shutterbugs, teaches all the important techniques of taking photos and it provides a platform for the kids we serve to be able to tell their journey through their lens,” said Gumpert. “We provide the sense of community and an opportunity for kids to be around other kids who are going through the same experience and find friends—and some end up being everlasting friends.”

MOTIVATION

Powerful impact: “I went to a Shutterbugs class in person, and I saw the impact the experience had on these kids,” said Gumpert. “Some were going through treatment, and they still got up and came to the class because they made a friend. Just watching the joy that it brought not only to the child, but also to the parents to see their kids smiling and laughing and having fun—it’s powerful.”

Why nonprofit work: “I got into fundraising and development work because I want to help others,” said Gumpert. “It’s so powerful to be able to make a difference and empower youth. Just seeing that genuine happiness makes my day.”

CHALLENGES

Funding: “Funding. Always funding,” Gumpert said. “That’s the biggest challenge we’re trying to overcome. We want to serve more kids, but in order to serve more kids, we need to raise more money.”

Competition: “There are a lot of cancer nonprofits that are providing an experience for cancer patients,” Gumpert said. “It’s a competitive industry, for sure.”

Pandemic shift: Like every nonprofit, Pablove saw changes over the pandemic and the economic unease, but it's starting to change. "I think they're all starting to come out of their homes, and saying 'OK, now I'm ready to go out there and give my time, treasure, and talent,'" Gumpert said. "So it is shifting for sure. But people are definitely being more selective."

CREATIVE SOLUTION

Funding research is a unique challenge because it can take years and years to see progress. "It's actually kind of tough to sell, because you don't have an end result," Gumpert said.

Solution: Family-funded research is a creative way the Pablove Foundation engages donors. Families who've had a kid go through the Shutterbugs class and been impacted by it work to fund a research grant.

Peer funding: "They use their network and try to fundraise \$50,000 grants to go toward a scientist that's working to cure their child's type of cancer," Gumpert said.

Progress: So far they've done six family-funded research projects.

Results: "We just did an event, a research roundtable with one of our scientists that got funded and she's actually in clinical trials now, which is two to three years away from the medicine actually being prescribed by doctors," Gumpert said. "That was a family funded project, so a family raised over \$50,000 and this scientist was able to accelerate her work."

EMAIL VS. TEXT MESSAGES

“Our email conversion rate is just not there,” Gumpert said. “The open rate is great. It's above industry average. But when it comes to converting and clicking and actually making a gift or registering or something, it's not as high as texting.”

So the Pablove Foundation actually uses text messaging more than email. They know messages are being read and acted upon.

“Nobody's reading these long emails that take us weeks to put together and get everyone's approval,” Gumpert said.

Bonus: That's another advantage of texting—the short character limit means more focused and targeted messages that go through the Pablove Foundation's internal approval process faster than email.

“We have definitely navigated our way more toward using Rally than MailChimp,” Gumpert said.

WHY RALLY?

Their CEO wanted them to be on a texting platform and told Gambert to run with it. They use Classy for their fundraising platform and Classy recommended Rally.

HOW DO THEY USE RALLY?

Text-to-give: The Pablove Foundation partnered with a sports team and needed a simple message to put on the jumbotron in front of 30,000 people.

Outbound text messages: Within a month or two they upgraded so they could send outbound text messages for various campaigns. Now they use Rally all the time.

Replies: They reply to text messages to develop that human connection with their supporters.

Ringless voicemail: They've used ringless voicemail 10 different times to encourage volunteers, remind donors, and thank supporters.

TEXT MESSAGE TIP: ADD A GRAPHIC

"Every time we send a text, we usually always put a graphic with it," Gumpert said.

Last year the Pablove Foundation did a year-end campaign starting on Giving Tuesday and every text message had a photo of a different scientist or shutterbug.

"One time we sent an image of a Shutterbug holding up a thermometer to show progress toward our goal," Gumpert said. "That one was pretty well received because we got quite a few donations."



TEXT-TO-GIVE IN ACTION

Using Rally started when the Pablove Foundation partnered with the New England Revolution soccer team. They were going to be on the jumbotron and needed a quick and easy way to engage people beyond a URL or QR code. Texting 'Pablove' to 24365 was that simple solution.

Stickers: They backed up the jumbotron message with a sticker that also had 'text Pablove to 24365.' "Everyone loves a sticker for their water bottle," Gumpert said.

Change as needed: They can swap out the message as needed by pointing to a new URL. The first time they drove donations, but the second time they shared their about page to drive education. "Because awareness is a big thing," Gumpert said.

Results: "We definitely made our money back, and we actually grew our audience," Gumpert said.

EVENTS IN ACTION

Volunteer meetup: "One of our teammates used it to invite people and then send a follow-up text with a link to the map so they knew how to get to the restaurant," Gumpert said.

Event logistics: They use it to send updates to the bike riders in their annual bike ride giving details about where lunch is being served, when their massage is available, etc.



Registration reminder: “I used it for the LA Marathon to encourage past supporters who ran it,” Gumpert said.

Voicemail follow-up: After sending a ringless voicemail, they send a text as a follow-up to encourage people to listen to the message.

RINGLESS VOICEMAIL IN ACTION

Surprise: “I got a voicemail one day from James and I was like, ‘Whoa, this is so cool,’” Gumpert said. “Sometimes I have over 150 calls to make and this is how I can use my time more efficiently.”

That initial surprise of the new ringless voicemail feature turned into using it frequently—as many as 10 times.

Valentine’s Day: They sent some extra love to monthly supporters for Valentine’s Day by getting Shutterbugs participants to record messages. “I actually got a few emails back saying, ‘That was so sweet that a Shutterbug called me like that,’ and ‘We love what you do and will always continue to support,’” Gumpert said.

The boss: “Our CEO did one once too,” Gumpert said. “That was a huge hit—hearing from the top honcho.”

How’s it work: Gumpert gave kids a script and edited the audio recordings in iMovie. Watching kids read a script in video always looks awkward, “But with voicemail, you can’t see that and it sounds genuine,” Gumpert said.

Why ringless voicemail: “Supporters always want to hear from the people they support,” Gumpert said. “It really is a very personal and cool touch that we definitely love here.”

TEXT MESSAGE TIP: CHECK FOR GROWTH

When supporters make a donation or register for an event, the Pablove Foundation has added a field for supporters to share their cell phone number, and that's definitely boosted growth.

REPLY WITH RALLY

Many text messaging platforms don't allow replies. There's literally no inbox and any replies just disappear into the void. Not with Rally, something the Pablove Foundation takes advantage of.

Responses: "I go in there maybe an hour after the message was sent," Gumpert said. "I'll go in and see if anybody is responding and will sometimes get responses saying, 'This is really cool,' or 'You guys are doing such great work.'"

Thank you: Gumpert replies and says thank you whenever she can. "They see right away that we acknowledge that their gift—no matter what size—is important to us."

Human connection: Gumpert often wonders if people are surprised to see real responses from text messages since so many companies can't respond. "Pavlov is a small nonprofit, but we pride ourselves on the personal connection," Gumpert said.

YEAR-ROUND COMMUNICATION

Like many nonprofits, the Pablove Foundation initially used Rally for their year-end giving campaign. After the effort, they were tempted to cancel Rally.

“But every month there was a different campaign going on that we could use it for,” Gumpert said, emphasizing the need for continuous communication. “There hasn't been a time when we went through two months where we didn't use Rally. We use it constantly.”

The Pablove Foundation keeps in regular contact with their monthly donors: “Every month they get a touchpoint from us,” Gumpert said. She uses Rally for more than half of those, but also mixes in other formats like an actual phone call or a handwritten note.



WHY THEY LOVE RALLY

Easy to use: “It's just so user friendly, which is really nice,” Gumpert said. “I didn't have to watch any webinars, I was able to navigate it just by checking things out. That was really nice too, because I never have time to watch the webinars.”

Customer service: “The customer service, even if I did have a question, is so great,” Gumpert said.

Affordable: “Not only is it great, but it's affordable for small nonprofits like us,” Gumpert said. “We are unfortunately penny pinchers when it comes to what we spend, because we want to give the most to those we serve.”

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