A FIELD GUIDE FROM BRIGHTLEAF GIVING

The First-100-Donors Playbook

How community fundraisers get from zero to 100 donors in three weeks — and why most stall at thirty.

EDITION 01

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PART 01

Introduction

There is a moment that almost every community fundraiser hits, and very few are warned about.

You launch. You tell your family. You tell your closest friends. The first donations come in fast — sometimes within hours. By the end of week one you might be at fifteen, twenty, even thirty donors. The cause is real, the response is real, and the momentum feels real.

Then it stops.

Week two is slower. Week three slower still. By week four, the same campaign that pulled twenty donations in five days is averaging one or two a week. You check the page more often. You consider another social post. You wonder whether the cause was as resonant as you thought.

In our experience, this is the most common pattern in the first year of a new fund: a fast start, a sharp stall around thirty, and a slow grind to the next milestone that often never arrives.

The stall is not about the cause. It is almost never about the cause. It is about **the order**.

The first 100 donors do not arrive randomly. They arrive in a specific sequence, in four distinct stages. Get the sequence right and 100 is a three-week project. Get it wrong — by, for example, posting publicly before you have finished your inner ring — and you can spend six months getting from 30 to 50.

This playbook is about that sequence.

> **Scope.** A tactical guide to the first 100 donors of a new community fundraising effort — kollels, religious institutions, family or memorial funds, neighborhood mutual aid, medical campaigns. Built for solo or two-person operators with a real cause and limited time. Not about brand-building, paid acquisition, or the work after your hundredth donor — those are different problems with different playbooks.

WHY THE ORDER MATTERS MORE THAN THE MARKETING

The instinct of most new fundraisers is to think about marketing first. The headline, the page design, the social post, the email subject line.

The instinct is wrong, or at least premature. At the first-100 scale, you do not have a marketing problem. You have a sequencing problem. The people who will give to your fund in the first three weeks are almost entirely people you know, or people one degree away. They will not be moved by your headline. They will be moved by you, or by someone they trust who is moved by you.

Your job in the first 100 is not to be discovered. It is to convert the warmth that already exists around you and your cause into actual gifts, in the order that builds the most momentum for the next stage.

Marketing comes later — in stage 4, donors 86 through 100. It works because of what you built in stages 1 through 3.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

Read the rest of this playbook before you ask a single new person to give. If you have already started, that is fine — but stop the broad asks until you finish section 3.

PART 02

The Four Stages of Your First 100

Picture the first 100 donors as a staircase, not a funnel. A funnel suggests volume in, attrition out. That is not what is happening here. What is happening is more like a staircase: each step is reached by the people on the step below, and each step has different physics than the one before it.

STAGE 4

Public Campaign (donors 86–100)

Broad announcements, social posts, group emails. The final sprint. Works because of stages 1–3.

STAGE 3

Peer-Powered Expansion (donors 61–85)

Your warm-network donors recruit their own networks. The most underused stage and the secret weapon of the first 100.

STAGE 2

Warm Network (donors 21–60)

Personalized 1:1 outreach to acquaintances. Text and email. No mass blasts. The widest stage by donor count.

STAGE 1

Inner Ring (donors 1–20)

Family and closest friends. 1:1 conversation only. The foundation everything else stands on.

Each stage answers a different question:

- **Stage 1:** do the people closest to you believe in this enough to give? If no, you have a cause problem, not a fundraising problem, and no amount of stage 2–4 work will fix it.
- **Stage 2:** can the cause cross from your inner ring into your wider network? Most causes can, but the asks have to be personal.
- **Stage 3:** can your network become your sales force? When it does, your fund becomes self-propelling.
- **Stage 4:** can you close strong with people one or two degrees beyond your direct reach? Match donors, social proof, and a real ending make the final sprint work.

The staircase is sequential. You do not skip steps. The most common mistake — by an order of magnitude — is to attempt stage 4 at the start, before stages 1 through 3 have been completed. We will return to this throughout the playbook.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

Count the people in your inner ring (stage 1). Write the number down. If it is fewer than ten, read the sidebar in section 3 first.

PART 03

Stage 1: The Inner Ring (Donors 1–20)

The inner ring is the small group of people whose belief in you is unconditional. Family. The two or three closest friends. The person who was at the hospital, the funeral, the bar mitzvah, the wedding. The people who would, if you called them at midnight, pick up.

For most fundraisers this group is between ten and twenty people. Some have larger. A few have smaller — we will address that case.

WHY 1:1 ONLY

The single most important rule of stage 1: **no mass communication of any kind**. No group text. No mass email. No social post. No WhatsApp blast.

The reason is not etiquette. It is mechanics. Your inner ring donors are doing three things at this stage that nobody else will do for you:

1. **Setting the floor.** Their gifts establish what "real" support for this cause looks like. If the first five gifts are $18 each via mass text, the next fifty will anchor near $18. If the first five are $500 each because each donor was asked personally for a meaningful amount, the next fifty will anchor much higher.
2. **Establishing credibility for stage 2.** When you reach out to your warm network, you will be able to say "my parents, my brother, and my closest two friends have already given. We're at $X." That signal moves people who would not have moved otherwise.
3. **Giving you usable feedback.** Inner ring donors will tell you what's unclear about the ask, the cause, and the page. A mass text gets none of this.

Mass communication at this stage gets you the gifts but loses the floor, the credibility, and the feedback. It is the most expensive shortcut in the playbook.

THE 5-SENTENCE ASK SCRIPT

The 1:1 ask, by phone or in person, is five sentences. Not three (too thin to land). Not ten (too long to feel personal).

> [Sentence 1] Context for the call — why you are calling, briefly.
> [Sentence 2] The cause, in one specific sentence — not abstract.
> [Sentence 3] What you are personally doing — your stake, your time, your gift.
> [Sentence 4] The specific ask — an amount or a range.
> [Sentence 5] An exit clause — what happens if they say no, said warmly.

Two example variants:

Variant A — Memorial fund (a fund in honor of someone who has passed)

> Hey — I wanted to call you before this goes out wider because you knew my mother as well as anyone. We are starting a fund in her name to support the meals program at the shul she ran for twelve years. I am putting in the first $1,800 and serving on the committee that will run it. I would love for you to be one of the first ten people in — anywhere from $360 to $1,800 would mean a lot. If this is not the right month, just say so and I will check back later.

Variant B — Medical or family fund (a fund for an immediate need)

> I am calling you specifically before I post anything publicly, because you have been a real friend to our family. As you know, my brother's treatment costs are going to be significant — we are starting a fund to cover the next six months. I am putting in $500 myself and a few cousins are matching. I would love for you to be in the first group of people we go to — $180 or $360 or whatever feels right for you. If now is not the right time, just tell me and we will keep it between us.

Notice what these scripts do:

- Name the relationship at the start. The donor knows immediately that this call is personal, not part of a campaign.
- Include the operator's own gift. **Do not skip this.** A founder gift signals seriousness in a way no language can replicate.
- Give a specific range, not "any amount helps." A range guides the donor toward what is appropriate. "Any amount helps" produces small gifts because it removes the anchor.
- Offer a warm exit. This protects the relationship if the timing is wrong and preserves the donor's willingness to give later.

THE ORDER TO APPROACH THEM IN

Within the inner ring, sequence matters again. Start with the person you are most confident will say yes — usually a parent, a sibling, or a co-organizer. Get their gift recorded. Then move outward.

The reason is morale. The first two or three calls are the hardest. If you start with the harder asks, you will be flat by call number six. Start with easy yeses, build the bank of "yes" responses in your own head, then make the calls that are less predictable.

A useful rough order:

1. Co-organizer / spouse / partner (often already committed).
2. Parents / closest siblings.
3. Closest two or three friends.
4. Mentor or community elder.
5. Extended family who would expect to be asked early.
6. The rest of the inner ring.

> **IF YOUR INNER RING IS SMALLER THAN TEN PEOPLE**
>
> Some operators come to this with small inner rings — newer to the community, far from extended family, or running a cause whose closest stakeholders are themselves the beneficiaries.
>
> Two adjustments. First, extend the stage-1 list to include people who would be insulted not to be asked early: a board member of the institution the fund supports, a neighbor who has helped your family for years, a clergy member. These "obligation-tier" donors belong in stage 1 even if you would not call them close friends.
>
> Second, lower the stage-1 target from twenty to twelve, and accept that you will need a longer stage 2 to compensate. Do not move to stage 2 until stage 1 is genuinely exhausted.

ONE SPECIFIC EXAMPLE

Sarah's mother had run her shul's weekly community meal for twelve years before passing. Sarah wanted to fund the program in her mother's memory.

Her inner ring was eighteen people. She started with her father ($2,500). Then her two siblings ($1,800 each). Her mother's two closest friends. Her own two closest friends. The rabbi and his wife. Six aunts and uncles. Then her mother's hairdresser of twenty years, who Sarah almost did not call because it felt presumptuous — and who gave $360 and later became her most active peer fundraiser in stage 3.

Total stage 1: nineteen donors, $18,700, eight days. No public post yet.

COMMON MISTAKES

- **Posting publicly before completing the inner ring.** When you post on social, you remove the future ability to make a personal ask. People who saw the post and did not give will feel awkward when you reach out individually. Save the public post for stage 4.
- **Skipping the founder gift.** Make it before you call the first person.
- **Asking for "any amount."** Anchoring works. Use a range.
- **Going in cause-order rather than confidence-order.** Lead with the easy yeses to build momentum, then handle the less predictable asks once you are warm.

> **WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK**
>
> Write the list of your inner ring on paper. Order it by confidence. Make your own gift. Make the first three calls.

PART 04

Stage 2: The Warm Network (Donors 21–60)

Once your inner ring is complete, you move outward — but only one degree.

The warm network is the group of people who would take your call but would not have given without being asked. Cousins you see at family gatherings. Friends from a former neighborhood. Colleagues from a past job. People whose weddings you went to but who would not be on your list of ten closest. The shul you attend but are not central to. The parent group at your kids' school.

Most operators have somewhere between sixty and two hundred people in this category. Some have many more. You do not need to reach all of them in stage 2 — you need forty to give.

THE MEDIUM: TEXT OR EMAIL, NEVER PHONE, NEVER MASS

Stage 2 has two rules of medium.

First: 1:1 personalized text or email, never phone. Phone is too high-friction for the size of the ask and the depth of the relationship. People will not pick up, and a missed call from a non-immediate-circle contact reads as work, not warmth. A text or email lets them respond on their own time, when the ask is most likely to land.

Second: never mass. This is the rule that gets broken most often, and it is the single largest reason fundraisers stall in the 30s.

The temptation is real. You have momentum and forty more donors to reach. A group text to twenty people takes ten minutes; twenty individual texts take an hour. Why not the group text?

Because the group text destroys the personal feel that is doing all the work at this stage. The moment a donor realizes the same message went to nineteen other people, the gift becomes optional. In our experience, the response rate to a personal text in this group is 50%–70%. The response rate to a group message in the same group is 5%–15%.

A group text saves you fifty minutes and costs you thirty donors. It is not worth it.

THE 1:1 WARM CONTACT TEMPLATE

This is the workhorse template of the first 100. Copy, personalize, send.

> Hey [NAME] — hope you're well. Quick note because I'm reaching out personally to a small group of people before this goes wider:
>
> [OPENING — one sentence connecting to the relationship. NOT generic. Examples: "I was thinking about you last week when [X] happened" / "It's been a while since [shared memory] — hope [their family member] is doing well" / "Saw [mutual contact] last week, who told me [Y]"]
>
> We're starting a fund for [CAUSE in one specific sentence]. I'm putting in $[FOUNDER AMOUNT] and [STAGE 1 PROOF — e.g., "my family and closest friends have already brought us to $X"]. I'd love for you to be part of the next group in — $36 or $180 or whatever feels right. If now isn't the time, just say so and no worries at all.
>
> The page is here: [LINK]
>
> [CLOSING — short, personal, NOT a generic sign-off]

Two example variants:

Variant A — Filipino diaspora family fund (a sister's medical care back home)

> Hey Mark — hope you're well. Quick note because I'm reaching out personally to a small group of people before this goes wider:
>
> It's been a long time since we worked together at [company], but I saw on LinkedIn you're still in the Bay Area — hope the kids are doing well.
>
> You may remember my sister Jeneca, who lives back home in Cebu. She's been diagnosed with [condition] and the treatment costs are going to run about $40K over the next six months. My family is raising it through a fund that makes the gifts tax-deductible here in the US. I've put in $1,000 myself and a few cousins have already brought us to $6,200.
>
> I'd love for you to be part of the next group in — $36, $180, $500, whatever feels right. If now isn't the time, just say so and no worries at all.
>
> The page is here: [LINK]
>
> Hope to see you in person sometime soon.

Variant B — Religious institution capital campaign

> Hey Daniel — hope you and the family are well.
>
> I was thinking about you last week when we were planning the expansion at [shul name] — the kids' learning program has grown to the point where the current space genuinely doesn't fit anymore. You were one of the first people I thought of for this.
>
> We're raising $250K to add the addition. The first $40K is already in from board members and immediate families. I'd love for you to be part of the next group — anywhere from $360 to $1,800 would mean a lot, and we have a few people in for $5,000 if that's the range you're thinking.
>
> Page is here: [LINK]
>
> Would be great to catch up in person regardless — let me know if you'll be in town next month.

Notice what these do that a group text cannot:

- The opener references something real about the relationship. This single sentence is what makes the message land.
- The stage-1 proof point gives the donor permission to take this seriously without feeling like they are the first.
- The range honors autonomy without leaving the donor without an anchor.
- The exit clause protects the relationship.
- The closing is personal, not a sign-off.

The Sprint Package tools inside BrightLeaf Giving are designed to make personalized 1:1 outreach feasible at the scale of 60 donors — they generate first-draft personalized text for each contact on your list, which you then edit and send yourself. The personal touch still has to come from you. The drafting can be assisted.

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR WARM NETWORK WITHOUT OVERTHINKING IT

The most common stage-2 mistake is overthinking the list. Operators stare at their phone contacts, their LinkedIn connections, their wedding guest list, and freeze.

A faster approach. In a single 30-minute sitting, write down everyone who:

- Came to a major life event (wedding, bar mitzvah, funeral, baby naming).
- Was in any group chat with you in the last year that you did not start.
- Replied to your last social post that touched on family or community.
- You have eaten a meal with in the last twelve months who is not in your inner ring.
- Sent you a holiday or new-year message in the last twelve months.

That list will typically be sixty to two hundred names. You do not need all of them. You need forty to give. Sort by confidence and start at the top.

THE LADDER OF ASKS: $36 DEFAULT, WITH TWO STRATEGIC EXCEPTIONS

For most stage-2 donors, the right default ask is $36. (Communities vary — in some the natural cultural default is $25, $50, or $100. Use the default that matches your community.)

The default works because it is meaningful enough that the donor takes the ask seriously, small enough that there is essentially no objection, and divisible — $72, $180, $360 are clean multiples, which makes the ladder for higher-capacity donors obvious.

> ### THE TWO STRATEGIC EXCEPTIONS
>
> **Higher-capacity donors.** If you know a stage-2 donor has capacity for a larger gift — they have given $500+ to other causes, they have built businesses, they have given generously at events — anchor higher. $180, $360, $1,000 as the range.
>
> **Lower-capacity donors who would be hurt not to be asked.** Students, recent immigrants, people in early career. Lower the default to $18 or $25 so the gift is achievable. Their participation matters; the dollar amount does not.
>
> **Why $36, briefly**
>
> The number has a quiet cultural resonance in Jewish giving that makes it the default amount most operators encounter without it ever being explained. Use it because it is the cultural default. Outside Jewish communities, use whatever amount holds that same "of course, that's the right starter gift" energy in your context.

ONE SPECIFIC EXAMPLE

Maria, who lives in San Francisco, started a fund for her sister Jeneca's medical treatment in Cebu. After completing her inner ring at $14,000 across fifteen donors, she moved to stage 2 with a list of seventy-three names — former coworkers, college friends, parents from her kids' school, people from her old neighborhood.

She sent twelve personalized texts a day for six days. By the end, she had sent seventy-two messages and received forty-three gifts — $11,200 total, average $260, range $36 to $1,800. Zero group messages, zero public posts. Response rate ~60%, which she credited to the fact that every message named something specific about how she and the recipient knew each other.

COMMON MISTAKES

- **Sending a mass blast.** The fastest way to destroy stage 2. Worth the extra hour to send individual messages.
- **Not personalizing the opener.** "Hi! Hope you're doing well!" gets ignored. "I was thinking about you last week when..." gets read.
- **Asking too small.** $18 from a person who would have given $360 leaves the gift on the table and trains your fund to anchor low.
- **Asking too big.** $500 from a person who can comfortably give $36 produces no gift and quiet embarrassment on both sides.
- **Not including the stage-1 proof point.** Donors at this stage want to know they are not the first.
- **No exit clause.** Without "if now isn't the time, just say so," donors who cannot give now will ghost — and you lose the relationship.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

Write the warm-network list. Send the first ten messages. Track responses in a spreadsheet so you know who has not yet replied.

PART 05

Stage 3: Peer-Powered Expansion (Donors 61–85)

Stage 3 is the stage almost nobody runs deliberately, and it decides whether you grind to 100 or get there in a sprint.

After stages 1 and 2 you have 55–65 donors and have personally reached the limit of your direct network. Most operators at this point default to public posting — and they stall. Public posting is stage 4, not stage 3, and skipping the in-between step is the most common reason a fund tops out at 65 donors and never reaches 100.

The in-between step is this: **your warm-network donors recruit their own networks.**

WHY WARM-NETWORK DONORS ARE THE BEST PEER-FUNDRAISER CANDIDATES

Inner-ring donors are usually too close to the cause to make good peer fundraisers — their networks already overlap heavily with yours. They will give and they will offer to help, but the help mostly reaches people you already reached.

Warm-network donors are different. They are one degree out, which means their networks are one degree further out from yours. When a warm-network donor reaches out to her own warm network on your behalf, she is reaching people you have no path to. That is where stage-3 donors come from: friends of friends, colleagues of colleagues, cousins of cousins.

In our experience, each activated peer fundraiser brings in four to seven donors from outside your network. Five peer fundraisers bring in roughly twenty-five new donors. That is the stage 3 math, and it is why this stage is the secret weapon of the first 100.

> **THE PEER-FUNDRAISER MATH**
>
> 5 peer fundraisers × ~5 new donors each = ~25 donors.
>
> That is enough to take you from 60 to 85 — the entirety of stage 3.
>
> You do not need ten or twenty peer fundraisers. You need five who will follow through.

THE PEER-FUNDRAISER ACTIVATION SCRIPT

Not every warm-network donor will be a good peer fundraiser. You are looking for the five to ten people who gave at stage 2, whose response felt warm rather than dutiful, and whose networks overlap with yours but extend beyond it.

Reach out individually — by text or quick phone call. The script:

> Hey [NAME] — quick thing.
>
> Thank you again for being one of the first people in on the fund. It meant a lot, and we're now at [X donors] and $[Y] — which is genuinely past where I thought we'd be at this point.
>
> Here's the favor I want to ask. We're trying to get to 100 donors by [DATE]. The next 30 are going to come from people I don't directly know — friends of friends. I don't have a way to reach those people, but you do.
>
> Would you be willing to send a short message to 5–10 people in your circle who might want to be part of this? I have a template ready to go — you'd literally just personalize the first line and send it. Takes about 15 minutes.
>
> If you're up for it, I'll send you the template. If now isn't a good week, totally fine, no pressure.

What this script does:

- Recognizes their earlier gift first. Recognition before ask.
- Names a specific, time-bound goal. Vague goals do not motivate; specific deadlines do.
- Makes the ask small and concrete. "5 to 10 people, 15 minutes" is achievable. "Help me fundraise" is not.
- Provides the heavy lifting (the template). You are not asking them to write something — you are asking them to send something.
- Offers a clean exit.

THE 3-SENTENCE TEMPLATE THE PEER FUNDRAISER SENDS

The template you give the peer fundraiser to send out should be short. Three sentences, plus personalization. Anything longer and they will not send it; anything more elaborate and the recipients will smell the campaign mechanic.

> Hey [THEIR PERSONALIZATION] — quick one.
>
> A friend of mine, [YOUR NAME], is running a fund for [CAUSE in one sentence]. I gave myself and I'm asking a handful of people in my circle who I thought might want to be part of it — $36 or $180 or whatever's right for you, totally up to you.
>
> Page is here: [LINK]

That is the entire template. The peer fundraiser fills in the first line per recipient, sends, and is done.

Notice what is NOT in the template:

- No long explanation of the cause. The donor will get that from the page.
- No emotional appeal. The peer fundraiser's own willingness to give IS the emotional appeal.
- No deadline pressure on the recipient.

- No founder bio. The recipient is giving because the peer fundraiser asked, not because of you.

ONE SPECIFIC EXAMPLE

A community shul running a $250K capital campaign activated five peer fundraisers from its stage-2 donor pool: a board member's wife, a parent of a child in the learning program, two former congregants who had moved away, and a young professional who had grown up in the shul.

Each sent five to twelve messages. The board member's wife brought in seven donors at $400 average. The parent brought in four at $180 average. The two former congregants brought in five and three. The young professional brought in six at $50 average — younger network, smaller gifts, highest participation.

Total stage 3: twenty-five donors. The shul's reach now extended into four cities where the operators had no prior contacts.

WHY PEER FUNDRAISERS WORK AND DIRECT EXTENSION DOES NOT

It is tempting to think you can skip stage 3 by getting your warm-network donors to introduce you to their friends. "Can you connect me with X?" instead of "can you send X this message?"

The intro-request structure mostly does not work for fundraising. It is high-friction (the intro is multi-step), it puts the warm-network donor in an uncomfortable middleman role, and it makes the new contact feel sold to from the first interaction.

The peer-fundraiser structure works because the warm-network donor is not introducing you — she is asking on your behalf, with her own credibility doing the work. The new donor responds to her, not to you. The gift happens because of the trust between the peer fundraiser and her network — precisely the trust you do not have access to directly.

COMMON MISTAKES

- **Skipping stage 3 entirely** and going straight from stage 2 to public posting. The single largest reason funds stall in the 60s.
- **Asking too many peer fundraisers.** Five committed is better than twenty half-committed. Quality of follow-through beats quantity.
- **Asking the wrong donors.** Big inner-ring donors are not your peer fundraisers; their networks overlap too heavily with yours.
- **Sending the peer fundraiser a paragraph-long template.** They will not send it. Three sentences max.
- **Not making the ask explicit.** "Spread the word" does not produce action. "Send to 5–10 specific people" does.

> **WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK**
>
> From your stage-2 donor list, identify the five warm-network donors most likely to follow through as peer fundraisers. Send them the activation script. Wait for replies.

PART 06

Stage 4: The Public Campaign (Donors 86–100)

By the time you reach stage 4, you have eighty-five donors and somewhere between $25,000 and $80,000 raised, depending on the cause. You are within reach of 100, and now — only now — you go public.

WHY THIS STAGE COMES LAST, NOT FIRST

Most fundraisers post publicly on day one. They have a launch post ready, a graphic prepared, a hashtag picked out. By day two the entire social network knows about it.

This is backwards. A public post made before stages 1–3 are complete kills your ability to make personal asks: anyone who saw the post and did not give now exists in a state of social ambiguity with you, and a personal ask later feels like pressure. Whereas a public post made after stages 1–3 arrives with social proof: "we are at 85 donors and $42,000 raised, looking for the last 15 to take us to 100."

The same post, with the same words, performs ten times better in stage 4 than in stage 1.

WHAT PUBLIC CAMPAIGN LOOKS LIKE AT THIS STAGE

The stage-4 public push includes some or all of the following:

- **A primary launch post on the platforms where the operator has the most presence.** Usually one or two: Facebook for older audiences, Instagram for younger, WhatsApp status, LinkedIn, or a community email list.
- **A short video or photo asset.** Not produced — taken on a phone. Authenticity matters more than production. The most effective stage-4 video is a 45-second selfie of the operator describing the cause, ending with the specific number ("we are at 85 donors and looking for the last 15").
- **A group email to broader community lists** (the shul, the school, the cultural organization, the alumni list), sent through the natural channel rather than as a "campaign email."
- **A specific deadline.** Stage 4 is the only stage in this playbook where you use deadline pressure publicly — and you only use it because it is true. "We are closing the campaign at 100 donors" or "by [date]" creates the closing energy that converts the last fifteen.

> **MATCH DONOR TIMING**
>
> A match donor is a single donor (or small group) who commits a large gift on the condition that other donors give. The textbook version: "for every dollar donated in the next 72 hours, I will match it up to $10,000."
>
> Match donors are most often used at the launch of a campaign. They are most effective at the end.
>
> At launch, you have not yet built the social proof for the match to motivate giving — it becomes a marketing claim, and donors discount it. At the end of the campaign, with 85 donors already in and a public deadline running, the match converts hesitant prospects from "I'll give next month" to "I should give this week." The same matching dollars produce 2–3x the conversion at the end as at the start.
>
> Identify the match donor in stage 1 or stage 2 — usually a large inner-ring donor or a high-capacity warm-network donor. Hold their gift for stage 4. Announce at the start of the public campaign, with a clear deadline.

THE CLOSING-WEEK SPRINT

The last seven to ten days — the move from 85 to 100 — is its own micro-sprint:

- **Day 1 (post-stage 3):** Primary public launch post. Match announcement. Specific deadline.
- **Days 2–4:** Daily updates on progress. "We are at 89. Eleven to go." Each update mentions a different donor or a different angle. No update repeats the same message.
- **Day 5:** A second push — different angle, different platform. Peer fundraisers can do one more round of asks ("we are five away — would you put one more person on the page?").
- **Days 6–7:** Daily countdown. "Three donors to 100." "Two donors to 100." In our experience the last 5–10 donors come in faster than any other batch in the campaign.

The Sprint Package inside BrightLeaf Giving handles the operational side of this stage — match-donor mechanics, public donor wall, real-time donor count display, social posts that update automatically. The mechanics are mechanical; the operator's job in stage 4 is to be present and to tell the story, not to manage the dashboard.

ONE SPECIFIC EXAMPLE

A neighborhood meals program in a non-religious community center was at 84 donors and $19,800 after completing stages 1–3 over twenty days. The operator asked a local business owner (who had given $1,000 in stage 2) to convert her gift into a $5,000 match over the next ten days. She agreed.

The campaign went public on day 21 with a single Facebook post: photo of the kitchen, 60-word description, mention of the match, deadline of day 30. By day 25 they were at 95 donors. A 30-second selfie on day 27 ("we have five to go") closed the gap; they hit 100 on day 28. Total raised: $34,000. The match fully triggered. The program collected more new email subscribers in those ten days than in the previous two years.

COMMON MISTAKES

- **Spreading the public push too thin.** Two platforms with daily updates beats six platforms with weekly updates.
- **No deadline.** "We are raising money for X" without an end date converts almost nobody. A specific date with a specific donor count creates the final-week energy that closes campaigns.

- **Match donor announced too early.** Save the match for stage 4.
- **Treating the closing days passively.** The last seven days require active operator presence — daily updates, daily texts to stragglers, daily acknowledgments of new donors. This is the most concentrated work of the entire campaign.

> **WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK**
>
> If you are approaching stage 4: write the launch post. Identify the match donor and confirm their commitment. Set the specific date.

PART 07

The 21-Day Execution Timeline

The four stages map to a 21-day sprint. Aggressive but achievable for an operator who can give 1–2 hours a day during the first three weeks. If you have less time available, lengthen each stage proportionally rather than skipping steps.

DAYS 1–5: INNER RING

- **Day 1.** Make your founder gift. Write the inner ring list. Sort by confidence. Make the first three calls.
- **Days 2–4.** Five to seven calls each day. Send polite follow-up texts to anyone who said "I'll get back to you."
- **Day 5.** Send thank-you messages to all stage-1 donors. Confirm the page reflects the $X raised. **Do not post publicly yet.**

Target by end of day 5: ~20 donors.

DAYS 6–12: WARM NETWORK

- **Day 6.** Write the warm-network list. Sort by relationship strength and likely response. Draft three personalized openers.
- **Days 7–9.** Send 10–15 personalized messages each day. Reply to incoming gifts personally.
- **Days 10–11.** Catch up on the long-tail of the list. Send personalized follow-ups to non-responders. Identify your top peer-fundraiser candidates from the responses so far.
- **Day 12.** Pause. Take stock. Update the page. Send a quick personal thank-you to stage-1 and stage-2 donors who feel like the heart of the campaign.

Target by end of day 12: ~60 donors total.

DAYS 13–17: PEER FUNDRAISER ACTIVATION

- **Day 13.** Reach out to your top five peer-fundraiser candidates with the activation script. Send the template to those who say yes.
- **Days 14–16.** Peer fundraisers do their outreach. You are mostly hands-off — respond to incoming gifts and check in briefly with peer fundraisers ("how is it going? Anything I can help with?").
- **Day 17.** Wrap stage 3. Send a personal thank-you to each peer fundraiser regardless of how many gifts they generated. This matters for the relationship and for next year.

Target by end of day 17: ~85 donors total.

DAYS 18–21: PUBLIC CAMPAIGN

- **Day 18.** Primary public launch post across one or two platforms. Match donor announcement. Specific deadline of day 21 (or extend to day 28 if you have less daily availability).
- **Days 19–20.** Daily updates. Acknowledge specific donors by first name and amount (with permission). Different angle each day — story about the cause, video selfie, peer-fundraiser story.
- **Day 21.** Closing day. Final push. Countdown by donor count. Match donor's gift triggers if the campaign hits its number.

Target by end of day 21: **100 donors.**

> **WHAT TO DO IF YOU FALL BEHIND SCHEDULE**
>
> The 21-day timeline is a target, not a deadline. Most campaigns slip a few days, especially if a personal emergency, holiday, or work crunch lands during the campaign.
>
> Three rules when you fall behind:
>
> 1. **Do not compress stages by skipping them.** A 28-day timeline with all four stages done well beats a 21-day timeline that skipped stage 3.
> 2. **Do not abandon the sequence.** Even at day 12 with only 12 donors, do not pivot to public posting. Finish stage 1.
> 3. **Adjust the public deadline if you set one publicly.** If your launch post said "by Friday" and you are not going to make it, say so directly — "we are extending by a week, we are at 92 and need 8 more." Donors respond well to honesty. They respond poorly to silent deadline-slips.

PART 08

What to Do When You Get to 100

Reaching 100 donors is the end of one campaign and the start of a different kind of work. The first 100 was about momentum and proof. What comes next — the recurring base, the stewardship work, the second campaign — is about durability.

THE 90-DAY RECURRING DONOR WINDOW

Of your first 100 donors, somewhere between 10 and 25 will convert to recurring giving if you ask them — and the window in which that conversion is easiest is the first 90 days after their initial gift. After 90 days the conversion rate drops sharply. While the cause and the gift are recent in the donor's memory, opting into a $36-a-month recurring contribution feels like an extension of what they already did. After 90 days, it feels like a new decision.

The recurring-donor ask is its own playbook. The short version: a personal note (not a campaign email) to each stage-1 and stage-2 donor between days 30 and 75 after their gift, suggesting recurring participation at an amount that makes sense for them.

STEWARDSHIP: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "FUNDRAISED" AND "FUNDRAISING ORGANIZATION"

A fund that raises its first $30,000 and goes quiet is not a fundraising organization. It is a campaign that ended. Donors will not be back next year.

A fund that becomes an organization that fundraises does three things in the months after the first 100:

1. **Communicates outcomes.** Within 60–90 days of the campaign closing, donors see what their gift did. Specific. Photo. Number. Story. Not a generic year-end letter.
2. **Maintains light touch year-round.** One short update every 2–3 months. Not a newsletter. Just presence.
3. **Builds the next ask with the same sequence.** When you launch your second campaign, you start again with inner ring, then warm network. The list has grown — next year's stage-2 list includes everyone who gave in stage 4 this year — but the order does not change.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

BrightLeaf Giving operators have access to recurring-donor conversion templates, stewardship calendars, and second-campaign playbooks inside their platform. Each is a separate guide. This playbook stops at 100 because the first 100 is its own discrete problem.

> **WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK**
>
> If you are at 100: take a breath. Send personal thank-yous to your peer fundraisers and your match donor before anything else. The next 24 months of your fund's growth runs on the relationships you built in the last three weeks.

PART 09

Appendix: Templates

All templates are copy-paste ready. Personalize the bracketed sections.

A. INNER RING 5-SENTENCE ASK (VARIANT 1 — MEMORIAL FUND)

> Hey — I wanted to call you before this goes out wider because you knew [PERSON] as well as anyone. We are starting a fund in their name to support [SPECIFIC CAUSE]. I am putting in the first $[FOUNDER AMOUNT] and serving on the committee that will run it. I would love for you to be one of the first ten people in — anywhere from $[LOW] to $[HIGH] would mean a lot. If this is not the right month, just say so and I will check back later.

B. INNER RING 5-SENTENCE ASK (VARIANT 2 — IMMEDIATE NEED)

> I am calling you specifically before I post anything publicly, because you have been a real friend to our family. As you know, [SPECIFIC SITUATION] — we are starting a fund to cover the next [TIMEFRAME]. I am putting in $[FOUNDER AMOUNT] myself and [STAGE-1 PROOF if applicable]. I would love for you to be in the first group of people we go to — $[LOW] or $[MID] or whatever feels right for you. If now is not the right time, just tell me and we will keep it between us.

C. WARM NETWORK 1:1 (VARIANT 1 — DIASPORA FAMILY FUND)

> Hey [NAME] — hope you're well. Quick note because I'm reaching out personally to a small group of people before this goes wider:
>
> [OPENING — one specific sentence about the relationship]
>
> [CAUSE in one sentence — concrete, not abstract]. I've put in $[FOUNDER AMOUNT] and [STAGE-1 PROOF — we're at $X from family and close friends].
>
> I'd love for you to be part of the next group in — $36, $180, $500, whatever feels right. If now isn't the time, just say so and no worries at all.
>
> The page is here: [LINK]
>
> [Personal closing — NOT a generic sign-off]

D. WARM NETWORK 1:1 (VARIANT 2 — CAPITAL CAMPAIGN)

> Hey [NAME] — hope you and the family are well.
>
> [OPENING — one specific sentence connecting to the relationship]
>
> We're raising $[GOAL] to [SPECIFIC USE]. The first $[STAGE-1 TOTAL] is already in from board members and immediate families. I'd love for you to be part of the next group — anywhere from $[LOW] to $[MID] would mean a lot, and we have a few people in at $[HIGH] if that's the range you're thinking.
>
> Page is here: [LINK]
>
> [Personal closing]

E. PEER FUNDRAISER ACTIVATION SCRIPT

> Hey [NAME] — quick thing.
>
> Thank you again for being one of the first people in on the fund. It meant a lot, and we're now at [X donors] and $[Y] — which is genuinely past where I thought we'd be at this point.
>
> Here's the favor I want to ask. We're trying to get to 100 donors by [DATE]. The next 30 are going to come from people I don't directly know — friends of friends. I don't have a way to reach those people, but you do.
>
> Would you be willing to send a short message to 5–10 people in your circle who might want to be part of this? I have a template ready to go — you'd literally just personalize the first line and send it. Takes about 15 minutes.
>
> If you're up for it, I'll send you the template. If now isn't a good week, totally fine, no pressure.

F. PEER FUNDRAISER'S OUTREACH TEMPLATE (3-SENTENCE)

> Hey [PERSONALIZATION] — quick one.
>
> A friend of mine, [OPERATOR NAME], is running a fund for [CAUSE in one sentence]. I gave myself and I'm asking a handful of people in my circle who I thought might want to be part of it — $36 or $180 or whatever's right for you, totally up to you.
>
> Page is here: [LINK]

G. MATCH DONOR PITCH (4-SENTENCE)

> Hey [NAME] — quick ask that's different from the gift you already made.
>
> We're heading into the final push of the campaign and I want to set up a match — meaning every new donor's gift gets matched, up to a cap, over a specific time window. You're the person I trust most to anchor that match, and the impact is roughly 2–3x the same dollar amount given at the start of the campaign.
>
> Would you be open to converting (or adding to) your gift as a match of up to $[AMOUNT], with a [TIMEFRAME] window?
>
> Happy to walk through how it works — takes about ten minutes.

A note on this playbook

This playbook reflects what we have seen across community fundraising efforts over the last several years. The sequencing — inner ring, warm network, peer expansion, public campaign — is consistent across causes, communities, and dollar scales. The specific numbers (21 days, 100 donors, $36 default) are starting points; they map closely to the median campaign but every fund has its own shape.

The framework will not save a cause that does not resonate, and it will not replace the operator's personal presence. What it will do is keep the operator from making the most common, most costly sequencing mistakes — and that is most of the battle in the first 100.