

# Thoughts on Donation Solicitation

by  
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It seems that almost every day I receive regular mail and email asking for donations. I'm sure that I am not alone and that many readers also get a lot as well.

I would bet that 99% plus of these letters that come to you are probably unsolicited. This is true in my case.

And it is not just solicitations for donations. Many solicitations are for:

- signing up some service,
- joining some group for political or social reasons,
- physical items such as automobiles, and/or
- offers to buy something, such as your home or car.

The solicitations can come from:

- for profit and non-profit companies,
- for profit and non-profit organizations,
- funding schemes such as Go Fund Me,
- individuals, and/or
- criminals.

## So how did I get on these solicitation lists?

Better known as "mailing lists," solicitation lists are created from many different sources. It doesn't take a lot of time or effort to create these lists. The key component of all mailing lists is contact information. Let's first look at the general mail that is delivered to you by a postal carrier.

### **Postal mail**

The most basic mailing list is the one created by the US Postal Service. The list contains street addresses, city, state and zip codes and is sold to companies, organizations and individuals. Mail that you receive and is generated from this mailing list can easily be identified because it is addressed to Occupant, Resident, or by some other generic name.

The next of mailing list levels are those that have people's names attached to the addresses. This level of mailing list can be generated in multiple ways. The most

common method uses public records to more personalize the mail you receive. Mail that is often sent using this type of list can be identified by looking at the stamp because much of this type of mail is sent as bulk mail. The stamp may have words such as “bulk mail,” “pre-sorted,” “non-profit,” a permit number, and so forth. However this is not always the case, so don’t rely heavily on this approach.

There are three ways that you can stop receiving a lot of the bulk or junk mail that you get.

1. You can contact the customer service department of the company that send you the unwanted mail and ask that your name be removed from their mailing lists.
2. Another approach, and broader approach is to contact the Direct Marketing Association at DMAchoice.org, and choose what mail you want to get. There is a fee for this registration and the registration lasts for 10 years.
3. If you are receiving obscene mail you can request your local Post Office (PS Form 1500) to stop delivering the material to you.

One other approach is to write “Refused” or “Rejected” on the letter or package and give it back to your letter carrier. It may take several refusals before the sender get the message not to send you mail. This approach can work well with a sender who is very cost minded.

Keep in mind, that like the national Do-Not-Call list, the above approaches only work with those companies, organizations, and individuals who abide by them.

### **eMail**

Like Postal Lists, email lists are also easily and cheaply generated. Along with companies and people selling email lists, there are software programs that also generate mailing lists. Many of these software programs take advantage of public records which often contain “private” information that you may not want the general public to know about. For example, it is fairly easy to access property tax record and link those records to other databases in order to get your name, email address, whether or not you are delinquent on your taxes in order to generate a “personalized” email to you. That personalized email could be offering you a loan or other way to pay your taxes.

Email lists are also generated when you sign up to receive information, order online, complete surveys, or when you fill out almost all online forms, including login pages. A major problem with generated lists is that they are often sold to others, and if you “unsubscribe” from one sender, when that sender requests an update to the list, your information is still there.

While you will never be able to stop all unwanted emails (spam), you can reduce the amount you get. There are four basic ways to reduce spam in your inbox.

1. Use the “unsubscribe” link (typically at the bottom of an email) to be removed from the list.
2. Email the sender directly and request that they stop sending you their emails.
3. Redirect unwanted newsletters or promotions to another email folder based on the sender’s email address or subject line.
4. Block the sender (You can unblock them address at any time)
5. Filter messages from senders using key words or phrases. For example, you can trash or forward emails to another folder if the emails contain a specific word/phrase.

There is also mass unsubscribe software that you can download or use online. Among the best are:

**Unroll.me** – A free and efficient unsubscribing tool. This service does collect and sells some of your data. <https://unroll.me/>

**Leave Me Alone** – Has several different programs. <https://leavemealone.app/>

**Unsubscriber by Polymail** – This scanning app is comes when you register for a Polymail account. After the scan is done, you can choose whether a sender stays on your list of subscriptions or not. <https://polymail.io/>

**Clean Email** – Organize and remove email you don’t want. You can sort your messages into four categories. You can unsubscribe the sender, pause a sender, block or unblock them, or keep the newsletter in a separate folder. It works on every email provider, and you can start with 1,000 free unsubscribed.

However, as much as you try, you may not able to unsubscribe from some senders. If this is the case, there is an alternative that you should set up regardless of unwanted emails. What you want to do is to set up several different email accounts. Some email providers allow you to set up several accounts for free.

You will use each account for its own specific purpose. Look at all the emails you get and try to separate them into some sort of category. For example you may have emails from:

- friends and family,
- your bank or other financial organizations,
- specific interest areas, and
- general surfing.

If this is the case, you will want to create at least 4 different email accounts

- johnQ-fam@xyz.com
- johnQ-money@xyz.com
- johnQ-fishing@xyz.com
- johnQ-cars@xyz.com
- johnQ-gen@xyz.com

You can use the same password for each account. Also, you may want to use a system that allows you to forward all accounts to a single unpublished account. If you do this, find out if you reply to an email in the unpublished account, which email address is associated with your reply. You may have to log into the specific account in order to replay to the sender.

### **OK. Now what about those pesky donation requests?**

For the most part, requests for donations come from charitable organizations, but remember there are other groups and individuals requesting donations.

We need to also realize that there are many reasons, both psychological and practical, why people donate.

<b><u>Psychological</u></b>	<b><u>Practical</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narcissism - enhance reputation</li> <li>• Concern or compassion for others</li> <li>• Religious convictions</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Sympathy</li> <li>• Makes you feel good</li> <li>• Strengthens personal values</li> <li>• Introduces importance of generosity to family</li> <li>• Sense of duty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public good</li> <li>• Being part of a social network</li> <li>• Tax benefits</li> <li>• Impacts society</li> <li>• Encourages others to do same</li> <li>• Believe in your mission</li> <li>• Trust in organization</li> </ul>

Most fund raising groups fall into one or more of the following donation groups:

- Animal
- Art and Culture
- Education
- Environmental
- Health
- International NGOs
- Political
- Religious

Considering the number of charities in each group and the limited number of possible donors, combined with technology, we begin to understand why we get so many requests for donations.

Add to our understanding that these organizations hire advertising experts, who use many different techniques to help in soliciting funds.

### Techniques Used

- Multiple mailings per year
- Outright requests
- Get something for donating
- Provide gift with request
- Contests
- Auctions

While there are many ways to handle these requests, the following process is a prudent use of your money and time.

1. Get a cardboard box
2. Put every donation request you receive in the mail into the box
3. Most requests that come in the mail will ask you to select an amount and pay by check or credit card
4. In December, determine the total amount of money you will donate for the year.
5. Pull out the box and separate the requests according to organization.
6. Determine which organization(s) you want to donate to and the amount from what you predetermined previously
7. Use the organization's pre-paid postage envelopes if available and mail a check.
8. If there is an organization(s) you do not ever want to donate to, contact them and have your name and address removed from their database.

**Note:** Consider using checks without your name and/or address. This is **legal**, however you will not receive a thank you from the organization.

Also, in this time of heightened criminal activity, you may want to use checks that do not have your address on them, especially if you use them to pay at a cash register. This is a security issue, If you want your name on checks, use your first initial instead of your name.