



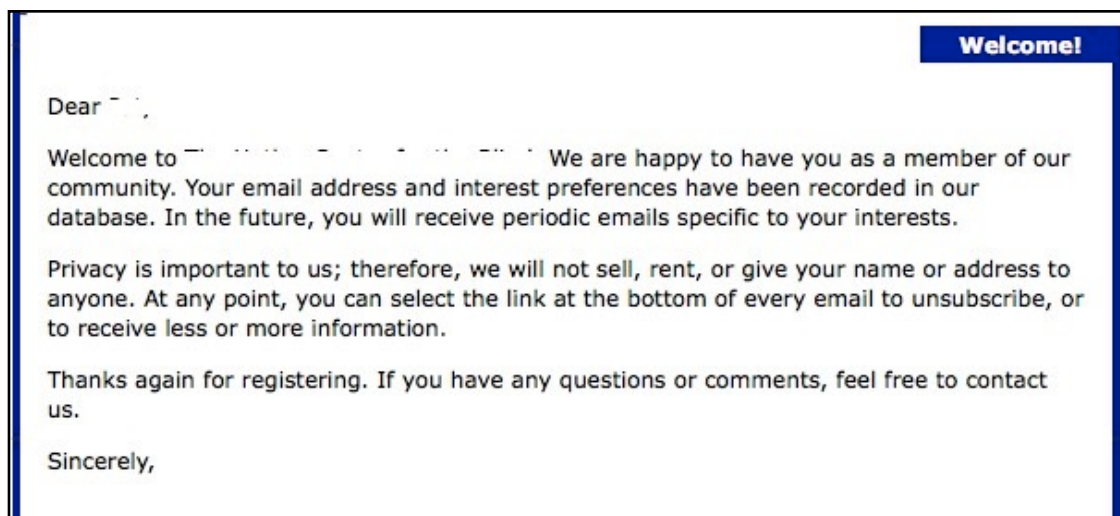
YOUR SECRET WEAPON:
An email auto-responder welcome series

Pamela Grow

Introduction

Let's say a prospective supporter has learned about your organization, visited your website, and been intrigued enough to sign up for your organization's bi-weekly enews. What next?

If you've set things up right, your new subscriber will receive a welcome email. Is this the kind of message that they'll receive?



When you're running a small shop development and marketing department with a staff of one (or less) you can't afford to pass up any opportunities for relationship-building. And your organization's Welcome Message provides the prime opportunity to systematize - *and humanize* - the relationship-building process.

Rather than a one-time welcome message, I'm going to urge you to think outside the box and think in terms of a three to five-part welcome auto-responder series. Let me explain: think of the auto-responder series as a magic wand of electronic communications. You know your success depends on building relationships and

touching prospects multiple times in multiple ways –“dripping” on them until they are ready to give their first gift and then drawing them closer to the core of your work, inspiring to give more regularly. It’s pretty easy to understand the concept, but the work itself can be overwhelming, especially for just one person. An auto-responder series can take some of the drudge work out of communicating with your online prospects.

What is an auto-responder?

An auto-responder is a special type of automated tool provided by your email service provider designed to send prospective donors a series of messages over a period of days, weeks or months. Because the messages are written by you and targeted toward a very specific audience, they read like personal email sent directly from you to a single recipient; and because the messages are sent by your email marketing service, you don’t have to remember who is supposed to get which message when. If you originally subscribed to my five-part free grant-writing course, that’s a prime example of an auto-responder. While there are some similarities between an auto-responder series and your newsletter, there is one big difference: Instead of sending the same message to your whole list at the same time, the auto-responder delivers a sequence of messages to prospective donors over time. Each person gets the first message immediately after she signs up and then gets the rest of the messages sequentially, usually one or two messages a week.

Why an email welcome series?

According to Common Knowledge, a San Francisco online strategy firm specializing in nonprofits, online retailers have discovered that an online customer's affinity is typically "highest for the first 30 days after the visitor opts-in to a retailer's email list." Known as the "honeymoon period," it's characterized by "new subscribers demonstrating higher email open rates, higher click rates, and higher conversion rates." And, it turns out that this same behavior is demonstrated by nonprofit supporters as well.

In direct mail the use of a *Welcome Kit* following a thank you letter has been shown to increase donor engagement and retention -- and the same principles hold for creating your electronic "welcome kit." You can create a three to five part auto-responder *Welcome Kit* specifically designed to inform, engage and inspire your new newsletter signups.

How do I get started?

If you're already using an email marketing service, you should be able to use the same service to deliver your auto-responder welcome messages. If not, setting up an account with a new company is simple and most offer discounted pricing for nonprofits.

You have several options. We'll be talking about the various options in Module Two. iContact, Mail Chimp and Aweber all offer fully-featured auto-responders. Each company's pricing structure is different, focusing on slightly different features; therefore, it's worth exploring several before you decide which one to use.

Constant Contact also offers an auto-responder but it has limited features, so unless you are a die-hard fan, I suggest you try one of the other providers.

Writing your auto-responder welcome series

The goal of your welcome series is to thank, inform, engage and inspire. Your subscriber/prospective donor has already shown an interest by signing up for your list -- it's up to you to increase their interest by providing a sequenced, more in-depth introduction to your organization (and why they should care). Additionally it should lead them, *gradually*, through the process of greater engagement, such as forwarding the email to a friend, "liking" your organization on Facebook, perhaps viewing a video -- even culminating in making that first gift. Your emails should be short, friendly and fairly informal. Schedule your emails over the course of 30 days.

In closing

Whether you decide to attempt an auto-responder welcome series or not, at the very least take advantage of the opportunities your email welcome message affords you. Write a warm welcome -- one that lets your new subscriber know that you appreciate them and you're glad they've opened up their inbox to you.

Examples

Following is an example of an auto-responder welcome series I wrote for a client in 2011.

New welcome message:

EMAIL #1

SUBJ HEADER: Welcome [fname]!

MESSAGE BODY: A special thank you from OKE

Dear [fname],

Welcome to Operation: Kid Equip! [pic of Menachem]

You're part of a special network of friends and neighbors who are committed to the intrinsic possibility within every child!

Over the next five weeks you'll be learning more about our OKE kids. You may be surprised. Some of our kids come from areas in Oakland and Macomb Counties where you'd least expect to find children on the federal free lunch program. Others have never known anything but poverty and lack. As a part of the OKE family, you're an important advocate for all of our kids. You'll also be receiving the bi-weekly OKE SmileAlert.

In the meantime, want to learn more? Visit our blog often and be sure to follow us on Twitter and Facebook! Want to see us in action? Give us a call and set up a time to stop by our warehouse and see OKE in action!

Thanks again for signing up. If you have any questions or comments or, even better yet, if you'd like to schedule a visit to the OKE Teacher's Annex in Troy, let me know.

For the children,

PS: We're happy to have you as a member of our community. Privacy is important to us. We'll never sell, rent, or give your name or address to anyone. At any point, you can select the link at the bottom of every email to unsubscribe, or to receive less or more information.

Email #2:

Subject: It started with 100 backpacks

Delivery: 4 days after Welcome email

Message body:

"Our kids don't lack the desire, motivation or capability to succeed. Many simply lack sufficient supplies. We're passionate about making futures happen."

Hi [fname]:

You rock!

By signing up for the Operation KidEquip SmileAlerts you've shown that you care about the future of Michigan's kids.

You already know it's no secret that our country has taken a nose dive when it comes to educating our kids. We're ranked 14th out of 34 countries for reading skills, 17th for science and a whopping below-average 25th for mathematics.

There's lots of finger-pointing and political posturing going on, but one simple fact remains.

Our kids are suffering.

You can help. Kids can't write without pencils. They can't color without crayons. Can you imagine going to school every day lacking basic supplies?

And did you know that our teachers, already resource-tapped, are regularly spending upwards of \$1500 a year of their own personal money to buy school supplies for their kids?

[fname], together how can we turn this around and help our kids reach their full potential?

Operation Kid Equip was founded with a vision: a community where every child's basic school day needs are met. You can accomplish that vision by helping us provide free school supplies, books, hygiene and food items for local children in need.

Today we've grown from 100 donated backpacks in my garage to opening the Teachers Annex in Troy, a warehouse treasure trove where teachers can shop for their students **for free**.

It goes without saying. When kids' basic needs are met you've removed one more obstacle to success.

One of OKE's supporters said it best:

"I love kids. They are our future and in order to have a future they need education. I have always felt it was important for everyone to have the opportunity to have a good education, but without proper tools how can they learn? So when I heard what Menachem had accomplished from his living room, I knew this was the organization I needed to get involved in. When I did a distribution and saw

the looks on the faces of both children and their parents when receiving their supplies, I was hooked. My heart was totally touched. The excitement of a boy getting his first ever HIS book to keep was contagious.”

Stay tuned. You'll be hearing some very special stories of children whose lives have been directly impacted in inspiring ways.

For the children,

PS: Wondering how you can help? Forward this email to a friend who cares about the future of our children - just like you do!

Email #3: Matthew's story

Delivery: 4 days after email #2

Subject: [fname], Got Milk? Many kids don't

Message body:

Photograph

Dear [fname]:

It breaks your heart. And it's a situation that's seen far too often these days in South-eastern Michigan schools. Little Matthew, just entering the second grade, was mortified. His backpack was leaking and the other students had noticed. What's more his teacher had noticed too and, as she opened his backpack, Matthew was nearly in tears.

What was in the little guy's backpack?

Milk.

You see, Matthew only drinks half of the milk he receives at lunch. He then tries to save the other half for home. There's no milk at home and, some nights, there's no dinner either.

But thanks to Operation: Kid Equip Matthew's teacher was able to visit the well-stocked Teacher's Annex in Troy that evening and pick up a brand new backpack and replacement school supplies, free of charge.

The next morning when Matthew showed up in class with nothing his teacher gently took him aside to give him all the things she had picked up for him at our warehouse. Matthew's teacher was also able to pick up resources for food assistance to share with Matthew's family. Matthew won't need to conserve his lunch anymore.

Stories like Matthew's aren't uncommon. They're the day to day reality of public education in Southeastern Michigan. But, thanks to our generous partners, in-kind gifts and volunteers, since 2007, Operation: Kid Equip is helping kids like Matthew every day. What's more, a full 95% of every cash dollar donated to OKE goes directly back to the program.

OKE is a life-changing program. But we've only just begun. Thank you for joining us on the journey!

For the children,

PS: Are you on Facebook? Spread the love and suggest us to friends!

Email #4: Poverty close to home

Delivery: 5 days after email #3

Subject: [fname], can you believe it exists in our own backyard?

Message body:

Dear [fname]:

One of our awesome volunteer teachers recently wrote:

"I see it every day in my first grade with students asking for pencils to extra snacks to everything in between. It breaks my heart to see what they go through then to come to school where they rely on their food, comfort and education. One student even asked me, "Do you sleep good at night?" Where I responded, "I am usually tired I go right to sleep." The eyes of this little first grader looked right into me and said, "I don't because the bed bugs keep me up all night."

When we think we had a bad day, think of what our students go through daily!"

The criteria for Operation: Kid Equip schools? At least 70% of the students are on the federal government's free or reduced lunch program. Right now we're serving 104

schools in Southeastern Michigan representing 53,000 kids -- and adding new schools regularly.

But if I were to tell you that 40 of our schools were in Oakland County, in what area would you imagine those schools were located? Surprisingly only 10 of the OKE schools in Oakland County are located in Pontiac.

"I've learned more about the home lives of my students in the six months I've been going to the OKE Teacher's Annex than I have over the course of the almost 20 years I've been with my district."

OKE Teacher

The reality is that poverty is touching the lives of far too many these days - including your own neighbors.

Thank you for being part of the solution.

For the children,

PS: Want to help? Operation: Kid Equip is always on the lookout for more supplies. Crayons, notebooks, rulers, pencils - it's easy to donate! Link

Email #5: Becky's story

Delivery: 5 days after email #3

Subject: [fname], Becky's future is looking a whole lot brighter!

Message body:

Photograph

Dear [fname]:

Every child should have someone who believes in their dreams. You can be that person.

[picture of Becky]

Becky's a second grader from (location). She's also dreamer and a reader and she can never get enough books. Sometimes she even gets in trouble for keeping her nose in a book while the teacher is trying to explain a lesson.

You've probably known a kid like Becky. Maybe *you* were a kid like Becky.

One of Becky's biggest dreams is to start her very own home library. She told us that when she's done with the books, she's going to let her brother read them, too.

But, like all too many families these days, Becky's mom is spending all of their limited income on housing, food, bare necessities and keeping gas in the car to get to work. There isn't any money in Becky's house for books. Becky has never been to a Borders, and by the time her mother gets home from work, the libraries are closed.

Then Operation: Kid Equip delivered hundreds of books to Becky's school.

Becky didn't receive one, two or three books....she received five books! Becky's excitement and smile reached across her universe. She especially loved the book on horses because she wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up.

Her world was changed with books! Books that said to Becky, "you are loved & valued and I believe in your dreams."

Thanks for being a part of OKE and keeping Becky's dreams alive and making her smile.

For the children,

PS: You're going to love watching kids' eyes light up when they get their new books!
Link

Email #6: Introduction of Backpackalooza

Delivery: 3 days after email #5

Subject: [fname], would you like to be a hero?

Message body:

You're amazing! Thanks for everything that you've done on behalf of Operation: Kid Equip over the past weeks.

Want to make even more of a difference in ensuring that our kids have the school supplies needed throughout the school year?

For as little as \$10 you can be a hero by making a gift to Backpackalooza([link](#))!

Your sponsored backpack will have a retail value greater than \$30 and will include pencils, crayons, paper, glue, scissors, new books and hygiene items.

As an added bonus, you'll receive a special e-mail to join us for an exciting event on August 20th where you will be able to give your backpack(s) directly to a local child in need.

But the best reward of all is knowing how you're helping to build a brighter future for the kids of Southeastern Michigan.

On behalf of the teachers, volunteers and, most of all our kids, thank you.

For the children,

PS: By spreading your support over several months, you'll be making an even greater impact.

And, on the following pages, you'll find general samples of nonprofit welcome email messages:

KaBOOM! DIY Project Planner

Thank you very much for joining the KaBOOM! Community.

Ready to help KaBOOM! ensure every child has the time and space to play? Let's get started!

Introduce yourself - Tell us more about why you support play or your favorite playground memory Upload a profile picture and show the community your play face.

<http://connect.kaboom.org/service/displayKickPlace.kickAction?u=22548219&as=14937>

Start your playground project - You can build a child's dream playground. With your hard work and our resources, every child can have a great place to play.

<http://projects.kaboom.org/projects/new>

Find and rate your community's playgrounds - Use our map to find, rate, and add the playgrounds, skateparks, and sports fields in your neighborhood.

<http://playspacefinder.kaboom.org>

That's just a few of the ways you can support play on our website. You can also upload videos, make friends, find volunteer projects, learn how to build benches, host a play day, and much more.

Thanks again for joining!

Jason Cooper

Online Community Coordinator

<http://connect.kaboom.org/jcooper>

jcooper@kaboom.org

[202.464.6189](tel:202.464.6189)

KaBOOM!

4455 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite B100

Washington DC, 20008

Thanks!

GovLoop - Social Network for Government

Hey - I just noticed that you became a member of GovLoop over the past week and I'm honored that you chose to spend time with our community.

If you're new to social networks, then I'd encourage you to join this group:

Go! GovLoop for New Members

And if you're really fired up and ready to go, then you'll want to take these **Top 5 Steps to GovLoop Awesomeness**:

1. **Introduce Yourself**. Big Tom Cruise fan - "you have me at hello!"
2. **Find 5 cool people**. Connect with folks from your city or agency.
3. **Join 3 rockin' groups**. Search and enjoy... from over 600 groups.
4. Scour (vs. skewer!) the **Top Members** and **Top Projects**.
5. Master how to use the site features with our **Getting Started Guide!**

Looking forward to seeing you on GovLoop! Let me know if you have any questions.

Keep being awesome,

Steve (i.e. **Mr. GovLoop**)

* **Extra Credit**: Check out the **Community Engagement Guidelines**, too!

Resources

Best of GovLoop -

Top Members, Blogs, Groups and Discussions

How-To Guides -

Learn how to do cool stuff on GovLoop and beyond!

Job

Listings -Several new opportunities are posted each week.

Topics Pages - From aquisition to telework, it's summed up here.

Upcoming

Events -Conferences, training and the latest trending topics.

Welcome

to *Smithsonian Focus*

Dear Kerri

Welcome to the Smithsonian community!

As a *Smithsonian Focus* subscriber, you have access to upcoming exhibitions and events, interactive online activities, games, and much more. Check out the quick links on the right side of this email to:

- [Explore the January issue](#) of *Smithsonian Focus* and discover everything the Smithsonian has to offer.
- Help us bring history, culture, art, and science alive with an [online gift today](#).
- [Test your knowledge](#) of the national treasures found in our remarkable museums.
- Visit the [Smithsonian Store](#) online, where you'll find one-of-a-kind gifts inspired by our collections.

So much awaits you in each issue of *Smithsonian Focus*...it's a special delivery of all the wonder and awe of America's greatest treasures right to your inbox. We look forward to taking the adventure of a lifetime with you.

Very best,

The *Smithsonian Focus* Team

P.S. Before you get started, please take a moment to add focus@smithsonianonline.org to your address book or safe list to ensure you receive our emails.

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Of Focus](#)

The January
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Your
Knowledge

[Piggy Watering Can -
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Store.com

If you received this message from a friend, you can [sign up for Smithsonian Focus](#).

Dear Kerri,

Thank you for joining us online! On behalf of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), I welcome you. If you haven't already, please take a moment to add this message's "from" address (humanesociety@hsus.org) to your email address book or safe sender list.

Because you have shown a commitment to the protection of animals, I'd like to personally ask you to become a monthly supporter. Our monthly donors are the backbone of The HSUS. No matter how small, every monthly pledge adds up and allows us to continue our lifesaving campaigns for animals.

:: Click here to make a monthly gift to The HSUS:
<https://secure.ga3.org/01/sustainingmember?source=qabcai>

I also invite you to stay in touch with me by signing up for my blog, "A Humane Nation." Since launching my blog in May 2007, I've been thrilled with the response and the opportunity to hear from readers.

:: Click here to read and sign up for my blog:
<http://hsus.typepad.com/wayne/>

You can also receive urgent actions and news when you're on the go by signing up for text alerts to your mobile phone.

:: Click here to read more about text alerts and to sign up:
https://community.hsus.org/campaign/text_signup

Thank you again for joining us online! I look forward to sending you action alerts, our exclusive undercover investigation reports, special offers, and much more over the coming months. Your participation and actions will help create meaningful changes for animals.

Sincerely,

Wayne Pacelle
President & CEO
The Humane Society of the United States

P.S. Did you know you can connect with The HSUS on our social networks, too? We also have badges that you can post on your websites to show your support. View all of the ways to connect and all of our badges here (and thank you for spreading the word):
www.humanesociety.org/connect

Thanks for joining us! Now it's time to show you the ropes.

Our online communities are here to help you be successful with every TechSmith product. Connect with us and join the conversation, get tips and training, or even hit the road with us at a TechSmith event.

Learning Center

No matter what product you are using, become an expert with free training videos, articles, guides, and FAQs. These assets will give you all the tips and tricks you need to get started quickly. [Start learning now!](#)

News You Can Use Email Newsletter

Get product updates, the latest news, free tutorials, and choose the information that you want to receive every month. 100% useful info. [Subscribe today!](#)

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Find out about TechSmith behind-the-scenes, discover how other customers use our software, and get even more tips and tricks! [Start reading!](#)

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Become a fan of our products on Facebook! Whether you use [Snagit](#), [Camtasia Studio/Camtasia for Mac](#), or [Jing](#) you'll have a place to let your voice be heard.

Twitter

Yes, we tweet [@TechSmith](#) and [@TechSmithEDU](#). Also, get tips and personal answers to your questions directly from our training team: [@SnagitTips](#), [@CamtasiaTips](#), and [@JingTips](#). Follow us!

Give Feedback

We want to hear from you! Use Get Satisfaction to let us know how you're feeling. [Tell us what you think!](#)

"I really like your super-useful newsletter and all the nice tutorials. I sometimes send it around as an example of a GOOD newsletter."

"Sending a big thanks to @TechSmith for getting me exactly what I needed, exactly when I needed it. Great service via Twitter!"

"Thanks @JingTips! And kudos to TechSmith for being so on top of Social Media. Love the fact that my voice can be heard!"

A little something extra, just for you.

ScreenCast.com

Store your screencasts and captures at our free hosting service, [ScreenCast.com](#). Share your stuff anywhere or save it for later, it's up to you!

Jing

Create instant content with [Jing](#), our free screen capture and recording application that sits on your desktop, always ready and waiting.

TechSmith.com

[Free trials](#) of all of our products are also available. So if you see something you like, you can try it out for 30 days! How sweet is that?