Campaign Best Practices 2026-2027

Workplace giving campaigns offer employees an easy way to give back to the community through donating to United Way of Metro Chicago. United Way makes running an employee giving campaign easy by supporting companies through every step of the process.

Best Practices Overview

1. Ensure the campaign has support from company leadership who can act as an internal champion for United Way to assist with increasing company or employee participation.
2. Campaigns should run for 2-4 weeks and have opportunities for participation in-person and virtually that are reflective of company interests.
3. Set fundraising and participation goals with the guidance of United Way.
4. Identify areas of interest for the company or employees that the campaign should focus on. Examples include:
    a. Access to Basic Needs (food, stable housing, health care, etc.)
    b. Workforce Development
    c. Education
    d. A specific neighborhood or region within United Way's service area
5. Work with United Way to develop a customized communications plan that centers company interests and increases employee support.
6. Maintain 2-3 opportunities for year-round engagement to increase employee visibility of the impact of their gift to United Way.

Key Campaign Influencers

Role	Recommended Number	Responsibilities
Campaign Leader	1-3	Leads and coordinates the campaign with United Way
Executive Sponsor/ Campaign Chair	1-3	Champions the campaign and encourages participation across the organization
Internal Ambassadors	5–15 (dependent on company size)	Promotes the campaign, assists with events, and engages colleagues

Recommended Timeline

Timeline	Action	Owner
1-2 Months Prior	Meet with United Way representative	Company & United Way
1-2 Months Prior	Confirm campaign dates	Company
1 Month Prior	Develop communications plan	Company & United Way
1 Month Prior	Recruit ambassadors	Company
1-2 Weeks Prior	Send announcement email	Company Leadership
Throughout Campaign	Share reminders and impact stories	Company & United Way
After Campaign	Thank employees and share results	Company & United Way

Communications Best Practices

Communication	Timing	Recommended Sender
Campaign Announcement	1-2 weeks before launch	Executive Sponsor or Company Leadership
Automated Reminders	Throughout campaign	United Way
Individual Follow-Up	**Throughout campaign**	United Way, Company Leadership, and Internal Ambassadors
Final Reminder	**Last 1-2 days**	United Way
Thank You Email	**1-3 days after campaign**	Executive Sponsor or Company Leadership
Campaign Results	**Within 1-2 weeks**	Company Leadership

1. **Launch the campaign with an announcement email** from company leadership or the campaign leader to introduce the campaign, share key dates, and encourage participation. The fundraising and participation goals should also be shared to motivate employees.
2. **Maintain momentum with reminder emails** throughout the campaign. The recommended cadence will vary based on campaign length, and emails can be sent by either the company or United Way.

Campaign Length	Before Launch	During Campaign	After Campaign
1 week	1 email	3 reminders	Thank you
2 weeks	1 email	5 reminders	Thank you
4 weeks	1 email	2 reminders/week	Thank you

3. **Keep communications engaging** by incorporating United Way stories, impact videos, volunteer opportunities, and campaign results to demonstrate the impact of employee giving.
4. **Tailor campaign messaging** in partnership with United Way to reflect your company's priorities, employee interests, and campaign goals.
5. **Recognize and steward leadership donors.** United Way provides personalized outreach and engagement opportunities for leadership-level donors ($1,000+) to strengthen donor relationships and encourage continued support.

Year-Round Engagement Best Practices

1. **Host company volunteer events** in partnership with United Way, either on-site or at a community partner agency.
2. **Host lunch and learns** facilitated by United Way.
3. **Participate in and sponsor seasonal initiatives** such as Uniting for the Holidays and April Food Day to engage employees around high-impact community events.
4. **Encourage leadership giving and donor network participation** by introducing eligible employees to Donor Networks **and** Civic Engagement Programs as opportunities for deeper involvement.
5. **Keep United Way visible year-round** by sharing impact stories, newsletters, volunteer opportunities, and community updates through internal communications.

Creative Ideas to Increase Participation

1. **Give the campaign a theme.**
    a. Sports i.e. Superbowl, World Cup, Olympics
    b. Holidays, based on time of year
    c. “Building Stronger Communities” or “Mission Possible”
    d. Spirit Week
2. **Host a special event.**
    a. Employee fair with tickets for purchase
    b. Breakfast for leadership-level donors
    c. Special lunch with tickets for purchase
3. **Host a raffle for employees who donate.**
4. **Host an auction to increase engagement.**
5. **Provide company-wide incentives for employees who donate.**
    a. Extra day off or work-from-home day if they donate at a certain level
    b. Lunch for the team who has the highest level of participation
    c. Denim Day

Campaign Checklist

1-2 Months Before Campaign: Preparation

- ☐ Meet with your United Way representative
- ☐ Confirm campaign dates
- ☐ Determine the campaign theme or focus area
- ☐ Begin prep for custom giving site build and confirm payroll deduction and online giving options
- ☐ Recruit internal ambassadors and executive sponsor(s)
- ☐ Develop a communications plan with United Way
- ☐ Schedule the campaign kickoff and volunteer opportunities (if applicable)
- ☐ Develop employee incentives or recognition plans

1-3 Weeks Before Campaign: Final Preparation

- ☐ Finalize email communications
- ☐ Order campaign materials from United Way
- ☐ Prepare intranet, newsletter, or digital signage content
- ☐ Brief company leadership and ambassadors
- ☐ Send the campaign announcement email

During the Campaign: Keep Employees Engaged

- ☐ Host the campaign kickoff
- ☐ Share United Way impact stories and videos
- ☐ Promote volunteer opportunities
- ☐ Share campaign progress and participation updates (if available)

Campaign Close: Wrap Up

- ☐ Send the final campaign reminder
- ☐ Recognize campaign leaders and ambassadors

After the Campaign: Celebrate & Plan Ahead

- ☐ Share final campaign results and impact (if available)
- ☐ Meet with your United Way representative for a campaign debrief
- ☐ Identify opportunities for year-round engagement

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