



Case Study | November 2018

Social Media Paired with Email Yields 40 Percent More PBS Passport Revenue

Combining Facebook Sponsored Content with Targeted Emails Increase Sustainer Acquisition

Overview

This past spring, PBS Development Services and Carl Bloom Associates (CBA) partnered with eight stations¹ to test the effectiveness of digital promotions around the premiere of the three-part mini-series *Little Women* on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 13, 2018.

At the time of the broadcast premiere, all three episodes were made available to qualifying donors for immediate streaming in PBS Passport. The 19-day pilot tested Facebook sponsored posts in coordination with a five-part email series.

The sponsored posts as well as the email series leveraged email addresses downloaded from the PBS Prospect Portal.² The Prospect Portal list was evenly split into three panels to test which method(s) of digital promotion was most effective: (A) receiving only the sponsored posts, (B) receiving only emails, or (C) receiving both the sponsored posts and emails.

When comparing which panel acquired a greater number of sustainers, the winning panel was (C) sponsored posts and emails. The combination of the sponsored posts and emails brought in 25 percent more gifts than the sponsored posts only. And the combination of the two generated 40 percent more annualized revenue than the sponsored posts alone.



¹ Arizona Public Media, Connecticut Public, Iowa Public TV, KLRU Austin, Nashville Public TV, WEDU Tampa, UNC-TV, Vermont PBS

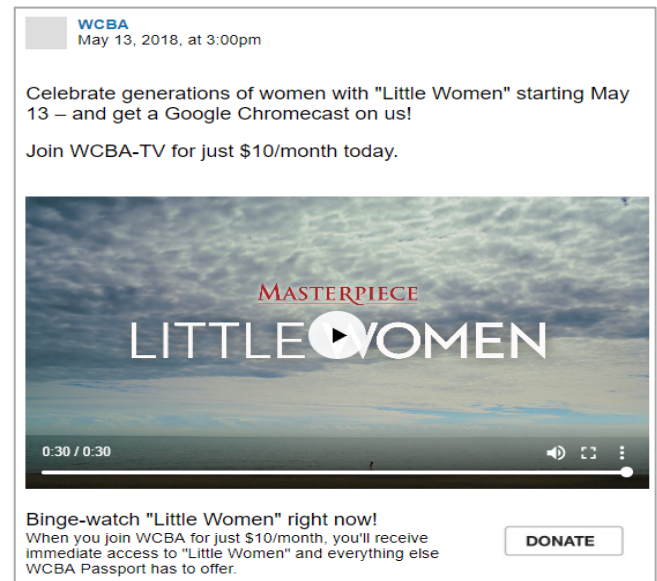
² 201, 275 total email addresses across all eight stations were retrieved from the PBS Prospect Portal.

Situation Analysis

In recent years, member stations have increasingly turned to digital fundraising strategies and PBS Passport to acquire sustainers.

Donor research has shown that younger audiences are more likely to make donations online. They also prefer the ease and convenience that comes with monthly giving. This has resulted in PBS Passport becoming an effective offer to acquire younger, digitally minded members.

However, with the variety of ways to promote PBS Passport, it is unclear which individual or combined digital marketing tactic may be the most effective in acquiring new, younger members through PBS Passport.

A screenshot of a video player interface. At the top left, it says 'WCBA' and 'May 13, 2018, at 3:00pm'. Below that, the text reads: 'Celebrate generations of women with "Little Women" starting May 13 – and get a Google Chromecast on us!' and 'Join WCBA-TV for just \$10/month today.' The video player shows a landscape scene with the text 'MASTERPIECE LITTLE WOMEN' overlaid. The video progress bar shows '0:30 / 0:30'. Below the video player, there is a call to action: 'Binge-watch "Little Women" right now! When you join WCBA for just \$10/month, you'll receive immediate access to "Little Women" and everything else WCBA Passport has to offer.' A 'DONATE' button is located at the bottom right of the video player area.

Objective

The goal of the pilot was to test which fundraising channel – or combination of channels – would be most effective in converting a “warm” list of prospective donors to sustainers.

Strategy

Little Women premiered May 13, 2018 on broadcast. On the same day, all the three episodes were available for viewing in PBS Passport, which ensured qualifying donors could binge the entire series. Stations provided CBA their targeted email files from PBS’ Prospect Portal, with one station supplementing their list with lapsed records for an increased sample size. The Prospect Portal contained email addresses sourced from PBS newsletter sign-ups and account registrations on the PBS website as well as streaming media devices.

CBA ran all email addresses through a validation process to remove “bad” emails and also suppress any active and lapsed member files. CBA then provided the creative for the campaign and directly administered the emails and Facebook sponsored posts on behalf of the participating stations.

Results

Google Analytics, Facebook pixels, Business Manager metrics, unique URLs, and post-campaign matchback reports were used to track donor activity. Because stations’ website and donation forms platforms varied, some stations were able to track at a deeper level and thus provide additional and more accurate metrics and data than others. Matchback reporting attempted to bridge the gap where digital tracking fell short.

Email Open & Click-Through Rates

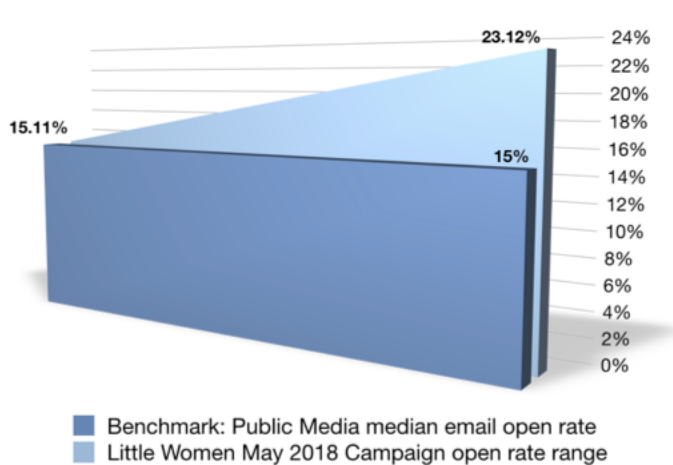


Figure 1: Open Rate

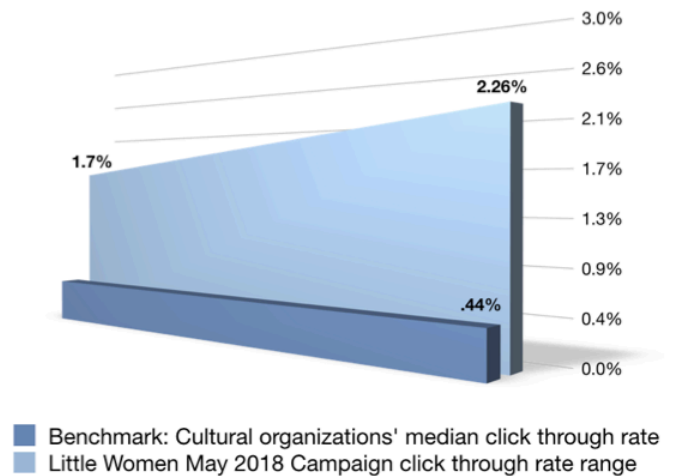


Figure 2: Click Through Rate

Open Rate (see figure 1)

- M&R Benchmark: The public media median email appeal open rate is 15%.
- Overall, stations saw open rates of 15.11-23.12%, with the Facebook + email panel seeing a slightly better open rate than the email only.

Click-Through Rate (see figure 2)

- M&R Benchmark: The public media median email click-through rate is .44%.
- Overall, stations saw click-through rates of 1.7-2.26%, with Facebook + email and email only panels seeing a negligible difference of .02%.

Matchback Results Methodology

Reporting accounts for donations tied directly to Facebook, emails, *Little Women* donation forms, and through matchback analysis. Matchback reporting cross-references the original prospect test files with a post-campaign file of all donations received - no matter what the source (mail, phone, web giving, other, etc.).

CBA knows that many people will see *Little Women* Facebook ads or get an email, but rather than giving through that source, will search for the station (i.e. KLRU) and/or go to the station's general donation form to make their gift. The following analysis acknowledges how many people from the original files contributed to the 19-day test window.

Matchback results account for 12-months of monthly donations – an average number of gifts usually seen for nonprofits on an annual basis. In this post-campaign analysis, CBA found that a number of the prospect email files contained alternate email addresses for existing donors. Results do not include any renewal gifts.

The overall winner was the Facebook and email panel (C).

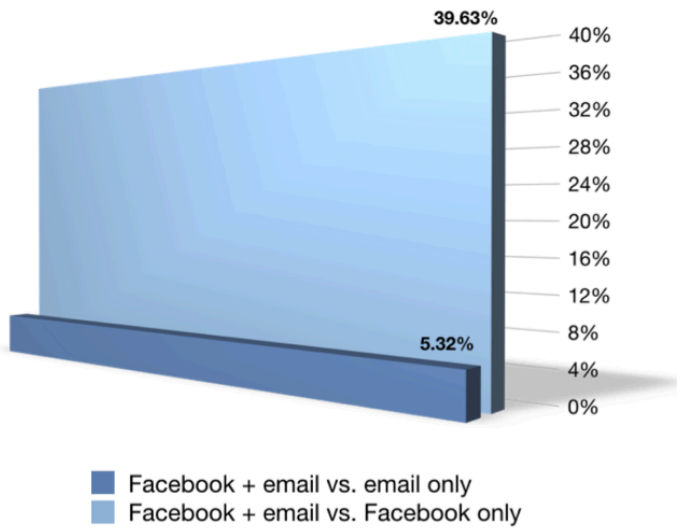


Figure 1 Increase in revenue

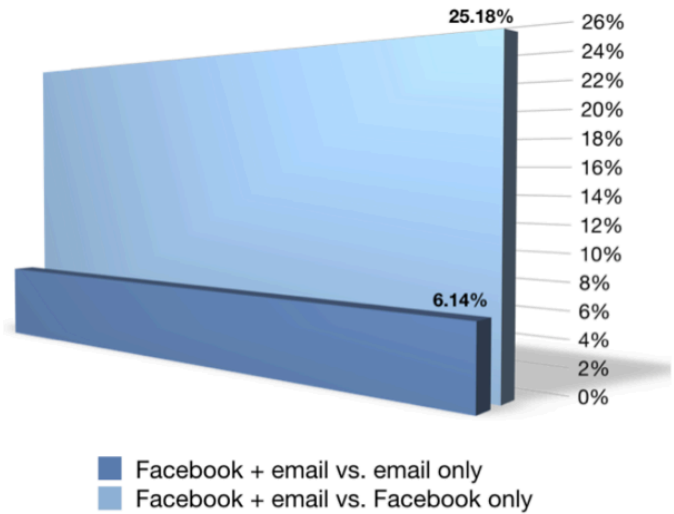


Figure 2 Increase in # of gifts

- Facebook + email # of gifts is 6.14% higher than email only
- Facebook + email # of gifts is **25.18%** higher than Facebook only
- Facebook + email revenue is 5.32% higher than email only
- Facebook + email revenue is **39.63%** higher than Facebook only

Conclusion

The test results indicate that sustainer acquisition increases with a multichannel campaign approach. Facebook sponsored posts and emails together acquired a greater number of new sustainers than either channel on its own. Because of this, and other industry best practices, CBA and PBS recommend multichannel digital campaign strategies over standalone appeals. The use of email addresses from the PBS Prospect Portal was a great way for stations to reach warm, interested prospects acquired through digital channels – and it's recommended that these names are actively used in future digital campaigns. The names in the PBS Prospect Portal list provided their emails because of their interest in PBS content, so offering binge opportunities and a premium is a tactic to boost conversion rates.

To learn more, please contact Christina McPhillips at [Carl Bloom Associates](#) and [Chas Offutt](#) at PBS.