



Triratna Online Fundraising Toolkit

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Introduction



This toolkit has arisen out of a particular set of circumstances - we are in the midst of a global crisis, with Coronavirus affecting all parts of our lives, including our ability to meet together as Sanghas, something which is a particular emphasis and well valued within Triratna. Of course, this also means that many Triratna situations will find themselves in financial need, with much uncertainty about the future of our Buddhist Centres and the ability to keep running without regular donations.

At Future Dharma, we recognise the anxiety this may cause and we want to respond, to offer support, training and resources, so that all of us may pull together through this situation and enable our precious Sanghas to thrive, in the hope that soon we will be meeting together in person.

As a Sangha we have lots which is of value to people at this time. We can help to bring a Dharmic perspective to this particular set of conditions and we also have the tools to help people respond and live their life with meaning and in line with how things are.

What is the need?

- To help centres to keep their finances buoyant during this transition online and into the future - to Survive and Thrive.
- To develop a changed case for support for dana appeals.
- To develop new ways to give online.

Who are the online audience?

Online Buddhist services may be:

- More accessible (pragmatically and psychologically) than a physical centre
- More sought after

This could attract:

- People (demographics) who would not normally come to a centre people i.e. people of colour, other groups
- Newcomers who are interested, but may not have the confidence to visit physically
- Regular Sangha members, who want to stay connected

So a wide spectrum of people - possibly wider than a physical centre would attract!!

There are likely to be different reasons for regular Sangha members and newcomers to attend online events.

Sangha members:

- Existing connection with Dharma/ meditation - they know the benefits
- Existing connection with Sangha - emotional connection to the Sangha, the teachers, the building
- Understanding/ sympathy of the impact from a lack of revenue on the physical Buddhist centre including ongoing costs, mortgage, support or staff costs, etc
- Investment in preventing the centre going under
- Understanding of the benefits of Dharma practice and an altruistic desire to 'pass it on'



Newcomers:

- Joining an online community
- Receiving Dharma and meditation teaching
- Receiving some guidance and support in Dharma practice

Fundraising Principles (good for online and off!)

There are a number of principles here and it will be almost impossible to apply them all in one go! Perhaps just try to be aware of one or two (maybe those you think are more likely to be your working ground) on each appeal you do and add one or two new principles as a focus each time.



Be yourself!

When you are doing a dana appeal, be aware of the potential tension in yourself between the ideal and your actual experience - you may be tired, fed up of using Zoom, feeling overwhelmed or nervous - all of that is fine, if you are aware of it! Of course, you may be feeling connected, at ease, relaxed and that is great too.

The most important thing is that you are authentic, whilst also focussing on your audience and not over-identifying with your own experience.

Connection

You need to be in connection with yourself: your body - feeling grounded and noticing any sensations; your emotions; your thoughts; your views around asking for money.

You also need to be in connection with the audience. It's important that you have rapport with the people from whom you are making an ask. If your dana appeal is following online content, then that rapport is likely to have been built up through your online session. If you can, connect with metta for your audience. Be aware of eye contact - that might sound strange in this online world, but imagine your audience are there in person - look straight into the camera, as you would when talking to someone face to face. Also be aware of your body language and remember that people can see you and your surroundings!

If you can, connect with why you're asking for money and what you're asking for beforehand. Connect with your own sense of appreciation of and enthusiasm for the Dharma, the teachers and the Buddhist Centre.

.....Leave Space.....

It will be tempting to rush through and get your message out there as quickly as possible. This is especially what people do when they are nervous. Pause. Breathe. Look at people. Keep it appropriate of course, you don't want people thinking your internet has cut out while you sit there and look at them all! But do be conscious of leaving space and the speed of your communication.

Spell out the benefit of the feature you are funding

As much as possible, while keeping it succinct and relevant, spell out what difference a donation will make and why that is important. i.e. *"an extra £400 per month would mean we can continue to support (...persons name...) to share the Dharma"*

Match the energy of your audience

Make your message relevant to your audience. If you can, match the tone and energy of your audience, being aware of what has come before the dana appeal, as you would in any communication.

Make an imaginative connection

If you can, use empathy and imagination, before the dana appeal and during it, with your audience and with the beneficiaries (the Sangha and potential future Sangha!) You want a sense of feeling connected with your audience and their potential response and also with the beneficiaries.

Opportunity for Spiritual death and learning

This is a new situation for many people and may be the first time that you have delivered content online, or certainly made an online dana appeal! So it might not go how you want it to. That's fine, see it as an opportunity for Spiritual death and also for learning. Learn from what goes well and what doesn't! Keep an open mind and a learning attitude - the best fundraisers are those willing to learn.

Take risks!

Be willing to step outside your comfort zone and take risks in your communication.

Acknowledge and recover if communication goes wonky

Your appeal doesn't have to be perfect, but be willing to acknowledge if something goes wrong and name that out loud.

Be organised

Prepare beforehand - ensure you know what you're asking and where you are directing people to - i.e. pointing people to correct URL to make donation, etc

Don't be apologetic

It is fine to ask and know that people will respond as and when they are able. When people in the Sangha know of the need and how they are able to help, they have a choice about how to respond - we

don't need to do the work for them! We can feel confident to ask. Look out for more to follow in this area with our video around views and attitudes towards money.

Developing a Case for Support

A Case for Support is what you will base your ask around in a dana appeal. It will differ slightly, depending on the channel you are using for delivery.



A Case for Support, no matter what the length or the means of delivery, needs to include the following:

- Vision
- Problem
- Solution
- Personal ask
- Request that they give now (while they remember and are inspired!)

VISION

The Buddha's radical vision was that the only way to create a world at peace and prosperity was for individuals to develop that potential in their own hearts and minds.

PROBLEM

Societal

Due to the current situation with Coronavirus there is an increased sense of:

- CRISIS - people are more likely to experience threat - so descent into personal concerns, increased fear, ill will, anxiety i.e. the hindrances are stronger
- SOCIAL ISOLATION - more time spent alone for those people living alone, isolation, boredom, frustration, desperation, depression etc.
- LACK OF MEANING - as our routine and society changes
- TENSION IN SHARED HOUSEHOLDS- From increased pressure combined with closer contact

Buddhist centres:

- Sangha are not currently gathering physically
- Centre team are not currently gathering physically
- Trustees are not currently gathering physically
- Courses/classes/retreats cannot take place physically
- Re organisation required
- Possible fragmentation of the Sangha
- New ways needed to communicate at depth -and provide support for practice
- New ways to create social contact & emotional support

Financial problem

- No dana from retreats/course/class nights
- Possible changes to standing orders as people may be concerned about finance
- Ongoing costs still to be met - mortgages, rent, support/staff, etc

SOLUTION

Societal solution

How the Dharma/ meditation addresses the situation:

- CRISIS - the need for a wider perspective & working with our minds
- SOCIAL ISOLATION- the need for emotional support & the need to develop new support networks
- LACK OF MEANING - an opportunity to see and understand the need for genuine values
- TENSION IN SHARED HOUSEHOLDS- Facing communication challenges in innovative and creative ways and not retreating into distraction & passivity (which breeds further tension)

The need for online Sanghas at this time -

- Gives much needed connection to our actual experience, whatever that is
- Gives perspective to our experience
- The opportunity for Insight
- Gives us emotional stability
- Gives us a greater sense of connection
- Gives an ethical dimension (what to do?)
- Creates inspiration
- Connects us to meaning
- Social Connection
- Emotional support
- Practical support

- Support for practice - keeping practice alive

Financial solution - The personal ask

- Keeping the centre (the building and supporting/paying people) afloat will cost....
- Keeping the online services going will cost....
- Can you make a standing order for Through the following platform (choose platform)
- **Regular Sangha** - ask if you regular Sangha members will “sponsor” the situation by making a regular, monthly donation
- “Please give regularly to sponsor the centre if you can and you feel moved to - £... a month will support..”
- **Newcomers** - if they have benefited and appreciated the content, they may wish to make a single gift, to ensure others can benefit in the same way in the future
- “If you’d like to support us, but can’t give regularly, please consider making a one-off donation”
- “Anything you can give makes a real difference to us in this situation”

And ask if people can do it **now**:

- When transitioning from live stream to Zoom - We have a break before moving over into Zoom groups - please donate now - *[tell them how]* - follow the link in the description/chat box/ go to [www...../donate](#)
- Following a Zoom meeting. Summarise the previous live stream appeal **or** if the Zoom meeting is not following a live stream then make the appeal and ask them to donate *[tell them how]* and suggest they do it once they leave the meeting.

Example short Case for Support:

“The Three jewels have the potential to transform our hearts and minds, living more in line with meaningful values and the truth, but because of current restrictions around the Coronavirus, we can’t meet face to face as a Sangha to practice in this way. However, we can continue to meet online and offer essential support and teaching at this time, but we need your support to enable this, at a time when we aren’t receiving the usual donations in the dana bowl.

Please consider giving regularly if you’re able, sponsoring us to support Order members and provide the Dharma online and pass this precious resource onto others in the future. Follow the link now in the description or the chat box to donate.”

Example longer Case for Support:

“Thanks for joining us for this session. So the vision of the Nottingham Buddhist Centre is that we want to share the Dharma with those of you who come regularly to the Sangha and also reach more and more

people in the world, sharing what we have and enabling people to live meaningful lives in line with their higher ideals.

The problem right now is that although we still need to financially support Order members to do this work (we support Aryavacin, Khemasiri and Saccanama here), we aren't receiving the usual donations in the dana bowl or the usual fees for courses and retreats. We want to meet people who are struggling at this time with isolation, loneliness and the tension that can come living with others and we want to offer them resources - teach them to meditate, teach them about Ethics and how to look at their experience through a Dharmic lens.

Thankfully, we have this wonderful technology which means that we can continue to meet together and reach others online, but it does cost - we have to pay for a Zoom subscription, for the technology to stream the videos, we support Gareth who is currently doing a lot of the work to get our classes online. But it does all come at a cost, including the costs for running the Buddhist centre. We currently have outgoings of £4000 each month, including support for Order members, admin and finance team and the building, as well as some extra costs around technology.

Many of you do support us regularly, so thank you. If you are in a position to increase your giving right now, it would make a big difference to continue sponsoring our Dharma teachers and to ensure we can return to the Buddhist centre when we can meet together in person. If 40 of us in the Sangha gave £50 a month, that would go a long way to covering our outgoings and ensuring we can keep offering the Dharma to more and more people.

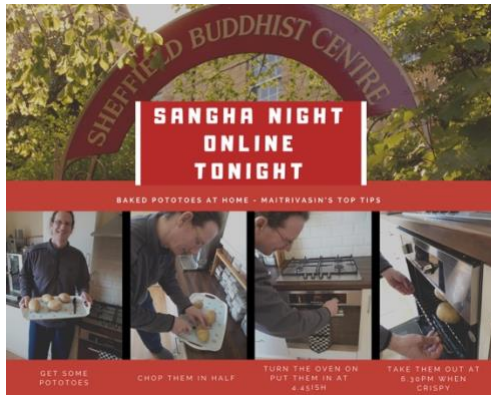
Please give now if you do feel moved and you have benefitted and would like others to benefit from the Dharma in this way. There is a link in the chat box and the description, so follow that while we have our break, before we move over to the Zoom groups. Thank you."

Of course at this time, we need to be sensitive that some people may not be able to give - they may have lost jobs or be in difficult positions financially and we can acknowledge that. However, that's the wonderful thing about the dana economy! People who can give are enabling others to receive the Dharma! Those who can't give money can still access wonderful resources, without feeling guilty or that they shouldn't.

Target

Decide on a target - how much are you hoping to raise in new, monthly donations? This should be based on need (i.e. support costs, running costs/mortgage for the centre, tech equipment) but also, BE AMBITIOUS!

Different Channels for delivery



It's recommended to use a number of different channels to direct people to giving donations:

WEBSITE:

- Intro YouTube video (see Dublin and Brixton) from Chairman - telling people about online activities
- Case for support typed up on donate page of website
- Donate now button - sending you to whatever giving platform you use
- Video from chair (a dana appeal) - on website when you click on the donate button

EMAIL:

A personal message from the Chair (short 2 minute video or written), including a relevant Case for Support and an ask, sent out to your mailing list. Thank people who give and ask people to set up or increase their Standing Orders if they are able. Include a very clear link direct to the giving page.

PHONE CAMPAIGN

Calling existing donors

Thank them for giving!

Get into communication about how this crisis is affecting them... tell them how it's affecting the Buddhist Centre. If appropriate, based on your earlier conversation about how they are affected, ask if they will give (short case for support, but make it personal). Give them a direct link to the giving site.

CHOOSING A GIVING SITE:

I've produced a spreadsheet with giving sites which do/or don't offer various benefits. See www.sikkha.online for these resources

DRIVING PEOPLE TO THE GIVING SITE:

People will either come through to the giving site from:

A) an appeal following a live stream (put links to giving site in chat or description)

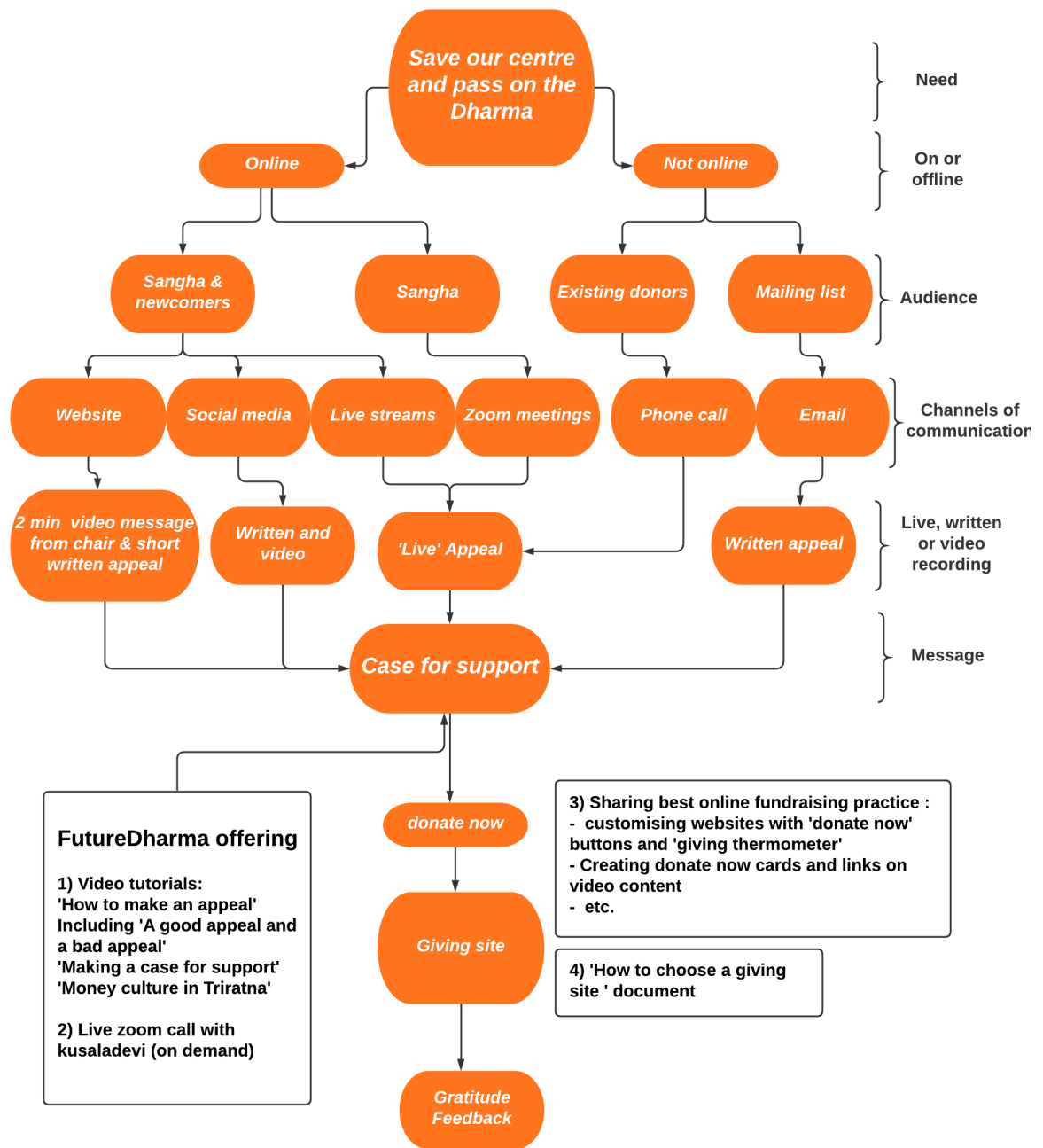
B) an appeal following a Zoom meeting (add link in the chat box, or tell people your URL - keep the URL simple. Remember, once the meeting is closed, people can no longer follow the link, so you want them to remember how to donate)

C) direct from the website

D) from an email

E) from a phone call directing them to the giving page

Flowchart of Channels



Other Resources Coming Soon

Tutorial appeal videos:

'How to do a dana appeal'

Example video: A dana appeal

Money Culture: 'attitudes to money in Triratna'

Discussing your particular situation

I am also offering bespoke Zoom meetings, to talk you through making an appeal and any specifics around fundraising in your particular situation. There is no charge for these sessions, so please do ask for one if you feel it would be helpful.

Please do feel free to get in touch about this, I really do want to help you be the most effective online fundraiser you can be, and I have lots of experience in training fundraisers which I'm very happy to share with you. [kusaladevi@futuredharma.org]

LINKS:

[Centre Fundraising resources on Sikkha online](#)

[Future Dharma page on BCO](#)

Written by Kusaladevi (With thanks also to Maitrinara and Amalavajra)

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Please contact kusaladevi@futuredharma.org with feedback or suggestions for edits to the document