

DOOMSDAY

OPENERS FOR EMAILS, APPEALS, SOCIAL MEDIA & MORE

**Attention Grabbing Phrases That Highlight
What's at Stake - and How to Change It**



a Nonprofit Storytelling Conference Publication

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What Are Doomsday Openers?

Doomsday Openers are designed to grab attention by highlighting an impending crisis, loss, or high-stakes situation.

They create urgency and make the reader feel that immediate action is necessary to prevent a negative outcome. But the power of these openers doesn't stop at creating anxiety—they also show readers how they can be the hero in preventing the 'doomsday' scenario.

These openers are perfect for fundraising appeals, awareness campaigns, and donor communications where quick action is needed.

What You'll Find in This Guide:

1. What Are Doomsday Openers?

Understand the purpose and power of Doomsday Openers in nonprofit fundraising.

2. The Psychology Behind Doomsday Openers

Explore why these openers work, from loss aversion to the curiosity gap.

3. Structure of a Doomsday Opener

Learn the key components that make these openers effective.

4. Doomsday Opener Templates

Ready-to-use templates to spark your creativity or copy and paste into your campaigns.

5. Doomsday Openers by Nonprofit Type

Tailored openers for specific nonprofit sectors, from health to youth organizations.

6. Crafting the Story After the Opener ("How to Change It")

Tips on how to deliver on your opener's promise and guide donors to action.

7. Example Story Appeal Using a Doomsday Opener

See how a Doomsday Opener transforms into a story that moves donors to act.

The Psychology Behind Doomsday Openers

Even if you're not a fan of Doomsday Openers, there's no denying their effectiveness. They tap into powerful psychological triggers that make people sit up and take notice:

1. **Loss Aversion:** People are more motivated to avoid losing something than to gain something new. Highlighting what's at risk—whether it's clean water, endangered animals, or vital community programs—compels readers to act.
2. **Urgency Bias:** When faced with a looming deadline or crisis, people feel a stronger need to respond immediately. Doomsday Openers make issues feel imminent, moving them to the forefront of the reader's mind.
3. **Curiosity Gap:** These openers hint at a larger story that readers want to uncover. By framing a situation as potentially catastrophic, you create a gap between what the reader knows and what they need to know—and the only way to bridge that gap is to keep reading.
4. **Empowerment Through Storytelling:** Doomsday Openers aren't just about doom and gloom—they're about transformation. In nonprofit storytelling, the donor is the hero who can change the ending. These openers introduce the problem, but the story that follows shows how the donor can avert the crisis.

While some may shy away from using this style, it's important to remember that these openers bring urgent, often overlooked issues to the forefront of people's minds. They spark emotional engagement and compel action—exactly what's needed in nonprofit fundraising.

Structure of a Doomsday Opener:

1. **Introduce the Crisis:** Use phrases that hint at loss, endings, or irreversible damage.
2. **Create a Sense of Urgency:** Imply that time is running out.
3. **Leave Room for Hope:** Make it clear that the reader has the power to prevent the worst-case scenario.

Doomsday Opener Templates:

These templates are designed to get your creative juices flowing. Feel free to copy and paste them as they are (just modify the bracketed sections) or use them as a starting point to craft your own unique openers.

Experiment with different combinations to see what resonates most with your audience. Remember, the goal is to highlight what's at stake and show how donors can make a difference.

1. "The End of [Cause]? Here's How You Can Stop It."
2. "Will [Valuable Thing] Disappear Forever?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Save [Group/Thing]?"
4. "Is This the Last Chance to Protect [Beneficiary]?"
5. "What Happens If [Problem] Isn't Stopped?"
6. "Without Your Help, [Negative Outcome] Is Inevitable."
7. "Can We Prevent [Crisis] Before It's Too Late?"
8. "Is This the Final Chapter for [Cause/Group]?"
9. "Will [Place/Person] Survive This Year?"
10. "[Group's] Future Is at Risk—But You Can Help."

Doomsday Openers by Nonprofit Type

Below are ready-to-use openers tailored for different types of nonprofit organizations.

You can copy and paste these directly into your fundraising materials (just update the bracketed sections with your specific details) or use them as inspiration to develop your own versions.

Don't be afraid to experiment and tweak the wording to better fit your organization's voice and mission—these examples are here to spark creativity and help you craft compelling messages.

Health Organizations

1. "The End of Accessible Healthcare in [Community]? Here's How You Can Help."
2. "Will Patients Like [Name] Be Denied Lifesaving Treatment?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Stop the Spread of [Disease]?"
4. "Is This the Last Chance to Fund Critical Medical Research?"
5. "Without Your Help, Families Won't Afford the Care They Need."

Education Organizations

1. "The End of Arts Education in Our Schools? You Can Change That."
2. "Will Students in [Community] Lose Access to Books?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Fund After-School Programs?"
4. "Is This the Last Year for Scholarships in [Area]?"
5. "Without Your Support, Classrooms Will Go Dark."

Environmental Organizations

1. "The End of Clean Water in [Location]? Here's How You Can Stop It."
2. "Will Endangered Species in [Region] Disappear Forever?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Save Our Forests?"
4. "Is This the Final Chance to Protect Our Oceans?"
5. "Without Your Help, Pollution Will Destroy [Natural Area]."

Animal Rescue Organizations

1. "The End of Shelter for Stray Animals? Here's How You Can Help."
2. "Will Homeless Pets Be Left Out in the Cold This Winter?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Save Abandoned Animals?"
4. "Is This the Last Chance to Rescue [Type of Animal]?"
5. "Without Your Support, Shelters Will Close Their Doors."

Religious Organizations

1. "The End of Community Outreach in [Location]? You Can Change That."
2. "Will [Church/Temple] Be Forced to Shut Its Doors?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Support [Mission/Ministry]?"
4. "Is This the Final Year for [Religious Program]?"
5. "Without Your Help, [Community] Will Lose a Place of Worship."

Higher Education Organizations

1. "The End of Scholarships for Deserving Students? Here's How to Help."
2. "Will Research at [University Name] Come to a Halt?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Fund Campus Programs?"
4. "Is This the Last Chance to Preserve [Historic University Building]?"
5. "Without Your Support, Future Generations Will Lose Educational Opportunities."

Arts & Culture Organizations

1. "The End of Live Theater in [City]? Here's How You Can Help."
2. "Will [Museum Name] Be Forced to Close Its Doors Forever?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Preserve Local History?"
4. "Is This the Final Year for [Community Festival]?"
5. "Without Your Support, Arts Education Will Disappear from Our Schools."

Human Services Organizations

1. "The End of Support for Homeless Families? Here's How You Can Help."
2. "Will Families in [Community] Go Without Food This Winter?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Provide Shelter for the Homeless?"
4. "Is This the Last Chance to Help Vulnerable Children in [Area]?"
5. "Without Your Help, [Organization Name] Can't Keep Helping Families in Need."

International Aid Organizations

1. "The End of Humanitarian Aid in [Region]? Here's How You Can Help."
2. "Will Refugee Families Be Left Without Support?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Deliver Emergency Relief?"
4. "Is This the Last Chance to Provide Clean Water in [Country]?"
5. "Without Your Support, Entire Communities Will Be Left in Crisis."

Youth Organizations

1. "The End of Safe Spaces for Teens in [Community]? You Can Change That."
2. "Will After-School Programs for At-Risk Youth Disappear?"
3. "Are We Running Out of Time to Support Youth Mentorship?"
4. "Is This the Final Year for [Youth Camp/Program]?"
5. "Without Your Help, Young Lives in [Community] Will Be at Risk."

Crafting the Story After the Opener ("How to Change It")

Once you've captured attention with a Doomsday Opener, the next step is to show the donor how they can prevent the crisis.

The key is to deliver on the promise of the opener, ensuring the donor feels empowered rather than misled.

Here's how to structure that story:

1. **Restate the Urgency:** Remind the donor why the situation is critical. For example: "Without immediate action, families in [Community] will lose access to clean drinking water, putting children at risk of illness and disease."
2. **Introduce the Hero (the Donor):** Clearly position the donor as the one who can prevent the crisis. Example: "But with your support, we can provide clean water systems to every family in need—you can be the reason a child stays healthy."

3. **Be Specific About the Impact:** Detail how their contribution will directly solve the problem. Example: "A gift of \$25 provides a family with a portable filtration system that ensures safe drinking water for an entire month." This clarity reassures donors that their contribution is meaningful and targeted.
4. **End with a Direct Call to Action:** Provide a clear and compelling next step. Example: "Click here to donate today and ensure no family in [Community] goes without clean water."

Example Story Appeal Using a Doomsday Opener

Opener: "The End of Safe Drinking Water?"

Body:

Right now, families in [Community] are losing access to clean drinking water. Pollution and outdated infrastructure have made the local water supply unsafe, and without immediate help, hundreds of children will be at risk of illness.

But you can stop this.

Your gift of just \$25 can provide a family with a portable water filtration system—giving them safe water to drink and protecting them from life-threatening diseases.

Without your help, this crisis will worsen. But with your support, families will have safe clean water.

Click here to donate \$25. You'll be saving a family and making sure they have the clean water they need to survive.

The Nonprofit Storytelling Conference Connection

Mastering Doomsday Openers is just one tool in a fundraiser's storytelling toolkit. At the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference, you'll get many more tools for raising money.

Join us to explore more storytelling techniques that drive donor engagement and make your fundraising campaigns unforgettable.

To learn more, go to <https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com>

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