

THE CHEESE-TO-CHIP RATIO

HOW TO BALANCE EMOTION AND INFORMATION
IN YOUR DONOR COMMUNICATIONS



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The Cheese-to-Chip Ratio

How to Balance Emotion and Information in Your Donor Communications

The Nacho Problem

You've made nachos before. You know the struggle.

Too much cheese? The chips get soggy and weird. Not enough cheese? Why even bother?

The best nachos have a perfect cheese-to-chip ratio. Every bite matters. Every chip gets love.

Your donor communications work the same way.

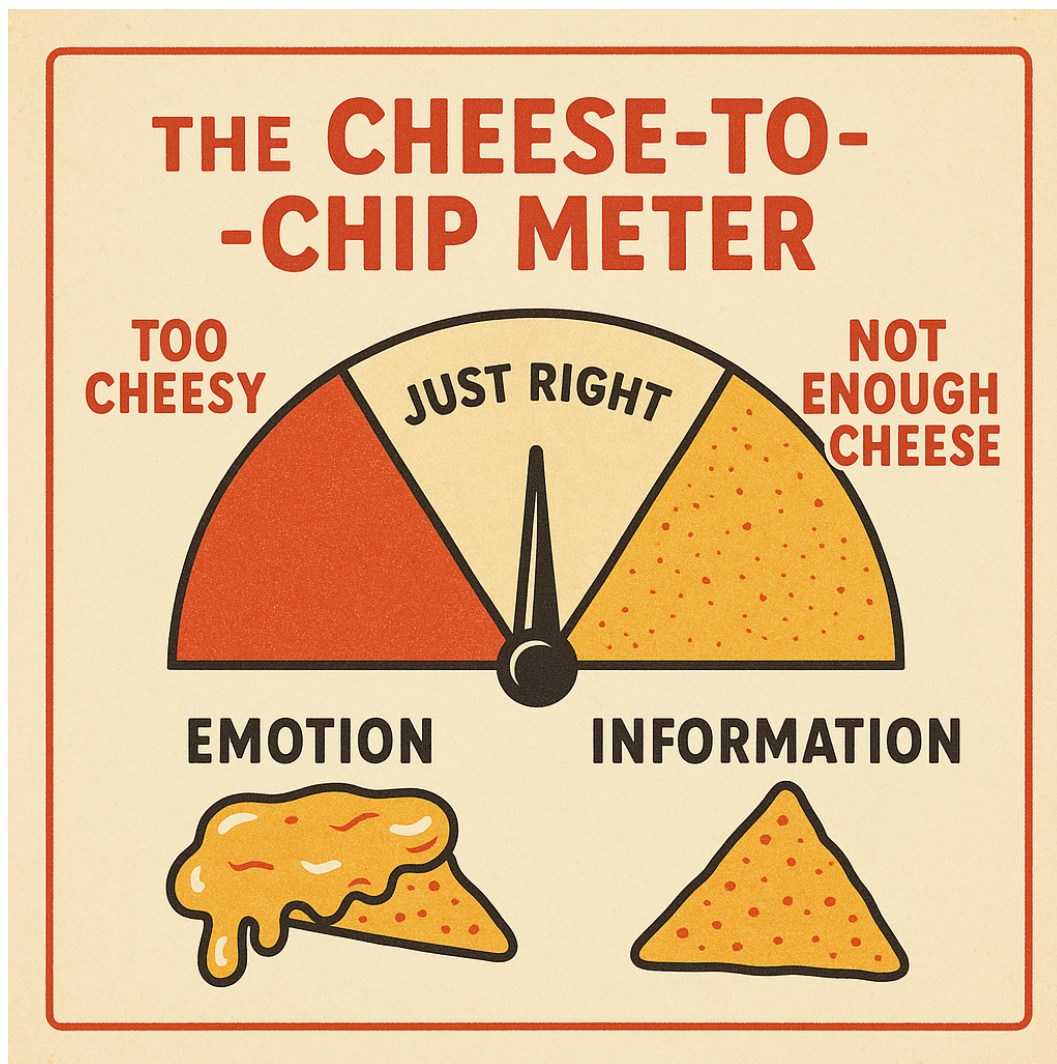
Too much emotion (the cheese) and your appeal or donor report can feel soft or manipulative. Too much information (the chips) and it's dry and easy to ignore. But when you get the mix right? Your message is irresistible.

THE CHEESE-TO-CHIP RATIO

- **Cheese = Emotion**
Story, feelings, stakes, visuals, vulnerability, hope
- **Chips = Substance**
Clear ask, what the donor's gift will do, urgency, logistics, credibility

Most fundraisers lean too hard toward the chips.

So here's a gut-check tool—and a simple set of questions—to help you balance your message.



Where does your message land?

TOO CHEESY



JUST RIGHT



TOO CRUNCHY



Ask yourself:

1. **Can I picture a real person in this story?**
If not, add cheese.
2. **Did I clearly say what the donor's gift will do or did do?**
If not, add chips.
3. **Is there a moment that makes me feel something?**
If not, add cheese.
4. **Is the ask clear and doable?**
If not, add chips.

IF YOU'RE OFF BALANCE, TRY THIS:

- Too much **cheese**? Add a grounding sentence like:
"Your gift will provide three meals today."
"Here's exactly what your donation will do."
- Too many **chips**? Add a human moment:
"We watched Jacob quietly tuck the bread into his backpack—he didn't want to look hungry."
"Anna still writes to the nurse who held her hand after surgery."

EXAMPLES:

1. Too Cheesy:

"Imagine the heartbreak of a child with no home. Cold rain falling. Tiny shoes soaked. No bedtime story, just fear and darkness. Now picture this: with one click, you could erase that pain forever."



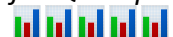
Fix (adds more chip, less cheese):

"Right now, a child like Caleb is facing another night on the street. But your gift can change that. Just \$25 gives him a warm meal, clean socks, and a safe place to sleep tonight."



2. Too Crunchy:

"Last quarter, our shelter served 1,258 meals, a 14% increase over Q2. Our operations budget for Q4 requires a 12% uplift to maintain services."



Fix (adds more cheese, less chip):

"Every tray served last night had a face behind it. One of them was Teresa, who hadn't eaten in two days. She said, 'This chili reminds me of my mom's.' That moment? You made it happen."



3. Just Right:

"When Teresa first arrived, she hadn't eaten in two days. She told us, 'I just want to feel full again.' Your gift gave her a hot plate of food and a warm place to sit."



Balance of cheese and chip. Emotion and clarity. That's the nacho sweet spot.

THE 3-STEP BALANCING FORMULA:

Use this simple rhythm:

1. **Start with a feeling or image**
"Teresa hadn't eaten in two days."
 2. **Show what the donor can do**
"Your gift gives her a hot meal."
 3. **Name the result**
"And that one meal? It gave her the strength to come back the next day."
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Why This Matters

Fundraising isn't about dumping facts on donors. And it's not about drowning them in tears, either. It's about giving them a bite that's rich, satisfying, and makes them want another.

Get the cheese-to-chip ratio right and your donor will stay with you through the whole plate.

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Let's make your next appeal unforgettable and just the right amount of cheesy.

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