# How Operation Smile Used Omnichannel Marketing to Maximize Donor Engagement at all Levels of the Funnel

# Meet the Team

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# About Us

Operation Smile is a global nonprofit specializing in cleft surgery and care. We provide medical training, education and mentorship to surgical teams around the world, along with expertise, research and care through our staff and volunteers, working alongside local governments, nonprofits and health systems.

Our mission is to help our clients establish and grow deep connections with their audiences through data, analytics, and industry benchmarking. Data Axle partners with Operation Smile in new donor acquisition efforts, audience development, data processing, list management, and many other data-oriented lines of service.

# Operation Smile Omnichannel Campaign

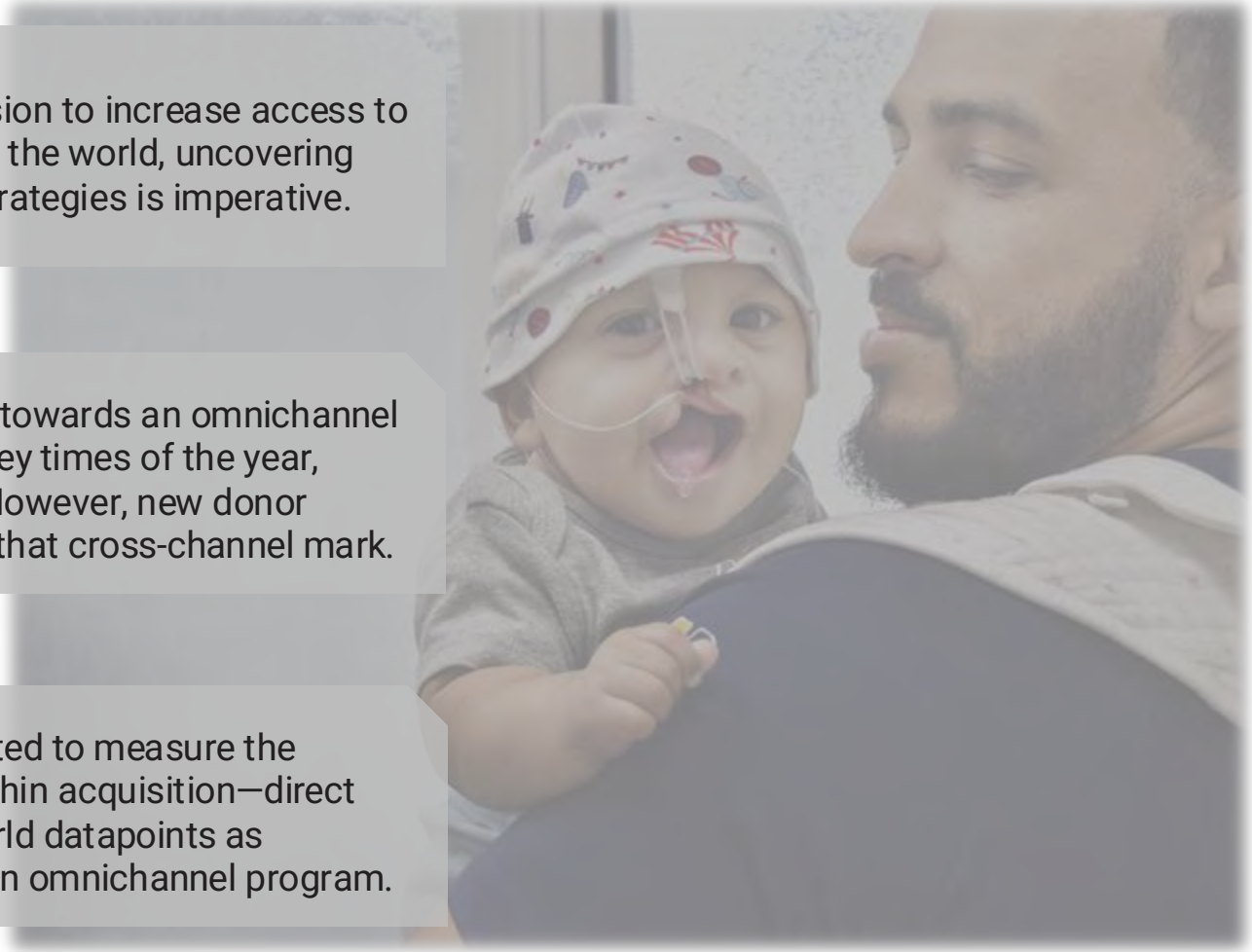
The Background

# Why did we decide to execute this test?

To support Operation Smile's mission to increase access to cleft care and safe surgery around the world, uncovering new, more targeted, fundraising strategies is imperative.

Operation Smile has been shifting towards an omnichannel strategy within cultivation within key times of the year, given the success it has shown. However, new donor acquisition had not quite reached that cross-channel mark.

Additionally, the organization wanted to measure the impact of multiple touchpoints within acquisition—direct mail and digital—to gather real world datapoints as leverage for future investment in an omnichannel program.



# Why did we decide to test this strategy?

**Original Plan:**

- Work with a partner to develop a direct mail acquisition co-targeting campaign.
- What is co-targeting? Serving digital ads, most often display banner ads, to direct mail recipients.

**Updated Plan:**

- After partnering with Data Axle and hearing their recommendations, a new audience targeting strategy was developed to support direct mail and reach more prospects through the digital channels.
- Why the change? We'll get to that ☺

**1. Looking for additional touchpoints for prospects.**

The marketplace is more crowded than ever – is there a cost-effective way to do more with direct mail audiences to boost response and revenue?

**2. Understand the overlap between direct mail and digital.**

With more people active online – whether it's simply browsing websites or donating online – how is our more online savvy constituent base interacting online?

**3. Can digital marketing add value to the program?**

With a growing number of prospects and donors opting for credit cards over writing checks, should we be looking at how marketing channels support and influence each other?

# Why did we recommend a change to the original plan?

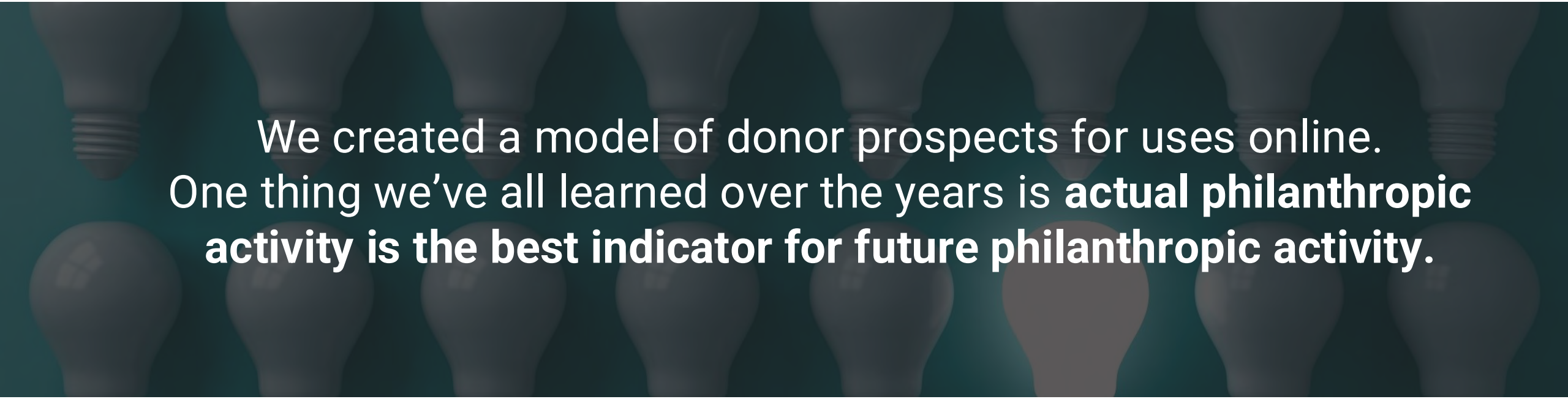
It's simple… the available audience online would not have been large enough to make a meaningful impact to their program.

**Here's the 411 on using offline audiences in digital marketing. This is key.**

1. When taking an offline audience *(aka – 'the list')* and onboarding it *(uploading it)* to use within the digital ad platforms, **you will not** be able to match with *(find)* everyone in your offline audience.
2. The match rates *(aka – who you can find online)* vary by age of your file and by online platform.
3. The match rate is only one part of the puzzle. These individuals must be online to serve them ads.
4. Lastly, match rates and your ability to reach constituents vary by platform. Here's why…
    - For some platforms, i.e., Meta, the user must login.
        - With Meta you could have reasonable audience size of 275,000, but to serve them ads they need a Meta account and to actively use it. There are lots of inactive Meta accounts.
    - With display, your ability to reach web users tends to be greater due to the larger amount of inventory that's available and login isn't required.
    - Google offers Demand Gen, but to match with individuals on your file, you must have a Gmail account.

# How did we solve the match/reach issue for Operation Smile?

At Data Axle, we've borrowed a well-tested and trusted tactic that has been used successfully for years in direct mail and we brought it to digital.



# To close out… why was the model the right recommendation for Operation Smile?

01

### It supports the original request to co-targeting request

When outputting the audience for use in digital marketing, direct mail prospects will be part of the audience.

02

### The volume problem was solved

Data density matters with digital marketing, and since we know we won't match or reach every individual, we're able to increase the audience size with a model vs. using the fixed size of the direct mail file.

03

### Expanding Operation Smile's reach

With a larger audience output from our donor co-ops, we're able to market to both individuals receiving direct mail and those who are not currently being marketing to.

These donor audiences are unique. In a recent comparison with another client, the model had a 2% crossover with their largest Meta audience which was 2MM Meta users.

04

### It was cost-effective

Whether you're co-targeting or using a model, there were data costs associated with the test. The model provided greater potential for Operation Smile to target and reach more prospects at a similar price point for data usage.

# What is factored into building a model?

## Data Axle Cooperative – Apogee Data Architecture

### Donor Data

*Philanthropic Behavior*

2,000+ nonprofit participants

75+ million donating HHs

95+ million donating individuals

1.5+ billion donations

### Political Data

*Political Behavior*

15+ million political donating HHs

Landline, cells, and emails

### Consumer Database

*Data Axle's National Consumer Database*

165 million+ HHs

2,000+ demo/psych variables

Ethnicity / Spoken language

Phone numbers / Emails

Wealth finder

### Transactional Data

*Commercial Buying Behavior*

62 million buying HHs

1.6 billion transactions

# Operation Smile Omnichannel Campaign

The Overview

# Campaign Strategy & Overview

**Goal:** Assess the impact of using the actual donor modeled prospects as a digital acquisition audience to enhance year-end giving for Operation Smile.

**Model selected for the campaign**:

- Data Axle Best of the Best

Description: This ensemble model, integrates existing successful direct mail models developed for Operation Smile, proven over the years, and brings together the best prospects regardless of the original model's goal.

**High-level Overview**

- Timing: 10-week campaign – launching mid-October
- Digital media platforms: Meta, display, emails deployed by Data Axle
- Creative: Operation Smile provided top performing creative

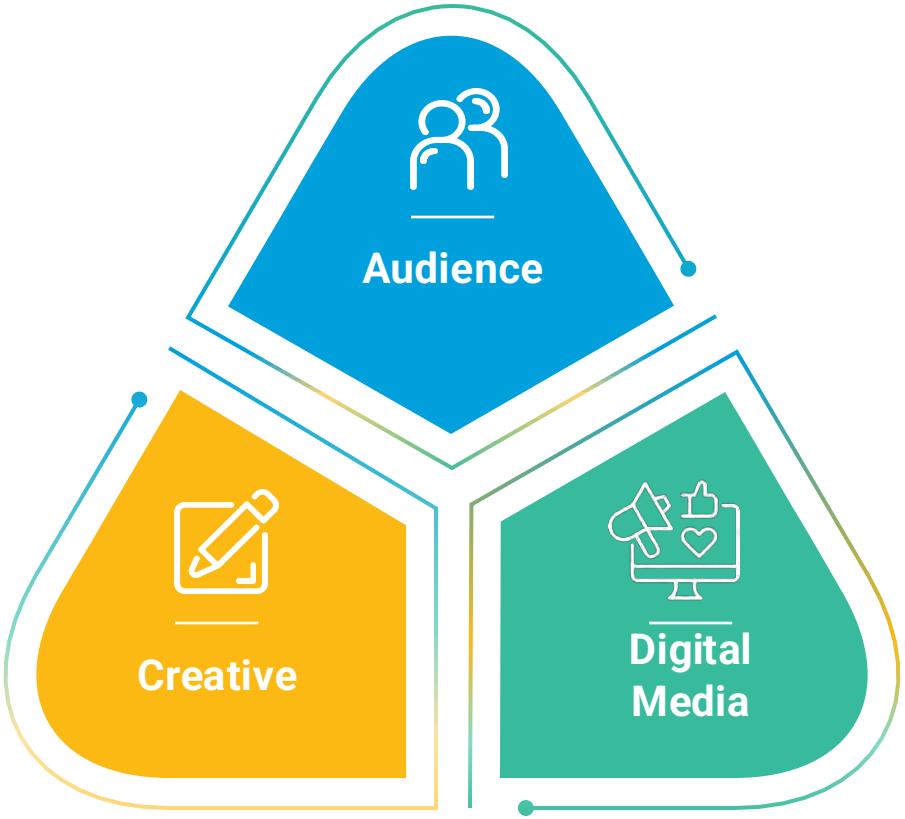
Success is measured by looking at both media and audience performance independently and together to assess ROI.

**Media or channel KPIs will guide media spend decisions, while audience reporting provides directional insights on the return on investment**.

# Developing the Campaign

Audience, digital media, and creative work together to maximize your ROI. But each element has individual factors to consider during the strategy and planning process.

- Audience:
  - Donor model prospects are upper funnel audiences that may not be familiar with your organization. They will need to be educated about who you are and what you do.
- Digital Media
  - Consider the audience when setting up your campaigns and selecting your bid strategy or audience optimization.
  - For example, in Meta it's best to optimize towards clicks vs. conversions for these upper funnel prospects. You'll reach more users by optimizing towards clicks with a lower CPM.
- Creative
  - Utilize mission-focused brand creative throughout the campaign to boost brand recall.
  - When engaging prospects for the first time with an upper funnel marketing strategy simple, consistent mission messaging reinforces the brand for these qualified donor prospects.
  - Consistency leads to action. Action leads to donation activity.



# Operation Smile Omnichannel Campaign

The Learnings

# Audience: Profile of Operation Smile Prospects

These prospects look a lot like direct mail prospects. This is due to the model selection, because the original goal was to develop a co-targeting program.

**73.5**

Average Age

Index to Apogee: 109

**59%**

Female

Index to Apogee: 164

**56%**

Married

Index to Apogee: 89

**17%**

Presence of Children

Index to Apogee: 70

**$90,108**

Average Income

Index to Apogee: 83

**86%**

Homeowner

Index to Apogee: 100

**50%**

Online Shoppers

Index to Apogee: 68

**$60**

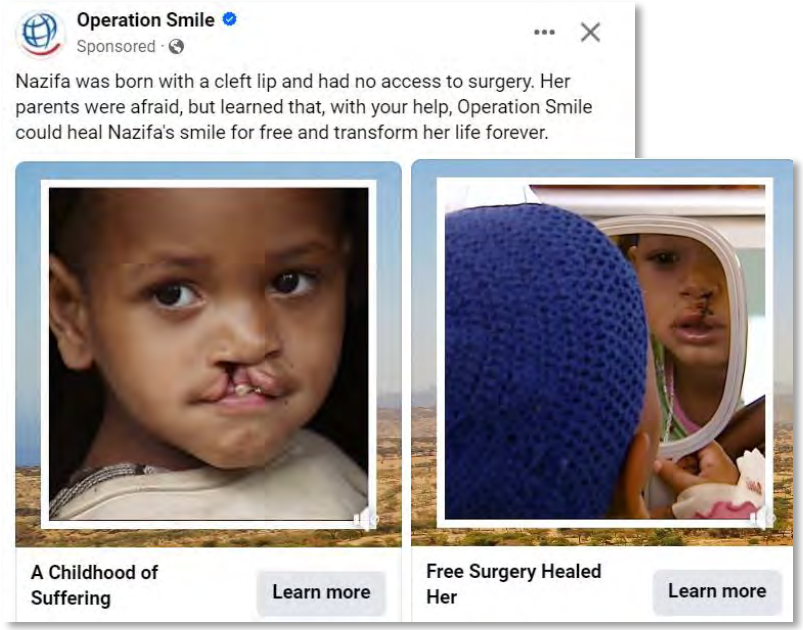
Average Gift

Index to Apogee: 101

# Operation Smile Campaign Creative

## Creative: Meta & Display

- The Operation Smile team provided two sets of brand creative for Meta and Display.
- For Meta, we were able to use a variety of ad types to engage users – video, static, and carousel ads were all used.
    - Per-usual for Meta, the video outperformed all other ad types accounting for the majority of the clicks to Operation Smile web properties.
- All the ads outperformed engagement industry benchmarks for Meta and Display.
    - In Meta, the campaign averaged a click-through rate of 2.72%
    - In display, the campaign averaged a click-through rates of .28%
- One of the most interesting takeaways from the campaign was the audience preferred Nazifa's ads to Pedro. Which differed from what Operation Smile tends to see when using these ads with other audiences.



Changes within digital marketing and media platforms require a different approach to measuring ROI.

## Audience vs Channel Measurement

# Measuring Success

## Rethinking the status quo

- Measuring success is no longer a one-to-one for channel ROI.
- Depending on your program, there are a lot of factors at play that are driving donation activity. Direct mail is influencing online giving, emails boost donations to the main donation forms, and online ads support direct mail.
- All your marketing efforts are working together to drive revenue across giving channels.
- There's another factor in the mix to consider…it's a donor's free will. No matter how much we try to push a donor or prospect down a particular path they will donate when and how they want to.
- So… where does that leave us?
- It's leaves us rethinking how we're measuring success – and reevaluating what we value from channel KPIs.

# Two Part Approach to Measuring Success

Success is measured by evaluating channel and audience performance independently and together to assess ROI. **Channel KPIs will guide media spend decisions, while audience reporting provides directional insights on the return on investment.**

## Media Performance

- Identify the most valuable KPIs in alignment with overall campaign objectives.
- Focus on three key areas:
  - Ad platform KPIs and direct donations from ads
  - Website: Assess whether the campaign improved the quality of web traffic and user engagement
  - Influence on bottom-funnel channels: Evaluate if the campaign increased donor volume and drove a higher percentage of first-time donors through brand search and direct web gifts

## Audience Performance: Match Back Analysis

- Connect the model input audiences, who was marketed to with who transacted or donated during the flight (when the campaign was in market).
- All transaction activity within the attribution window is measured through all channels – online and offline regardless of where their marketing and fundraising journey began
- Online marketable and non-marketable prospects:
  - Data Axle identifies which model prospects are eligible for digital advertising, and which are not.
  - The match back report compares giving behavior between these two model audiences.
  - 81% of Operation Smile model prospects were online marketable.

# How did the campaign do?

The Results

# Operation Smile Match Back Results

Omnichannel takeaways: using an offline model audience in your online marketing program can help reach direct mail returns and online revenue.

**Digital promotion leads to higher value direct mail donors**

Direct mail donors eligible for online promotion **donated 9% more** than those who were not.

**Multiple touchpoints helps make the case for support more effectively**

64% of web donors received at least one direct mail piece and were eligible for online promotion. These **donors donated 10% more** than those who only received direct mail.

**The program had a positive ROI for digital acquisition**

The campaign more than paid for itself returning a **1:1 ROI on new online donor** revenue.

**Upper funnel marketing can be cost-effective for nonprofits**

When broadening the impact of the campaign more holistically for every **$1 spent $11.50 was returned**.

# Final Thoughts

## Multiple touchpoints makes a difference

- Driving exposure with multiple channels gives prospects not only multiple chances and avenues to give, but keeps brand awareness fresh, in turn bringing in more engaged and higher value donors.
- Whether donors choose to give online with a credit card or by writing a check, those who received both online and direct mail promotion gave at higher levels than those who only received direct mail.
- Upper funnel digital marketing can be cost effective and can make an impact on your program. Always to remember the three elements when developing a program audience, digital media platforms, and creative.
- Donor behavior continues to change and evolve which is pushing our industry to reevaluate how we're measuring success and planning tests.
- Look for opportunities within your program where small changes could make an impact. Change is hard…if you start small, it's less intimidating.

# Thank You!