

# Messaging that moves our readers

What we've learned from testing 1000s of fundraising appeals



**WIKIMEDIA**  
FOUNDATION

# A little about Caitlin

- (A/B test-obsessed)
- (eager to engage our donors in our mission)
- (even more obsessed with her dog)

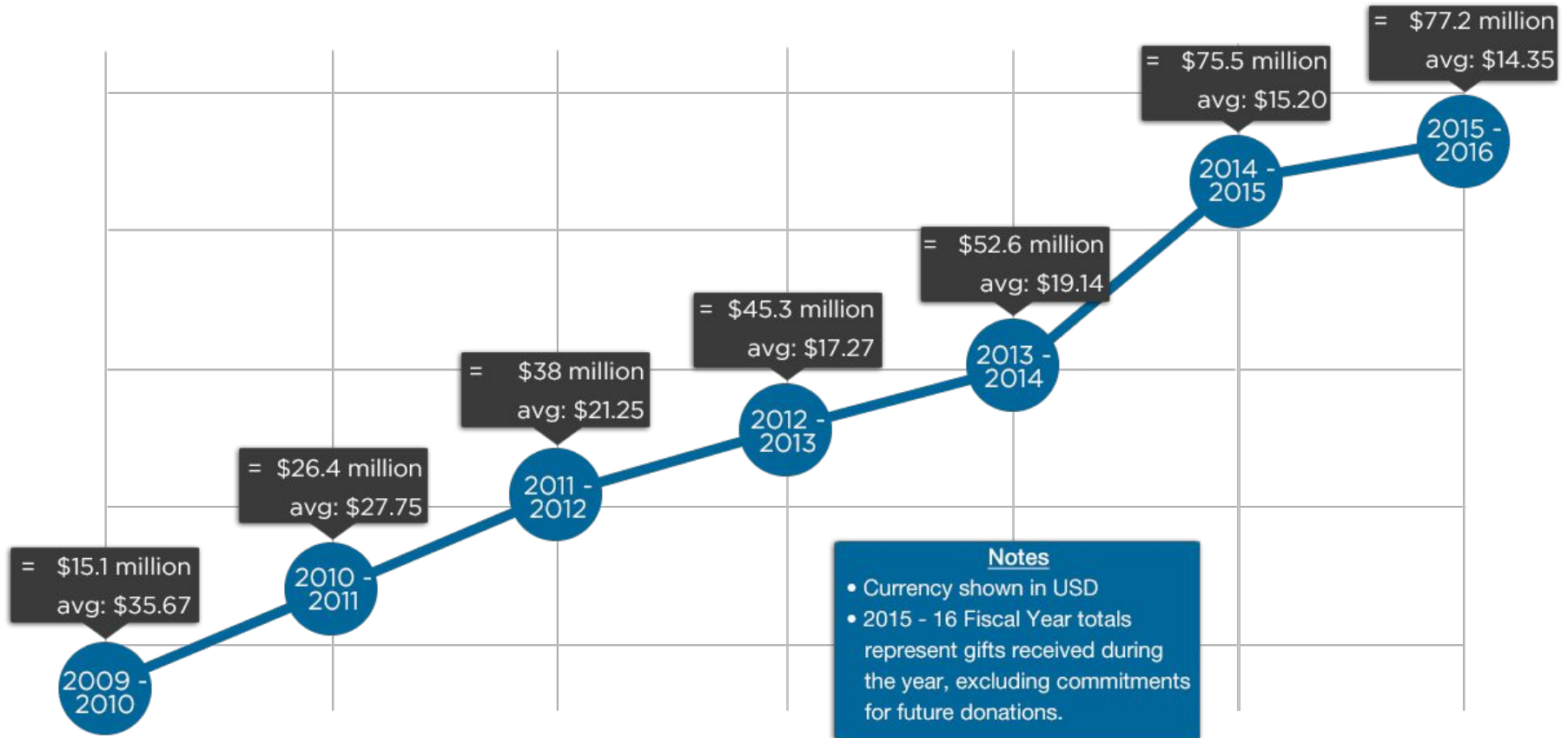


# And Sam

- (also love testing bc it's an antidote to ego)
- (nonprofiteer who went from politics to sweet sweet nonpartisanship)
- (obsessed with baby and wife)



# Why do readers give?





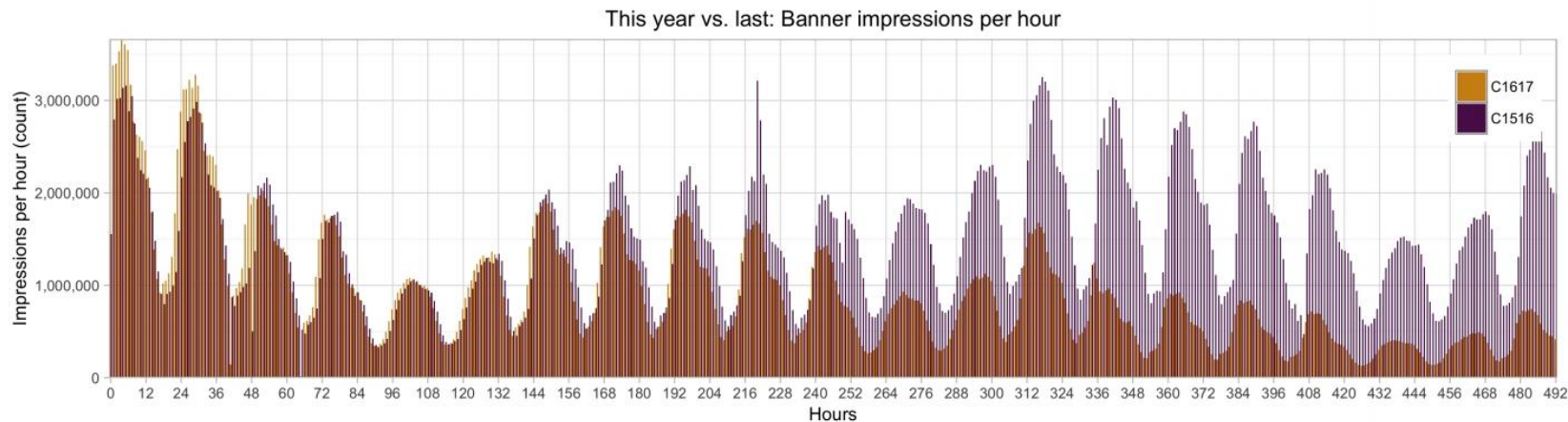
## Donors give because Wikipedia is so incredibly useful

“I might not be (economically) rich but Bloody Hell, Wikipedia is the most beautiful result of modern technology that I know of and whoever reads this; I appreciate your being here! ”

**The goal of our  
fundraising is to move  
donors, and then  
move out of the way**



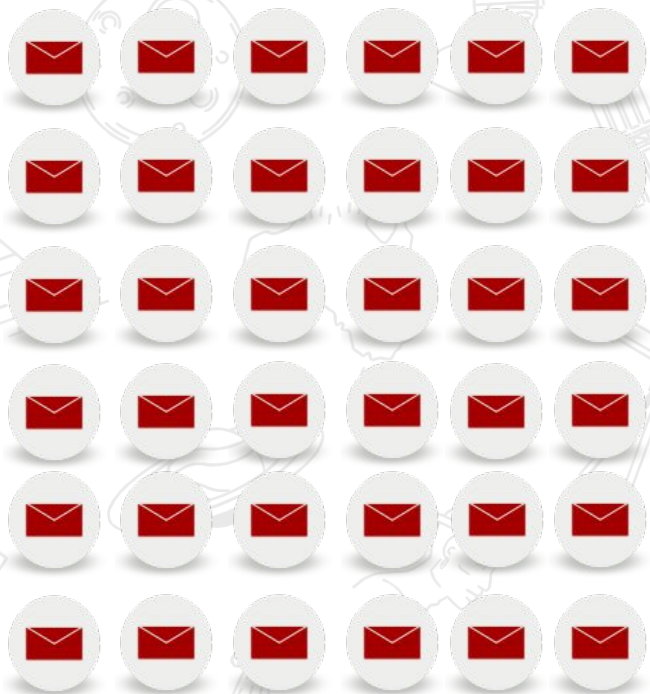
**WIKIMEDIA**  
FOUNDATION



**Readers saw **44% fewer desktop banners** in our 2016 'Big English' campaign**

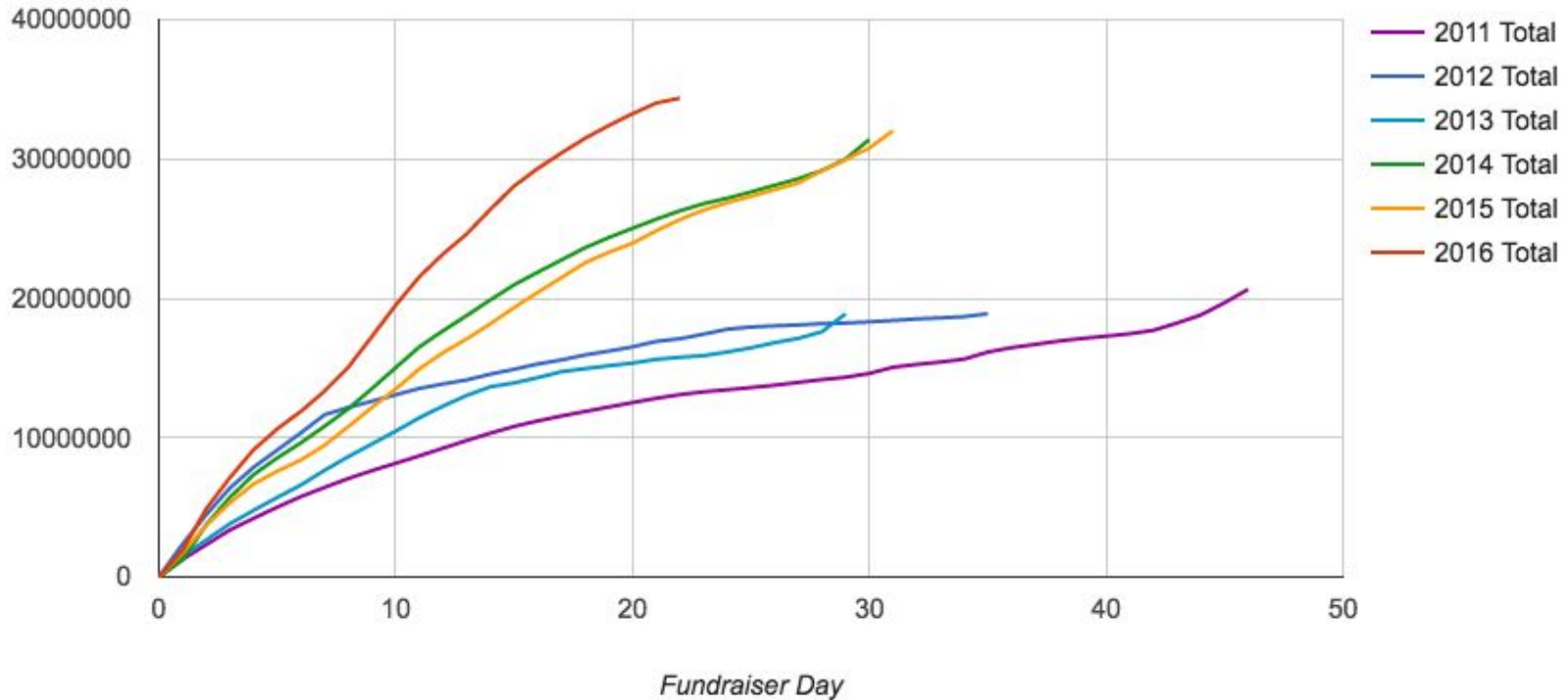


# The average nonprofit sends 49 emails a year per subscriber



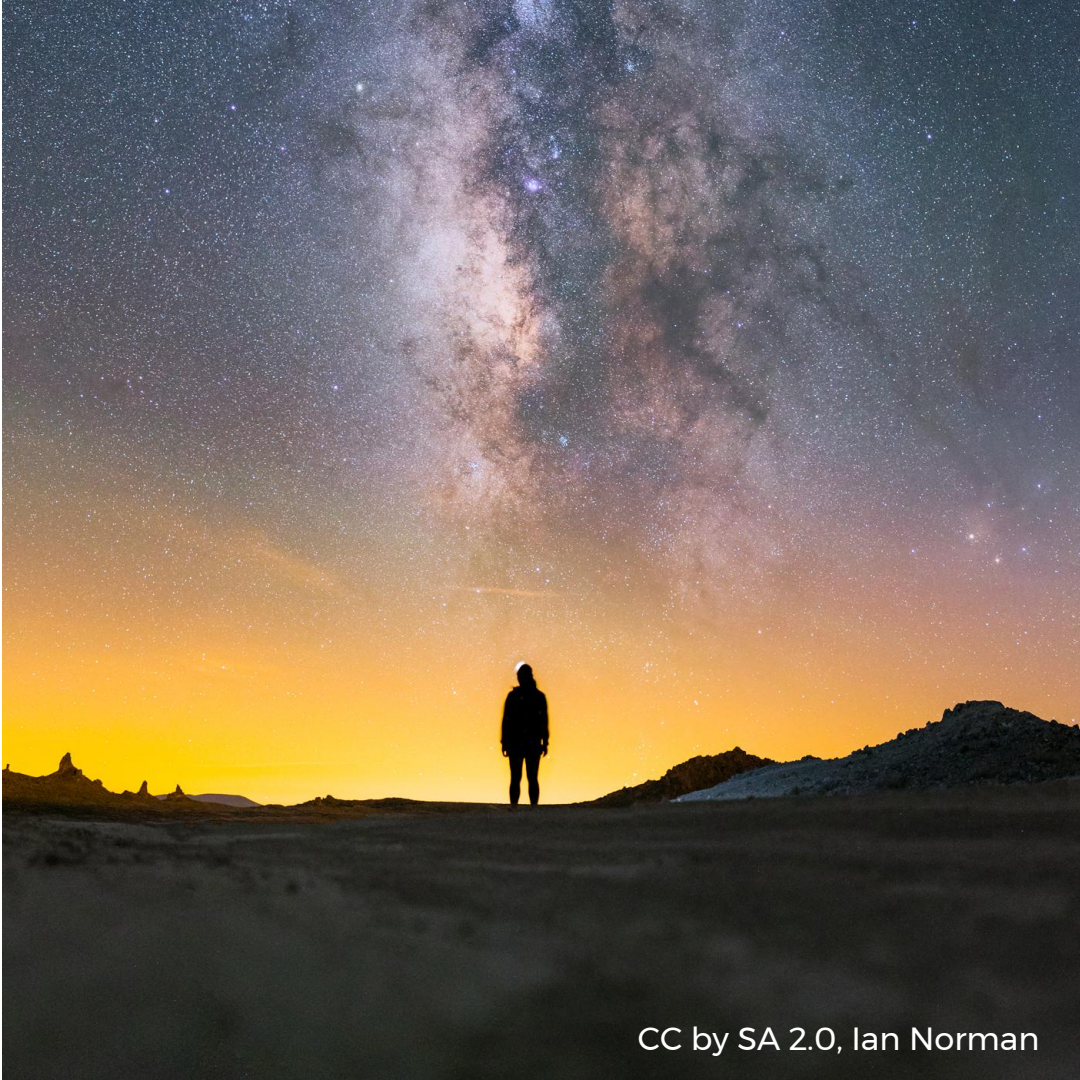
## Wikimedia sends 1-10

Year-end Fundraiser Total Earned Rate Comparison, From Launch Day



**And still, every year, it takes less and less time to hit our fundraising goal**

# Thru the wonder of A/B testing



# HOW WE TEST



Wikipedia visitors are randomly segmented into two groups



Half see Variation A

Half see Variation B



Variation A

Small Top Banner, Blue Background



Variation B

Small Top Banner, Gold Background

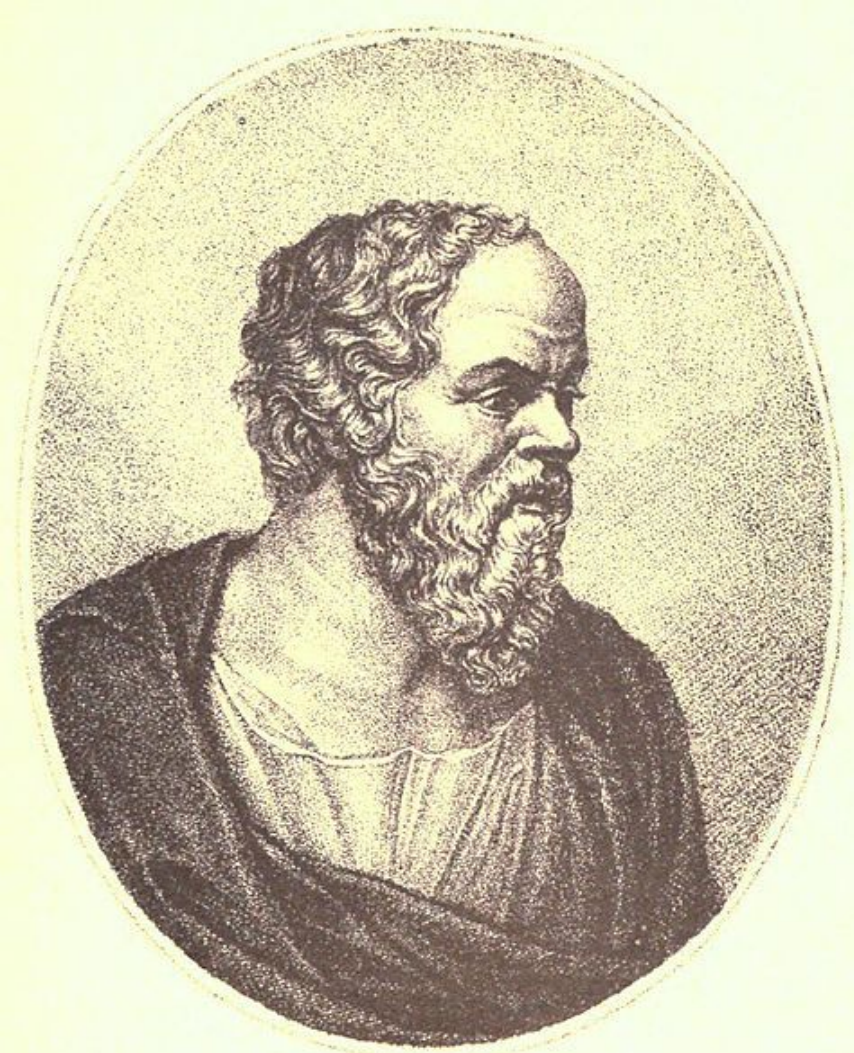


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# We are special

- **Most nonprofits don't have the traffic or user base to test this breadth of variations**
- **Community values affect the content and duration of fundraisers**
- **We strive to meet donors' unique needs in each country**





**I know one  
thing:  
that I know  
nothing.**



**WIKIMEDIA**  
FOUNDATION

# 5 Pillars of Efficient Fundraising

- Let go of your gut
- Know your data
- Target with purpose
- Invest in the relationship
- **Ask less. Ask better.**



# It started with a banner

Introducing one of our very first fundraising banners, born in the 2000s

Please read:  
A personal appeal from  
Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales





# Today's banner sequence

**i** To all our readers in the U.S.:

Today we ask you to help Wikipedia. When I made Wikipedia a non-profit, people warned me I'd regret it. Over a decade later, it's the only top ten site run by a non-profit and a community of volunteers. Has it crossed my mind how much we could have made if it had ads? Sure. But it wouldn't be the same. We wouldn't be able to trust it. To protect our independence, we'll never run ads. We're sustained by donations averaging about \$15. Now is the time we ask. If everyone reading this gave \$3, we could keep Wikipedia thriving for years to come. The price of a coffee is all we need. It's easy to ignore this message; most people do. But I hope you'll think about how useful Wikipedia is in your life. We're here to give you reliable, neutral information in a world where fake news spreads too easily. Please help keep Wikipedia online and growing. Thank you — *Jimmy Wales, Wikipedia Founder*

CLOSE X

Just Once

Give Monthly

Select an amount (USD)

3

5

10

20

30

50

100

Other

Credit Card

PayPal

SECURE TRANSACTION

Maybe later

**From Point A to Point B,  
with 1000s of pit stops  
in between**

Se desissimo tutti 2€, la raccolta terminerebbe in un'ora. Se Wikipedia ti è utile, per favore dedica un minuto del tuo tempo a mantenerla online e senza pubblicità.

[Dona ora](#)

Winyaru Cebuano

Problems donating?

Dear reader We'll get right to it: Today we ask you to help Wikipedia. To protect our independence, we'll never run ads. We're sustained by donations averaging about \$15. Only a tiny portion of our readers give. If everyone reading this right now gave \$3, our fundraiser would be done within an hour. That's right, the price of a cup of coffee is all we need. We're a small non-profit with costs of a top website: servers, staff and programs. Wikipedia is something special. It is like a library or a public park where we can all go to learn. If Wikipedia is useful to you, please take one minute to keep it online and growing. Thank you.

Today's featured article

**John Lloyd Waddy** (1916–1987) was a senior officer and aviator in the Royal Australian Air Force, who later served as a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and Minister of the Crown. As a fighter pilot during World War II, he shot down fifteen enemy aircraft in the Desert War, becoming one of Australia's top-scoring aces and earning the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was a member of the [Order of Australia](#).

[Donate now](#)

DEAR WIKIPEDIA READERS, We'll get right to it: Today we ask you to help Wikipedia. To protect our independence, we'll never run ads. We're sustained by donations averaging about \$15. Only a tiny portion of our readers give. If everyone reading this right now gave \$3, our fundraiser would be done within an hour. That's right, the price of a cup of coffee is all we need. We're a small non-profit with costs of a top website: servers, staff and programs. Wikipedia is something special. It is like a library or a public park where we can all go to learn. If Wikipedia is useful to you, please take one minute to keep it online and growing. Thank you.

Rho

Dear Wikipedia We'll get right to it: Today we ask you to help Wikipedia. To protect our independence, we'll never run ads. We're sustained by donations averaging about \$15. Only a tiny portion of our readers give. If everyone reading this right now gave \$3, our fundraiser would be done within an hour. That's right, the price of a cup of coffee is all we need. We're a small non-profit with costs of a top website: servers, staff and programs. Wikipedia is something special. It is like a library or a public park where we can all go to learn. If Wikipedia is useful to you, please take one minute to keep it online and growing. Thank you.

Contenta

1:41 PM

1:41 PM

Ongoing events: Syrian Civil War · European migrant crisis

Recent deaths: Dolph Schayes

We'll get right to it: This week we ask you to help Wikipedia. We're sustained by donations averaging about \$15. If we all gave \$3, the fundraiser would be over in an hour.

SELECT A PAYMENT METHOD

CREDIT CARD PAYPAL AMAZON

Read in another language

View edit history of this page.

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Terms of Use | Privacy

it may have been named after the Fleet was in existence

Queridos leitores, Vamos direto ao assunto: Hoje proteger a nossa independência sobrevivemos de doações de quem nos apoia. Se todos lendo isso nos doarem, a nossa campanha terminaria em uma hora. Isso é possível, pois o preço de uma xícara de café é tudo o que precisamos. Nós somos uma pequena organização sem fins lucrativos com custos de um site de topo: servidores, pessoal e programas. A Wikipédia é algo especial. É como uma biblioteca ou um parque público onde todos podem ir para aprender. Se a Wikipédia for útil para você, por favor, dedique um minuto para mantê-la online e crescendo. Obrigado.

[Doar agora](#)

Winyaru Cebuano

Problems donating?

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Now is the time we ask.

SELECT AN AMOUNT

\$3 \$15 \$20

\$50 \$100 Other

SELECT A PAYMENT METHOD

CREDIT CARD PayPal amazon.com

Problems donating? | Other ways to give | Frequently asked questions | By donating, you are agreeing to our donor privacy policy. The Wikimedia Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

Dear Wikipedia readers, We'll get right to it: This week we ask you to help Wikipedia. To protect our independence, we'll never run ads. We're sustained by donations averaging about \$15. Only a tiny portion of our readers give. If everyone reading this right now gave \$3, our fundraiser would be done within an hour. That's right, the price of a cup of coffee is all we need. We're a small non-profit with costs of a top website: servers, staff and programs. Wikipedia is something special. It is like a library or a public park where we can all go to learn. If Wikipedia is useful to you, please take one minute to keep it online and growing. Thank you.

Now is the time we ask.

SELECT AN AMOUNT

\$3 \$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100

Other

Make this a monthly donation

Frequently asked questions | By donating, you are agreeing to our donor privacy policy. The Wikimedia Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

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TAKE ONE MINUTE TO KEEP WIKIPEDIA GROWING

SELECT AN AMOUNT

\$2 \$10 \$20

\$50 \$100 Other

SELECT A PAYMENT METHOD

CREDIT CARD PayPal

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online and growing. Thank you.

THE PRICE OF A CUP OF COFFEE IS ALL WE NEED.

SELECT AN AMOUNT

\$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100

Make this a monthly donation

Frequently asked questions | By donating, you are agreeing to our donor privacy policy. The Wikimedia Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

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Now is the time we ask.

SELECT AN AMOUNT

\$3 Other

Pre-Second World War

Second World War

Post war

Frequently asked questions | By donating, you are agreeing to our donor privacy policy. The Wikimedia Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

# Testing can feel illogical

- Image Becomes Pullquote
- Pullquote Removed
- Highlight Removed
- CTA above Form Removed
- Remind Me Later Email Option
- Copy update

December 1st, 2015

Dear readers,

We'll get right to it: This week we ask you to help Wikipedia. To protect our independence, we'll never run ads. We're sustained by donations averaging about \$15. Only a tiny portion of our readers give. **Now is the time we ask. If everyone reading this right now gave \$3, our fundraiser would be done within an hour.** That's right, the price of a cup of coffee is all we need. If Wikipedia is useful to you, please take one minute to keep it online and growing. We're a small non-profit with costs of a top website: servers, staff and programs. We serve millions of readers, but we run on a fraction of what other top sites spend. Wikipedia is something special. It is like a library or a public park where we can all go to learn. Wikipedia is written by a community of volunteers with a passion for sharing the world's knowledge. Please help us end the fundraiser and improve Wikipedia. *Thank you.*

TAKE ONE MINUTE TO KEEP WIKIPEDIA GROWING

Now is the time we ask.

Please help Wikipedia

ONE-TIME  MONTHLY\*

Select an amount (\$)

3 5 10 20

30 50 100 Other

CREDIT CARD PAYPAL AMAZON

Problems donating? | Other ways to give | Frequently asked questions | By donating, you are agreeing to our donor privacy policy. The Wikimedia Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. If you make a recurring donation, you will be debited by the Wikimedia Foundation until you notify us to stop. We'll send you an email receipt for each payment, which will include a link to easy cancellation instructions.

December 31st, 2015

Dear readers,

Last chance: There are only a few hours left in 2015 to help Wikipedia. To protect our independence, we'll never run ads. We're sustained by donations averaging about \$15. Only a tiny portion of our readers give. Now is the time we ask. If everyone reading this right now gave \$3, our fundraiser would be done within an hour. That's right, the price of a cup of coffee is all we need. If Wikipedia is useful to you, please take one minute to keep our work going another year. We're a small non-profit with costs of a top site: servers, staff and programs. We serve millions of readers, but run on a fraction of what other top sites spend. We believe knowledge is a foundation. A foundation for human potential, for freedom, for opportunity. We believe everyone should have access to knowledge—for free, without restriction, without limitation. Please help us end the fundraiser and improve Wikipedia. *Thank you.*

TAKE ONE MINUTE TO KEEP WIKIPEDIA GROWING

Now is the time we ask.

Please help Wikipedia

ONE-TIME  MONTHLY\*

Select an amount (\$)

3 5 10 20

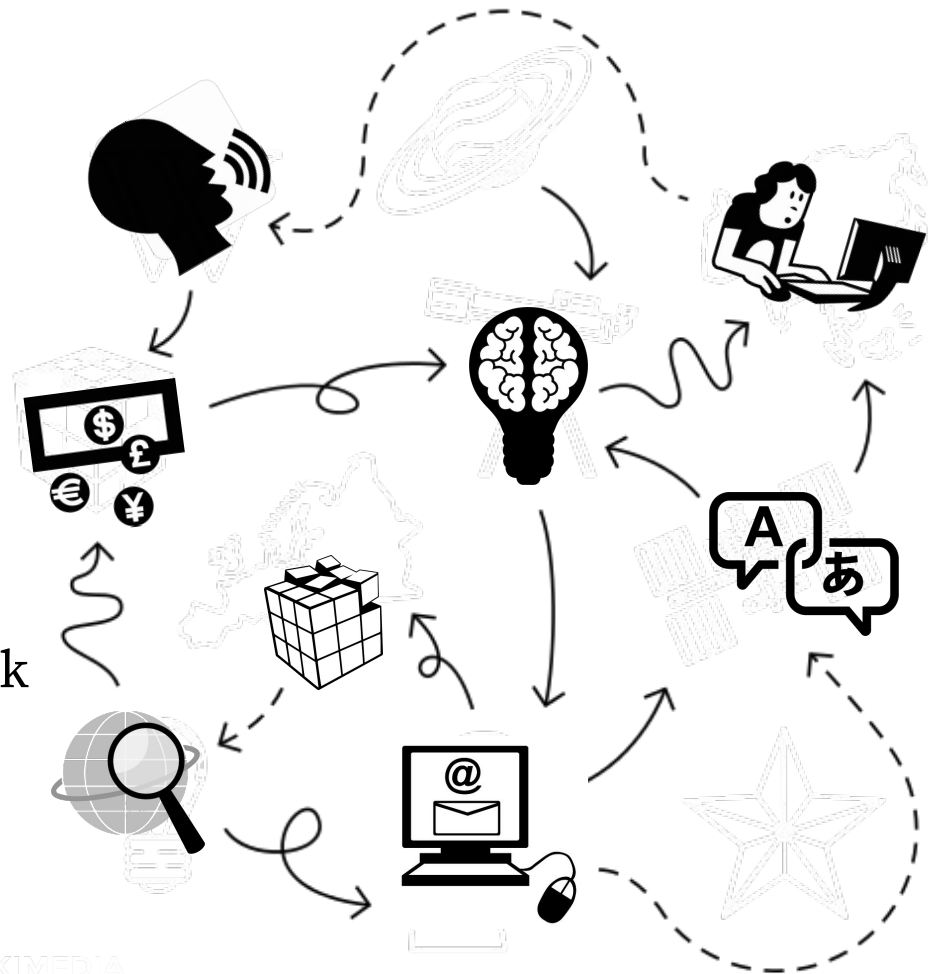
30 50 100 Other

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# Gather your data

- **Before Campaigns**
  - Focus groups, surveys
- **Before & During Campaigns**
  - Translator feedback
  - Community/Chapter feedback
  - Past & live test analysis
  - Donor comments & bug reports



utm_source	Lang COUNTRY	Email version	Short desc	Test Note	Emails Sent	Received	Blocked	% blocked	% bounce	Unsub	Unsub Rate	Abuse	Abuse Rate	Opens (Unique)	% Open	Opens (Gross)	Gross/Unique Opens	Clicks (Unique)	% Click / Opens	% Click / Received	Donations	Donati per op
11/30/2016	8pm UTC																					
sp52885793	enUS	Email 1	Control	Control - to people who didn't receive 2016 newsletters	49615	48105	57	0.11%	3.04%	261	0.54%	61	0.13%	18419	38.29%	26381	143.23%	4582	17.37%	9.52%	3,571	0.1939
sp52885820	enUS	Email 1	1Newsletter	Control - to people who received 1 newsletter	49116	48887	32	0.07%	0.47%	202	0.41%	63	0.13%	21039	43.04%	30818	146.48%	6623	21.49%	13.55%	5,283	0.2511
sp52885842	enUS	Email 1	2Newsletters	Control - to people who received 2 newsletters	48200	47659	41	0.09%	1.12%	222	0.47%	49	0.10%	18209	38.21%	25918	142.34%	4569	17.63%	9.59%	3557	0.1953
sp52885865	enUS	Email 1	6Newsletters	Control - to people who received 6 newsletters	48899	48278	60	0.12%	1.27%	257	0.53%	57	0.12%	18368	38.05%	26264	142.99%	4677	17.81%	9.69%	3641	0.1982
dons/emails	<a href="https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=3571%2C48105&amp;1Newsletter=5283%2C48887&amp;2Newsletters=3557%2C47659&amp;6Newsletters=3641%2C48278&amp;abba%3AintervalConfidenceLevel=0.95&amp;abba%3AuseMultipleTestCorrection=true">https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=3571%2C48105&amp;1Newsletter=5283%2C48887&amp;2Newsletters=3557%2C47659&amp;6Newsletters=3641%2C48278&amp;abba%3AintervalConfidenceLevel=0.95&amp;abba%3AuseMultipleTestCorrection=true</a>																					
dons/opens	<a href="https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=3571%2C18419&amp;1Newsletter=5283%2C21039&amp;2Newsletters=3557%2C18209&amp;6Newsletters=3641%2C18368&amp;abba%3AintervalConfidenceLevel=0.95&amp;abba%3AuseMultipleTestCorrection=true">https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=3571%2C18419&amp;1Newsletter=5283%2C21039&amp;2Newsletters=3557%2C18209&amp;6Newsletters=3641%2C18368&amp;abba%3AintervalConfidenceLevel=0.95&amp;abba%3AuseMultipleTestCorrection=true</a>																					
sp52888250	enUS	Email 1	Control	Control - SL Regret ; copy subjective facts	29281	28529	143	0.49%	2.57%	169	0.59%	43	0.15%	12014	42.11%	19390	161.40%	2671	13.78%	9.36%	2052	0.1708
sp52888260	enUS	Email 1	11_29Control	11/29 Control (something special copy)	29311	28557	33	0.11%	2.57%	177	0.62%	42	0.15%	12628	44.22%	20840	165.03%	2893	13.88%	10.13%	2,193	0.1737
sp52888279	enUS	Email 1	Adv															2775	14.00%	9.69%	2,148	0.1742
sp52888290	enUS	Email 1	15'															2775	13.45%	9.70%	2,114	0.1693
sp52888298	enUS	Email 1	He															2646	13.04%	9.25%	2,011	0.1626
sp52888303	enUS	Email 1	Wri															2743	13.65%	9.59%	2,079	0.1678
sp52888310	enUS	Email 1	Por															2807	17.67%	9.82%	2,195	0.1958
sp52888316	enUS	Email 1	Ale															2799	13.90%	9.82%	2,124	0.1704
sp52888321	enUS	Email 1	HlstoryCopy	Copy - imagine if W										165%		19649	161.12%	2648	13.48%	9.26%	2,032	0.1666
sp52888326	enUS	Email 1	CataloguesHistoryC	1st paragraph - a re										23%		19198	162.93%	2514	13.10%	8.80%	1,875	0.1591
sp52888335	enUS	Email 1	FactsHighlight	Highlight copy - Fac										178%		20324	162.46%	2670	13.14%	9.34%	2,049	0.1638
sp52888339	enUS	Email 1	GiveALotHighlight	Highlight copy - You										60%		20887	167.58%	2823	13.52%	9.88%	2,151	0.1726
sp52888343	enUS	Email 1	Just1Highlight	Highlight copy - If e										37%		19342	163.83%	2505	12.95%	8.78%	1,922	0.1628
sp52888362	enUS	Email 1	Just1ExceptionalHig	Highlight copy - who choose to do something exceptional.	29294	28559	46	0.16%	2.51%	171	0.60%	54	0.19%	12441	43.56%	20996	168.76%	2914	13.88%	10.20%	2,252	0.1810
sp52888369	enUS	Email 1	PHRegretCopy	Preheader - Have I considered how much money...	14955	14574	97	0.65%	2.55%	101	0.69%	20	0.14%	5405	37.09%	13125	242.83%	1104	8.41%	7.58%	841	0.1556
sp52888373	enUS	Email 1	PHGetReal	Preheader - Let's get real	14966	14619	127	0.85%	2.32%	98	0.67%	21	0.14%	5774	39.50%	9268	160.51%	1211	13.07%	8.28%	942	0.1631
sp52888376	enUS	Email 1	SLDIdntHeed	SL - I didn't heed their warning	14952	14575	142	0.95%	2.52%	73	0.50%	9	0.06%	5962	40.91%	9915	166.30%	1262	12.73%	8.66%	963	0.1615
dons/emails	<a href="https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=2052%2C28529&amp;11_29Control=2193%2C28557&amp;AdvertiserCopy=2148%2C28625&amp;15YearsCopy=2114%2C28609&amp;HeadlinesForumsCopy=2011%2C28616&amp;WrittenByVictorsCopy=2079%2C28611&amp;PowerOffFactsCopy=2195%2C28597&amp;AlexandriaCopy=2">https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=2052%2C28529&amp;11_29Control=2193%2C28557&amp;AdvertiserCopy=2148%2C28625&amp;15YearsCopy=2114%2C28609&amp;HeadlinesForumsCopy=2011%2C28616&amp;WrittenByVictorsCopy=2079%2C28611&amp;PowerOffFactsCopy=2195%2C28597&amp;AlexandriaCopy=2</a>																					
dons/opens	<a href="https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=2052%2C12014&amp;11_29Control=2193%2C12628&amp;AdvertiserCopy=2148%2C12329&amp;15YearsCopy=2114%2C12489&amp;HeadlinesForumsCopy=2011%2C12368&amp;WrittenByVictorsCopy=2079%2C12392&amp;PowerOffFactsCopy=2195%2C11211&amp;AlexandriaCopy=2">https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=2052%2C12014&amp;11_29Control=2193%2C12628&amp;AdvertiserCopy=2148%2C12329&amp;15YearsCopy=2114%2C12489&amp;HeadlinesForumsCopy=2011%2C12368&amp;WrittenByVictorsCopy=2079%2C12392&amp;PowerOffFactsCopy=2195%2C11211&amp;AlexandriaCopy=2</a>																					
11/30/2016	10pm UTC																					
sp52889232	enNZ	Email 3	Control	Control - My final email	20053	19909	79	0.39%	0.72%	151	0.76%	4	0.02%	8613	43.26%	13564	157.48%	2481	18.29%	12.46%	1,796	0.2085
sp52889237	enNZ	Email 3	SincereURL	1st link copy - I'm asking you, sincerely: please take one minute	20036	19872	76	0.38%	0.82%	137	0.69%	3	0.02%	8628	43.42%	13919	161.32%	2673	19.20%	13.45%	1,979	0.2294
dons/opens	<a href="https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=1796%2C8613&amp;SincereURL=1979%2C8628&amp;abba%3AintervalConfidenceLevel=0.95&amp;abba%3AuseMultipleTestCorrection=true">https://www.thumbtack.com/labs/abba/#Control=1796%2C8613&amp;SincereURL=1979%2C8628&amp;abba%3AintervalConfidenceLevel=0.95&amp;abba%3AuseMultipleTestCorrection=true</a>																					

**Throw ideas at the wall.  
See what sticks.**



# ABBA





## A/B testing statistics

# Find a win!

Label	Number of successes	Number of trials	
Control 	1399	19455	<a href="#">Remove</a>
MyFace_Ctrl 	1599	19567	<a href="#">Remove</a>
Dumb_Regret 	1513	19535	<a href="#">Remove</a>
TickledPink_NeedYourHelp 	1185	19482	<a href="#">Remove</a>

Interval confidence level:  Use multiple testing correction:

[Compute](#) [Add another group](#)

	Successes	Total	Success Rate		p-value	Improvement
Control	1,399	19,455	7.2% (7.2%)		+	-
MyFace_Ctrl	1,599	19,567	8.2% (8.2%)		+0.0008	4.6% – 23% (14%)
Dumb_Regret	1,513	19,535	7.7% (7.7%)		+0.095	-1.2% – 17% (7.7%)
TickledPink_NeedYourHelp	1,185	19,482	6.1% (6.1%)		< 0.0001	-24% – -7% (-15%)

14% gain

But donor feedback is not positive...

**Isolate  
what's  
working  
and iterate  
on it**



Giphy, <http://gph.is/1k5pPfg>



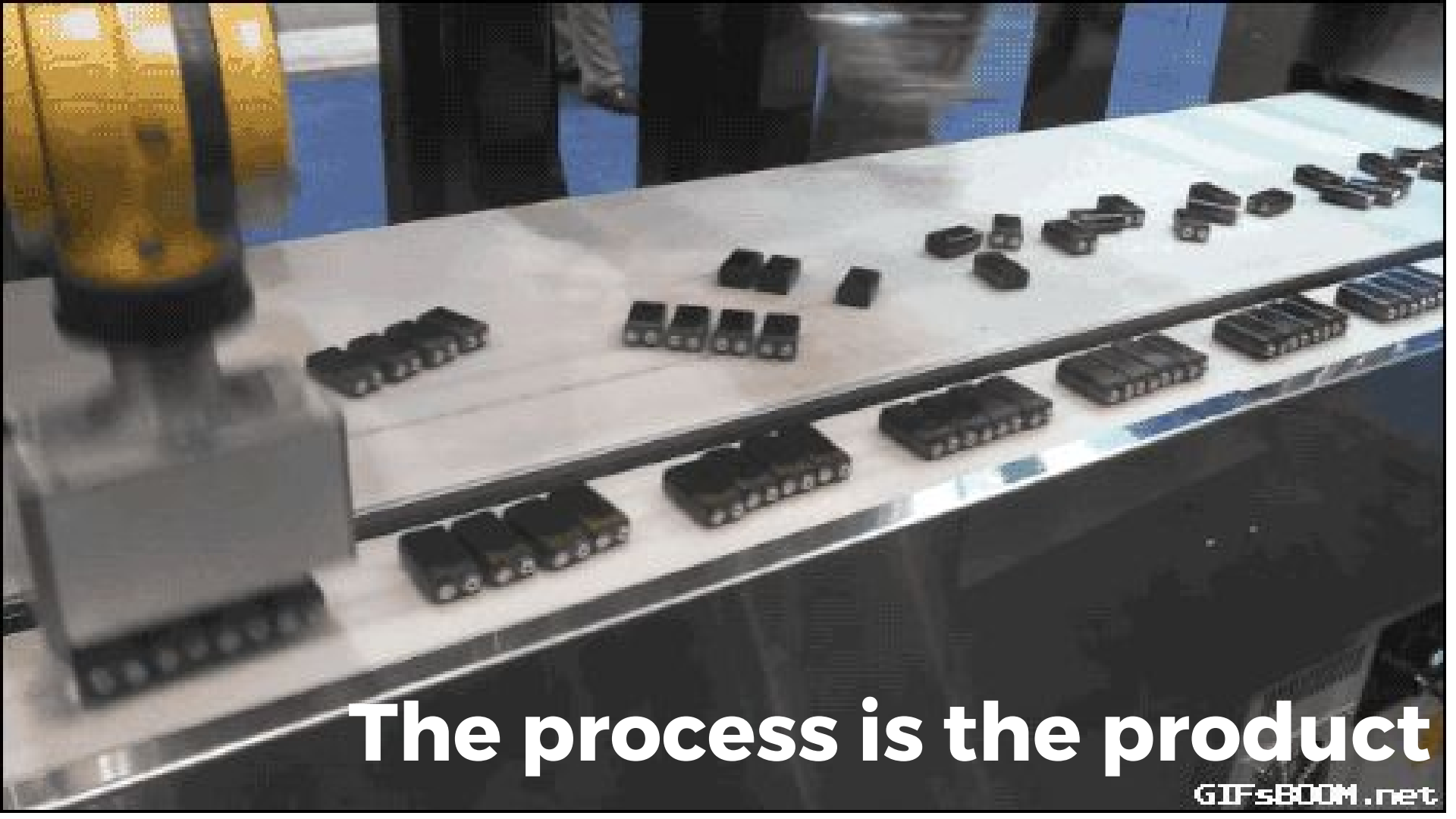
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# Keep refining



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**The process is the product**

# There are always new frontiers to test

- Localization
- Increased segmentation by:
  - Donation history
  - Demographic data
- Campaign schedule
- Banner sequencing
- Donor education
- Mobile optimization

***Every dollar that we receive is to us a mark of independence. People know that they can trust us because we are not influenced by any outside stakeholders - we are just here to make knowledge available. And so that support is a very important relationship for us; we are here for you and you are here for us.***



Photo of Katherine Maher by Victor Grigas, CC BY-SA 3.0

**THANK YOU**



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