



in:SPOTLIGHT MESSIANIC JEWISH ALLIANCE OF AMERICA

The Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) has been sharing the message of Yeshua (Jesus) with the Jewish people since 1915. As the ministry's goals have grown, so has the need for creative ways to acquire new donors, secure second gifts and keep supporters engaged long term.

In 1996, the group sensed a calling to reach out more intentionally to the people of Israel. At the time, many Jews were emigrating from the former Soviet Union to escape rampant anti-Semitism. Israel had difficulty absorbing this mass influx, and as a result, many families were living in dire poverty.

In response, the MJAA began increasing the volume of much-needed aid to the poor. Thanks to the generosity of donors, the MJAA warehouse in Israel is packed wall to wall with relief that ranges from hospital equipment and paper goods to food and baby shoes.

GROWTH FOR GOOD

Motivated by a deep desire to make a significant impact, the MJAA has distributed roughly \$95 million in aid since 1996. For every dollar contributed to the cause, the group is able to offer \$9 worth of goods. Despite these impressive advances, the ministry's vision continually outpaces its budget.

Three years ago, the group partnered with KMA, a Pursuant company, to bolster their donor base and magnify the ministry's effectiveness.

"Our ministry has been a mom-and-pop operation since 1915. Most of the people involved are busy rabbis with little to no business experience," says Terri Gillespie, chief operating officer for the MJAA. "When I first met the KMA personnel, I was extremely impressed with the caliber of professionalism. And in spite of our small size, KMA leadership invested in us for years before we were able to sign on."

At the outset of their partnership, the MJAA first tested KMA's services against those of another agency. Compared to the competing agency, KMA's acquisition program produced double the results.

"That wasn't difficult to sell to our board," says Gillespie with a laugh.

The remarkable outcome gave the MJAA the confidence to entrust the entire fundraising program to the KMA team. KMA then assisted the MJAA with a comprehensive package of development services, including monthly appeal letters, newsletters, weekly donor receipts, email appeals, website copy, telemarketing and data analysis.

"One of the unique aspects of the MJAA is their willingness to embrace a holistic approach to fundraising," says Karen Burman, senior vice president of client services for KMA. "Their team understands that unified messaging coordinated across channels is the best way to reach and engage donors."

REACHING A WIDER AUDIENCE

Critical to improving donor communications was ensuring that messaging was strategic and consistent. The first year kicked off with a communication calendar crafted to send donors down different paths based on individual reactions to what they received.

One of the key changes was expanding acquisition from the organization's defined market, Messianic Jews, to sympathetic Christians. "Using the right messaging allowed the MJAA to share their vision with and cultivate support from a broader base," says KMA Account Executive Stephanie Haddix. "By thinking differently about the audience, it expanded the opportunity."

KMA also added creative power to the MJAA's messaging. Direct mail and newsletters spotlighted Jewish holidays like Shavuot and Passover. Appeals educated prospects and donors about world affairs affecting Israel, often including petitions to President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

"The KMA team seems to have more than a professional incentive to learn about our ministry's unique sensitivities," says Gillespie. "The depth of research they did into our festivals and holidays made me so much more confident that they would be able to write in our voice."

THE RESULTS

During the first year of KMA's program, the number of active MJAA donors doubled from 4,200 to more than 8,300, and donor retention rose 4.5 percent to almost 68 percent.

At the close of 2010, appeal response had gone up **116 percent** over the prior year without KMA, and it increased an additional **23 percent** in 2011. The ROI on appeals was up 16 percent, and even after agency fees, the net appeal income at the end of fiscal year 2010 was up 55 percent from previous years.

As donations increase, more people around the world receive aid. In just the past year, the MJAA increased aid shipments in 40-foot containers from **11 to 28**. More than **100,000** Israelites received **\$4 million** in critical aid, and **more than 1,800** Ethiopian Jews received medical care.

A SHARED EFFORT

Since the beginning, the KMA staff has mentored Gillespie and her team, which she credits as crucial to their success. "They taught us best practices in fundraising using strong data and crafting a tailored approach unique to our organization," she says.

Gillespie also points out the invaluable resources Pursuant provides its clients in the form of whitepapers, digital magazines, webinars and other learning tools.

"The information is very helpful for those of us who haven't had a lot of experience in fundraising," says Gillespie. "I've learned so much about how to be a better development director and operations manager, thanks to Pursuant."

About the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America

The Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) was founded in 1915 and is the largest association of Messianic Jews and non-Jewish believers in Yeshua (Jesus) in the world. The ministry's purpose is to testify to the large and growing number of Jewish people who believe that Yeshua is the promised Messiah and Savior of the world, to bring together Jews and non-Jews who have a shared vision for Jewish revival, and to introduce Jewish people to the Jewish Messiah Yeshua. MJAA also provides extensive humanitarian relief to Israel, Ethiopia, Europe and the United States.