

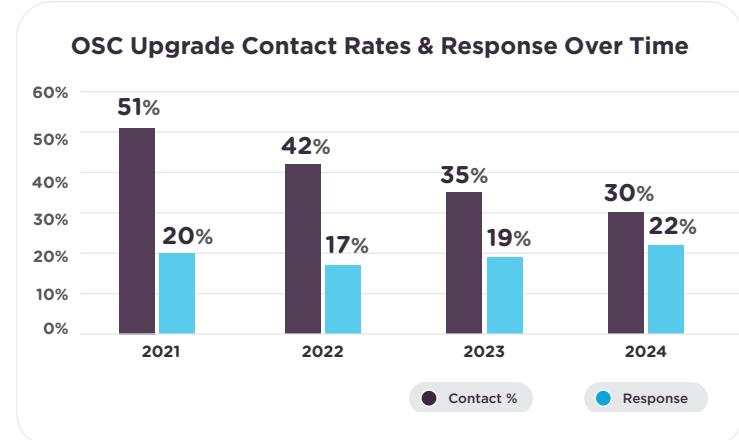
Operation Smile SMS Upgrade

Upgrade calls to monthly donors are a critical component of a strong monthly giving strategy. These calls are an important opportunity to remind your most loyal donors what sparked their passion for your cause in the first place and how valuable they are to your mission. Most importantly, upgrade calls are a chance for donors to deepen their financial commitment to your cause and fulfill their philanthropic goals through your organization.

Stratcom has partnered with Operation Smile Canada since 2021 to deliver high quality Upgrade calls as part of their full telefundraising strategy. Upgrade calling both increases the lifetime value of their monthly giving file and improves retention of monthly donors. According to one study carried out by Stratcom, retention of donors who receive an upgrade call increases by 5%, even when they decline to increase their gift.

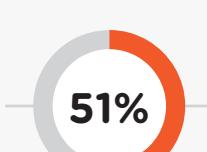
The Challenge

Contact rates have been a growing concern in the telefundraising space for years – exacerbated by growing mobile phone popularity – leading to fewer reachable monthly donors for Upgrade calls. As this happens, those donors' monthly gift values stagnate, and without that important personal touchpoint from the charity, their loyalty may stagnate or even decrease slightly. Operation Smile Canada recognized the challenge of declining contact rates in their Upgrade campaigns, which dropped from 51% in 2021 to just 30% in 2024 – a 41% decrease. On a campaign that would have contacted 1,000 monthly donors in 2021, the same campaign in 2024 would only reach 590 monthly donors.



The Challenge of Declining Contact Rates

Contact rate



2021



1,000

Monthly Donor Contacts

Contact rate



2024



590

Monthly Donor Contacts

The Effect of Declining Rates on Upgrades

With an average upgrade response of



Using an average value

of **\$8.50**

That is a loss of almost
\$700
per month

The Solution

In order to mitigate this change, Stratcom recommended sending an SMS message following the Upgrade campaign to donors we weren't able to reach on the phone. Operation Smile Canada agreed to test this approach, and in December, we sent a follow-up SMS to those unreachable monthly donors.

The message was sent to 2,131 donors, with 310 replying either with a keyword provided in the initial SMS, triggering an automated response, or with a personal message they wanted to share with Operation Smile Canada, all of which were responded to by live agents. In the end, 196 monthly donors decided to upgrade their gift. This yielded a total value of \$1,050 in monthly revenue. The cost for the SMS broadcast was \$1,149 in total before tax, generating a Year 1 ROI of 11!

✓ Achieved an upgrade response of **9.2%** from the SMS alone

✓ **SMS Generated \$1,050 in monthly revenue,** not only offsetting the \$700 loss brought about by the decline in contact rates, **but bringing in 1.5 times that much!**

✓ Began the process of **acclimatising Operation Smile Canada monthly donors to receiving SMS messages** as a positive means of communication