Designing Donor Communications: Lessons From Around the World

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By the end of the session you should be able to:

- Describe the 4 truths of communication
- Distinguish between features and benefits
- Develop a fundraising proposition for your organization
- Design more effective fundraising communication
Four fundraising truths…

- People give because they feel something
Four fundraising truths...

- People give because they feel something
- People give to people – but not loads of people
Four fundraising truths...

- People give because they feel something
- People give to people – but not loads of people
- Nobody is interested in what you do
In the non-profit world…

‘What you DO is of no interest to anyone…

…except you!

‘What you ACHIEVE (by doing it) can motivate even the stoniest of hearts’
Marine Conservation Society

The beauty
The horror
Some examples...

‘$10 could help us to produce 10 pocket Good Fish Guides.’

Better...

‘$10 could mean 10 more people choosing fish from sustainable sources.’
Some examples…

‘$100 could allow us to spend an hour advising a fisherman on how to use wildlife friendly fishing gear.’

Better…

‘$100 can mean another fisherman using wildlife friendly fishing gear.’
Four fundraising truths...

- People give because they feel something
- People give to people – but not loads of people
- Nobody is interested in what you do
- People give to things that are close to them
  - Emotionally close
  - Geographically close
Creating a fundraising proposition

So ...
Exercise 1

- Why should I give you $500?
A fundraising proposition is the answer to the question…

‘Why should I give you $500 now?’
The proposition has four pillars...

RNLI
Vision
Enemy
Hero
Recipient
Example 1: RNLI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISION</th>
<th>ENEMY</th>
<th>HERO</th>
<th>RECIPIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No deaths at sea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

The Four Pillars Exercise
Tangible Response Aug 2007
Example 1: RNLI

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<td>The cruel sea</td>
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<tbody>
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<td>No deaths at sea</td>
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<td>Tough, bearded, lifeboat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>crewman</td>
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## Example 1: RNLI

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No deaths at sea</td>
<td>The cruel sea</td>
<td>Tough, bearded, lifeboat</td>
<td>That stupid, drunken, day sailor, who fell off his boat!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>crewman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
He’ll face 30ft waves, blizzards, force 9 gales and sub-zero temperatures.

All we ask of you is £20.

To: The Chief Executive, RNLI, FREEPOST (BH173), West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 1XF.
### Example 2: Sue Ryder Care

<table>
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<th>ENEMY</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to help every seriously ill person to have the best quality of life</td>
<td>limited availability of the best quality care</td>
<td>our passionate and expert carers</td>
<td>someone I love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SRC’s fundraising proposition

When someone you love is seriously ill, our passionate, expert carers will help them enjoy the best life they can, in the time they have.
Are you sitting uncomfortably?

Vision - best quality of life

Recipient - someone I love

Hero - passionate, expert carers

If you've ever sat in pained discomfort, you'll understand why a chair like this meant the world to Marc.

Dear neighbour,

Let me tell you about Marc – a young man who's lost his life here at St Albans, not far from you. Always smiling (yes, you can see from the picture), always sociable, he was a real character around the building, the life and soul of the party. He always had a smile for everyone, and they had a smile for him.

Marc died peacefully at home a few months ago. He was just 24.

He had developed Huntington's Disease at 15 – a progressive, degenerative brain disease that slowly robs him of his ability to walk, speak, move, eat and drink. Over the years, Marc's memory and coordination declined, but he remained well and was able to live at home for as long as possible. He had always been a fighter and was determined to stay independent as long as possible.

Unfortunately, a chair like the one Marc needed cost around £3,500. A lot for a family like Marc's to find, you might agree – especially with all the extra costs that supporting someone who's seriously ill brings.

So today, I want to ask if you'll lend a hand. If you're going on holiday here at St Albans, can you please make a donation today? It will help us provide the support that Marc needed.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Smith

Care Centre Manager
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Pinned to a chair all day every day would be agony without special padding.

Towards the end of Marc's life, Huntington's disease forced him to be in a wheelchair. To make him more comfortable, it needed to be specially adapted and padded to suit him.

There were lots of things that we did – like the pillow for his head and the seat for his feet. We made sure that he was as comfortable as possible, and it really helped him.
### Example 3: Royal Exchange Theatre

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<tr>
<td>Everyone in Manchester gripped by the transformative power of live theatre</td>
<td>Theatre is out-of-reach, remote or unfamiliar; not for the ‘likes of us’</td>
<td>The magic and dazzle of Theatre, powered by passionate artists bringing performance to where people are.</td>
<td>Manchester people with a love of Theatre and ALL those yet to discover it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fundraising Proposition

- A gift of £200 brings the dazzle and wonder of live performance to wherever Manchester people come together: in the Royal Exchange, in schools, community halls and drop-in centres. Everyone, from the seasoned theatre-lover to a youngster or a homeless veteran, can be gripped by the spectacle and feel the transformative magic of Theatre.
An immortal quote...

The strongest desire is not love or hate, but the need to change someone else’s copy.

...which certainly appears in David Ogilvy’s book.
Key Rules of Fundraising
Comms from George Smith – wonderful man!

- Write in simple straightforward English – one human being to another …
George Smith, wonderful man!

- Approximately – about
- Participate – take part
- Establish – set up
- Utilise - use
- Use short sentences and vary the lengths
- Use short paragraphs and vary the lengths
Doesn’t it upset you to walk among people who have lost everything? Doesn’t it distress you to see small children dying in their mothers’ arms?

I am often asked these questions when I return from a disaster zone. Quite frankly it does and it doesn’t...

It doesn’t because I’m busy when I’m visiting the scene of a disaster. I don’t feel the helplessness you feel in front of your TV. Just the opposite, I have the privilege of being able to do something to ease the suffering.
But of course it hurts when someone you’ve got to know dies.

In the civil war in Uganda I was visiting camps for people fleeing the fighting. We picked up a very sick mother and her starving children to take them to hospital in Kampala. In the crowded jeep a little boy of five or six sat on my lap. We smiled at each other as the jeep bounced along the rough direct roads. He died before we reached the hospital.

That evening I just dissolved into tears. I have a child about the same age.
Autoblag

- If your boss or client are happy with the copy it is probably under-achieving.
- If words look about right the first time around, then both parties are presiding over mediocrity. It may work, but it could have worked better.
- Fundraising copy deserves better than comfort.
Key Rules of Fundraising

Comms

- Format your letter for easy reading
Reading Gravity
Key Rules of Fundraising Comms

- Relate the story to the reader
For instance...

- One in three of the population will suffer from Cancer..
- One in three of us will suffer …
- One in three of your family and friends…
Avoid Tautology

A major nuclear disaster
He said he had nothing further to add
First invented or first discovered
Mutual agreement
Died from a fatal dose of heroin
Jargon

- Biodiversity
- Community development
- Skill-sharing
- Empower
With thanks to the sublime George Smith!
Dr Vogele

- Reader spends more time on the back of an envelope than the front
- It takes under 3 seconds to decide to read or dispose
- Large pictures get more attention than small ones. Color more than black and white.
- p.s.
Typography, a little used art

- A little understood art form
- Some rules…
Bold is good for headlines
So is sans serif type

They drag the eye along its natural trajectory while pausing at important points along the way. They can break the copy to make it look less daunting to read, especially if it is a long letter.

Headlines do not need full stops

They put a brake on the brain.
And hinder the natural trajectory of the eye.
CAPITALS SHOULD BE AVOIDED. EN MASS THEY FORM PATTERNS NOT WORDS.
In copy, you would never reverse out type would you? It makes everything so very hard to read. Even only 22 words.

Like capitals, blocks of reversed out type forms patterns not words. The brain has to work harder to decipher the pattern – it is tiring.
YOU WOULD NEVER REVERSE OUT CAPITALS WOULD YOU? It makes everything so very hard to read. Even only 8 words.
Color

- Comprehensibility of colored text increases as the color gets closer to black. So why not use black – and use color where it’s best suited – as a complement to the message.

- Colored type on same tints should be avoided except where the color is of low intensity and dark – and the tint is light.

- A reversed out page might look dramatic – but it is the enemy of comprehension

- Sans serif is better than serif type in reverse
PARE OS EXPERIMENTOS GENÉTICOS NA SUA FAMÍLIA

Greenpeace necessita da sua ajuda para parar um dos experimentos mais assustadores com a nossa natureza, o nosso abastecimento alimentar e a nossa saúde. Um experimento que afeta você e sua família. Gêneros alimenticios engendrados geneticamente.

A engenharia genética permite que os genes sejam transferidos entre espécies totalmente não relacionadas. Ninguém calculou os riscos que isto traz, ou pode garantir que não causará problemas para a agricultura e o meio ambiente.

Devido ao fato que engenheiros genéticos têm mezido com ingredientes básicos tais como a milho e a soja, milhões de alimentos processados em breve transformarão qualquer pessoa que os ingere em um ‘laboratório de ratinho’ vivo.

Greenpeace está determinado a parar esta insanidade, mas precisamos de seu apoio. Por favor, faça a sua contribuição hoje, e traga segurança e sanidade à comida que ingerimos.

A ajude Greenpeace, ajude a sua família

Sim, desejo apoiar Greenpeace

☐ 3.000 Escudos
☐ 10.000 Escudos
☐ 20.000 Escudos
☐ Sua escolha

Se poder dar 3.000 Escudos ou mais, lá qualify para se tornar membro da Greenpeace, e receberá informações regulares em inglês sobre o progresso dos seus campos.

Favor debitar o meu cartão de crédito MasterCard/Visa Card número.

Código postal

Sua assinatura

Favor retornar esta forma com a sua doação à Greenpeace International, Supporter Services, Koopergat 176, 1086 DW Amsterdam, The Netherlands, http://www.greenpeace.org

GREENPEACE
And ...

Learning from Tom Ahern
What should you say?
Stop talking about yourself!

“If we show them how great we are, they'll support us.”
“Corporate" communications and "donor" communications are 180° different.
Corporate communications are about how great the organization is.

Favourite pronoun: we
Email subject line: You are amazing!

Dear John!
Because of you, we reached our Summer Match Campaign fundraising goal. Thank you!!
Get the headlines right

With thanks to Tom Ahern
Artwork: 80 percent
Photos: 75 percent
Headlines: 56 percent
Briefs: 31 percent
Captions: 29 percent
Text: 25 percent*

*This number is abnormally high, according to Poynter Institute researchers. They tested prototypes rather than actual publications. Prototypes invariably produce higher, more positive numbers than real publications. Source: Ann Wylie
A good donor headline:
(1) captures the gist of the story
(2) has a hook
(3) applauds the donor
High Quality Feedback …
Donors are asking...

44% - UP from 25% the previous year

Blackbaud 2016 State of the Not-for-profit Survey UK
Get them to join your campaigns
We expose the suffering of horses on their long-distance journey to slaughter.

100,000 horses are still being trucked long-distances across Europe to slaughter. Please help them. Make A Noise now!

Every day, horses from Poland, Romania, Spain, Lithuania and Belarus are packed into trucks and trucked thousands of miles across Europe in appalling conditions. We want to end this trade. As Director of Campaigns and Communications, I have led the ILPH campaign to introduce the most necessary regulations in Europe.

The shocking reality is that this legally ignored trade is still happening in every country. We need to ask for a legal way to transport horses across borders. The trade must be stopped and the animals rescued.

With Make A Noise, you can be part of the solution. With your support, we can and will put an end to this trade. We need everyone to join the campaign to protect these beautiful animals. Together, we can make a difference.

Help us break the trade that’s breaking horses.

MAKE A NOISE

Drive long-distance transportation of horses for slaughter off Europe’s roads.

To the Commissioner – Add your voice to mine.
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) – U.S.

- Activists taking 2+ actions between September and November were 4x more likely to donate at year-end
- Donors taking 2+ actions produced 26% more revenue at year-end than non-activists

Nick Allen
Stop thinking about…

- …winning campaigns

Start thinking about…

- …winning hearts, winning commitment!
- …and the campaign becomes the mechanism!
Ask them for their views...
And be donor-centric ...

- How often and what ...
Phew ... 

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Adrian.Sargeant@plymouth.ac.uk