

Direct Forum

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Direct Forum is a free e-mail newsletter containing useful direct marketing tips, news updates and how-to information. It's convenient, informative and I am not trying to sell you anything.

1. Who says old dogs can't learn new tricks?
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Who says old dogs can't learn new tricks?

What I did not mention in my last newsletter was that I have started creating my newsletters using an entirely different design program.

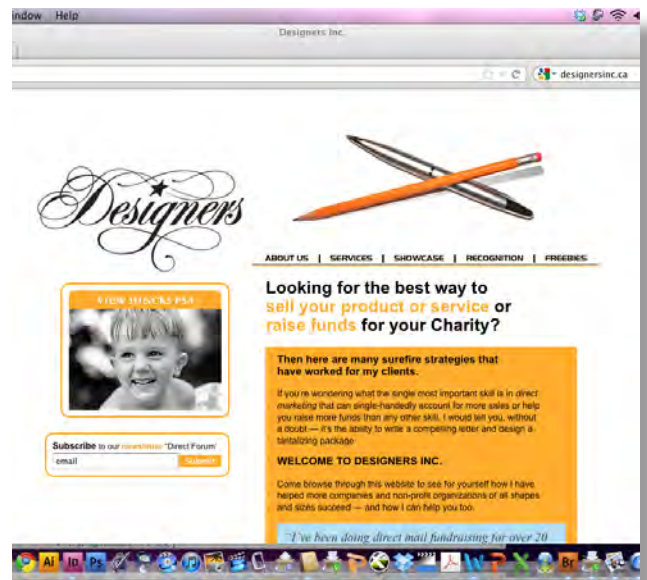
After having worked for 140 dog years in the design program called QuarkExpress, I finally switched to InDesign.

I did it partly because all my design students use this software so it is the only way I can look at their work. As well, more and more people in the industry have adopted this software.

As I familiarize myself with the program I am learning that it has its advantages and disadvantages. One of the biggest advantages is the ability to create hyperlinks.

This is a bonus for me because I am constantly asked by people to send them one of my older newsletters. Now all I have to do is to direct them to click on the link below:

www.designersinc.ca. That takes you directly to my web site where you can click on the “freebies” section and retrieve any back issue you want.



My home page.

Acquiring New Donors—Plan B

Let's talk about cultivating new donors. Acquisition has always been the lifeblood of every nonprofit's survival.

Most of you have all tried Plan A: Acquiring new donors either by renting a list or exchanging your list with other charities.

In the "old" days that was a sure-fire way to grow your house list. However, according to *Target Analytics*, the industry has been experiencing declines in new donor acquisition for six straight years, a trend they feel will continue.

This study states that acquiring new donors is especially challenging today. Only a handful of people even consider providing gifts to organizations they have never supported before.

The study shows that:

- Many feel the economic pinch and are unwilling to support another nonprofit organization.
- Older donors—the bread and butter of every charity—are extremely skittish about the economy and less willing to take on a new cause. Nearly 9 in 10 people older than 60 are less willing to support a new cause (86%) compared to just 64% of donors younger than 40.

Don't blame all this on direct marketing. It hasn't failed. It's just that we are looking for new donors in the wrong places.

So, where do we do we go from here?

Remember those Lapsed Donors that make up about 30-50% of your house list? If they have not given for five years or more, you should really consider them as new prospects.

Except that there is a difference—they did give your charity a gift at one time.

These are the prime candidates you should consider for Plan B.

In the "good old" days, the senior staff member would call up a lapsed donor, perhaps see them



**Plan B Prospects:
lapsed donors**

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personally and try to find out why they had stopped giving. Chances were that 6 out of 10 of those lapsed donors would once again support the charity.

But that approach is a lost art. Face-to-face contact has been taken over by digital lifestyle and devices that put a new degree of separation between you and those who have fallen by the wayside.

However, what has not changed is the reason behind making that face-to-face contact.

Currently I am testing two methods of luring lapsed donors back and once I get the results, I will talk about them in future newsletters. So stay tuned!

Social media is changing how we communicate

At one time Information flowed in one direction: from companies to advertising agencies to consumers. When the agencies drew up their plans the key metric was consumer reach and frequency; i.e., how many impressions of your advertising could reach how many people how many times.

As I mentioned in my last newsletter under the heading—***What to do now that our traditional marketing methods have stopped working***—today there has been a quantum shift in who controls the conversation about your brand. It is no longer solely the advertising agency, the corporation or the retailer.

It is also your consumer or donor. They are in charge of your brand as much as you are and what they think and say about it can spread like a brushfire.

I think it is important how well companies and charities embrace their critics and their advocates. Acquiring a new donor or ensuring consumer loyalty has less to do with what an organization does and everything to do with what your advocates do.

Perhaps the most consequential change is how they have become empowered to create their own content about your brand and share it throughout their networks of friends and beyond.



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I offer two suggestions:

1. Accept those who talk about you.

Don't fight this wave. Accept it and feed it with content that touches donors' and consumers' passions.

For example: I estimate that there are over 23,400 **Special Olympics** videos on **YouTube**.

Only two were created on behalf of **Special Olympics Ontario**—one by my student and the other by me. Other **Special Olympics** offices created the others but in most cases the videos were created and posted online by individual advocates of **Special Olympics**.

To watch my contribution, which has already been viewed by over 4,200 people, just double click on the link below.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Inben6Fwero

2. Accept that your branding is no longer in your hands. It's in the hands of your consumers or donors. Companies spend thousands creating a Graphics Standards Manual and protecting how their material can and cannot be used. But can it?

For example: Consider **Coca-Cola's** fan-page on **Facebook**. An employee at their headquarters in Atlanta didn't design and post it. Instead, it was launched by two consumers in Los Angeles as a genuine expression of how they felt about **Coca-Cola**.

A decade ago, a big company like **Coca-Cola** would have sent a "cease and desist" letter from their lawyer. Instead they've partnered with them to create new content for their **Facebook** page that now has more than 40 million likes (fans).

Social media fundraising has not yet fully matured, but it will be a great way to spark passion and loyalty among your supporters. As we all know, loyalty is the most important element for success.

Here's my question: How are you doing in terms of having success with your social media efforts today? Please let me know.



Back in 2002 when I interviewed **Judy Elder** for my column: **Direct & Personal** in *Direct Marketing*, just before she passed away, she said something quite profound about branding. She asked, "Who can solely lay claim to the success or failure of any brand when each consumer experiences a million touch-points by the separate elements of the marketing mix, elements that include advertising, direct marketing, sponsorships, events, customer relationship management, public relations, branding, the internet and a host of other sources?"

Charitable newsletter—a bird of a different feather

- A newsletter is always more welcome than a direct marketing piece because it is a soft sell not a hard ask for funds.
- It should bring elation and joy. It should be fun and easy to read. It must take the reader on a journey—one of fundraising guru Adrian Sargeant's seven principles.
- It should shamelessly flatter and express gratitude towards its donors.
- It should not be about your organization, how great it is or what the staff is doing. It shouldn't be a laundry list of your programs either.
- It should take your donors on that special journey by telling little success stories about people who have been helped by your organization. Be verbally descriptive and use pictures.
- It should inspire your readers to want to help those anxiously awaiting their chance to turn their lives around too.
- It must solicit avid outpourings of compassion and good feelings.
- Ultimately the good will you produce will result in greater revenues.
- Here are a few guidelines as to what it should look like.
- Keep it short, no more than four to eight pages.
- Feature short stories and articles.
- Write effective headlines that captivate.
- Write for skimmers (most readers do just that),
- Insert a separate reply device and include a #9 reply envelope.
- Keep it personal (like a DM package the word "you" is "glue").
- Focus on your accomplishments. Show how their gifts have changed peoples' lives.



Newsletters can be a great fundraising source for charities

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- Include a section that identifies who gave how much.
- Invite donor participation.
- Make sure all features of it translate well to PDF for emailing and posting on your website.

Send it by email or hard copy to all donors who subscribe.

Send a hard copy to your most likely prospects.

Leave your reader with just one thought to consider—"I am proud to sponsor this charity."

Unlike direct mail, a good newsletter doesn't blatantly ask for money. A newsletter must act as a subtle reminder of the projects that the readers have supported in the past and tell them how grateful the charity is to them. A newsletter must strengthen the relationship with donors and hopefully increase the lifetime value of the donor.

OPT IN, OPT OUT, OPTIONS:

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designersinc@sympatico.ca

To download back issues of my newsletters go to 'Freebies' on my website: www.designersinc.ca

To unsubscribe, send me an e-mail simply saying, "Please, remove".

To participate, send me an email with your suggestions.

To post a comment, please include your name, email address and your thoughts.

Let me remind you again that your name and/or e-mail address will never be shared, sold, circulated, or passed along to anyone else.

Designers Inc.
1407-99 Harbour Square,
Toronto, ON
M5J 2H2

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One of my first newsletters for the **University of St. Michael's College** was a "Report to Donors", printed on newsprint. It was sent to alumni that had given as well as those who had not donated.

A simple letter to the latter group said, "Look how much friends have given." It raised over \$56,000 from them in the first year and each year it has grown.

Now, that's one great way to bring back Lapsed Donors.

