

Direct Forum is a free email 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. My analysis** of which direct marketing concepts **worked** and... **which did not.**

**2. How to keep the reader involved** from sentence-to-sentence..

**3. Flattery:** A good tool for your fundraising toolbox.

## My analysis of which direct marketing concepts worked and... which did not.

For the last 15 years I have raised millions by writing and designing fundraising appeals for charities using direct mail.

What worked and what did not is based on field-tested results.

But first a few words about direct mail:

- **It is still not dead. When done right It continues to generate the greatest amount of funds from individuals.**

In fact, even Steve MacLaughlin,

Director of Blackbaud, a company that only promotes online fundraising methods once said: "93% of funds are still achieved by traditional methods."

- The primary goal of direct marketing should be to solicit a response—to get people to act.
- Direct marketing is also great for preaching to the converted. That is why who you talk to is the most important factor in its success.

**Therefore the list of people you mail to is the most crucial.** In fact every textbook on the subject of direct marketing will tell you that 50% of the success depends on who you talk to.

You have to choose your list carefully to focus on a predisposed audience— predisposed to your category, product or service.

For example, direct mail won't convince someone to change political parties, but it's great for getting someone to contribute to the party they belong to.

- Finally, you have to catch the reader's attention, which is getting harder to do. It seems that the attention span of people is now below the average attention span of a goldfish.



A recent research study determined that the average attention span of a goldfish is 9 seconds [1]. In 2000 scientists measured the average attention span of adult humans. It was 12 seconds. In 2013 the same test revealed the average attention span had dropped to 8 seconds.

National Centre for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine, The Associated Press, via Chris Washington-Sare

## What worked

**When my reader's were engaged:**

### 1. Through storytelling.

Yes, there is magic in storytelling,

**My Verdict:** Don't just narrate a good story but touch and inspire your donors to act so they can help others in a similar situation.

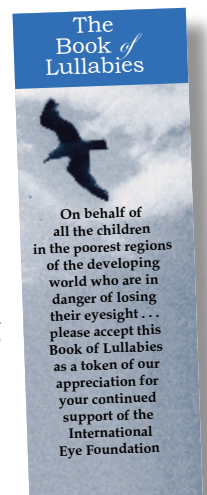
### 2. With an insert that tells a story.

I have used pieces of cardboard to conjure up homelessness, a toothbrush to demonstrate that when women in an abusive situation are fleeing for their lives, they don't even have time to pack the very basic necessities. It's a great way to tell a dramatic story.

Other involvement devices I have used to increase response:

- **A yes/no sticker**
- **A book of lullabies**
- **A questionnaire or survey with a pencil**

**My Verdict:** Sending anything that is tactile, tangible and mail-able gives you great stopping power.



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### 3. Use of Donor Recognition pieces.

This only applies to loyal high-end donors. Acknowledging their value with a small token of appreciation leads to high satisfaction. Plus, these small gestures of acknowledgement have a proven impact on donor giving and future gift value. 87% of people made an unsolicited gift after having received a recognition gift and this can be a powerful influencing factor in future giving decisions.

**My Verdict:** Put recognition of high value donors on your priority list.

gifts, but are negatively inclined them.

Donor attrition has an obvious long-term negative impact on fundraising. The high cost of premiums is often cited as a primary reason for donor attrition. Token gifts upset loyal donors because of the added expense associated with using them.

**My Verdict:** It's short-term gain that is likely to lead to donor attrition and long term pain. My verdict when it comes to token gifts for your all donors? Leave them out.

### 2. When I misread the donor.

In a recent mailing to a house donor file, I thought that a charity for single mothers provided help in educating teenagers who dropped out of high-school because they got pregnant.

I was wrong. This was not why they supported the charity. They supported it because these girls had no other support. They were alone.

**My Verdict:** Always research past mailing results to find out what topics elicited the greatest positive responses. Then find a way to relay that message in a new and more powerful way.

## What did not work:

#### 1. When I was asked to do something simply because it had worked in the past.

I am talking about mailing with premiums like address labels, greeting cards, etc.

Generally these kinds of premiums are frowned on by donors as ploys to get them to donate. According to the Donor Burke Survey, most people report that they are not swayed by token

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### 3. When I was asked to solicit a new category of donors who had no giving history.

As I said earlier, direct marketing is great for preaching to the converted.

The charity in this case got a list of Air Miles subscribers for free. This group was asked to either make a small gift or donate some of their Air Miles reward miles.

While the exact same piece worked well on the house list of donors, this piece did not do so well with Air Miles subscribers. Less than 0.3% responded.

**My Verdict:** Air Miles reward miles donors are takers, not givers. They joined the organization to get things for free, not to help others. Remember, 50% of the success of any mailing depends on who you mail to.

**Alongside is a partial list of some of the charities I have had the privilege of working for:**

- Amnesty International
- Arthritis Society of Canada
- Breakfast for Learning
- Canadian Bible Society
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- CAMH Foundation
- Cancer Research Society
- Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research
- FoodShare Toronto
- Juvenile Diabetes Foundation
- The Canadian Cancer Society
- Canadian Liver Foundation
- Canadian Crossroads International
- Canadian Diabetes Association
- Covenant House
- Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada
- Easter Seal Society
- Good Neighbour's Club
- Hammer Band
- Heart and Stroke Foundation
- Hincks Centre for Children's for Mental Health
- IEF International Eye Foundation (USA)
- IWK Health Centre Foundation
- Invest in Kids Foundation
- Imagine Canada
- Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation
- Make-A-Wish Canada
- Prostate Cancer Research Foundation of Canada
- Save the Children-Canada
- Second Harvest
- Shades of Hope
- Show Kids You Care
- Special Olympics Ontario
- Springtide Resources
- The Lisa Brown Charitable Foundation
- The Massey Centre for Women
- The Royal Conservatory of Music
- Tree Canada
- Sierra Legal Defence Fund
- Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario
- Toronto Humane Society
- United Way Montreal
- University of St. Michael's College
- Vancouver Symphony Orchestra
- UNICEF
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children
- Youth Employment Centre
- YWCA of Greater Toronto
- Toronto Zoo

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# How to keep readers involved from sentence-to-sentence.

It's called connecting the thoughts.

The reader's tendency is to scan copy and only continue reading if the next paragraph is either linked to the previous statement or continues to explain more.

Connectives provide a way of hooking paragraphs together. I use them whenever I'm trying to create a sequence of related ideas to ensure that the reader continues to keep on reading.

## **COPYWRITING HINTS:**

Here are some basic connective words that link sentences together quite well:

- But that's not all. . .
- Of course you can also. . .
- Here is another reason why. . .
- So you see. . .
- Here's another reason why. . .
- To show you what I mean. . .
- If you wonder why. . .
- You see, this is the real problem. . .
- I'm sure you'll understand, when I say. . .
- Also, you will have. . .
- And there's more. . .
- And when that happened. . .
- Here's another reason why. . .
- Meanwhile, you also will find. . .
- Nevertheless, until you also. . .
- Moreover, that happens when. . .
- This is why. . .
- Why not consider. . .
- If that happens you can expect. . .
- The truth is. . .
- In addition, . . .
- But wait, that's not all. . .
- Why am I so concerned?
- Because. . .
- Let me explain. . .
- But first. . .

CONTINUES ...

**DESIGN HINTS:**

- Use visual anchors like hand written text, underlines, italics, etc. (but sparingly) They act like yellow highlighting to emphasize the main points of your message.

**IEF INTERNATIONALEYE FOUNDATION**

*Enclosed is a book of famous lullabies especially for you. Let me tell you why . . .*

Dear Friend,

In the enclosed book of lullabies you will find the most famous lullaby "Hush little baby don't you cry" right at the start of the book.

There's a good reason for that; lullabies have always provided a soothing way to help children fall asleep all over the world.

Mothers in many developing countries have their babies strapped to their backs and sing to them as they go about their day. They sing them to sleep and they sing to them when they cry.

But there are some things no song can soothe.

It is difficult enough to get a child to sleep when they are still hungry or malnourished. It is harder still when the child is sick and in danger of losing his or her sight.



Just like the little girl Yams, who lives in a part of Africa that has the highest rate of river blindness.

This beautiful child was always full of life and energy. Just watching her smile and giggle filled one's heart with joy.

But when Yams developed a skin rash and little nodules on her head, the constant itching was so severe it made her often cry all night.

So, her parent's took her to the local clinic. The doctor took one look and shook his head. "She has river blindness," he said.

The microscopic worms passed by black flies cause this disease. The larvae enter the body through the fly bites and the victim becomes infested with tiny worms that spread under the skin throughout the body, eventually getting inside the eyes and . . .

- Indent the first line of every paragraph.

- Present information in bite size form by using shorter sentences and paragraphs,

- Make the key paragraph shorter for focus

- Avoid all caps in copy. CAPITAL LETTERS ARE DIFFICULT TO READ, AND GIVE THE FEELING THAT YOU ARE SHOUTING.

- Break up the last sentence on the page so that the reader has to turn the page and continue reading.

- Shorten overall copy area. Wide margins increase readership.
- Use dashes instead of commas—at times—to break up the routine look.
- Finally, make sure your letter looks like a letter.

**IMAGE HINTS:**

- Images work best when they are either involved in the action you are trying to portray or if they are looking straight at the reader. Humans are social animals. They communicate in a positive way by looking at another person's eyes, or in a negative way by refusing to make eye contact.

CONTINUES ...

**You look  
mah-vel ous!**

**Simply  
mah-vel ous!**

Curtsy of Billy Crystal

# **Flattery:**

## A good tool for your fundraising toolbox

It is said that flattery will get you everywhere. And this is especially true when it comes to composing a letter to your donors. Remember, it's not about you.

**Flattery is a form of social reward and can be a powerful tool.**

Complimenting an individual gives them positive feelings about the person bestowing the favourable comments, even when the recipient suspects the remarks may not be entirely truthful or sincere.

Now, research proves that compliments also aid memory.

Japanese researchers conducted a study and found that when people were given a task to learn involving motor skills, praise for their performance afterwards resulted in their remembering the task better than control groups who received no praise.

The researchers concluded that the reason was due to “memory consolidation.” That memory can be enhanced by praise.

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So educators, trainers, and fundraisers take heart. You may be able to use compliments as a strategic to make your messages more memorable and at the same time, it will be viewed more positively by your recipient's and may increase motivation, too.

**By the way, have I mentioned lately how awesome my newsletter readers are? You are intelligent, curious and insightful—thanks for being a subscriber.**

**And that's the truth!**

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