



# 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. It's not just the response rate that matters to me, it's also the kind of response

## 2. How to create an appealing appeal

### It's not just the response rate that matters to me, it's also the kind of response

I just read an interesting survey conducted by the **Direct Marketing Association** in the USA, called: **DMA Survey Shows Snail Mail, Phone Beat Digital in Response Rates.**

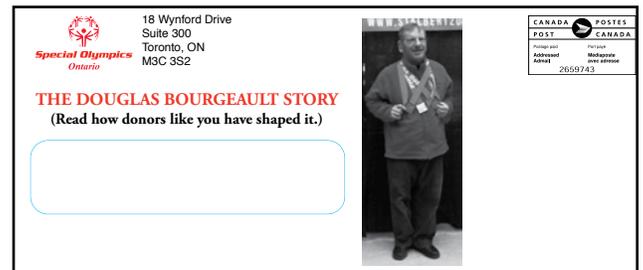
The report is based on data from the association's online survey to which 481 people responded, as well as transactional data on Internet display ads run through **Bizo** and email data from **Epsilon**.

The survey found that although direct-mail response rates have dipped, they remain well above those for digital channels. Direct-mail response rates have decreased from 4.37% in 2003 to an average response rate of 3.40% today. However, they have remained fairly stable since 2010, when the DMA's last survey showed average rates of 3.42%.

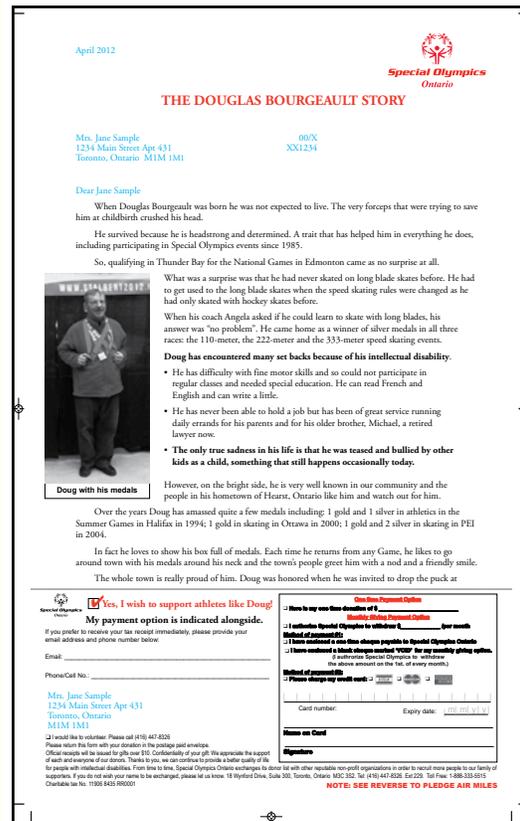
For the last six years I have been averaging well over 10% response rate for **Special Olympics Ontario**. They generally send three mailings per year to their donors.

So when the last piece I did for them once again got a 12.8% response, I was very happy. However, this time what was more thrilling for

### The outer envelope



### The Letter



me was direct feedback from some of the donors.

Alongside are two examples. Douglas Bourgeault's story (featured on the previous page) obviously touched a nerve.

Just goes to prove that good story telling is alive and well and can touch people deeply.

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## How to create an appealing fundraising appeal

Appeals should be targeted with the audience in mind rather than created around client initiatives. Written appeals involve the four crucial elements which are listed below in order of their importance:

### 1. A sense of urgency.

You have a higher than average chance of getting a response when the need you are writing about is urgent. However, an urgent appeal should be built around a once-in-a-life- time issue. You cannot cry wolf too often.

### 2. An element of specificity.

If you can state you need to a specific amount of money to accomplish a specific goal, you'll motivate more donors to give to your cause.

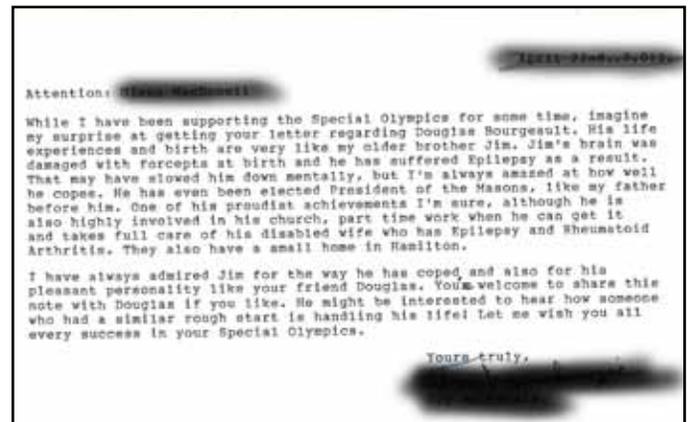
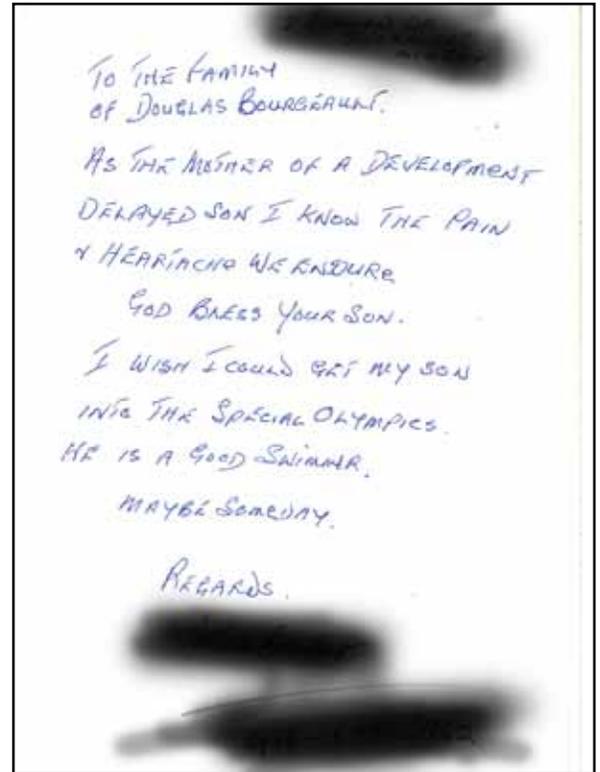
### 3. Making an emotional connection.

An emotional hook is a *lot* harder to create than a bunch of facts. Story telling is creating word-pictures. Your copy needs to inspire donors to action. It must jump out and stand out. Tell a gripping story and you'll be much more likely to get a good response.

### 4. The final element is involvement.

Any involvement devise is more likely to get a response simply because the audience has spent more time with the piece. Even asking them to place a 'Yes! I will donate' or a "No, I cannot donate right now' will provide a slight lift in response.

Online appeals also involve the same four elements except that the order may change drastically. Remember, digital is the realm of the younger



Continued overleaf ...

audience, the MTV generation. Internet users are more “picture-people” or more visually orientated.

The web has another dimension that is often neglected: **sight and sound**, so create a video that tells your story. Just imagine how many Internet viewers have watched with fascination as a cat plays a piano?

The above elements still apply although the order may look like more like this:

1. **Involvement.**
2. **A sense of urgency.**
3. **Making an emotional connection.**
4. **The element of specificity.**

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