

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. **How colours influence our buying decisions and how to use them effectively.**
2. **My secret to one of the most effective involvement devices—‘sharing a problem’.**

How colours influence our buying decisions and how to use them effectively.

In the world of marketing, colour is a science that has been extensively studied.

Advertising Agencies are renowned for using colour psychology in all their marketing material.

When the US Transportation Department researched which colour was the most visible in all conditions, they discovered it was the colour orange. No wonder it is used by *Home Depot* and in part by *McDonald's*.

Green represents freshness so is logically used in the *Jolly Green Giant* and *Subway* logos. Green also says revitalization and is the reason why the *Starbucks* logo uses this colour—it wants to be the place where you can renew yourself.

Colours play a big role in people's purchasing or donating decisions. They can make one feel a certain way about a company or they can even trigger a specific desire.

Color is consistently used in an attempt to make people feel hungry, make food look more appetizing, associate a positive reaction to advertising or marketing materials, encourage trust and even help increase sales or donations.



Orange is the easiest colour to detect even under the worst weather conditions.

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Most good designers will likely agree that there are benefits to understanding and using the psychological effects of colours:

- Colour can increase brand recognition by up to 80%)
- Colour can improve readership by as much as 40%
- Colour can increase comprehension by 73%

Colour's effect was one of the first things I studied in art school in Germany.

For example: When two very similar colors touch, they appear to wash out and become indistinct. This is because the borders between them are difficult to distinguish and our brain blurs the colors together.

On the other hand, contrasting colours make each one stand out and apart.

Artists and designers have long understood how color can dramatically affect moods, feelings and emotions. It is a powerful communication tool and can be used to signal action, influence mood and cause physiological reactions.

Take a cue from the way we describe certain emotions such as seeing red, feeling blue, being green with envy. There's no denying that color and mood are inextricably linked.

Fluffy white clouds give one a feeling of lightness and buoyancy so is the reason most planes are painted this colour. It soothes and calms any concern we all secretly harbour about big machines in the air.

Slip on a tailored black dress and you instantly feel chic and elegant. Or pop open a sunny yellow umbrella on a gloomy day and some of that sunniness will undoubtedly rub off on you.

For many people, one of the first decisions of the day concerns color harmony. What am I going to wear? This question is answered not only by choosing a style and fabric appropriate to the season and occasion, but is answered by making suitable colour choices.

So how can we use colour when designing our fundraising appeals?



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Here some suggestions:

- Words in red or a second colour on the outer envelope or inside such as headlines, subheads, phone numbers and other important elements, will grab attention but may not be the ideal colour for all the copy inside.
- Black type on white paper is the most legible and economical although a one or two colour piece is also effective and reasonable in cost.
- By contrast, creating a full colour piece may often seem counterproductive, presumably because it strikes donors as being extravagant and a waste of funds. This should, of course, depend on the organization. A zoo or an art museum would be hard-pressed to design an effective solicitation without using lots of color.
- When in doubt, use blue. It's a favorite colour and is easy to use in design. It is legible for headlines, produces good-looking tints and lets you highlight key points in the copy while not detracting from the design itself.
- Signatures in blue give an impression of being signed in a pen.
- Some colors are hard to work with such as purple, brown and pink. They often don't print the way you want them to look and tints can be tricky.
- However orange is another great color to grab attention. It goes in and out of fashion, but in general is underused so will stand out more readily.
- The most effective use for color? Photos, charts and illustrations. These graphics give a layout plenty of "pop" and let you keep the text simple and readable.

There you have it. That's my quick review of key points for using color in direct marketing. This barely scratches the surface but still gives you new ways of using colour to improve your marketing materials.

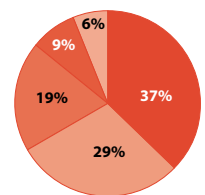
However, don't throw multiple colours together on a page. The use of too many colours is distracting



Client: Toronto Zoo
 Agency: TCP Interactive
 Art Direction: Mark Johnson
 Copy: Billy Sharma

WHAT YOUR GIFT DID

- 37%** created positive opportunities for children, troubled youths and their families.
- 29%** helped improve living conditions of the underprivileged in the community.
- 19%** assisted marginalized and excluded people to maintain their independence and social connections.
- 9%** helped build stronger neighbourhoods and communities.
- 6%** supported volunteer programs.



Client: Centraide (Montréal)
 Art Direction and Copy: Billy Sharma

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and makes a layout look cheap and unprofessional. Keep it simple. Remember the old saying: “Too much colour is no colour at all.”

Finally, colours often have different meanings in various cultures. For example, while the color white is used in many Western countries to represent purity and innocence, it is seen as a symbol of mourning in many Eastern countries.

Some interesting facts about colour:

- An executive for a paint company received complaints from workers in a blue office that the office was too cold. When the offices were painted a warm peach, the sweaters came off even though the temperature had not changed.
- A green colour scheme in a workplace has shown evidence that it results in less absenteeism due to illness.
- When workers at a certain factory complained that the black boxes they had to lift were too heavy, the boxes were re-painted in mint green. The load didn't change, but the workers seemed happier.
- One of the more interesting uses of colour psychology: the football coach at the University of Iowa had the visitors locker room painted pink—to reduce their aggression.

My secret to one of the most effective involvement devices—‘sharing a problem’.

Believe it or not, problems grab our attention. A crossword puzzle or a quiz can capture your readers’ attention faster and draw them deeper into your letter or email.

In contrast, ‘good news’ or ‘no news’ takes longer to catch their attention and is of little interest.

Why?

Because our brains are wired to make snap decisions when confronted with an issue or problem. It’s our primal survival instinct.



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You see or confront something and instantly your brain analyzes whether it's a threat or not, then it instantly reacts as to how best to avoid or solve the problem. That's how we are pre-programmed automatically.

Example:

Situation A: You're walking in your house when suddenly your eye detects something in your path. As you look closer your brain starts analyzing and signals your legs to step sideways in the nick of time.

Whew! There was a toy left by a kid and you just avoided tripping on it or possibly destroying it.

You are relieved...and proud of yourself...for avoiding a mishap or an injury.

Situation B - You're walking in your house when suddenly your eye detects something in your path. As you look closer your brain starts analyzing and then tells you to keep on walking. It's just a piece of paper.

You pick it up forget it as quickly as it happened – not even a second thought. It was never an issue.

Now what does this have to do with copywriting? You ask? How does avoiding a toy help you communicate better with your readers?

Situation A: One's brain pays attention to an issue or a potential problem. It gets the reader's mind working on how the problem might be solved if they were facing a similar dilemma; it subtly suggest what your organization is doing to make it right and tells how the reader could help.

Open your letter by describing a problematic situation. Focus on an issue, a person or one family facing that issue. Tell their story and how you need the reader to come to their rescue. It will help highlight one fact: **What the world would be like without your nonprofit.**

The brain makes an automatic connection to a problem—how your charity helps and then they're drawn in. The impression you make on them will be more intense and emotional.



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They'll be more likely to read more of your message and when they read more and get more involved they are also more likely to respond to your call-to-action.

See my latest example alongside:

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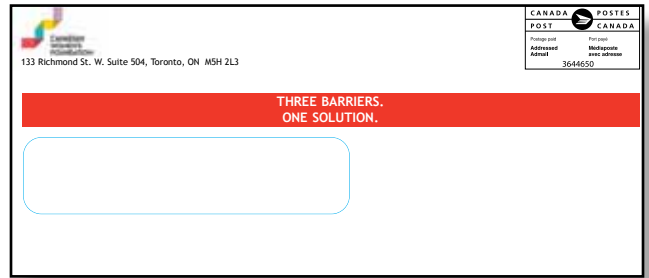
To participate, send me an email with your suggestions.

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.

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CANADIAN WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

Ms. J. Sample
 123 Anywhere Street
 Any City, ON
 A1A 1A1

June 7, 2013

Dear Ms. Sample,

You've read about it. Perhaps you've witnessed it or experienced it yourself. We can no longer ignore it, deny it, or hide the ugly truth.

Violence against women is a serious problem in Canada.

You may be appalled to learn that on average a woman in Canada is murdered by her current or former partner every 6 days. Every night in Canada, more than 3,000 women (along with their 2,500 children) sleep in an emergency shelter.

Should we accept this as inevitable? Should we just ignore it because it's someone else's problem?

What about women living in poverty?

In Canada, more than one million women are struggling to raise children on their own—these families are among the poorest in the country. Considering that Canada is one of the richest countries in the world, it is unacceptable that our poverty rate ranks an appalling 20th out of 31 OECD countries. And what about the fact that women in Canada still only earn 71% of what men earn—even when they work full-time and are just as qualified?

What about girls growing up in Canada?

Every day, girls are bombarded with hypersexualized images of passive women and girls. Every day, these messages teach them they are "too fat" or "too ugly" or "too bossy". They start to believe that how they look is more important than who they are. As a result, girls are at a very high risk for depression, eating disorders, and low self-esteem. Sadly, half of all girls aged nine to thirteen say they wish they were someone else.

I am writing to tell you that we at the Canadian Women's Foundation continue to work to fight these injustices.

We invite you to join us!

We are Canada's foundation for women and girls. Over the last 20 years,

Over please...

133 Richmond St. W. Suite 504, Toronto, ON M5H 2L3
 Tel.: (416) 365-1444 • Toll Free 1-866-293-4483 • Fax: (416) 365-1745 • Toll Free 1-877-293-7490 • www.canadianwomen.org

YES! I want to invest in women and girls.

TWO WAYS OF GIVING

Suggested donations:

Single gift: \$200 \$150 \$120 \$60 \$36 \$ Other

Monthly gift: \$25 \$15 \$10 \$5 \$ Other

*Please note that charitable tax receipts are issued for donations of \$20 or more.

12345 210-01-XXX

Ms. J. Sample
 123 Anywhere Street
 Any City, ON
 A1A 1A1

Cheque marked "NO" from my bank account

Card No. _____ M Y _____ Expiry Date

Signature _____

Telephone No. _____

Email I prefer to receive my tax receipt via email.

Please return this card with your donation in the postage paid envelope.

Thank you!

Client: Canadian Women's Foundation
 Art Direction and Copy: Billy Sharma

