

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. One big reason** why appeals underperform and **how to remedy that.**

**2. Legibility** is a key if you want your recipients to take action. **Here's how I do it.**

## One big reason why appeals underperform and how to remedy that.

Let us look at what happens from your recipients' point of view when they receive your direct mail appeal, email or sales solicitation.

Do you think that they immediately stop doing whatever they are doing to attend to it?

**No. If they are committed to or touched by your cause, or interested in your appeal, they usually put it aside to deal with it soon.**

And generally within a span of a month you usually start to get their responses

However, many of them who put the appeal aside are occupied by other things and forget.

**The importance of sending them a reminder seems to have become a neglected art. Many direct marketers ignore this simple golden rule—and that's why their appeals underperform.**

Reminder mailings are key to lifting your response; they tend to bump up the response by at least 2% to 4%.

Think of a reminder as a follow-up call.

Ever wonder what advertising agencies do so well for their clients?

- They use multi channels to relay the same message.
- They create TV commercials that run over and over again.

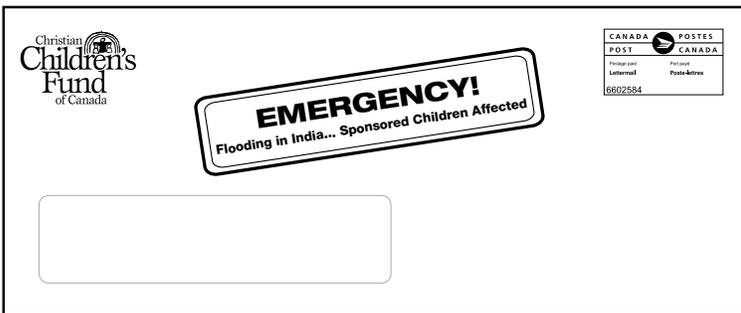
These messages act as a constant **reminder**. The word reminder is key to their success.

Here are some case studies that prove that reminder appeals do boost response rates..

**Case Study 1: The Christian Children’s Fund of Canada’s emergency appeal to the flooding in Tamil Nadu, India.**

Package 1: An E-blast was sent to all sponsors within 48 hours of the disaster in India, detailing how urgent the need was to help provide emergency shelter, nutritious food, clean water and medical care for their sponsored children and their families. (see alongside)

Reminder 2: A direct mail package with the same message was sent to those without an email address and to those who had not responded to the E-blast. (see envelope below)



**Results: The e-blast generated over \$10,000, while the reminder mailing raised another \$20,000.**

**EMERGENCY!**  
Flooding in India... Sponsored Children Affected

Charitable Registration #10001-2543-892001

<<Print Date>>

Dear <<Addressee>>,

Devastating flooding during Easter weekend has displaced children, their families, and communities in Tamil Nadu, India.

**Your sponsored child, <<Childfirstname>>, lives in one of the communities hardest hit by torrential rain and flooding. Your donation right now will be used to address the urgent and immediate needs of their village.**

Valmurugan Muniyasamy, our Country Director in India, requests your immediate assistance. A donation of \$50 or more will help provide emergency shelter, nutritious food, clean water, and medical care for children and families.

Details of the damage are emerging daily. Valmurugan has been in constant contact with us by cell phone. Our program partners are busy assessing the needs of communities most affected and implementing a rapid response plan. In times of emergency like this, shelter, food, water, and medicines are desperately needed. Please donate online at [www.ccfcanada.ca](http://www.ccfcanada.ca), call us toll-free at 1-800-263-5437 or mail back your donation today. Your gift will give children the basics to survive.

If the rainfall continues, more homes, schools, and hospitals will be flooded. Food stocks are running low and water is polluted. <<Childfirstnames>> is at great risk of contracting water-borne diseases. Emergency shelter, food, water purification tablets, and medical attention are required immediately.

Please help today. Your gift will help innocent children survive this natural disaster.

Blessings,

*Bruce Herzog*

Bruce Herzog  
Chief Executive Officer and a Sponsor

1200 Denison Street, Markham, Ontario L3R 8G6 • 1-800-263-5437 • [www.ccfcanada.ca](http://www.ccfcanada.ca)

Wordly possessions float out of a flooded home.

Villagers are forced outside; their homes damaged

A village elder stands outside her destroyed home...

CONTINUES ...

## Case Study 2: Special Olympics Ontario's upcoming National Summer Special Olympics Games.

Package 1: A letter asked donors to support first time athlete, Sarah Lynn Lisi of Ontario, at the upcoming National Summer Special Olympics Games.

May 2006

Mrs. Jane Sample  
1234 Main Street Apt 431  
Toronto, Ontario  
M1M 1M1

\*\*XX  
(M)  
XX1234

Dear Jane Sample,  
Sarah Lynn Lisi is all excited.

Last summer, she won a gold medal at the Provincial Games in St. Catharines. Now, for the first time as part of the Ontario Rhythmic Gymnastics Team, she will compete in the National Summer Games in Brandon, Manitoba from July 18 – 23, 2006.

**Sarah has always been a mover and a shaker**

Born with Down Syndrome, she attended a special integrated day care until she began school when she was six. Her parents, Mary and Mario, took advantage of every early intervention program they could find. This gave Sarah the opportunity for lots of interaction: participation in music, movement and stimulation. It was fun for her and helped her immensely in developing an interest in the world around her. When in pre-school, this interest in the world translated into a little girl who liked to help other children put on their shoes or remind them to do up their jackets when it was cold. And because she's open and interested, I guess she's always made friends easily.

Sarah's mother told me, "I think that as parents we have had it remarkably easy. Sarah was born without the health problems that many Down Syndrome children have to deal with."

**Getting involved with Special Olympics Ontario was easy**

"We've always kept Sarah busy and physically active, so when a friend of hers told her about rhythmic gymnastics, it seemed like a natural. We went, and she was in love with the sport from the first five minutes of it!"

"This connection to Special Olympics Ontario has given her an opportunity to shine. We've seen her confidence and ability grow and she has no fear now," said Mary.

Like every teenager, Sarah, who is now nineteen, loves music, movies and dancing. Being very observant, she learned to imitate every dance move by Shania Twain. She even performed in her high school production of the musical 'Grease', and won an achievement award in drama.

In grade school, she participated in the Halton School Board's Special Sports day and won the pennant for best athlete overall. She has since competed in many tournaments, including the Sports Defici in Montreal, and regularly wins medals.

**Now Sarah is preparing for her biggest challenge – the National Games**

The family has more or less adjusted to the constant thumping of the ball and the hops, skips, jumps and bumps as she practices for hours in her room daily. I suppose, like people who live next to an airport, they have learned to live with the noise!

over please...

Reminder 2: Another letter was mailed as an update to the same target audience, to thank and inform them about the results that Sarah Lynn Lisi had achieved.

September 2006

Mrs. Jane Sample  
1234 Main Street Apt 431  
Toronto, Ontario  
M1M 1M1

\*\*XX  
(M)  
XX1234

**AN UPDATE**

Dear Jane Sample,  
Last May we featured Sarah Lynn Lisi in our direct mail package.

She was that extraordinary young athlete with Down Syndrome, whose parents, Mary and Mario, took advantage of every early intervention program they could find to give her opportunities to participate in music, movement and stimulation.

Those involvements eventually led to Sarah being exposed to rhythmic gymnastics and Special Olympics Ontario.

As Sarah's mother Mary said, "We've always kept Sarah busy and physically active, so when a friend of hers told her about rhythmic gymnastics, it seemed like a natural. We went, and she was in love with the sport from the first five minutes of it!"

"This connection to Special Olympics Ontario has given her an opportunity to shine. We've seen her confidence and ability grow and she has no fear now."

She was also that teenager who loves music, movies and dancing and had learned to imitate every dance move by Shania Twain. She even performed in her high school production of the musical 'Grease' and won an achievement award in drama.

In grade school she participated in her school's sports activities, winning the pennant for best athlete overall. She also competed in other tournaments and regularly won many medals.

**Our previous letter told you of the heart-breaking story of Sarah's first attempt to find a job. She was offered a trial placement at a local restaurant, but when the owner realized that she had a disability, he refused to even come out to speak with her.**

Her mother described that terrible setback, "I just looked at Sarah's stunned face. On the drive home she was very silent. She didn't understand what had happened or why, only that she had been rejected."

"Her heart was totally broken. How could I explain what had happened? I wanted to cry, but you have to wait until you're alone to do that. No child should suffer through having the door slammed in their face that way."

**But Sarah, like a true athlete, never lost hope because she knew that with every defeat can come a victory if one simply perseveres.**

over please...

**Results: Package 1 raised over \$114,500 while the reminder generated an additional \$72,000 from the same list of donors.**

### Case Study 3: Make-A-Wish Foundation's year-end appeal.

Package 1: Year-end appeal to house donors to grant the wishes of terminally ill children.



I am not a doctor, but I truly believe that giving hope and happiness to a child with a life-threatening illness has magical medicinal powers.

Granting these children their wish helps lift their spirits . . . It lets them fight their illness with more vigor . . . It adds a glimmer of hope to their eyes . . . It puts a smile on their faces that could light up the whole world.

At times a wish results in tears of joy, and sometimes it may even help put an illness into remission.

But a wish always provides joy, strength and hope and leaves them feeling much better.

Yes! Make-A-Wish® has witnessed these moments of pure happiness thousands of times and I continue to be deeply moved with the news of each wish we grant. How I wish you could be there to share in this joy, and see the smiles it helps create. After all, it is because of wonderful donors like you that we have been able to bring this kind of unbridled joy to thousands of ill children.

So please support the Make-A-Wish® Foundation of Canada once again.

**THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, GIVE A GIFT WITH THE MAGICAL POWER OF HOPE**

The strength of this gift goes much deeper than just the impact it has on the child. It also touches the entire family of the child and fills them with everlasting gratitude.

It brings great satisfaction to our volunteers and staff who work tirelessly to ensure each and every child's wish is as unique and special as if it were the only one ever granted.

Best of all, I guarantee that it will bring you too, great satisfaction knowing that you have reached out and touched a child by making his or her wish come true.

Helping a great cause like Make-A-Wish does more than grant a wish. Your donation gives an invaluable gift to a child with a life-threatening illness . . . A gift that will be cherished forever.

Whether this wish fulfills a child's fantasy, takes them on an adventure or enables a meeting with

### Reminder 2: Reminding donors how important their donations are.



Make-A-Wish® Canada  
4211 Yonge Street, Suite 521,  
Toronto, ON M2P 2A9  
Tel: 416-224-9474  
Toll Free: 1-888-822-9474  
[www.makeawish.ca](http://www.makeawish.ca)

Mrs. Jane Sample  
1234 Main Street  
Apt 431  
Toronto, ON  
M1M 1M1

XX1234

A month ago I wrote to you about how I truly believe that giving hope and happiness to a child with a life-threatening illness has magical medicinal powers.

Granting these children their wish helps lift their spirits . . . It lets them fight their illness with more vigor . . . It adds a glimmer of hope to their eyes . . . It puts a smile on their faces that could light up the whole world. Granting a wish provides hope, strength and joy and leaves the children feeling much better.

The letter detailed how Make-A-Wish® has witnessed these moments of pure happiness thousands of times and how I continue to be deeply moved with the news of each wish we grant.

What the letter did not express forcefully enough is how important donors like you really are. You have helped to bring unbridled joy to thousands of ill children.

As one of our strongest supporters you have already demonstrated how much you care about children and how important you are to us as a friend. You know that some wishes just can't wait for someday. So what better time than this holiday season to share joy and happiness with children living with a life-threatening illness?

If you have already responded to my earlier letter then please accept my sincere thanks as our letters may have crossed. If however you set it aside to deal with later because you have been busy, please use the attached donation form today.

To children with a life-threatening illness, the news that their special wish will be granted, is quite possibly the best medicine they could receive. **Thank you as always.**

Sincerely,  
  
Dave Stinton  
President  
Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Canada.

P.S. This holiday season, help us provide that magical hope, which like a miracle medicine, does wonders for children with life-threatening illnesses.

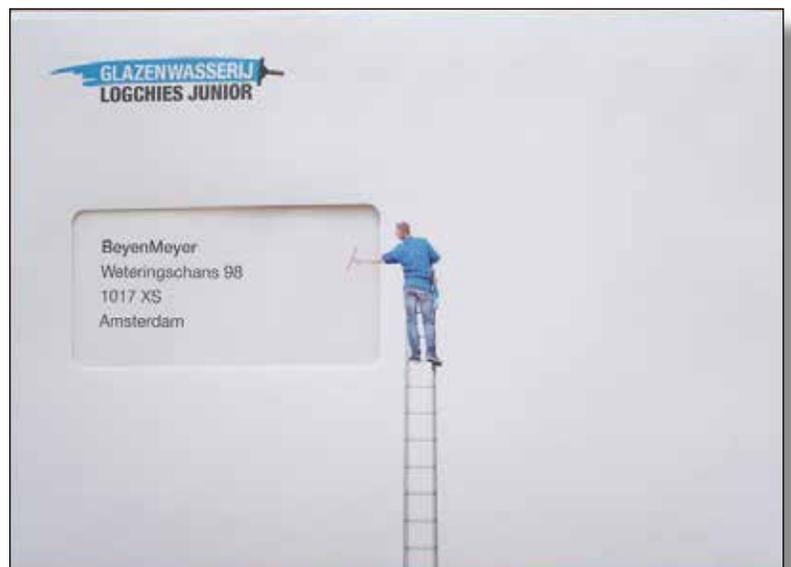
**Result: The first package generated a response of 10.5% while the reminder package got an even higher response of 13.2%.**

CONTINUES ...

## My suggestion:

1. Not every mailing needs a reminder but don't miss the golden opportunity to use a reminder to maximize response rates of your most important appeal.
2. Change the reminder just enough so it looks different; that way your recipients won't think they have seen it before and discard it. *(Just like the envelopes in two different sizes alongside)*
3. I am also not suggesting that the reminder be in the form of a direct mail piece. A reminder could be in the form of emails, postcards, social media prompts on twitter, Facebook, Pininterest—anywhere and everywhere that your donors or supporters are located or connected to your organization.

**After all multichannel interdependency is a reality in marketing today.**



CONTINUES ...

# Legibility

## is key if you want your recipients to take action.

### Here's how I do it.

#### What's the point of having a well-written piece if it isn't easy to read?

Unfortunately today, all designers have to use digital fonts, which are a challenge, because every typeface you use needs radical adjustment.

Even two simple words, when set digitally have weird spaces between the units and the gaps like the one below:

you are

They need to be kerned so that the letters come a bit closer together to act like a unit as below:

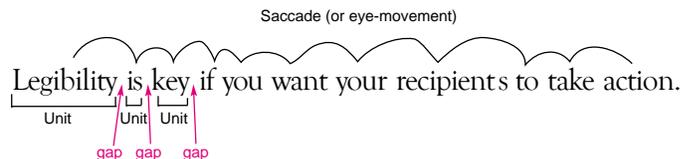
you are

Typically our eyes capture combinations of 7 to 10 letters before they need a pause to process the message.

Two things impact readability and comprehension:

1. Spacing between letters that make up a word;
2. Spacing between words.

When we read, our eyes follow a certain pattern.



All the letters that make up a word are read together as a “unit” and the spaces between them are “gaps”.

To optimize legibility, “units” need to be tightened (kerned) and the “gaps” optically widened.

Just like music, if everything is too close together or overlaps, the sound can be muffled and hard to understand or appreciate. If the sound is spread out, it stops sounding like one harmonious piece.

CONTINUES ...

## Take this simple test, which block of copy are easier to read?

### Regular Digital Typesetting

You'll love how our magazine encourages your kids to read, reason and make key decisions.

You'll love how our magazine encourages your kids to read, reason and make key decisions.

### Quick Scan Process

You'll love how our magazine encourages your kids to read, reason and make key decisions.

You'll love how our magazine encourages your kids to read, reason and make key decisions.

If you said the ones on the right, it's because there is a science behind making fonts more legible.

### Here's what I do.

I reformat the "units" and "gaps" to increase legibility.

**I call this my Quick Scan process.**

I have offered this **Quick Scan process** in the past for just \$100 per page.

One person who took me up on my challenge was Maura Fitzpatrick of the Barnaby Hospital Foundation.

She tested two identical mailings of 24,355 pieces each.

One mailing was set as set by their

designer, while I altered the other using the same typeface with my **Quick Scan process**.

She emailed the results as below:

**The Non-Quick Scan process raised \$14,946 with an average gift of \$58.35.**

**The Quick Scan process generated \$15,490 with an average gift of \$69.46.**

That's a 3.71% overall improvement in response without any changes to the text—the **Quick Scan process** just made it easier to read.

**To improve the response of your next printed piece, direct mail piece or newsletter, even by a fraction, one of the simplest ways to do it is by improving the legibility of your piece.**

CONTINUES ...

**Here's another quiz for you. Which block of copy below is easier to read?**

Consider the universe of all the people within your boundary as the Market. Those that you wish to target, that you consider may have a preference or relevance for your product or service, are called Suspects. Among this group, those that respond to your initial communication are now considered as Prospects. It is only after they buy from you that they become Customers. Those Customers with whom you have an on-going relationship can then be considered as Clients. And finally those who stay loyal are termed High-Value Customers or Advocates.

Consider the universe of all the people within your boundary as the "Market" in general. Those that you wish to target, that you consider may have a preference or relevance for your product or service, are called "Suspects". Among this group, those that respond to your initial communication are now considered as "Prospects". It is only after they buy from you that they become "Customers". Those "Customers" with whom you have an on-going relationship can then be considered as "Clients" and finally those who stay loyal are termed "High-Value Customers" or "Advocates".

**ANSWER:**

The typeface your designer selects also has a lot to do with legibility. The top block was set in Helvetica.

Surprisingly it's the typeface chosen by 96% of designers, online bloggers and emailers.

The one below is set in Gotham—a typeface that is easier to read.

**OPT IN, OPT OUT, OPTIONS:**

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