

# DIRECT FORUM

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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. We have all heard of **“writer’s block”** but did you know there is also a **“reader’s block”**?
2. How to **add some spice** to your **writing**.

3. Looking for new ways to **raise funds**? Talk to me; my student’s will do it **pro bono** for your charity.
4. A great **offer** from my **publisher**.

We have all heard of  
**“writer’s block”**  
but did you know there is  
also a **“reader’s block”**?

## Not getting the response you expected?

It’s likely that you’ve run into one or more of the inherent barriers your reader or donors have. First you need to overcome those.

No one blindly buys into what you are selling.

Physical, emotional, intellectual and financial obstacles are the ones that usually stand between you and your prospect.

Here are some suggestions for overcoming them:

**The identification barrier:** Think about your target audience. Does your copy clearly target your

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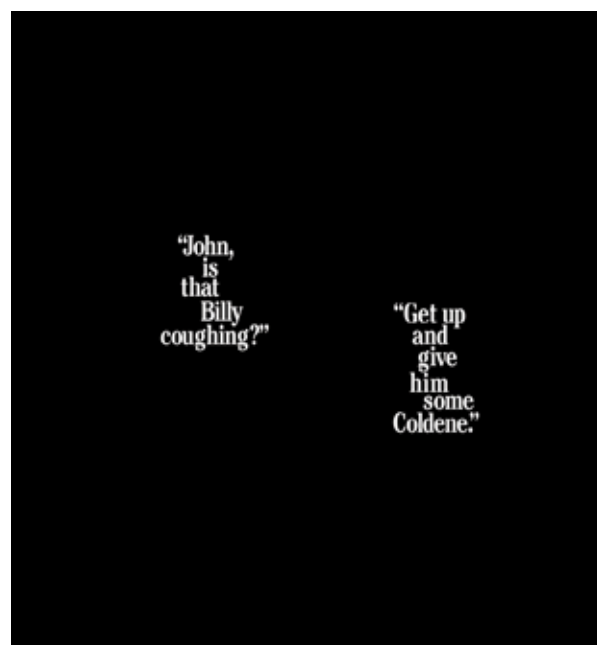
prospect? Does it make your prospect feel, “Yes? I can buy into this” or “I want this.” Speaking your prospect’s language is key to getting their attention.

Case in point: Promotion of the Apple iPod is one of my favourite examples of simplicity in marketing. It showed silhouettes of young people dancing to the sound of music. No lengthy list of product features, no mention of price, or even information on how to buy an iPod. And yet those Ads sold millions of the product, because it targeted the right people in a way they could relate to.



they will stop reading. So check if your message is clearly understandable and interesting. Does it focus on the offer? Make sure the graphic treatment does not hinder the legibility of your message. Use bite-size paragraphs and sentences to encourage reading.

Case in point: An ad by George Lois for Coldene. This one doesn’t even show the logo of the product but it communicates in a split second.



**The involvement barrier:** Readers need to become involved with your message. Make sure you give your prospect a simple choice to make by asking them to do something that encourages

**The clarity barrier:** Every email, letter and ad must communicate in a nanosecond. If your reader cannot grasp in the first few sentences what you are getting at in your communiqué,

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involvement. Capitalize on your reader's inborn sense of play.

Case in point: UNHCR Cardboard package. A simple piece of cardboard included in the package not only involved the recipient but it also clearly expressed the homeless refugee's experience.



The credibility barrier: Some communications don't match up with the size or accomplishments the company has presented to the public. Bragging about what your organization does and does not do becomes unbelievable. Be honest; make sure you tell it like it is.

Case in point: Mac versus PC ads: Two guys just standing and talking against a white background. No lengthy list of product features, no mention of price, not even information on how to buy a Mac. Each ad aimed to make one point, and one point only: a Mac is better than a PC.



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**The immediacy barrier:** Before you ask people to do something immediately make sure you have given them a good reason for doing so. Make sure you expressed in words and graphics why it's so important to respond now rather than later. Your copy must sound urgent and the graphics must make your offer look urgent. Tell your prospects what you want them to do. Show them the benefits of responding right now. Give them a deadline or emphasize the limited quantity of your product available.

Case in point: The recent earthquake in Nepal. Red Cross sent an email to me—a past donor—clearly showing me the devastation and the dire need for me to respond. It worked!



**The acceptability barrier:** Make an appeal to your prospect's emotional needs. Give them the hope that responding now will make them feel good. Make an effort to show how desirable your offer is. Give your prospects the logical justification as to why they need to buy your product or why they need to donate now.

Case in point: Tom Gaffney's Covenant House piece about the girl with the paint can. (Email me if you wish to read this gripping and emotional letter.)

### **The over-communication**

**barrier:** When my students ask me the question: "How long should a letter be?" I always reply, "As long as it takes to put down all the points needed to convince your readers to buy your product or service." It used to be a proven fact that a longer letter always performs better than a shorter one.

In fact, I once wrote a 16-page letter that was very successful back then.

**But times have changed and so have the readers.**

Case in point: Recently one of my clients, for whom I had

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condensed a 4-page letter into a 2-page letter, emailed me to say:

*Hi Billy,*

*We just received another response from the two-page mailer. What I find odd is that the four-page mailer was more personal while the second was more commercial looking (but straight to the point). I would have bet that the long letter would have outperformed the short one..*

*Go figure.*

*Don.*

In this case where we tested a 2-page against a 4-page letter, the 2-page version won handily.

**Case in point: Things have changed. In today's environment, long, drawn-out, pieces stand little chance of being captivating, much less read.**

**The accessibility barrier:** Make it easy for the reader to respond.

Offer as many avenues to respond as possible: mail, fax and e-mail, toll-free telephone, on-line donation or sale. Also, give readers enough room on your order form to write or correct things like their address, if necessary.

**Case in point:** The Royal Conservatory of Music. The order form not only

gave them all the above choices but it also gave them the option of indicating when they would like to become members. Membership was expensive and not everyone was ready when we wished them to join. Offering them to pick the right time to enroll worked. (As below.)

**To sum it all up: Call this method selling, or call it a problem/solution approach. Whatever you call it, adopting a barrier-removal mindset may be the most practical way to find out what's wrong when you think you've done everything right.**

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# How to add some spice to your writing.



**Nothing adds more spice to your writing or communication than a metaphor.**

Based on a Greek word meaning to “carry something across” or “transfer.” A metaphor links two or more seemingly unrelated thoughts without using the word “like” or “as”.

As Aristotle said about the art of persuasion, ***“The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor.”***

A good metaphor fuses together two different thoughts by instantly transferring the qualities of one to the other.

When, my former boss, David Ogilvy, gave a presentation pitch to a new client, he often started by saying, ***“Ladies and gentlemen, unless your advertising is built on a big idea, it will pass like a ship in the night.”***

Instantly, his audience thought, ***“A ship in the night? No, we can’t have that!”***

That image perfectly set up a show-and-tell presentation of the big ideas he would then present to boost the clients’ sales.

Someone once described my friend, who was a Casanova: ***“He has eyes like Tarzan, they jump from limb to limb.”***

Warren Buffett’s statement, ***“Someone’s sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago”*** best describes the wisdom of starting early to invest for retirement.

Or the wartime slogan: ***“Small leaks sink great ships.”***

Do you see how tight, how irrefutable, how powerful such arguments are when phrased in an apt metaphor? They yield instant agreement, and that is their charm.

## Best Sources of Persuasive Metaphors

Your richest sources of metaphors include movies, fairy tales, mythology and the Bible.

Example: ***“Life is a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.”*** — Forrest Gump (1994)

***“Fasten your seat belts, it’s going to be a bumpy night!”*** — All about Eve (1950)

Aesop used animals to illustrate the morals of his stories while mythology and the Bible gives us stories to show how evil can triumph over good, or how the weak can conquer the strong. **Think of David taking down Goliath.** These stories are

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filled with metaphors and act like motivational magic.

### Here's how to do it!

First, identify the point you want to make. Then imagine something totally different—a sentence, a word, phrase—which acts as a point of comparison that will make your point for you.

Many metaphors have become clichés but they work precisely because everyone already believes them; so using them gives your copy greater credibility.

We don't have to look very far to find examples of metaphor:

*"It's raining cats and dogs"*

*"Old as dirt."*

*"Smart as a whip."*

*"Cool as a cucumber."*

*"Dumb as a box of rocks."*

*"Where's there's smoke, there's fire."*

*"The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."*

*"Tip of the iceberg."*

You get the point. The list is almost endless.

### Two Mistakes to Avoid

**Don't use metaphors to exaggerate. They will reduce credibility and depress response.**

For example the ad alongside with the headline **"Cheat death."**

A little over-the-top I think and quite unbelievable too.



### Also beware of using "mixed metaphors."

Here's why: Creating two competing images can sometimes clash and negate each other, as in, *"don't count your chickens till the cows come home."* Or, *"Our keyboard will teach your mind's eye to play by ear."*



Finally, let me leave you with a few from the heavy weight champion of metaphors, Muhammad Ali.

He could verbally out-shadowbox even the cleverest reporters, leaving them entertained with metaphors that have become memorable:

*"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee."*

*"Only last week I murdered a rock, injured a stone, and hospitalized a brick. I'm so mean I make medicine sick."*

*"I'm so fast that last night I turned off the light switch in my hotel room and was in bed before the room was dark."*

An added benefit of a metaphor is that it can breathe life, color, and power into your writing—not to mention that it can make something unforgettable. It creates imagery that automatically triggers in your audience powerful emotions they already harbour.

This often enables you to persuade instantly.

# Looking for new ways to **raise funds?**

Talk to me;  
my student's will do it  
**pro bono**  
for your charity.

Each year my students work on a project for two charities. This could entail direct marketing, advertising, social media marketing, crowd funding, ambient or gorilla marketing—whatever you need.

They create videos, packages, Ads and concepts and in the last 12 years they have successfully helped raise a lot of money for charities.

For example:

- Their direct mail piece generated over \$30,000 for Integra Foundation from just a thousand donors;
- They designed a social media opportunity for The Hammer Band, a unique charity that helps “Turn violence into violins” in the poorest schools in Toronto;
- They created all the material for an event that raised over \$140,000 for The North York Women’s Abuse Shelter;

- Their online video for The Lisa Brown Foundation— a suicide prevention organization—drew the attention of Sick Kids Hospital and led to a partnership between the foundation and the hospital;
- An email and direct mail campaign designed by my students last year for The Massey Centre for Women has been highly successful.

**Best of all of these initiatives were free.**

So if you too want fresh ideas from young minds and the chance to use the power of out-of-the box thinking to raise funds for your charity, here is a golden opportunity.

Just email me at: [billy@designersinc.ca](mailto:billy@designersinc.ca)

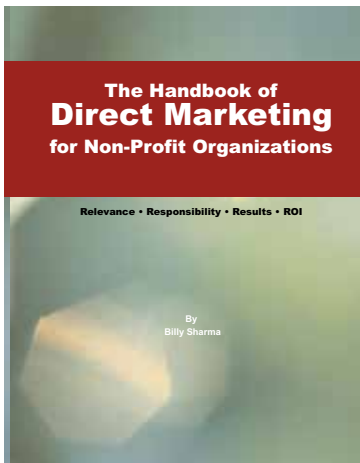
If you are interested, we can talk. I start teaching in September. However, you must hurry, since I only accept two charities each year.

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## A great **offer** from my **publisher.**

Civil Sector Press, the publisher of my book, **The Handbook of Direct Marketing for Non-Profit Organizations**, is **offering a 10% discount for my book till September 15.**



This practical reference guide for all non-profit marketers is packed with case studies and illustrations covering all aspects of the art and science of direct marketing. It focuses on understanding your donor to drive results from your next campaign

### **This book:**

- >> Reveals why direct marketing continues to be a reliable source for raising more money. Page 6.
- >> Shows you how to plan and position your next campaign. Page 41.
- >> Illustrates how best to cultivate and solicit prospects online. Page 154.
- >> Shows you ways of welcoming and acknowledging donors. Page 134.

**To get your copy at a 10% discount ... just click below:**

<http://hilborn-civilsectorpress.com/products/handbook-of-direct-marketing-for-non-profit-organizations>

**Use discount code: Shipfree**

As Harvey McKinnon, President, Harvey McKinnon & Associates said: *“I buy a lot of fundraising books because I know one good idea can help raise 10,000% more than the cost of the book. This book is chock full of many good ideas that will help you raise a lot more money. It deserves to be on the shelf of every non-profit.”*

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