

Briefing your copywriter

Great copy depends on two things: the skill of the writer and the quality and quantity of the information you give him.

An outside writer needs to be briefed on the feel of your organisation and the work being done. First prize is for him to see the work. Important points include:

- Your organisation's past history, and vision for the future;
- Detail of the work you're engaged in;
- Beneficiaries of that work;
- Where the work takes place;
- Staff members undertaking that work.

Your writer also needs to hear your 'organisation speak'. To make your copy sound convincing, your copywriter must be aware of your special language.

Prepare

Giving a good copy brief takes preparation. Before meeting, arm yourself with:

- Some themes or needs on which the appeal or campaign can be based.
- Case histories which clearly illustrate the need to be met. Don't be afraid of emotion. From an ethical standpoint, all 'stories' require permission, and (before going to print) the courtesy of allowing the people concerned to read and approve what has been written.
- A mental picture of the finished package or piece, and its objective.
- In the case of an appeal letter, the identity of the signatory, and also of the recipients. The tone of writing and even the subject matter – can significantly influence these two factors.
- Fine descriptive detail. Seemingly insignificant detail can really breathe life into copy. All these set the mood, and draw the reader into the situation.
- Photographs. The value of good photographs can't be over-emphasised.

Know Your Offer

The 'offer' is a vital ingredient to any

direct mail package. Bring your need down to bite-sized chunks, to suit a cross-section of donor pockets.

Also clearly describe and provide the mechanics of sending the money.

Evaluate

After the copy has been written and submitted, you'll want to evaluate it.

First objective is to check that all facts, figures, any real names used, and descriptions are correct and truthful.

Certain aspects of copy that may come under fire are:

- Emotion – remember that emotion is usually the heart of successful copy.
- Grammar – an experienced copywriter knows that the tone of a letter should be 'conversational', and may therefore take some licence with the grammar for ease of reading.

If the assessment comes down to changes being required, go back to the copywriter (if only as a courtesy), express concerns, and discuss possible changes.

Usually there are very good reasons for the 'how' or 'why' of copy, and having these reasons explained can sometimes make all the difference to accepting what is being suggested. Finally, try to promote amongst your staff and board members this definition of copywriting.

Fundraising copy is a body of words which, using internationally tried and tested techniques, sets out to:

- clearly define the credibility and positioning of the not-for-profit organisation or institution;
- emotively clarify and enlarge on the need to be met;
- construct an irresistible 'offer' to make it as attractive and easy as possible for the recipient to send their donation.

Compiled with the assistance of the copywriters at Downes Murray International.

Fundraising Forum is edited by Richard Solomon and Terry A Murray and published by Downes Murray International.

Downes Murray International

Downes Murray International are fundraising consultants, working with non-profit and non-government organisations of all kinds, to increase their fundraising effectiveness.

We offer feasibility studies, strategic planning workshops, direct mail fundraising, mail/phone, corporate and capital fundraising campaigns, Internet fundraising and website design, church fundraising and bequest promotion programmes. In addition, Downes Murray International has close links with a number of fundraising consultancies across the globe, and represents DVA Navion International Consultancy in Africa, enabling us to keep a finger on the pulse of international trends and techniques. For more information contact your nearest office.

Durban

Tel. (031) 207-3755

Johannesburg

Tel. (011) 465-7217

Cape Town

Tel. (021) 674-0805

Website

www.dmi.co.za

E-mail

dmi@iafrica.com

"Reprinted with acknowledgement to ..."

Fundraising Forum prides itself on keeping South African fundraisers right up-to-date with developing attitudes, trends and techniques, both here and overseas. We are grateful to the following international publications, which are regularly quoted and highly recommended:

- *Successful Fund Raising*, PO Box 4528, Sioux City, Iowa, 51104 (12 issues per annum \$149) website: www.stevensoninc.com
- *The NonProfit Times*, 190 Tamarack Circle, Skillman, NJ08558 (\$129 per annum) website: www.nptimes.com
- *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, PO Box 1989, Marion, Ohio, 4335-1989 (24 issues – one year at \$95) website: http://philanthropy.com
- *Mal Warwick's Newsletter* – Successful Direct Mail, Telephone and Online Fundraising. Strathmoor Press Inc, 2550 Ninth Street, Suite 1040, Berkeley, CA 94710-2516 (6 issues per annum \$79) website: www.malwarwick.com/newsletter

If you would like additional copies of *Fundraising Forum* or would like to add names to our mailing list please write to:

The Editor
Fundraising Forum
PO Box 3455
Durban
4000

e-mail: justin@dmi.co.za



Is it time to question conventional wisdom?

Direct mail guru, Mal Warwick, ponders the question of whether our beliefs and assumptions always hold true. This report with acknowledgement to Mal Warwick's website www.malwarwick.com

Ever since the celebrated American economist John Kenneth Galbraith coined the term 'conventional wisdom' 40 or 50 years ago, those beliefs have gotten a bad rap. It may be rash to subscribe reflexively to widespread beliefs — but they're not always wrong.

So, let's examine some of the convictions that together comprise direct mail fundraising's conventional wisdom to see whether there's any true wisdom to be found in them.

A direct mail fundraising package must include a letter.

Perhaps you don't even regard this statement as a given. If you work in higher education, you may even sneer at it (to judge from the number of collegiate fundraisers who use self-mailers and brochures in favour of letter packages).

However, I strongly suspect that if you've recently tested this proposition, you've discovered that the conventional wisdom is, indeed, wise in this respect. In some circumstances, a brochure or other insert may enhance the results of a fundraising appeal.

However, I've never seen a brochure used as a substitute for a letter yield results as good as a letter package. A direct mail fundraising appeal is (or should be) a communication from one person to another person.

In all but the most exceptional circumstances, an impersonal brochure simply won't have the same impact.

A direct mail appeal requires a teaser.

This one's easy: testing disproves this contention. Outer envelope teasers, which mimic commercial direct marketing, are one of those bad habits we've picked up from reading too much of one another's mail.

Sure, a great teaser can boost the rate at which envelopes are opened and (if it doesn't prove to be misleading) can significantly boost response. But how many great teasers have you seen lately? How many are just . . . boring? And why would



anyone believe that a boring teaser would increase the rate of response?

My rule of thumb is to skip the teaser unless it's either absolutely necessary or absolutely terrific.

A brochure is an indispensable element in a direct mail package.

It's commonly (though no longer universally) believed that brochures play an essential role in direct mail because they provide opportunities to explain the case for giving in more depth and to illustrate the organisation's work photographically.

Truth to tell, though, my agency's testing of this proposition has shown that, almost always, brochures depress response rather than enhance it.

Why? I speculate that most of these brochures are off-the-shelf publications used by organisations to describe their work to the general public.

Even the best of them draw the reader's attention away from the business at hand — taking action by sending a cheque in response to the letter. However, those brochures that truly reinforce the proposition outlined in the letter can indeed boost response.

These response-enhancers are always tailor-made for individual mailings rather than grabbed from the shelf.

Always suggest several possible gift amounts.

There are two aspects to this question, and each requires its own answer. In both

INSIDE INFORMATION

- Getting the most from your direct mail fundraising programme 2
- Philanthropy in focus 3
- Quick answers with *QuickGuides* 4
- Recipe for success – add more fresh ingredients! 5
- The art of asking 6
- Getting up close and personal 7
- Briefing your copywriter 8

Continued on page 4

Getting the most from your direct mail fundraising programme



Terry A Murray is former Chairman of Downes Murray International and recently retired president of DVA Navion South Africa.

Whilst in recent years my consulting focus has shifted more towards large capital fundraising campaigns, I've lost none of my enthusiasm and interest in direct mail – the starting point of so much that is successful in fundraising. And, of course, it is the main medium that attracts that all important individual donor to your cause.

Over the years I've noticed that there are certain common denominators when one analyses successful direct mail programmes and they can be summed up fairly quickly and easily:

Firstly, *a willingness to invest in building a donor base.* Finding first time donors is invariably a costly process which requires a strong will and a faith in the eventual outcome. Particularly when you may be spending a large sum of money to acquire each new

donor. But, if you are recovering your initial investment in nine months or less then you can be sure that you're on the right track.

Next, *a sense of ownership of the programme across the whole organisation.* This requires educating everyone about the detailed workings of the programme – board members and trustees, volunteers, all your staff from the receptionist through to the service deliverers (and especially the social workers).

I say this because so often I have encountered social workers who are overly sensitive about using emotional stories in your appeal letters.

You need a 'product' to 'sell' to prospective donors. What aspect of your work is likely to have the most appeal to an individual donor, and what needs do you have that are urgent and compelling and that will make a positive difference to the lives of the people you serve?

What list are you mailing to find new donors? Often the most important factor will be the list that you choose. This is where the expertise and experience of a specialist fundraising consultancy can often play a significant role.

You need to be constantly testing new lists – and consultants often know what is working in the market place and what lists are newly available.

Proper staffing. Firstly you need a person

dedicated to opening the mail and banking the donations. Apart from training someone in the tactful handling of complaints and queries, you need a dedicated person (or outsource) to look after the database and to handle prompt and personal thanking.

Staying one step ahead. Too many direct mail programmes which are handled 'in-house' by an organisation suffer from a lack of new ideas or innovation.

No one is challenging the organisation to think about new ways of presenting the cause and the presentation to donors becomes stagnant and repetitive. This, of course, is a recipe for donors to support other, more excitingly presented causes.

Recording the good things that happen. Too often the wonderful work of a non-profit organisation goes unrecorded – either in words or photographs (or both). And it is this recording of events that provides the best creative briefing for appeal letters and for producing effective donor newsletters.

The care and nurturing of donors remains one of the most important factors in any fundraising programme. The answer is to ensure that you treat your donors like the friends they are and thank them

promptly. Tell them how you are using their money and above all, make them feel good about their support.

Timing of your mailings. I have seen an alarming number of organisations which start planning a mailing far too late and then end up rushing the creative and production – and still get it into the mail late. The detrimental effect which this can have on your income is all too often underplayed.

Remember that you should always try to allow a minimum of six to eight weeks between mailings to achieve the maximum income from each. And beware the tendency to blame the fall off in income on everything but the poor timing!

So those are some of the key factors which can make the difference between a highly successful – and an ailing – direct mail programme.

They are by no means beyond the reach of every non-profit organisation. But they do need to be taken seriously and followed through if your programme is to achieve success. ■

“The care and nurturing of donors remains one of the most important factors in any fundraising programme.”

Getting up close and personal

Society is uneasy about too many rules and regulations. Rules are all very well as long as they don't inhibit us too much.

But if they restrict us from pushing the boundaries in life then we question them. This is not always unhealthy but there are one or two basic laws that we ignore at our peril. And this is no less true for fundraising.

One of the fundamental laws of fundraising is the Inverse Proportion Law. An inverse proportion law states that as one factor decreases the other increases.

This may seem strange – especially in fundraising, as it is the size of the gift that is increasing. What can possibly decrease and yet result in a larger gift?

The Law states: the closer you get to the donor the bigger the gift. It's that simple, decrease the distance and increase the gift.

Of course, close proximity to your potential donor is more than just physical contact. There is also ideological, emotional, social, intellectual and cultural proximity.

Face-to-face

Capital fundraisers understand the equation. They know you must get face-to-face with a prospective donor if you're going to get a significant gift.

If you're making the ask from your office by writing a letter to a donor miles away in his office, you're not going to get a major gift – unless there are very exceptional circumstances, the kind that break the rules.

Letters are so easy to ignore, which is why the best person to approach a prospective donor is not the paid professional but a close friend.

The friend has instant rapport, knows the prospect's likes and dislikes, his concerns and interests. This is going in through the front door and being greeted warmly on the other side.

Physical proximity is primary. This is because the face-to-face presentation gives you the opportunity to be flexible – to react to the situation. Even the best letter is inflexible, limited.

It can't respond to questions that have not been anticipated. Nor can it counteract false claims or incorrect arguments. A face-to-face meeting should be a constructive dialogue, whereas a letter may, at best, be the beginning of a correspondence over time but without the immediacy of a meeting.

Obviously, a telephone conversation is better than a letter, which is why there's been a move to far greater use of the telephone in fundraising. But it's not the medium for major gifts or the basis for a real relationship.

Ideological proximity is also important. You may be physically near to your prospect but he may not understand your message or empathise with your cause.

Cultural and ideological barriers can distance you from your potential donor. If the solicitor of a gift and the prospect are on the same wavelength, then that close bond will improve the chance of a major gift.

Missing the mark

Labour Party supporters are not going to give to the Conservative Party or vice versa. If you are asking for a gift from a cat lover for new dog kennels at a home for cats and dogs then you've missed the mark.

People with strong religious convictions are usually motivated by very different values.

There's another advantage to the personal approach that's based on the integrity of the person asking for support. It is another law of fundraising that you can't ask someone to do something you're not prepared to do yourself. In other words you can't ask for a major gift if you haven't made a major gift yourself. The fundraising team member establishes his credentials by stating, 'I've given to this project because I believe in it. I'm asking you to make a similar gift.'

Declaration of your own gift establishes your right to ask someone else to give. This is a very personal matter but an important one in fundraising.

There's been a lot of talk about relationship fundraising. But unless you actually meet your supporters and talk with them, you only have a relationship at a distance. For fundraising to flourish it must be based on a real relationship. Real relationships with your supporters will pay dividends for years to come.

Electronic media

The reality of face-to-face fundraising raises questions about the use of media in fundraising – in particular electronic media, which are image-based and easily manipulated. At the moment they're all the rage.

But they're also subject to misuse and even abuse. In theory you could set up a charity on-line, receive donations, send instant 'thank you' letters, mail regular newsletters and 'personalise' support from an office in the middle of nowhere for a fictitious need.

The charity could even win awards for professionalism in fundraising. And all with no real contact between the charity and its supporters. But it won't survive for long as it breaks the Inverse Proportion Law of Fundraising. ■



Decrease the distance, and you increase the gift. But the opposite is also true. Ken Pearson reports on the Inverse Proportion Law, and how it can ruin your fundraising programme.

Ken Pearson was DMI's first Johannesburg-based consultant in 1987. In 1991 he moved to England and – as an independent fundraising consultant – has conducted capital campaigns for large churches in Bath and Birmingham which have raised over R40m and R50m respectively. Ken is busy with a R30m campaign for the London School of Theology and is chairman of the Christian HIV/Aids Alliance in the UK.

The art of asking

The 'Ask' is central to your fundraising success. Whether you're approaching trusts, individuals or corporates, these guidelines by Terry Murray are central to clinching the deal.

If you want to raise money, sooner or later you'll have to learn to ask individuals – because that's where the money comes from.

In the United States, gifts from living individuals account for more than three-quarters of all the money donated to non-profit organisations.

Bequests and other planned gifts push the total to more than four of every five dollars raised. In Canada and, increasingly, other countries too, a similar picture is emerging.

It's important, then, that we fundraisers

keep uppermost in our minds the principal do's and don'ts of raising money from individuals – and how those guidelines differ from one fundraising method to another.

The list below is only the beginning, of course. Each of these aspects of fundraising demands experience, insight, and a human touch – and a much deeper understanding of the fundamentals of the craft than these terse guidelines suggest. But, given all that, you can't go far wrong if you keep these tips in mind. ■

Top tips for asking

Asking in the mail

To raise money by mail, it's important to:

- Use emotion in your appeals
- Ask for specific amounts
- Focus on specific needs
- Offer credit card options (and debit order options, too, in countries where that's viable)
- Ask at least six times a year
- Ask for interest in bequests

Asking on the telephone

Successful telefundraising requires a professional approach that involves either hiring a specialised telemarketing firm or using professionals to train and supervise paid or highly committed volunteer callers. It also requires that you:

- Ask first in a pre-call letter
- Ask for a pledge over three to five years
- Ask with trained callers
- Ask for a decision and give options
- Follow up the Ask promptly

Asking for major gifts

- Ask face-to-face
- Prepare your Ask well
- Ask with the right team
- Ask for the right amount
- Know when to shut up
- Ask for a decision date
- Set up the next appointment

Asking for time and influence

- Ask for a manageable time commitment
- Ask for 'moments in time'
- Ask for recommendations
- Ask for 'door opening'
- Ask for executive expertise
- Ask for lead gifts

Asking for bequests

- Ask for age

- Ask for confirmation
- Ask for interest in estate planning
- Ask for membership in a society
- Ask for recommendations of friends

Asking corporations, trusts and foundations

When seeking institutional support, keep in mind that there are potentially four different types of assistance you can secure:

- Asking for money
- Asking for a partnership
- Asking for gifts-in-kind
- Asking for volunteer time

Asking for corporate gifts

- Ask for their proposal requirements
- Ask for what interests them
- Ask who else they support
- Ask them to visit
- Ask what recognition they want

Asking for partnerships

- Ask what interests the potential partner
- Ask for marketing policies
- Ask about their customers and prospects
- Ask where there is a match of your needs and theirs

Asking for gifts-in-kind

- List everything you spend big bucks on
- List all your major suppliers
- List other suppliers of similar goods
- Prepare your case for support
- Prepare benefits and recognition options
- Telephone for appointments
- Go visit!

Asking for volunteer time

- Ask for a 'champion'
- Ask for professional expertise
- Ask for a loan of staff
- Ask for board membership

*With acknowledgement to
Successful Direct Mail,
Telephone & Online
Fundraising
November 2002*

Milestone Thinking

On-target observations in brief

Few donors care even remotely as much as you do about the details of the issues or projects that fill your day. They care about the underlying realities that cause you to do the work you do.

*With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times
September 15, 2005*

A wimpy website is one that doesn't present the information a visitor wants immediately, easily and attractively.

*With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times website
www.nptimes.com*

A good PS will sum up the focus in one or two short sentences. A really good PS will also serve as a teaser to encourage the donor to read the entire letter.

*With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times
July 15, 2005*

Charities, foundations, businesses, and governments all need to realise how society will suffer if non-profit groups are not able to continue to attract dedicated workers.

*With acknowledgement to
The Chronicle of Philanthropy
July 21, 2005*

Invite your volunteers to do something that requires both additional commitment and gives the opportunity to learn additional skills.

*With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times
September 1, 2005*

Fundraising letters are – by far – the single biggest means used by non-profits to recruit new donors.

*With acknowledgement to
Mal Warwick's website
www.malwarwick.com*

Integrating direct mail into all your fundraising events will help you get bigger gifts.

*With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times
September 15, 2005*



Flying high for 40 years

February 2006 saw the 40th birthday of the country's first aero-medical service, the SA Red Cross Air Mercy Service (AMS).

In 1966, with loads of enthusiasm and a Cessna 205 single engine six-seater aircraft, the South African Red Cross Society flew their first air ambulance flight from Cape Town to Oudtshoorn. This was to be the first of thousands of mercy flights across South Africa.

Since these humble beginnings, the AMS has grown into a comprehensive aero-medical network, providing air ambulance, rural health outreach and emergency rescue services to metropolitan and remote rural communities.

It has bases in Cape Town, Oudtshoorn, Durban, Richards Bay and Kimberley that focus on taking equitable health care directly to needy communities, in association with the provincial departments of health.

In the past, an ambulance transfer by road or evacuation from an accident scene could have taken hours. Or a relatively simple procedure like a cataract operation would have meant months on a waiting list, where patients had to be referred to a tertiary hospital for treatment.

In celebration of 40 years of service, the AMS has embarked on an awareness and fundraising campaign to highlight its fundraising needs, which include infrastructure development and the purchase of medical and aviation equipment.

For more information, please contact the Fundraising Department on (021) 934-0916, visit www.ams.org.za or e-mail adele@ams.org.za.

(Readers are invited to submit photographs, together with a brief overview of their organisation's work, for inclusion in this regular feature.) ■

February this year saw the 40th anniversary of the country's first aero-medical service, the SA Red Cross Air Mercy Service (AMS).

FUNDRAISING FORUM

Fundraising Forum is a regular newsletter dedicated to the enhancement of management and fundraising techniques and the promotion of community service, welfare and not-for-profit organisations of all kinds.

It is published by Downes Murray International and circulated, free of charge, to anyone with an interest in the growth and improvement of the non-profit sector and those served by it. In addition to regular features written by Downes Murray International staff, there are extracts from worldwide fundraising publications which are reprinted with acknowledgement to the publishers.

We welcome submissions for publication from all writers involved in not-for-profit work.

Visit www.dmi.co.za

(continued from page one)

Is it time to question conventional wisdom?

cases, the answer is equivocal.

For starters, the going assumption is that it's always necessary to suggest at least one possible gift amount.

This is based on the hard-won experience of major gift fundraisers, who have learned that suggesting a gift amount is much more likely to lead to success than is leaving the amount up to the donor.

However, a series of interesting tests conducted a few years ago by a colleague showed that sometimes — leaving that decision entirely to the donor brought in more and bigger gifts. So that aspect of the proposition requires further testing. It can't be taken for granted.

But there's another aspect of this matter that needs attention. Check out almost any direct mail fundraising package that arrives in your mailbox, and you'll find a series of suggested gift amounts — an 'Ask string'. Why? Why suggest several different amounts rather than just one? Because 'that's just the way it's done'?

I thought so. In fact, under some circumstances, my colleagues and I have had great success with a single Ask amount. That permits a stronger focus in the offer the package makes — and that in turn seems to help persuade donors to settle on that amount.

The key to success in direct mail fundraising is always to keep the cost as low as possible.

Here's another widely held conviction that's just dead wrong. It's true, of course, that in most large-scale donor acquisition programmes, cutting costs to the bone may be wise . . . most of the time, anyway. (I've seen too many

instances where the addition of an expensive additional insert may significantly raise the response rate or the average gift, so I won't even concede the general case in acquisition.)

In resolicitation programs, however, the opposite is often true: raising the production values of a special appeal, an upgrade package, or a high-value mailing may be far more cost-effective than keeping costs as low as vendors will allow.

You should expect one percent response from a direct mail appeal.

I hope that no reader of this newsletter still believes this old rule of thumb.

Sure, 20 years ago you might have been justified to suggest to newcomers to the field that a 1% response rate in cold mail — that is, in recruiting new donors — was a 'typical' experience in the non-profit sector.

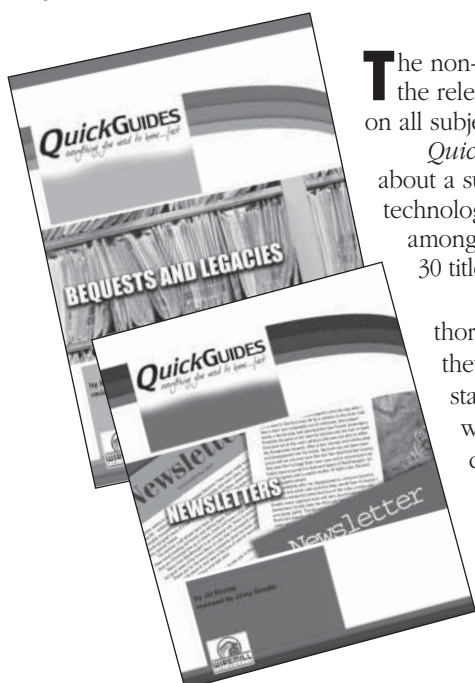
At no time, however, did it make any sense to pretend that a 1% response rate was a common expectation in housefile mailings, i.e., in mailings to existing donors or members.

And today it is the naive mailer indeed who ventures for the first time into donor acquisition with the expectation that response will be 1% or higher.

Sometimes it is, of course. But usually it isn't. The response rate varies tremendously from one country to another.

In most countries of the Global North, 1% is more wish than reality. In the South, response rates tend to be substantially higher. Once again, the conventional wisdom is a less than perfect guide to experience. ■

Quick answers with *QuickGuides*



The non-profit sector has a new resource with the release of *QuickGuides* – 24-page books on all subjects relating to their needs.

QuickGuides are the perfect way to learn about a subject quickly and easily. Fundraising, technology, management and marketing are among the 22 titles now available. Another 30 titles will be available at the end of 2005.

'*QuickGuides* provide accessible yet thorough information about the subject they cover. In under an hour non-profit staff, trustees and staff can get to grips with a new idea or supplement their current knowledge,' says Nancy Bikson, MD of Wiremill Publishing, the UK company which is producing the guides.

'We live in an information age yet we are drowning in information. These guides provide

a lifeline. After 25 years in the sector I know how desperately short of time everyone is and how much good, authoritative, quick information is needed.'

QuickGuides are unusual in that they're not country-specific. Indeed the publishers have specifically aimed the guides so they will be useful everywhere.

Every guide is written by a practitioner in one country and reviewed by a practitioner in another in order to ensure accuracy as well as highlighting cultural and other differences.

QuickGuides are available in Southern Africa through Papillon Press www.papillonpress.co.za or online at www.quickguidesonline.com.

Cost per *QuickGuides* is R100. For further information in South Africa call Jill Ritchie on 021 851 4793. ■

Recipe for success: – add more fresh ingredients!

Having been a passionate advocate of online fundraising for several years, and watched our clients' income from this source show slow but steady growth, it was incredibly exciting to be able to guide the Internet component of *Catholic Welfare & Development's* successful annual *Buckets of Love* Christmas campaign to new heights last year.

Although online giving accounted for only 3% of the total amount raised by the campaign – in just three months (October to December), we raised almost double what was raised online the whole of the previous year. The campaign also generated the largest single gift yet made online to any of the non-profits we serve – R30 000 from one individual.

Excluding this exceptional gift, the average online gift was R386, which is substantially higher than that achieved through the mail.

Secrets of Success

The key to this success was working hand-in-hand with the organisation's fundraising and PR departments to develop a truly integrated campaign – involving direct mail, some inspired PR work achieved on a shoestring by *Catholic Welfare & Development*, and sheer hard work.

At times, the website was being updated virtually on a daily basis. As the campaign to distribute a record 6 000 buckets of food to needy people at Christmas progressed, we added photographs of volunteers packing the buckets, news of organisations and people who were sponsoring them, letters from overseas supporters and, later, pictures of needy people receiving their gifts of food.

Direct ask

Central to the online appeal was a direct ask on the home page. We used a photograph

of a wistful child, superimposed on some bleak shacks, with the headline: 'Send Santa someplace he's never been.' This linked to a customised donate page and secure online payment gateway.

The same concept was used for banner ads which were displayed on the MWeb and *Business Day* websites free of charge.

But wait ... there's more!

Prospective donors were given the opportunity to 'buy' *Buckets of Love* as Christmas gifts for family, friends and work colleagues, and a downloadable Christmas card – which could be printed out and given to the person concerned – was included on the site.

Visitors could also view a 20 second promotional movie clip on the site. Although it took some time to load, people seemed happy to wait; we recorded 224 hits on the clip in November and December.

Driving forces

Apart from e-mail alerts with links through to the website, which were sent out to previous donors and contacts, online giving was promoted in other media – including radio ads, the video (which was screened in three Cape shopping malls), posters and leaflets.

The leaflets were handed out to motorists at traffic intersections by students wearing branded caps and T-shirts emblazoned with the web address.

Towards the end of December, all online donors received a 'thank you' Christmas card, showing a group of smiling children with their bucket. We subsequently posted a photo gallery on the website, showing the joy the buckets brought to underprivileged township folk.

As a result of the ongoing activity, a further R4 543 was raised via the website in January 2006.

Last year's *Buckets of Love* campaign was the most successful fundraising initiative ever run by *Catholic Welfare & Development*, with total net income up by 31% locally and 6% internationally. It proves that the more elements you can integrate into a campaign, the more donors you will attract and the more money you will raise – it's as simple as that!



Local online fundraising guru, Sheila McCallum, gets excited about the potential of integrated fundraising campaigns.

