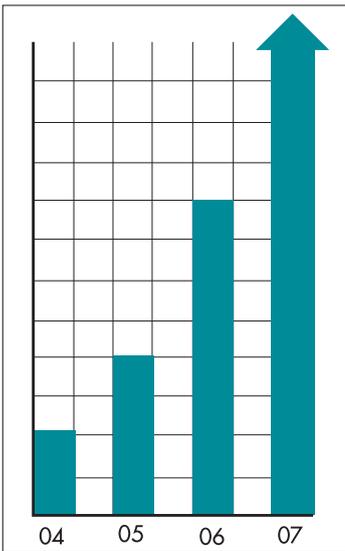


Double your money!



A look at the growth in online fundraising in South Africa, with some real case histories from the Downes Murray International Online portfolio.

There's an old adage that says if you want to double your money, you should fold it over and put it back in your pocket!

But when it comes to fundraising, a better option would be to invest in establishing an online presence. Early adopters among our clients have found that it is possible to double your income from this channel year-on-year.

In the USA, online fundraising is the only sector that is still showing strong growth. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy's* annual *Giving USA* report reports a modest 1% increase in general giving in 2006 – while its report on online giving shows a 37% increase.

Over the past three years, online giving grew 101% to offline's 6%.

Local case histories

In South Africa – bearing in mind that online fundraising is still in its infancy here – Downes Murray International clients have experienced growth of between 100% and 1000% in online giving over the past four years!

The table below reflects year-on-year growth for three local organisations which receive support from overseas donors.

	2004 (Rand)	2005 (Rand)	2006 (Rand)	2007* (Rand)
Organisation A	50 000	28 078	65 400	153 747
Organisation B	-	92 573	200 785	104 467
Organisation C	20 603	61 503	124 953	207 358

(* 2007 figures are to date only, which excludes the traditionally generous Christmas season.)

Although Organisation A's income took a dip in 2005, it recovered nicely in 2006 and will have an outstanding result by the end of 2007.

Organisation B doubled income from 2005 to 2006 and, with the major online campaign of the year still to come in December, is expected to at least match, if not exceed this income in 2007.

Organisation C has doubled income from online fundraising every year, and is expected to do the same again in 2007.

How did they do it?

Establishing a web presence was just the first step on the road to online fundraising success for these organisations. Other vital aspects of their online strategy include:

- website content management – ensuring the home page is regularly updated with strong, emotive fundraising appeals, and that donors receive visual report backs on projects via up-to-date 'news' pages;
- building online communities and harvesting e-mail addresses of web visitors via newsletter subscriptions, prayer requests, daily inspirations, online surveys, etc.;
- integration of offline and online communications;
- a regular e-mail programme to previous donors, subscribers and other prospects;
- Google pay-per-click promotions;
- Offline advertising and promotional activities.

With the exception of paid advertising, most of these activities can be achieved at minimal cost, making online fundraising one of the most cost-effective ways of raising money.

What's holding you back?

In our experience, the greatest barrier to success is the unwillingness of many non-profits to use the website as a fundraising tool.

Far too many use their home page to focus on their own mission and vision statements which, apart from being of little interest to web visitors, are not something that can be updated every month to give the page a fresh, interesting feel.

Others are really coy about asking for the money they need. At best, they add a donate button to their navigation bar, but give web visitors no reason to click on it.

Then there are the template-based sites that make use of RSS feeds to fill their home page with general news content. While this is a solution for busy, short-staffed organisations, it can never take the place of genuine and unique stories about your organisation and the people you are helping.

And *that* is what you need to turn your website into an effective fundraising tool! ■

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Watch out for the 'Tone of Voice' police!

Old friend and fellow fundraiser from the UK, George Smith and his wife Stella recently spent a few days with us in Cape Town. One evening, George and I got chatting about the state of direct mail fundraising in the UK today. (George, like Jerry Huntsinger, the famous 'Dean of DM fundraising' in the USA, has been in fundraising the same length of time as I have – 45 years).

Maybe we are a couple of grumpy old men, but George happens to agree with my assessment of the state of direct mail fundraising and marketing in the UK at the present.

Gimmicky

It has become totally over commercialised and the ad agency types and young inexperienced artists have influenced design and copy to such an extent that most of what is produced is so gimmicky that it screams out 'mass commercial mailing – don't open'.

And George confirms that no-one wants to listen to the voice of reason and experience in preference to the latest branding guru or 'Tone of Voice' consultant (more about this later!).

The basics that we know in South Africa are still working exceptionally well – both at home and also in Australia and New Zealand (where we are providing strategic and creative advice) have been forgotten in the rush to find the next flashy outer envelope with a huge teaser headline, or the next expensive and useless premium gift.

The reason we can speak with authority on this subject is that on behalf of a number of different clients, DMI continues to raise many, many millions each year from donor acquisition and renewal mailings and bequest promotion to donors living in the United Kingdom, Ireland, the USA and Canada – all some of the most competitive markets in the world.

And the packages we are producing still adhere to the basic rules which have been working for decades.

But back to 'Tone of Voice' – this is apparently the latest commercial sector consulting gimmick to find its way into the world of charities and welfare organisations.

Self-appointed specialists will guide you in how you and your staff should communicate using the spoken, written and printed word – so that you convey the right message to match your brand and don't ever stray into the world of reality, sincerity and emotional involvement.

George provided an example of how

a fundraising letter he wrote for a client was attacked by the 'Tone of Voice' police and he was told that not only did it contain an apology, but it was way too emotional to fit in with the strictly laid down guidelines which the 'Tone of Voice' consultancy had provided.

And recently, I have experienced something very similar in a couple of not-for-profit organisations which employed advertising agencies to provide brand booklets laying down strict guidelines.

The only problem with this was that the guidelines broke every known rule of timesteps and layouts that research has proved are best for communicating your message in a way that ensures that it is read and comprehended.

And the non-profit organisations insisted on sticking with the bad advice they had paid so much money for – a double tragedy.

Whilst we all accept that branding and the way in which one communicates verbally and in print, are as important in the non-profit sector as they are in the commercial world, based on my conversation with George, I want to offer a timely word of warning to the Southern Hemisphere not-for-profit world.

Inexperienced

And it is this: don't follow slavishly what has been provided by an organisation such as an advertising or design agency, which has had little or no experience in the not-for-profit sector.

In my experience the extent of the not-for-profit 'expertise' of most agencies is limited to 'freebie' ads or campaigns which have been produced *pro-bono* in order to enter creative competitions without the restrictions which would have been placed by a paying client.

And all of them show a total ignorance of what is, after all, a highly specialised and long established field of expertise – that of fundraising consultancy.

(George Smith was a founder of the pioneer Smith Bundy Agency in the UK in 1973 and subsequently with Ken Burnett, he co-founded Burnett Associates in the early 80s. For six years, George was also chief executive of the International Fundraising Group who were responsible for the celebrated annual fundraising conference which takes place near Amsterdam each year.

In 1990, he was awarded the DMA Gold Award for his work with Greenpeace and in 1994 he was the first person to ever be awarded an Honourary Fellowship of both the Institute of Direct Marketing and the Institute of Charity Fund Managers.) ■



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

“Don't follow slavishly what has been provided by an organisation such as an advertising or design agency”

Milestone Thinking

On-target observations in brief

Every cause needs people more than money, for when the people are with you and you are giving your cause their attention, interest, confidence, advocacy and service, financial support should just about take care of itself; whereas, without them in the right quality and quantity in the right places and the right states of mind and spirit, you might as well go and get lost.

Harold J. Seymour

With cellphones, e-mail and other forms of communication bombarding our daily lives, the old-fashioned personal note – sent via postal service – is taking on more meaning. You can't beat a handwritten note to convey sincerity.

With acknowledgement to Successful Fund Raising October 2007, Volume XV No.10

In theory charities should find it easier than companies to identify and promote appealing, compelling brand messages. Their very existence involves pursuing missions that inspire and help others.

With acknowledgement to The Chronicle of Philanthropy October 4, 2007

A person could receive a mailing and choose not to donate at that time, but due to the recipient's heightened awareness of the cause, he is more likely to respond to a future mailing.

With acknowledgement to The NonProfit Times Vol. 21 No. 17, 15 September, 2007

The best prospects for future gifts are those who have already given.

With acknowledgement to Successful Fund Raising November 2007, Volume XV No.11

Be innovative with your thanks – a children's home can use a child's note of thanks or a drawing, an animal welfare charity might have a picture of a dog or cat with a pawprint – get your staff to brainstorm some new ideas and surprise your donors with something memorable and different.

With acknowledgement to Terry Murray in The Art of Asking (see page 4)



TAFTA goes gold – 50 years of service excellence

In addition to providing residential homes for older persons, The Association for the Aged (TAFTA) also offers many support services to Durban's elderly – including frail care, assisted living, home help, community centres, subsidised meals, social work services, advisory clinics and respite care.

It's a progressive organisation, given its focus on tailor-making workable solutions to the challenges facing pensioners.

Their unique development project in Inanda – the Ilungelo Labadala Multi-Purpose Centre – is proof of this. Here, the aged and their orphaned grandchildren live together. This mini 'village' fulfils a vital role in the wider community, too. It includes a pension pay-out point, hall and training centre, after-care venue for children after school and a thriving food garden project.

Although TAFTA receives State aid, this subsidy falls far short of what the organisation needs to keep helping old folk. As many services are provided free of charge or made available on a sliding scale, dependent on income, TAFTA places great emphasis on its fundraising efforts.

In 2008, TAFTA celebrates 50 years of sterling service to older persons.

When around 20 concerned citizens were invited to the home of founders John and Anna Conradie back in 1958, could they have imagined that five decades later, TAFTA's annual operating costs would amount to millions of Rands? The organisation's first audited set of accounts shows expenditure amounting to £546 after eight months of operation! Here's to another 50 years, TAFTA!

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

What's almost 50 years old, continues to change (and save) lives – and also happens to be one of the most respected organisations in South Africa?

If you answered 'TAFTA', you'd be right. The Association for the Aged fulfils a vital role in the lives of thousands of senior citizens and is highly regarded for its expertise – and heart.

FUNDRAISING FORUM

Fundraising Forum is a regular newsletter dedicated to the enhancement of management, 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

The art of asking



The Art of Asking + 60 More Fundraising Tips and Trends written by Terry Murray, was recently published to coincide with Terry's 45th year in fundraising (in May 2007), and Downes Murray International's 21st anniversary in 2008. Here we feature one of the articles in the book, which is a collection of Terry's Fundraising Forum 'My View' columns over the past 20 years.

The Art of Asking + 60 More Fundraising Tips and Trends is published by Papillon Press. E-mail jill@papillonpress.biz or telephone 021 851 4793.

All fundraising eventually boils down to one person asking another for something and that's why the 'ASK' is probably the most important aspect of fundraising to understand. In fact, I would suggest that the first rule of fundraising is: 'You have to ask'.

The second rule is that you should 'fish where the fish are' and that means understanding that individual donors give most of the money to non-profit causes. We all know that in the USA more than 80% of the US\$ 260 billion donated to non-profit organisations each year comes from individuals and Canada and many other countries follow similar patterns.

Corporates, Trusts and Foundations are of course, also run by individuals so ultimately you are talking as one individual to another.

Thirdly you need to know a fact that I learned from Arthur Venn, a veteran Australian fundraiser who, together with my friend and business partner, Michael Downes, started Downes, Venn and Associates the forerunner of DVANavion. Arthur always used to say 'Who asks is often more important than what for' and that is very true even today. The right person of influence, be they a board member or a financially influential volunteer, will often get you that big gift because of their own obvious commitment to your cause.

Rule number four is 'put the donor's needs first' which means find out what their interests are and explain the benefits of their support.

And the fifth and final rule after you've made the ask and got the gift, is 'Thank, thank, thank' for thanking is the first step towards the next gift.

I have put together some guidelines for all the different types of ask which you might encounter in the raising of funds and resources for your organisation. These are just the outlines and obviously each requires a degree of knowledge and skill, but keep these tips in mind and you will be well on the way to fundraising success.

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-openings'
- 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 partnerships
- 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 you
- Ask for specific projects
- 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

Donors: the next generation

Parents serve as trusted advisors to children in myriad ways throughout their lives. One of the most valuable roles parents can play, whether their children are youths or adults, is to help them understand the importance of philanthropy and to assist them in discovering their own philanthropic values.

The philanthropic tradition must be taught and passed from one generation to the next, lest it wither and die.

Parents, educators and non-profit leaders must help foster philanthropic mindsets and behaviours in future generations.

Enriching

Philanthropy is the space in society where innovative approaches are developed to address complex social problems. It encourages pluralism and diversity of ideas, and serves as a check on the government and business sectors. It addresses the spectrum of community needs, from meeting basic human needs to enriching culture and creating a better future.

To fail to instil these values in young people risks losing the heart of our society and the giving and volunteering that sustain it.

Next-generation knowledge of why and how to engage in philanthropy is needed more today than ever before. The non-profit sector is expanding in size and complexity to meet increasingly diverse challenges.

The Foundation Centre in New York City indicates that the number of family foundations in America grew 22 percent, from 27,804 to 33,994, between 2001 and 2005, and the Council on Foundations in Washington, D.C., reports that family foundations are more than half of all private foundations.

Boston College's John J. Havens and Paul Schervish estimate that more than \$41 trillion in wealth will be transferred to younger ages. To put this wealth to the best possible use, young people must understand philanthropy and their place in it.

Beyond these trends, we all have a responsibility to help develop children who care for others, regardless of economic status or background.

Philanthropic practices help a child develop compassion, altruism and good citizenship. They also nurture children's psychological needs by benefiting both society and the philanthropic individual.

Leading by example and exposing children to a variety of opportunities is one of the most important ways to engage children, who acquire philanthropic values, in part, by observing and participating alongside family members, teachers and other adult mentors.

Research confirms the importance of parents in transmitting philanthropic activity. Indiana University's Centre on Philanthropy Panel Study

(COPPS) of more than 8,000 households found that adult children whose parents gave to religious purposes are more likely to give to religious purposes and to give more.

It also found that adult children whose parents gave to secular purposes are more likely to give to secular purposes and to give more.

A study commissioned by the Bank of America and conducted by the Centre on Philanthropy at Indiana University found that adults in more than 70% of high net-worth households discuss philanthropy with children and approximately 35% allow their children to participate.

Other studies, such as those conducted by Independent Sector in Washington, D.C., indicate that people who volunteered as youth give and volunteer more as adults than those who did not. That process can start with something as simple as accompanying a parent on a community service project.

Parents also can help establish philanthropic habits through their religious communities, where children can learn about rituals of giving during religious services, such as putting money in a collection plate, and can engage in volunteer work.

Many community organisations, such as the Boy and Girl Scouts of America, Youth as Resources, Youth as Grantmakers and 4-H also provide opportunities for young adults to learn about and practice philanthropy.

Milestones

In an interview with the National Centre for Family Philanthropy (NCFEP), Dr Kathryn Agard, founding executive director of Learning To Give, suggests that parents and educators can identify developmental milestones in each child's life at which they can move to deeper understanding of and involvement in philanthropy.

She recommends specific activities and educational benchmarks for children at each stage that help to facilitate this development.

The process can begin in children as young as toddlers. Using language such as 'You are helping our family' can help them understand why they should contribute to their family, school and community. Agard said that elementary school-age children start to reach out to others and parents should begin to tell family stories of philanthropy, including both giving and receiving.

By middle school, children are open to the realisation that philanthropy is a tradition that exists around the world and should be involved in a regular, planned volunteer experience.

In high school, leadership development and transferring key knowledge about the sector are important. Youth should be encouraged to become active in personal giving and to explore

Children are the next generation of philanthropists – but are we doing enough to educate them on the contribution they can make? Eugene R. Tempel investigates.

*Adapted from
The NonProfit Times
August 1, 2007
Visit www.nptimes.com*

Continued on page 6

Donors: the next generation (continued)

Continued from page 5

careers in philanthropy.

The NCFP recommends that parents maintain a strong connection with the unique interests and talents of their children. At each step, parents can help young people to self-identify their own unique talents, how they want to spend their time, and the valuable material gifts that they want to give away.

There are also a growing number of efforts to expose children to philanthropy at school. Learning to Give recently merged with The League to provide leadership to build the practice and teaching of philanthropy into formal K-12 education, offering meaningful and fun service-learning projects and free teacher resources that help students to live and understand philanthropy.

Resources

Learning to Give also offers valuable tools for parents to encourage the teaching of philanthropy in their children's schools and to use in their homes and communities.

A resource entitled *Nine Ways to Raise Children Who Give, Share & Care*, encourages parents to take such steps as reading books to their children that contain messages of giving and service, involving their children's friends in philanthropic activities, and encouraging their children's schools to adopt the 'academic service-learning' teaching method.

A pioneer in this approach is The Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Institute for Philanthropy and Service Learning at the Westminster Schools, a K-12 private school in Atlanta.

It focuses on engaging children in all grades, parents, faculty and alumni in the tradition, values and practices of philanthropy and service projects.

Rising seniors can take Philanthropy 101, a four-week summer course teaching the art and science of smart giving, including a stipend from which they make a donation.

Courses such as History and Economics of American Philanthropy, one of the first such for-credit courses in secondary education, and an interdisciplinary, experiential course, School for the Common Good, are offered as well.

A year-long service and learning programme for fifth-graders called Urban Ed-Venture helps students develop a sense of community and citizenship at an early age. The semi-annual Glenn Institute Lecture Series helps parents understand how to instil and reinforce philanthropic ideals at home.

As children grow into young adults and begin to develop their own views, the NCFP and other experts emphasise the need to help children discover their own philanthropic calling. According to NCFP, 'Allowing a

child to establish and pursue his or her own philanthropic agenda can be a valuable way of both reinforcing the importance of giving back to the community and allowing them to exercise their independence'.

Howard W. Buffett, son of philanthropist Howard G. Buffett, agrees. 'It is absolutely important to pass philanthropic values down. But it is also important to keep in mind that members of the next generation need an opportunity to explore their own ideas and their own kinds of interests within the realm of philanthropy, and to be able to branch out from what their parents or aunts and uncles or grandparents are doing.'

This is especially significant when involving children in long-standing family philanthropic traditions or in a family foundation.

Young adults of financial or other privilege face particular challenges in identifying and shaping their own philanthropic paths.

A number of organisations and programmes have emerged to provide multi-generational or next-generation resources to help with this. Organisations such as 21/64, Resource Generation, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP), and GENERous explorATIONS offer publications, workshops, conferences, networking and peer learning to assist these young philanthropists.

Whether by guiding inner-city toddlers or advising wealthy, young professionals, everyone working in non-profit organisations supported by philanthropy have a role and stake in the success of continuing the philanthropic tradition.

Managers must encourage volunteers and donors to talk to their children about the rationale and scope of their philanthropic activity. You can encourage them to engage their children with them in our organisation's events and activities.

Programmes

You can work with local educators and school administrators to establish programmes that teach students about the philanthropic tradition and engage them in both giving and volunteering. We can arrange special activities for young people ourselves.

By establishing the value of philanthropic giving and communicating this regularly to youth, parents and educators and non-profit leaders provide a valuable foundation for a lifelong understanding of philanthropy and how one's time, talent, and treasure contribute to a civil society.

Eugene R. Tempel is executive director and Dwight F. Burlingame is associate executive director and director of academic programmes for the Centre on Philanthropy at Indiana University in Indianapolis. ■

Nine tips for Effective e-mails

E-mail may seem boring, what with Google Earth, Web 2.0, Twitter, widgets, and badges, but it's still the workhorse of online fundraising and communications.

In-boxes are more congested every day, and more and more people are checking their e-mail on cell phones and other mobile devices. So you've got to keep grooming your e-mail to keep it readable and relevant.

Here are nine questions to ask when you're preparing a message:

1. Is there a compelling reason to send the e-mail?

Is it urgent, interesting, funny, sad? Would you forward the message to a friend or family member? If there's no good reason for it besides 'it's on the calendar,' consider taking the day off.

2. Does it have an effective 'From' line?

Usually the 'From' is the name of the organisation, but it could include the name of the signer, such as your Executive Director or a celebrity supporter, especially if the name of your organisation is short enough that most people can see the name of the signer and the name of the organisation in their in-boxes. The 'From' and the subject line are the two main ways your recipient decides whether or not to open your message.

3. Does it have an effective subject line?

We all struggle over this, and books have been written about it. One option for large lists is to test two or more subject lines and roll out the most opened one.

4. Does it make the point in the first vertical centimetre or two?

Many people won't see images – your header, wrapper, or photos – because their e-mail software turns them off. Or they may be getting your message on a BlackBerry or Treo or cell phone.

5. Is it easy to scan the message (since very few people read it all the way through)?

Can recipients get the idea at a glance? Are the key terms and images clear to most recipients (remembering that most people don't open most messages, and even when they do, they barely pay attention)? If you say 'Plan B,' will everyone understand you mean the morning after pill? What about the NLRB – do they know what it is?

6. Does the headline make the offer?

Does the first or second paragraph

make the point and provide a link for action? Is the call-out box simple and clear, making a single point and with no more than a sentence or two at the most?

7. Is it as short as possible?

Does it contain vague, unemotional language that repeats what's already been said? Can you edit out the useless words and clichés that just slow down reading or turn people off, such as 'unwavering support' and 'heartfelt tribute'?

8. Does the Ask feel compelling?

If it's advocacy, does the action feel as though it can make a difference? If it's fundraising, is it clear what the money's for, and does it seem as though your donation will make a difference?

9. Does it feel like one person writing to another?

As impersonal as e-mail can be, you still want it to feel like one person's message to another. Work with your signer to give the message a personal feel.

If it's from your Executive Director, can it mention something about her life? If it's from Meg Ryan, can it mention an experience she had while making a film ('When I made *When Harry Met Sally*, we were reading about the famine in Ethiopia as we shot the scenes. Now 20 years later...').

There are plenty of other tips and tricks – technical and editorial – that can help your programme. You can learn more at industry sites such as marketingsherpa.com and clickz.com, and non-profit blogs such as *The Agitator* and *Sea Change Strategies*. You can also get my own e-newsletter at donordigital.com

Nick Allen is Managing Director of Donordigital, which helps organisations use the Internet for fundraising, advocacy, and advertising. Contact nick@donordigital.com

Is your e-mail readable and relevant? If not, it's unlikely to be opened. Nick Allen offers nine tips to make your e-mails more effective.

Websites such as marketingsherpa.com (above) and theagitator.net offer a wealth of news, views, tips and trends on e-mail and online strategies – and more.

With acknowledgments to Successful Direct Mail, Telephone and Online Fundraising™
September 2007
Visit www.mahuarwick.com

That elusive, invisible thread

Still looking for Inspiration's address? If your creative flow is but a trickle, Downes Murray International copywriter Marisol Gutierrez suggests a route to the floodgates.

Inspiration. The word itself has wings. She's the intangible source, the breath of life of creative pursuits.

But what about those *other* times ... the darkness of dreaded 'writer's block' – when we struggle to string a sentence together and a full stop can't even find its way onto a blank page. *Horrors.*

If one somehow produces something of worth while in this state of disgrace, a little pat on the back is in order. If not, despair not: writers' bosses are human, usually.

They have been known to forgive one for writing nothing/drivel if one had not slept for six nights – in a row.

Or if one's 'flu medication explicitly states that one must not operate any electrical devices, particularly those that chop, grate, suck or slice at the speed of light.

Near-death

Of course, in the real world, writers' bosses do not bring their sensitive souls, tranquillisers or tissues to the office. Which means that one must write on, regardless of minor setbacks such as severe sleep deprivation or near-death experiences.

So, back to that flighty, mighty thing known as Inspiration ... and the lessons that this writer has learned.

To find Inspiration, stop looking. Call off the search for something that is *as much a part of you* – and unique to you – as your fingerprint.

Truth is, Inspiration is never absent ... we are.

When we are not connected, immersed, involved – and go through the motions of work and life while distanced from them – when we stop looking at things through the eyes of the student ... a robotic reality results.

Hardly fertile ground for cultivating creativity.

And now?

Is there a remedy? No, there is only a good place to start ...

Above all: watch more; see beyond the obvious. Listen more. Speak less. Notice. Daydream, think – without logic bleaching and sanitising your ideas. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Deceptively so.

Great, but what has this got to do with fundraising, you wonder?

It is this: if you're not inspired by your own cause, the chances of you presenting a compelling case for support to others are dismal. Your approach may become diluted and dull.

Einstein has left the building

No matter what the cause – be it Aids orphans, the euthanasia of homeless pets or habitat destruction – tell *your* story.

But please: don't base a call to action on mind-boggling statistics that would challenge the mathematical genius of Einstein.

There's a place for numbers, but alone they do not – cannot – have personality. Remember who is living, dying, crying, starving, hoping, hurting – and why? As importantly, *what can the donor do* to help you change it?

Be specific. Want money? How much? If R125 will feed a pet for a month – ask for it. If you want a company to sponsor clothes for 10 orphans – say so. In no uncertain terms.

Vague generalisations are numbing. Passion and purpose are powerful – and nourishment for Inspiration.

Commitment

Just as motherhood is not for sissies, neither is fundraising. There's nothing effortless about either. No rights to entitlement – of appreciation, admiration or reward. There is just the inescapable truth that what you are doing matters a great deal.

So, even on those despairing days when your cause doesn't seem to matter to the world, make it count in every sentence you write. ■

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.

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Season's Greetings

The editors, contributing writers and publishers of *Fundraising Forum* wish all clients and friends a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.



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