

SAIF conference 'makes waves'

The recent SAIF conference – Making Waves – attracted some 223 delegates. Downes Murray International consultant Sandy Havercroft-Drummond was there.

SAIF launched its 9th Biennial Fundraising Conference on 26 May and at the same time, showcased their new logo.

The importance of branding, of making your organisation unique in the eyes of the donor, of producing a consistent and relevant message throughout all communications featured in many of the excellent workshops that delegates attended.

Almost every aspect of fundraising was covered in one way or another, from tried, tested and proven methods such as direct mail, through to some excellent 'how to' sessions covering difficult areas like proposal writing and compiling case statements.

The future of fundraising was tackled in depth, with dedicated workshops on the topic. Mention was made of newer methods of reaching donors. While it's very exciting to look at these methods – for example, SMS fundraising and online campaigns – it was stressed that integrated programmes, using as many types of media as possible, offer the best chance of success.

Another point that was made was that in different countries, there may be limitations on the use of different media. It's true to say that certain international organisations have had huge success with new media. Here in South Africa, we currently cannot access the details of anyone who donates via SMS.

We also can't accept payments made via debit card on websites. No doubt these difficulties will be overcome in the future, but in the meantime, it is important to think clearly and holistically about strategy and tactics.

Sustainability

A theme often visited was that of sustainability and the need to clearly strategise with this goal in mind. With so many NPOs working hard for the donor's loyalty, sustainability is key to ensuring that your organisation is successful and beneficiaries continue to receive your help.

National Director of the QuadPara Association of S.A., Ari Seirlis, illustrated just how innovative an organisation can be, and what great results can be achieved when clear strategies are devised to achieve specific goals.

Fundraising in general is not always

tackled strategically, and activities are often planned based on 'what worked last time' so the session presented by Professor Adrian Sargeant, *Lessons from Research for Fundraising*, gave some real food for thought. The research carried out by Professor Sargeant and his team showed how a significant increase in average donation can be achieved simply by the use of social information. Sharing a seemingly innocuous piece of information with your donors can have a very positive effect on your bottom line!

Feel good

Similarly, using specific techniques that make our donors feel good about supporting us can also increase the amount donated.

So how do you achieve this? What words do you use? How do you talk to your donor? Downes Murray International hosted a workshop at the conference and those who attended will know that putting together a communication strategy, whether it be via direct mail or any other method, is not a simple task.

By using the skills of a professional team who are up to date with the latest research, including a copywriter who knows how to 'talk to' donors, you can significantly increase your chances of success.

It was excellent to see the calibre of speakers on the programme, but just as exciting was the realisation that there is a huge amount of experience and knowledge already present in South Africa.

Conferences such as these offer us many opportunities to learn from international trends and from each other – all with the ultimate aim of making a difference, not by chance, but by clearly thought out strategies. If we can put a little scientific research behind our actions – all the better!

'Kudos to SAIF for a professionally organised event, with an outstanding selection of speakers. How refreshing to be amongst like-minded people from our sector!

I found the conference hugely motivational ... as fundraisers in South Africa we tend to become parochial in our outlook. It really inspires to realise that our efforts play a hugely important part in the bigger picture,' said Caroline Smith, Marketing Manager, Durban and Coast SPCA. ■

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In a recession, stay close to your donors

This article is excerpted from Mal Warwick's newest book, Fundraising When Money is Tight: A Strategic and Practical Guide to Surviving Tough Times and Thriving in the Future (Jossey-Bass, April 2009). Copyright © 2009 by Mal Warwick. All rights reserved. Available at www.kalabari.net

You've heard it a thousand times: Fundraising isn't really about money – it's about relationships with donors. But does your organisation have programmes in place that truly reflect this perspective? If your approach is like hundreds of others I've observed first-hand, probably not.

In your major gift programme, for example, the byword is bonding. Yet how many hours per week do your major gift officers spend meeting face-to-face with donors and prospects? In what ways do you keep your biggest donors up-to-date on the principal programmes and issues that affect your work? If you have good answers to these questions, go to the head of the class. You're not alone – but the space up there isn't crowded.

Now, when money is tight, it's doubly important that you operate as though all your donors are your best friends in the world. To survive tough times and thrive when the economic storm clouds lighten, you need to devote a great deal of attention to thinking about how you can make your donors' experience with your organisation more meaningful.

As a profession, we fundraisers have begun to learn a lot about what moves donors, and what doesn't. Researchers have plumbed the depths of a hundred questions or more.

But one fact does seem to emerge clearly from almost all of what I've read: donors crave appreciation for their gifts – and they're liable to become downright cranky if they're not thanked promptly and warmly.

Acknowledgement

No doubt you're attentive to the need for acknowledging major gifts. But how about gifts in smaller denominations?

In direct mail circles, many fundraisers lament the low rates of conversion from one-time to multiple givers, and the higher but still sobering rates of renewal of multi-year donors. Yet so many direct mail fundraising programmes skimp on – or entirely avoid – donor acknowledgments. I know this is the case, because for many years I conducted an annual test of thank you practices by major American mailers (what's called 'mystery shopping' in other countries).

I was truly appalled by how many sent gift acknowledgments only weeks, or even months, after the fact – or failed to send any at all. I'm certain, without any doubt whatsoever, that the poor renewal rates that plague so many direct mail fundraising programmes are partly the result of this cavalier treatment.

What do donors want the most? They want

to be treated as human beings, not statistics! Yet is this the message you deliver when you mail generic thank-you notes by bulk mail ... when donors receive them weeks after sending their gifts ... when all you get after giving online is an instant email acknowledgment with no follow-up ... when your gift acknowledgments include not a hint of the appeal that gave rise to the donors' gifts ... or when (to make matters even worse) your thank you is a postcard rather than a letter?

Competitive advantage

Sure, times are tough. Yet this is not the time to economise on gift acknowledgments. In fact, to gain a sorely needed competitive advantage in this era of tight money, you would be well advised to spend more, not less, on expressing appreciation to your donors.

If you're laughing now – or groaning; the difference is immaterial – I suggest you consider taking another look at the preceding chapter on segmentation.

Spending more on gift acknowledgments to a smaller number of donors can still save you money. Think about it!

Give your donors that warm, fuzzy feeling. Prompt, personalised thank you notes won't do the trick alone. It's important that your donors – especially your most generous and responsive donors – get the feeling that you care about them more than just as sources of cold, hard cash. This is the impression they're likely to get if you:

- Never communicate with your donors except to ask for money.
- Ask for an additional gift as soon as you receive the last one.
- Include a postage-paid reply envelope with every gift acknowledgment.

I'm well aware that many direct marketing specialists heartily recommend such practices. I think they're wrong.

Three decades ago, when I began my career in fundraising, it made perfectly good sense to undertake a consistently aggressive solicitation programme. Competition, at least by today's standards, was slight. Most direct marketing donors were less sophisticated and less demanding. But times have changed, and so have donor attitudes.

Today, donors demand heartfelt appreciation, considerate and responsive treatment, and information that inspires their trust. It's not enough to ask them for money. You'll need to keep them well informed about your organisation's work in general – and about the specific projects and programmes they've supported. ■

Milestone Thinking

On-target observations in brief

It's important to impress donors because they talk, and they talk to one another.

*With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times
September 15 2008*

Creating a year-long operational plan with goals and strategies is one thing. Including incentives that make achieving these goals more fun is quite another.

*With acknowledgement to
Successful Fund Raising
December 2008 Volume XVI, No.12*

I will love the light, for it shows me the way, yet I will endure the darkness, for it shows me the stars.

Og Mandino

Fundraising professionals should develop the concept of generosity. What really matters is the size of the gift in relation to the donor's means.

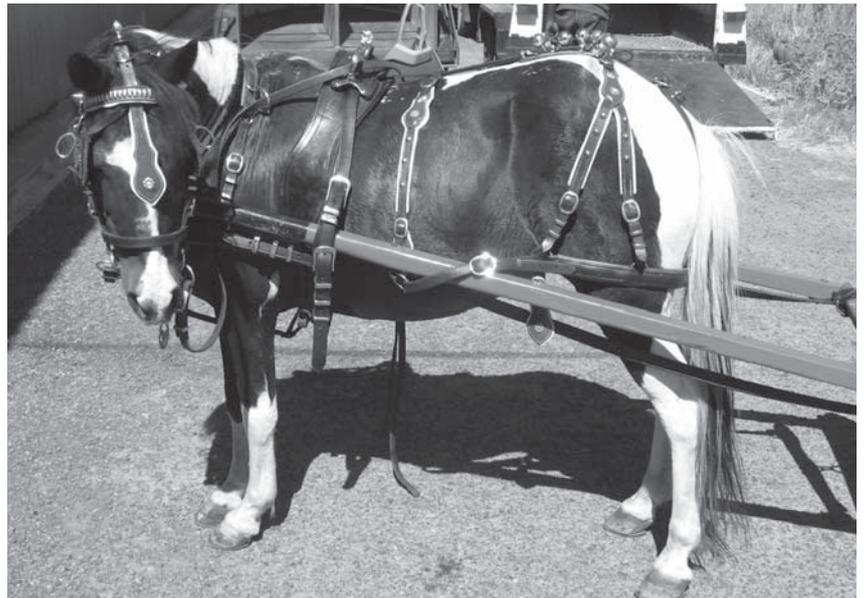
*With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times
June 15 2008*

Fundraisers raise funds. It's in the title. But great fundraisers are more than human automated teller machines. Raising the most money isn't the only measure of a great fundraiser. Overcoming obstacles and still breaking new ground for the future is just as important to an organisation's bottom line as today's Rand.

*With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times
January 15 2008*

You absolutely must have a very short 'elevator pitch' when you are asking for money. If you can't explain in two or three simple sentences why the donor should be interested in your programme, you won't get anywhere.

*With acknowledgement to
Virginia Turner in
Successful Fund Raising
December 2006, Volume XIV, No. 12*



Protecting the rights of working horses

Since 1995, the Cart Horse Protection Association (CHPA) has been providing services and support to cart horse owners and their horses.

On the Cape Flats, owners and drivers use their cart horses to collect scrap metal, which often leads to neglect or abuse.

CHPA's subsidised clinics provide access to feed, a professional farrier service, harness repairs, basic veterinary treatments, as well as free de-worming and vaccinations. Horse owners are also educated and given practical training on how to take care of their horses.

The Patrol and Call Out Response Unit polices cart horse drivers by conducting inspections.

The Veterinary and Rehabilitation Unit provides veterinary services to sick and injured horses and carries out stable yard visits, while the Recovery and Rehabilitation Centre provides a place of safety for abused and neglected horses.

Last year, CHPA put on 2218 sets of shoes, and distributed 4540 bales of hay and 1200 bags of 10% horse meal. The organisation treated over 400 sick and injured horses, responded to over 400 emergency call outs, removed 18 horses, seized over 100 horses, and conducted over 6000 general inspections. All this with just two full-time inspectors!

Contact Megan on 021 535 3435 for more information.

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

CHPA provides various essential services to over 500 working cart horses living on the Cape Flats.

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 international 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 humble thank you letter – just how important is it?



Recession has 'bitten' and the response of a number of charities has been to cut back on their donor acquisition programmes. This despite the research that has shown this to be false economy, and results in a drop in income four or five years down the line. DMI's Sandy Havercroft-Drummond reports.

Sure, everyone has to tighten their belts, but consider this: would you stop paying your children's school fees and make them stay at home in order to save money? Just for a year or two? What would happen when you decided that you could afford to send them back?

After two years of little or no investment in their education, they would be at a significant disadvantage, and have a few years of playing 'catch up' before they could even hope to reach the required standard from which to progress. This is what happens when charities stop investing in acquisition – short term gain but a long term sacrifice, from which it is not easy to recover.

The default position for an NPO should be to continue to invest in acquisition – but to maximise future returns by looking after those donors a lot better than we might have in the past, in order to conquer the other demon of recession: donor retention, i.e. keeping your existing donors and bringing new donors into the fold for a lifetime.

Your appeals need to be as real and as urgent as ever, but once you have a donation – saying thank you, and saying it correctly will be the most important determinant of keeping new – and existing – donors.

Although recession is the reason given for a decline in donor retention, is there anything else that affects retention rates? A survey, carried out in America in 2008, asked donors why they had stopped giving. The number one reason? They 'no longer feel connected to an organisation'.

This is not a new feeling. In 1997 the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating found that 50% of donors stop giving, or give less, because they felt that their gifts were not appreciated.

The thank you letter is the perfect place to show your appreciation, to tell your donors that they matter to you, that their donation made a difference.

In a 2008 study carried out in the UK 25 charities were sent an initial 'test' donation of R120. A staggering 14 of them failed to send any form of thank you whatsoever. These were not small, cash-strapped organisations either, but well established charities. Of the thank you letters that were received, the one that made the most impact was a hand written card from Hope & Homes for Children. It was personal, heartfelt and much better than a compliments slip with

the words 'thanks for your donation' scrawled on it – one of the other thank you's received.

So it's vital for your organisation to thank donors properly.

Consider the following:

How soon after the gift is received do you send a thank you letter?

- Promptness is a priority. Aim to send a thank you letter within 48 hours.
- Do you refer to the amount donated? If I have made a donation, I want to know that you have paid attention, that you acknowledge the amount of my gift.

Do you address the donor by name?

- Know who the donor is – personalise your thank you letter.

Do you supply a receipt as standard?

- You should, as standard procedure.
- Do you differentiate what kind of letter or communication goes to people who donated very small amounts and those who sent substantial gifts?

If someone has donated a large amount of money, send the letter, but make sure your director or CEO makes a phone call as well.

If someone has donated R10, this is as important a gift as any other.

What about content?

- You could start with something other than 'Thank you for your gift' to make it more exciting!
- If this is a repeat gift, acknowledge their past generosity.
- Include a contact number they can call if they have questions, or an e-mail address – but a *named* address, not an 'Info@abc'. Direct them to a real person.
- Use the words 'you' and 'yours' more than 'we' and 'ours'.
- Say 'thank you' more than once.

What kind of information do you have on your donors?

- Your database should be able to tell you how old I am, how often I donate, what my average gift is, whether I have a special interest in any of your projects and so on.

This is the type of data that can help you keep track of the effectiveness of your appeals, the lifetime value of donors, who to send bequest information to – your database is the life-blood of your fundraising.

If you want to improve your retention rates, improve the way your donors feel about you. Make them part of your family.

Every NPO can do a better job of saying thank you, and it doesn't have to cost you a great deal. ■

References:

- *The NonProfit Times*, October 1 and 15, 2008
- *Failing to hit the (Bench) Mark – a Mystery-Shopping Report*, John Grain Associates Ltd, March 2008
- *How to Write a Better Thank You Letter and why it Matters*, Lisa Sargent, Sargent Communications LLC, March 2009.

A handshake and a smile

According to Merriam-Webster, 'credibility' is the quality or power of inspiring belief. The next part is to ask what inspires belief more than anything else? The answer is trust.

Trust is built from shared experiences and honest conversations, in good and bad times. It's fostered by doing what you say you'll do, when you say you'll do it. Trust is strengthened by coming to the aid of others when help is needed. But, what does trust have to do with building circles of support? Everything.

Trust is personal. It's a value shared between individuals. Why does Kevin Rogers, long-time friend of your new executive director, now donate to your organisation? Is it because he likes your mission? Maybe, but initially, it's because he trusts and supports his friend.

For thousands of nonprofits, it's these types of personal and professional relationships that will be the saving grace in what will continue to be a year of uncertainty.

We tend to get caught up in trying to implement the next new whizz-bang, quick-win fundraising tactic. In doing that, we neglect old-fashioned relationship-building with those in our community. It's imperative to take the time to get out from behind our computer, and in front of business owners, service groups and like-minded individuals who may be able to help keep our organisations strong, and our missions moving forward.

Word of mouth

Word of mouth is a powerful marketing tool, and it's at the very core of viral marketing. It can be a powerful fundraising strategy for non-profit organisations.

Using word of mouth to build circles of support and influence for your organisation can create a positive buzz; increase contributions from current donors, while improving donor retention; and bring new donors to the organisation. In fact, the Great American Donor Survey, conducted by Campbell Rinker, found that 85 percent of donors say they frequently or occasionally recommend one of their favourite charities to a friend or family member.

Encourage your board, volunteers, and staff to take advantage of opportunities to talk about why they're passionate about your organisation in every day business and personal interactions. Even casual conversations plant seeds in the minds of others that can be cultivated over time, as well as reinforced by other advertising and communications.

Your organisation will be introduced to more people in a more positive light than through traditional marketing or public relations alone. When you finally make that ask for support, those people will be more inclined to give, because you have the support of their trusted friends and colleagues.

Local service organisations, such as Rotary and Lions clubs, are a great way to build circles of support. These organisations mobilise thousands of individuals whose time and contributions impact local, national, and international initiatives, such as hunger prevention, literacy, and medical aid.

Speaking

Service organisations enjoy learning about new groups and new projects, particularly ones in their local community that align to their strategic initiatives. Try to secure speaking opportunities at local service organisation meetings to introduce your organisation; educate on the current trends or conditions that make your cause invaluable to the community; and, over time, gain new supporters.

Businesses provide much-needed resources to the nonprofit sector in terms of volunteers, monetary support, pro-bono services and in-kind donations. Business networking organisations, such as your local Chamber of Commerce, can help you tap into your area's local businesses, resulting in increased awareness for your cause, and the development of key relationships with local business influencers in your community.

It's essential to develop a true partnership that helps both the business and your organisation. When approaching new business partners, find out what they need to do to 'move the needle' and foster inter-organisational trust by developing a two-way street for communication. Demonstrate how their involvement in your organisation will help them accomplish one of their goals, like reaching new customers.

Once the trusting relationship is built, the businesses will naturally become advocates of your cause, spreading the word to their customers, clients, and business associates on your behalf. Attending networking opportunities and becoming a member of a networking group will open doors and avenues of support that may have otherwise gone untapped.

Making time is important. Even if you can only start small, start somewhere. We're all being asked to do more with less, and it's your relationships with supporters that will get you through these challenging times. Schedule time – even just 15 minutes each day – to focus on mobilising your most devoted supporters to be advocates for your organisation.

Strong organisations have pillars of strength around them. Fostering trust between your organisation and its stakeholders in the community is a strategic activity that will pay for the investment in the long run. The more people who speak highly of your organisation, the greater the chance that your current and potential donors will hear messages of credibility and value in casual conversation, thus contributing to your cause. ■

Heather Burton, senior marketing manager for Sage North America's Non-profit Solutions, looks at building circles of support the old-fashioned way.

*Adapted from
The NonProfit Times
April 15 2009
Visit www.nptimes.com*

Take six solid steps towards compelling case statements

The case statement serves as an important tool in preparing a capital campaign. This report courtesy of Successful Fund Raising, June 2009, Volume XVII, No. 6.

While the case statement will not invoke major gifts, it will capture the attention of would-be donors and play a key role in the solicitation process.

This document should provide compelling justification to support your effort as both key donors and prospects share in its development or in reviewing it prior to the launch of a capital campaign.

To make your case statement as persuasive as possible, incorporate these principles into its development:

1. Illustrate your organisation's strength and ability to forge confidently ahead. Donors and prospects first need to be assured of your institution's viability. Do you have a solid history of balanced budgets? Growing endowment? Have you followed through on your plans? Your organisation's history should show worthiness of future support.
2. Create a 'knock their socks off' strategic plan. To generate extraordinary gifts, you must get people's attention with extraordinary (but attainable) plans. Create a long-term strategic plan that

exemplifies your intent to make significant achievements, to be a leader.

3. Tie the organisation's future to quantifiable objectives. Don't simply say 'We want to build a great university'. Rather, include clear objectives of how you intend to do so. What are quantifiable outcomes of becoming great? How will you get there?
4. Spell out how these plans relate to your mission and what a difference their fulfillment will make to those you serve. Stay true to your organisation's purpose (if unable to do so, re-examine your mission statement before moving ahead on a major campaign).
5. Paint a clear, detailed picture of how revenue will be used. Prospects are more likely to invest if they fully understand your plans.
6. Don't hesitate to share consequences of unfulfilled plans. While a case statement's overall theme should be positive, it's acceptable to convey what will (or won't) happen if plans are not fully realised. This also helps bring urgency to the need for a campaign. ■

Are your volunteers doing it for you?

If not, now's the time to prepare for Do It Day – on 18 September – and get volunteers to do something for your charity. The DMI team 'did it' for various NGOs last year, writes Marisol Gutierrez – and plans to do it again in September.

I did it for cats and dogs last year – along with a not-so-hairy band of colleagues who also cleaned out cat potties and had their legs walked off by dogs at the SPCA.

Other DMISTers chose to 'do' old age homes or educate at children's centres. Our team should have won a prize for being the dirtiest and smelliest – and fluffiest. As the washing powder says, 'dirt is good' ... and to that maxim we add: especially when it's for a good cause.

Do It Day is a GreaterGood SA initiative and is a valuable opportunity for all not-for-profit organisations to harness the skills, energy and passion of ordinary South Africans.

Use this excellent initiative to get willing helpers to do whatever it is you need to get done – whether it's painting a room, holding a hand, reading to children, exercising pets or sharing skills.

Do It like this

Step 1: Identify your needs.

Think about the essential skills gaps in your organisation as well as 'sweat-equity' projects. If you need help identifying your needs, e-mail belinda@ggsa.co.za and she can give you some ideas to get you started.

Step 2: Submit your proposal now.

Submit your proposal online at www.doitday.co.za or download the application form and email it to belinda@ggsa.co.za or fax it to 021 762 7065.

Your project should involve volunteer skills and/or labour. If you need materials to make it happen, your budget must not exceed R4 000.

Ideas for volunteer projects include:

- River, beach or park clean-up.
- Share sports skills with youth.
- Read to or make art with children at an early learning centre.
- Have a tea party at a home for the elderly.
- Ask a plumber to fix leaks at your residential facility.
- Create a food garden for a school, home or community.
- Build or refurbish a playground.
- General painting, landscaping and maintenance.
- Comfort children awaiting surgery or the elderly at hospices and homes.
- Plant trees.

Whatever it is – get it done! ■

What is news?

One key reason donors will pay more than a few seconds' attention to something in your newsletter has nothing to do with you ... and everything to do with the programming of the typical human brain.

Here's the natural law: neuroscience has determined that humans respond autonomically to anything new in our environment. And it doesn't matter whether that new thing is important or not. A speck of pepper in a bowl of oatmeal attracts the mind's eye just as firmly as an elephant walking on the lawn.

But it gets better.

Not only does our brain swerve involuntarily toward anything new, it takes real pleasure in doing so. Using MRIs, scientists now can watch our minds at work. Last year, they reported an amazing discovery: an encounter with new information stimulates a pleasure center in the human brain.

Mystical powers

Now you know why marketers consider the word 'new' one of the crown jewels of persuasion: it has mystical powers. And so do new-ish words like future, secret, hidden, hints, tips, update, private, confidential, mystery, discover, unveil, expose, reveal, divulge. Items like 'Did you know?', 'Myths and Facts', or 'Frequently Asked Questions' also have intrinsic news value because they promise to tell the reader something she didn't know.

Sadly, most donor newsletters I see take little or no advantage of the mind's love affair with the new.

Instead, they run pretty much the same photo over and over. Instead, they devote much

of their ink to things that have already happened.

Instead, they devote their front page – the sacred parking space reserved for the most important news – to a wearisome 'letter from the executive director' issue after issue, a 'worst practice' that somehow over the years has become a non-profit industry standard.

Hook

If you want someone to read your donor newsletter, it must have news. New news, not boring old news. So, what is news, after all?

Anything new is news. Honestly, it's just that simple: the new is, by definition, news. It will hook the brain. Let's look at what that means in the context of a donor newsletter.

A new trend that could have a baleful influence on your mission is news. A new anecdote or report from the field, demonstrating how your donor-supported mission has changed a life, is news. A new season of artistic offerings – any upcoming event – is news.

A new gift that has moved your organisation significantly closer to achieving your vision is news. A new member of your legacy society is news. A new challenge grant a donor can use to multiply her impact is news. A new piece of intriguing information your donors can find on your website is news. A new award for your outstanding work is news. Even a familiar scene photographed from a new perspective is news.

David Ogilvy founded one of the world's great ad agencies on his belief that 'you will never bore anyone into buying your product or service'. Similarly, you will never bore anyone into making a gift. ■

You have a donor newsletter. You want it to help you retain donors and bring in additional gifts. So, what kinds of stories should you share? Tom Ahern reports.

*Adapted from
Ahern E-news 6.9
Visit
www.AhernComm.com*

Turning green – but not with envy

If you're reading this while you boil a full kettle for one cup of coffee, please get up. Return to the kettle, decant the water into a jug for later use, and boil only enough water for your single caffeine fix. Thank you very much.

Boiling only enough water for the number of drinks you're making is one of the most common tips that's offered to save energy. So is changing your lightbulbs to energy-efficient ones. Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) use 80% less electricity than ordinary light bulbs and last up to eight times longer.

Other ways to save energy – and money – at your organisation include:

- Save all paper. Don't throw it away after printing on only one side. Load up your printer with the 'singles' and print on the other side. Or use the blank side for notes, messages, etc. And only then throw it into the recycling box.
- Turn off the lights – and everything else

that's not being used. Switch off plugs at the wall at night.

- Make your own earth-friendly cleaning products. It's not rocket science and really is kinder to the planet (and budget).
- Check what kind of paper you're using for office stationery. Is it recycled? Ask your printer and investigate your options.
- Ban paper towels. Use cloths and towels.
- Encourage your clients, friends, family to choose green alternatives.
- Get loads of tips from the dozens of helpful green sites on the Internet. Find out about recycling projects that could earn money.

Also visit: www.paperpickup.co.za; www.collectacan.co.za; www.petco.co.za and www.theglassrecyclingcompany.co.za

DMI has implemented all of the tips I've mentioned here – and we're going to be doing more, as individuals and as a team, to reduce our carbon footprint. What about you? ■

Get rid of wasteful or harmful practices in your organisation and choose environmentally-friendly alternatives to save money – and help save our planet. It's sensible and savvy, writes DMI copywriter Marisol Gutierrez.

Sharing your story with donors

When it comes to engaging people in your cause and turning them into donors, telling them your story is crucial.

Sharing your story through feature stories in newsletters, in the news media, on your website, in public presentations, in one-on-one solicitations and other means is a cornerstone of building a strong donor base.

Joseph Barbato, president of Barbato Associates, offers some dos and don'ts for sharing your story when working with potential donors.

'A non-profit should tell a compelling story that speaks directly to the interests of the donor,' Barbato says. 'A story should stress the tremendous difference the non-profit is making in its field, which is one about which the donor is excited.'

When communicating this message to potential donors, he says, there are four areas to avoid:

1. Negativity.
2. Overselling.
3. Taking the donor for granted.

4. Talking about how much better your non-profit is than the other guys.

'The biggest challenge is getting the story just right,' Barbato says. 'You want to push all the right buttons and convey the story in the simplest and most memorable way. You must know your own organisation and its strengths. What is it about your group that appeals to major gift donors? Why do they care? Study yourself, know yourself and act on the power of that self-understanding.'

To accomplish this, Barbato offers the following tips:

- Hone your message.
- Keep it simple.
- Use telling anecdotes
- Convey the emotion that goes with making a difference in people's lives.
- Make clear the wonderful opportunity the donor has to help advance your work and improve the lives of those your organisation serves.

With acknowledgement to Successful Fund Raising, May 2009, Volume XVII, No. 5. ■

Conference date to diarise

There are a number of conferences taking place this year which we highly recommend – so if you're able to attend – be sure to diarise these events:

The International Fundraising Congress (IFC) is the world's leading education and training conference on fundraising.

Since 1981 the event has attracted some 900 participants from over 55 countries, and is renowned for its outstanding training and networking opportunities.

The 29th IFC takes place from 20-23 October 2009 in Noordwijkerhout in the Netherlands (the 30th IFC will take place from the 19 - 22 October 2010).

Visit www.resource-alliance.org/ifc

Another highly recommended

conference is The National Catholic Development Conference, which takes place from 20-23 September in Arlington, Virginia in the USA.

Each year, more than 700 people from all aspects of the Catholic fundraising market attend the NCDCC Conference and Exposition – an event created specifically for fundraisers from Catholic organisations.

Visit www.ncdc.org

The Resource Alliance – a UK registered charity which aims to build the fundraising capabilities of the non-profit sector worldwide, holds many workshops throughout the year. For more information visit www.resource-alliance.org for a full programme of upcoming events. ■

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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, USA, (12 issues per annum \$159) website: www.stevensoninc.com
- *The NonProfit Times*, 190 Tamarack Circle, Skillman, NJ08558, USA, (\$129 per annum) website: www.nptimes.com
- *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, PO Box 1989, Marion, Ohio, 43306, USA, (24 issues – one annum at \$95) website: <http://philanthropy.com>
- *Successful Direct Mail, Telephone and Online Fundraising*. Subscribe for free at www.malwarwick.com/newsletter
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