

Finding new donors has become increasingly tough in the bad economy. But for charities that have succeeded, their new donors may be worth more over the long haul than supporters recruited in better times. Holly Hall reports.

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Visit  
<http://philanthropy.com>

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## Charities find creative ways to recruit new donors in tough times

**D**onors who started giving to a charity for the first time during the recession give 10% more, on average and for longer periods than people who started giving before the financial crisis, according to Avalon Consulting, a Washington fundraising company that has examined the fundraising returns of the cultural, environmental, and social-change groups it advises.

'Donors we acquire in these hard times tend to have a better return on investment, and they stay longer, so they are better donors,' says Ann Herzog, Avalon's president.

'These are very challenging times,' says Cindy Lappetito, a vice-president at Epsilon, a Dallas company that helps charities with fundraising. Even as other types of fundraising are beginning to fare better, 'donor acquisition has not recovered'.

### Trying new approaches

A big reason for the problem is that direct mail, the main way most charities seek first-time donors, isn't working as well as it once did – but few charities have found anything that fares much better.

Poor direct-mail results were a main reason that the number of new donors declined by a median 15% from 2007 through 2009, according to a study of 82 large charities by Target Analytics, a Boston research company.

And while things improved some last year, much of the increase in new donors was from people making one-time gifts to charities that provide aid to Haiti earthquake victims.

Many charities are trying alternatives to direct mail, such as pavement canvassing, e-mail, and social networking, but for many organisations, those extra activities have yet to produce much.

'We are trying alternative programmes, we have an online programme and e-communications, and we have done social media, but the jury is still out on whether this works,' says Susan Loth, director of fundraising at Disabled American Veterans, which sends tens of millions of mail appeals to would-be donors every year and collects about \$100-million annually in direct-mail contributions.

### Telemarketing

Like many other international aid

organisations, Doctors Without Borders was inundated with gifts from new donors after the Haiti earthquake.

From January to March last year, the charity attracted 287 000 new supporters. But because many donors tend to stop giving once news about the tragedy fades, fundraisers at Doctors Without Borders decided to try something new: calling the new Haiti donors and asking them to become 'field partners' who make monthly gifts.

That telemarketing campaign is one reason Doctors Without Borders now has 50 000 donors who give \$13 each month, on average, up from 38 000 monthly donors before the earthquake, says Melanie West, director of marketing.

The charity also won repeat gifts by sending the Haiti donors direct-mail appeals designed specifically for people who have never given before.

The appeals include a poster-size world map; on the back of the map, the charity provides a snapshot of its accomplishments in seven regions world-wide.

By October, 10 months after the earthquake, Doctors Without Borders had received a second or third gift from 10% of people who first gave during the Haiti crisis.

After the Asian tsunamis, when the charity sent new donors the same appeal as other previous supporters, it got repeat donations from only 6% of people in the 10 months after the disaster.

### Soliciting beneficiaries of charitable services

The HealthWell Foundation, a charity that provides financial assistance to people whose insurance won't pay for treatment for life-threatening or chronic diseases, until recently had a lackluster response to direct mail appeals to potential new supporters.

Like many other charities, the foundation was doing well to get a return gift from 0.5% of the new people it solicited through the mail. Then, in late 2008, the foundation decided to send a holiday card and solicitation to thousands of patients who had benefited from its aid, and that mailing garnered gifts from 5% of the recipients.

Continued on page 8

## Five copy resolutions for the new year

Since it's still early in the new year, Deborah Block and Paul Karp thought they'd offer you their New Year's resolutions when it comes to writing fundraising copy.

**G**ranted, this is hardly an exclusive list. We could literally go on and on. (And maybe that should be Resolution Number 1: Don't go on and on!) So we'll try to keep this year's list to a minimum. After all, there's always next year.

Anyway, in no particular order, here goes:

### 1. It's OK to wear your heart on your sleeve

Showing emotion in your copy is a good thing. Not being afraid to get personal is even better. In other words, giving your signer the chance to sound like a real, unique individual – writing to another real, unique individual – will only serve to make your copy warmer and more persuasive.

Let's say, for example, you're writing for a children's hospital. Including a reference to how the signer is a mother of two – or grandfather of four – gives you the opportunity to establish a closer bond with the reader, thereby increasing the case for giving. But even if you don't have that kind of detail available, keep your copy warm and friendly, whatever the actual writing style of the signer may be.

### 2. Don't assume donors know who you are

You may live and breathe the mission of the organisation you write for. But your donors may actually be thinking about other stuff.

Really. It's true. So even though you may be sick and tired of that one story you told in your newsletter six months ago – and that's been on your Web site for four months – your donors probably won't remember it or may not have even seen it in the first place. If it's a good story, use it to your best advantage.

The same goes for information about your work. While you don't want to insult the intelligence of your donor, you just can't assume she has the depth of knowledge or understanding that you do.

### 3. Write the copy from the reader's perspective

This one's certainly an oldie-but-goodie ... and definitely worth repeating. In a nutshell, it's not all about 'you', the nonprofit.

Instead, copy should revolve around the wants, needs, and interests of the reader. That's why 'you' – aka the reader – is considered the most important word in fundraising.

Yet as much as this seems so obvious to most of us, we recently received a four-page acquisition letter from a local nonprofit ... in which the very first 'you' was toward the end of page four when the nonprofit finally got around to asking for money. Just inexcusable. But it happens – time and again.

### 4. Don't think e-mail copy should be any less compelling than direct mail

One misconception we sense is that many people feel email copy needs to be short and

sweet. Hey, the thinking goes, these e-mail types have such short attention spans that we can only hold on to them for a brief moment.

So keep appeal copy to a bare minimum. Of course, if you take this advice, you're just as likely to suck all the air out of the appeal – making the case for giving that much less compelling.

Indeed, could this be a factor in the finding that direct mail continues to outperform email?

On the other hand, some of the most effective fundraising e-mails we tend to receive are longer in length, quite comparable to the length of direct mail appeals.

### 5. Target your copy to the right audience

In writing fundraising copy, one size does not fit all. If you're writing to donors, you need to thank them. If they're lapsed, thank them for their past generosity and ask them to reaffirm their support. If they're high-dollar donors, step up the praise.

If they've given to a capital campaign or other specific effort, single them out. And if they've never given to you before, make that abundantly clear, as well.

More and more these days, we seem to be writing multiple copy platforms – targeted to these kinds of different audiences – that can then be lasered on page one (including personalised gift strings or other individualised fields).

Page two is written in such a way that it applies to everyone equally. It can then be preprinted, probably saving you money in production.

That's it for this year. Five's a nice round number, don't you think? At least that's what our friend Fibonacci says!

Copywriters Deborah Block and Paul Karp are partners in BK Kreative, *email bkkreative@aol.com*.

#### Editor's note

Here, in brief, are my top five copy resolutions for the year:

1. Convince more people that 'copy by committee' = 'too many cooks spoil the broth!' Having a direct mail piece approved by more than one – or two people at the most – is likely to kill the copy all together.
2. It's OK to write in conversational English. In fact – it works! So please feel free to use contractions (it's, I'm, that's) and avoid jargon. It's even acceptable to start a sentence with 'but', 'because' and 'so'. And even 'and'.
3. The two most important words in fundraising copy are 'You' and 'I'. Not 'give money'.
4. Short words, short sentences and paragraphs of varying lengths will get copy read. Use underlining for emphasis and remember to indent paragraphs.
5. Ask early and ask often. Ask for the right amount based on what donors give on average – because more often than not, you'll get what you ask for. ■

**MILESTONE THINKING**

On-target observations in brief

Failure to teach a fundraiser how to use language effectively is like failing to teach an architect how to choose the right material for a load-bearing structure.

With acknowledgement to **Frank C. Dickerson, PhD** in **Mal Warwick's E-newsletter** November 2010

Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.

Helen Keller

Nurture your major gift prospects and they will remember you when the opportunity to give presents itself.

With acknowledgement to **Successful Fund Raising** November 2010 Volume XVIII No.11

Most opinions do more harm than good. Mostly, they are uninformed opinions; no better than stabs in the dark, based on 'what I like'.

With acknowledgement to **Tom Ahern** Ahern E-news 9.10 Visit [aherncomm.com](http://aherncomm.com)

If you accept the reality that individuals have a finite amount of money to contribute to all causes, you similarly accept the reality that all fundraising is competitive with all other fundraising.

With acknowledgement to **The NonProfit Times** 15 January 2010

Long-term volunteers can turn into annual or monthly donors, or even join your board of directors. Former board or staff members may become major donors. And any of these people can leave legacies. Regardless of whether they're donors now, their future value is potentially enormous.

With acknowledgement to **Mal Warwick** **Mal Warwick's E-newsletter** February 2011

Handle them carefully, for words have more power than atom bombs.

Paul Strachan Hurd



The SA Guide-Dogs Association's founder, Gladys Evans, who had failing eyesight, brought the first guide dog – Sheena – into the country after training at the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association in the UK.

## Giving 'eyes' to visually impaired people

**G**ladys Evans started the SA Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind in Johannesburg in 1953. Since those early days, the Association has gone from strength to strength, and now also has a training centre in Cape Town.

Guide Dog breeding lines are carefully selected to produce the best possible dogs, and each puppy's first year is spent in the family home of a volunteer Puppy Raiser, where the pup is thoroughly socialised before it returns to the Association at age 12-18 months for a year of formal working training.

All applicants and dogs are carefully matched according to factors such as size, character and temperament. Training is first done at the Association's residential training centres, followed by home and neighbourhood training to suit each client's requirements.

Owning a guide dog is a life-changing experience for someone who cannot see – coming in a wonderful package of safe mobility, independence, loyal and devoted companionship, as well as being a great social asset.

The Association also provides Service Dogs for people who are disabled; and Social Dogs to those with certain health conditions who would benefit from having a well-trained dog.

Receiving no Government funding, the SA Guide-Dogs Association operates entirely on donations. People truly are wonderful in the extent of their caring, and in their generosity – both of which make Guide Dogs possible.

Visit [www.guidedog.org.za](http://www.guidedog.org.za)

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

## 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.downesmurray.co.za](http://www.downesmurray.co.za)



Dear CEO, ED, and chair... Stop short-changing your organisation's future. Only hire fundraising chiefs who know how to properly market charitable bequests. The 'fingers crossed' and 'we'll make it up as we go along' approaches don't work. Richard Radcliffe's approach does work. Tom Ahern reports.

# Proper bequest marketing, per Radcliffe

**R**ichard Radcliffe has personally interviewed more than 16 500 UK donors, asking them, among other things, why they've chosen to leave legacy gifts.

Plus his London employer, Smee & Ford, analyses the contents of 1 000 British Wills, looking for data about charitable giving. As a consequence, Richard's opinions regarding bequest marketing are uncommonly deep, wide, and often notably – pay attention now – at odds with our accepted wisdom and practices.

'In the UK,' he noted last October, 'bequests represent the only increasing source of funds, especially in a recession.' Let that thought echo for a few moments. Things are bad right now. One group of hospitals I know, envied as a fundraising powerhouse, saw its major-gift income tumble 70% last year!

Now's the time. Bequests are the opportunity. **What Richard Radcliff has to tell you**

**Be Aware #1:** Bequest marketing pays off more quickly than you'd expect. The knock on bequests has always been: We need income now ... not 10 years from now! Holding that attitude is like supergluing a board to your forehead that says in bold black-on-white letters, 'I'm stupid'.

Bequest marketing programmes actually start producing results – i.e., charitable bequests that name your organisation as beneficiary – within 6 months to a couple of years. The reasons are based on irresistible demographics and other facts of life (and death).

Never forget (you can take the 'stupid' sign off) ... the reason you need income now is because you don't at this time have enough charitable bequests. If someone in your organisation had worked on this problem 10 years ago? Today, you'd be fine.

- Bequests are your organisation's future. It's as simple as that.
- Bequests will dependably cover your organisation's structural deficits and emergencies.
- Bequests will dependably mean that your organisation will no longer have to spend as much annually on a scramble for individual donors. So your per-donor costs will go down.

But wait ... there's more: Bequests that are invested as endowed funds become permanent income streams ... forever income streams ... that will grow and grow and grow.

**Be Aware #2:** Bequest marketing is easy, cheap, and doable, no matter how busy you are.

Good bequest marketing is dirt simple. At bottom, it requires you to talk once a year to your

very best, most loyal, and least demanding donors.

You send a letter. A brief, personable letter of a dozen lines or less. Not to everyone – only to your most 'committed' donors and volunteers.

You thank them for their years of support. 'You've been fantastic.' You let them know that there's another way they can make a difference: '... with a gift in your Will'. You remind them that a legacy gift costs nothing now. You describe what past legacies have achieved. If you're writing to volunteers, you ask them to spread the good word about bequests; they like doing that (and, in the process, convince themselves).

Successful bequest marketing, in truth, takes about as much energy and cost as buying a cup of coffee. Is there any excuse for not bothering?

**Be Aware #3:** Bequest marketing taps the middle class. It's not an elite thing at all. In Europe, the typical bequest donor commands, at death, an estate worth 400 000 euros (about R3.7m), including the house and savings.

Is this unusual? Meet an average American named Bert, writing in December 2010: 'I've worked all my life, am a veteran, always made far less than President Obama's upper limit for middle class income (\$97K per year), and my estate will be between \$1 million and \$2 million depending on the value of my home. I think of myself as lower middle-class'.

The hottest prospects for charitable bequests, says Richard Radcliffe, are middle-class females who have donated for 10 or more years to your cause. Lapsed donors who once gave to you regularly are also surprisingly good candidates. Why? Because they loved you but had to stop giving as they aged and went onto fixed incomes. But making a bequest costs them nothing.

## Getting started: The Radcliffe way

Here are three things you can do to launch your bequest marketing.

1. Send your draft bequest letter to 50 loyal donors, asking, 'Do you think this would work? Is this any good? Please help guide us'.
2. Send a bequest-promoting letter on the anniversary of the donor's first gift. 'Imagine: it was 10 years ago that you made your first gift. You've done so much good since.'
3. Create a bookmark. Send it to your loyal donors. Older people read a lot. On the bookmark include a message: 'Every gift in every Will makes a difference.' On the back print a little story that demonstrates the impact of bequests.

*E-mail richard@smeeandford.co.uk*

# Seven cost-effective strategies to increase income from donors

**M**ore than a decade ago, John Groman, a top US Direct Marketing expert visited South Africa to conduct the first ever fundraising seminar in this country. And one of the many insights John left with us was the fact that fundraising income can only be increased in three ways:

1. More donors
2. More donations (from those donors)
3. More dollars (again from existing donors)

Within those last two are a number of strategies to increase income from donors. Here are seven that I believe are likely to provide the best ratio of results to effort.

## **One: Show donors what you are doing to be more efficient**

If you've embarked on a rationalisation of resources or of service programmes – evaluate the savings and tell your donors about it. Show them that you are making wise use of their money, send them your annual financial report and invite them around to see for themselves what you are achieving.

Accountability to donors was always important but has now taken on much greater significance with the recent spate of evidence of misuse and misappropriation of funds.

## **Two: Give them a challenge**

Find a major donor to make a challenge gift to your organisation – a gift that you have to match with many more gifts from others. Or raise the sights of your donors by showing them how much more could be done if they doubled their previous gift (or even increased it by 50%).

## **Three: Find out what lights their fires**

Ask for your donor's opinions in your newsletter or mail appeals or use a survey or group discussion to establish their particular interests. In this way you'll be able to offer them giving opportunities that fulfil their needs. Recognise your donors as individuals and you'll be able to talk to them as the friends, which they are.

## **Four: Pay greater attention to the top 10%**

Every donor file I've ever analysed has a group of people who give more frequently and/or in larger amounts than the average. These are often the people who love you and what you're doing the most. So don't just mail them – talk to them. Telephone them to stress how important they are to you, invite them round to visit, give them tea 'n tour, involve them in a special club or support circle. Keep a card file with their names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers and everything else you know about them – and

then phone five or ten of them every week. You'll be amazed at how the relationship grows.

## **Five: Share your dreams**

If you feel passionate about an aspect of your programme or your organisation, or if you know that by adding something specific you're going to save more lives, feed more babies, educate more children, create more jobs – then tell your donors what it will take to achieve the dream and show them how they can be a part of your vision. Your passion and your enthusiasm will help lift their support to new heights.

## **Six: thank you, thank you, thank you**

Reinforce each first time donor's decision to support you with a 'Welcome' package not just an ordinary thank you note. Include (for example) your latest newsletter, a bumper sticker or licence holder with your slogan or logo, some informative literature on your organisation, a few press cuttings about your work, something describing the impact you're having in your field of endeavour, an offer of bequest literature and a reply envelope to hold their next gift. In this way you will make sure they remember how grateful you were for their support. And you'll start to grow the relationship and build their loyalty from day one.

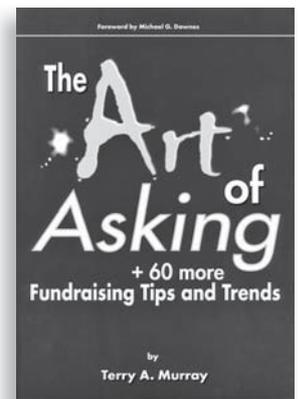
Mail your 'thank you' within 24 hours so that it arrives before they've forgotten they wrote a cheque. I recently saw the results of an annual mailing drop by 25% and the sad reason was traced back to a number of very generous previous donors who didn't receive a thank you letter for 6 months after they gave!

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 different and memorable.

## **Seven: Encourage the ultimate gift**

Bequests in the form of cash, residuals of estates, property, antiques, paintings, investments and jewellery are sometimes called 'the final gift from a friend'. And your friends – your donors – are often delighted to find that there is another way in which they can help you. A way which ensures that your good work will continue beyond their lifetime.

Your donors are unlikely to think of this on their own – so talk to those who have reached the stage of life when bequests are a consideration – and offer them literature and advice on how they can make the ultimate gift to fund your work. ■



This article first appeared in *Fundraising Forum* in August 1995, and is still relevant today.

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# What ingredients make a good story?

We always enjoy telling a good story in our copy – just as most of our fellow writers. Deborah Block and Paul Karps report.

**R**eaders can relate and empathise far better with a broad issue when it's brought down to the level of an individual experience. And, truth be told, getting the opportunity to spin a compelling tale is something nearly every writer yearns for.

Okay. So you're planning your next appeal and decide to go with a story. But how do you go about choosing what will actually make for a persuasive one that serves your fundraising purpose? Here, then, are a few guidelines that may help you in this process:

## **Make sure it's not too complicated**

Uppermost in your mind should be that the narrative is uncomplicated enough – and straightforward enough – so you aren't forced to get into a lot of technical details in your copy.

While the writer should be able to keep the descriptive copy simple, sometimes the story itself is overly complex. Too many names, too many dates, too much going on. So do yourself a favour and don't use a story that's destined to bog down your copy.

## **Be the hero**

You also want to ensure your organisation has played the pre-eminent role in the story. Sure, there may be some other groups involved – especially in the case of international relief.

But you must be able to position your group as the hero. Otherwise, what's the point of telling this particular story?

## **Get some juicy quotations**

It's not enough just to get the facts. You really need some nice quotations from the people involved in your story.

Let them say how your group was 'a godsend' or 'saved our lives'.

Because think about it: This sounds much better and has much more impact coming from a third party rather than from the pen (or computer) of your Executive Director.

The perfect story, in fact, is one in which you have the option of using quotations throughout your copy: to describe the problem, what happened next, how it was resolved, and how the nonprofit made all the difference.

Given that you're using this story as a fundraising vehicle, the icing on the cake would be a quotation about how the beneficiary of the service has become a donor.

You now have the chance to tie the story directly into an appeal for money. Clearly, this isn't possible (or even relevant) in every instance and for every organisation. But if you've got it, flaunt it.

## **Drama**

While we run the risk of stating the oh-so-obvious, you want a story that has some oomph to it. Something that can grab your readers' attention and, eventually, inspire and motivate them to give. If not, you may end up with a letter in which, as they say, 'there's no there there.'

## **Don't forget the logistics**

If telling your story depends on interviewing the subject – or related person – you want to make sure she's available within the appropriate timeframe and deadlines dictated by your schedule.

Ditto for being available to review the draft copy before it mails, if that makes sense in your situation. The last thing you want to find out is that the subject will be incommunicado at a key point in the process, potentially delaying your mail date. Knowing this ahead of time could steer you to a different story.

## **Have a happy ending**

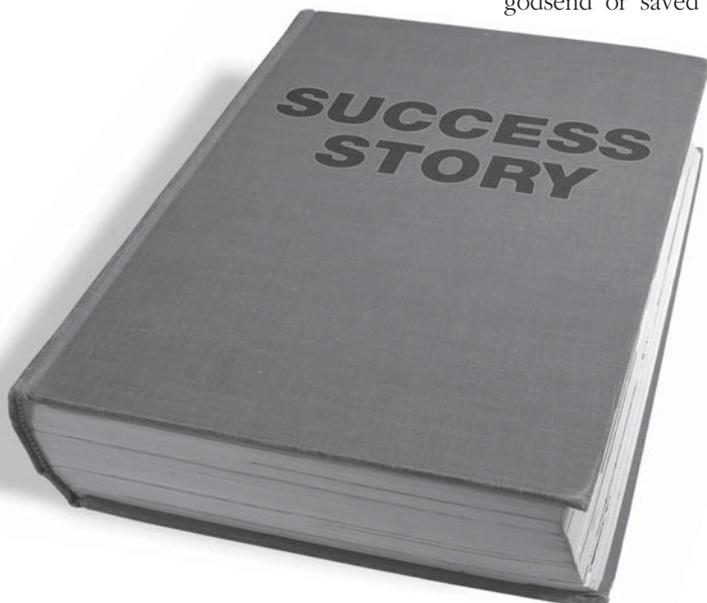
The very essence of storytelling in a fundraising context is the ability to present the before-and-after dichotomy – which, in effect, is analogous to the problem-solution approach inherent in a typical direct mail format.

As in, 'here's what the situation looked like before the organisation came to the rescue, and here's how it was able to solve the problem'.

In other words, without the happy ending (or at least a relatively happy one), there is no story.

*Copywriters Deborah Block and Paul Karps are partners in BK Kreative.  
Email [bkkreative@aol.com](mailto:bkkreative@aol.com)*

With acknowledgment to **Mal Warwick's Newsletter** February 2011  
Visit [malwarwick.com](http://malwarwick.com)



# The case statement: Selling your vision to donor prospects

**T**he most ancient parts of our brain are concerned only with survival,' says Tom Ahern, 'and they need a very compelling reason to part with hard-earned money'.

A concise and compelling case statement is key to providing this reason, Ahern says. Here, he discusses some of the fine points of this important solicitation tool:

## What is the bedrock of a successful case statement?

'Everything in a good case statement is focused on answering three key questions: "Why this organisation?" "Why now?" and "Why should I care?" You need to explain why your project is uniquely valuable and more worthy of investment than other projects.

'You need to explain why the donor should write a cheque today instead of next week or next year. And you need to explain why the donor should care about what your vision is and what you are trying to do.'

## How should a case statement be used?

### What is it designed to do?

'A case statement is a tool to be used in face-to-face solicitation. You don't send it to the prospect in advance, you bring it with you to the meeting. You have it in your hands to prompt the points you want to focus on, and you might open it up at times to illustrate a point or have the prospect look at something.

'When the meeting is over, the case statement can also be left with the prospect as he or she is considering a gift.'

## What does a good case statement look like?

Pages of text? A short list of bullet points?

'There is no formulaic answer, but in

general you want to make the statement as short as possible (see related story, top right). The core case for Yale's \$3.2 billion Yale Tomorrow campaign was only 550 words.

'The rest of the document was pages and pages of photographs and provocative quotes about how uncertain

## Short, Shorter, Even Shorter Yet

Tom Ahern, principle of Ahern Communications, has a story about the importance of ruthless brevity in compelling case statements:

A college developed a 2 500 word statement for an upcoming campaign and started approaching top supporters with it. One prospect looked at the lengthy statement, scratched his head, and after several minutes of explanation, asked if the campaign could be boiled down to the aim of furthering academic excellence.

When the gift officer said it could, the man said, 'Well I support academic excellence. How much are you looking for today?'

Don't over-complicate the solicitation process, Ahern says. 'You need to get the heart of your entire vision across in the first 30 to 50 words. You need to be able to express your central aim in just a sentence or two. And if you can't do that, you probably don't really understand what you are doing and why.'

the world can be and how important it is to plan for the future.'

## What kind of facts should a case statement include?

'There are two basic types of evidence: statistical and anecdotal. Research shows that donors respond far more strongly to one anecdote about one person than to any amount of statistics.

'Stats should be used, but as a background that reinforces the central narrative. It's also important to know that research has shown people respond much more strongly to the story of a single child than the story of that child and a sibling. Adding even one other person to an anecdote makes it less effective, and adding more than that just crushes donor response.'

## What is the biggest misconception non-profits have about making their case with prospects?

'Talking too much about themselves. People don't give to charities, they give through them. Unfortunately, charities forget they're only a means for a donor to help solve a problem. I've seen case statements asking for \$150 million in which the donor is never mentioned, the word 'you' is never used. That is not an engaging practice and not a good way to get support.' ■

Behavioural research shows that donors are fundamentally skeptical about donating to non-profits, says Tom Ahern, author and principle of Ahern Communications.

Adapted from  
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Volume XIX No.2

## DONORS

### Charities find creative ways to recruit new donors in tough times

Continued from page 1

Since then, the charity has recruited nearly 10 000 new donors, mostly patients or their friends and family members.

Of 4 800 new donors recruited this year alone, the majority are patients and their relatives. And many patients give more than the suggested contribution, says Sheila Halper, director of marketing. For example, one mailing to 15 000 patients in October prompted an average gift of \$23 even though the foundation had asked people to give \$5 or more. 'Originally we didn't think to ask our beneficiaries,' says Ms Halper. 'But they want to give as well as receive.'

#### Spending more on direct mail

At a time when many charities have cut back on direct mail to recruit new donors, Catholic Relief Services is planning to increase its mailing by 60% over five years. The international relief charities now send 15 million appeals annually to find new donors, and that number will grow to 23 million pieces by 2015, says Jean M. Simmons, director of annual giving.

Last year, after its first increase in recruitment mailings, Catholic Relief Services says the total number of new donors has grown. Even with the expense of additional mailings, she says the charity has achieved a revenue gain because more donors are contributing, and they are giving larger sums than in the past.

Ms. Simmons credits the increase to a combination of the improving economy, choosing better mailing lists, and other internal management practices that have led to more efficient use of the charity's budget for recruiting new donors.

#### Appealing to donors who have stopped giving

Instead of focusing on seeking new donors, some groups are putting more attention on winning back people who have not made a gift in a long time. Charities use varying

methods to choose which of their past donors are worth approaching: Some select previous donors who resemble their current supporters in terms of demographic characteristics.

Others look for past donors with certain characteristics, such as those who have made multiple gifts or donated at least a specific sum. 'We have done a lot more of this in the recession, it is an efficiency-gaining strategy,' says Amy Koop, vice-president of Paradysz Matera, a direct-marketing consulting company.

She says she worked with one client, a large national charity she declined to name, that raised \$1.5-million, after expenses, from a November recruiting campaign that included more than 500 000 past donors, as well as other new recipients.

#### Making it easier for online donors

A growing number of charities are making sure that donors find them online through search engines such as Google and Yahoo, says Kevin White, vice-president for media at Russ Reid Company, a fundraising consulting firm in California.

In addition to using a free service that enables charities to ensure their organisations will pop up when people search online for content related to their cause, many charities now also pay to get more exposure on search engines, particularly during the year-end holiday season.

Operation Smile, which helps children get surgery to repair cleft palate and other facial deformities, has found new donors online by using a mix of free search terms donated by Google and paid search results on Google, MSN, and Yahoo.

For example, in the first half of December, it received an average of \$3 in online gifts for every dollar spent on Google and MSN, according to Scott Vooss, the charity's director of marketing. 'We are seeing some really positive results,' he says. 'We are looking to invest further in 2011.'

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

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- **Successful Fund Raising**, PO Box 4528, Sioux City, Iowa, 51104, USA, (12 issues per annum \$159) website: [www.stevensoninc.com](http://www.stevensoninc.com)
- **The NonProfit Times**, 190 Tamarack Circle, Skillman, NJ08558, USA, (\$129 per annum) website: [www.nptimes.com](http://www.nptimes.com)
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