



SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

The blogosphere is here ... for you

BY DEBORAH BLOCK AND PAUL KARPS

IN THE SEPTEMBER 2006 issue of this newsletter, we reviewed some of the online resources we use on a regular basis—available to all direct marketing fundraisers. The best part? This wealth of information is absolutely free!

Now we thought we'd extend our review to the wonderful world of blogs, a burgeoning area that's taken off in just the last year or two. These sites are jam-packed with personal reflections and insight, news and information, and tips and advice, as well as the chance for reader response and interaction. Updated in many cases on a daily basis, blogs

are a timely way to stay on top of the industry. And did we mention, once again, it's all free?

While the use of blogs by nonprofits themselves offers an unlimited potential—in terms of programmatic content, donor participation, and actual fundraising—the focus here will be on resources designed to help direct marketing professionals.

With dozens of possibilities to choose from, here are just a few to get you started. Of course, if you're an old hand at the blogosphere, we invite you to tell us what your favorite sites are.

“...Blogs are a timely way to stay on top of the industry.”

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Join Mal Warwick at the Third Hemispheric Congress on Fundraising Latin America from May 23-25, 2007 at the Hotel Sheraton Centro Histórico in Mexico City. For more info, [click here](#).



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THE AGITATOR

Undoubtedly #1 on our personal list, [The Agitator](#) is edited by direct marketing fundraising gurus Roger Craver and Tom Belford. Apart from imparting their own wisdom—what they call “fundraising & advocacy strategies, trends, tips . . . with an edge”—posts are also submitted by such renowned “guest agitators” as Morris Dees, Jerry Hunstinger, Denny Hatch, Richard Viguerie, Hal Malchow, and other luminaries in our business. White papers and research studies from various sources abound.

All aspects relating to direct mail, tele-fundraising, online fundraising, and both philanthropy and marketing are covered. Take a look at the “Tagged Entries” on the left-hand side of the home page and you’ll see what we mean.

Above this list of keywords, you’ll also notice an extensive list of other blogs (called a “Blogroll”), which will most certainly lead you in any number of interesting directions. This is a common feature of most blogs—a reflection of the “we’re-in-this-together-so-let’s-share-all-we-know” mentality that underlies the enterprise. By the way, the Blogroll on the [Give and Take](#) site of *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* is particularly impressive—and includes examples of nonprofits that have now started their own blogs.

DONOR POWER BLOG

Jeff Brooks, Creative Director at the full service agency [Merkle/Domain](#), somehow finds the time to run [Donor Power Blog](#).

His perspective is one with which we’re certainly sympathetic. As he states, “More than ever before, donors are insisting that you share power with them, not treating them like passive ATMs. This blog is about the ways you can do that—and the rewards that await you and your donors when you do.”

DONOR INSITE

The purpose of [Donor InSite Fundraising Blog](#) is pretty straightforward: “Help nonprofit organizations increase fundraising revenue.” And as Vice President of the [Russ Reid Company](#), overseeing the agency’s Canadian operations, host Duke Smith certainly knows whereof he blogs.

BLOG SUMMARIES

With the number of blogs growing by the week, some sites specialize in summarizing and reviewing key posts from other blogs. Two premier examples are the previously mentioned [Give and Take](#) and [The Raiser’s Razor](#),

which “cuts away the fat from the vast number of Web sites related to fundraising, and presents the very best articles and blogs available.”

JUST SOME OF THE OTHERS

Of the many other possibilities out there, here are just a few ideas to get you going. Author of *Robin Hood Marketing: Stealing Corporate Savvy to Sell Just Causes*, Katya Andresen hosts [Katya’s Non-Profit Marketing Blog](#). [Getting Attention](#), by Nancy

Schwartz, helps “nonprofits succeed through effective marketing.” While another well-known site focusing on marketing is [Seth Godin’s Blog](#), though his focus is more commercial than nonprofit.

ONE CAVEAT

A word of warning: As is the case with other online resources—namely mailing lists where relative novices are oftentimes quick to share their “expertise”—there’s always the potential of the blind-leading-the-blind. In effect, anyone with the technological know-how can write a blog, regardless of her fundraising or direct response experience. Just be cautious about the advice you consider. Because in the blogosphere, everyone has something to say and is more than happy to say it!

“Anyone with the technical know-how can write a blog, regardless of her fundraising or direct response experience.”





Easy mistakes that are hard to avoid

BY PETER SCHOEWE

WHEN I GET a fundraising letter in the mail, I can't help myself—I have to run through a mental critique of all the things I like and all the things I would change. Of course, most of my snap judgments are probably dead wrong. But even without knowing an organization or the results of its mailings, I can usually identify a couple easy mistakes.

With acquisition letters, I often see signs of a lack of testing to develop a strong control package. When the gift Ask stretches from \$10 all the way to \$1,000, it's a sign the organization hasn't done a lot of work on how to target its audience and best inspire prospective donors to give.

Second, I get worried when I see an organization has included brochures or other mission-based inserts in an acquisition mailing. More than any other type of fundraising package, an acquisition mailing needs to be donor-focused. It needs to make an emotional plea for an urgent gift. Any insert should be a gift to the prospective donor or a device that encourages interaction, such as a petition, survey—or just a simple card to sign and return.

I can almost guarantee that a brochure detailing an organization's important work and priorities—no matter how colorful or well designed—will reduce the number of people who make the critical leap of getting out their checkbook and sending in a gift. If it had been tested, it wouldn't be in the envelope.

With appeal mailings, a common mistake is to skimp on personalization. Donor databases are one of the most valuable resources a non-profit organization has—and yet they're often woefully managed and haphazardly updated. This leads to mailings—even those targeted to an organization's best donors—that say nothing more than “we know your name” and “we want you to send another gift.”

A donor's giving history is the most predictive variable of how and when she will give again. In a quiet way, databases are busy tracking what inspires donors, how often they want to give, and the amount they're likely to

increase their giving level. But I've seen countless appeal letters where none of this wealth of information is reflected in the mailing.

And personalization doesn't have to be complicated. Even making sure the front page of the letter has a personalized Ask string somewhere in the copy is a step in the right direction. As you grow more sophisticated, you can make sure donors who gave to an appeal last year get a special version of this year's appeal. You can identify donors who like to give a lot of small gifts and one or two big gifts and make sure they get an open-ended Ask rather than a predetermined Ask string. And, most important, you can begin talking to donors like you know them.

That leads me to a mistake I see more often than any other. So many fundraising letters have boring copy. Every once in a while I come across a letter that really captures my attention. I still get drawn into [The Nature Conservancy](#) letter about the purple butterfly, even though I think I've seen it a dozen times. But, far too often, I find myself skimming through a letter that doesn't tell a story and asks me for a gift without any compelling reason why.

I've made the mistake of writing boring letters myself. To save myself, I try reading the letter after I've stepped away from the computer for a few minutes. If my mind begins to wander, I know I have to give it another try.

I believe that fundraising copy should take your donors on an emotional roller coaster ride. You need to tell an amazing story, but remember that each time you bring them out of a loop or plunge them down a steep rise, it's time to pause. And those emotional pauses are exactly the points where you show your donors you know them—and ask them to send a gift again.



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Where's Mal?

May 7, 2007 – Singapore National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre

Workshop: *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Direct Mail (But Would Take You Years to Learn on Your Own)*

Site: National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre

[More info](#)

May 23-25, 2007 – Mexico City, Mexico

Association of Fundraising Professionals

Tercer Congreso Hemisférico de Fundraising

Taller: *Captando Más Dinero con el Poder del Mercadeo de Boca a Boca*

Taller: *Creando un Mensaje Poderoso para su Organización*

Site: Sheraton Centro Histórico Hotel, Ciudad de México

[Más información](#)

June 6-8, 2007 – New Orleans LA AFP New Orleans Conference

Pre-conference workshop, keynote, workshop

[More info](#)

July 9-10, 2007 – Washington DC AFP/DMAW Bridge Conference

Site: Washington Hilton Hotel

[More info](#)

October 23-26, 2007 – Noordwijkerhout, The Netherlands 27th International Fundraising Congress

Master Class on essentials of direct mail fundraising, mini-course on socially responsible business, workshop on direct mail

Site: NH Leeuwenhorst Hotel

[More info](#)



Ahhsking?

British universities are just now getting into the act of raising money from their alumni, according to *The New York Times*. The UK's two best-known institutions, Oxford and Cambridge Universities, boast endowments of just \$7.1 billion and \$5.9 billion, respectively. By contrast, Harvard and Yale top the American educational scene, with endowments valued at \$28 billion and \$18 billion. But the gap may be starting to narrow, with British universities quickly adding development staff and learning how to ask without hemming and hawing. Apparently, there's nothing like a challenging competition to loosen those British upper lips!

Who are you calling a “social enterprise?!”

BY MAL WARWICK

QUICKLY—define “social enterprise” in 25 words or less. No cheating now. No peeking at your neighbor’s paper!

Are you finished? Good. Now compare what you’ve written with your friends and neighbors.

Are you all on the same page? No? Well, welcome to the crowd.

I’ve read a fair amount about this phenomenon we so loosely refer to as “social enterprise,” and I’ve spoken personally to many of

those who are most often publicly identified as among its leading advocates—and not just here in the United States, but around the world. (For that matter, I’m even a member of the Advisory Board of the newsletter, *Social Enterprise Reporter*, that originally ran this article.)

Guess what? The “experts” don’t agree, either. In fact,

their contrasting definitions appear to come from completely different mindsets. They might as well be from different planets.

In an effort to sort through all this confusion, I’ve devised a nifty little diagram. Maybe it will help you, too, to find your way more smoothly through the field.

Here goes:

As you can see below, Quadrants 1 and 2 correspond to the revenue-generating model. In Quadrant 1, you’ll find parking garages operated by nonprofit hospitals to help underwrite their budgets and a plethora of other for-profit enterprises launched by

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“Contrasting definitions appear to come from completely different mindsets.”



Defining Social Enterprise

	Social sector	Business sector
Revenue-generating	1. NGO generating revenue through a business enterprise to support its social mission	2. Business generating revenue to support the social mission of one or more NGOs
Problem-solving	3. NGO established to address a social problem in an entrepreneurial manner	4. Business established to address a social problem in an entrepreneurial manner



Continued from page 4

nonprofit organizations to make money, pure and simple. Quadrant 2 holds such remarkable ventures as [Newman's Own](#), [Working Assets Long Distance](#), and [Give Something Back](#), all of which operate traditional businesses and dedicate most or all the profits to support a range of social-sector organizations. This quadrant also includes any businesses established independently of the nonprofits they support, but whose primary function is to funnel their profits to those particular organizations—if, in fact, there are any such businesses. (I, for one, can't think of any.)

By contrast, Quadrants 3 and 4 include those enterprises established primarily to address one or more social problems. Quadrant 3 includes such organizations as [Goodwill Industries](#) and [Rebuild Resources](#), both of which engage in business to provide training and jobs to people who would otherwise face barriers to employment, and environmental organizations such as the [Environmental Management Institute](#) that

operate as businesses but are organized as nonprofits. In Quadrant 4 lie those enterprises established as for-profit businesses rather than nonprofits, but whose nature is centered on its social mission. [Shorebank](#) comes immediately to mind—a precedent-setting bank operated and regulated like any other but dedicated to creating “economic equity and a healthy environment.”

“There are thousands of us, companies that operate with a view toward serving all our stakeholders, not just the owners.”

What you won't find in this typology are those businesses—such as my own, [Mal Warwick Associates](#) as well as others much better known—that characterize themselves as “socially responsible” and pursue the “triple bottom line.”

There are thousands of us, companies that operate with a view toward serving all our stakeholders, not just the owners. Many folks include us in the category of social enterprise. [Wikipedia](#), for example.

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Texting for bucks

Considering ways to use text messages to raise money or communicate with your donors or prospects? If you're on the fence, you might want to consider this: Roughly 220 million Americans now have cell-phones, says *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. In June 2006 alone, they sent a total of 12.5 billion text messages. That's an increase of 71% over June 2005.



Kintera?

What happens if Kintera goes out of business? Or Convio? Or any company that hosts your Web site, processes your donations, manages your e-mail subscription list, or does all of that for you? It's unthinkable. Right?

Well, maybe not. To ensure the continuity of your online operation and sleep well at night, here's our five-step plan:

1. Insist on a complete backup of all your critical data, in a common format, on a regular basis (at least monthly, but more frequently if your volume of activity is higher). This goes for Web content, too.

2. If this isn't already a feature of your providers' service, negotiate a good price for it, set a timeline of no longer than 90 days, and hold them to it.

3. Test the data. Be sure you can actually restore it and use it.

4. Review this plan at least annually.

5. Join together with other users of your software to share information, tips, and backup plans. We've created a user group for Kintera users and another for Convio/GetActive users at Yahoo! Groups. Join now, and invite your colleagues to do the same.

http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Kintera_Users

http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Convio_Users

—Rick Christ,
NPAdvisors.com

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I could shoehorn my company into Quadrant 4, since from the beginning our mission has been to raise money for progressive nonprofit organizations and political candidates, but most other triple-bottom-line companies don't fit so neatly into that little rectangle. (Ben & Jerry's? Selling flavored fat? Where's the social mission in that?) That's one reason why I think we don't belong under the label "social enterprise."

Another, much bigger reason is that I'm convinced all for-profit businesses will eventually be forced to acknowledge their responsibility to their customers, their employees, their suppliers, the community or communities where they do business, and to the environment. If that ever comes to pass, then presumably every business would be considered a social enterprise—robbing the term of all remaining sense. There are some who contend that every business already is, but from my perspective that just confuses matters. To my mind, a social enterprise is something special—not just another company. A social enterprise is

conceived to address a social problem or challenge, either directly (Quadrants 3 and 4) or indirectly (Quadrants 1 and 2).

One more point: If you have more than a passing familiarity with the field, it will be

obvious to you that many social enterprises straddle one or more of the quadrants in this typology. These are the enterprises generally referred to as "hybrids." [Greyston](#) is an excellent example. Originally founded as a business to provide employment for the "unemployable," the Greyston Bakery has since spawned several nonprofit enterprises which benefit from, but aren't dependent on, its profits. That's a hybrid operation in anyone's book! Another fascinating example is [Pura Vida Coffee](#), which is "changing the world, one cup at a time." There are dozens of other brilliant examples.

Still, most of the organizations that are normally described as social enterprises appear to fall into one or another of the four quadrants of this typology. I find it useful. I hope you do, too.

"... I'm convinced all for-profit businesses will eventually be forced to acknowledge their responsibility to their customers, their employees, their suppliers, the community or communities where they do business, and to the environment."





Maybe may be the right answer!

IN DIRECT RESPONSE FUNDRAISING, we're pretty much conditioned into soliciting one of two responses: yes or no. A fairly simple choice, it seems.

But the smart folks at [Children International](#) (Kansas City MO) are suggesting we should also seriously consider a third option: maybe. In fact, it builds an entire package around this concept.

The mailing itself is a monthly sustainer acquisition to a cold prospect, asking the recipient to sponsor a child in need for \$22 a month. That's a hefty entry level, to be sure. So instead of forcing an immediate yes or no from the recipient, the entire package zeroes in on saying "maybe."

In essence, this is a lead generation package—asking the recipient merely to raise her hand if she's interested. When she does, she'll receive a "FREE Children International Sponsorship Kit" with the "photograph and personal history of a special child who urgently needs your love and care. . ."

As it says on the bottom of page one, "There's no cost, no risk and no obligation . . . because you're only asking for information. You're only saying 'maybe.'"

Just to make sure the reader gets it, the "no cost, no risk and no obligation" phrase—complete with underlining—is repeated six times in the four-page letter (actually two times each on pages one, three, and four). At the same time, the copy hammers the theme that "you don't have to say 'yes' right now. . .just say 'maybe' and send for your FREE Sponsorship Kit today."

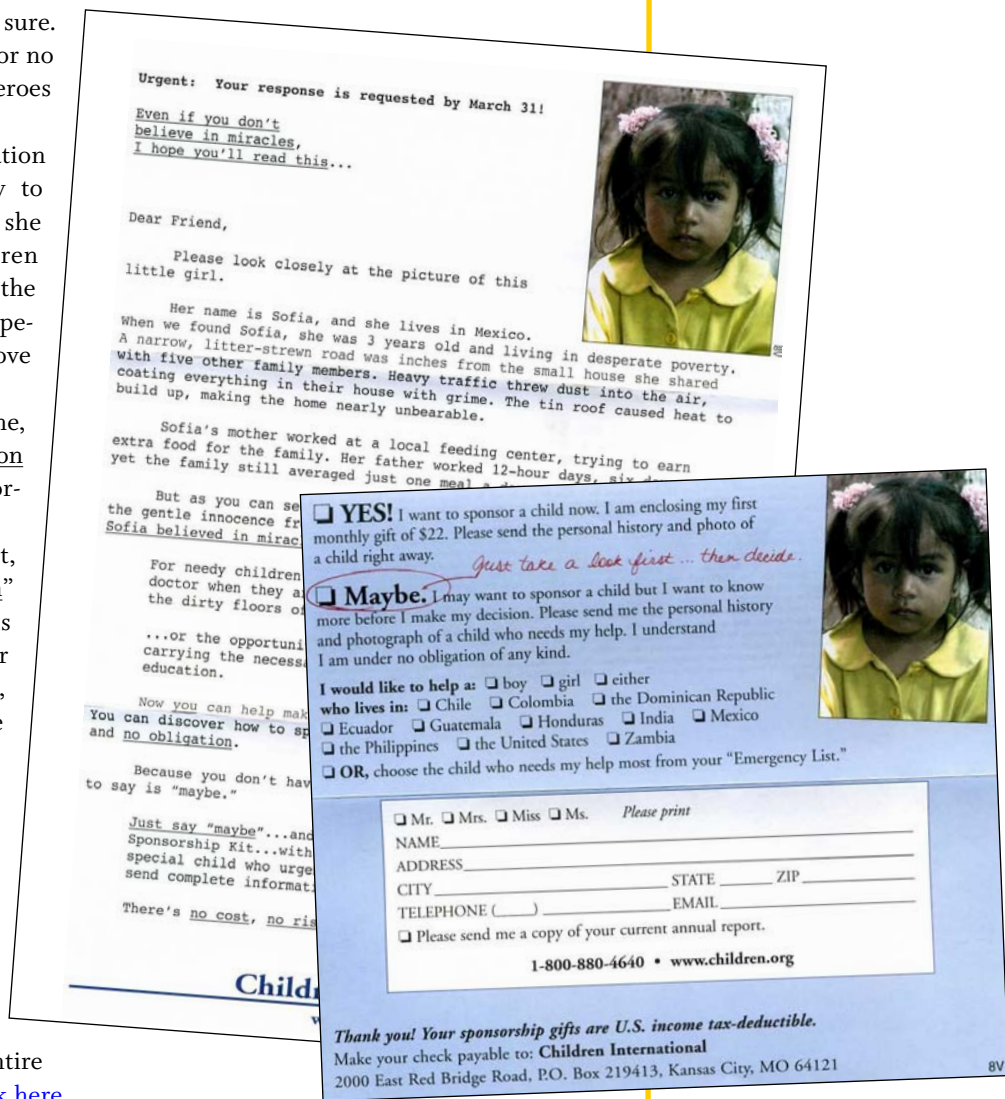
The 'maybe' theme continues on the back of an enclosed photo of

Sophia, whose story is also told in the letter. While on the (non-lasered) reply device, the "Maybe" option is literally circled in red with a handwritten notation that reads "Just take a look first. . .then decide."

All in all, the unrelenting, repetitive nature of the message is perhaps a bit over the top. But the idea itself—a more commercial, lead generation-styled effort—is certainly intriguing, assuming it's within your budget. Then again, maybe that's the rub!

A political perspective

When it comes to the 2008 presidential election, 42% of Americans say they'll do more online research of candidates than in 2004. This according to a study conducted by Opinion Research Corp. for Performics, as reported in *DIRECT*. Younger voters were most likely to say they'll be searching the Web for political information—no surprise there—with 88% of those 18-34 expecting to do so. Just 25% of those 65 and older are planning to rely on the Internet.



To see this entire package, [click here](#).

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Creating a real conversation

BY DEBORAH BLOCK AND PAUL KARPS

IN LAST MONTH'S ISSUE of this newsletter, [Contributions Magazine](#) publisher Kathleen Brennan interviewed fundraising consultant Tom Ahern, who said, "I urge people in my workshops to treat direct mail as conversations." Ahh, music to our ears!

And while this is a perspective we've mentioned any number of times in our column, we wanted to revisit such an important theme. After all, at least in our book, it really gets to the heart of why direct mail works.

As we see it, the underlying power of the medium is its ability to create a one-on-one relationship: so that the recipient is able to suspend her understanding of computer technology to think, even for a moment, this is a real letter coming from a real individual.

That's why establishing a conversational approach is so vital—because it represents one friend speaking with another. To help you do just that in your fundraising efforts, here are a number of techniques we regularly use to set a conversational tone:

BE INFORMAL

The whole idea is to write as you would speak in normal, friendly conversation. That means using contractions. And yes, it also means starting sentences with "and" or "but." Because let's face it, that's how people talk to each other. Ditto with the use of fragments.

An interesting side note: When we run our copy through a grammar checker, we often get alerts that certain phrases—such as "plus" or "what's more"—are deemed "informal" and inappropriate in formal usage. To which we say, great! That's exactly what we're trying for. (And you bet, ending a sentence with a preposition is just fine, as long as it sounds right.)

ENGAGE THE READER

Even though this is technically a one-way conversation, you can engage the reader psycho-

logically by employing a number of tricks. For example, ask questions throughout your copy. Not just the "did you know" variety, but also something simple like: "Our goal?" or "Don't you agree?"

Additionally, you can draw the reader into the conversation with such phrases as "you probably know" or "as you may have heard." Or put the reader right in the middle of your story by saying "Imagine being 15 years old and all alone, hungry and living on the streets. . ."

READ YOUR COPY ALOUD

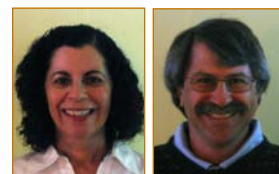
A conversation, in the truest sense, is verbal in nature. Not only should copy read well, it should also *sound* just as good. So adding the proper

rhythm and cadence to our words is a critical part of our editing process. This is done by reading the copy aloud to each other, to *hear* how it actually reads.

In some cases, a sentence might need an extra beat or two. This can add just the right dose of punch at the sentence's conclusion—as in "send a gift to Save the World" vs. "send a gift to Save the World without delay." See how the extra words seem to finish it off?

Here's another tip: Ever notice that three-part strings sound better than four-part strings? Or that repeating a word or phrase three times can have a wonderful, sing-songy quality, but four times sounds like it's too much? Leaving out the esoteric stuff about Italian mathematician Fibonacci, there's a certain symmetry in the number three. Some even refer to this as the "power of three." As they say, try it. You'll like it!

"The whole idea is to write as you would speak."



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