

Workshop menu | **Topics in donor communications**

Tom Ahern, presenter

Updated ~ July 2022

Virtual presentations [via Zoom or similar]

These presentations can also be done in person, on-site > Depends on your judgment re: COVID; personally, I've been on an airplane just once since 2020....

- **Everything I know about successful donor communications, crammed into 45 minutes**

[voted most popular in 2022]

Learn the basics of successful donor communications FAST ... updated through the pandemic. Understand just a few principles, pass just a few tests ... and your donor communications might be far more lucrative.

Especially apt for ambitious fundraising newbies. First created for a planned-giving conference. Then used to train a newly-reconstituted development department at a college ... then the board at a major city library (applause broke out at the end) ... then all the units of CASA California ... then recently with a new team at the prestigious Anchorage Museum.

- **The Return On Investment (ROI) Show > *new and culture-changing***

The commercial world sees customer communications as an investment ... one that's expected to yield a decent return. So the commercial world spends money to make money.

The charity world, on the other hand, often stunts long-term growth with a different mindset: the "scarcity mindset." Bosses and boards see donor communications as a cost, not an investment. They expect no return ... and spend as little as possible.

The truth? The return on investment (ROI) for donor communications can be staggeringly lucrative ... even for small, volunteer-run organizations ... if they have enough training to do their donor communications adequately well ("great" is not needed; adequate is good enough).

Increases in giving can start with something as simple as a better thank you. In the 45-60 minute version of this show, first done for a national consulting firm, 8-10 real-world examples are analyzed ... including a young community foundation that realized \$78 million in bequests in a decade by a small investment in advertising.

- **Nothing's Changed / Everything's Different**

[voted most popular in 2021]

Preparing your donor comms for success: the basics ... expanded and updated.

Expanded? Meet "philanthropic psychology." Researchers Dr. Adrian Sargeant and psychologist Jen Shang found they could significantly increase donations by connecting with the identities layered into a donor's self-image. Based on almost two decades of research, their fresh insights make clear why donors *really* say YES.

Updated? Well, the pandemic rocked the boat a bit. (Hint: online is up.)

Covered during the show: "The day everything changed" in fundraising (i.e., the early proof that donor-centered comms make far more money). The show probes real comms (digital and print) from nonprofits of all types and sizes (mostly small and medium). And the show shares several easy-peasy tests that will help driven fundraisers fail-proof their own donor comms.

PS: This show and the "Everything I know" show have overlap.

PPS: Also good to know? The show I deliver for your audience will be customized to their specific needs.

PPPS: So feel free to select topics that appeal to you, even if there is overlap. Together, we'll figure out the best, final show.

- **Writing a Convincing Case for Support**

[always a fave because it's so fundamental]

"Why should I give you my hard-earned money?" At surprisingly many nonprofits, this obvious question cues a deer-in-the-headlights response. Yet, answer this question well ... and you'll never be short of funds. Answer it poorly? Fundraising becomes an uphill battle. [original was created for a national conference and ran an hour with Q&A; there's a popular (and longer) pay-for super-webby on the same theme that sells for \$129 per connection]

- **Why 100% of our estate goes to charity: Talking to your donors about bequests**

[timely; also lucrative and urgent]

Don't wait, please. As Forbes reported in November 2021, "The Silent Generation and the Baby Boomers, upon their death, will transfer an estimated \$30 to \$68 TRILLION to children and other beneficiaries, including charities."

Trillions. Many trillions.

Do you have a cup ready to sip from that cascade?

This show covers the basics of marketing charitable bequests to your truest of true believers. It's easy enough: sometimes requiring no more than a short letter once a year. This show also demonstrates how to talk about death ... WITHOUT talking about death. [original was 45 minutes; world-sourced from successful charitable-bequest campaigns in 4 English-speaking countries]

Before you shop, please note:

- Since the pandemic hit and the world shut down in March 2020, I've switched heavily to Zoom and other "virtual" presenting media.

Online presenting is nothing new to me, though. I'm a "virtual veteran," doing a heavy schedule of webinars every year since 2011.

- Most workshops can be **customized** to include (gentle but detailed) critiques or/and in-class exercises.

Zoom, with its "share screen" function, allows me to look at and evaluate what's on attendee screens. This critiquing option has proved popular.

However, please be aware: it requires about 15 minutes *per* critique. That equals 4 critiques per hour. Which means seating must be limited ... or you might offer two price points: "with critique guaranteed," at a higher price point; "as an observer," at a lower price point. (Frankly, observers learn just as much.)

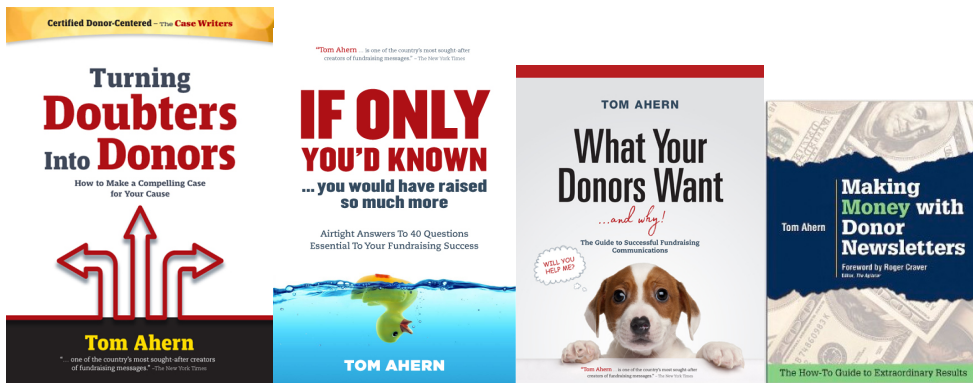
- My presentations are **flexible**, time-wise. Most workshop topics can be compressed to as little as 45 minutes ... or stretched to hours. Also: any topic can run as a keynote as well as a workshop.
- *Never stale*. I **update** my inventory of examples daily, as new stuff and better research arrive. These shows are always fresh, newly rebuilt for your audience.

Shameless Bio



In November 2016, the New York Times called Tom Ahern "one of the country's most sought-after creators of fund-raising messages."

Then in May 2021, world-revered UK researcher Richard Radcliffe chimed in: "Tom Ahern is possibly the greatest non-profit copywriter on the planet."



[Ahern bio can stop here]

Tom Ahern specializes in applying the discoveries of psychology and neuroscience to the day-to-day business of attracting and retaining donors. He's authored more than 5 well-received books on that topic. Each year, he trains thousands of fundraisers internationally through conferences and webinars.

[or can stop here]

He is an award-winning copywriter and journalist. His 2019 clients (the last pre-pandemic year) for direct mail, capital campaign case statements, audits and training included USA for UNHCR; Save the Children Global; Swedish Medical (hospitals, Seattle); the Connecticut Humane Society; The Marine Mammal Center (Sausalito); Sharp Healthcare (nonprofit hospitals in San Diego) and the Native Plant Trust. Other recent clients include Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford, the Anchorage Museum, Lollypop Farm (animal rescue), Friends of the Mississippi River ... and dozens more, large and tiny.

[or here is good]

He works with Prof. Adrian Sargeant and psychologist Jen Shang, principals at the Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy in the UK.

[bitter end; when you have to fill space]

Tom Ahern has a BA and MA from Brown University and a Certificate in Advertising Art from the RI School of Design. Aspects of all that have helped.

His inspiration and wife remains Simone Joyaux, ACFRE, nonprofit consultant of international rank and AFP Fellow. "We shared a life, values, and an existential worldview in Rhode Island and France. We hiked and shop-talked for thousands of miles. We traveled internationally to speak. We collected an impressive collection of luggage for all occasions as a result."

The beagle in my photo is a loaner.