

## Useful for you to know

- I update my workshops weekly, as good new examples and research arrive.
- These presentations are quite flexible, time-wise. Most workshop topics can be covered in as little as one-hour (or stretched to three hours). Workshops can be strung like beads with other workshops to make an immersive half-day or full-day.
- Most workshops can be customized to include in-class exercises, so attendees can immediately practice what I preach.
- I use PowerPoint heavily. I will bring my own laptop. You'll need to provide the screen(s) and projection AV (either VGA or HDMI are fine; I carry the proper connectors).
- I request a lapel mic for audiences larger than 30, so I don't have to shout.
- Most workshops can be done as a webinar, which can be a far cheaper option than flying my warm body to some distant venue.

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> **NEW in 2018**

### **Everyone's a Critic**

You decide: what's good, what stinks, what would you do instead?

Enter the critiquing zone. In this frantic but fruitful workshop, you'll pass judgment on all sorts of nonprofit communications, digital and print. Your hurry-it-along host: Tom Ahern, "one of America's top creators of fundraising messages."

What do *you* think? How did this email appeal from Charity: Water escape being labeled "poverty porn" ... yet still convey strong impact? Why did this particular cover of a land conservancy newsletter inspire hikers ... yet disappoint donors? Why did a communications strategy beloved by staff lead to a 40% drop in annual giving at a major animal rescue charity? Which fundraising elements of a new charity home page worked just as well in 1950?

And that's just part one. In part two, you get to practice the principles yourself. You'll suffer (productively) through such quick little exercises as: "Tell your mission's story in a single adjective or verb."

**Please note:** Because of its intensely interactive nature, this workshop works best with smaller groups. Groups of 100 or more will need a second person with a roaming microphone to facilitate dialogue.

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> **NEW and proven in 2017**

## **20 Questions: The Donor Communications Test**

This test, with answers sourced from top experts around the world, asks you to answer questions ranging from "How old is the average US donor?" to "Does raising awareness also raise money?" to "What's the best length for a direct mail letter?" Most non-professionals get the answers wrong and unwittingly undermine fundraising success. Come learn the right answers ... and bring your own questions, too!

Created for fundraisers, their bosses, their boards and especially for newbies to the nonprofit world, Tom Ahern's 20 Questions test promotes a quick, common understanding of profitable, proven best practices in appeals, newsletters, and thanks ... printed and digital.

**Please note:** Because this is a live test for the audience, only a question sheet will be distributed in advance. Full answers are provided *after* the presentation.

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> **MOST POPULAR: applied donor-centricity**

## **"Loverizing": The Lucrative Difference a Few Well-Chosen Words Will Make in Your Donor Communications**

You've heard the news: donor-centricity -- an approach psychologist Jen Shang has dubbed "loverizing" -- is a street paved with gold. It raises lots more money and retains donors longer.

But you're in the trenches. You need practical advice. What -- exactly -- makes a direct mail appeal irresistibly "donor-centered"? How do you "loverize" your website or newsletter?

Learn the nuts and bolts in this heavily illustrated new workshop from copywriting master, Tom Ahern. Angel Aloma, ED of Food for the Poor, a billion dollar charity, recently wrote Tom to say: "I want to reiterate that much of what we are doing now in regards to donor centricity was inspired by your wonderful presentation.... I am convinced that the reason why we have grown in the last years of tough economic conditions in the country is because of that wonderful switch that you inspired [in our communications]."

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> Introduced in 2016, updated pretty much weekly (because it has to be!)

## **The Big (little) Diff: Writing for Digital**

The digital realm is different in key ways. It can move and speak (video can deliver donors to the front lines). It's action-oriented: people LOVE to click; they seldom read.

As giving increasingly shifts online, what are today's best practices in an ever-evolving world? Turns out: old school. Offers. Great headlines. Donor-centricity. The same skills you needed for print.

Covered in the session: the real purpose of email (it's not reading); how to write subject lines that grab higher opening rates; building a "family of purpose" (a movement) online through social media; warm vs. cold website giving pages; choosing content for Facebook posts; and why you need "sad" to sell "hope" ... and how to find "your special sad."

This overview of writing examines how a small animal welfare charity in Bangkok, Thailand, can now raise \$350,000 every month in donations from American women 45 and older ... using Facebook alone. (Maybe you can do it, too!)

[For multilingual audiences: WARNING: this course was developed from experiences in countries where English is the dominant language. If your native language doesn't permit the informal use of the word "you," this session will likely not help you. Just saying.]

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> Basic fundraising skill, as well as for capital campaigns

## **Writing a Powerful Case for Support**

"Why should I give you my hard-earned money?"

Answer this question well, and you'll never be short of funds. Answer it poorly, and fundraising becomes an uphill battle.

Most nonprofits suffer from what the best-selling business book, *Made to Stick*, rightly calls the "curse of knowledge."

This shortcoming - and a common lack of donor-centricity - seriously undermine the effectiveness of many (maybe even *most*) donor communications ... from the humble elevator speech (an overrated exercise) to direct mail appeals to websites to stewardship materials like "gratitude reports" all the way up to **capital campaign** case statements.

In this revealing session, one of North America's **most experienced case writers** shares his secrets for properly selling your projects, programs, endowments, initiatives, buildings, renovations, and bright ideas.

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> Skills-building: Turning what's typically a cost center into a profit center

## **How to Build the Perfect Donor Newsletter, Print and Digital**

Do donors really want a newsletter? "Absolutely," research says. Yet most donor newsletters die unread. Why?

Join award-winning journalist, Tom Ahern, for a fast, in-depth look at the secrets behind great donor newsletters. You'll learn proven formulas for both paper newsletters and e-newsletters. You'll learn how to craft a powerful headline (and why that matters). You'll learn how to invent news when you think you have nothing to say.

One hospital that followed the advice in this workshop went from \$5,000 to \$50,000 in gifts per issue, and the advice works just as well for small organizations. Similarly, a city library system tripled giving through its newsletter between one issue and the next.

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> **Skills-building: Demystifying a key fundraising tactic that's used both for building your supporter base and to renew gifts**

### **Direct Mail for Smaller NGOs: How to Make It Work for You**

Is direct mail dead? Cancel the obituary. It is still, by far, the biggest moneymaker in fundraising.

On the other hand: given that many of the so-called "rules" of direct mail derive from campaigns that mail millions of pieces, can smaller, local non-profits, mailing mere hundreds or thousands of pieces, reasonably expect to use direct mail to advantage?

Absolutely.

Direct-mail appeals from local non-profits, done right, can net tens of thousands of dollars with a single mailing. For smaller NGOs, direct mail remains a powerful tool for (1) acquiring new donors and (2) attracting repeat gifts from past donors. Direct mail also plays a key role in promoting bequest and monthly giving.

Yet local charities often find their direct mail results deeply disappointing. What are they doing wrong? This workshop will analyze several recent case studies where small or local non-profits used direct mail to attract shockingly large amounts of philanthropy. This workshop clarifies how direct mail really works (physically and emotionally); how to set achievable expectations; and how to write an appeal that engages the reader.

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> **Skills-building: A healthy bequest marketing program can cure your annual giving woes; and most US charities are clueless**

### **Marketing Bequests [*alternative: Selling Legacy, Selling "Forever"*]: The Delicate Art of Asking for That Final Gift**

A recent survey asked a sample of typical middle-class donors, "Would you consider putting a gift for charity in your will?" More than 90% of these donors enthusiastically said yes.

But then came the second question: "Have you already put a gift for charity in your will?" The dismal answer: fewer than 10% had done so.

What's to blame for this striking gap? Lousy communications, plain and simple. In this brisk, no-nonsense workshop, Tom Ahern will teach you the right way to solicit bequests. A pivotal part of the discussion: the proven insights of the UK's "Dr. Death," a.k.a Richard Radcliffe, the world's leading researcher into legacy giving. Ahern will share with you the communications that doubled the number of legacy givers in just a few years.

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> **Self-analysis: Being your own best critic**

### **The amazing do-it-yourself audit. Your donor communications, bless their hearts: Are they any good?**

Become your own best critic. Build to succeed instead of fail.

Abnormally successful donor communications all have a dozen or so things in common.

These secrets derive from many fields: marketing, psychology, eye-motion studies, journalism, and of course fundraising's own vast body of knowledge.

Today, you'll learn what the world's top donor communicators know about the subtle science of persuading people to give and stay loyal -- AND you'll learn to judge your own materials against these very same standards. This session equips you to return to your desk and ruthlessly (but profitably) assess the competence of your donor and prospect communications materials.

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> **Donor-retention strategies: What the research tells us**

### **How to Apply Dr. Adrian Sargeant's Essentials of Donor Loyalty**

No one knows more about keeping your donors happy than pioneering researcher and author Adrian Sargeant. He founded and heads (with psychologist Jen Shang) the Hartsook Centre for Sustainable Philanthropy, at Plymouth University in the UK.

Dr. Sargeant has discovered 7 states of mind ("They're aware of consequences," "They trust you," etc.) that tend to convince notoriously fickle donors to continue their giving year after year.

So for fundraisers the urgent question then becomes: How do you apply Dr. Sargeant's insights to your own appeals, thanks and reporting? In this heavily illustrated exploration, Tom Ahern will analyze examples of Adrian Sargeant's loyalty principles at work in an array of donor communications, print and digital, from a wide variety of

charities, local and large.

[SHORTER]

No one knows more about keeping your donors happy than pioneering researcher and author Dr. Adrian Sargeant. For fundraisers the question then becomes: How do you apply his important discoveries to your very own appeals, thanks and reporting? In this heavily illustrated talk, Tom Ahern will show Sargeant's loyalty principles at work in a wide array of real-life donor communications, print and digital.

## Keynotes (can also run as workshops)

**Storytelling for Fundraisers: It Ain't All Bourbon and Whittlin' in Your Rocker** [this is different approach toward donor-centricity; should not be double-booked with **Loverizing**]

Experts scream: "Tell stories! You'll raise more money!" Yes, but....

While stories ARE the vivid, evocative, empathy-arousing servants of fundraising, they are NOT all that matters.

In this summary of what really matters in nonprofit storytelling, attendees will learn the HUGE and profitable difference between **corporate** (what most charities send) and **donor** communications (what few charities send, to their loss). You'll understand the neuro-scientific purpose behind before/after stories (fundraising's bread and butter). You'll discover the quick, essential art of delivering the so-called "Gift of Joy" within seconds to the donor.

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**Everything I know in 60 slides** [meant for short programs; it takes about 45 minutes; it can be easily lengthened by adding slides; there is significant overlap with my "6 realizations approach," so the two keynotes should not be scheduled together]

Tom Ahern prides himself on having an "opinion free" consulting practice. The way he writes and what he teaches come either from science; years of training; the accumulated best practices of experts around the world; or that merciless teacher, experience.

In this "truth stampede," you'll learn the best information and insights Tom has gathered in 15 years of high performance, award-winning direct mail, case writing, and audits for charities.

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# Bio



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

*[can stop here]*

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

*[or here]*

He is an award-winning copywriter and journalist. Current and recent clients for direct mail, capital campaign case statements, audits and training include Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford, the Anchorage Museum, Sharp Healthcare (nonprofit hospitals in San Diego), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (USA), Oxfam AU, the Gettysburg Foundation, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, Lollypop Farm, Friends of the Mississippi River, Connecticut Forest and Park Association ... and dozens more, large and tiny.

*[or here is good]*

He works with Prof. Adrian Sargeant and psychologist Jen Shang, principals at the Hartsook Centre for Sustainable Philanthropy, Plymouth University (UK). Tom sits on HCSP's advisory board. HCSP includes amongst its many outreach activities the world's top fundraising think tank, Rogare (Latin: to ask).

*[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. He lives with his wife, esteemed nonprofit consultant Simone Joyaux, in Rhode Island and France.