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Love Thy Reader | About Donor Communications | *from Tom Ahern*



If you had more money ... you *could* do more good.
If you do better communications ... you *will* have more money.

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New advance in CRM



From the same **team** who invented **eTapestry: A truly easy new donor management software** With built-in communications prompts: [Bloomerang](#). Now you know.

Higher ed-ites: Read this before your next appeal...

Why 1-page letters are kind of useless Writer and consultant Rick Schwartz crafted something like 150 letters for a college client. Many were 3 or 4 pages long and got good results. But the man upstairs sent down a dictum: no letters longer than a single page, a page and a half at most. Listen to Rick's righteous grief in this illuminating [blog posting](#).

Yes, you can?

How one organization raised \$690 million through

Workers of the nonprofit world, unite!
Pretty please?

Revolution ouch?

I've had it.

Yet again.

I'm speaking to a sold-out room, talking to attendees at the 10th annual [ADRP](#) International Conference. Five hundred professionals at round tables are listening to the opening plenary, which is me.

I've got a mic attached to my tie. I am loud and proud.

Because I love these folks! These are *my* peeps! *They* do what *I* do, a lot of them anyway ... at hospitals, at universities, at all sorts of charities.

ADRP stands for Association of Donor Relations Professionals. They're the people who write. They're the people who try to keep donors happy via communications. They're the stewardship people. *Professionals like me!* I want

email

President Obama's 2012 campaign shattered the record: no candidate had ever raised as much online, via email appeals. But his gargantuan haul was no accident. Read in this Marketing Sherpa [article](#) how the Obama team refined their email fundraising on the fly.

On the YouTube beat...

One more time

In the last issue, we got a little "Hallelujah" festival going, with a bunch of videos of that great Leonard Cohen song. [Joe Lindell](#) wrote to point me toward one more version, his favorite. He warned me, "Find a box of tissues." He was right. [See](#) for yourself.

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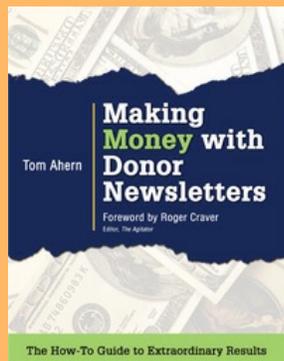
¶ [Twitter](#): 932 followers

Twitter name: thattomahern

¶ [E-news](#): 7,484 subscribers

¶ [Facebook](#): 187 friends

Look what's coming soon....



Heavily revised and illustrated 2nd edition. From [Emerson & Church](#).

What's new on [SOFII](#)?

Need a good idea

RIGHT NOW?

Then review this freshly updated [list](#) of SOFII's latest exhibits. SOFII stands for the *Showcase of Fundraising Innovation and Inspiration*. This big-hearted, mostly volunteer, London-based nonprofit collects and annotates examples of **SUCCESSFUL** donor communications

to join this organization!!

And yet...

This morning's crowd has a BIG problem, judging by the response that roars across the audience when I say:

"The charity world will continue to raise a meager fraction of what it *could* raise from donors ... as long as the approval loop contains PhDs and know-nothing second-guessers, like, unfortunately, many of your bosses." Or words to that effect.

Applause erupts, like a flock of a thousand starlings exploding from the trees. Not a standing ovation, true. But an ovation none the less: a sitting ovation. A dark ovation.

What was it, really? A cry of pain.

A cry of pain from a working class too often oppressed by ignorance. "I felt a great disturbance in the Force," Obi-Wan said softly. "As if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror, and were suddenly silenced. I fear something terrible has happened."

I know the difference

Ain't it grand?

These days, I only work with clients I want to work with.

It took 15 years of specialization, business strategy, and authoring books to get here. But now the right people and charities find me. If there is a "work heaven," this, my friends, is it. *And by the way? I love you guys! All my clients challenge me. All my clients are fun. And I'm not the only agency that's chosen to become highly selective: [Agents of Good](#) in Toronto pursues exactly the same approach.*

Writing fundraising copy is interesting work. But it's a trade. A craft. A body of knowledge. You acquire it. You apprentice. You demonstrate you're competent. You stay up to date. And you get paid.

I see myself as a sort of plumber, electrician, or master carpenter. I know how to build somewhat complex things so they work properly.

Only I'm not wiring your house. I'm writing appeals, newsletters, and cases. I'm wielding emotional triggers with a certain *je ne sais quoi*. I'm "loverizing" your donors (to deploy Jen Shang's sharp term). All this helps you increase your charitable revenue. An electrician gets paid so the lights go on

from around the world ... and then gives you **FREE** access. I'm there often.

Could they take the heat? Well, they came into my kitchen...

Enter a GALLERY of FRANK critiques ... solely for your error-avoiding, idea-stealing pleasure

Brave people send me samples of their donor comms, for a **free, nitty-gritty** - and **public** - critique. Find out exactly what they did wrong or right, and learn from their mistakes or victories.

Available as [downloadable PDFs](#) with pop-up comments. I won't be critiquing for awhile, due to other commitments.

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Where will Tom speak next?

Check upcoming events on Tom's international [speaking CALENDAR!](#)



Ourhouseinfrance.com

[My blog](#)

[My website](#)

when you flip the switch. I get paid so more money comes in when you send the appeal.

My simple point?

Donor communications is a trade. And at the 10th annual ADRP International Conference I'm looking at an audience filled with tradespeople just like me ... YET what do I hear, loud and clear, question after question?

They're being second-guessed. They're being told no. They're being told, "We don't do it that way." They're being told in essence, too often: "Just do what I tell you to do." Even though there *are* "best practices" -- and what they're being told to do ain't them.

Norma Rae was right

Bosses Day is October 16. Are you gearing up?

I think we need a counter-demonstration. I think we need in the nonprofit world a "flush the ignorance from the system" day.

On that day, I propose that every boss must take a test about best practices in donor communications. I'd be happy to write it, as a public service. I will consult with a bunch of experts and top professionals. This will be a great test of real skills.

And if you flunk, everybody knows you flunked. And if you pass, everybody knows you passed. (In a perfect world, anyway.)

Who's with me?

I feel like Norma Rae. I want to start a revolution on the shop floor. Hold up a sign like she did: "UNION."

When they told her to leave, she refused. "I'm staying put! Right where I am! It's gonna take you, and the police department, and the fire department, and the National Guard to get me outta here! I'm waitin' for the sheriff to come and take me home! And I ain't gonna budge till he gets here!"

Revolution now? I wish.

Postscript: At least once a year, I publish an article like this. The purpose of the article is to bring some mild comfort to the "second-guessed-to-death" fundraisers of our world. These are the purposeful people who attend how-to workshops and read how-to books, determined to improve their game, only to meet resistance from above.

I salute your struggle.

###

Back issues of this newsletter? [Here...](#)

[coming tomorrow to Bratislava](#)

Tom Ahern (USA)

- Love Thy Reader: The Science & Secrets of Effective Donor Communications
- Marketing Bequests: The Delicate Art of Asking for That Final Gift
- Following the Path to Donor Nirvana: The 5 Realizations Approach

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