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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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What the Grammys have to tell fundraisers

Lorde explains a lot

I love this blog generally, and I love this [posting](#) specifically. It's smart! Plus I haven't been able to get Lorde's song, [Royals](#), out of my head.

Memo from "Putting the Fun back in Fundraising" Dept.

Green Farms Academy annual appeal video

Tip of the hat to [Jim Rattray](#), hospital comms guru, for pointing out this particular "doesn't take itself too seriously" [video](#) released by his daughter's school, to fundraise.

Juicy job opportunity....

VP Development

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England has [posted](#) its top FR position; brand new.

Are you looking for...?

Interesting young website designer encountered

The [Berkshire Natural Resources Council](#), a nonprofit devoted to linking "island" habitats in western MA into a single, viable,

Dr. Adrian Sargeant, explorer! - **Part 3**

7 principles of donor loyalty

Charities that get straight A's in 7 things reap the rich rewards of contented donors.



Dr. [Adrian Sargeant](#) is a marketing professor specializing in charities. In his groundbreaking research, he uncovered 7 chief reasons why donors will sometimes stay with a charity for years. Previous issues of this newsletter talked about reasons #1- #3.

Loyalty reason #4. You've connected

Say it loud. Say it proud. "You."

As in, "You are invited."

uninterrupted wildlife and recreation corridor, printed a stunning infographic (design cost: \$800) that concisely and vividly explains their long-term vision. "Who did that?!" I begged. A.: [Shane Scanton](#), a 20s-something based in Vermont with a brilliant gift. I asked him if he were cheap. "We're efficient," Shane said. "We attribute cost savings to good organization and a thought-through process." His company, [Lightwell](#), can do gorgeous websites, architectural renderings (think capital campaigns), and infographics.

You deserve a smile today...

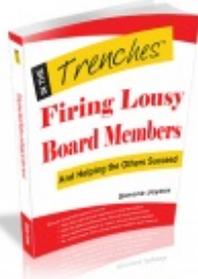
Happiness Sprinkling Project

Don't know how this [idea](#) will help you raise money, but, heck, it's just too wonderful not to spread the word. This [article](#) led me there.

Yes, you can ... and should!

Joyaux's new poke in the eye

A picture says a thousand words:



Where we're headed?

Social media in charity life, a decade from now

I'm not a social media skeptic, since I use it heavily myself. But it's low on my list of things to worry about right now, as far as raising money for charity. Will that always be so? Nope: you have to go where the people are, and people are on social media. Here's a great [forecast](#) from The Guardian in the UK on how social media will be integrated into nonprofit comms 10 years

As in, "You are invited to join a wonderful family of people willing to help others, even strangers, overcome real problems."

As in, "It's not up to us. Sure, we have the expertise. But that's all just going to sit idle and go to waste without compassionate people like you. With your generosity, though? That's a big, fat different story. With your kind help? Well, then the miracles *never* end!"

BTW, the preceding paragraph is not a parody. It's how you *should* write to donors and prospects, if you hope to maximize response.

If, on the other hand, you're uncomfortable writing that way, get used to smaller portions. Paraphrasing the great [Jeff Brooks](#): "Start corny. Stay corny."



Look: you've got *all* these "contact points": acknowledgements, thank you's, welcome kits, appeals, newsletters ... all these times when your organization is in **direct contact** with the donor.

These contacts are all HUGE opportunities. Each is a GOLDEN chance to make a GREAT impression. Each means you can HUG the donor. At each contact point, electricity should flow into the donor and light that person up.

from now. Thank you, Ann Browning, for tipping me to it.

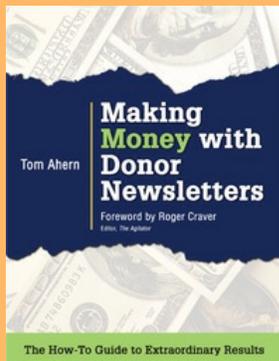
Ahern critiques

Visit the "training museum": a large [collection](#) on my website of donor comms in downloadable PDF format (appeals, newsletters, annual reports, etc.) that I have nano-critiqued, no holds barred.

Working on....

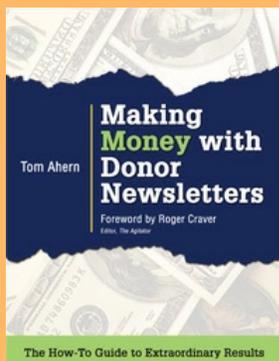
San Antonio is building one of the nation's best children's museums, and I get to play a little with the blocks as they raise the last few million. And speaking of San Antonio, AFP called and requested my presence at the Int'l conference, March 23-25. Between remembering the Alamo (for the 5th time) and a cocktail crawl looking for the best cactus margarita, I'll be giving a workshop on cases and a world premiere workshop on donor-centricity and how to weave it into your communications, thus accessing unsuspected fortunes in higher donations and increased retention.

It's here!



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

And here, too!



From [Amazon](#).

Know what you're actually selling to donors

To quote renowned psychologist and Nazi death camp survivor Viktor Frankl, "Humans are driven by a will to establish meaning in their lives. They need purpose."

Charities can help supply that. That's the commodity you are selling: *purpose*.

You break your contract with your donors when you don't successfully convey to them how much difference their charity has made in the world.

This bad habit is why so many charities remain perennially underfunded, I suspect. Neglecting to properly praise donors is their [besetting](#) communications sin.



About your boilerplate

Permydia X. (named changed, protect the innocent), director of communications for philanthropy/alumni at a brand-name university, wrote me the most apropos email the other day, talking about exactly this problem:

...a reluctance to embrace donors without

Joinme?

Linked In: 979 connections

Twitter: 1,259 followers

Handle: thattomahern

E-news: 7,987 subscribers

Facebook: 216 friends

Ahern bloggy

My career,

unvarnished, not all that well censored either

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

Joyaux Associates

International expertise at down-to-earth prices. Fund development, board development, strategic planning. [Lots of free resources](#), too!

Where will Tom speak next?

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



Ourhouseinfrance.com

My website

reserve. A.k.a., incompetence in donor relations.

"Can we get a petition going to eliminate the term 'acknowledgment letter' from the fundraising industry vocabulary?" Permydia asked.

Sign me up.

What's happened at Permydia's shop is "our fundraisers have passed the [acknowledgment] task on to administrative personnel who have never met the donor" -- or *any* donor, maybe -- "[and] don't know what the use of the funds will result in. [They] come to the communications staff every 12-18 months looking for 'boilerplate' paragraphs about our fundraising priorities...."

Boilerplate, hey? Sound familiar?



OK, let's return to Adrian Sargeant's 4th commandment:

Thou Shalt Connect

And NOW let's take a basic IQ test. Please answer this question:

Is boilerplate likely to connect?

Yes No

Permydia notes that people "freak out" about writing acknowledgment letters ... and therefore turn out soulless *merde* (if that was French, pardon mine).

"It seems to me that if you know the person, why they made the gift, and you can project a few ideas on what can be accomplished with the funds, you've got a dandy letter in the making," she wrote me.

She confessed, "I think people have a very hard time being sincere in writing - they try to make it

sound like the gift will make worlds collide or something, which is not likely what the donor expected. They'd just like to see a problem fixed."

That last paragraph? Highly quotable. Highly notable. Thank you, Permydia.

Next time: More loyalty principles to come....

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

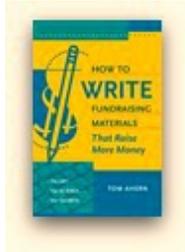
[Tom Ahern's "I forgot Valentine's Day" collection](#)



Refresh your under-wardrobe
Wear your heart on/near your sleeve
Writer-wear©. *Advice-wear*®. *Reminder-wear*™. **We do message. You customize! PICK your colors, sizes and styles ... huge range! Statement T-shirts (and the occasional iPhone sleeve) for the wordy wise. [Click here to see for yourself!](#)**



How to write a case for support. Read the Kool-Aid.
See what Amazon reviewers say...



How to write fundraising materials your donors will love.
See what Amazon reviewers say...

