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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.

Like what you're reading? **Receive** your very own free copy!



Why go to AFP International?

You meet incredible people. You hear incredible things.

This March in San Antonio, I met Rory Green, a 2nd generation fundraiser (her dad's the legendary Canadian fundraiser, Fraser Green). And in our few too-brief conversations she introduced me to lots of stuff, including this 2013 test published by the NY Times, "[Can You Read People's Emotions?](#)"

What's *your* "sensitivity IQ"? And trust your gut. Whenever I got one wrong, it was because I voted against my instinctive 1st choice. These are NOT trick questions.

Rory World – Part 2

If you're a parent, this is a must-read

This [one](#) left my jaw permanently ajar. Rory told me about a 5th-grade teacher who secretly helped least-connected kids become more connected in class. She hopes to avert a Columbine-type tragedy at her own school. She understands that *all violence begins with disconnection*. And she's doing something about it, Ninja-style.

Dr. Adrian Sargeant, explorer! - **Part 5**

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- #5. To read the issues, send your eyes [here](#).

I'll make this issue fast. Opening rates for these **Love Thy Reader** newsletter reports on Sargeant's 7 loyalty principles have slipped, from 40% to 37%. Not a lot, true. But enough to tell me, "Get on it with, man." [altho i HAVE saved the best principles for last]

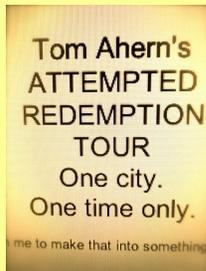
6. Multiple engagements

Two-way interactions (i.e., the donor talks back

Rory World – Part 3

Run for this cover

We share a love of Leonard Cohen. Rory drew my attention to this [cover](#) by The Civil Wars of *Dance Me to the End of Love*. Brilliant, crushingly poignant. Who doesn't like a good cry from time to time?



Richmond, VA. Tuesday morn, May 6, 2014. Tix from [VAFRE](#).

Mal's incredible free offer....

This download could change everything

Last I heard, Mal Warwick was on his Buddha journey, bringing soccer balls to the poor worldwide. And then he wrote to me about:

[Integrated Fundraising - The Good, the Bad & the Ugly](#). This PDF bowled me over by page 5. Get [your own copy](#).

"Luke, I am your father ... and I'm leaving a little something in my will for your Rebel Alliance ..."

Sample bequest request letter from Obi-Wan Kenobi

This is not a joke, but it is fun. Agents of Good have created a "Star Wars" themed series of instructional posts. They've done [Direct Mail 101](#), [Thank You Letters 101](#), [Newsletters 101](#), and now - - "Luke! Behind you!" -- [Legacies 101](#), written by Rory Green, daughter of Jedi bequest master, Fraser Green.

From the Dark Arts Dept...

The Cuteness Factor

If your charity serves kids in any way, it's important that

to the NGO) significantly improve retention, Adrian found. Being able to express an opinion is worth a lot, turns out.

Want to hold onto more donors?

Ask them about their "communications preferences." I.e., Dear Donor, *How many times a year would you like to hear from us?*

Mail that survey 3 years running. If you do (and then religiously comply with your donors' instructions), I predict that your retention rates will rise like a hot-air balloon in a cool Arizona morning.

Dr. Sargeant is especially fond of customer (i.e., donor) surveys.

Intelligently crafted customer (i.e., donor) surveys speak truth to delusions. Customer (i.e., donor) surveys are the thermometers of marketing and sales (i.e., fundraising). Surveys can tell us whether consumer (donor) sentiment is running hot or cold, positive or negative.

Basically, commercial firms use customer surveys as a navigation aid. *OK, captain, something's not working on this end. Steer the other way.*

Yet (ouch!) NGOs almost *never* do customer (i.e., donor) surveys. I can say that confidently because I've seen the research. (You thought nobody was watching?)

Do you REALLY wonder why donor retention amongst charities is generally dismal? You *never* ask your customers (i.e., donors) what they think. And you expect them to love you? No: they feel ignored and abused.

Donors know the game. "It's a numbers game," everyone says.

you know why adults will therefore respond to your requests for help. The Wikipedia article on "[cuteness](#)" does a helpful job of explaining the science. **What's the easiest first gift in the world?** Asking someone to help a child.

From the Washington Post

Today's bright sayings are tomorrow's clichés

I have a warm spot for clichés. Once I banished from my brain the 10th-grade English teacher that haunts us all, I saw clichés for what they are: shortcuts. Here's [a list of 150](#) current journalistic clichés. Thanks Jerry C.

You got about 35 characters to persuade me to open....

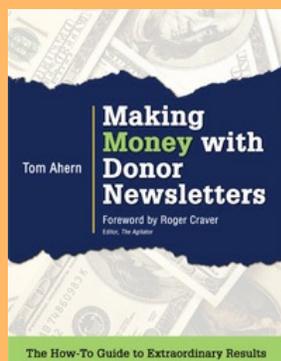
Best email subject lines I know

"It's Our Choice: Pipeline ... or Pipe Dream." I talked about Kent Ashworth in my new newsletter book. He's the former journalist heading comms at [Achieve Hartford!](#), a nonpartisan education reform group. Kent writes killer email subject lines. Follow along. Sign up.

Working on....

A new book: the Donor Communications Test. AKA the book that will set your imperial ED and board chair straight on all matters related to donor comms. Well, we can hope.

It's here!



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

And here, too!

Yes, it is ... in arenas like large-scale direct mail.

Here's the math behind mass mailings: even with weepingly low response rates, you will still make a decent return ... if you mail out enough professionally produced pieces to the right people and make an irresistible offer.

I work in that world. At some point, I confess, numbers become your friend. You almost *can't* fail, if your direct mail appeals are reasonably competent.

I've drifted. Let me drift back. I'm begging you: **survey your donors.**

It's easy ... and will return your investment many times over. Retention will improve, and you'll reap the rewards of better average lifetime value per donor ... or what I call BALVPD (just kidding; the acronym is rubbish).

Nor do you have to re-invent this wheel.

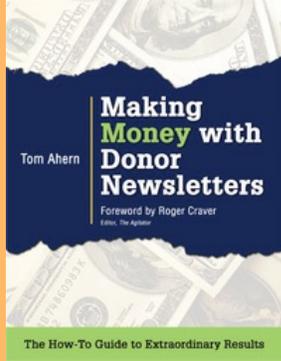


Masterly, next-gen fundraising consultant (and extreme advocate!), [Tina Cincotti](#), has on her website a [sample donor survey](#) you can download as a PDF.

7. They're learning. Are you taking them on a journey?

This final principle's easily explained by showing you some stuff, all from [SOFII](#):

How many [RNLI lifeboats](#) are at this moment plowing the seas around the UK? Donors can see for themselves. Here's the [full case study](#) on SOFII. RNLI's tagline: "...the charity that saves lives at sea."



From [Amazon](#).

Joinme?

¶ **Linked In:** 977 connections

¶ **Twitter:** 1,418 followers

Handle: thattomahern

¶ **E-news:** 8,301 subscribers

¶ **Facebook:** 222 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.

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.

No one knows more about bringing joy and insight to the donor's door than [Lisa Sargent](#). Look at her [makeover of the Merchants Quay donor newsletter](#), with the highly capable design connivance of [Sandie Collette](#).

Greenpeace USA asks its donors to make [origami whales](#) ... and lands a whale of a response.

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

[Tom Ahern's "I forgot my sister's birthday, again!!!" collection](#)



Refresh your under-wardrobe Wear your heart on/near your sleeve

Writer-wear©. *Advice-wear*®. *Reminder-wear*™.

Customize! PICK your colors, sizes and styles ...

huge range! Statement T-shirts for the wordy wise.

And really well-made leggings (Simone loves hers).

[Click here to see for yourself!](#)

I won't be critiquing for awhile in 2013, 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 website](#)



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...](#)

'Til next time...
donor communications
true believers!

