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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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AND GET YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED LIVE

JANUARY 14TH, 2015

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### Online asks soar in December 2014

You're right: you did get a stifling number of email solicitations in December. Blackbaud's Steve MacLaughlin tracked his: in the last month of the year, he received 445 email solicitations from 74 different nonprofits. As [The Agitator](#) reported, "14 organizations sent him more than 10 messages each; 16 groups only sent one message each (that's a 'too little' headscratcher to Steve); the median was six. The overkill champion sent 23!" No report on whether Steve gave to any of them. Steve's [blog post](#) includes every subject line he received (i.e., endured). Is online giving up for 2014? Yes. 2014 giving online rose 13% over 2013, the [Chronicle of Philanthropy](#) reports.

From Google...

**A Year in Search**  
What did trillions of

## Ahern presents where next?

[BloomCon](#), FREE online conference, Jan. 14, 2015

[FIA conference, Brisbane](#), Australia, Feb. 18-20, 2015

**It's up to fundraisers to know how donor communications work best.**

# Your boss isn't the problem, necessarily

Is 2015 the year the beleaguered put their feet down and slay the Dragon of No?

searches teach us about 2014? Google invites you to "[Explore 2014](#)," as the company shares what trended during the past year. It taught me something about picking messages to suit. Plus it takes 10 years off your worried brow. Brilliant, beautiful, uplifting. What is a great campaign case but a search for an answer the donor didn't know she wanted.

How long WOULD a wood chuck chuck...

### The good stuff

In this [infographic yardstick](#) you'll find what's been tested to be the perfect length for tweets (less than 140 characters), Facebook posts, paragraphs and more. Worth knowing. Recommended by Russell Wycoff, Nonprofit Storytelling Conference 2014 alum.

Fun and anyone can do it...

### Steal this video

What better way to kick off your 2015 donor relations lovefest than with a fast, easy thank you video ... like [Childhaven produced](#). Nonprofit Storytelling alum, Em Weissman, said, "My staff jumped on the 'because of you' bandwagon and created a pretty cute (albeit low budget) thank you video."

From the "Now you know" department...

### Behind the scenes of the Ice Bucket Challenge

If you're serious about this (instead of just envious), here's the [documentary](#) insider behind the scenes look at what happened, how it happened, and the aftermath. 52:40 minutes long. Don't let that stop you. Tony Martignetti interviews straight-talking ALS CEO, Barbara Newhouse. Via [The Agitator](#).

### Better Boards Await You

-----  
The inaugural Nonprofit Storytelling Conference held in Seattle this past November was the most useful conference I've ever attended. And that's saying a lot.

I've attended scores of fundraising conferences. Seattle turned out to be different: it wasn't so much a [conference](#) as a community under construction.

All speakers were available all the time for any question for the entire two days. Also special: there was a private Facebook group where attendees could ask questions and get collective answers post-conference, to infinity ... and beyond, as Buzz would declare. Nice touch.

## Here's the question I hear most often

So someone posted this question to Facebook: "How do I convince my boss that all these new ideas" - approaches like donor-centricity (which I swear only qualifies as novel in the curiously anachronistic world of fundraising) - "actually work?"

I had to confess: I don't have a short answer on how to convince your boss.

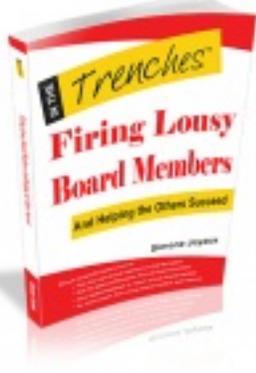
I don't KNOW a short answer.

I only know a longish answer ... but it *is* foolproof.

For the first 10 years of my consulting life I was a partner (the copywriter) in a small marketing agency: direct mail, PR, ads.

Our very first client - a medical practice - taught me an extremely important lesson: you have to DOMINATE opinionated people, or they will not let you do what you feel is best.

The question posted to Facebook was: how do I convince the boss? A more accurate question is maybe: how do I, as a self-described professional, get to do what I'm learning to do and believe is right?



**NEW!** By Simone Joyaux, ACFRE. **Subtitle promise:** "And helping the others succeed!" This book is for real. You'll learn how to fix a misbehaving, underperforming board for good. [Amazon...](#)

## Rule #1 (or you've already lost)

The only person in a nonprofit who should approve donor communications of any kind (appeals, newsletters, thanks, the "donate" aspects of the website) is the fundraiser.

There is no "but...." There is no option or alternative. This is a precondition for success: the fundraiser exercises TOTAL control over all donor communications.

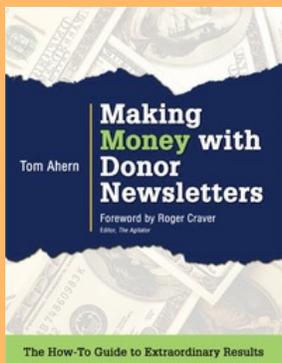
Not the ED. Not the board chair.

They may be lawyers. They may be doctors. They may be industrialists. They may be bankers. They may be young entrepreneurs. They may be Ph.D.s. Doesn't matter.

They're not trained in donor communications, which makes them (technically speaking) ignorant. Dangerously ignorant, in fact; since the "bright" ideas of the untrained don't work pretty much 150% of the time. (Stephen Hawking did the science.)

Of course, *someone* has to be trained in donor communications. And that would be ... YOU.

### Make More Money



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

## Domineering 101

I'll be blunt so I'm not misunderstood:

You MUST know SO much about how to get good and improved results that you can silence every untrained opinion in the room.

There's no easy, alternative route that I've encountered. There's no "just add water" and your boss likes what he's hearing.

Our method - and we were eventually a successful agency winning international awards opposite competition from Disney and Boeing - was to go in and LISTEN. Listen until the client had said everything they had to say. Let the silence ring.

When can I see you again?  
**I'm around, speaking**  
[Calendar](#) of upcoming Ahern workshops. For an occasionally entertaining downloadable PDF of workshops I currently offer, [CLICK ME](#).

Ahern [website](#)

**Working on....**  
USA UNHCR audit? Capital campaign case for Planned Parenthood SNE. Comms audit for Harlem RBI. Original "workshop

theatre" for Tucson.  
Consulting with  
Oxfam Australia.

France [website](#)

"Stop!"

### The Little Words Mean the Most...

My stupid [blog](#). Includes  
"Worksheet Confidential,"  
a gappy documentary of my  
work methods.

## Joinme?

¶ [LinkedIn](#): 1,261 connections  
¶ [Twitter](#): 1,946 followers  
Handle: thattomahern  
¶ [E-news](#): 9,227 subscribers  
¶ [Facebook](#): 276 friends

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

Enter a **GALLERY** of  
**FRANK critiques ...**  
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critique. Find out exactly  
what they did wrong or  
right, and learn from their  
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Then start taking over.

Slowly ... with smiles and zero aggression.

"I like your idea." Always start criticism with a  
compliment. "But there's some new research on that very  
thing that *could* effect sales. May I explain?"

*By all means* was the usual response from the sane (not  
all clients passed this litmus test).

Sure, for the first few years we got push-back.

But I was secretly following the advice of a major guru to  
consultants. He'd told me over tea one idle afternoon, "If  
you read one hour in your field every day, within a year  
you'll be an expert. If you do that every day for three years,  
you'll be a *national* expert."

I followed his advice. Then I start speaking and writing  
books. And once you've published a book, your opinion  
becomes unassailable except by true experts. It's a super  
nice place to hang out: Unassailable Opinion-ville.

## Managing up? Money is the trump card

View yourself as a consultant.

(Want help with this? Margaret Roberts, a Storytelling  
Conference 2014 alum, strongly recommends Peter  
Block's [Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your  
Expertise Used](#).)

If you do commit to something like that schedule of daily  
reading described above, then, when you go to your boss,  
you'll be saying things (s)he'll actually want/need to hear,  
because what you're saying will connect directly to  
increased revenue.

You see, money is the trump card.

When someone asks me today, "Tom, what do you do?" I  
answer, "I help charities make a lot more money."

When the discussion's about money, the discussion trends serious instead of frivolous.

If the discussion's about who's right, you lose.

If the discussion's about which version is better from a "I like it, I don't like it" standpoint, you lose.

Those are NOT professional-grade nor -relevant discussions.

Talk about income instead. Have the body of knowledge under your belt. Change jobs regularly if you have to, learning a little more each time. And one day, maybe three years from now, you'll be on easy street.

"I think this can especially be hard for women to do," Sarah Woodard, director development and communications at [Spectrum Youth and Family Services](#), notes. "Always be learning, but also, own what you know."

*Own what you know.* Thank you, Sarah. That's it in a nutshell. Own what you know.

## **Slaying the "Dragon of No"**

I couldn't successfully insist on the Verbatim Rule (you, client, will not change a word I write) ... I wouldn't now attract the clients of my dreams (which describes ALL my current clients) ... if I didn't know how to actually do what they want done.

It's not about getting permission. It's about being scientifically more likely to succeed than to fail because you know the rules, you know the guidelines, you know the best practices, and you know the data.

My self-confidence is off the charts when I speak with clients. You have to be the smartest person in the room in your field ... in your head ... and in fact, in this one peculiar specialty: donor communications.

Treat your boss as a client. Listen.

Then mention money. Then dominate.

There is no shortcut I know. There is no spray for this. No herbicide. Your boss (despite appearances) is not a noxious weed.

To dominate, you have to be knowledgeable. And then you can slay the Dragon of No.

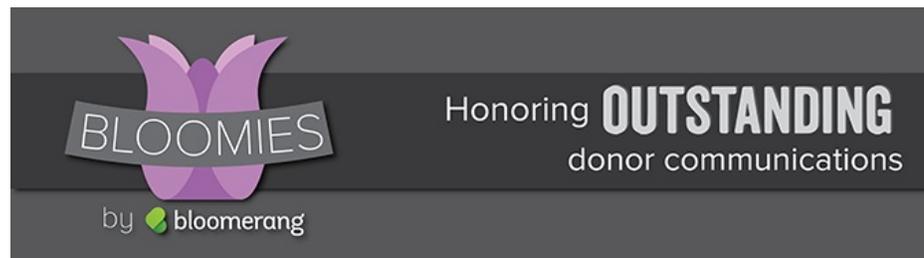
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Back issues of this newsletter? [Here...](#)

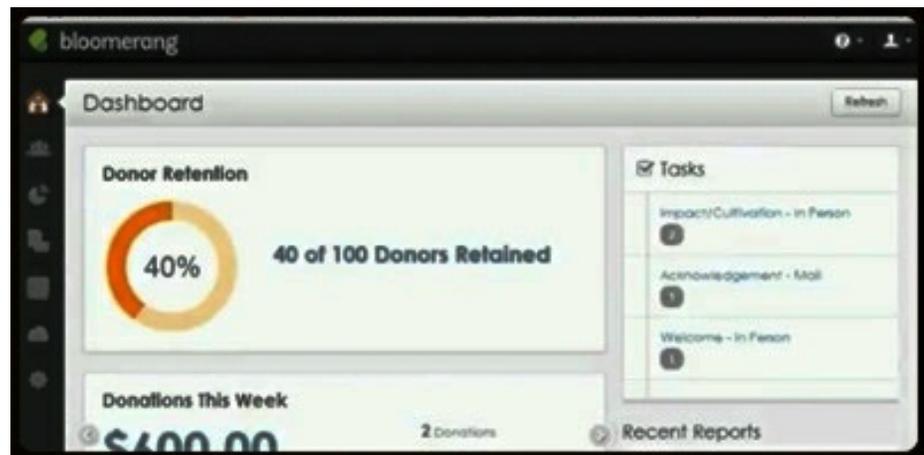
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Are *you* doing GREAT donor communications? Want a [prize](#) and international recognition?

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Can your charity *easily* track donor retention, the most profitable metric in fundraising?

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from the ground up" donor management software, for "modern fundraisers."

Built to be so simple and intuitive you don't even need a manual. And yet ... built to give you unprecedented insight into your donor data, in the office or on your mobile. Retention expert Dr. Adrian Sargeant is a key member of the Bloomerang team, so you know the thinking behind it is state of the art. Are you willing to invest 30 minutes in something that could change the future of your nonprofit? Then watch Bloomerang's "[how it works](#)" [video](#).

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## 2015 Get It Right Donor-Comm Ts



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donor communications  
true believers!

