

If you are in the fundraising business, here's something you really should know

'Money is short-sighted!'

I have a theory. It's an interesting wee theory. It comes from years of writing direct mail letters for companies and charities. And it goes something like this:

Money is Short-sighted!

It's a simple little hypothesis and it's based on the indisputable fact of life that as we get older our eyesight fails.

It's true! Most people when they start hitting the mid-forties, if not before, start having difficulties reading small cluttered print.

Many of us won't even admit to it until the dreaded fuzzy-eye syndrome or the headaches begin.

But long before this happens, something else happens, which is very important to us direct marketing professionals and people in the fund-raising business. What happens is that these key people hit the top of one of one of the most important economic cycles in their lives.

It's the time when their mortgage repayments are getting lower, their children are probably beginning to earn their own keep, their out-goings are (at last!) coming more under control, they are hitting the maximum on the incremental salary scales and so on and so forth...

... in short, it's the time when they have money to spend!

And if you don't believe me, just take one quick look at your donor database, and I'll be very surprised if you don't find that € for € the 40 - 55 target group is one of the best response groups of all.

And there's another little factor that we have to take into consideration as well ... and this is what I call the 'I can't be bothered' factor'.

Because, no matter how generous these financially independent people are, they've now reached a stage in their lives where they just can't be bothered trying to concentrate for any length of time on small print ... or hard to read print ... or cluttered print, unless they absolutely must.

You know the kind of print I mean?

Like torturous grey messages printed on a black background. Or endlessly long paragraphs typed up in line after line of sans-serif Helvetica or Arial typeface.

The secret of success with this target group is to make it as easy as possible for them to read your all-important message. Keep it plain and simple!

Write to them in a serif typeface like Times Roman. Keep your sentences short ... very short. Don't let any paragraph exceed six lines otherwise they will skip-read it.

Bear in mind that these people are at a very practical stage of their lives. So don't be afraid to tell them exactly what you want them to do. Be specific about how much money you want them to give you. **(They stopped playing 'fish' long ago.)**

Make it easy for them to respond to your appeal. Tell them precisely to whom they are to make out their cheques. Acquaint them carefully with the fact that credit card donations and Standing Orders are more than welcome.

Explain to them that their donations aren't going into an anonymous black hole. Assure them that you will personally acknowledge their contributions.

And remember, this target group was educated in the days of 'Plain English'. So don't ask them to try and 'conceptualise' anything for you or invite them to get 'motivational' or take a 'holistical' view of things and suchlike. Because they won't!

Above all, don't invite them to squeeze their name and address into an impossibly small coupon or response form. These gymnastics only irritate them. Instead...

... **THINK BIG** in everything you do.

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