

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1) Common Reasons People Don't Give.....	5
2) Core Messaging & Finding Your Why.....	7
3) Finding Common Ground.....	21
4) The Art of Storytelling.....	24
5) Choosing Powerful Words.....	33
6) Writing a Hook to Grab Attention.....	36
7) Use Framing to Enhance Your Message.....	39
8) Create Visual Images.....	42
9) Compare and Contrast.....	45
10) Show, Don't Tell.....	47
11) Craft a Memorable Tagline.....	50
12) Writing an Effective Call to Action.....	53
13) How to Leverage Emotion.....	55
14) Write an Elevator Pitch.....	57
15) Finding Your Target Audience.....	59
16) Final Tips.....	63
17) About the Author.....	66
18) Acknowledgements.....	67



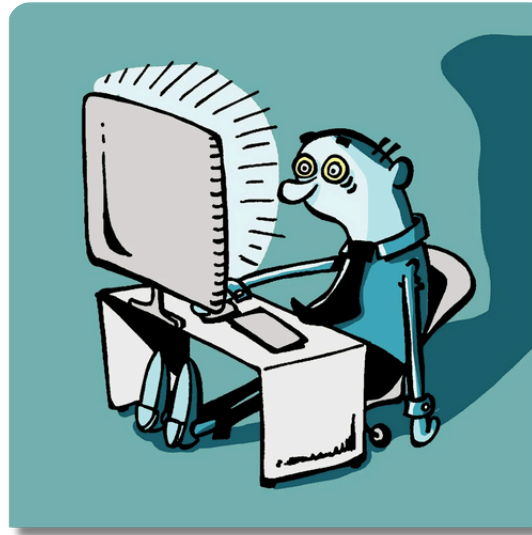


**ARE YOU READY TO MASTER WRITING
TECHNIQUES THAT WILL
UP YOUR FUNDRAISING GAME?**

If you are here, most likely you read my book “Engage Donors to Raise More Money” and would like to practice specific techniques and/or have some cheat sheets on hand to make life easier. If you haven’t read the book, never fear, this workbook will still be a valuable tool for you as you strive to write fundraising appeals, grant appeals, annual reports, press releases, and more.

The goal here is not to rehash everything that was in the original book, but rather to give you prompts, ideas, and checklists to help you put the techniques into practice. As I stated in the book, don’t try to do everything at once. It will overwhelm you. Start with one or two things, master those, and then move on.

Do you ever feel like this...



... when you sit down to write a fundraising letter, newsletter article, or grant appeal? Relax! I'm here to help. Practice the techniques in this workbook to reduce stress, regain your confidence, and position yourself for better results!

The good news is that any of the exercises you do through this workbook should leave you with workable copy you can use going forward. And I am offering some free tools, such as a Strategic Core Messaging Implementation Action Plan and review sheets on my website to help guide you as you work to transform your messaging throughout your organization. Just click on the link at the end and download whatever you think would be helpful.

I wish you happy writing and even happier results!

Lynn Bohart, FAHP





1

COMMON REASONS PEOPLE DON'T GIVE



Before you can fix anything, it's good to know what's wrong. Following are barriers that might stop someone from making a donation to your organization and what you could do about it, because each one of them can be remedied/addressed through better writing and messaging.

They don't know who you are; you aren't even on their radar.

- You can increase local name recognition through a stronger public relations effort that includes copy that catches people's attention and then outlines how you *make a difference in the world.*

They don't feel engaged with you or your cause.

- Identifying your core message and incorporating it throughout your organization will help donors and potential donors feel more engaged and sympathetic with your mission.

They don't feel that what you do is either unique or better than what anyone else does.

- Telling stories about how you're making life better for someone, how you're helping the planet, or how you're saving animals will illustrate visually and emotionally why what you do matters.

They aren't motivated enough to give; other things take priority.

- Incorporating your 'common ground emotion' into your copy and especially your call to action can definitely help motivate donors to change their priorities.

They don't know how their support will make a difference.

- If you highlight stories about how you have helped to change lives or make a difference, you 'humanize' the act of giving and help potential donors see themselves in that role.

Deploying good communications can make a big difference with all of the above.





2

CORE MESSAGING: Finding Your Why

Finding and deploying your Core Message is the key to better messaging and positioning your organization to raise more money. It means finding the *essence* of why you do what you do and leaning hard on that throughout your messaging. Remember! It's not the essence of *what* you do, but *why* you do it. What difference do you make? How do you change the world one donation at a time?

It is what potential donors are looking for. Although numbers are important, donors will be moved by the emotional difference you've made in people's lives. Even if you work towards climate change or with an animal rights group, ultimately you can bring that back to how it affects our everyday lives.

When you look for the core message, you're drawing the curtain back on the services your organization provides and shining a light on *why* the cause is important to begin with.

"The essence is one percent that gives life to the other ninety-nine percent."

--Daniel Pink, "To Sell is Human"

According to Daniel Pink, the 99% refers to what you do and how you do it. The nuts and bolts of your operations.

If 99% of what you do are the operations, ask yourself, “*What is it that gives life to that 99%?*”

Dig deep. It’s the only reason you exist.

Why is finding the essence of that story so important?

The *essence* is why people sign on to your cause. They aren’t giving you money just because you have a trained staff or house dozens of homeless families. They’re giving you money because of how you change things for the better for people.

When you write anything, your goal is to connect with your reader (otherwise, why would you write it?). It’s 100-times easier to connect to a reader using core messaging because it’s based on emotion, and humans naturally react to emotion. But if the core message isn’t effectively delivered, then it's wasted.

To be most effective, everyone within your organization must speak with one voice. If people within your organization are giving out different messages, your messaging becomes garbled and blurred. And when the message is blurred, you fail to be as effective as you could be.

Once you’ve gone through the core messaging exercises, you can download a blank core messaging template to fill out from my website.

Remember! Core messaging is not a thing; it's clarifying 'why' you do what you do, and the emotion behind that.

I used to do 4-hour workshops on finding your core message. Now, I've re-created some of the exercises here to help you go through the process on your own.

I suggest you set aside a couple of hours to meet with your key leadership so that when you're done, you can all agree on what your core messaging is and then disseminate it throughout the organization so that you speak with one voice.

I've included an example of the Core Messaging Map for Birthday Dream (an organization I work with) so you can see how it's done.

When you've filled out your Message Map, keep it handy every time you sit down to write about your organization. It will help remind you of key words and phrases you've all agreed on.

If you're not sure this will work, here's what Chris Spahn, Executive Director of Birthday Dreams, said when I asked for permission to use their Message Map in this workbook.

"Of course you can use it. I was thinking of someone today who needs to see the message map and planned to show it to her, because she's helping with social media."

It's a tool; use it.



The concept behind 'core messaging' is to focus on **why** you do what you do rather than **how** you do it. The Better Fundraising Company gave me permission to use the following graphic showing the proper relationship between talking about **how** you do what you do and **why** you do it, i.e. who or what you help.



Before you begin, review some of your past content (newsletter articles, fundraising appeals, thank you notes, annual reports) to see how well you've executed this in the past.

“People don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it.”

--Simon Sinek

As fundraisers, we’ve been taught to talk about the numbers. How many people have we helped? How many animals have we saved? How much money have we raised?

While that’s an important part of your messaging because it shows results, donors want to ‘feel’ the difference you make. And often times, fundraisers shy away from talking in terms of feelings.

But that’s what you’re going to do now. It’s time to find your core message; the essence of who you are and why you do what you do.

Grab a flip chart or a whiteboard, some notepads, and make sure everyone has water, tea, or whatever they need to keep hydrated, and let’s get started.

The best way to proceed is to have each individual answer the questions below on their own, and then record everyone’s answers on the flip chart.

Then, discuss amongst the group which answers best reflect your organization, tweaking them to fit your unique narrative.





CORE MESSAGING EXERCISE

Remember that core messaging is your DNA. It's not **who** you are or **what** you do but **the essence of WHY** you even exist. You're not there just to give out clean clothes to low-income people, but to help **restore their dignity** as they move forward in life. Yep! Clean clothes can do that.

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

1) What do you want people to know first about your organization?

a. *Do you want people to know that you help inspire girls of color to consider enrolling in STEM programs, **OR** that you help girls of color understand they have a place in a future STEM career field, which could open up a whole world for them? **Difference between what & why.***

b. Your answer:

2) What do you want people to remember about you?

a. *Do you want people to remember that you succeeded in enrolling 15 more girls in the high school STEM program, **OR** that you helped 15 girls of color realize their potential when they enrolled in a STEM program?*

b. Your answer:

CORE MESSAGING EXERCISE Continued

3) What are the main conflict(s) your organization is attempting to overcome?

a. *Racism. Bias. Misogyny. Ignorance. Bigotry.*

b. Your answer:

4) What are the consequences your clients face if you don't intercede or your mission fails?

a. The consequences are the fallout from that conflict:
these girls would feel anger at being left behind, discouragement, loss of self-esteem, frustration at not being seen for who they are, loss of their dream, even a feeling that there's no point in even trying.

b. Your answer:

5) Write out a phrase or sentence identifying the core or essence of what you do?

a. *We help low-income girls and girls of color to feel confident and empowered to believe in a future in the STEM career of their dreams.*

b. Your statement:

6) Write a tagline based on your core messaging sentence.

a. *Every girl has the potential to fly high.*

b. Your tagline:



LOOK AT CORE MESSAGING ANOTHER WAY

1) Write a list of consequences answering the question, “What difference would it make if our organization wasn’t here?”

Ex: If Birthday Dreams didn’t exist: hundreds of homeless children wouldn’t get a birthday party and would continue to feel isolated and alone; parents would feel guilty because they couldn’t provide the birthday; that birthday memory would be a painful one; everyone would feel badly that such an important milestone was missed.

2) Turn that list into statements about struggle, pain, and suffering. Hint: be prepared with a list of emotion/feeling words from the internet to help you.

Ex: If Birthday Dreams didn’t exist: over 1600 homeless children wouldn’t celebrate their birthdays each year in the Seattle area. That loss of a celebration would be added to all the other losses these children have suffered through. These children would feel different than all of their peers. They would feel more alone and forgotten than ever. This loss could add to their anger and frustration and a feeling that the world has let them down. It could even create a barrier between them and their parents and cause depression.

3) Together, craft a sentence encapsulating your essence, preserving the strongest, most impactful phrasing. Hint: don't be afraid to change words/phrasing or move things around.

Ex: Birthday Dreams exists because each child deserves to be celebrated on the day they were born, and to be reminded they are special, loved, valued, and not forgotten, regardless of their living situation.

4) Reduce that to the length of a tagline (10 words). Hint: focus on the essence of what you've written; what you believe in.

Ex: All children deserve to be celebrated on their birthdays.

5) Now, list 10 descriptive words/phrases that describe how you change people's lives for the better. You inspire joy. Revive a dream. Hint: you are alleviating the pain of something.

Ex: Birthday Dreams inspires hope, creates new memories, helps homeless children to see life through a new lens, brings a feeling of joy and a sense of renewal, reminds them they are loved and valued, creates a feeling of normalcy in the middle of chaos, and helps reduce the parent's guilt for having so few resources.



Remember that your 'why' is what makes you tick and worthy of support. It's not about what you do or how you do it, it's about *why* you do what you do.

It's the emotional difference you make. It's how you change the world for the better.

Remember what Daniel Pink said:

"The essence is the one percent that gives life to the other ninety-nine percent."



That means that who or what you benefit gives life to your organization as a whole. Right? Otherwise, you wouldn't exist.

So, go back to what you've written and be sure you have focused on the 1%.

Now, it's time to take what you've learned through the core messaging exercises and fill out your Strategic Core Messaging Map. Study the example from Birthday Dreams that follows. Then, download yours from my website, fill it out and make copies, maybe laminate it, and give it to all of your key people.



STRATEGIC CORE MESSAGING MAP

Birthday Dreams

Organizational Vision

We envision a community where every child is celebrated on his/her birthday.

Mission

Birthday Dreams brings joy and a sense of self-worth to homeless children with the gift of a complete and custom-made birthday party.

Core Belief Statement

Every child deserves to feel valued on their birthday. For all children, a birthday party is the celebration of his/her entry into the world, giving them a sense of worthiness and purpose.

Tagline

We bring birthday smiles to homeless children.

Website Taglines

- We celebrate them. (tagline laid over photos of children)
- Every child deserves to be celebrated on their birthday. (second landing page)

STRATEGIC CORE MESSAGING MAP

Birthday Dreams

Key Messages

- Being homeless shouldn't mean you don't matter – especially on your birthday.
- No child should feel alone and forgotten, especially on their birthday.
- We provide more than just a birthday party, we help to create a new, positive memory.
- A birthday party isn't just another day to a homeless child – it's everything!

Potential Headlines

- Imagine a child alone and feeling forgotten on their birthday.
- We touch young, traumatized lives, one birthday at a time.
- Every homeless child deserves to celebrate the day they were born.
- We lift the spirits of homeless children with the gift of a birthday party.

Position Statement

(How you're different from other nonprofits that do something similar.)

Birthday Dreams is the only nonprofit organization in the Puget Sound area dedicated to celebrating the lives of homeless children with the gift of a birthday party.

STRATEGIC CORE MESSAGING MAP

Birthday Dreams

Goals

- To make the child feel...validated, special, and normal
- To make the parents feel...like they're not alone and less guilty for having lost their home.
- To make the donors feel...like the hero.
- To make the volunteers feel...like Santa's elves.

Elevator Speech

When resources are limited, we bring the gift of a custom-made birthday party to homeless children in the Puget Sound area, because we believe that every child should feel valued and celebrated on their birthday.

The Consequences Our Program Addresses

A CHILD'S ...

- Lack of self-worth
- Feelings of anger, shame, loneliness, isolation, helpless
- Feelings of being forgotten, being embarrassed and alone
- Jealous of other kids
- Feeling like they don't matter

STRATEGIC CORE MESSAGING MAP

Birthday Dreams

Services We Offer to Address the Issues

We provide a complete and custom party catered to each child by theme, which allows the parent to be the hero again. The parties allow each child to be the center of attention, reminds them they haven't been forgotten, allows them to see life through a more positive lens, and gives them hope for a better tomorrow.

Specific/Applied Products or Services

Personalized cake, punch, themed paper goods, paper goods, wrapped presents, gift bags and games. We make sure the child knows the party was created just for them and deliver it to the parents, so the parent can be the one to stage the party.

Calls to Action

- Your gift of ____ could bring a genuine birthday smile to a homeless child.
- Your gift of ____ will help provide all that's needed to make a homeless child feel special and remembered on their birthday.
- Give your gift today and make a child who has lost almost everything feel like their community hasn't forgotten them.

*My thanks to Birthday Dreams for permission to use their message map.



3

FINDING COMMON GROUND

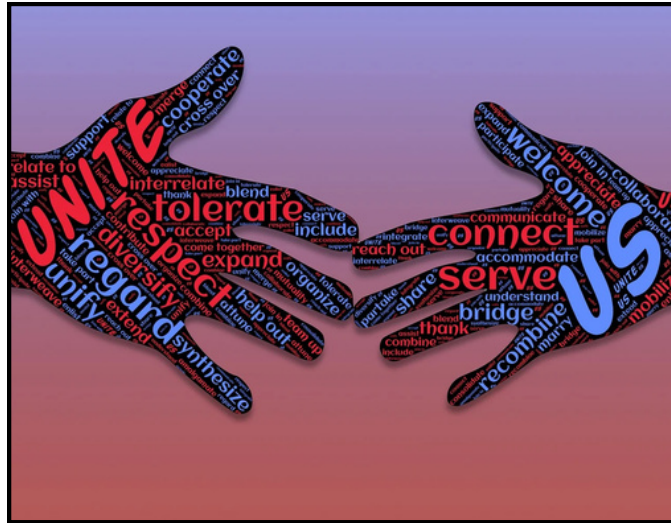
I talked at length in the book about finding common ground with your donors and potential donors. The concept is that 90% of your audience will not only understand but most likely empathize with your common ground ‘emotion,’ because they have felt it themselves at some point in their lives.

I used the example in the book of a mother telling a luncheon crowd the story of her learning-disabled child being invited to a birthday party for the very first time. She was in tears when she told the story, and there were audible gasps in the room. Why? Because most of us knew what it felt like to be left out. And the emotion is strong--especially if it's your child.

For me, that experience prompted me to double the gift I was set to make when I arrived at the luncheon that day.

What's the pain (feeling) of being left out? Sadness. Isolation. Lack of self-esteem. Feeling different, inadequate, and diminished as a human being.

That common feeling or emotion becomes your secret sauce. And when you sit down to write a fundraising appeal or even a newsletter article, DO NOT lead with what you want people to know but rather what **you want them to feel**. Reach for your secret sauce -- the feeling or emotion that people share, and then show how you eliminate the pain of that emotion.



Here are some secret sauce examples:

- **Are you restoring someone's dignity?** Because the feeling of personal dignity gives you confidence and motivation to move forward in life.
- **Are you making someone feel safe and secure?** We all understand the sharpness of feeling fear or a lack of safety.
- **Are you restoring a child's self-esteem?** Every person wants to feel respected and valued. Without it, we feel diminished.
- **Are you giving someone peace of mind?** Peace of mind is essential for a fully realized life. When we lose it, our lives can become chaotic and fearful.





COMMON GROUND EXERCISE

- 1) Go back to the core messaging exercise and pull out your list of ‘pain point’ words or phrases from question #5. Talk with your team about which one(s) you feel would resonate the most with the broadest number of people.
- 2) Now, talk about how your organization reduces or eliminates that pain and then brings what to the table? Joy. Hope. Security. Enlightenment. Inspiration. You reignite people’s dreams.

Ex: For Birthday Dreams, the common pain points a homeless child feels when they are NOT celebrated on their birthday are things like the loss of self-esteem, feelings of anger and shame, feeling left out and isolated.

When Birthday Dreams provides the all-important birthday party in the face of all that loss, they help that child to feel hope, joy, and as if they are loved and valued. Once you find your common emotion, don’t be afraid to lean into it.

**Go
from
this -**



**To
this -**





4

THE ART OF STORYTELLING



I'm sure you've heard it said that our brains are wired for stories. In fact, humans have used storytelling to teach important life lessons and pass information from generation to generation for thousands of years.

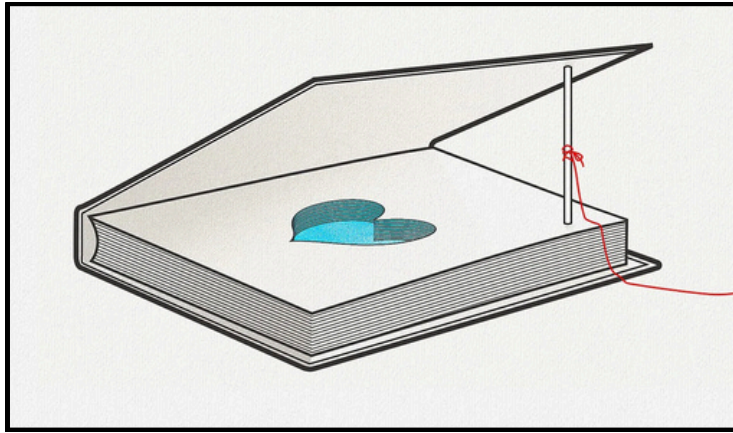
Stories create images in our minds. Those images create emotion. And it's the emotion that imprints the story in our brain.

GOOD storytelling, however, is more than a recitation of events or facts. If you want readers to have a visceral reaction to what you write and then act in some way (donate, volunteers), you need to engage them with the story.

Just as understanding the difference between annual, major, and planned giving is important, knowing how to use a story effectively is important. It is a tool that, when deployed effectively, can help you raise more money.

Consider the benefits.

- Stories grab people's attention more than a recitation of what you do and how great you are.
- A story can help to refocus the reader's attention when attention begins to fade.
- Stories make connections in our brains in a way that can influence decisions.
- Stories help you frame your nonprofit in a way to seem more appealing.
- Stories can help create a connection with the audience where there wasn't one before.
- Stories make people think differently about a subject because stories help them visualize it.
- Stories influence people's opinions because stories feel more authentic and have a higher trust value.
- And most importantly, stories can help to overcome someone's objections and inspire them to act.



STORYTELLING COMPONENTS

Nonprofits tell stories about their volunteers, the people they help, their donors, even their board members. Consider the following as you begin a story specifically about who you serve:

Who is your main character (MC)? Is it the child struggling to learn. The teen living on the streets. The veteran who suffers from PTSD.

What is the conflict he/she faces? A complex mental health system. A lack of education and an inability to get a job. Mental health or addiction issues.

What are the consequences? A child's feeling of abandonment. The predators your MC faces on the street. The depression, fear, or shame your MC feels as a result of being sex trafficked.

Who is the hero in your story? The programs your organization offers. Your amazing staff. The teacher who nurtures a struggling student. A particular volunteer.

How will you help your MC define success? Building the skills necessary to rise above their trauma. Giving them back their dignity. Giving them the tools they need to get a job and chart a new path forward. Restoring a feeling of hope.

Where will your story begin? At the trigger moment when their world falls apart, or while they are in the midst of their struggles? It can even begin once they've safely come through their pain and can look back with a feeling of satisfaction.

What kinds of feelings do you want your reader to feel after reading the story? Empathy for your main character. Disgust at those who have treated your MC badly. Inspiration at seeing how your MC has turned their life around. The need to help others like your MC.



STORY EXAMPLE



Stasis: Tina is a twelve-year-old girl who excelled at art and hoped one day to become a graphic designer.

Trigger: Last spring, her dad left her mom because her mom used drugs. Her mom didn't work and hadn't had a job since she was a teenager.

Complications: Tina and her mom were forced out of their home, and Tina lost all her favorite possessions, including her art supplies and even their dog, Lucy.

Tina's mom tried hard to find a job, but she hadn't graduated from high school and had no training. She cried a lot and yelled at Tina, making Tina think everything was her fault.

Tina's world was turned upside down as they first moved in with their grandparents and then to a cousins' house, before finally having to live in their car. Tina had nightmares, because there were all sorts of strange noises and strange people hanging around. The only way she could study was by using a flashlight, and they had to use the park bathroom to bathe and brush their teeth. Eventually, they lost their car and had to live on the street or in a shelter.

Consequences: Tina felt trapped in a world she didn't understand. Kids made fun of her when she went to school in dirty clothes. Teachers got mad when she hadn't finished her homework. Her grades plummeted, and she lost friends. She ended up feeling lonely, ashamed, and desperate.

Turning point: A lady told Tina's mom about Vision House, and they were given a safe place to live. Tina was thrilled to once again have her own bed in her own bedroom, and she could take a shower and brush her teeth like a normal person. She even had a place to study.

Resolution: Tina's grades improved rapidly. She even got honorable mention in the school science fair. Best of all, the people at Vision House connected her mom with recovery support, provided a drug and alcohol-free environment, and helped her find a training program that could give her the skills to land a job. Tina says, "I'm so proud of my mom, and now she smiles all the time."

Bingo! You have now made something that sounded impossible to Tina's mom--possible. You're the hero!



***Thanks to Vision House, a great transitional housing program in the Seattle area, for allowing me to use them as an example.**

WHERE TO BEGIN A STORY

Where you begin a story is not the same as ‘how’ you begin it. We’ll discuss that later.

Where you begin a story has to do with the way in which you tell the story, i.e. in real time, through flashbacks, projecting forward, etc. Following is a story I used in the book that you might see in an organization’s newsletter:

Martha and her four-year-old daughter have lived on the streets of Seattle for over twelve months. Living on the street was tough, as Martha watched her daughter cry from hunger pains, and she struggled to navigate a complex system to find housing, food, and clean clothes. It was hard to remain positive, and she often broke down and cried herself to sleep.

Thankfully, Agency X was there to help. Today, Martha and her daughter live in one of our safe and clean transitional housing units. Her daughter is in daycare, and Martha has enrolled in our Life Skills class, bringing her one step closer to having a better future. According to Martha, “I now see sunshine instead of constant rain, and I think I’m going to make it.”



Here are four different ways to open that same story:

- 1)** Start that story with what a great life Martha had *before* her husband divorced her, leaving her broke and alone. That would have been a nice contrast and created sympathy for her.
- 2)** Start the story at the point the processors showed up with the eviction notice. That would have helped to put us in her shoes, feeling her abject fear as her life is torn away, and she is now faced with living on the street.
- 3)** Begin the story with a scary incident when she and her daughter are living at a shelter, showing how vulnerable they both are.
- 4)** Lastly, we could have started the story after she had been off the street for a year or two, had a steady job, and enrolled to get her GED. That could have grounded us in the feeling of the good things yet to come.

Whether your story is about a client's success, a donor, a board member, or a volunteer, before you begin, ask yourself these questions:

- What point are you trying to make?
- What do you want your audience to 'feel' because of the story?
- What do you want them to do once the story is over?

Then, ask yourself:

- What is the best way to achieve my goals?
- How can I evoke the most emotion?
- How can I inspire action?

Finally, go back to the different ways I began Martha's story above and decide which one you might use, or create a new way of your own.



KEY WORDS



5

CHOOSING POWERFUL WORDS

Word choice is always important in writing, because it can transform your writing from merely being competent to memorable. I gave the following examples in the book of how I changed a perfectly good sentence into something more meaningful by just adding or changing words.

Original sentence:

Nancy is a single mom who became homeless when she left her abusive husband of fourteen years and moved into the Hope for Tomorrow Shelter.

Revised sentence:

Nancy is a single mom who became homeless when she **fled** her abusive husband of fourteen years and took **refuge** with Hope for Tomorrow Shelter.

By changing only two words in that sentence, we suddenly feel as if Nancy was in imminent danger and the shelter saved her.



KEY WORDS EXERCISE

Rewrite the following sentences by adding or changing words or short phrases, or moving phrases around. Focus on feelings as much as possible.

- 1) John spent six years in the military, leaving with commendations. Now he's having nightmares, getting up in the middle of the night, and distancing himself from his family.
- 2) Jeanine was a drug addict and lived on the street for over eighteen months, always looking for her next fix. She'd lost her daughter to Child Protective Services and was estranged from her family. She had nowhere to turn.
- 3) Everyday, Alma had to walk six miles to the nearest water hole to fill a bucket and carry it back to her family to have clean water to drink. The trip was long and exhausting, and she was beginning to feel the aches and pains in her body.
- 4) Patsy sat alone in her bedroom on a hot summer day, wondering what she could do to entertain herself. She remembered all the books she liked to read at school, but the school was closed for the summer.
- 5) George is a retired engineer and has volunteered for the museum for several years. He comes twice a week to work at the front desk. George's favorite volunteer task, though, is fixing little things around the museum.



6

WRITING A HOOK TO GRAB ATTENTION

If you want people to read what you've written, a good way is to grab their attention. It's the difference between, "After leaving the Army, Robert suffered from PTSD for six years..." and "Did you know that an estimated 22 veterans commit suicide each day in this country?" Which one would catch your attention most?

Here, the question grabs attention, especially with such a big number attached.

This is what we call a hook. A hook is the opening sentence or short paragraph that grabs your reader's attention and draws them in when you're writing any sort of narrative. It could be a short story about a volunteer, a thank you letter, even a fundraising appeal. The goal is to make sure the reader doesn't just read the headline and move on to the next page.

Here are some examples:

A statement of simple but emotional fact.

- There are over 650,000 homeless people in America, and thousands of those are children.
- Children account for half of the victims of human trafficking, and the average age is 12.

A statement to establish mood.

- Imagine a dark alley, the smell of urine, and a dirty sleeping bag—the place you call home.
- Kids who can't read suffer from far more than an inability to decipher a page; they are often ridiculed and bullied and made to feel like they don't matter.

A statement that serves as a frame.

- Opening: Every homeless child has a story to tell. Closing: Help us give this story a happy ending. (closing)

A question.

- What's the difference between a child who sits alert and ready to learn in class and one who doesn't? A bed and a hot meal.
- Did you know that homicide is one of the highest causes of pregnancy-related deaths for women?

A quote.

- “Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.” --Malala Yousafzai, Co-founder of Malala Fund

***“If you want to catch more fish,
use more hooks.”***

--George Allen , Sr.





HOOK EXERCISE SHEET

Craft hooks for your organization using each of the following prompts.

A question:

- 1)
- 2)

A statement of fact:

- 1)
- 2)

A statement that creates a mood:

- 1)
- 2)

Opening and closing statement that serve as a frame:

- 1) Opening
- 2) Closing

A short paragraph that might open a fundraising letter or the About You page on your website.



7

USE FRAMING TO ENHANCE YOUR MESSAGE

The concept of framing more involves beginning and ending a written piece with the same overarching theme or thought. Like a frame, this technique sets off your theme (love, security, isolation, grace, forgiveness) in a way that makes a statement, punches the ending, or helps your reader to feel something, which makes the piece more memorable.

My thanks to the Methodist Children's Homes of Mississippi for giving me permission to offer the following example we used in a fundraising appeal.

Sometimes, kids just need to spread their wings and fly.

Opening: Children trapped in foster care or the juvenile justice system don't have the same opportunities you and I may take for granted. That could be going to a theme park, a high school football game, or even a museum. Instead, most of these kids have only known emotional pain, restriction, and disciplinary action.

Closing: Make your gift today so that we can help create lasting memories, while also teaching these kids the skills they need to be a functioning part of the world around them. Together, we can help them spread their wings and fly.

Do you see the symmetry in that, from the tagline to the last sentence? And how it can emphasize a theme or point you're trying to make? Here's an example using a holiday for a donor thank you letter.

Dear:

February is the month of Valentines and telling others how much they mean to you. We would like to use this opportunity to tell you how much your donation means to us.

Closing:

Your donation of \$__ is like the greatest Valentine in the world to our kids. It's a message that says we love you just the way you are. Remember what Leo Tolstoy said, "When you love someone, you love the whole person as he or she is, and not as you would like them to be."

Thank you for being a Valentine for our kids.

Again, the repetition of the theme emphasizes your point. Practice with the following exercise.





FRAMING EXERCISE

- 1)** Write two paragraphs (opening and closing) of a thank you letter using a month of the year as your theme.

- 2)** Find or create a memorable or inspirational tagline to open a fundraising appeal for your organization and use that to write the opening and closing paragraphs.

- 3)** Use an animal attribute (the flight of an eagle/strength of a bear) to frame an opening and closing paragraph for a newsletter article about the success of a client or volunteer.

- 4)** Find a quote about dedication and use that as the opening for a newsletter article about a volunteer and close the article referring back to the opening quote.



8

CREATE VISUAL IMAGES

Creating visual images in the reader's mind helps them to be more engaged with your writing and to remember better what they've read. Novelists do this all the time. So do advertisers. This may take a little practice because it delves into the area of creative writing. But no one expects you to be Ernest Hemingway. In the beginning, keep it simple. To create visual images:

1) Use descriptive words, similes, and metaphors.

Ex: Many of our women have come to us from the depths of darkness. They've been forced to live on the street, trapped in abusive relationships, or sexually abused, and they've finally bottomed out in their personal lives. In short, the light in their lives has been extinguished, leaving them enslaved by a new master—desperation.

Ex: Emily has been with us for six months now, and her face shines with new hope.



2) Use the five senses (smell, taste, touch, sight, sound) to help your reader visualize what you're talking about.

Ex: People forced to live in squalor learn to ignore the grit of food picked up off the street or the offensive odor of unwashed bodies, feces, and rotting food. Gone are the days of gazing at the stars through clear eyes, when their eyes have been blurred by alcohol, loneliness, and despondency.

Ex: Scout was a skinny little dachshund we picked up behind a restaurant. His fur was oily to the touch, and he smelled like the inside of a dumpster. Today, his fur is as smooth as silk, and he smells like lavender, his new owner's favorite perfume. An excessive amount of hugs will do that.





VISUAL IMAGE EXERCISE

- 1)** First, you need to visualize the image you hope to illustrate to your readers yourself. If you need help, go to a place like Pixabay and look at pictures of people, animals, or the planet in distress.

- 2)** Grab a list of descriptive words off the internet and keep them handy.

- 3)** Decide in advance what you're trying to accomplish. Do you want the reader to feel the pain/joy your client feels? Understand better the world they live in? Or see the barriers your clients face?

- 4)** Write your paragraph first without attempting to make it descriptive. Then, go back and add words or phrases that bring it to life.

- 5)** Lastly, have someone else read it, and ask them if you succeeded in creating a visual image they could picture in their mind.



9

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

This style of writing compares two or more elements of a specific subject before and after to make a point. The elements being analyzed should be connected in a meaningful way and make a statement about your mission that is easily recognizable. You can do this with a photo and adding a tagline to drive the point home.

At Mercy House, we make the rain stop.



You can also do it through narrative.

At Methodist Children's Homes of Mississippi, we make magic happen. We take kids whose entire lives have been filled with tragedy, abuse, and neglect and help turn them into young adults, infused with the spirit of hope and the coping skills they need to move forward in a positive way.



In the nonprofit world, you are generally comparing the before and after. You're showing people how you're making a difference.



COMPARE AND CONTRAST EXERCISE

Identify three specific ways in which you could compare and contrast the difference you make.

1)

2)

3)





10

SHOW, DON'T TELL

All novelists are schooled in the concept of ‘show, don’t tell.’ It’s the concept of drawing the reader into the story rather than merely telling them what you want them to know. It engages the reader. When you merely tell someone something, they don’t internalize the information. And because you haven’t created a visual image, they don’t feel anything. If you’re going to ask for money, you’d better make them feel something.

**“Don't tell me the moon is shining;
show me the glint of light on broken glass.”
— Anton Chekhov**



Here are a few examples of how best to deploy “Show, don’t tell.” In these examples, we are an addiction recovery organization, and Jasmin is our newest client.

1) Use the five senses (sight, touch, smell, taste, sight):

- a. Living on the street, the odor in the alley was so bad that Jasmin could almost taste the decaying food and garbage.
- b. When Jasmin got clean, you could feel her joy, because her eyes glowed, and her smile lit up the room.

2) Use dialogue:

- a. “When I first met Jasmin, she was so thin that a breeze could have blown her away.”
- b. “When I was on drugs, I only saw darkness,” Jasmin said. “Each day felt like I was walking on pins and needles, because my body screamed for a fix.”

3) Use similes and metaphors:

- a. Jasmin felt trapped in a bubble of recurring thoughts; make money, get a fix, sleep, and then start all over again.
- b. Today, Jasmin feels like she’s living on a cloud; instead of darkness, she sees the light of hope.





SHOW, DON'T TELL EXERCISE

Rewrite the following sentences as if you were describing something for a newsletter article. Your goal is to show us what you're talking about rather than merely telling us what to see.

- 1)** Our community garden is filled with rows upon rows of healthy lettuce, radishes, cucumbers, and carrots, ready for picking.
- 2)** When infant mortality rates soar, so do the women's fear and anxiety within the village.
- 3)** Children who can't read feel different than their peers and often suffer from depression.
- 4)** Seniors like to stay independent as long as possible. But when they live alone, they are susceptible to loneliness, depression, falls, and poor nutrition.
- 5)** Colby's mother went to jail on drug charges when she was six years old, putting Colby into foster care. Since then, Colby has been relocated eleven times. By the time she came to Mercy House, she was angry and depressed and kept trying to run away.



11

CRAFT A MEMORABLE TAGLINE

Effective branding is a necessary evil for every nonprofit. It helps to define who you are and what you achieve and then emblazons that onto the hearts and minds of clients, donors, and volunteers.

The tagline is the briefest and quickest way to communicate your brand. Besides your logo, it is probably the most frequently used statement about your organization and used on your website, in brochures, blog posts, newsletters, and on social media.

According to The Editors, “When your tagline works, it has the potential to become a perennial icon of your organization, lifting your brand from the commonplace to the unforgettable. Think **‘A mind is a terrible thing to waste’** from the United Negro College Fund.

Be thoughtful and strategic in creating your tagline. It should frame the passion behind your organization. Above all, if possible, it should be inextricably linked to your name.

BUT BEWARE! There is a difference between what you do and what you accomplish. Focus on the difference you make. It’s the only thing people care about.

ELEMENTS OF A GOOD TAGLINE

- Short & specific (8 words or less)
- Complement your name
- Action oriented
- Speaks to the ‘essence’ of what you do and/or the value of your organization
- Unique to your organization & should be able to live on its own.
- Unexpected in its imagery

To write a good tagline, focus on your core message (the essence of what you do) and strive to include an emotional hook. Taglines are meant to snap a reader to attention, so don't be coy.

Homeboy Industries – “Nothing Stops a Bullet Like a Job.”

EarthJustice – “Because the Earth Needs a Good Lawyer”

Oregon Center for Public Policy – “Because Facts Matter”

Arts & Culture / NYC Theatre Spaces – Where Actors Find Their Space





CRAFT A TAGLINE EXERCISE

Take a stab at developing a tagline for each of the below in no more than 10 words. It doesn't have to be a complete sentence, and remember to focus on your core message, emotion, and something that will snap people to attention.

Write it as a question.

Ex: What if every child had a place to live?

Statement of fact.

Ex: Every teen should feel important.

Begin with the word *because*.

Ex: Because people with a disability shouldn't have to live in shame.

Begin with the word *even*.

Ex: Even homeless children deserve to celebrate a birthday.

Evoke emotion.

Ex: Seniors should be allowed to age safely and gracefully.

A declarative statement.

Ex: Clean water=life.



12

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE CALL TO ACTION



The call to action (CTA) is the last sentence or short paragraph of your appeal, and it is important to focus here on the benefits of what you do and not the organization's needs. In other words, don't say, "With your gift, we'll be able to expand our space." That's what *your* need is, not your client's. Instead, express the benefit that more space equals helping more people or changing more lives.

- Use active verbs/sentences & be concise
- Generate emotion
- Show urgency
- Talk about needs in terms of who/what you benefit

Ex: Make your gift today and help put food on the table for the 5,000 homeless people in our area.

Ex: Make your gift now and join our team to inspire a whole new generation of artists.



CALL TO ACTION (CTAs) EXERCISE

Write out 3 different CTAs that you can use in upcoming written pieces:

1)

2)

3)





13

HOW TO LEVERAGE EMOTION

To raise more money, you need to motivate people to act. To do that, it's important to engage them in a way that will show them why they should care about what you do.

And the best way to accomplish that is to incorporate emotion into your writing. Your goal is to create a sense of empathy for whomever or whatever you serve. When you use emotion, you'll paint whoever you help as being vulnerable. And when someone is vulnerable, someone else feels motivated to step up to lend a hand.

How do you incorporate emotion?

- Focus first and foremost on whatever or whoever you are helping and not on the mechanics of how you're helping them.
- Zero in on their fears, wants, needs, and desires. Or on the consequences of doing nothing.
- Describe 'how' the individual will be impacted emotionally. (Remember... your goal is to alleviate pain. How do they feel once the pain is gone? What does it mean to them?)

- Show your donors how circumstances have impacted the people you serve and the pain they went through before you arrived on the scene. Use impactful words, phrases, and images. (Remember ‘show, don’t tell.’)”
- Make people and situations as real as possible through storytelling.
- Engage your reader and don’t talk at them.
- Put the reader ‘into’ the situation by creating visual images.



Here’s a group of ‘feeling’ words listed under the heading of **ANGER** according to Centervention (feel free to Google them). You can see that you have a huge variety from which to choose.

- **Disgust:** Contempt, disgust, revulsion
- **Envy:** Envy, jealousy
- **Exasperation:** Exasperation, frustration
- **Irritation:** Aggravation, agitation, annoyance, grouchiness, grumpiness, irritation
- **Rage:** Anger, bitterness, dislike, ferocity, fury, hate, hostility, loathing, outrage, rage, resentment, scorn, spite, vengefulness, wrath
- **Torment:** Torment





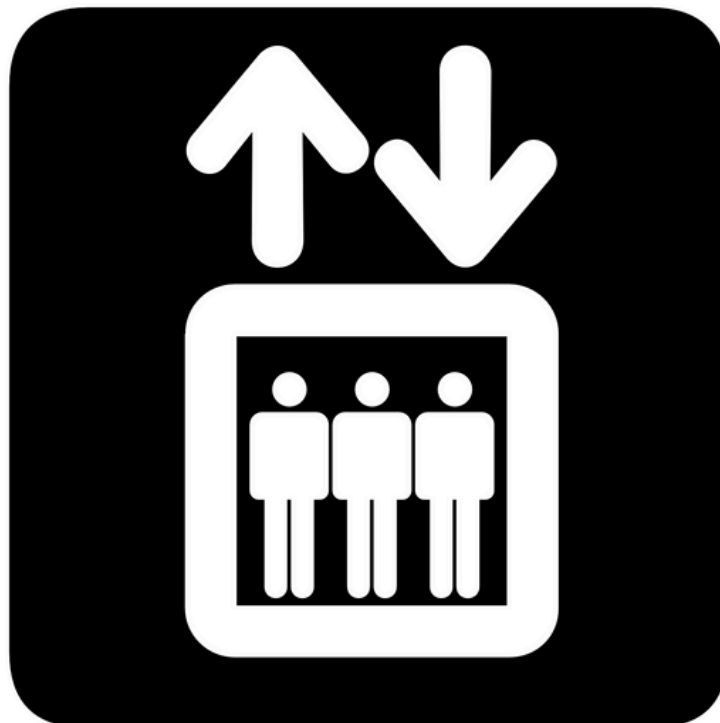
14

WRITE AN ELEVATOR PITCH

All nonprofit professionals need a short, concise, and compelling pitch to quickly explain who they are and how their organization helps others. Typically, your elevator pitch should last no more than 30 seconds, or the time it takes to ride from one floor to another with someone in an elevator.

Choose your message carefully. Eliminate all unnecessary words and focus on how you provide solutions.

Imagine someone asks you in passing: “What does your organization do?” Craft your answer below.





WRITE YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH

- 1) Lead-in (Quickly tell them your name or the name of your organization and not just what you do, but the problems you solve). Ex: *I'm the founder of Girls Light Our Way, and we provide tools and experiences for low-income girls and girls of color to become great women and productive citizens.***
- 2) What value do you provide? Talk about solutions. Let your listener know up front why someone should care about what you do. Ex: *"We give girls the tools they need to create a pathway out of poverty and to launch them upward to social and economic success."***
- 3) Include a call to action (CTA): Have your card available and finish with something like: Ex: *"Here's my card. I'd love to chat with you about how you might partner with us to help more girls become contributing members of their community."***



*Thanks to Dawn Jeffries, Ph.D., Founder/Executive Director for GLOW for allowing me to use her great organization as an example.



WRITE YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH EXERCISE

- 1)** Lead-in: (Quickly tell them your name or the name of your organization and not just what you do, but the problems you solve.)

- 2)** What value do you provide? Talk about solutions. Let your listener know up front why someone should care about what you do.

- 3)** Include a call to action (CTA):



15

FINDING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Most nonprofits have more than one target audience because they have existing stakeholders and a list of potential donors.

The challenge is to focus the right message to the right audience. For instance, using a highly emotional client story to ask staff members to donate might be wasted. After all, they're already fully aware of the work you do. The appropriate message for them might be more along the lines of playing to their organizational loyalty, deep knowledge of why you need the money, or the need for the internal family to give first.

When nonprofits disburse the same basic message to everyone – “Come to our auction.” “Support our cause.” “Volunteer with us.”—the result is the same. The message will only motivate a small percentage of the people it reaches.

Let's face it, how often have you grabbed your checkbook and written a check in response to a generic solicitation from an organization you've never heard of?

The challenge is to identify who your audience is and then what the best methods are to reach them and solidify a bond.





BREAKDOWN OF AUDIENCES

- 1) Natural Stakeholders** (patients, clients, students, service consumers) – these people tend to benefit from your cause directly. Who are your natural constituencies and how do you communicate with them? Newsletter. Memos. Social media. In person contact.

- 2) Agency Stakeholders** (board members, staff, volunteers, service providers, donors) – these people are connected to you by choice and the best target for donations. What forms of direct communications do you use on a regular basis to steward their loyalty? How do you solicit their support?

- 3) Peripheral Audience** (friends of board members, neighbors, vendors) – this includes anyone who is on the periphery and may support your cause because of an association with someone in either the natural or institutional stakeholder categories. How could you reach out to prospective volunteers, board members, and donors to build a relationship? Facility tours. Newsletter. Events. Small informational get-togethers. What's the best way to solicit them for support?

4) Global Audience – This is basically the rest of the world.

People in the category may be aware of you but have never attended an event or given anything to you. It also includes people who have never even heard of you. The biggest difference is that they may or may not be sympathetic to your cause. Many foundations fall into this category. How do you communicate with them to crack that barrier? Press releases. Public events. Media coverage. Social media. Grant appeals.

It's important to be aware of any challenges you might face with regards to reaching and/or motivating your target audiences, and to mitigate the challenge in advance if possible

- Language barrier
- Educational barrier
- Cultural or religious barrier
- Lack of available resources (time, money, personnel)
- Lack of available skills (writing, graphics, technological)
- Other

Deploying your ‘common ground’ emotion is especially important when attempting to appeal to a target audience that is not connected to you in some way (agency or peripheral audiences).





LET'S CLARIFY YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Natural Stakeholders:

Agency Stakeholders:

Peripheral Audience:

Global Audience: Here is where you should find ways to filter the general masses down to actual target audiences. Try to identify something they might have in common with you, such as people who have a college degree, veterans, people living in a certain area, seniors, teachers, people who love animals or the arts, etc.





FINAL TIPS

- 1) To be successful in changing your messaging, you will need to change the way you think about messaging. Your goal is to engage and/or connect with your audience and not merely to inform them about your organization.
- 2) Before you write anything, stop and ask yourself:
 - Who is my target audience?
 - What do I hope they will feel at the end of this?
 - What do I want them to do as a result?
- 3) Find the emotional common ground to draw your readers in to make them feel something.
- 4) Create powerful visual images. Visual images not only catch a reader's attention but are more memorable.
- 5) Whenever possible, use the word 'you' when talking to donors. You helped fourteen kids graduate. Your gift helped fourteen kids graduate. Because of donors like you, fourteen kids graduated.





- 6)** Make your donors feel part of your ‘family’ of donors or your ‘partner’ in changing lives and that you are working together to make good things happen.

- 7)** Take the time to make whatever you write authentic and real. Explore the pain. Find the pleasure. And don’t forget... show, don’t tell.

- 8)** Don’t get tangled up in industry jargon. The only place it might be necessary is in a government grant appeal.

Lastly, make core messaging a priority every day. It really will help to transform your writing AND help you connect better with donors and potential donors.

CONGRATULATIONS! You did it! You’ve mastered new skills and are on your way toward writing your way to success!





Thank you so much.

I hope I've offered new techniques to put into practice as you strive to help your organization shine and do good for your community.

Please visit my website at **www.lildogcommunications.com** for free writing tools (cheat sheets, worksheets, and checklists). If you'd like to contact me for information on how we could work together, you can contact me through my website or email me.

You may also go to Amazon.com to buy the original book "Engage Donors to Raise More Money," which will give you a deeper dive into everything discussed here.

I wish you the best of luck in your endeavors. And please reach out if you have questions.

Lynn Bohart, FAHP
Lildog67@icloud.com





ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ms. Bohart worked for 35+ years in the nonprofit world, first as a development director for the Mental Health Association in Los Angeles County and then for the Northern California Transplant Bank. She moved on to serve as the executive director for three different hospital foundations, earning her Fellows certification in the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, ending her career as the Executive Director of the Renton Regional Community Foundation.

After retiring, she launched her own freelance writing company—Lil Dog Communications—and now writes for clients all over the world. She holds a master’s degree in theater, has taught “Crafting the Story” through Green River College for 10+ years, and has written for both Patch.com and the Renton Reporter.

Currently, she has over a dozen books on Amazon (paranormal mystery novels, short story books, and nonfiction books). She has also launched a bi-monthly newsletter called “Let’s Talk About Murder,” which you can sign up for free on her website at www.lynnbohart-author.com.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GLOW

Birthday Dreams

The Better Fundraising Company

Jayne/Dakoda

[Link to original book](#)