

Newsletters

Why most drive donors away —
and some succeed wildly

Tom Ahern

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Your *alumni* magazine
is NOT
your *donor* newsletter.

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3

My alumni magazine feeds me a
steady diet of people who are
richer, younger, better looking,
and have achieved more in life.

Thanks?

TOM AHERN © 2013

4

Remembering a 2011

Broadsheet

Remembering a 2011

What do you do after you've done the impossible?
Do it with less.

The Porsche Panamera was the first vehicle to combine that rare blend of driving dynamics with an ultra-luxury interior and amenities. A real breakthrough for the brand. But for Porsche, it was just the start. Introducing the Panamera S Hybrid. Despite an inherent trade-off, a new breed of super sports car was born, with an electric motor for low fuel consumption and 40-60 mpg in U.S. units. (EPA estimates based on testing.) Porsche. There is no substitute.

www.broadsheetmagazine.com

POURCHER
PANTHERONIC

POESCHE

Porsche ads?



2005 Honda Civic on its second engine



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I am poorly
stewarded ... and yet

© Tom Ahern | © 2013

8

And yet ...
I am a major donor.

Understand...
you ARE an intrusion.
No matter what...

Thousands of messages.
Three piles.

1. Can't ignore.
2. Can safely ignore.
3. A bit interested.

© Tom Ahern 2013

11

Beginning
of mail



Elapsed time:
1-3 seconds

End of mail

© Tom Ahern 2013

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The virtuous circle...

Appeals, thanks, & newsletters work together.

You ask. You thank. You report.

You ask. You thank. You report.

You ask. You thank. You report.

Actually...

You ask (and flatter).

You thank (and flatter).

You report (and flatter).

You cannot flatter too much.

“Even when people perceive that flattery is insincere, that flattery can still leave a lasting and positive impression of the flatterer.”

Source: Neuromarketing blog

Anatomy of a failed front page...

(When your worst instincts take over.)

30 people might have felt good about this page (plus the insiders, because they threw a well-attended shindig)

EXCLUDES everyone but attendees

“Case closed” headline

Memorial Foundation • Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital Foundation

CHRONICLE

WINTER 2010

AN INVITATION TO INVEST IN YOUR HEALTHCARE

Fairy Tale Ball Raises \$270,000 for Children and Families at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital

It was an unforgettable action-packed, two-day event filled with entertainment, golf, a gala and poignant moments of reflection as more than 150 guests danced the night away to classic rock's biggest names, including U2, the Grateful Dead, and the Who. The 7th Annual Fairy Tale Ball "Midas," presented by the Diamond Family Fund, was held and sponsored in part by the Weston Imperial Resort and Spa.

Guests enjoyed the facilities which ultimately help the better members of our community. The impact of the Fairy Tale Ball was brought clearly to home as attendees heard the story of this year's autoimmune Maggie, a healthy eight-year-old who weighed only 11 pounds at birth.

The majority of funds raised will support the new neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, a state-of-the-art 64 bed facility that cares for South Florida's most acutely ill newborn babies made possible by The Diamond Foundation. Over \$75,000 of the evening's proceeds will support the Diamond Family Fund, which provides families of children with life-threatening conditions being treated at the hospital, with emergency financial support for non-medical expenses.

During its seven years, the Fairy Tale Ball has raised nearly \$2 million.

"When we conceptualized this event, we chose to call it the Fairy Tale Ball and use a different fairy tale as the theme for each year," said Michele Formisano, who along with Wendy Palmer, co-chaired this year's gala. "We were excited to have a night with more whooping checks, but they all tripped in the end."

Maggie is the sweetest baby ever born and never has an ailment. She was born at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and is thriving. A sample of her blood and marrow was sent to the University of Michigan's Stem Cell Bank for transplantation. She was discharged from the hospital in late February. She is healthy, happy and thriving.

She is the sweetest baby ever born and never has an ailment. She was born at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and is thriving. A sample of her blood and marrow was sent to the University of Michigan's Stem Cell Bank for transplantation. She was discharged from the hospital in late February. She is healthy, happy and thriving.

Photo courtesy of the event's photographers, Michele Formisano and Wendy Palmer.

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Photo courtesy of the event's photographers, Michele Formisano and Wendy Palmer.

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...and a good time was had by all...

How many kids depicted? One. Teensy.

Your newsletter is not the society pages.

Stay on mission.

The purpose of direct mail is
to get inside the my home.

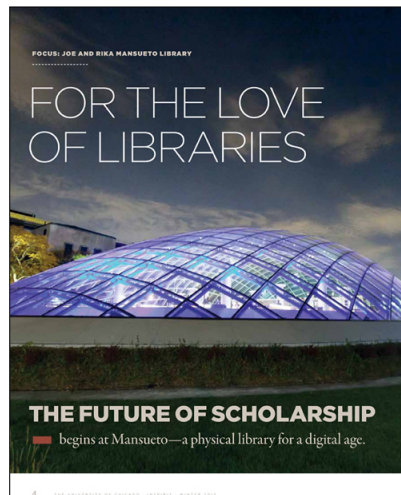
Essential point #1

So answer this:
“Why are you here?”

To make me feel good.

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What did I, your reader, **learn about myself?**

© 2013 Tom Ahern

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70% of first-time donors do
not make a second gift.

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“If we lost more than 5% of our
customers in a year, I’d be fired.”

Source: Bank president in Ohio, 2013

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LTV

Lifetime value

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A 10% improvement in your donor retention improves your revenue 50% immediately.

And that's just the beginning....

Source: Adrian Sargeant, 2010

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“Am I treating the
donor as our org.’s
superhero?”

31

Donors have to play a role.

© Tom Ahern 2013

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“Is this
all I am
to you?”

33

Donor-CENTRIC:

“With your help, all
these amazing things
happened. And without
your help, they won’t.”

34



How great the ORGANIZATION is



How great the DONOR is



How great the ORGANIZATION is = \$4,470 in gifts

1,000%

How great the ORGANIZATION is = \$4,470 in gifts

IMPROVEMENT!!!

Zawadi Says, "Thank You!"

You Helped a Tanzanian Girl Stand Tall on Her Own Two Feet

To meet Zawadi Rajabu, 6, is to experience gratitude through the eyes of a child. She greets you with a warm hug, a bright smile, and an

needed a surgeon trained in the Ilizarov method — a complex technique for reshaping bones, developed by Gavril Ilizarov, M.D., in a remote

How great the DONOR is = \$49,600 in gifts

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When you make donors feel good, when you make them feel important, they reward you with added gifts.

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Most important secret to success!!!!

Your newsletter is
not about your organization.

Your newsletter is
really about your donors ... and how
wonderful they are.

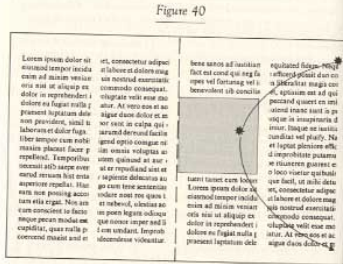
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“Can readers easily
skim my stuff?”

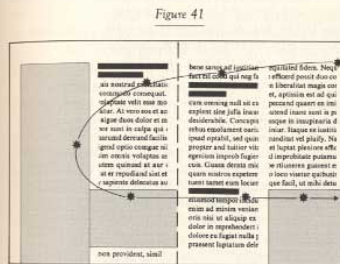
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Vögele's eye motion study



With minimal display, the reader's eyes scan only a short distance into the page.



More display points give the eyes more fixes and increase the likelihood of the reader's going back to digest the message.





Headline

45



Headline

The “deck” is smaller type commenting on the headline

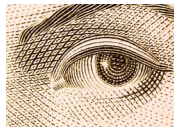
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Bigger



Bolder



Briefer

A full “headline” includes:

- (1) eyebrow
- (2) headline
- (3) deck
- (4) caption(s): keep short
- (5) lead: start short



Breakthroughs you've helped make happen

← Eyebrow

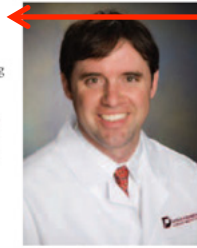
Crowdsourced drug promotes "memory loss" in cancer cells

← Headline

Revolutionary research leads to revolutionary discoveries

← Deck

What if it were possible to make cancer cells "forget" their deadly mission and instead turn into white blood cells or other harmless structures?



← Lead (lede)

That is the innovative idea behind some amazing research you're helping make possible at Dana-Farber.

← "Look at me!"

Jay Bradner, MD, an attending physician in our hematology-oncology department and leader of the team doing this work, described his breakthrough at the TEDxBoston conference last June.

← Caption

Cancer genes carry reminders of the function they're supposed to perform, Bradner explained. Inserting certain compounds into cancer cells can erase those reminders, rendering them harmless. Research in mice has produced extremely promising results.

But that's only the start. "This is not only a breakthrough in research," Bradner told his audience. "It is also a breakthrough in how research is done."

Dana-Farber's Jay Bradner, MD, thrilled the audience at this summer's TEDxBoston with news of his breakthrough in "reprogramming" cancer cells.

Opera Ball 2011: My Fair Ladies...

WOULDN'T IT BE LOVELY TO RAISE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

Mark your calendars for April 9, 2011. Rudy Aulst, HCO's "prince of parties services," is choosing this season's Opera Ball. As you'd expect, Rudy's special touch promises to make "My Fair Ladies" a truly glorious evening. A favorite part of the Ball is the annual silent auction, co-chaired this year by Anna Dean and Wade Wilson. It will feature a wide-ranging collection of luxury items, jewelry, clothing, vacations, spa services, artworks, and more. Proceeds benefit Houston Grand Opera and all its extraordinary programs.



Rudy Aulst, the season's Opera Ball Chair.

Ride of the Valkyrie

HCO & THE ART CAR PARADE

This unforgettable Wagnerian is Breinhardt, the only (as far as we know) Valkyrie with a career as an art car. Proudly strapping atop a modified Ford F-150 pickup truck, she was designed by Houston Grand Opera's technical department and built by dedicated volunteers, and she has been a wonderful ambassador for the company. Besides winning the Houston Art Car Parade's overall first place award (2008) and first place in the music category (2009), she has also traveled to Miller Outdoor Theatre, as well as Houston-area schools, to support the Opera's activities. Every year, HGO volunteers work to keep Breinhardt looking great. This year, in addition to sprucing her up, we plan to fashion her helmet with used



Breinhardt, Houston's first Valkyrie, wears her trademark red and white opera costume at the Art Car Parade (2008).

CDs. If you have old CDs you'd like to contribute, we'd love to take them off your hands! And if you really want a hands-on experience, you might also enjoy helping to refurbish her for this year's Art Car Parade in May. To help make 2011 Breinhardt's best parade yet, please contact Megan at 713-546-0239.

Rudy invites you to make Opera Ball 2011 unforgettable

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Rudy Aulst, the season's Opera Ball Chair.

You can dance all night...and help make Rudy's Opera Ball even more special. To purchase tickets or to donate to the silent auction, please call Gayla Pircher at 713-546-0277.

Ride of the Valkyrie

BREINHARDT NEEDS VOLUNTEERS!

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used CDs. If you have old CDs you'd like to contribute, we'd love to take them off your hands! And if you really want a hands-on experience, you might also enjoy helping to refurbish her for this year's Art Car Parade in May. Even better, if you have room, we're looking for a (large!) new space to garage Breinhardt. If you have storage space appropriate for an art car of Wagnerian proportion, you can help protect her from the elements between public appearances! Volunteers wanted! Please contact Megan at 713-546-0239.

...or having homelessness," says Suzanne Fortgang, executive director of The Planning Council. "Foundation investments in bricks and mortar, people, services, planning and outcome measures" are all part of the solution.

The January merger of the Norfolk and Virginia Beach Foundations "helps us in our work," says Andrew Freydlman, director of housing and neighborhood preservation for the City of Virginia Beach. "Tackling these issues can't be done by any one city." #

Foundation grants since 2005 were for a range of purposes - building and repairing homeless shelters, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing; providing operating support; starting children's programs; helping vets and caregivers; providing services for housing specialists; and being a contributor for regional housing programs and planning.

Seton Youth Shelters
St. Columba Ecumenical Shelter
United Way of South Hampton Roads
Union Mission Ministries
Virginia Beach Community Development Corp.
Virginia Supportive Housing
YWCA of South Hampton Roads

Total: \$2,397,166

Free. New.
And yours for the asking...

Just published by the Hampton Roads Community Foundation: our informative — and inspiring — booklet about charitable bequests.

You'll get straightforward answers to all your questions. And you'll meet some wonderful people here in southeastern Virginia who have already added charity to their estate plans. Discover why charitable bequests are so wonderfully meaningful.

For your free copy, simply call us at (757) 622-7931 or email us at bequests@hamptonroadscf.org.

www.hamptonroadscf.org

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Offer

...company president David Newsham. "By making a contribution on a level that makes sense for each of us, together we

for Cures program coordinator, Elizabeth Kennedy, at 617-632-3146 or Elizabeth_Kennedy@dfci.harvard.edu.

training kept me going," she says. And he is still going today, because of your caring support of Dana-Farber. ■


My Gift to Keep Fighting Cancer

YES! I want to help provide compassionate, comprehensive care and further the groundbreaking research happening at Dana-Farber.

Here is my gift of: \$ _____

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 PHONE _____
 EMAIL ADDRESS _____

DANA-FARBER
CANCER INSTITUTE
The Jimmy Fund®
 10 Brookline Place West, 6th Floor
 Brookline, MA 02445-7226



Visit us online at Dana-Farber.org and JimmyFund.org.

Thank you! Please return this form with your tax-deductible gift or use the enclosed reply form and envelope. To make a gift right now, visit Dana-Farber.com/support.

Fall 2011 Dana-Farber Report 6 52

Headlines

A.k.a., the things that kill
most donor newsletters

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A good donor headline:

- (1) captures the gist of the story
- (2) has a hook (anything new)
- (3) applauds the donor

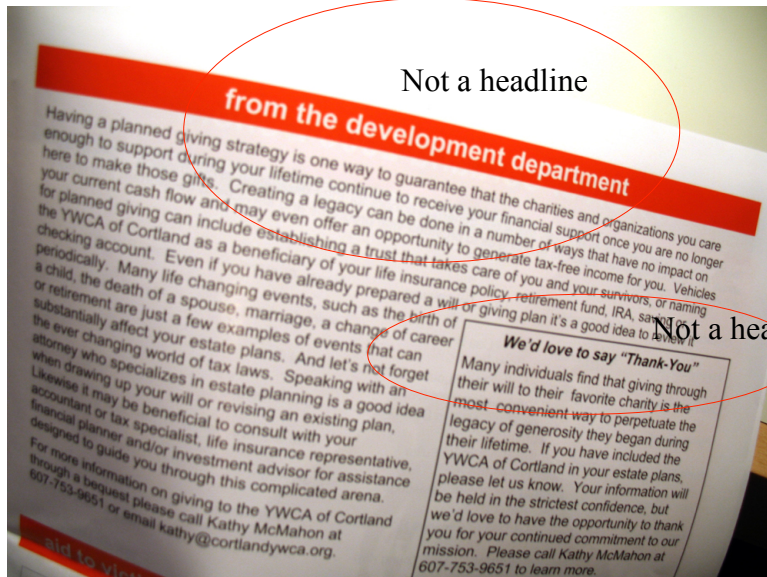
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This is big type. It is *not* a headline.



© 2013 Tom Ahern

Not a headline



Not a headline

© 2013 Tom Ahern

By land, by air, and by sea, they have traveled the world. **David and Sylvia Iren** have visited big cities, like London, Paris, and Hong Kong, and journeyed through vast countryside, as in China, Australia, and New Zealand. They love the adventures, yet there is no place like home.

World Travelers Come Home to Receive World-Class Care

Great photo...
great recognition...
but what's the *real* story?

Joan and
Sylvia
Iren
are
a
couple

They are
and clinical
cancer and
oncology

Iren says,

"give back some of the generosity that has been given to us." In one instance, they honored their beloved Laby physician, Bart Mandel, M.D., when they established a charitable remainder unitrust.

This trust offers many benefits. When it was created, it generated a sizable charitable deduction that reduced the Irens' income taxes. It also helped to diversify their portfolio. Today, this professionally managed trust provides Mr. and Mrs. Iren with quarterly payments—income that they use to travel and to spoil their grandson, Ethan. Someday, the trust will advance patient care in General Internal Medicine and Radiation Oncology.

David and Sylvia Iren journey around the globe, but they come home to receive world-class health care. Their generosity will help to ensure that this high-quality, compassionate care is available for generations to come.

If you would like information about establishing a charitable remainder unitrust, contact the Office of Gift Planning at 781-744-3333.



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Is Your Baby Racist?

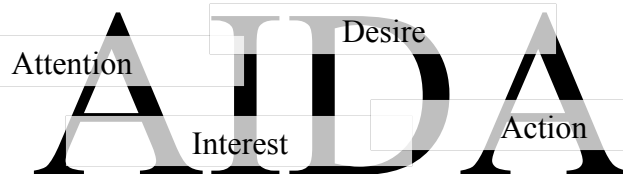
Exploring the Roots of Discrimination

Headline source: Newsweek

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“Am I AIDA-ing?”



A diagram illustrating the AIDA acronym. The letters A, I, D, and A are arranged horizontally. The first 'A' is connected to the word 'Attention' by a horizontal line. The 'I' is connected to the word 'Interest' by a horizontal line. The 'D' is connected to the word 'Desire' by a horizontal line. The second 'A' is connected to the word 'Action' by a horizontal line. The words are positioned above or below the corresponding letters.

Grab my ATTENTION

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Hook my INTEREST

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Direct mail secret to success.....

You're trying for "mental nods."

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A. Lee Edgar, M.D.

If you believe in Hospice as much as I do, open immediately...

What should I do next?

Authority figure

Mental nod

© 2013 Tom Ahern 65

the Steel Yard
27 Sims Avenue Providence, RI 02909

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 546
PROVIDENCE, RI

ARE YOU A STEEL YARD TRUE BELIEVER?
OPEN THIS!

Mental nod

© 2013 Tom Ahern 66

Build my DESIRE

© 2013 Tom Ahern

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Sore throat? My tonsils had filled with cancer.

But thanks in part to donors like you,
Sharp cancer care had the cure.

Dear Tom,

My name's Diane York.

I'm a mother, a wife, a career fashion designer ... and, thanks to the *magnificent* care I received at Sharp, I am also now a cancer survivor.

If you are, or have been, a donor to Sharp, I want to take this special opportunity to thank you personally for your contribution to my recovery.

ETC....

Donor love



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Call me to
ACTION

The right offer in front of the right people at the right time...

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If you put a gift to the Hampton Roads Community Foundation in your will, we'd like to honor you with membership in a very special group of people, the Legacy Society for Hampton Roads. How do you join? It's a one-step process: just let us know about your charitable bequest.

Then the fun begins.

We like to thank our donors personally, so we hold special events. As a Legacy Society member, you're always invited. You'll learn new things and meet interesting people. Including other philanthropists like you in the Hampton Roads area.

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This March 30th, honor the professor you liked the most....

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What PROBLEM are ...
your donors
... the SOLUTION to?

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FIGHTING JUNK SCIENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS.

We are the primary resource for sexuality education in Maryland. We:

- Reached 12,600 adolescents, adults and professionals, an increase of 10% over the previous year.
- Provided 76 trainings to professionals who work with adolescents through our Training Institute.
- Graduated seven Peer Educators in the sixth annual Peer Education training.
- Conducted *Back on the Dating Scene* programs at every Baltimore County Senior Center.
- Expanded education, outreach and reproductive health care services to Spanish speaking clients.

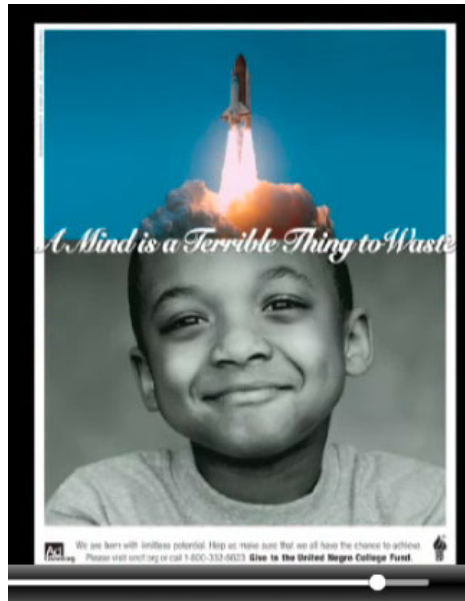
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“Giving is not about a calculation of what you are buying,” Yale economics professor, Dean Karlan, proved. “It is about participating in a fight.”

The New York Times | March 9, 2008

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1. Make it plain.
2. Make it corny.
3. Make it obvious.



Source: Jeff Brooks, The Fundraiser's Guide to Irresistible Communications

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The Domain Formula

85

Domain's proven formula:

- 11x17 format, folding to 4 8.5x11 pages
- 6 pages is OK, 2 pages is not, 8 pages is not
- one-color, two-color, full-color
- NOT a self-mailer
- mail in a #10 envelope: "Your newsletter enclosed"
- send exclusively to current donors
- include a reply envelope and reply device
- mail as often as possible
- use the newsletter for "impact reporting"


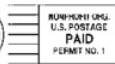
86




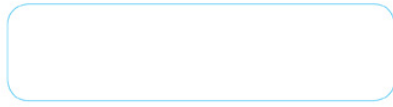
Non Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #43

*Dear believer in the kids of
Pawtucket...*
Your newsletter is inside.

inside CALLING ALL CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN:
Meet little Umi – and others whose lives you help change.
YOUR SPRING 2012 NEWSLETTER


 

 **Save the Children.**
34 Wilson Road, Westport, CT 06880
www.savethechildren.org



"You cannot even compare the joy I feel today to the sadness I felt three months ago – it is just not comparable."

– Umi's mother, from East Africa, whose little girl survives and thrives, thanks to your compassion



812460212.wor

What does raising \$500,000/yr from 10,000 readers look like?

89

An Enriching Experience
A child center shares her story

"I've had an absolute blast being a part of this!"
—Elizabeth Richards, a child center sponsor

"Deeply enriching!" That's how Elizabeth Richards portrays her experience as a child sponsor—especially visiting her sponsored child and his community in Bolivia where, she says, "I felt part of my home." Elizabeth shares her story with us.

Why child sponsorship?
Child sponsorship has become a cornerstone of childhood. Children who have been sponsored have the resources and support to thrive in their communities. The sponsor provides the financial support that allows the child to attend school, receive medical care, and live in a safe and healthy environment. Child sponsorship is a life-changing experience for both the sponsor and the child.

Child sponsorship is a life-changing experience!
Child sponsorship is a life-changing experience for both the sponsor and the child. It provides the financial support that allows the child to attend school, receive medical care, and live in a safe and healthy environment. Child sponsorship is a life-changing experience for both the sponsor and the child.

Sponsoring a child
Sponsoring a child is a life-changing experience for both the sponsor and the child. It provides the financial support that allows the child to attend school, receive medical care, and live in a safe and healthy environment. Child sponsorship is a life-changing experience for both the sponsor and the child.

Save the Children's 2012 Annual Advocacy Day
WASHINGTON, DC
MARCH 20 & 21, 2012

FOCUS: CHILD HUNGER & NUTRITION

You're Invited: Volunteer your Voice—in Person or Online!

What is Advocacy Day? Every year for its 100th anniversary, Save the Children Day is a national day of action for children. It's a day when people across the country and around the world, along with Save the Children staff, gather on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC to advocate for children.

Why is it so important? Advocacy Day is a day when people across the country and around the world, along with Save the Children staff, gather on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC to advocate for children.

How can you get involved? Advocacy Day is a day when people across the country and around the world, along with Save the Children staff, gather on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC to advocate for children.

Save the Children's 2012 Annual Advocacy Day
WASHINGTON, DC
MARCH 20 & 21, 2012

inside Save the Children

Meet the children whose lives you help change:

Meet the children whose lives you help change:

Using Your Bills Efficiently
Save the Children is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We are an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, or national origin.

Save the Children
1100 17th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036
1-800-725-2828
www.savethechildren.org

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What a Difference, Thanks to You!
Little Umi, once literally waving away, is now a happy healthy 6-month-old baby girl with an adorable toothless grin. Your compassionate support makes all the difference to children and families still suffering from East African devastating drought and food crisis.

Let's Continue our Conversation...
Thank you for your support. It's so important that we continue to work together to make a difference in the lives of children and families in need.

See Timmy Read and Succeed!
As a child who reads, Timmy is on the path to a lifetime of success. But like for 100 young kids growing up poor in rural America, Timmy was off to a tough start - at risk of being behind in school and, later, in life.

Building Hope in Haiti
Save the Children's commitment to support in Haiti is focused on providing access to the most vulnerable children and families. Our programs provide life-saving relief and support to children and families in need.

Your NEW Newsletter
If you're a supporter for children - a donor, volunteer, or someone who cares about the future of children - you'll want to receive our newsletter. It's packed with news, stories, and ways to get involved.

WE CAN BE HEROES
We can be heroes in many ways. We can be heroes in our hearts, in our actions, and in our voices. We can be heroes in our communities, in our schools, and in our homes.

Your Compassion at Work
Thank you for your support. It's so important that we continue to work together to make a difference in the lives of children and families in need.

were su
pneumo
pounds.
Thanks to
emergenc
Within da
"Umi came
Umi's mot
"My dau
only im
healthy
joy I fee
not corr
You are m
Children t
children, I
Continue i

Umi, severely malnourished at 3 months, in her mother's arms

© Tom Ahem | © 2013



What a smile!
Happy, healthy Umi,
just 3 months later,
thanks to you.

© Tom Ahern | © 2013

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Paper or digital?

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“I’m getting close to
concluding that e-newsletters
don’t work.”

Source: Jeff Brooks

“Does your email newsletter feel like a gift to your participants and supporters, or is it simply what you think they need or what you want to give them for your own selfish reasons? Think about where you are right now, and what it would take to get your newsletter to ‘Cool Aunt’ status.”

Source: Kivi Leroux Miller, “15 days...[inspiring] e-newsletter”

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We choose an email message
We give it a **two-second** glance
We decide if it’s worth our time
If it is, we keep it and read it
If it’s not, we hit the delete key, and send
the email to the trash

Source: Constant Contact blog, by Pamela Wilson

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Improving your email opening rates....

- Having “video” in the subject line can drive open rates 7% to 13% higher
- Videos in the email produce better results than static images
- Using “exclusive” in the subject line can boost open rates
- Subject lines with “top 10” and “top 5” boost open rates

Source: Experian, via The Agitator

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Event-triggered email marketing

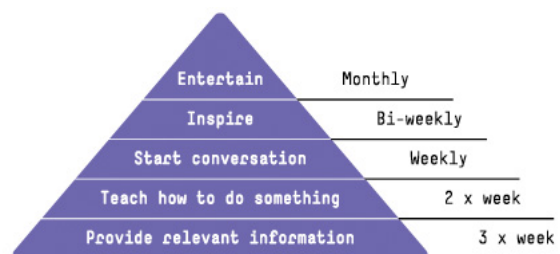
- New donor welcome series
- New subscriber welcome series
- New volunteer signup welcome series
- Event registrant welcome series
- Membership welcome series
- Expiring membership series
- Community signup welcome series
- New sustainer donor welcome series
- Sustainer donor credit card expiring

Source: Future Fundraising Now

Social media

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Social media content mix



Source: Content Marketing Institute

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A day of successful for-profit social marketing

Posts

- **Twitter**
 - 1 post per hour from
 - 4 influencer re-tweets
- **Facebook**
 - 3-5 posts per day
- **Google+**
 - 3-5 posts per day
- **LinkedIn**
 - 2 posts per day
- **Pinterest**
 - 4-5 pins per week

Source: The Definitive Guide to Social Marketing, Marketo

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