



# DIRECT FORUM

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Direct Forum is a free e-mail newsletter containing useful direct marketing tips, news updates and how-to information. It's convenient, informative and I am not trying to sell you anything!

- 1. DO YOU KNOW WHAT STOPS YOUR RECIPIENTS FROM READING YOUR DIRECT OR ONLINE MATERIAL? HERE'S A HINT — IT COULD BE YOU.**
- 2. IN THE AGE OF INSTANT GRATIFICATION WHY ARE MANY CHARITIES STILL USING OLD IDEAS TO THEIR DETRIMENT?**
- 3. MORE SCIENTIFIC REASONS WHY MANY ADS ARE INEFFECTIVE BUT MAY ACTUALLY HAVE A REVERSE EFFECT.**

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**DO YOU KNOW WHAT STOPS YOUR RECIPIENTS FROM READING YOUR DIRECT OR ONLINE MATERIAL? HERE'S A HINT — IT COULD BE YOU.**

As copywriters we try and build a solid argument as to why the recipient should buy our product or make a donation to our cause.

To do this we advance the process bit by bit by logically moving the reader on forward to the end of our argument or sales pitch.

One of the best ways to do this is to separate our thoughts into individual paragraphs, which can work great but too often can turn on you and become the culprit that keeps your readers from finishing your letter.

**The end of every paragraph in reality provides the perfect opportunity for the reader to stop reading.**  
*Unless...*

*... You connect it to the next paragraph.*

The whole point of direct-response writing is to keep your



November 15, 2006

Dear Friend,

There are an increasing number of people who are doing everything they can, yet they are having a difficult time buying food to feed their families.

And I'm writing to you because they need your help.

Some of them have lost jobs.

Some are single parents on social assistance who've had their benefits cut by 20 percent.

Some are what's referred to by policy makers as the 'working poor' -- people who have full-time jobs but still do not earn enough money to make ends meet.

Many are spending over three-quarters of their income on housing. They have very little left over for food.

This request is urgent.

Will you send \$17 to help people in our community realize their dream of providing good, nutritious food for their families?

FoodShare has developed pioneering food programs -- among them, The Good Food Box -- that provide access to fresh, affordable food for families.

Participating families order a large box of fresh fruit and vegetables and pay just \$17 at the beginning of the month. We deliver a brimming box of food to a neighbourhood drop off.



Your matching \$17 goes towards creating a non-profit food distribution system that delivers good, fresh food to people who need it.

-- Please turn over --



prospects reading, word after word, passage after passage, until the end.

So it is imperative your paragraphs interconnect driving your reader from one to the next so that your targets stay with you until the end.

Someone once suggested that each paragraph is an island, which is true, so you have to show the reader how to hop on to the next island lest you lose them before they've read everything you want them to read.

Another danger of losing the reader in mid-sale is at the end of a page. That is why, in a well designed letter, you will often see that a sentence is broken into two, between the bottom of page one and will continue on to page two.

This is done to help navigate the reader across to the next page.

### So, how do you connect paragraphs?

One way to create transactions is by using subheads between paragraphs.

Another way is to suggest that there is more to come, like this short list of connectors that are underlined:

But that's not all... Or, here's another reason why... Or, to explain further what I mean... Or, and... Or, in addition...

Another method is to Indent the next paragraph and make it shorter than the other paragraphs.

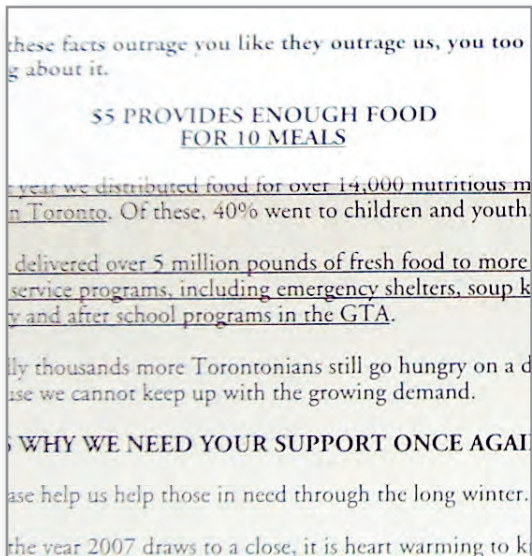
And finally, you can connect the previous part of your letter by asking a question mid-way that results from what has been said and leads them to the final answer.

Connecting your paragraphs is key. It is also the reason why letters that tell a story are the most read letters.

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### **IN THE AGE OF INSTANT GRATIFICATION WHY ARE MANY CHARITIES STILL USING OLD IDEAS TO THEIR DETRIMENT?**

One of the lines that I am expected to add in the donation card for many charities, in very small print, goes somewhat



like this:

**An official receipt will be issued at the end of the year for gifts over \$10.**

One of the key findings by many research organizations is that an extremely high number of Canadian charities send 'thank-you' receipts or acknowledge the donation weeks, even months after the gifts had been received—and sometimes, not at all.

Now, Imagine if you just helped another person and waited and waited for a simple 'thank you'. What would be your reaction?

**Donors should be thanked not only warmly, but also promptly.**

Failing to do so is guaranteed to turn off your donors and accelerate disloyalty. Under the best circumstances, many charities find that renewal rates from first time donors can drop by as much as 50%. Within five renewal campaigns, 90% of lapsed donors tend to evaporate.

Donors expect, indeed crave, to be appreciated for their gifts immediately.

Failing to do so promptly in an age of instant gratification is a huge mistake.

**Another key factor is how you show your appreciation, but I will leave that topic for the next time. So stay tuned.**

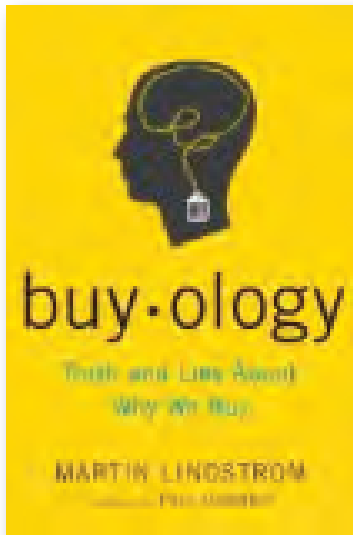
We have to pay particular attention to our customers/donors at a time when people are challenged just to put food on the table or replace a failing car.

To add more challenge the pundits already proclaim that public trust in non-profits is at an all-time low. non-profits is at an all-time low.

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**MORE SCIENTIFIC REASONS WHY MANY ADS ARE NOT ONLY INEFFECTIVE BUT MAY ACTUALLY BE HAVING A REVERSE EFFECT.**

In the recent TIME magazine that featured the World's 100 Most Influential People, one person who caught my



attention was **Martin Lindstrom**, author of the marketing book, ***Buyology: Truth And Lies About Why We Buy***.

This Danish consultant used brain-imaging tools to figure out why people buy or reject some things. He found that many ads are not only ineffective but sometimes have a reverse effect.

*For example:* Huge health warnings on cigarette packs may actually be encouraging smokers to light up because they trigger a mental echo of the desirable product they crave.

He found that **Ford Motor Company**, who spent \$26 million sponsoring America Idol, were seen less favourably, mostly because people perceived them not as sponsors but as interrupters of the show.

And, in spite of winning every taste-test in the **Pepsi Challenge**, **Pepsi** still lags behind **Coke**, because it is not what actually tastes better, but what we think tastes better.

That's an emotional reaction, not a rational one. Lindstrom's brain scans scientifically revealed that what people express on the outside isn't necessarily what they feel on the inside.

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- To participate, send me an e-mail with your suggestions.
- To post a comment, please include your name, e-mail address and your thoughts.

**Let me remind you again that your name and/or e-mail address will never be shared, sold, circulated, or passed along to anyone else.**

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