

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!

This month's topics include:

- 1. DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE 'FOUR MAGICAL WORDS' THAT ACCOUNT FOR THE SUCCESS OF ANY COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE?**
- 2. WANT TO ENHANCE LEGIBILITY AND INCREASING RESPONSE RATES? THEN USE 'QUICK SCAN' — A METHOD THAT IMPROVES READABILITY.**
- 3. YOU WILL BE SURPRISED TO KNOW WHAT THE BEST 'THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY' IS FOR A CHARITY TO CONVERT FIRST-TIME GIVERS INTO REGULAR DONORS?**

DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE 'FOUR MAGICAL WORDS' THAT ACCOUNT FOR THE SUCCESS OF ANY COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE?

When I worked at Ogilvy Mather, I got a great tip from my boss and creative director, **Tony Haughton**. He told me that the four magical words to success were: **'Tell me a story.'**

Yes, these four magical words always work. Every successful TV spot or ad campaign, direct mail, email, news story or TV program is based on how well they tell a story.

The most successful direct mail piece by **Martin Conroy** for the *Wall Street Journal* told a story when it began with the words: "On a beautiful late spring afternoon, twenty-five years ago, two young men . . ."

Father Bruce Ritter, the founder of **Covenant House**, built over 17 centers in the USA and many more around the world and raised over 1.2 million back in 1990 on his sheer ability to tell a captivating story.

And **J. Peterman** turned his catalog copy into some of the best short stories.



Image of the real
J.Peterman
not the Sinefeld
version



Even the hit TV show, **60 Minutes**, which originated back in 1968 was based on this premise. It was the brainchild of **Don Hewitt** who set it apart by using a unique style of investigative reporting.

He only ran a piece when it was based on these four magical words: **“Tell me a story.”** Incidentally, the inspiration for the show came from the controversial Canadian news program ***This Hour Has Seven Days***, which ran from 1964 to 1966, which in turn, was based on the British satire series ***That Was The Week That Was***.

On March 6, 2011 when **60 Minutes** reported a story about homeless children in Central Florida it generated an unusual response.

A week after it aired, members of **First Baptist Church of Orlando** pledged \$5.6 million to fight the homeless problem.

And yet sadly, I see and receive tons of communication pieces totally devoid of this.



Here a headline that was posted on LinkedIn recently:

Social Storytelling Boosts Donations 31% for Ronald McDonald House Charities

Proving that even a short personal story on a donation box can make a huge difference.

Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools in my arsenal and I use it as often as I can, but I am utterly amazed why others seldom deploy this technique.

Originally people used symbols, e.g. *hieroglyphics* to communicate and tell a story. Words were then transmitted through word-of-mouth, bone, bronze, stone, bamboo, fabric and paper.

Comic books have been one of the most popular forms of narration.

Children love stories, and so do we adults. Just look at the popularity of detective books, novels, short stories and movies. They captivate and engage us.

We want to know what happened, what happened next, and how did it all end?

Stories have no boundaries. They're able to entertain or inform, but they must always have a purpose. If a story is powerful, it can create a connection, a lasting bond between the narrator and his or her audience.



Watch this great storytelling video on YouTube

If you tell interesting stories in your copy, you will always be successful.

Here is an amazing video about great storytelling:
Go to: <http://youtu.be/Hzgzim5m7oU>

WANT TO ENHANCE LEGIBILITY AND INCREASING RESPONSE RATES? THEN USE 'QUICK SCAN' — A METHOD THAT IMPROVES READABILITY.

I DID AND HERE'S PROOF.

One of the things that I learned at design school, both in India and Germany, was the fine art of typesetting, My design and typography teacher, **Otl Aicher** — the man responsible for all the graphic design at the **Munich Olympics** — used to say: *“Think about it, if the piece isn't easy to read, most people wont.”*

I learned from him that eye flow is, in large part, a function of typography. And a designer's job is not only to make the piece look attractive and inviting but also to encourage readership.

So, when I first started using a computer years ago, I noticed that digital fonts needed radical adjustments.

I had my two in-house typesetters labouriously make minute adjustments to every character and spacing between individual characters and between words of each and every typeface that we possessed on our computers — a task that took them well over six months to accomplish.

I know this was a lot of work and it would be hardly visible to the average person. But I also know that these minuscule adjustments would improve eye movement and readability.

To test my theory I segmented a list of 50,000 names into two equal groups and sent out the same letter. The first group received a version with the unadjusted typeface (type as available on your computer) as the control package.

The second group received the version using in the same



font but with our adjusted typeface as a test package. No other variable existed between the two packages.

The result were dramatic between the adjusted typeface over the unadjusted typeface:

- **Response rate increased: 6.67% with the adjusted typeface**
- **Average gift increased: 3.2% with the adjusted typeface**
- **Net revenue increased: 16% with the adjusted typeface**

To see what I mean look at the two examples below, you will notice how each word is easier to read and how it speeds up readership in the reformatted typesetting version as opposed to the unadjusted typesetting version.

UNFORMATTED TYPESETTING VERSION:

You'll love how our magazine encourages your kids to read, reason and make some key decisions.

REFORMATTED TYPESETTING VERSION:

You'll love how our magazine encourages your kids to read, reason and make some key decisions.

He: *Come on! Who would ever know?*
She: I would. That's who!



I call this method **'QUICK SCAN'**. As you can see for yourself, although subtle, the 'QUICK SCAN' formatted text does improve readership without making any changes to layout, fonts, sentences, paragraphs, vocabulary, word order or grammar.

If the science of direct marketing is all about nudging responses by even a small fraction then I know that I have been giving my clients this big benefit for years.

Why did I bother to do this?

It's a small detail that nobody really notices but I know that I am making a big difference in the results for my clients.

My reasoning can be best summed up in the cartoon of a couple marooned on an island alongside.

YOU WILL BE SURPRISED TO KNOW WHAT THE BEST 'THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY' IS FOR A CHARITY TO CONVERT FIRST-TIME GIVERS INTO REGULAR DONORS?

Traditional knowledge says that we should never ask new donors for money too often or too soon for fear it may drive them away.

Now, new research conducted in England by a direct marketing agency **DMS** found that first-time donors are most likely to become regular donors if you ask them within 60 days of their first donation.

The agency analyzed a charity's data of more than 265,000 first-time donors to see who became a regular giver after which period of time.

They found that just over 6% of the charity's first time supporters became committed donors when asked again within 60 days of making their initial donation.

But, only 2.6% of became regular supporters after 60 to 120 days after the original gift.

And only 1% became regular donors after 121 to 180 days after the first gift was made.

The double dip



If you are concerned about asking your first-time donors for money too soon, remember this analysis proves that you shouldn't be.

The reason is quite simple; a donor who writes his or her first cheque to a nonprofit may be mildly surprised by a rapid request for another gift in the first 60 days. But the reality is that, just after a donor has made their first donation to a charity, it is at this point that they have the strongest connection with that nonprofit organization.

So, go ahead ask for the second gift well within 60 days after the first gift, because after that the window of opportunity keeps steadily diminishing.

Incidentally, this also applies to regular customers that may have just purchased a product or service from a new client for the very first time.

OPT IN, OPT OUT, OPTIONS:

- To unsubscribe, send me an e-mail simply saying, "Please, remove".
- 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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