



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:

- 1. The art of balanced copy writing**
- 2. Many charities have stopped using direct marketing to raise money. My question is are they shooting themselves in the foot?**
- 3. The science behind telling personal stories — why they work so well**

The art of balanced copy writing

Ask any writer and he or she will tell you that when they present their copy to a client, the most scrutinized part is what you say about the client or their product or service.

If you read any book about good copy writing, it will tell you that the most important thing from the reader's point of view is **'What's in it for me?'** What are the benefits that the recipient — your target audience — can get from your client's product or service?

The YOU vs. WE dilemma

To a reader, endless references of "I", "we" or "our" are a "yawn", "yawn", "yawn".

And yet that's the reality of most material that we as writers are forced to contend with. We must strike a happy balance that keeps the client happy and yet provides interesting material to the reader.

Here's my little secret to this dilemma.

- 1. Run your copy through a website called:**
www.futurenowinc.com/wewetext.htm.
It will provide actual numbers that indicate whether your copy is talking more about your product or service or about the customer.

September 2011



Here's an amazing story of hardship and determination, of passion and pride and of guts and glory — the hallmarks of a truly dedicated athlete.

Mrs. Jane Sample
1234 Main Street Apt 433
Toronto, Ontario M1M 1M1

00/X
XX1234

Dear Jane Sample

Sara Albers has what is called Agnesia of the Corpus Callosum with a Dandy Walker Variant. In layman's terms this means her cerebellum did not develop properly and continues to interrupt her development — a challenge she faces daily. The condition was so serious at birth that her doctor was not sure whether she would ever walk or talk.

But just look at her now! This year at the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Athens, Greece, she won a gold and a bronze medal.

Sara runs with an unusual gait, has to wear glasses and is virtually deaf, but she has an incredible fighting spirit. At the Games, in the 200 meter dash in her division of 12-15 year olds, she captured a bronze with a time of 32.48 seconds, improving her personal time by over four seconds.

Sara was nervous before the event. In the preliminaries she was in lane number 8, the worst lane to be in. She did not have her glasses and all she could see was a foggy finish line but she was determined to do well. She handily qualified by placing first.

In the finals she got a better lane — lane number 2 — but was flanked by two strong runners who just flew past her at the last few seconds.

In the Long Jump she won a gold medal in her division with an incredible jump of 2.68 meters.

Sara had butterflies in her stomach as she strode up to the starting line. Being deaf she could not hear the crowds cheering her, especially her seven family members who went to the games to support her. They included her mother, Jennifer Albers, her dad William, sister Rachel, brother William, her aunt Martha Doran, her uncle Steve Doran and another aunt Karen Glancy.

Her first jump was average but in the second attempt she did really well, outperforming all the others. As she completed the jump she looked back for the white flag to make sure it was a clean jump. Then there was a faint, barely audible 'yes' from her lips as she clenched her fist with joy. She had beaten her own record by 0.22 meters.

Standing proudly on the podium, as the Canadian national anthem played, she humbly accepted the gold medal. The entire Albers clan beamed with stars of joy and pride as the crowd stood up and applauded. This was their little girl, the one supposedly destined never to walk.

Jennifer Albers, Sara's mother told me, "Sara's was always interested in sports; she loved to participate with other children but the physical gap between what she could do in comparison to the average child was very apparent and heartbreaking."

"Getting involved with Special Olympics Ontario was easy!"

"I wanted her to continue participating in sports so when she was nine years old, I Googled 'sports for kids' with



Sara with her coach Angela Behn

Yes, I would be proud to support more dedicated Special Olympics athletes like Sara.

I have enclosed a donation of \$ _____
We are happy to provide your tax receipt electronically. If you prefer to receive your tax receipt via email, please provide your email address.
Email: _____

Mrs. Jane Sample
1234 Main Street Apt 433
Toronto, Ontario
M1M 1M1

I have enclosed my cheque payable to Special Olympics Ontario

Please charge my credit card:

Card number: _____

Expiry date: (mm/yy) / (yy/yy)

Signature: _____

Amount: _____

*I would like to volunteer. Please call (416) 447-8326

Please return this form with your donation to the postage-paid envelope.

Official receipts will be issued for gifts over \$10.

Confidentiality of your gift. We appreciate the support of each and every one of our donors. Thanks to you, we can continue to provide another quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities. From time to time, Special Olympics Ontario exchanges its donor list with other reputable non-profit organizations in order to recruit more people to our family of supporters. If you do not wish your name to be exchanged, please let us know. 18 Wynter Drive, Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario M2C 3K2. Tel: (416) 447-8326. Ext 279. Toll Free: 1-888-333-6915. Charitable Reg. No. 11906-8263-000201

NOTE: SEE REVERSE TO PLEDGE AIR MILES

This is the latest two-page mailing for Special Olympics Ontario that was mailed in September 2011

For example, the letter alongside for Special Olympics Ontario was analyzed by the website as follows:

Your Customer Focus Rate: **45.56%**
(15 customer-focused words)

Your Self Focus Rate: **44.44%** (14 self-focused words, and 3 mentions of the Company Name)

You speak about yourself as often as you speak about your customers.

2. How might you improve that balance if it is too self-focused?

Select a few of the "I", "we" or "our" references and see if you can transform them into benefits for the reader. This would tip the balance to a more even level before you present your copy to the client.

Many charities have stopped using direct marketing to raise money. My question is are they shooting themselves in the foot?

Look at the facts:

Charitable giving generally represents about **20%** of a charity's yearly funding but can go as high as **90%** for those organizations that do not have other revenue sources such as government grants, membership fees, special event proceeds or corporate sponsors.

According to the organization **Giving USA**, over the past 50 years the four primary sources (and contribution levels) of charitable fundraising revenue have been: **75%** individuals; **14%** foundations; **6%** estates and **5%** corporations and corporate foundations.

I was surprised that social media interaction hasn't had more of an influence on giving according to this study but I imagine that will slowly change over time.

New report underscores importance of direct mail to charities

71%^{of}
current
customers
prefer
mail

It is estimated that one billion dollars, about one quarter of all Canadian charitable (non-church) giving by individuals, is in response to direct mail.

If you're a charity soliciting crucial donations, direct mail is a must.

According to **Acxiom**, a large majority of donors continue to give through mail — their most preferred channel.

They also claimed that, contrary to popular belief, consumers aren't too keen on mobile advertising but continue to welcome direct mail and email.

It seems agencies and marketers are over-estimating consumers' preferences for contact by mobile, despite figures that suggest the devices are primarily contact and entertainment sources for many consumers.

Acxiom's survey found that only **12%** of existing customers thought ads on their mobile were appropriate and that figure drops further to **9%** when it comes to Short Messaging Service (SMS) marketing.

Meanwhile, marketers and agencies were way off the mark assuming **45%** of customers welcomed mobile ads and that **25%** liked to receive SMS messages.

SMS messaging provoked the most disdain among prospects (**4% acceptance**).

The research suggested that almost three-quarters of current customers (**71%**) are happy to receive mail from brands they are already customers of while **57%** of prospects also favored the medium.

Email was also popular with **78%** of existing customers, though for prospective customers, the figure dropped down to **52%**. However, it remained the second most appropriate way of targeting.

"The digital age is accelerating the opportunity for brands to truly engage with consumers across all channels. Equally, it is leading to constant shifts in the way people buy and interact with brands.

The risk of marketers getting contact strategies wrong and wasting budget is increasing," **Murray Dudgeon, Acxiom Europe's** head of client services.

He continued, "Now more than ever, marketers need the

insight to understand when and where it's appropriate for brands to join the conversation with consumers — and when they do, to make those communications as relevant, consistent and delightful as possible."



This Saturday, October 29, 2011, in the *GLOBE AND MAIL* an article called: **For Canada's charities, this is a time of crisis and a moment of opportunity** By Paul Waldie stated: **Big donors aside, attracting support has become more complicated and costlier. The traditional workhorses – direct mail and telephone solicitation – are being overshadowed by the Internet and social media.** But raising money online isn't as easy as it may appear; social-media donors tend to give relatively small amounts and have little long-term attachment to a cause. That means charities must spend more on fundraising, even as increasingly savvy donors are scrutinizing their administration costs.

The biggest factors that continue to motivate people to donate according to Giving USA are:

- A compelling reason or story. (85%)
- Followed by trust in the charity (56%)
- And Friend/Peer endorsement (52%)

The science behind telling personal stories — why they work so well

“They laughed when I sat down at the piano...”

And

“On a beautiful late spring afternoon, twenty-five years ago, two young men graduated from the same college

Advertising buffs will instantly recognize these two opening lines. The first is from an ad penned by the legendary **John Caples** promoting music lessons by mail.

The second is the beginning of a **Martin Conroy's Wall Street Journal** direct mail piece considered as “the greatest sales letter of all time.”

They Laughed When I Sat Down At the Piano But When I Started to Play!—

Then I Started to Play

How I Learned to Play Without a Teacher

Pick Your Instrument

A Complete Triumph!

As the last note of the

What do these two have in common besides being amazingly successful? (Both ran for decades, unbeaten for years and became Control packages.) The answer is simple: **each tells a personal story**.

Clearly the narratives in these successful ad or direct mail pieces resonated in some special and universal way with their readers.

We've all experienced moments of social discomfort, much like the would-be pianist who sits down at the piano only to have his friends laugh. And we've all had moments of pride when others acknowledge our skill or accomplishments. Is the narrative nature of the wording in "They Laughed When I Sat Down..." bringing deep-seated memories to the surface?

Do these words produce a more profound effect than if the ad had simply suggested that we could impress our friends if we could play the piano?

Equally important is who tells you what.

You might be convinced of a restaurant's excellence after reading scores of glowing reviews in various publications.



But it just takes one friend to complain that his or her meal was lousy or that the service was poor to negate the reviewers' enthusiasm for the same restaurant.

Chances are that a friend's first-hand opinion has a more powerful effect on you than all the media reviews put together.

Why? Because we naturally generalize from one personal friend's example as opposed to all the professional opinions. Our acceptance of our friend's comments carries more weight.

Individual statements from our trusted friends are more powerful and tend to lodge in our minds, while reviews or hearsay do not.

That is why infomercials having one credible individual tell a personal story of weight loss can be much more potent and believable.

My advice:

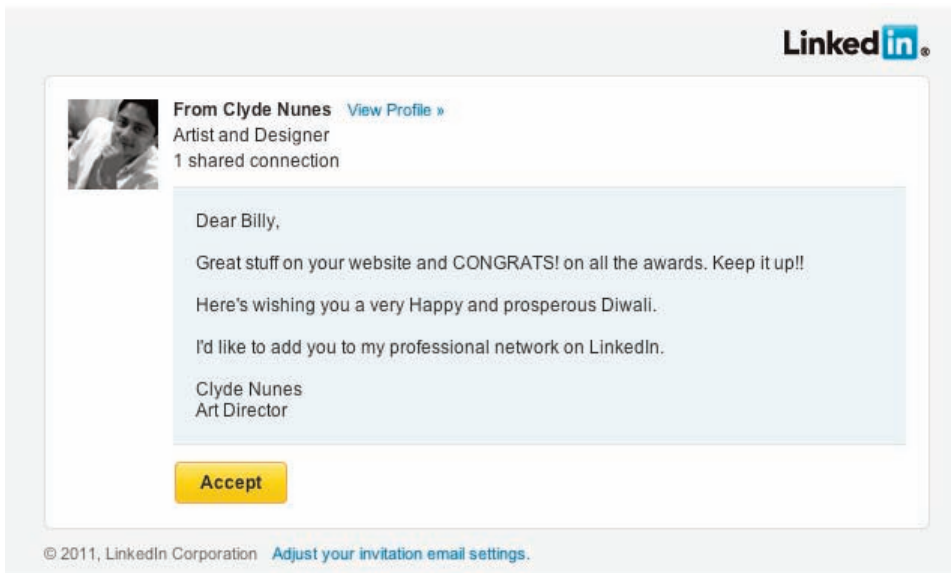
1. Engage potential customers by writing a vivid story involving your product.

If it works for the most successful ad in history and for the most successful direct mail piece then surely it will work for you.

2. Use testimonials to your advantage

Short testimonials are excellent. Letting potential customers know that other real people used your product with success is always a good thing. But turning a testimonial into a **personal anecdote** will **greatly increase its impact.**

Adding a **name**, a **face**, and **story** will play to the way our brains evolved and be **more convincing** and **more memorable.**



Here is a **LinkedIn** invitation that I recently received from someone in the Middle East.

How well do you think it would rate as a testimonial?

Would love to get your feedback. Please, email me with your response

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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