

THE JOY OF GIVING:
AN INVESTIGATION OF POSITIVE FUNDRAISING TECHNIQUES

by

TINA M. BRAND

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Daniel Hart

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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By TINA M. BRAND

Thesis Director:

Daniel Hart

This research aims to further our knowledge about why people donate money to charity. I hypothesized that fundraising requests that were a) handwritten, and b) contained positive emotion words related to pro-social motivations would increase donations relative to requests that lacked these qualities. Participants were drawn from the mailing list of a local charitable organization that conducts a yearly direct mail fundraising campaign. Participants were randomly assigned to one of five conditions: 1) Only the standard fundraising packet (standard), 2) standard plus a printed note with positive emotion words, 3) standard plus a handwritten note with positive emotion words, 4) standard plus a printed note without positive emotion words, 5) standard plus a handwritten note without positive emotion words. The results indicated that those who received a handwritten letter donated more money; positive emotion words did not seem to have an effect. These findings can help charitable organizations design and enhance their campaign strategies.

Table of Contents

Title Page.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Table List.....	iv
Illustration List.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Influence Factors.....	1
Why People Donate.....	4
Message Evidence.....	6
Donor Motives.....	8
Emotions.....	8
Handwriting.....	10
Methods.....	13
Participants.....	13
Measures and Procedure.....	13
Results.....	16
Discussion.....	18
Tables.....	34
Figures.....	28
Appendix.....	33
References.....	36

Table List

- Table 1. Frequencies of Donation by Condition (24)
- Table 2. Probable Associations Between Experimental Conditions (25)
- Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Donations Received by Condition
(with zero dollar amounts factored into means) (26)
- Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for experimental conditions (27)
- Table A1. Methodologies, strategies and influence techniques (33)

Illustrations List

Figure 1. Campaign Brochure (front/back) (28)

Figure 2. Letter from Campaign Chairman (29)

Figure 3. Positive Emotion Letter –Printed and Handwritten (30)

Figure 4. Non-Emotional – Printed and Handwritten (30)

Figure 5. Donations received by dollar amount for conditions (31)

Figure 6. Donations received by dollar amount, includes zero dollar amounts (32)

The Joy of Giving: An Investigation of Positive Fundraising Techniques

The American Institute for Philanthropy reports that tax-exempt organizations are the fastest growing sector in the U. S. economy and that most of them must continually seek donations to support their efforts (Basil, Ridgway, & Basil, 2006). Many tax-exempt organizations must raise money through direct mail solicitations. The task has become more difficult in recent years as household donating has not kept up with the increased need for private donations (Das, Kerkhof, & Kuiper, 2008). Direct mail solicitations generally convey several important pieces of information about the organization as well as utilizing methodologies geared towards leading the recipient to donate. Methodologies include the use of influence techniques together with constructing messages that draw attention to the primary reasons why people donate as well as an understanding of donor motives and emotions.

Influence Factors

Fundraisers commonly use influence techniques to help them gain compliance from donors to charitable giving requests. These techniques reflect fundamental social and psychological principles that successful persuaders use to get people to say *yes* (Cialdini, 2001). Each factor is governed by a psychological principle that directs human behavior and gives the factor its power. Moreover, the persuasive impact of these factors becomes more important as people are increasingly bombarded with information (Cialdini, 2001) and have less time to make careful, reflective decisions.

Over time, individuals acquire a set of trigger features (sets of specific information) for compliance that prompts the individual when a compliance request (such as someone asking us for a charitable donation) is likely to be correct and beneficial (Cialdini, 2001). Cognitive heuristics help individuals make decisions when they don't have (or feel like) spending the mental energy to weigh all available options (Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Cialdini, 2001). Once an individual makes a choice or takes a stand, he or she begins to behave in accordance with the decision, thus introducing consistency into the commitment. Commitments that help to produce intrinsic change are generally desirable, from the perspective of fund-raisers, because the effects are lasting and the change is not just specific to the situation where it first occurred (Cialdini, 2001). For example, once an individual has been introduced to taking actions that shift his or hers' self-image (such as being someone who donates time or money to charity) that individual will begin to pay attention to facts previously not noticed (in this case, about the value of community service). This rationale occurs in part because the individual now has a desire to be consistent within the new belief system and more importantly, the newly discovered reasons for the actions can support the original reason for the change in the first place (Cialdini, 2001). The aspiration to act in a consistent manner will hold true as long as the individual retains that self-image (Cialdini, 2001). Additionally, the pressure to be consistent to one's self image means that compliance professionals do not have to engage in costly and continuing efforts to reinforce the change since a charitable individual will likely act in a consistent manner in accordance with his or hers'

new beliefs in similar situations (Cialdini, 2001).

The principle of social proof helps provide another convenient mental short cut with regard to decision-making. The principle of social proof is similar to the concepts of conformity and liking in that people who are unsure how to act in ambiguous situations will look to the actions of others, follow them, and accept them as correct (Asch, 1951 as cited in Cialdini, 2001). This principle is especially true in situations where people look to others for guidance when they are unsure how to act and even more so when they observe the actions of people perceived to be most like them (Festinger, 1954 as cited in Cialdini, 2001). Fundraisers are aware of this tactic and use it to their advantage in gaining compliance. For instance, telethons often post the names of donors on the television screen in hopes that potential donors will be swayed *to do the right thing and give* as so many others in their area have already done so (Cialdini, 2001). The increase in “average person testimonials” is also evidence that this principle is heralded in the marketing and advertising. When ordinary people have confidence that other ordinary people believe in a product, cause, or service, the uncertainty is lessened; turn on any television home shopping channel to see this principle at work (Cialdini, 2001).

Compliance professionals as well as the general public are keenly aware that the more an individual knows and *likes* someone, the more an individual will be inclined to say *yes* to that person (Cialdini, 2001). People also prefer to comply with someone who they perceive is *like them* in that they have similar personality traits or interests. The same holds true when individuals share an

affiliation with another person that they don't know (e.g., the love of a sports team or membership in the same political party). Additionally, increased familiarity through repeated contact (usually under positive circumstances) facilitates liking, as do praise or complements. Interestingly enough, although there are limits to a person's gullibility (Jones & Wortman, 1973 as cited by Cialdini, 2001) – people often accept as true the praise they receive and feel positive about the person giving it even if the praise is not genuine or true (Byrne, Rasche & Kelley, 1974; Cialdini, 2001). In summation, positive comments produce positive behavior even when it is realized that the flatterer has something to gain (Drachman, deCarfulfel & Insko, 1978; Cialdini, 2001). Once an organization identifies which influence techniques can help maximize direct mail donations, it may then look to incorporate information that focuses on why people ultimately choose to donate.

Why People Donate

Research has shown that how a donor perceives and feels towards a particular charity (namely, trust) directly influences giving practices – especially when there is prevalent and widespread concern about ineffectiveness, inefficiency, and mismanagement by administrators and trustees (Hibbert, 2005 and Farsides, 2005). Additionally, The New York Times reported in 2006 that an estimated \$40 billion of the \$300 billion given to charity was embezzled (New York Times; retrieved online 3/29/08). With the issue of trust becoming so important to charitable behavior, suspicions or mistrust towards charitable

organizations can be devastating to fundraisers in that the reputation (trust) is the primary reason people donate (United Way of America Public Opinion Poll, 2006).

The United Way of America poll (2006) suggested that the second most important factor influencing peoples' decision to donate is whether or not they had a personal experience with the population that the charity represents. Many charities make it so people are able to contribute to a cause (usually medical or health related) that they have been affected by or can pay tribute to someone close to them who has been affected. Popular and established charities such as the American Cancer Society, Special Olympics, and March of Dimes are just a few examples of these charities.

The third most important reason why people give is the result of a direct experience that the donor has with the charity (United Way of America Public Opinion Poll, 2006). Donors who continue to have a positive, personal relationship with a charity (such as a volunteer or board member) encounter numerous benefits, including but not exclusive to commonality (the individual being part of something greater), responsibility (which happens when people feel psychologically devoted to a cause) and efficiency (the mental short cuts that make decision making easier and automatic) (Hibbert, 2005; Farsides, 2005, and Cialdini, 2001). A sharp decline in the other reasons cited in the United Way poll may imply that fundraising techniques focusing on the top three donating reasons would be of particular use to fundraisers. It is not enough for fundraisers to be cognizant of influence factors and the primary reasons why people choose to

donate – how these messages are constructed is also of great importance and can influence donating results.

Message Evidence

How fundraising messages are conveyed and how a donor receives these messages are also key determinants in the decision to donate. While extrinsic and intrinsic variables (such as age, gender, empathy, and sympathy) help explain why people choose to donate, perceptual factors (such as perceived benefits to the donor and how the donor perceives the organization's performance) help explain donor consistency as well as the donor's level of support (Sargeant, Ford, & West, 2005). Furthermore, the perceived value of a charity's goal depends on key factors that include message framing (the decision to focus on the positive consequences of giving or the negative consequences of not giving) and message evidence (Bendapudi, Singh, & Bendapudi, 1996). Additionally, there are challenges facing charitable organizations on how to convey to society that their cause is valid, urgent, and serious enough to compete with other issues salient to the public (Das *et al.*, 2008).

Past research has shown that message evidence that provides potential donors with information or knowledge seems to be effective (Morgan & Miller, 2002). Message evidence can be presented in an impersonal way, like statistics or in a more personable way, such as a story (Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996). Additionally, message framing can make a communication positive or negative in structure. While the concept of message framing seems easy to understand, when

to use a positive or negative frame is not as clear. Negative appeals are used often by charities (e.g., children will die if you don't donate or animals will be put to sleep if you don't help now) and are associated with bringing out (or avoiding) guilt and fear in potential donors.

Positive framing is the opposite of negative framing. Instead of stating that "children will die if you don't donate now" – positive framing would state the plea in a positive manner – "children will be saved from starvation if you donate now." Reviews are mixed on which framing method is most effective (Das, *et al.*, 2008). The type of framing used in conjunction with other factors (such as processing motivation and message evidence) might help to explain why one method does not continually stand out over the other. To complicate matters, strategies that evoke guilt and fear (and are generally negative in structure) appear to work initially, but research has shown that negative fundraising messages may not help contribute to long term giving and it could actually cause people to donate less money than they would have if the message were received in a more positive way (Hibbert, Smith, Davies, & Ireland, 2007). People are willing to pay protection money to get out of an uncomfortable situation where they are experiencing negative feelings (Hibbert & Farsides, 2005). To increase the likelihood that a donor will feel good about their donation choice, it is crucial to also include a rationale of how the choice not only benefits the charity but how it can benefit the donor.

Donor Motives

Donor motivations are another critical aspect that helps to shape charitable behavior (Hibbert, 2005). Donor rewards by and large fall into three categories: economic (such as tax breaks), social (like gifts or recognition), and emotional (e.g., feeling altruistic or having positive self-esteem). Emotional benefits are also described as those that relieve one from a sense of guilt or obligation (Hibbert, 2005). However, messages that evoke a certain level of negative emotions may not produce positive and lasting donating behavior. Additionally, it is not uncommon for donors to experience more than one type of donor reward, which makes the process of giving all that more complex. These motivations guide giving behavior and is being looked to for creating new strategies in some organizations (Ouellette & Wood, 1998). Solicitations that promote their cause while giving the donor a sense of some kind of reward may help create an on-going donor.

Emotions

Emotions guide donating behavior. Typically (and in a general sense), emotions begin with an individual's assessment or appraisal of the personal meaning of some antecedent event. Either consciously or unconsciously, this appraisal process triggers a cascade of response tendencies (Lazarus, 1991 as cited by Mayne & Bonanno, 2001). Ellsworth and Smith (1988) found that emotional theorists like Eckman, Izard, and Buechler presented more negative emotions in their theories than positive ones. Ellsworth and Smith (1998) also

determined that people use more words to describe negative experiences over positive ones. Negative emotions such as anger, fear, resentment, and guilt (due in part to their association with the problems and dangers of human suffering) have captured the majority of the attention of researchers (Mayne & Bonanno, 2001). On the other hand, positive emotions such as joy, contentment, interest, and love have played only minor roles in research and theory (Mayne & Bonanno, 2001). The predominance of negative states in emotion theory may reflect some truth about the nature of human emotions (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988) and although positive emotions may not spark the same magnitude as negative emotions do, they may provide some important solutions to the problems negative emotions generate (Fredrickson, 1998).

Guilt appeals are commonly used to generate donations but the process by which guilt motivates pro-social behavior is not well understood (O'Keefe, 2002 as cited by Basil, Ridgway & Basil, 2006). Fear is another common negative emotion that fundraisers use in their appeals - fear can evoke charitable impulses in donors who wish to avoid feeling fearful about topics such as poverty, government cuts, famine, and death (Warwick, 2001, p. 16). However, the long-term effects of using guilt and fear in fundraising campaigns are unknown, possibly inconsistent, and raise ethical questions (Basil *et al.*, 2008, Warwick, 2001, p. 16).

Conversely, the function of positive emotions has been identified as facilitating approach behavior or continued action. Experiences of positive emotions prompt individuals to become part of their environments. Fredrickson

(1998) theorized that negative emotions narrow a person's momentary thought-action repertoire (similar to a flight or fight response) and proposed that positive emotions broadened a person's momentary thought-action repertoire (Fredrickson, 1998). This theory was tested in an experiment demonstrating that, compared to neutral states, the positive emotions joy and contentment each widened the array of thoughts and actions that came to people's minds while the negative emotions fear and anger shrank the same thought-action repertoire (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2000).

Using positive emotion words in direct mail solicitations may help non-profit organizations gain regular supporters in that if a donor feels positive after reading a solicitation, that donor may reflect more often in a optimistic manner about the charity, creating a positive, feel-good situation. Conversely, direct mail solicitations that convey a negative message (e.g., evoke guilt and fear) may prompt the donor to want to quickly eliminate those uncomfortable and negative feelings that likely don't create a desire for on-going and positive support.

Handwriting

Another important way to convey emotion and to gain compliance lies within handwriting (Victor, F. pp. 163, 1952). Handwriting can express emotions because every individual possesses a unique writing style (Smith & Rivas, 2007) and handwritten messages are often seen as being more "personal" in that the writer took more time to consider the fashion of the communication (Smith & Rivas, 2007). Additionally, from a marketing standpoint, handwritten letters grab

the receiver's attention - in part because these letters stand out. Marketers who primarily use direct mail are aware that gaining the receiver's attention is the first step in the selling process (Clark & Kaminski, 1989). Clark and Kaminski (1989) conducted a direct mail study and found that over 43 percent of the time, a handwritten cover letter resulted in better responses than printed cover letters. Loewenthal (1975) illustrated that handwriting interpretation can be a social-act, whose meaning is interpreted fairly reliably according to situational demands. Clark and Kaminski (1989) suggest that non-profit organizations can stand above the crowd by using a handwritten cover letter as these highly personalized appeals may increase the recipients' personal identification with the organization and hence their willingness to contribute as well as the size of the contribution. Moreover, Clark and Kaminski (1989) propose manipulating the message content of the cover letter to determine what types of appeals are most effective with handwritten requests. In today's society, computers that generate handwritten-like fonts likely don't fool most donors and don't stand out. Actual handwritten requests appear sincere, convey emotion, and would stand out from other solicitation requests.

It is clear that there are multiple methodologies and seemingly endless combinations of layers in how individuals' process fundraising requests that result in some level of donating behavior. However, the ultimate goal of a charity is to create an on-going supporter while keeping within the organization's marketing budget. To do this, research suggests campaign requests that stand out, create a positively framed message and touch upon the primary reasons why people

donate will result in more donations. Smith and Rivas (2007) and Clark and Kaminski (1989) showed that handwritten requests do stand out, evoke emotion, and are more personal than printed or typed requests. This personal element can bring to mind feelings of trust, liking, and consistency that may lead to a shift or change in an individual's cognitive heuristic (Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Cialdini, 2001). Also, Frederickson (1998) illustrated that positive emotions expand a person's momentary response more than negative emotions – suggesting that a positively framed request will yield more donations. Thus, I examined the following hypotheses:

H1: A fundraising request letter that includes six positive emotion words will increase the dollar amount given by each donor more than a request that does not include the six positive emotion words. The positive words will encourage donors to feel optimistic.

H2: A fundraising request letter that is handwritten (versus printed) will increase the dollar amount given on average because the handwritten request will convey an emotional and personal connection with the donor that makes it stand out over other requests.

Method

Participants

The participants were past donors to United Way of Burlington County (UWBC) who generally donate outside of other avenues such as a workplace campaign or other UWBC targeted fundraising events. UWBC maintains an extensive list of past donors, of which they furnished me with approximately 215 names, thus creating a purposive sample. The participants had no prior knowledge of the experiment, as they are accustomed to receiving yearly solicitation requests from the organization. UWBC makes every effort to keep their donor list up-to-date and does not solicit a previous donor via direct mail if the donor already pledged in the current campaign year.

Measures & Procedure

The experiment began during the charitable organization's yearly direct mail campaign in December of 2008. Participants were randomly assigned to one of five conditions. Participants in all five conditions received the standard solicitation packet from the charitable organization. The standard packets included three items: a tri-fold brochure from the non-profit organization (*Figure 1*), a typed 8 1/2 x 11 letter from the Campaign Chairman (*Figure 2*) and a pledge return envelope.

The first condition was the emotional, handwritten (EH) letter - the second condition was the emotional, printed (EP) letter (*Figure 3*). The third was the Non-emotional, handwritten (NEH) letter and the fourth was the Non-emotional,

printed (NEP) letter (*Figure 4*). The fifth condition served as the control. The participants in the control condition received *only* the standard solicitation packet. *Table A1* describes all the techniques used in each condition. The volunteer who prepared the mailing tracked the participant conditions by creating an Excel spreadsheet with the participant names (from the mailing envelopes supplied) and a corresponding condition number.

All letters were written or printed on LIVE UNITED stationery that was purchased through the United Way on-line store. The stationery is recommended for personal notes and is a complementary size to the letter in the standard packet at 5 1/2” by 8 1/2”. I used dark blue ink for both the handwritten and the printed letters because the blue ink complemented the non-profit’s color scheme. Ink color is not anticipated to have an effect on donating results.

The two letters convey a similar message (the appendix contains the complete explanation and rationale for the content of each letter). The subtle differences between the two versions are in part due to the use of the six positive emotion words. Each sentence for both versions was crafted using direct mail best practices and there was no prior knowledge of what was in the letter from the Campaign Chairman when the letters were constructed, thus any similarities are coincidental.

The sentences used to test H1 contain the six positive emotion words: “*Your (interest and caring) actions towards your community contribute to positive change every day!*” In this sentence the words “*interest*” and “*caring*” are used to describe positive emotions. The next two sentences “*Imagine the*

pride that a single mom feels as she gets ready to enter the workforce, armed with a new set of job skills and confidence; or the relief that a caregiver feels as she realizes she has a support and someone she can talk to” make use of the words “pride” and “relief” to describe joy and contentment respectfully. Last, “Thanks for supporting United Way and for giving people the opportunity (for joy and happiness. ☺)” The words joy and happiness support the positive emotion, joy.

Results

I examined the results of the study by testing for overall effects and interactions of the hypotheses (using the SAS statistical program). I initially tested to see if the experimental condition was associated with the participants making a donation just prior to the mailing. Participants who gave prior to December 15, 2008 likely responded to another solicitation and were excluded from my data analysis (represented by a crossover score of 1). The cross-tabulation of the condition (with donation) is presented in Table 1. A chi-square analysis suggested no significant associations between rows and columns (Chi-square = 0.227, $p > .1$). This finding indicates that the experimental factors did not affect the probability that a participant would respond to the solicitation with a donation (illustrated in Table 2).

My hypothesis concerned the *average* donation elicited by each of the five conditions as shown in Table 3. An analysis of the distribution of dollars donated suggested a positive skew (as shown in Figure 5) indicating that many people gave no money while others gave large sums. To reduce the skew, I computed a log of dollars donated (of .0001 dollars) to those who gave no money since a log of zero ("0") cannot be computed. The log was taken off that amount and is illustrated in Figure 6.

I tested my hypotheses using an ANOVA with two factors (emotional versus non-emotional words and handwritten versus typed). For purposes of this analysis, participants in the control condition were judged to have received neither of the treatments intended to increase participation, and thus considered in the

same group as participants that were excluded (described earlier and represented by a crossover score of 1). The dependent measure was the log of dollars donated. The means of the four conditions are described in Table 4.

The results of the ANOVA suggested a marginally significant effect for the full model handwritten factor ($F = 2.68, p < .08$) and a marginally significant effect for the handwritten versus the typed condition ($F [1,189] = 3.82, p < .06$, eta-squared = .02). The effect for the inclusion of emotional words was non-significant ($F < 1$). Thus, my hypothesis concerning the importance of handwritten solicitations received weak support from the analyses.

Discussion

Past research suggests that charitable organizations have generally not changed their fundraising strategies and methodologies for years in part due to tight budgets and limited resources (New York Times; retrieved online 3/29/08). For many charitable organizations, it is standard operating practice to use strategies that include a combination of influence factors and emotional pleas.

This research tested the effects of donating behavior in a direct mail campaign using handwritten solicitations that contained positive emotion words relating to the previous identified pro-social motivations. It was argued that a skillfully constructed, handwritten, positive-emotional request would yield more donations and higher donation amounts from past donors than not using these techniques. Utilizing past research, it can be assumed that by making use of positive techniques in donation requests, it could assist in building donor trust and enhance their personal connection to the charitable organization.

As expected, handwritten requests yielded more donations than printed requests. It appears that donors related more favorably to a handwritten letter that someone actually took the time to write (instead of a typed or printed piece of correspondence). Some organizations send out correspondence that appears at first glance to be handwritten but is actually printed. The handwritten element likely stood out in a sea of pre-printed requests from other non-profit organizations (that are sent out around the same time we did our mailing). Even if a participant did not read the contents of the message, the mere fact that it was obviously handwritten (and not printed in a handwritten font) could have made a

difference.

I did not expect the nonsignificant findings between the emotional and non-emotional letters or the lack of any significant interaction between the conditions in regards to letter content having an effect on those who donated and the individual donation amounts. This lack of findings could be attributed to the letters being too long and that the overall message was lost if a participant skimmed for content versus reading and internalizing the letter. Also, it is possible that the letters did not resonate with the past donors in that they were not moved enough by the stories or examples, thus neither letter would make them want to donate or donate more. Another possibility is that two letters per packet was overkill and busy people do not have time to read that amount of correspondence – or even open it. Lastly, it could be more effective to use two or three of the positive emotion words versus six words. In a society of instant gratification, using less words with stronger examples may have been enough.

It is unfortunate that this experiment was conducted during a time when the economy was in the middle of a serious and on-going economic downturn. The United Way of Burlington County's donations were down approximately 4.5% overall for the 2008 campaign. Additionally, the letters were sent out in early December – a time when people are usually thinking about the holidays and good-will towards others, not losing their jobs or not being able to meet basic expenses. In a strong economic time (such as the last several years leading up to 2008), non-profits experienced more positive results on campaigns as people are usually in a philanthropic mood around the holiday season and probably had more

disposable income.

Likewise, a serious limitation when using direct mail is that there is no way of knowing if a request was actually ever opened or viewed by the intended party. If I conducted the same experiment in a work-place campaign or in another targeted setting where the participant would likely read the letter or the letter was not amongst a sea of other solicitation requests, I anticipate that the letter would be read for content. Even if I conducted the same experiment during a time of year when other non-profits and holiday cards are generally not flooding the U.S. Mail, I would estimate a significant response. Another possible limitation is that the experimental letters were combined with another letter (from the Campaign chairman) and other non-profit materials. In all likelihood, participants are not going to read both letters. I would suggest including only one letter and possibly less materials overall in the packet to better direct the donor's attention. The use of alternative mailing materials and techniques could also be explored – using a colored envelope or a larger, single piece of mail (like an advertisement) or even a mailing that invites donors to interact on-line or simply an on-line mailing.

There are some practical implications to these findings. I found that a personal approach (even in difficult economic times) provides a better chance to increase the number of donors. By increasing the number of donors, charities have an opportunity to continue to build trust and possibly create a long-standing personal relationship with the donor. While it may initially require more resources to handwrite letters – the gains over time could be worth the extra efforts. This research found that on average, those who received a handwritten

request gave on average over \$14.00 more per donation and 30 percent more people donated in this group over donors who did not receive a handwritten request.

Theoretically it is important to look at how a personalized approach, such as physically handwriting a request can be applied in future research as technology increases with the use of email, PDA's, computers, etc. It seems likely that computerized modes of communication will continue to replace door-to-door solicitations and U.S. Mail as a main mode of interacting for many individuals. The challenge in translating these findings to new mediums lies in exploring methods to bridge the often impersonal or misinterpreted emotional gap between individuals as they comfortably hide their faces behind their computer or other means of communication technology (Smith & Rivas, 2007). Smith and Rivas (2007) state that people miss the opportunity to connect at a very personal level when they cannot read someone's body language, facial expressions or have the ability to simply recognize another's passion and enthusiasm (or lack thereof).

Non-profits could consider partnering or expanding their affiliations with companies, colleges, and organizations in their community. Community partnerships may help some of the small to mid-size non-profits in finding advertising and technological resources as well as eager college students to assist in their efforts. By synergizing with other entities, non-profits can update their strategies to keep current and be in a position to survive and advance in difficult and changing times.

The lack of significant findings provides us with knowledge to build on in future endeavors. It has been well established that donors are fickle (Farsides, 2005). To keep donors interested and feeling good about their philanthropy, non-profits might consider touching base with donors more often – letting them know where their donations are making an impact. Emails or websites and web updates via phone texting are great ways to let the community know what’s going on in a very timely manner. In these communications, non-profits could invite donors to interact on their website with their own stories, sign up for emails/updates, volunteer their own ideas, time, or money - the possibilities are endless. Basically, people need a reason to want to get involved and stay involved (to build on motivation and positive perception) with respect to what is important to them and what kind of time they may or may not have to devote to important causes.

Moreover, future studies may also look to creating various scenario examples and testing the content of the letters first for effectiveness before using them in future campaigns. For example, since we know the gender of most past donors, we could explore targeting scenarios to each gender or family, etcetera. The idea of utilizing a new mailing list, not made up of past donors, may also be another way to test the effectiveness of the techniques. The use of other influence factors could also be taken into account when constructing additional methods to test. While partnering with local companies and organizations to assist in marketing and resource efforts, non-profits may find that other companies and agencies might have promotional items available to give potential or past donors.

Donated items – utilizing the idea and theory of reciprocation (Cialdini, 2001) has been effective in past studies and can help a non-profit set themselves apart from others.

Lastly, fundraising is complex and changes in one approach will likely effect other approaches or details there in – hence, proceed with the utmost care and caution when making changes and incorporating new techniques into fundraising (Das, *et al.*, 2008). However, giving to a cause you deem worthy and important, whether the gift is in time, resources or money can evoke great joy – a feeling that should be experienced by all.

Table 1. *Frequencies of Donation by Condition*

Table of Donor2008 by Condition Code							
	Donor 2008	1	2	3	4	5	Total
		26	34	31	32	33	156
Freq Pct		13.68	17.89	16.32	16.84	17.37	82.11
Row Pct	0	16.67	21.79	19.87	20.51	21.15	
Column Pct		70.27	85.00	79.49	88.89	86.84	
		11	6	8	4	5	34
Freq Pct		5.79	3.16	4.21	2.11	2.63	17.89
Row Pct	1	32.35	17.65	23.53	11.76	14.71	
Column Pct		29.73	15.00	20.51	11.11	13.16	
		37	40	39	36	38	190
	Total	19.47	21.05	20.53	18.95	20.00	100.00

Table 2. Probable Associations Between Experimental Conditions

Statistic	DF	Value	Probability
Chi-Square	4	5.6452	0.2273
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	4	5.3835	0.2502
Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square	1	3.3513	0.0672
Phi Coefficient			0.1724
Contingency Coefficient			0.1699
Cramer's V			0.1724

Table 3. *Means and Standard Deviations of Donations Received by Condition (with zero dollar amounts factored into means)*

<i>Condition</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Emotional Handwritten	47	\$29.66	51.37
Emotional Printed	44	\$24.32	70.16
Non-emotional Handwritten	47	\$32.04	65.52
Non-emotional Printed	44	\$20.11	60.18
Control	45	\$35.44	107.61

Table 4. *Means and Standard Deviations for experimental conditions*

Analysis Variable: loggift2008							
Emotional	Handwritten	N	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
		Obs					
0	0	74	74	-3.324	1.832	-4.00	2.301
	1	39	39	-2.797	2.402	-4.00	2.398
1	0	40	40	-3.117	2.137	-4.00	2.602
	1	37	37	-2.338	2.593	-4.00	2.000

Figure 1. Campaign Brochure (front/back)

Figure 2. Letter from Campaign Chairman

Figure 3. Positive Emotion Letter –Printed and Handwritten

Figure 4. Non-Emotional – Printed and Handwritten

Figure 5. Donations received by dollar amount for conditions – factoring in log of 0.001.

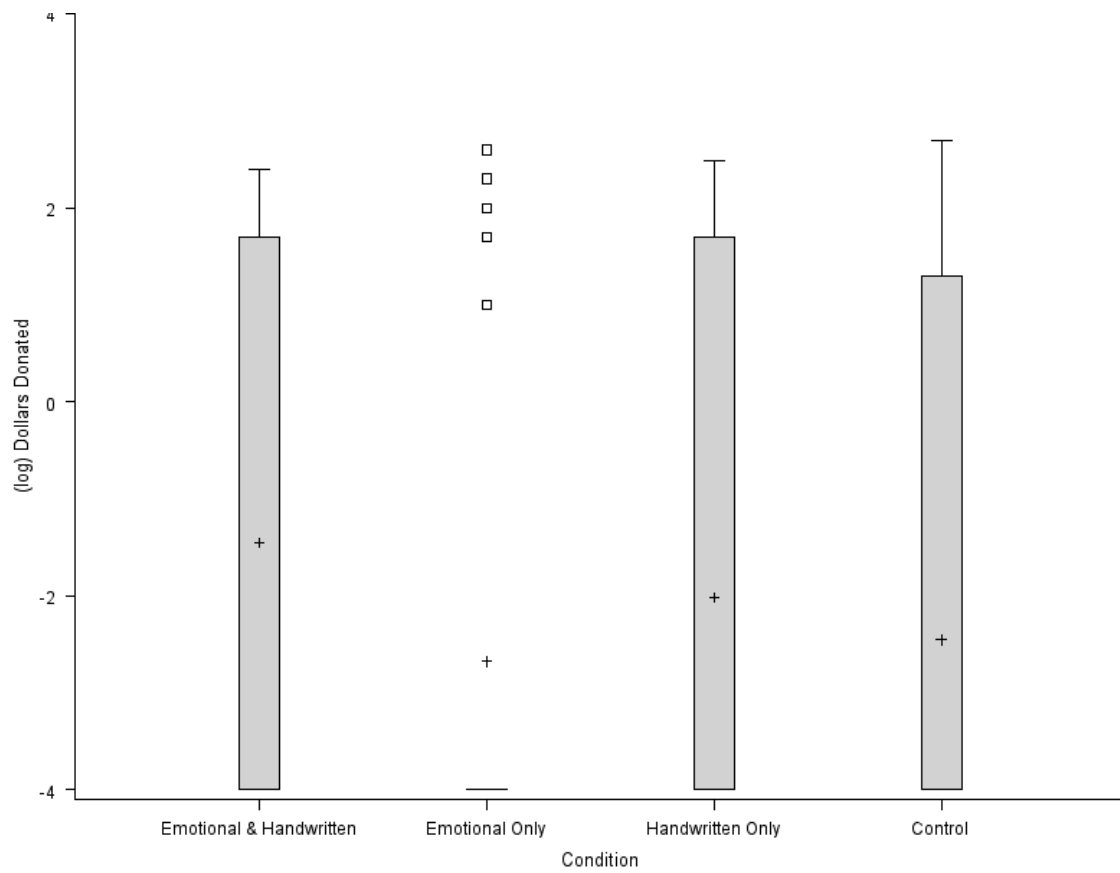
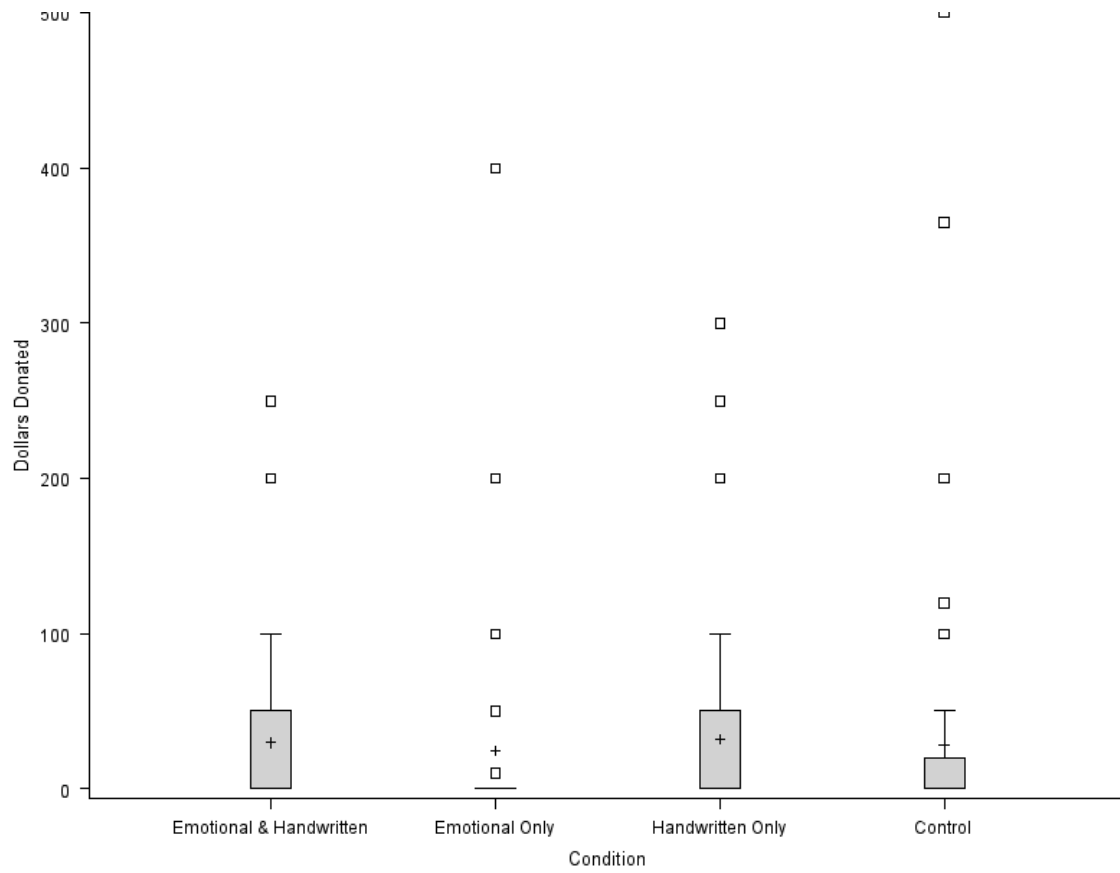


Figure 6. Donations received by dollar amount, includes zero dollar amounts.



Appendix

Table A1. Methodologies, strategies and influence techniques

	Factors of Influence; Persuasive Techniques	Donor Motives	Positive Emotion Words	Personal Appeal
Emotional Handwritten	“like me” Compliance Female subject Social Proof	Trust Personal Experience Recognition Increase self esteem	Interest Caring Pride Relief Joy Happiness	Handwritten Smiley Face
Emotional Printed	“like me” Compliance (click, whirr) Female subject Social Proof	Trust Personal Experience Recognition Increase self esteem	Interest Caring Pride Relief Joy Happiness	Not Applicable
Non-Emotional Handwritten	“like me”	Not Applicable	None	Handwritten Smiley Face
Non-Emotional Printed	“like me”	Not Applicable	None	Not Applicable
Control Group	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Both letters share the same greeting (*Dear Neighbor*). Neighbor was used to convey a sense of community and respect, whereas the use of the greeting *friend* could have been seen as presumptuous. Additionally, the use of *neighbor* utilizes the “like me” factor of influence as most donors reside in the same county.

The first sentence “*As a United Way volunteer, I am touched by the generosity of people like you*” is meant to instill trust (because a volunteer is likely perceived as a qualified judge of how donations are utilized as well as taking the time to actually write a letter). I also intended for donors to feel that they are good and generous. Using verbiage that describes trust is critical because

trust in a charitable organization was identified as the most important reason why people donate to a charity (United Way Opinion Poll, 2006). Moreover, in letting someone know that they are good and generous, I use the factor of *social proof* and *liking*. If past donors perceive that I believe them to be generous and good (that usually translates into being liked), they should act in a way that is consistent with this belief.

“Your (interest and caring) actions towards your community contribute to positive change every day!” This sentence (and its modification to include positive emotive descriptors in one of the conditions) illustrates the past, positive actions of the donor and how that optimistic action resulted in positive change in the community that they live in. The words *“interest”* and *“caring”* are used to describe positive emotions in more detail. I use the factor of influence, *commitment and consistency* to show that the donor’s past actions created a desired result. By donating again, the donor can feel good about what they are doing and perhaps even experience other benefits.

The next sentences *“Imagine the pride that a single mom feels as she gets ready to enter the workforce, armed with a new set of job skills and confidence; or the relief that a caregiver feels as she realizes she has a support and someone she can talk to”* describe how individuals who need help can help themselves and be part of the desired change. Past research shows that donors are more empathetic with someone who helps him or her self out of a difficult situation (Piliavin, Piliavin, & Rodin 1975; Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007). Research also reveals that donors are more likely to respond to the plight of a female versus a

male (Feinman, 1978; Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007). The words “*pride*” and “*relief*” describe joy and contentment respectfully. I intended to use situations that are common in today’s society. Most of us know a single mother that works to support her children or caregivers who often take care of their own families in addition to looking after elderly or sickly parents or other family members. Even if the donor isn’t directly affected by either of these scenarios, they are likely aware of such situations. Moreover, letting donors know how their donation is used and where the money goes helps to build trust.

“*Thanks for supporting United Way and for giving people the opportunity (for joy and happiness. ☺)*” The sentence illustrates simple common courtesy; thanking people for what they have done or are about to do again. It also tells the reader that he or she is in some way responsible for people having opportunity. In the emotional letter, the words *joy* and *happiness* support the positive emotion, *joy* (and the smiley face has been shown to increase compliance with some requests (Goldstein, Martin & Cialdini, 2008; Lynn, 2004)).

Lastly, the letter is from a real United Way volunteer in Burlington County. People who know me or live in my town might be more apt to donate. The *like me* factor and a personal touch applies here; that a volunteer actually took the time to write a letter.

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