



HELPING YOU CONNECT WITH YOUR KEY AUDIENCES

THE CASE FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS

People Don't Donate to Unknown Causes

By Bill Goodwill

Admittedly, my company's expertise is in the creation, distribution and evaluation of public service ad campaigns on behalf of non-profits. However, PSAs are not effective in raising funds per se; they are primarily for general branding or a way to educate the public about specific issues. Knowing that fundraising is the lifeblood for nearly all nonprofits this article provides a brief overview about the importance of public awareness as it relates to fund raising.

My first job out of college was to work for McGraw Hill's Publications Division, and I came across one of the most famous print ads in history, which McGraw-Hill used to demonstrate the importance of advertising. Called "The Old Man in the Chair" ad, it showed a grumpy old man with a frown on his face saying he knew nothing about the company that wanted to sell him an ad. It was named the best ad of the 20th century by *Business Marketing*.

An updated version of the ad is shown here which might be titled the "Skeptical Donor" ad. Both of these ads say essentially the same thing. Until you have carefully created widespread public awareness and credibility for your organization, the chances of developing a successful fund-raising effort is going to be an uphill battle.

According to experts, when it comes to raising funds, there are several fundamental truths that every non-profit executive should know:



- **Financial transparency/security.** You can bet donors are going to check your reputation out before donating. At a minimum, you need to be listed on the following websites: Charity Navigator, GuideStar, Great Non-Profits and the Better Business Bureau. Be sure your online donation form contains security validation links to let people know transactions are protected.
- **Hire an expert.** Unless you have a full-time fund-raising expert on staff you are going to need help, as fund raising is a special skill. You will reach your goal much faster by hiring an experienced fund-raising executive who knows how to shake the money tree on behalf of your organization. You may want to visit the Association of Fund-Raising Professionals to learn more about their work and how to find a fund raiser that is the right fit for your organization.
- **Address the right audience.** According to a study from Bloomerang.com *88% of donations* typically come from *only 12% of the donors*. This is why building relationships and asking for feedback from top donors is paramount.
- **Understand your donors' habits.** According to Mobilecause.com more than half of all people who visit a nonprofit's website do so from a mobile device, so make sure your website is mobile friendly.
- **Media diversity.** Develop a strategic plan to build awareness and raise funds via a variety of communication channels including direct mail, marketing, public relations, public service advertising, social media and special fund-raising events such as a Walk-A-Thon.
- **Email sells.** According to salsalabs.com email is responsible for about one-third of nonprofits' online fundraising revenue.

For some insightful tips on fund-raising [CLICK HERE](#)

Bill is the founder of Goodwill Communications, a firm that has distributed over 1,000 national PSA campaigns on behalf of nonprofits and federal agencies.