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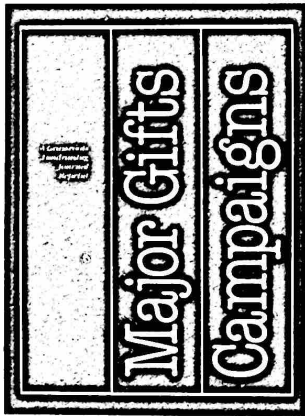
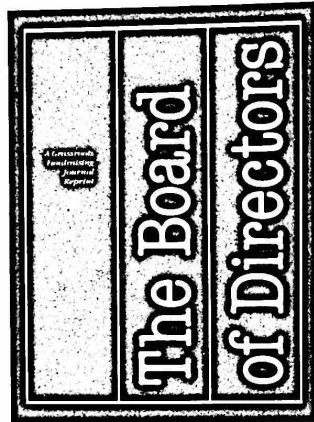
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Membership Development: Part 1

Developing A Membership Base

The following article is the first in a series of articles on membership development. It addresses the initial questions an organization must explore when considering starting a membership.

Future articles will focus on how to build an active membership, how to do outreach, how to write effective membership brochures, how to set up efficient record-keeping systems and creative ideas for membership benefits.

Introduction

In the world of community or social change organizations, developing a membership base can be one of the most important methods of grassroots organizing. Groups develop memberships usually to provide a formal means by which large numbers of individuals can establish a connection with their organization. The kind of connection that is established can differ from group to group and individual to individual. Some groups need members to carry out a large part of their work and so develop an active membership base of individuals who volunteer time and energy to promote the goals of the organization. Others establish membership primarily as a means of fundraising. Often these groups have "inactive" members whose major contribution is financial.

While the primary focus of this article is membership as a fundraising technique, this does not mean to belittle the value of building a membership base as a means of organizing. Indeed, membership by definition is a means of organizing and activating individuals. One way in which individuals can be active is to donate money to support a group's work. *That is only one way.*

Membership for Fundraising

While there are numerous ways in which developing a membership base helps build a strong organization, there are two ways in which it can help build a strong grassroots fundraising program. First, it provides a systematic means of attracting and processing large numbers of relatively small donations. Most organizations get some contributions from individuals even without soliciting them. Often these individuals get thanked, their checks cashed, and no record is kept of their names and addresses. Later, when the organization needs to seek donations from individuals they realize that a record of these donors might have been useful. Integral to developing a membership program is setting up a record keeping system so that these individual donors can be re-solicited each year.

Secondly, there is no better list of prospects for a major gifts campaign than that of individuals who have given before. While membership contributions are usually under \$50, a little research will show that among a list of a hundred people who have given \$25 or less, there are always a few who have the ability to give more. By identifying potential large donors, a membership base provides the foundation for a major gifts campaign.

Active vs. Inactive Members

The first step in establishing a membership base is to consider the question, "Why would a person want to become a member of our organization?" If your organization is one that provides numerous opportunities for individuals to become involved as volunteers and to have some input into the activities and direction of the organization, then developing a membership is a natural way to formalize that relationship. The answer to this question is simple. One reason a person would join as a member is to

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 membership benefits
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 by which members feel
 that they are special
 & are involved.*

have input.

However, many organizations have the bulk of their work carried out by paid staff. Decisions are made by the Board of Directors and staff and there is no desire to have an active membership. If you cannot or do not want to provide your potential members with the opportunity to have input into the direction of the organization, then the question of why a person would join becomes more difficult to answer. It then becomes very similar to "Why would a person give money to our organization?" and the answers are very much the same: Their giving provides them with a sense of involvement and a means of supporting the group without having to give time.

It is important to note that groups that attempt to attract members solely to contribute money will sooner or later come to two realizations. One is that the large number of individuals who are indicating an interest in the group through a monetary contribution could also be helping the organization more effectively fulfill its objectives by contributing time, and that it might be worth looking into ways to turn the "inactive" members into "active" ones. Second, people give money for a variety of reasons. One is an intellectual interest in the issues being addressed by the groups. Another is a personal involvement in the group. Intellectual interests tend to change much more rapidly than personal involvements. Therefore, organizations whose members are personally involved as activists tend to enjoy a higher rate of membership renewal than those whose members' sole involvement is through money.

Membership Benefits

Usually to attract and maintain members in an organization with an "inactive" membership one must offer a little more than the joy of supporting your work. That little

more is known as "benefits." There is an endless list of possible benefits that you can offer your members. When considering what benefits you might offer, try to be realistic about what you can afford. Sometimes organizations make the mistake of offering so many benefits that the cost of the benefits plus the cost of staff time to process the members ends up being much greater than the income generated through membership. If your major goal in developing a membership is to raise money, then you must be careful that the program costs less than it brings in.

The key in establishing membership benefits is to provide a means by which members feel that they are special to your organization and are involved. To that end, a special publication such as a newsletter that communicates with your members on a regular basis can be very important. Often, in fact, a newsletter is the only benefit derived from membership. Some groups organize events for their members such as an open house, and/or give members discounts on all products the group markets such as t-shirts, trips, tickets to events, etc. Some groups provide members with a membership card or pin.

What you offer your members depends in part on what kind of contributions you are getting. For example, it would be foolish to send silver pins to everyone who joins your organization with a \$25 contribution. However, if the average contribution is \$100, a pin might be a cost-

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effective benefit. Some organizations offer different benefits depending on the size membership dues being contributed and actually use the benefits to attract larger donations. The establishment of membership benefits requires the application of some serious creative thinking, and the topic is sufficiently large that it merits an entire article. For the purposes of this article, the important point is that *some* benefit must be offered to members.

Membership Dues

Having explored what you will offer your members, it is now important to ask what they will offer you. While different organizations get varying levels of donated time, advice and services from their members, all organizations get one donation in common—dues. Membership dues are an individual's annual contribution to establish a formal relationship with your organization. To accommodate the fact that people are of varying financial means, most organizations offer a range of dues rather than one set figure. A typical range might be: \$15 (low income/student membership); \$25 (regular membership); \$50 (supporting member); \$100 (sponsoring member); \$1000 (Benefactor). Some organizations offer fewer options; others more options. Most do establish a very low figure for low income or student members. For some organizations, depending on who their constituency is, the low-income dues might be as little as \$5; for others it might be \$20. Usually a reasonable figure that would be affordable to the "average" member is identified as "regular membership." Again, depending on the audience, that figure might be much lower or much higher than \$25.

Most groups offer higher dues figures than the average one so that those who can afford to donate more are given the opportunity to do so. As mentioned before, those who donate larger amounts are often offered extra benefits. Some organizations even set a very high dues figure for a "life-time membership" thereby offering potential members the added benefit of never having to renew.

Identifying Your Audience

An important question to be addressed at this stage is what kinds of people would join your organization. An answer to this question will help you in the process of establishing reasonable dues figures and will also be important in helping you to focus your outreach efforts.

There are usually two categories of people who would potentially join your organization as members. One is those who would benefit from the work you are doing. They could be potential clients or anyone who would directly feel the positive consequences of the work you are doing. The second is a larger group of people who, while they might not benefit directly, would benefit indirectly. These could be people who work in the same

or similar field, with the same or similar issues or people who share political beliefs that would be furthered by the work of your organization.

It is important to identify your "audience" so that when you are developing an outreach plan you know where to direct your efforts. While you may think that everyone will be positively affected in some way by the work you are doing, and therefore, should be a potential supporter, it is a fact that there are some kinds of people who are going to be more likely to support your work than others. This does not mean that outreach should be limited only to those who will naturally feel a connection to your work. If you see developing a membership for organizing or public education purposes, you will want to use your membership outreach as a means of communicating with as wide an audience as possible. However, those who will feel a connection because their lives are or will be made better because of your work will take less convincing to join. And, since an outreach effort must start somewhere, that is a good place to start.

Some groups find it helpful to try to identify their potential members by making a list. At the top of the list are those groups or kinds of people who, for whatever reason, would most understand the necessity of the group's work. The list progresses from those who would most understand to those who would least understand. This list becomes the framework for an outreach plan.

The development of an outreach plan is the next step in setting up your membership program and will be the focus of Part 2 in this series of articles. In Part 2, we will look at the various methods of outreach including gathering lists, use of the mail, events and public speaking and development of printed materials. ■

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Profile of a Non-Donor

The person chosen for this profile holds a philosophy that is increasingly common among upwardly mobile white people: that of total responsibility of the individual for his/her conditions, actions, and life.

This man is 36 years old, has an MBA degree from a prestigious Eastern university, and works in upper management at a computer manufacturing firm. His \$65,000 a year salary is enhanced by various stock options and other company benefits. He invests money in speculative stocks and real estate deals, bringing his gross income to nearly \$100,000 where it has been for the past 7 years.

Our non-donor gives neither money nor time to charity. He does not vote, will not sign petitions, or take part in any civic, spiritual or social action activity. He is not married and has no significant relationship, nor does he want one.

Surprisingly, our non-donor was active in anti-war activities during the early 1970s, and was a conscientious objector. Later, he was involved in various civil rights struggles. He says, "From the age of 18-25 I spent all my weekends at demonstrations, or at tables with literature about various social causes. I gave all my money away, and I worked in jobs where I earned very little money anyway. At one time, I was living in a three bedroom house in the midwest with 12 other people to save money. All of these people were involved in some way in social change work, mostly anti-war."

His radical change came around his

25th birthday when he read several books on self-responsibility, as he calls his philosophy. He discovered "that there is no one and nothing you can change except yourself. For thousands of years, good hearted people have been involved in bringing about reforms and revolutions, and the world is in more danger today than it has ever been. More people are starving to death, dying of cancer, being wiped out by genocidal policies here in the United States, like Native Americans, or abroad, like in Cambodia. Social change work doesn't help. In fact, it may make things worse because it sets up an illusion of helping."

I asked him if he thought simply improving himself would help to change society. He said, "At one level, I don't care. At another level, it will create change because I will be a person who does not need any government services. If everyone could be like me, then the government could scale down a lot, there would be no need for defense weapons, welfare, or anything like that."

I asked him how he accounted for the privileges he has as a white male with a good education that allows him to earn enough money to have this kind of freedom. I pointed out that his starting place is far ahead of that of the vast majority of Americans, particularly women and minorities. He said, "If you start without the things I have, you must get something out of it. There are a lot of examples of people who start with nothing and get ahead. It's because they want to, and they take re-

sponsibility for the position they are in."

I pointed out that a lot of people start with nothing and work hard and end up with nothing. He said, "Hard work doesn't matter. If you work hard but don't believe you can get ahead, you won't. If you work hard, and think you deserve to get ahead, you won't. Nobody deserves anything. You get ahead because you want to, and you do what is required based on that want."

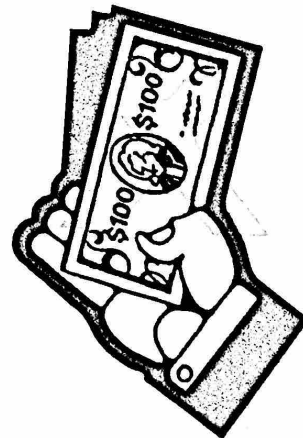
I asked if it was possible that he was just burned out and cynical. He laughed. "If you want to think that, that's up to you."

I tried one final tack. "What about the tax advantages of charitable giving?" He replied, "It doesn't make a difference. I take this position as a matter of principle, and I cannot be bribed out of it."

This viewpoint should cause all of us in social change work to re-examine our mission statements, and the way we state our accomplishments. This non-donor's arguments are difficult, and probably pointless to counter, but we must be sure that people cannot become cynical by looking at our work.

So often, we are tempted to present a gloomy view in order to elicit response, particularly financial response. It is important to remember that too much gloom causes prospects to become callous and hardened to social needs. When they perceive a constant need and no sign of progress, their donations of time and money will dry up.

KK



How to Break Through Bureaucracy

By Irene van der Zande

During a word association test, seven out of ten people presented with the word "bureaucracy" would probably respond with "government." The eighth and ninth persons might just wring their hands and cry "Help!" And the tenth person? Well, we'll get to that later.

Bureaucracy exists in any large institution. This article is about government bureaucracy because between grants, claims, reimbursements, permits, and licenses, government bureaucracy affects much of a program manager's life. However, any formally organized group of people can cause the same headaches, and the same techniques can be useful.

Bureaucracy means decision making by bureaus or departments rather than by individuals. To get anything done, quixotic program managers find themselves tilting with windmills of paper, procedures, and lines of authority.

The Trials of Job

A typical example is the experience of Job, a physical therapist who wanted to set up a parent governed day care center offering special therapy for handicapped children. After learning that money for innovative programs was available through the State Department of

Education, Job wrote a letter requesting the application forms. He received a form letter stating that the manual was temporarily out of stock, but would be sent shortly. Job waited patiently for three months, and then wrote again. He received the manual only to find that he had just missed the deadline for several excellent funding opportunities.

When Job read in the paper that new health funds had been allocated, he decided to try telephoning the State Department of Health. He was told that applications had to be made through an area office. He telephoned this office and learned that the person he needed to speak with was on vacation and would return his call within two days. After trying repeatedly for several weeks, Job finally contacted the appropriate person. This man denied that new funds were available and insisted that their department's budget was so tight that even existing programs would have to be cut back.

Eventually Job managed to apply for a grant. He and his Parent Board were overjoyed to learn that the Center was approved for funding and should be ready to start right away. They secured a location, obtained the necessary clearances, purchased equipment, and assembled a staff. Each week, Job was told that the actual award of the grant would take "just a little longer." Each week, there was a

new difficulty: the committee hadn't met yet; the contract needed to be revised; one of the forms was filled out improperly. After six months, Job and the Parent Board were deeply in debt. Just when they were ready to give up, the contract was approved. They were able to pay their debts and begin operation.

The Center was extremely successful, and Job thought his troubles with bureaucracy were finally over. Then, a health department official came to check the facility. This man announced that the red color of the walls in the dining area was too bright and would interfere with the proper digestion of the children, and would have to be changed to meet health code regulations. Job painted the walls white. A few months later, a State representative came to monitor the program. This time, Job was told that the white walls were too institutional. The last straw was when the books of the Center were audited by the State. Since the method of recording attendance did not conform with State requirements, Job was told that the Center would have to pay back \$3,000 of its grant. Burned out by red tape, Job resigned.

Job's story, as well as all the examples which follow, are based on real situations. The details have been altered for obvious reasons. Despite Job's experience, there are dedicated, capable people working for any bureaucracy who are willing to take responsibility and risks in order to get their jobs done. Cherish them if you encounter them. If not, the following techniques can help you to break through bureaucracy instead of being broken by it.

Make Personal Contact

First, and most important, make personal contact with the persons who work for the bureaucracy. On any given day, these people probably are each dealing with hundreds of pieces of paper—regulations, applications, laws and procedures. To protect themselves, employees within a bureaucracy build walls of unavailability and unavailability. Your job is to penetrate these walls and,

Get

*all important actions
regarding your dealings
with a bureaucracy in
writing.*

as the song goes, "All you need is love..."

Never take grumpiness personally. After having her head bitten off by a Medi-cal clerk, a counselor in a health program who needed a claim approved for one of her clients responded, "It sounds like you're having a hard day."

"You bet I am!" retorted the clerk. "Half the staff here are sick, and everybody wants everything all at once."

"I can see that you're under pressure," the counselor said sympathetically. "How can I help you to help my client?" Not only was her claim approved, but from then on, the clerk dropped everything to help that counselor with anything she wanted.

Unless you don't mind waiting extra months or years for an answer, go in person or use the telephone when gathering information about a bureaucracy. Ask the name of the person with whom you speak—starting with the secretary who answers the telephone—and use the name in your conversation. A secretary who is treated as an individual is likely to remember you and to be helpful in reaching people.

Often, the telephone number listed in a directory is incorrect or out-of-order. Often, the contact person mentioned has been transferred, is on a six-month leave of absence, or doesn't know much about your particular area of need. If you can't find the right person, ask to speak to the head of the entire agency or department. Be matter-of-fact. "May I please speak with Ms. Department Head?" You will probably be connected with her personal secretary who will either give you the names of appropriate people or will let you speak with Ms. Department Head's assistant, or even with Ms. Department Head herself. When you let people lower in the hierarchy know that their names were given to you by Ms. Department Head's office, they are much more likely to be helpful.

Once you have identified helpful contacts for your program, invite them to visit. One community was funded for a halfway house after an ex-addict took the representative from the National Institute of Mental Health on a tour of the poorest houses in the area and the street where the junkies hang out. The representative's tour guide introduced her to some of his friends and begged, "Please hurry up and get us our halfway house. I'm afraid I'll be needing it myself pretty soon."

Personal contact saved a day care center for migrant children from losing its funding, in spite of serious accounting errors. The Director invited the State representatives to come in person to explain the funding cutoff. They came at naptime, were shown the rows of innocently sleeping children, and were told, "These babies will be in the fields or locked in cars if we lose our center."

If people won't come to you, go to visit them. Bring photographs and potential participants or committed volunteers. They will be impressed if you have a well-

planned presentation and are dressed officially. Use facts rather than rhetoric. Give simple messages like "I'd still be on welfare if it weren't for this training program" rather than jargon.

Board members, volunteers, and participants can have an impact that a staff person with a job at stake cannot. Their presence is crucial when seeking help and can be essential during negotiations and program reviews.

Once you have built a relationship with individuals within a bureaucracy, maintain your contact on an ongoing basis. Ask their advice at each stage of the approval and review process. Send copies of press releases or testimonials about your program.

Be Prepared for Roadblocks

Some bureaucrats act as if our tax money is their own. Others don't seem to care about people and their problems. Take the position that you are doing bureaucrats a favor by giving them the opportunity to earn the existence of their jobs. Be prepared to break through the defensive roadblocks which these bureaucrats use to shield themselves from action.

1. "It's not my decision."

Ask who does make the decisions and what process is involved. If there's a committee, get the names of the key people and contact them individually. Find out when the committee meets and whether you may give a presentation. Ask who makes recommendations and what criteria are used. Ask to see copies of staff recommendations before your request is to be considered. If your request is not granted, ask why. Under the Freedom of Information Act, federal programs are required, at your request, to provide copies of all such data.

2. "There's no money."

Bureaucrats tend to be narrow in their point of view. While there may be no money under their jurisdiction at the moment you ask, funds may exist for your type of program in the office next door. Money may have been allocated but not yet received. The procedures for making grants may not have been established.

Ask to see departmental budget documents. Usually, bureaucrats don't even know what their fiscal situation is. They just repeat what they think they heard from someone. "No money" is very relative. Remember that the salary of the average state or federal employee is enough to support many community programs for an entire year! Your request might cause people to examine their budget themselves. After insisting that additional funding would be impossible, the State Department of Rehabilitation adjusted a second year grant to allow substantial salary increases for the staff of a sheltered workshop when an unused contingency fund was suddenly discovered.

Hidden discretionary funds may also exist. Sometimes projects lose funding in mid-year and the remainder of funds is reallocated. Occasionally, a budget surplus is

M*ake personal contact with the people who work for the bureaucracy.*

discovered and must be spent quickly. If a department does not spend all of its money by the end of the fiscal year, the money will have to be given back to the State or Federal Treasury. The department's budget for the following year may be reduced since it apparently did not need so much money. This situation provides a strong incentive to commit any surplus funds. If you have maintained contact with the department, they may give you the opportunity to help them get rid of their money.

3. "You've missed the deadline."

If the review process has just begun, ask how you can make a late application. If it's not possible, find out when the next funding or decision-making cycle will be. Let people know that you would like to be considered if additional money becomes available. You can use this time to get them interested in your program. People tend to be less harried when they are not in the middle of accepting grant applications.

4. "I don't think your approach will work."

Occasionally, people act as if they don't like you or your program. Try to find out the reason for their negative feelings and listen sympathetically. Maybe they were criticized by their boss after approving a request similar to yours which caused problems for their department. Maybe your predecessor was rude to someone in their office. Explain what is different about *your* situation.

"It's not in our priorities."

Redefine your program in terms of their priorities. Nutrition funding was granted to purchase dentures for elderly people on a Nebraska Indian Reservation after it was pointed out that without teeth, people could not eat a balanced diet.

6. "It's against the law."

Bureaucrats will often tell people they must do—or not do—something because of the law. Generally, what they call the law is their interpretation of some regulation.

Demand to see the law or regulation in writing. When Job was told by a health department official to change the color of his child care center's walls, he should have responded, "We can't afford a new paint job. Please show me exactly what the law says about color requirements."

Since the law only mentioned "the maintenance of a healthful environment," Job could have saved himself some extra work.

Study written laws and regulations carefully. Both are full of contradictions, ambiguities, and most important, exceptions. Recently, a federal department issued a requirement that all programs receiving reimbursement change their record keeping from a fiscal year to the calendar year, and send out a form letter to that effect. Before beginning the horrendous paperwork involved in making this change, one program manager requested a copy of the regulations and discovered that programs like his, which were below a certain size, were exempt from that requirement.

Be aware that changing laws requires action by a legislative body, but that changing regulations does not. Find out who has the power to revise or waive regulations, and get in touch with them.

**Be Willing to Go Up
The Chain of Command**

If no amount of persuasive argument or sympathetic listening leads to cooperation, go to a person with more authority in the chain of command. Don't be negative about the individual who was uncooperative. Just say that you need to speak with someone with a broader perspec-

tive. Go slowly, giving each layer of bureaucracy a chance to respond. Be prepared to go right up the chain of command to the head of the government if necessary. After being rejected at every level, the director of a day care center for migrant children in California received funding a few years ago by waiting outside the governor's office until Governor Brown came out, then telling him, "About our day care center...!"

Acting ready to appeal to higher authority can be all that's necessary to change a situation. Collection of pledges from a very successful walkathon almost came to a standstill for an organization because the local post office refused to allow the walkathon results to be sent to sponsors as a bulk mailing. When the director said "Tell me who to call, even if it's in Washington, D.C.," the post office manager decided to call Washington herself. She obtained a special authorization regarding walkathons.

Appealing to legislative representatives can also be helpful. In an attempt to make their documents readable, the legal division of one state department decreed that all its contracts with community organizations would have an average word length of no more than eight letters. But then the state lawyers responsible for revising the language found themselves unable to comply with their own requirements and, therefore, unable to execute any new contracts. The result was that an alternative energy

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Never take grumpiness personally.

program experienced months of delay in receiving funding. In desperation, the board president wrote an eloquent letter of appeal (all in words of eight letters or less) to the state assemblyman. A call from the assemblyman's office produced enough embarrassment that, in record time, the average word length requirement was abolished, the program's contract was approved, and the funding was released.

There may come a time when you need to appeal to the ultimate higher authority—public opinion. Keep in mind that the threat of public exposure can produce more results than the reality, but sometimes you have no choice. A State Department of Transportation was responsible for purchasing modified vans equipped with wheelchair lifts for a transportation program for handicapped people. Since the department insisted that the program would have to start immediately, staff was hired and clients were waiting the day the vans arrived. Unfortunately, the vehicles were delivered in dangerous condition. The modifications had been done improperly and were not repairable. After considerable public pressure and bad publicity, the department replaced the vans with vehicles on loan from the State fleet and allowed the program to do its own purchasing.

Hold People Accountable

Avoiding responsibility seems to be the major occupation of many bureaucrats. Your job is to make them accountable—whether they want to be or not. Get all important actions regarding your dealings with a bureaucracy in writing. Whenever an agreement is reached, ask that a letter be sent as a record of that understanding. If people say they're too busy, offer to write the letter for their signature. If necessary, you send *them* a letter defining the agreement. "As we agreed, you will recommend our program for full funding. You will also waive the following requirements...." Include the date of the discussion and the parties involved. Keep copies. When people leave or arbitrary changes are made, these documents are your protection.

Set time limits for all necessary actions. One of the biggest frustrations in dealing with a bureaucracy is that everything takes so long. If you don't ask that a form be

put in the mail today, you may not receive it for six weeks. You may be told that crucial decisions regarding your application will be made "right away" but will see nothing happen for months.

Force people to be accountable by insisting that they set specific deadlines. Ask "When will you have this information ready?" Confirm the deadlines given by saying "If I haven't heard from you by Friday morning, I'll call again." If a state or federal employee's lack of follow-up forces you to make several calls, try telephoning person-to-person collect.

Let people know when their actions create problems for your program. Through misinformation, lack of communication, and inconsistency on the part of a bureaucracy, programs can fail to meet the bureaucracy's own requirements. Keeping explicit records of exchanges and assertively pointing out where the bureaucracy is at fault can save a program from disaster.

Apply Techniques Appropriately

The manner in which you can use the techniques described depends on the sort of bureaucracy you're dealing with. Ask yourself, "Who owns this bureaucracy?"

For a private foundation, your answer will likely be, "Some family is the owner, and I'd normally have nothing to do with them except that they donate money which my program could use." You should be persistent in this situation (if you're not, people will think you're not serious), but the techniques need to be applied with a gentle hand.

If your answer is, "Some local company (or a national company with a local office) is the owner, but I help pay their bills," you can use your leverage as an important customer. In other words, you can request action and hold out the carrot of positive publicity.

But, if your answer is, "I own that bureaucracy, at least in part," you can act like an owner. Anything supported by taxes including local, state, and federal government, public educational institutions, and even public utilities, falls into this category. With these agencies, you can insist on action and answers.

Conclusion

Remember the tenth person who hasn't yet given a response to the word association test for "bureaucracy?" Well, the tenth person, knowing what bureaucracy is all about, would just smile and, with no time to waste, go to work. ■

Irene van der Zande, *Principle of Comprehensive Consulting*, specializes in counseling program managers on how to facilitate the changes necessary to achieve their agency's maximum potential. In addition, she teaches workshops on grant writing and long range planning.

Mail Appeals

But Will They Open The Envelope...?

Many mail appeals fail because much attention has been spent writing an effective letter that is then enclosed in an envelope that no one opens. Mail appeals are called "packages" because they are more than letters in an envelope. The whole unit consists of the letter, the return forms and return envelope, and the outside envelope which the contents are sent in. Each is an important part of the package.

First class personal and business mail can be sent in a plain envelope with great security that the person receiving the letter will open it. In the case of personal first class business mail, the envelope is simply a convenient way to carry the message.

In a bulk mail fundraising appeal, the outside envelope has an entirely different purpose. The envelope must grab the prospects' attention, and then intrigue them enough that they want to open it and see what's inside. The envelope in this case is like gift-wrapping. Everyone wants to know what is inside a present. In fact, gift-wrapping works so well that even when you may know what the gift is, there is still a thrill in opening the present.

That thrill and that curiosity—from the low level if you know what is inside to the high level if you have no idea, is what you should strive for with mail appeals. Make the prospect want to know what is inside the envelope.

There are many ways to do that, and different ways will work effectively with different audiences. For the purposes of

this article, we will concentrate on effective use of the outside envelope for small mail appeals (200-5,000 pieces) sent by bulk mail to new prospects.

In this case, the main idea is to make the envelope look as if it contains a personal letter. There are two ways to make that happen: to make the envelope look as if it were sent by first class mail, and to make it different from other mail appeals the prospect will be receiving.

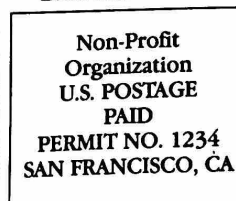
The methods you choose to accomplish this purpose will depend on how many volunteers you have to help with the mailing, your judgement about whether this is the best use of their volunteer time, how many pieces you are actually sending, and what your goal from the mailing is.

1) The best way to make a mail appeal look as if it came first class is to hand-write the address. If you have an appeal going to fewer than 750 names, this is not too arduous a task. The addresses can also be handtyped for the same effect. For lists of more than 750 names, a word processor with envelopes designed to feed through the track feature of the printer, can be used.

2) In addition or instead of writing or

typing the address, you can use a pre-cancelled bulk mail stamp in place of the more common postal indicia. (See below.) These stamps may be purchased at the Post Office where you send your bulk mail. The rules for sorting and handling the mail are the same as for any other bulk mailing.

Bulk mail indicia



Pre-cancelled bulk mail stamps



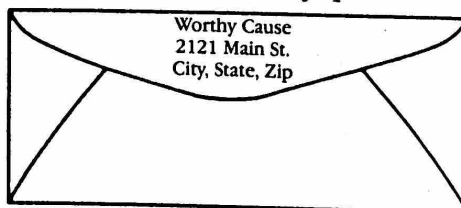
3) Consider the rest of the envelope. If you are in a major metropolitan area where a lot of mail appeals originate, don't put your name and return address in the upper left hand corner. Either put it on the back flap of the envelope, or use only your address without your organization's name in the upper left hand corner (shown below.) In either case, the prospect asks, "Who is this from?" and opens the envelope to find out.

On the other hand, if you are in a rural area, it is likely that the people receiving your appeal will open all letters that originate in their county or small town. In that case, you want the name of the town to be fairly prominent on the front of the envelope.

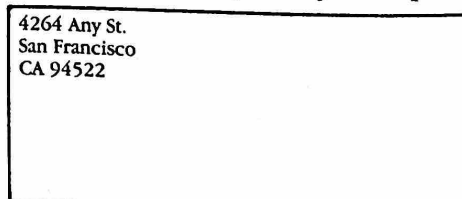
4) Most mail appeals are sent in standard business size envelopes (called No. 10). Your appeal will stand out if it arrives in a smaller or an odd-size envelope. Personal letters are not generally sent in business size envelopes, so to make your appeal look more personal, send it in a No. 6 3/4 or No. 7 3/4, or in an invitation style envelope. (See opposite for different sizes of envelopes.) One word of caution: if you use small envelopes, make sure your return envelope is smaller yet, so that it will fit into the envelope without being folded.

continued on next page

Address on back flap



Address only on front of envelope



Vary the size or style of the envelope:

No. 10 Official
9½" (horizontal) x 4½" (vertical)

No. 7¾ Official
7½" (horizontal) x 3¾" (vertical)

No. 6¾ Announcement
6½" (horizontal) x 4¾" (vertical)

No. 6¾ Commercial
6½" (horizontal) x 3¾" (vertical)

continued on next page

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Mail Appeals

continued from page 13

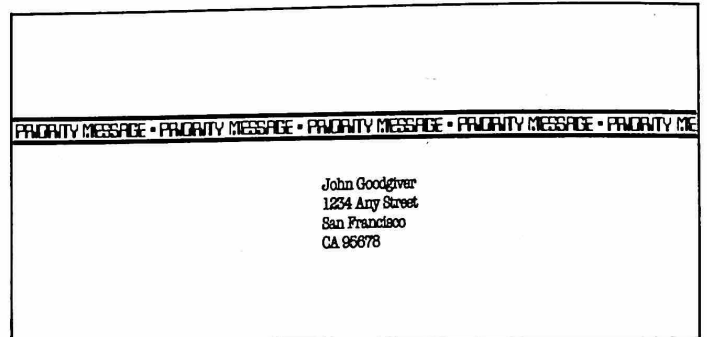
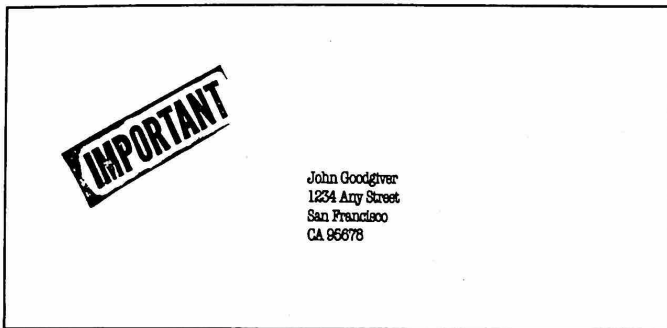
5) The least effective strategy for small mail appeals is "teaser copy." However, it should not be totally disregarded. "Teaser copy" involves writing, drawing or using a photograph on the envelope itself which intrigues the reader or causes

some emotional response which will lead to the envelope being opened. The ineffectiveness of the teaser copy method lies in the fact that most direct mail appeals use it, so it will not make your envelope stand out. The examples below show the most common uses of teaser copy.

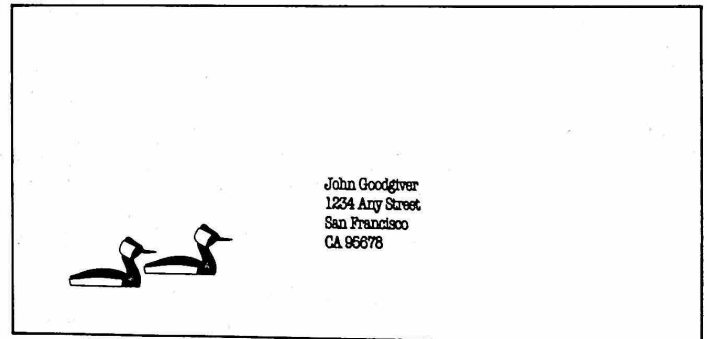
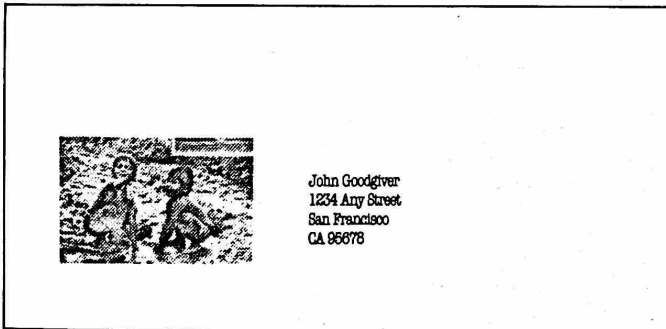
As you can see from these examples, there are many methods which will help motivate people to open your envelope.

You may wish to experiment with various styles of outside envelopes to find which methods work best for your organization. Save mail appeals from other groups which you open, and figure out what about the envelope caused you to open it. The more creative you can be designing the outside envelope, the greater chance you will have of the prospect reading the appeal. 

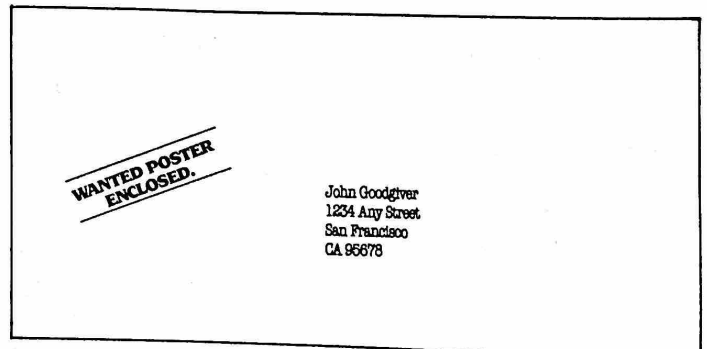
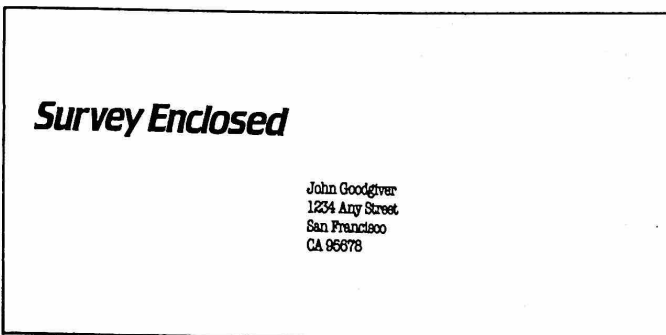
Words & phrases, as well as the style of the graphic, give an impression of urgency:



Pictures or drawings are used extensively for children, animal or wilderness appeals:



Phrases that are "come-ons," promising something for nothing:



(These No. 10 envelopes are shown at 35% of their original size.)

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