# Grassroots Fundraising Journal

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**The Alternative Fund Movement: Gaining a Foothold in America's Workplace**

**Looking Good, Part III: Just the Words That Matter**

**State of the Journal**

# Writer's Guidelines

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# In This Issue



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# The Alternative Fund Movement:
## Gaining A Foothold in America's Workplace

*by Peggy Mathews*

A quiet revolution is happening in America's workplaces—a revolution that is changing how people view charitable giving and challenging the United Way monopoly. This revolution is promoting community ownership of philanthropy and directing more of the lucrative "payroll deduction" dollars to nontraditional social welfare and social justice nonprofits across the country.

Behind the revolution is the "Alternative Funds" Movement made up of non-United Way funds across the country offering employees alternatives to giving to United Way. Alternative funds are federations of—or umbrella funds for—local, national and international nonprofit organizations. Their main source of charitable contributions is workplace giving—or payroll deduction—campaigns, but they also raise money through corporate gifts, events, direct mail, and major donor fundraising.

This past fall the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) published a special report, "The Great Charity Drive Expansion," announcing that nontraditional alternatives to United Way have passed the $100 million milestone in revenues raised for social justice and the environment.

According to the NCRP Report, the movement has grown dramatically over the last 10 years, from 14 funds raising $1 million in 1978, to 38 funds raising $22 million in 1988. In 1988 nontraditional alternative funds raised $120 million for social and economic justice and the environment. Among the fastest growing of these funds are the social action funds, which expected to raise a total of $2.7 million in 1988 for grassroots social change organizations.

According to NCRP executive director, Bob Bothwell, the increased revenues show a growing trend toward more alternative charities in operation and their greater participation in payroll deduction drives. "The increased funding for non-traditional charities reflects both the growing number of funds and their improved access to the workplace," he said.

Local nontraditional alternative funds are established in just about every major city on the east and west coast and the mid-Atlantic. The recent trend now is for regional or statewide funds to organize in the more rural, less densely populated states: Colorado, Montana, Utah, Tennessee, Idaho, Alaska, Maine. In these areas the population needed to make an alternative fund successful requires the fund to reach out and serve more than one city or county.

### *The many varieties of alternative funds*

There are now 91 alternative funds in the United States. Of these, 53 are traditional charities such as national health and welfare, and international relief and development agencies. Another 38 are nontraditional funds that raise money for social and economic justice and environmental organizations.

Of the nontraditional funds, there are two main types: national and local funds. The national funds are the United Negro College Fund, and the National Service Agencies. The United Negro College Fund, founded in 1944, collects nearly $5 million from payroll deductions among federal, state and local government employees. The National Service Agencies was organized in 1980 to obtain federal employee contributions through the Combined Federal Campaign. It represents 56 member agencies ranging from the National Organization for Women Legal Defense Fund and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, to Recording for the Blind and the National Right to Life Trust Fund. This year the National Service Agencies expects to raise $9 million from the Combined Federal Campaign.

The local nontraditional alternative funds include 11 Black United Funds (all part of the National Black United Fund), 2 women's funds, 2 environmental funds, and 21 social action funds (most of which are associated with Community Shares/USA). Community Shares of Tennessee is such a fund. Collectively, these local nontraditional funds predict they will raise $8 million during 1988, primarily from payroll deduction revenues.

## *Why alternative funds?*

In the Reagan era of massive funding cuts for social programs and deregulation of industries, grassroots community groups were faced with the two-edged sword of greater needs for their services, yet little funding with which to provide them. According to the Urban Institute, government support for most charities plummetted $17 billion in real dollars during the first four years of the Reagan Administration.

As the battle for government and foundation money got tougher, grassroots fundraising understandably became more important to nonprofits. Nearly 90% of the total $80 billion in annual charitable contributions in the United States comes from individuals. And to get those individual donations, workplace giving campaigns can be the most cost-effective strategy, as proven by United Way's $2 billion revenues.

Studies show that when employees are permitted to spread their contribution over time through regular deductions from their paycheck, they give three to seven times as much as they would give in one lump sum. Payroll deduction campaigns also reach many people at one time, making it a most efficient way to solicit many small donations. Furthermore, the employer will often cover the costs of labor and materials needed to conduct the campaign, keeping the costs to the nonprofit minimal compared to the great return.

As non-United Way organizations attempted to enter the arena of workplace fundraising, previously dominated by the United Way, they found many barriers, from special state laws that barred United Way competitors to "negative" campaigns that promoted suspicion and fear of including alternative funds in employer charity drives.

To gain access to employees and to pursue this very lucrative market for non-profits, the Alternative Fund Movement was born. The primary target of these funds was the public workplace, and their campaign was ultimately to rest on obtaining a guarantee of their rights to free speech.

## *History of the movement*

The roots of the Alternative Funds Movement are in the late 1960s when leaders in the Los Angeles black community saw that few traditional funding sources, including United Way, were putting money into black community-based programs, although middle-income black workers were giving billions of dollars to charity every year. In 1968, Walter Bremond founded the first Black United Fund in Los Angeles, called the Brotherhood Crusade, to tap into the rich vein of payroll-deduction giving. After five years of struggle, the fund broke into the Los Angeles County workplace campaign, and later added city and county housing authorities, the L.A. Unified School District and several small private companies to its list. By 1984, the fund was generating about three quarters of a million dollars through payroll deduction campaigns, and another million dollars through events, giving by major donors, and corporate and foundation grants.

Bremond worked steadily in the 1970s to organize local Black United Funds across the country (in Detroit, San Francisco, Philadelphia, New York, and New Jersey) and to get them included in workplace fundraising drives. In 1974 he set up the National Black United Fund to assist in the formation of more Black United Funds and provide technical assistance to its membership. Black United Funds are foundations that make grants each year to a broad variety of community and economic development organizations, including some that work with other racial or ethnic groups.

During the 1970s other alternative funds were also begun, as nontraditional charities saw the potential of workplace solicitation. These funds were organized by grassroots groups and constituencies often neglected by the United Way funding process: groups focusing on organizing and advocacy efforts, those addressing civil rights and economic justice for women and minorities and issues of the environment and peace. Most of these funds organized as federations, controlled by and for the benefit of their member organizations.

But the doors to public workplace campaigns did not really open up to alternative funds on a national basis until the National Black United Fund, twice denied admission to the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), won their 1976 lawsuit against the federal government, charging discrimination and violation of the fund's right to free speech. In 1980 a federal district court judge decided in favor of the National Black United Fund and in 1981 the Black United Funds were admitted into the nation's largest workplace campaign. That lawsuit established the rule that if government workplaces allow one charity to solicit contributions, they cannot indiscriminately deny other charities their right to solicit contributions as well.

Under the Carter Administration the Combined Federal Campaign was opened to a limited number of advocacy and nontraditional charities. But under the Reagan Administration, and with United Way's urging, the CFC became more restrictive, and alternative funds and national advocacy groups have had to band together to oppose various Executive Orders and regulations intended to keep them out.

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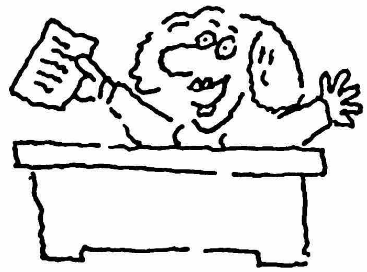
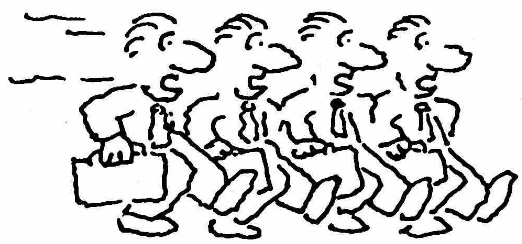


*"My New Year's resolution is to ask a lot of people for money in person—but I don't know how!"*
—Gina Genuine, Iowa

*"And a fundraising plan, and some Board members who'll do it, and..."* —Executive Director, Important Non-profit



*"We're very busy. We want something to read that tells us all we need to know."* —Fundraising Committee, New York

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It has been a long and hard-fought battle, with United Way and the Reagan Administration blocking all attempts to open the CFC to nontraditional charities. However, in 1987 Congress passed legislation that finally established an open CFC, including access for advocacy groups and alternative funds.

Since the Black United Fund's 1980 legal victory, alternative funds have succeeded in gaining access to many state, county, and municipal workplace campaigns. Sometimes the efforts required litigation, sometimes they employed lobbying to create legislative changes. As a result, government campaigns, often the major source of revenues for alternative funds, have grown tremendously. Whereas in 1978 only one state government payroll campaign was open to nontraditional funds, today 29 state and scores of local governments allow their employees to give to a broader range of charities.

## *The drive to gain access in corporate America*

With the public workplace access battle virtually won, alternative funds are now focusing on the major source of payroll deduction revenues: the private workplace. Corporate employees tend to give three times as much as their government counterparts, yet this is the "hardest nut to crack" for alternative funds, since private employers are under no legal obligation to run open campaigns. Additionally, CEOs of local corporations often serve on United Way boards and fear that opening their workplace to other charities would cut into United Way's revenues.

Contrary to these expectations, a study conducted in 1988 by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy found United Ways often benefit from "multiple charity" campaigns—that is, one campaign providing employees with a number of charities to support. Based on a small sample of 227 multiple charity campaigns at 50 worksites in 10 states and the District of Columbia, the survey found that giving to United Ways increased annually in 75% of the campaigns. And 55% of the time, United Way donations increased more than their national average of 10%. In fact, according to the survey results, United Ways suffered most in the campaigns in which they had the most control over the campaign's management and the least competition from other charities.

In 93% of the 227 campaigns surveyed, total giving went up. And in 73% of the campaigns, giving went up more than 10%. It appears that the good old fashioned open marketplace rules apply in workplace giving campaigns as elsewhere: when provided with more than one brand to buy, the consumer is more likely to make a purchase.

More and more national corporations and hundreds of smaller businesses are seeing the benefits of multiple choice campaigns. National corporations signing on include IBM, AT&T, Apple Computer, Safeway Store, Lotus Development, Bell and Howell, Aetna, and St. Paul Companies. The challenge now for nontraditional alternative funds is to open up many more private workplace doors.

## *Future opportunities and challenges*

Recent trends in the workplace point to a bright future for alternative funds. The fastest-growing segment of private industry are small businesses with 50 or fewer employees. Many of these businesses are not closely aligned with United Way and therefore could be more approachable. Steve Paprocki, NCRP's director of field operations, cites several other trends that will affect how United Way and alternative funds campaign in the workplace: demands by workers for more choice in all aspects of their employment; a growing number of managers who are women or people of color; a more positive view of alternate charities; and greater support for self-help and long-term efforts.

Now that more and more "60s generation" people are moving into management positions, more decision-makers have an awareness of social justice causes and non traditional charities. There is a growing awareness that United Way is limited in the constituencies and organizations it helps. United Ways tend to admit only one or two agencies a year, and over 40% of their $2 billion goes to 12 major charities, including Red Cross, Boys Scouts, Child and Family Services, Catholic Social Service, YMCA and YWCA, and Lutheran Social Services.

As horror stories in the press have revealed this or that charity's disreputable actions, such as using contributions for high-paid executive's perks, people have grown more suspicious of charities and are demanding to know where their money is going. Furthermore, there is a growing sentiment among employees for options in how they give to charity, and for being able to designate where their money goes. Likewise there is a growing resentment in the workplace over heavy-handed tactics sometimes used to coerce people to give, whether or not they wish to do so.

## *Developing a national strategy*

Seeing these challenges and opportunties, a number of social action, environmental, and women's alternative funds organized a national coalition in 1987 called Alliance for Choices in Giving (ACG). The Alliance's priority is to open up national corporations, non-profits, and unions to its member funds. The Alliance is working with leadership among its funds to identify corporations that should be approached and coordinating the efforts. The Alliance is also focusing on providing technical assistance to its membership through cross-training of staff and board members and through regional and national workshops. In March 1989 the Alliance will co-sponsor the annual Alternative Funds National Conference with NCRP.

In addition, the social action funds have formed their own network, called Community Share/USA. Unlike ACG, Community Share/USA provides marketing and promotional assistance to its members. By creating generic Community Share posters, billboards, PSAs, etc., Community Share/USA offers its members the benefit of ready-made and therefore less expensive materials to use in their home town. As Community Share/USA founder Joe Vanni says, "My vision is of an executive who leaves Providence, Rhode Island and sees a pitch for Community Share at the airport, then gets on a plane to Minneapolis and sees Community Share on a billboard and before he gets back sees an advertisement in a magazine arranged for free by the Ad Council so when he comes home he wants to know what Community Share is."

### *Creating A New Breed of Philanthropists*

The impact of alternative funds goes beyond the dollars raised for nontraditional charities. As more alternative funds enter workplace giving campaigns, more grassroots social justice organizations come to the attention of employees. The best estimates are that one-half million employees are now being solicited by alternative funds, learning about community issues and needs that they had never heard about before.

In so doing, alternative funds are creating community-owned philanthropy, stimulating people who had never before given to give back to their community. These funds are educating blue-, pink-, and white-collar workers alike that philanthropy is not just the work or responsibility of the wealthy. They are teaching the working person that they can and should have a say in how we address our communities' problems and needs to create a more just society.

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*AUTHOR'S NOTE: Much of the information in this article comes from the recent Special Report of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, "The Great Charity Drive Expansion." Copies of the report are available for $15.00 from NCRP, 2001 S St., NW, Suite 620, Washington, DC 20009. Thank you to Steve Paprocki for help in writing this article.*

*Peggy Mathews is founding Director of Community Shares of Tennessee. She is also one of the founders of the Appalachian Community Fund, and previously worked as an organizer and fundraiser for Save Our Cumberland Mountains. She lives in Jacksboro, TN.* ■

*Parts I and II of this series dealt with achieving strong visual impact with your written materials through knowing graphic design elements and how to work with production people. In Part III, the* Journal's *copyeditor focuses on getting the words right to keep your reader involved in your message.*

# Looking Good:

## Developing Effective Written Materials at Low Cost

## Part III: Just The Words That Matter

*by Nancy Adess*

Once you've attracted your reader's attention with a good-looking, well-produced piece, you have to keep it with effective copy. Good writing, like most of the work we do, is the product of planning and style.

Just as with any project, written materials need to be planned. You wouldn't set out to have a dance or provide a new service without carefully thinking through all the details of the project, enlisting the people you need to help you and going about it step by step. Producing written materials is much the same, although usually in a shorter time frame.

People often put off planning, thinking that action is more important—get that flier written or that newsletter out. But unless you're an extremely clear-thinking person, you'd do well to give yourself the "luxury" of planning. This is more obvious when you're thinking about creating an annual report than producing an invitation to a conference or a letter to members, but the principle is the same. By planning well in advance you can make a realistic timeline to include the elements that make your piece worth reading.

First, decide your purpose—why are you writing something anyway, what do people need to know, what is the primary message you want to get across? You may want to have others help you brainstorm this point. With a newsletter, thinking ahead can help you avoid the last-minute rush to get articles, or help you know what to leave out if you have too much copy. If you plan ahead, you may be able to come up with themes or topics to build each newsletter around, and that means you could ask people for articles well in advance of the deadline. The *Journal,* for example, plans six months at a time so it can give writers plenty of time to get their articles in.

If you are producing a major piece such as an annual report you may also want to develop a theme or pattern to unify the sections of the piece, such as a day in the life of your organization, profiles of people you've served, or case vignettes. A battered women's shelter, for example, could follow a woman as she comes into care and gains confidence and skills through the programs offered and the kinds of help she receives at the shelter. A hospital volunteer program could follow two (or more) volunteers through their days in the hospital showing the range of services the volunteer office provides.

Second, identify your audience so you can focus your writing to the intended reader. You'd write differently if your purpose is to tell city councilpeople or legislators what you've accomplished than to inform potential clients about your services.

When thinking about your annual report, for example, decide whether it's meant to report to donors on your program in a general way, or educate your constituency about your services in a very specific way, or impress your legislators or other decision-makers with the importance of the services or advocacy your organization provides. You also want to consider how important statistics and financial data are to your purpose, so you will know how to treat them in the text. If your financial information is not as important as your program reports, the tables of numbers and pie charts can have a smaller space than program information. If, on the other hand, your financial information is of primary importance to those reading the report, then by all means give it a lot of room and concentrate on making the graphic presentation as dynamic as possible.

Third, define your format—what will best meet your purpose and suit your audience, and possibly be new, stimulating, and exciting. For example, a few years ago the Women's Foundation of San Francisco produced its annual report as one large sheet (11x17) that folded down to mailing size. They used a handsome paper and design to enhance the piece, and they fit all the basic information they wanted to give out onto that one sheet.

The ultimate "look" of the piece, as determined by format choices, may also influence how you write it. If, for example, you decide that a picture story might be a fresh and inviting way to present your material, you may limit your text to short but thorough explanatory captions, rather than writing an essay.

Next, decide who can help you. You may solicit help in deciding what to say, such as with an educational brochure, or in actually producing drafts or sections of the piece, such as articles for a newsletter or segments of an annual report. If you have a standing editorial committee on your board that helps you brainstorm the content of the next newsletter or annual report or the look of various pieces, make sure you use them. They may have wonderful new ideas to bring from their experience with other organizations or at their workplace. If you don't have an editorial committee I heartily recommend developing one. Two or three volunteers from your program or board can be a wonderful, consistent help in checking for content, style, looks, continuity with other written materials, and for making decisions about what goes into a piece and how it looks.

Consider who in or outside the organization can best help you, either with content or with feedback—it may be a key volunteer or board member, the executive director, the public relations person (for larger organizations). When planning your production schedule, make sure you leave enough time in your process for these people to read drafts and suggest revisions.

Now that you know why you're writing something, who is going to read it, and who is going to help you along the way, you can start writing. Rather than facing the dreaded blank sheet of paper and expecting yourself to pour forth with lucid, sparkling prose, help yourself begin by making a list of the principle points you want to cover. For a newsletter article there may be only one or two points: something happened and your organization had a role in it, for example. For an educational brochure, there may be four or five, or more: the need for your services, what the services are, how they are paid for, how to use them. To develop an educational brochure on the sexually transmitted disease chlamydia, for example, I met with a group of health providers and asked them to brainstorm everything they thought their clinic patients needed to know about the disease. I wrote fast and furiously as they talked and when I got back to my office, developed a list of statements that had emerged from the meeting. From there it was easy to write the brochure.

When you know your key points, state each one in a short declarative sentence. This may be more difficult than it sounds, but it will save you from hopeless muddle in the end.

If outlining in this way is antithetical to your personality, I suggest checking what you write by outlining it afterward. Read each paragraph and write in the margin what the topic of that paragraph is. If you find that each sentence in the paragraph is a topic in itself (a common finding of this method), then you'll know you have too many ideas in one place and you can begin to clean up the writing. Keep in mind that people need ideas and information presented to them clearly, usually one well-developed thought at a time.

Once you've been able to write down what you want to say in simple, clear and concise statements, then you can evaluate it and revise it until it is appropriate to your purpose and interesting to your readers.

Now you're ready to write a first draft. Take each of your topic sentences and flesh out the idea with supporting data and illustrations. Consider how one paragraph flows into the next, and add some phrases to relate them. Phrases and words such as "On the other hand," "moreover," "furthermore," "in addition," "or" and "meanwhile" create bridges from one idea to the next and keep the reader moving through the story.

After you have a first draft, don't work on it for a few days. If you don't have a few days, give it what I call "the

24-hour rule"—letting it sit at least overnight. You need to get away from it, do something completely different, and then come back to it with a fresher eye. You need that time to extricate yourself from the words and get back to the bigger picture. I follow this rule even with correspondence that's of any substance. Say, a letter to a researcher or to a donor or a legislator. The next day, or a few days later, you'll find ways to say things more concretely, more briefly, more clearly. I guarantee it.

While the piece is sitting in your in-box, start thinking about how you want it to look when it's printed. Keep in mind the graphic elements discussed in the first article in this series. Thinking about layout and design issues *now* will have an effect on how you see the length and organization of the piece when you come back to your writing. If you are not doing the layout yourself, now is the time to meet with the person who is. For example, in writing an informational brochure about a network serving agencies for runaway youth and their families, the designer and I decided that in the absence of a powerful photograph, it would be good to put a strong statement on the cover, introducing what the brochure was about and leading the reader inside. That meant composing the right number of words to fit on the cover, having them say just the right thing with just the right emphasis, and getting approval from the client. This step took time. Fortunately, it was time we had while the draft was going through revisions.

When you take your piece out of your in-box again, you'll be ready to start revising. As you re-read your piece, look for these common obstacles to clear writing: wordiness, ambiguousness, jargon, lack of focus, use of abstract rather than concrete images, misplaced thoughts or elements, and the use of passive rather than active wording.

### Common obstacles to clear writing

Wordiness
Ambiguousness
Jargon
Lack of focus
Use of abstract rather than concrete images
Misplaced thoughts or elements
Passive rather than active wording

Only after you've done at least one revision should you show it to anyone else for comments. Otherwise you might embarrass yourself. But when you're ready for advice, seek it openly. Rid yourself of that time-consuming ego trip called "pride of authorship." This isn't the great American novel.

### Useful books and references on writing style

William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd Edition, Macmillan, 1979 (Paperback, $3.25)

Casey Miller and Kate Swift, *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing*, Barnes and Noble, 1980 (Paperback, about $5)

Jan Veniola, *Write Right!*, Tenn Speed Press, 1982 (Paperback, $4.95)

*The Written Word II*, Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1983 (Hardback, $4.95)

Theodore Bernstein, *Watch Your Language*, Atheneum, 1958 (Paperback, $7.50)

***Larger Investments:***

Theodore Bernstein, *The Careful Writer*, Atheneum (Paperback, about $10)

*The Chicago Manual of Style*, University of Chicago Press, (about $36)

So don't hesitate to show your drafts to others in the organization (editorial committee, other board and staff). Despite busy schedules, it doesn't take long for someone to review even a relatively long piece, such as an Annual Report, and the piece will benefit from someone else's perspective. Not only can they correct any facts that might be wrong, they can also point out infelicities in the writing and suggest additions that might strengthen the piece. It's worth the time, both yours and that of others in the organization.

Once you've received comments and suggestions from your editorial committee or whoever else you feel can help, decide which suggestions to incorporate and revise it again. As you do so, keep in mind how it will look on the page. It may need shorter paragraphs or places where you can break up the text with subheadings. For bigger pieces, such as educational brochures, it's critical to direct your reader's attention to the different points of information so that someone who only wants to know, for example, about treatment of a condition, or service hours of your agency, or your legislative strategy or whatever can find it easily. So use subheadings as a guide to the text.

## Style

Style involves those elements that make the writing clear, help it to move along smoothly, maintain your reader's interest and show the reader your respect for their intelligence and their time. Anyone who has written a term paper has probably used Strunk and White's classic reference, *Elements of Style*. There are, in fact, a number of books relating to style (see box). Here is a checklist of style elements relavant to the type of writing we're talking about here that I've taken from a few of these.

*1.* Write to one person, keep that person in your mind and speak to her or him. For example, I was recently hired to write the text for a tape cassette on how to write a grant proposal, and my instructions included the following paragraph:

Write it as if it were written to a room full of volunteers, most of whom have two years of college at a community school, have not travelled widely, think foundations will save them, and want to start or get more money for their humane society, church school, health clinic, food bank, homeless shelter, Big Sisters program, etc. Imagine them also to be primarily in small towns or rural areas, with limited or no access to other reference materials.

*2.* Make a few key points. Don't try to say too much. Even an ardent supporter has only a few minutes to focus on your message. This is where knowing just what you want to get across comes in handy.

*3.* Use short, punchy sentences, with active verbs. Verbs can make or break a sentence. They get you there or they don't. Find colorful, bright, surprising verbs. They drum up excitement and convey your enthusiasm. For example here's a sentence from a horseback trailride flier I worked on recently:

> *We may circle a secluded marsh, follow a meadow, or ride through a tunnel of trees. The weather and seasonal changes lend their mood to each ride, and wildlife appears to the watchful.*

That would have been a much duller promotional if it had said, "We may go around a marsh, go across a meadow..." or "The weather and seasons change with each ride and wildlife can be seen by the watchful."

Furthermore, be vigilant about using active construction and eliminating the passive voice. One of the differences in the horseback ride description was in active versus passive in the sentence, "Wildlife can be seen by the watchful" and opposed to "Wildlife appears to the watchful."

Passive voice is a favorite of deadly dull bureaucratic language.

*4.* Keep the material short. Don't waste people's time with repetition. Don't pad. But don't skim either. Use what you need, but only what you need. In addition, keep all the elements short: short words, short sentences, short paragraphs.

- Membership and appeal letters need not be more than two sides of one page
- Keeping an informational brochure short will allow for white space and make room for art—either photos or graphics
- Annual reports should give 1-2 sentence background, 1-2 sentence program description, and 2-4 sentences for accomplishments (for each program)
- Newsletter articles also follow these rules

*5.* Use examples and illustrations—verbal and visual—to make your material come to life. Take a look at the examples used in this article.

*6.* Teach, don't tell. Present facts to help your reader come to a decision or take an action. Don't tell people what they must do—assume they can think for themselves when they know the facts about the situation, then give them an understanding of what action can help. Wouldn't you rather feel you're making your own choice about what you do than being preached to, threatened, or "guilt tripped"?

For example, don't tell people that unless they vote for Proposition A libraries all over the state will close. Tell them the importance of the library to their community, the impact of funding cuts, the remedies that Proposition A promises. Then let them know they have a chance to keep the libraries open by voting for the proposition.

*7.* Weed out jargon, including initials. Also, avoid cliches and flowery adjectives. For example, here's a sentence describing an employment program for seniors:

### *Passive versus active voice*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Passive:* | Five bills are selected each year by the Advisory Board as priority issues. |
| *Active:* | each year the Advisory Board concentrates on five top issues. |
| *Passive:* | Representatives are sent by each committee. |
| *Active:* | Each committee sends a representative. |
| *Passive:* | Grazing standards on ranches was the subject of a workshop led by the Advisory Commission. |
| *Active:* | The Advisory Commission held a workshop on ranch grazing standards. |
| *Passive:* | A regional telecommunications network has been set up. |
| *Active:* | The agency has linked member services with a regional telecommunications network. |
| *Passive:* | Contributions from clients to further expand the program are invited. |
| *Active:* | Client contributions will help us provide service to even more people. |

"The purpose of the program is to provide, foster, and promote useful work experience activities for seniors." Why not say, "The program finds work for seniors"?

***8.*** Eliminate fancy words. Let your ear guide you. Use easy, familiar words. Write to express, not to impress. A plain tone lends lucidity and force. I recently saw a corporate memo forbidding "portable personal consumption confectionary units" at workers' desks. They were talking about a candy bar.

***9.*** Begin each section with a clear point and move forward from there. Use the next sentences to back up your point with examples or supporting facts. Don't wobble off into new territory.

***10.*** Revise. There are always too many words at first. Omit those that have no reason to be there.

***11.*** Use definite, specific, concrete language, not abstract theoretical language.

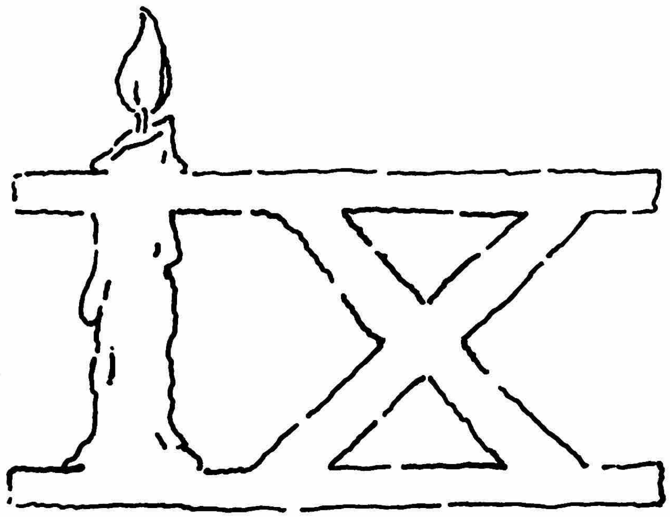
***12.*** Be thoroughly honest. Do not exaggerate or overstate. And don't try to manipulate your reader's emotions through the use of underlining and exclamations points!

***13.*** Let others brag for you. If you're trying to impress on potential donors or supporters the value of your services, use real testimonials from real people. Don't write an endorsement and then ask someone to put their name to it. It will undoubtedly sound "canned." Ask a few clients or a few volunteers to say in their own words what your service or organization has meant to them.

***14.*** Look at your second paragraph. Chances are it says what you meant in your first paragraph before you were warmed up. Many pieces do much better to start with their second paragraph and simply eliminate the first. A corrollary to this principle is to avoid introductory remarks. Get the reader right into your story or your apeal or your report. Here are some ways:

- Use a startling statement, such as a little-known fact that will catch the reader's attention
- Give a piece of news, such as a legislative breakthrough or something that has happened that affects the reader's life
- Use a quotation from a known person (Daniel Webster, Ben Franklin, Simone de Beauvoire, etc.)
- Use a story, such as about a client you have helped (a real story)

Clear writing is a matter of knowing what you want to say and working with the words to get it right. When your writing is clear, your message will come across and the cause of your organization is enhanced.



# State of the *Journal*

While typing this up for the typesetter in December, I had to pause and count the years. Could it possibly be nine years since Lisa Honig and I first had the idea of publishing a magazine whose sole function would be to tell small groups how to raise money in their communities? I went back to the shelf and looked on the December, 1988 issue. Sure enough. Vol. 7, Number 6. So the next issue has to be Volume 8, Number 1.

A lot has happened in these nine years since we invented the *Journal* and the eight years since we started publishing it. I have moved from California to Tennessee and am getting ready to move again (more on that later.) Lisa has moved from fundraising for a public interest law firm to being an attorney. Carter was president when we planned the *Journal*.

By the time we published the first issue in February, 1981, Reagan was in office. Lisa and I have both turned thirty, and I have turned 35. Because I stayed in fundraising, and Lisa moved to another career, I took more responsibility for the *Journal*.

When we started the *Journal*, we said we would stop publishing when we no longer had anything new or useful to say about fundraising. I thought we would stop after five years or so, but we still have a lot of strategies to write about, new ways to do old things, and new ways to do new things. Plus, as we have trained organizations in fundraising over the years, served on Boards, served as paid staff or consultants, it has become increasingly clear that effective fundraising can only happen in an organization that is effective in many other ways. So, we have devoted many articles to Board development, hiring and firing staff, running meetings, planning, evaluating, and the like.

We still have about 1500 in our readership. Some groups come and go, but many readers have been with us for four, five, and even all eight years. We have readers in every state, plus over 14 foreign countries. When we started, we were the only publication devoted to small non-profits, and one of a handful written for any size non-profit. Now we have been joined by some very fine publications such as *The Non-Profit Times* and *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. Groups have become increasing sophisticated and strategic in their fundraising, and more and more people name themselves "professional fundraisers".

These are all good changes. The number of people in fundraising, the amount of technical assistance available, and the range of written materials all serve to strengthen this sector. We need all the strength we can get.

On a personal note, I am moving from Knoxville to New York City for a while. The *Journal* will still be headquartered in Knoxville, and I will be here frequently. Anyone wishing to reach me can still do so at this address. I will be working for the Funding Exchange, an umbrella organization of fourteen community foundations all committed to supporting organizations working for social justice. The foundation I work for now, the Appalachian Community Fund, is the newest member of the Funding Exchange. All fourteen members have joined together in an unprecedented national campaign to raise $15 million for a jointly held endowment. Each fund will share in the interest generated by this endowment. My job will be to coordinate the logistics of raising this money.

I am very excited about this move, because it give me the chance to help raise mega-money for radical social justice work. At the completion of this campaign, I will have raised money under almost every circumstance, which was a goal I set for myself 12 years ago. As the endowment progresses, I will be writing "how-to" articles on this strategy. Many readers have requested such articles, but we have never found anyone who could write them from the point of view of grassroots groups.

Everything about the *Journal* is staying the same, including the price. We look forward to publishing again this year, and hope that you readers will write with suggestions of articles, will write articles yourselves, and will encourage others to subscribe to the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal.*

Thank you.

Kim Klein

*Kim Klein*
*Co-Publisher*

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**Number 1 (February 1984):** Cash Management for Smaller Non-Profit Organizations; Using Phonathons for Renewal; Free Advice for a Price (how to hire and use a consultant).

**Number 6 (December 1984):** Developing a Membership Base; How to Break Through the Bureaucracy (getting access to government money); But Will They Open the Envelope? (designing carrier envelopes for direct mail appeals).

**VOLUME FOUR**

**Number 3 (June 1985):** Membership Record Keeping: If We Only Had an Endowment (What to consider in starting an endowment fund); A Community United (case study of a farming community's fundraising efforts to help a family in need).

**Number 4 (August 1985):** Through Rain, Sleet and Snow (the personal experiences of a canvasser); Major Donor Prospecting; Hiring a Development Director; Rapidly Growing Women's Funds; Long Beach "Friendraiser" (case study of a special event designed for publicity).

**Number 5 (October 1985):** Planning and Running a Phonathon; When Money Isn't the Problem; Philanthropy 1984 Summary.

**Number 6 (December 1985):** How to Use the Media; Grassroots Fundraising: Back to Basics.

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