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PHONE: (510) 596-8160 • FAX: (510) 596-8822
E-MAIL: chardon@chardonpress.com • www.chardonpress.com

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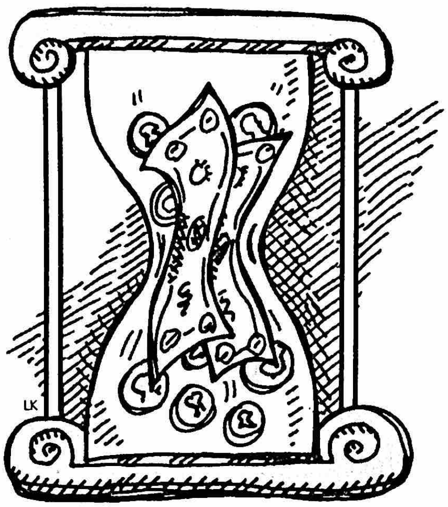


How We Raised Money *in a Hurry*

By Mary Humphries

I recently discovered that, when confronted with a formidable fundraising challenge, it's wise to consult the experts, craft a feasible plan, and perhaps most important, trust your instincts. With virtually no experience in securing gifts from major donors, and with the help of many talented and resourceful people, I was able to lead our group in raising $1.5 million from middle-income donors, most of it in just five months. This article focuses on how we accomplished that feat—what worked, what didn't—and the important lessons that we learned.

The Campaign and Its Goals

For eight years, Northwest Ecosystem Alliance (NWEA) worked tirelessly to save 25,000 acres of priceless boreal forestlands in north-central Washington's Loomis State Forest—critical habitat for one of the last remaining healthy populations of lynx in the lower 48 states. During that time, we succeeded in getting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to add the lynx to the list of federally protected endangered species. But other campaigns were less successful. Though our science experts spent countless hours in the field studying and documenting the Loomis' ecological values, we were left fighting several bills in the state legislature to mandate logging in the area. And we engaged in four separate and expensive lawsuits to protect the forest, without success.

Then, in April of 1998, when we'd run out of options to save the Loomis wildlands and Washington's lynx, the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) unexpectedly offered a deal: They would stop logging the Loomis wildlands we sought to protect—all 25,000 acres—if NWEA and our partners raised the $13.1 million needed to compensate the state's Common School Construction Trust Fund for the market value of the standing commercial timber and the land. The beneficiaries of the Trust Fund are Washington's schoolchildren, who increasingly need new schools to accommodate their ever-growing numbers.

The deadline for raising the funds was set at July 1, 1999. But before we could know how much money we had to raise, a professional appraisal of the land and timber had to be conducted. That was completed in mid-November, giving us only eight months within which to raise virtually all of the funds—a daunting task for a regional conservation group with a membership of roughly 3000 people, a budget of $650,000 and an untested donor base.

In December, as our coalition developed a plan, I was given responsibility for developing and implementing the grassroots component of the campaign, with a goal of $650,000, or 5% of the total funds needed. While a relatively insignificant proportion of the $13.1 million price tag, I nevertheless thought this a staggering figure. I realized immediately that we were going to have to contact hundreds of people to meet this target, since the range of gifts I would be securing was between $100 and $10,000 with, I hoped, a handful of gifts exceeding that amount to make up for any shortfall. I also knew that I needed some help in putting together a fundraising plan that would work. I spent two days consulting with experts in the field and, after much number-crunching, we came up with an aggressive but achievable plan comprised of four components:

1. House parties
2. Major donor visits
3. Phone solicitations
4. Membership recruitment letters and other mail appeals highlighting the campaign.

How We Raised the Money

I had one advantage going into this campaign: we had gotten an early start on grassroots fundraising, as we had to pay the DNR $95,000 by July 7, 1998 in order to defer three timber sales that would have sliced the very heart out of the Loomis wildlands we sought to protect. To raise that money, we conducted our first-ever major gifts campaign in May and June of 1998. Exceeding our goal, we raised $113,000, which swelled to $170,000 later in the year with the response to a December appeal letter to our membership. With this head start, I still had $480,000 to raise between January 1 and July 1, 1999. Here's a closer look at each component of the plan.

1. House Parties: After identifying 15 initial house party hosts, including members of NWEA's board, we planned to host 4 parties a week for 20 weeks and raise approximately $1,000 per house party, for a total of $80,000. We also hoped to recruit two additional house party hosts at each event. I hired a full-time House Party Coordinator whose sole responsibility was to identify hosts, convince them to host a party, work with them throughout the pre-party phase, give a slide show presentation at each party and ask for campaign gifts. Much of my time at the outset was spent preparing the supporting materials needed to ensure the success of these house parties, including standard invitations, an outline of tasks to accomplish for each of the four weeks prior to the party, an agenda for the party itself, introductory remarks, and text for "the ask." We also spent many hours role-playing the actual presentation and "the ask" with our house party hosts.

2. Major Donor Visits: We counted 610 prospective major donors. Assuming that we would reach 65% on the phone and that 50% of those would agree to a visit, we calculated that we had 200 donors to visit. Knowing I could not alone undertake the task of visiting all these people, I hired a full-time Major Gifts Coordinator along with a part-time Gifts Solicitor. Among the three of us, we determined that it would be possible to visit all 200 donors. Our goal was to secure an average gift of $500 from 200 individuals, for a total of $100,000.

I drafted a schedule that set forth what weeks letters would be sent to donors, what weeks follow-up phone calls for visits would be made, and what weeks visits would be scheduled so that we could get through all 200 individuals as efficiently and systematically as possible. This schedule worked well until the final four weeks of the campaign, when we realized the number had increased from 200 to at least 250 because of referrals and we would not be able to visit all who agreed to do so. We opted to simply solicit the remaining gifts by phone.

3. Direct Mail Membership Recruitment and Appeal Letters: I calculated that it was possible to raise $100,000 through direct-mail appeals if we stuck to a rigid schedule of four mailings, one per month for the months of February through May. The plan was to mail 250,000 pieces to members and subscribers of like-minded organizations and publications, with an anticipated return rate of 1% (2500 responses) and an average gift of $40. I worked with a direct-mail consultant to implement this component of the campaign.

4. Phone Solicitation of Members: After reviewing the number of donors in our database and factoring in the number that we would continue to recruit through direct mail, I calculated that we could reach 2,604 people by phone and generate an average gift of $38 per contact, for total funds of $98,952. I hired two part-time Phone Solicitors and drafted a three-month schedule that would enable them to get all of their calls made.

In summary then, the plan would raise the needed $480,000 in a five-month period and require four full-time staff, one part-time staff person and the assistance of two consultants—one for direct mail appeals, the other for ongoing campaign oversight. I estimated the cost of the plan at $151,250. Staff salaries for a five-month period along with consulting fees would come to $51,250, while the recruitment mailings alone would cost $100,000. Thus, to net $650,000, we would have to raise about $800,000.

I cannot overemphasize how much the success of the plan depended on the initial preparation of all of the supporting materials: the gift range chart; packets for major donor visits; an outline of what needed to be covered during major donor visits; scripts for telephone conversations with donors, including responses to objections; pledge forms; answers to commonly asked questions, etc. Extensive role-playing was also extraordinarily beneficial. As the campaign progressed, I found that doing our homework up front, sticking to our goals and schedules, and checking in with one another on how we were all doing, were crucial to our fundraising success.

In the end, we raised not $800,000 but $1.5 million through dedication, sheer hard work, and ingenuity. It also certainly helped that during the latter part of the campaign we received excellent media coverage in several news stories and editorials, with contact information included. This attention was due in large measure to the fact that the firm helping us secure gifts of $10,000 to $1,000,000 suggested we hire professional media consultants to help with promoting the campaign. We paid $38,712 in fees and incidental expenses to the media consultants, but the income generated from publicity and news coverage was at least five times that amount and likely more. Clearly this was a wise investment of funds.

The Results

The outcomes for my segment of the campaign taught us a lot. Here is what we achieved and what we learned.

1. We hosted fewer house parties than expected but secured many more gifts because the hosts were willing to invest considerable time and effort in making sure the events were successful. In fact, the final house party featured a band, fine food and beverages, dancing, singing and an amazingly heartfelt pitch for gifts from the host. Expected income: $80,000; actual funds from house parties: $122,951.

2. The donor visits also exceeded our most optimistic expectations. The average gift, at $1,100, was more than

twice the $500 we had projected and represented in many cases a tenfold increase in the donor's previous largest gift. Moreover, some donors we visited made second gifts after just three or four months. Expected income: $100,000; actual funds raised from major donor visits: $521,739.

3. Phone solicitations did not work well for us for two reasons: first, our members made it clear they did not want to be approached for gifts over the phone, and second, the training we did for the phone solicitors was insufficient. Expected income: $98,952; actual funds raised from phone solicitations: $5,500.

4. While the return rate for recruitment mailings hovered somewhere between .8% and 1%, the average gifts were well above our expectations, ranging from $65 to $140, with a single gift of $50,000. Expected income from mail appeals: $100,000; total funds raised from recruitment mailings, special appeal letters to members, and campaign updates with gift forms: $686,392.

Aside from these results of our four-part program, we learned a number of other things:

- ***Word-of-mouth pays off.*** Total funds raised from miscellaneous sources (Web site, member referrals, publicity and media): $194,335.
- ***People were willing to make "stretch gifts"***—giving more than we had anticipated—because they could choose from the alternatives of pledges over time, gifts of stock, gifts on credit card and matching corporate gifts.
- ***It is very helpful to have a key person overseeing the whole plan.*** Much of my time was spent providing prospects for donor visits, making sure that data were entered accurately, revising support materials, writing thank-you notes, keeping track of how each component of the campaign was performing and adjusting our goals accordingly, training and role-playing with staff, etc. Staying on top of this administrative function clearly paid off.
- ***It takes money to make money.*** In the nonprofit world, we tend to want to cut down on expenses wherever possible; this can sometimes be to our own detriment. We learned that spending the money to hire media consultants and extra staff or to mail 250,000 appeals meant that we were able to raise far more money than we anticipated.
- ***Perhaps most important, we discovered that most of the money we raised***—about 70%—came from households with incomes of $60,000 or less.

In conclusion, I found that the key ingredients to a successful fundraising campaign are several: preparation and planning; self-confidence and a fundamental belief that the organization's work is important and necessary; excellent communication and social skills. I would also add three more personal observations: 1) trust your instincts when logic fails you and be flexible—plans often need to be altered as the campaign's objectives and interim deadlines are met; 2) accept that you will make mistakes—some large, some small—and that your message will not resonate with all of the people all of the time; 3) accept that you are also capable of great things and that many people will find your passion infectious and your message compelling. GFJ

Mary Humphries is Development Director of Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, and gives particular thanks to Valerie Reuther, Lisa Karl, Ellis Robinson and Kim Klein for making this campaign's success possible.

Book Excerpt

THE *Art* OF Media Advocacy

by Makani N. Themba

Editor's Note: Chardon Press's latest book, Making Policy, Making Change: How Communities are Taking Law into Their Own Hands, *by Makani N. Themba, is rolling off the presses as this issue of the* Journal *goes to print. The book—a joint project with the Applied Research Center—shows how activists around the country are making change and getting it in writing, through more than 1,000 local policies enacted in recent years. Using case studies, Themba describes how groups have developed and won initiatives affecting advertising and sales of alcohol and tobacco in low-income neighborhoods, living-wage contracts for workers, corporate accountability for environmental damage, and bringing youth into the policy-setting process. The following excerpt is from a chapter on how to draw media attention and support for such policy initiatives.*

More and more, policy decisions are determined by public perceptions of an issue, and those perceptions are the product of news media. Therefore, media coverage is a key factor in building support for advocacy initiatives—and advocates must learn to use it effectively. Effective media advocacy is simply using the news to influence public opinion and affect the terms of debate. It's hard to think about being proactive in the newsmaking process but, with the proper preparation and planning, any savvy group can participate in shaping the news.

How does the right story "happen"? That has a lot to do with what kind of information advocates are prepared to provide the public. And that, in turn, has to do with the ways that organizations are prepared to interact with the media. It's more than just being ready for an interview. It is a basic issue of having the infrastructure (e.g., fact sheets, mailing lists, materials, staffing, etc.) to effectively support media-related work.

The first step in developing an organizational infrastructure for media advocacy is learning the media terrain. Framing an issue without first monitoring media coverage of it is like driving cross country and having no idea what direction to go, what month it is, or what the weather will be. Good media advocacy requires some surveying of the media landscape and a system for tracking coverage and media outlets.

Start with the many published media lists available through bookstores or nonprofit associations. For example, *Editor and Publisher* puts out an annual yearbook of media outlets. Those media outlets that are important to a group's efforts should be called to get the names of key contacts. Who is the main reporter on health issues or environmental issues? Who should be contacted with a public service announcement? Routine calls should be made to update lists, as personnel move frequently. Also, try to track coverage of your issue and related topics at least monthly. Clipping services (both electronic and paper) are useful for tracking newspaper coverage. Some electronic services will also track broadcast transcripts uploaded on databases or on the World Wide Web. Many local papers, especially ethnic and other community presses, are not a part of these services. It makes sense to regularly monitor (i.e., read, watch, subscribe to) key outlets in your area.

Pay special attention to your issue's placement in papers or on broadcast news (is it the lead story? the last?); who's quoted, how they are quoted and how much; whether the reporter had a grasp of the issue's complexity/importance; and the overall angle or frame of the story. If there are no stories on the issue, look for coverage on related issues. For example, if there are no recent stories on teen suicide, what kind of coverage are teens getting in general?

Too many groups attempt to reach the media without properly defining an issue. An issue is the overarching concern that drives your initiative, whether it's a problem or vision statement. Issues should reflect the mission, core values and concerns of the organization or coalition—and should incorporate an institutional angle. That is, the description of an issue should identify ways that institutional actors (government, corporations, etc.) have an effect on the issue, and should develop strategies to make institutional change for the better. This is important as a key tenet of media advocacy is *advocacy for change at the institutional level*—not marketing changes in individual behavior. Here are some examples:

Not-so-good issue statement: *Teen violence is a problem; we have to get teens to leave guns alone.* No institutional angle here; no opportunities to advocate for institutional change. In this construction of the issue, there's only room for education programs that seek to market new behaviors to youth. Of course, education programs are important, but they are not advocacy.

Good issue statement from a problem perspective: Teen violence is a problem; we have to address where young people get their weapons.

Good issue statement from a vision perspective: We can have a safe and healthy community for our young people if we expand opportunities for healthy, alternative activities.

Once an issue is defined, the group is ready to identify an action or initiative to address the issue. This is the most important step in preparing for media advocacy because it will define what you communicate about and to whom. Identifying an initiative requires an honest assessment of the group's strengths and weaknesses, the political climate, and thorough research of the available options.

Know who you are talking to. Most media advocacy is focused on getting the message to the initiative's target because that is who has the power to enact the desired change. In some cases, groups use media advocacy to mobilize supporters as a preliminary step to targeting policymakers. Although media can support organizing goals, it can never be a substitute for organizing. That's why most groups shape their media strategy to target policymakers.

Once the target is chosen, research how they get their information. Most elected officials and other gatekeepers read the editorial pages of local newspapers to gauge community concerns. Television news also helps set the public agenda and affects the "public conversation" on a particular issue.

Know what you're saying. Now you are ready to take the final step in preparation: developing a message. A message is not a sound bite or a slogan (although it can help shape them). It is the overarching theme that neatly frames your initiative for your target audience. Messages should be relatively short, easy-to-understand, emotive and visual. The message should reflect the hard work and research that went into developing the initiative and should be supportive of the overall strategy.

The California Wellness Foundation's Violence Prevention Initiative invested significant resources in developing messages on youth violence. They invested in public opinion research (including polling and focus groups) that uncovered critical information that would guide their media effort. First, they found that most people did not know that handguns were the number-one killer of kids in California. Their research indicated that once people knew, they were much more likely to support gun control. The polling and focus groups also helped them to figure out which segments of the population tended to agree with them the most. This allowed them to prioritize and focus their resources.

Gun control is no easy issue. Armed with the data and a strong media plan, the foundation believed that if they could shift the discourse on guns from a "rights" issue to a public health issue, they would have a better chance of winning against some awesome opponents: the gun lobby.

Their message was the straightforward, simple message that worked so well in focus groups: "Handguns are the number-one killer of kids in California." With this message, they supported a statewide campaign to limit guns and increase gun safety through the enactment of dozens of state and local policies. They won legislation mandating trigger locks for guns, banning junk guns, and restricting the number and concentration of gun outlets.

It's best to test messages on friends and co-workers—especially those who are not familiar with your issue. Colleagues working on similar issues are another good resource. Listen carefully to feedback: Did the message convey the importance of your issue? Did the listener understand what you are advocating and why? Keeping your target in mind, use the input to help shape and refine your message.

Framing the Message

Good messages are affective and strike the receiver as making good sense. In the case of advocacy campaigns, they also must give people a sense that something can and will be done about the issue at hand. Framing is the art and handiwork of ensuring that the message works as intended.

In the seminal book, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues,* Shanto Iyengar examined how television news framed important issues like crime and poverty and its effects on viewer perception of those issues. He divided stories into roughly two categories: *episodic* and *thematic,* with most news stories having more of one characteristic than the other.

Episodic stories are the most common news stories. They focus on individuals who illustrate or individualize a particular issue. For example, an episodic news story on unemployment will feature interviews with unemployed people, pictures of people standing in line and perhaps an interview with someone who recently found a job. It's called episodic because it explores a single episode in the life of the story. None (or very little) of the history or context that shapes the issue is included. According to Iyengar, when people watch episodic news stories they focus on the individuals and forget about the context. They are disconnected from any sense that there may be a solution to the problem and that institutions have some responsibility for addressing the problem. Further, viewers have a tendency to *blame the people portrayed* in the story for the problem without any other information to go on.

During the coverage on welfare repeal in 1995 there were numerous stories featuring women telling compelling personal stories about what the policy changes would do to their lives. It made riveting journalism but bad framing for policy. Too often, the news story is all the information many viewers have on a given issue. Without a sense of the forces that brought these women to this point, viewers were left with only two choices for action: make donations to the women portrayed, or blame their lack of achievement on bad luck or lack of initiative.

Another common pitfall for activists is to pitch episodic stories featuring exceptional people who have triumphed over great odds. The idea is to put a nice "face" on a problem to demonstrate the possibility of rehabilitation and change. New York metropolitan media featured a news story in 1997 on a high school valedictorian who was homeless. The stories marveled at how the youngster lived on city buses and on the streets but still managed to keep his grades high. Instead of investigating why the young man was homeless, looking into the lives of other homeless children, and discussing what could be done, the stories praised the young man's tenacity and effectively implied, "Why can't all kids be valedictorians if this kid is?"

The story probably didn't move many people to care about the plight of homeless children in New York. It did move people to care about the young man in the story. The focus on individuals is an important core value in this country, but advocates must overcome this bias and frame stories from a "thematic" perspective.

Thematic stories deal with the systemic and institutional issues that form the context of a story. A thematic story on welfare repeal would talk about the availability of jobs, child care and public transportation for former recipients to job sites. In this kind of story, a woman might recount her four-hour bus ride to work or lament the fact that she only sees her child while he's sleeping. It may mean gathering data on whether there are enough jobs for everyone. Such a story might even question why child rearing is not considered work and explore the history of the issue.

Thematic stories engage viewers while giving them a sense of the history and context of a story. They hold institutions and policies responsible for the current state of affairs and offer a sense of the alternatives. At bottom, good thematic framing is about how the stories themselves are constructed. That construction is the heart of framing.

Framing is the process by which facts, opinions and images are packaged together to become a news story. There are many ways to frame a story. Media scholar Dr. Lori Dorfman often likens framing to the view from a speeding train while one looks out of the window. As the train speeds by, the window frames the landscape—that is, it arranges the images so that some are more prominent than others. The moving train imagery is an apt description of how news media move through issues. There often isn't time for detail and long-term study, but with purposeful planning and good information management, advocates can greatly influence this process.

Framing for Access

Getting media attention means getting that moving train to stop and pay attention to our issue. This is called *framing for access.* There are many techniques for framing a story to make it accessible to media.

Controversy, conflict, injustice. The news media are in the storytelling business. Highlighting these aspects makes stories interesting. While you might frame the story with a personal angle showing the effect of controversy, conflict or injustice on individuals, be sure to bring the story back to the institutional reasons that people are caught in the situation.

Irony or uniqueness. What's different about this story? What will make viewers sit up and pay attention? What is new in this news?

Population of interest. Media outlets are businesses that must reach consumers in order to stay profitable. Oftentimes, some demographic groups (and therefore, stories that potentially appeal to them) are of greater interest than others. Call the advertising departments of your local media outlets for their package to prospective advertisers. These materials are free and often specify an outlet's target markets. See if you have a match between your issue and their consumers.

Significant, serious. Although this is often subjective, any story affecting large numbers of people meets this criteria. For example, a story broadcasting the outbreak of lethal food poisoning or a widespread banking crisis would fit this criteria.

Breakthrough, anniversary, milestone. Something new and amazing—like a discovery or new drug; or the commemoration of an important event. Tobacco control activists, for example, pegged a 1994 study on youth and tobacco to the 30th anniversary of the first Surgeon General's report on smoking with good results.

Local peg, breaking news. Piggybacking on a news story that is already getting media attention can be an effective strategy. For example, advocates artfully used the O.J. Simpson case to raise public awareness of the tragedy of domestic violence.

Good pictures. If a picture is worth a thousand words and the average media bite is seven seconds, developing compelling visuals that illustrate your perspective is critical. Moreover, visuals operate at the level of emotion and are accessible across different languages and literacy levels. Give serious thought to the colors, symbols and backdrop of any visuals you present. All media, including print media, need good visuals for their stories. Some groups provide balloons to demonstrators or meet in front of dramatic backdrops. Others opt for more emotional visuals like candlelight vigils or deteriorating neighborhoods in order to provide news media with some direct experience of the issues advocates seek to address. Choose the pictures that best illustrate your message.

Framing for Content

Once you have the media's attention, actively shape the story by providing information, interviews, sources and visuals that will effectively frame the story accurately and from a public health or social justice perspective. This element of framing is known as *framing for content.* Framing for content increases the odds that the story is told in a way that reflects the "public interest" perspective of the issue.

One way to think of framing for content is to imagine each story as a blank comic strip. The reporter or producer must tell a story with a few words illustrated by a picture. Stories have more than one side, so advocates must anticipate and even suggest "characters" for the entire "strip." There will likely be members of the opposition, authentic voices or people who are personally affected by the issue, and experts with important information to provide. Pitching a good story requires paying attention to the whole picture and not just your angle. It also means remembering that the goal is getting a good story, not being quoted. A quote is the most superficial level of impact an advocate can have on a story. It is far more important to influence the story with good, accurate and accessible background information and to refer to other good sources (including your opposition). Providing both sides of the story will increase your credibility with the media.

Translate individual problem to social issue. The first step in framing is to make sure that what you say is consistent with your approach. It's hard to justify an environmental approach to an issue if all the media interviews frame it from an individual perspective. Further, a social issue affecting large numbers of people is news, one individual problem is not. Placing an issue in its social context helps others to see why it is important and newsworthy.

Assign primary responsibility. Again consistency is key. If the issue is tobacco sales to kids, it's hard to justify a new ordinance if spokespeople assign primary responsibility for the problem to parents. Framing for content means framing your message in ways that support your initiative goal and explain to others why the target you chose is the right entity to address the issue.

Present solution. The message should clearly articulate what the initiative can address. For example, the solution offered for youth access to tobacco is to make it harder for merchants to profit from youth smoking.

Make practical/policy appeal. This is where the initiative comes in. It should be communicated as practical, fair, legal, affordable and the right thing to do. It should also preempt the opposition by addressing their likely criticism—including economic arguments.

Tailor to the audience. Remember who you are trying to reach in each case. Communities are fragmented with lots of different interests and concerns. Tailor your message to your audience which is, first and foremost, usually your target. GFJ

Makani Themba, a longtime community organizer, currently directs the Applied Research Center's Grassroots Innovative Policy Program (GRIPP).

For further discussion of the ideas presented here, see the following resources:

- *Shanto Iyengar,* Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues. *Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1991.*
- *Erna Smith,* What Color is the News? *Center for the Integration and Improvement of Journalism, San Francisco State University, 1992.*
- *Lawrence Wallack, et al.,* Media Advocacy and Public Health: Power for Prevention. *Sage Publications. 1993.*

Case Study

Selling Social Change:

A Bog is Their Business

by Andy Robinson

***Editor's note:** Relatively little has been written about generating earned income from the sales of goods and services. Next year, Chardon Press will publish* Selling Social Change: How to Earn Money from Your Mission, *by Andy Robinson. The book explores how two dozen progressive organizations across the U.S. and Canada have found ways to develop and sell goods, services and publications that support and extend their missions. In doing so, they are discovering new strategies for educating their communities, activating their constituents, and expanding their budgets. This article examines the many approaches used by one organization, the Burns Bog Conservation Society.*

Just a half-hour drive from downtown Vancouver lies a unique landscape filled with carnivorous plants, sphagnum moss, bears, water lilies, foxes, wild rosemary, sandhill cranes, Pacific tree frogs, black-tailed deer, a "bonsai forest" of shoulder-high lodgepole pine, patches of ground that quake and shiver when you walk—and the biggest city dump west of Toronto. To help protect this important natural area from further encroachment, the Burns Bog Conservation Society is raising money to safeguard the bog with conservation purchases and community outreach.

At 10,000 acres, Burns Bog is the largest urban wilderness in North America. It began forming 5,000 years ago when the glaciers receded and left a large, poorly drained basin, which over the centuries fostered lots of plant growth. The resulting area, known as a raised peat bog — peat is composed of slowly decaying plants — is the largest on the West Coast.

More than 150 species of birds live in the bog, while dozens of others visit during their migration along the Pacific Flyway. Twenty-eight mammal species make their home there. Many of the unusual plants, including velvet-leafed blueberry and bog rosemary, are remnants of the Ice Age. Biologist Richard Hebda calls it "A northern island in a southern climate."

In addition to providing high-quality habitat, Burns Bog reduces carbon in the atmosphere, which helps to clean the air of pollution and reduce the threat of global warming. In fact, Burns Bog can store two to three times more carbon dioxide than a rainforest of comparable size. The bog functions as the "lungs" of metropolitan Vancouver.

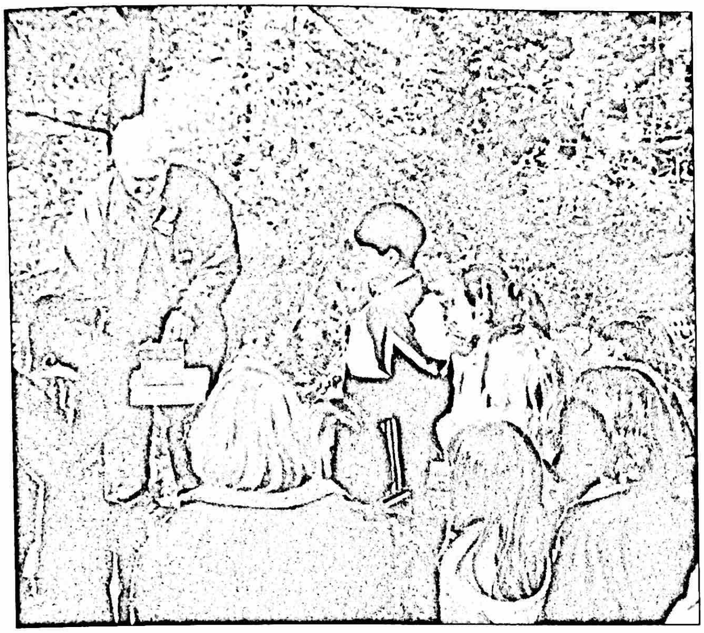
Those lungs are both precious and imperiled. Two million people surround Burns Bog. The Vancouver Landfill, which handles 500,000 tons of trash per year, covers 10% of the bog. The dump is the same size as Vancouver's famous Stanley Park and will be 134 feet high when completed. Demolition and industrial waste are also dumped into the many licensed private landfills along the area's northern boundary. More than half of the peatlands are privately owned. In a growing region, pressures to drain and develop the land are intense. An acre per day is lost to development.

In 1988, local developers unveiled a plan — ultimately defeated — to build housing for 125,000 people on the bog and dredge a portion of it for a seaport. In response, the Burns Bog Conservation Society formed. As founding director Eliza Olson says, "We won the battle but not the war, and we wanted to be prepared when the war came." Along with raising money for purchases, the Society manages the Delta Nature Reserve, a 150-acre protected area.

In addition to the usual fundraising strategies (direct mail, major gift solicitation, fundraising events, and so forth) the Burns Bog Conservation Society has created a variety of ways to earn income.

1. Tours and workshops. During the spring and summer, about 200 people visit the Delta Nature Reserve each day; 800 toured the central bog during International Bog Day in 1997. Indeed, the tour groups grew so large, the organizers began to worry about their impact on remote wilderness areas. The Society is now focusing its marketing efforts on smaller groups (no more than 30 people), especially teachers and their students.

A current brochure invites teachers to "Add a local flavour to your teaching....Today's specials: Labrador tea, fresh wild blueberries, bog stories and legends, healthy fish, clean water and fresh air." The basic workshop costs $15 per person and includes information on bog ecology and a demonstration of the group's educational materials (see below). A tour designed specifically for educators takes



Lee-Ann Locker, bog preservation activist, demonstrating how the bog is like a giant sponge to second-graders.

three hours and allows them to "visit the sapsucker tree, hunt for the carnivorous sundew, breathe the relaxing scent of Labrador tea"—all for only $12 per person. A special one-day "Ecology Tour and Bog Writer's Workshop," featuring three local naturalists discussing how to use their books in the classroom, was offered in October 1998 for $85, with 25 people attending. Eventually, the organization plans to be certified so participating teachers can receive continuing education credits.

When it's time to invite the class along, Burns Bog Conservation Society offers student tours of the Delta Nature Reserve ($100 per class) or the central bog ($125). As teacher Annette LeBox says, "It's easy to teach kids how a bog works because the number of indicator species is relatively small." She took 24 elementary school children into Burns Bog and, she reports, "those kids became naturalists." In no time, they could identify all the bog plants plus 30 other species that grew near their school.

Staff and volunteers also offer to "bring the bog to your students" via classroom presentations ($150/hour). They typically lead two to five classes per day, though the record is 14 classes (at one school) in two days. Discounts are given when more than one class is involved.

The Society promotes seminars and tours by faxing announcements to all the schools in the region. Olson, a former teacher, follows up with calls to her colleagues. The group also sets up displays in local malls. Taken together, she says, these strategies "are starting to work." Indeed, business has been brisk: between September 1998 and April 1999, the Society provided 95 classroom presentations and on-site tours.

2. Educational materials. The organization carries a wide range of materials for both the classroom and the general public. They created some of these products themselves and purchase others at wholesale prices. All items are promoted at their workshops, tours, and other community events.

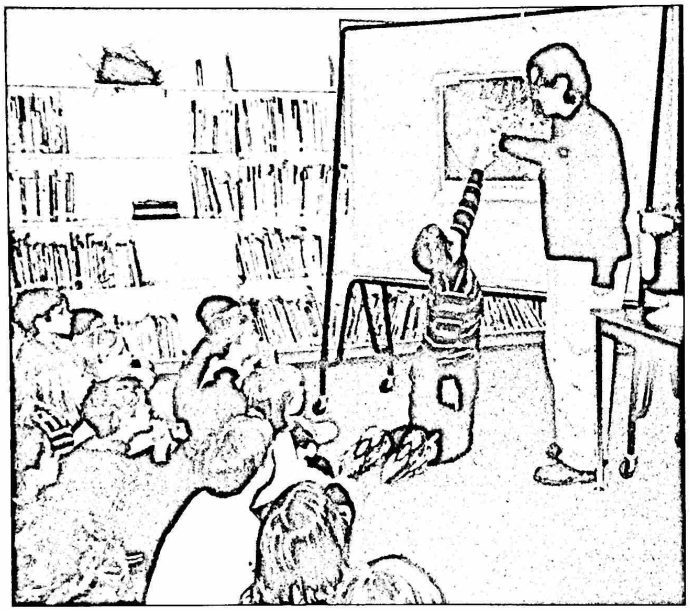
Materials include children's books, a 24-minute video ($40), and a full-color satellite map ($20) showing how Burns Bog fits into the metropolitan puzzle. Natural history publications, which range in price from $21 to $37, include *A Teacher's Guide to Burns Bog; A Teacher's Resource Guide to Sandhill Cranes;* and *Plants of Coastal British Columbia.* Pricing is determined, in part, by printing costs. Within the self-publishing industry, Olson says, a book's cover price is typically four to seven times its printing and binding costs. To keep prices affordable, the Society sells their self-published books at four times the printing cost. The group also saves on expenses by using student interns to help develop and design their books. The strategy works—the Teacher's Guide, for example, has sold more than 400 copies.

"After reading the *Guide,* I was inspired," says LeBox, a former instructor at a local teacher's college. "I've used it to successfully teach a wetlands unit to a class of kindergarten children. It's one of the best tools I've ever used."

LeBox, author of the forthcoming children's book, *Wild Bog Tea,* describes herself as "obsessed with bogs." She blames her obsession on Olson, who, in her words, "has really 'sold' that bog. Because of Eliza, everyone in the region knows about Burns Bog."

Burns Bog Conservation Society also publishes a free visitor's pamphlet, which is underwritten through corporate support. After numerous requests, the booklet was translated from English into Punjabi and Mandarin Chinese to accommodate Vancouver's substantial Asian population.

Central bog tour–adult hiking group having lunch by the lagoon.



Kyla Hubbard, bog preservation activist, making a bog-education presentation to third-graders.

The artwork and layout are identical among all three versions, which saved time and money in production. Olson points out that the cover of the Mandarin guide was printed in red and gold, which are "culturally correct" colors. When Chinese visitors see the booklet, she says, "their faces just light up." She notices Asian families wandering through the reserve with the children reading the English version and their grandparents reading the one in Mandarin.

3. Bog-related merchandise. Labrador tea, which grows abundantly in the area, was traditionally used by the indigenous peoples as a medicine for sore throats and colds, and is said to have a calming affect. Society volunteers collect, package, and sell it. Logo T-shirts, artwork and a fragrant soap made with bog herbs are also available at the Society's office and Web site. All told, sales of publications and other merchandise totaled $10,000 in 1998, while educational programs and tours accounted for about $5,000.

The Society is now experimenting with "affinity checks" as a source of earned income. The checks feature a greater sandhill crane and the message, "Burns Bog—Wild Forever," plus the organization's name and logo. If members and supporters buy a minimum number of checks—50,000 imprints—over the next two years, the organization will receive 10% of the check printing fees.

Olson enjoys the intellectual challenge of being a nonprofit entrepreneur, saying, "We constantly strive to be creative. We try to look at our failures and crises and see the opportunities in them."

4. Business contacts. To build credibility with local businesses, the Society joined the local Delta Chamber of Commerce a few years ago and invited the Chamber to co-host a banquet. The keynote speaker was Dr. David Bellamy, a noted bog biologist from the United Kingdom and honorary chair of the Society. Olson says, "It was one of our best political moves." Visitors to the bog spend money at local stores, she points out, which demonstrates how environmental protection can benefit small business. As a result, she says, "the business community is much less threatened by our work." Her advice: join your own Chamber of Commerce and get involved. Olson now serves on the Delta Chamber's board of directors.

Lessons

Several lessons emerge from the Burns Bog experience that other groups can incorporate in their fundraising programs.

1. Local pride and "sense of place" is a terrific hook for both fundraising and sales. Carefully consider this: what makes your community unique? How does your work contribute to that special sense of place? How can you take advantage of local pride to build support for your mission?

2. Take what you know—in other words, your content—and package it as many ways as possible to reach different audiences through different formats. The Burns Bog Conservation Society uses its expertise in bog ecology to produce tours, educational programs, books, curricula, etc. The content of each is adapted to meet the specific needs of the specific audience.

3. Recycle your basic design and "look" to establish an identity (businesses call this "branding") and save money on design and production costs. For example, when the Society decided to publish their English language visitor's guide in Mandarin Chinese and Punjabi, they used the same design and artwork for all three versions. GFJ

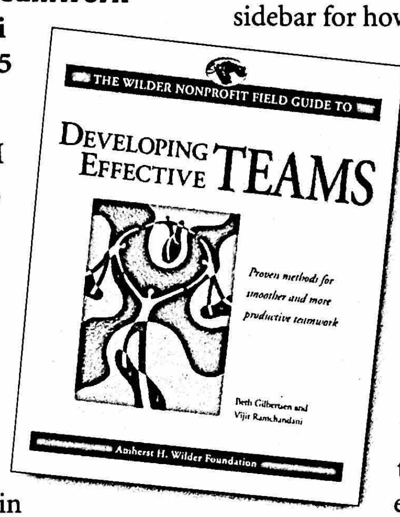
Andy Robinson is author of Grassroots Grants, *published by Chardon Press.* Selling Social Change *will be out next year.*

Book Review

SHARPEN YOUR *Teamwork*

Developing Effective Teams: Proven Methods for Smoother and More Productive Teamwork
by Beth Gilbertsen and Vijit Ramchandani
Amherst Wilder/64 pages / Paperback / $15

Reviewed by Kim Klein



At first, I put aside the review copy I received of *Developing Effective Teams,* thinking I had seen more than enough books and manuals on this topic over the years. However, I have always found Amherst Wilder Foundation materials to be very useful and when I finally read this book, it was no exception. As I pondered the many ineffective teams I have been on and how much time and aggravation I would have saved with some of the tips in this book, I wanted to let readers of the *Journal* know about this valuable resource.

Gilbertsen and Ramchandani have more than 30 years' experience between them helping nonprofits of all sizes and types work together more effectively. They have culled the high points from their experience and saved us all a lot of time by presenting here what you need to know to form an effective team.

In the first section they distinguish a group from a team and then discuss how to get a group to become a team. Particularly helpful to many will be the discussion of how to be a team leader. Here is their wonderful and reassuring description of what is expected of a team leader:

> Jay Conger wrote of leadership, "Most of us have known leaders at work who capture our imagination with a passion for an idea—a vision of the way the future could be. They seem to possess a certain indescribable energy that inspires and motivates.Often we find ourselves, quite willingly, drawn to them."
>
> This is a tall order to the potential team leader. It scares off some excellent candidates before they even attempt taking a leadership role on a team. This expectation is also beyond what's really needed on most teams: While inspired leadership is a plus, most team leaders are simply solid, well-respected performers who are trusted for their skills and expertise. Good leaders are able to effectively coordinate and delegate work and create accountability and commitment in each team member.

In the experience of these authors, any group can become a team and any person can become a team leader by following certain rules and understanding how the dynamics of a team change over time. The authors then take us through the stages of a team, with suggestions in a sidebar for how the leader should deal with each stage.

Section Two discusses how to get a team going and Section Three focuses on how to keep it going. The ten-page appendix contains a number of useful worksheets to help implement the suggestions made throughout the book.

Not surprisingly, much of the discussion is about clarifying roles and responsibilities, tasks and accountability. Ownership of the outcomes of team effort comes from buy-in on the part of the team members, which is brought about by a clear sense of what the team has been formed to do. The authors emphasize over and over the importance of planning and preparation, and especially of writing things down in order to have a reference later. Particularly in the multicultural and multi-class environments of many social justice groups, the suggestions in this book can help avoid a lot of misunderstanding and resentment.

Ramchandani and Gilbertsen's ideas will probably not be unfamiliar to *Journal* readers. However, I have not seen this level of clarity and thoroughness of presentation in any other materials on building teams, and I find particularly refreshing their clear belief that being a member of team or even a team leader is skill that any one can learn, not a gift of personality.

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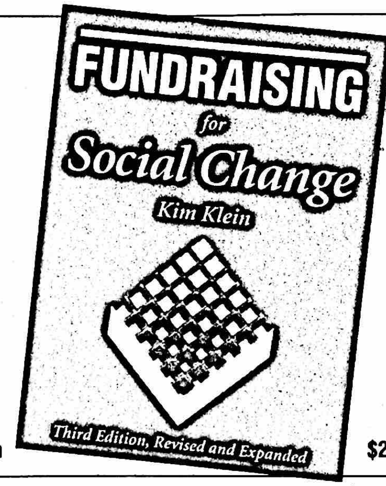

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