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**PERSONAL
FUNDRAISING
POWER**

OF
17

Influencing Donors



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The Members Club

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

THE MAGIC FORMULA FOR
PERSUADING MORE DONORS

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Bringing it all together - The Magic Formula for Persuading More Donors

This section is designed to help bring together the key themes to do with influencing donors from within Personal Fundraising Power. The purpose is to show how all the techniques fit together to create system that will help you influence more donors and companies.

For specific help implementing any particular tactic, watch or re-watch the relevant film and apply the techniques suggested in those notes.

Here are the seven questions that make up The Magic Formula as explained in The Fundraiser Who Wanted More.

Evoked the problem

1. What is the essence of the problem (faced by our beneficiaries)
2. What is not obvious about the problem
3. What (short, sad) example brings to life this problem

Impact – help them feel that your charity’s solution works

1. What story or example shows your solution works
2. What numbers show your solution works
3. How could you use the psychology of influence, such as social proof or authority, to shoe your solution works
4. What, put simply, is your solution? What is the ‘special ingredient’ of the recipe?

6 key themes from the Magic Formula

1 Evoke the problem first. The biggest mistake made by most fundraisers is to talk about what the charity does without any attempt to ‘set the frame’. We have to help the donor tune into a problem they care about, before going into any detail about our solution / the fact that our charity can solve this problem. The context in which we consider a problem makes all the difference.

Just as weight loss adverts usually present a ‘before’ picture as well as an ‘after’ picture, it is essential in fundraising to help someone connect to the problem faced by the refugees / patients / students etc. This is usually not best achieved by presenting a statistic of the prevalence (eg 3000 people per month are diagnosed with this condition) because such numbers tend to beg other questions (eg ‘is this number large or small compared to similar issues?’). Rather it is about helping us connect to what the issue is actually about.

There are three key questions which help to do this:

- What is the essence of the problem and what are the consequences of this problem?
- What is not obvious about it? (ie in terms of why it happens, or in terms of how high the stakes are for the beneficiary)
- What (short, sad) example or story brings this problem (for the beneficiary) to life?

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2 Showing impact is more persuasive than ‘what your charity does’. Find ways to show your service works. Whereas most fundraisers and charities spend the majority of the conversation or the proposal talking about what the charity does (eg the service, the research), the truth is this is not the best way to help someone decide to make a donation.

It is made harder by the fact that many donors often ask deliberate questions about what you do. And of course it is appropriate to answer their questions. But wherever possible, the most persuasive thing you can do is to instead find ways to help them feel that your solution works. Show them that it does remove the suffering or increase opportunity etc. Lots of detail about how you do it is actually far less helpful and persuasive.

Three of the ways to do this in practice are: stories / examples; numbers; the psychology of influence (Cialdini’s Six principles of influence).

3 Stories are the rocket fuel. Find specific examples. There are two kinds of story / example that help us within the Magic Formula. We need examples that help the donor connect to the problem (ie for the first half of the magic formula). Note these are usually less detailed when we tell them to donors, but they are very important if we are to help donors really connect to the reality and urgency of the problem our beneficiaries face.

Many fundraisers initially cannot think of these examples, because they are most powerful when they are nothing to do with your charity. Really they are about evoking a world in which your charity is not there to help solve the problem. Though many charity’s communications departments have not sought out such stories, they are nevertheless very important. Effectively they show what happens when your service does not receive enough funding to reach people.

The second kind of story helps with the Impact part of the Magic Formula, that is stories which show your solution works. They may be ‘Big Fat Claims’ (one sentence examples which particularly focus on the result), or ‘full version stories’ which are most persuasive in the format:

- A. Who
- B. Problem
- C. Action
- D. Result

4 Find numbers that demonstrate impact. How can you find ways to show your charity’s solution works using numbers? Note, this is not about ‘outputs’ (eg how many students you helped) but about outcomes (something that measures whether your service produced the desired result for the beneficiaries, such as 94% of them secured a job within 6 months of leaving your college).

Has anyone within your charity found numerical evidence to show that this kind of solution works, even in another charity / country. Or could you google for such a piece of research yourself? Could you start working more closely with your colleagues from now to improve how the effectiveness of your services is measured?

The book Black Box Thinking by Matthew Syed shows how essential it is that all organisations, including charities, carefully test what solutions work, so that there is continuous improvement rather than naïve funding of mediocre services / projects.

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5 Make use of Prof Robert Cialdini's Six Principles of Influence. So much of what influences us is not what our common sense suggested it was (a carefully assessed analysis of the pros and cons of an action). We are always taking account of other factors which 'frame' what we pay attention to and make decisions.

In this set of films, I explore how to use social proof (eg examples of what other donors have done), authority (eg quotes from experts, awards) to help reassure people about the effectiveness of a solution. In another section I explore ways to make use of the principle of 'commitment and consistency' both in terms of the 'confirm question' which makes it easier to ask for a gift and in terms of securing the next meeting.

I highly recommend Cialdini's classic book Influence - the science of persuasion and watching animations on Youtube which bring these six principles to life.

6 In advance, prepare and practice these ideas for each area that needs funding. Above all, if we are to become very persuasive and confident when meeting donors, we will need to deliberately find persuasive things to say (such as the ideas explored in these Magic Formula films) and practice how to use them.

Busy though fundraisers are, this is solvable if we break it down into manageable chunks (for example, finding time to improve what you can say about one topic per month. Though a bit of determined effort, within three months you will be able to be interesting and persuasive about the three services your donors are most likely to be interested in. It's even easier if you enlist the help of colleagues.

As well as watching these films, you can improve your confidence with these ideas by reading my book, *The Fundraiser Who Wanted More*, available from Amazon.

You've been working on:

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