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17 January 2017

Dear Friends,

We hope that this edition of the Newsflash will find you well! Here at Firelight we are reflecting on 2016 and diving into for 2017. In this month's edition of the Newsflash, we are continuing the topic from the past few editions, dealing with how to communicate your organization's mission, successes and needs. Previous Newsflashes have centered on how to write effective proposals and build organizational presence online. This edition focuses on email communications, including: general guidelines for communicating effectively by email, how to write fundraising letters, and ideas for emails that your organization can be sending to your networks. As always, you will find additional resources in the form of funding opportunities at the end of the Newsflash.

We wish you well as the new year begins, and thank you for your work to support children and their communities in 2016!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

*Article: 7 Rules for Communicating Clearly and Concisely in Email*

*Article: How to Write More Effective Fundraising Letters*

*Article: Three Emails your Non-Profit Should Be Sending*

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*Opportunity: Ambassador's Self Help Fund- Malawi*

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## **7 Rules for Communicating Clearly and Concisely in Email (by: Leo Babauta)**

As email is the prevalent form of communication for many web workers, it's gotten a lot of attention: how to handle your email, how to empty your inbox, email etiquette, and more.

But perhaps not enough time is spent learning about how to communicate with email. And more specifically, how to communicate clearly and concisely, two crucial aspects of communication that are often overlooked.

How many times have you received a rambling and incoherent email? How many times have you hit "Delete" because you have no idea what the person wants and no time to sort through the long message?

The truth is that people don't have time for long emails, and they don't have time to try to find out exactly what you want. You have to tell them, in as short an email as possible. Misunderstandings are also a problem, because of the nature of email. People are often ambiguous, and their messages are interpreted differently than they intended, leading to a waste of time and energy.

Communicate clearly and concisely with the following rules.

**1. Use the minimum amount of sentences.** I've been using the 5-sentence, but you can use more if needed. The question is: how many sentences are needed to communicate what you're trying to communicate? Or how few sentences can you get away with. Cut it to that number, and no more. That ensures that you're not wasting the time of the recipient, and that your email actually gets read (people tend to put off reading longer ones, and might even delete them).

**2. State what you want right away.** Don't write a long introduction, telling your life story, or any story for that matter. People aren't interested. They just want to know what you want. So state that, in the first sentence. Skip the niceties. Don't make the recipient wade through 10 paragraphs to find what action is needed for the email.

**3. Write about only one thing.** There have been numerous times when I read an email, saw the action needed, and went and did it ... only to find out that three other things were also needed to respond to the email. I've also responded to the first part of an email and not to others, just because I didn't have enough time.

If you write about multiple things, with multiple requests, you do two things: 1) make it likely that your email actually won't be read or acted on; and 2) make it likely that even if it is acted on or responded to, the recipient will only do one of those things.

Instead, stick to one subject, with one request. Once that's done, you can send a second one, but don't overwhelm the recipient if at all possible.

**4. Leave out the humor and emotions.** These don't come across well in an email. Even if you use emoticons. There's just no way to express tone, inflection, etc. ... and there's no way to know if the recipient understands that you're joking. If you're communicating in person, you can see that the person didn't understand the humor, and say, "I was only joking!" But not in email.

So, unless you know the person well, and you know they'll understand that you're joking, leave out humor. It's a risk that you don't want to take.

**5. Use "If ... then" statements.** As email is a back-and-forth method of communicating, and it can take a day or more for a response (in some cases), you want to limit the number of times a message has to go back and forth. To do that, use "if ... then" statements, anticipating the possible responses to your question.

For example, if you want to know if a person has received a response to an inquiry, instead of asking if they've received a response, and then waiting for a reply, and then sending another email based on that reply, try doing it all in one email:

"Have you received a response from Mr. X yet? If so, please finish the report by Tuesday and email it to me. If not, can you follow up today and let me know the response?"

By anticipating the possible responses, and giving a desired action for each possible response, you're cutting a lot of wasted back-and-forth time.

**6. Review for ambiguity, clarity.** Once you've written an email, take a few seconds to read over it before pressing the Send button. Read it as if you were an outsider — how clear is it? Are there any ambiguous statements that could be interpreted the wrong way? If so, clarify.

**7. Revise for conciseness.** As you review, also see if there is a way you can shorten the email, remove words or sentences or even paragraphs. Leave nothing but the essential message you're trying to communicate.

URL: <http://bit.ly/2hHX4bO>

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## How to Write More Effective Fundraising Letters (by: NGO.Media)

Many charity communicators say that writing fundraising letters is one of the most difficult parts of their job. At ngo.media we've found that if you focus on a few basics, it's easier than you think to write the kind of copy which generates impressive results for your charity or not-for-profit.

### *Things you'll need*

- A quiet space where you won't be interrupted.
- Your creativity.

### *Step One: Understand your target audience*

Don't even touch your word processor until you know who you're writing for. Your target audience will determine everything about your letter from the words you use and the format you write in to the way it's laid out. Think about what magazines they buy, what TV shows they watch and what social media they use. Now tailor your letter to meet their needs.

### *Step Two: Make it Personal*

Once you can visualise a member of your target audience, make sure your copy speaks personally to them. Refer to them as "you". Instead of using "I" or "me" use "we" or "our" so the reader feels like they're making a connection with your organisation.

*Step Three: Grab your reader's attention from the start*

People remember good opening lines and fundraising letters are no different. You only have seconds to grab your reader's attention so start in a way that you know will keep them reading. Compare "I'm writing from a charity called Befriending England" to "Sometimes your neighbour Ethel doesn't see anyone for two weeks."

*Step Four: Use case studies*

Make sure you provide a personal story that allows readers to look past the statistics to the human stories beyond. You can either use direct quotes from a case study or tell their story. For example: "Rasheed spent last Christmas on his own, cold, hungry and on the streets. Without the Camden homeless shelter, I would be dead,' admits the 16 year old."

*Step Five: Be specific*

"We help homeless children on the streets of London" sounds a little vague. What readers really want is concrete information about what your charity can achieve. Sentences like "We have 50 homeless shelters in the capital providing the warmth and food which could save over 150 young people's lives this Winter," make a strong, specific case for your work.

*Step Six: Don't ramble*

The length of your letter should be dictated by its contents. Or, to put it another way, keep writing for as long as you've got something to say, then stop. Don't feel like you've got to shoehorn loads of extra information just to make up the word count. Readers associate huge blocks of text with bills, bank statements and other kinds of mail they aren't keen on opening. Using plenty of white space makes what you have to say all the more inviting to your audience.

*Step Seven: Include a call to action*

There's a purpose to writing your letter, so make sure you include it as a call to action. Your reader should start and finish the letter knowing what you want them to do.

*Step Eight: Rewrite and revise*

Using plain English isn't about dumbing down your message. It's about ensuring that every one of your readers understands what you have to say and has the opportunity to respond. Get feedback from a member of your target audience on an early draft to make sure your letter is crystal clear. Never stop at the first draft. Look again later and you'll find plenty that you can improve. Positive it's finished? Then pass it on to your colleagues for their comments, and make sure it's properly proofread before it reaches your supporters.

URL: <http://bit.ly/2iaOtzt>

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**Three Emails Your Non-Profit Should Be Sending (by: Jill Bastian)**

The first thing most people do when they get up in the morning, or get to work, is check their email. That's because there's never a shortage of emails in your inbox; some you

can't wait to read, some you save for later, and others you just delete.

How people interact with their emails isn't something you can control, but making sure you're sending the *right* emails to encourage engagement, is.

Every business sends (or should be sending) various types of information, from email newsletters to promotions, and non-profits are no different. Here are three types of email campaigns your non-profit organization should be sending to build rapport, educate, and hopefully gain donations.

*Welcome email* – If you're not currently sending out a welcome email, you could be missing out on a stellar opportunity. A warm and friendly welcome email can make a positive first impression on new members, donors, volunteers, or your sponsors. A great time to send a welcome email is when someone subscribes to your email list. Keep the tone of your welcome email light, as you want it to be warm and approachable. Asking for a donation straight off the bat might be too much, too fast. You want your readers to feel like they're part of your organization, your community, your world, so provide information, pictures or videos that makes them feel included and valued.

*Newsletter*– This is probably the most common type of email sent out by non-profits, but there's a reason: an email newsletter allows you to share what's going on with your organization, events, volunteers, fundraising or other relevant information. It's an easy and effective way to communicate, and you can include calls to action to donate or volunteer to help drive your fundraising efforts.

Content for a newsletter is exactly what the name implies, newsworthy information. Anything that's important to your organization and would be interesting to your readers can and should be included. Sending a newsletter does require some commitment from you and your staff, as you'll need to mail at least once per month to be effective, stay top of mind and get good engagement. By mailing your newsletter at this frequency, you'll have the ability to send other email types too, without annoying your readers. For more help creating a fantastic newsletter, check out our free webinar on creating a significant email newsletter (<http://bit.ly/2h2dd89>)

**Thank you email** – First and foremost, your thank you email should be sincere. Once you have a thank you email, you'll find there are many opportunities to use it. Just be sure to update it for each situation. You can send a thank you email when someone makes a donation, registers or volunteers for an event, subscribes to your email, after an event or other interactions someone may have with your organization.

We would be remiss if we didn't mention fundraising emails, but that could be a blog post on its own! Here (<http://bit.ly/2hVv9Ww>) is a recent post with some tips on creating certain types of fundraising emails. These three types of emails should give your non-profit a great start to your email marketing efforts.

URL: <http://bit.ly/2i1go1q>

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### **Australian Aid Development Cooperation: Direct Aid Program**

*Deadline: 28 February 2017*

The Direct Aid Program (DAP) is a flexible, small grants scheme for development activities managed by Heads of Australian Missions in approximately 45 countries. The emphasis of the program is on alleviating basic humanitarian hardships. The Direct Aid Program, managed by the Embassy in Harare provides funding for an average of 30 projects per year from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, the DRC and the ROC.

*For more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/2ifW3EX>*

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### **Feminist Review Trust Fund: Supporting Projects that Transform the Lives of Women**

*Deadline: 31 January 2017*

The Feminist Review Trust is currently accepting applications from eligible entities for its grants program representing the diversity of women's lives globally and supporting the creativity with which women fight the inequalities they face.

*For more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/2dkjNWc>*

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### **Ambassador's Self Help Fund: Malawi**

The Embassy of the United States of America, with funding from the United States African Development Foundation, welcomes proposals for funding under the 2017 small grants program, which seeks to support innovative and sustainable income generating projects implemented at the local level through established community groups. The grants will help organizations create tangible benefits such as increasing or sustaining the number of jobs in a community, improving income levels, and addressing social development needs. Typical grants will range from US\$3,000 to US\$10,000 (MK 2 million – MK7.2 million).

*For more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/2hl3nfB>*

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As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our network via monthly emails. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-

focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website:

<http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash>

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at [newsletter@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@firelightfoundation.org)