

SUCCESSFUL MAIL APPEALS TIP SHEET

- **MAKE THE COMMUNICATION AS PERSONAL AS POSSIBLE** – from a sender who the recipient knows and respects. The more personal the communication (who writes a note on top, whose address is on the envelope, who signs the letter) the more likely the recipient is to reply, so as not to disappoint the sender. An organization is just too easy to disappoint...
- **THE UNDERLYING THEME OF THE LETTER SHOULD BE: INVEST IN A CHANGED WORLD.** (however your work changes the world – gives kids a better chance, takes care of the elderly, brings a community together, empowers the marginalized...)
- **BUT MAKE SURE THERE'S A SENSE OF URGENCY** – *why you need the reader to put the letter down and act now* – otherwise the letter will get put aside with good intentions, but won't be picked up again!
- **TELL A STORY** – people are giving money to have an impact on the world, and they need to see, hear, taste, touch a real experience of how your organization has an impact.
- **SOMETIMES IT WORKS WELL TO TELL SEVERAL STORIES** (interweaving them through the letter or one following another), to indicate the variety of problems and issues your organization works on.
- **REFER TO WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE READER.** The letter needs to be about the reader's values and how funding you will make something he or she cares about happen in the world. (*NOT about how great you are.*)
- **MAKE SURE THE LETTER FOLLOWS A DIRECT PATH** to take the reader from point A – *I don't know much about what this organization does but I'm willing to hear about it* – to point B – *This is really good work and I'm going to help make it happen.* Don't go through a lot of side issues that aren't specifically designed to take the reader from Point A to Point B. (The reader will get lost in the side issues and never make it back!).
- **SPEAK TO THE READER.** A fundraising letter needs to have the tone of a direct communication, not a term paper or an annual report.
- **MAKE THE LETTER EASY TO SKIM** – not to read, word for word, but to SKIM! This means lots of white space, short paragraphs (2-3 sentences each), variety in paragraph length and sentence phrasing....
- **ALWAYS PUT IN A REPLY CARD/FORM AND A RETURN ENVELOPE.** It's too much to expect a reader to find their checkbook, an envelope, a stamp, and paper to write a note. They'll find their checkbook – and a stamp – *if* all they have to do is fill out a form and stick it in a pre-addressed envelope.
- **ALWAYS INCLUDE A SHORT P.S.** to re-tell the reader – in language that speaks to the timeliness of the requested action – what you want the reader to do (now!)