

Anatomy of a Profitable Fundraising Letter.

Alan Sharpe

*Discover 62 tricks,
secrets and tactics
used by successful
fundraising pros.*



Handbook Number 4

H A N D S - O N F U N D R A I S I N G S E R I E S

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Anatomy of a Profitable Fundraising Letter.

By Alan Sharpe

Introduction

One of the best ways to learn the craft of writing and designing successful fundraising letters is to look over the shoulders of professional fundraisers at work.

Below is a fundraising letter that Habitat for Humanity mailed to prospective donors. I was the writer. The firm that created the theme, designed the package and managed the entire process was CanadaDirect.

Although this is an acquisition letter (mailed to strangers and designed to secure a first-time donation), it contains the elements of all successful fundraising letters.

Read the letter through, then review my annotated comments. You'll learn a lot of practical methods that you can employ with your next direct mail fundraising appeal.

May it be a success!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Sharpe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alan Sharpe

10



11

We Build Dreams.

12

13 Dear Friend,

14 Can you measure contentment with a ruler? My mom could. Your mom probably could too.

15 If your home was anything like ours, birthdays were the time when mom walked you over to the kitchen door, made you stand as tall as you could (no going on tiptoes allowed!), and marked your increased stature on the door jamb behind you. That's one of the beauties of home ownership, I suppose—you can mark your family milestones wherever you want.

16 But many parents in Canada don't yet enjoy that simple pleasure of measuring their children's growth from birthday to birthday. That's because they don't own their home. They rent. Then they move. Then they rent again. They never know from one birthday to the next where they are going to live.

17 These families never stop dreaming of the stability, security and self-esteem that home ownership offers. I'm writing to you this morning on their behalf.

18 I work with volunteers across Canada who use tape measures to turn dreams into reality. Our organization, Habitat for Humanity, is an independent, charitable, Christian housing program dedicated to eliminating poverty housing by building homes in partnership with families in need. We build houses that are simple, decent and affordable. And we provide interest-free mortgages to families who could otherwise never buy their own home.

19 Volunteers donate their time and labour. Sponsors donate some of the building materials. The homeowner invests at least 500 hours of "sweat equity" by working shoulder to shoulder with the volunteer builders.

20 What makes our homes affordable is friends like you. Friends who donate the money needed to buy the land, lumber, siding, and other items that go into every home.

21 I invite you to send us a gift today. Your donation will deliver immediate results that our new homeowners can measure for themselves. Here's what I mean.

22 When our families move into their Habitat home, one of the first things they notice is that the percentage of their monthly income committed to housing drops from 50% to approximately 25%.

23 With each passing year, they watch the equity in their home increase. Their self-esteem improves. Their sense of security and stability returns. They notice a measurable change in report cards, too, as their children improve in school.

24

25

26



Partnership

Security



Hope

Togetherness

Family Values

Self - Esteem



Stability

27 Here's living proof of what your donation will do. I have in my hands a hand-written note from the Whalen family in St. John's, Newfoundland. Supporters just like you donated the funds that put the Whalen's into their first affordable home ever. Here's what the Whalen's have to report:

28 *Since moving into our home two years ago our quality of life has improved by leaps and bounds. We are now planning things that only seemed like wishes before, and our faith in all things possible has been restored . . . We've gained a new respect for our neighbourhood, we take pride in ownership and best of all we can extend an invitation to "come to our house." These things might seem foolish to some people but we are bursting with pride and joy at what we like to call our "Little piece of Paradise."*

29 Alison, Edgar, Cynthia, 14, and Joanne, 12.

30 Isn't that an encouraging note? It's one of hundreds that I could share with you. We have other families just like the Whalens, waiting for their chance to move into a decent, simple, affordable home. They are standing by with their hammers, nail aprons and tape measures. All they need is for you to partner with Habitat for Humanity to make their dreams of home ownership come true. Please send your gift today using the enclosed reply card and return envelope. And if you'd like to learn more about our work—and to read more success stories from families like the Whalens—please visit www.habitat.ca.

31 Sincerely,



32

33 David Hughes
President and CEO

34 P.S. I've enclosed a handy little ruler for you to use around the house. May it remind you that Habitat for Humanity builds dreams. We aim to build 1,000 homes by 2005. We are already over 700. Help us make our dreams come true by sending your gift today in the enclosed return envelope.


35 We are committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. Habitat for Humanity Canada is dependent upon the generous support of donors and volunteers to fulfill its mission. In order to share the work of Habitat with all Canadians, we sometimes work with other organizations to reach the largest number of people. Please contact us if you prefer that we do not make your name available to other organizations.

Habitat for Humanity Canada

Building Homes. Building Hope.

Habitat for Humanity is an independent, not-for-profit, Christian housing program dedicated to eliminating poverty housing by building homes in partnership with families in need. We build simple, decent and affordable houses. And we provide interest-free mortgages to families who would otherwise never own their own home.

Your gift today helps us eliminate poverty housing—one house and one family at a time. 39



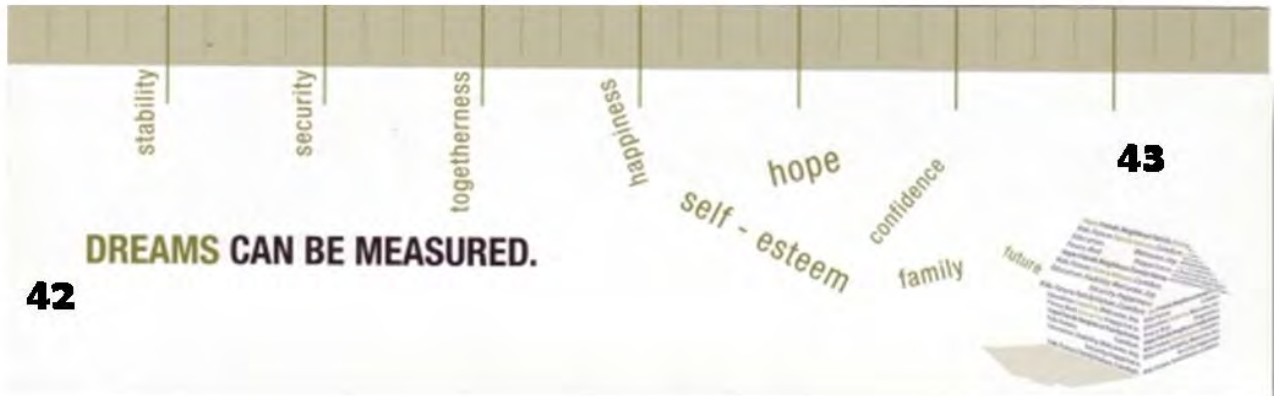
Buckslip front

BUILDING MOMENTUM SINCE 1985...

- ★ 1985: program spreads to Canada with the start of a national office of Habitat for Humanity to support the work of local Canadian affiliates.
- ★ 1993: Former US President Jimmy Carter, with his wife Rosalynn, volunteer in Waterloo, Ontario and Winnipeg, Manitoba when Canada hosted the annual Jimmy Carter Work Project.
- ★ 2003: over 700 homes built across Canada for needy families.
- ★ Currently 61 local affiliates are addressing the need for affordable housing in communities like yours across Canada.
- ★ Habitat for Humanity now spans over 92 countries.
- ★ Over 160,000 families enjoying their new homes around the world.

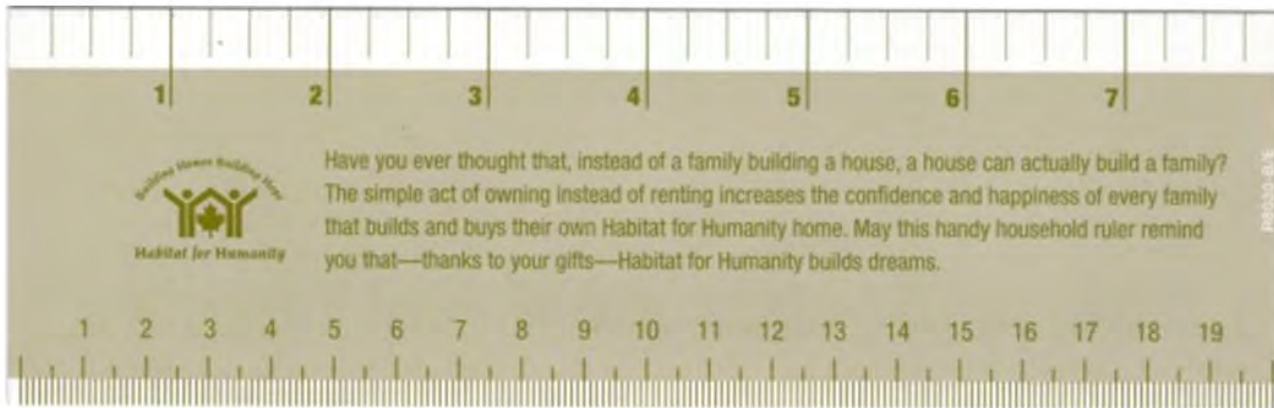
41

Buckslip back



Freemium front

44



Freemium back

*Your stamp will help us build more houses
for families in need*

59



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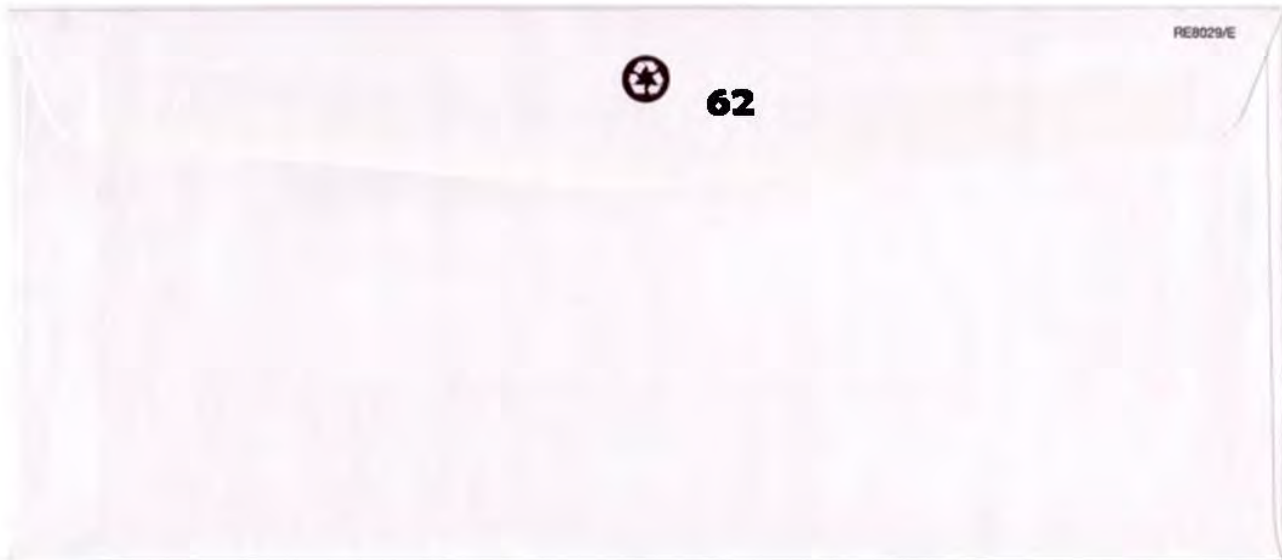
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY CANADA
40 ALBERT ST
WATERLOO ON N2L 9Z9

60



61

Reply envelope front



62

REB029/E

Reply envelope back

The Outer Envelope

1. Since this letter is being mailed to strangers—people who have not supported Habitat for Humanity before—the letter bears the internationally recognized and respected logo of the organization. This demonstrates that the letter is coming from a reputable charity.
2. This teaser copy gives the reader only half of the message. The other half is inside . . . What else does Habitat for Humanity build other than houses? You must open the envelope to find out.
3. The address is formatted in all capital letters and conforms with the addressing standards that the post office requires of mailers who want to receive postage discounts on their bulk mailings.
4. This piece of code is printed by the mailing house to help them bundle letters by postal code or zip code. This saves the non-profit organization even more money—and improves delivery.
5. The envelope is a standard #10 window. The standard size keeps costs down. And the window eliminates the otherwise costly process of matching the inside letter with the outside envelope.
6. This intriguing and unique illustration, created especially for this campaign, complements the envelope teaser copy without giving too much away.
7. The postal indicia also saves the non-profit money by letting it mail large quantities first-class for less than the standard first-class postage rate.
8. Putting the return address on the back of the envelope leaves more room on the front for teaser copy and visuals and gives the front a cleaner look. The address is a street address, not a post office box.
9. More teaser copy, “Find your Dream Ruler Inside,” placed here because most people turn an envelope over and see this side when opening it. Notice that the teaser does not say, “Dream Ruler Inside,” which would simply be stating a fact, but instead says “Find your Dream Ruler Inside.” It’s an invitation to open the envelope, and it’s a personal

**Read the remaining seven pages of this Handbook now.
Buy it online here:**

[Anatomy of a Profitable Fundraising Letter.](#)

This handbook features a line-by-line analysis of a successful direct mail fundraising package that Habitat for Humanity mailed to prospective donors.

The entire package was written by a professional direct mail fundraising writer and designed by a firm that specializes in creating fundraising packages for the world's top non-profit organizations.

Although this is an acquisition letter (mailed to strangers and designed to secure a first-time donation), it contains the elements of all successful fundraising letters. If you use the mail to raise funds, this handbook will help you discover what to do right—and what to avoid.

Anatomy of a Profitable Fundraising Letter is the fourth Handbook in the Hands-On Fundraising Series, published by Andrew Spencer Publishing.

Read the letter through. Study the contents of the entire package (every part of the package is illustrated; see what actually went in the mail and generated such a terrific response). Then review Alan's detailed, annotated comments (seven pages of them). You'll learn over 60 practical, effective tactics that you can employ with your next direct mail fundraising appeal letter.

Topics covered

Mailing envelope

- eight tips for getting it right
- logo placement
- how to use teaser copy
- illustrations on envelopes
- addressing
- window or no window?
- postal indicia

Two-page letter

- 25 observations, recommendations and criticisms to help you produce winning letters
- tips for having a professional letterhead
- how to use the headline with the envelope teaser
- the value of a powerful opening line
- how to build rapport quickly
- introducing the need for funds in the right way
- introducing the writer
- when and how to introduce the organization
- the role of facts and evidence in the appeal letter
- the human interest angle, and how to use it
- formatting tips
- features of a winning testimonial
- how to sum up
- how to ask for funds
- the sign off
- what color ink to sign the letter with
- who should sign the letter?
- the P.S. and what to say there

Buckslip, two-sided

- six tips about buckslips
- what the buckslip should accomplish
- what to put on a buckslip
- should you ask for funds?
- a few words about formatting for success

Freemium (a unique one!)

- learn four things to get right with your next freemium
- why include a freemium?
- why is this one excellent?
- how the freemium ties in with the ask and the rest of the package
- one thing this freemium got wrong

Reply coupon, two-sided

- 13 tips on writing and designing an effective reply device

- one-time gift or monthly gift—which should you ask for?
- how to capture email addresses
- a few tips on ask strings

Reply envelope

- four guidelines for effective return envelopes
- one simple phrase that saves your organization money when receiving gifts
- two things that boost response with reply envelopes
- an interesting image to put on the back of the envelope to boost response (worth testing)

See the contents of the direct mail package and the first nine pages of this Handbook [here](#).

Download this Handbook now. Start reading it within minutes.

**Read the remaining seven pages of this Handbook now.
Buy it online here:**

<http://www.raisersharpe.com/handbooks/H4-anatomy-profitable-fundraising-letter.htm>