

\$19.95

Boost Your Response Rates and Income with Simply Irresistible Fundraising Letter Envelopes.

Alan Sharpe

Learn from 22 examples of fundraising letter packages that really push the envelope.



Handbook Number 18

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

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Competition from other charities

If your donors are typical, they receive solicitations from other non-profit organizations each week. Your envelope will likely be one among many. How will you stand out? How will you persuade your donor or prospective donor (or former donor) to open your envelope first—if at all? Your envelope is your first chance, maybe your only chance.

Competition from other mail

Your package is also competing with electricity bills, bank statements, pizza flyers, credit card statements, personal letters, credit card offers and junk mail. Your reader will open these pieces of mail in a particular order, starting with the most pressing. The size, shape, weight and look of your envelope will determine if it gets opened or not.

Competition from other media

You are also competing with door-to-door fundraisers. And telephone canvassers. And telethons (television fundraisers). Not to mention the evening news, sitcoms, today's newspaper, CNN.Com and a literal host of radio shows and satellite TV channels. How can you get your fundraising appeal letter package to break through this noise and reach your donor? You need to start with your envelope.

The benefits of getting your appeal letters opened and read are tremendous:

- you will likely immediately boost your response rate, since more donors will read your appeal and respond with a gift, all other things being equal
- you will increase your gift income, since higher response rates mean more gifts

- you will reduce your cost to raise a gift, because the increase in revenue will offset your mailing costs
- you will improve your renewal rates, since more of your first-time donors will open, read and respond to your subsequent appeals
- you will reduce your attrition rates, because you will keep more donors engaged and interested in your cause

None of these benefits will be yours unless your donors open your envelopes. That's where the battle for your donor's head and heart begins. Don't lose the battle there. Create envelopes that are simply irresistible. Here are some tips.

Oversize Window

If you are mailing a premium, have it appear through an oversize window.

Unusual or Unexpected Dimensions

Switch from a #10 window to something larger or smaller.

Unique Addressing

Address the letter by hand.

Use Every Inch Available

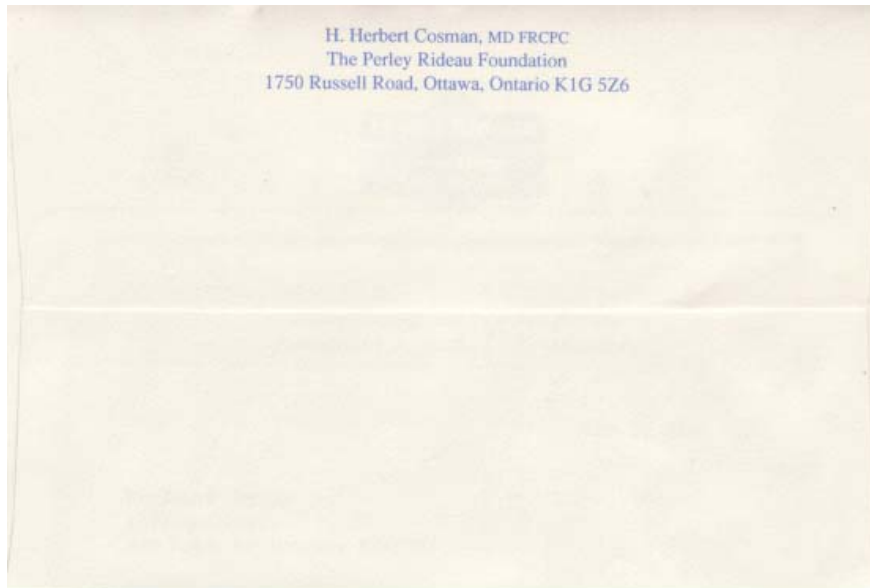
Put a dramatic photo on your envelope that stretches from one side right across to the other.

Tease the Donor Inside

Ask a question or pose a riddle that is answered inside.

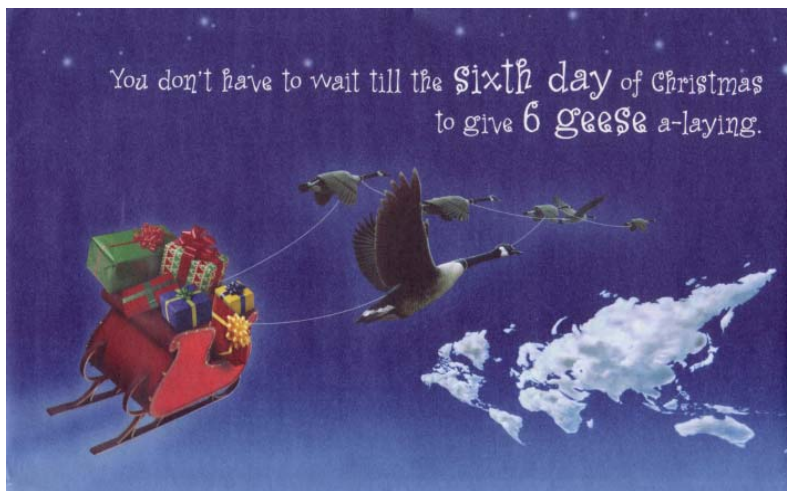
Multiple Windows

Put another window on the envelope and have something interesting show through from the inside.



The organization puts its return address on the back, which keeps the front cleaner and keeps the envelope looking like a piece of personal correspondence.

Use Every Inch Available



One advantage of using the back of the envelope as the front is that you have more real estate to display eye-popping graphics that stimulate donors to open the envelope, as Heifer International does with this seasonal mailer measuring 9 1/2" x 6" (see over).

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The box opens at one end only, revealing the contents: a sheet of four Christmas gift labels, eight greeting cards (four designs), a pen, a letter, a reply device and a return envelope. Boxes of this kind cost more to produce and mail, but their bulkiness and weight make them almost impossible to throw away unopened.

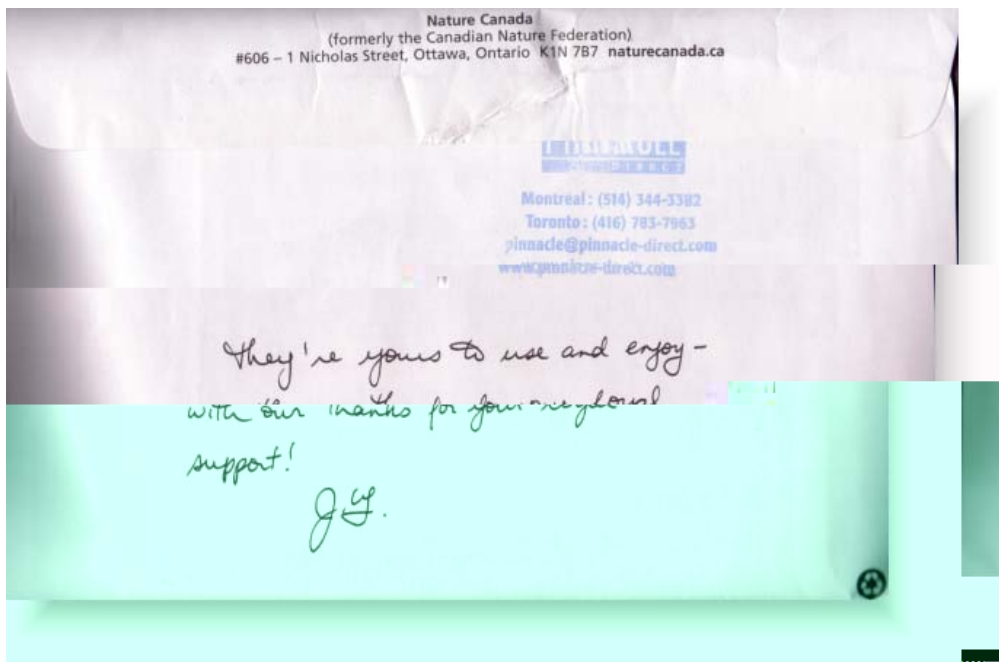
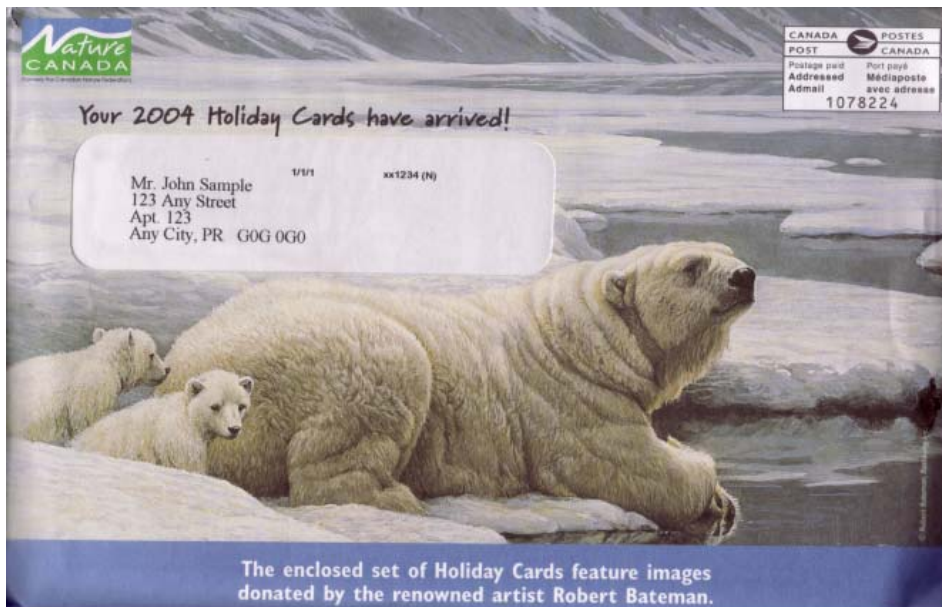
Postage



The commemorative stamp on this envelope from The Perley Rideau Foundation makes it stand out amidst the bland postal indicia and metered postage so common to business mail. You are not limited to just one stamp, either. Combine two, three, even four different commemorative stamps on one envelope (all adding up to the required postage) and you will stand out even more in donor mailboxes.

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Add a Personal Touch



The hand-written note on this envelope from Nature Canada gives the piece a personal touch. The note refers to the holiday cards enclosed, and says, "They're yours to use and enjoy—with our thanks for your loyal support!" To give the note even more personal appeal, it is signed simply J. G., the initials of Julie Gelfand, the organization President and the one whose signature appears on the letter inside.

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