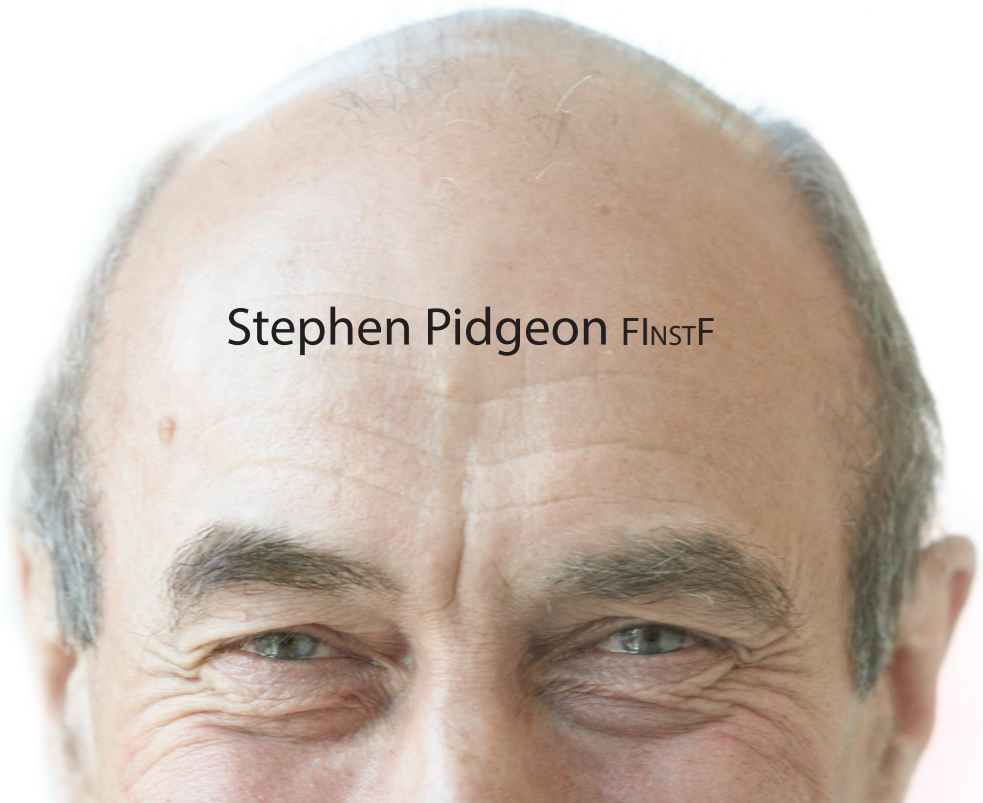


'As irreverent and incisive as the man himself'

HOW TO
LOVE
YOUR DONORS
(TO DEATH)

Stephen Pidgeon FINSTF



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DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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Foreword, by **Ken Burnett**

I love this book with its clever title, practical content and overdue messages. And I'm delighted to see my long-time friend, colleague and respected competitor Stephen Pidgeon finally getting his take on donor relationship development into print. But I have to confess, I despair that it had to be written at all.

But written it had to be and Stephen has done us all a service in the process.

The striking thing about the case for exemplary donor care is that it's such evident moral and financial common sense. Yet common sense is not common at all and 'the bleedin' obvious' still manages to elude so many.

What is it about making donors feel good and treating them as if they're extra special that so many fundraisers, CEOs and trustee boards find so hard to grasp? Why, when good causes have nothing more to offer in return for freely-given financial support than the warm glow and good feeling of having done something really worth doing, do so many imagine that it isn't imperative that we ensure every donor enjoys the experience so much that they'll willingly give again and again because being a donor makes them feel, consistently, so good?

The evidence that most fundraisers don't get this enough to change it, is clear from the experiences of current and lapsed donors. It can be seen from donors who hang up or cross the street to avoid talking to a fundraiser. It's underlined by the repeated dismal results of countless 'mystery shopping' tests of charity responses to an unsolicited donation. And it's evident from the inexorable toll of that dread horseman of the fundraising apocalypse, Attrition, the super-expensive, energy-sapping, all-but-overwhelming nemesis of donor-focused fundraisers everywhere, the fundraising devil who keeps our causes small, weak and under-achieving by causing potential long-term donors to leave in droves.

Attrition of course is not the right name for this tragedy. More accurately we should call it what it is – today's professional fundraisers failing to keep their donors.

What prevents us from shaking off the dead hand of attrition is that as a sector we consistently fail to grasp the need for sustained major investment in the customer experience. When we see how completely the likes of Amazon have wrenched dominance of the book-buying market from the feeble grasp of a traditionalist, fragmented, under-investing book trade just by providing a painless, consistent, exemplary customer experience, we realise that fundraisers could never aspire to

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emulate such a thing. The so-called not-for-profit sector (which really should change its name to the for-change sector) is too lacking in vision and unity, too hamstrung by short-term thinking and stunted by under-investment and the twin daft notions of cost ratios and immediate return on investment to ever aspire to putting such a grand vision into practice.

A bright light these last three decades on the international fundraising stage, Stephen Pidgeon needs little introduction to seasoned fundraisers around the world. As you'd expect, in amongst this book's practical tips, rants, keys and big ideas 'How to love your donors (to death)', covers all the basic essentials of fundraising direct marketing and also throws in some sensible insights into the more complex aspects of this endlessly fascinating activity. Its pages are packed with sound advice on everything from how to communicate effectively and responsibly to how to maximise return on investment and while at it, how to enjoy the process too. Step by step Stephen guides you through the intricacies of his chosen field, illuminating its quirkiness and shining light into its gloomier recesses while sharing shedloads of secrets, stories and insights that will help you both to raise lots more money cost-effectively and to feel satisfied while you do it of the rightness of your approach. He even helps you get your grammar right.

Many of the gems in this book are deliciously straightforward and simple. Stephen exhorts fundraisers to be less demanding and more engaging, a simple recipe that in itself could transform fundraising, or at least the donor experience of it, overnight.

We should all join forces to campaign for a transformation of the donor experience, yet sadly only a tiny, privileged elite of readers will take this book's advice to heart. Their organisations and causes will prosper accordingly. Fundraising I'm sure will increasingly divide into those who get this and those who don't. This book therefore is for fundraisers with the vision, tenacity and campaigning zeal not just to change the world but to change the way fundraising is done, not only in their organisation but throughout our sector. Causes in future will be increasingly categorised as those that do great fundraising, and those that don't. As you're holding this book in your hands, you have made a good start.

Ken Burnett,
London
2nd October 2014.

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1 Why should you be reading this?

I am a fundraiser, my medium is direct marketing and my audience is Minor Donors – good people who give ordinary donations. I speak at conferences all over the world on this sort of fundraising. And as I get older and become part of the population segment that is most likely to donate, I feel more and more abused by charities trying to squeeze the last penny out of me. It's madness, because people like me – and there are millions of us – need to be loved by charities... loved to death!

Loving your donors is a strategy with high returns. The money donated during their lifetime through small donations is but a drop in the ocean. If a charity provides a supporter with a consistent and happy experience, then when they die they will leave a legacy. And the value of that gift will eclipse all the donations they gave in their life.

That's the subject of this book. I'll show you how to do it and, in one or two of my 'rants', how not to do it. Everything in this book is designed to leave the supporter feeling appreciated, 'loved' in my terms. But I have to start with some fundamentals of fundraising – one fact and two phenomena.

Lots of people give to charities and if you're reading this, I'll guarantee you're one of them. But serious money comes from people who are older than you. That's just a fact of life – people who are over 60 are more wealthy, a lot more wealthy. The figures from the Office of National Statistics in the UK released in 2014¹ are very clear. Wealth in this report has four constituent parts: property wealth; financial wealth (cash, savings, stocks etc.); physical wealth (the mass of things you own); and private

1 Wealth and Assets Survey (2014) 'Wealth in Great Britain 2010/12' Office for National Statistics, London. www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_362809.pdf

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pension wealth. In these terms, three categories of people stand out a mile – all of them are ‘older’. They are over pensionable age, or couples with one partner over pensionable age, or couples with children who are no longer dependent. That’s no surprise; it simply confirms the social structures we’ve lived with for years.

And the age of ‘around 60’ neatly coincides with two other life-changing phenomena. If you haven’t experienced them, you cannot know how immensely liberating, how truly amazing they are.

The first is retirement. Throughout countless years of work, people have relied on you, you’ve had responsibilities, whatever your level in the organisation. When you are working, you have obligations. When you retire, all that goes. It’s wonderful; I recommend it to everyone I now meet. I’ve never worked so hard in my life, but the responsibilities I had, the obligations to colleagues, have virtually disappeared.

The second phenomenon for most people is that children leave home, not just to go to university or whatever, but to set up somewhere on their own. While that may bring some element of sadness, it also signals an amazing sense of freedom.

Not only do older people have more money, but retirement and the children leaving home encourage a new view of life, liberated from responsibilities to others at work and from the concentration of all energies on raising the family.

In this book you will learn a huge amount about Minor Donor fundraising – raising smaller gifts from lots of people, often through a regular monthly donation paid through their bank. But it is not about techniques – the detail of recruitment or media or testing or what software to use for an email campaign. Nor do I laboriously debate the merits of digital versus paper fundraising. This stuff is monumentally boring and has been clogging up conference sessions for the last decade without achieving the fundamental shift needed in fundraisers – the change in their attitude to the wonderful folk who support their cause.

This book is about how to love your donors. As anyone knows, falling in love is easy, but loving somebody over time, though a joy, is also hard work. Loving your donors requires a fundamental shift in attitude, a long-term strategy and a strong