


The essence of
Campaigning
Fundraising

in 52 exhibits and
199 web links



‘This is the book I wish I had when I left university to work in the for-change sector... It is a map, a compass, and a North Star.’

Dr Julie Berthoud-Jury, international fundraising consultant, Switzerland.

Ken Burnett

Foreword by Roger M. Craver

Published in association with the SOFII Foundation, UK and *The Agitator*, USA.

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WHAT DO YOU MEAN, CAMPAIGNING FUNDRAISING?

Voluntary action funded by individuals sits deep at the core of our civilisation. It's our society's tangible, practical, freely given expression of concern and support for its weaker, more vulnerable members. Most of our society's great causes got started because concerned people came together to raise money to change something that urgently needed changing, or to save something that very much deserved saving. Their impact on the character and development of our society cannot be over-estimated. And their continued existence and effectiveness depends upon successful fundraising.

Fundraising is a powerful catalyst for change, but it shouldn't ever be separated from the cause you're raising money for. People don't give for things to stay the same. Always, they give to make a difference, to bring about a positive shift, even transformation. So, by referring to this activity merely as fundraising, simply emphasising the money, we made a basic big mistake, a mistake we've paid dearly for and are still paying for, so should rectify once and for all. Campaigning fundraising it has to be, for the fundraiser's job is to directly, delightfully connect each and every donor with the difference he or she is making. That, in essence, is what campaigning fundraising is for. It's why, when done properly, this can be the very best job going.



The White Lion Press

OTHER BOOKS BY THIS AUTHOR

Storytelling can change the world, The White Lion Press, London, softback, 2014.

The Field by the River, Anova Books, London, hardback, 2008, softback, 2009, and Kindle, 2013.

The Zen of Fundraising, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, softback, 2006.

Tiny Essentials of an Effective Volunteer Board, The White Lion Press, London, softback, 2004.

Relationship Fundraising, second edition, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, hardback 2002. The White Lion Press, London, hardback, 1992.

Friends for Life, The White Lion Press, London, hardback, 1996.

How to Produce Inspiring Annual Reports, Directory of Social Change, London, softback, 2000, with Karin Weatherup.

Website and blog, www.kenburnett.com

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The Agitator

sofii 
showcase of fundraising
innovation and inspiration



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IN MEMORY OF MARIE BURNETT

co-founder and editor-in-chief of SOFII.org,
The Showcase of Fundraising Innovation and Inspiration.

Alongside our generous co-collaborators on *The Agitator*, this book is dedicated to the SOFII workers, Carolina Herrera, Joanna Culling and Joe Burnett; also to trustees of the SOFII Foundation, Fiona Duncan, David Carrington (Hon secretary, treasurer and former trustee), Meredith Niles, Craig Linton and Richard Turner; to newly appointed trustees (for their evident potential) Rachel Moore, Angélique Masse Nguyen, Charmaine Shah, Andrew Watt and Heather Little and to all the legions of supporters, donors, volunteers and users who make SOFII possible by freely contributing and sharing priceless inspirational content that will change the world.

What others have said about *The essence of Campaigning Fundraising*

'This book does not deserve a place on your shelf. It deserves to be open on your desk in a place of practical use, as a campaigning fundraiser who wants to do and be better: dog-eared, marked-up, pages flagged for future world-changing projects. The links and exhibits contained here transformed the way I do my work as a fundraising copywriter (and continue to do so). May they likewise transform the work you do to make this world a better place by giving your donors the chance to be the generous, compassionate, caring people they are – as deeply committed as you are to making this world a better place for us all. Use this book daily. I know I will.'

Lisa Sargent, campaigning fundraising copywriter, USA

'Thirty years ago, Ken Burnett rescued donors by putting them in the centre. In this new book, Ken rescues fundraisers by showing them they are campaigners. They don't raise funds. They work with donors yearning to make their world more just, more educated, more healthy, greener. Precious donors who, guided by campaigning fundraisers, want to be inspired, angered, impassioned and given a chance to be heroes. This book, filled with powerful examples accompanied by Ken's sharp wit and profound insights, is a treasure.'

David Love, author and leading environmental campaigning fundraiser, Canada

'If you raise money for a cause you believe in – whether you're a volunteer or a professional – this book will pay for itself the first day you look at it. *The essence of Campaigning Fundraising* is filled with great advice from author Ken Burnett, as well as wisdom from dozens of successful and ground-breaking direct response campaigns archived on SOFII.'

Nick Allen, digital fundraiser for UNICEF, Amnesty and many more, USA

'This book is very timely post-Covid pandemic, as need for raising money has increased tremendously and fundraisers are not only expected to be good at what they do but to be great at what they do. This is what Ken teaches us in this book; he takes us on the journey to become a great fundraiser through learning the history of great fundraising. The more we know about the great fundraising of the past, the better prepared we are to make the great fundraising of the future.'

Ikhlaq Hussain, lecturer, trainer, head of philanthropy and partnerships, Orphans In Need, UK

'Through the years Ken's words have launched a thousand fundraising careers. His latest collection of words – *Campaigning Fundraising* – will inspire a thousand more to join in the crusade to change our world. SOFII.org is part historical record, part labour of love and part treasure chest of fundraising riches. This book will take you, the reader, through SOFII's vast exhibit hall – where you will get a closer look at the beautiful details that lie within. Lovingly crafted by a true master, this book should sit on the corner of every enlightened fundraiser's desk.'

John Lepp, partner, Agents of Good, Canada

'When Ken Burnett writes, I listen. This is the book I wish I had when I left university to work in the for-change sector. A masterful distillation of time-tested principles and nuts-and-bolts wisdom that only comes from hard-earned experience. It is a map, a compass, and a North Star that can guide you through the body of work in fundraising so you, too, can experience the kind of exciting, successful, and rewarding career the social change sector is uniquely positioned to offer. A brilliant gift for any graduate as well as seasoned professional who wants to change the world.'

Dr Julie Berthoud-Jury, international fundraising consultant, Switzerland

'This is a fantastic book. Chock full of inspiring stories, well-told, and ones that will help you to raise a lot of money. Once again Ken Burnett has given all of us a gift that will help the profession, and most importantly, promote the social progress we all desire.'

Harvey McKinnon, author and president, Harvey McKinnon Associates, Vancouver, Canada

'The truth told well' is a phrase frequently used by Ken Burnett to inspire fundraisers. *The essence of Campaigning Fundraising* is just that, *the truth told well*. Cleverly written and highly readable, this book is a brilliant reminder to all world changers and leaders about the IMPACT we can all make, if we do it well. You can hear the calming, considered voice of Ken on every page. A must-read for everyone in the sector or thinking of joining it.'

Michelle Berriman, executive director, Fundraising Institute of New Zealand

'Thank you for writing it. We need it and the repositioning of fundraising is welcome. I think many fundraisers (young and old) will like to describe themselves as campaigning fundraisers. It should hit home.'

Mark Phillips, managing director, Bluefrog Fundraising, London, UK

'I love this book, I love its spirit and I think the fundraising sector will love it too. The descriptor campaigning fundraising captures the work of fundraisers eloquently and accurately. The book and its exhibits will be very encouraging for those looking to join the sector, equipping them to take a donor-focused approach and tell their supporters the right stories in the right way at the right time.'

Ryan Burdock, associate director - fundraising, Prospectus, London, UK

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A glaring need for re-focusing

Foreword, by Roger M. Craver, *The Agitator*

The crying need for fundraisers and fundraising leaders to re-examine what we do and how we do it has now taken on an existential urgency.

Democracy is under threat. Truth, the essence of any free and democratic society, is in decay, assaulted by forces intent on imposing a frightening and conspiratorial alternate reality. Trust in governments, leaders, the press, non-profits and even among citizens themselves is at an all-time low. For good measure a global pandemic now tops this heap of woe.

Fortunately, in troubling times like these ordinary people and the organizations they band together to create have historically proven amazingly resilient: capable of rescue, restoration and renewal.

In my 55 years of organizing and campaigning for change I've witnessed first-hand the power of organized, ordinary folks. Name an issue where there's a problem and you're likely to find a group of caring people banded together in support of a solution. Women's suffrage. Hunger. Homelessness. Human Rights. Civil Rights. Animal Rights. Conservation. Peace. Climate Change. Whatever the issue there are scores of non-profit household names tackling the problem.

Nearly every one of these organizations requires a multitude of committed activists and donors to fuel the change it seeks. And that means *fundraising and fundraisers*.

Given the high stakes now at play for the future we will not only need more fundraisers, but better fundraisers. A lot more. A lot better.

To address the challenges we face not only must we acknowledge our sector's crumbling infrastructure of lower and lower retention rates, fewer and fewer donors, and more and more organizations chasing a shrinking base of trust and support. Equally we must admit we're failing to properly recruit and adequately train and inspire a new generation of fundraisers. *We must do something about all this. We must change.*

Right here – in your hands – you hold a precious guide to how we might change. You'll discover that we don't have to start over and build from scratch. Rather, we do have to look at first principles and challenge virtually every assumption we've taken for granted for far too long.

Fortunately, Ken Burnett, with this new book, is back in his role as master guide. Just as he did 30 years ago with his revolutionary *Relationship Fundraising: a donor-based approach to the business of raising money*, he now delivers a wealth of advice and advice-by-classic examples that should give every fundraiser a big, big nudge.

Even if our acquisition, retention and development results were miles better than they actually are, there still would be a glaring need for a re-focusing – exactly the aim of this book.

Whether novice or veteran these pages contain a treasure trove of value for every fundraiser:

- ★ For the young would-be fundraiser – and there are plenty of them – how do they cut through the clutter of blogs, books and conferences to find what really matters, for them? And should they even be calling themselves fundraisers, in the first place?
- ★ Fundraising leaders need a motivational and informed kick in the pants too. If you had just a few hours to brief a new recruit to your fundraising or campaigning departments, what are the top 20, or even top 100, key things you'd want them to really know and master?

The strength of this book is in the cumulative evidence it provides for a very specific, clearly articulated philosophy of how to do campaigning fundraising and donor retention and relationship development in the early years of the 21st century and beyond.

Through 52 exhibits and 199 web links it shows where we've got things wrong and how we can massively improve and thus multiply our voluntary sector's impact on the problems we seek to solve and the benefits we bring to our society.

Like an archaeologist uncovering and highlighting great riches from the past, the author taps into the motherlode of fundraising riches available 24/7 online – The Showcase of Fundraising Innovation and Inspiration (SOFII.org). Ken Burnett helped found SOFII in 2007, and it's been growing ever since. SOFII is a working wonder. A carefully curated repository of hundreds of examples of the best campaigns and thousands of articles offering professional fundraisers the best available guidance and support. Fortunately for the reader, the examples cited in this book conveniently contain links and QR codes back to the original entries on SOFII and a few too on *The Agitator*. Link. See. Admire. Think.

Importantly, the book's title deserves special note. "*Campaigning*

Fundraising” doesn’t flow easily off the tongue, but it’s the absolutely accurate descriptor of a function so essential to creating a better world.

As you’ll see in the example-packed pages of this book *campaigning fundraising* is unique, complex and quirky. Way too many people too often assume it’s simple, easy, merely a matter of asking people to give the money. And if ever more and more money is needed (which it always is) too many fundraisers and others have assumed they just have to ask more people, more often, more vigorously, for bigger sums. (Perhaps this explains why people instinctively cross the street to avoid a fundraiser, and why at parties any campaigning fundraiser incautious enough to announce what she or he does for a living can, in an instant, effectively clear a room.)

Fundraising is not popular. Neither is it well understood nor appreciated. This book should change that. Campaigning fundraisers and what they do should have very much higher status and respect in our society because of both the good they make possible and the benefits they bring. Fundraising enables social impact and empowers communities, so leads to dynamic and lasting social change.

Our society would be much less healthy and self-sustaining without campaigning fundraisers. Their work cannot be entirely delegated to the state nor reassigned to commercial suppliers. A thriving fundraising and campaigning community enables a vibrant, thriving third sector – the voluntary, not-for-profit or for-change sector – which in turn ensures a stable, balanced and caring society that provides ample means for all its constituents to share in its obligations and duties, to care for and share with those less fortunate than themselves and to otherwise improve our world.

Campaigning fundraisers can and must go further and aim higher. This book sets out a road map and a timeline for improving and accelerating a vital function that’s needed more now than ever.

Roger M. Craver, Editor
The Agitator
Chilmark, Massachusetts



Roger Craver's Wikipedia entry describes him as an American author, fundraiser and campaigner for liberal political and progressive causes. Roger was among the first to apply direct mail methodology to movement

and political fundraising. He has said that the frustration and alienation that Americans felt during the 1960s developed a social environment that encouraged the success of the fundraising method. Later scholars would call Craver an early pioneer for democratic and progressive direct mail efforts. In 1969 he cofounded Common Cause and then went on to found Craver, Mathews, Smith & Company, the consulting firm that helped launch the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) the National Council to Control Handguns and to grow the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Planned Parenthood, Sierra Club, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and help dozens more non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity and Heifer International gain traction through direct mail fundraising. A leading opinion-former in the non-profit sector worldwide, Roger is now editor of the influential *Agitator*.

www.agitator.thedonorvoice.com

Introduction

What campaigning fundraising is really about

‘What drives great fundraising is value. We create value, and money follows value. A perhaps more poetic way to say this is that we make donors’ dreams come true. So, every time you read the word “fundraising”...please think “creating value”.’

David Love, *Green Green*, 2020

IT’S ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN THE MONEY

Effective campaigning fundraising isn’t just about what raises most money, far from it. Donors’ gifts drive societal changes that shape our communities. Events spread campaign messages, bringing people together to make good things happen and build social cohesion. Trusts and foundations exist solely to give away money to the most deserving of causes, money often made in less socially useful activities. Major donors find in charities an acceptable way to share their surplus wealth, in the process getting to feel good about the differences they make. In exchange for an easily affordable slice of their disposable funds, less well-heeled individuals can also share the warm glow of giving and enjoy a sense of achievement too. Charity shops provide bargains for everyone and are lifesavers for society’s most vulnerable, recycling quality used goods to people who often desperately need low-cost essentials. Companies use charities to build their employees’ morale, sense of self-worth and social purpose. Face-to-face fundraising introduces tens of thousands of young people each year to caring for good causes, who in turn go on to recruit generally younger-than-usual donors. And much more. The capital donors bring is as much emotional as transactional. Most of our society’s great causes got started because concerned people came together to raise money to change something that urgently needed changing, or to save something that very much deserved saving. Their impact on the character and development of our society cannot be over-estimated.

WHY ADD ‘CAMPAIGNING’ BEFORE ‘FUNDRAISING’?

I like David Love’s notion that when we say the word ‘fundraising’ we should think more broadly. Sadly, people don’t, they think it means simply asking for money. So, we need to add something. This project started out as a book about fundraising, but even a short way in I realised that

to be accurate, it had to broaden its scope. We need to move beyond the merely monetary aspect of what fundraisers do, to link their activities to the change that a donor's money brings. As if to emphasise that, in fundraising, asking for money is the last thing that you should do, fundraising invariably goes hand in hand with campaigning, though always the campaigning has to come first. Whether it's eradicating cancer, tackling climate change or providing access to education and excellence for aspiring young musicians, you can't remove the campaigning element from fundraising. Otherwise, it's just asking people for money, for no evident benefit or good reason. People don't give for things to remain as they are – they give to see change, always. So campaigning fundraising it has to be. Many of our sector's recent, most dangerous, most enduring problems stem from fundraisers focusing on asking bluntly for money rather than on answering what's uppermost in every donor's priorities, which is, 'How can I help?', 'Will my help make a difference?', and 'Will my help get through?' Campaigning fundraising is about helping people to understand, savour and enjoy the end result as much as it is about helping them to get there.

Your organisation is a truck, donors' money is its fuel and cargo. Its sole purpose is to take the supporter's contribution and the difference that makes directly and promptly to where it's needed. So, you can't separate the mission from the money or from the supporter experience. Without the former and the latter, the bit in the middle won't come or won't last. Simple. Fundraisers can show that, through campaigning fundraising, small change can make a big difference. But in coming up with a name for this activity it might have been wiser had fundraisers emphasised the difference the money can make at least as much as emphasising the money they want. Donors and their causes enjoy a strong, mutually beneficial relationship. Fundraising above all is about the change charities and their supporters want to see in this world. So, by referring to this activity merely as fundraising we made a basic big mistake, a mistake we've paid dearly for and are still paying for, so should rectify once and for all. Campaigning fundraising it has to be, for the fundraiser's job is to directly and delightfully connect the donor with the difference he or she is making. That, in essence, is what campaigning fundraising is all about.

'First open their hearts and minds. Their wallets will follow.'

Harold Sumption, founder, the International Fundraising Congress, Holland

‘Fundraising is the most important source of income for voluntary bodies and giving by individuals is the most important area in fundraising.’

The Status of UK Fundraising 2018 Benchmark Report, Blackbaud Europe

‘The market for something to believe in is infinite.’

Hugh MacLeod, @thegapingvoid, using art to transform business

Voluntary action funded by individuals sits deep at the core of our civilisation. It’s our society’s tangible, practical, freely given expression of concern and support for its weaker, more vulnerable members. While we might argue whether the State should do more or less for society’s most needy and vulnerable, no one wants the State to do everything. Of course, all organisations campaigning for social change need to work closely and harmoniously with the government of the day, but fundamental to the quality and effectiveness of the relationship is the capacity of voluntary organisations to retain their independence. Inevitably, that independence comes from successful fundraising. The often remote, at times stifling hand of any central government system can dull creativity, flexibility and passion, all essential for appropriate and effective service provision. Over-reliance on central government to tackle all social ills and needs would also deny ordinary individuals the chance to direct their own giving and to delight in and benefit from the achievements their giving makes possible. The independent voluntary sector exists to fill the gaps in state provision and also to lead the way in doing things better. The fuel for all its actions comes from fundraising. Thriving voluntary sector causes are a barometer of society’s health and effective functioning. To stretch the metaphor, they work best as a nippy little Nissan Micra rather than a huge gas-guzzling Chevrolet. So, as fundraising fuels all this great work, its role in all our lives is hugely important.

Fundraising is communication. It’s the inspiration business and it’s the truth, told well. Fundraising for good causes is all about winning hearts and minds first, so that wallets, purses, pocketbooks and electronic funds transfers happily follow later, to stimulate and generate significant change. Money is the means to that end but it’s never the end itself, so fundraising, campaigning and the communication of inspiration are all inextricably intertwined.

‘Raising money for a cause is a unique business area. It benefits from many of the highest human emotions and is lucky enough not to be burdened by some of the basest. One thing is certain – a fundraising transaction is fundamentally different from a commercial business transaction. Although fundraisers have much to learn from commercial practice they will commit a fatal, suicidal error if they embrace commercial practices too enthusiastically.’

Ken Burnett, *Relationship Fundraising*, 1992

In that nearly 30-year-old book I went on to suggest that rather than focusing on the money, fundraisers should first focus on the people sending it. I stressed the importance of understanding donors and delivering what donors want, then explained how to do that, in elaborate detail. Increasingly over the years the simple truth that forms the core of that and all my subsequent books on this subject has become ever clearer to me and to many others too, though sadly, not to all. Had this truth been universally acknowledged the UK’s fundraising community couldn’t possibly have suffered the sustained, near catastrophic criticism that so damagingly afflicted our sector in 2015 and beyond as print and broadcast media persistently catalogued in lurid, heart-rending detail systematic, inappropriate, even aggressive fundraising practices from charities (see exhibits 13 and 22 in this book). Fortuitously, that near catastrophe has become a catalyst for change – providing we can grasp it firmly and keep our nerve and our commitment to delivering a great donor experience. That change seems likely to lead soon if not imminently to what’s been called a new era of responsible fundraising. Rather obviously, inspiring and delivering a consistently excellent supporter experience is what fundraising should be all about.

‘If giving is a good experience, donors will do more of it. If it isn’t, they’ll soon stop.’

The 6Ps summary document of the Commission on the Donor Experience, 2016

The logical and emotional case for this is, thankfully, delightfully simple: if we do right by our donors, they’ll do right by us. That said, fundraising is remarkably resilient. Since 2017 the sector has bounced back from a PR nightmare that would have sunk most other industries. Though, I submit,

there's still some way to go. Others more qualified than I am will come up with explanations for this seeming recovery but to me it seems obvious that while donors may dislike the way some fundraisers go about the business of asking, they won't want the innocent beneficiaries to suffer for the inappropriate actions of the fundraisers. While bad fundraising persists, many donors will give in spite of the fundraisers, perhaps as much as because of them.

We must change that.

We fundraisers offer no tangible good or service that our customers have to have. If giving is a good experience, donors will do more of it. If it isn't, they'll soon stop. Yet we also have potentially the greatest proposition of all for would-be world-changers – we offer people of goodwill the chance, the potential, the possibility, even the certainty of making a difference in a troubled world. And we can prove it. We can offer donors sound assurance of impact that will show them that their gift has been the difference they want to see. As such, fundraisers are catalysts of change. More than that, if we deploy our creativity, passion, wit and wisdom wisely we can deliver, consistently, a fulfilling, richly rewarding supporter experience that will play a constructive part in adding purpose, meaning and achievement into our supporters' busy lives, which will inspire donors to involve their family, friends and contacts so we can engage far more donors than we do at present. And there's more. As we'll see later, giving is actually good for you, your health, your marriage, your physical and mental well-being.¹ The propositions we need to make shouldn't be too hard to sell.

A CORNUCOPIA OF TREASURES

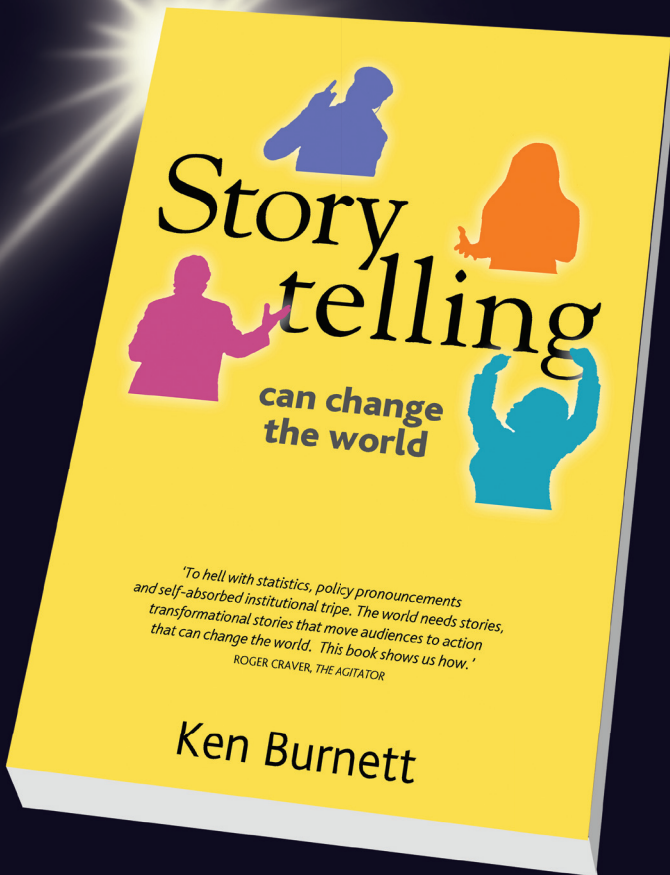
Promoting social improvement offers unsurpassed career opportunities. More than anything, young people coming into the world of work want to do something worthwhile with their life that will make a difference, maybe even change the world. Campaigning fundraising allows them to do that and much more. Indeed, some will find it a vocation. So campaigning fundraising should find a prominent place in every school's careers department.

Consistently down the ages some of our world's most creative minds have bent their talents, passion and experience to the task of communicating to stir and shape the mutually beneficial relationship

¹ Dr Tara Swart, *The Future of Giving is Smarter Giving*, Barclays Private Bank, 2019.

Persuading others effortlessly, painlessly and willingly to do something that otherwise, most likely, they would not is the most valuable asset for anyone working in any number of professional and technical business areas.

**We do that best by telling them stories.
How to do transformational storytelling is
explained and illustrated here.**



Details from
www.dsc.org.uk/scc



The White Lion Press

If you want to change the world, this book is for you.

The essence of Campaigning Fundraising describes in detail how modern-day fundraising should be, how it should be structured, implemented and explained so that our publics, particularly donors and fundraisers themselves, see it as the positive, transformational force for change and good that it surely can be, as well as the best career going for any creative, committed, enthusiastic individual who really wants to make a difference, to change the world.

'This book deserves to be open on your desk in a place of practical use: dog-eared, marked-up, pages flagged for future world-changing projects. The links and exhibits contained here transformed the way I do my work as a fundraising copywriter (and continue to do so). Use this book daily. I know I will.'

Lisa Sargent, campaigning fundraising copywriter, USA

'Precious donors guided by campaigning fundraisers want to be inspired, angered, impassioned and given a chance to be heroes... This book, filled with powerful examples accompanied by Ken's sharp wit and profound insights, is a treasure.'

David Love, author and leading environmental campaigning fundraiser, Canada

'I love this book, I love its spirit and I think the fundraising sector will love it too... The book and its exhibits will be very encouraging for those looking to join the sector, equipping them to take a donor-focused approach and tell their supporters the right stories in the right way at the right time.'

Ryan Burdock, associate director - fundraising, Prospectus, London, UK

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