

Communicating Your Case in a Competitive Environment

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The real title of this session:

The Five Dirty Secrets of the Fundraising Case

What We're Going To Cover

- A quick overview of the current fundraising environment
- Some thoughts about the role of the case
- Key elements of the case
- How and why to manage the case development process
- Use of the case
- Communicating the case through various channels
- 15 – 20 minutes of questions, commiseration, and vigorous debate

The Current Fundraising Environment

Arguably the toughest in recent history, due to competition and, of course, economic factors

Canadian tax filers reported making charitable donations totaling \$8.5 billion in 2006, up 8.3% from 2005

22.2 million Canadians (85% of the population aged 15 and over) made a financial donation in 2004

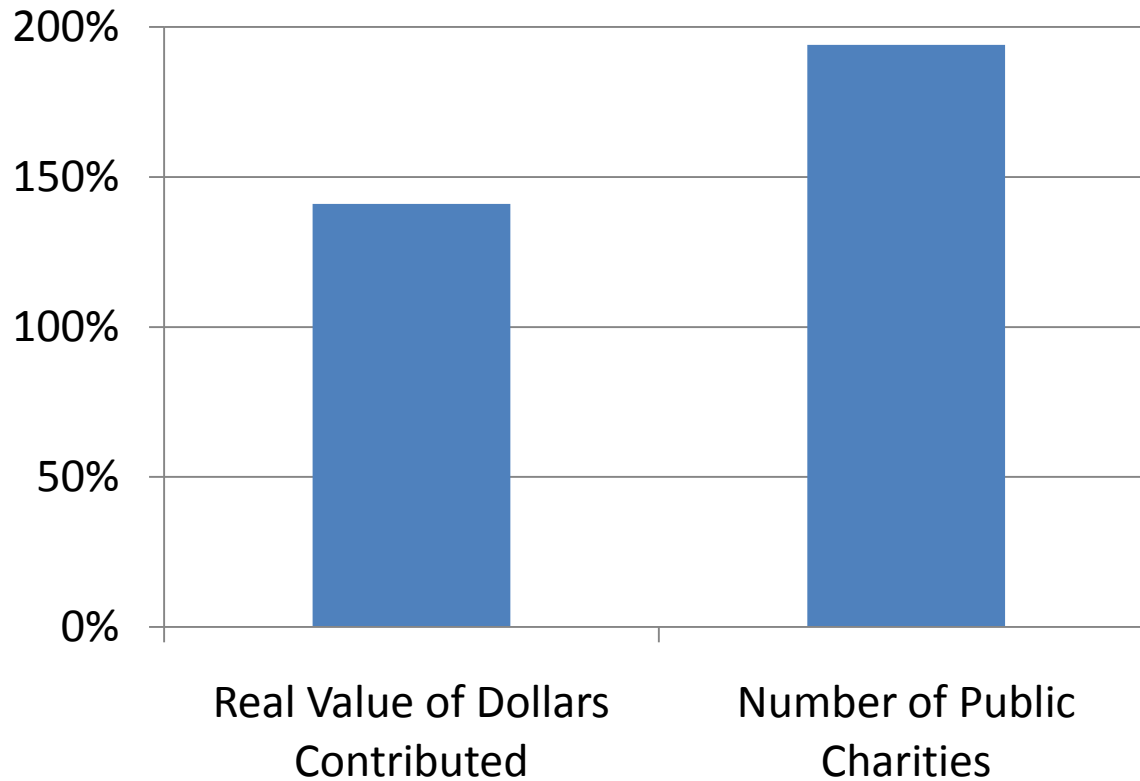
A perspective on the competition:

- Canada (2003) – 161,200 charities
- Ontario (2003) – 45,000 charities

*Sources:
Statistics Canada and
National Survey of
Nonprofit and Voluntary
Organizations*

The Current Fundraising Environment

United States: % Growth '82 – '07

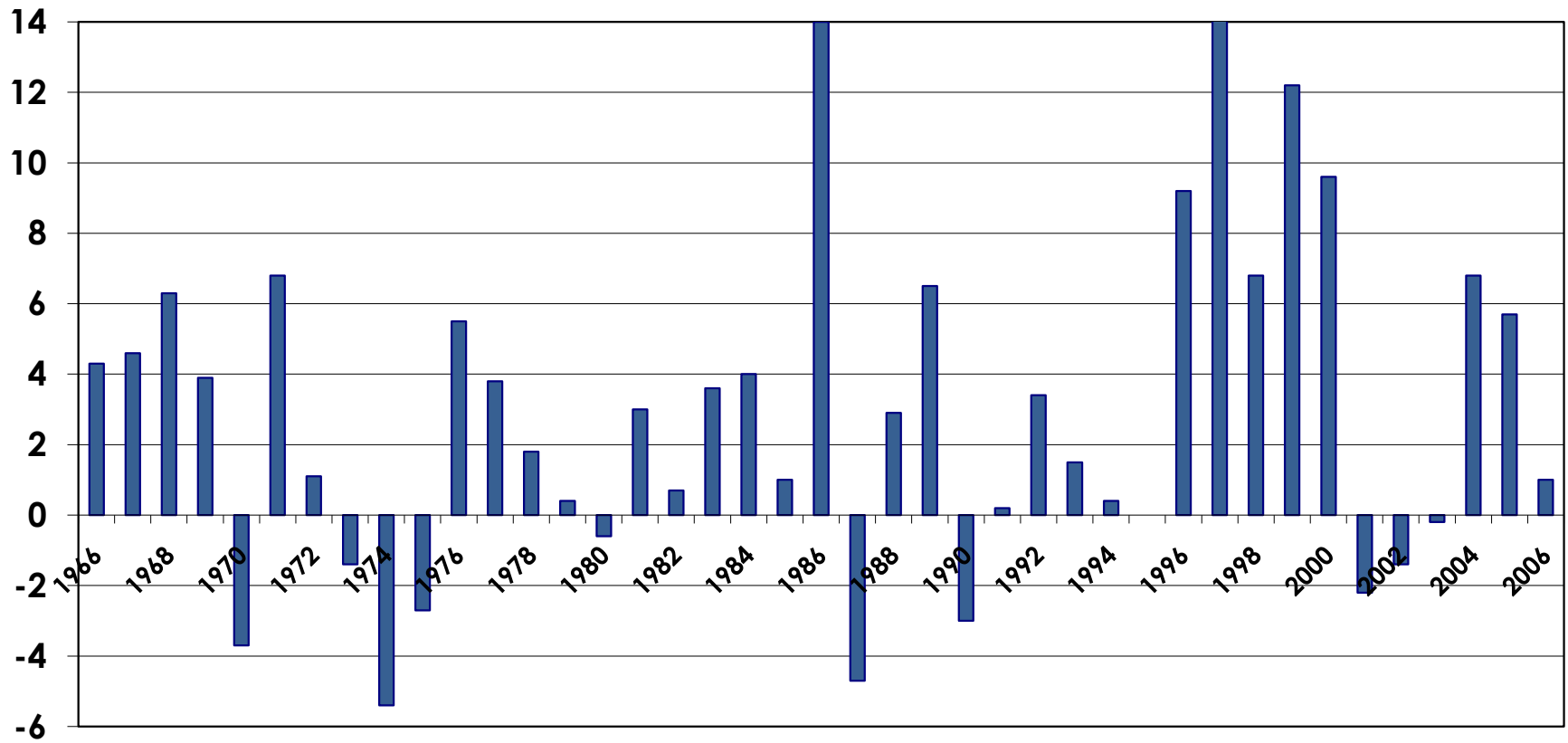


*Source:
Susan Raymond, Ph.D.
Changing Our World, Inc.*

The Current Fundraising Environment

- Some historical perspective (again, US data)

Charitable Giving: Year-To-Year Percentage Change, '66 – '06



Source:
Giving USA

The Current Fundraising Environment

What we are seeing (anecdotally):

- Most foundations and corporations are in full retreat mode, in many cases limiting gifts to prior awardees only
- Individuals are continuing to give, but
 - *In some/many instances they are giving less*
 - *In some/many instances they are giving to fewer institutions...those that are nearest and dearest to them, and those that have the strongest cases*

Consequently (and Obviously)...

A compelling fundraising case is
more important than ever.

The Primacy of The Case

The Four Essential Components of Any Fundraising Effort:

- A compelling case
- Cultivated prospects
- Motivated leadership
- A plan

Secret #1: The Case is a Concept



While it will ultimately be articulated in documents and through other means and media, it is essential that the case be thought of in conceptual elements:

- What do you do?
- What critical need are you addressing? (i.e., how are individual human beings affected by your work?)
- How does your institution differ from your peers?
- What would happen if your organization disappeared from the face of the Earth tomorrow?

Secret #1: The Case is a Concept

The Case is not:

- The Mission Statement, which sets the gross parameters around the programs and services of the institution
- The Elevator Speech, which in a sentence (maybe two) provides an abbreviated overview of what you do

Rather, it is an explanation of the vital impact you make on the people you serve...an exercise in concise story-telling that must touch both the heart and the head.

Secret #1: The Case is a Concept

Mission Statement:

We protect and restore vision among underserved children living in urban areas.

Elevator Speech:

We operate 20 clinics in poor neighborhoods throughout the country where our team of skilled ophthalmological professionals treat over 5,000 children with blindness and vision problems each year.

Case:

Let me tell you about a little girl who came into one of our clinics...

Secret #1: The Case is a Concept

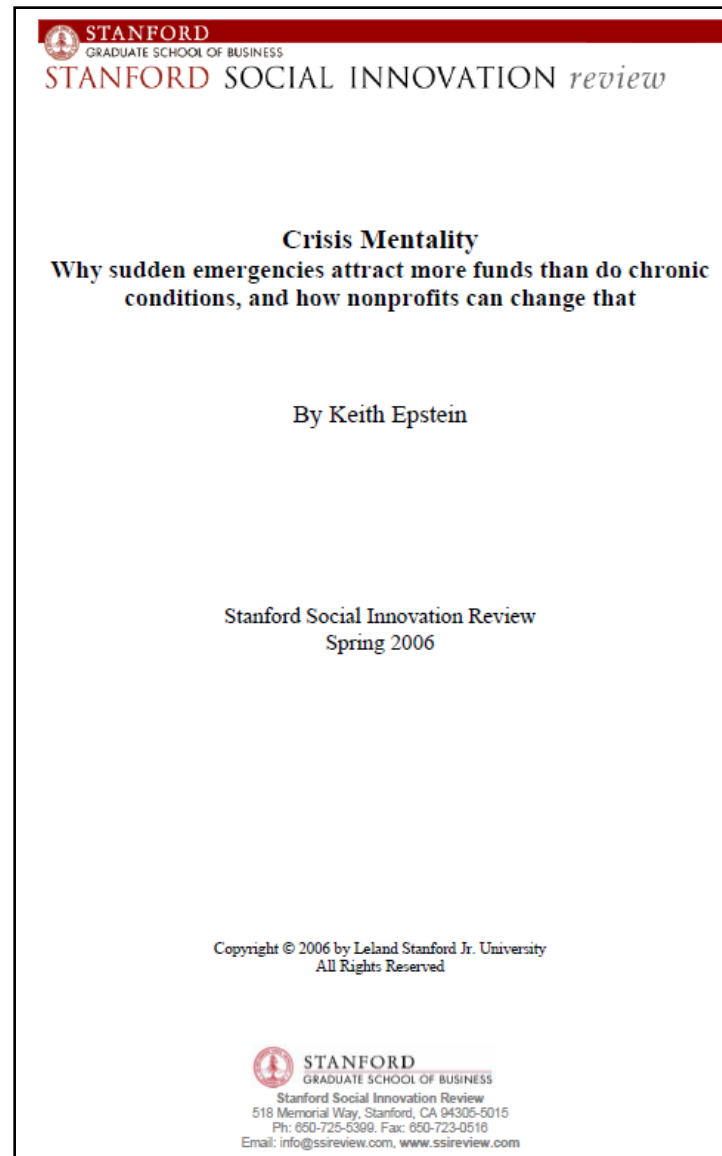
...and it is more important than ever that you be able to boil it down and express it concisely:

- What's it going to look like on a mobile device?
- And what about Twitter = 140 characters?

In an era of media/message bombardment, you have one quick shot to make your case.

Secret #2: The Case Must Touch the Heart

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Secret #2: The Case Must Touch the Heart

“**Crisis Mentality**” – by Keith Epstein in the Spring 2006
Stanford Social Innovation Review

- The “Save The Children” test:
 - a) *The story of one hungry child in Africa only*
 - b) *The story of one hungry child in Africa and statistics about poverty/hunger in Africa*
 - c) *Statistics about poverty/hunger in Africa only*

Which one “won”?

Secret #2: The Case Must Touch the Heart

WHY? According to Epstein...

We are motivated by behaviors that developed deep in our evolutionary past:

- Our “instinctive” brain (emotional: one child) reacts before our “rational” (logical: big numbers) brain.
- As evidence, he points to the fact that there is usually an inverse relation between the number of individuals affected by a “crisis” and the amount of money raised.

Secret #2: The Case Must Touch the Heart

For example:

Hurricane Katrina - ~1.6 million affected

AIDS - ~ 40 million diagnosed

*Private donors gave approximately \$1,800 per person affected by Katrina...but donated only **\$10** per person diagnosed with AIDS*

Secret #2: The Case Must Touch the Heart

But what about foundations, corporations, and sophisticated individual donors, whose interests are:

- Impact
- Outcomes
- Replicability
- Scalability

The human factor is still critical.

Secret #2: The Case Must Touch the Heart

As a result, while a Case Statement will generally need to contain “proposal-type” elements (history, statistics, expected outcomes, etc.), these must be couched within a “story” to which the reader can emotionally respond.

Further, the case need not be exhaustive...it should invite discussion – which will lead to the deepening and fortification of relationships.

Secret #3: The Case Is As Important Internally As It Is Externally...and Sometimes More



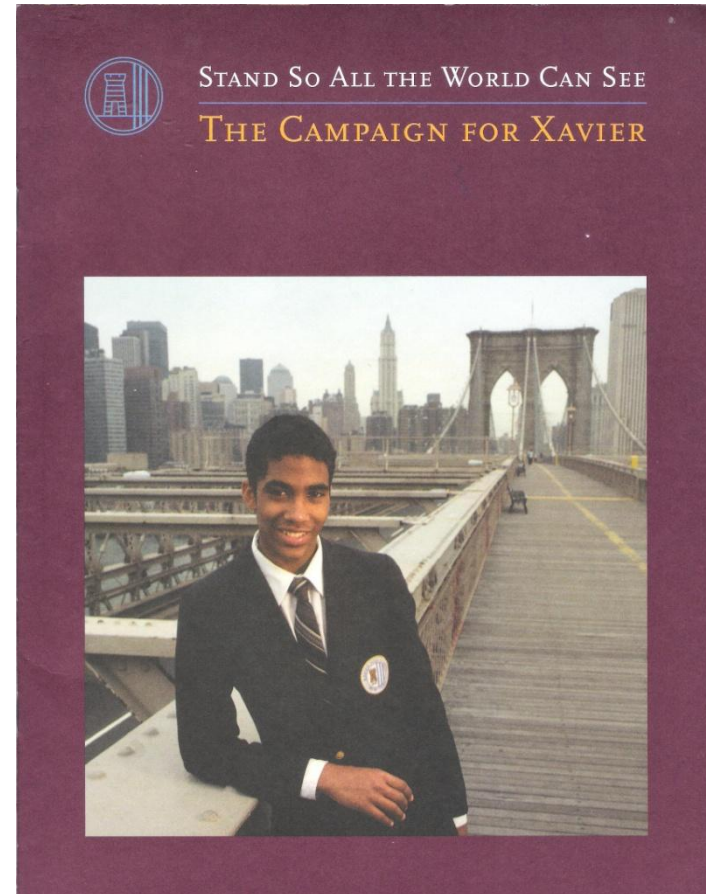
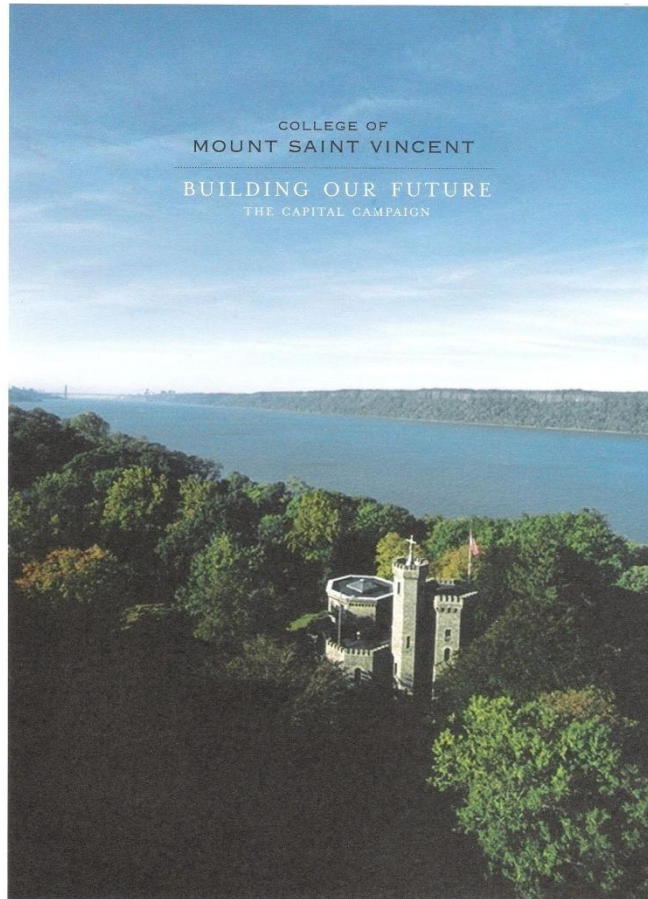
Every Fundraising Case has at least **three** audiences:

- Externally, prospects for financial support
- Internal leadership at the Executive and Board level
- Staff who, in various capacities, are charged with getting the message out.

The case statement and the case development process present an opportunity to build enthusiasm and to get everyone reading from the same script.

Secret #3: The Case Is As Important Internally As It Is Externally...and Sometimes More

Does the case thematically reflect your institution's culture?



Secret #4: Case Development – Done Correctly – Is An Extremely Subversive Activity



Worst Case Scenario:

One person is charged with writing the case statement, which is then reviewed, revised, and edited to death by a well-intentioned committee of many. Original writer then seeks prescription for anti-depressant medication.

Best Case Scenario:

A limited set of interviews are conducted by the case-writer with key stakeholders and decision-makers; case-writer strategically incorporates their words and ideas into the case statement; final review and approval comes from a committee of few. Writer celebrates.

Secret #4: Case Development – Done Correctly – Is An Extremely Subversive Activity

Potential Interviewees:

- Key executive and project/program leadership
- Decision makers on the Board
- Current major donors who are also leading prospects
- Key staffers on the fundraising/communications teams

“Public” Objective:

- Secure thoughts, ideas, and language that can be incorporated within the case statement

Subversive Objectives:

- Build early buy-in
- Strengthen relationships...internally and externally
- Conduct early cultivation

Secret #5: The Case is Never Really Finished



Think of the case statement as a living text that can continue to be refined – especially in the early leadership/major gift phases of your effort.

- Consider Powerpoint deck format
- Other channels offer the opportunity to refine and update the case
- You can use this concept to facilitate approval

Secret #5: The Case is Never Really Finished

The case concepts and case elements must be reinforced throughout the organization's communications programs.

- Newsletters, website, web video, and digital social media all offer the opportunity to provide updates, additional information, and to zoom in on specific elements of the case and the fundraising effort (e.g., tweet the groundbreaking...a significant gift...or a news story that speaks to the case)
- DVD? A personal bias...(against)

Secret #5: The Case is Never Really Finished

New media – especially social media

Assets

- Immediate
- Emotional
- Personal
- Strengthen relationships
- Build-out your network

Liability

- You will give up some degree of control over your message...which is why consistency is so important in all of your communications

Bonus Secret: Prospects Don't Read Case Statements



- This is especially true for your very best prospects, who give because of their affinity with the organization, and because they are asked by someone they like and trust – which is why the case statement is often more important to the solicitor than the prospect.
- Yes - the printed case statement (and case-supporting features on the web, in newsletters, etc.) serve as “credibility thresholds” – you have to look serious, and you have to appear to have done your homework.
- But the best investment of fundraising time is NOT in writing cases – it is in asking for money.