

Fundraising Letter Secrets



Letter-Writing for Effective
Fundraising & the Mindset to Succeed

Terri Nicholson

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Introduction

Welcome!

I am so excited to share this information with you! And I'd like to say straight up: “congratulations” for taking the step and investing in a copy of my book.

I wholeheartedly believe you have made an excellent choice, one that will be returned to you and your fundraising efforts many times over.

I am also excited because I know how simple and powerful the information I have to share with you is, and because I can imagine how many people might benefit from your fundraising efforts...especially if you get results like the ones this book shows you how to get.

I also know just how potentially exhausting, stressful and time-hungry fundraising can be, so I love being able to help you, the one doing all that work.

In Chapter 1 I share **My Story** of raising \$8300 from one fundraising letter, and why I have the experience necessary to write this book.

Chapter 2 delves into the importance of having a **Successful Fundraising Mindset** or attitude. I want you to have your heart and head in the right space before you implement the letter-writing strategy! This is because your attitude will affect the way you write your letter (from an emotional perspective). Your reader will either engage with you or not, and it will be the clarity in your mind and your motivations that will make all the difference.

I think that Mindset is so important that it could be an entire book in itself. So I have at least dedicated a whole chapter to it, because without it even the best strategy can flop!

Chapter 3 focuses on my **Effective Letter-Writing Strategy**, and takes you through the specific steps I have used and taught to successfully raise many thousands of dollars for numerous worthwhile projects and causes.

Chapter 4 shares some essential **Final Tips for a Successful Letter Campaign**. Use these after you've written your letter, but before sending it out.

The **Fundraising Letter Secrets Workbook**, which is a separate Word document, is the practical part of this letter-writing process. After going through the Workbook, you will end up much clearer in your own mind, and also emerge with a blueprint or solid draft of your own top quality fundraising letter!

I suggest opening up the Workbook document, or printing it off as a paper copy now, so you can have it beside you as you read through the rest of the book. This way, as you read the book itself, you can also jot down any fresh ideas in the Workbook that may end up being really effective lines in your letter.

Enjoy the process.

Chapter 1

My Story

I am from a fairly humble background, although I have diverse experiences in different areas of life. I grew up in rural Australia, with a family actively passionate about environmental and social causes. From an early age I was surrounded by people putting their time, effort and money into projects and causes that were bigger than just their own lives. Seeing people effect positive change in the world definitely gave me a sense of personal power and the right to make a difference.

I am a university-qualified naturopath (natural health practitioner) with a Bachelor of Naturopathy, with a further Diploma of Body Psychotherapy. I have worked overseas at university Level, and studied and worked closely with indigenous health practitioners in Chile and Bolivia.

In my community area in New South Wales, I am frequently involved with fundraising for the local pre-school, school and landcare groups to name a few. As a result, I have extensive experience in the other common forms of fundraising such as putting on events or running raffles. These have been successful, but the letter-writing campaigns are by far the most effective and get the best results for the least number of people-hours.

I raised \$8300 from my first fundraising letter back in 2001, which I will share in more detail throughout this book. Since that first success I have taught numerous people, using the same letter template and idea tailored to their specific projects, always with significant financial results.

Over the last two years I have concentrated on learning effective marketing, especially marketing with integrity. What I have learned from this is a lot more about the importance of a success mindset, and that some aspects of marketing and sharing a message are extremely relevant to fundraising. So, I have selected relevant marketing gems and included them in this book.

More of my Story...

How I raised \$8300 with one fundraising letter...

My first connection with South America was when I went to live in Bolivia as a 16-year-old exchange student. I spent a lot of time in both Bolivia and Chile in the years that followed with a deepening sense of relationship to that place and the people.

When I finished my Degree of Naturopathy at the School of Natural and Complementary Medicine at Southern Cross University in Australia, I was honored to be invited to teach herbal medicine at the Catholic University of Temuco in Chile, assisting my Herbal Medicine lecturer Dr. Sue Evans. This felt like a fantastic opportunity to not only further my skills, but to do good work in the world by supporting the validation of indigenous herbal medicine from a scientific and traditional perspective.



Araucanía region in Southern Chile where I was invited to teach

However, the University in Chile did not have the resources to fund my air travel or living expenses. I set about trying to raise the funds, but after approaching numerous funding bodies, herbal medicine companies and institutions in Australia over a few months, I had only \$500 (from Mediherb...thanks!). There came a moment when I had 7 weeks till I needed to be on the plane, with over \$7000 still needing to be raised. Time was running out and I realized I would have to do my own networking with real people in and around my own community, rather than appealing to companies and people who didn't know me.

I'm not sure who suggested it, but I started writing a fundraising letter to send out to all the people I knew. I made a list of everyone I knew personally in my local circle. Then I looked through my old address books for people who hadn't come to mind the first time. I made a list

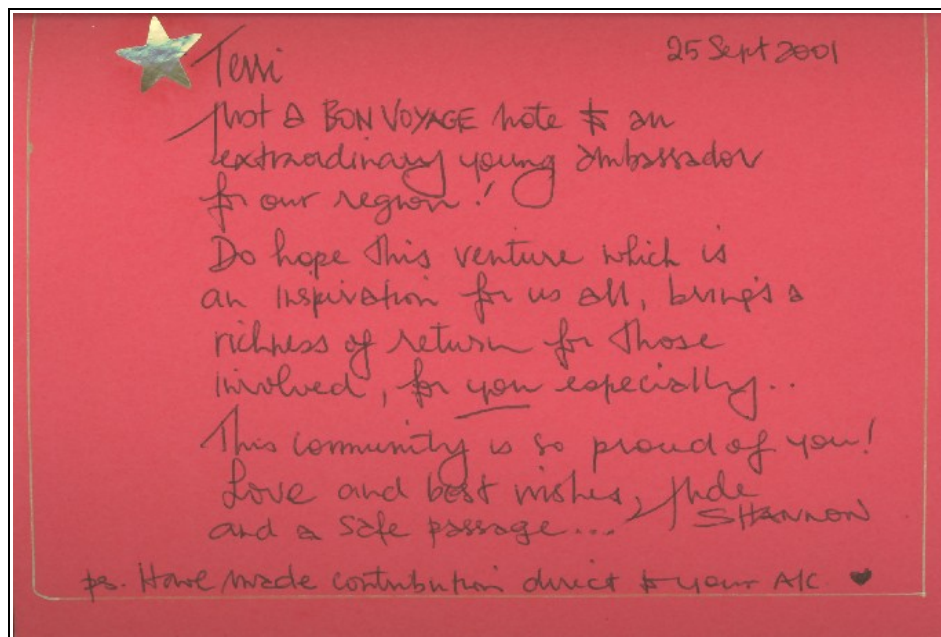
of people who knew of me through my parents, grandparents, or other social contacts. Before I knew it, I had a list of over 150 people.

It was a very fortuitous moment when Cathy Burke, a professional fundraiser for The Hunger Project (<http://www.thp.org/>), proofread my draft letter. She said “just write from your heart; make it feel like you; be genuine, not formal; make it an invitation for people to participate”.

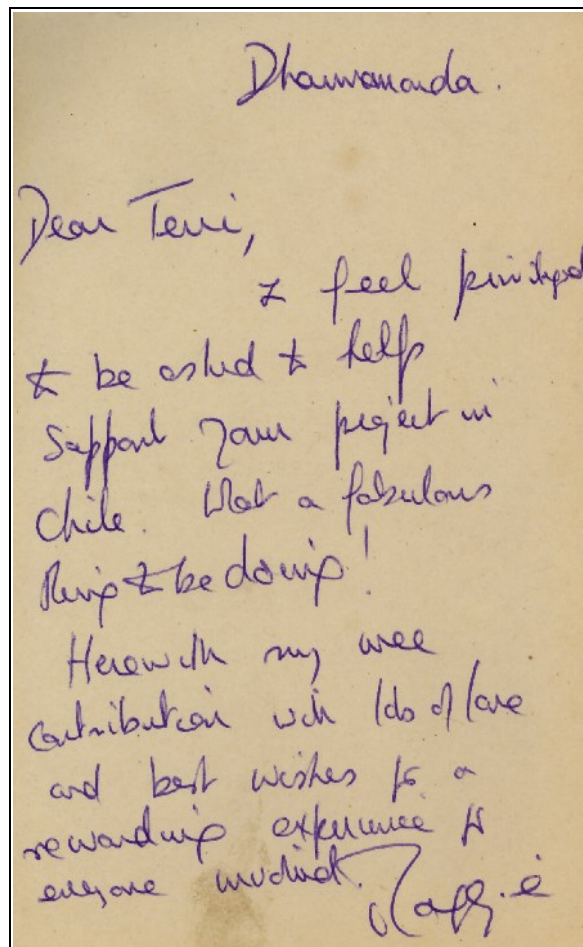
What wise words! (You can read the exact letter I sent out in Chapter 3). So, I sent out 135 letters...and within days I was getting many cheques in the mail, and it lasted for weeks! What really stood out for me was that people were *thanking me* for thinking of them. They were full of gratitude for the opportunity to be part of something good in the world. They were investing in me to do that good work and make a difference on their behalf.

Here are some of the little notes that came with cheques in the mail. I have kept them all these years, as they are personally special to me, and remind me of how enthusiastic people are about being part of something good in the world.

***“...hope this venture, which is an inspiration to us all,
brings a richness of return for those involved...”***



"I feel privileged to be asked to help..."



Dharmamanda.

Dear Teri,

I feel privileged
to be asked to help
support your project in
Chile. What a fabulous
trip to be doing!

Herewith my wee
contribution with love
and best wishes for a
rewarding experience for
everyone involved.

Caffie

The results: \$8300 within a few weeks just from that one letter! 86 people responded (64% response rate), and the average donation was \$97, so the range was between \$15 and \$500. Pretty great, hey?!

It was an amazing process for me to let that much money come in, to receive it gracefully and to remain humble. To feel people's practical support is a wonderful feeling.

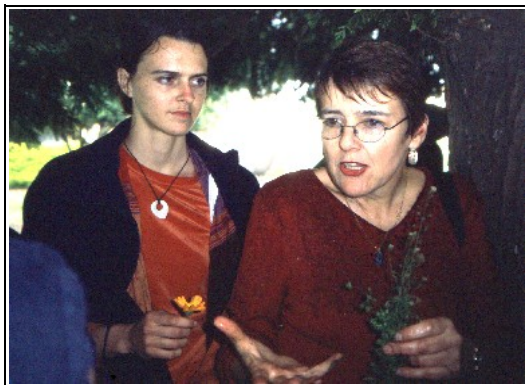
I live in a rural village area which is recognized as one of the poorest socio-economic regions in Australia. This figure was achieved at a grassroots local level, without the incredible global possibilities we have now.

The letter was the main fundraising strategy I used to fund the project, and the only strategy I'll focus on in this book. This is because it is so effective, low cost and easy to do.

Off I went to Chile, feeling that I was carrying so much wonderful energy from the people of Australia. The course was very well received, and what I gave in Chile has had numerous other positive ripples over in South America. I have also given back to my community here through sharing the stories from over there, and through my continuing work as a naturopath. It is a cycle of benefit to all involved.



Teaching “Medicina Herbolaria” in Temuco, Chile, and our class (me: 2nd from right)



Myself, Dr. Sue Evans, and three Mapuche students going on a medicinal plant walk.

So, that’s the story of my first fundraising letter. Since then I have taught others to do the same with consistent and fantastic results, raising thousands of dollars for their causes.

Like Toola Andrianopoulos who raised \$5000 to go back to East Timor in 2006, and help some of the 65000 civilian refugees in crisis after civil war broke out.



Toola Andrianopoulos

And The Channon Children's Centre, who were facing having to close their doors due to lack of funds, but raised \$6000 from one letter campaign.



Children and Staff from
The Channon Children's Centre

And Karina Cerpa and Jorge Sanjinez, two Bolivians, whose dream it had been for several years to attend a 30-day training "Seeds for the Future II" with world renowned scholar and teacher on Deep Ecology, Systems Theory, and Engaged Buddhism, Joanna Macy in the USA.

We raised \$6000, and they made it. Now they're sharing what they learnt at that training in their communities in Bolivia, for a more environmentally sustainable future.



Dr. Joanna Macy with Bolivians
Jorge Sanjinez and Karina Cerpa

Okay, enough about me. Let's get into the real content of this book...how to help YOU fundraise effectively for the cause you care about.

Chapter 2

Successful Fundraising Mindset

DO NOT SKIP THIS! This is the first of two equally important sections.

How your mindset and beliefs are working will impact on your fundraising. So, let's make sure you're in the best frame of mind to make it work...really well and effortlessly.

This will be divided up into some key concepts, which creates a foundation before moving into implementing the strategy.

What is 'mindset'?

This is something too important for you not to know about. In a nutshell: what is going on in your mind, such as your beliefs and attitudes, affects your experience in life, including the tangible results you may get from your fundraising.

Successful entrepreneurs say that your mindset or attitude is about 90% of the game in terms of getting results. It's the same with fundraising. If your success mindset is not switched on, your strategy will *simply not work* or will be *significantly less effective* than is possible.

Now, I've always been against marketing, believing that marketers were trying to con me at some level. What I have learned, however, is that as fundraisers we are also marketers. And I have learned that marketers do know a thing or two, and *it is* possible to take on a few marketing ideas, and keep utmost integrity...for, as fundraisers, we are most definitely *not* ripping anyone off, are we?

If you are a fundraiser, then like it or not, you are selling your idea to people...and at the same time you are sharing your passion about your cause. For people to think about donating money they need to connect with what you are saying at an emotional level.

Our task is to communicate with people and help them connect with the cause that we believe deserves financial (and emotional) support.

How we communicate and where we are coming from inside ourselves (our intention) is critical...and this is where mindset comes in.

Getting this right will give you the inner integrity that inspires people to choose to give generously and give with a warm heart (rather than because they feel bullied or guilt-tripped into giving – that’s not satisfying, good or operating with integrity in my view). You will most likely have people *thanking you* for the opportunity to participate and be part of your cause – and for thinking of them!

Key Concept # 1: INVITE, DON’T PLEAD!

Your role as a fundraiser is to inspire people while helping them connect with a way they can be part of making the world a better place, simply by giving money to you/your cause.

Absolute tragedies are real and sadly extremely prevalent in our world. However, fundraising letters that emphasize sob stories, poor-me pleas and even the simple facts *do not* inspire people to take action and give money generously.

They more often create a feeling of overload or guilt, resulting in potential donors wanting to shut the information out because it feels like yet another thing that needs their help when they’re already feeling bombarded.

Donors want to feel:

- ◆ positive about giving
- ◆ connected personally with the outcome or benefit
- ◆ trusting that the people they are giving to have the highest level of integrity
- ◆ that their hard earned money is being used in the most effective and beneficial way

Desperate pleading for funds often comes from a victim mentality. I heard a saying recently: “you are a victim once; after that you’re a volunteer”. That is a fairly confronting statement, but one to ponder. There are real victims all the time, but as someone trying to help through raising funds, your letters will be more effective if you can step out of this view.

It lifts you up from inside to be inviting people to participate in something positive in the world, rather than contributing to their sense of overwhelm and sadness or feeling hassled into giving even though they don’t feel emotionally connected with the cause.

Giving donations is similar to shopping! It seems like a terrible analogy, but it is well recognized that people buy things on emotion, and justify it later with logic.

Similarly, people will give to your cause because they connect emotionally. This is crucial. You need to make sure you have helped them engage emotionally, and also given them the information so their logical mind supports the emotional decision to give.

Key Concept # 2: CONNECT WITH YOUR VALUES/VISION

“If the *why* is big enough, the *how* will become clear.”

What this means is that if your connection with your deeper values, and *why* you are doing what you are doing, is strong and clear then the way forward to reaching your goals happens with less effort.

In other words, if your motivation, intention and vision are crystal clear and focused, then you will often find that the steps you need to take to create this vision become clearer and more obvious.

Part of having a strong, clear mindset is taking the time to examine your own values and vision and to ask yourself what really motivates you.

This includes asking yourself: what are the qualities or intentions within yourself or your organization that underpin all your fundraising actions? These may be qualities such as: integrity, honesty, kindness, accountability, generosity, action-taking etc, so in the Workbook I ask you to make a list of these for yourself.

Further questions which will help you clarify your vision/values are: What matters to you? What fires up your passion? What benefit to the world or your own life are you seeking to make? And how does that make you feel?

Key Concept #3: CONGRUENCY

Be congruent. Or in other words, walk your talk.

Essentially, you need to be convinced inside yourself that you are trustworthy and full of the utmost integrity before asking people for money. If you are doubting whether you can pull the project off then that lack of confidence or certainty will come through in your communication with potential donors. However, once you are clear inside yourself, your ability to communicate with donors will be easy.

Ask yourself: Do you give money/time to good causes, or are you stingy with your own

generosity? Can you expect others to give to you if you do not also model that way of being? Make sure that your actions match your words. There are many ways to give, and obviously by being involved in reading this book, and writing your own fundraising letter, you are already giving in a particular way, even if it's not financial.

Questions of Self-worth, how we feel about Asking and Receiving, and Integrity and Trustworthiness are relevant for this concept. These questions are relevant for everyone, but especially if the funds you are raising are for yourself in some way. Whether you are asking for money for yourself, or not, it can be quite an emotional process if you're not used to asking for such tangible support.

In the Workbook we will be considering questions such as:

Self-worth

How strong is your sense of self-worth? Do you feel worthy of people giving to you and your cause? In what ways do you feel personally worthy? What is it about you and/or your project that is worthy of people's support? In what ways do you feel unworthy? Getting these thoughts out can help clear your vision for the reasons why you are worthy.

Asking and Receiving

How do you feel about asking people to help you? Are you comfortable with this, or not? How does it feel when you imagine lots of cheques coming in the mail, or lots of money being deposited in your fundraising account, with messages of gratitude from the donors for the chance to be part of something so wonderful?

Can you really imagine letting it in, letting yourself receive such financial support? For some people it is an easy natural thing. For others it is difficult and very challenging.

Integrity and Trustworthiness

Have a look at reasons why donors would or wouldn't choose to donate to you/your project. How is your own sense of your integrity and trustworthiness?

Why *would* people donate to you? This concerns a level of trust, either because they know you and already know of your integrity and trustworthiness, or because you have proven your credibility to them.

Why *wouldn't* people donate to you? Do you know for sure that you will follow through on this fundraising project? Do you have a good track record of doing what you say you're going to do? In what ways might you fall short and not deliver fully? In which areas might you find it hard?

People's reasons not to donate may relate to you or your organization, but also may be reflections of your beliefs about the potential donors. This would include beliefs such as: people are overwhelmed, too busy, don't care about our cause...etc.

Once you identify these issues, you can examine whether these are real reasons which you can then address in your letter, or whether they are simply your projections from your own beliefs about the world and aren't relevant for your letter or potential donors. For example: If you have the belief that there's not enough money, and that people are generally stingy...well *they* are the kind of potential donors you are likely to end up sending your letter to.

If you are able to stay open minded to the possibility that there are many, many people who would love to donate to your cause and that they are easy to find, then it is more likely that's what will happen for you.

This is why I have included the **Fundraising Success Meditations** and **Affirmations** audios (see bonuses), to help you with this aspect. Shifting your beliefs – or what you tell yourself and expect from the world – to a more positive view can have absolutely astounding results. But to get the benefit of these, you need to actually do the meditations! I advise you to listen to them daily, especially during the time you are writing your letter, sending out the letters, and also while waiting for the results.

As fundraisers, we are often involved in some environmental or social rights issue, and we see a lot of destruction and suffering. We see the apathy and cruelty which causes this, but when we have our fundraising hat on we need to remember other aspects of humanity: generosity, kindness, caring, helping out, belief in change and a vision of a better world. These are the qualities we want to remember, connect with and appeal to in our potential donors.

Key Concept #4: IDENTIFY AND WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS

People who write down their goals succeed in meeting their goals significantly more often than people who don't.

It may sound ridiculous, but this can actually work like magic. Numerous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of writing goals down.

Research by Matthews of the Dominican University of California found that people who write down their goals (as opposed to just *thinking them* inside their heads), and share those goals with a friend accomplished 64% of their goals. This is significantly higher than for those who *thought* about their goals but didn't write them down, reaching just 43% of their goals. This jumped to an amazing 76% success rate for those who not only wrote their goals down, but

sent weekly updates to a friend (that is, having some public accountability). (Reference: <http://www.dominican.edu/dominicannews/study-backs-up-strategies-for-achieving-goals.html>)

We don't know exactly *how* writing your goals down helps them actualize, but it does, so I encourage you to let go of needing to know how it works, and just do it anyway!

After you've completed the Workbook, your mindset will be clearer and your letter basically done. Your goals will be also be much more defined than they may be right now. At that point it is important to summarize your fundraising goals and write them down in a succinct way.

Tips for writing goals:

Frame your language in the positive, set a time frame for completion of the goal, and write it as if it has already come true.

Example: "It is the 15th November 2010 and the Fundraising Letter campaign for _____ has been a huge success! We have been flooded with donations totaling no less than \$11 000, given by people who were just so happy to be giving to our cause. The whole process was effortless, enjoyable and the people/causes who are now receiving the proceeds are so appreciative and it is making a specific difference and benefit in these ways:_____."

Goals that are important to consider are:

- ◆ What do you want to achieve with your current fundraising?
- ◆ Who specifically do you want to help?
- ◆ What specific and concrete benefits do you want to see from your efforts?
- ◆ How much money do you want to raise for this?
- ◆ What are the qualities of your ideal donor?

Chapter 3

Effective Letter-Writing Strategy

“Involve, Inspire, Invite!”

Australian author and dynamic speaking coach Dr. Joanna Martin teaches people how to make an income from speaking on stage. She has broken it down into three words – involve, inspire, invite – which apply to many situations including fundraising. I believe a fundraising letter, or really any fundraising strategy, should have these three aspects.

Involve: people want to feel connected and part of something, so involve them as quickly as you can. This can be as simple as a warm welcome introduction to your letter.

Inspire: people want to feel uplifted and inspired by a vision or a solution that will solve a problem.

Invite: people want to be able to move forward with this feeling of connection and inspiration...invite them to contribute and therefore be part of it.

People often want to give to make a difference, but just don't know where or how to. By inviting them to give to your cause, you are giving them the gift of the opportunity to be generous, and to know how to make a difference in the world. Remember, just by asking, you are giving the donor something, not just taking from them. This is a profound shift in attitude to the one of feeling guilty about asking for financial support.

The Core Structure

I have taken my proven and effective fundraising letter that I initially used to raise \$8300 for my project, and broken it down, paragraph by paragraph, to get a clear template for the flow, structure and essential points that need to be present in your fundraising letter.

I will share the outline of each point, followed by my original letter as an example, and then provide further specific detail.

Structural Outline – The 13 Points of an Effective Fundraising Letter

1. Introduction – especially welcoming and warm in tone
2. History / context of your project / story
3. Your contribution – what you will give / the specific benefits of your project
4. How your project is part of the bigger picture or health of the world
5. Reality / Situation – why it needs funding support
6. Invitation to invest / participate and budget itemization
7. Communication of possible donation amounts
8. Time frame (urgency) and benefits summary
9. Reciprocity – what you'll give back to the donor
10. Sign off with warmth
11. Call to action – easy way for people to give money
12. Ask for their contacts so you can acknowledge their generosity.
13. Additional information page

Here's my fundraising letter, exactly as it was written at the time, followed by the one page of supporting information that was also sent out with the letter.

10th August 2001
The Channon, NSW

Dear _____,

Hello, hope you're well. I am writing to you because you know me, or of me, and may know I have been invited to help teach a course in herbal medicine in Chile, leaving in 7 weeks!

Living in South America for 2 years my interest and passion for herbal medicine was sparked by contact with herbalists in Ecuador and Chile. This inspired me to come back to Lismore and study Naturopathy at Southern Cross University (SCU) from 1997-2000. I graduated at the end of last year, and have now been invited to go back to Chile to co-teach a unit in Herbal Medicine as part of a Diploma of Intercultural Health run by the Catholic University of Temuco, starting in October this year.

This is an amazing opportunity to share what I have learnt and to immediately put this into service, supporting the indigenous Mapuche in Chile to validate and access their own herbal medicine. But this is more than helping to outreach a group of people in a country

far away. For me, it is a chance to link elements vital to our human well-being, and to acknowledge our interconnectedness between people in Chile and Australia as we all live on this precious planet. I see this project as helping to join the best of both traditional herbal and mainstream medical systems, having both practical health equity and environmental health at the heart.

I feel honored to have been invited, and feel that the learning from this experience will be invaluable in my work as a naturopath, and in furthering my commitment to contributing to the health of this world.

Because the course begins in October I need to be in Chile by the end of September. However, the University in Chile where I will be teaching does not have the financial resources to get me there.

I am asking people to invest financially in me and the project. In order for me to teach this course I need \$7000 [air fare/transport (\$3600), basic living costs for three months (\$3400)]. This may seem like a lot of money. However, this is what it adds up to for me to be able get there and stay for the duration of the course, so that I can really give what I'm going there to contribute. Broken down this could be 14 people investing \$500, or 70 people \$100, or 140 people contributing \$50.

As there are only 7 weeks until I leave, I would greatly appreciate you letting me know as soon as possible if you feel you'd like to contribute in assisting me to share my expertise and gifts with students and people in Chile, for the health of the Mapuche people.

I see myself as a channel or a bridge, in that when I go, I carry the voices and energy of people from here in Australia. When I come back I would love to share with you what your contribution made possible, and to let Chilean voices speak back to you also.

Much love and warmth,

Terri

To contribute you can:

- Make a cheque out to: Terri Nicholson/ 'Chile Herbal Medicine'. Send to Terri Nicholson, xxxxxxxxxxx, xxxxxxxxxxx, NSW 2480.
- Put your donation straight into Account No. 06 xxxx xxxx xxxx; Terri Nicholson/ 'Chile Herbal Medicine', Commonwealth Bank, Lismore.

~ If you do contribute, please let me know for my records, and so I can acknowledge you ~

For any more info please ask or call: xxx xxx or email: xxx xxx

Herbal Medicine in Chile

~ validating indigenous Mapuche medicine ~

An innovative educational project involving the School of Natural and Complementary Medicine, Southern Cross University (SCU) and the Catholic University of Temuco (UCT) in Chile, is happening in September this year.

Herbal lecturer Sue Evans and graduate Terri Nicholson from the School of Natural and Complementary Medicine at SCU will be going to Chile to teach the course 'Science and Tradition: Aspects of Herbal Medicine', as part of a Diploma of Intercultural Health.

The Bachelor of Naturopathy course at SCU includes herbal medicine as a major focus, and is taught from the perspective of both traditional and current science. This came to the attention of Professor Teresa Duran, head of the Sociocultural Centre at UCT in Chile, and she has invited Sue and Terri to assist with an educational project in Temuco.

Professor Duran's group has been working with the Indigenous Mapuche communities around Temuco for many years. Poor health is a major problem for the Mapuche people, which is contributed to by an existing gap between Traditional Mapuche medicine and the Scientific Medical system, and the lack of validation of Mapuche medicine.

The Diploma of Intercultural Health, has been established in cooperation with local Mapuche communities, the Catholic University of Temuco, and the regional Health Service, and aims to help improve the health and social status of the Mapuche. The Diploma runs this year for the first time, and is offered to health workers and other professionals working with Mapuche communities.

The unit Sue and Terri have been invited to teach: "Science and Tradition: aspects of herbal medicine" is part of the Diploma of Intercultural Health, and will contribute to the objectives of the Diploma by:

- validating herbal medicine from scientific and traditional perspectives in order to endorse traditional Mapuche herbal medicine.
- using the experience in Australia where herbal and orthodox medicine are used side by side to help bridge the gap between the two medical systems in Chile.

Sue and Terri have been developing the course material for the past 4 months, and are continuing to write and translate the course notes into Spanish for presentation in Chile.

Sue and Terri have both been to Chile before. Sue Evans was invited to speak at a herbal conference in Temuco in 2000, at which she met Dr. Duran. Terri Nicholson has lived in Chile previously and speaks fluent Spanish. Both are very excited at the opportunity of using their herbal knowledge to support local indigenous communities in Chile.

Detailed Points of an Effective Fundraising Letter

For each of the 13 points above, I have put in the appropriate paragraph from my own letter as an immediate example, followed by more detail.

1. Introduction – warm in tone

“Dear _____,

Hello, hope you're well. I am writing to you because you know me, or of me, and may know I have been invited to help teach a course in herbal medicine in Chile, leaving in 7 weeks!”

Be warm and welcoming immediately to establish a connection (involve).

You need to gain potential donors' trust, and let them know your credibility. If you know the potential donor, then it's your track record and integrity which will speak for you. You may simply be part of a community, area or region they can connect with.

If you don't know the donor, you can share your credibility and trustworthiness through past actions, testimonials, evidence, and the additional information page (point 12).

You may find that you have a couple of groups of potential donors, and your opening sentence may be different. You can simply have two different letters, one for each group, with the minor difference being the introduction.

2. History/context of your project/story

“Living in South America for 2 years my interest and passion for herbal medicine was sparked by contact with herbalists in Ecuador and Chile. This inspired me to come back to Lismore and study Naturopathy at Southern Cross University (SCU) from 1997-2000. I graduated at the end of last year, and have now been invited to go back to Chile to co-teach a unit in Herbal Medicine as part of a Diploma of Intercultural Health run by the Catholic University of Temuco, starting in October this year.”

This is where you provide a brief summary of the history or context of your story or project. This allows people to see how it fits together, and builds integrity, trust and credibility.

3. Your contribution – What you will give? What are the specific benefits of your project?

“This is an amazing opportunity to share what I have learnt and to immediately put this into service, supporting the indigenous Mapuche in Chile to validate and access their own herbal medicine. But this is more than helping to outreach a group of people in a country far away. For me, it is a chance to link elements vital to our human well-being, and to acknowledge our interconnectedness between people in Chile and Australia as we all live on this precious planet. I see this project as helping to join the best of both traditional herbal and mainstream medical systems, having both practical health equity and environmental health at the heart.”

It is crucial to share *why* what you are fundraising for is so important. Focus on your vision and anticipated outcomes as this is inspiring to people.

Be very clear about the benefits (or in other words the selling points) of your work or project. Let them know the specific benefits to individuals, groups, or whoever, that will happen because of their contribution.

In my letter you might see that I used the word 'service' and I see that as an important 'attitude' that people resonate with, as it often describes what you are giving to the project.

4. How your project is part of the bigger picture or health of the world. What larger contribution does it make?

“I feel honored to have been invited, and feel that the learning from this experience will be invaluable in my work as a naturopath, and in furthering my commitment to contributing to the health of this world.”

If you can broaden your horizon or vision here, beyond the immediate people you may be helping with your project, and see this as part of the whole, it will help people feel connected and part of the 'bigger picture'.

Remember that whatever you are doing will have beneficial ripple effects from the lives of the people or places you are helping (or your own dream if it is a personal fundraiser) out to those that they then come into contact with. By helping one child in the world, you create beneficial ripple effects through many lives.

Include some comment that reminds people that we are all connected on this planet, and that helping one person, group or place actually contributes to the well-being of us all.

5. Reality/Situation – why your project needs funding support

“Because the course begins in October I need to be in Chile by the end of September. However, the University in Chile where I will be teaching does not have the financial resources to get me there.”

Be up-front about why you need help with the funding. Sometimes it's self-explanatory, but if it's like my example, sharing a line about the reality of the situation simply makes it clearer.

6. Invitation to invest/participate and budget itemization

“I am asking people to invest financially in me and the project. In order for me to teach this course I need \$7000 [air fare/transport (\$3600), basic living costs for three months (\$3400)].”

Share your target amount and what this will achieve. This can be a set amount for a project with a deadline. If it's an ongoing project, still set a goal with a reason, eg “we aim to raise \$10 000 in the next 2 months which will mean we can achieve a, b and c”.

Itemize the target amount, because people want to know why you need to raise, say \$7000, and how that figure is arrived at. Be specific and tangible.

7. Communication of possible donation amounts

“This may seem like a lot of money. However, this is what it adds up to for me to be able get there and stay for the duration of the course, so that I can really give what I'm going there to contribute. Broken down this could be 14 people investing \$500, or 70 people \$100, or 140 people contributing \$50.”

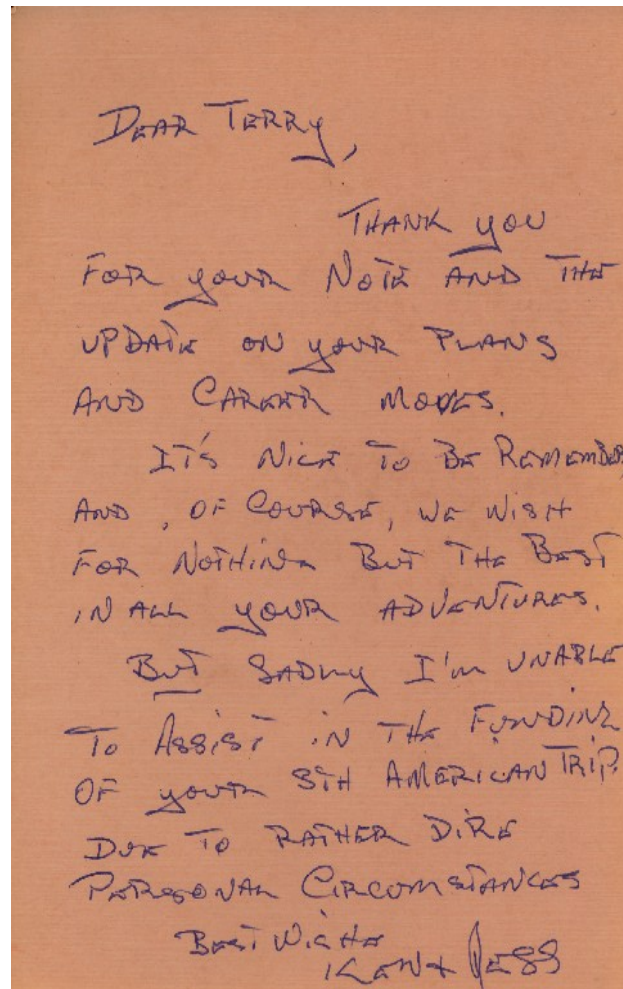
If you know what it costs to result in specific benefits, this can be very powerful. The Fred Hollow's organisation, who raise funds for treating eye disorders say, for example, “\$50 can restore eye-sight”. Donors get a very clear sense of how their donation will help.

What I did in my letter was to divide the target amount into different possible donation sizes. This makes it easy for potential donors because it:

- ◆ allows people to know that any donation size is welcome
- ◆ spells out different donation possibilities
- ◆ helps them connect with actual amounts and consider in their mind “mmm, well yes, I could give \$100, but \$500 is too much for me”, or “no, \$50 doesn't feel like I'd be giving enough”. This helps them place themselves in the spectrum of potential amounts to give.

I had people giving me \$15, and others \$500. In fact I had about 4 letters where people took the time to write and wish me well and thank me for asking them, but that unfortunately they couldn't contribute financially at that time. These letters are treasures to me, and I feel like they gave energetically with their support and encouragement, even though they didn't give financially. It's about more than just the money raised.

Here is one such lovely note, where they couldn't give money, but still gave so much in their loving support and solidarity.



DEAR TERRY,
THANK YOU
FOR your NOTE AND THE
UPDATE ON your PLANS
AND CAREER moves.
IT'S NICE TO BE REMEMBERED
AND, OF COURSE, WE WISH
FOR NOTHING BUT THE BEST
IN ALL your ADVENTURES.
BUT SADLY I'm UNABLE
TO ASSIST IN THE FUNDING
OF your STH AMERICAN TRIP
DUE TO RATHER DIRE
PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
BEST WISHES
KANT 1988

Asking for donations in a genuine and invitational style with no pressure, does create ripples of goodwill and increases the spirit of generosity.

Should you be requesting one-off donations or recurring donations?

My herbal medicine project was a one-off event, so I wasn't looking for recurrent payments. However, if your project is long term it makes sense to think about inviting people to commit to a recurring donation, with options of weekly, monthly, 6 monthly or yearly contributions. You would need to consider if this is appropriate for your strategy and target group of potential donors.

If it is an option, your letter may include a form at the end that can process credit card payments. You may direct them to a website set up with a secure payment system such as Paypal. Another way to collect recurring donations is through a collection company such as Debit Success that we have in Australia which processes automated recurring payments.

8. Time frame (urgency) and benefits summary

“As there are only 7 weeks until I leave, I would greatly appreciate you letting me know as soon as possible if you feel you’d like to contribute in assisting me to share my expertise and gifts with students and people in Chile, for the health of the Mapuche people.”

Make sure you put some kind of time frame in your fundraising letter. If the time frame is too vague, people don't connect with the urgency, and are much less likely to donate there and then. The more specific you can be with your vision and how and when you want it to happen, the easier it is for potential donors to connect also.

Often the time frame is very urgent or real if there is a set deadline. If you don't have a deadline, then create a goal with a time frame, eg “We need to raise \$x within the next 30 days to accomplish_____”.

9. Reciprocity – what you'll give back to the donor

“I see myself as a channel or a bridge, in that when I go, I carry the voices and energy of people from here in Australia. When I come back I would love to share with you what your contribution made possible, and to let Chilean voices speak back to you also.”

A couple of things I did to fulfill this promise:

1. I got people's emails and wrote updates every few weeks while I was away. This was a lovely way for people to feel connected with my journey and be able to feel part of it.
2. I gave a talk when I got back home and put on a slide show and snack food. There was no charge, as this was just me giving back to the people who had helped me get there...and “letting the Chilean voices speak back” to them through my stories and photos. People appreciated this so much.

There are so many ways to reciprocate the donors' generosity. Just make sure you only commit to something you can actually follow up on. Don't over-commit your time or energy. This is where you may ask others to help send out a thank you note, or keep sending updates out to the list of donors.

Other ideas are a newsletter, update, blog or website which is updated. Basically it is about creating some way so people can feel acknowledged and know that their funds are being used well. This makes them feel confident, and lets them know that you are transparent and accountable.

10. Sign off with warmth

“Much love and warmth, Your name”

In my case, I sent my letter out mainly to people I did know personally or at least well enough to sign off with some affection. The word “love” may feel too personal for you, but find a few words so that readers can feel your warmth and care as a human, eg “With gratitude and warmth, your name”. It leaves them with a good feeling.

11. Call to action – easy way for people to give money

“To contribute you can:

- Make a cheque out to: Terri Nicholson/‘Chile Herbal Medicine’. Send to Terri Nicholson, xxxxxxxxxxxx, xxxxxxxxxxxx, NSW 2480.
- Put your donation straight into Account No. xxxxx xxxxx; Terri Nicholson/ ‘Chile Herbal Medicine’, Commonwealth Bank, Lismore.”

Make it really easy for people to donate. If you make it at all confusing about *how to actually give you money*, you will lose people.

I used the above two ways (cheque and direct bank deposit or transfer), but these days having a simple website with a way for people to pay with credit card or through Paypal may be wise. This way you can direct them to the website in your letter, and they can donate there.

Make sure you still include the option of writing a cheque, or sending their donation in the mail. Not everyone is internet or computer savvy!

12. Ask for their contacts so you can acknowledge their generosity

“If you do contribute, please let me know for my records, and so I can acknowledge you. For any more info please ask or call (xxx xxx) or email: terr nicholson@xxxxxx.com .”

Email is probably the easiest way to contact people these days, but if you are in a region where computers are not used so much, make sure you ask for people's address or phone

number, so you can express your gratitude to them and keep them updated on the success of your project.

13. Additional information page

Herbal Medicine in Chile ~ validating indigenous Mapuche medicine

As you saw in my own example letter above, I included an extra information page that was sent with the letter. This is a place to go into more depth than in the letter itself, covering any background information or anything relevant to your project. It makes your whole project more real and credible if you can have some supporting evidence. For Toola, who was fundraising for East Timor, we simply photocopied an article that had run in the local newspaper telling her story, and included that as the additional information page with the letter.

Important keys to keep in mind:

◆ Write from your heart and let it sound like it's coming from you

Simply see your letter as a communication between hearts – from your heart to the reader's heart. In this way, be genuine, and express yourself in the way you would if you were talking to someone face-to-face in a warm conversation.

◆ Conversational Language

Are there any particular terms or use of language that is specific to your topic or group of potential donors? Be sure to use these terms in your letter as it makes the donors feel understood...that is, you're 'talking their language'.

On the other hand, are there terms you use within your topic that the average person would *not* understand? Do not use jargon terms in your letter unless your donors understand the language. This is very important in making the letter feel accessible to those you send it out to.

◆ Imagine writing to just one person

When you are writing, imagine one particular person you will be sending the letter to. If you don't know the potential donors, visualize a warm, friendly, receptive person who is reading your letter.

If you write in this way, it generally creates a more intimate or warmer feeling letter, than if you are imagining writing to 150 people at once.

◆ **People love a story**

People remember stories more than information, so if there is a good story about how you became involved in the project, or about someone you will be helping, this is much more engaging for the reader than facts. Make sure you include it in your letter.

◆ **How long should a fundraising letter be?**

This is an interesting point. I have always kept my letters to within two A4 pages. I wanted it to be heartfelt but succinct, to get to the point but also give enough information. I kept the letter itself short, but added an information page to support the letter, and provide more credibility and proof that it is a real project.

Bret Thomson, Australian copywriting expert on long sales letters, says “you can't make a letter too long, but you can make it too boring”. He says it's important to identify people's obstacles or concerns about giving and address them in the letter. He stresses the importance of conversational writing, where it has a personal feel, and also how crucial it is to tell a story, because people relate to and respond well to stories.

Now for *your* letter...

You've now read the theory on how to write an effective fundraising letter. Here are a couple more examples before I get you to step into the practical aspect of putting your own letter together using the Workbook. Have a quick read of these examples, and it will give you the sense of how the basic template or structure has been adapted to other projects and people. I have included the supporting information documents that went with the letters in the envelope.

1. Toola Andrianopoulos – East Timor Fundraising Letter (Results: \$5000)
2. The Channon Children's Centre (Results: \$6000)

Example #1 – Toola Andrianopoulos – East Timor Fundraiser

Tuesday 6th June 2006

Dear

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to you because you know me, or of me, and may know of my connection with East Timor. I arrived soon after the vote for independence and the following horrific massacres in 1999. For the following 5 years I continued to live and work there, until my return to Australia in 2005. Most of my work focussed on improving the lives of women, children and their communities (in that order) through the ALOLA Foundation headed by the First Lady / Chairwoman, Kirsty Sword Gusmao. The key areas of work for the Foundation are maternal and child health, advocacy and education. For information on the ALOLA Foundation, I encourage you to visit www.alolafoundation.org

With the current crisis in East Timor, and Kirsty's personal assistant resigning, she has asked me to come over to a) support her in the crucial work she does as 1st lady and Chairwoman, and b) to help the ALOLA Foundation get up and running again as soon as possible after Dili is safe.

It has deeply saddened me to speak to very close friends including my 40 colleagues, who are now displaced and traumatized in refugee camps in Dili right now. Many of my colleagues have had their houses destroyed and family members killed in the current crisis.

I am in a unique position and believe that what I can offer during this time of crisis will make a difference. My history and previous experience as Kirsty's PA and Manager of the ALOLA Foundation, my fluency in the local language and my deep love for the people and country of East Timor set me in good stead.

As I received the call only a few days ago, and haste is of the essence, this letter probably won't reach you until after I've left on Thursday the 8th June. I anticipate going for 2 months.

My going over is more than just helping people in another country. It is a chance to link elements vital to all of our wellbeing, and to acknowledge the interconnectedness between the people of East Timor, our close neighbours, and Australians. I see my work as part of a bigger picture, which includes caring deeply and acting beyond my comfortable and privileged life in Australia, and directing that energy in a way that can make real differences to traumatised people.

The ALOLA Foundation's limited resources are best directed toward responding to the immediate needs of the women and children in refugee camps. Therefore, I am inviting people to invest financially, assisting me in doing my work there.

I need about \$3500 AUS to cover the basics (roughly: flights \$1500 return, living and work expenses for 2 months \$500 (about \$60/week), organisational costs before I leave including phone liaising \$500, and costs of specific items I've been asked to bring, including first aid medical supplies \$1000). Any contribution is helpful.

Of course the costs of living and my work once I get there are estimates, as I don't know the exact situation I will find in East Timor. Therefore, it is very important for me to keep a clear track of donations so that I can acknowledge your generosity, and provide you with updates where possible.

If you'd like to contribute, the easiest way is to deposit directly into my savings account:
Toola Andrianopoulos, ANZ Bank, BSB: xxx-xxx Account No: xxxx-xxxx.

If you do make a deposit, please support our record keeping by **ALSO** contacting Terri
Nicholson who is keeping a specific record, with your name and the amount.
terriniicholson@xxxxxx.com or Ph. Xxxx xxxx.

I see myself as a bridge, and in going, I carry the energy of people here in Australia and my
community. When I return I'd love to share with you what your generosity made possible, and
let the Timorese voices speak back to you also.

Much love and warmth,

Toola

Toola Andrianopoulos
toola_a@xxxxxx.com

Toola flies back to help East Timorese women and refugees

Channon woman to work with East Timor's First Lady

By MEGAN KINNINMENT
megan.kinniment@northernstar.com.au

"BRING a bag of banana lollies and musk sticks with you!"

Not the sort of request you would expect from a First Lady — but this is exactly what Kirsty Sword-Gusmao, wife of East Timor President Xanana Gusmao, cheekily asked of her good friend Toola Andrianopoulos yesterday.

Ms Andrianopoulos, from The Channon, tonight flies to war-ravaged East Timor to be Ms Sword-Gusmao's personal assistant.

The women met in East Timor in 2000 while working with female

Falantil resistance fighters and Ms Andrianopoulos, a community development worker, later became manager of Kirsty Sword-Gusmao's ALOLA Foundation — dedicated to the advancement of the women of East Timor.

"I first flew to East Timor in 1999 — when it was still smouldering and there were thousands of displaced people," Ms Andrianopoulos recalled.

Meeting Ms Sword-Gusmao in 2000 was like meeting a kindred spirit she said: "She was an activist from Melbourne who had this desire to improve the East Timorese situation. She just seemed like a good friend."

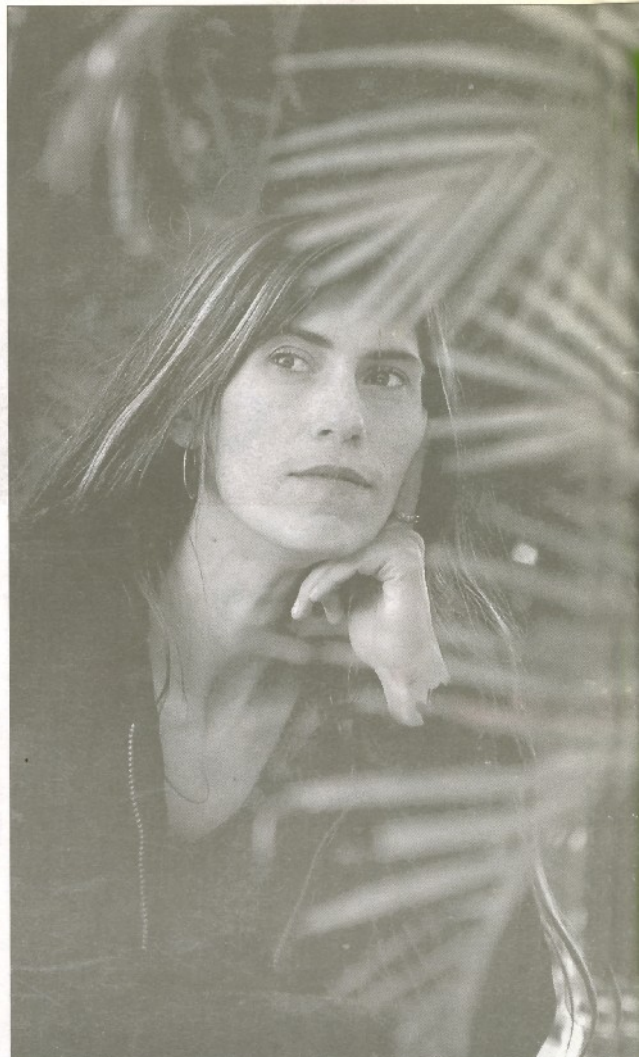
Ms Andrianopoulos flies to East Timor to help Ms Sword-Gusmao in the face of the worst humanitarian crisis the country has faced since the violence of 1999 following the referendum for independence.

"Kirsty is deeply saddened by what is happening in East Timor now, especially as an advocate for women and children — they always suffer the most," Ms Andrianopoulos said.

With 65,000 East Timorese now refugees since last month's violent uprising, Ms Andrianopoulos felt she had no choice but to go back.

"In the five years I lived in East Timor I watched the people rebuild their country from the ashes. To watch it being destroyed again is just heartbreaking," she said.

"I got a flood of calls from colleagues and friends who are now



HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: Toola Andrianopoulos, from The Channon, will work alongside Kirsty Sword-Gusmao to assist the 65,000 refugees displaced in the recent crisis.
Picture: JACKLYN WAGNER

displaced, whose homes have been burnt and who are separated from their children and living in refugee camps."

When she arrives in East Timor Ms Andrianopoulos will live with the Gusmaos in their home in Balibar, in the hills above Dili.

"I expect that as soon as I get off the plane it will all be 'on'," she said. "There will be loads of work to do and supplies to organise."

"Women don't stop having babies because there's political upheaval. Women are still giving birth in refugee camps where there is one toilet for three to five thousand people."

And, top of Ms Andrianopoulos's list is to help the 'mother' of East Timor — Ms Sword-Gusmao. "Kirsty is seen as the mother of the nation. Women look to her for support: she is the voice of East Timorese women."

■ Toola Andrianopoulos is urging the Northern Rivers community to support East Timor and especially the ALOLA Foundation's work. To assist, visit the ALOLA website: www.alolafoundation.org and make a donation or send a cheque to PO BOX 23, South Melbourne, VIC, 3205.

To contact Ms Andrianopoulos in East Timor email: toola@alola-foundation.org

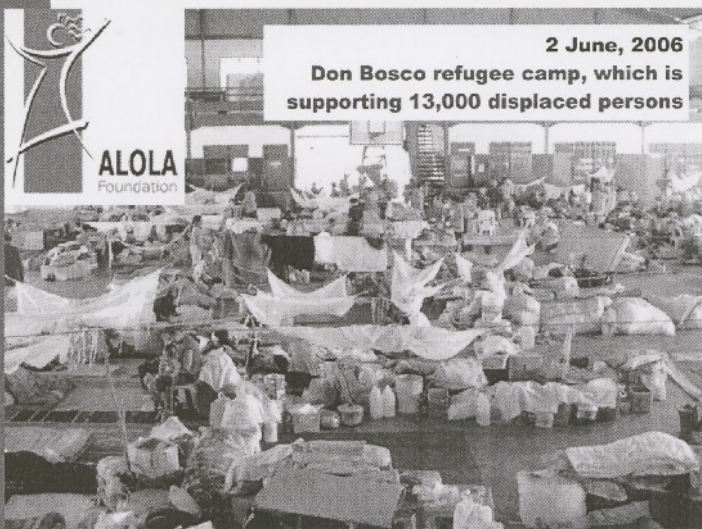


KIRSTY SWORD-GUSMAO: Patron of the ALOLA Foundation and mother of East Timor.



2 June, 2006

Don Bosco refugee camp, which is supporting 13,000 displaced persons



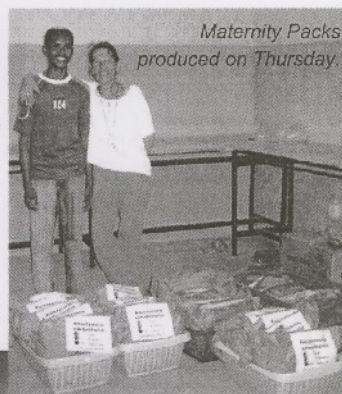
Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for the many messages of love and concern that you have sent to us during the recent troubles in Dili. I know that staff of the Alola Foundation have been truly heartened to know that they have so many friends who are concerned for them and the plight of East Timor, as our fledgling democracy finds its way. Many of you are also asking how you can help the women and children of East Timor who are again suffering the traumas of violence and displacement. I am writing to you today to give you an outline of the

role Alola intends to play in what will be a monumental relief and relocation effort and how you can help.

Alola has been closed for the past 10 days and our project work has been temporarily suspended. Staff have been active in assisting with the relief effort where they are able and yesterday we made 30 maternity packs for distribution to women who have delivered in the camps. We will continue to coordinate with other agencies and provide support based on our maternal and child health and child rights focus.

I am relieved to be able to tell you our Dili office is still intact, as is our maternity packs sewing room in Taibesi. Our staff are all safe, but several have lost relatives, friends or their home in the gang violence. In terms of assistance, funds are the most flexible form of aid and provide us with more flexibility and capacity to respond to the needs of the people.



The most effective way to assist us is to visit our web site www.alolafoundation.org and make a donation, or send your cheque to PO Box 23, South Melbourne Vic 3205 Australia. All donations will be acknowledged.

I know some of you would like to send us material aid such as clothes and household goods to assist families who have lost everything. Unfortunately, the usual difficulties of receiving material aid from Australia and elsewhere are magnified by the current disruption. Nevertheless, *should you live in the Melbourne area, the following items may be able to be carried by a Rotary container presently being filled:*

- BASIC COOKING UTENSILS (POTS, PANS, WOKS).
- PLATES, CUPS, CUTLERY.
- CLOTHING, INCLUDING CLEAN SECOND-HAND CLOTHING.
- BEDDING – SHEETS, LIGHT BLANKETS, SLEEPING MATS.

For information, please contact Jill Forsyth on: 0412 171 353

Example # 2. The Channon Children's Centre

10th December 2008

Hi there, we hope this letter finds you well. We are writing to you because you are a member of The Channon community, or connected somehow to this community.

You may know of The Channon Children's Centre as the valuable and precious community resource that it is. You may send, or have sent, your own children to the centre. You may have friends that have. You may have gone there yourself when you were a kid. Or maybe you've just gone to the Curry Night.

This letter is a warm invitation to you.

We are welcoming you to participate in the health of our community by supporting the health of our local preschool. Kids thrive at this centre. It is a vibrant place where our kids get wonderful understanding, learning and lots of fun in the crucial years of 3-5.

What we give is much more than just day care to individual children. We see our work as social action, that has many positive rippling effects, both for the children and society. Kids who get early childhood education as non-punitive, non-shaming guidance, grow up to create a more peaceful society. Pretty important hey!?

Fundraising is an ongoing part of our existence as a community preschool. As government funding is not enough to make us viable, we need to find other ways to create income just to cover the basics of paying staff and keeping the doors open. Low funds is nothing new for us, but the current situation has reached a new level of seriousness.

It needs to be said that The Channon Children's Centre has parents and families who have been paying NSW preschool fees (the highest in Australia), doing fundraiser after fundraiser, and usually donating extra. Thanks so much to those people! We can't ask any more of those families! This is why we are thinking laterally and opening the invitation out to you, part of the wider community.

One of our brilliant ideas this time is to invite all the workers out there to donate the profit from one day's work out of the year. This means we get to go to work for one day a year with the satisfying thought that my work today is going to the kids. How would that feel for you?

We need to raise around \$10,000 by the start of the new school year, which is the end of Jan 2009 (1 and 1/2 months away). We have already faced some serious decisions about our precious preschool just to stay afloat.

At the last committee meeting we made decisions which will come into play for next year. This looks like stripping the operation of the preschool back to the bare bones, reducing staff and remaining staff hours, thus reducing the child/teacher ratio to 2 staff for 20 kids which has major repercussions on the quality of care we pride ourselves on. We also anticipate a significant fee rise next year (some parents will pay \$26/day!), and potentially closing some days of operation. This is despite excellent work over the last couple of years by the centre management! The general

financial climate and State Government irresponsibility have been the major factors.

If only 20 people chose to contribute \$500, or 100 people \$100, or just 200 of us gave \$50, we could reach the \$10,000. No amount is too small to be helpful.

We are committed to the long term continuation of this wonderful preschool, and determined to see

this happen. Your support, however, would ensure that this service keeps going, and enable this to happen with significantly less stress!

This is a genuine, wholesome invitation to invest in the health of our community, our children, and our world. This is where you get to feel great about being part of this!

If you would like to help, with a **tax deductible donation**, the easiest way is a direct deposit into the preschool bank account or a cheque. We would love to reciprocate with our thanks and acknowledgement of your generosity, so if you do put money in, could you please put your name with the direct deposit, call us on xxxx xxxx, or email thechannonchildrenscentre@xxxx.com.au.

We (and the kids and their families) appreciate your participation and support, either in person, or in spirit.

Warmest regards to you,
The Channon Children's Centre Committee and Staff

Committee of parents: Kylie, Liz, Austin, Julie, Donovan, Peta, Sarah, Terri, Trish.

Staff: Chris, Robyn, Lisa, Kat.

PS: If you have family or friends who may like to be involved, we will get you this letter to send on, in stamped envelopes, or an email-able version - just call or email us!

Banking Details: The Channon Children's Centre,
Commonwealth Bank BSB: xxx-xxx Account No: xxxx-xxxx

I suggest you go to the **Workbook** now, and I'll take you step by step through a series of simple questions, that will basically provide the blueprint or draft for your own letter. You then simply structure your answers in the way I have outlined, and your letter will be done!

Chapter 4, **Final Tips for a Successful Letter Campaign**, will be more relevant once you have your letter completed and ready to send out.

Chapter 4

Final Tips for a Successful Letter Campaign

Proofreading

Get a couple of people to proofread the final draft of your letter. Keep in mind the following points when deciding who to ask to proofread for you. Include someone:

- ◆ who you respect and who will give you honest feedback
- ◆ who you perceive to already have a positive attitude
- ◆ from the target group you'll be sending your letter to. They will be able to tell you if there are any jargon words or phrases that will not make sense to your readers.

Also get someone to **read it back to you out loud**. Listen to see if it feels warm, conversational, and makes you feel like the person who wrote the letter is speaking just to you. Listen to see if it's interesting, flows well, is clearly written and easy to connect with. Make sure it is inspiring and leaves you feeling keen to be part of it by making a donation!

Who do you send your letter to?

◆ 1. Personal friends / acquaintances

Go through your phone book, mobile phone and old address books. Write down everyone's name without censoring. You never know who would love to support you and your work. Don't make that decision for them, but give them the chance to participate.

◆ 2. Friends of friends / family

This can be a list of people who may know of you. In my case, going through my parents' and grandparents' phone books / address books provided a lot more people to send the letter to. They knew of me through my folks, but didn't know me personally.

◆ 3. Key networkers

There are people who are naturally fantastic at networking and connecting people with each other. Think about whether you know any people who are like that, and ask them if they know

others who they could put you in contact with.

These 'networkers' may have a list or network which they are happy to send your letter out to (probably in email form for ease and low cost). Their endorsement of you and your project makes people much more likely to take notice, because it's from someone they already trust and respect.

◆ **4. Interest groups**

See if there are interest groups connected with your particular issue or area of interest. If so, contact them directly and see if they can send an email to their members, or include a story about you and your project in their newsletter with how to donate as part of it.

One way to find interest groups is simply by typing the words into Google or other search engines, such as Facebook which has groups of people with particular interests. You could join the group and then post a note about your campaign. Of course that is getting into internet marketing, and online list building. But for those of you who don't have a base of personal contacts, this is a valid way to find people to send your letter to who are already interested in your topic.

Distribution Options

◆ **Mail (stamped snail mail)**

This is my recommended option, simply because it is so much more personal, and more likely to get a fantastic response rate.

◆ **Email**

Of course email is cheap and fast, but it's much less personal and it is easy for people to just skip over it unopened, and then not get back to it. For people to open the email, it is crucial for the email subject line to be intriguing. One bad subject line, and many people just won't open your email, and therefore will never even read your letter.

I think email should be used only for those people that you don't have postal addresses for.

◆ **Printing your letter in local newspapers / offline media**

There are often local newsletters, newspapers or publications where you can have your letter printed. Submitting your letter to a relevant magazine may also get a lot of exposure. If you can't have the whole letter printed, you could still get an editorial or interview and leave a link to your website for more information, or how to make donations included at the end.

◆ **Letter drop**

You can get friends or pay the local post service to drop your letter into letter boxes or post office boxes. Because you would not know the recipients of your letter personally, your response rate will be lower than sending it out through your personal networks. This is a way to broaden the number of people who receive your letter.

◆ **Online distribution**

I am referring to social media sites (Facebook, Twitter etc), forums or blogs. For these online distribution options you would generally post a short summary, with a link to your website or blog which would have the detailed letter itself, and payment facilities.

Specific Tips for sending Snail Mail

I encourage people to send 'snail mail'. Who isn't going to open a hand-written letter that comes in the mail? As mail in the post is so much rarer these days, it feels warmer, more personal and exciting, and will be much more likely to be opened and read. I think it is usually worth the small amount in postage costs to have a better readership and ultimately a higher response rate.

Consider the following when getting ready to mail your letter

◆ **Readability** – It has been shown that some fonts are easier to read and get a better response rate in sales letters. As this is a 'sales letter' of sorts, which we want to have maximum success with, I think it is wise to apply the results of that research and use the fonts suggested.

Australian copywriter extraordinaire Bret Thomson recommends using the fonts Georgia or Times New Roman for letters sent out by snail mail (offline). (For email (online) use the font Arial for the body text and Tahoma for headings).

◆ **Print the letter on colored paper (not white)**

This is simply to make it more visible and different, with the aim of helping it stand out. I have used both pale yellow and pale purple paper, with the information sheet on white paper.

◆ **Lumpy mail**

This is the idea of putting something inside the envelope that makes the letter a bit lumpy. This creates much more curiosity for the person receiving it, and isn't just missed because it's thin like any other letter.

One idea is: Staple a tea bag to the top of the letter. Encourage people to sit down and have a cup of tea to read your letter.

◆ **Hand write the address on the envelope**

Do not print the address with a printer, but take the time to hand write the address. It feels much more personal and will get a better rate of people opening the letter and responding.

◆ **Hand write the welcome and sign off**

For the Welcome: On the version of my letter you can see I have typed “Dear name”. However, when I sent them out I hand wrote these words. If you print the Dear, and then just fill in the name by hand, it makes it much less personal from the outset, and makes the person feel like they are just one of a bunch of people getting the same letter. Do one or the other: either type “Dear William” – or hand write both the words, but don't mix it up.

For the Sign-off: Definitely hand write your name, or signature.

Get support with contacting people

As I have mentioned before, asking people to support your cause and contribute money can be an emotional process in itself. This can be especially true if you have a history of doing everything yourself and not asking for help, or negative beliefs such as “I am not supported in the world”.

Reaching out and asking people to support you or your cause financially through the letter is getting support. But, it is also okay to have support with the process of actually sending out the letters.

Here is a real example of getting support with the Letter Strategy process:

Toola, who successfully fundraised to help in East Timor, shared this. She said that it felt like a really big thing to ask people to invest in her and her work, and having some support made all the difference.

After going through her phone book and old address books, she felt uncomfortable about contacting these people, some she hadn't spoken to for years, and essentially asking them for money. It was her limiting belief that it was rude or inappropriate to do that. What of course happened was that those same people were thrilled to hear from her, inspired by her work in the world, and were very happy to give money to help her and the people of East Timor.

But at the time, asking felt hard to her, so having support with that part by way of two friends doing the contacting and sending on her behalf was fantastic.

As Toola had phone numbers without addresses, this meant that these helpers rang up those numbers, introduced themselves as a friend of Toola's, and asked for their postal address so she could send them something. The helpers then addressed the envelopes and the letters were sent out.

Letting Toola step back from that particular part of the process meant that more people were contacted (otherwise she would likely have censored the list) and more money was raised. It allowed Toola get on with the important tasks of getting ready to go to East Timor at short notice and help in the crisis situation.

So, basically, you don't have to do everything on your own! If there are particular issues you identified in the mindset questions in the Workbook, then this is a very relevant point for you to consider.

What measures can you put in place to ensure you have the support and means to go through sending the letters out? Do you have a team of people, or support in whatever way, to help you stay on track and deliver everything you say you will?

Follow-up letters – Sending out letter sequences

Most of the fundraising letters I have been involved with have been within a short time frame, and only one letter was required.

However, successful direct response marketers suggest that it is more effective to send out a sequence of 3 letters about a week to ten days apart. Often people open the initial letter, and just don't get around to taking action, even though they may have intended to. A follow-up letter or two can be worded in a way which doesn't have any of the pushiness that may annoy some people. The response rate on this second and third letter can significantly increase the over-all response to the campaign.

The spacing suggested by the marketing experts of letter campaigns such as entrepreneur and natural health practitioner Wayne Pickstone is to **send out three consecutive letters one week apart.**

Example: With The Channon Children's Centre fundraising letter campaign, we sent out letter #1 which brought in about \$4000 over a period of about 1 month.

A follow-up letter was sent out about 6 weeks after the first, thanking people who had already donated, giving an update on the situation, and letting people know there was still the time and the need if they hadn't already contributed but wanted to.

This **letter #2 resulted in another \$2000 of donations** (50% again from what was raised with the first letter). So you can see the massive results that sending out friendly follow-up letters can have.

Also, rather than spending money the Children's Centre didn't have to mail out all the rest of the second letters, we actually just put this letter #2 in the local newspaper 'The Terania Times'. If we had sent it out personally to individuals, I expect the further donations would have been even higher.

The Channon Children's Centre follow up letter (letter # 2)

I have highlighted the most relevant paragraphs in dark red.

25th March 2009

We are writing to express our deep gratitude for your generous contribution to the Channon Preschool over the summer. Apologies for the delay in communicating our thanks!

The response to the letters we sent out to the community was truly heart warming, and raised close to \$4000. This has meant we can still operate as a centre at this point. Thank you so much from all of us – committee, staff, kids and the whole community who benefit.

You may ask yourselves, as we have, why the preschool is in a constant state of fundraising just to stay open. On looking back over the records, we are realizing just HOW FAR the State Government is lacking in providing adequate funding for community preschools.

The government funding we receive from Department of Community Services used to make up over 75% of our running costs, but now comprises an abysmal 45%. This explains why we are continually fundraising to make up such a massive short fall just to keep the centre viable and open.

I hope that explains our situation a little. We appreciate your community spirit and feel blessed to be part of this community with you in it.

This letter is about acknowledging and thanking you, but it feels ok to say that if you feel to

donate more at any time it is most welcome! Even setting up an automatic amount on an ongoing basis, however small, would be amazing.

We looked into the possibility of being tax deductible, but unfortunately this isn't possible. Hopefully you can still claim your donations as being for a non-profit organization.

Warmest regards from us all here at the preschool,
Committee at The Channon Children's Centre Inc.

Conclusion

I sincerely hope what I have shared in this book has been extremely helpful and practical to you.

I wish you all the best in your fundraising endeavors and acknowledge and honor the time, energy and love you are putting into your fundraising.

The benefits that will result from your fundraising actions will be both seen and unseen by you, but I think you can rest assured that you are making the world a better place by what you are doing, and the ripple effects will be many.

I welcome you to stay in touch. I would love to hear your stories. Please let me know how this book has helped you and in what way.

And, of course I welcome feedback on anything you think could be improved in the book. My intention is for this to be a very user-friendly and practical resource that helps people make the difference they want to with their successful fundraising.

You can send any feedback or stories to me at : info@fundraising-success-secrets.com

Warmest regards, Terri