

# Compelling Appeals and Meaningful Thank You Notes

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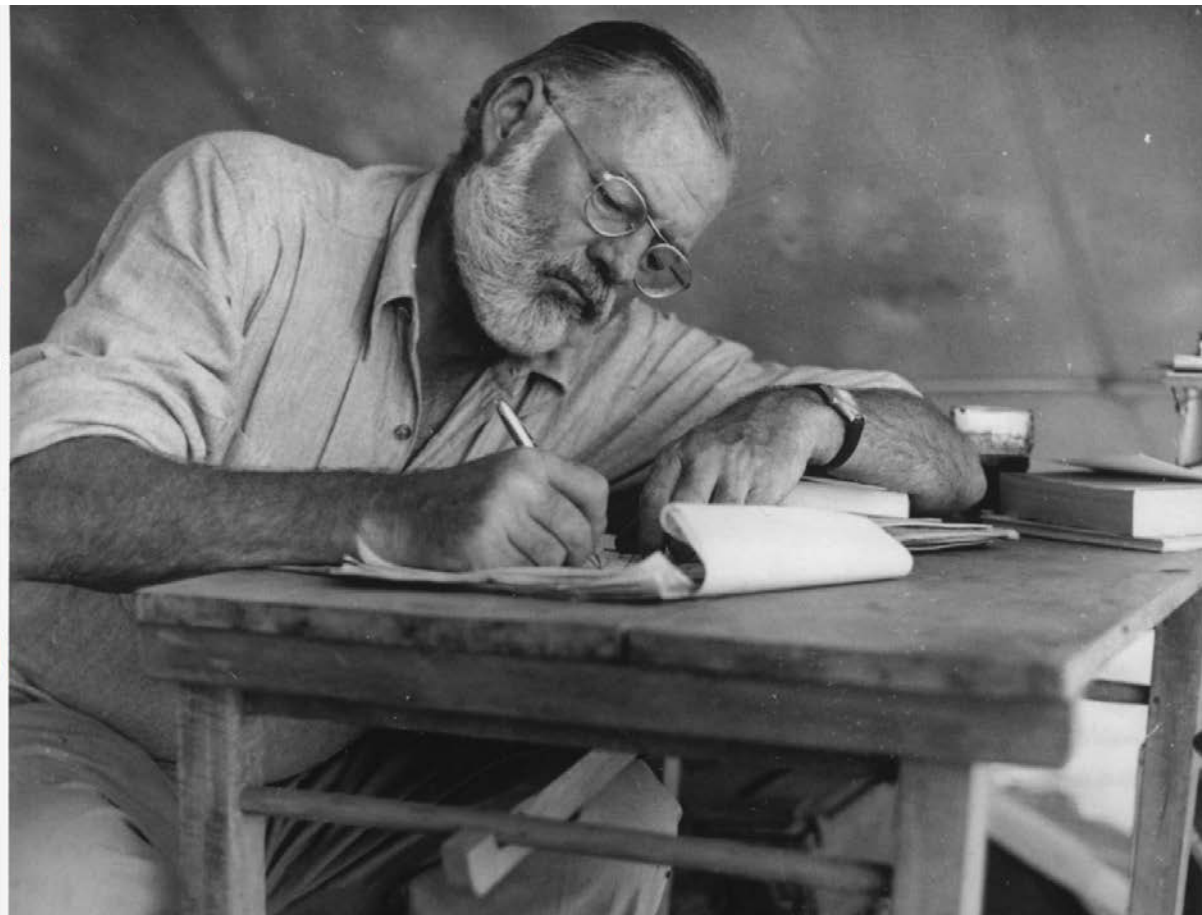
UT System Seminar

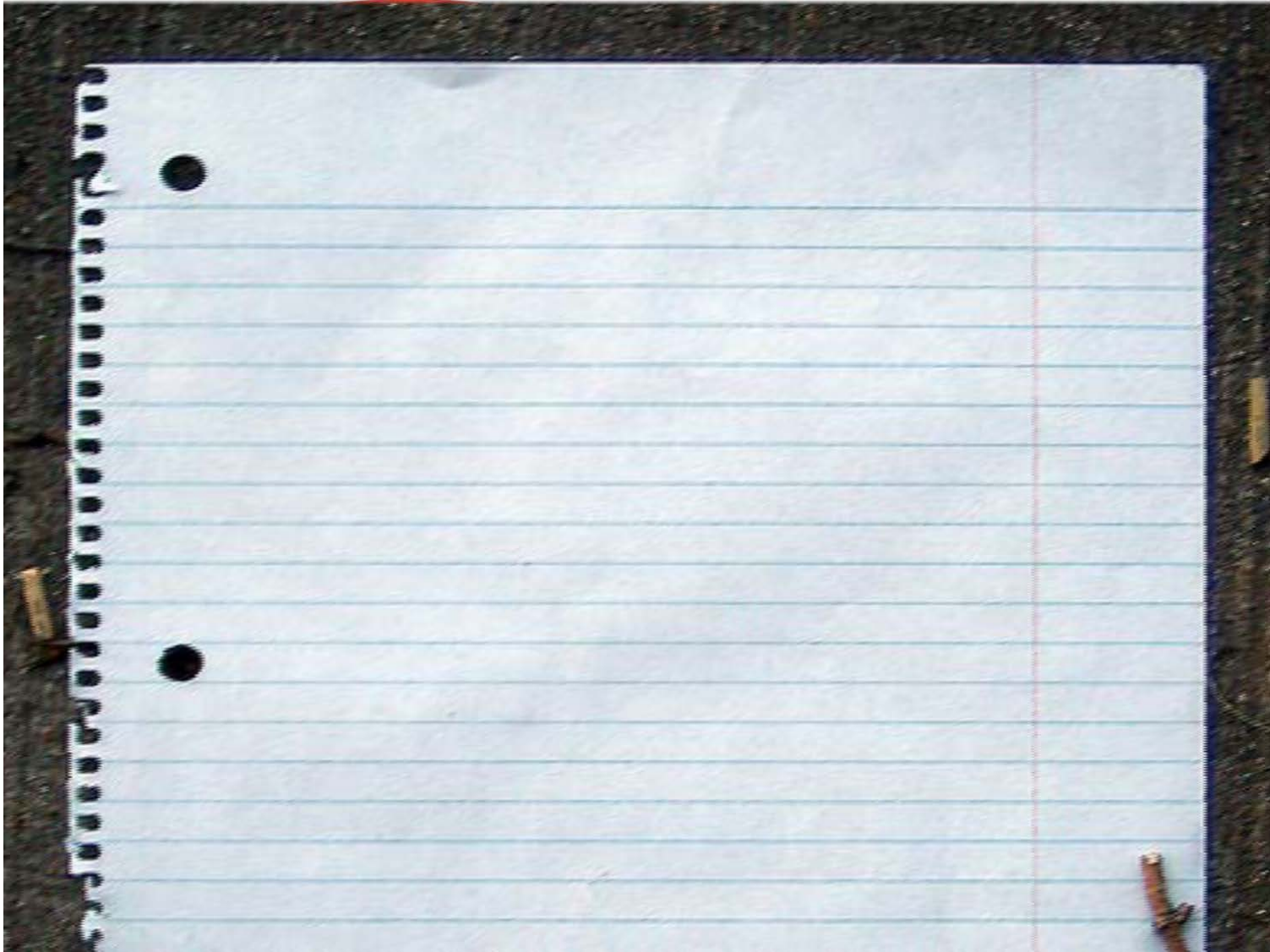
December 4, 2016

# Objectives

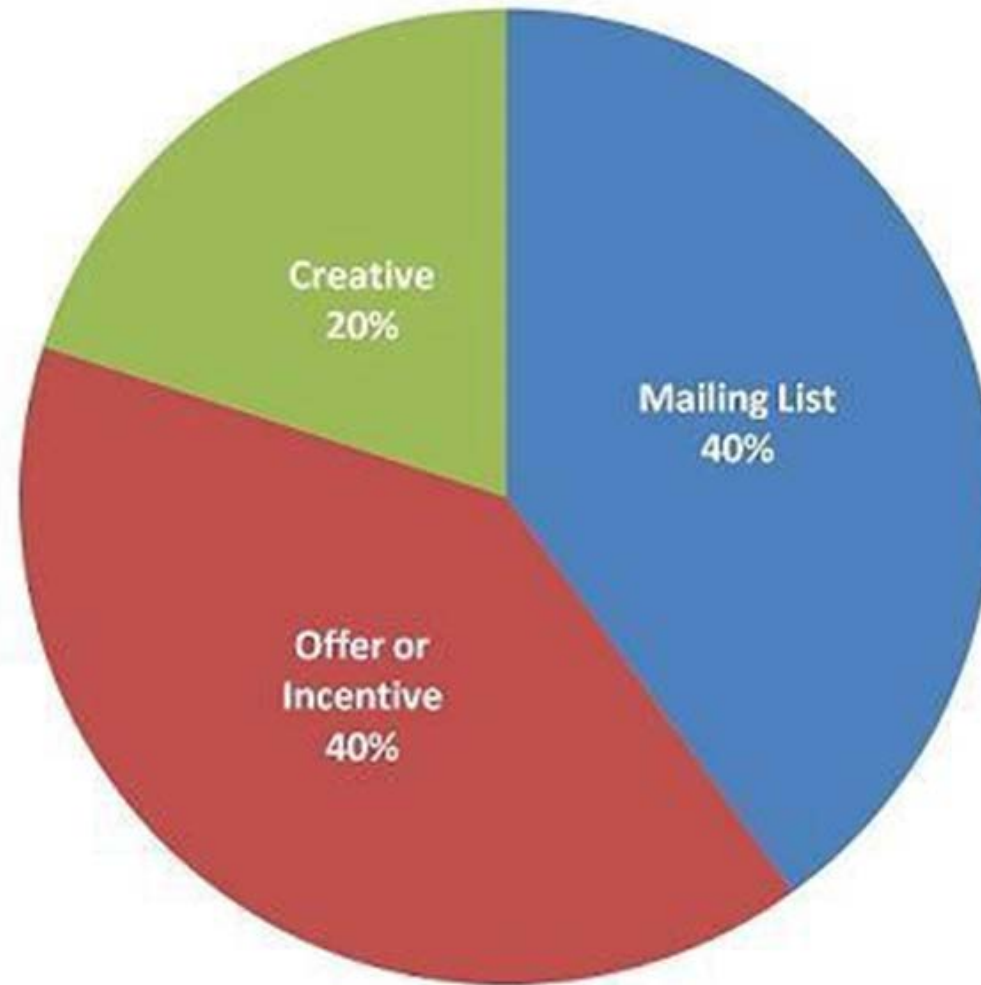
- Unpack what drives “compelling” and “meaningful”
- Identify best practices and examples
- Apply, in discussion

# The Scariest Thing Ever...

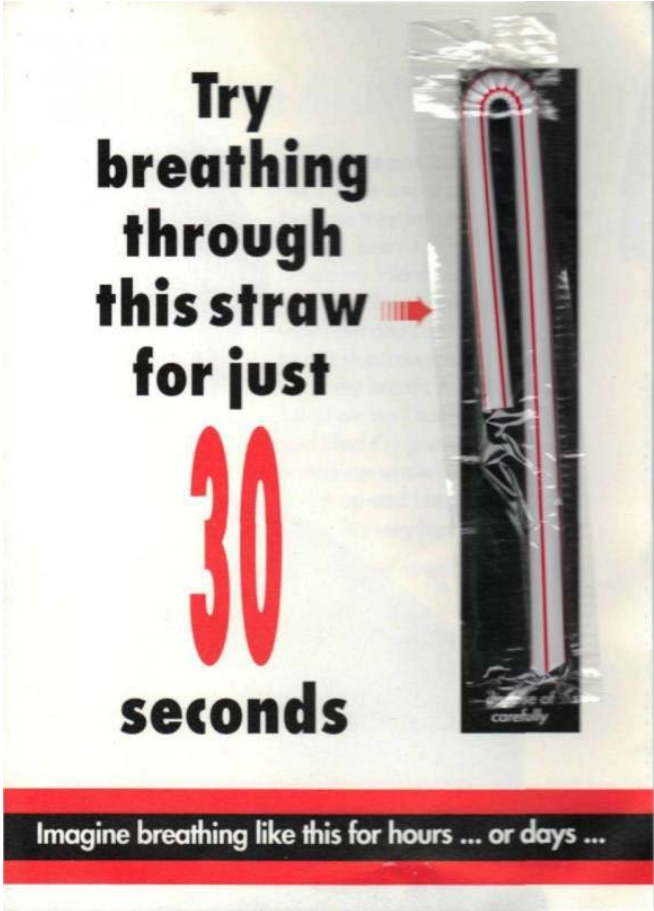




## Direct Mail Campaign Effectiveness – Success Factors



# A Great Offer...



# A Great Offer...

**SMALL DOG  
SEEKS BIG  
LOVE**



Looking for love? For just £1 a week you can sponsor an abandoned dog like me. In return, you'll get a sponsor's certificate, updates on your chosen dog and unconditional love.

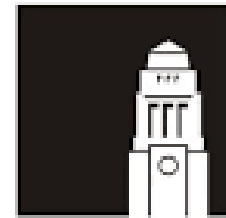
**SPONSOR A DOG TODAY**

TEXT 'DOG' TO  
**64118**  DogsTrust  
[www.sponsoradog.org.uk](http://www.sponsoradog.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 207091

# A Great Offer...

Give £ 100 and be one  
of 30 Leeds graduates  
to offer a scholarship



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**



# What Is a Great Offer?

A great fundraising offer puts your **entire appeal** across **succinctly** and **memorably**, and shows the donor a **clear benefit** to them from giving.

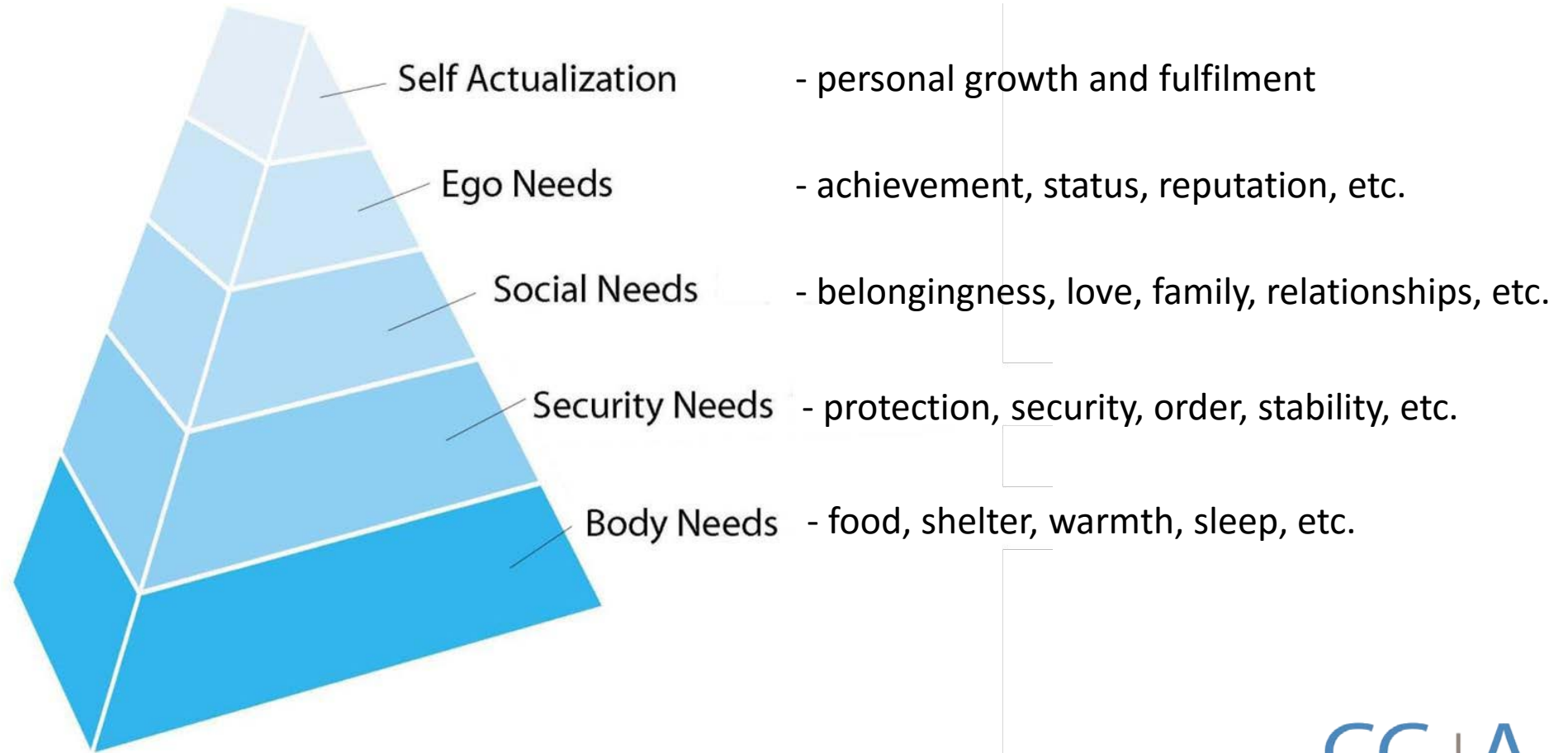
Until you have defined your offer, you can't devise the rest of your creative.

And a great offer is rooted in....

# Donor Needs



# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# Help Me To Grow

- Elevate status
- Not macro marketing
- Emphasis on special treatment
- Respect and honesty
- Wanted information
- It's about the donor, not the institution

# The Nine Moral Adjectives



Dr. Jennifer Shang,  
Professor of Philanthropic Psychology  
Plymouth University,  
United Kingdom

- Research: what motivates people to give?
- These words “describe a core sense of who people actually are, as well as a core sense of who people would ideally like to be.”

Source: NY Times, “Flattery Will Get You Everywhere. Drafting a fund-raising appeal? Don’t skimp on the magic words,” by John Hanc, November 6, 2016

# The Nine Moral Adjectives

Fair

Friendly

Kind

Generous

Compassionate

Honest

Helpful

Hard-working

Caring

# Example: Public Radio Station



- Thanking those who contributed to a public radio station for being “kind and compassionate” increased giving among female donors by 10 percent.

Sources: “Field Experiments in Charitable Contribution: The Impact of Social Influence on the Voluntary Provision of Public Goods,” Jen Shang and Rachel Croson, University of Michigan Research Center for Group Dynamics, 2006; and NY Times, “Flattery Will Get You Everywhere. Drafting a fund-raising appeal? Don’t skimp on the magic words,” by John Hanc, November 6, 2016



# Example: Letter Opening

*Dear Reader,*

*You came to our hospital as a patient, in need of help. Thank you for that profound act of trust.*

*Now we come to you, humbly, to ask for your help in turn. The cause for excellent health care, here in our community, needs you. Will you consider becoming its champion...by making a gift?*

Source: NY Times, "Flattery Will Get You Everywhere. Drafting a fund-raising appeal? Don't skimp on the magic words," by John Hanc, November 6, 2016





## Example: Letter Closing

*We cannot do great medicine without your help. So please consider Sharp Chula Vista in your decisions about charitable giving.*

*I know there are many good charities that will seek your help. Please know how honored we are when you choose to make a gift to Sharp HealthCare Foundation.*

Source: NY Times, "Flattery Will Get You Everywhere. Drafting a fund-raising appeal? Don't skimp on the magic words," by John Hanc, November 6, 2016

# The Nine Moral Adjectives – A Caveat

“Randomly injecting these words into the same communication that donors would not otherwise read anyway does not help anybody.

It is about allowing the donors the opportunity to reflect on who they think they are”

– Dr. Jennifer Shang

Source: NY Times, “Flattery Will Get You Everywhere. Drafting a fund-raising appeal? Don’t skimp on the magic words,” by John Hanc, November 6, 2016

# Thank You Letters

- A strong “thank you letter” allows just that opportunity
- Guidelines:
  - Timely
  - Human touch
  - Demonstrate impact

# Thank You Letters: Timely

“It’s extremely, extremely, extremely important for nonprofits to thank people properly. It’s done immediately, the first opportunity they get to thank people.” – Dr. Shang

Thank a new donor within 48 hours – Tom Ahern

Sources: New York Times, “Getting Into A Benefactor’s Head,” by David Wallis, November 8, 2012; and Tom Ahern, “20 Questions: The Donor Communications Test,” [ahearncomm.com](http://ahearncomm.com)

# Thank You Letters: Human Touch

- Control: Thank you note signed by Executive Director Michael Leventhal, with a profile of a blind person who has been helped by a service dog.
- Test: Handwritten outer envelope, and personalized handwritten thank you note (via Thankster); return address with two names (beneficiary, and guide dog); send one month before solicitation.
- Results:
  - Donor retention has increased more than 8 percent over three years
  - 440 one-time donors gave again after receiving one of the notes
  - Revenue from repeat donors jumped \$657,398 in one year

Source: The Chronicle of Philanthropy, "Thank-You Notes That Look Handwritten Inspire Donors to Give Again," Eden Stiffman, September 21, 2016



# Thank You Letters: Demonstrate Impact

“Make sure that with first-time donors they are really taking a donor on a journey that this person will travel with the nonprofit to achieve some social goal. Thanking needs to serve the purpose of holding the donor’s hand on this exciting journey.”

- Dr. Shang

Example:  **BOSTON COLLEGE** — *Ever to Excel* — “Thank A Donor Day” ([video](#))

# Case Study: University of Leeds

## Background

- 8<sup>th</sup> Largest University in UK, 31 K students, founded 1903
- Russell Group member; Top 100 World University
- Only £156 K of £2 M raised from 2004 – 2011 came from Direct Mail
- DM below breakeven; appeals raised £30 K but cost £80 K to target 80,000 – 100,000 alumni
- Response rates less than 0.4%

Source: CASE Currents, “Direct to the Heart,” by Adrian Salmon, Jan/Feb 2015

# Case Study: University of Leeds

## Strategies:

- Target alumni 50+ years old
- Build relevance: segment and apply emotional appeals based upon nostalgia
- Use multi-channel approach
- Focused DM offer on scholarship support

Source: CASE Currents, "Direct to the Heart," by Adrian Salmon, Jan/Feb 2015

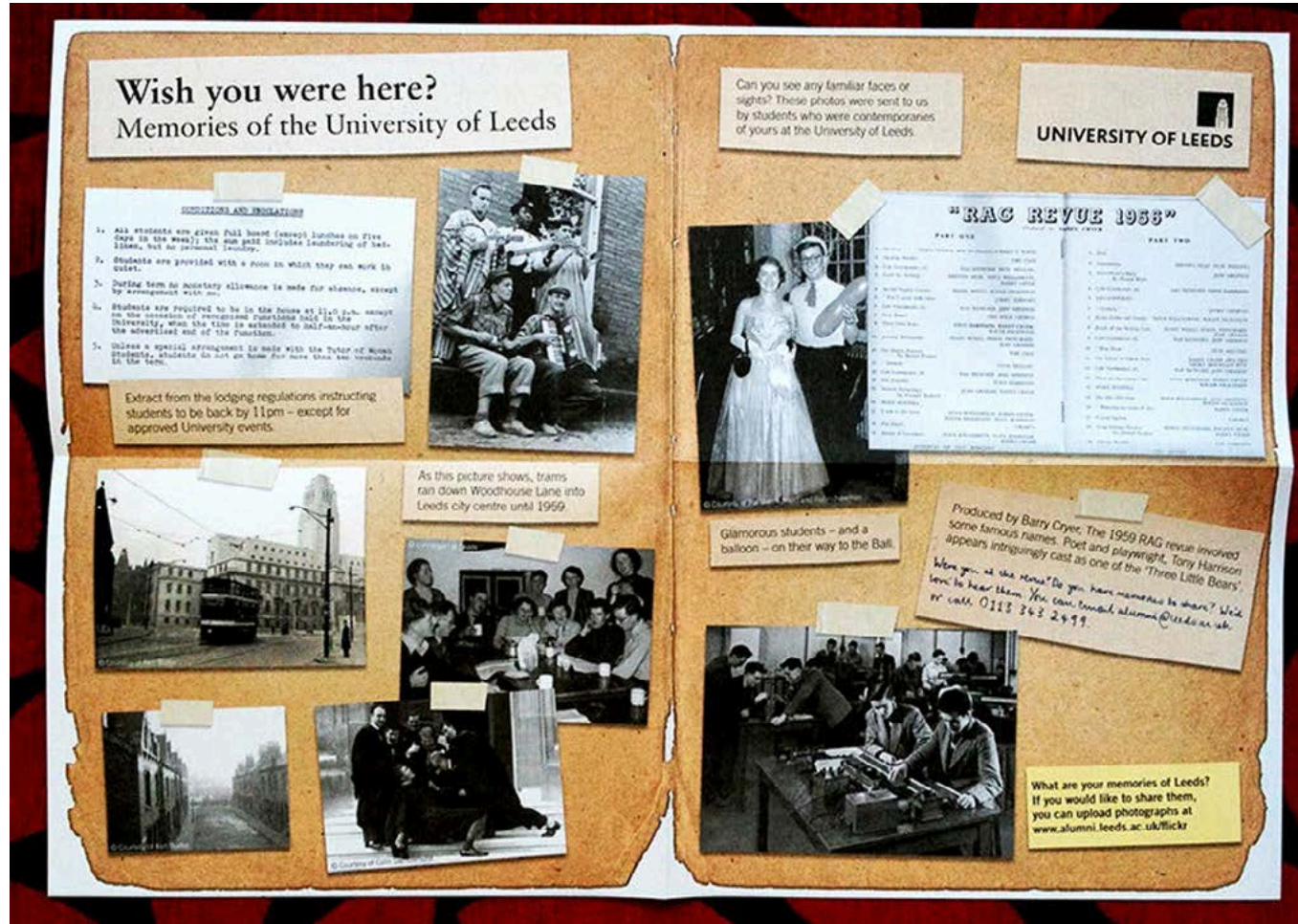


# Case Study: University of Leeds

## Appeals

- Expanded DM from greeting card with decade-related photo, to “scrapbook” that showed alumni a fuller glimpse of former lives
- Reverse side of scrapbook showed current university and explained need for alumni support
- Alumni received email informing letter was on the way
- Donation form included URL of dedicated landing page

# Case Study: University of Leeds



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# Case Study: University of Leeds

## Incorporating the “thank you”

- Two-page letter from Vice Chancellor offered alumni a pin as a thank you gift
- Copy was taken almost verbatim from a thank you letter a student wrote to anonymous donor
- Alumni referred to thank you note in several responses, some including gift cards. Example:
  - “Every time I hear about present-day students and their financial problems, I am grateful that things were so different when I was at Leeds from 1948-51. I’m only sorry I can’t donate more. I was charmed by Amy Broadbent’s letter.”



# Case Study: University of Leeds

To thank you for your gift, we would be delighted to send this further little reminder of your time at the University of Leeds.

online  
delighted  
ur time at



Source: CASE Currents, "Direct to the Heart," by Adrian Salmon, Jan/Feb 2015

# Case Study: University of Leeds

Each year, students who have received scholarships write to the people who have supported them by donating to the Sainsbury Fund.

I've included Amy's letter because it shows the powerful difference you can make to the life of someone who - thanks to you - has the chance to study at the University of Leeds.

Dear Donor,

I am just getting in touch to let you know personally how much the scholarship that you supported has helped me, and to say thank you for your kind generosity.

Before I came to Leeds I didn't have a lot of confidence in my ability as my school had set low grade predictions and I doubted I could achieve the high grades required for A grades at A-Level in Psych ICT. During this time I developed such potential to help others teacher inspired me to study degree at university and when the capability of doing so, I this was the route I wanted to

However, I was a little bit nervous as I knew that university was an investment. After deciding to

study Psychology at the University of Leeds, I discovered that students with my background could be supported with scholarships, if they met the criteria.

When I got accepted onto the course at Leeds I was ecstatic! I couldn't believe that I was going to such a world-class university to study the course which I felt was made for me! I also found out that I had been given a scholarship. This really put my mind at ease as I knew that this extra money would help with my studies.

The scholarship has proven to be so helpful. It has enabled me to purchase crucial textbooks for my course as well as the British Psychological Journal every month, something which I feel has been essential in my success so far.

I really wanted to let you know how much of a difference you have made to my life. You have not only provided me with financial support, but also in form of personal support as I feel like someone out there wanted to send me to university. Without these types of valuable support, I don't think I would have been able to come to the University of Leeds, so thank you once again.

With very best wishes,

Amy Broadbent, BSc Psychology (2011)

Source: CASE Currents, "Direct to the Heart," by Adrian Salmon, Jan/Feb 2015

# Case Study: University of Leeds

## Results

- Appeal raised £188 K – 6 x the previous best
- Response rate of 1.7% - 4 x previous average
- One Australian donor gave AU\$5 K and set up a trust to give AU\$25 K / year in perpetuity
- Raised £64 K in online giving in a single year – matching the total online giving of previous four years

## Key takeaways

- Targeted appeal to current donors and alumni over 50
- Focused appeal – on scholarships
- Leveraged multichannel approach

# Case Study: University of Iowa “Phil Day”

University of Iowa Foundation

About the Foundation Recognition and Thanks Ways to Give Careers Give Now


## PHIL WAS HERE

About Phil Student Philanthropy Group Phil's Facts Phil's Day PHIL Grant

HOME » ABOUT PHIL

### About Phil

Rectangular Snip

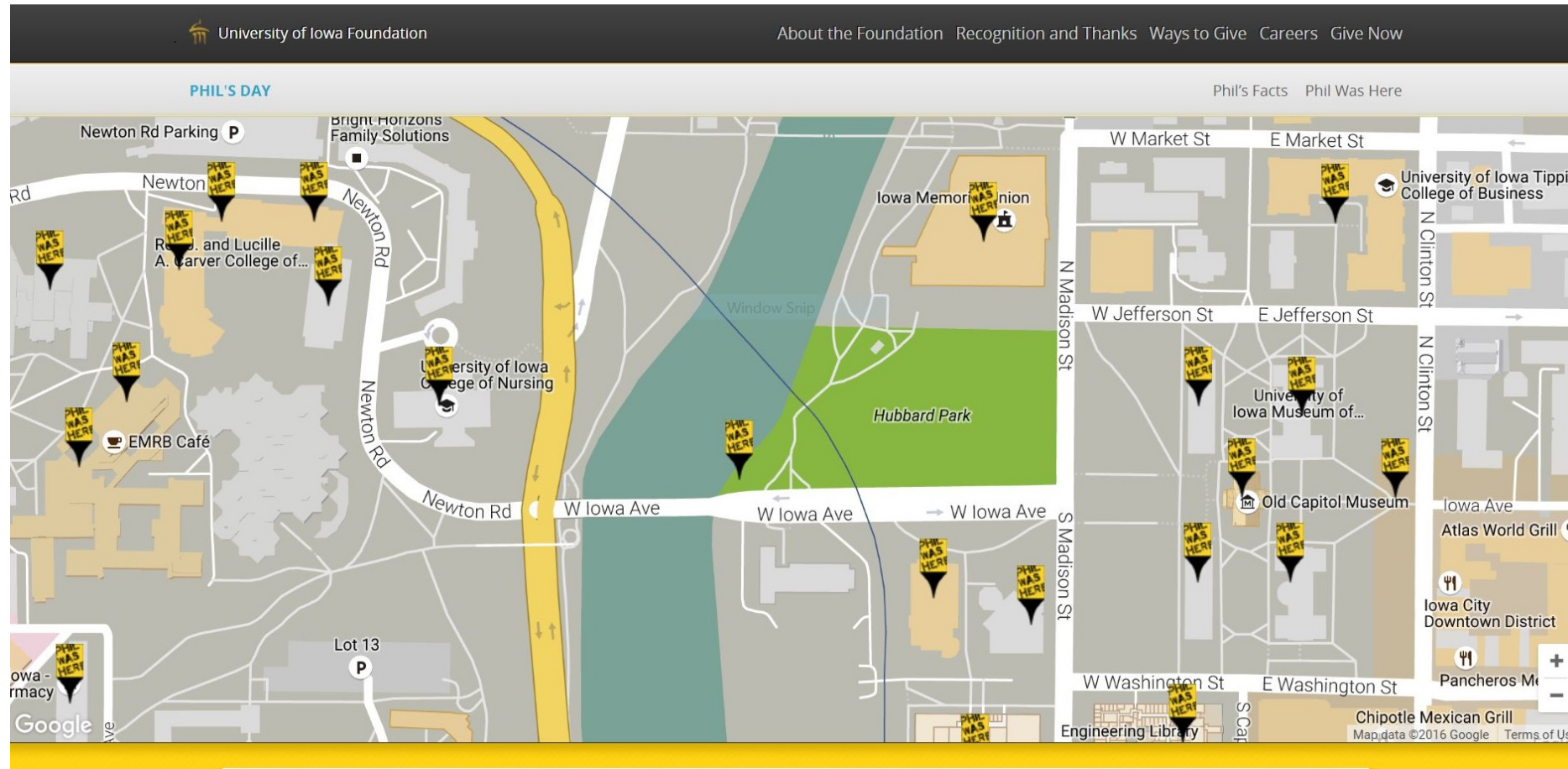


Phil is learning in classrooms, researching in labs, building new facilities, and giving back to others. Phil takes to the stage and charges the playing fields. Phil is everywhere. Phil is Iowa. Phil is you.

**JOIN PHIL**  
Check out the many activities on campus.



# Case Study: University of Iowa “Phil Day”



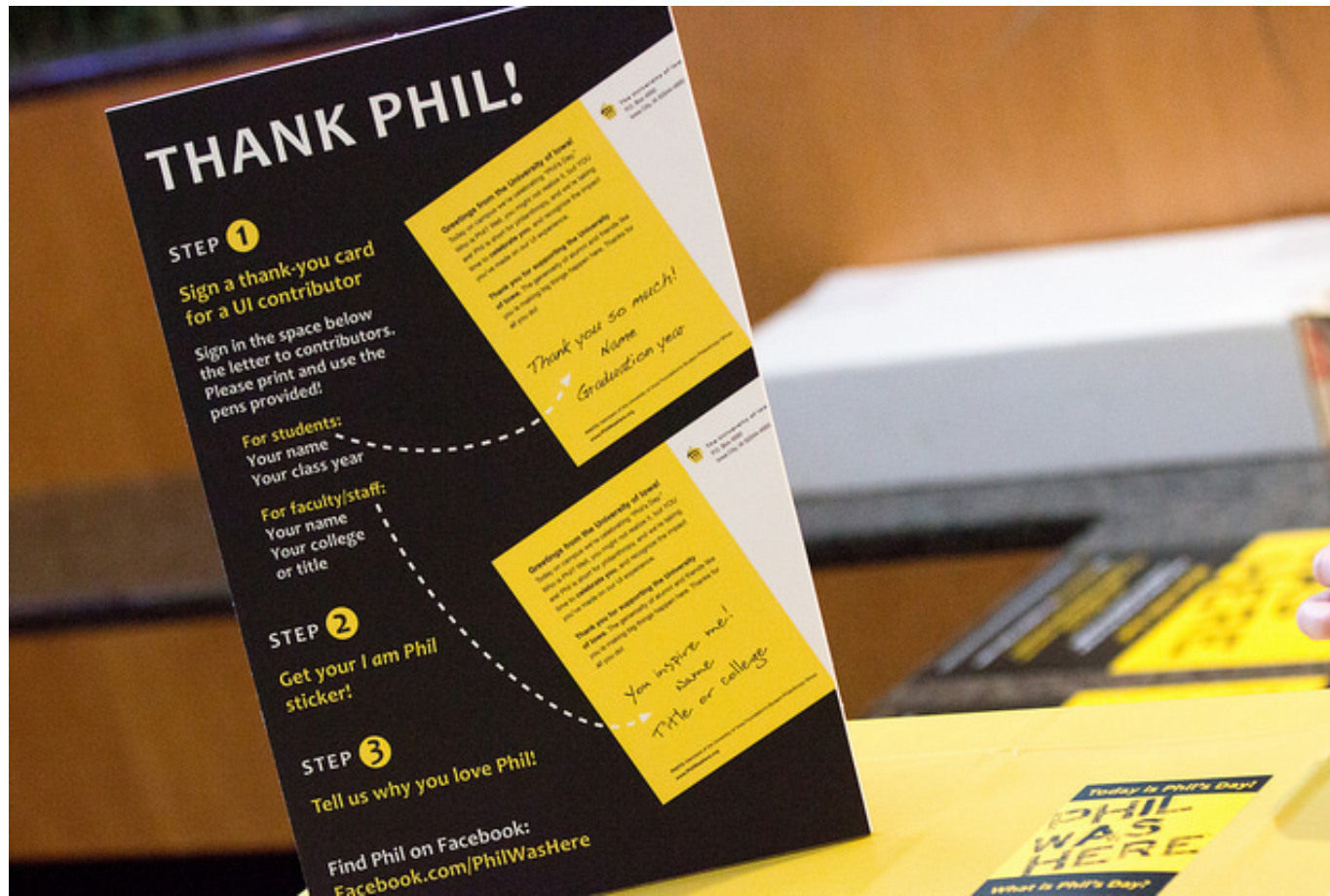
# Case Study: University of Iowa “Phil Day”



Photos: University of Iowa Foundation



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Photos: University of Iowa Foundation

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Photos: University of Iowa Foundation

# Concluding thoughts

- “Compelling” and “meaningful” start with the donor, not the university
- Philanthropy connects the donor and the university by fulfilling high-level donor needs
  - Maslow’s hierarchy of needs
  - Nine moral adjectives
- Compelling and meaningful appeals and thank you letters start with the writing, but don’t end there
  - Multichannel approach
  - Student-focused campus events

# Thank You!

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