

SUMMER 2021

Viguerie's Four Horsemen of Marketing™

How to quickly grow your organization,
income, and effectiveness



Introduction

This booklet grew out of a series of conversations in early 2020 with my good friend and mentor Richard A. Viguerie. Richard is the pioneer of ideological/political direct mail. Since the 1960s, his accomplishments in this area have motivated millions of Americans to participate in politics for the first time.

I have learned much from Richard Viguerie over the years—and continue to do so. He has extraordinary wisdom to share. During our recent conversations he expanded upon four key concepts—what he calls the Four Horsemen of Marketing™: 1) position; 2) differentiation; 3) benefit; and 4) brand.

The following pages seek to set out each of those concepts as he has explained them to me. The questions and prompts are mine, the insights his. Rightly understood and applied, the Four Horsemen can help you market your nonprofit and achieve your goals in an over-communicated world.

Richard Viguerie puts it best:

“Learn and apply these four concepts, and it’s all downhill with the wind at your back. But if you don’t, it’s a long and steep uphill climb—and very difficult to succeed.”



Kevin Gentry

FOUR HORSEMEN OF MARKETING™

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Position

Finding Your Hole in the Marketplace

“The solution to a positioning problem is usually found in the prospect’s mind, not in the product.”

AL RIES & JACK TROUT

Positioning is one of the most important concepts in marketing. Whether it was developed by David Ogilvy or by Jack Trout and Al Ries, positioning has been indispensable to entrepreneurs and their business growth. I began my discussion of positioning with Richard Viguerie by asking a simple question.

Why do you put position first—why is it the first of your Four Horsemen of Marketing™?

Positioning comes first because it is the foundation upon which your organization rests. It's the foundation for all of your marketing efforts. Remember the Bible story about the wise man who built his house on the rock? When the floods came, the house on the rock stood firm. For your organization, positioning is your bedrock.

A position is nothing more than a hole in the marketplace. Every organization needs to find theirs. Think about how Apple competed against IBM. It did so not by going up against IBM directly, but by finding a hole in the marketplace. Apple didn't compete by offering computers—it offered *personal* computers.

So how do we break through so much chatter and noise to get our message across?

We all live in a massively over-communicated world. Every day we're bombarded with thousands and thousands of messages. Your non-profit is just one of them. It's hard to be heard above the noise. In such a world, you can't expect people to remember everything they see and hear. But one thing they can remember is this: categories.

When I pioneered political direct mail in the 1960s, it was a category that didn't exist.

Usually when I ask nonprofit leaders what their position is, they will respond with something like this:

“We’re better than our competition. We’re more effective, more impactful and more efficient.”

Now, this may well be a position in *their* minds, but it’s not in the minds of others. That’s what has to change.

Who does positioning well?

Political campaigns can provide terrific examples of the power of positioning. Here’s an example.

In 2008, six major Democrat candidates were running for President of the United States. Do you remember who they were? In addition to Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, there was former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson and Senators Chris Dodd, John Edwards, and Joe Biden. Each of the six candidates believed they were the smartest or most qualified person on the stage. But that wasn’t sufficient for success. Two of the candidates had managed to position themselves as frontrunners. Hillary Clinton was one. She was the candidate of the “Democrat establishment”—that was her position.

The other was Barack Obama. What set him apart?

Obama was the freshman Senator from Illinois. To compete with his more experienced rivals he knew he had to establish a position—a hole in the marketplace. So that’s what he did. On the campaign trail, Obama began to emphasize one issue above all others: If he had been a member of the U.S. Senate at the time, he would have opposed the War in Iraq. Hillary Clinton (and the others) had supported the war.

That was Obama’s hole in the marketplace. He had taken a position that electrified the Democrat grassroots—and this position would form the bedrock of his victory in the primary. Need a more recent example of political candidates and positioning? Consider the holes in the marketplace filled by Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders.

How about entrepreneurs who have successfully found and filled holes in the marketplace?

Several years ago you introduced me to your friend Dino Cortopassi, an incredibly successful agri-businessman. When he started out, Cortopassi had a superior product—tomato sauce—with superior production operations. But until he met Jack Trout, his business growth had plateaued.

Trout is co-author of the book *Positioning*. He helped Cortopassi carve out his hole in the marketplace—that he was “the *real* Italian tomato company.” Owners of real Italian restaurants craved the real thing, something authentic. That’s what Cortopassi offered them—and they were willing to pay extra for it. What Jack Trout helped Cortopassi understand about positioning launched his business into the stratosphere.

As this story illustrates, positioning is not a matter of changing or improving your product, of doing something better than everyone else. It’s a matter of identifying a hole in the marketplace and then positioning your organization or your product to fill it. In short, you have to identify what you are doing that no one else does—and people have to see a benefit.

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That’s position, the first of the Four Horsemen of Marketing™. Next is horseman number two—differentiation.

Differentiation

Ever thought about becoming a Purple Cow?

I never saw a Purple Cow,
I never hope to see one,
But I can tell you, anyhow,
I'd rather see than be one!

GELETT BURGESS

“In a crowded marketplace, fitting in is failing.
In a busy marketplace, not standing out is the
same as being invisible.”

SETH GODIN, AUTHOR OF *PURPLE COW*

Once you've established your position, you need to differentiate it from everyone else. However, cutting through the clutter of our over-communicated world is a challenge. In thinking about the concept of differentiation you need to ask these questions about yourself and your organization.

What makes you remarkable? Do you blend into the background—or do you stand out? To stand out from everyone else in the field you have to differentiate yourself. According to Richard Viguerie, you just might need to become a Purple Cow.

So what do you mean by that—that you need to become a Purple Cow?

I live in the foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. It's out in the country. When I travel home, I regularly pass fields filled with black-and-white cows. Then comes another field with brown cows. I can't tell one cow from the other—they all look alike. But if one of them was a Purple Cow, that would stand out.

I regularly read and study the work of the marketing guru Seth Godin. In his famous book, *Purple Cow*, he argues that there's only one way to really cut through the clutter of our over-communicated world. That's to innovate something truly unique and remarkable—like a Purple Cow. To give yourself the best possible chance to achieve your dreams, vision, and goals, you need to become a Purple Cow—and stand out from all others.

How does differentiation relate to positioning, the first concept of marketing?

We started with positioning because that's the foundation on which everything is built. It's the bedrock. You have to find that hole in the marketplace that fits you. Identify what you do that no one else does.

But remember—it's not necessarily that you do it better than everyone else. It's doing something that no one else is doing. And people believe there is a benefit for them. You then take your position and you differentiate it through your public activities.

And by the way, position is a private decision. You privately decide what hole in the marketplace you want to occupy. Then differentiation is what you do publicly that communicates your hole in the marketplace.

Who has done differentiation well?

Consider how Rupert Murdoch and his Fox Network applied positioning and differentiation—and achieved huge success as a result.

In 1996, Murdoch introduced the Fox News Channel, a 24-hour cable news network. By then, CNN already occupied that space, offering viewers around-the-clock news.

However, Murdoch privately identified a hole in the marketplace and believed that Fox News could fill it. Fox News would position itself as a *conservative alternative* to CNN. The differentiation then came from the public activities. Fox News differentiates itself by featuring Tucker Carlson, Laura Ingraham, Sean Hannity, Fox & Friends, and so on.

Incidentally, when CNN was launched in 1980, its position had been as an unbiased objective cable news organization—and it held that

position for many years. Then MSNBC established a brand for being a liberal cable news network, and Fox established a brand as a conservative cable news network. In recent years, CNN has changed its position (hole in the marketplace). It now has moved to the far left. However, that position is already occupied by MSNBC.

So, CNN went from being the number one cable news network to number three, behind Fox and MSNBC. Why? Because it abandoned its original position and ran afoul of the first of Ries and Trout's "22 Immutable Laws of Marketing"—it tried to occupy a position that was already occupied.

You've said that a lot of differentiation is visual. Explain what you mean by that.

For your organization, ask yourself a series of questions:

1. Who should sign the letters for your direct mail? Who should sign a pub note for you?
2. Do you have well-known and respected advisory board members or friends you can list on the left side of your stationery to help establish a differentiation?
3. To differentiate yourself, who and what should you feature in photographs and testimonials in your newsletters and other publications?
4. What might you send to your supporters?

My longtime friend Morton Blackwell sends his supporters a jar of honey at Christmastime every year. And let me tell you, that honey gets your attention. It certainly helps differentiate Morton (Leadership Institute founder and president) from the leaders of other organizations.

You've also said that differentiation is vital for an organization's growth and success—even for its very survival.

Think about your work—all the important things you believe you and your organization do. Now think about how you communicate what you do to a prospective customer through your mailings. On a really good day, you might have just 10 seconds to convince the customer about what you are offering. Usually it's more like 3 to 4 seconds. It may well be even less, especially for fundraising emails.

Of course, a similar process happens daily in homes all across America. Each day we stand beside the trash can—the circular file—and quickly sort through the mail, deciding what we don't even need to open. We do the same with email, quickly deleting what we don't need to read. We tune out radio and TV advertising. We ignore print ads. If what's presented to us doesn't immediately catch our interest, we move on. We have to—we're all so busy with our daily routines and responsibilities.

Differentiation is also important on an individual basis, right?

I have a granddaughter who at an early age began to play the harp. Years later she applied for college—and received a scholarship that covered most of her tuition, room, and board.

Why?

She won the scholarship because the college had no harpist. They did have lots of piano players, singers, and violinists—and good ones at that. Just no harpist. My wife and I had paid for years of music lessons for our granddaughter. Those lessons had paid off more than we could ever have imagined.

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A harpist in a harp-less orchestra. A purple cow in a field of brown cows. That's differentiation. Next we're going to saddle up horseman number three—your benefit.

Benefit

If I give you \$25, how will I benefit?

“The most important single central fact about a free market is that no exchange takes place unless both parties benefit.”

MILTON FRIEDMAN

At first blush, benefit might look like an easy concept to grasp. But not so—many individuals and organizations fail to understand the importance of this, the third of the Four Horsemen of Marketing™. In the section below, Richard Viguerie explains why.

We've covered positioning and differentiation. How do we now move on to the concept of benefit?

Earlier we saw how Rupert Murdoch privately *positioned* Fox News as a conservative alternative to CNN. Then Murdoch publicly *differentiated* it by featuring Tucker Carlson, Fox & Friends, and so on.

Now, what is the *benefit* of Fox News. Well, if you're a political liberal, you probably don't see much benefit at all in Fox News. But if you're a conservative, you might believe Fox gives you the news you're looking for. You are better informed. You learn things. You get motivated.

In short, you benefit.

So how do we apply the concept of benefit to our nonprofit fundraising and marketing work?

There are challenges when it comes to understanding benefit—chiefly because there are many types of them. For instance, a benefit could be:

- for you personally
- for a family member or friend
- for someone you don't really know, but for whom you have compassion—starving children, the homeless, victims of a natural disaster.
- for an idea, such as your religion (mission work, building a church) or your values (a political candidate who will work to advance your principles)

- for the country, passing/repealing legislation, changing the culture, etc.

The benefit you offer could be as tangible as a free book signed by the author, or a certificate of recognition or membership card, or other promised recognition or status. But benefits can also be less tangible—the satisfaction of knowing that you’re helping someone in need or that you are making a difference for your ideas or values.

You’ve also said that in capturing benefit you have to make sure your vision isn’t too small.

This is an important consideration. Remember the warning in Proverbs 29:18?

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

We can apply that Bible verse this way:

Your Four Horsemen of Marketing™ will fall short—fail—if your benefit is too small, not clear, and not well stated.

The benefit that you offer must be specific, obvious, and clear. In a nutshell, KISS—Keep It Simple, Stupid.

How optimistic are you about what can be achieved?

When we apply these concepts effectively, there is no end to what we can achieve. There are lots of potential funders out there who are ready to invest in good causes. We also know that the grassroots are more engaged than ever. All across this great country of ours, people are hungry for leadership, for a better way forward.

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If you can understand and apply the Four Horsemen of Marketing™ in a strong, compelling manner—the money will flow. And then you'll be able to really make things happen.

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Before moving to the next section, here's a recap on the first three Horsemen.

- 1. Position: This is the foundation upon which your organization rests, the foundation for all of your marketing efforts. Deciding on your position is a private matter of finding your hole in the marketplace. What is it that you're doing that sets you apart from everyone else?*
- 2. Differentiation: Once you've found that hole in the marketplace that fits you, you then publicly differentiate your position from everyone else. Remember: Much of differentiation is visual.*
- 3. Benefit: What do you offer that your customers—in this case, your financial supporters—value?*

Now let's turn to Horseman number four—your brand.

Brand

How are you known, defined, or categorized?

“Oh, I read your book about direct mail... Wait a minute!
You don't have a book about direct mail?”

How important is brand? Richard Viguerie answers that question this way: Brand is the ballgame.

Brand is your position, differentiation, and benefit all rolled into one. It's what makes you singular, one-of-a-kind. It's Seth Godin's Purple Cow—there's no one like you, your product, or your organization.

We're excited to learn more about this Fourth Horseman of Marketing. How should we begin to think about your brand?

Remember that most products are not sold. They are bought. Pause on that truth for a moment: Consumers tend to spend their money on brands they're familiar with, on brands they trust.

Take the case of airlines. Airlines have often developed clearly identifiable brands—brands that make them singular. They know that customers may well choose a particular carrier because of its brand rather than convenience or price.

- Southwest Airlines is known for “cheaper fares” and for its friendly, fun, casual staff. Plus, you get to pick your own seat. Southwest has branded itself as affordable—even if its tickets cost the same or higher than its competitors. Did you know that Southwest carries more U.S. domestic passengers than any other airline?
- With Virgin Atlantic, every class is better, more luxurious than the same class in other airlines. Virgin offers amenities like slippers and comfort kits in coach—and massage therapists and open bars in first class.
- Singapore Airlines? It's luxury, luxury, luxury.
- United, American, and Delta airlines are not brands. They're well-known airlines, but because they don't “own” a category

they're not brands. Most people don't care which of them they fly—they just want to leave and arrive at a certain time.

So how do you know if you or your organization has a brand?

A successful brand occupies a category. I'm a brand—I'm a Purple Cow. My brand is ideological direct mail.

Now, there are lots of categories of direct mail. There's direct mail sales. Direct mail fundraising. Direct mail charitable fundraising. Direct mail ideological fundraising. And direct mail political fundraising. The category I'm most associated with is conservative direct mail fundraising.

Here's an illustration of why your brand is so important.

I can't tell you how many times someone has come up to me and says, "Oh, I read your book about direct mail."

The funny thing is—I've never written a book about direct mail. But I am so strongly associated with direct mail that people associate me with all things direct mail. It's my brand.

Tell us about some other strong brands.

Think about the history of broadcasting in this country. Once upon a time there were the three major television news networks: NBC, ABC, and CBS. Then CNN came along and became the first cable news network.

That was CNN's position (hole in the marketplace), its differentiation, its benefit (24/7 news coverage), and its brand.

As I mentioned earlier, Fox News went on to stake out its own category—cable news for conservatives. CNN also chose to move to the left. But this weakened it in the market because CNN was trying to occupy a category that was already occupied by the liberal news network MSNBC. The lesson? There are perils to changing your brand, abandoning a category you had previously owned, and trying to move into another's position.

You've even said that paper towels can be a brand.

They can. The Scott Paper Company developed the idea of the paper towel—a more sanitary alternative to cloth towels. Brawny is a cheaper version. Viva is a more high-end product.

When I go to my favorite grocery store, Wegmans (which is a brand of its own), I don't have to think for a moment about what paper towels I'm going to buy. I'm a Viva man. That's the category I want. If I buy Viva, I know what I'm going to get.

Think about the first internet businesses that owned categories: Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, etc. Practically overnight, these businesses became brands—and no one is likely to successfully challenge them.

Any closing thoughts about position, differentiation, benefit, and brand?

Learn and apply these four concepts, and it's all downhill with the wind at your back. But if you don't, it's a long and steep uphill climb—and very difficult to succeed.

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When it comes to your nonprofit organization—or even to yourself personally—you have to keep asking the following questions:

- 1. What is your hole in the marketplace? What unique position do you “own” that sets you apart from all others?*
- 2. How do you differentiate from other competitors? What visual imagery, style, tone, or “voice” do you use to make you stand out?*
- 3. What unique and special benefits do you offer to those who might wish to buy from you or donate to you?*
- 4. What brand have you developed and marketed? Do you “own” a category? Is your brand something your supporters can rely on and trust? Do they know that if they contribute to your efforts, you’re going to do your best to advance the values and goals you share with them?*

Continuing to seek answers to these questions can help your nonprofit achieve its goals in an over-communicated world.

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Tagline

You deserve a little extra—a lagniappe

Oh, would some Power give us the gift
To see ourselves as others see us!
It would from many a blunder free us

ROBERT BURNS

We've now covered each of the Four Horsemen of Marketing™: position, differentiation, benefit, and brand. But we've also got a little extra for you—what Richard Viguerie would call “a lagniappe” (lan-yap).

A lagniappe is a bonus, like the thirteenth donut in a baker's dozen. It's a Louisiana Cajun/French term. In many cultures around the world, a merchant might throw in “a little extra” at the time of purchase. A piece of candy, a small toy—a lagniappe.

Viguerie has one for us—your tagline.

What do you mean by a tagline?

Your tagline is one more important but often overlooked element of marketing. A tagline appears under the name of your business or organization. In essence, it's a sub-headline.

Consider this: The names that most businesses or organizations choose are generic. They don't actually describe who they are or what they do.

Adding a tagline can help. But for many organizations that do, the taglines they choose are usually vague or generic, too.

If you just looked at your tagline, would it clearly define your organization—its focus, its philosophical orientation, its nature? If not, you need a new tagline.

Could your tagline work for a nonprofit doing similar work to yours? If so, once again, you need a new tagline.

So this is all about how we are perceived?

Remember, we live in a massively over-communicated world with many thousands of messages bombarding us constantly. Yet it's all too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that others see us the way we see ourselves. We have to focus on how our prospective customers see us—or how long we hold their attention at all.

How much time do you think you have to get a person's attention before your brilliant fundraising copy goes into the circular file or your email is deleted?

It comes down to seconds. That's why your tagline is so important. Your tagline has to say what you or your product does that no one else is doing. And it has to include as much application of the Four Horsemen of Marketing™ as possible.

This must be an important consideration for political candidates.

A political candidate's name alone is not likely to provide a value proposition to prospective voters. The few words in the candidate's tagline may be all that people remember when they vote. Whatever you might feel about Donald Trump, the man knows marketing.

There are few better examples of an effective tagline than *Make America Great Again*. For many years I've worked with a group called the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes. Their tagline is this:

Providing emergency aid to seriously wounded GIs in the war on terror

Now, there are dozens of national veterans' organizations in this country—but the Coalition is the only one that provides emergency aid to seriously wounded GIs in the war on terror.

Simply put, they “own” a category. Their tagline differentiates them from all other national veterans’ organizations.

What goes into a good tagline?

Your tagline is critical to your marketing success. Consider these attributes of an effective tagline:

- It gives you ownership of your category.
- No other organization can say what your tagline says.
- Your tagline makes your value proposition clear.
- An effective tagline includes one or more key parts of your brand.

Many people think taglines need to be short and snappy. That’s not true. The more vague your name, the more you need a very descriptive (and often that means longer) tagline. If people can’t tell what you do from your name, they need to be able to tell from your tagline.

So what is your tagline? Is it delivering for you?

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There you go—that’s your lagniappe from Richard Viguerie. It’s his little extra gift to go along with the Four Horsemen of Marketing™.

Coming up, Viguerie provides some final thoughts, on fundraising don’ts and fundraising do’s.

Fundraising Don'ts

What just might be holding your nonprofit back

There are so many opportunities right now in the nonprofit world for us to GO BIG—to truly make a difference in the lives of others. So, what can you do to grow and increase your effectiveness? Richard Viguerie recommends six specific steps. But first, he identifies six other things that may be holding your nonprofit back.

1. There are very few nonprofit leaders who are entrepreneurs

A key characteristic of entrepreneurs is that they are risk takers. Few nonprofit leaders are risk takers. The truth is, many people are attracted to nonprofits because they aren't comfortable in a hard-charging, aggressive, businesslike environment. However, if the person driving your marketing lacks energy and an entrepreneurial spirit, then very little will happen.

My advice? Don't hang around people who are not ambitious—they'll pull you down. Instead, associate with people who are on the way up, who want to make a difference. Get with those who are trying to climb mountains.

2. Many nonprofits don't have a fully functioning, professional development team

There's no way I would fly in an airplane with a pilot who had the relative skills of the average nonprofit marketer.

The vast majority of those involved in marketing (for causes and candidates that I know) are not performing at a professional level. Most are doing their job by the seat of their pants, their gut, and their instincts.

This lack of professionalism is shocking. Frankly, I've learned very little from the nonprofit world—80 percent of what I've picked up has come from the giants of the business: David Ogilvy, Peter Drucker, Leo Burnett, Claude Hopkins, Al Ries, Jack Trout.

So where should you start with your staff? Insist that they spend 8–10 hours a week (mostly on their own time) studying marketing. If they resist or drag their feet, fire them quickly. Replace them with people with high energy and the desire to learn.

3. Not knowing your donors' lifetime value (LTV)

If you don't know donor lifetime value, you have no basis for determining how much to invest in acquisition. If you decide to conduct an acquisition campaign to significantly increase your donor file, expect a return within 75 days of between 40 and 70 percent of your initial investment. Most successful large businesses invest heavily to achieve significant long-term growth.

Peter Drucker, the premier business consultant of the 20th century, insisted that the number one purpose of a business (or nonprofit) was to acquire a customer (or donor). From the customer/donor flows the profits/contributions that propel the organization to success. The LTV of your existing donors will help you determine how long it should take to recover your investment in finding new donors. I encourage our clients to be prepared to wait about 12–18 months to recover their investment.

More important, I tell clients that 90–95 percent of the value our direct marketing program brings to them is to identify donors who can give much bigger gifts down the road. These are four, five, six, and seven-figure gifts made now and throughout a donor's lifetime, including as bequests.

In other words, in determining the lifetime value of a donor, only about 5 or 10 percent should come from direct marketing. The rest should come from major gifts and bequests developed by your professional development team.

4. Ignoring 95 percent of your donors

Many organizations focus too much on raising high-dollar donations (\$100+). The most successful aggressively seek out the \$1, \$5, \$10, \$25 donors. Why?

A focus on the 5 percent who give \$100+ is the reason most organizations only have 20,000 donors or less. How do you get to 50,000, 100,000, 1,000,000+ donors/supporters?

Direct mail is the third-largest form of advertising (after TV and the internet). So when my company mails billions of postal letters, we're not only finding donors and raising money. We're also educating voters—about the virtues of our beliefs and the dangers of others' beliefs, getting people to become activists, urging them to vote, and so on.

The late John Von Kannon was the longtime head of fundraising for the Heritage Foundation. He liked to share the fact that two-thirds of the \$2 billion+ that Heritage has raised since its founding has come from people whose first contact with the organization was a \$100 or less donation in reply to a postal mailing.

5. Not putting enough resources into acquisition

I don't know any nonprofit that spends enough on acquiring new donors. Once you've determined the lifetime value of your donors, you should spend at least 25 percent of the LTV on acquiring new ones.

A former Heritage Foundation executive recently confided to me what she considers her number one mistake—not to have mailed more acquisition letters. This for an organization with 700,000 donors.

Bear this in mind: Every year about one-fifth of your regular donors drop off—they die, retire on a fixed income, lose interest, experience financial setbacks. If they are not replaced, your income will continue to decrease until your organization becomes irrelevant. On average, about 60–65 percent of those who make a first-time donation to a nonprofit do not make a second one.

This is why you must constantly be acquiring new supporters.

6. Failure to appreciate the power of effective marketing

Peter Drucker famously said, “Business should be primarily focused on marketing and innovation. Everything else is a cost.” Drucker also considered marketing to be the responsibility of the managing leadership within a business, not a separate function delegated to others.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of leaders of organizations with which I'm familiar have delegated marketing to a department—in effect, as a silo separate from the rest of the organization. Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, or Howard Schultz (Starbucks) did not delegate marketing. They led the way.

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Those were Richard Viguerie's six fundraising don'ts. Next we'll see his six fundraising do's.

Fundraising Do's

Specific steps to increase your
effectiveness in a big way

What can you do to grow your nonprofit and truly make a difference in the lives of others? Richard Viguerie highlights six solid recommended actions.

1. Write a plan

My heritage is Cajun. Ask a Cajun chef how to prepare any Cajun dish, and they will all start with the same sentence: “Well, first you make a roux.” My advice for any important project is similar: “First you start with what I call Newt’s Four-Part Plan.”

Beginning in the mid-1970s and for about 10 years, national conservative leaders would gather at my home in McLean, Virginia, for a two-hour breakfast meeting. Sometimes they would be back in the evening for dinner as well—and more strategizing. If there ever was what Hillary Clinton called a “vast right-wing conspiracy,” this was probably it.

Whenever we came up against a problem, Congressman Newt Gingrich would go to the blackboard and write the following words: Vision, Goals, Strategy, and Tactics/Projects. Half an hour later, after we had filled in these four categories, we would have a clear path forward. Before starting any important project, you need to understand where you want to go—where you want to be in 1 year, 5 years, 10 years, 20+ years.

The number one benefit of writing the plan is not to work the plan. That’s important, but it is secondary. The number one benefit is *writing the plan*, because as you write the plan it helps to clarify your thinking.

I do this exercise two or three times a week.

As you write the plan, things will come into focus. You will realize you need to do more of X, less of Y.

Once you've finalized your plan, share it with others. This will put pressure on you to follow through with your plan—and others will want to help you. It's permissible to alter or change the plan, but it's vital to start a new, major undertaking with a written plan.

2. Invest in the acquisition of new supporters/donors/members

You might convince a major donor—or several major donors—to make this investment. You can tell them to think of it as helping you learn to fish rather than giving you a fish. If they give you a fish, then you will be regularly coming back for more. But if you learn how to significantly grow your organization you can raise tens, maybe hundreds, of millions of dollars because of the lifetime value of the new donors.

Invest in quickly growing your small-dollar donor base. According to John Von Kannon, more than two-thirds of Heritage's major gift donors started in their postal direct mail program with a gift of \$100 or less. In other words, the more postal donors an organization has, the more major donors they will likely have.

3. Build a professional development team

Unfortunately, most organizations do not have a professional development department. Or if they do, it's part time or has only a single full-time person—not the 5 or 10+ that it should have.

A successful major gifts program depends on a vibrant, ongoing direct mail program to identify potential new high-dollar donors. Major gift donor development takes years—to create relation-

ships, build trust, and ultimately get the big gifts. But cultivating new prospects is paramount. If you have a development team, you probably should be doubling or tripling its size. If you don't have a development team, start building one immediately.

But don't make the perfect the enemy of the good. If you can't quickly find the right person to head your development department, hire one or more people quickly and get them writing, calling, and meeting with your donors. Meanwhile, you can still be looking for the next John Von Kannon.

4. Raise money for projects

When seeking funding, the lack of a project is often the biggest mistake nonprofits make. The vast majority of fundraising letters that I see (postal and email) are what I call cuss letters—bad things are happening, therefore send me money.

Prospective donors want to know how you're going to solve the problem.

Donors are smart. They can tell you have great compassion and concern about problem X, but they also know you don't have a solution. They may send you a token gift—the serious money they send to those who have a serious plan to solve problem X.

This is true whether you're asking for \$25 or \$1,000,000.

Also, be sure to give your project a strong marketing name.

5. Read, read, study, study

For the past 58 years, I have spent two to three hours a day, six days a week studying marketing.

I strongly recommend throwing yourself into a major study of marketing. If you do, within five years you can be in the top 3–4 percent of nonprofit marketers. In fact, you’ll find there won’t be a lot of competition until you get to the best 10–15 percent.

You should also join different professional groups—some focused on business, such as the Young Presidents’ Organization, Strategic Coach, or The CEO Clubs, and some with a marketing focus.

6. Find several mentors

I was fortunate to have four giants as mentors. If you want someone to mentor you, convince them you are worth their time. It’s best to have both a marketing mentor and a business mentor.

We all can benefit from mentors. As Sir Isaac Newton put it, “If I’ve seen further than others, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.”

Further Reading

Richard V. Benson, *Secrets of Successful Direct Mail*
(Passport Books, 1991)

Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*
(Harper Business, 2006)

Robert B. Cialdini, *Pre-Suasion: A Revolutionary Way to
Influence and Persuade*
(Simon and Schuster, 2016)

William Cohen, *Drucker on Marketing*
(McGraw-Hill Education, 2012)

Claude C. Hopkins, *Scientific Advertising*
(CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010)

Al Ries and Laura Ries, *The Origin of Brands*
(HarperCollins, 2009)

Al Ries and Jack Trout, *The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing*
(HarperCollins, 2009)

Al Ries and Jack Trout, *Positioning*
(McGraw-Hill Education, 2001)

Mal Warwick, *Revolution in the Mailbox*
(Jossey-Bass, 2004)

Not on Kevin Gentry's weekly Fundraising Tips email list? If you'd like to receive more Tips such as these, you can email him at kgentry@standtogether.org to be added to his distribution list.

