

Immediate Release 25/10/06...

NEW REPORT SAYS CHARITIES NEED “PUB FACTS” & “DRIZZLED MESSAGES” TO WIN SUPPORTERS OVER

nfpSynergy/ImpACT report and guide helps charities dispel debilitating stakeholder misperceptions

Not for profit think tank nfpSynergy has teamed up with The ImpACT Coalition to produce a free, short, practical report and guide that will empower charities to formulate and communicate simple messages – including pithy “pub facts” – needed to dispel a range of debilitating misperceptions their stakeholders may have, both about themselves and the wider third sector.

“Getting the Message Across”:

1. Explains how and why the public, donors, volunteers and other stakeholders often misunderstand and adversely stereotype charities.
2. Identifies six generic messages that all charities need to get across to their own stakeholders in order to address such key gaps in understanding.
3. Advises six strategies that can be employed for “packaging” these, and more specific, messages – including the use of pithy wordbyte “pub facts”
4. Suggests a whole range of practical tactics for delivering these well “packaged” messages on a sustained, consistent, low-level “drizzle” basis.

“GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS”: GUIDE OVERVIEW

(1) BACKGROUND

The public holds a variety of stereotypes in their heads about modern charities and how they work, chiefly around (a) how money is raised, (b) how money is spent and (c) whether charities have an impact; as well as (d) a belief that charities are still amateurish. **Just two examples, from nfpSynergy’s own research:**

- The public think less goes to the cause than actually does. When asked to estimate the actual amount of each donation that goes to beneficiaries, the average guesstimate is 47p in each £1. The reality is closer to 65p.
- The public harbour misperceptions about whether some charity staff are paid or not. Half (49%) incorrectly think presidents are paid. The majority (55%) incorrectly think fundraisers are unpaid. Only 11% think trustees are definitely unpaid.

Such stereotypes are usually left undisturbed because charities haven’t prioritised addressing these gaps in understanding. However this means **the public continues to believe things like:** “charities aren’t effective”, “CEOs get paid too much”, “fundraising isn’t effective”, “admin costs are too high” and “trustees are paid”.

Individual charities can’t tackle the big picture for the sector as a whole - that’s why they should join The ImpACT Coalition; **but they can get the message across to their own stakeholders** - especially staff, volunteers, supporters and clients. Hence, this guide...

(2) SIX GENERIC MESSAGES, TO COMFORT & INSPIRE

There are **six generic messages that charities can and must get across far better, in order to address some of the concerns stakeholders have (ie to comfort) and to reinforce more positive beliefs (ie to inspire):**

- Charities are effective and do a great job
- To raise (more) money, charities have to spend money
- Charities use donations carefully and wisely
- Charities are highly regulated and adhere to a range of strict standards
- Charities work together
- Charities need the public's donations because they really do make a difference

Note: It is not expected that the above wordings are used verbatim, but rather that charities get the messages across in other ways, most likely specific to themselves...

(3) SIX WAYS TO “PACKAGE” MESSAGES

There are **several ways in which charities can best package such messages – both generic and tailored to their own organization** - in order to help get them across, including:

- Pledges
- Tangible successes
- Testimonials
- Quartiles, percentiles and surveys
- Wordbite “pub facts”
- Confiding in stakeholders

(4) SOME TACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO CONVEY “PACKAGED” MESSAGES

Having decided on the key messages, and how best to “package” them, the **key to success is to consistently, ubiquitously and unrelentingly “drizzle”** (a little everywhere rather than a lot all at once) them in every communications channel your organisation has, including:

- On every piece of corporate stationery including envelopes, letterheads, donation forms, invoices, payslips, business cards, cheques and Christmas cards
- On every page of the website (especially the home page) and email tail signatures
- Woven into every press release; and slipped into every radio & TV interview
- By training every staff member and volunteer to use the messages in conversation

The ImpACT Coalition’s Chair, Alan Gosschalk, said:

“This free guide arose out of the work that nfpSynergy has been doing on charity branding and public understanding of how modern charities work, and the work that The ImpACT Coalition has been doing on trying to change the way that charities are seen by their key stakeholders. Charities of all sizes will benefit greatly from reading it.”

nfpSynergy’s Driver of Ideas, Joe Saxton, said:

“The gap between how 21st Century charities work and how the public *think* they work is huge. An individual charity can help bridge this debilitating gap at a sector-wide level by joining The ImpACT Coalition. Additionally, it can better inform its own stakeholders, directly; something this new short, easy-to-follow guide - brimming with practical examples – will empower it to do.”

A full copy of the nfpSynergy/ImpACT guide, “Getting the Message Across”, is downloadable from: www.nfpsynergy.net

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MEDIA INTERVIEWS:

To interview either nfpSynergy’s Joe Saxton or The ImpACT Coalition’s Alan Gosschalk about “Getting the Message Across”, please contact:

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Notes to editors:

- **nfpSynergy**

nfpSynergy (www.nfpsynergy.net) is the UK's *only* think-tank and research consultancy dedicated to the charity sector and not for profit issues. It provides ideas, insights and information to help voluntary and community organisations thrive in an ever-changing world. Regularly harvesting the social and charity-related views of public and parliament, media and business - not to mention not for profit organisations themselves - nfpSynergy has a vast and ever-growing knowledge pool from which to extract and deliver insights.

- **The ImpACT Coalition**

The ImpACT (Improving Accountability, Clarity and Transparency) Coalition (www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/impact/) was launched in the summer of 2005 by a group of leading fundraising charities (supported by several infrastructure bodies) who want to work together to improve public trust and confidence in the charitable sector and the way it works. Working individually and together, they are committed to enhancing the public's understanding of the sector through evidence and openness. The Coalition has grown rapidly to include over 70 leading charities and trade bodies, including most of the top 50 fundraising charities in the UK.