



Do Diligence Sounding Board Report

To: Interested Parties

From: Eric Eckl, Water Words That Work, LLC

Re: Review of a Fundraising Webpage for Charity:Water

Date: 02/10/2010

Water Words That Work, LLC is preparing to launch a new market research service -- tentatively titled the "Do Diligence Sounding Board" -- for nature protection and pollution control organizations to use to evaluate marketing materials and messages.

The purpose of this forthcoming service is to allow you to **quickly** and **affordably** pre-test materials *before* they are final -- giving you an opportunity to improve your piece before you release it into the wild. Once the service launches, Water Words That Work, LLC will provide DDSB feedback to our clients in complete confidence.

As part of our field trials for this service, we tested 8 fundraising webpages and emails from nonprofit organizations seeking financial support for water-related work.

This report summarizes what two dozen "everyday citizens have to say about the "Donate" page on Charity:Water's website:

<http://www.charitywater.org/donate/>

The Do Diligence Sounding Board provides feedback that you can use to sharpen your fundraising message -- finding your way to the words and pictures that successfully evoke a charitable response. However, favorable feedback does not guarantee fundraising success, and negative feedback does not guarantee failure, for the following reasons:

- This report provides insight into the *first impression* that your fundraising message makes. Those who already have an impression of your organization already may react differently.
- You are *competing* for donors' generosity against other good causes, as well as the events that occur in their lives and in the world.
- A powerful message is only one part of a fundraising effort. Successful fundraising also requires regular effort, enough suitable prospects, regular effort, a good reputation, regular effort, and a good system for delivering your message and processing the gifts.

By the Numbers

Of the 8 pieces tested, this webpage performed best overall. It scored well above the average on nearly every criteria.

Statement	1-Strongly Disagree	2-Somewhat Disagree	3-Somewhat Agree	4-Strongly Agree	Average for this Piece	Average for similar pieces
This group is trying to solve a problem that is important to society	0	0	4	19	3.83	3.45
This group is trying to solve a problem that has affected me or someone I care about	6	7	4	6	2.43	2.46
This organization will use donations to help end the suffering of people or animals	0	1	5	17	3.70	3.03
This organization will use donations to correct some kind of injustice	1	7	8	7	2.91	2.63
This organization will use donations to help children	0	1	5	17	3.70	2.34
The group has a clear goal that it is raising money to achieve	0	0	4	19	3.83	3.32

I understand how the organization will use the donations it receives	0	0	12	11	3.48	2.83
I am confident that this group can make a difference if it reaches its goal	0	1	10	12	3.48	2.95
I am confident that others are supporting the group's work	0	1	12	9	3.30	3.06
If the group doesn't reach its goal soon, it may be too late	0	9	9	5	2.83	2.59
Overall					3.35	2.86

Key Findings

Question	Yes	No
Does the work of this organization fit your own personal definition of a "good cause?"	23	1

Question: "Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question:"

They answered like this:

- "My personal definition of a good cause is some effort that a community values and is able to keep, I grew up in a very poor (dirt floor, no outhouses, etc.) isolated rural community and came back here to raise my family. I saw what tended to work to help and what made people even more wretched -- often at great expense and complication. For the effort to work the people in the community had to feel control and ownership of it. One of the first jobs I had was door to door sales, and it was not uncommon for someone to be watching tv and buy china, over a dirt floor and with

wretched pots and pans. People understood the need for dishes, but not a deep water well. Beaver fever was common".

- "Everyone needs water that's drinkable. It's also important for showers and washing dishes/clothes".
- "I consider the ability to obtain fresh and clean drinking water a basic need/right"
- "It looks like they are committed, the %100 thing is very appealing, and clean drinking water is a very important need".
- "Getting clean water to people is always worth while".
- "They help prevent outbreaks of fatal diseases such as hepatitis and typhoid, by providing a source of clean water for the people".
- "Well one of the main building blocks of any society is fresh clean drinking water and therefore they are building stronger societies".
- "All peoples deserve clean drinking water, even the least among us".
- "It certainly seems like a worth-while cause, the fact that millions and millions of people do not have pure drinking water is a sad truth of the world".
- "Water is essential for life".
- "This is something that is very important because it is helping make a better life for others"
- "I feel strongly about making sure everyone has access to food, water, clothing, etc".
- "Providing clean water to people with no access to clean water is a noble cause".
- "Helping people out in the third world. Water is pretty basic and I gather it can be pretty scarce in some places. Much more so than computers or micro-finance kind of stuff (not that those are bad) I think this is a pretty basic need, easy to relate to, easy to see why the cause is important".
- "It is critical that developing countries have access to clean and safe water, because other efforts to help them can be defeated by the water borne illnesses which can come from unsafe drinking water".
- "Clean water is more than just "nice to drink." Using clean water to mix formula reduces the spread of Aids by HIV-positive mothers through their breastmilk, it reduces the spread of water-borne diseases".
- "Water is something alot of us use without any thought of how important it really is. This organization helps us to give something we are all so wasteful of. \$20 that we will spend on a night to dinner will go to give someone water for a whole year".
- "Water is something people cannot live without. They are not only providing water, but a well to these people".
- "Since water is an essential nutrient, I believe this cause to be a "good" one since this organization is helping to provide for the less fortunate".
- "Lack of access to clean drinking water is associated with massive death and disease worldwide. It also disrupts efforts to build educational infrastructures and promote economic development".
- "They are a good cause because they go to places of great need and provide basic services that provide an immediate improvement to the quality of life in the areas they are helping".
- "There are a lot of people who need clean water to drink from, and this charity shows the compassion needed to get water for them".
- "Clean drinking water is the first step to good health and hygiene. If such a simple thing such as clean water is so hard to find, then how could one expect a nation to

develop and get out of poverty".

Their Initial Reaction

Question: "Pick one word that summarizes the feeling this piece evokes in you:"

They answered:

- "serious flaws in application"
- "helpful"
- "positive"
- "hope"
- "worthwhile"
- "hope"
- "Sad"
- "righteous"
- "Heart-warming"
- "Emotional"
- "charitable"
- "Determined"
- "duty"
- "interest"
- "hopefulness"
- "hopeful"
- "Sadness"
- "caring"
- "Need"
- "Impressed"
- "empathy"
- "moving"
- "Goodwill"

Your Message in Their Words, Part I

Question: "In your own words, please describe the work of this organization:"

They answered like this:

- "This organization is intended to give the impression that children will get clean water to drink".
- "To provide clean, healthy, safe drinking water".
- "The organization looks to raise money to build wells in less developed countries to provide fresh and clean drinking water for people".
- "CharityWater Builds wells in places where water is scarce, through donations and merchandising".
- "Building wells".
- "This organization works to build clean water sources and wastewater systems in third world countries".
- "This organization provides water by drilling wells or any other means to places that are destitute of fresh ground water"
- "Wells for impoverished people in foreign countries".

- "The organization works hard to provide clean drinking water for those who don't have it readily available. Specifically developing nations. You can donate and help make a difference today through the webpage".
- "They build wells and other fresh water applications for people that are destitute".
- "giving clean water to those in other countries that need it"
- "Provide clean water to under-developed countries".
- "Building wells to provide fresh drinking water".
- "The accept donations to try to find and develop fresh water resources in developing nations. It looks like they also sell some merchandise, hopefully with the proceeds going to benefit the effort".
- "This organization uses donations to dig wells to provide clean water in developing countries".
- "This organizations provides clean well water".
- "This charity is here to give water to developing nations in need".
- "An organization that is working on providing water to those in need".
- "This organization is seeking to bring fresh water to remote areas of the wilderness where below average conditions are impeding the quality of life".
- "Charity: Water provides clean freshwater facilities in developing countries".
- "This organization provides safe drinking water in places where they do not have a good source of drinking water by providing wells. They also provide sanitary latrines as well".
- "It is an organization to get clean water for people. You can donate money, or help towards digging a well".
- "This group uses donated money to build freshwater drinking wells in villages and places where it is inaccessible".

Your Message in Their Words, Part II

Question: "In your own words, please describe the people or animals this group is trying to help?"

They answered like this:

- "rural poor people not unlike those I grew up with deep in mountain poverty".
- "It is trying to help people and animals who don't have clean drinking water".
- "people in other countries, who do not have access to clean fresh water"
- "Children and families in places where water is hard to get, or where existing water is contaminated by disease".
- "All people who are in poverty and need clean water".
- "The people and animals in underdeveloped nations, such as those in Africa, would benefit from this charity".
- "It is trying to help people that have no ample water supply on which to build a community on".
- "Impoverish people with no access to clean drinking water".
- "Those impoverished and not born into the best socio-economic lifestyle. Clearly the people suffering are just like anybody else and need this help".
- "Destitute communities that need water".
- "People that don't have access to clean drinking water"
- "Everyone who is drinking dirty water, or using it for cooking, cleaning, animals,etc".

- "People with no access to clean water".
- "It looks like it's trying to help people in the developing world with little access to water. I imagine that would be either because they live in climates with restricted freshwater access (because of political or environmental issues), probably outside urban areas".
- "Those group is trying to help people in developing countries who don't have access to clean, safe water".
- "Clean water is necessary to sustain life and health for all living things".
- "This will help people of all ages in a different part of the world some of us our blind to see. The animals the live there are affected as well. This will make a huge difference for everyone. Including yourself for making a difference".
- "The group is trying to help needy people who have no water or source of water".
- "I believe that monies from this program will be used in the remote parts of the world, such as Africa. Third world countries are often the poorest and most ineffective countries when it comes to utilities and infrastructure".
- "People in poor countries or regions will be helped by having access to fresh drinking water and effective plumbing facilities".
- "They are working with third world nations that do not have the basic conveniences such as safe drinking water, sewer systems, or other modern developments".
- "people who are in countries who need clean water"
- "This group is trying to help the children and people of underdeveloped nations who do not have any luxuries at all and are simply looking for basic essentials".

Shop Talk vs. Plain English

Question: "Imagine that your friends, coworkers, or family member are looking at the piece themselves. If there are any words or phrases that might be difficult for them, please share them below:"

They answered like this:

- "no words are difficult"
- " I think they'd understand everything".
- "the paypal only feature"
- "I feel the site is pretty self-explanatory".
- "None"
- "Non words or phrases per se but the font is really small and hard to read. If it wasn't black on white it would probably be totally illegible. My mom would probably donate to this cause, but I doubt that she could read the type on the ad".
- "This all seemed pretty straightforward to me".
- "none"
- "The part that reads "profit supports the behind the scenes running of charity"
- "There is nothing on this website that was difficult to understand. They covered all objections".
- "None really. This is pretty easy to understand".
- "There really aren't any words or phrases that are particular difficult. They don't talk about death or disease or the causes of the trying circumstances of the people they are helping".

Strengths of the Piece

Question: " In your opinion, what is the strongest or most compelling thing about this piece?"

They answered like this:

- "the smiling children holding sparkling glasses of water"
- "The importance in providing clean water".
- "the fact that we all need clean water"
- "It looks like the charity is well thought out and well connected, the %100 is very appealing".
- "That clean water is important to all people, especially the most needy among us".
- "The pictures of the children help invoke compassion from the viewer".
- "The images show people who need the service that they are providing. Goes with the old saying a picture is worth a 1000 words".
- "That everyone deserves help".
- "The actual photographs of the people make it 'hit home' more".
- "The photos are compelling because they show children in need".
- "That it breaks down exactly how much water my donation will provide and gives several options"
- "The picture of the well with the kids".
- "Images of people great-full to have water".
- "The information design is great. The pictures are compelling, the colors are bold, the writing is very clear and straightforward. This is a very good ad. The only thing that I see as a flaw is the size of the font".
- "Stating that 100% of donations go directly to digging wells to provide water and citing statistics about how much it costs to achieve certain goals".
- "This is one of the most effective campaigns I've ever seen. Tells a story. Talks about charitable status and % of funds going to projects (and explains how admin. costs are covered). Clear, graphic, compelling".
- "You know where your money goes. Also the bracelets & e-cards to involve others and get the word out there!"
- "That they have already made many wells in that area".
- "The pictures help bring the idea home that people need this service. The joy on their faces makes this seem worthwhile".
- "The emphases on efficiency and on the significance of even small donations were impressive. The graphic design of the piece was sleek and understated".
- "The most compelling thing about this piece are the pictures. The pictures of the kids with water make you want to help. Also the fact that \$20 can provide clean water for one person for 20 years is pretty compelling".
- "showing the happiness of the children when they have clean water from a well"
- "The facts it states about how much donations can truly effect someone. For example that \$20 can provide someone with clean drinking water for 20 years".

Weaknesses of the Piece

Question: " In your opinion, what is the weakest thing about this piece?"

They answered like this:

- "I know about intestinal parasites from the inside out. I know that it's easy to get a child to take a drink of water, but if women who raise children don't understand the need, the utility won't be maintained. As a young adult and again after a bad ice storm I worked to maintain outhouses for people who didn't have them, worked to explain to people who had powers of persuasion why latrines were needed, and what pure wells did for a family, explained about anemia and the rest. It's not just the availability of water it's the choice of the community to use the water. I can't tell you how many times we dealt with people who were collecting contaminated spring water because they liked the taste and would not drink the tap water. It's a good idea, but it hits a lot of the problems I saw back when I was a child in the Adirondacks".
- "Not sure"
- "only accept donation through paypal for the monthly donations"
- "no visible and easy way to donate small amounts (under \$20) immediately, like through text or paypal".
- "Nothing weak".
- "I understand the connection between the lack of clean water and disease. However, I think the piece needs to tell the reader outright what the risks are from dirty water, especially Americans, who have probably never experienced a typhoid outbreak".
- "there is no header that is strong on the webpage which would suggest that its not a strong organization. No Recognizable logo or at least professionally looking logo"
- "Nothing weak as evident".
- "I find nothing weak about it".
- "overall lack of a professionalism in there website. Makes you wonder how large this organization is".
- "doesn't give examples of exact locations"
- "The font is too small!!"
- "No explanation of what happens when people don't have access to clean water".
- "Again, the ad is very good but the font is too small".
- "This sounds very good, like a really good cause, but when it claims that \$20 will give a person clean water for 20 years, then later states that \$20 per month will do that, which one is correct? I am assuming that \$20 per month would be more accurate".
- "I suspect my one complaint might have been covered on another page. It doesn't reall talk about the deep, deep problems that lack of clean water causes:
 1. long time spent walking to get water, often by children, which affects schooling
 2. diseases carried by dirty water
 3. how AIDS transmission to children is linked to the choice between infected breastmilk and using dirty water to mix formula".
- "Could have explained a little more of how badly water is needed in these areas".
- "They needed more statistics on how many people they are helping. However, everything else was great".
- "I suggest more pictures of what is being done to help this cause. Show a picture or two of actual construction of a well. Show people that there money is actually being used".
- "There was no mention of the scope of the problem; how many people need clean water and don't have it, or have to travel a long distance to get it? There was no

mention of how many people and communities this organization has already helped. A good track record builds confidence and motivation".

- "The least compelling part of the piece is that there is a lack of information about where this work is done and about how bad the circumstances of the people are".
- "the straight lines"
- "This piece does not make me feel like this is an urgent issue. While it would be nice to help others, it seems as though this cause does not need the money as bad as others due to the general short wordings and lack of persuasive facts".

About the Do Diligence Sounding Board

Just whose opinions are these, anyway? The "Do Diligence Sounding Board" is a standing body of U.S. residents who provide feedback on marketing materials and perform related tasks in return for payment.

A major corporation recruits the board members, maintains the system for securing their feedback, and handles the financial transactions. Water Words That Work, LLC pays to access to this service, as do other marketing firms.

The feedback that you receive from the sounding board is different from feedback you receive from your peers, for three reasons:

- The sounding board members who review your materials approach them like actual everyday citizen "in the wild." They are not professionals in the field and have not participated in the drafting of the materials.
- The sounding board members have never met you, and will provide their feedback anonymously. Their feedback will not be influenced by their personal relationship with you.
- The sounding board more closely approximates the demographic makeup (especially race and education) of the U.S. "public" than the staff and board of most nature protection and pollution control organizations.

Demographic Trait	Environmental Professionals	Do Diligence Sounding Board	Traditional Telephone Poll, U.S. Sample	Actual U.S. (Census)
4 Year College Degree	95% or higher	~50%	~40%	24%
White/Caucasian	95% or higher	~80%	~80%	79%

All sounding board answers are verbatim -- including spelling and typographic errors.

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P.O. Box 2182, Falls Church, VA 22042 703.635.4380 <http://waterwordsthatwork.com>

