



# Why you should stop f\*\*\*ing about with your logo and stick to fundraising instead

Critical fundraising lecture #1

🕒 Brand management

**Mark Phillips**

June 2022

**bluefrog**  
FUNDRAISING

**ROGARE**  
THE FUNDRAISING THINK TANK

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# About the Critical Fundraising Lectures

Mike Brearley is England's greatest ever cricket captain.<sup>1</sup> He's also a polymath. He studied classical and moral sciences at Cambridge, and following his retirement from professional sport, he became a psychoanalyst and served as president of the British Psychoanalytical Society from 2008-10.

As one of cricket's leading thinkers – you could call him a philosopher of cricket – Brearley delivered the annual Spirit of Cricket Lecture in 2019.<sup>2</sup> This lecture is one person, talking, sometimes reading from notes, for 45 minutes. There are no slides, no video clips, no images...and no 'performance'. It goes against the grain of what we expect from presentations. Other lecture series take a similar approach – the BBC's Reith lectures,<sup>3</sup> for example, or the Royal Academy talks and lectures.<sup>4</sup>

In all these lecture series, it is the ideas that have centre stage. When the ideas are good, you don't need a 'performance' to deliver them; the ideas present themselves. In fact, there is no bells and whistles style presentation to distract from the ideas: in the absence of visual effects, you are forced to concentrate on what the speaker is actually saying.

It has been an aspiration of mine to instigate a similar lecture series for fundraising that would showcase new thinking, getting away from the hustle and bustle of the conference circuit by carving a space out of our busy agendas that is devoted to contemplating new ideas and thinking way the Spirit of Cricket lecture is.

In May 2022, Rogare co-hosted an event with Kingston University Business School at their campus in south-west London, the first time we had got people in a room since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. It

seemed the perfect opportunity to kick off the Critical Fundraising Lecture series.

Bluefrog Fundraising is Rogare's longest standing Associate Member, having been with us 2014. So I asked Mark Phillips if he would deliver the inaugural Critical Fundraising Lecture to close the Kingston University event. I asked Mark if he would talk about an issue that I knew he was passionate about – the wisdom and appropriateness of some charity rebrands – and I suggested the deliberately-provocative title.

The lecture was recorded but, alas, the quality was not quite good enough to share (though no fault of our excellent IT support on the day). So Mark has re-recorded the lecture. He has also taken the opportunity to add to the original lecture to respond to some questions made during the Q&A session (which the recording failed to pick up).

This paper contains the text of Mark's lecture. And if you want to watch the lecture, you can view it here: <https://bit.ly/cfr-lecture-mark-phillips>.

I would like to make this at least an annual event and will be exploring with Rogare's network ways we can stage this lecture series regularly and what topics we could include. If anyone has a topic for a Critical Fundraising Lecture they would like to deliver, please drop me an email or DM me on LinkedIn.

Thank you, Mark, for taking on the challenge of this inaugural Critical Fundraising lecture. I hope you enjoy the case he presents. 🍷

**Ian MacQuillin**

Director

Rogare – The Fundraising Think Tank.

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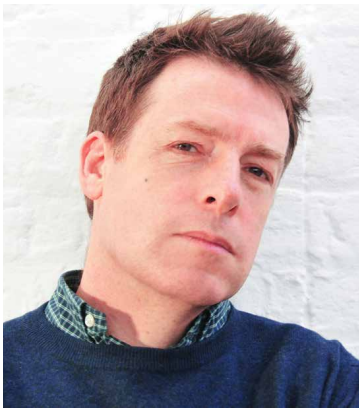
1 According to a San Francisco-based sports website. <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2496551-ranking-englands-12-greatest-test-captains>.

2 If you are interested, you can watch it here – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5Evuejg\\_Pg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5Evuejg_Pg).

3 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00729d9>.

4 <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/events/tag/talks>.

# Why you should stop f\*\*\*ing about with your logo and stick to fundraising instead



Mark Phillips  
General secretary  
Bluefrog Fundraising

One of the things that has always bugged me about fundraising is the sense that some people in our sector feel that we aren't as competent as the commercial world. That if we want to be more successful – and raise more money – we need to adopt their approaches and practices.

Of course, there are plenty of ideas that we can borrow, but the fact is that when we fundraisers do take a peek through the window of the commercial world, it's often the shiny ball of advertising, of branding, of creativity, that catches our eye and mesmerises us to the point that we forget about what we might need; and instead we start dreaming of getting our hands on a sparkling, cutting edge, new brand – or an 'award winning' advertising campaign.

After all, we don't want to miss-out, do we?

Suitably entranced, we can easily forget the reasons why fundraising actually works, and that's connecting people with a cause that they care about. After all, these commercial people know their stuff. Perhaps they know more than us about fundraising too? Success will surely follow if we place our faith in the brave new world of branding, new product development or the fourth – or is it the fifth? – generation of advertising.

And what's the risk? The price of failure isn't that high, is it? The cost of the idea and perhaps, if we are being honest, the time and the missed opportunity of what we could have done instead?

But even then, we can console ourselves that we will have learned through our mistakes, and we can then return to the search – with a greater level of insight and expertise – for the mythical great new idea that has alluded all who came before us. And let's not forget about the fun we might have on the way either.

But there is a risk. And quite a significant one at that. Maybe

Watch Mark Phillips present this lecture here:

<https://bit.ly/cfr-lecture-mark-phillips>

there is more to be lost by looking to the commercial world for inspiration than sticking to what we know? And maybe we are poorer as a sector for it?

So let's pull out the history books, take a dip into the archives and journey back in time to see what happened when we did place our trust in the ideas of commercial ad men and women, so we can work out if we are better off as a result.

In Britain of the 1950s, fundraising was worthy, if not particularly exciting. Campaigns reflected the people who ran them. Fundraisers were often former army officer types or closely associated with the church. They had lived through the war and the years of austerity. They weren't too bad at the job as they stuck to producing appeals for people not too dissimilar to themselves.

It was the same for advertising. Agencies were run by people of the same stock. Their work might have been a little patronising and, maybe, dull – more like the civil service than creativity unleashed.

### **But change was coming.**

By the early sixties, British creative industries, particularly music and fashion, were famously having their revolution led by young, exciting talent.

Advertisers served by polite agencies felt left behind in this new market. They wanted to be part of this new world – cool, young and creative. And they had the tools to do it. The advent of colour TV and the new print technology that introduced the Sunday colour supplements brought a new kind of glossy consumerism into houses everywhere – and it was perfect ground to test out new ideas.

As a result, instead of advertising interrupting the TV show you were watching or the article you were reading, it suddenly started

6 *“In Britain of the 1950s, fundraising was worthy, if not particularly exciting. Campaigns reflected the people who ran them. Fundraisers were often former army officer types or closely associated with the church. They had lived through the war and the years of austerity. They weren't too bad at the job as they stuck to producing appeals for people not too dissimilar to themselves.”*

to be as interesting and as dominant as the shows and features themselves. The new generation of advertisers understood that commercials actually had to grab viewers' attention and interest them as much, maybe even more, than the programme.

And advertising in those days was incredibly powerful. There was a saying that you could reach the entire population of the country with two ads: one in *Coronation Street* and then another in *News at Ten*. You ran them tonight and there would be queues in the shops tomorrow morning.

In a few short years, British advertising changed from a dull marketing tool to being a central part of the national popular culture where viewers actually wanted more.

Advertising was at the heart of things.

And the ad agencies started to use the same techniques they used to sell FMCGs to market themselves as key movers and shakers in 1970s Britain.

They felt they could do more than sell; they could shape public opinion. The teams behind the ads started to brand themselves as social engineers.

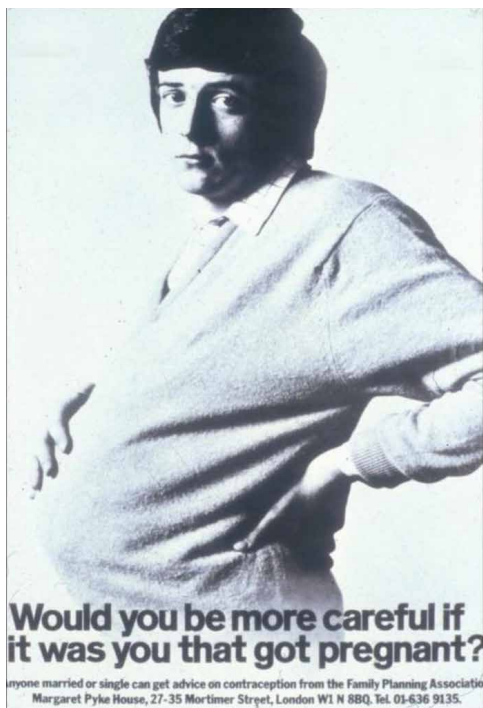
So advertising started to move beyond selling cereals and shoe polish. Instead the focus moved on to far more ambitious projects like changing attitudes and behaviour.

This was certainly the case with a start-up agency called Cramer Saatchi, which eventually grew into the very large, Saatchi and Saatchi. When the agency opened its doors in 1968 it was at the height of the sexual revolution. The summer of Love was just around the corner.

And what follows a summer of love? A winter of pregnancies.

This wasn't something that was being ignored by the media. Or the government. The Department of Health were looking for an agency to help promote a campaign aimed at promoting the use of contraceptives amongst young people. Cranmer Saatchi got the job.

Their idea was the Pregnant Man.





By any measure, It's a great ad. The image of a pregnant man was, for its time, pretty extraordinary . And the headline...

"Wouldn't you be more careful if it was you that got pregnant?"

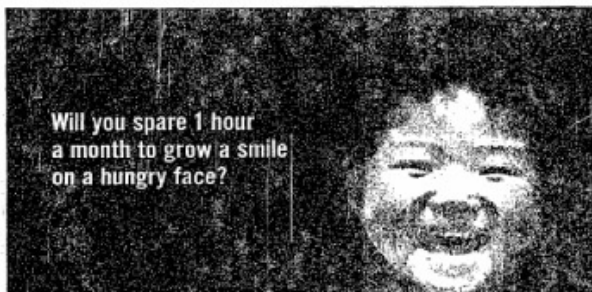
...was very provocative.

The campaign caught the public imagination. And as a result, it made the name Saatchi one of the most famous in the country. As Charles Saatchi said at the time: "When you have a small client, you do work that is controversial and you gain an enormous amount of free publicity."

And advertising accounts flowed towards them.

Other agencies wanted to copy them. And, of course, **charities were fertile ground for controversial work.**

And if we visit the advertising archives, we see that over the course of a few years charity advertising went from this sort of thing...



Not money. Guardian readers already give generously to Oxfam. We need a little of your time. This is a request to find a few friends, colleagues or neighbours who will give a regular 2/6 a month for Oxfam's constructive work (and we bet you have a few friends who wouldn't miss half-a-crown!). It needs less than an hour a month. Not much to ask, is it?

<p>Yorkshire railway scene Vincent Cook collects from his train. He says: "When I look at those poor refugees, especially the children, and what I hear, I want my money."</p>	<p>John Riddell of Air France, who collects at London Airport, has found one hunger in the 'Fat East'. "Not even I could feel this way. I think we all really know how hungry we are."</p>	<p>Mrs. Paula Munoz, 46 and suffering from arthritis, collects from the 'Fat East'. "I think we are very happy to help. I've received not a bad response, but I think it is an ever-longer war."</p>
<p><b>OXFAM, PLEDGED GIFTS</b></p> <p>Fill in and send quickly To: Juan Chapman - OXFAM - 274 Bedford Rd - Oxford Yes, I'd like to help. Please send me details (without charge) of how I can do a 2/6 a month collection.</p> <p>NAME: _____ ADDRESS: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> "Thank you!" <input type="checkbox"/> Tick for copy of Annual Report</p>		
<p><b>I read in 50</b></p> <p>Already 100,000 people help. Over 20,000 volunteers call for their help every month and each person gets an interesting information sheet showing how the money is used. Yet 49 out of every 50 have no collection. And even fewer offices and factories, which is a pity for every road and every poor person who could be done. That's why we need help... just for an hour.</p>		

## A day in the Christmas of Major Harris.



**2pm**  
Salvation Army Hall  
"Major Harris there's 100 people waiting down to their Christmas dinner. Imagine that, Major Harris, 100 people."

**3pm**  
Children's Ward, Barns Hospital  
"Oh, who's got to bring a toy in a bag? It's a pity you're not here."

**3.30pm**  
Home Call  
"So your child's not coming home today. But he'll be home soon. Now look we've got a little present for you from Father Christmas."

**5pm**  
G.L.C. Children's Home  
"What did Father Christmas bring you all?"

**6pm**  
Salvation Army Hall  
"You've got the whole of New Year's Eve to get it all done."

**6.40pm**  
Salvation Army Hall  
"Now who's going to help me out the cake?"

**8pm**  
Salvation Army Hall  
"My boy is going to be a soldier. It's a long way to Tipperary."  
And then to Mr. Harris who has to go to play grand piano in an orchestra."

**10pm**  
Salvation Army Hall  
"Goodnight, ladies. Goodnight Miss Philman."

**12.00**  
Home Call  
"Look it's very cold. Don't sleep in that room but tonight. Come with us and we'll find somewhere for you to stay."

**For God's sake, care.**  
I want to help make Christmas Christmas for everyone. Here's my donation: £  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
C.I.

Send Cheques, P.O.'s payable to The Salvation Army.  
**SALVATION ARMY**  
171 Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4P 4EP.

**7.30am**  
Christmas Morning  
"Happy Christmas, Miss Philman. Happy Christmas! Will you come and spend Christmas with us?"  
"Well Mr. Harris I was going to write for a booklet, but I haven't got time to write."

**9am**  
Home Call  
"Happy Christmas!"  
"Go away Sally Army, I haven't time!"

**10.30am**  
Salvation Army Hall  
"Let's have a sing-song and we'll sing some songs when we were kids."

**11am**  
Children's Ward, St. Mary's Hospital  
"Listen, I'll tell you a Christmas story."

**11.30am**  
Salvation Army Hall  
"Major Harris this is like Christmas when I was a little girl with my family."

**12.00**  
Home Call  
"Look, here's a card for you. We'll find it up with Christmas stuff. I can't stop you tonight, but do look into the food will you? Will you please?"

**1pm**  
Home Call  
"Miss Brown, you've got no food, no light, no fire. You're going to spend Christmas with us. It's here to help you."

...to stuff like...

...this....



**HOW MUCH MORE CAN YOU TAKE? HOW MUCH MORE WILL YOU GIVE?**

Once again the NSPCC Annual Report shows parental cruelty and neglect to be on the increase. The NSPCC has to double its efforts. Please try and do the same with your donation. I want to help and enclose cheque/postal order for

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

To: NSPCC, 100, Broad Street, London W1P 3PU. No stamp needed.

This advertisement has been sponsored by The Social Company and a charitable trust.

# Children like him need to go on a diet.



It may sound astonishing, but simply feeding him the right foods at the right times can give him a healthy future in a very short time indeed.

What is even more astonishing is the horrifying number of children still dying every day.

Fortunately, **Save the Children** is involved in many positive, long-term projects throughout the Third World.

One such project is the Mulago Nutrition Unit in Uganda where we have been able to save many under-nourished children and give them a happier future.

Just £1 a week can do an extraordinary amount of good. And, if you, as a taxpayer, donate this amount through a four-year covenant, **Save the Children** receives an extra 43 pence tax relief on every life-saving pound.

**Save the Children** has given its long-term commitment to the Mulago Nutrition Unit and will keep you informed of the work and results in return for your commitment.

Please join in and help. If we can put those children on a proper diet we can put them on the road to a proper future.

Send to: Maureen Brian, The Covenants Manager, Dept 622200, **Save the Children**, 17 Grove Lane, London SE3 8PL.

## Save the Children Mulago Nutrition Unit

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

The Children at Mulago Hospital desperately need your help. A four-year covenant of £52 p.a. will help ensure the long-term success of this vital unit, though any amount at all can help.

Please enter the amount of your first payment here: £ \_\_\_\_\_ (pounds/annually). We will then send you a Covenant Form.

Even if you cannot join in the covenanting scheme, donations are still vitally important. Please enter the amount enclosed: £ \_\_\_\_\_ or fill in your Access/Bankcard number so that we may debit your account. No.

Please send s.a.s. if you require a receipt.  
Send to: Maureen Brian, Dept 622200, **Save the Children** Fund, 17 Grove Lane, London SE3 8PL.

An offer to change a life or make the world a better place became an idiom, a pun or an ironic turn of phrase, packaged with that sparkling new logo or cutting edge typeface.

They were certainly controversial ideas. Ideas so controversial that we look at them today aghast.

But in the history of fundraising, these controversial adverts didn't last that long. Not least because they didn't really work. But even as these ideas disappeared, our fascination with commercialisation remained. Because that's the thing about commercial marketing – there always has to be another new idea round the corner to leave you with a large dose of FOMO – fear of missing out: a sort of fashion-based built-in obsolescence.

And as our excitement about the possibilities grew, we adopted more and more commercial practices. New logos were drawn, new colour palates were chosen along with those – oh so sharp – typefaces. Strap lines were developed. Rule books were written that told fundraisers how they had to use photographs, how to talk about work and how to lay out ads



and appeals so everything looked the same.

And these rules were often made by people who weren't fundraisers. They were commercial marketers who knew why people bought things. But I'm not sure if many of them ever really understood why people give money to charity.

But as charities adopted the approaches of the corporate world, lo and behold, charities started to look like companies. And donors started thinking of charities as being companies – with all the trappings that we might imagine: Highly paid staff, slick offices, high administration costs, glossy brochures and flash company cars.

And this change in attitude didn't take too long to happen. I discovered some market research on attitudes to giving from the early 1970s, produced by a long-forgotten agency called Rupert Chetwynd and Partners.

They found that members of the public thought fundraising by charities had recently increased both in "quantity and in quality". This had generated a hardening of attitudes to giving. Professionalisation, with particular reference to their communications, had led the public to see charities as "larger and more institutionalised...than is in fact the case".<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most important change was with the language that was used as those commercial approaches started to take hold in the voluntary sector. Charities started focusing on how great they were rather than how important their work was. The word 'we' grew in importance as a result – because that is how companies speak – and it didn't necessarily ring true with donors. You see, a commercial company has to make a particular promise. That's what the brand stands for – a promise – we will wash your clothes whiter, keep you safer, give you more energy, deliver the best experience. In short, we promise you that you can depend on us.

**But when it comes to fundraising, a charity brand usually needs a different approach.**

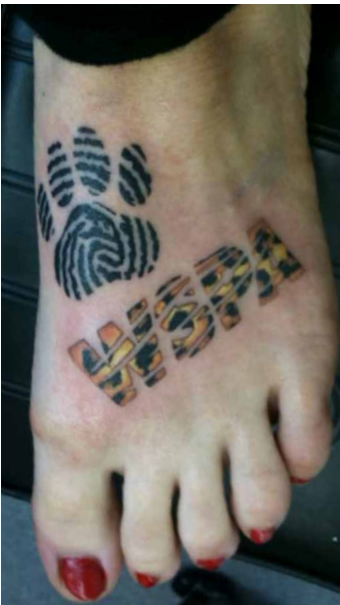
Which charity digs the best wells, or gives the best care or provides the most nutritious food to the poorest people? There are loads of great charities all doing great work in specific causal areas – and donors know that. There are very few who really can claim – as can the RNLI – that they are unique in what they do.

6 *"In the history of fundraising, these controversial adverts didn't last that long. Not least because they didn't really work. But even as these ideas disappeared, our fascination with commercialisation remained."*

<sup>1</sup> See <https://queerideas.co.uk/2018/02/not-much-changed-fundraising-environment-since-1971.html> for more on this market research.

*“I love great brands. I’ve seen their power in action. That is why I think a great brand should be fiercely protected and not dropped because someone new thinks it’s time for a change. When someone loves you for who you are, you change at your peril.”*

If charities communicate their brand values well enough, they might find their supporters will brand themselves with the charity’s logo.



The fact is, when we get to fundraising, we need to recognise that the charity offer is different to the commercial one. Donors don’t simply depend on us. We depend on them.

And understanding that simple point defines what lies at the heart of a great relationship between a donor and a charity. When we give to a charity, how do we know what our money has paid for? We don’t open a box or get to experience the service we have bought. We learn about what we have done when we give from how the charity treats us.

It is through appeals, thank you letters, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, advertisements, and perhaps if we are lucky, TV and newspaper reports, that a donor’s worldview of the causes they care about and the charities that they support is shaped.

It’s these communications that donors refer to when talking about our work. In our research, we regularly hear about projects that people have read about or the staff who have signed the letters that they receive. When these communications are done well, donors think of these people as friends in a common purpose.

What I’ve never heard a donor to ever say is something like, “Well, I would have given to them but pantone red 19-1664tcx (that’s true red to the uninitiated) is so 2002.”

But in many ways, that is brilliant. It is why fundraising works. Donors care deeply about what we do. It means far more to them than what colour we choose or what logo appears on our communications. It’s the content in those comms that matter. If we get that right, we can actually turn donors into something more powerful than a customer – we turn them into friends. I don’t think it is by chance that we call those people who give to us a ‘supporter’.

The result is that when we communicate well, logos can physically jump out of the page and end up on an arm or a leg as a donor physically brands themselves with symbol of the organisation that they value above all others.

That is why – even though I’ve been described as a brand grump – I actually love great brands. I’ve seen their power in action. That is why I think a great brand should be fiercely protected and not dropped because someone new thinks it’s time for a change.

When someone loves you for who you are, you change at your peril. So let's take a look at what can happen when a charity decides to embark on a rebrand.

But first, let me explain that I'm not going to name the names of the organisations behind the numbers I'll share with you. Get in touch with me if you want to know more.

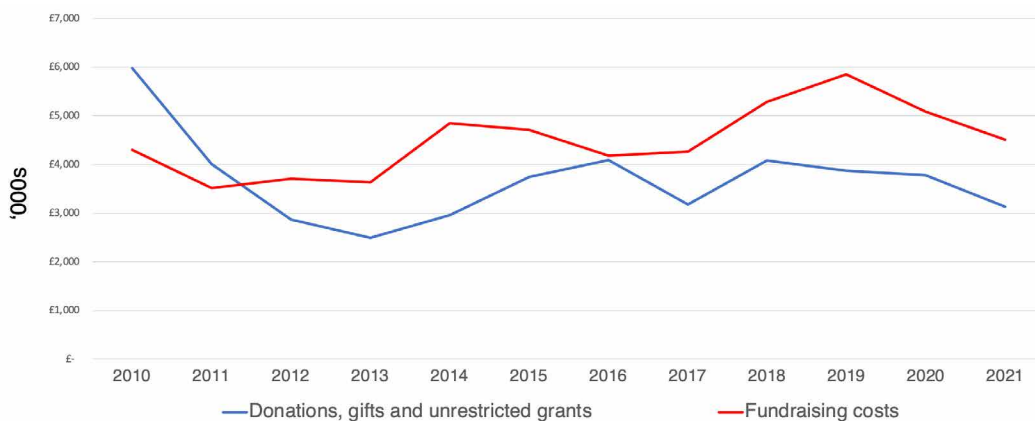


Fig 1. Donated income and fundraising costs for Charity A, a nationally-recognised charity, in the years after it changed its name.

The organisation in Fig 1 is a nationally-known charity that changed its name in 2011. It's been around for over one hundred years and if I mentioned the area of work, their original name would probably be the first charity that came to mind.

If you look at the dark blue line, they generated about £6 million in 2010. Then after the rebrand, we see that income drops to below £2.5 million and never recovers to that 2010 level. So was it worth it? On the face of it, it looks like that rebrand cost the charity many millions of pounds in lost revenue.

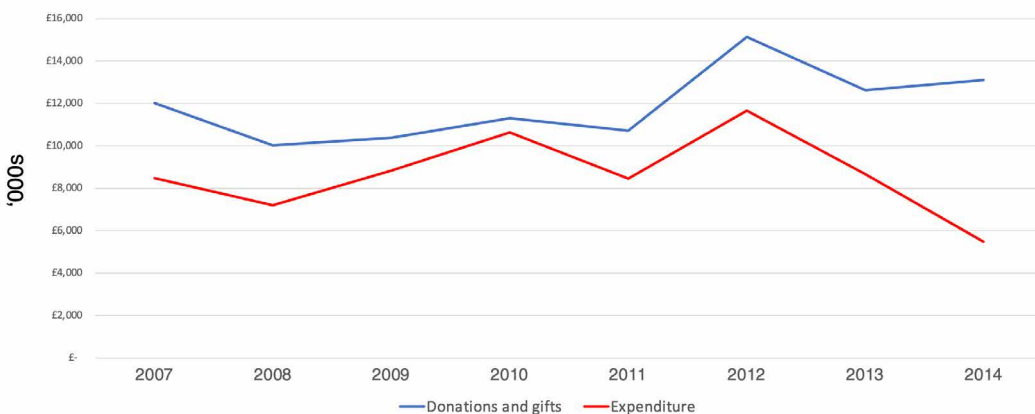


Fig 2. Income and expenditure for Charity B after it renamed in 2007. See next page for explanation.

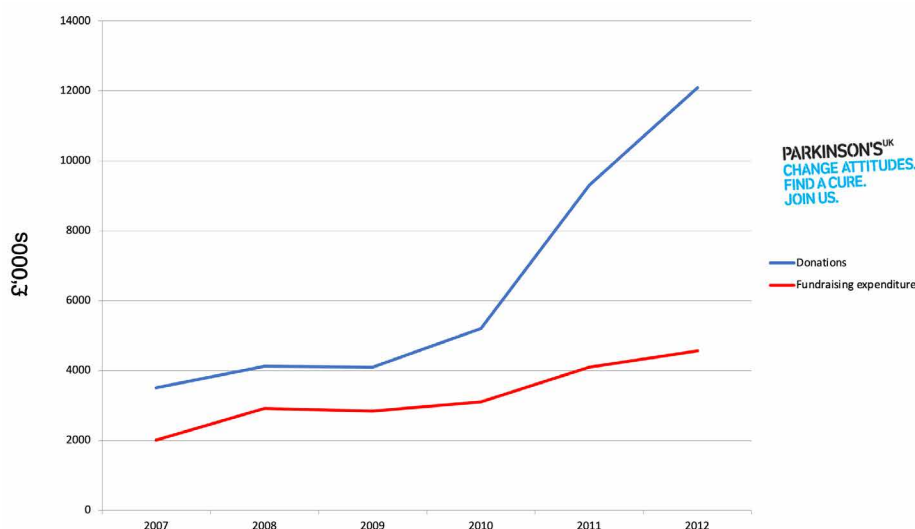
Fig 2 shows another big nationally-known charity that renamed itself in 2007. And again, looking at the blue line, we see yet another big dip of £2 million before income starts rising again. And what drives that return to growth? Look at the red line, It's millions of pounds of increased fundraising expenditure.

But maybe this new name cut through the noise and resonated with a new audience?

What's even sadder is that I remember speaking to them a few years after their rebrand about producing some appeals for them. I learned that their unprompted awareness was stuck firmly on zero per cent.

Here's a third example (Fig 3). And this is the only example I know of significant fundraising growth after a rebrand so I've included the name. It's Parkinson's UK. Take a look at that blue line. Boom. Surely that's the evidence that we need to say a new name can work wonders? Sadly, no.

Fig 3. Increase in donations following Parkinson's UK's rebrand? But is it all down to the rebrand?



What drove the increase? As the head of fundraising of Parkinson's UK explained at the time, it was going back to good old-fashioned fundraising. It was meeting people, involving them and thanking them. Basically, making giving enjoyable on a human level. I know, because we at Bluefrog were responsible for helping them achieve that growth.

I should also flag up that over recent years we have seen that the proliferation of charity names with the two letters UK after the causal area - Parkinson's UK, Leukaemia UK, Mental Health UK - has become seen as almost a piece of shorthand indicating "charity"

and offers a level of familiarity in that respect. Something to note if you are a start-up organisation or if you have no real profile.

I'll now refer to a question that was asked at the end of the original presentation. It was about Macmillan and this would probably be a good point to address it. I was asked my thoughts about the enormous growth in income that Macmillan saw following their rebranding.

I said that I wasn't sure whether the rebrand was solely responsible for the increase in income and highlighted that last time I'd looked at their direct marketing income, I thought it had been relatively static. But I dug out their numbers and put this chart together (see Fig 4). Macmillan have had two rebrands over the last 15 years. The first was in 2006 and a second one was undertaken in 2014.

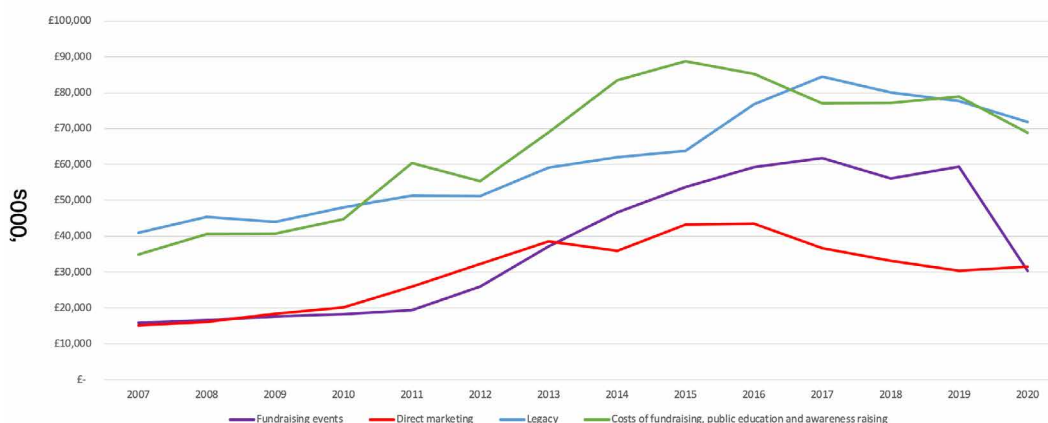


Fig 4. The complex relationship between donated income and costs following two rebrands at Macmillan in 2006 and 2014.

As we can see after the first rebrand, there was growth in legacy income (blue line), direct marketing (red line) and events income (purple line). But this does seem to track the increase in expenditure on fundraising and publicity (green line). In that respect it's a little similar to Charity B (Fig 2) from earlier on. Indeed, after expenditure reaches a peak in 2015 we see a fall in income in the following years, with direct marketing starting to flatten out. Of course, I don't know that much about the strategy at Macmillan over the last 15 years, but it does look likely that the growth was, at least in part, influenced by a significant increase in expenditure which appears to track income levels.

I should also point out these that Macmillan were very cleverly, highly active in the cold recruitment of legacy donors in the early 2000s. I wouldn't be surprised if these ads helped drive the increase in legacy income. But returning to the lecture...



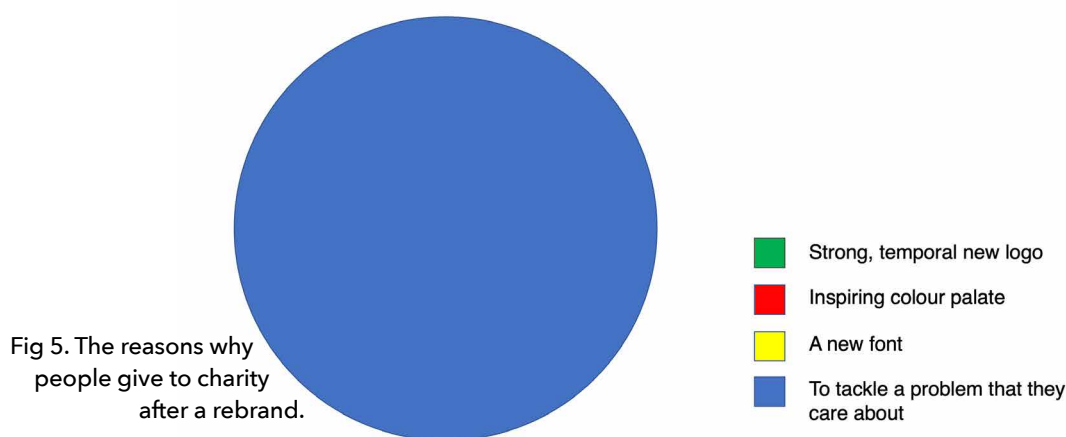
*“When a charity rebrands, they look and sound different. That’s the idea, isn’t it? But how can that possibly help raise more money? There are hundreds, maybe thousands of supporters that suddenly think. Ooooh. Who’s this?”*

Rebrands often come with another problem in that they can also cause us to take our collective eye off the ball of what actually matters. Rather than looking at what can dramatically increase your income, you focus your energies and money on what you look like – rather than what you do.

Jeff Brooks, in his excellent 2014 book *The Money Raising, Non-profit Brand* shared his decades of experience of what happened to fundraising when charities decided to rebrand.

A new logo tended to leave the needle stable. A new visual identity or change in a tone of voice could be expected to have a small negative impact. But a new name or a new area of focus could reduce income by as much as half. Or as we have just seen in the case of Charity A, by almost 60 per cent.

But time after time, when we hear why a charity has undertaken a rebrand, the desire to raise more money is always one of the main reasons to justify it. But so much of the evidence points to the fact that if you need to raise more money, a re-brand is perhaps the last thing you should do.



I put together this chart (Fig 5) a few years ago to sum up why people give to charity after a rebrand. Ask yourself if it rings true with you? Would you give more to a charity that you support because they changed their logo, or their new colour palate or even because of that new font?

The fact is, when a charity rebrands, they look and sound different. That’s the idea, isn’t it? But how can that possibly help raise more money? There are hundreds, maybe thousands of supporters that suddenly think. Ooooh. Who’s this? Is it a scam? Or ask

themselves why a favourite charity has changed? Or how much it cost?

Rather than re-energising support, it gets them asking what was so wrong before – and that emotional noise usually damages trust. That's if they even realise that the charity that they have supported for decades has a new name.

At Bluefrog, we speak to hundreds of donors each year about who they give to and why. And after a major rebrand, what we tend to hear their supporters say is something along the lines of: "Yes, I used to support them, but they have gone very quiet now. You never hear of them."

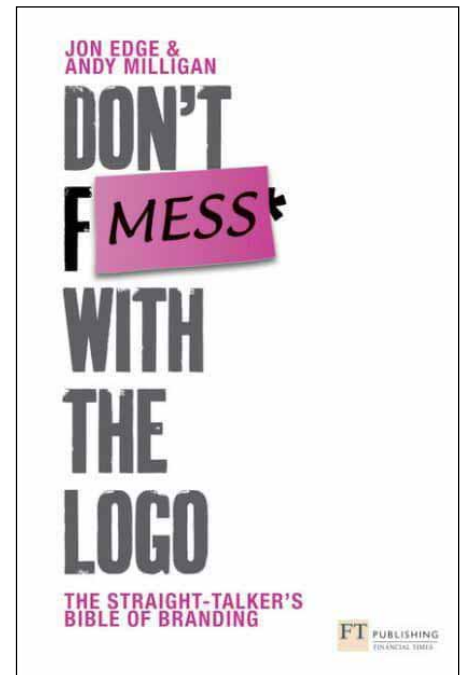
The fact is that after a major rebrand, there is a major danger that the organisation will be seen as yet another, unknown charity. And the result is that many donors, despite being told, don't realise what happened to the old organisation that they knew and loved. Their loyalty remains with that original brand, and they don't give to this new charity as they wait in vain for that appeal with the old brand to drop through the letterbox.

### So is there any good reason to rebrand?

There are three. And they are laid out in a fabulous book on branding, *Don't Mess with the Logo* by Jon Edge and Andy Milligan. They are:

1. When what your brand stands for is no longer appropriate or relevant to enough people in the market. I always remember hearing of the stories of people in the audience standing up to applaud when the organisation now known as Scope announced its name was changing from The Spastics Society.
2. When a catastrophe seriously damages your credibility. There's been a few of those in the charity world over the years, but I can't think of one that has ever driven a rebrand.
3. When you have been subject to a take-over or merger and there is a need for economies of scale.

But we need to be aware of the 'wrong change' syndrome, which typically happens when research has not been thought through properly and the wrong conclusions are drawn. A famous example of this was when BabyCham removed the deer from



In their book with a very similar title to this lecture's, Jon Edge and Andy Milligan give three reasons to rebrand.



'Wrong change' syndrome results in a cherished part of the brand disappearing. It happened to Babycham's deer in the commercial sector...

its logo as it thought it was holding the drink back by making it seem old-fashioned.

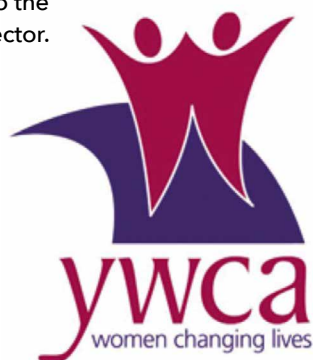
The fact was, the drink was seen as old fashioned and the deer was about the only thing that consumers liked about the brand, which meant the deer was later reinstated.

In our sector, the YWCA in England changing its name to Platform 51 is probably a good example of this. I worked for many years at the YMCA and learned how much those four letters meant to many of our staff, members, residents and supporters and, as a result, I pushed back against the regular suggestions to rename the charity because it was old, out of date or not representative of the user base. After all, we helped people who weren't young, who weren't male, who weren't Christian. It was seriously suggested we should change the 'Y' (as we all knew it) to the People's Association.

I imagine the YWCA heard similar arguments. Platform 51 no longer exists as a brand. Sadly neither does the YWCA in England, though it is still a huge movement working for young women elsewhere in the world.

The other main reason, as I've highlighted before, is when someone new comes in and wants to take things in a 'new' direction, and through their use of the 'dark arts' persuades everyone that this is a great idea. They tend to leave soon afterwards to do it again elsewhere.

...and it happened to the YWCA in the charity sector.



**So, what do we do about branding in charities?** We certainly don't reject it. But we need to fully understand what it can do for us and how it should be used.

The Godfather of branding is Wally Ollins. In his 2004 book *On Brand*, he reminds us that branding is there for a single purpose: To encourage people to buy a product or a service.

But he also explains how branding could be used for charities. As he says...

*"How can we have the faintest idea what happens to our money? How can a charity, having once captured our interest, sustain it so that we remain regular, committed and brand loyal?"*

*"...Over the first quarter of the twenty-first century branding will become a powerful force in charities. Major charities will capture our concern and interest and our money.*

*"They will draw us into Friendship Associations and try to tell us how our particular donations are used. They will become skilled at merchandising their clothing and memorabilia. They will memorialise us. They will create headlines out of heartbreaking causes which will engage us and persuade us to commit money and sometimes time to their cause.*

*"They will link us to individual cases and personalise it all. This kind of commitment to charities will enable us to feel better about ourselves."*

Friendship Associations? Telling us how our particular donations are used? Memorialising us? Engaging us? Linking us to individual cases? Personalising? Feeling better about ourselves as donors?

This is what charity branding is really about and the reason why I love it.

Which is why I find it so frustrating that so many re-brands miss this. They are simply about the new name or new identity, the latest list of values, the use of photographs and the use of language. In short, the imposition of controls that benefit no one but those who create them.

The critical factor in any brand mix for a charity is the behaviour

6 *"After a major rebrand, there is a major danger that the organisation will be seen as yet another, unknown charity. And the result is that many donors, despite being told, don't realise what happened to the old organisation that they knew and loved. Their loyalty remains with that original brand, and they don't give to this new charity as they wait in vain for that appeal with the old brand to drop through the letterbox."*

*“Changing your colour or logo won’t have much impact either way on how much you raise. But it’s your positioning that acts as the glue that holds you together with your supporters. This has to be based on answering their enduring needs. We can’t afford to get that wrong.”*

of the individual members of staff in their day-to-day relations with members of the public – be it face-to-face, on the telephone or through printed or digital media.

If they focus on showing donors how important they are, what they have helped achieve as individuals and how the charity depends on them to help tackle the causes that donors care about, we will see the development of brands that don’t just matter, but actually become central to the success of the charities that are lucky enough to have them.

That’s where branding starts for charities. And where it ends. It is not a tool to bring in from the commercial world. It is a means to define how we treat those who we work with and those who fund us. It is our position from which we communicate.

So, if you really want to, it is OK to mess about with your logo, to change your colours or fonts – if you are not really messing about with what matters about your brand. That’s who you are – your name, what you do and your area of work.

That’s what needs to be protected. That’s what people love about you and why they support you. If you have spent decades building a base of support – why chuck all that away?

Changing your colour or logo won’t have much impact either way on how much you raise. But it’s your positioning that acts as the glue that holds you together with your supporters. This has to be based on answering their enduring needs. We can’t afford to get that wrong.

So, to sum up, of course the commercial world can offer us ideas. But let’s review the evidence carefully before thinking about adopting them and test carefully as you go.

The fact is, professional doesn’t always equal good.

And perhaps most importantly, let’s all remember that when it gets down to what really matters – saving lives, fighting poverty, tackling injustice and protecting everything that society holds most dear, that’s when the commercial world should be looking to us for advice. That is our territory. It is our skill set. And it is our values that matter – far more than even the greatest guarantee behind the most delicious tin of baked beans. ●



# Mark Phillips



Mark Phillips runs Bluefrog Fundraising, the acclaimed fundraising creative agency he founded in 1997 with the goal of it being the agency he would want to employ.

Mark has a BA in development studies from the University of East Anglia, which was where he got the advice to get a job in charity marketing. He then received an MSc from Manchester University in management science. This led to a first job at ActionAid, and then seven years as head of fundraising at YMCA.

Mark is one of the global fundraising profession's most in-demand conference presenters, particularly on Bluefrog's research into the motivations, attitudes and behaviours of mid-value donors. He also writes the *Queer Ideas* blog, which explores and presents new takes on many critical issues in fundraising, and curates examples of historical charity advertising and direct mail on Pinterest.

Bluefrog has been an Associate Member of Rogare since 2014, and Mark is a member of Rogare's Council, where he serves on our Governance and Oversight Group. He is also a member the project team exploring the history/historiography of fundraising.

Watch Mark Phillips present this lecture here:

**<https://bit.ly/cfr-lecture-mark-phillips>**

# Get in touch

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## Associate Members

Rogare is supported in our task of Rethinking Fundraising by our Associate Members – partners to the fundraising sector that share our critical fundraising ethos. Our Associate Members are:



### Ask Direct

Strategic and creative agency (Ireland)  
<https://www.askdirect.ie>



### GoalBusters

Fundraising consultancy (USA)  
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### Giving Architects

Fundraising consultancy (NZ)  
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