Fundraising is an essential part of the work of most charities. Because successful fundraising is key to the survival of most charities, it can become very competitive. Here we invite you to step back from the daily pressures of raising money to ask: Why fundraise?

Charities often view one another as competitors, vying with one another to increase their own share of the total charitable donations.
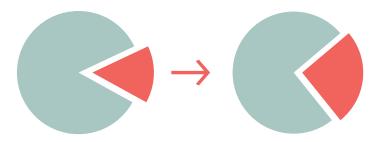

Figure 1
Securing a bigger slice of the 'cake'!

But of course, the overall size of that pool of support — of the 'cake' — must also be of interest. There is vibrant debate within fundraising circles about whether or not the overall 'cake' (amount of charitable giving) in the UK is contracting. Irrespective of its true size, and how this is changing, fundraisers could ask: **can we contribute to increasing the overall size of the 'cake'?**
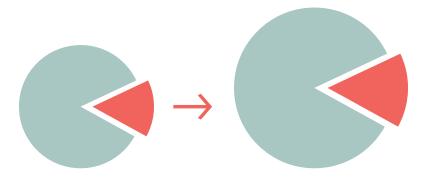

Figure 2
Fundraisers may work to help increase the overall size of the 'cake'

To work in a way that could increase the overall size of the 'cake' may seem 'inefficient' in terms of the return on investment that a charity could anticipate. After all, what impact would the communications of a single charity really have? The obvious objection is that such work could benefit many other charities, while being of only dilute benefit to the charity which is setting out to work in this way.

This perception is almost certainly justified – so long as charities are seen primarily as 'competitors', working on different causes that are largely unrelated to one another. Yet, as we discuss elsewhere, there are deep interconnections between seemingly unrelated causes (such as biodiversity conservation and disability rights).

Appreciating these connections could lead to a closer sense of interdependency between charities working on different causes – and a clearer understanding that different charities' fundraising successes are intimately intertwined.

But of course, there are legal and organisational obstacles to this new way of thinking. What might be achieved in the short-term?

We think that there is a happy coincidence here. We believe that the best strategy for increasing the proportion of the whole 'cake' that a charity receives (Figure 1) is likely to be closely aligned to the best strategy for growing the overall cake (Figure 2). See Figure 3.
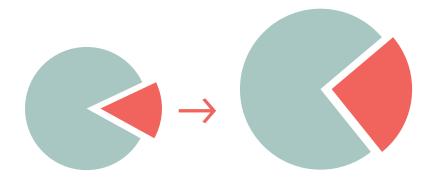

Figure 3
Strategies aimed at increasing the proportion of the whole 'cake' that a charity receives may be closely aligned to strategies aimed at growing the overall 'cake'!

If these two different outcomes are indeed effectively pursued by adopting the same strategy, then the tension between pursuing specific fundraising targets and contributing to strengthening a wider culture of giving may actually prove to be far less important than imagined. Indeed, far from being in tension with one another, these two things could be pursued in tandem.

Up until this point, though, we've only considered the immediate financial imperatives for fundraising. Clearly, for a charity, fundraising should be a means to an end: it provides the means for doing more good work.

One should also ask, therefore: "What impact are my communications (including my fundraising activities) likely to have on wider public concern expressed in non-financial ways?" It is important to consider, for example, the impacts that a fundraising communication is likely to have on a person's motivation to campaign or volunteer.

Your charity's fundraising communications are likely to exert such impact in several different ways. Such communications may:

→ **Impact upon non-financial support for your charity**

→ **Impact upon the motivation of your audience to engage in other activities which, though perhaps not led by your charity, nonetheless advance the same cause**

→ **Impact upon the motivation of your audience to support other social and environmental causes, beyond the focus of your charity**

Think of throwing a stone into a pond. As the ripples move outward they grow weaker, but they also extend to a larger area (see Figure 4).

Something similar is probably happening with charity communications. A fundraising communication is like the stone thrown into the middle of the pond – it has an immediate effect on an audience's motivation to offer financial support to the particular charity that produces the communication.

But as the ripples move outward, they are also likely to affect people's motivation to offer non-financial support to that same charity.

And then, as they move further out still, they are likely to affect people's motivation to offer support to other charities – both those working on causes that are obviously related, and (nearer the edge of the pond) those that are working on seemingly very different causes. If the pond is taken to represent the full range of social and environmental challenges that we confront, then it may well be the case that the cumulative impact of a fundraising communication across the whole pond is more significant than the specific impact created through its target audience. As they throw more stones into the centre of the pond, fundraisers are sometimes in danger of focusing exclusively on the immediate effects of their work in encouraging donations to the particular charity for which they work. But it's also important to zoom out and notice the effects of ripples across the rest of the pond.

Figure 4
The ripple effects of a communication

The wider effects of communications have been proven. We have shown this effect experimentally. Our research shows that communications about the work of WWF (a conservation charity) can have significant impact on people's intention to help Scope (a disability charity). In fact, we found that impacts of this kind are far greater than we might have guessed. As the ripples move outwards towards the edge of the pond, it seems that they are still very important.

These considerations point to further questions:

→ **In seeking to recruit new non-financial supporters, should a charity pause to consider the possible impacts of its communications on people's motivation to support other charities?**

→ **If so, should such consideration only be extended to the impact upon charities working on related causes? Or should it also be extended to charities working on very different causes?**

→ **Some charities draw little on the non-financial help of the public (for example, a charity which delivers a specialist social service, or which relies upon a staff of professional lobbyists). Should such charities pay any attention to how their communications may impact on public motivation for various forms of civic engagement (for example, volunteering or joining a demonstration)?**

This is a mind-bogglingly complex set of considerations, which in turn raise legal questions about the proper scope of a charity's concerns. Someone working for a biodiversity conservation charity may believe that it is morally important that communications they produce don't erode concern about disability. But from a legal perspective they are required to ignore these wider impacts (which fall beyond the concerns of the charity for which they work).

Thankfully, we believe that there is a short-cut through this complexity. We believe that there are some guiding principles which are likely to optimise the effectiveness of fundraising campaigns both for a particular charity, and for the wider community of charities. We also believe that these same principles can simultaneously help to optimise strategies for recruiting non-financial supporters, and help to ensure that people exposed to these communications are left more likely to volunteer, campaign or lobby on a wide range of different causes.

This Toolkit introduces you to these principles, and supports you in applying them in your work.

!

Does this make us hypocrites?

There's an irony to the case that we're advancing here. We are appealing to extrinsic motivations in order to promote a strategy that we believe will help to promote intrinsic values! Isn't this an example of us using the very strategy that we're arguing against – of using ends to justify means?

Certainly, there are risks in adopting this tactic. We discuss some of these risks, in the particular context of communicating with decision-makers in government or business, in the main report *Common Cause Communication: A Toolkit for Charities* (see Section III, pp.55-61).

As we see things today, it would be difficult for fundraisers to adopt a strategy which is suboptimal in fundraising terms, however convinced they were of its wider benefits. Indeed, there are likely to be legal barriers to a charity pursuing such an approach.

We've reached a judgement on this issue having deliberated at length about the values that different approaches communicate. We may be wrong, of course. You may disagree about whether we are right to promote this strategy – and we'd respect your alternative viewpoint, because there is no easy answer here.

More widely, and irrespective of whether or not we are right in this particular instance, we'd argue that ends *can* sometimes justify means. But the impact that a strategy has in values terms must be given full consideration, before any judgement is reached. We really don't want you to read this Toolkit and conclude that there can be *no* instances in which it's legitimate and helpful to appeal to extrinsic values!

Discussion questions

→ From a moral perspective, do you think that charities should be sensitive to the impacts of their activities on levels of public support for other causes, perhaps far removed from their own?

→ What are some of the practical and legal barriers to paying attention to these wider impacts?

→ If you work for a charity, think about how your organisation views other charities, working on related causes? Are they seen as competitors or as collaborators? Do you think that staff perspectives on these questions vary depending upon the role that a person has within your organisation?