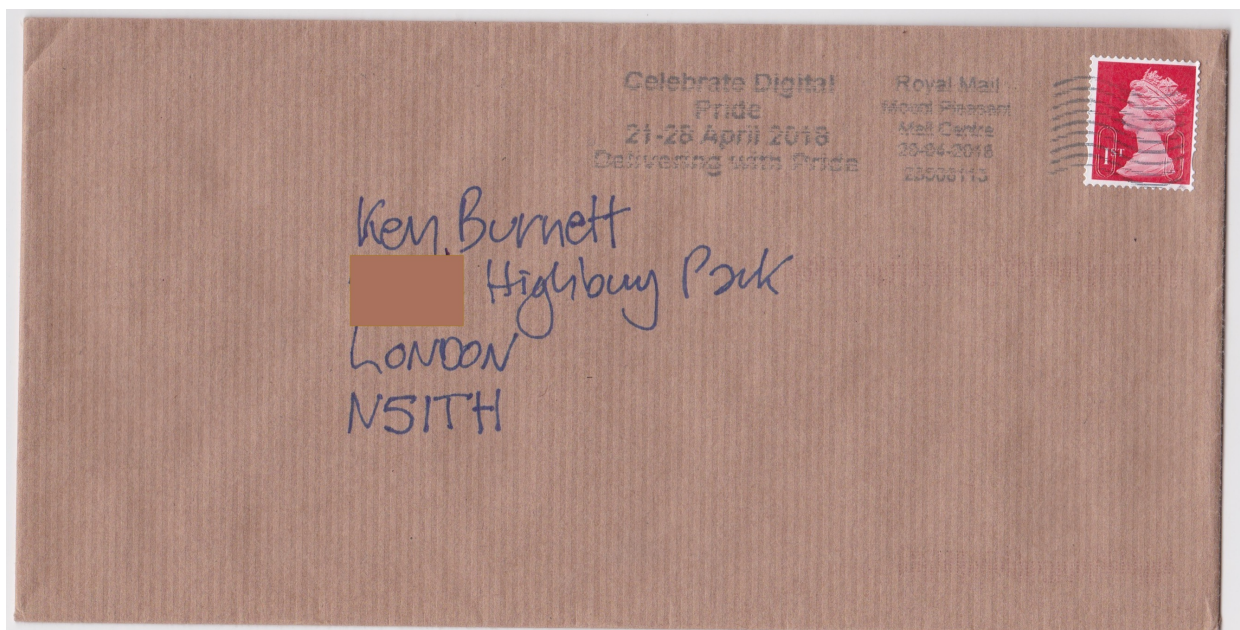




The John Watson letter. #1 in a series of SOFII letters to look out for.

Summer 2018.



The outer envelope, hand-addressed with a real stamp.  
Followed by John's four-page personally topped and tailed letter.  
And the leaflet explaining SOFII's competition.

Dear Ken,

**"This is probably the best offer you will  
ever get in your commercial life.**

**It will inspire you to do something  
serious about the things you're angry  
about in the world.**

**And will almost certainly get you  
valuable new business as well.**

**As the following story demonstrates..."**

**John Watson, Copywriter, Chairman WPN Chameleon.**

I hardly ever start off my direct mail letters by telling a story. "Get the offer up front" is my invariable advice. So this letter ought to begin with something like: 'here's a free competition to make your organisation so highly regarded that every fundraiser in the UK will be beating down your door.'

But I think you should hear this story first...

I was just starting out my new agency Watson Ward Albert Varndell (WWAV as it became) and we had a new business contact from a charity – the NSPCC. Would I be interested in writing a direct mail pack?

I asked if I could go and see what they did: a visit to one of their offices would be fine.

*But as a twenty-something copywriter inflamed with ambition to build an agency, whatever the NSPCC actually did was hardly uppermost in my mind. It was a client. A new one. Just get on with it.*

So up I went up to Coventry where some nice people took me around,

*continued...*

showed me the centre (minus, of course, the kids themselves), gave me the usual presentations.

I tried to look enthusiastic, actually thinking it would be nice to get back to London, get the mailing written and the invoice sent. Business is business, for heaven's sake. They gave me some curly sandwiches and would I like to meet the regional director while I waited for a cab back to the station?

It's best to be polite in these situations. I was shown into a rather small office where the director, a large fellow with a very social-worker beard, was sitting behind a rickety old desk. He asked what I was doing, I told him, and he watched me from under heavily-lidded eyes while I prattled on about how important copywriting was. As I chattered he leaned forward and opened a drawer and took out a large brown envelope which he rested on the desk.

**"Do you want to see what we really do?" he asked.** Well why not?

He pushed the envelope across. I opened it and took out several large black and white photographs.

***Even today, forty years later, as I write this I can feel the tears welling up.*** I will not even try to describe the pictures, except that the child was very young and the cigarette burns were very large. He didn't say a word. He took the pictures back, put them in the envelope and quietly closed the drawer.

At that moment I changed from callow copywriter into someone who realised that such talents that we have should actually make a difference to the world.

I came back to the office inspired and, I suppose, angered, I wrote a mailing that was one of the most powerful I had ever written\*. Giles Pegram was in charge and the mailing helped them generate millions of pounds. The NSPCC became a major client that helped WWAV become the biggest DM agency in Europe a couple of years later.

***"Get the offer up front?"***

So – if you're still with me – that story is what this offer is actually about.

It's called **SOFII** – a snappy(ish) acronym that stands for ***The Showcase of Fundraising Innovation and Inspiration***, given birth a few years back by the incomparable Ken Burnett.

And if you've never looked at this website before (Google SOFII or go to

*continued...*

\* I wish I could find it but I can't... which of course goes to show why SOFII is so important!

soffi.org), you'll be fascinated, sometimes shocked, usually intrigued.

**But what SOFII does, above everything else, is inspire..**

You will read about how others succeeded. You will delve into the history of fundraising. You'll see how fundraisers took on the world and made it better. And not just a few snippets, either. You'll read detailed, gritty and comprehensive case histories that get you to the inside of the charity's work.

Spend a few minutes on SOFII and you'll find it's turned into half an hour and you'll be filling with ideas – which you're free to cheerfully nick – about not just fundraising but also causes and campaigns.

Just as my visit to Coventry did for me all those years back, you'll reaffirm your commitment to doing things that will make the world a slightly better place. You'll possibly even discover better ways to do exactly that. You'll see the stuff that actually works.

**But what about the new business part of this offer?**

Take a look at the SOFII website. Imagine, for a moment, that you, or your company, or your organisation, was strongly featured in one of the articles. Something you're proud of. One of your creative breakthroughs? Showcase your work?

The website has very serious traffic stats. It gets 3,200 hits every week – 170,000 a year – people heavily engaged in the world of fundraising. You can get an advertising banner on SOFII if you're a business partner. **But we're talking here about editorial inclusion – with all the credibility that means for you.**

So Ken and the SOFII team are running a competition for companies and suppliers to the fundraising industry.

Convince members of your staff to enter. Or enter yourself – 500 words maximum – about your/their experience of wanting to change the world or make a tangible difference, why that matters and how you're/they're doing it in your organisation.

A personal view, in other words.

There will be three finalists. Each entry will then be published on the SOFII website as part of their new World Changers at Work series, starting later this year. And as I said earlier, with thousands of professional fundraisers going on the SOFII website every week, there's never going to be a better chance to get your organisation and its expertise in front of your target audience.

Need a bit of help? I've enclosed a poster to grace your company noticeboard. Let Ken know if you need more.

And while the three finalists will be featured on the website – star billing – Ken's publishing company, *The White Lion Press*, will donate for

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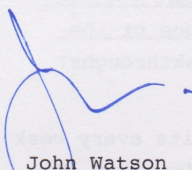
every entry a copy of the classic *Tiny Essentials of Fundraising*. The three winners get an instant library – all eight books in the *Tiny Essentials* series.

There is, of course, a deadline. Ken needs your entries on or before 30<sup>th</sup> June. That sounds like a way off but you know how time flies, so in the immortal phrase: **act now!!**

Winners will be judged and selected in August, with publication due during September, which is just in time for when fundraising directors start looking at their plans for next year and start thinking about new suppliers.

A final word (or two): The fundraising world has never been under such pressure. The media and politicians have decided that fundraising and the work done by voluntary organisations is a fair target. Charities are not blameless, of course. But with pressures like these, if we really value the work the sector does, then our professionalism and our ability to deliver great results for organisations that still do vital work has never been more needed.

So please think seriously about taking up that offer.



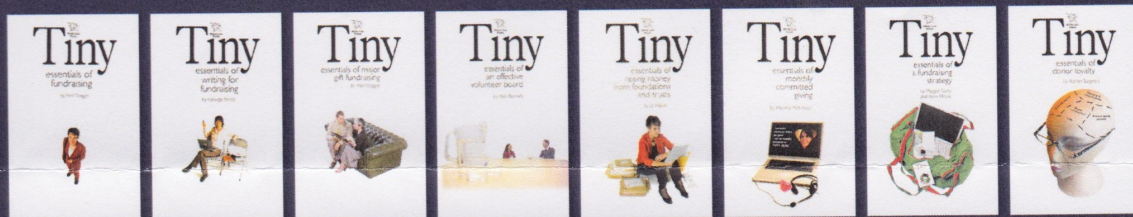
John Watson

PS: I agreed to write this letter for Ken after a Charlotte Street lunch that was far too short but no less enjoyable. It's my modest contribution to SOFII and he said I could have a credit for doing it. If you like this sort of letter I can be reached at [johnwatsonsdirectmail.com](mailto:johnwatsonsdirectmail.com) – or for the full agency and digital stuff, try the WPN Chameleon website. Thanks Ken for all the good work.

In 500 words.

How are you going to change the world while you work?

To win, just tell fellow fundraisers how, through your job, you make a difference every day.



Tell SOFII how and win public recognition and a great prize – **the full set of *Tiny Essentials***, your shortcuts to fundraising know-how.

Contact [joe@sofii.org](mailto:joe@sofii.org)

You'll win *Tiny Essentials of Fundraising* just for entering.

See all eight *Tiny Essentials* books at [www.whitelionpress.com](http://www.whitelionpress.com)

**WOW!**  
WORLD-CHANGERS AT WORK

**sofii** showcase of fundraising  
innovation and inspiration