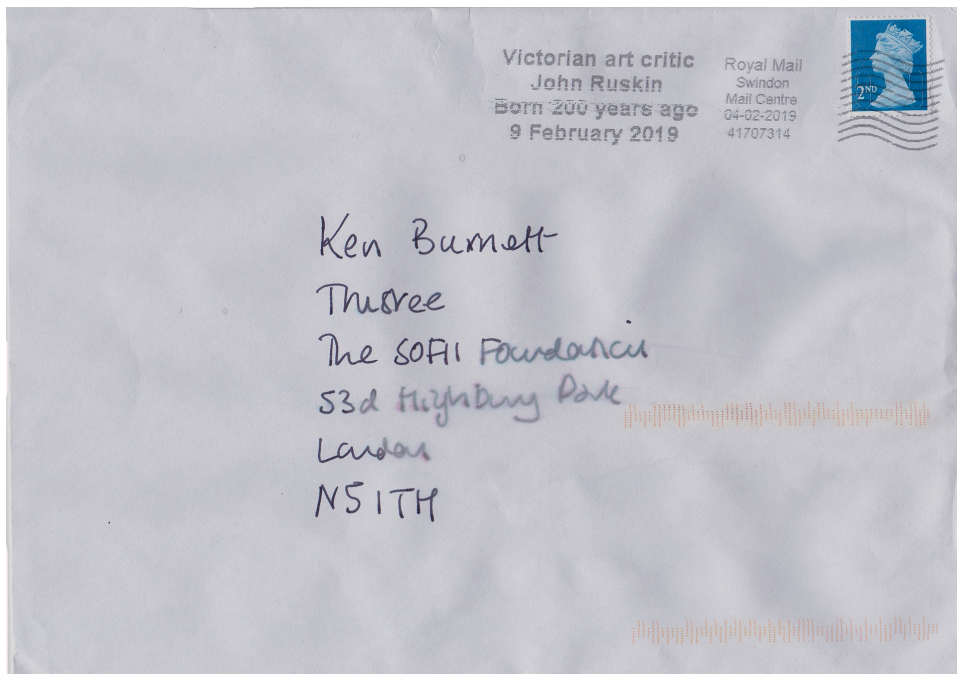


Letter # 5 in SOFII's series of letters to look out for.

In this the fifth letter in this series, veteran UK fundraising leader Richard Turner describes an idea whose time has come, how it came to be and, in the process, explains why for fundraising innovators the secret of success is to adapt, rather than merely adopt.



Fundraisers find themselves in a fast-changing world, so Richard sets out how, by building on the learning of the past, they too will adapt to create and shape the fundraising of the future.

'What struck me wasn't just the learning I'd observed at SolarAid. It was the way they had understood the building blocks of a great idea, so they could then apply it to their own situation. In other words, adapt, don't merely adopt. The answer to future fundraising isn't just dusting off and replicating the past. It's how we take the learning from the past and adapt it to today's fast changing world.'

February, 2019

Dear Ken,

How do ideas grow?

Recently I was invited to sit in a campaign planning session with SolarAid, a charity I admire. They had an idea for attracting new regular donors.

And where had they got that idea? From SOFII, of course. And how had they come across it? At the start of the year they tuned in to the live stream of SOFII's flagship inspiration-sharing event *I Wish I Thought of That* (IWITOT). They watched every one of the 18 rapid-fire presentations. Just as well, because it was one of the last, by Irish fundraising guru Damian O'Broin on the campaign by Ireland's Abortion Support Network, that got their full attention. A simple idea of getting existing supporters who already give a regular gift to publicly share their reasons why. This peer recommendation was the basis for their fundraising campaign. Damian's presentation won the IWITOT 'best idea' vote too.

So, nine months later I found myself listening to the SolarAid team think through their approach and assign the tasks amongst the team members, so they could launch it in the coming weeks (inspired by IWITOT, the idea had been logged many months earlier in their plan for the year). They'd also been in touch with the Abortion Support Network who were wonderful about sharing their learning. What struck me was the confidence the team now had about doing something they'd never tried before. SOFII helped give them that confidence and the courage to try something new.

And at no cost to them other than the commitment to make it happen (no small thing of course. I say at no cost, but as you know SOFII does come at a cost – but not to those who draw on it, thanks to you – which of course is a huge, essential part of its attraction).

What struck me wasn't just the learning I observed at SolarAid. It was the way they had understood the building blocks of a great idea, so they could then apply it to their own situation.

Continued...

The Showcase of Fundraising Innovation and Inspiration

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In other words, adapt, don't merely adopt. The answer to future fundraising isn't just dusting off and replicating the past. It's how we take the learning from the past and adapt it to today's fast-changing world.

This concept needs understanding – understanding that's more important than ever before.

As you'll know, fundraising, particular in the UK, is going through huge change. Why? Well for starters, the world around us is changing. This can be seen every week in the news with high street stores closing down as businesses fail to adapt to changing consumer behaviour. More than ever, charities need to be able adapt their approach to fundraising – and we'll get there a lot faster if we can learn from each other.

Fundraisers will need courage to try new approaches at a time when the pressure of getting it wrong is intense and the fear of failure is high.

As SolarAid found, SOFII's free collections help provide that courage. SOFII shows fundraisers things from a perspective they didn't notice before. It enables them to build on the shoulders of anyone who finds a better way to fundraise. And in doing so, they create yet another exhibit for SOFII to share with the fundraisers of tomorrow. SOFII's a prime example of the past, creatively shaping the future.



SOFII helps people learn *and* understand. Because by understanding it becomes clear what to do. And that gives fundraisers the courage, or takes away the fear.

And it's the doing that's important. We learn by doing. Which is why SOFII isn't a theoretical class. It's a showcase of real practical application of great fundraising – of doing.

In the UK we're seeing the symptoms of a fundraising model that's no longer working as well as it used to, whether it is in adverse headlines, rising costs, or falling response rates. We can't just 'target' people and shout louder anymore.

Yet I've come to realise that if you can understand why this change is taking place, you can start to apply it to your advantage. We now live in a world where there are millions of 'channels' – everyone is now a channel (you, me, our business, our customers). So, to cope we filter out the noise by relying on trusted networks. That's why

Continued...

peer recommendation matters so much. Hence the approach by the Abortion Support Network makes total sense – to get their existing donors to say *why* they love giving to them.

It's why the donor experience now matters so much. A bad experience is easily shared (as the UK sector has learned to its cost). Before, it didn't much matter – but now everyone has a voice.

Of course, a good experience is also easily shared. That's why SOFII championed the findings of the Commission on the Donor Experience and is proud to host and share all the thinking that's been poured into that initiative by hundreds of volunteer fundraisers.

Herein lies the opportunity – now everyone can be a storyteller and that includes donors and supporters. Fundraising has never been about getting money out of people. At its heart it is really about inspiring people to spread a story.

If fundraisers can inspire donors to spread amongst their own networks the story that led them to give, if they can make people feel so good about giving they do it again and begin to believe so passionately in the mission that it becomes their mission, so they become advocates. When that happens, fundraisers of the future can create true fundraising magic.

Because in this increasingly connected world you don't know who people know. This changes the fundraising paradigm. It's not about getting money out of someone. Now it's just as important that people spread a story and have such a wonderful experience in giving they have to tell others about the cause they love. That's the new marketing – get your 'customers' to do it for you. Which is what the Abortion Support Network tapped into so beautifully. And what SolarAid is copying so profitably, from SOFII.



So, the future of fundraising is going to need great storytelling, giving great donor experiences and, of course, communicating inspiring missions, beliefs, solutions and values.

These are building blocks that are the cornerstones to great fundraising. Now we need to be brilliant at these basic building blocks. That's why we value them so much in SOFII and seek the best stories of how fundraisers have made them work.

Giving a donation, fundraising for a cause, makes people feel part of something – it gives them a stake. It is fundraisers who can connect people to do something about what they believe in. It's never been harder to be a fundraiser, yet right now with so many issues that need support, there has never been a better or more important time to be a fundraiser.

We have an ambition at SOFII that every fundraiser can learn from their peers and be inspired to take it further. That's how ideas grow.

Continued...

So, thank you. You have helped us get this far and with your help we will continue to give fundraisers the courage they need to adapt to a fast-changing world by building on the learning of the past to shape the fundraising of the future.

Yours sincerely,

Richard

Richard Turner,
SOFII Trustee



PS. This is the fifth letter in a series of six. In the final letter Ken Burnett will explain how SOFII can add value to your business at a surprisingly low cost. It provides multiple opportunities for you and

your colleagues to engage with potential charity clients as you advance your knowledge and understanding of the complex world in which they operate and the issues that shape their decisions. Becoming a business partner of SOFII provides superb value for money. With many exciting new initiatives currently in progress or in planning there'll be regular opportunities for progressive businesses to partner with SOFII in creating some of the most innovative training and learning opportunities in our sector. A prime example, the splendid IWITOT event is just one of these. As a SOFII business partner, you'll be involved not just as a funder but also through helping to design ideas that will shape the future direction of fundraising.



Richard Turner @ifundraiser

Richard Turner is a SOFII trustee. He's also one of the UK's most experienced and respected fundraising leaders with 30 years' fundraising experience including Director of Fundraising, at FARM-Africa, ActionAid UK, and most recently as Chief Fundraiser for SolarAid. He was awarded the IoF Fundraiser of the Year in 2001.

Richard's on the advisory board of the International Fundraising Congress and actively involved in the Institute of Fundraising's initiative to improve the

supporter experience in the UK. He currently operates as a fundraising catalyst - helping charities adapt their approach to fundraising in today's fast changing world. The picture shows him in deep debate with several stalwarts of the Commission on the Donor Experience - Julie Harrington, Rachel Hunnybun, Kathy Allen and Di Flatt at a CDE consultation event in York.

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