

The Red Bull Rule

Why Donors
Buy the Feeling,
Not the Facts



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Make your donor feel like the kind of person they want to be.

Red Bull doesn't taste good. It feels good.

People don't buy a can of Red Bull because they love the flavor. They buy it because it makes them feel like a risk-taker. A rule-breaker. A rebel with a parachute.

Red Bull sells *identity* not ingredients. It sells the story people want to tell themselves.

Giving works the same way.

Donors don't just give to solve problems. They give to *feel like someone who solves problems*. They give to be a helper, a protector, a good neighbor. They give to feel like the kind of person they want to be.

That's the Red Bull Rule.

What This Means for You

Here's how to use the Red Bull Rule in your fundraising:

1. Stop selling outcomes. Start selling *identity*.

Facts tell. Feelings sell.

Instead of: "We provided 4,235 meals."

Try: "You stepped up and fed someone's child when no one else could."

2. Make the donor the *main character*.

Instead of highlighting the organization's greatness, tell a story that lets the donor *feel* like a hero. Let them see themselves in the action. The impact. The identity.

3. Name the feeling they'll get.

Don't assume they'll know.

Spell it out: "When you give, you'll feel the quiet pride of being someone's safety net."

Or: "This is your chance to be the one who shows up."

4. Use verbs that *activate* identity.

Instead of "support," "fund," or "assist," try:

- *Rescue*
- *Protect*
- *Show up for*
- *Step into*
- *Make happen*

5. Reflect who they already believe they are.

Mirror their values back to them.

“You’re the kind of person who doesn’t look away.”

“You’ve always been the one others can count on.”

“You believe every child deserves a chance—that’s why you’re here.”

Try This Reframing Exercise

Step 1: Take one sentence from your appeal or donor story.

Look for a line that states a **stat**, **outcome**, or a “**what we did**” moment.

Example: “Last year, our shelter placed 147 dogs into permanent homes.”

Step 2: Ask this question:

What feeling does the donor get from making this possible?

Maybe it’s:

- Relief (“I helped an animal escape suffering.”)
- Pride (“I gave a second chance.”)
- Love (“I made someone’s family whole.”)

Step 3: Rewrite the sentence to reflect the **donor’s identity**, not just the result.

Rewritten: “You didn’t just save 147 dogs—you gave 147 families their new best friend.”

Sample Rewrites (From Fact-Based to Red Bull Rewrite)

Fact-Based:

“Last year, we helped 83 families avoid eviction.”

Red Bull Rewrite:

“Because of donors like you, 83 families slept in their own beds last night—safe, proud, and still standing.”

Fact-Based:

“Your donation helps provide after-school tutoring.”

Red Bull Rewrite:

“You’ll be the reason a kid doesn’t fall behind. You’ll be the one who gives them a shot at a future.”

Fact-Based:

“Support our mission to restore local wetlands.”

Red Bull Rewrite:

“You’re someone who protects what’s sacred. This is your chance to fight for a place that can’t fight for itself.”

Gut Check Checklist

Before you hit send or print, ask:

- Does this make the donor feel like someone they want to be?
- Have I named the feeling they’ll get from giving?
- Does the story invite the donor *into* it—or just talk *at* them?
- Have I traded dry facts for emotional truth?
- Would someone feel *proud* forwarding this to a friend?

Donors aren’t just buying your mission.

They’re buying a moment where they get to feel like **who they are at their best**.

When you give them *that* feeling, you don’t just raise money. You build loyalty. You build identity. And you build a donor who wants to give again.

Want more resources like this?

The *Nonprofit Storytelling Conference* is where fundraisers go to learn how to turn identity, emotion, and story into real dollars. It’s like Red Bull for your fundraising brain.

nonprofitstorytellingconference.com