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PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES

Drive Fundraising Communications Efforts With Social Proof

Are you the type of person who reuses your towel at the hotel? Perhaps the signage on the wall stating that “75 percent of guests choose to reuse their towels and help us in our sustainability efforts” made you think twice about asking housekeeping for a new one. There’s a reason for that. It’s called “social proof,” and it is a phenomenon in which people copy the behaviors of others they perceive to be correct or appropriate. The term, which was coined by Robert Cialdini in his 1984 book *Influence: Science and Practice*, has implications for fundraisers too.

“If nonprofits have a way to demonstrate that there are a significant number of people behind a certain cause, that can have a big impact on the success of their campaign,” says Jack Appleman, writing instructor and coach for Successful Business Writing. “Seeing testimonials and statistics may encourage prospective donors to take the next step, so they can feel important and as though they are part of something bigger themselves.”

He says these persuasive messages can be included in:

- Fundraising emails.
- Direct mail appeals.
- Social media posts.
- The donation page of the nonprofit’s website.
- Signage within the nonprofit’s space.

“It goes back to the idea that if you can get one person to buy in first, others will follow,” Appleman continues. So start convincing others to get on board to snowball your way to success. And the next time you go on vacation, consider recycling your towel— after all, your neighbors are doing their part. ◆

Source: Jack Appleman, Writing Instructor and Coach, Successful Business Writing, Monroe, NY. Phone (845) 782-2419. Email: jack@successfulbusinesswriting