

# FOREWORD

“The book you now hold  
was written especially for you,  
the scientist and artist of emotion.”

Francesco Ambrogetti and his wonderful book *Emotionraising* have a special place in my affections, as well as on my bookshelf. He contributed almost a whole section for the special project I’ve recently assembled for the UK’s Commission on the Donor Experience, on the theme of “the use and misuse of emotion.” It’s a subject close to the heart, for both of us.

That merely indicates that I think this book is very important, but it doesn’t explain why.

The why is, because this book is about what works. And why it works when you do it properly.

I’ve been a professional fundraiser now for 40 years and a volunteer at it for a good few years before that. For much of this time I’ve been a consultant, renting myself and my colleagues out by the hour to any client disposed to pay the not unreasonable rates we asked for. This was so we could, as my long-term business partner George Smith would say, “sprinkle magic upon their fundraising.” And we did just that, all over the world, in every continent except Antarctica.

There was one question that, at one time or another, every client without exception would ask. Always we’d have been steering them towards one or maybe several new or improved ways to fundraise, or new strategies to apply to old ways. And the clients, always, would say, “Yes. OK. That sounds fine. But will it work, for us?”

I would invariably answer in the same way, always. “Yes,” I would reply, “for sure it will work. But only if you do it properly.”

The client would then go away and come back weeks, months, or even years later and say, “You told me that ‘such-and-such’ would work, and it didn’t.”

“Ah,” I would respond, “that’s not quite precise. I didn’t just say it would work. I said it would work *if you do it properly.*”

Then as often as not the client then would look at me a little bashfully, mumble something incomplete or incoherent, then leave.

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Hopefully they'd learned a lesson. Fundraising will only ever work if you do it properly.

It's not rocket science. Really it isn't. It's more about making someone feel, for real. It is about astonishing, persuading, seducing and even disturbing. As American fundraiser Jeff Brooks puts it, getting people to give to a cause is not about, "Careful, clean, precise forms of writing. Fundraising belongs to a much messier, more passionate world that includes love letters, ransom notes, pleas for mercy and outbreaks of religious fervour."

*Emotionraising* will help you to gain entry to that much more interesting world.

But there is some science to it and that science is fascinating, as Francesco Ambrogetti shows. As you'll learn, you need to grasp at least the essence of this science if you are to excel at emotional fundraising.

Mostly the subject of this book, raising money effectively by understanding and taking account of emotions, is all about what works.

That's what a firm grasp of emotional fundraising will give you – an understanding of what will work in your fundraising communications and why. And what won't work and why not.

So the content of what you are now holding could be literally priceless. In the right hands, of course.

In this book the author says, "This book is for fundraisers, but also for all who work to make this world a little better because they could understand that emotions are not something to hide, to control, or to be ashamed of, but rather constitute the 'salt' of what we do."

This leads neatly back to the quote that I put at the top of this foreword.

Fundraisers are indeed scientists and artists of emotions. If we understand that and manage those emotions right we will make people happy and make ourselves happy at the same time. And for all our sakes we'll enable the great causes that we work for to make more of a difference, so that faster and more surely they can change the world for the better.

And that has to be really, really worth doing.

This book will work its magic for you, too, but not if you keep it neatly stacked on your bookshelf or tucked away in your bottom drawer. So get it out there, into hands, bags and briefcases and onto bedside tables. Lend your copy widely, or

better still, buy one each for all your colleagues. Expect to see it passed around the office bristling with post-it notes. Get it extra-well thumbed and opened by asking each colleague at suitable intervals, “how has *Emotionraising* changed how you view and do your job?”

You’ll learn a lot from the answers.

I commend this book to you, in all its wonderfulness.

Ken Burnett  
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October 2016

# INTRODUCTION

What do I ask of a painting?  
I ask it to astonish, disturb,  
seduce, convince.

—Lucian Freud

1. This book originates from my curiosity and professional practice to convince other people, often total strangers to me, to give me some of their most precious and intimate things—including money—to support a cause, an idea or an organization. My job is, in fact, to explain, excite, seduce and convince someone around a cause or a social project and convince him or her to open their wallets, to give me their credit card and even persuade their friends or family to do the same. Having worked with so many different organizations— AIDS, children, indigenous peoples, and animals—I often wondered why sometimes it is easier to get a yes to an appeal for funds, or why certain campaigns have more success than others. How is it that certain causes or organizations are more popular than others in terms of money raised or social media views? Is it just that some are better at utilizing sales techniques, a bit like circus magicians or door-to-door sales representatives?

The fact is that, practically every day, we give money to a charity, or support someone, sign up for something, or advise others to adopt a cause, a baby, a kitten or an organization. It depends on the data and their reliability<sup>1</sup>, but it is estimated that in the world in 2015:

- 2.2 billion people helped a stranger in difficulty;
- 1.4 billion people made at least one financial donation;
- 1 billion people volunteered

In short, instead of so many odious taxes, why don't governments launch a good fundraising campaign? Why do people give and continue to donate?

Usually when we do not have convincing answers to behaviour and social phenomena we turn to opinion polls. How many people believe in God? Which candidate will you vote for in the next election? How many people trust or agree with this statement or with that proposal? The same applies to generosity or

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1. <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/publications/2015-publications/world-giving-index-2015>

charitable donations. If we want to understand why people give, and to which causes or organizations, usually we look at the latest polls.

Assuming that the results are statistically correct and representative of the population, they leave us with more questions than answers. Among the reasons to donate (I have come to count more than 40!), the most frequent are the following:

- I want to help people in trouble.
- I want to support a cause I believe in.
- I want to help to solve a problem that affects me personally (or affects a family member or friend).
- It is part of my education or tradition (such as a religion).
- I have been asked by someone I trust (friend or family, etc.).

The fact is that these are just opinions, i.e., rational responses or reflections in retrospect after we made the donation, and do not reveal anything about what exactly and intimately has pushed us to act so strangely, like giving \$10 to a stranger or giving our credit card details without buying any product or service, without having anything in return.

In general, many market researchers and business leaders today tend not to trust most of the polls. And given the mistakes of many exit polls in accurately predicting election results, they have good reason! Studies have shown that 50 percent to 70 percent of those who respond to online surveys provide incomplete answers, while other research has found that 75 percent of participants in focus group tend to go against their own perceptions and opinions and adapt to what other people think<sup>2</sup>.

The question therefore is: If we cannot ask through an interview or a questionnaire why we support a cause or give money, how can we understand what moves us to do so?

For centuries, philosophers, economists, theologians, psychologists and ordinary people have wondered and constructed theories to explain the abnormal behaviour of sharing something valuable (like our money and our time) with strangers, without receiving anything in return. Several researchers and scientists have spent their time and careers trying to better understand the paradox created by those individuals who do something for free and voluntarily for a common good—for example, cleaning a beach or a public garden or helping someone to cross the street. From the perspective of the Cartesian theory of rationality [\*\*\***I checked this online and I can only see it attributed to Descartes—not sure what author would advise we do**\*\*\*] (Cogito ergo sum), the *homo economicus*

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2. Dan Hill, *Emotionomics: Leveraging emotions for business success*, Revised edition, Kogan Page, 2008.

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of John Stuart Mill and Ricardo, and also from the evolutionary point of view of Darwinian survival of the fittest, the fact that someone gives something to a stranger without an equivalent in return has posed serious problems, to the point that some of these scholars had to develop specific theories explaining this “paradox.” The theory of the “free rider” developed by economist Mancur Olson identifies precisely this paradox of collective action. In a nutshell, if individuals are natural “free riders” because they can benefit from a public good that others will generate (a park, a school, etc.), why do people still collectively act, through a donation for example, to support causes, programs and initiatives knowing that others will pay for it<sup>3</sup>?

To some economists, however, giving is simply a selfish act: donate for cancer research because I have the chance of being impacted in the future and therefore I could benefit from research advancement. But why do we give to individuals, communities, animals, museums, etc., with whom we have no connection, nor ever will have the chance to see them or know them? Other economists and psychologists, such as James Andreoni<sup>4</sup>, maintain that the act of giving to unknown entities and individuals is not totally free; rather it is an act motivated by increasing self-esteem. The act of giving allows us to be perceived as a better person (or considered by others to be better because we’re generous), and therefore giving is a bit like being pampered—like putting on a nice pair of gloves to warm our cold hands (the “warm glow theory”).

2. But if giving is not a rational choice and is not a self-esteem mechanism, because many people give anonymously – let’s think about \$1 billion donated for victims of disasters in remote parts of the world, or for a rare disease such as ALS through the Ice Bucket Challenge — why do we keep giving money?

It is interesting to note in fact that donations grown or remained stable even during periods of economic crisis such as the recent ones. While philosophers, economists and theologians formulated their ideas to explain the “anomaly” of giving, neurosciences with their capacity to look into what is really happening in the brain while we do things like giving money have changed everything. Understanding what really happens in our brains changed everything, not only from an evolutionary or cognitive perspective, but especially from the philosophical and moral point of view that is behind philanthropic behaviour. Antonio

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3. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Harvard University Press, 1st ed., 1965; 2nd ed. 1971.

4. Andreoni, James (1990): “Impure Altruism and Donations to Public Goods: A Theory of Warm-Glow Giving,” *Economic Journal* 100 (401): pages 464–477. JSTOR 2234133.

Damasio<sup>5</sup>, a Portuguese neurologist, had the audacity based on neuroscience to refute in a wonderful book the foundation itself of modern Western identity. The *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes, Damasio argues, is a big mistake and a deception. In fact, our decisions are taken not by the “cogito” or rational part of the brain, but from that part of the brain that deals with emotions, which in turn is activated by the body on the basis of sensory input (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch).

In short, we decide on instinct or in a “blink,” as Malcom Gladwell would say, and only after the rational part of the brain formalizes and explains our decision through words and concepts. This finding, subsequently confirmed in recent years by many studies and experiments, has radically changed the way we communicate and do marketing and also how to do fundraising. Because now we really know that emotions, whose etymological origin from Latin *movere* means “take action, moving toward something or someone” physically, are the ones that decide if you will press the button “Donate” or “like” on Facebook; if you’ll dial a phone number in order to “adopt” a child; if you send a text message; or if you will open your portfolio to a young stranger at the subway exit.

3. A note on the subject of the emotions is that this is a universal human trait that is hard-wired in our body and brain and it’s trans-cultural. Emotions are programmed into our DNA to lead our behaviour and actions, and are not an exclusive element of Italian folklore or Mediterranean culture.

It is true however, that as an Italian who has lived abroad for so long and comes from a family with its remote origins in Sicily, emotions for me are an obvious fact of life. I grew up and I was fed by stories, music, images and highly emotional food. I still remember the days spent in the kitchen surrounded by dozens of women who told incredible stories of Noto, a small Sicilian village and jewel of European Baroque, moving from laughs to tears in seconds—all in strict Sicilian dialect and songs.

When I speak or write about emotions, the reaction of non-Italians is often as follows: “Obviously you talk about emotions because you are Italian: look how you gesticulate, listen to your tone of voice, think about the drama of the opera or of a football match. We (Germans, Anglo-Saxon, Nordic, Asians, etc.) have different behaviours and express ourselves differently. We are more ‘cold’ and reserved.” The truth is that, as neuroscience and marketing shows, emotions are a universal evolutionary trait that are not at all determined by culture. Of course, how to cry, laugh or get angry changes depending on the geographical context,

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5. Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, Putnam, 1994.

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culture and language, but all human beings feel biologically the same emotions and react in the same ways. In fact, we can read the emotions on faces of people no matter where they come from, their educational level or their social background, and we can recognize the same emotions on their faces even if they are blind.

I have met over the years thousands of large and small donors from Germany, Sweden, England, Argentina, Thailand, Australia, etc., and I've seen how some stories, causes or specific campaigns provoke equally anger, disgust, surprise or joy. These emotions then leads them to do something like donate or support a cause or an organization, at any latitude, culture or climate. An interesting anecdote is what happened to me during the International Fundraising Congress (IFC), which is held in the Netherlands every year and is the world's leading conference for the fundraiser. Before starting the session on emotions, a tall blond gentleman wearing a business suit approached me very formally and told me: "I am the president of a German organization, and we think this type of thing does not work in our country." Without arguing, I thanked him for coming and invited him to attend the workshop. During the session, while I was showing examples of very emotional campaigns and videos, I heard sobs coming from the room and when I turned around I saw the same German man with red eyes trying to conceal his tears. He looked at me, smiled and gave me the OK sign saying, "You were right. Even Germans get emotional."

4. This book is based on the recent discoveries in neuroscience applied to marketing and fundraising that show how our brain—both when we buy a product, and when we make a donation or subscribe to a petition—decides on the basis of some specific emotions activated in that part of the brain called the meso-limbic system (the one that controls our heartbeat, oversees memories and reacts to stimuli and rewards such as food, sex, or money). Using more than 20 years of my experience in Italy and around the world, in which I've raised millions of dollars, pesos, yen and euros for large and small social causes, we will try together to figure out why and how emotions guide our decisions and what role they play when we decide to support or join certain causes or organizations. We will do this using practical and real examples of success (but also resounding flops and mistakes). We will explain how the ability to thrill, surprise and excite somebody is the key to everything we do and in particular is the decisive element activated when we do something to help others.

5. In the first part of the book, we will discover how neuroscience have revolutionized the assumptions about why we act and why we give, and we'll



see how modern marketing and fundraising theories and tactics are increasingly using content and emotional strategies. We will discover the six key emotions that are activated when someone decides to make a donation. In the second part, through examples of successful fundraising campaigns online and offline, we will better understand how to practice emotions in fundraising and how emotions are activated through the use of images, sounds, smells and specific words. In the third part, inspired by Dan Hill's book "Emotionomics" and the television series "Lie to Me," we will see how emotions can be "revealed" or understood through the study of micro-facial expressions and body language. Finally, we will have the opportunity to have a chat with some of the world's leading experts on emotions applied to marketing and fundraising.

6. Between the publication of the first edition of this book in Italy (2013) and this edition, a lot has happened. I worked in Asia where I saw the power of emotions in one part of the world, which seems to us so far away from emotions. I returned to Italy, the land of emotions, and in the past three years I had the opportunity to discuss with neuroscientists and hundreds of fundraisers the subjects of the book in international congresses and during a chat over a glass of wine. I have experienced even more deeply the use of emotions applied to fundraising campaigns, and for the first time I have seen and measured what happens in the brain of a potential donor when he is making a legacy to a charity. All this has greatly enriched the contents of this book, which has been expanded and improved. But surely "Emotionraising" has not changed in its core substance and main assumptions, and each time I present, not only do I manage to get the public emotional, but I meet many people who say, "Why haven't I thought of that"?

7. This book is for fundraisers, and for anyone working to make this world a little better because they understand that emotions are not something to hide, control or be ashamed of, but rather they constitute the "salt" of what we do. After all, we are all, a little bit, scientists and artists of emotions in order to astonish, disturb, seduce and persuade others to do something that will make someone happy—and make us happy at the same time.