



Improve Your Fundraising with
the Self-Connection Principle

How did Coca-Cola get its first increase in sales in a decade?

IMAGINE LOOKING at shelves of soft drinks — all kinds, from Pepsi to Dr. Pepper — and you see among all those cans, your name emblazoned on a bright red can of Coca-Cola. Or your child's name or your friend's. Won't your eye stop there? Wouldn't you rather buy "your" can than an anonymous can of ... whatever?

Coca-Cola put 150 of the most common first names on 100 million cans of Coke and reversed a 10-year decline in sales. In fact, sales went up by 2% to 7% in countries around the world, and #shareacoke, with photos of people enjoying "their" drink, went viral. Why did this happen?



SELF-CONNECTION

Connecting to People on a Personal Level

This is an example of the self-connection principle. We relate to others who share the same name, birthday, birthplace, values, beliefs, age, and other characteristics. Anything that is self-connected (or can be made to seem so) can serve as a springboard to persuasion. People who share things in common can quickly establish rapport which leads to heightened cooperation. This can be used to improve fundraising results.

The self-connection principle is so pervasive that separate studies have found that:

- There are more dentists named Dennis and more residents of Virginia Beach named Virginia.
- People prefer products whose first letters match the first letter of their own name.
- People marry others who have similar sounding names.
- Waiters who repeated their customer's order word for word increased tips by almost 70%.

Self-Connection & Nonprofits

- Microloans offered online are more likely to be made to people with the same first name.
- When a survey was sent to someone with a letter signed by a person with a name similar to theirs — Robert Greer to Bob Gregar, for example — the response rate almost doubled, from 30% to 56%.
- An experiment involving Utrecht University graduates found that people were more likely to make donations when approached by someone with a similar name to make a contribution, or when their first names resembled the name of the university.

Apply Self-Connection to Your Fundraising

Find out all you can about your donor prospects so you can uncover similarities that you can use to establish rapport and prime for agreement. These can include gender, family role (mother, father, etc.), career, political orientation, geography (birth, raised, work, live, etc.).

- If you have identified your donors as parents, you might say: "Tonight in Ethiopia, a family like yours will sit down to eat a very different meal" or more directly, "As a parent, you understand how important it is to provide a stable, loving home for a child."
- Use success stories that relate to your donors. Send success stories of females to female donors, and male stories to male donors. Point out similarities in your story to the donor's identity — that they are from the same area, share similar values, or have similar aspirations.
- A personal touch can make a big difference. For example, one survey received a 35% response rate. When a message was handwritten on the cover letter, the response increased to 48%. When a sticky note asking that a survey be completed was added, the response increased to 75%.



Red Rooster Group uses behavioral science to help nonprofits raise more money, create effective marketing, and improve their programs. Our Behavior Change Cycle and Fundraising Action Pack card deck help nonprofits put behavioral principles into practice. Contact us to tap into our insight.



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