

# Air Conditioning and Planned Giving

## A Hot Marketing Concept *by Viken Mikaelian*

As we were driving down I-95 in the Fort Lauderdale/Broward County area, racing to our next appointment, my colleague, **Keith London**, who represents PlannedGiving.Com in the Sunshine State, pointed out two striking **billboards**. I begged him to keep his eyes on the road.



Two air conditioning/heating companies in SE Florida (who needs heating in Florida?) were going after each other with dueling billboard slogans: “Your Wife is Hot” attacked by “Your Wife is Not Hot.”

This battle sparked some controversy... and controversy is something we fundraisers do not like. Right? That’s why so much of our marketing remains extremely vanilla.

Anyhow... Which of the two companies won the war?

### Both.

- They both received news coverage, media coverage, criticism and some more.
- They both upset a couple of people and maybe lost some clients, of course.
- But they both gained one-hundred-fold in return, including absolutely *free* publicity.

### This is guerrilla marketing.

As a result of this sword fight, the public’s attention was diverted away from the other 500-some AC/Heating competitors in the area and towards the two that took some risks.

It’s like that pizza shop that advertised, “Bring in the Yellow Pages ads of any of our competitors and you’ll get a large pizza for free!” Result?

- Customers got free pizzas.
- The pizza shop made lots of friends.
- *Competitors’ ads disappeared from the Yellow Pages.*

### This is thinking outside the box.

I recall a number of years ago I heard a radio commercial from a non-profit on KYW News Radio in Philadelphia (Go Phillies!) that went:

*I hate you. You are going to grow old. You are going to get ugly. And one day you will have a hard time walking. I hate you because I will not have that chance. I am dying of AIDS.*

- Ugly language? Yes.
- Effective? The fact I still remember that ad verbatim after 25 years proves it so.

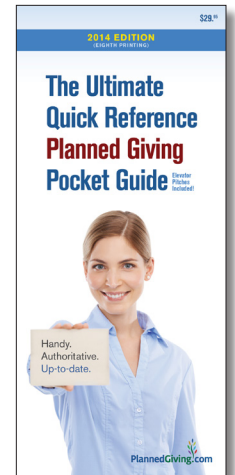
When was the last time you thought outside the box? Pushed the envelope a little? Created some controversy? Stirred a few things up?

### Are you still dishing out the same-old vanilla in a beige room?

Remember, as Tom Ahern says, if you send out a mailing of 10,000 and you do not receive at least 100 complaints, *your message is not getting heard*. Complaints are good!

(I recently visited a client who sends out 22,000 planned giving newsletters and only

FREE FOR  
OUR CLIENTS



If for some reason you have not received your *free* copy, please call us at:

800-490-7090

Every fundraiser needs this planned giving pocket guide.

gets back about 4 requests for more information. The good news is she also gets at least one request for an address correction.)

Instead of spending \$18,000 on two boring newsletters, increase your touches with a simple postcard, once a month! Reach out and touch someone... yes, monthly.

For the same money, but with greater return. This is Marketing 101.

## Most Widely Read Plaque

When my politically correct alma mater, University of Pennsylvania, is bold enough to create *endowed urinals* with plaques above them (the most intensively-read plaques on this planet, by the way) – *and gets away with it* – you should have **no problems** opening up your own creativity a little.\*

Another case in point: this happened with a medical school:

- The Director of Development asked us to write, design and print 20,000 beautiful ways of giving brochures.
- But the school elected to do the complete mailing services *themselves*, in-house.
- So the entire mailing went out with a bold mistake: Instead of addressing each and every envelope and cover letter with “Dear Dr. and Mrs.” (remember, the school’s grads are all doctors!), their mailing said “Dear Mr. and Mrs.”

*Panic in the Development Department.*

The DOD was planning to follow up with a letter of apology (bad move) when the results started coming in. The first responses included a few funny letters, some sarcastic ones, and a couple of ugly (and thus uncomfortable to the DOD) ones –

But all of them included \$4000, \$5000, and even \$8000 checks.

Not only didn’t the DOD lose his job, but the mailing had an abnormally high response rate, too. I do not know why. Please don’t try to duplicate this situation yourself.

The moral of this story is many of us are far more sensitive to issues like this than our audience is. We put our fearful focus on the 0.05% that are “loud squeakers” who upset easily, instead of feeling comfortable with the 99.05% who don’t. And remember, even that 0.05% forget fast.

## Playing it “safe” works against us.

- Did you hear about the fundraiser who sent out a cover letter mentioning an “enclosed brochure” – and left out the brochure on purpose to get recipients to call in?
- Or how about the fundraiser that sends prospects “birthday-and-a-half” cards (“Congratulations on being 57 and a half years old”)?
- And the brochure I received recently from a public services organization that featured disturbing images of severely-ill children?

## What will capture YOUR prospects’ hearts and heads?

Remember: edgy marketing will not hurt a non-profit (only mismanagement does). Please talk to your board and boss about better marketing. And show them this article.

Start ramping up your creativity and imagination now. Visit [www.plannedgiving.com/idea-center](http://www.plannedgiving.com/idea-center) for inspiring examples. 🌱

PS: The billboard ad announcing: “Your wife is NOT hot! Better get your A/C fixed!” set off a trademark infringement suit which finally settled out of court (now we can all breathe again. Phew!). We’re still not sure whether the lawsuit was an intentional part of the guerilla marketing scheme.

\* Re: endowed urinals. It’s a true story! See the Spring 2013 issue of *Planned Giving Tomorrow*.



I hope you found this white paper stimulating and useful.

My mission is to make available to you the best know-how, insight, and tools so you can keep yourself, your career, and your organization permanently ahead of the curve.

Contact me. Let me know how you’re doing. And let me know how I’m doing.

Let’s improve and succeed together.

Viken Mikaelian  
Founder, PlannedGiving.com  
[Success@PlannedGiving.com](mailto:Success@PlannedGiving.com)



[PlannedGiving.Com/linkedin](https://www.PlannedGiving.Com/linkedin)



Valley Forge, Pennsylvania  
(800) 873-9203  
[Success@PlannedGiving.Com](mailto:Success@PlannedGiving.Com)

### WANT TO REPRODUCE THIS ARTICLE?

© Copyright 2014

Readers are invited to distribute the contents of this article in hard copy or in electronic form on the conditions that its contents remain unchanged, and that [PlannedGiving.Com](http://PlannedGiving.Com) be credited as its source.



[plannedgiving.com/facebook](https://www.plannedgiving.com/facebook)  
[plannedgiving.com/twitter](https://www.plannedgiving.com/twitter)