

# The Mind Hates Confusion

By Viken Mikaelian

**Did you know that the average American in a major city is bombarded with over 3000 messages a day?**

Each day the Web grows by millions of pages. Wherever you travel, satellites are beaming endless messages a minute to every corner of the globe. We see rotating billboards, take calls from telemarketers, and get marketing materials in our mailboxes. A survey as long ago as 2009 revealed that a child is exposed to over 140,000 commercials by the time he or she is 18.

I could go on.

As a fundraiser, you are in the business of sales and marketing. You have an overwhelming amount of noise to cut through. If you want to be heard, you must differentiate.

Your differentiating idea should be simple and visible and delivered over and over again in a variety of formats.



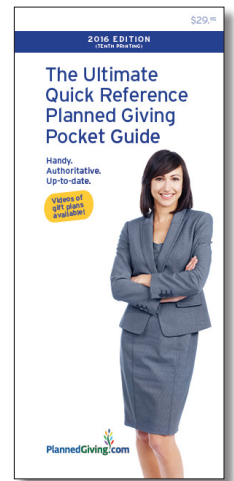
## The Mind Hates Confusion

Some time ago I went into a Best Buy to purchase a cordless phone.

There were so many brands! So many options! I analyzed, over analyzed, and could not make up my mind. I left not buying anything. This happens to fundraisers, too. In fact, we all know non-profits are plagued by indecision. We meet, and discuss via email, and meet again. Then we call in specialists to help. Decisions are almost made. Then nothing happens. Half the team changes jobs, and the process of indecision starts all over again.

Am I being harsh? I don't intend to be. I'm just stating it as it is. I have made enemies and lost clients because of addressing serious issues

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within non-profits that no one wants to address. In fact, Jeff Comfort (Planned Giving, Oregon State) and I did a webinar on this topic that was not that popular. Why? It is not for the faint of heart.

### **The Power Of Simplicity**

In 2002 we “created” the planned giving postcard. One of our competitors, who was heavily invested in printing newsletters, placed an ad on their website that read something like, “Many of you have been considering a planned giving postcard. But the fact is that the complex features of planned gifts can’t be related with less than 150 words.”

We milked that statement all the way to the bank because we had some-

thing that worked, and we knew it. Now that competitor is producing postcards.

### **My Advice. Please Take It.**

Your donor’s mind can’t handle complexity and confusion. The only way to enter their mind is to oversimplify your message.

Oversimplify.

Simple words. Fewer words. Powerful words. Be ruthless about how you edit your message. Any language that requires analysis or a second reading... nix it.

And please... do not have an academic edit or write your copy. They may be smart, but not when it comes to marketing.



I hope you found this white paper stimulating and useful.

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