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## **Practical Persuasive Communication: The Evolving Attitudes of the iGeneration Student**

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### **Abstract**

*This article examines the effectiveness and impact of the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) persuasive strategy versus more direct rhetorical strategies. Approximately 142 individuals in the 18 to 25 age range participated in this study, which compared the persuasiveness of pairs of fundraising messages. Our preliminary findings indicate that our participants, who represent an emerging audience for university fundraisers, prefer more direct strategies over AIDA. The findings have the potential to change business communication pedagogy and increase university fundraising effectiveness.*

**Key words:** *Fundraising; iGeneration; persuasion; communication pedagogy; AIDA.*

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## Introduction

For many non-profit and educational organizations, fundraising is a necessary and vital part of doing business, and in many cases, it may ensure an organization's survival. For the past few decades, however, the task of raising funds for higher education institutions has grown progressively more difficult. In 1990, for example, 18% of college and university alumni gave to their alma maters; by 2013, that number was less than 9%—a drop of 50% (Allenby, 2014). This ongoing trend has particularly impacted annual giving, that is, small, one-time gifts raised through such means as telephone solicitations, e-mail or direct-mail appeals, or events (Blackbaud, 2017). While the occasional mega-gift from a wealthy benefactor will grab headlines, the gifts from alumni, family, and other individuals that once formed the backbone of university annual giving programs are shrinking in both number and size (Marklein, 2010).

This trend is especially distressing to university advancement professionals and administrators because annual giving programs are designed to do more than simply raise money in the short term; rather, they are intended to create long-lasting relationships between the institution and individuals that will lead those individuals to make repeated and ever-larger gifts over a span of years or decades. In addition, increased monetary giving often goes hand-in-hand with other kinds of engagement; active donors often also give of their time and expertise. In the minds of many advancement professionals, then, fewer annual donors today means that their universities and their students face a dearth of various resources in the future (Council on Advancement and Support of Education, 2013).

The key to reversing this trend—and regaining those lost relationships—is identifying the most effective ways to persuade donors, especially young alumni, to donate to and engage with their alma maters (Allenby, 2014). According to Warwick (2000), the primary means by which organizations recruit new donors is by using written persuasive appeals sent by direct mail. Even in today's digital environment, the conventional fundraising letter-by-post continues to be a popular channel for soliciting current donors and recruiting new ones. However, little empirical research exists to give practitioners guidance in this task. Much of the advice given on how to compose these annual giving appeals comes from fundraising practitioners drawing upon their own professional experience, both good and bad (e.g. Kuniholm, 1995; Rosso, 1996; Ahern, 2007). As a result, most annual giving professionals are left without a proven, evidence-based strategy for creating and delivering effective messages.

A brief survey of college-level, business communication textbooks reveals that subject matter experts consistently propose AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) as one of the most persuasive rhetorical strategies in both spoken and written discourse. For example, Cardon's *Business Communication: Developing Leaders for a Networked World* (2018, p. 320), Schwom and Snyder's *Business Communication: Polishing Your Professional Presence* (2019, p. 175), Lehman, Dufrene, and Walker's (2018, p. 141) *BCOM9*, and Guffey and Loewy's (2018, p. 345) *Business Communication: Process and Product* all specifically mention the AIDA strategy in writing unsolicited sales messages. Similarly, Flatley and Rentz (2010) also advocate gaining the audience's attention, then building a persuasive case, and 'driving for the sale' in sales messages, although the acronym AIDA is not specifically mentioned (pp. 157-164).

While AIDA is commonly employed in business education, and in fields such as sales and advertising, this strategy is largely unknown (and unused) in higher education fundraising messages. Upton (2002) reviewed a corpus of nearly 1,000 direct mail fundraising letters and found that they tend to follow one of three distinct rhetorical patterns—none of which closely resembles the traditional AIDA strategy. While Upton examined the persuasive strategies that appear in fundraising messages, he did not

identify which rhetorical strategy is the most effective in raising money, nor did he explore how generational differences impacted these messages. This study examines whether a younger demographic prefers the AIDA strategy taught in most college-level business communication courses over a direct persuasive strategy. Further, this study has the potential to inform curricular development focused on practical persuasion for the 21st Century.

## Review of Literature

While AIDA is commonly found in many modern business communication textbooks and manuals, the *moves*<sup>1</sup> are deeply rooted in nineteenth-century advertising practices in the United States. Elias St. Elmo Lewis, a prolific advertising practitioner and writer, is usually credited with envisioning the moves that eventually came to be known as AIDA. *Cody's Success in Letter Writing: Business and Social*, published in 1906, mentioned the notion of AIDA. However, Lewis' widely published 1908 book, *Financial Advertising, For Commercial and Savings Banks*, firmly grounded the strategy in a business communication context:

The three elements in any successful advertisement must occur to any man who will analyze the advertisements that have appealed most strongly to him. He will find that the advertisement . . . had to first attract him (p. 95).

Next, according to Lewis, the advertiser must keep the customer's interest, a concept he termed 'attention prolonged' (p. 126). If done effectively, attracting attention and arousing interest will lead to the potential customer's conviction that the argument is sound and arouse in him a desire to act (p. 162). For Lewis, the action itself was a natural consequence of the three essential elements; consequently, he did not formalize the idea of a call to action.

Lewis' principles were quickly adopted into practical manuals covering aspects of business behaviour and communication that were popular in the early twentieth century. In Arthur Sheldon's *The Art of Selling: For Business Colleges, High Schools of Commerce* (1911), the moves had been formalized into a series of steps recognizable as AIDA, and were acknowledged as the preferred strategy for writing a persuasive sales message:

Every buyer's mind passes, more or less quickly, through well-defined stages of thought and feeling in making a purchase, and therefore it is your duty and advantage to adapt your argument to the law governing those stages. They are:

1. Favorable attention
2. Interest
3. Desire
4. Decision and Action (p. 146).

These four rhetorical moves were eventually published in Edward K. Strong, Jr's. *Psychology of Selling and Advertising* (1925), with acknowledgement to Elias St. Elmo Lewis, and were subsequently carried forward in business manuals throughout the twentieth century, including many business communication textbooks in use today.

## Message Strategies: AIDA and Direct

Business communication textbooks consistently emphasize the importance of adapting communication strategies based on the audience's anticipated reaction. For

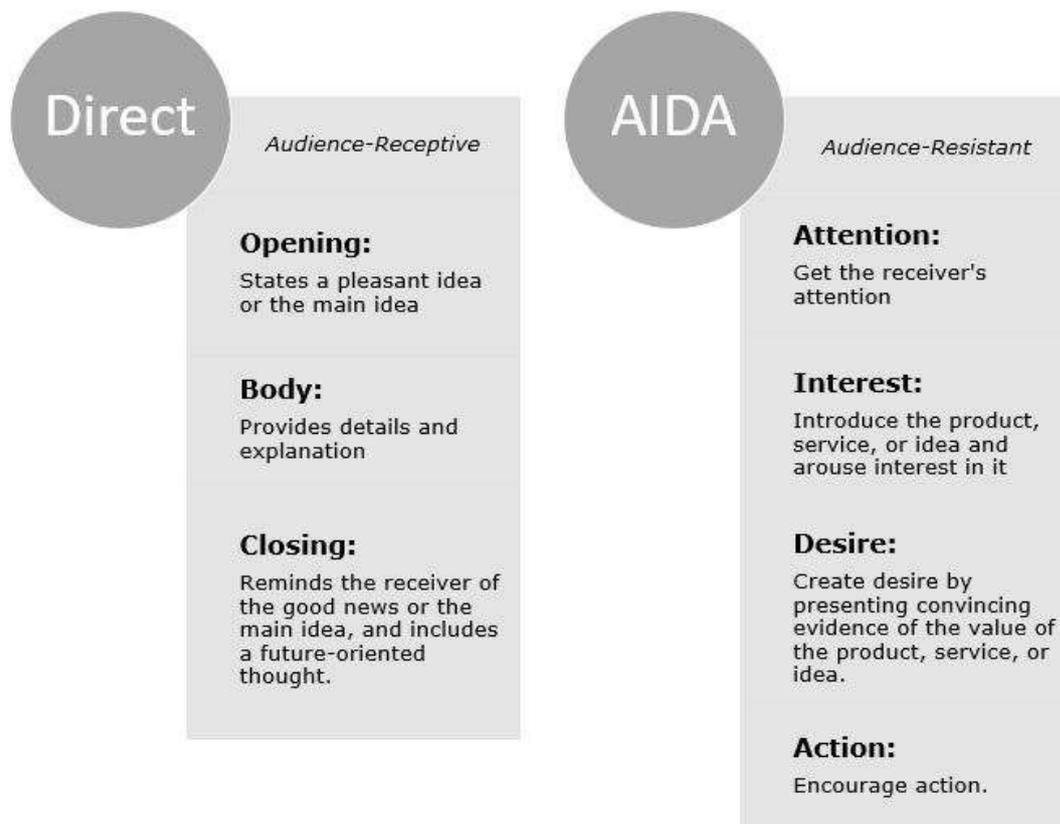
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<sup>1</sup> Swales and Feak (2000, p. 35) define move as a 'bounded communicative act that is designed to achieve one main communicative objective.'

example, the direct or deductive approach is commonly recommended when a writer expects the audience to react in a positive or neutral way to the message content (Guffey & Loewy, 2018). In direct strategy, the main idea of the message comes first and is followed by details that support it (Lehman, Dufrene, & Walker, 2018). A forward-looking closing typically ends the message (Guffey & Loewy, 2018, p. 308).

In contrast, the indirect or inductive approach is recommended when the writer anticipates resistance to the message. In this strategy, supporting or persuasive details come before the main idea (Schwom & Snyder, 2016, p. 87). The assumption is that, by the time the audience has read through the details, they will be more receptive to the main idea, which is typically an appeal to take action or accept an idea. A goodwill close usually ends the message (Schwom & Snyder, 2016). Therefore, AIDA is typically recommended for unsolicited sales messages, in particular, since the audience may be resistant to the message (Guffey & Loewy, 2018, p. 299). Figure 1 shows a comparison of the direct and indirect approaches.

**Figure 1:**  
*Comparison of the Direct and Indirect Approaches*



Source: adapted from Lehman, Dufrene, & Walker (2018)

While our purpose is to examine whether iGen students are persuaded by AIDA messages, our hypothesis is that the iGeneration will not find the AIDA strategy more persuasive than other, more direct strategies. This examination is based on the authors' observations of student reactions to persuasive strategies during classroom discussions. Moreover, according to Twenge (2017)<sup>2</sup>, members of the iGeneration prefer communication through more direct channels, such as social media, texting, and chat.

<sup>2</sup> Twenge (2017) defines the iGeneration as a demographic group of digital natives born after 1995, characterized by a preoccupation with technology.

These preferences for fast and truncated communication may influence their reaction to various traditional persuasive strategies.

### ***Discourse and Corpus Analysis of Fundraising Messages***

Largely descriptive in nature, discursal corpus analysis was applied to the genre of fundraising messages in the latter half of the twentieth century as academicians investigated the many strategies and techniques that fundraising practitioners employed in their persuasive materials. For example, Abelan, Redeker, and Thompson (1993) explored the rhetorical patterns within the genre; Bhatia (1998) and Connor (1997) examined the functions of fundraising discourse; and Connor and Gladkov (2004) used Aristotelian *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* in their textual analysis of the genre.

However, it was the work of John Swales (1981 and 1990), and later, Thomas Upton (2002) and Ulla Connor (Upton & Connor, 2001) who focused discourse analysis on more corpus-based moves applied to an entire class of fundraising messages. The Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication (ICIC) (now the International Center for Intercultural Communication at IUPUI) contributed significantly to this study of fundraising communication by collecting a corpus of fundraising materials from more than 230 non-profit organizations. The ICIC Fundraising Corpus, which is not publicly available, included more than 900 documents and totalled more than one million words. The documents came from five fields in the non-profit sector—education, health, human services, arts/culture, and conservation/environment (Upton, 2002).

In 2002, Upton conducted a corpus and genre analysis of the ICIC messages to identify common patterns in the rhetorical organization of annual giving letters. He found seven distinct moves in the corpus of messages:

- Move 1: Get attention
- Move 2: Introduce the cause and establish the credentials of the organization
- Move 3: Solicit response (either financial donation or other action)
- Move 4: Offer incentives (can be either tangible or intangible)
- Move 5: Reference insert (pledge form, return envelope, brochure, or gift)
- Move 6: Express gratitude (for past, current, future financial or other support)
- Move 7: Conclude with pleasantries

After identifying the individual moves, Upton looked for common move sequences in the letters in the corpus. He identified two template letters or 'prototypes.' The most frequent pattern, which Upton calls **Prototype One**, includes only two moves and is found in more than 85% of the letters in the corpus:

- Move 2: (Introduce the cause/establish credentials)
- Move 3: (Solicit response)

**Prototype Two** includes the following moves, in the following order:

- Move 2: Introduce the cause and establish the credentials of the organization
- Move 3: Solicit response (either financial donation or other action)
- Move 2: Introduce the cause and establish the credentials of the organization
- Move 3: Solicit response (either financial donation or other action)
- Move 5: Reference insert (pledge form, return envelope, brochure, or gift)
- Move 6: Express gratitude (for past, current, future financial or other support)

Neither of these distinct rhetorical prototypes resembles the traditional AIDA strategy (2002). Interestingly, Move 1: Get Attention, which corresponds to the first A in AIDA, appears rarely; only 15% of letters have at least one example of this move.

Moves 2 and 3, however, appear in 93% and 97% of the letters, respectively (2002, p. 10). So it is clear that, in practice at least, AIDA is not widely used in a genre that is intended to be persuasive. The corpus analysis methodology that Upton uses to analyse persuasive appeals is further discussed and applied in Upton and Cohen (2009).

While Upton identified a number of common rhetorical strategies used in direct-mail solicitations, he did not identify which ones were actually successful—in other words, which ones raised the most money and led to deeper and longer-term relationships between the institutions and their donors (2002). Further, Upton’s study does not consider the effect of these fundraising appeals on specific demographic groups.

Rather than analysing the rhetorical moves (or combination of moves) in a corpus of fundraising letters, this study attempts a more practical outcome: determining which strategies are more effective in raising money. In addition, we focused our inquiry on a demographic of rising interest to university fundraisers, the iGeneration (Twenge, 2017). Currently, traditional U.S. undergraduate students are members of iGen and will be targeted in their universities’ fundraising efforts upon graduation. Therefore, identifying the strategies that this generation finds persuasive, with the intent to recruit them as annual donors today and retain them as major donors in the future, is a top priority for higher education institutions.

## Methodology

The methodology for this project was modelled on a study by Goering, Connor, Nagelhout, and Steinberg (2011) in their analysis of the effectiveness of persuasive techniques in fundraising letters. To begin our project, we developed several hypothetical fundraising messages based on the authors’ own fundraising experience and incorporating ‘moves’ from the ICIC Fundraising Corpus studied by Upton. The letters purported to be from a regional university in the U.S. and solicited monetary support for student scholarships in the university’s College of Business Administration.

The respondents were students in a junior-level business communication course at the regional university named in the letters. At the beginning of the course unit on persuasive communication, before classroom discussion of persuasive techniques, respondents were given three pairs of letters to read. Each pair consisted of one AIDA letter and one direct letter. The students were then asked to imagine that they were recent alumni of their alma mater; in addition, they were told to assume that they could donate a total of \$100 to each pair of letters. They could divide those funds however they wished between the two letters, but they were asked to donate more money to the more persuasive letter in each pair. The donated amount per pair had to equal \$100 but could not be split \$50/\$50.

Of the 142 students who participated in the study, 54% were male and 41% were female (5% percent of participants did not report their gender). The majority of students were traditional college age. Only one participant was under the age of 18. Twenty-two percent of the participants were between 18 and 20 years of age and 53% of students were between the ages of 21 and 24. Only 19% of students were age 25 and above. The ethnicity of the group was predominantly White (44%) and Hispanic (24%), followed by African American (16%), and American Indian (5%).

Of the responses, 112 were collected from face-to-face classes; in these instances, the instructor distributed one pair of letters at a time along with a response sheet. An additional 30 responses were collected from online classes, in which students were presented with the three pairs of fundraising letters at once. To ensure confidentiality and to meet the ethical standard of human research outlined by the authors’ university, no student names were written or indicated on the response sheets;

instead, the anonymous sheets were randomly assigned a number code. The data was handled according to the confidentiality procedures required by our university.

In addition, students were asked to write a brief paragraph explaining their donation choices for each pair. By analysing the amount of donations given in response to the individual letters and the qualitative responses, we were able to judge which strategies may have been the most persuasive. Appendix A contains the response sheet and the demographic sheet distributed to the students. Appendices B, C, and D contain the three pairs of letters, respectively; each letter contains annotations of the moves for easy reference.

## Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that traditional undergraduate students, who represent an emerging audience for university fundraisers, may prefer a more direct strategy over an indirect strategy. When analysing students' donations to each pair of fundraising letters, we determined that each direct message in all three pairs received the most donation dollars. Table 1 shows the dollars allotted to each letter within each pair:

**Table 1:**  
*Donations by Letter*

| <b>Pair</b> | <b>Letter</b>       | <b>Donation Amount</b> |
|-------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Pair A      | Letter 1 (indirect) | \$6,440                |
|             | Letter 2 (direct)   | \$8,060                |
| Pair B      | Letter 1 (indirect) | \$6,876                |
|             | Letter 2 (direct)   | \$7,614                |
| Pair C      | Letter 1 (indirect) | \$3,703                |
|             | Letter 2 (direct)   | \$10,797               |

In Pair A, the indirect (AIDA) letter solicited \$6,440 and the direct letter solicited \$8,060, a difference of \$1,620. Similarly, in Pair B, the indirect letter solicited \$6,876, while the direct letter solicited \$7,614, a difference of \$738. While these amounts are not striking, the student explanations of their donation decisions reveal particular attitudes towards specific persuasive moves that suggest subtle preferences.

The largest disparity in donations occurred in Pair C. Students donated \$10,797 to the direct strategy letter and only \$3,703 to the indirect (AIDA) letter. In further analysing the rhetorical moves of those letters, as well as examining the qualitative comments made by students on their scoring sheets, we determined that students were averse to the attention-getter in the indirect letter: 'You never write. You never call. Just off on your own adventure with never a thought about us. But we're here and doing our best to enhance the value of your degree' (Appendix B). In addition, many students indicated that they stopped reading after the first line explaining the 'unprofessional,' 'rude,' 'demanding,' and 'inappropriate' tone of the attention-getter. Due to this

aversion, the 43 students gave \$0 to this letter (30.28%). However, when students liked an emotional appeal within the letter, they were motivated to give some money (\$1 to \$30 out of the \$100) despite an ineffective attention-getter. Those 59 students (41.5%) who donated small increments cited a move that came at the end of the letter explaining that any amount would go directly to help students cover school costs.

Overall, however, the letters that used a direct strategy raised \$26,711 in donations, while those letters that adopted an indirect AIDA strategy raised only \$17,019, a difference of \$9,692. In higher education fundraising, this could mean a 37% loss, which is substantial.

### **Pair A (Appendix C)**

Regarding letters in Pairs A and B, where the donations were not extremely disparate, the persuasive elements of the direct letters may have swayed students to donate more. Table 2 below shows that the majority of respondents (57.75%) chose to donate more money to the direct letter (Letter 2):

**Table 2:**  
*Pair A Donations by Frequency*

| <b>Pair</b> | <b>Letter</b>       | <b>#Respondents who donated more</b> |
|-------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| A           | Letter 1 (indirect) | 60 (42.25%)                          |
|             | Letter 2 (direct)   | 82 (57.75%)                          |

Letter 1 in Pair A follows closely the AIDA strategy for indirect persuasion by beginning with an attention-getting move: 'Lights! Camera! Action! It's almost time for the annual XXXX University's College of Business Student Awards Ceremony. Faculty presenters to the stage! The envelopes, please!' The letter asks for donations to fund student scholarships and indicates how the scholarship monies may be used to help students pay educational expenses such as tuition, housing, books, and supplies. Only 19 respondents (13.4%) responded that their donation to Letter 1 was based on the informative nature of message; however, clear preferences emerged in the data about the use of the attention-getting strategy mentioned previously.

While students did not have as strong a reaction to the tone of this initial attention-getting move (as they did in Pair C, Letter 1), 47 (33%) respondents specifically identified the attention-getting strategy of Letter 1 as a motivating reason for their donation choices. Of those 47 respondents, only 17 perceived the attention-getter negatively and ineffective. However, of the 30 respondents that appreciated the tone of the beginning lines of the letter ('Lights, Camera, Action...') and the 'energy,' 'fun,' and 'creativity' of that strategy, 8 still donated more money to the direct. Although the content in Letter 1 (indirect) was perceived as thorough by outlining where and how donation dollars would be used, the attention-getter seemed to work against the persuasiveness of the letter. This prompted 53 students (37%) to donate small increments of money (\$5-30) to this letter due to the informative nature of the message.

When considering the entire pool of respondents who donated more money to indirect Letter 1 (60 students), we observed a possible correlation between the gender

and age in students' perceptions of persuasive communication. The 60 respondents' reported gender was fairly matched, with 26 females and 34 males preferring Letter 1. Though the majority of these respondents were between the ages of 21 and 24, a significant number of respondents who preferred the indirect letter were over 25 years old. Of the 28 total study participants over 25, 12 (42.85%) (6 males and 6 females) donated more to the indirect letter. While additional research is necessary to determine the impact of age and gender on communicative preferences, this finding could support our hypothesis that iGeneration students value directness and explicitness in persuasive messages. Further, the fact that 50% of the respondents under 25 who donated more to Letter 1 (indirect) identified relatability as the persuasive element in this letter. Those students (6 females and 12 males, aged 18 to 24) claimed that Letter 1's focus on the importance of student scholarships and helping students 'achieve their dreams of a college education' influenced their decision, suggesting for higher education fundraisers a potential angle for appealing to this generation.

As mentioned, the informative and direct nature of Letter 2 seemed to be the most persuasive to the students. In this letter, the writer does not gain the audience's attention first; rather, he begins the letter with Move 2, which explains and establishes the credibility of the cause: 'As an alum of the XXXX University College of Business Administration, you know that the COBA has a rich tradition in business education, shaping the talents and genius of some of XXXX's most noted entrepreneurs.' Letter 2 presents the accomplishments and reputation of the school and includes a direct request for donations in the first paragraph: 'Please consider making an impromptu investment in the future of business education by being part of a XXXX renaissance of business.' The majority (91.46%) of respondents donated for Letter 2 based on three specific aspects: the tone ('professional,' 'business-like'), the transparency ('where my money is going,' 'informative,' 'clear,' 'straightforward'), and the choice ('options,' 'choose where to donate,' 'choice in the donor's hands'). Respondents appreciated being able to designate which program or scholarship their donation would support based on individual feelings on the importance of each program.

### ***Pair B (Appendix D)***

The donation amounts to the letters in Pair B were much closer than Pair A, with Letter 2, the direct letter, eliciting \$738 dollars more than the indirect letter (see Table 1). Table 3 below demonstrates that the number of respondents who donated more to each letter was almost equal, with two more respondents donating more money to the direct letter:

**Table 3:**  
*Pair B Donations by Frequency*

| <b><i>Pair</i></b> | <b><i>Letter</i></b> | <b><i>#Respondents who donated more</i></b> |
|--------------------|----------------------|---|
| B                  | Letter 1 (indirect)  | 70 (49.3%)                                  |
|                    | Letter 2 (direct)    | 72 (50.7%)                                  |

Letter 1 (indirect) again begins with an attention-getting device expected in the AIDA structure: 'Just a moment of your time, if you can, to talk about a ten dollar bill.' Twenty-nine respondents (41.4%) reference specifically the effectiveness of the opening, commenting on the power of a requested \$10 donation as well as the emotional appeal in the letter: '...sadly, many of these students cannot afford the ever-

growing costs of a college education.' Not only did these students feel that the *ask* of \$10 was reasonable, but also identified the emotional appeal in the letter as effective and relatable: 'With your help, these dedicated young people can reach their dreams.' Significantly, this emotional appeal resonated most with the 18-24 age demographic (72.4%). The persuasive power that seemed to influence the 70 students who donated more to Letter 1 was linked to being able to make a difference (impact).

Though the main persuasive strategy identified as effective by students for Pair A was information, many students had the opposite reaction to Pair B, Letter 2. Like other direct letters, Letter 2 begins with Move 2 and offers background information on the endowment fund. The writer also offers an update on the progress of donations and asks for donations in Move 3 of the third paragraph. Of the 72 respondents who donated more to Letter 2, 20 (28%) remarked that the message was 'too long,' 'too formal,' 'wordy,' and 'boring.' Although the message provides thorough information in an attempt to be transparent, the lack of concision renders this letter less persuasive for these students.

Still, Letter 2 rendered more donations (72) and more donation revenue than the indirect letter. The issue of impact again appears to be a strategy that persuades students to donate more money to this letter. Like Letter 1 in Pair A, students seemed to respond to the potential for increased impact by having their donations matched in Move 4. Of the 72 students who donated more to Letter 2, 21 (29%) specifically referenced the dollar-to-dollar donation matching as their reason for donating. While the letter was perceived as boring and too long, these students were still motivated by the potential for additional impact.

## Conclusion

In summary, iGeneration students appear to be persuaded by emotional appeals, the opportunity to make a greater difference, and the chance to directly help other students. The original purpose of this study was to examine the impact of AIDA message strategies on iGeneration students. The authors hypothesized that AIDA would not be more impactful than other direct strategies; however, it appears that direct strategies are even more persuasive to this demographic group than AIDA. In fact, it appears that differences in students' communicative preferences were not exclusively based on indirect (AIDA) or direct strategies, but rather were based on more nuanced inclusion of strategies related to emotion and impact. This finding suggests that persuasion for a younger demographic should be rooted in fact, transparency, and information, rather than in an effort to gain the audience's attention or by building rapport, as is found in AIDA. Therefore, the null hypothesis is only partially supported. As we discuss below, changes in future studies would allow us to better investigate the statistical significance of age and gender on communicative preferences. These findings suggest that demographic differences in communicative preferences may be influenced by technology, specifically social media and mobile communication. Not only are these technologies blurring the distinction between our personal and professional lives, but the use of wearable technologies is also becoming more common. Digital communication has enormous potential to create a paradigm shift in the ways that people strategically communicate with each other.

Another interesting observation in our study concerns the attention-getting device or the 'A' in AIDA. As reported in Upton's (2002) article, the 'Get Attention' move was rarely observable in the ICIC corpus. In the present study, this same move was frequently the part of the letter the students did not find impressive or persuasive. The majority of students who allocated more dollars to the letters that adopted a direct strategy did so because they appreciated the efficiency and transparency of the letter. They appreciated that the information was 'up front' and that the point of the letter (the

ask) was at the beginning. Several students commented 'get to the point' as their preferred communicative method.

Though our sample size was robust, a few changes could result in a more informative analysis of the data. Further breakdown of age brackets in the under-25 category would be beneficial to indicate tolerances of specific generational boundaries. Additionally, in future research, the use of actual fundraising letters to manage the content of the persuasive appeals may control for the adverse reactions we noted in Pair C. Using actual fundraising letters may also raise students' motivation to donate.

The small number of students in this study who identified the attention-getter in the indirect letters as more persuasive (and who donated more based on this assertion) were older and in a higher income bracket than typical iGeneration students. While this correlation deserves additional analysis, the findings suggest that further study of generational differences in response to fundraising strategies is promising. Specifically, future research could reveal which channels are more effective at reaching and impacting the iGeneration.

In addition, our future research will be focused on the iGeneration's response to the discourse moves of negative or bad news messages. These findings may further underscore a paradigm shift in the ways in which practitioners develop strategies for indirect messages and may affect how business communication message strategy is taught at the college-level.

In closing, the results of this study will enable fundraising and communication practitioners to create messages whose persuasive elements are based on research and not simply on tradition or anecdotal experience. The findings from this study also have the potential to inform curricular development focused on practical persuasion for the 21st Century.

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## Appendix A

### Score Sheet – Persuasive Letters

#### Directions:

1. Read both letters in Pair A. Imagine that you are an alumna/us of both the programs in the letters. (They are from different majors, so you'll need to pretend anew for each letter.)
2. Think about which letter is more persuasive. In other words, which one does a better job of making you want to donate to their cause?
3. Imagine that you have been given a total \$100 to donate to the two universities. Decide how much of the \$100 you want to give to each university. You may give the entire \$100 to one university if it does a fantastic job of making you want to donate; you may also divide the money between the two (for example, \$25 to one and \$75 to the other).
4. You may **NOT** split the donation directly in half (\$50 to one and \$50 to the other). The two amounts must be different, even if only by a few dollars.
5. You must donate in whole dollars (that is, no cents!).
6. When you have made your decision, fill out the section for Pair A below.
7. Then answer question (a) for Pair B
8. Follow the same procedure for Pair C.
9. When you have finished reviewing all pairs of letters, fill out the demographic information on the back of the sheet and return it to the instructor.

#### Pair A

Amount you'd like to donate to the university in Letter 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount you'd like to donate to the university in Letter 2: \_\_\_\_\_

- a) Why did you choose to divide up your donation in the way you did?

#### Pair B

Amount you'd like to donate to the university in Letter 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount you'd like to donate to the university in Letter 2: \_\_\_\_\_

- a) Why did you choose to divide up your donation in the way you did?

#### Pair C

Amount you'd like to donate to the university in Letter 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount you'd like to donate to the university in Letter 2: \_\_\_\_\_

- a) Why did you choose to divide up your donation in the way you did?

### Demographic Information

1) What is your age?

- < 18 years
- 18 to 20 years
- 21 to 24 years
- 25 and above

2) What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3) Which categories best describe you?

- White
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Black or African-American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Other

4) What is your major: \_\_\_\_\_

5) What is your year in school:

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate student

6) How many years have you attended [university name]?

- Less than 1
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- More than 4 years

## Appendix B

| <b>INDIRECT (AIDA) - Pair C, Letter 1: \$3,703 donated</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <p>T.J. Smart, Chair<br/>                     Department of Business Communication<br/>                     College of Business Administration<br/>                     XXXX University<br/>                     P.O. Box XXX<br/>                     XXXX<br/>                     February 1, 2018</p> <p>[Your Name]<br/>                     [Your Address]<br/>                     [Your City, State, and ZIP]</p> <p>Dear [Your Name]:</p> <p>You never write. You never call. Just off on your own adventure with never a thought about us.</p> <p>But we're here and doing our best to enhance the value of your degree. XXXX University is growing and so is the Business Communication Department. So, we thought you ought to know what we've been doing.</p> <p>Much of our energy lately has been devoted to preparing the proposal for the master's degree in Business Communication. The proposal has been approved the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and we will be open for business with our new MS program in Fall semester, 2018.</p> <p>One of the Department's goals is to create a scholarship fund for students in our new master's degree. In fact, this is such an important issue that every one of the full-time faculty has made a gift to this initiative. Faculty can be a pretty serious force when they believe in the rightness of something like this!</p> <p>We would be honored if you, as an alum, would join with the faculty in supporting the new scholarship fund. Even a gift of \$25.00 will make a huge impact. If every Business Communication graduate takes this opportunity to pass along the gifts they have received, then in a few years, we can offer full scholarships to every Business Communication graduate student.</p> <p>So, fill out the enclosed form, and we'll be delighted to hear from you.</p> <p>Sincerely yours,</p> <p>T.J. Smart<br/>                     Chair, Department of Business Communication</p> | <p>Move 1: Get attention</p> <p>Move 2: Introduce the cause and establish the credentials of the organization</p> <p>Move 3: Solicit response</p> <p>Move 4. Offer incentives</p> <p>Move 5: Reference insert<br/>                     Move 6. Express gratitude<br/>                     Move 7: Conclude with pleasantries</p> |



## Appendix C

| <b>INDIRECT (AIDA) - Pair A, Letter 1: \$6,440 donated</b>  |   |
|---|---|
| <p>T.J. Smart, Dean<br/>College of Business Administration<br/>XXXX University<br/>P.O. Box XXX<br/>XXXX<br/>February 1, 2018</p> <p>[Your Name]<br/>[Your Address]<br/>[Your City, State, and ZIP]</p> <p>Dear College of Business Alum,</p> <p>Lights! Camera! Action! It's almost time for the annual XXXX University's College of Business Student Awards Ceremony. Faculty presenters to the stage! The envelopes, please!</p> <p>Excitement abounds as some 300 students and proud parents and grandparents are preparing to fill the Parker Conference Center for this annual event. The event is CoBA's opportunity to recognize the winners of scholarships ranging from \$50 to \$3,000—scholarships made possible by alumni like you.</p> <p>We would like to offer a special way for you to participate in this memorable ceremony—by donating to one of the more than 50 scholarships available to CoBA students. With support from you and fellow alumni, the students of today are able to pay the ever-increasing costs of tuition, housing, books, and other expenses. In short, you can help them achieve their dreams of a college education.</p> <p>To donate to student scholarships, please complete the enclosed form and mail it with your check made payable to the XXXX College of Business Administration by March 15. This is a great way to make a dynamic donation to the students of XXXX CoBA.</p> <p>The students' appreciation and enthusiasm for what they are doing will go a long way to thank you for your encouragement and support.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>T.J. Smart<br/>Dean, XXXX College of Business Administration</p> | <p>Move 1: Get attention</p> <p>Move 2: Introduce the cause and establish the credentials of the organization</p> <p>Move 3: Solicit response</p> <p>Move 4. Offer incentives</p> <p>Move 5: Reference insert</p> <p>Move 6. Express gratitude<br/>Move 7: Conclude with pleasantries</p> |

**DIRECT – Pair A, Letter 2: \$7,970 donated**

T.J. Smart, Dean  
 College of Business Administration  
 XXXX University  
 P.O. Box XXX  
 XXXX  
 February 1, 2018

[Address]

Dear [Your Name]:

As an alum of the XXXX University College of Business Administration, you know that the CoBA has a rich tradition in business education, shaping the talents and genius of some of XXXX most noted entrepreneurs. In fact, an impressive number of business leaders with national reputations are products of the XXXX program, succeeding despite old—often inadequate—facilities. Please consider making an impromptu investment in the future of business education by being part of a XXXX renaissance of business. Areas where support is needed are identified below:

\_\_\_ GENERAL FUND. These funds allow the school some flexibility by putting your gift to work in an area that most needs it as circumstances arise.

\_\_\_ SCHOLARSHIPS/AWARDS. Students need to be recognized and rewarded for their abilities and efforts. Your gift in this area has a direct impact on a student’s continuing education. Please identify whether you wish to support the General Scholarship Fund or a particular scholarship (indicate name of this scholarship here:\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ VISITING SCHOLAR SERIES. Assistance is needed to continue this program which brings in some of the nation’s most noted business leaders to speak with students and faculty as well as the public.

\_\_\_ SATURDAY SCHOOL. The Saturday School offers various business classes for young and old alike who wish to improve their business knowledge but are not full-time XXXX students. Your assistance will allow the continuance of offering these programs at reasonable rates.

\_\_\_ FACULTY ENRICHMENT. Our faculty needs support for continuing education to maintain the knowledge base necessary for teaching and to meet with faculty members from other schools to exchange ideas and information at national meetings.

Thank you for your gift! Please make checks payable to: XXXX College of Business Administration, check the area from the above-listed categories where you’d like your gift to support, and return both items in the envelope.

Sincerely,  
 T.J. Smart, Dean

Move 2: Introduce the cause and establish the credentials of the organization

Move 3: Solicit response  
 Move 4. Offer incentives

Move 5: Reference insert  
 Move 6. Express gratitude  
 Move 7: Conclude with pleasantries



**DIRECT – Pair B, Letter 2: \$7,944 donated**

T.J. Smart, Chair  
 Department of Accounting  
 College of Business Administration  
 XXXX University  
 P.O. Box XXX  
 XXXX  
 February 1, 2018

[Your Name]  
 [Your Address]  
 [Your City, State, and ZIP]

Dear [Your Name]:

As you know, we are in the process of building an endowment fund in graduate accountancy at XXXX University which will honor Dr. Timothy J. O’Leary, a man whose leadership played a significant role in our school and profession. The Dr. Timothy J. O’Leary Accounting Endowment Fund will greatly benefit our faculty and students by providing funding to support teaching and research in our graduate accountancy program. Your support of this endowment in the past has been greatly appreciated.

I am pleased to report to you that we have raised \$87,000 toward our initial goal, which is to reach \$100,000 by January 2019. In a time when higher education, and graduate programs in particular, are suffering from a lack of funding, we are positioning ourselves to remain a leader with outstanding faculty, students, and private support from alumni and friends of the program.

As we approach our goal, a graduate of our program has offered to match all new gifts (dollar for dollar) until we reach the \$100,000 mark. To help us take advantage of this generous offer, I’d like to ask you to consider an additional contribution to the Dr. Timothy J. O’Leary Accounting Endowment Fund. This fund is extremely important to us, and your ongoing participation will be greatly appreciated. You have helped us get to this point, and I hope that you’ll extend your support. All contributions are tax-deductible.

I thank you for your consideration of this request – it will really make a difference!

Sincerely,

T.J. Smart, Ph.D.  
 Chair, XXXX University Department of Accounting

Move 2: Introduce the cause and establish the credentials of the organization

Move 4. Offer incentives

Move 3: Solicit response

Move 6. Express gratitude  
 Move 7: Conclude with pleasantries