



## Frank C. Dickerson, Ph.D.

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Service: [HighTouchCommunication.com](http://HighTouchCommunication.com) | Research: [TheWrittenVoice.org](http://TheWrittenVoice.org) | Education: [NarrativeFundRaising.org](http://NarrativeFundRaising.org)

### EDUCATION

**Claremont Graduate University:** Claremont, CA

PhD May 2009

Research: Linguistic, rhetorical, & paratextual dimensions of promotional and fundraising discourse  
Dissertation Title: *Writing the Voice of Philanthropy: How to Raise Money with Words*

Studied at: The Peter F. Drucker School of Management and The School of Educational Studies

Focus: Marketing for commercial and nonprofit organizations and pedagogy in higher education. A hallmark of doctoral studies at Claremont was the freedom to cross disciplinary lines, to take courses among all the university's graduate and undergraduate colleges, and to shape one's own research agenda.

**Pepperdine University:** Malibu, CA

MBA June 1989

MBA students took a predetermined corpus of courses with no majors or minors.

**International School of Theology:** San Bernardino, CA

MA June 1987

Studied theology, church history, exegesis, and Greek language

**The Ohio State University:** Columbus, OH

BA June 1973

Studied in the university's College of Humanities. I was allowed to create a cross-disciplinary Personalized Studies Program focused on communication, history, and the humanities.

### EXPERIENCE

**2015-2017: Part-time Adjunct Professor, Bristol University**—<https://www.bristoluniversity.edu/>

- Courses taught:  
Marketing | Business Research Methods | Business Ethics | Business Management  
Project Management | Supply Chain Management | American Government  
Capstone Research | American Literature | English Composition | Humanities
- Doctoral committee member & chairperson

**2011-2014: Part-time Adjunct instructor, Cal International University**—<http://www.caluniversity.edu/>

- Courses taught:  
Consumer Behavior | Advertising | Marketing & Brand Management | Marketing Principles  
Doctorate Capstone | Introduction to World Religions | Film Management  
English Composition | Integrated Retail Management | Enterprise Resource Planning  
Marketing & Brand Management | Qualitative Research in Consumer Behavior  
Project Research Plan Development | International Management and Marketing
- Doctoral committee member & chairperson

**1997: Part-time Adjunct Instructor Hope International University**

- \$ Created an online MBA course called *A Marketing and Fund-raising Communication Curriculum*
- \$ Implemented a marketing plan for promoting school's online MBA degree
- \$ Taught online course I had created

**2009-present: The Written Voice (linguistic and paralinguistic research)—<http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/>**

- \$ Text analysis service: Profiling promotional and fund-raising discourse by using multivariate analysis to measure the distribution in a text of 67 linguistic features and by using conventional discourse analysis rubrics to evaluate a text's effectiveness in 3 language domains
- \$ Copywriting and editing service: Writing purpose-driven texts and fixing those that have gone astray by using narrative to infuse the written word with the passion of speech. The end result is a product that *persuades* the doubting mind, *touches* the apathetic heart, and *moves* the reluctant will.
  1. **Rhetorical Superstructure** (the de facto *architectural plan* of a text)
  2. **Linguistic Substructure** (*the text-building raw materials* of words, grammar, narrative)
  3. **Stylistic Infrastructure** (the *artful use* of text-building raw materials to produce a total effect)

**2009-present: Narrative Fund Raising (educational outreach)—<http://www.narrativefundraising.org/>**

- \$ Research Briefing on Philanthropic Discourse (in plain English: on how fund raisers write)
- \$ Narrative FundRaising Seminar: Writing the Stories of Philanthropy. A daylong workshop that teaches how to avoid the five fatal mistakes fund appeals make. Believing that knowledge + application = change, participants write, read what they write, and get immediate feedback.

**1996: Founded InterSafeNet™—A Private-label Dial-up Internet Service**

- \$ Created affinity program for marketing InterSafeNet™ dial-up service to organizations as a revenue stream offering commissions in exchange for member subscriptions to service
- \$ Developed marketing plan for promoting InterSafeNet™ among membership organizations
- \$ Recruited a network of sales representatives and personally sold service throughout the U.S.

**1995-present: President and Founder High Touch Communication (A Marketing & Fund-raising Agency)—<http://www.hightouchcommunication/>**

- \$ Consulting in strategic marketing and fund-raising for businesses and nonprofits
- \$ Developing strategic plans based on Peter Drucker's paradigm of eight key-result domain
- \$ Conducting management, marketing, and fund-raising audits with client organizations
- \$ Analyzing commercial and nonprofit organizations' discourse with corpus linguistics tools
- \$ Writing copy for direct response marketing and fund-raising campaigns
- \$ Designing graphic elements for direct response marketing and fund-raising campaigns
- \$ Printing variable data (VDP) direct response campaigns featuring Computer HandScript—a proprietary computer-simulated handwriting technology for addressing & personalizing mail
- \$ A partial list of clients include nationally and regionally recognized organizations:
  - Muscular Dystrophy Association | Habitat for Humanity | Feed the Children | Food for the Hungry | Detroit Symphony Orchestra | Save the Children | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees | The University of Michigan | The Ohio State University
  - Chi Alpha Campus Ministries Campus Crusade for Christ | The Navigators | Luther Seminary | Concordia University Chicago | New York Metropolitan Opera | Azusa Pacific University | California Baptist University | American Bible Society | Oral Roberts University

Prison Fellowship Manhattan College | Florida College | California Pacific Medical | YMCA  
 Boy Scouts of America | Bryan College | Tennessee Wesleyan College | University of the  
 District of Columbia | ChildHelp USA | Make A Wish Foundation | The American Red  
 Cross | Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation | The Jesus Film Project Cumberland  
 University SUNY New Paltz Foundation | ORBIS International | Loma Linda University  
 Medical Parkinson Society Bible League Canada | Teen Challenge | Youth for Christ | Boys  
 & Girls Club | Tennessee Wesleyan College | Santa Monica College | UCLA Hardin-  
 Simmons University | Abilene Christian College | Fellowship of Reconciliation | USC

**1993-present: Conducting Management, Marketing, & Fundraising Counsel: Levasis Ministries, a  
 Nonprofit Consulting Agency <http://www.levasis.org/>**

- Offering pro bono or discounted counsel in marketing, management and fund-raising to small- and mid-size nonprofits and commercial enterprises
- Leading executives through the day-long Drucker strategic planning seminar
- Managing implementation of projects with executives of client organizations
- Past clients include these smaller organizations:  
 Illustra Media | KidWorks | LightHawk | MasterMedia | Go International | Obria Birth  
 Choice) | Raleigh Rescue Mission | Peppermint Ridge Group Home | Star 99 Christian  
 Radio | Windsor New Life Center | Xela Aid | Boys Hope Girls Hope | Wesley Community  
 Center | Food Bank of Alaska | Family Life Ministry | Family Life Broadcasting System  
 Frontiers Mission | St. Mary's Foodbank Alliance | AMOR Ministries | Angeles Crest  
 Christian Camp | Forest Home Christian Camp | Atkinson Youth Services | Claremont  
 School of Theology | Committee on the Shelterless West Hawaii Community Health Center  
 Icthus International | Mexican Medical Ministries | Pilgrim Pines Camp and Conference  
 Center | National Network of Youth Ministries | Polly Klaas Foundation | Surgical Eye  
 Expeditions | San Diego Rescue Mission | Successful Survivors Foundation | The Arc of  
 San Diego | Kimmel Center for Performing Arts | Lancaster Country Day School | National  
 Aviary Pittsburgh | Furman University | Ronald McDonald House Charities | Harmony  
 Foundation | Christian Community Action | Global Vision | Herald of Truth | KLRN-TV  
 Schreiner University | Star of Hope Rescue Mission | World Bible Translation Center | Utah  
 Youth Village | Hillview Acres Children's Home | Converge Worldwide | Union Gospel  
 Mission of Spokane | New India Evangelistic Association | WILW Television | City Mission  
 ISOH Free Medical Supplies | C.S. Lewis Foundation | Asian American Christian Fellowship

**1990-1992: Management, Marketing, & Fundraising Counsel: EDM, a Nonprofit Consultancy**

- Developed a one-day seminar on writing for direct response marketing and fund raising
- Implemented a marketing plan for promoting seminar across in U.S.
- Taught seminar in key cities
- Wrote paper containing course content: *The Trade Secrets of Development Copy Writing*

**1972-1989: CRU (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ, founded at UCLA 1951)**

**1986-1989:** U.S. director of development for staff fund-raising, reporting to the Vice President

- Created marketing and fund-raising strategies that increased income 7 to 10 percent annually, boosting revenue from \$65 million to \$92 million. This trend has continued with the organization, which is now ranking 23rd on *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* 400 list and 25<sup>th</sup> on the *Forbes* top 100 nonprofits. With 25,000 staff, worldwide revenue in 2016 was \$709.2 MM, with 90.5 percent of that sum coming from donor contributions.

- Oversaw international development training among continental directors in 93 countries
- Developed week-long curriculum for training new hires to raise funds for organization
- Produced training video, featuring SAG actors, to demonstrate skill areas of training

**1980-1985:** Assistant to the U.S. director

- Created marketing strategies for national conferences held across the U.S.
- Merged data from government and commercial information sources into a comprehensive profile of all U.S. four-year colleges and universities to assist in organization's expansion
- Developed and co-hosted a nationwide speaking tour with International staff members who had escaped the genocide of Pol Pot, under rule of the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea
- Authored numerous in-house publications
- Authored work that was published through Here's Life Publishers

**1977-1979:** International Training Curriculum coordinator

- Developed curricula using mediated training formats
- Recruited 65 writers to develop a standardized international training curriculum
- Supervised and trained writing team which published the curriculum produced

**1972-1976:** Researcher and field staff member

- As a junior studying ancient history at The Ohio State University to author, earned 12 credit hours working with Josh McDowell, conducting research and writing two chapters published in a two-volume anthology on apologetics: *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* and *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict* edited by McDowell. Research was done at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Southwestern Baptist Seminary, June-September 1972
- Developed university speaking tour to present findings of published research
- Joined the CRU staff developing student organizations in Minnesota and Texas for four years

**PUBLICATIONS, PAPERS, AND PRESENTATIONS**

*Case Study: Three A/B test panels from a million-household mailing by American Heart Association.* An abridged chapter from *Writing the Voice of Philanthropy: How to Raise Money with Words*, an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Claremont Graduate University: May 2012. [http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/AHA\\_CASE.pdf](http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/AHA_CASE.pdf).

*Narrative Fundraising: Writing the Stories of Philanthropy.* A daylong writing workshop for nonprofit sector leaders. [http://www.narrativefundraising.org/uploads/Narrative\\_Fundraising\\_Seminar\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.narrativefundraising.org/uploads/Narrative_Fundraising_Seminar_Brochure.pdf)

*Writing the voice of philanthropy: Do you make these five fatal mistakes in writing fund appeals?* Presentation first given at The 48<sup>th</sup> AFP International Conference on Fundraising (Chicago: March 2011) then at other national conferences. [http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/Writing\\_the\\_Voice.pdf](http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/Writing_the_Voice.pdf).

*A million-household mailing by American Heart Association: How Computer HandScript™ Personalization and Cancelled Discount Stamps Increased Net Income.* Unpublished case summary of dissertation chapter submitted to Claremont Graduate University. May 2011.

*How Harvard university got its name - major gift fundraising in the seventeenth century.* Showcase of fundraising innovation and inspiration. November 2010. <http://www.sofii.org/node/603>.

*Pliny the Younger and the first appeal for matching funds, ca. 100 AD.* Showcase of fundraising innovation and inspiration. October 2010. <http://www.sofii.org/node/559> (With Ken Burnett).

*Writing the voice of philanthropy: Fixing the broken discourse of fundraising.* The Nonprofit Quarterly: 17:1, Spring 2010. [http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/The\\_Nonprofit\\_Quarterly\\_Spring\\_2010\\_-\\_Writing\\_the\\_Voice\\_of\\_Philanthropy.pdf](http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/The_Nonprofit_Quarterly_Spring_2010_-_Writing_the_Voice_of_Philanthropy.pdf).

*The myth of the philanthropy fairy.* Mal Warwick's Newsletter: Successful Direct Mail, Telephone, and Online Fundraising. November 2010. <http://malwarwicknews.com/2010/11/mal-warwick-newsletter-november-2010/-post-1639>.

*The way we write is all wrong.* Journal of the DMA Nonprofit Federation. 12: 3, September 2009. [http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/The\\_Nonprofit\\_Quarterly\\_Spring\\_2010\\_-\\_Writing\\_the\\_Voice\\_of\\_Philanthropy.pdf](http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/The_Nonprofit_Quarterly_Spring_2010_-_Writing_the_Voice_of_Philanthropy.pdf).

*The Way We Write is All Wrong: A Profile of and Prescription for Fixing the Broken Discourse of Fund Raising.* www.TheAgitator.Net. June 2009. [http://www.theagitator.net/wp-content/uploads/file/The%20Way%20We%20Write%20is%20All%20Wrong\(2\).PDF](http://www.theagitator.net/wp-content/uploads/file/The%20Way%20We%20Write%20is%20All%20Wrong(2).PDF).

*The Impact of Paratextual Variables on Response and ROI in Direct Mail Fund Raising: If Your Envelope Doesn't Get Opened, Then It Really Doesn't Matter What You Put Inside.* June 2009. [http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Paratextual\\_Variables\\_on\\_Response\\_and\\_ROI.pdf](http://www.thewrittenvoice.org/uploads/The_Impact_of_Paratextual_Variables_on_Response_and_ROI.pdf)

*Writing the Voice of Philanthropy: How to Raise Money with Words.* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Claremont Graduate University. January 2009.

*The Mind of Philanthropy*. Unpublished review of literature relevant to understanding philanthropic discourse, emphasizing tacit presuppositions of disciplines. Claremont Graduate University. June 2004.  
<http://nebula.wsimg.com/828d2d512739e6157a83b18e4340cf3b?AccessKeyId=330181E9FCA328CEAB51&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

*The Voice of Philanthropy*: Unpublished review of literature research relevant to understanding philanthropic discourse, emphasizing centrality of communication theory. Claremont Graduate University. August 2004.  
[http://app4.websitetonight.com/projects/1/2/8/3/1283090/uploads/The\\_Voice\\_of\\_Philanthropy.pdf](http://app4.websitetonight.com/projects/1/2/8/3/1283090/uploads/The_Voice_of_Philanthropy.pdf)

*A Marketing and Fund-raising Communication Curriculum*. Created course and reader for Hope International University's online MBA curriculum. The Nonprofit Leadership Group. May 1997.

*A Path-Analytic Regression Analysis to Identify Correlates of Successful Face-to-face Fund Raising*. Unpublished study measuring solicitation performance using multivariate statistical techniques. Claremont Graduate University. September 1993.

*The Trade Secrets of Development Copywriting*. The Nonprofit Leadership Group. June 1992.

*Early Harvard Fund Raising*. Unpublished paper on colonial era fund raising efforts to promote higher education, with a focus on Harvard's efforts. Claremont Graduate University. October 1992.

*Effective Marketing and Fund-Raising Copy Writing*. A seminar series I marketed and taught across the U.S. in day-long seminars. July 1990.

*Fund-Raising Boot Camp*. Video-based training series which I wrote, produced, and directed at the PBS studios of Indiana University to demonstrate concepts in fund-raising training curriculum. June 1989.

*A Philosophy of Marketing and Development*. Unpublished Master's thesis. International School of Theology. July 1987.

*International Training Curriculum* (Ed). Led team of 65 writers to develop a curriculum used as a training resource in communication in 190 countries. Here's Life Publishers. September 1980.

*More Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Researched and wrote a chapter titled *The Presupposition of Anti-supernaturalism* for Josh McDowell's book on apologetics. Campus Crusade for Christ. September 1975.

*Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Researched and wrote a chapter titled: *The Resurrection: Hoax or History* for Josh McDowell's book on apologetics. Campus Crusade for Christ. September 1972.  
(In 1999, Thomas Nelson republished the preceding two volumes to which I made contributions in 1975 and 1972, renaming them as a single volume titled *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. In October 2006 *Christianity Today* honored this research by ranking it 13th on their list of "The Top 50 Books That Have Shaped Evangelicals," a works they described as "landmark titles that changed the way we think, talk, witness, worship, and live." <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/october/23.51.html>.)

Additional publications, and research updates are available at: [www.TheWrittenVoice.org](http://www.TheWrittenVoice.org), [www.NarrativeFundRaising.org](http://www.NarrativeFundRaising.org), [www.HighTouchCommunication](http://www.HighTouchCommunication), and [www.FrankDickerson.com](http://www.FrankDickerson.com).



**REFERENCES**

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Investigations Lieutenant  
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Letters of reference are available upon request.

The following describes the day-long writing workshop that grew out of my doctoral research in corpus linguistics and includes endorsements of that research by thought leaders in academia and the nonprofit sector.



**Narrative Fundraising™**  
*Writing the Stories of Philanthropy™*

**Stories make donors feel heroic  
Visual appeal boosts open rates**

**Doctoral Research At Claremont Graduate University Reveals:  
The Three Dimensions Of A Well-Built Story  
How Visual Rhetoric Lifted Response 346%  
Join your peers at a career-building 6-hour writing workshop**

## Do You Make These Five Fatal Mistakes When You Write a Fund Appeal?

Whether you raise major gifts face-to-face or speak to groups . . . whether you create direct mail letters, grant proposals, or online content—each of these tasks begins with writing. Dr. Frank Dickerson's analysis of 1.5 million words of fund-raising copy found that the typical appeal:

- Reads more like an *academic paper* than a *conversation*—preferring *abstract concepts* over making a *human connection*
- Has fewer narrative *linguistic features* and *rhetorical structures* than an *official document*—*high exposition/low dialogue*
- Lacks the *three types of characters* needed to build a story—*protagonists, antagonists, and ensemble cast members*
- Fails to create *tension* with *events, dialogue* and *imagery*—doesn't make a reader *scared, sad, glad* or *mad* enough to *act*
- Neglects to offer the *leading role of hero* to a donor—doesn't show how their *gift* can bring *resolution* to a nonprofit's *story*

Beyond theory to practice . . . at this workshop you'll learn how to avoid these problems by applying what you learn. You'll write, read what you write, and get feedback on:

- 10 rhetorical superstructures of the *connecting narrative moment*—the heart and soul of a fund appeal
- 23 linguistic features of personal *emotional connection*—words that make an appeal read like a conversation sounds
- 6 linguistic *features of obfuscation* to avoid—words and structures that create dense, tangled, detached prose
- 6 linguistic *substructures of narrative*—the story materials used to build the connecting narrative moment
- 5 visual language factors that add to text what a smile adds to speech—how *paralanguage* **lifted response 346%**

## What Thought Leaders Say About The Language Research This Seminar Is Built On:

"What an interesting extension of narrative research, Frank! Indeed, there are hardly any studies (that I know of!) that deal with the effectiveness of story-telling in fundraising—though it's taken for granted, somehow, that without a "good story" one's appeal for funds will not get you far. Let me hear more about what you're up to. It's very "consciousness raising."

Jerome Bruner, PhD  
New York University School of Law

"Dr. Dickerson, I enjoyed hearing that you are another language vigilante struggling to keep everyday writing clear and plain. The subject of fundraising writing has never crossed my path in all my years of teaching various forms of writing. Thank you for your contributions to this craft."

William Zinsser, Author of *On Writing*  
Columbia Graduate School of Journalism



"Frank, I tend to throw away many fund-raising letters and I never thought about analyzing the content and determining what works. I am pre-conditioned to favoring certain charities and causes and pay little attention to other solicitations. But your language analysis and findings are critical to practitioners."

*Philip Kotler, PhD, Professor of Marketing  
Northwestern University*

"Frank, this is amazing work, just the kind of thing we should be doing more of."

*Grant McCracken, PhD  
Research Affiliate, MIT*

"This research is a wake-up call based on solid evidence, and it couldn't come at a better time."

*Andy Goodman, Principal  
The Goodman Center*

"Frank, a very impressive study. Having been in direct mail for more than 30 years, your research is a window to the craft of words and how important copy is to successful direct marketing. In fact, given that twitter only allows 140 characters, I think the ability to write clearly and concisely is even made more important through social media."

*John McIlquham, CEO  
The NonProfit Times*

"I was pretty impressed. We need more research into the 'soft side' of fund raising. Story telling is where it's at!"

*Gail Perry, Principal  
Gail Perry Associates*

"I am interested in referencing your findings in The Nonprofit Marketing Guide. Thanks so much for your contribution to the field!"

*Kivi Leroux Miller, Principal  
NonProfitMarketingGuide.com*

"OMG Frank! Your work is brilliant! This research is profound and needs to be shared widely."

*Michael Margolis, President  
Get Storied*

"Thank you for sharing your research. This is very interesting work and of course extremely relevant for a large nonprofit organization like CARE. We know the importance of language in delivering our message to donors and the public, and it is both interesting and helpful to read your analysis of the current problems that plague written fundraising communications. We've also been testing similar variables that you mentioned in your study, such as simulated hand-written fonts and nonprofit stamps vs. first class rate to name a few. And, we continue to learn from our testing and tweaking of direct mail copy as well. Your research will be invaluable to us as we continue to try to 'crack the code' on what motivates individuals to take action through our direct response vehicles."

*Kymerly McElgunn Wolff, Sr. VP  
Formerly with CARE, Now with Habitat for Humanity*

"Wow, we are true soul mates when it comes to fund raising. Terrific. This stuff is great. I can't wait to highlight it in my work."

*Katya Andresen, C.O.O.  
Network for Good*

"Frank, wonderful stuff and we'd like our 7000+ readers of The Agitator to benefit from it."

*Roger Craver, Founder  
Craver, Matthews, Smith*

"This research agrees with what almost anybody who spends any time looking at the way nonprofits communicate already knows: Most fund raising copy is wooden, artificial, dull, and ineffective."

*Jeff Brooks  
Future Fundraising Now & TrueSense Marketing*

"Imagine my pleasure realizing you're the author of the piece I read a few days ago that I hoped to commend in my e-newsletter. One of my chums in the nonprofit world said: 'Look, we're NOT all nuts; and here's the research to prove it!' Thank you. You've done everyone a big favor. Lousy written communications are costing the industry gazillions in lost revenue."

*Tom Ahern, Principal  
Ahern Communications Ink*

"Fantastic. Great job in dignifying what I have also practiced: 'Write the way you talk.' I still do it and still dictate all my letters."

*Jerry Huntsinger, Founder  
Huntsinger & Jeffer*

"Frank I'll be brief. Awesome, as my young Canadian associates say. Keep it up and if you get to London--well, if you don't call me for a pub-crawl you're not half the man you think you are! Here is to the preservation of wisdom."

*John Sauvé-Rodd, Principal  
Datapreneurs, London*

"I completely agree with your take on the way we write. So much communication sent by great organizations is poorly crafted. And that makes it difficult to get people to listen to very important messages."

*Joan Smythe Dengler, Sr VP  
Covenant House*

"Dr. Dickerson, as part of his doctoral studies at Claremont Graduate University, in California, recently analyzed more than 1.5 million words of online and printed fund-raising texts to determine how effectively fund raisers communicate with their audiences. While his findings were enough to fuel a 350-page dissertation, his thesis can be boiled down to a few short words: Most fund-raising copy stinks."

*Peter Panepento, Asst. Managing Editor  
The Chronicle of Philanthropy*

**Learn more about Training:** [www.NarrativeFundRaising.org](http://www.NarrativeFundRaising.org)

**Research:** [www.TheWrittenVoice.org](http://www.TheWrittenVoice.org)

**Service:** [www.HighTouchCommunication.com](http://www.HighTouchCommunication.com)