



# The one-sentence theory of change.

Clarify your fundraising message with this magic formula

The most common  
donor grievance we  
hear (by far):

**They can't understand  
what you actually do.**

ONE-SENTENCE THEORY OF CHANGE

Even nonprofits with a theory of change on paper can quickly lose funders with all the assumptions, arrows, and academia.

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KEVIN L. BROWN



So here's a six-part formula.

Just like magic, it can  
summarize your entire theory  
of change in a single line.

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**Because (WHY),  
we work (WHERE)  
to help (WHO) (WHAT) (HOW),  
in order to (WHEN).**

And here are four Mighty Ally client examples, based on their complete theory of change:

# Sabre Education

Because 90% of a child's brain develops before age five (**WHY**), we work in Ghana (**WHERE**) to help the early childhood education sector (**WHO**) provide the best possible early childhood education (**WHAT**) by partnering with government to implement play-based learning at scale (**HOW**), in order to achieve SDG 4.2 by 2030 (**WHEN**).

# Justice Defenders

Because there can be no peace without justice and no justice without peace (**WHY**), we work in Uganda, Kenya, and The Gambia (**WHERE**) to help defenseless communities (**WHO**) get a fair hearing in court (**WHAT**) through legal education, training, and practice (**HOW**), in order to elevate one million people in conflict with the law within 10 years (**WHEN**).

# Transform Schools

Because poverty could be cut in half if all children completed secondary school (**WHY**), we work in India (**WHERE**) to help secondary school system actors (**WHO**) improve learning outcomes for children (**WHAT**) through co-designed learning enhancement programmes and capacity building (**HOW**), in order to reach 20 million children by 2030 (**WHEN**).

# Peek Vision

Because those with unmet needs remain invisible to health systems (**WHY**), we work in Africa and Asia (**WHERE**) to help eye health program providers (**WHO**) strengthen systems and service delivery (**WHAT**) with a software and data intelligence platform (**HOW**), in order to prevent 1.25 billion people from untreated vision loss by 2050 (**WHEN**).

Sure, it's a long, clunky sentence.

**But it's not supposed to be public-facing messaging.**

Instead, this one-liner — which consists of your problem statement, people, mission, interventions, and 10-year target — is meant to drive focus and strategic clarity.

So if you struggle to nail this one sentence, you'll struggle to pitch and struggle in fundraising.

But if you get it right, you'll capture attention and **leave donors wanting to learn more.**

*“Doers: until proven otherwise, your first priority is to learn to clearly, concisely, and compellingly communicate what it is that you do.”*

– Kevin Starr, Mulago Foundation

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