toddbemis

GET IN TOUCH

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EDUCATION

Bachelor of Environmental Design, Architecture
University of Colorado
Boulder, CO

Advanced + Senior Management Program
Babson College
Omnicom University
Boston, MA

Designing Strategy
IDEO U
Certificate Program

Senior Creative Director | Nonprofit Fundraising | Creative Systems

Hi, I'm Todd. I build creative systems that turn nonprofit supporters into lifelong donors.

I build creative systems for nonprofit fundraising — offers, donor journeys, and campaigns across every channel — sharpened by the same direct-response rigor commercial brands live or die by.

After 25 years directing creative for Make-A-Wish, World Vision, Operation Smile, The Salvation Army, and dozens of other national nonprofits — plus commercial brands like The Home Depot and AT&T — my throughline is simple: every gift a donor makes is also a promise, and the creative that keeps it is the creative that lasts.

There's an architect under the creative director. Architecture school taught me how to solve a problem elegantly — structure is what lets art and emotion carry a load. So I read offers, conversion paths, and donor journeys as structural questions: where the weight goes, what holds. Then the mixing starts — AI-tools, research, a photograph, an offer nobody's tried, a sentence tightened until it lands. Get the mix right and it reaches the heart and the wallet in one motion.

The tools change. The principle doesn't.

EXPERIENCE

VP, Client Innovation | The Lukens Company | 10/22 - 5/26

Led innovation and creative strategy across a national portfolio of nonprofit, cultural, and grassroots clients. Built the AI tools and methods now in use across the agency for discovery, content, and new business.

Founded TLC's Latino audience practice — strategy and messaging written for Hispanic donors, not translated at them.

Built persona-based, AI-powered content systems with data and strategy partners — membership renewal programs, segment-specific offers, and modular creative across mail, digital, and CTV.

Created custom GPTs and Claude-based tools trained on client voice and offer architecture for new business discovery and pitch development — adopted agency-wide.

Partnered with data science to turn segmentation insight into offer strategy and creative platforms that held up across channels.

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SELECT CLIENTS

Nonprofit
Make-A-Wish
The March of Dimes
Habitat for Humanity
The Salvation Army
Arbor Day Foundation
Prison Fellowship
World Vision
Mercy Ships
Operation Smile
Fred Hutch Hutchinson Cancer Center
Hope Rises Int'l
Save The Children
Food For The Poor
National Shrine
Pontifical Missions
& others...

Syndicated Groups
Children's Hospitals
Animal Welfare
Rescue Missions
Food Banks
Cancer Research

Commercial (BKV)
The Home Depot
Equifax
AT&T
Delta
John Deere
& others...

EXPERIENCE

VP, Group Creative Director | Grizzard/One&All | 2012 - 2022

Led creative, digital, UX, and strategy teams at one of the country's largest fundraising agencies through a decade of change. Built new productized service offerings. Directed national creative on $2M–$20M+ programs for Make-A-Wish, World Vision, Operation Smile, and others.

Moved several major national organizations off siloed channel calendars into unified acquisition and retention programs — direct mail, CTV, email, social, and display working from one strategy instead of five teams guessing at each other.

Partnered with data science on national research across verticals — surfacing insights on messaging, offers, visuals, and tone that drove optimization across entire co-ops. The highest-impact work of my career.

Productized a subscription service for nonprofit verticals — turning custom-build work into a modular, templated, multi-channel fundraising platform. Sites became core conversion hubs for the DM and digital programs.

Architected continuously optimized supporter programs across donor segments — offer development, conversion paths, response mechanisms, multivariate testing of CTAs and creative — raising retention and acquisition response across clients.

VP, Group Creative Director | BKV Advertising | 1998 – 2012

14 years leading creative at one of the country's largest direct-response agencies, where nonprofit fundraising programs ran alongside major commercial accounts (The Home Depot, Equifax, AT&T). Founded the agency's digital practice; grew into Group Creative Director and Strategist across the full portfolio.

Founded BKV's digital practice and grew the team that served both commercial and nonprofit clients across display, search, email, web platforms, and lead generation programs.

Directed creative across the full corporate roster and the agency's national nonprofit accounts — direct mail, digital, broadcast, print, and email — under a pay-per-acquisition business model that made optimization a survival skill.

Brought high-stakes corporate direct response rigor — disciplined testing, channel-by-channel attribution, offer optimization at scale — into nonprofit fundraising creative, where it became foundational to how the agency built donor programs.

Learned the full craft of direct response across every channel during a period when the agency was paid only when the response showed up.

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HOW I THINK

There's an architect under the creative director. The question on every conversion path: how do I make taking this action honestly worthwhile for the person being asked?

SKILLS

Creative leadership
Performance creative · Direct response · Donor and customer experience design · New product and service development · Modular design systems · Team leadership · New business and pitch development · Education/Presentation

Optimization and systems
Offer development and optimization · Conversion path design · Supporter program architecture · Service design · Multivariate testing · Vertical research and insight-driven creative strategy · Data science partnership · Pay-per-acquisition discipline

AI and tools
AI content systems · Custom GPT development · Claude-based tooling · Midjourney

Specialty
Multichannel campaign development (direct mail, CTV, email, social, broadcast, display) · Latino and Hispanic audience strategy

SPEAKING

Topics
Honest Mission Messaging
Fundraising for Latinos
Finding Your CX North Star
The Perfect Donor Journey
Neuroscience of Design
Branding for Fundraising
& others...

Conferences
BRIDGE (x4)
DMAW
Salvation Army NCRD
ReInvent
Rescue Mission Conferences
Animal Welfare Symposia
& others...

PEOPLE SAY

"What happens when the left brain meets the right? Research-driven creative, which is Todd's specialty. My research paired with Todd's creative application has resulted in campaigns that consistently outperform controls. Todd's innovation and strategic thinking shake up the ordinary, and help elevate brands for growth."

— Lori Collins, Marketing Science: Strategy | Analytics | Brand + Creative Research

"As CHRO of Grizzard Communications Group, it was my privilege to recruit and onboard Todd as the leader of all our creative work. [...] Todd is well-respected by those he leads as well as by his colleagues on the various account teams. He is a true business partner who adds value to everything he touches. One of the 'best hires' I had a part of during 30+ years as a HR professional."

— Gary Jones, former CHRO, Grizzard Communications Group