

Social Media for Nonprofit Organizations

Part II: Marketing, Communications, and Fundraising

By ESC Consultant James M. Greenfield, ACFRE, FAHP, former Senior Vice President, Resource Development, Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian

The vast Internet superhighway offers multiple avenues to link with anyone, anywhere, at any time. Social media has enlisted unprecedented numbers of participants with more than 2.9 billion email accounts, 400 million Facebook users, 161 million visits per month on Twitter, and 133 million active blogs (Wikipedia: Social Media). Given such a global entry point, care is needed by nonprofits in selecting how best to showcase their mission and vision with the goal of linking to those who will share in and support the cause. *At all times, cause reigns!*

[Social Media for Nonprofit Organizations: Part I in November](#) explored basic concepts and first steps for nonprofits to develop social media programs that connect their organization with “fans, followers, and friends” who can be educated, engaged, and enlisted in the cause.

After planning for a social media program, how do you now apply your social media program to your goals in marketing, communications, and fundraising? These uses of social media build on each other sequentially. First, you need to establish a visible identity or “brand” that people will trust and with which they will want to affiliate. Second, you need to communicate with materials designed to inform and build relationships of mutual respect. Fundraising comes third and works best when a foundation of contact and exchange has been established. In order:

- **Marketing Objectives:** Establish an image. Elicit a positive response. Draw clients for programs. Build a constituency. Recruit volunteers. Stimulate the public to act.
- **Communications Objectives:** Inform and educate. Tell a story, and repeat it often. Report results and outcomes. Educate advocates. Build confidence and

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trust. Create community consensus.

- Fundraising Objectives: Engage in friend-raising and relationship-building. Develop a willingness to volunteer and to give. Solicit gifts to meet defined community priorities. Maintain continuous contact with donors to keep them engaged and contributing.

Goals and Guidelines

Your overarching goal is to connect with those who share your vision and values who will support your mission. If you tie your social media program to a strategic marketing, communications, and fundraising plan with defined goals and objectives, this will define the tools you should use, the messages you will send, and the target markets to which they will be sent. You want to make it easy for people to connect, communicate, and collaborate. You should also review ethical guidelines for safe and effective use of social media by both nonprofits and the public, such as those published by the [Association of Fundraising Professionals](#).

Your path to success with social media will move you from making contacts to engaging those contacts regularly. Begin with gathering email and text message addresses year-round. Build relationships with addressees by offering information, sending updates, giving them direct access to programs and services, icons and links to related sites to connect them with others, and more. Know your audience groups and send personal messages to each with regularity.

Marketing

Internet forums, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, and videos are all available 24/7 to increase interest and active participation in nonprofit causes. But nonprofit leaders need to ask themselves what image they would like to put out in these forums, and how to best engage the public. It's important that such efforts are goal-driven, targeted, and consistent so that trust is developed and the efforts yield a high return.

Entry ports such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing are important as search engines, but they are not the only points of entry. It is estimated that half of 500 million active users log on to Facebook on any given day (Facebook Press Room Statistics). Twitter messages ("tweets"), only 140 characters of text, are the fastest growing instant messaging tool (Wikipedia: Twitter). Email remains an effective tool that can share volumes of information, so don't forget to incorporate it into your social media strategy. Blogs are cheap, easy to maintain, and a marketing tool that builds credibility, keeps people informed, and facilitates dialogue. But because daily (even hourly) response may be required, explore how the agency's image and brand would be communicated on different forums, what the target market would be, and if the return on investment would be worth the effort before diving in.

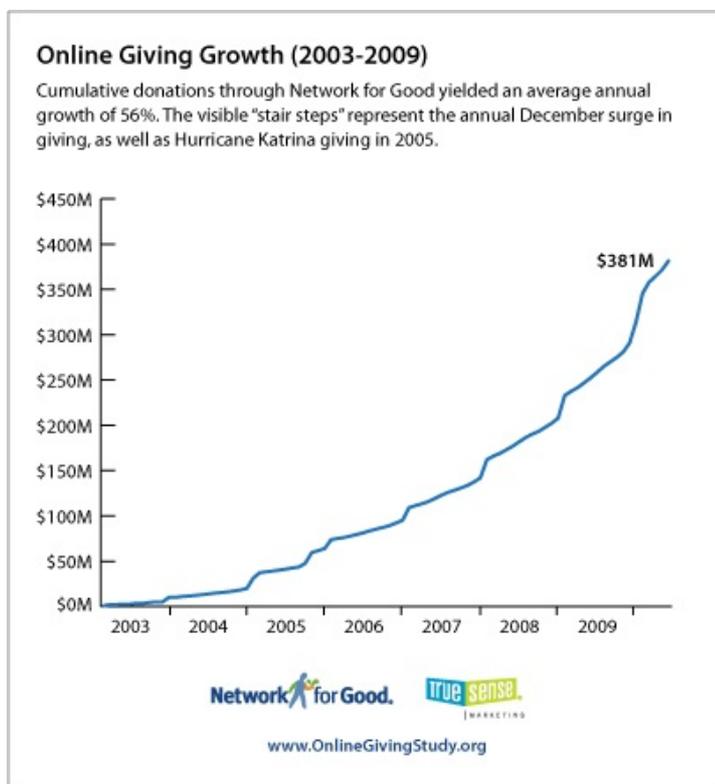
Communications

Social media promotes and engages, offering access to information, or dialogue, or both. Nonprofits can supplement traditional communications vehicles (such as direct mail, telephone, and events) with social media to expand public participation and support – in other words, the numbers and passion of your advocates, donors, and volunteers. The internet is limited to electronic relationships from a distance. *Bridging this gap is social media's end game, using a variety of "touchpoints" to engage people in your cause and stimulate active responses.*

Contact requires that the nonprofit "listens" in a way that leads to purposeful exchanges, answers a question, blogs or "tweets" on a topic or concern, or responds to a call to action. Internet campaigns can be conducted using strategies such as "social good," "impulse giving," or text messaging to engage the public in an interest or cause, solve a problem that needs fixing, or act on an urgent appeal for funds such as disaster relief. Once contact begins, offer ample avenues to engage new "fans, followers, and friends" via email newsletters and reports, and invitations to events, webinars, volunteer opportunities – even to make a gift – all designed to elicit and deepen their participation and support.

Fundraising

Of course most nonprofits want to use social media to increase fundraising. Online giving appears to be skyrocketing in the last seven years:



Between 2003 and 2009, online giving achieved \$381 million – an impressive figure – but perhaps more so that it represented 3.6 million gifts from 1.879 million unique donors to 66,470 different nonprofits (Network for Good: The Online Giving Study).

Adding a “Donate” icon on your agency’s website encourages contributions in the same virtual space that builds awareness of your organization and its mission. How ever someone lands on your homepage, whether using an Internet search engine, blog, or social networking site, both information and an appeal should be easily visible.

But it doesn’t end there. Your organization might also benefit from listings on charity portals, malls, or generic giving websites such as [4Charity.com](#), [lgive.com](#), [NetworkforGood.org](#), [GreaterGood.com](#), [WorkingForChange](#), [Facebook Causes](#), or [Give a Tweet](#). These offer secure channels to make gifts using bankcards (debit or credit) to any number of charities and often are a first point of contact for potential supporters. With all these vehicles, nonprofits must be prepared to respond quickly, whether or not funds were involved, and provide visible security protection whenever money is exchanged.

Don’t forget that once your social media plan is implemented, you will need to monitor website and social media traffic with defined metrics or benchmarks to help you evaluate whether or not you are meeting your objectives, which will assist in determining if the investment your organization is making in social media is worthwhile. You can use online measuring tools such as [Spredfast](#), [Social Mention](#), [Bit.ly](#), and [Twitalyzer](#) to keep an ongoing dashboard on your various online forums that is updated regularly and realistic in what it tracks (5 to 10 metrics for a start). For more detail on measuring social media results, see Part I of this series ([Executive Insights November 2010](#)).

Social media usage is growing daily, perhaps hourly, thanks to rapidly enhanced technologies enabled by Wi-Fi linked computers, cell phones, smartphones, tablets, and more. Access today is easy and anywhere. *Social media and social networking require serious investments in a new way of communication that begins with careful first steps and grows as the response dictates.* Using these tools properly will bring benefits to the “fans, followers, and friends” who connect with your organization, and in turn, will bring your agency increased support. Join in, but wisely, so you don’t miss out on the great opportunity.

Additional Resources:

“E-Mail and Internet Solicitation” by Jeff Stanger in *Achieving Excellence in Fundraising*. Third edition. Eugene R. Tempel, Timothy L. Seiler and Eva E. Aldrich, editors. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint, 2010, p. 235-246.

“Great Online Resources for Nonprofit Leaders” in *Executive Insights*. Executive Service Corps of Southern California, October 2010.

Internet and Nonprofit Management: Strategies, Tools & Trade Secrets. Ted Hart,

Steve MacLaughlin, James M. Greenfield, Philip H. Geier, Jr., Editors. AFP/Wiley Fund Development Series. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010.

“The Online Giving Study: A Call to Reinvent Donor Relationships.” (2003-2009). Network for Good. www.onlinegivingstudy.org.

Nonprofit Internet Strategies: Best Practices for Marketing, Communications, and Fundraising. Ted Hart, James M. Greenfield, Michael Johnston, Editors. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2005.

Nonprofit Marketing Best Practices. John J. Burnett. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2007.

People to People Fundraising: Social Networking and Web 2.0 for Charities. Ted Hart, James M. Greenfield, Sheeraz D. Haji, Editors. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007.

The Networked Nonprofit: Connecting with Social Media to Drive Change. Beth Kanter and Allison H. Fine. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint, 2010.

“Social Media for Nonprofit Organizations Part I” in *Executive Insights*. Executive Service Corps of Southern California, November 2010.

“Using Social Media to Energize and Mobilize Your Volunteers” by Jay B. Love in *Achieving Excellence in Fundraising*. Third edition. Eugene R. Tempel, Timothy L. Seiler and Eva E. Aldrich, editors. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint, 2010, p. 295-304.

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Executive Service Corps
1000 North Alameda Street
Suite 330
Los Angeles, California 90012

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