

NONPROFIT Communications REPORT MONTHLY COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR NONPROFITS

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Create Writer's Guidelines For Would-Be Contributors

Does your organization publish any newsletters, magazines or journals to which other authors might submit articles? If so, it's wise to have writers' guidelines available for those who are interested.

Here's a checklist of items to include in your newsletter's writers' guidelines:

- The type and size of articles you're requesting. Do you want feature stories? Tips and ideas? Events and calendar items?
- What graphical elements are needed (photos, artwork, etc.) and in what format (JPG, TIFF, etc.).
- Who will retain copyright to the article.
- What your style requirements are. Does your publication follow the Chicago Manual of Style? AP Style? What specific style requirements do you have (e.g., website instead of Web Site, e-mail instead of email, etc.)?
- Whether you want to receive query letters or full manuscripts. How you want to receive submissions (e-mail or mail or both), in what format and to which address.
- How much you will pay for each article and when. For example, will you pay a standard fee of \$X per article, so much per word, etc.? Will you pay upon acceptance or when the article is published?

CASE STUDIES

Visual Feature Story Showcases Unique Program Offering

The southern states are known for friendly accents and storytelling. But one North Carolina (UNC) campus is a nationally prominent training ground for a unique language and culture — American Sign Language (ASL) — and the surrounding community is full of valuable stories.

UNC Greensboro is home to Professions in Deafness (PID), a program in the School of Education that includes courses in ASL interpretation, K-12 education and Deaf advocacy. Students learn not only from accomplished faculty members but also from highly involved community members and accomplished alumni who have come out of the one-of-a-kind program. These aspects made PID the perfect topic for a highly visual UNCG Magazine feature (https://uc.uncg.edu/magazine/2019_spring/features/#PID) and a corresponding documentary, “Signs of Impact” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=YfcBBscutoc>).

“There are many things to learn about the Deaf community — for those studying sign language and those who are merely interested,” says University Communications Writer Susan Kirby-Smith. “We wanted to share new knowledge with our readers while showing how the program exemplifies one of our brand pillars of everyday impact.”

The print feature and film showcased local interpreters, public school teachers, advocacy professionals and faculty members. The content told a larger story about accessibility, inclusivity and Deaf culture, while at the same time promoting the PID program. Kirby-Smith shares how her team was able to craft these powerful spotlight pieces:

1. **Look behind the scenes.** “We easily found high-profile alumni, but talking with them helped us discover the unseen (and equally, or more important) everyday work of less visible graduates,” Kirby-Smith reveals.
2. **Understand the culture and consult the experts.** “From our faculty we gained an understanding of the three educational tracks and philosophies behind them,” Kirby-Smith says. “An important aspect to convey was that Deafness is not a disability, and that ASL is a culture and a language.”
3. **Look for community involvement — take input.** “For this project, it was crucial to attend Deaf community and ASL-learner events, from conversation nights to the largest Deaf holiday event in North Carolina.” Kirby-Smith adds. “Attending yielded us great photos and video and also taught us a lot about ASL and Deaf culture.”
4. **Aim to educate.** “This was an opportunity to highlight a community that may be unseen and show our university's commitment to it,” Kirby-Smith says. “For those who are new to ASL, we created original images of the ASL alphabet then ran that along the bottom of the feature.”
5. **Take an unconventional storytelling approach.** “We used art strategically to promote understanding — for instance, opening our video in silence as our interview subjects introduced themselves in ASL. With accessibility as a priority, we included ASL interpreting throughout the entire video. Those choices made a huge difference in how our video was perceived by both hearing and deaf audiences.”

Source: Susan Kirby-Smith, Writer and Editor, University Communications, University of North Carolina Greensboro, Greensboro, NC. Phone (336) 314-3155. E-mail: sckirbys@uncg.edu. Website: www.uncg.edu

Reach Out to Your Community's CEOs

Small business owners and corporate CEOs are in positions to be of great assistance — providing contributions, sponsorships, advertising, employee volunteers, gifts-in-kind and more.

It's worth your while to develop a yearlong plan designed to reach out to your community's CEOs. Examples of quantifiable objectives could include:

- To form a CEO club or society that provides member benefits and serves to involve this exclusive group in the life and work of our organization.
- To host a series of four exclusive informative and/or social gatherings for your region's CEOs.
- To form 10 new partnerships with companies this year, working through area CEOs.

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Send a Pitch Reporters Can't Pass Up

It's harder than ever to capture the attention of the media. That's due to the fact that newsroom sizes have diminished at a rapid pace. According to Pew Research Center, about 86,000 people were employed by American news outlets in 2018 (down from 114,000 in 2008).

"With newsrooms stretched thin and reporters juggling multiple beats, offering a thoroughly packaged pitch that makes the media's job easier is more likely to move the needle in your favor," says Katie Lischick, public relations director at The Cyphers Agency, an integrated marketing agency (Crofton, MD). "It's imperative to get creative with how you use your press releases to generate compelling coverage for your organization."

Here Lischick and Steve Adams, public relations account executive at Cyphers, share some of their top tips for packaging your press releases with content and details that will captivate reporters and lock better story placements for your nonprofit:

1. **Leverage a not-so-obvious milestone.** "While pitches for anniversaries are a dime a dozen, many nonprofits have at their disposal a wealth of facts and figures that can be used as eye-catching hooks," Adams says. "A library, for example, could develop some pretty headline-grabbing pitches announcing it's 10,000th book loaned, 1,000th library card issued or highest fine."
2. **Carry out a PR stunt.** "Almost everyone has a smartphone in reach, which means anyone can become a newsmaker by taking and sharing images and videos," Lischick explains. "A PR 'stunt' seeks to capitalize on this fact by capturing the public's attention, and subsequently the media's, with a share-worthy planned event. A hunger-fighting nonprofit might attempt to set a Guinness World Record for the biggest bowl of pasta ever made and serve it to the homeless."
3. **Develop a human interest story.** "While the National Center for Charitable Statistics reports there are more than 1.5 million nonprofits in the United States, each with its own unique mission, they do all have one thing in common: the goal of helping people," Adams says. "Nonprofits can take advantage of this by offering a compelling story of an individual whom they've helped (even if he or she remains anonymous)."
4. **Offer media an exclusive experience.** "Offering a unique, exclusive experience that media members can write about is one way to entice them to be present at your next event," Lischick adds. "Behind-the-scenes, one-on-one tours of soon-to-be-completed projects are hard to pass up."
5. **Share your expertise.** "Even media coverage that doesn't directly focus on your cause can raise the visibility of your organization (and yourself), so connecting your expertise to a timely or seasonal topic can be very valuable," Lischick says. "For example, if your nonprofit hosts an annual winter coat drive, you might consider offering a list of the 'most under-donated winter essentials.'"

Sources: Steven Adams, Public Relations Account Executive, The Cyphers Agency, Crofton, MD. Phone (410) 280-5451. E-mail: Steve@thecyphersagency.com. Website: www.thecyphersagency.com

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EVENT PLANNING

Create the Right Ambiance for Your Event

Planning a special evening event you'll want attendees to remember? Give some thought to setting the right mood. If, for instance, your event is more formal, consider these ideas:

- Turn lights low, but not too low for older guests.
- Gather several artificial trees and decorate them with white twinkly lights, and enjoy the magical glow that adds to the evening's ambiance.
- Ask male staff to wear tuxedos and women to dress in black and gold colors.
- Throw large glitter stars along the guests' walking path.
- Ask your CEO to sign cards with a message at each dinner place.

Boost Your Writing's Readability

Newsletters that are hard to read, wordy and full of phrases that don't mean anything to your audience are essentially not worth the time they take to write. Improving your newsletter's readability helps your donors, members and volunteers.

"If you write mediocre articles in your newsletter, you're training your audience to expect mediocre, and they will stop reading," says Sandy Rees, Chief Encouragement Officer of Get Fully Funded (Loudon, TN). Rees helps organizations make the most of their newsletters. She offers these three tips to improve your newsletter's readability:

1. **Get rid of acronyms and jargon.** Your readers don't understand your organization's insider language, for example, at-risk populations, underserved youth, and so on, and that could even put you at risk for making them feel dumb, diminishing the possibility they'll take action. Keep your writing clear and jargon-free. Rees suggests having someone outside your organization proofread your newsletter to catch any unrelatable terms.
2. **Use short sections and headings.** Keep the content short, crisp and to the point and use headlines to let the reader know what to expect in each section. "People are incredibly busy, and they won't read a long newsletter. The format that I use with clients is incredibly short: Your donor needs to read this, get the gist of it and feel good within 30 seconds." Consistently sharing good stories about the organization that make readers feel good about themselves will keep your readers looking forward to your newsletter.
3. **Include good images.** Graphics, charts, photos and video break up the text and give readers something to look at. The right image goes a long way to boosting readability by forging an emotional connection. "Make sure it's a good image — we have to see eyes and teeth. If you can't see the person's eyes, you can't see the emotion on their face." If privacy is an issue, use images that take advantage of creative angles, like shooting from the floor, over the shoulder or hands. To find images, Rees suggests hiring a photographer pro bono to build a catalog of images or looking for good stock images online.

Source: Sandy Rees, Chief Encouragement Officer, Get Fully Funded, Loudon, TN. Phone (865) 657-9915. E-mail: sandy@getfullyfunded.com. Website: www.getfullyfunded.com

Avoid Two Common Newsletter Mistakes

There are two common newsletter mistakes that go hand-in-hand: creating a newsletter that's inwardly focused and rushing the entire process.

Sandy Rees, chief encouragement officer for Get Fully Funded (Loudon, TN), says she sees many newsletters that are more about the organization, with an emphasis on the "we" and not enough on the reader. "I think what happens is people are in a hurry, and the newsletter is just one more thing on their to-do list. They don't give themselves enough time to think before they write and just slap something together so they can mark it off and go on to the next thing."

Combat this by starting the writing process asking yourself, "What am I assuming that my reader already knows?" "What does my reader want to know?" "What are the common myths and misconceptions my reader probably has?" and provide a nugget the reader can take away.

Rees advises creating a production schedule of at least a couple of weeks that builds in time to think about the content, draft the story and have it proofread and finalized. "When you start early, if something happens you can push those deadlines out a day or two, and you're still ahead of time."

Share Stories From Those You Serve

Q. *Why is it important to share stories of those you serve, and, more importantly, how do you go about making that happen?*

"College of the Atlantic (COA), like many institutions, is a big idea that's full of complexities. Even though we are a small school, you could never paint all the parts of COA into one picture. Our story is too rich and multilayered to even try. Instead, I picture COA as a diamond, with multiple, glimmering facets — each comprised of the stories of our community, especially faculty and students. Through these stories we let our audiences — prospective students, alumni, current students, parents, peers — know who we are, connect with us, even see themselves here. Sharing these stories is essential; people are at the center of our mission and our brand, and it is through these human stories that we build authenticity, excitement, confidence and curiosity.

"I go about telling these stories using the time-tested tools of journalism, and just like journalism, you need to come from a curious place in order for the process to work. You've got to ask a lot of questions and poke around the corners. I'm continually developing new sources. I want people to know what types of stories I'm looking for and to think of me when they've got something interesting. I work with my subjects just like a journalist would, but once I've got a good draft it goes right back to them so they can add or subtract, make edits, maybe improve their quotes. It's important that people feel good about what's going out the door, and it makes for a better finished product.

"I accomplish much of this work with the help of work-study students (every student at the college has work-study hours available, and they are an important part of our operations). They are not professionals, but one big advantage is they can move seamlessly within student life, academics, college events and just hanging out, so there are a lot of opportunities to capture authentic moments."

— Rob Levin, Director of Communications,
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Pull ‘Nonreaders’ Into Your Copy

Lengthy paragraphs aren’t only unappealing to the eyes — they are downright archaic. Asking someone to read every word on the page is asking a lot. Average readers instead absorb information via “flipping” or “skimming.” While the goal to understand key messages remains the same, it’s now the communications professional’s job to deliver well-packaged content tailored to “nonreaders.”

“People are skipping paragraphs — instead they read the headlines, the subheaders and the image captions,” says President of Wylie Communications Ann Wylie. “As writers we think of ourselves as creators of paragraphs, but that needs to change. Now we need to think about what we want our readers to learn, and how we can help them do that as quickly and easily as possible.” Wylie says there are three steps that will aid writers in producing effective copy:

- Include key messages in the micro-content.
- Make the page easier to read.
- Follow best practices.

In her class “Think Inside the Box” (<http://bit.ly/EmailWritingClass2020>) she shares these helpful tips:

1. **Design useful “micro-content.”** Break up your page with boxouts, subheaders, lists, infographics and bullets. These elements of “micro-content” should reinforce key messages and make the page more attractive to the eye.
2. **Provide a second pathway for the message.** “Your readers should get the gist of your message without reading a single paragraph,” Wylie suggests. “Do that by putting the messages directly into your display copy. If they can get the point without reading the entire article, then you’ve passed the ‘skim test.’”
3. **Apply the “palm test.”** “Your copy should appear easy to read,” Wylie insists. “Break your copy into sections no longer or wider than the palm of your hand. Actually place your palm on your newsletter or your marketing materials and take note of what’s underneath — it must include something other than just paragraphs. If it doesn’t, add a subheader, an image or something else.”
4. **Follow the evolution of best practices.** Technology, shortened attention spans and busy schedules all have an impact on best practices for writing. “What you learned in 2019 may already be outdated,” Wylie adds.

Wylie provides more suggestions in her Writing Tips e-mail newsletter (<http://bit.ly/Wylies-Email-Newsletter>).

Source: Ann Wylie, President, Wylie Communications, Portland, OR. Phone (503) 954-2289. E-mail: Ann@wyliecomm.com. Website: www.wyliecomm.com

Create a Mobile Video Plan

By Erin Sandage

Video is one form of communication that is here to stay. Statistics show video is the best performing content on Facebook and Twitter, and LinkedIn posts that use video see more engagement and shares than other types of content.

“Video, when done well, is an incredibly efficient way to reach people,” says Dan Farkas, lecturer on Strategic Communications for The Ohio State University (Columbus, OH). “A gaggle of studies have shown video has a longer shelf life, better conversion numbers and improves metrics on websites even when it is not watched.”

Farkas advises every organization should be integrating more video into their communication plans:

- **Decide how you want to use video.** One of the great things about video is one piece of content can be used in numerous ways in numerous places, such as social platforms, websites, newsletters and e-mails. “I’m a big believer in Gini Dietrich’s PESO (paid, earned, shared, owned) model. I also like the idea of COPE (create once, publish everywhere). The only person looking at a brand’s website, social, e-mail and then e-newsletter is the brand manager. I can take one video and easily use it across multiple areas without doing any extra work. It’s also easy to track who watches the video and what they do upon viewing the video.”
- **Use tools to help capture video.** A mobile phone is all that’s required to start capturing video, but Farkas adds there are apps that even make shooting your own video unnecessary. “I love Lumen5. It’s great for using existing content and quickly creating video without ever lifting a camera. Animoto and MoShow are great for phones. The key is to use technology your team feels comfortable using. I don’t like the idea of imposing technology on people.”
- **Determine who will gather content.** The job of capturing video content does not have to entirely rest on the communication department’s shoulders. Farkas suggests finding team members to help that are interested in telling stories, even from other departments. “I like to find people who embrace trying new things. This approach connects the communication to larger organizational goals and increases the probability of success and subsequent buy-in.”
- **Test all forms of video content.** What works once may not work a second time. Farkas suggests trying all different types of video content to see which provides the most value to your audience. He acknowledges talking-head videos are a tough sell for audiences. Instead, go for video content that can be watched without sound by utilizing captions and graphics. Live streaming is also growing in popularity, and Farkas says you can reuse that material to get the most out of the presenter’s time. “It’s easy to cut a Facebook Live into shorter segments, transcribe the information for social media or blogs and integrate the insights into earned media opportunities.”

Source: Dan Farkas, Lecturer, Strategic Communications, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. Phone (614) 668-8921. E-mail: farkas.88@osu.edu. Website: www.osu.edu

Infographics Best Practices

By Megan Venzin

Today's relentless data overload makes it difficult for people to quickly gather the information they need. Attention spans are shrinking, and the brain's bandwidth is stretched too thin to read endless pages of text via e-mails, online news, social media posts and physical publications. Infographics alleviate some of that stress by delivering the most important nuggets of insight in clean, visually appealing packages.

"Infographics tell stories combining text, illustrations, data visualizations and layout," says Author of the book "Cool Infographics" Randy Krum. "Good infographics are understood faster, memorable and actionable."

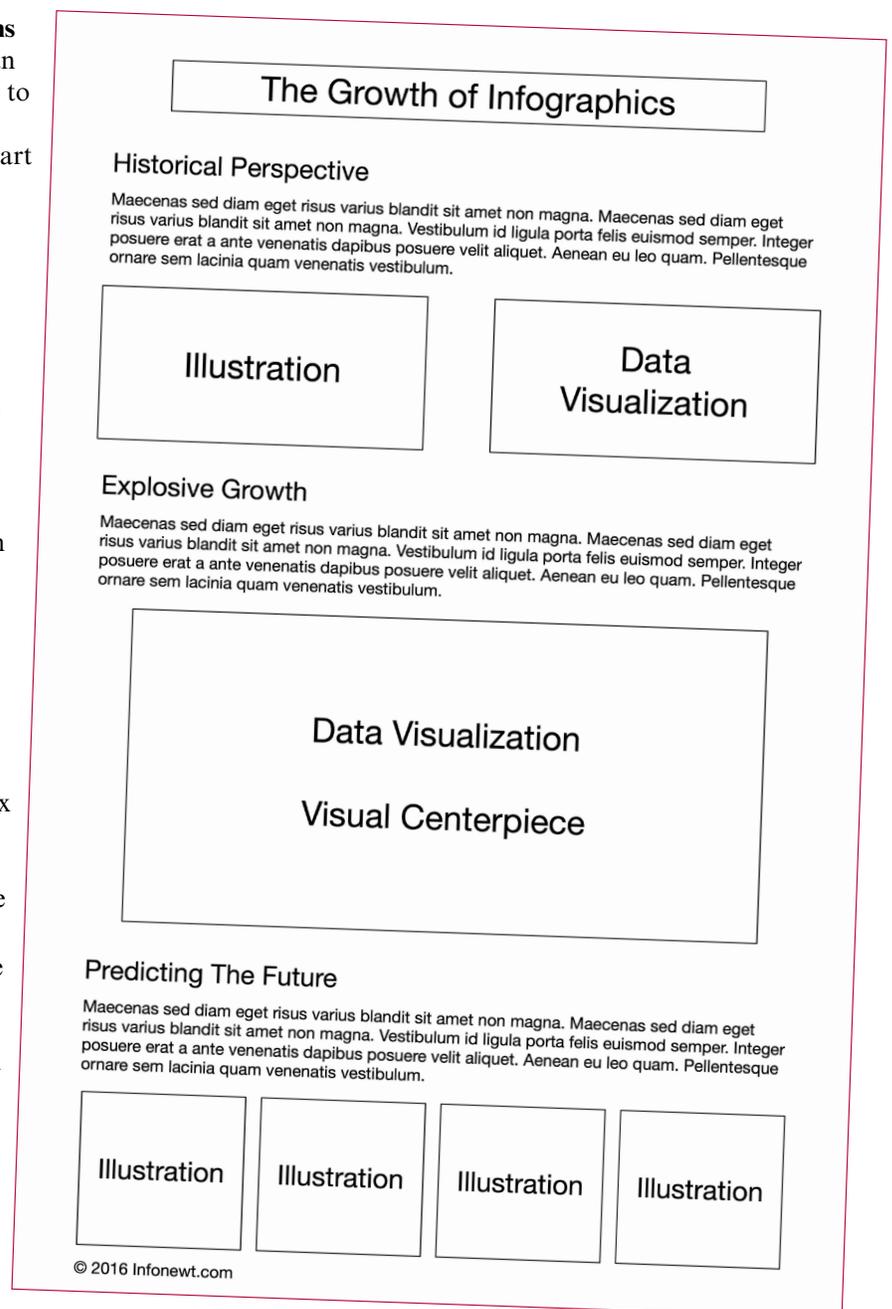
"Cool Infographics" guides nonprofit communications professionals on how to interpret data, sharpen designs and share infographics effectively online (download a PDF of the first chapter for free at <https://coolinfographics.com/book>). Krum offers some first steps for creating engaging infographics that tell complete stories and resonate with readers:

- 1. Know the difference between data visualizations and infographics.** A bar graph or line chart can help the human eye interpret data, but it fails to capture the "big picture." These are actually data visualizations, which are an important part of any infographic. However, to have impact they must be accompanied by supporting content, whether it be descriptive text or a layout that provides context and insight to readers.
- 2. Visualize your data.** "Data shown as text is ineffective," Krum says. According to a study conducted by the University of Rochester, 80 percent of the brain is dedicated to visual processing — so show, don't tell. If a food bank wants to emphasize how \$1 can supply three meals to a hungry person in need, it can show \$1 as text followed by images of three full plates of food, \$5 with 15 plates of food and so on. This reinforces the concept and provides a visual that is 6.5-times more memorable than text alone.
- 3. Refer to a wireframe.** Think of your "wireframe" as the rough draft of your infographic. It's black and white, uses text box placeholders instead of finalized visuals and serves to demonstrate the flow and order of information you wish to share. It's a reference document that keeps the story focused.
- 4. Keep SEO in mind.** "If you want more people to see your infographic, the JPG image format is best, and the ideal size is typically 800 pixels wide," Krum says. You'll also want to use a good image filename that implies exactly what's conveyed in the graphic. "That means no file names that look like this: 'Infographic.jpg' or 'Infographic Final Final Final.jpg,'" he adds.

Source: Randy Krum, President, InfoNewt. E-mail: randy@infonewt.com. Website: www.infonewt.com

With the dawn of a new decade, there are special considerations nonprofit communications professionals should keep in mind to ensure the security of their workplace documents. "When filling out paperwork, signing contracts, cutting checks, etc. always use the full year 2020," says Business and Finance Consultant Jackie McGuire. "Using only '20' gives people the opportunity to alter the dates on your documents."

Source: Jackie McGuire, Business and Finance Consultant, Washington, DC.
E-mail: hello@honestlyjackie.com. Website: www.honestlyjackie.com



Boost Your Likability By Removing These Walls

Think about the people with whom you most want to spend time. They are probably warm, dynamic, trustworthy and helpful. These individuals have an authentic appeal that sits front and center — they are likable.

“If the people who are speaking on behalf of your nonprofit are not likable, then you’re going to have a problem,” says owner of Graham Corporate Communications Inc. Bill Graham. Likable people are marketable, and, in turn, the organizations they represent also take on that quality. “Success comes easily to people and organizations that are completely open, trustworthy and have an objective to help everyone,” he adds.

So how can nonprofits and their spokespeople become more “likable” to the public? “They must remove the walls,” Graham says. “These are physical adjustments that anyone can make.” Here Graham explains some of the most common walls people create and how to eliminate them for “likable” results:

1. **Release the “jail bars.”** Some people have two prominent wrinkles in between their eyebrows, which appear mostly during times of concern or deep thought. “Those wrinkles, or jail bars, make others think you are worried, angry or off your game,” Graham explains. “It’s a defense mechanism, but it’s also a wall. Use your jail bars, or thinking face, only for demonstrative purposes.”
2. **Break the monotone.** “Your thinking face, or jail bars, causes your larynx to lock, which results in a one-note, monotone voice,” Graham shares. “A monotone voice lacks humanity. Inflection (the opposite of monotone) is creative.” To have inflection, just slightly lift your eyebrows — your voice will sound artistic and engaging.
3. **Wear an “open face.”** “The open face stops fights, opens doors and gets you free stuff,” Graham explains. The open face consists of slightly raised eyebrows with a slightly open mouth. “Your forehead controls your voice. An open face gives your larynx freedom to sound friendly,” he adds. Visually, the open face is the face you use to look into a baby’s crib — completely unguarded. Graham says people with an open face look interested and caring, which is good for communications staff.
4. **Drop the arms.** “Your hands and arms can be walls too,” Graham says. “The ‘fig leaf’ (think Adam and Eve) with carefully placed hands or folded arms says you need to protect yourself from others.” True, your hands at your side may not feel comfortable, but your job is to make the people around you comfortable.

Source: Bill Graham, Graham Corporate Communications Inc. Phone (917) 705-0663. E-mail: bill@grahamcc.com. Website: www.GrahamCC.com

Three Steps to Drive Meaningful Website Visits

“Getting Web traffic is about much more than just numbers — it’s about quality,” says CEO and Founder of Duraca Strategic, Tasha Prados. “It doesn’t matter if you’re getting millions of people to your site, if they’re not part of your ideal target audiences — e.g., folks who are truly eager to engage with your mission.”

Prados makes a good point. A high volume of Web traffic is insignificant if it fails to convert into the actions you want from your audience. “Would you rather have 1,000 page views or 1,000 donations?” Prados asks. “Reach alone means nothing.” If the people who land on your website aren’t genuinely interested in your organization’s work, then their visit lacks value. “Start with why you want people to come to your website — whether it’s donate, register to volunteer, etc. — and then work backwards from there to get them to take those actions.”

Prados has helped nonprofit clients build websites that do much more than just attract visitors. Instead she sees websites as a tool to help clients meet measurable objectives, such as increased donations, volunteer engagement and heightened visibility of key services. Here she shares three steps nonprofits can take to drive more “meaningful” website visits:

1. **Align brand positioning/messaging with target audiences.** Prados says this is the most commonly overlooked step — yet the most important and often hardest to implement, because it requires prioritizing big-picture, strategic thinking. “The foundation of any website is your brand, so make sure it’s authentic to your organization,” Prados says. “Your messaging needs to be true to your organization’s identity while getting at the motivations and barriers that drive your audiences to action. And your marketing needs to meet your audience where they already are.”
2. **Develop an integrated marketing strategy.** “Next you’ll need to get your messages out there, so your ideal audience can find you,” Prados explains. A truly integrated marketing strategy should look at all the ways you interact with the outside world — your “owned” media (website, social media, blog, e-mails, etc.), earned media (nonpaid exposure from journalists, influencers, etc.), paid media (advertising), thought leadership (speaking engagements), direct outreach and partnerships. “Hone in on what will be most effective for moving your target audience from learning your organization exists to being motivated to go to your website and do something there.”
3. **Conduct A/B testing.** After you start experimenting with different channels for reaching target audiences, use the data you gather to steadily improve your effectiveness. One of the easiest ways to do this is through A/B testing. Run the exact same message to two segments of your audience with one key difference. “Try testing two different calls to action, or two different headlines,” Prados instructs. “If you keep doing this over time, it will make your click-through rates more effective.”

Source: Tasha Prados, CEO and Founder, Business and Marketing Strategy Consultant, Duraca Strategic, Takoma Park, MD. Phone (202) 403-9969. E-mail: duraca.strategic@gmail.com. Website: www.duracastrategic.com

Planning to Celebrate an Anniversary?

Does your organization have a milestone anniversary on the horizon? These four suggestions will help you plan a winning celebration:

1. If it's not too late, start planning two years out. That way you can have a series of special events that take place all year long.
2. Start digging into your past early on. What you discover about your organization's history may provide creative planning ideas. Scour your archives. Talk to the oldest living individuals who were associated with your agency way back when.
3. At a minimum, form a single planning committee, and if time/resources permit, form a more structured steering committee that oversees several subcommittees. Expanded volunteer ownership of your anniversary will ensure its success.
4. To come up with the resources required to pull off a red-letter event, get sponsors to underwrite portions of it.

PLANNING PROCEDURES

Key Components of a Yearlong Communications Plan

Your fiscal year is about to end, and it's time to develop a new yearlong communications plan that outlines goals, quantifiable objectives, action plans and a master calendar that includes who's responsible for doing what by when.

When it's finished and in document form — one that you and your team can closely follow throughout the year — your yearlong communications plan should include these key components:

- A. Introduction — This is a summary of the plan, which points out what went into its development and what matters most. It should also note key changes from last year's plan.
- B. Position and committee descriptions — Each position description addresses who in your department is responsible for doing what, and each committee description lays out key responsibilities and expectations for each committee associated with your department or division.
- C. Goals — The two or three goals you select should tie into and support your nonprofit's overall goals for the year. They should be challenging but realistic, lofty but definitive.
- D. Quantifiable objectives — These are measurable objectives that help you achieve your broader goals (e.g., to place no fewer than 500 news releases in local, regional and statewide media throughout the fiscal year). You will likely have multiple quantifiable objectives that support each of your goals.
- E. Action plans — These more descriptive plans will outline what needs to happen to achieve particular quantifiable objectives. An action plan may address particular programs, events or communications strategies.
- F. Master calendar — This yearlong calendar brings together everything that needs to happen throughout the year and lists who is primarily responsible. It provides an overall snapshot and covers details as well.

Provide Clear Directions To Your Visitors

Does your office bear any responsibility for providing clear and simple directions for visitors to your facilities?

Whether it's road directions around your campus or directions to a particular office, be prepared to address whatever navigational questions come your way.

Take these steps to make getting to or navigating around your facilities easy:

1. Write a step-by-step set of directions that a sixth-grader would be able to follow. Picture yourself driving to the location. Be as detailed as possible, including distances.
2. Do a trial run. Follow the directions yourself, making sure you didn't miss important turns or landmarks along the route.
3. Make sure all buildings and offices are properly labeled and easily visible to visitors.
4. Include a map with your directions. Visit www.mapquest.com and chart a map to your organization.
5. If there are special requirements (e.g., security measures, handicap access, private lot, metered street parking, etc.), be sure to address them in your directions.

If you know a visitor is coming, contact that person prior to his or her visit to answer questions he or she may have regarding your location. This personal attention shows your agency cares about its constituents.

NW Boys & Girls Home
2019/20 Communications Plan - Master Calendar

Date	Item	Action	Responsible
10/1	President's Report	Final layout complete	Lemke
10/15	Volunteer Recognition Banquet	Send invitations	Marshall
10/15	Holiday Cards	Design determined, to print	Lemke
10/16	B&G Quarterly	Content final, topics assigned	Lemke
10/21	Open House - Chamber Event	Host a reception for Chamber members	Tortmann

Ways to Overcome Writer's Block

Having trouble putting pen to paper? Here are some tips for overcoming writer's block:

1. **Brainstorm.** Write out anything related to your topic. For example, if you're writing an article about writer's block, you might include words like: pen, computer screen, blank, nothing, frustration, etc.
2. **Read other people's work you admire.** It might serve as inspiration.
3. **Take a break.** Walk away from your desk and talk to people. Step outside and breathe in deeply. A dose of reality can get the creative juices flowing.
4. **Avoid writing at the end of a long work day.** Instead, write in the morning when your mind is clear, and you're thoroughly rested. Warm up your writing muscles by answering e-mail, then move on to larger tasks.
5. **Lower your standards.** In order to write well, sometimes you have to write poorly first. Avoid the urge to edit as you write. Save the judging and revision for later.
6. **Just write. Anything.** Let the sound of the clicking keys drown out the negative voices in your head.

What's Your 'Perceived' Mission?

Perception is not necessarily reality. How the public perceives your mission — through your programs and services, marketing and outreach — may differ from your stated mission. If so, you need to address the issue.

Perhaps your mission has changed over time and needs to be rewritten. If that's the case, update it and make sure everyone in your organization is aware of the change. If that's not the case, you need to refocus on your mission, making sure everyone in your organization is aware of it.

Be sure to include your mission statement in all of your publications, mailing and marketing efforts.

Take Steps to Increase Website Traffic

Q. *What specific actions have you taken to successfully increase traffic on your website?*

“We view ourselves as a media operation more than a marketing operation. So in order to drive Web traffic, we must place a strong focus on technical search engine optimization (SEO). We spend time figuring out what people are searching for and then create mission-appropriate content around that. In coming to this conclusion, we had to rethink our integrated approach to communication. Instead of aiming just for marketing-centric messaging, we started thinking about how we could position ourselves as a media brand that people know, trust and consider to be a credible source for information. Plus, we A/B test almost all of the content we send out (testing headlines, article count in newsletters, etc.). This gives us a more granular look at what is more likely to drive traffic, and once a user is on the site, what will keep them there.”

— Greg Brooks, President,
Better Cities Project, Las Vegas, NV.
E-mail: greg.brooks@better-cities.org
Website: www.better-cities.org

“If you're situated to host a job board for your sector, it's a great way to get traffic to your site, get higher e-mail opens and get your organization's name out there. While I was working as the communications director for the California Association of Nonprofits, we frequently linked to our online job board in our e-mail newsletters and would use social media (via Twitter and a weekly Facebook post labeled 'Jobs Roundup') to let our members know about open positions. This tactic helped us direct people to our website who may have never heard about us otherwise, all while providing a service to our members who were in need of capable employees.”

— Sean Coffey, Director of Communications and Outreach,
California Policy Lab, Los Angeles, CA.
Phone (310) 597-7821. E-mail: info@capolicylab.org
Website: www.capolicylab.org

“I have worked with a lot of nonprofits and have helped many of those improve traffic flow to their websites. I've found that website trends change often, and this is an area that organizations must pay careful attention to if they want to reach their intended audiences. Here are some key considerations I tell my clients to keep top of mind:

1. **“Have a clear website strategy.** Ask yourself this question: ‘Is the website's intention to encourage donation, talk about our programs, get volunteers, talk about our mission or something else?’ Although a website should ideally exist for several of those reasons, having the home page focus on a strategy itself and stick to a theme will go a long way in keeping people on the site.
2. **“Research and experiment with hashtags.** The hashtag is here, and it's very impactful. Make sure to add hashtags so your website comes up in searches, and also research how much of a following that hashtag already has. Something as simple as ‘#nonprofit’ may have 1,000 searches, whereas ‘#nonprofits’ may have 50,000 searches. If you are able to find the keywords that people are looking for and hashtag them on your site, this can greatly increase traffic.”

— Daniel Dibble, President and Co-Founder,
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