

# 2011 Guide to Nonprofit Marketing Wisdom

BY NANCY E. SCHWARTZ

*127 Nonprofit Marketers  
Share Lessons Learned*



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# Table of Contents

Part 1:	<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	1
Part 2:	<a href="#">Marketing Planning</a> .....	2
Part 3:	<a href="#">Know Your Audience</a> .....	6
Part 4:	<a href="#">Message Development</a> .....	9
Part 5:	<a href="#">Fundraising</a> .....	14
Part 6:	<a href="#">Strategy</a> .....	17
Part 7:	<a href="#">Email and E-newsletters</a> .....	21
Part 8:	<a href="#">Social Media</a> .....	24
Part 9:	<a href="#">Websites</a> .....	26
Part 10:	<a href="#">Media Relations and Press</a> .....	27
Part 11:	<a href="#">Staff and Leadership</a> .....	29
Part 12:	<a href="#">Budgets and Operations</a> .....	33
Part 13:	<a href="#">You, the Marketer</a> .....	36

## Introduction

Dear Nonprofit Communicator,

Welcome to the first edition of the GettingAttention.org *Guide to Nonprofit Marketing Wisdom*, featuring 127 lessons learned from your colleagues in the field.

These practical lessons derive from survey responses submitted by nonprofit communicators in December 2010.

A special thank you to all of you who shared your stories for this year's *Guide*. Your nonprofit marketing wisdom is thoughtful, focused, practical *and* based on experience. It's a gift to your fellow marketers, and will help them make this a highly-productive year.

Best regards,



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## Marketing Planning

### Without a Plan, It's All Action and No Traction

**1** I learned that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Doug Blecher, President  
Families with ASD

**2** Preparing an annual strategic marketing plan is a great help to me. We are a very small shop with a small budget. I updated the plan throughout the year on an ongoing basis and it's a vital document for us now – showing us what we accomplished and what we could have done better to integrate into the following year's plan.

Linda Richards, Marketing and Fund Development Coordinator  
Brockton Visiting Nurse Association

**3** Have a marketing plan and refer to it frequently. It's so easy to get distracted by the day-to-day (week-to-week, month-to-month) tasks. The result is that you end up with nothing but a lot of projects you've checked off your list. What you *don't* get is any real cohesive advancement in communicating your mission or engaging your target audiences.

Sheri Booms Holm, Communications Director  
West Central Initiative

### A Plan Positions You to Jump on Marketing Opportunities

**4** If you are doing it (a program, have new info, a success at advocating on behalf of members, etc.), but fail to communicate it, it is the same as not doing it at all.

Ginny A. Glasner, Executive Director  
Highland Park Chamber of Commerce

**5** Almost anything your organization does is a marketing opportunity for the *right* audience, whether it is promoting a new program, sharing the results of a recent fundraising event or announcing the appointment of a board or staff member.

These news events, and more, are valuable opportunities to enable your targets to learn more about your organization and the issues you focus on, and how they can help!

Amy Stern, Executive Director  
United Hospice of Rockland, Inc.

### **...And To Work Against Time**

**6** There is never enough time. Plan, plan, plan and then start working much earlier than you think you need to on the annual appeal, newsletter, whatever time sensitive information you are trying to send out.

Sheila Helgerson, Executive Director  
United Ministries, Inc.

**7** When it gets busy, that means you should keep doing the marketing you've been doing. Don't slack off and have to start up all over again!

Loretta Walker Kelly, Homeowner Coordinator  
Clackamas Community Land Trust

### **Marketing Should Take a Strategic Role, Not a Support Function**

**8** When left to their own devices, program managers will frequently devise an outreach approach that may address the needs of the program and its offerings, but doesn't necessarily benefit the organization as a whole. My last executive director suggested I take a backseat in programmatic outreach and what resulted was an ineffective hodgepodge of effort (or none at all).

In 2011, under a new director, I'm taking back ownership and devising a marketing strategy (thanks to Nancy and Kivi's *Total Focus Marketing Plan Workshop* I've got the tools to build support among the naysayers). I'm moving our organization's outreach/marketing/education efforts from where they were positioned (as a support function) to where they belongs (as a strategic player in the organization).

Tara Collins, Communications Director  
Watershed Agricultural Council

### **Avoid Shiny Object Syndrome**

**9** Don't fall into the shiny object syndrome. Tactics are sexier than strategy to most nonprofits. In a world where quick fixes from creative or social media are valued, it's often hard to take a breath, back up and create the necessary strategic groundwork.

Rebecca Brookes, President  
Upstream Social Marketing, LLC

### **Stay the Strategic Course**

**10** Success is dependent upon extensive preparation to deliver a carefully executed plan that tactically and strategically places the organization in a win-win situation.

The aim is not only to win the battle but to win the war. This involves social intelligence, energy, drive and commitment by highly effective teams. You must create and drive the agenda forward by being greatly professional in every aspect of the operation.

Eddy Jackson, Head Teacher  
Highfurlong School

**11** In the middle of a recession, do not make a name change of your theatre name. You do not have the marketing funds to transition to a new name properly and your current and former patrons will not support the change with their donations.

Stay the course until economic hardships are over – then make a major name or strategize directional change if you know you have the financial and community support of your patrons, staff and donors.

Christine McGlasson, (former) Director of Development  
Magic Circle Theatre/Civic Theatre West

### **Measuring is Planning's Other Half**

**12** Simply "re-evaluate, re-evaluate!" Your marketing plan should be regularly evaluated by yourself and your staff against your benchmarks and the environment in which you work.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving has a great marketing department at the national level but each state also has its unique marketing needs. We reach out to volunteers and donors regularly for feedback and recommendations. Each time we do so is an opportunity for the marketing team to review our plan vs. reality!

Janette Kolodge, State Executive Director  
MADD/Mothers Against Drunk Driving

**13** Marketing, as opposed to straight development/fundraising is often misunderstood. Find a way to benchmark, and then measure, the results of your work.

Abby Reiner, EVP, Marketing  
Wounded Warrior Project

## Know Your Audience

### Meet Your Audiences Where They Already Are

**14** Be clear about the audience before you create the strategy. Not all audiences use all channels. Be visible where your audience spends their time.

Amy K. Harbison, Principal  
Open Window Creative Strategies, LLC

**15** Let your audiences interact with you in the way they want to, where they want to. That could be via e-newsletter, paper newsletter, social media, and/or your website, among other options.

Anonymous

**16** We sent information via the usual channels to the deaf community earlier this year about several signed cultural events, but received no response. So we did the (in hindsight) obvious thing. We contacted information gatekeepers in the deaf community and asked them why our communication hadn't worked. The answers were illuminating and resulted in a positive change in the way we presented events and the advice we are able to give event organizers, an ongoing dialogue with the deaf community, an improved and consistent response rate to events and a very enjoyable and informative deaf awareness training session for all our staff.

Tracylee Arestides, Media & Marketing Coordinator  
Accessible Arts NSW

### It's Never About You

**17** I am more interested in our product (plays and musicals) than the public is.

Anonymous

**18** Just because you like something, that doesn't mean your constituents will feel the same. Use the media format preferred by your constituents, not necessarily the same ones frequented by you and your colleagues. Design and write for your donors and prospects, not for yourself.

Renee Russell, Development Assistant  
St. Joseph Home of Cincinnati

**19** Too many nonprofits develop their marketing plans from the inside out. One of my messages is: "Always start with them!" It's a rare nonprofit that truly understands the difference between market push (starting with themselves) and market pull (starting with their clients and customers).

Jerr Boschee, Founder and Executive Director  
The Institute for Social Entrepreneurs

**20** Always write with the customer in mind. If you love the package, your target audiences probably won't. Write for them, not for yourself. And test!

Krista L. Ellis-Smith, Marketing Data Analyst  
CNIB

### **It's All About Relationships**

**21** We can't skip building relationships and community. Those are the foundations of all healthy organizations.

Emily Jarrett Hughes, Assistant Director of Organizational Development  
MN Council of Churches

### **Know Your Audiences' Wants and Habits**

**22** As arch villain Charlie Cowell said in *The Music Man*, "Ya gotta know the territory!" Where are you looking for your customers? What's on their mind? What will push their buttons? What are the socio-economic conditions or environmental factors? Etc., etc.

Ray Nichols, Education and Outreach Coordinator  
NJ Department of Environmental Protection

**23** Take the time to research and garner a detailed understanding of the target market before designing and forwarding marketing materials. Otherwise, you might as well throw them in the trash.

Jim McHardy, Director  
Kinark Outdoor Centre

**24** Researching the demographics of the target audiences for an event is a prerequisite for reaching the right people with the right message via the right channel at the right time.

Donna Barrett, Sales and Marketing Manager  
Cultural Center of Charlotte County

### **Ask the Right Questions, and Keep Asking**

**25** Be sure you understand what your customers/clients need and what their expectations are – then target your communication and engagement with them with timely, concise, and relevant information that MATTERS to them, not just what matters to you or your organization. If you don't know what they need and expect, ask!

Libby Barnes, VP for Marketing and Membership  
Greater Spokane Incorporated

**26** You need to make a great case but when the economy shifts so dramatically as it has since 2007-08, you need to be ready to make changes to that case. What resonated with people before the crisis likely does not resonate now.

Catherine Ferrer, (former) Fundraising Programs Manager  
Manatee County Habitat for Humanity

### **Everyone is a Market Researcher**

**27** There has to be synchronicity between those marketing and those that are on the ground doing face-to-face meeting with donors, volunteers and program participants. Your colleagues throughout your organization should be talking to your audiences regularly via a defined process in order to find out what they want, what's working and what's not. You'll need a system to share key insights gained this way and responses to them, and a good CRM (constituent relationship management system) to note everything you know about each one of your stakeholders so you can respond appropriately and include them in the right segments for outreach.

Kathy Cunningham, Admin Managed Care  
Clarity CGC

### **Kick Start a Feedback Stream**

**28** Talk to the people you're hoping to engage! After taking some time to talk to a few of my organization's most successful team fundraisers, I learned that a new team fundraising tool we're implementing is confusing to them.

It can be hard to make yourself take the time to reach out for input, but it is well worth the time! Next on my to-do list is to survey our Facebook fans on what they like hearing about.

Daniel Buckley, Senior Online Communications Manager  
Food Bank for New York City

## Message Development

### It's Still Not About You

**29** Sell the sizzle, not the steak. Don't go on ad nauseam about your organization. If people want to know about your organization or how you do what you do, they'll ask. Tell them about the people whose lives you help change instead.

John M., Development Officer  
DAI

### Think Conversation, Not Megaphone

**30** When sending out a mass email, write it as if you are talking to one person.  
Jackie Normand, Ministry Development Director  
Christian HELP

**31** Prospects are more responsive when the marketing tone is conversational.  
C. Rybak, Member Relations  
Alliance for Children and Families

### More Stories, Fewer Stats

**32** I try to remember that my donors need more stories they can connect to and fewer statistics about what we are doing.

Andy Perkins, Executive Director  
BESTWA, Inc.

**33** There is real power in asking our clients to share their photo and story with our stakeholders, both for our clients and for our supporters and prospects.

Because we help sexual assault survivors, we have always been overly protective of client identity. This year, we learned that many of our clients appreciate the opportunity to tell their stories and want to help our organization put a face on the issue of sexual assault. I feel we are empowering our clients even more by giving them a choice whether or not to share their story publicly.

Sondra Miller, Vice President of Community Engagement  
Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

**34** We learned that using brief stories about how our clients are empowered to create lasting, positive change for themselves and their families works much better than data (e.g., number of women helped) to communicate the value we deliver to folks in our region.

We saw the difference in this year's annual appeal, which began with three one sentence stories. We've built a base of 25 or so brief stories and will keep adding them to keep this golden resource fresh.

Pam Kukla, Special Advisor, Communications  
WE CAN (Women's Empowerment Through Cape Area Networking)

#### **Less is More, and Don't Assume**

**35** Brevity! I always struggle with this. Under the heading of brevity comes the subheading of concise language and avoiding use of industry jargon. I keep a sticky note on my desk to remind me that only 37 percent of Americans are familiar with the term "planned giving." People don't care about statistics and appeals and campaigns, they just want to make a difference and feel connected to something that matters to them. Make that possible.

Susan Dunning, Gift Planning Associate  
Bates College, Office of Gift Planning

**36** I have a rule of thumb that, while a bit dramatic, almost always leads me in the right direction: "No one ever reads anything." This rule reminds me to make everything as clear and succinct as possible, ensuring that more people actually *will* read what I'm sending them.

Melinda McKee, Public Relations and Communications Director  
NC Gives

**37** Say more with less! I recently became intrigued with the idea of getting your message across in six words. I learned that your opening statement should be intriguing and invite people to ask questions. That was extremely helpful as I frequently try to say all the important stuff in 30 seconds, which must be overwhelming to the listener.

Mary Streufert, Regional Coordinator  
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

### **Repetition, Repetition, Repetition**

**38** Don't worry about being redundant in your messaging! You may feel like you've said it a million times in a million ways in a million venues, but if it's still news to some, and it's important to your organization, it's worth repeating, via Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn!

Tracy Thompson-Przylucki, Executive Director  
NELCO

**39** Repeat the same message several times before you move on to another to really test it!

Charlene Smith, CEO  
People Helping People

### **Consistency Connects**

**40** Nothing's as important as consistent, regular messaging. True success in marketing comes in building your case with consistent communication across various channels. You can't put all your eggs in one basket with marketing, you need to use multiple media.

Cindy Weber, Director of Financial Development  
Door County YMCA

### **Personality Is Powerful**

**41** Make subject lines, tweets and Facebook posts sound more personal, rather than businesslike or clinical. Your show of personality enables people to feel connected.

Nicole Limpert, Social Media Manager  
Catholic Charities in Madison, WI

**42** Always use inclusive, gender-neutral language, especially when talking to men.

Derek Dean, Fundraising Coordinator  
Home and Family - Christchurch NZ

### **The Power of Thank You**

**43** Last year the common theme of our outreach was the power of “thank you.” It was a huge success!

C. B. Watts

### **Ensure Your Message Platforms Is Ready and Waiting**

**44** Make certain that you have an "elevator statement" prepared and that everyone knows it.

Anonymous  
Private K-12 School

### **Taglines**

**45** Develop a tagline that engages while conveying your organization’s focus and impact. Have it provoke a reaction or feeling to be most effective.

We were lucky to have a board member suggest our new tagline, “Teaching the Art of Metal,” and it wasn't being used anywhere that we could find. As the Florida Society of Goldsmiths we welcome all artists who work in metal or make jewelry from other media. The term goldsmith denotes one who makes decorative items in precious metal, not just gold, but most don't know that. As a result, the term is perceived as scary by beginners and snobby by hobbyists, and difficult to overcome when applying for funding. However, the tagline makes all the difference in the world.

Jean Marie DeSpiegler, Executive Director  
Florida Society of Goldsmiths

**Watch Out for Empty Acronyms**

46

Acronyms are great for shortening the name of your agency or project but they often don't mean anything to the majority of people in your community. Would you know that PVW or OPARC provide services to developmentally challenged adults?

Mary Ann Payne, Consultant  
Payne Consultants

## Fundraising

### Know How Hard – and When – to Push

**47** Make sure that newsletter and donation request mailings don't follow each other too closely, unless you know that works with your supporters!

We mailed our quarterly newsletter, which includes a donation request segment, in late October, and then mailed our annual donation request letter in mid-November. The feedback we got from recipients was that they felt pressured to donate.

Jan Smith, Development Coordinator  
ITNOrlando

### Stay Donor-Centric

**48** My biggest lesson? Donor-centricity is not widely or well understood. That lack of understanding costs fundraisers, and the nonprofits that employ them, huge amounts of lost revenue every year. What happens when a charity DOES grasp true donor-centricity? A children's hospital ditched its self-centered newsletter for a donor-centered one instead, and increased giving 1,000 percent, from \$5,000 per issue to \$50,000 per issue.

Donor-centricity is just customer-centricity by another name. Good marketers are customer-centered because the customer provides the cash. Why be donor-centered? Same reason.

Tom Ahern  
Ahern Communications

**49** It's much more important to show how your donors' gifts are being used and how clients benefit (case studies, photo or whatever brings it home), than to talk about the organization's needs. Show, don't tell.

Gail Reynolds, Deacon  
Pantry at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

**50** Donors really do pay attention to what you are fundraising for and must see fruits of their donations in reasonable amount of time or they will stop giving to you.

Joan Swigon, Special Events Coordinator  
Franciscan Village

**51** Provide opportunities for your donors to get within touching distance of the people you serve.

Ann Rourke, Director of Development  
CUES

### **Focus on the Low-Hanging Fruit**

**52** I learned to take more time to focus on my A-list referrals rather than trying to reach everyone in my service area.

Erin Cauley, Marketing Coordinator  
Visiting Nurses Association of Cordele

### **Multiple-Channel Thank You's Mean More**

**53** Thanking your donors (major donors, at the very least) via multiple channels works wonders and generates the second, third and fourth donation every time. Options include e-mail, a phone call, visit, open house at your office or a site visit, formal thank you in press release and other content, or announcement at your fundraising event. You call them, stop by and see them, take them to lunch...and this is after the thank you note, formal thank you in the press release, the PA announcement at your fundraising event, and the birthday or holiday card you send them. Get creative, but do it. It works!

Pamela de Jong, Director of Development  
Star of Hope Activity Center, Inc.

### **Do What It Takes to Really Connect**

**54** Don't forget to pick up the phone and talk to donors or visit them face to face. Sometimes the easy way to reach out is not the best way to connect.

Mary Holmes, Executive Director  
Cumberland Community Foundation

**55** Stay in touch with your key stakeholders and supporters, no matter how busy you are or how limited your budget.

Annabel Lush, Executive Director  
Auckland Zoo Trust

#### **Reinforce Relationships at the Right Time**

**56** Those summer months are a great time to sit down and systematically write a short note to each donor in your high-level tiers (majors, partners, etc.). You may not hear back from them, but it will make a difference in loyalty, increased giving and good will.

Christine M. Dodson, Manager, Donor Communications  
Freedom from Hunger

**57** Do something simple but meaningful – call your members/donors to thank them at a key time of the year.

Melissa Shapiro, Development Associate  
Taller Puertorriqueno, Inc.

#### **All Special Events are Not Equal**

**58** Not all events are the same (duh!). We fill our small courses very easily, so didn't really think through some larger events this year where there were opportunities to broaden our reach (and revenue). All turned out okay, but big auditoriums lend themselves to students, vendors, affiliated professions, etc. who we don't normally think to target.

Eric Pourchot, Institutional Advancement Director  
Foundation of the American Institute for  
Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

## Strategy

### Relationships are the Heart of Good Marketing

**59** The biggest marketing lesson I learned in 2010 was to be open-minded by getting back to the old days of hands-on knocking on doors and making that personal connection with business owners.

I market nonprofit employment centers with almost no funds for advertising. You have to get creative, put up posters, and use free services such as Facebook, Twitter and resource sights such as yours. It's definitely more of a challenge but rewarding to realize that it is possible to get your people through the door with 1980's tactics.

Krista Kay, Marketing Coordinator  
Employment Centres

### Back to Basics Wins Big

**60** Social networking is great but don't forget to go old school: pick up the telephone and talk to folks, attend social gatherings to make personal contacts, follow up on those contacts with a handwritten note, make it a priority to meet people for a cup of coffee or lunch on a regular basis and keep in mind the personal touch in whatever you do if you want to be remembered in a positive way.

Lytha Page Belrose, Statewide Medicaid Liaison  
Florida Department of Juvenile Justice

**61** Don't cut off snail mail contact with your donors (newsletters, solicitations, general correspondence, etc.) in favor of e-correspondence until you've ascertained whether your audience is ready, able or willing to make that jump with you!

Carla Harman, President  
Friends of Yad LaKashish/Lifeline for the Old

**62** Good old-fashioned networking is one of the best keys to success.

Donna Barrett, Sales and Marketing Manager  
Cultural Center of Charlotte County

**63** Sometimes, the oldest, simplest ideas are best, such as getting volunteers on the phone for a phone campaign. All it cost me was a few pizzas on calling nights, and we sold hundreds of new subscriptions. If only all challenges were this easy to master.

Tracy Mitchell, Executive Director  
Bay Street Theatre

**Holistic Marketing: Far More than the Sum of its Individual Parts**

**64** Don't let all the hubbub around online communications distract you from other forms; coordinate online and offline efforts!

Jennifer Waggoner, Communications Director  
League of Women Voters of California

**Diversify**

**65** Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Market across several mediums in a condensed time period for maximum impact!

Cindy Weber, Vice President, Fund Development  
Door County YMCA

**Focus Your Advertising Dollars, Then Diversify for Impact**

**66** Concentrate marketing dollars in one advertising venue initially, rather than spending money with many different advertisers. Then, diversify as your success increases, adding one venue at a time. This approach allows a strong return on your investment with one target audience and, as other venues are added, the ability to build on those that worked well.

Sharon Owen, Director of Development  
Sisters of Mercy Services

### **Just Ask**

**67** Just ask, and make a start, anywhere!

We've used internal and external newsletters to ask our volunteers and community for what we've needed for the first time this year - and been surprised at the results. We've received some great new chairs thanks to the network of one of our volunteers. Even though our external newsletter is basic and we are still finding our way with its format and content, we ask for support from our community in each issue. Again, we were surprised that we've already received some donations that we wouldn't have got if we didn't make a start with this initiative.

Sarah Morton-Johnson, Chairperson  
Lifeline Waikato

### **A Rifle is Better than a Shotgun**

**68** By far the biggest lesson we learned has to do with the adage: "a rifle is better than a shotgun."

We thought well and hard about getting results by targeting the most likely customers to respond to marketing strategies, rather than wasting the time of customers who had other needs.

Unfortunately, we did not get a front-line perspective on EVERY new marketing strategy. Our staff members who interface with our customers on a regular basis know what resonates with customers, and what doesn't. Equally important is the fact that when they're asked to participate, they buy-in to the new strategy.

My management team felt we were under the gun more than once this year and did not think we had time to run our latest and greatest ideas by frontline employees. These ideas flopped because key components were either missing or frontline employees didn't have the chance to tell us that the new strategy wouldn't work until after implementation.

Paul Ellis, Director  
United Methodist Publishing House

### **Don't Pass Go Without Innovating**

**69** In these difficult times too many are choosing the "same old, same old" paths. Marketing-speak has become boring. This is the time to be more innovative, not less so. Take some risks, be creative or you will get lost in the "look alike" crowd.

Carol Winer, Creative Director  
Winer Idea Group

**70** We learned that we need a completely new approach to market our fee-for-service programs. Strategies we've successfully used for years to fill seats at free events aren't working very well for our income-generating events so we're getting creative and trying new things.

Jodi Williams, Administrator/Fund Developer  
South Island Dispute Resolution Centre Society

**71** Marketing the same way will get you the same results.

Donna Barrett, Sales and Marketing Manager  
Cultural Center of Charlotte County

### **Be Creative with Corporate Partners**

**72** Review your corporate partnerships to see if they'll give your organization exposure to the wider community by including you in their advertising plan.

Audia Johnson, Development Coordinator  
Women's Legal Education and Action Fund

## E-mail and E-newsletters

### Effective E-mail Campaigns Follow from a Thoughtful Strategy

**73** That's what I learned in using e-mail to promote 2010 cultural competence workshops organized by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health. Before we implemented this simple strategy, we were struggling to get enough participants in our workshops. In the last six months, we've filled every single workshop and have been able to add a second one on certain topics. Here's how:

- **Spend time getting the subject line AND the first line of the e-mail exactly right, and test them.** The subject and first sentence appears in e-mail preview windows and for many is the deal breaker on whether or not to click 'open'.
- **Know what's important to recipients and clearly connect your call to action to those priorities.** We now spend some time selecting a target audience for each one of our workshops, researching what the audience finds difficult and identifying exactly how our training will help them. These elements are the focus of every e-mail we send.
- **Use a reliable e-mail service provider (ESP) to reach out to your database, but support the mass outreach with a personal e-mail to selected key contacts.** Include a brief paragraph they can easily cut-and-paste to share with THEIR email networks and clearly ask them to do so. Of course you'll have to be prepared to return the favor.
- **Learn where else your target audiences are online and try to get your message shared out there as well.** For example, most people who come to our workshops are on the mailing list for the State Government's diversity health newsletter focused on diversity issues, so we ensure our workshops are always listed there.

Zayne D'Crus, Communications Officer  
Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health

### **Tailor Your E-mails to Each Segment**

**74** When segmenting your e-mail fundraising campaigns, think in terms of the message and case for each segment (group of recipients that shares similar wants, habits and preferences). This is basic fundraising, but it is worth mentioning.

Segments must be targeted differently, and the differences should go beyond the level of the appeal. Different segments are interested in diverse things. For example, if you do peer-to-peer or event fundraising and have donors in your database that essentially have no relationship to your organization—e.g., they donated because a friend asked them to—you'll want to reach out to that segment differently than the way you engage those who donated in response to an interest in your issue or seeing a campaign poster.

Jono Smith, Vice President  
Event 360

**75** Our association members and prospective members are our primary target audiences. But we know they are other marketers' targets, too. So if they have 50 to 100 email messages a day, or maybe even more, how do we offer them a compelling reason to open ours?

Our association has different interest groups and figuring out what is compelling to each group can be a challenge, especially to sustain a reasonable level of reader engagement. In general, we try to work on why a message's content is important to the reader as opposed to why it is important to us, the association. After all, readers act on their own interests and marketers should respect and accept that reality.

Rich Lapin  
TAPPI

### **Subject Lines and Testing Are Equally Important**

**76** Since I started focusing on, and getting a bit more creative with, e-mail subject lines, our response rate has increased considerably. It's remarkable that something so simple can create such dramatic results.

Karen Kendall, Volunteer Services Program Associate  
Minnesota Historical Society

**77** There's so much focus on crafting the right subject line these days that testing is often overlooked. Test your mass e-mails and e-newsletters by sending to different browsers (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome) and e-mails (Gmail, AOL, Yahoo and e-mail clients such as Outlook) to check for format variations, dead links and other potential disasters.

Anonymous  
CANFIT

### **Stay Succinct and Relevant**

**78** Use fewer but clearer and more relevant words, particularly in the headlines and subheads within your emails.

Rob Gregg, President  
Vine Lake Preservation Trust

### **Use an E-mail Service Provider to Send All Bulk E-mails**

**79** We had created our own e-newsletters (not beautiful) for years and mailed them from our own e-mail accounts, which we knew could have had our organization's address (e.g. @your-organization.org) identified as a spammer.

This year we finally set up an account with iContact and had instant success for a number of reasons:

- The design/format of our e-newsletter is more professional, visually engaging and easier to read.
- It is now much easier to manage our e-mail lists and to reach out to them.
- We can now monitor opens and click-throughs and adjust accordingly. We're hitting great numbers in both categories and see how tweaks in our approach and/or content can generate changes in response rates.

Karin Anderson, Director of Programs and Development  
Exploring the Arts, Inc.

## Social Media

### A Friend, Not Foe

**80** Social media can be a great friend, or a great enemy. Use these tools with thought and they'll work well for your organization.

Donna Barrett, Sales and Marketing Manager  
Cultural Center of Charlotte County

### In-Depth Content Drives Engagement

**81** Never underestimate the power of social networking, especially if your message is powerful. When we expanded beyond promoting fundraising events and began to post staff-generated articles on meaty topics in our field, our Facebook presence really took off.

Susan Darcy, Development Director  
Artemis Center

### Just Do It!

**82** Don't be afraid to experiment with social media in a broader way, because it is inexpensive and quick. It's hard to make big mistakes, but it's more likely your messaging will be too frequent, cluttered and ill-timed if you don't have a plan.

Make sure your messaging stays on track by having a written case statement, brand "white paper" and your strategic goals in front of you while you make plans. Last, make sure that everyone who is blogging, posting to Facebook and Tweeting all have the same info!

Connie Lanaghan, Director of Development  
Camp Ondessonk

### More than Just Chatter

**83** Twitter isn't just for celebrities and mindless chatter; you can tweet about things that matter.

David Carrier, Director of Outreach & New Media  
Child Trends

### **Timeliness is Everything**

**84** Keep it current and alive, or don't keep it at all. Social media is a tremendous tool but it isn't exactly free. It takes people (usually paid ones) to create, build, maintain and evaluate. I like the old saying: "It's like sex and housework; it never gets 'done!'"

Susan Liehe, Senior Associate  
Richard Male and Associates

### **Move Traffic to Home Base – Your Website**

**85** I attended a wonderful seminar about driving traffic to one's website. The message: incorporate social media, i.e., Facebook and Twitter to coordinate one's message. As someone who learned on a manual typewriter, all of this is new to me, but very exciting, and I am anxious to implement!

Lu Ann Maciulla McNabb, Executive Director  
VTV Family Outreach Foundation

### **URL Shorteners Undermine Inbound Marketing**

**86** Using URL shorteners like bit.ly is great for tweeting out content. But the URL shorteners undercut the inbound link search engine optimization (SEO) benefits of using social media. When your real links aren't registered as being hit, those links don't rise up in the list of viewed pages on a certain search term or phrase.

Scott Bechtler-Levin, President  
IdeaEncore Network

## Websites

### Keep It Simple

**87** Relearned: keep it simple. Specifically, make yourself easy to find and your website easy to use.

Maureen McNeill, Director of Development  
Coastal Hospice

**88** Nothing is more important than to make it easy for our supporters to register and donate online!

Emily Wade, President  
MITS, Inc.

### Realism Rules

**89** With my nonprofit clients out here in Colorado, we learned together that we have to be candid with ourselves about how much Web presence a small organization can realistically manage.

Let me explain. If you have a 15 page website with a link that includes, "What's New," and I click on that link in November, only to read what your agency accomplished last February, then you have a capacity problem. Learn to prune your website to what can truly be maintained and managed, otherwise you look frantic and unorganized. Can't keep up with 10 pages? Fine, then have five crisp, proofed, useful ones.

Susan Liehe, Senior Associate  
Richard Male and Associates

## Media Relations and Press

### A Good Story is the First Step

**90** If your organization is on a shoestring budget in regards to marketing, build relationships with the media by giving them compelling, positive stories that lift up the community (and not just your organization). Do good and good will come.

Kristan Creek, Program Manager  
Community Foundation of Central Illinois

### Nurture Strong Relationships

**91** I'm struck by the fact that nothing substitutes for face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with media folks. The nuances of nurturing ongoing relationships with the media are must-have skills requiring constant honing.

Dorothy Farley, Public Relations  
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill

**92** It is vital to reach out to media (writers, editors, broadcasters) in ways other than e-mail, phone calls and social media. Taking someone to breakfast or lunch builds a personal connection and allows a good opportunity to ask what you can do to help them in terms of content.

David Craig, Principal  
David Craig PR and Marketing

### Be Prepared

**93** ...to respond to interest generated by media coverage. When you have received some press exposure, be ready with a call to action on your website. People may visit in response to media coverage. Be ready to capitalize on that interest and direct them to some concrete step in support of your work.

Mercia Komen, Founder  
The Custodian Project

**94** Put your information out in as many places and forms of media as possible.

Sara Phalen, Executive Director  
People Made Visible

## Staff and Leadership

### Marketing Must Be Funded

**95** Plain and simple: Nonprofit organizations need funding support for their marketing efforts. Yes, they will always need program support. But if no one knows about their programs, the programs will fail.

I will admit some of my foundation peers have asked why we are promoting this notion at a time when many organizations have limited funds. (The St. Luke's Foundation launched a new grant program in 2010 to enhance nonprofits' capacity to tell their stories.) Some have even suggested that in a down economy, communications is a luxury that some organizations simply cannot afford. I respectfully disagree.

Now is not the time to retreat. Just like in the child's book "Horton Hears a Who!" when the Mayor of Who-ville tells a young boy, "We've GOT to make noises in greater amounts! So, open your mouth, lad! For every voice counts!" – these organizations need to be shouting their messages from the rooftops.

My a-ha moment on this issue came when 161 organizations applied for our marketing grants. Many of the projects were smart and strategic—there just were not enough dollars to fund them all. The volume of applications validated that nonprofits know marketing is vital.

Funders take note: These dollars are not a luxury, they truly can create impact.

Kim St. John-Stevenson, Communications Officer  
St. Luke's Foundation

### **Everyone is a Messenger**

**96** All staff members, volunteers and board members who answer the phone (or have any other public-facing role or simply mention the organization at a party) are marketing your organization. Make sure they do it well.

Our part-time database staffer was recently deluged with calls from angry members unable to register for our sold out conference. I crafted talking points for her and the rest of the staff on how to break the bad news in the most positive way possible, so callers would renew their annual memberships.

Lois Leveen, Director of Communications  
Grantmakers for Education

**97** Teach team members to understand they are always representing your organization – when they wear your t-shirts, mention where they work on social media or go to the dentist. Arm them with the right messages and ensure they understand that their personal brand is interconnected with your organization's brand.

Renee Bell, Intake/Marketing Coordinator  
Easter Seals Iowa

**98** Volunteers love to see their nonprofit organization succeed. They love to see the name in print or on television, or heard on the radio! They can help you spread the word, and are the best tools in marketing your nonprofit organization!

Donna Barrett, Sales and Marketing Manager  
Cultural Center of Charlotte County

**99** Don't try to do it all yourself. The more people involved in marketing, the greater your success.

Jim Stickels, Fund Development Manager  
Wisconsin Literacy, Inc.

### **Building Buy-In is the First Step**

**100** Branding doesn't work unless it comes from the top down. If you don't have buy-in at the top, you'll never get it at the bottom.

Brandon Dameshek, Development Associate and Marketing Specialist  
Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.

**101** Even if folks in your organization are initially wary of branding and elevator pitches (they don't want to be scripted), with the right training and messages they'll get on board, thereby raising the consistency and strength of your brand.

Meredith Fenton, Director of Communication Strategies  
Ella Baker Center

**102** Bring people along with you. Invest in relationships. Build a self-sustaining team around you. Invest in your own replacement.

Chris Davidson, Web and Technology Coordinator  
St. Luke's United Methodist Church

### **Branding's a Bust without Board Support**

**103** Without a board behind you, all is for naught.

Alex Zucker, Communications Officer  
Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation

**104** No matter how much explanation and preparation for branding, some board members will still think it's a logo.

Lois Whitehead, Executive Director  
Atlantic Provinces Council on the Sciences (APICS)

### **Build Skills at Every Level**

**105** Don't change your messaging but forget to train frontline and program staffers about the new way to talk about your organization. This was a big lesson this year at a number of agencies I work with. We got numerous comments about staff interaction with donors, guests, etc. that clearly indicates we need to tighten up on our internal communications strategies.

Jodi Williams, Administrator and Fund Developer  
South Island Dispute Resolution Centre Society

**106** Don't overestimate staffers' technology IQ. Help them understand marketing strategies that rely on social media and other avenues they may not be as familiar with.

Anne Springer, Public Relations Director  
SeniorCare, Inc.

### **Be Prepared**

**107** Be in a constant state of readiness to meet the market in its reaction to your marketing communications. For example, when your organization launches your new program, it is vital to have a customer service team well versed in handling inquiries promptly to ensure that registration occurs expertly and expediently.

Ralph Penning, Advisory Trustee  
RU Penning & Associates

### **Outside Help Can Help**

**108** Don't be afraid to ask for help from the professionals. Take advantage of their expertise and resources to augment your internal capacity.

Yna C. Moore, Communications Director  
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

### **Put the Kibosh on Marketing Decrees**

**109** Don't jump at every suggestion made (even those with some degree of forcefulness) by directors or senior management. Step back and ask: what resources do we need, and are you willing to help find them? What is the expected outcome of this project? In a client's case (a very small nonprofit), some thought that a Facebook presence was a cool thing the organization had to have, with no clear idea of target audience, what they wanted to accomplish, who would provide fresh content or even just "why?"

Betty Skov, Marketing Communications Consultant

## Budgets and Operations

### Do Outsmart, Don't Outspend

**110** I had the good fortune to attend a session where Terry O'Reilly spoke. His message was: "Don't outspend them (the competition), outsmart them." It was the biggest marketing lesson that I have learned... in the last few years!

Dave Watson, President, Board of Directors  
Goodwill Industries - Essex Kent Lambton

**111** Low budget? Use free online learning tools such as *GettingAttention.org* to improve your marketing and your messages.

Kristan Creek, Program Manager  
Community Foundation of Central Illinois

### Plan for the Unplanned

**112** Give your budget a little wiggle room. Unforeseen events (opportunities) may come up during the year that require marketing/financial resources.

Laura Owen, Director, Communications and Development  
Hospice of Davidson County

### Perfect Your Processes

**113** If you know you're going to grow, think long and hard about systems and processes. As much as you can, develop systems that are scalable, and automate, automate, automate.

Create tools like brand standards, an editorial style guide and a copy repository so messaging stays as consistent as possible without the marketing department having to develop it all.

Abby Reiner, EVP, Marketing  
Wounded Warrior Project

**Aim for Error-Free**

**114** Proof, proof, proof. Walk away, then proof. Repeat. This applies to grants, letters, brochures, invitations and everything else.

Leslie Clay, Chief Development Officer  
Hope Cottage

**Test, Test, Test**

**115** Before launching your campaign, put yourself in the shoes of a donor and try making a donation or registering for a program using a variety of platforms and payment methods. Even better, have real members of your network do so.

Given the complexity of the tools today, and the speed with which we invariably put things together, errors do get made and you want to be the one to find them before the launch!

Kathleen Sandusky, Communications Specialist  
Casey House

**Multiple Bids Generate Big Savings**

**116** When pricing out a service or item, call at least three vendors. This may take a few more minutes of your time, but you will save hundreds, even thousands of dollars. We have been able to save so much money on production costs for printing, photography and Web design by doing so.

Patty Bains, Marketing  
The Tabernacle Church

**Manage Your Printer, Don't Let Him Manage You**

**117** For awesome, cheap four-color printing, consider using a "gang printer," which means your print job will be run or ganged up with another client's job. We have been able to produce a lot more color work for less cost this way.

Patty Bains, Marketing  
The Tabernacle Church

**118** When printing, always get the PMS (PANTONE® Matching System) color numbers before sending to print. Otherwise, you'll soon get a call from the printer asking for the numbers and you'll have to stop the job to get that info from your designer!

Kristan Creek, Program Manager  
Community Foundation of Central Illinois

**119** **Get Info Online ASAP to Generate Early Interest**  
You don't have to wait until the brochure is printed with all the dates, prices, instructors and times. Instead, post information online ASAP, even if minor details may still be in flux, to spark interest in your programs before you start taking registrations. Also, consider taking names for an early bird list.

Jean Colvin, Communications Director  
Wisconsin Youth Company

## You, the Marketer

### Organization Opens Doors

120

Organization is key. The position I am in now was vacant for quite a while. In addition, starting a new job in a new environment is always challenging, even more so if it is about raising funds in December! Keep yourself organized.

Andrea Balda, Fundraising and Communications Manager  
JUCONI Fundacion Juntos Con los Niños

### Keeping Positive is a Plus

121

Be unfailingly cheerful. Make sure your persona is optimistic, confident and fun. It helps if we really believe in the campaign and the work.

Elizabeth Guss, Director of Outreach and Development  
Whidbey Camano Land Trust

122

Believe in your organization, program or service and make sure you're conveying that enthusiasm to your audience.

Rachel Weisman, Owner  
WeisWriting

### Trust Your Gut

123

No matter what I read about not mailing out an annual report it proved to be successful for our organization! I think you have to trust gut instincts and/or your experiences as to what works for your organization.

Charlene Ervin, Executive Director  
Hoopeston Area Healthcare Foundation

### Learning Should Be Part of the Plan

124

Make professional development and continuing learning a priority and protect the time.

Maryanne McGlothlin, Senior Director of Development  
Family and Children Services

**125** Due to never ending innovation and increasing competition, continuing education is no longer an option, but vital and synonymous with the job. You now MUST budget/schedule continuing education or you will fail (quickly).

Mike Carlson, Owner  
MC2 Marketing and Communications

**Expect the Unexpected**

**126** Careers don't necessarily take the path you expect, so be able to tap into your own creativity and resourcefulness.

Deanna Miller, Marketing Specialist  
Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina

**Keep on Keeping on**

**127** I've learned that marketing never stops, and the hardest part is just doing it.

John Herron, CEO  
Harbor City Services