The Nonprofit Tagline Report

An In-Depth Survey and Analysis: Building Your Brand in Eight Words or Less

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www.GettingAttention.org
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I. INTRODUCTION

Rising to a dare, Ernest Hemingway wrote a short story in six words. He said it was one of the most difficult things he had ever written. “For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”

As options in nonprofit marketing expand to incorporate what was previously unimagined (think mobile giving and in-a-flash organizing), it’s all too easy to focus on the new and shiny and forget the basics of effective marketing.

But today — as we work with ever-more-diversified audiences, content overload and a sustained economic downturn — getting the basics right is more critical than ever.

Nothing’s more central to your nonprofit marketing strategy than your brand — your organization’s unique focus and impact as perceived by your network. Branding communicates your organization’s unique identity and value via consistent messaging.

Your messaging works only when it connects with what’s important to the folks you need to engage to meet your goals. And, for maximum impact, your messaging must be paired with a consistent “look and feel” so your network recognizes that it’s your nonprofit reaching them in an email, on Facebook or via a walkathon sign in a walker’s front yard. Most importantly, strong branding integrates promises of quality, consistency and authenticity so donors, volunteers and other key audiences become more engaged than ever.

Effective branding will differentiate your organization (or program, fundraising campaign or special event), enabling you to strengthen existing relationships and increase awareness and engagement with prospects. But...

YOUR NONPROFIT’S NAME ALONE ISN’T ENOUGH

You’ve been there. You’ve got to explain in a few seconds what your nonprofit does and the impact it makes, but that’s just not enough time to deliver your elevator pitch (usually takes about a minute).

Or you’re about to jump off the bus and need to leave your seatmate with a memorable and repeatable take on your newest program, fundraising or advocacy campaign or special event in just 10 seconds.

Many organizations expect their names (or program, fundraising or event names) to broadcast what it is they do. Trouble is, they frequently don’t.

Here are the three main reasons why. Many nonprofit names:

• **Convey nothing about the organization’s work.** Look at Lotus Outreach International. There’s no way you’d know that this organization fights against child trafficking and exploitation, and for access to education, in Cambodia and India.

• **Sound like the names of other organizations.** For example, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights First and Human Rights Campaign.

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1 Freakonomics co-author Stephen Dubner shared this story while introducing his motto contest for the United States.
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• Are frequently confused with those of organizations focused on the same issues. Think Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

Nonprofits of all sizes have a valuable opportunity to position their organizations, programs, fundraising campaigns and special events. Those that hone their messaging well are part of a growing trend of healthy organizations whose taglines help to build awareness of their value and put them firmly in audiences’ hearts, minds, schedules and wallets.

This is where your tagline — those vital eight words or less — comes in, complementing your organization’s name to convey its unique impact or value with personality, passion and commitment. The most unforgettable taglines also make an emotional connection. Think E Pluribus Unum.

A high-impact tagline is the easiest and most effective way to communicate your organization or program brand, the best way to freshen up your messaging, emphasize your commitment to your work and/or revive outdated positioning, and a powerful method of building interest in your fundraising campaign, program or special event.

Your tagline should be a meaningful message that works in every context, for every program and audience.

But is it?

THIS REPORT DEFINES THE NONPROFIT TAGLINE LANDSCAPE, GUIDING THE WAY TO TAGLINE SUCCESS

This report digs into nonprofit taglines, providing models, dos and don’ts, trends on tagline use and longevity and access to a searchable database of nearly 6,000 taglines conveying the essence of nonprofit organizations, programs, fundraising and advocacy campaigns, and special events.

These outtakes derive from the thousands of organizations that entered the Getting Attention Nonprofit Tagline Awards plus survey data submitted by 1,550 nonprofit communicators working in organizations that are diverse in field or issue focus, budget and staff size, longevity and geographic location — from the Pulmonary Hypertension Association to the Bendigo (Australia) Figure Skating Club and the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

Together, these voices have an important story to tell — one that can translate into increased impact for your nonprofit, in just eight words or less.

EIGHT KEY FINDINGS

1. Taglines that work generally fall into one of four categories, describing an organization’s:

   • Work: The voice and source for New York nonprofits — Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York
   • Impact or value: We Stop Polluters — Potomac Riverkeeper
   • Core values or spirit: Whatever it takes to save a child — UNICEF
I. INTRODUCTION

- **Strategic approach**: Increasing physical activity through community design
  
  - Active Living by Design

2. Most effective taglines at the organization level explain, reinforce or balance your organization’s name, without repeating it:
  
  - *Winning the case against cruelty* — Animal Legal Defense Fund
  
  - *The Museum of America and the Sea* — Mystic Seaport

3. High-power taglines meet these criteria:
  
  - **Message**: Does it tell a smart, fun and memorable story?
  
  - **Characteristics**: Does it express your organization’s brand focus, personality and values?
  
  - **Differentiation**: Is it distinctive, not easily used by another nonprofit?
  
  - **People power**: Does it motivate your audiences to contact you, join, give, volunteer and participate in programs or services?

4. A majority (70%) of nonprofits rate their taglines poorly, or don’t have one at all.
  
  - Most nonprofit organizations (71%) do have taglines, but many (59% of that group) aren’t satisfied with the ones they have.

5. The leading reasons that nonprofits don’t have taglines they are too busy with existing tasks (27%) and don’t know what the process should be/lack of expertise (27%).

6. Nonprofit staff members most focused on making the most of their taglines are marketers (27%), fundraisers (23%) and executive directors (18%), in order of survey participation level.
I. INTRODUCTION

TAGLINE BEST PRACTICES — WITH OVER 6,000 EXAMPLES —
AND THE GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

We introduced the Getting Attention Nonprofit Tagline Awards in 2008, and ran four wonderful rounds of awards. The awards motivated nonprofit marketers like you to work hard to craft powerful messages (taglines plus), and guided them in doing so via strong models and specific how-tos.

Read on to learn what makes a strong tagline work, what not to do and where your nonprofit peers are with their organization’s taglines.

Then dive into the biggest-ever compilation of nonprofit taglines: The Nonprofit Tagline Database. It’s an inspiring tool for your own message brainstorming.

LEARN MORE, GET HELP ON NONPROFIT MESSAGES
AND OTHER NONPROFIT MARKETING CHALLENGES

Here are two easy, no-cost ways to build your nonprofit marketing skills and keep them fresh! Both resources are crafted specifically for nonprofit communicators like you, focused on helping their organizations succeed through effective marketing:

2. Read (and better yet, subscribe to) the Getting Attention blog — pithy, punchy bites of insight, examples and tips for nonprofit communicators.
3. Ask questions and share tips in our Facebook community (https://www.facebook.com/gettingattention).
4. Follow Nancy on Twitter (@nancyschwartz).

For more information on branding, message development and tagline consulting; speaking and training; or customized reports, guides or surveys, please contact report author Nancy Schwartz at nancy@nancyschwartz.com.
II. WHAT MAKES A STRONG NONPROFIT TAGLINE WORK?

“Less is more; less is more; less is more. Oh wait, I only need to say that once.”¹

“The three questions I really want a tagline to help me answer are: What do they do? How are they different? Why is this exciting? It's really hard to answer all three, so I admire anyone who can do it. For me, Gilda's Club Nashville hit home runs on all three — ‘Cancer support for the whole family — the whole time.’”¹

Who is your organization? How is it different from your colleagues and competitive organizations, and why should your base and other audiences care? Your tagline — when crafted for power — should communicate these attributes, in a memorable eight words or less. But does it?

In much the same way, you can differentiate your program, fundraising campaign or special event with a tagline — the quickest way to engage your network in an instant. However, perfect your organization’s tagline first!

THE HAiku OF BRANDING²: HOW A STRONG TAGLINE BENEFITS YOUR ORGANIZATION (AND YOUR PROGRAM, FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN OR SPECIAL EVENT)

Your organization’s tagline is hands-down the briefest, easiest and most effective way to communicate your brand. It’s one of the six vital components of branding, along with your nonprofit’s name, positioning statement, key messages or talking points, tone and visual identity (logo, type, colors, images, look and feel).

The tagline is the heart of your organization’s brand, so it should be designed strategically, conveyed artfully and delivered passionately and consistently. Most essentially, it should be such a natural outgrowth of your nonprofit’s name that the two are inextricably linked.

Make sure your tagline is frequently heard and read. Feature it prominently in all print collateral and stationery, online communications (from e-newsletters and websites to the email signature used by all staff members), signage, conversations and presentations and, where appropriate, your main voicemail. The American Liver Foundation puts its tagline (The nation's leading organization in the fight against liver disease and hepatitis) front and center in its organizational voicemail, which is useful, especially for after-hours callers.

An effective tagline differentiates you from your competitors while expressing your organization’s personality and adding consistency to your marketing. And, because it stresses value and uniqueness, it generates a positive response from audiences.

When your tagline does work, it has the potential to become a perennial icon of your organization, lifting your brand from the commonplace to the unforgettable. Think A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste®, from The United Negro College Fund (UNCF).

Your tagline should also work well as a lead-in to your positioning statement (the one to three sentences you use in all written communications — print and online — to convey your organization’s focus, impact, distinctiveness and value). In the broader picture, tagline

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¹ The quotes at the beginning and end of each chapter are from award voters and survey participants.
² Eric Swartz, “the Tagline Guru”
II. WHAT MAKES A STRONG NONPROFIT TAGLINE WORK?

development serves as a way to quickly and inexpensively refresh or revise your brand — an anchor for subsequent branding work if your organization doesn’t have the bandwidth or budget for an all-new or all-revised brand initiative.

The bonus? The tagline development process will help to enrich and align internal understanding of your organization’s direction and goals. And once you develop your tagline, you have the process in place to strengthen the rest of your messages — at both organizational and programmatic levels.

Of course, the more complex your organization’s focus and programming, the more challenging it is to craft a powerful, accessible brand and tagline.

Beware: The absence of a tagline or the use of an ineffective one (and that’s 70% of you) puts your nonprofit at a competitive disadvantage in engaging donors, building your staff and network, and increasing use of your programs, services and products.

THE TEN HAVE-TOS: YOUR CHECKLIST FOR TAGLINES THAT CONNECT

Here’s a checklist for you to use to ensure your tagline does as much for your organization as possible. That boils down to helping your nonprofit to achieve its marketing goals, and hence its organizational goals. Note these ten musts...

Your tagline:

☐ 1. Must convey your organization’s or program’s impact or value.
   • Our Vision Does Not Require Sight – Volunteer Blind Industries
   • Your Guide To Intelligent Giving – Charity Navigator
   • Finding good homes for great dogs – Save the Strays Animal Rescue
   Make sure you use your tagline for all it’s worth. If your tagline doesn’t have positioning value, it’s a bust. Pure descriptors don’t make the grade.

☐ 2. Must be authentic. Make sure your organization can stand behind your tagline, 100%. When you do, you build credibility. When you don’t, you lose any you may have.

☐ 3. Must be broadly and easily accessible and memorable, avoiding jargon and acronyms.
   • Healing a hurting world – Episcopal Relief & Development
   • Spread the words. – Edmonton Public Library
   • E.R. You Watch It…We Live It! – Indiana State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA)

☐ 4. Must be specific to your organization, not easily used by another nonprofit reaching out to the same audiences otherwise it’s just a “me too.” This is particularly tough, but differentiation is the name of the game.
   • Different Faiths, Common Action. – Religions for Peace
   • A Community Transforming Technology into Social Change – NTEN
   • Smart Policy. Sound Science. Stronger Communities. – Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs
II. WHAT MAKES A STRONG NONPROFIT TAGLINE WORK?

Three national human services organizations submitted the exact same tagline (People Helping People) to the survey, which means each one is losing out on tagline power.

☐ 5. Must be eight words or less, which is all you have of your audience’s attention.
   • Serve a Semester. Change the World. – Youth Service America (YSA)
   • Where good books are brewing. – Coffee House Press
   • Where volunteering begins. – VolunteerMatch

NOTE: There are exceptions to this rule, when more than eight words are required to get the gist across:
   • Helping donors create thoughtful, effective philanthropy throughout the world
     – Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (a complex service and concept, justifying nine words)
   • More than a store. We build healthy families and communities one job at a time.
     – Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota (15 words is a lot, but the organization is trying to correct misperceptions about its work and impact)

☐ 6. Must be highly visible and integrated into all print, online, multimedia and most verbal communications. For example, when audiences hear your organization’s name and tagline announced as a sponsor of Morning Edition (or any other show), it’s imperative that they can go to your website and see that tagline front and center to affirm that they’re in the right place. The American Psychological Association (APA) sponsors the show, and its name and tagline are broadcast to a huge audience. Unfortunately, that tagline is nowhere to be found on the Association’s home page. That invisibility and lack of integration across channels undermines your tagline power and overall marketing impact.

☐ 7. Must make an emotional connection.
   • When time matters most. – United Hospice of Rockland, Inc
   • Helping Preserve the Places You Cherish – Land Choices
   • When You Can’t Do It Alone – Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Sarasota–Manatee, Inc.

☐ 8. Must capture the spirit or promise of your organization.
   • Because Curiosity Knows No Age Limit – Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Clemson University
   • Finding the Ways that Work – Environmental Defense Fund (committed to taking on environmental issues with persistence and innovation)
   • Grounded in tradition...Open to the Spirit – Memphis Theological Seminary
II. WHAT MAKES A STRONG NONPROFIT TAGLINE WORK?

☐ 9. Must clearly complement and/or clarify your organization’s name without duplicating it.
   • It’s a Moving Experience – Museum of Transportation (MO)
   • Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet – Sierra Club
     The Sierra Club’s name is somewhat obtuse, as the reference to California’s Sierra Nevada mountain range doesn’t communicate anything about what the organization does, or the geographic breadth of its work and programs.
     You can’t presume your network or prospects bring any particular context to digesting your tagline.

☐ 10. Must take the tone that will connect with your audiences while being true to your organizational “self.” Effective taglines may be humorous or earnest, tangible or conceptual.
   • Humorous: To Life (from Fiddler on the Roof) – Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County (Caution: This tagline succeeds because of the cultural common ground shared by the Federation and its base. That’s a prerequisite for integrating humor into your nonprofit’s tagline or other key messaging.)
   • Earnest/straight-ahead: Investing in Peace and Security Worldwide – Ploughshares Fund
   • Tangible: We Stop Polluters – Potomac Riverkeepers
   • Abstract: Ideas into Action, Action into Service – American University

How does your tagline stack up?
Add one point for each box checked:

  8-10 points: Highly effective
  5-7 points: Moderately effective. Fine tune to increase impact.
  4 or fewer points: Needs more work. Get back to the drawing board right now.

The “musts” are a must.

THE HAVE-TOS FOR PROGRAM, FUNDRAISING, AND SPECIAL EVENT TAGLINES

According to the nonprofit experts who judged the Nonprofit Tagline Awards, these are the must-haves for other tagline types:

**Program Taglines**

Must make a personal connection (even more so than other tagline types, since the prospective participant is considering personal involvement in your program).
   • Serve a Semester. Change the World. – Youth Service America (YSA)

Must convey a program identity that’s distinct from the organization itself (rather than reiterating the work of the organization as a whole).
   • Your Mouth Can Say A Lot About You – Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS): Awareness campaign to educate the public about the important relationship between oral health and overall health.
II. WHAT MAKES A STRONG NONPROFIT TAGLINE WORK?

**Fundraising Taglines**

**Must have a strong call to action.**

- *Bring Back the Roar!* – Oregon Zoo Foundation: Capital campaign to fund lions’ return after 10-year absence. The tagline led the campaign, which motivated donors to exceed the goal by 20%, with total gifts of $6.2 million.

**Special Event Taglines**

**Must connect the event theme with the cause that it supports.** This connection increases the potential for attendees to remember the tagline and repeat it when telling family and friends about the event.


**THE FIVE SHOULD-DOS: INCORPORATE THESE ELEMENTS FOR EVEN GREATER IMPACT**

1. **Surprising or unexpected imagery, perspective or approach.**

   - *Help is a four-legged word.* – Canine Companions for Independence (imagery)
   - *The Art of Active Aging* – EngAGE (perspective)
   - *Cancer support for the whole family — the whole time* – Gilda’s Club Nashville (approach)

2. **Motivating an action.**

   - *Help us feed the hungry* – Food Pantries for the Capital District

3. **Verbs. Action words are more engaging:**

   - *Connecting People Who Care…With Causes That Matter* – Greater Menomonee Area Community Foundation
   - *Advancing Immunology. Conquering Cancer.* – Cancer Research Institute

4. **Making your audiences want to know more.**

   - *Instruments of Mass Percussion* – Drums Not Guns
   - *From Dependence to Independence* – First Occupational Center of New Jersey

5. **Consistent meaning even when standing alone.** That way, you can use it in conversation or other situations when your listeners don’t have your organization’s name or logo right in front of them:

   - *Helping victims become children again* – Memphis Child Advocacy Center
   - Caveat: In most cases, your name and tagline will be used together.

Do strive to integrate as many of these guidelines as possible into your tagline. Clearly, it’s difficult to incorporate all ten have-tos and five should-dos in a single tagline.

**NOTE:** The range of taglines in *The Nonprofit Tagline Database* demonstrates that tagline style is all over the map. There are absolutely no standards, but I advise you to stick to the style and tone you’ve shaped to work in other marketing, and fundraising messages. Consistency and repetition are musts for your audiences to remember, and repeat, your messages.
II. WHAT MAKES A STRONG NONPROFIT TAGLINE WORK?

FOUR MAIN TAGLINE TYPES AND A MILLION VARIATIONS ON THE THEME

You’ve already been introduced to these four main nonprofit tagline genres, focused on the organization’s:

1. **Work focus:** This is especially useful when an organization’s name is obtuse.
   - *Teaching Children the Language of Music* – The Children’s Orchestra Society
   - *Providing Medical Relief* – Doctors Without Borders
   - *Connecting People with Nature* – New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

2. **Impact or value:**
   - *From Harm to Home* – International Rescue Committee
   - *When You Can’t Do It Alone* – Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Sarasota–Manatee, Inc.

3. **Core values or spirit:**
   - *The greatest casualty is being forgotten* – Wounded Warrior Project
   - *Changing Hearts, Changing Lives* – Canadian Bible Society

4. **Strategic approach:**
   - *Giving a hand up, not a hand out, to homeownership* – Habitat for Humanity South Sarasota County, Inc.
   - *Holding Power Accountable* – Common Cause

However, there are a million variations on the theme that are also valid models for your organization. Here are some examples:

1. **Aligned with a specific approach, category or field** that adds prestige and credibility, and gives new meaning or added value:
   - *Lawyers Giving Back to the Community* – Volunteer Lawyers Service
   - *Building Human Potential for Economic Development* – Hi-Tech Charities

2. **Inspirational.** Focuses on needs, wishes or aspirations that suggest the successful attainment of an abstract goal or desired outcome:
   - *Be the Change* – Mercy Corps
   - *Seeing through problems to possibilities*
   - Pan American Health and Education Foundation

3. **Twofold benefits:**
   - Join for the swords, stay for the friends – Historic Entertainment
   - *Ease the burden, Find a cure and Un appui aujourd’hui, une réponse demain.* – Parkinson Society Canada
II. WHAT MAKES A STRONG NONPROFIT TAGLINE WORK?

4. **Play on words.** Frequently double entendre; works when it adds meaning, less so when cute, glib or tired:
   - *Caring Pays* – Ontario Service Safety Alliance (occupational safety)
   - *Where Actors Find Their Space* – NYC Theatre Spaces (clearinghouse for performance and rehearsal space)

5. **Makes you think, want to know more:**
   - *Changing the News* – Institute for Inquiry
   - *Partnering with Nature to Teach Kids Science!* – Youth Science Institute

6. **Call to action:**
   - *Stand Up for a Child* – CASA of Southwest Missouri
   - *Make the most of your giving.* – The Greater Cincinnati Foundation

7. **Emotional/moving:**
   - *Finding a cure now so our daughters won’t have to* – PA Breast Cancer Coalition
   - *Helping Preserve the Places You Cherish* – LandChoices

8. **Word choices reference what the organization does:**
   - *All Building Starts With a Foundation* – Building Future Builders
   - *Where the Profits are for the Birds* – Seattle Audubon Society’s Nature Shop

9. **Evocative, builds understanding:**
   - *Hear it, See it, Feel it* – Syracuse Opera
   - *The Catholic University for Independent Thinkers* – University of Dallas
   - *More than a store. We build healthy families and communities one job at a time.* – Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota

10. **Great differentiation.** The value add is loud and clear:
    - *Stay Close…Go Far.* – East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania
    - *The Art of Active Aging* – EngAGE

11. **Provocative.** Engages when it doesn’t offend:
    - *Because facts matter.* – Oregon Center for Public Policy
    - *Revolution through Competition* – X Prize Foundation

12. **Fun/energizing:**
    - *Let the music take you there* – Vermont Symphony Orchestra
    - *Wildly Inspiring!* – Sacramento Zoo

13. **Effectively startling:**
    - *Nashville Has AIDS* – Nashville Cares

14. **Brings a sense of the positive to a serious topic:**
    - *Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet* – Sierra Club
II. WHAT MAKES A STRONG NONPROFIT TAGLINE WORK?

USE THE WORDS THAT WORK

Take a look at the graphic below: The words most frequently used in the winning and finalist organizational taglines are shown as the largest elements in the graphic.
II. WHAT MAKES A STRONG NONPROFIT TAGLINE WORK?

WHAT WORKS: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM TAGLINE AWARD VOTERS

- “Amazing to see the difference between the ones that were really clever, ‘... deep in the heart of Texans’ and ‘God’s Work, Our Hands’ and those that seemed like business jargon recycled.”

- “Isn’t it interesting that the better taglines suggest what the organization (e.g. United Negro College Fund, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Center for Rural Culture) does, while the taglines that directly describe the organization’s work fall flat? Also, those are more engaging than a tagline that simply delivers the facts (e.g. Human Rights Center, Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City).”

- “Taglines are best when they both relate and motivate.”

- “I count just five of these as (a) focused, (b) terse, and (c) memorable. Only by satisfying all three criteria can a tagline be truly outstanding.”

- “Those that evoke images and don’t use jargon are the best.”

- “I prefer taglines with an active thought or attribute, that tell the reader what to think/do.”

- “The more ‘in your face’ the taglines are, the more I liked them.”

- “When I reviewed my Excellents [during the award voting process], I found clever and simple use of words, and brevity with emotional appeal.”

- “Extra points for not using capitalized nouns.”

- “The taglines that work the best for me are the ones that punch up the purpose or mission of the organization.”

- “Taglines using action words are the most memorable. Adjectives make it less clear what an org actually DOES — and less sincere because the org is qualifying its own work.”

- “I’m partial to the ‘call to action’ type of tagline, but for some orgs the ‘descriptive’ tagline is more important.”

MOVING FORWARD TO TAGLINE SUCCESS

You now have the criteria to evaluate whether your tagline works or not. While you’re assessing its impact, don’t forget to solicit input from your base and other audiences. The way they perceive your organization is the most important ingredient in effective branding, including your tagline.
III. TAGLINE DON’TS

“"I'm surprised at the number [of taglines] that leave me cold — especially those that make impossible claims."

“Most of the ones that don’t work are too long or not clear in expressing what the organization does.”

As challenging as it is to create a strong tagline, it’s all too easy to craft one that fails. When that happens, your organization loses a potent tool and, even worse, may confuse or annoy audiences.

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS: AVOID THESE TO ENSURE YOUR MESSAGE IS ON POINT

Next to your organization’s name, your tagline is the most remembered and repeated message you have. Make sure it works. A tagline is a terrible thing to waste.

1. Don’t be generic. Be as specific and emotive as possible to highlight a connection between an individual and your organization. Warning: Generic taglines are very common.
   - Weak: Building a Better New York — Organization providing legal services to other nonprofits
   - This tagline could represent a construction firm or the mayor’s office.
   - Powerful: Connecting Lawyers and Communities — From the same kind of nonprofit in another city.

Take a look at these other generic taglines that raise more questions than they answer:
   - We’re more than you think! — Women’s health care provider
     - What are the unexpected services, and why are they important?
   - There is a Difference! — Hospice organization
     - What is different about this organization?
   - Discover! — Camp
     - Discover what?

2. Don’t craft a tagline your organization can’t stand behind 100%. Your nonprofit has to be able to deliver what you promise. When you do so, your organization reaffirms its credibility. When you don’t, you lose any you may have:
   - Together we can save a life — Major relief organization that hasn’t been all it could be over the past decade
     - This tagline just doesn’t ring true. It’s hard to believe that one could rely on this organization to do the job as it’s just as well known for its mismanagement as it is for its relief services.
   - Eliminating racism, empowering women
     - Human services organization serving women
     - No single organization can eliminate racism.
III. TAGLINE DON’TS

3. **Don’t veer off focus.** It will distract audiences from what’s really important:
   - *Produced in Boston, Shared with the World* –
     Public service media production (PBS and public radio)
     - The organization’s geographic location is absolutely irrelevant to the value of its programming, which should be the focus of its tagline.

4. **Don’t use inept references.** You’ll only confuse your audiences:
   - *Life is a Team Sport* – Marrow donor organization
     - Sounds more like a mentoring program, or an alumni program for athletes.
   - *Find Your Edge* – University
     - Edge is not what most students (or parents) are seeking.

5. **Don’t plant uneasiness.** Make sure you don’t introduce ambiguity into your tagline.
   Take a look at these:
   - *Protecting, Strengthening and Promoting Nonprofits* – State association of nonprofits
     - Why do nonprofits need protection? This is bound to make audiences wonder.

6. **Don’t put two or more taglines to work.** If you do, you’re doing everything you can to undermine your organization’s brand. As a result, your audiences won’t get to know or pass the word on your organization. Instead, they’ll be annoyed and confused.
   One survey respondent commented, “Different taglines are used by various staff, board members and volunteers.”

**THE NINE SNORES: WHEN YOU TAKE THESE APPROACHES, YOUR TAGLINE BECOMES A SNOOZER**

1. **Avoid platitudes.** Beware your audience’s reaction. If it’s “Of course,” then you need to return to the tagline drawing board.
   Here’s a tagline that falls into this trap:
   - *Caring for all that matters* – Public health care clinic
     - Who doesn’t?

2. **Avoid talking to yourself.** Remember, your tagline is designed to engage your base and others. It’s not about you; it’s about other people.
   When your tagline is self-referential, it’s the kiss of death:
   - *Live United* – Major human services organization
     - Perhaps this is an attempt to convey core organizational values, but it doesn’t mean a thing to those other than staff and volunteers.
   - *One University. Two Great Names.* – University born from a merger of two major institutions.
     - If that’s all the school has to say, I wouldn’t send my child there.
     - This tagline may be a component of a brand transition campaign, but it lacks the key prerequisite for campaign success: meaning.
III. TAGLINE DON’TS

• We give you support. We give you information. We give you hope.  
  – Bereavement support organization.
  • Could it be any more about the organization?
  • Better: More you. Less we.

3. Avoid using hyperbole. When you overstate your organization’s value or impact, you lose credibility. Who liked or believed the kid who boasted about the 50 birthday presents he received or the six no-hitters he pitched at summer camp?

Focus on what makes your organization important to your audiences. Let them draw their own conclusions on how great your nonprofit is:

• The authoritative resource on safe water – Water safety organization
• Excellence in Philanthropy – Community foundation
• Cultural Ambassador to the World – Famed modern dance company

4. Avoid dating yourself. Make sure your tagline reflects your audiences’ current concerns and issues, and review it periodically to ensure it stays that way. Otherwise, the perception of being out of touch will extend to your nonprofit.

This one is very 1998:

• Log on. Log in. Be Counted. – State community service commission

5. Avoid cute, trite or clichéd. Because these references are so familiar, it’s likely your audiences will skim or dismiss the tagline without taking it in. Clichés also minimize the value and importance of your nonprofit’s work and issue focus:

• Finding ‘fur-ever’ homes for the cats and kittens of Las Vegas  
  – Pet adoption agency
• Rock Solid Education – University whose name includes “rock”
• No one like you, No College like us. – Community college

6. Avoid repeating yourself. Redundancy has a way of annoying people, including your audiences. Show a little more respect and say what you want to say, once. Here is a tagline that hits its audience over the head:

• Overcoming Barriers to Justice, Improving Lives – Legal services agency
  • Of course overcoming barriers to justice improves lives. No need to say so.

Also, avoid repeating a word that’s in your organization’s name in the tagline; it’s too much of one concept and sound, and too much of a waste:

• Altering the legacy of violence, one life at a time – Legacy House
• Defending Human Rights Worldwide – Human Rights Watch

7. Avoid use of jargon or obtuse language. It’s a barrier to understanding:

• Helping Kinship Families Avoid the Pitfalls – Family services agency
  • What is a kinship family?
III. TAGLINE DON’TS

8. Avoid using a tagline already in use by another organization engaging the same audiences. Three organizations I know of use the same tagline: *People helping People*. That means it didn’t pass the compare test, or wasn’t researched or tested. As a result, audiences won’t be engaged. They’ve seen it before:

  - Selected as finalist in the *2009 Getting Attention Nonprofit Tagline Awards.*
  - Voters let me know that it is the long-time, well-known tagline of The People of The United Methodist Church.

A tagline used by multiple organizations will work for the first organization someone finds but will flop for the second and third (and then it will flop for the first organization after the subsequent uses are discovered).

9. Avoid including anything extra, especially the date of your organization’s founding or how many years it’s been around. Such details waste the little bit of audience “real estate” you have, unless your organization is a bank:

- *Saving lives since 1998* – Cat’s Cradle
- *Strengthening New York’s Communities for Over 25 Years* – Community Resource Exchange

THE FIVE BEST WAYS TO ANTAGONIZE YOUR AUDIENCES:
THESE TAGLINE TYPES WILL MAKE YOUR AUDIENCES RUN FOR THE HILLS

It’s your responsibility to make it easy for your audiences to digest your tagline, and to help them remember and repeat it. But many organizations seem to have left that focus out of the job description.

1. Don’t confuse or confound audiences. Not that anyone sets out to confuse audiences, but many organizations do so unintentionally. Make sure your content is clear and accessible:

- *Helping older adults, now and in the future* – County council on aging
  - Will the council be around in the future, or does it plan to provide services for seniors now and in the future?
- *Bringing your vision into focus* – Community development agency
  - The tagline suggests a focus on the visually impaired, not community development
- *Beyond* – University
  - Beyond what, and why?

2. Don’t force audiences to piece together fragments. This is a common path taken when nonprofits feel their focus and/or programs are too complex or diverse to communicate in a single phrase. The typical reaction to taglines like these is “And…?” The question remains: how do these individual words fit together to showcase the organization’s focus or value? It’s your job to connect the dots:
III. TAGLINE DON’TS

• **Excellence Reflection Collaboration** – Jewish education organization

• **Quality – Flexibility – Community** – University

Let me say it again: MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR AUDIENCES. Present them with a complete picture, not 1,000 pieces they have to put together. However, this approach can work when more meaningful phrases are strung together:

• Big Sky. Big Land. Big History. – Montana Historical Society

3. **Don’t twist tongues.** Nothing’s more annoying, or more impossible to remember and repeat, than a tongue twister.

Try saying these taglines 10 times fast:

• **Perfecting the Places We Live to Protect the Places We Don’t**
  – Environmental organization

• **Uniting Unique People in a Unique World** – Advocacy organization

4. **Don’t try to cover everything.** It’s just too much information. These taglines are impossible to digest, much less to remember and repeat:

• **Teaching people of all ages and abilities to use their power to stay safe, act wisely and believe in themselves!** – Agency teaching personal safety, self-protection, confidence, and advocacy skills.

Cut what’s not necessary: For example, never include the organization’s name in the tagline.

5. **Don’t guilt me.** Making audiences feel bad may work in the short term, but it always bombs in the long run. You can’t build a healthy relationship with guilt, so avoid this approach:

• **The Right Thing to Do** – Food pantry

**THE ANSWER? RESEARCH, REVIEW, TEST; RESEARCH, REVIEW, TEST…**

Before you start your own organization’s tagline brainstorming session, review taglines of colleague and competitive organizations (within and outside of your field).

Don’t launch your tagline before trying it out. Before committing yourself to your top choice, get feedback from at least 10 members of key external audiences.

You may discover one of two things: They just don’t get it, or you don’t feel 100% comfortable with it yourself.

Before you launch, make sure you love your tagline and will be satisfied using it for at least five years. If it remains relevant and powerful, a longer life span is even better.

Recognition is priceless. Unless your nonprofit changes its programs and services drastically, or the environment in which you work shifts significantly, there’s considerable value in your tried-and-true tagline.

But remember, there are good reasons to change your tagline even when your name or other brand elements remain the same. A tagline-only change can freshen your message, confirm your promise and/or rejuvenate your organization’s brand.
III. TAGLINE DON’TS

WHAT DOESN’T WORK: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM TAGLINE AWARD VOTERS

• “Most of these, sadly, are not taglines. They’re descriptors or a collection of words that sound nice but don’t really say anything. A tagline is a positioning statement expressed as a benefit. The ones that work communicate a clear and competitive benefit, the ones that don’t fail as taglines.”

• “Clichés don’t work (“one ___ at a time”), negative is difficult (“From Harm to Home”), ‘change’ is ambiguous and overused, commands sound harsh.”

• “If the taglines are too long and too ‘concept rich,’ they don’t work. Too fervent isn’t good, either.”

• “Taglines fail when they reek of policy wonkery. You can tell a director either came with them or reduced their effectiveness with the addition of trend words like impact, potentials, employability, and barriers.”

• “Too many of these taglines could be for thousands of other charities — very few encapsulate the unique selling proposition of the cause. Also, very few are snappy, punchy or memorable because they’re too long or wordy.”

• “Too many gerunds here; when you remove ‘ing’ from many of these, they improve hugely.”

• “The weakest ones are the ones that still don’t give you a clue as to what the organization does, no matter how clever the line.”

• “Generalities make a tagline fail: The #1 reason I think most of these taglines don’t work is that they are not SPECIFIC enough, and have nothing to do with the groups or their work.”

• Some of these taglines that IMHO don’t work are also pretty meaningless, to put it bluntly. What does ‘Because facts matter’ really mean? So facts matter, so what? The tagline contributes very little, if anything; it performs no useful function.”

• “Sometimes taglines that are too literal don’t work. Plays on words can work, but only if they really make sense.”
IV. NONPROFIT TAGLINE TRENDS

The following statistics and trends, derived from survey findings, paint a clear picture of how taglines are shaped and used by nonprofit organizations. The findings also underscore the many impediments to developing a strong tagline and, in some cases, the plain indifference of some nonprofits not currently using a tagline and not interested in doing so.

MOST NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS DO HAVE TAGLINES

71% (1,077) of nonprofits use taglines; the other 29% (430) try to motivate actions—giving, volunteering, participating, signing a petition—without them.

HOW TAGLINE USE BREAKS OUT ACROSS FIELDS

The fields of Human Services (75%) and Grantmaking (74%) boast the greatest percentage of organizations using taglines.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Religion & Spiritual Development sector has the fewest taglines (56%), followed by Arts & Culture (58%) and Education (66%).
IV. NONPROFIT TAGLINE TRENDS

70% OF NONPROFITS RATE THEIR TAGLINES AS POOR OR DON’T HAVE ONE AT ALL

Most nonprofit organizations do have taglines, but many aren’t satisfied with what they have. Those dissatisfied organizations, plus those without taglines, comprise 70% of all nonprofit organizations – a dismal statistic.

![Diagram showing sectors with greatest % of effective taglines]

**Sectors with Greatest % of Effective Taglines**

(rated *effective* or *very effective*)

- Civic Benefit: 48%
- Jobs & Workforce Development: 48%
- Human Services: 47%
- Other: 46%

**ONLY 41% OF NONPROFITS WITH TAGLINES GAUGE THEM TO BE EFFECTIVE, INDICATING A NEED TO DIRECT MORE FOCUS AND BUDGET ON THIS CRITICAL MARKETING TOOL**

Just 41% of nonprofits with taglines rate the tagline as effective (31%) or very effective (10%). But 59% of participants rate their organization’s tagline as only somewhat effective (46%) or not effective (13%).
IV. NONPROFIT TAGLINE TRENDS

THERE IS NO CONSISTENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A TAGLINE’S AGE AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Of the 8% of taglines deemed not effective, most are between two and four years old, or more than eight. It is likely that nonprofit staff members are paying less attention in these middle years (five to eight years). Most (43%) of the taglines rated very effective (10% of all taglines) are between two and four years old. That life span is enough time to gauge impact but not so much time that staffers have lost interest. 22% of the top-rated taglines are a year old or less, making that rating less definitive.

MARKETERS (27%) ARE THE STAFF MEMBERS MOST FOCUSED ON TAGLINES — SUGGESTING A NEED FOR BROADER PARTICIPATION IN HONING THIS ALL-ENTERPRISE TOOL

Marketers are trailed by fundraisers (23%) and executive directors (18%), as extrapolated from self-identification of survey participants.

These individuals are likely to be the staff members most focused on outside perceptions of their organizations and committed to putting multiple communications strategies to use.

Marketing, must be a all-organization focus to be effective. It’s clear that those beyond marketers and fundraisers should be involved, interested and trained in branding, including taglines.

Remember, your organization’s tagline is — next to its name — the most used marketing message it has. At the very least, everyone in a nonprofit organization should understand and be able to articulate the tagline and elevator pitch/positioning statement.

NOTE: Few program, membership, operations, human resources and IT staff members and board members, volunteers and founders participated in the survey.
IV. NONPROFIT TAGLINE TRENDS

WORDS, PHRASES AND CONCEPTS MOST FREQUENTLY USED IN NONPROFIT TAGLINES
(Also see tag cloud, p. 14)

1. Metaphors
   • Moving/path/roadway (progress)
     • Moving victims of violence from crisis to confidence – Safe Horizons
     • Creating Paths to Success – Ravenswood Education Foundation
   • Voice of/for...
     • National Voice – State Focus – Local Impact – National Council of Nonprofits
     • A Powerful Voice for Lifesaving Action – Refugees International
   • Time; today vs. tomorrow
     • Addressing today’s needs. Reducing tomorrow’s. – United Way of Central Indiana
     • Learn Today, Lead Tomorrow – Northwestern Oklahoma State University
   • Steady progress, one step at a time
     • Improving Life, One Breath at a Time – American Lung Association
     • Changing the World, One Gift at a Time – Changing the Present

2. Concepts
   • Confidence/success
     • Building skills and confidence for independent lives – NJ Foundation for the Blind
     • Early education. Lifelong success. – Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
   • Hope
     • Starve Fear. Feed Hope. – National Eating Disorders Organization
     • Building Confidence, Inspiring Hope, Enhancing Success – The Reading Center/Dyslexia Institute
   • Commitment
     • A Passion to Help. The Ability to Deliver. – Americasres
     • A Passion for Patient Care – St. Mary’s
   • Compassion
     • Compassion is our Cause – Montgomery County Humane Society
     • Compelled by Compassion, One Life at a Time – Convoy of Hope

3. Verbs are the most common (and most effective) first word in nonprofit taglines
   • Helping
     • Helping donors create thoughtful, effective philanthropy throughout the world
       – Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
     • Helping Preserve the Places You Cherish – LandChoices
   • Building
     • Building communities, strengthening lives – Family Promise
IV. NONPROFIT TAGLINE TRENDS

- *Building futures for women and children* — The Barrett Foundation
- Eliminating/ending X and empowering Y
  - *Eliminating Racism, Empowering Women* — YWCA USA
  - *Eliminating Hunger and Empowering People* — Second Helpings, Inc.
- Other common verb starters:
  - Bringing
  - Changing
  - Connecting
  - Developing
  - Improving
  - Inspiring
  - Keeping
  - Making
  - Protecting
  - Providing
  - Serving
  - Strengthening
  - Supporting
  - Transforming

ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT TAGLINES HAVE A RANGE OF REASONS WHY NOT — SOME GOOD, SOME NOT SO GOOD

Survey participants had the option of selecting more than one reason why their organizations didn’t have a tagline:

The leading reasons that nonprofits don’t have taglines are...
- too busy with existing tasks (27%) or don’t know what the process should be/lack of expertise (27%).

There are three additional categories of reasons participant organizations do not have a tagline, as submitted by survey participants:

1. These participants have little personal power to move forward with tagline development, as much as they may want to:

   - “The final decision makers want a tagline that is more of a vision statement. It is very hard to get everyone involved to narrow our tagline down to just a few words, but I really think we need one!”
   - “Going through strategic planning, then will develop one.”
   - “We’re only a few years old — wanted a better sense of what we are actually adding value before developing a tagline.”
IV. NONPROFIT TAGLINE TRENDS

• “Government policy not to.”
• “Sophomoric board.”
• “I’m new to organization; have not pursued it forcefully.”
• “I’m a peon, but in general branding/marketing is poorly done.”

2. These participants cite challenges that make sense but can – and should – be overcome:
   • “Just haven’t sat down to work on it.”
   • “No time to research, no budget to pay a consultant.”
   • “Our organization is set in its ways; hasn’t moved for a century.”
   • “Interest comes and goes.”
   • “We have a program with a strong tagline that outshines any attempt we’ve done to have an organizational one.”
   • “New entity within organization so we’re trying to stand out yet integrate branding.”
   • “Only recently re-branded and tagline still needs to be developed.”

3. These participants cite reasons that are not justifiable. Get on it, today:
   • “Just haven’t sat down to work on it.”
   • “Org’s name is already so lengthy.”
   • “Had one, everyone hated it. Can’t agree on another one.”
   • “Just changed our name. That was enough for one year.”
   • “We get pseudo taglines that cycle with the seasons.”
   • “Difficult decision in creating the right one.”
   • “Not sure our story is compelling enough to have a tagline.” (Bad news)
   • “Created only for the Web.”
   • “Use our mission statement.”
   • “Used to have one, but leadership decided it wasn’t effective, and noted that other organizations like ours didn’t have one.”
   • “Various staff and board members, and volunteers, use different ones.” (More bad news; conflicting messages undermine your brand.)
   • “Difficulty in creating one”
The Getting Attention Nonprofit Tagline Awards program was established when so many powerful taglines were submitted to the Getting Attention survey on nonprofit messages in 2008. The award winners represent the best of nonprofit taglines—for their organizations, programs, and fundraising and advocacy campaigns—in all vertical sectors. It is designed to motivate and guide nonprofit organizations to put effective taglines to work. For each award cycle, tagline finalists were selected by our panel of expert judges according to the criteria outlined in Chapter Two. Then, from that group, the finalists were selected by thousands of nonprofit professionals via an online poll.

**NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS 2008-2012**

Congratulations to these award winners voted best in class.

**Advocacy Taglines**

- *Help Drive Change.* — Vehicles for Change: Freedom Wheels Campaign—To build support for a culture of donating used cars, focusing on how having a car changes the lives of low-wage families.

  Tagline: This clever tagline is a satisfying and motivational play on words. That’s a tough balance to find, and this tagline does it well, painting a crystal-clear call to action.

**Fundraising Taglines**

- *It’s all big when you’re changing the world* — “You” are the star of this tagline for The Funding Exchange’s Funding Exchange: No Small Change Campaign—Small gift campaign to raise funds and friends.

  Fundraising campaign which elevates every gift (no matter the size) into a powerful tool for good.

  The tagline “is an ideal introduction to our stories of small actions, ideas, gifts and grants that went on to cause big change,” says Barbara Heisler, executive director.
V. GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

• *Bring Back the Roar!* – Oregon Zoo Foundation: Capital campaign to fund lions’ return after 10-year absence.

This memorable tagline plants a strong seed in one’s mind — You can hear and see that lion roaring. It’s fun, pithy, emotional and unique with a clear call to action (an absolute must for fundraising messaging).

**Program Taglines**

• *Your Future Is Calling.* – Goodwill Industries Serving Eastern Nebraska and Southwest Iowa: Customer Connect Program

Employment training individuals for phone-based customer service jobs. Voters enjoyed the word play here: It adds depth of understanding without being glib.

• *Your Mouth Can Say A Lot About You* – Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS): Awareness campaign to educate the public about the important relationship between oral health and overall health.

MDS’ tagline is strikingly personal. As a result, it provokes immediate interest (with a touch of emotion, my mouth?), generating an unavoidable urge to know more about the program.

• *Serve a Semester. Change the World.* – Youth Service America (YSA): Semester of Service YSA engages hearts and minds in its passionate focus on improving the world. Its tagline opens a world of possibility to students, and invites them to act.

**Special Event Taglines**

• *Feed the World You Want to Live In* – Ecological Farming Association (EFA): EcoFarm Conference 2013

This tagline is engaging and visual. It fosters an intellectual and emotional connection between you (and the future you hope for) and the practitioners who will share their perspectives at the conference, while emphasizing the direct impact of conference organizer EFA.

• *Little Feet. Big Strides.* – Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research: Kids Can Cure Fun Run, LA Cancer Challenge

This tagline is extremely engaging and visual. It fosters an emotional connection by declaring that small children can make a difference, while highlighting the direct impact that those who run it have on the cause.

**Organizational Taglines**

**Arts & Culture**

• *Play Your Part* – New Depot Players Community Theatre

This community theatre tagline uses a double entendre to invite supporters to take part by taking action (donating). It’s dramatic, and broadly accessible.
V. GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

• *Where good books are brewing* — Coffee House Press
  Nonprofit literary publisher Coffee House Press prides itself on its measured acquisition and editorial process, and the active discussions percolated by its publications. Its clever mash-up of a tagline clearly and succinctly conveys both aspects of its unique way of doing business. The surprise of the mixed imagery (books, rather than coffee brewing) makes it easy to remember.

• *Big Sky. Big Land. Big History.* — Montana Historical Society
  The Montana Historical Society takes its state’s most elemental and distinctive characteristics (Big Sky, Big Land) and deftly melds them with its mission in a way that generates excitement. The result is a tagline with punch and focus. It was also a big hit with voters.

• *Where Actors Find Their Space* — NYC Theatre Spaces
  This clearinghouse for NYC rehearsal and performance spaces uses a double entendre to go beyond a description of its services and highlight the value of its work.

**Association**

• *You Make a Difference…(We Make It Easier)* — Indiana Association for Community Economic Development (IACED)
  IACED’s tagline cuts through the clutter as it conveys the value of membership, while giving subtle kudos to the community-focused work of member and prospect organizations.

• *E.R. You Watch It...We Live It!* — Indiana State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association
  The Indiana ENA’s tagline draws a clear connection between its mission and its service delivery and is emotional, fun and highly memorable. The tagline’s reference to E.R. — the longest-running primetime medical drama (15 years) — has broad appeal as long as the show stays in reruns.

• *Building community deep in the hearts of Texans* — TexasNonprofits
  TexasNonprofits’ tagline tweaks the title of an iconic American popular song from the 1940s and brilliantly connects it to the spirit, passion and mission of the state’s citizenry. A great example of how word play works in a tagline.

**Civic Benefit**

• *The greatest casualty is being forgotten.* — Wounded Warrior Project
  This distinctive tagline from the Wounded Warrior Project provokes anger, compassion and a desire to help, in just six words. It’s an excellent example of a mission-driven tagline.

• *Instruments of Mass Percussion* — Drums Not Guns
  This tagline is a clever play on words (instruments of mass destruction), but remains clear and powerful. That’s a delicate balance to strike, and this tagline does it well as it paints a crystal-clear picture in your mind of this organization’s focus.
V. GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

• *Holding Power Accountable* — Common Cause
  Common Cause’s tagline leaves no doubt about the organization’s mission, unique value and commitment. It’s definitive, with a powerful economy of words. An excellent example of the tagline clarifying the nonprofit’s focus, when the organization’s name alone doesn’t do so.

• *Stand Up for a Child* — CASA of Southwest Missouri
  CASA’s tagline provokes anger, compassion and the desire to help—in just five words.

**Education**

• *Putting information in the hands of the world* — Librarians Without Borders
  This simple yet effective tagline from Librarians Without Borders leaves no doubt about the organization’s mission and commitment. It’s definitive, with a powerful economy of words.

• *Because Curiosity Knows No Age Limit* — Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Clemson University
  The Osher Institute’s tagline is both poignant and emphatic. It is a definitive and positive statement on seniors’ characteristics and capabilities, likely to engage the very seniors who are prime prospects for participating in the Institute’s learning opportunities.

• *A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste®* — UNCF—The United Negro College Fund
  This decades-old tagline from UNCF still rings strong. It elegantly delivers its straight-up, powerful message. When your tagline is the boiled-down essence of your argument for support, you’ve achieved tagline bliss. That’s why this one is a classic.

• *Stay Close…Go Far.* — East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania
  This simple yet distinctive tagline from East Stroudsburg cuts through the clutter. Its straightforward character mirrors that of the school.

**Employment & Workforce Development**

• *Potential Meets Opportunity* — Youth Express
  Youth Express’ emphatic tagline is an equation that adds up to perfection, telling a memorable story in just three words. It stops you in your tracks, makes you want to learn more and sticks with you afterwards. That’s the kind of potent nonprofit message every organization needs.

• *Our Vision Does Not Require Sight* — Volunteer Blind Industries
  Volunteer Blind Industries’ tagline surprises with its play on the word “vision.” This tagline makes the organization’s focus clear in a concise and compelling way, with a touch of inspiration.
V. GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

Environment & Animals

- *Clean Water. Healthy Fish. Happy People.* – Lake Champlain International (LCI)

Lake Champlain International’s tagline highlights the value of its work and impact by connecting clean water with healthy wildlife and food, and satisfied swimmers and boaters. Such cause and effect is seldom so clearly articulated by environmentalists.

This tagline was created to bring the organization forward when its major fundraising event—the Father’s Day Fishing Derby—began to overshadow LCI’s overall mission and identity, says James Ehlers, executive director.

- *Finding good homes for great dogs* – Save the Strays Animal Rescue

Working smoothly in concert with the organization’s name, this tagline conveys the essence of Save the Strays’ impact. Our judge for this tagline category called this tagline “emotional catnip for every dog lover.”

In fact, she was so moved by this tagline that she went to the organization’s website to learn more, and ended up making a donation. That’s tagline success.

- *Because the earth needs a good lawyer* – Earthjustice

Earthjustice capitalizes on what people do understand— that a lawyer protects rights—and uses that framework to dramatically position its role and impact in the environmental movement. And it does so with humor. If your tagline makes people smile or light up, without stepping on your message, then you’ve made an emotional connection. Bravo.

- *Helping Preserve the Places You Cherish* – LandChoices

LandChoices’ tagline thoroughly communicates the value of its work while evoking one’s most precious memories of walks in the woods, wildflower meadows and childhood camping trips. There’s a real emotional connection here.

Faith-based & Spiritual Development

- *The Strength of a People. The Power of Community.* – The Jewish Federations of North America

The work of faith-based organizations often operates on several planes at once, a challenge for any organization and its messages. Here, The Jewish Federations of North America delivers a tagline twinset that inspires Jewish pride and highlights the Federations’ role as reliable shepherds of that community power.

- *Different Faiths, Common Action.* – Religions for Peace

This tagline’s impact is based in its clever use of contrast and comparison. It clarifies what Religions for Peace does, and how it works, in just four words. Powerful!

- *Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.* – The people of The United Methodist Church

The work of religious organizations often operates on several planes at once – a challenge for any organization and its messaging. Here, The United Methodist Church delivers a tagline trinity that supports its applied faith mission and is warm, enthusiastic and embracing.
V. GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

- *Grounded in tradition…Open to the Spirit* – Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS)
  MTS conveys the two equally important halves of its values and curriculum in a way that makes you think about the connection.

**Grantmaking**

- *For our University, our Hawaii, our Future* – University of Hawaii Foundation
  The University of Hawaii Foundation’s tagline thoroughly communicates the value of its work while evoking every Hawaiian’s typically loyal ties to this special place and its future. You hear the love!

- *Connecting People Who Care…With Causes That Matter* – Greater Menomonie Area Community Foundation
  The Community Foundation’s tagline emphasizes the value it adds to giving, while clearly educating those who don’t know it on its role in the region.
  Although we’ve heard from a few other community foundations that use this same tagline, that fact alone doesn’t counteract its impact. One key criterion for a high impact tagline is that it isn’t used by other organizations hoping to engage the same target audiences. Since community foundations serve specific regions, that criterion is met.

- *If you want to be remembered, do something memorable.* – The Cleveland Foundation
  It’s a rare tagline that manages to recruit people to its cause both unabashedly and effectively. That’s exactly what The Cleveland Foundation pulls off here. Clear, concise, and…memorable! A model for any organization promoting philanthropy.

- *Make the most of your giving.* – The Greater Cincinnati Foundation
  This clear tagline articulates the value of the foundation for donors considering an alternative way to give.

**Health & Sciences**

- *Food for People, Not for Profit* – Community Food & Justice Coalition
  The Coalition surprises and engages hearts, minds and stomachs with this impassioned tagline urging the separations of corporations and food

- *When time matters most.* – United Hospice of Rockland, Inc. (UH R)
  UHR’s powerful tagline is a heart-stirring message that’s hard to forget. This tagline works because it is so simple, yet profound.

- *Finding a cure now...so our daughters won’t have to.* – PA Breast Cancer Coalition
  The PA Breast Cancer Coalition’s tagline is both emphatic and poignant. It strikes a deep emotional chord, and conveys the focus and impact of its work without being overly sentimental. “Finding a cure” a highly used phrase for health organizations, is bolstered here by the appeal to solve a problem now so future generations won’t suffer from it.

- *Improving Life, One Breath at a Time* – American Lung Association
  This unexpected focus on the breath – a core element of life – gets attention, and understanding.
V. GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

Human Services

- *There’s no place like home* – Elder Services of Worcester Area, Inc.
  This concise tagline tells Elder Services’ story succinctly and powerfully: It’s all about getting seniors and younger disabled people the help they need to stay in their homes.
  Plus, this idiom as tagline forges a bond between those of us who aren’t seniors (yet) and those who are. All of us feel welcomed and secure, yet independent, in the corner of the world we call home.

- *Help is a four-legged word* – Canine Companions for Independence (CCI)
  This tagline tells the story in a style that is honest, compassionate and smart. The play on words works here because it catches you a bit off guard and gets you thinking about what CCI actually does.

- *Filling pantries. Filling lives.* – Houston Food Bank
  With simple but effective use of word repetition, the Houston Food Bank clarifies its work and impact. It delivers on two distinct levels—the literal act of putting food on people’s shelves and the emotional payoff to donors and volunteers. An excellent example of a mission-driven tagline.

- *When You Can’t Do It Alone* – Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Sarasota–Manatee, Inc.
  This tagline tells the story succinctly and powerfully: It’s all about getting help when life becomes overwhelming. It makes a strong emotional connection.

International, Foreign Affairs & National Security

- *Empowering Communities. Ending Poverty.* – The TARA Project
  The Tara Project conveys the two equally important halves of its values and impact in a way that makes you think hard about the connection.

- *Healing a hurting world* – Episcopal Relief & Development
  This brief tagline quickly highlights the way in which Episcopal Relief & Development approaches its work, as it motivates compassion and a desire to learn more. It’s straightforward but emotional, a proven combo for taglines that connect.

- *Send a Net. Save a Life.* – Nothing But Nets
  Short, punchy and laser-sharp, the Nothing But Nets tagline connects the action with the outcome. It’s inspirational in the simplicity of its message and its reason for existing.
  The kind of tagline nonprofits should model.

- *Whatever it takes to save a child* – U.S. Fund for UNICEF
  UNICEF engages hearts and minds with its passionate focus on helping children.
  Who could turn down a request for a donation?
V. GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

Jobs & Workforce Development

- *Nothing Stops A Bullet Like A Job* – Homeboy Industries
  Homeboy Industries’ tagline is a mini-masterpiece, telling a memorable story in just seven words. It stops you in your tracks, makes you want to learn more and sticks with you afterwards. That’s the kind of potent nonprofit messaging every organization desires.
- *All Building Starts With a Foundation* – Building Future Builders
  Voters enjoyed the word play here: It adds depth of understanding without being glib.

Library

- *The Quickest Way from Q to A!* – University of West Florida Libraries
  The UWF Libraries’ tagline was submitted in response to a student contest and highlights the value that librarians have (and the Internet doesn’t).
- *Spread the words.* – Edmonton Public Library
  Edmonton Public Library’s tagline is another example of effective surprise as a familiar saying takes an unexpected turn. Who would have thought that one little “s” could make a tagline sing – and zing?

Media

- *Telling stories that make a difference* – Barefoot Workshops
  If your organization’s name is vague, it’s critical that your tagline be distinct. Barefoot Workshops’ tagline sums up the transformative power of stories to create change in people and their communities, so clarifying the organization’s focus. Saved by the tagline!

Wildlife & Animal Welfare

- *Feel the Warmth of a Cold Nose* – Maryland SPCA
  Animal welfare groups tend to be pros at stirring emotion, and the Maryland SPCA excels here. Voters went wild for this tagline—it’s emotional catnip for animal lovers!

Other

- *A head for business. A heart for the world.* – Enactus (formerly SIFE: Students In Free Enterprise)
  If an organization’s identity contains within it a distinct contrast between its key characteristics, that’s often good tagline material. Here, Enactus surprises by capitalizing on the contrast between profit and compassion.
  An excellent example of the tagline clarifying a nonprofit’s focus, when the organization’s (new) name alone doesn’t do so.
- *Your Guide To Intelligent Giving* – Charity Navigator
  This tagline is unique and clear to mission, and conveys an air of wisdom and refinement. You immediately sense via the word “Guide” that the Charity Navigator service is an asset to you. The phrase “Intelligent Giving” feeds egos (who doesn’t want to be intelligent?) while it underscores the difficulty in wading through information to make an informed and wise giving choice.
V. GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

• *The Art of Active Aging* — EngAGE
  EngAGE surprises with the imagery of active aging and the use of the term “art” to describe the way it does its work.

• *Because facts matter.* — Oregon Center for Public Policy (OCPP)
  This tagline introduces the nature of OCPP’s impact in Oregon and entices the reader or listener to find out more. Its value proposition—the truth—is particularly compelling at a time when facts are frequently disregarded in public debate.
## V. GETTING ATTENTION NONPROFIT TAGLINE AWARD WINNERS

### ADVOCACY TAGLINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Tagline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles for Change</td>
<td>Help Drive Change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FUNDRAISING TAGLINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Tagline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding Exchange</td>
<td>It's all big when you're changing the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon Zoo Foundation</td>
<td>Bring Back the Roar!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PROGRAM TAGLINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Tagline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goodwill Industries Serving Eastern Nebraska and Southwest Iowa</td>
<td>Your Future Is Calling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts Dental Society</td>
<td>Your Mouth Can Say A Lot About You.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Service America</td>
<td>Serve a Semester. Change the World.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SPECIAL EVENT TAGLINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Tagline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Farming Association</td>
<td>Feed the World You Want to Live In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research</td>
<td>Little Feet. Big Strides.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ORGANIZATIONAL TAGLINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Tagline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Lung Association</td>
<td>Improving Life, One Breath at a Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barefoot Workshops</td>
<td>Telling stories that make a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Future Builders</td>
<td>All Building Starts With a Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Food and Justice Coalition</td>
<td>Food for people, not for profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canine Companions for Independence</td>
<td>Help is a four-legged word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity Navigator</td>
<td>Your Guide To Intelligent Giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee House Press</td>
<td>Where good books are brewing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Cause</td>
<td>Holding Power Accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Appointed Special Advocates of Southwest Missouri</td>
<td>Stand Up for a Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drums Not Guns</td>
<td>Instruments of Mass Percussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthjustice</td>
<td>Because the earth needs a good lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Stay Close...Go Far.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Public Library</td>
<td>Spread the words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder Services of Worcester Area, Inc.</td>
<td>There's no place like home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EngAGE</td>
<td>The Art of Active Aging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal Relief &amp; Development</td>
<td>Healing a hurting world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeboy Industries</td>
<td>Nothing Stops A Bullet Like A Job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston Food Bank</td>
<td>Filling pantries. Filling lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana Association for Community Economic Development</td>
<td>You Make a Difference...(We Make It Easier)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association</td>
<td>E.R. You Watch It... WE LIVE IT!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jewish Family &amp; Children's Service of Sarasota-Manatee, Inc.</td>
<td>When You Can't Do It Alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Champlain International</td>
<td>Clean water. Healthy fish. Happy people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LandChoices</td>
<td>Helping Preserve the Places You Cherish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians Without Borders</td>
<td>Putting information in the hands of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memphis Theological Seminary</td>
<td>Grounded in tradition...open to the Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Depot Players Community Theatre</td>
<td>Play Your Part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing But Nets</td>
<td>Send a net. Save a life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYC Theatre Spaces</td>
<td>Where Actors Find Their Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon Center for Public Policy</td>
<td>Because facts matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Clemson University</td>
<td>Because Curiosity Knows No Age Limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Breast Cancer Coalition</td>
<td>Finding a cure now...so our daughters won't have to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religions for Peace</td>
<td>Different Faiths, Common Action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save the Strays Animal Rescue</td>
<td>Finding good homes for great dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE)</td>
<td>A head for business. A heart for the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TexasNonprofits</td>
<td>Building community deep in the hearts of Texans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cleveland Foundation</td>
<td>If you want to be remembered, do something memorable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Greater Cincinnati Foundation</td>
<td>Make the Most of Your Giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jewish Federations of North America</td>
<td>The strength of a people. The power of community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The People of The United Methodist Church</td>
<td>Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Negro College Fund (UNCF)</td>
<td>A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Hospice of Rockland, Inc.</td>
<td>When Time Matters Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hawaii Foundation</td>
<td>For our University, our Hawaii, our Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Fund for UNICEF</td>
<td>Whatever it takes to save a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Blind Industries</td>
<td>Our Vision Does Not Require Sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wounded Warrior Project</td>
<td>The greatest casualty is being forgotten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Express</td>
<td>Potential Meets Opportunity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are two easy, no-cost ways to stay updated on nonprofit marketing tips and trends – including branding and taglines – you need to know about. Both resources are crafted specifically for nonprofit marketers and fundraisers.

1. **Subscribe to the Getting Attention e-update** – in-depth tools, templates, case studies and other guidance.

2. Read (and better yet, subscribe to) the **Getting Attention blog** – pithy, punchy bytes.

3. Participate in the **Getting Attention Facebook community**.

4. Get timely tips and resources via Nancy on Twitter (**@nancyschwartz**)

For branding and tagline consulting, speaking, training (in-person, webinar or teleseminar), and customized reports, guides or surveys, contact report author Nancy Schwartz at **nancy@nancyschwartz.com**.

Her firm **Nancy Schwartz & Company**, provides results-driven marketing and communications services to nonprofit organization and foundation clients. In addition, she’s a well-known workshop leader and speaker for conference keynotes and breakout sessions.
Survey Methodology

This report is based on findings of an in-depth survey of nonprofit organizations’ use of taglines. The survey, implemented by Nancy Schwartz of GettingAttention.org, was open to all nonprofit organizations without restriction.

Participants:

- Were largely based in the United States, with minor participation among Canadian nonprofits and a few responses from organizations in other countries.
- Spanned 11 vertical sectors, from arts and culture to environment and animals, and human services.
- Held a variety of positions within nonprofit organizations, although marketers, fundraisers and executive directors were most strongly represented. Consultants and firms also participated.

Respondents included readers of the Getting Attention blog and e-update and readers of other blogs and publications reaching the nonprofit sector; members of state nonprofit associations, regional associations of grantmakers, and the Communications Network; and others who learned about the survey via print and online resources or colleague referral.

The survey instrument was designed by the researcher and reviewed by colleagues prior to release. The main objectives adhered to during the instrument design were defining trends and best practices for tagline design and usage.

Participants were asked what fields they worked in, whether they had a tagline and, if so, how satisfied they were with it, how and when the tagline was used, and how long it had been in use.

Data collection ended on June 14, 2012. In total, 1,566 individuals completed the survey.
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SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENT

Survey Instrument

1. What is your primary area of responsibility? (Check the one that covers it best.)
   - Marketing
   - Fundraising
   - Program
   - Executive Director
   - Volunteer
   - Board Member
   - Other (please specify)

2. Do your organization’s messages (as a whole) connect with your target audiences?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Somewhat

4. How effective is each of these organizational messages in terms of engaging your target audiences?
   - Other (please specify)

   Tagline
   - Don’t Have
   - Not Effective
   - Somewhat Effective
   - Effective
   - Very Effective

   Positioning statement (1-3 sentences—what your org does & the value of your work, the big idea you want remembered)
   - Don’t Have
   - Not Effective
   - Somewhat Effective
   - Effective
   - Very Effective

   Talking Points or Key Messages
   - Don’t Have
   - Not Effective
   - Somewhat Effective
   - Effective
   - Very Effective
5. **What is the single greatest barrier to developing more effective messages for your organization? (Choose one.)**
   - Concerned about the expense (updating materials, etc.)
   - N/A, we have an effective message platform.
   - Low priority/Too busy with existing tasks
   - Lack of leadership support
   - Don’t know what the process should be/Lack of expertise
   - Other (please specify)

6. **Which of these organizational message elements are used consistently across channels, programs and teams? (Check all that apply).**
   - N/A: We have none of these elements.
   - Tagline
   - Positioning statement
     - (1-3 sentences—what your org does & the value of your work, the big idea you want remembered)
   - Talking points or key messages
   - Other (please specify)

7. **Who is involved in the creation and/or approval of your organization’s messages? (Check all that apply.)**
   - **Marketing Team**
     - Creation
     - Approval
   - **Fundraising Team**
     - Creation
     - Approval
   - **Program Team**
     - Creation
     - Approval
   - **Executive Director**
     - Creation
     - Approval
   - **Volunteers**
     - Creation
     - Approval
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Board Members
  Creation
  Approval

External Consultant or Firm
  Creation
  Approval

Other
  Creation
  Approval

8. Which of these additional messaging elements do you use now or have used in the past?

Tagline: Program(s)
  Use Now
  Never Used
  Used in the Past

Tagline: Fundraising campaign(s)
  Use Now
  Never Used
  Used in the Past

Tagline: Advocacy campaign(s)
  Use Now
  Never Used
  Used in the Past

Tagline: Event(s)
  Use Now
  Never Used
  Used in the Past

Talking points or key messages (for programs, campaigns or specific audiences)
  Use Now
  Never Used
  Used in the Past

Other (please specify)
  Use Now
  Never Used
  Used in the Past
VI. APPENDICES

9. Please check all descriptors that apply to your organization’s messages as a whole.
   - Weak
   - Targeted
   - Dull
   - Powerful
   - Forgettable
   - Uplifting
   - Unfocused
   - Memorable
   - Confusing
   - Non-Existent
   - Inspiring
   - Other (please specify)

10. I'd like to interview a few fundraisers and nonprofit marketers on their organizations’ messaging practices. Your insights will help others learn and improve. May I contact you?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Name and email please (if Yes, and not provided in #2)

11. If there was something about your organization’s messages that you could change quickly and easily, what would it be?

12. Is your mission statement featured in your marketing and/or fundraising content?
   - No
   - Yes
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy E. Schwartz helps organizations activate their supporters as a strategist, speaker, and coach, and as publisher of the Getting Attention blog and e-newsletter. Recent marketing and fundraising clients range from Catholic Charities of Idaho and Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless to Paper Mill Theatre, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kansas Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, Environmental Health Coalition and the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater.

Nancy serves on the board of NTEN and her local garden club, is a columnist for Fundraising Success and on its editorial advisory board, and packs and distributes food at the Interfaith Food Bank of the Oranges. She enjoys spending time with her husband Sean and daughter Charlotte, gardening, cooking and eating, hiking, photography and all kinds of exploration.

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Subscribe to Nancy’s free e-update, Getting Attention, and read her blog for more guidance, case studies and tools to ensure your organization attracts the attention and engagement it deserves.