



Marketing Guide for Nonprofits



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Howdy,

My partner and I started DonorLynk based on the drive to support organizations like yours. We are an unlikely pairing of business acumen and creative marketing know-how. He wears khaki and golf shirts, I wear skinny jeans and flannel. However different we may be, we are equally passionate about you and your mission.

We are keenly aware that most nonprofits were started with a singular mission: to help others. You've built your organization around passion. You aren't driven by riches or success, you're driven by heart—and by an overwhelming sense of duty to change our world.

At DonorLynk, we aren't directly a part of your team, but our goal is to help you better achieve your mission, and we feel the same call to change the world. We do this by creating tools and providing services for the nonprofit industry that allow you to spend more time actively making a difference, and less time at a desk.

This marketing guide is the embodiment of our promise to you. You may not be a client or customer of ours, but we still want to see you succeed. We still want to help.

Let's do good together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'WK' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Will Knowles

Co-Founder & Chief Experience Officer



Thinking Like a For-Profit: The Importance of Marketing

There's an old saying, "Build it and they will come." It's a nice idea, but it doesn't work when you're trying to carry out a mission that needs funding. You can't come up with an idea, throw up a website, and expect it to go viral overnight. The biggest mistake a nonprofit organization can make is staying in this passive mindset.

It's time to start thinking like a for-profit. It's time to start actively marketing the good that you do. Marketing is a tool used in all industries—not just by advertisers trying to sell a physical product. If you want your mission to succeed and your ideas to reach the maximum number of people, then you need to put as much work into marketing as someone working in the corporate world.

Your idea is your product, and that's what you need to get across to prospective donors. Think of them as customers, and the idea of marketing becomes a lot clearer.



For every **212 people** in America, there's **one nonprofit**. That's over 1.5 million nonprofits competing for donors.

What You Care About Matters

Marketing matters because what you care about matters. The ability to make an impact isn't directly related to how much you care about your mission. It's directly related to how your story is told and how you relate your mission to the world around you. It's directly related to how well you market your mission.

Today's nonprofit market has become fiercely competitive. Take a look at the numbers: For every 212 people in America, there's one nonprofit. That's over 1.5 million nonprofits competing for donors. That's more than the number of Starbucks, McDonald's, and Walmart stores fighting for your attention.

If you want to capture a larger portion of the \$350 billion annual donation market, your thinking needs to change radically. Operating a nonprofit has become more like a business, and to be successful, you need to switch perspectives. You have to start using the tools the for-profit industry has crafted and perfected over time.

It's not about having an overwhelming desire for money. It comes down to making the largest impact for your specific mission. Your mission is dependent on donors and volunteers. Which means your organization has to be focused on acquiring donors and learning how to market effectively.



Paradigm Shift: Doing Business in the Modern World

Making such a radical change in thinking isn't easy, and probably won't happen overnight. It's not as simple as waking up and deciding you want pancakes for breakfast instead of oatmeal. Taking on the view of a for-profit is going to change everything from the inside out.

It starts with the idea—your mission. Everything else builds on that. Your mission is essentially your product. For your mission to be as successful as possible, you need to connect with donors from a new angle. It's not about appealing to just anyone's sensibility so much as selling your product to the right demographic.

Your nonprofit has its own appeal to a certain audience. After you craft a strong mission statement, your main job is finding that audience. Get to know who your organization appeals to. What makes them tick? How old are they? Are they male or female? What are their hobbies? Try to figure out as much about them as you can. The more you know about your market, the easier it is to sell your mission to them.

The way you approach your mission isn't the only paradigm shift that's occurring. Marketing itself has gone through many changes since the advent of the web, and what was once popular isn't always effective anymore.



The cost of print materials and traditional media ad spots can quickly eat through an advertising budget without any promise of success.

Outbound vs. Inbound

You have two main choices when it comes to marketing to your audience: outbound marketing and inbound marketing. The focus and strategies behind each are markedly different.

Another word for outbound marketing is interruption marketing, and nothing could describe it better. Think of the telemarketers that call you out of the blue or the advertisements you get in the mail. Outbound marketing is basically full of techniques that interrupt the largest number of people in the hopes of grabbing their attention and focusing it on the product being advertised.

Organizations can advertise via television, radio, print ads and other media, but outbound marketing methods tend to be poorly targeted and prohibitively expensive for smaller organizations. The cost of print materials and traditional media ad spots can quickly eat through an advertising budget without any promise of success. On average, traditional outbound marketing techniques cost 62% more than inbound marketing strategies.

Interruptive marketing techniques also only communicate one way, leaving the customer feeling “talked at” with no way to dialogue with the advertiser. Generally, these strategies provide little value to their audiences and are widely disliked.

Inbound marketing is also known as permissive marketing and is generally better received than outbound marketing techniques. It crowns content as its king and strives to provide value to its audience. Those two things alone make inbound marketing wildly successful, even for an organization that has little brand recognition and an even smaller budget.

Content marketing and social media participation are the two main ways organizations increase their brand awareness. The average budget spent on company blogs and social media has nearly doubled in the last two years, and 60% of marketers say their company blog is critical or important to their business.

When you look at the number of conversions, though, you realize how powerful inbound marketing can be:

- 54% of businesses have acquired a customer through Facebook
- 42% of businesses have acquired a customer through Twitter
- 57% of businesses have acquired a customer through their company blog

As you can see, inbound marketing is inherently rewarding when done right. It allows you to build a relationship with your audience and offer them quality content to earn their loyalty, and opens up channels for you to directly market to your audience in a transparent and engaging way.

Salespeople vs. The Web

The internet has taken old school marketing and flipped it upside down, turned it inside out, and given it a few shakes for good measure. What used to be the salesperson's job of finding prospects and generating leads has been reversed, with prospects being proactive in seeking you out.

Companies used to be able to hire salespeople to cold call or meet with prospective customers and offer solutions to their problems. They would go through a proven script that would qualify their lead, present their product, answer any objects and hopefully close with a sale. Then the web came along. The prospects don't need the company's solutions anymore, so the company's leads dry up. Then out goes the salesperson. Unless you look at what salespeople do in a different way.

The salesperson's job is ultimately to find and create business opportunities, educate and inform people about your organization, and change how people view your organization and its services. In this way, the salesperson becomes a web marketer.

Are You Doing Enough?

Sales are what drives business. Donations are what drives your nonprofit. In order to keep your mission going, you need be marketing your organization effectively. If you neglect to promote your brand, all of your work stagnates and eventually crumbles into nothing.

Every organization can take their marketing up a notch. Some are still stuck in the days of direct mailers and have no online presence, others need to fine-tune their marketing strategy, and still others may have no marketing techniques to speak of. No matter where you are in this spectrum, your next step starts with understanding one key fact: all marketing is about storytelling.



Storytelling: Once Upon a Time...

It's easy to assume that your mission is just as important to everyone else as it is to you. Maybe it actually is. But having that mindset leads to laziness when it comes to getting your message across. Your message needs to do more than provide a laundry list of your programs and services.

Storytelling is the strongest way for a brand to communicate with their audience. Stories invoke emotions and hold attention, two things that are key in converting prospects into donors. 56% of nonprofit donors say that a compelling story is what motivates them to support an organization's mission.

Few nonprofits know how to use a good story to drive their outreach and improve donations, though. Others make the worst mistake of telling bad stories. So what makes a good story? It can be broken down into four simple parts.



56% of nonprofit donors say that a compelling story is what motivates them to support an organization's mission.

The Hero

The central part of the story is the hero. As the focus, the hero needs to be part of your mission. It's a major mistake to make your nonprofit the hero of your story. People don't empathize with faceless organizations, but they do connect with universal needs and the people they effect.

Center your story on someone your nonprofit has helped and let your organization be the supporting character. Tell the story of how that person's life was changed, not how you changed that person's life.

The Conflict

Bring your audience right into the major issues your hero has to face. They should feel like they're part of what your hero is going through.

This part needs to be handled with care. When telling the story of your hero's conflict, tell it from their point of view. Use their voice. Let them give their experiences. Refrain from putting your own spin on it or showing the conflict through the eyes of your organization.

The Plot

It's crucial that your story has an intelligible plot. There needs to be a clear thread running through it from beginning to end, connecting each piece in a logical way. If there are parts that don't fit, cut them out. Sometimes it helps if you create an outline of the story before you write it.

Resolution

Finally, the hero overcomes the conflict. This is where your organization has its moment, but framed through the lens of the hero's journey. Don't make it about your nonprofit just because your programs or services changed their life. Keep your organization as the supporting character, and chronicle the events of the hero's life as they're changed for the better—supported by your organization.

Yellow Brick Road

Your organization's story isn't that different from that of a movie or book. Don't believe it? Take *The Wizard of Oz* as an example. It hits all four key points, but it also engages the reader and fleshes out the story to a perfect level of detail.

You have the hero, Dorothy. She's clearly a likeable and sympathetic character. She gets swept away to Oz and has to find her way home. This is a classic example of conflict. The majority of the story details her dealing with the conflict, which is the plot. It's presented in a clear, coherent fashion.

Eventually, Dorothy meets the Wizard. Though he's not able to make her and her companions' wishes come true, he enlightens them enough to realize they've already been self-fulfilled. The conflict comes to a resolution and Dorothy goes home (Spoiler alert.)

Defining Your Story

Donors want to hear the social impact their donations can create. Their donations take on a tangible reality when they can engage with stories you tell about the difference you have made in the world.

Begin by putting the different elements of your story together. Choose the hero you want to spotlight and take note of their particular conflicts. Decide which perspective you're going to view your nonprofit from and try to offer new insights about what it is you provide and how your mission can make a difference. Show people how the hero overcame their conflict, especially the most compelling part.

As you plot out your story, you'll find there may be other things you'll want to add that enhance it further such as:

- Statistics about the problem and people facing it
- Icons who support your mission
- How your mission differs from that of other organizations

Once you've developed your story, you need to decide which medium is the best way to tell it. For instance, does your audience prefer video over written content? Consider all possible platforms for telling your story, even nontraditional ones like live streaming.

Whatever you choose, you must never take any shortcuts. Your audience will see right through you if you do, and that's the last thing you want when your goal is to connect and engage with them.



A nonprofit with a solid brand can distinguish itself from similar organizations and elicit positive emotions from prospective donors.

At the end of your story, your prospective donors should understand the conflict the hero is facing, how those needs are met, and how they can be part of meeting those needs. Appeal to them with a call to action. If you're successful, you'll gain a lifetime donor who feels like a part of your story and will share it with their friends who will, in turn, continue the cycle of fundraising.

You can change the world with a well-told story.

Creating a Brand

What makes a brand? Is it the story you tell, your mission statement, or your advertising? Your brand is larger than all of that. It encompasses your organization and the presence it gives off, but also includes your public reputation.

Having a strong brand is as important for a nonprofit as it is for a fast food restaurant. People have so many choices in every facet of their lives, and that includes the choice of where to donate their money. A nonprofit with a solid brand can distinguish itself from similar organizations and elicit positive emotions from prospective donors. When people strongly identify with your brand, you will be more successful drawing in lifetime donors.

Building a brand as a nonprofit can sometimes be more challenging than doing so in the corporate world. Limited resources narrow your pool of options. Many organizations tend to be short-sighted and only focus their energy on boosting name recognition and donations. There can be a higher learning curve involved.

Branding a nonprofit can be powerful in its own way, too. When you consider a brand as the sum of your audience's experience with you and the reputation you have, your organization has an easier time creating your brand than corporations that don't have such personal stories as part of their very character.

Find the Ethos

Persuasion is built in three layers. Logos, logical persuasion; pathos, emotional persuasion; and ethos, characteristic persuasion. Where many people drop the ball is ethos.

The foundation of your brand is your organization's ethos. It's what everything – your branding, marketing, and identity – is based on. Your nonprofit doesn't simply serve your community, it has a driving ethos that defines what you stand for and influences everything you do.

People all have something they believe in, and it's one of the ways we connect deeply with one another. More than that, we want to be part of something bigger than ourselves. Your ethos allows your donors to make that connection and fulfill that want. It personalizes a faceless organization for them.

To develop an ethos is to solidify a spirit that your organization embodies. It's the values you hold. It's your ability to fulfill not just your mission, but your donors needs as well. It's your selflessness in the way you run your organization.

Sell your ethos and your donors will become a part of your nonprofit's culture. They won't simply like your mission, they'll identify with your values and love your brand.

Expressing Your Story

The story of your nonprofit plays an important role in branding. You need to tell it, but do so succinctly. That doesn't mean you should just cut out parts or make it shorter. Continue to hold on to those elements of a hero, conflict, plot, and resolution...but make sure you get to the point!

The succinct expression of your story can be used for press releases or promotional products. It can be shortened enough to become something of a tagline, associated with your organization instantly without having to watch a video or scroll through page after page.

Your brand becomes the story told in the marketplace. It brings awareness to your organization and eventually understanding, preference, and loyalty will follow.

Personality Matters

When taken all together, your brand is what your nonprofit "oozes." It's the sum of all things that make it up and more. There's the ethos, the story, and the marketing. It all comes together to give your organization a certain feel.



Ditch the one-size-fits-all approach to marketing and learn what makes your donor base tick.

Think of it like your brand having a personality. There will be key words and phrases that you use. It'll have a distinct tone of voice, a mission it cares deeply about, issues it has opinions on, even a sense of humor.

A carefully cultivated brand is what makes or breaks you as an organization. Don't just consider what you are saying, but how you are saying it and if it's in line with your nonprofit's brand. Your branding doesn't only need to be well-thought out, it also needs to be consistent.

The Most Important Part of Branding

Maya Angelou once said, "People don't always remember what you say or even what you do, but they always remember how you made them feel." Above all else, your brand is how you're perceived in the marketplace.

Stay in tune with the feelings you evoke in your audience. Be aware of what people are saying about your organization. Look at what your donors and other prospects are saying about your brand and your mission. Get involved in the discussion. Marketing has become a two-way street with the rise in popularity of social media, and donors and prospects think more positively of organizations that engage with them.

You know the people you serve through your nonprofit, but you also need to take time to get to know those who donate. You already have a mission in common—that's one point you can connect on. Ditch the one-size-fits-all approach to marketing and learn what makes your donor base tick. Find other points to connect on and reach out to them.

Make promises and deliver on them. Give your donors and prospects a brand they can trust. If you go the extra mile in trying to make your audience happy, they'll pay it forward to you.

Your Organization's Identity

Your nonprofit needs to have a cohesive image. Its identity is created by taking that image and applying it consistently across different types of media to create brand recognition.

The image is made up of all the visual stuff: themes, colors, layouts, and most importantly, the logo.

All aspects of your identity need to be chosen carefully. Do you have too many fonts, making your website look poorly designed? Is your logo too busy? Do the colors on your website clash? First impressions count. Your organization's identity is the first thing your audience sees when it discovers you. At first glance, your identity is almost as important as your mission.

The style that you choose must be consistently and coherently applied to every medium attached to your organization's name. Exceptions can be made for certain things like advertising campaigns. Otherwise, everything needs to look like it came from your nonprofit. There can be no brand recognition without identity recognition.

Pay special attention to your logo. While it's not your organization's identity in itself, it holds the most power as the foundation of your image. It's what your audience will eventually rest their perceptions of your brand on. Your logo should be clean and simple, and the colors should agree with your general image. Just remember, without your nonprofit behind it, your logo has no meaning of its own.

But what good is all the thought you put into branding if you don't have any place to show it off? Thankfully, modern technology has given everyone from individuals to major corporations the tools to do just that. And it all starts with the web.



Web Presence: Your Home on the Internet

To stay relevant in a highly competitive market, having a presence on the web is a must. Twenty years ago, it was possible for a nonprofit to operate completely offline and reach the maximum number of donors. Ten years ago, they could get away with setting up a simple site with little information. But today, with the enhancement of technology and greater globalization, there's a little bit more to it.

Websites are much more interactive and responsive than they used to be. This allows organizations to engage with their audience using their content. It becomes a virtual version of your nonprofit.

You have the opportunity to create a website that visually echoes your passion. Include a page that shares your story. Put up a few videos about projects you've done. Run a blog and let people into the world of your nonprofit. Set up a newsletter that your audience can subscribe to. Tie in concrete examples of your brand and what you do.

Take into account your audience and tailor your content to them. Remember, this is the internet. The majority of what you put up on your site needs to be in a form that's easily consumable. People are busy, they don't have time, they have short attention spans. Keep it simple, but keep it interesting.

Designing a Winning Website

There's nothing more frustrating than trying to get through a hard to navigate website. You want to avoid that at all costs. If the user can't figure out where anything is on your site, then you've lost them completely. They're not going to sit there and try to figure it out, regardless of how great your mission is.

There are five main things to focus on when designing your website.

1. Make it Friendly

The more effortless your website is for your users, the longer they'll stay on it and the more they'll come back. Is your content concise, clear, and compelling? Does your navigation flow in an intuitive way? Is your site appealing as a whole?

Over 75% of web users consider ease of finding information the most important feature of a website. Less important to users are its appearance and whether it offers an interactive experience.

Think of the user's goal as finding the information you provide on your site. Your job is to make that journey as seamless as possible.

A user-friendly website has:

- A search function
- Logical navigation
- The least amount of pages to tell your story succinctly
- A comprehensive menu

As a nonprofit organization, you should also consider implementing ADA standards so that your site will be accessible to people with disabilities as well. Aside from helping accommodate all users, following these standards can also improve search engine rankings.

2. Reduce Clicks

The longer it takes a user to get to a piece of information, the higher the chance of them abandoning their search altogether. It should take a maximum of three clicks to get from where the user starts to where they want to go.



People search the web, look for jobs, find community activities, follow the news, and even donate to charities right from their phones.

An easy way to keep your click count down is to group similar pages together. Have a dropdown menu that lists all the pages under a specific category, or if there are too many, list them in a sidebar.

A good user experience doesn't just come from counting clicks. You also have to take into account how much content you're presenting to your user on one page.

People can only process about 40 small pieces of information per second. Users are too often presented with many times that. When you also take into account that users only read about 20% of what you put in front of them, sometimes it's best to split up longer content across multiple clicks to avoid overwhelming the user.

3. Design for Mobile

The computer isn't the only way people access the internet anymore. 80-90% of American smartphone users browse the web on their device. 15% of smartphone users browse the web exclusively on their devices. Having a website today means having a website that's mobile-ready.

People search the web, look for jobs, find community activities, follow the news, and even donate to charities right from their phones. If someone stumbles upon a site from their phone that isn't mobile-ready, they likely won't even bother with it.

Mobile readiness also plays an important factor in your search engine ranking. Google takes into account many factors when they rank pages, but mobile responsiveness and readiness is now so important it's enough to knock you off the first page.

Depending on your audience, your mobile traffic may be more important than your desktop traffic. Give your potential donors a site with great user experience design across the board.

4. Add Calls to Action

Corporations have calls to action all over their websites, and if they're done well, you hardly notice them. Some generate leads, others are for social sharing, but the most important ones close the sale.

You need to have all those calls to action too, but as a nonprofit, the all-important donate button is king.

When creating and placing donate buttons on your site, you need to:

- Include concise copy that compels users to click
- Begin with action oriented words like “Donate”
- Place buttons intuitively along the flow of the page
- Use colors that stand out from the theme but don't clash
- Make them large enough to see, but not so large they take over

Your donate buttons need to convince your users to donate right at that moment. They should be friendly and inviting, with pictures of staff, people your organization has helped, or projects your organization has completed. Don't be afraid to include donate buttons on multiple pages, or even most of your pages. If a user finds it difficult to donate, they won't donate at all.

5. Remove Barriers

Whenever you create a web form, whether it's for a contact page, a newsletter, to enter payment info, or any other reason, it needs to be set up in the easiest, most understandable way possible.

Your forms need to have text boxes large enough for everybody to see. They need to flow in a way that a user won't be confused about what goes where. Ask for the least amount of information you think you would need.

Keep the barrier to entry low and your conversion rate on web forms will be high.

Once you have a top-notch website in place, it's time to get it in front of people. Thankfully, the methods for doing that are becoming just as accessible as building the site itself... but it takes just as much careful thought.



Content Marketing: Trust Matters

Marketing used to be about direct mailers and rented lists. Advertising on television and in print ads is lucrative for the big corporations with big budgets. But as marketing has taken a turn to become more inbound than outbound, content has risen to the top as the single best way to market an organization. There's low overhead and with compelling content the return on investment (ROI) can be higher than traditional marketing techniques.

Content marketing can take many forms, from long sales copy to short emails. It all depends on the message you're trying to get across to your audience. If you choose the right medium for the right message, a Tweet can be as successful as a video. It's all in how it's presented.



Anything that provides value to your audience can be used in a successful content marketing campaign.

What Is Content Marketing?

Forget ads for a minute and think about content in its most simple form. Content is information. When you use it to market, you're creating content useful and relevant to your audience. It encourages user interaction with your brand and the sharing of information across your donor base and beyond.

The key component of content marketing is relevancy. In order for your content to affect user behavior, it has to be relevant to their interests. If you remove that all-important factor, you're right back there with all those other organizations and their interruptive marketing techniques that just blast information at their audience without a thought toward whether they'll find it useful.

Some examples of useful content are:

- Infographics that include statistics, charts, graphs, or information your audience will find interesting
- Webpages designed specifically to provide value to your audience instead of just providing information about your organization
- Podcasts and videos that convey content via a new channel and open up your brand to a new audience
- Promotional books that give your audience helpful information in a field related to your mission

Anything that provides value to your audience can be used in a successful content marketing campaign. The more creative you get, the better the chance it'll go viral.

How Does It Work?

Every user has to get to you somehow. Sometimes it'll be through a search, other times through word of mouth or social media. The main takeaway is that each user is looking for something when they come across your organization.

When you create relevant, valuable content, the odds of meeting a user's needs increases. Your search engine footprint gets bigger and you generate more traffic to your site. You become viewed as an expert in your field. All because of your content.

Compare that with traditional marketing techniques. You'd have to invest in print ads or billboards. It's hard to reach a targeted audience that way. The overhead is astronomical compared to content marketing. You have to constantly tweak your strategy. And the worst part, the ROI is significantly less. With content marketing, either you or a writer you hire can write articles, blog posts, Tweets, and other targeted content that drives people to your organization and gets them instantly talking about you.

The traffic that content marketing generates is all targeted, leading to higher conversion rates and, by extension, more lifetime donors.

Pick Your Platforms

The beauty of marketing through content is that you're not restricted to just one technique. Each platform generally carries the same risks and overhead as all the others, while opening your brand up to a more diverse audience. You'll reach different demographics with each platform you use to market.

Social Media

Your first foray into content marketing should be through every available social media channel. They're free to sign up for, it's incredibly easy to build a following, and each platform enables you to engage in conversation with your donor base.

The great thing about social media marketing is you get to increase your online presence while building your brand's authority at the same time. Every piece of content you create is spread from user to user and resonates because it comes from a recognized brand and a trusted source.

Fill out your profile on each site completely. It shows professionalism and signals to your audience that you're serious about engaging with them. Write in a personable way to avoid coming across as a faceless organization. Tailor your keywords to your brand and your field, but integrate them well with your copy. And always keep your visual identity cohesive across all platforms to maintain brand coherence and recognition.

Each social media site is an ideal channel for certain types of content:



Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social media site, boasting 71% of adult internet users. Millions of people use it every day to keep up with friends, post photos, and most importantly, share content.

Photos are the most popular content on Facebook, bringing in 53% more likes, 104% more comments, and 84% more click-throughs than text-only posts.



Twitter

Twitter is great for posting content that's short and sweet, like real-time text messaging to thousands of people. 23% of all internet users are on Twitter, but their demographic trends in the 18 to 29 range. Photos, links to articles, and quotes are all popular. If you need more retweets, consider adding a photo, video, quote, or hashtag.



Instagram

Instagram is a mobile app all about sharing pictures, and users interact by liking and commenting on each other's posts. It's quickly becoming more popular, with 26% of online adults using the app. Include relevant hashtags with your posts to bring in more views.



Pinterest

Pinterest is where 28% of the entire adult population goes to find everything. Users search through different categories and save posts to a virtual pin board, often sharing them among their followers. Pinterest users post frequently, so it helps to be very active.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn works a little differently than your traditional social media site. This is where professionals go to network and you can leverage that as a nonprofit. As a side benefit, it's also a great way to keep track of what's going on in your sector. You can get away with posting less often to LinkedIn than other social media channels.



YouTube

YouTube is great for sharing videos, and you'll be hard-pressed to find a larger audience to share them with directly. It can even be integrated with other platforms such as Google+, Facebook, and Twitter. Upload well-made and well-edited videos as often as you can, but remember to stay actively engaged with your audience in between.

Those are just a few of the sites you can use in your social media marketing campaign, but you should make an account with as many of them as you can keep up with. Social networking sites come and



Email marketing gives you a direct line of communication with your prospective donor.

go all the time. Keep your finger on the pulse of what's popular so you can reach the biggest audience possible and get the most out of your social media.



Email

There's an old saying, "The money's in the list." It still holds true today. Out of all your marketing channels, the best one you've got is your email list. You should be capturing the email of every single person that lands on your site. Put up a form so that they can sign up for your newsletter from every page, even if you rarely send one. Have them enter their email when they donate. Offer them something in return for their email. Once you get in their inbox, marketing to them becomes a whole lot easier.

Email marketing gives you a direct line of communication with your prospective donor. You're able to foster a personal relationship with them. Follow the same guidelines you would when creating any other content: make it valuable, make it engaging, and include a call to action. Even if you're getting visitors that leave your site after one or two clicks, you can eventually build enough trust to turn them into donors.



Blogging

Without question, every website needs a blog. It allows you to open your organization to the world and let them peek in. It gives you a voice on any issue you wish to speak about. It's another platform where you can connect with your donor base, and where your donor base can get content to share on other platforms.

The best thing a blog can do for your organization, though, is bring in new traffic. Organizations that blog have 97% more inbound links. Post valuable, useful content on a consistent basis and you'll be guaranteed to bring in more traffic and even rise in search rankings.



The age, gender, location, and preferred form of communication of the majority of your donor base is going to dictate your nonprofit's voice in a big way.



Search Engines

If organic traffic isn't coming from social media, it's coming from search engines. Search engine marketing is more intensive and requires a bit more planning than other techniques.

The first part of search engine marketing is pay-per-click advertising. You run an ad on Google or Yahoo! and pay for every click your ad gets. This method of marketing can become very expensive, especially if your ads aren't converting into donations. It's much more geared toward corporations with landing pages and sales funnels.

The other half of search engine marketing is search engine optimization, or SEO. When done correctly, this is the key that unlocks all the organic search engine traffic by:

- Increasing rankings
- Improving click-through rates (CTR)
- Targeting a large number of relevant words and phrases
- Driving more search volume to words and phrases for which you already rank

A lot of factors influence where you rank in search engines, with many of them requiring some deliberation when you create content for your site. Keyword usage, keyword density, frequency of updates, and content diversity are all some of the things search engine algorithms look at when ranking a page.

Discovering Your Voice

It's important to develop your nonprofit's voice before you begin any sort of campaign or create any content. The easiest way to find it is to imagine if your organization were a person. How would it speak? What kind of personality would it have?

You also need to consider your target demographic. The age, gender, location, and preferred form of communication of the majority of your donor base is going to dictate your nonprofit's voice in a big way.

Be true to your mission and the people you work with as you go through the process of discovering your voice. Don't use fancy words or pull out a thesaurus just for the sake of it. Authenticity will shine through all forms of communication and help you connect with your audience. Though tone can change depending on context, consistency across all channels and campaigns is key.

Lead Generation

One of the trickiest parts of marketing to get right is lead generation and, by extension, conversions. For-profits consider an average conversion rate of 1-2% to be good. In order to bring in the donations to support your mission, you absolutely need to perfect your method of generating leads.

Social media is the easiest platform to take advantage of. Look at what the ALS Association was able to do with their viral Ice Bucket Challenge campaign. It brought in \$100 million, 3 million leads, and was shared over 3.4 million times. Consider running your own campaign. Make it fun and accessible, and remember to brand it with your organization. Don't forget to include a call to action.

Not every campaign needs to go viral, though. If you're getting users to subscribe to your newsletter, you've already moved them one step closer to becoming a donor. Include content in your newsletters that requires more interaction from your audience and get them willing to provide you with information. Once you've sent out enough newsletters, you'll be able to use analytics to track how exactly those users are engaging with your content and converting to the next stage. You'll have all the data you need to better lead your audience through each stage of the journey from prospect to donor.



Prospects vs. Donors: The Marketing Lifecycle

The importance of brand, taking advantage of the web, and strong marketing strategy for your organization isn't just a vague idea. It's a proven method that has worked for decades in for-profit enterprises, and is emerging as a popular path forward for nonprofits as well. Using the content marketing concept outlined in this guide will help you reach people at a rate that could only be dreamed of just a few years ago.

If you come from a for-profit background, you are probably familiar with many of these techniques and could implement them in your organization very smoothly. But the biggest challenge you will face as a nonprofit is the idea of donor cultivation. While businesses have to keep customers happy, you have to do more than that—you have to keep donors giving.

Start first with capturing the attention of a prospective donor, then focus on keeping them. While many of the techniques will be similar, there are a few notable differences to keep in mind.



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Marketing to Prospects

When you're marketing to a prospective donor, it's less like two strangers meeting and more like a blind date. Your efforts in targeting a specific audience should ensure the prospect has an idea of what your nonprofit is and what it does. This brings back the importance of brand awareness. Get your nonprofit's name out there, broaden your scope, increase your reach. Only go deeper within your industry once you've gone wide enough to capture an audience that considers you an authority and recognizes your logo, your mission, your ethos, and your identity on sight.

It's not enough for a prospective donor to be aware of your brand. They need to be endeared to it. Prospective donors are more likely to convert for organizations that they have positive feelings about. So develop good relationships with your audience. Engage with them on social media, reply to their emails, comment with them on your blog. Turn your organization into a person for them and they'll start to fall in love with that person.

Connecting with your audience also fosters a sense of community, which strengthens your brand as a whole. They now have a space online where they can connect with other likeminded people, facilitated by your organization. You've allowed them to be part of something bigger than themselves. Being transparent and candid about the work you do and even the day-to-day operations of your nonprofit will make your audience feel like they're helping. That sense of community and feeling of being a part of the work your nonprofit does will turn those prospects into donors.

Marketing to Donors

Marketing isn't a one size fits all process. You've learned about all the different types of marketing, and the different platforms you can use. So it shouldn't surprise you that the groups of people you market to need to be approached differently.

The Community

Reaching out to your donors is a whole new ball game compared to drawing in prospects. You've brought them in, made them a part of your community, and they've decided to show their loyalty and

gratitude by donating. Now you have to cement that relationship and keep them as a lifetime donor.

Start by saying a simple thank you after they donate. A thank you email can help you with that. Make it personal and heartfelt, not an obvious form letter. Include links to blog posts or pages on your site you think they may be interested in to get them further engaged with your organization. Let them know they can contact you if they have any questions or comments, or if they need anything at all. Good customer care is what keeps donors loyal and trusting.

The Individual

To convert a one-time donor into a lifetime donor, you have to take the step and communicate with them on an individual level. If marketing to your prospects was the blind date, this is where the real courtship starts.

Your relationship with the donor has already begun and now it's time to cultivate it. That process can be broken down into three steps.

Invest

Your donors have given their money, now it's your turn to give time. Think of it as a thank you in return for them choosing your organization as their avenue for giving. Thank your donors for their gift and regularly update them on how that gift has helped further your mission. They're personally invested just as much as you are—they'll appreciate it.

Connect

Just like you share knowledge and understanding with those close to you in the real world, you need to do the same with your donors. Remind them how important they are to you, give them some insider knowledge of your organization, and occasionally surprise them with something special.

Communicate

You've been there for your donors for some time now. Don't be afraid to let them know your needs. Be honest with them about how they can help. Remember, they were willing to support you in the first place. If you cultivate a great relationship, they'll be there to support you again.

Interacting with your donors like this will make it easier to identify major donors. Seek them out, make them feel special, work to establish intimacy. They'll become your strongest asset and even influence others on your behalf.



You Can Do This. We Can Help!

Thank you for letting us help you on your journey to marketing your nonprofit. If you found this resource helpful, there's more to discover at donorlynk.com. See our full range of services, from website design to marketing strategy. You can also find out more about our fundraising products like GiveSuite and PowerPack.

Our entire staff is dedicated to helping you advance your mission, and we'd love for you to get in touch with us. We're ready to help!

Let's do good together!

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