DIMENSIONS

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E-newsletters and Your Communications Strategy

By Allison Van Diest

The effective use of email newsletters can be one of the most critical components of your overall communication strategy. They offer not only an inexpensive way to spread important information about your initiatives, but also an effective way to get your members and donors to take action. In fact, good email newsletters generally out-perform standard email appeals in both clickthroughs and conversion rates. E-newsletters can also help you grow support for your mission as you expose your work to a vast network of potential new constituents, whenever current subscribers forward items of interest to friends and relatives.

However, Blackbaud's 2010 Internet Marketing Assessment revealed that while 90% of organizations send email to supporters, only 58% of organizations include email *newsletters* as part of their regular communication. Those that had never sent e-news said the difficulty of generating and assembling content on a regular basis has prevented them from starting. Other organizations had given it a go, but gave up on email newsletters, because they seemed ineffective compared to the amount of work involved in their production.

Email newsletters don't have to be a chore and they can work for your development office. To make them work for you, you'll need to ensure you have an agreed upon strategy, a professional design, a respectful subscription policy, and —the thing that seems simplest but can be trickiest—plenty of valuable information to share.

Defining Your Strategy

Your email newsletter may well be doomed if your leadership and communications team don't have a clear, shared strategy for it. To determine yours, decide what you most want to achieve with your newsletter. Is your goal to expose new people to your mission? To share information with your current subscribers? Or do you hope to motivate response, as in donations, attendance, volunteering, or membership? If your answer is, "all of the above," you'll need to prioritize them in order to make your newsletter most effective.

Without an overarching strategy for the newsletter, the purpose gets lost in the pressure to publish almost everything that anyone at your office wants to share. Determining what you want the newsletter to accomplish and focusing the design around the actions you hope to inspire will help you reach your goals.

Designing Your Template

The design of your e-newsletter is more critical than that of any other email you send. With a newsletter, you are asking a reader to invest time and attention, to absorb a variety of topics, to share with others, and to become more involved. A boring, confusing, or inconsistent design can spoil your chances at all of these and can even annoy a reader into unsubscribing. Following good design principles can dramatically change your e-newsletter's performance.

The most successful e-newsletters share these design best practices:

- Strict adherence to your organization's brand standards;

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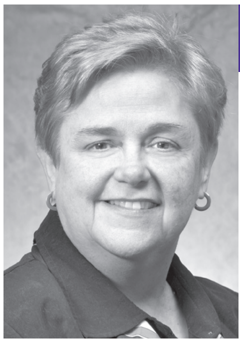
Inside:

How can fundraisers optimize their communications?



President's Corner

By Sr. Georgette Lehmuth, OSF

Communications and Community

In his book, *Community, The Structure of Belonging*, Peter Block states that "Community is fundamentally an interdependent human system given form by the conversation it holds with itself." He goes on to explain that when people care about each other they almost inadvertently begin to become accountable for each other. People, Block believes, choose to be in association for common purposes and being about these purposes can be transformative. Therefore, he concludes that relationship is critical for community transformation. Persons who engage others are able to create alternative futures. "All transformation is linguistic, which means that we can think of community as essentially a conversation…To change a community, all we have to do is change the conversation." (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008, p. 30-31)

This edition of *Dimensions* is about communications. As I reflected on the role of communications in terms of mission advancement or resource development, somehow I kept thinking about Peter Block's book. In fact, I believe that in our roles as development directors, we enter into conversations with others about our missions and we do create "structures of belonging."

We invite others to engagement and participation in significant ways—ways that are life-changing both for the recipient as well as for the donor. Let's reflect first on the recipient.

Prisoners are "set free" of their anger, guilt, and self loathing because Sr. Mary brings compassion, forgiveness, patience and understanding inside the prison walls. She is supported by the generosity of others, whose kindness provides her with a home in a small rural town and a vehicle to take her to the prison.

Johnnie can complete his homework assignment because Bob, his mentor, in his Christo Rey School, can give him the encouragement and skills he needs to rise above his impoverished conditions, all through the contributions of those who believe Johnnie deserves a fair chance in this world.

"Today is a blessed day," says Rhonda because she has a bag filled with groceries to take home to her children, thanks to the Bread of Life food pantry and its generous supporters.

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In the next issue:

Capital Campaigns

There is Robby, who was able to pass the GED test, and old Mr. Smith, who will sleep in a heated home tonight.

Suzie got that winter coat she needed at the "Nearly New Store" and Rose is receiving excellent pre-natal care at the free clinic on wheels that comes to her neighborhood regularly.

Joe is learning a new trade and Rebecca is learning how to sew. A mother's newborn child in Africa got the vaccine to protect him from common but deadly diseases. All this, because someone cared. And the list goes on and on.

What all of the people in these and many more stories have in common is that these often forgotten people, are now part of a community of belonging. They are brother and sister with others whom they may never meet. This community, these others have become accountable and responsible for them. They care about them and want to share with them. They want these less fortunate ones to know they are important in someone's eyes. They have worth in someone's mind. They have a place in someone's heart. They belong.

If community "is given form by the conversations it has with itself," what kinds of conversations are we having with those who choose to be accountable for others, our donors?

Perhaps, we can think of ourselves as "conversation shifters." While our friends and benefactors may often find themselves talking about their worries and fears and things that cannot change, our conversations with them can offer them different perspectives and possibilities about things that together we can change. We can engage them in finding a way to make a significant difference. Peter Block says that when we do this, we create what he calls "social capital."

Our benefactors find fulfillment and joy in becoming part of the communities of hope in which we invite them to participate through various acts of generosity. This is not a community that frets about the unknown. This is a community that thrives by caring for others. This is a community that creates new energy—a community in which all are welcome. It is a community that has faith in its own capacity to make a difference. It is a community that celebrates all life as gift, all persons as worthwhile, and time as an opportunity to use accountably.

Block says that "questions are more transformative than answers and are essential tools of engagement." (p.63) He also states that some questions have more power than others. In a parish men's or ladies' club, for example, questions like "how do we get people to show up?" or "how do we get them on board?" are, in Block's way of thinking, questions of "little power."

In our context, the serious questions that keep us awake at night might be "how do we get more donors?" or "how do we engage the next generations?" I think Block would call them questions of less power, because he would suggest that these questions "support a mindset that the future can be negotiated, mandated, engineered and controlled into existence." (p.104)

So what are our questions of great power? Block says that these are questions that do not define themselves and allow each person to bring his or her own understanding and meaning into the conversation. This allows space for the personal, which in turn opens space for relationship. They have the capacity to move something forward while strengthening relationships and commitments.

Possible questions of greater power might be: "What is it within you that urges you to continue to support us?" "What is it about our mission that is important to you?" "What is the story you keep telling about us to others?" "What are the crossroads you are facing at this point in your life?" "What are the gifts you hold that you would like to share?" "Who would you wish to also participate in our mission?"

Both by asking ourselves and those who generously support us such questions, we may find some answers we did not expect. We may also find ourselves better prepared to communicate effectively with our current donors.

As we continue to invite others to collaborate with us, we are asking them to make a choice. It is an invitation to make space in their lives for something new. It is an opportunity to become part of a community that holds itself accountable for those less fortunate. Block would talk about

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Integrating Communications and Marketing in Faith-Based Organizations

By Alice Black, PhD

Mission and Vision

This year the Dominican Sisters of Peace will celebrate their second anniversary as a Pontifical Congregation of religious sisters within the Roman Catholic Church. We have more than six hundred Sisters and five hundred Associates in 39 states and six different countries, seeking to preach the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

At the first General Chapter (canonical meeting for decision-making in religious congregations) of the Dominican Sisters of Peace in April 2009, the delegates set direction for the first six years of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. At this time, the work of integrating mission and ministry; outreach and engagement; and marketing and communications began. Since we are also a 501c3 nonprofit organization, the following nonprofit business terms may be applied to this process for ease of understanding. In short, our chapter commitments became our mission and vision statement and our first strategic plan.

These strategic planning efforts were then synthesized into the following statements, which direct all of our marketing and communications efforts. They proclaim the way we function and do business as sisters and associates of peace. This synopsis has proven to be very helpful as we apply to grant makers and reach out to potential funders. These commitments are noted below so you might see the essence of our organization. Even though many of you work with just this type of commitment, for comparison purposes, it might be useful to see how this religious organization captured the mission and vision:

> *We, Dominican Sisters of Peace, claim our charism to preach truth—with a new fire. Our preaching flows from our contemplation and is embodied in our prayer, study, community and ministry. Rooted in the heritage of the Order of Preachers, we witness to the living presence of the Risen Christ.*
>
> *As members of an international Order and recognizing our interdependence, we call ourselves to greater involvement with the global community. We embrace simplicity of life and itinerancy of mind, spirit and body. We respond to the hungers of our world by sharing with others the bread of life.*
>
> *Radically open to ongoing conversion into the peace of Christ, we commit ourselves to be women of peace who:*

- *Study, contemplate, and preach God's revelation discovered in the unfolding mystery of creation and in Sacred Scripture.*
- *Create environments of peace by promoting non-violence, unity in diversity, and reconciliation among ourselves, the Church and others.*
- *Promote justice through solidarity with those who are marginalized, especially women and children, and work with others to identify and transform oppressive systems.*
- *Create welcoming communities, inviting others to join us as vowed members, associates, volunteers and partners in our mission to be the Holy Preaching.*

The Mission Advancement and Communications Departments then become the staff who "serve those who serve" and who embrace the mission and assist in implementation. Our departments serve in union with the sisters and in close conversation with our leadership team. Our jobs as staff becomes easier because we have a clear direction and have now developed a communications and mission advancement plan with clear goals and objectives. Our plan involves both internal and external audiences and is completely integrated in approach.

Integration and Story Telling

We have learned that this integration between advancing the mission, our development work and our internal and external public relations is key to successfully telling our story. As Henry Nouwen so aptly states, "announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission" is integrated into our marketing and communications efforts.

Mission advancement and development staff are responsible for assisting in our public relations, marketing and communications efforts. Conversely, the communications staff is responsible for assisting in development, mission advancement efforts and public outreach efforts, while those involved in mission and ministry are called into action in both areas. All work together for the greater good.

As we strive to integrate marketing and communications techniques into all we do—we know that successful marketing practices means that we must create and maintain satisfying, mutual relationships on a more transactional level. We also know that our public relations efforts seek to create two-way relationships based upon information exchanges and awareness building.

With this in mind, the integration of marketing practices might answer the following questions or take these paths:

- Create awareness—How can someone help our efforts? Be specific.
- Call to action—Provide a timeframe to take action; don't ask for the same effort again and again.
- Positively reinforce decisions—Show our supporters how they have helped our mission.
- Identify and segment audiences—Look at specific geographic and regional supporters will aid our efforts.
- Maintain identification in branding, advertising, and public relations.
- Evaluate financial needs and goals—Determine a primary focus for yearly efforts.
- Implement cost recovery towards future sustainability—How will we continue these efforts?
- Create fundraising plans—Involve the ministry and leadership.
- Seek grants—Determine what the grantor is trying to accomplish and how and if we fit.
- Maintain and frequently evaluate processes and outcomes—Are we on track?

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5 Steps to Publicity Success

By Sandra Beckwith

Nonprofit organizations like yours have a publicity advantage that your counterparts in the for-profit world lack: Media outlets want to help you spread the word about your worthwhile programs or initiatives. As a result, nonprofits have the potential to enjoy the support of media allies even though their for-profit counterparts often feel like they're squaring off with adversaries when trying to publicize events, products or programs.

While this is good news for your development efforts, many nonprofit organizations are disappointed when they see that their initiatives or issues aren't getting media attention—even in a friendly media environment. That's often because they don't understand how publicity and media relations work. Too busy, perhaps, to take the time to learn or simply implementing the steps put in place by a predecessor, the individual responsible for supporting development goals by securing free media exposure often makes the same mistakes repeatedly.

Any one of these errors can undermine your efforts to promote your mission. Here's how to avoid these mistakes and enjoy impressive publicity that supports your development efforts but costs next to nothing.

1. Tell the press what you're doing.

When we're doing good work, we expect it to be noticed. It doesn't always work that way, though. Leave nothing to chance—make sure you tell the press what your organization is doing. It's the only way you'll make certain they get the information and that it's accurate, too.

Provide them with the information they need to report on your initiative accurately. That involves double checking all the facts you've provided, spelling names correctly, and offering a name, e-mail address, and telephone numbers (during office hours and outside of them) for someone on staff who can answer any questions.

2. Make sure you've got something newsworthy.

Learn to think like a media gatekeeper—that person at the newspaper, local magazine, or TV news department who decides what does and doesn't get space or air time. Look at your "news" from their perspective and ask yourself, "So what?" Is it interesting enough to appeal to someone lacking a connection to your organization?

What's newsworthy varies from community to community. In addition, what's appealing to a newspaper might not work with a TV station because TV news relies on visuals to tell a story. If you've got great visuals, emphasize that in the information you share with the press. For example, TV news departments seem partial to stories that feature children, so if you've introduced an innovative learning program in a Catholic elementary school, make sure your media materials include an invitation to bring cameras into the school for interviews with participating students and teachers. Inform newspapers, too, so that they know that interview sources and others can be photographed.

3. Use the proper format when sharing your news.

That's not an event flyer, a brochure, or an invitation. It's a news or press release that has all the details in a narrative form. When writing press releases, don't worry about your writing skills—if you've got a good story and you've presented the key facts in the order of most to least important, your story will be used even if you don't know when to use "that" or "which."

Work on the headline—many editors and reporters won't read beyond a headline that doesn't grab them. (For example, "Unique community project will help save lives" is more compelling than "Diocese announces new project.") Use this as your e-mailed release subject line, too, rather than the less informative, "News from the diocese."

Get the five Ws and one H—**W**ho, **W**hat, **W**hen, **W**here, **W**hy and **H**ow—into the first two paragraphs. Concentrate on writing simply, as if talking to a friend. Keep it short—no more than two pages double-spaced before you copy and paste it from Word into an e-mail message—and include a standard "boilerplate" paragraph at the end that provides information about your organization. Include a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address at the beginning and end, so a reporter or producer knows whom to call for more information.

When you want to sell a reporter or editor on your feature article idea or convince a TV assignment editor or radio talk show producer to interview your spokesperson on a particular topic, the tool to use is a "pitch letter." This sales letter should be no longer than a page and should state your idea in an interesting way in the first paragraph. Support that idea with compelling facts or statistics. Note that a feature article always includes interviews with several sources, so make suggestions about other sources and provide their contact information.

If you're promoting a special event, use a "media alert." Unlike the press release, this media relations tool does not use a narrative paragraph format. Think bullet points instead, listing the date, time, and place along with the "what" and the "why" of the event. It lets those assigning coverage—and those receiving the assignment—see at a glance whether they can fit it into their news schedule and whether it's the type of event they should or would report on.

When offering tips or advice, such as "5 ways to select a private school," or "4 things you must know about a nonprofit before contributing to it," or "3 questions to ask when researching nursing homes for a loved one," use a tip sheet format. This specific type of news or press release opens with a paragraph describing the problem, follows with a quote from your organization's spokesperson, then lists the tips with numbers or bullet points. End with your standard "about us" boilerplate paragraph.

4. Get your information to the right editors, reporters, and producers.

Assemble your media contact list by studying media outlets and their websites or by calling for appropriate contact names. Most libraries have media directories at the reference desk, too.

Here are the typical contacts:

- **Daily newspaper:** calendar editor, features editor, "beat" reporter (education, religion, health, etc.)
- **Weekly newspaper:** reporter assigned to your community
- **TV news:** assignment editor (there's often a different one for weekends)
- **Radio news:** news director
- **Radio & TV talk shows:** producer
- **Radio & TV public affairs shows:** public affairs or community affairs editor
- **Magazine:** editor or section editor
- **Web site:** online editor.

5. Establish relationships with journalists in a position to help your organization.

Once you know who should be on your media list, get to know them. Start virtually by following them on Twitter, re-tweeting some of their content. Invite them to connect with you on LinkedIn. "Friend" them on Facebook. Use what you learn about them from social networking to move your relationship into the real world by inviting them to lunch and asking questions about how you might help them do their jobs better. Do you know people they would like to know? Can you pass along article or segment ideas? What do they need to know about your religious organization so that they can report on it more accurately? Keep in mind that, as with all forms of networking, you want the emphasis on how *you* can help *them*, not the other way around.

When appropriate, leverage these connections to schedule deskside briefings or editorial board meetings when you need the media's support for an issue or cause that will have a significant impact on the community.

Focus on these five publicity steps and you'll soon be partnering with the media to help those you serve—and others—appreciate your contributions.

■ NCDC

Sandra Beckwith is the author of **Publicity for Nonprofits: Generating Media Exposure That Leads to Awareness, Growth, and Contributions.**
Receive a free publicity report and other publicity tips at www.nonprofitpublicity.com.

Practical Tips for Managing LinkedIn and Facebook (on Top of Everything Else)

By Carol Meerschaert

I bet you've never thought to yourself, "I'd like more work to do." So how can you possibly accomplish everything *and* manage your association's LinkedIn group and Facebook page as well?

You need not be an expert; you just need some expertise. You can stay on top of the important tasks by using two acronyms I've developed. Just take it FAST and take it SLOW and here we go.

FAST: Frequency, Access, Statistics, Templates

Frequency

- **Always remember: Social media moves quickly; you snooze, you lose.** So, build short time slots into your daily schedule for checking and updating your groups (LinkedIn) and pages (Facebook). For example, schedule 10-minute slots three times a day.
- **Set up auto-notifications** so that you know when someone writes on your Facebook wall or posts a discussion on LinkedIn. The easiest response: Just "like" the post.
- **Post at least a couple of times a week to keep things fresh.** It will give your audience something to react to and set standards for the sort of content they should deliver.

Access

- **Keep in mind that it's very easy to create controlled access to your group.** At the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association, we position our members-only LinkedIn group as a member benefit, and more than half of our members belong to it.
- **Speed things up by multitasking.** I process 10 to 20 requests to join per week. That takes about 10 minutes total and can be done while I'm on a conference call so it is not a time sink.
- **Save even more time by uploading your new members into the group as they join** to make them preapproved. What if you don't have the bandwidth to check member status? Just make yours an open group.
- **Recruit volunteers** to serve as page admins on Facebook and managers of the group on LinkedIn. These volunteers can help seed discussions and monitor what's posted. Just be sure to take the time to write out guidelines so everyone is clear on what's OK.
- **Stay fresh without being annoying.** Our Facebook fan page grows steadily. We keep status updates steady—but not obnoxiously frequent—by announcing major events and posting photos of the events afterward. We also post a notice when new videos appear on our YouTube channel. This kind of regular posting takes less than two hours a week.

Statistics

- **Keep track of what gets the most interest and when.** Social media come with boatloads of free statistics worth a thousand words. I ran a couple of Facebook ads and found that our clicks came almost exclusively on Friday and the weekend. So guess when I post things on Facebook? How is your group growing? How's engagement? Do people post discussions? Do photos get more clicks than links? Are shorter posts more popular? Use the stats to guide you so you can give members what they want and stop wasting time posting things they don't care for.

Templates

- **Use the template feature in your LinkedIn group to set up and send automatic responses**. You can use templates for requests to join, for approvals, and when you decline membership. I'm a big fan of "one and done." I even have a template for when I have to remove job postings from our group. (We don't allow them, preferring to drive traffic to our online career center instead.)

Now it's time to go…

SLOW: Search, Links, Outreach, Work

Search

- **Always think search engine optimization.** Instead of typing out URLs or remembering to bookmark sites before clicking away, many people simply Google a short descriptor.

When someone searches for "HBA," I don't want the first page of results to be about the Hawaiian Bible Association or health and beauty aids. Your social media will enhance your SEO by adding incoming links to your site. Check how you're doing by searching for your organization on LinkedIn and Facebook. Set up a Google Alert account to see when and where your organization is being mentioned.

Links

- **Keep in mind that the fastest, easiest way to get social media content is to post links** from your website to LinkedIn and Facebook. You'll save a ton of time, get the message across, and drive traffic to your website. Copy and paste is all it takes.

Outreach

- **Don't spend any more time and money than you have to on member acquisition.** Using social media makes acquisition better, faster, cheaper. Chances are that friends of your members on Facebook and connections on LinkedIn are also in your target market. Use ads on these sites to target by geography, career level, and employer. You can view the results in a minute each day and alter if needed to reach your goal. This is so much easier than the "spray and pray" bulk mail methods of the last century.
- **Allow chapters to have their own Facebook pages.** The HBA Greater Philadelphia chapter is a shining example of how to engage members using Facebook. The volunteers ask event speakers to post engagement questions before an event, discuss key points from the event, and then post photos afterward. Although this chapter was started just four years ago, it reached 1,000 members in 2010.

Work

- **Enjoy the many ways social media lets you work smarter.** Using social media has not only allowed us to decrease the number of eblasts we send, but it has increased member engagement. It lets our chapters that don't have one of our signature programs (women in transition, women in science) to connect their members to our larger community.

I cannot directly attribute our membership growth to social media alone, but in the year I have been with the HBA, we have increased from 5,000 to nearly 6,000 members, even as we've experienced what probably was the most tumultuous year in the healthcare industry. Facebook and LinkedIn are two more tools for your toolbox. Learn to use them efficiently and they'll help you to reach out to a new audience, engage members, and drive traffic to your website.

Carol Meerschaert is director of marketing and communications at the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association in Fairfield, New Jersey. She'll share her volunteer guidelines with you if you email her at carolm@hbanet.org

Tips to Use & Habits to Lose

USE IT!

Building an online community that serves your constituents' needs, not just your own

Yes, any online community you create must fit your organization's overall plan. But the surest way to turn off your various constituents—the people you help, actual and prospective donors, and others—is to establish a community that's only about what *you* want. It would be a lost opportunity as well, because the (relative) anonymity of the Internet allows your constituents to share their feelings in a way in which they might not otherwise be comfortable. On your dedicated Facebook site/blog/website, set up pages designed to solicit constructive feedback from users; post polls and surveys; and, of course, track all traffic to the relevant pages. "Listen before speaking" applies to the social network, too.

Using the full potential of your Facebook page

Remember that Facebook doesn't merely offer a page ("Info") for you to record dry facts about your organization. It also offers a "Wall" for you or your users to make comments and post web links of interest; photo and video pages for you to let users know who you are and who your donors and constituents are; and an "Events" page to give users notice about future (and a record of past) fundraising and other events. You can even start a "Discussion" page to address issues of concern and a "Twitter" page to post your recent tweets. If the full functionality of a Facebook page is not exploited, at least as far as possible for your particular organization, you're not really on Facebook.

Letting "your (online) light shine before others"

The trick to mastering the art of getting people to your website is to realize that they're already out there, looking for you; all you have to do is not hide. You know your organization's key goals and key metrics; now you have to find the *keywords* that will communicate these concepts and bring your natural constituency to you. A good first step would be to Google your own organization's name and see who appears associated with your organization—and who doesn't. Then you can work on creating "backlinks": links on other pages that lead back to your site. It will take time and effort, but those who understand how to optimize their websites through search words will never "hide their light under a bushel."

LOSE IT!

Confusing "communications" and "marketing" plans

A well-conceived communications plan is essential to the success of your overall campaign. However, "communications" and "marketing" plans should not be confused. The process of convincing a prospective donor to give to a nonprofit is not really "marketing." Though there are close parallels between for-profit "selling" and nonprofit "soliciting," the differences are significant. An example would be a $3 million capital campaign in which about 90 percent of the amount raised is expected to come from about forty donors: why then should the nonprofit fund an expensive "marketing" campaign targeting thousands of people, rather than *communicate* one-on-one with the most likely donors?

– Adapted from "Designing a Communications Plan to Enhance Your Fundraising Campaign," by Tony Poderis (see http://bit.ly/e8Fxyl)

Creating two (or more) unintegrated communications efforts within one organization

Engaging in two-track communications—one to promote the unique services your institute offers its constituents and the other to raise funds—doesn't work. No organization would deliberately create an incoherent communications system, but it's quite easy to lose track of one's message (and one's messengers) without knowing it. Instilling in your staff, starting with the receptionist, the concept that they are all communicators definitely helps. Making sure that the Communications Department, if you have one, is not isolated (even if inadvertently) from the rest of the organization is also critical. Mastering *internal* communicating is half the battle.

Obsessing on ROI when evaluating the effectiveness of your communications

Communications, at least for nonprofits, is less about return on investment than about *relationships*, so those who see social media as a drain on their organization's resources may be looking at the issue through the wrong end of the telescope. Those intangibles that make us tick—brand awareness, reputation and our respect for our constituents (in this case, showing the younger generation a willingness to reach them through *their* media)—are vital factors, too. It's good to recall sometimes that it wasn't the power of the spreadsheet that drew us to religious fundraising. ■ NCDC

Giving Up Control Vital to Viral Campaigns

In today's tech-savvy world, word travels fast. And when your supporters start texting and tweeting about your major event or capital campaign, then their friends forward that news to their friends, the campaign has gone viral.

"Giving in to serendipity is part of the entire concept of going viral," says Nonprofit Consultant Ken Goldstein of Goldstein Consulting (Los Gatos, CA). "If a campaign is driven from top-down, with a command and control attitude that was approved in endless closed-door meetings, then by definition it's not viral, no matter how popular or successful it may be."

To be truly viral, Goldstein says, a campaign must be person-to-person sharing out of true interest, "not carefully orchestrated, scheduled and monitored organization-to-masses distribution." Unfortunately, he says this troubles many professional fundraisers and boards of directors because the very things that make something viral also prevent it from being put in a budget with any accuracy.

While going viral in the virtual world may be a new trend, the concept of such groundswell support is not. As long as there have been nonprofits, there have been people-driven efforts to support them, from bake sales to asking for donations in lieu of birthday gifts. "The difference in the social media is scale," Goldstein says. "Instead of supporters bringing in a few hundred dollars from the couple dozen people they are in physical contact with, the message is quickly forwarded electronically to friends of friends of friends, and the results can be huge."

All nonprofits should be prepared for a fundraising effort, publicity campaign or other communications element to go viral, Goldstein says. To do so, he advises:

- Truly engage friends and followers with social media. Be on Facebook (www.facebook.com) and Twitter (www.twitter.com) with regularly posted updates, including photos of your events and good deeds. Don't just post and run. Listen to what others are saying, and reply swiftly. Remember, social media is not a broadcast medium; it's a conversational platform."
- Have a large, easy-to-find "Donate Now" button on every page of your website.
- Make your website accessible and easy to read (and donate) from mobile devices. "This includes phones, iPads and whatever is invented next week," says Goldstein.
- Think phones. If your message goes viral, bringing people to your website, and it's not maximized to be read on a phone or have a call to action front and center, "you've just blown your opportunity."

Finally, the nonprofit consultant says, the social media-driven concept of viral marketing is so new that there are no experts, "only practitioners and slightly more experienced practitioners. So learn from your peers. See what other, similar organizations are doing and evaluate their success."

One of the most effective ways to do so is through Twitter, he says. "Start following other nonprofits and fundraisers, using the 'Follow Friday' Twitter tradition, where users recommend their favorite tweeters. If somebody you respect is recommending somebody else, follow them, broaden your circle and pay attention."

Two Viral Campaign "Nevers"

You may think you know what to do to be prepared for a viral campaign, but do you know what not to do? Nonprofit Consultant Ken Goldstein, Goldstein Consulting (Los Gatos, CA) cites two key elements to keep in mind to make your viral campaign a success:

1. **Never force it.** "Your online audience is message-savvy and knows the difference between a true viral message and being marketed to."
2. **Never correct your supporters.** "If you have somebody sending donors your way, don't yell at them for using the old tag line, or messing with the schedule for your other events or not sending it out to the right people. Only if the message is so off-base or incorrect that you'll end up in legal trouble should you ever get in their way."

Source: Ken Goldstein, Goldstein Consulting; email: ken@goldstein.net.

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Dollars and Sense

Functional Allocation of Expenses—Where to Begin

Craig, Fitzsimmons & Michaels, LLP

Functional accounting is based on a nonprofit organization's major types of activities, program or mission-based services and supporting services such as administration, governance and fundraising. The Statement of Functional Expenditures shows how nonprofit organizations allocate these activities and is used by donors and watch groups to show the ratio of program services to supporting services. Donors and end users look more favorably on NPO's that spend a higher portion of their resources on the causes (programs) that it exists to support than on soliciting contributions or management and general expenses. Remember, a Statement of Functional Expenditures is required for all voluntary health and welfare organizations!

Your organization can start breaking down its functional expenses by focusing on its natural expenses (i.e., salary, postage, printing, telephone, rental expense, office expenses) and functional areas.

Natural Expense Categories—Your chart of accounts should be detailed enough to be able to determine what kind of expenses your organization has and how these expenses are used, i.e. to raise money for your mission work, to purchase postage for reply envelopes, and to pay salaries related to management, creative services or donor services. The coding of your natural expenses is very important and will save you time later on. Postage ideally should be broken out into postage for appeals, reply envelopes, acknowledgement and office expenses. The same theory should be used for other expense items such as printing, supplies for mailings, rental of equipment, salaries and professional services. In short, you should not have any account called "Appeal Expenses" or "Fundraising Expenses" that is a catch-all for everything your organization spends money on to raise funds for your mission work!

Joint Cost Allocations—A fund raising appeal that serves a dual purpose by also furthering a mission purpose or fulfilling an administrative function may meet the criteria for joint cost allocation.

- Purpose—Is the expense for something other than just strictly fundraising? In other words, not just asking for donations.
- Audience—Are the recipients selected just based on willingness to donate or based on helping the mission work?
- Content—Does the activity support a program or just administrative or general purposes? In other words, is the expense used to acknowledge a donation (required by law) and therefore support services or does the appeal letter call the donor to take action to help support the mission work and therefore program-related?

For operational expenses such as rental of property, repair and maintenance, depreciation or telephone bills, usage by department or square footage of building can be used.

Expenses can also be part program and part support services, which would mean they qualify as joint costs. Joint costs will need to be

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it in terms of enlarging one's capacity to believe in ideals. For us who choose fundraising as a ministry it is about enlarging our capacity to believe in the Good News. It is about believing that God loves us and invites us into a special relationship. That relationship calls us to accountability to realize God's love in our world.

Those questions that keep us awake at night about who will take the places of our most faithful benefactors when they leave us for their eternal rewards are important ones. But the answers do not lie in numbers alone. They lie also within the community of belonging that has called us and others to participate in bringing God's love to our world.

Every day, you and I and our donors and those to whom we minister choose not to give up. We are in this together. On good days, the returns on our efforts are abundant: a mailing did better than expected; we received our largest bequest ever; the Smiths agreed to chair our special event; the Provincial stopped in just to say "thank you." It is easy to choose not to give up.

But there are those other days, those moments when things have not done well and we are preparing a report to our Board that will be disappointing to some and discouraging to others. It is still our choice. Somehow we do not find ourselves trapped by circumstances both within and not within our control. Somehow the fatigue of all that work for far less than what we had anticipated does not completely deplete our courage. We make a choice to come back tomorrow and begin again.

The answer to the question "Why do we do what we do?" may be different for each of us. In fact, depending on what is happening around us, that answer may even change from day to day. However, I think that for all of us there would be a thread of commonality that has something to do with belonging, with relationship.

It is something like the experience of Peter, James and John, who simply dropped their nets, left their boats and began following a carpenter from Nazareth. It is why Zachary climbed the sycamore tree and Mary told her son at the wedding feast of Cana that there was no more wine. It has something to do with fearless curiosity that in time becomes the faith that can move mountains.

And, each time we affirm our commitment, we come back to run another leg of the good race about which Paul speaks, and we know we are not alone. We know we are in this together and for each other.

Margaret Wheatley in her book *Perseverance* writes:

> The potential for joy is always in us but, like everything in life, that potential only becomes evident in relationship…We have to be together. We have to be in service to one another to discover our essential goodness. (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010, p. 143)

Let all that we communicate be stated with the conviction of our faith in the community of belonging to which God has called us all and in which all are always welcome as brother and sister.

Have a Blessed Lenten Season.

■ NCDC

Sr. Georgette Lehmuth OSF

E-newsletters and Your Communications Strategy from page 1

- Well-rendered logos displayed using proper resolution;
- A consistent, recognizable header that allows a reader to tell who you are and what you do at a glance;
- A layout that remains consistent from issue to issue;
- Well placed graphics and photographs that support and build interest in adjacent content;
- "Tell A Friend" and "Donate" links above the fold;
- Excerpt-style content, with the bulk of longer stories continued on a website landing page;
- Headlines and features that change from month to month;
- Clear and compelling calls to action;
- Interactive features (polls, surveys, comment boards, social media links).

Building Your List

Many institutions manage a single email list that is used for all electronic communication. While it is permissible to send email to anyone with whom you have established a relationship with (as long as they have the option to unsubscribe), you run the risk of alienating one-time or casual supporters if you auto-subscribe them to your e-newsletter. Your constituency is varied and those you hope to cultivate into donors have come to you for a variety of reasons. The best way to ensure that your e-newsletter is valued by your readers is to inform prospective subscribers of the benefits of subscribing and letting them take that proactive step to engage with you.

Each goal for your email newsletter has a corresponding metric that can help you evaluate your progress.

Goal	Metric
Find new subscribers	New list growth
Share information	Clickthrough rates
Motivate response	Conversion rates

Your website should encourage subscription to your e-newsletter on every page where similar content might be available via e-news. The subscription link should head to a preference center, where would-be subscribers can see samples, have their privacy guaranteed in simple, straightforward terms, and where options (if available) such as frequency, timing and areas of interest should be presented. Subscription forms should be brief and user friendly—only ask for the information you absolutely need at this point.

Once someone subscribes, send an immediate acknowledgement with a link to the most recent issue of your newsletter. After a few issues, consider surveying new subscribers to find out if your newsletter is meeting their needs. Meanwhile, measure clickthrough and conversion rates to ensure that you're hitting the mark. Readership and activity should generally trend upwards. In some sectors, it is natural for a list to go through periods of contraction; after a major list building activity, your less enthusiastic subscribers may leave your list. But for Catholic organizations that focus primarily on membership, any contraction may be worth investigating. Those who have been reading should continue reading and acting, or you may need to examine your newsletter's content and timing for problems.

To that end, consider how you are managing "emotionally unsubscribed" list members. These are people who joined your list, read your messages, hopefully took action at some point, but have since stopped reading and responding. Maybe they aren't turned off enough to click that unsubscribe link, but they are clearly tuned out. The most effective email marketers are reading their lists with the same attention that they hope their list members use to read the news. When list members seem to have lost interest, savvy communicators will examine behavior to determine what is required to reengage their lists, and make adjustments accordingly.

Branding	
In this issue First Headline	Personalization
Graphic & Lead Story Copy	Donate Link
Second Headline	Feature #1
Graphic & Second Story Copy	Feature #2 Feature #3

Segmentation of your list will also assist in engaging your readership. Catholic organizations may consider segmenting lists into those who appear based on their connection with a cause and those who appear to give as part of their connection with their faith. The first segment may be supporting your organization because they believe you do the best job at executing your mission, and would be engaged through stories of how dollars are spent effectively toward specific projects. The latter segment may be supporting your organization because of your alignment of values and faith. Those readers may be most effectively engaged by stories of how faith is manifested in your projects. Both stories would ultimately be the same, but the voice and prominence of the different areas of interest can be tested to see if higher response can be motivated.

Telling Your Stories

Generating great content, month after month, can be the most challenging part of maintaining a successful e-newsletter. The key is to have a detailed picture of your audience in mind at all times, and to share information you know they need in an authentic, passionate voice. Your newsletter is not about what your organization wants to say, but what your audience wants to hear. Some of the things they'll want to hear are obvious. Offering exclusive, preview or premium content in your newsletter and providing special value not available elsewhere or as quickly will ensure a more engaged readership. Get your readership used to reading your newsletter promptly to find out about special events, firsthand accounts and more. Showcasing a special reader from time to time who exemplifies the action you hope to motivate will drive the behavior you want and entertain your audience.

But don't underestimate your audience's connection to your mission. If you have an e-newsletter today, you are likely sharing the impact of your program, providing updates on projects, and acknowledging donors. But are you also making relevant, explicit asks? A news update is interesting, but engaging your audience emotionally by making meaningful asks and showing appreciation will build loyalty in your list members. Don't rely on the passive "Donate" button. Weave a call-to-action into most stories, and your e-newsletter will soon feel quite worth the effort it takes to publish.

Every Catholic organization of every type and size should prepare an email version of the news you distribute to your constituents. By laying the proper foundation of a clear strategy, sound design and good list management beneath your audience-focused, authentically-voiced stories, you will quickly discover how effective email newsletters can be in helping you reach your development and communication goals. ■ NCDC

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disclosed separately in the financial statements at year-end.

This is a process that takes time to develop and changes as your organization changes.

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Integrating Communications and Marketing from page 5

- Train boards, staffs, and volunteers—Do volunteers know about our mission and how they can assist? Are we reaching out and inviting new volunteers?
- Keep records—Maintain detailed accountability should be for future reporting.
- Generate thanks—We cannot say thank you enough. Send official and hand-written notes.
- Report outcomes (especially to foundations, benefactors, leadership, etc.).

The integration of public relations techniques might follow these paths:

- Focus on vision and values—How are we meeting your vision and values?
- Key message identification—What message is key in our efforts?
- Media relations and the utilization of new and old media—Are our efforts best helped by social media, print and electronic media, or a combination?
- Positioning—Where is our message best positioned? Strategize.
- Partnership identification—Who are the best partners? Reach out.
- Public identification and contact—Who are key opinion leaders? Reach out.
- Speaker opportunities—Offer our organization as a speaker to groups that can assist in our efforts.
- Events, tours, etc.—Which events, tours or others will best assist in our efforts?
- Technology usage—Are we benefitting from technology? How or why not?
- Telling your stories—Are we telling our story outside your organization? How?
- Tracking & quantifying outcomes—Track how we are telling our story and what the outcomes have been.
- Philanthropy/community outreach/sponsorships—Become a sponsor in our community (communities) for like-minded charities. Volunteer to be a partner.
- Thank you correspondence—We cannot say thank you enough. Send official and hand-written notes.

As one can see, the items included in the marketing and public relations techniques may be interchangeable or may work together. This circular relationship is key to successful integration of efforts and mirrors the functioning of the organization. However, keep in mind that public relations is often considered a "trailing indicator." In other words, give your public relations efforts time to be implemented and to bear fruit. Just as a tree does not bear ample fruit in the first year, so it is with public relations.

Measuring Success

Finally, measure success. Begin quantifying outcomes of missions and ministries. Many grant funders now require this practice, so it is prudent to begin thinking about this issue. Depending on the report being generated this could be done by:

- quantifying demographics and psychographics of populations;
- measuring media placements;
- evaluating successes and weaknesses of programs;
- gathering testimonials;
- reviewing capabilities.

The integration of communications and marketing efforts with fundraising and friendraising efforts becomes easier because our religious organizations have such a compelling story to tell. The focus is on those we serve as we tell their story and the story of the dedicated and humble lives of our religious who do so much with so little across the globe. As they serve God with prayer, lives and deeds, we are drawn into service.

"I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"

– Luke 12:49

■ NCDC

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