

The 8 Online Fundraising Changes You *Must Make* in 2010

Katya Andresen

A free eBook
from your friends at
[Network for Good](#)

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This eBook was written by Katya Andresen (COO of Network for Good, blogger at nonprofitmarketingblog.com and author of [Robin Hood Marketing: Stealing Corporate Savvy to Sell Just Causes](#))

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About Network for Good

The Home of Easy & Affordable Online Fundraising

At Network for Good, we don't just give you a DonateNow button—we help you make sure people click on it. And we don't just give you an email tool—we help you run a great campaign. We help you become an online fundraising and marketing superhero without superhuman effort or a big budget.

Here are a few of the ways how we can help nonprofits succeed online:

1. Easy, affordable fundraising solutions: Get donations on your website with [DonateNow](#)
2. Email campaign and newsletter tools: [EmailNow](#) powered by Emma for sending and tracking mass emails and telling you which messages work best
3. Free weekly fundraising and marketing tips: [Sign up here](#) for great advice in your inbox each week
4. [Fundraising123.org](#): Our free online learning center is filled with ideas and best practices on what it takes to be an online fundraising superhero

We're biased, but we think there are many good reasons to work with us:

- ☑ **Kinship.** We understand you because we're a nonprofit too
 - ☑ **Value.** We handle the tough parts of fundraising for you
 - ☑ **ROI.** Our customers raise \$25 for every dollar they spend
 - ☑ **Support.** We provide lots of training and support via phone, email and chat
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OTHER GOODIES FROM NETWORK FOR GOOD

ONLINE FUNDRAISING *Custom DonateNow*

DonateNow is an online donation processing service for nonprofits to accept credit card gifts on the Web. It is user-friendly, affordable and customizable – giving your donors the best experience and your nonprofit the most bang for its buck (typical returns are \$25 back for each \$1 spent on DonateNow!).

EMAIL OUTREACH *EmailNow powered by Emma*

EmailNow was built by email marketing experts to do the tough stuff for you. It allows you to send beautiful email appeals without having to become a designer, software engineer or someone who knows HTML or CAN-SPAM laws.

LIVE TRAINING *The Learning Center, Nonprofit 911 & Tips Weekly*

Our programs and materials help nonprofit leaders become online fundraising and email marketing superheroes. Take advantage of free strategy lessons online, on the phone and in your inbox.

Visit www.networkforgood.org/apply to get started, or call 888.284.7978 x1 to speak with one of our fundraising specialists who is happy to provide more information!

CHAPTER 1: OMG IT'S 2010 – WHERE ARE YOU? CHANGE TO MAKE: Get Online if You Aren't Already

It's 2010, do you know where online donations are?

If you're up to speed, you're collecting donations on your website with a well-crafted, compelling, clearly branded and secure donation page. You're using software designed for bulk email marketing, not Outlook, to communicate with your community of supporters. You have a social media strategy and you've committed the resources necessary to achieve your clearly articulated, measurable goals. You continually assess how all of these efforts are performing against your targets. Your online and offline outreach is seamlessly integrated.

You need to be doing all of these things. Now.

Why? Because individual donors contribute a whopping three-quarters of all charitable giving. And in focusing on individual givers, you need to realize that more and more of those people are donating and taking action online. Consider the following, which can be a useful list to put in front of a skeptical boss:

- While online giving is only around 10 percent of overall giving, it is growing very fast – about 50% per year. Network for Good processed 58% more dollars online in 2009 vs. 2008.
- According to Convio, 39% of consumers reported making an online donation after visiting a charity website in 2009.
- According to a Kintera study, over 60% of all donors – online and offline – did research online before giving. Donors are not only researching your organization on your website, but also all over the Internet--from blogs to rating organizations, thanks to the increasing power of search engines. How well you are positioned online affects all of your fundraising efforts.
- In 2009, nonprofits that were raising money online raised around 20% more than 2008--according to Network for Good's own data as well as Blackbaud's reporting – in a year when overall giving was down about 10%.
- Email and direct mail from nonprofits now have the same influence on consumers' decisions to give at 27% and 28% respectively -- email closed a 10% gap from 2008 to 2009, according to a Convio study.
- Meanwhile, direct mail response rates continue to decline. Nonprofits raising money online had a median increase in online donors of 315% over the past five years, while offline donors declined a median -6% over the same period, according to the donorCentric study by Target Analytics.
- Your peers are already using social media. A study by Common Knowledge and The Port found that 74% of nonprofits have a presence on Facebook – with an average community size of 5,391 – and 80% are committing at least one quarter of an employee's time to social media

Moreover, the Internet is where donors turn first during crisis. After the tragic earthquake in Haiti, the vast majority of donations in response to the crisis were made online or by phone. People gave via social networks, on news websites and on nonprofits' websites. They gave in whatever way was most immediate and convenient –and all of it involved technology. Expect a lot more of that behavior, a lot more often, in the years ahead.

Online givers are also important because they tend to be younger than offline donors (boomers or younger) and their gifts average around \$100 on nonprofit websites (less on social networks). We want more donors like

them: They account for most of donor acquisition, and they are a leading source of new revenue for most nonprofits. In addition, because they are comfortable engaging in philanthropy online, they can be terrific champions of your cause. Their word of mouth is amplified – particularly via social networks. This is the era of the citizen activist and the wired fundraiser. If you aren't able to fully engage with these folks online via your own site as well as social networks (more on that in a later chapter), you are in trouble.

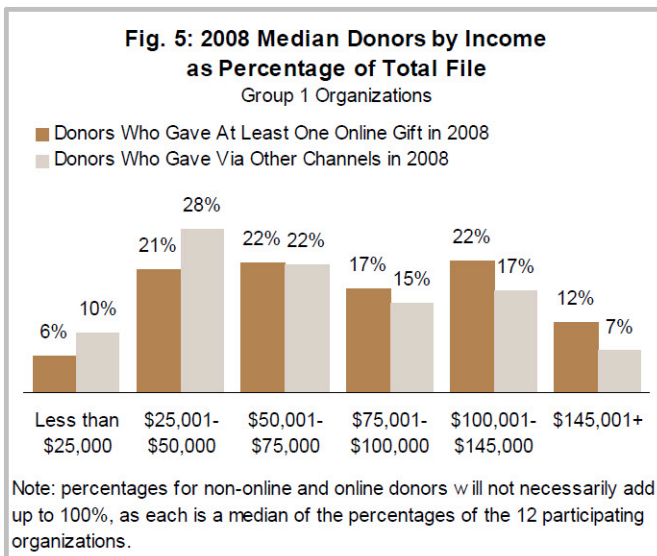
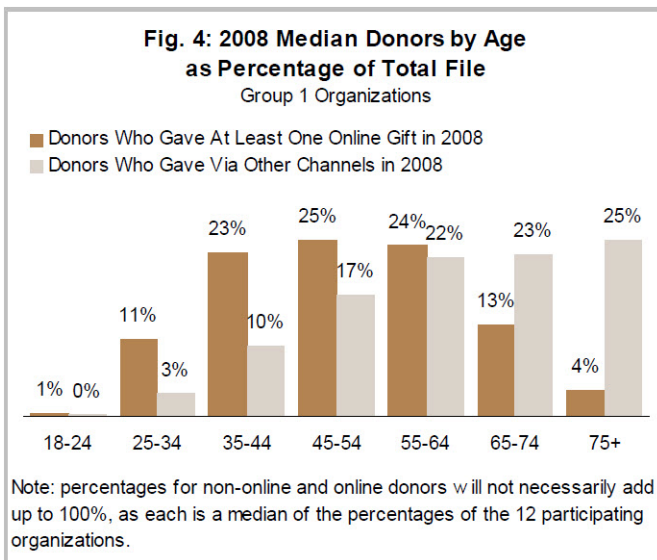


Figure 4 and Figure 5 are part of the recommended reading, *2008 donorCentrics Internet Giving Benchmark Analysis*

Establish, monitor and optimize your online presence this year – and make this the year to integrate what you do online with your other fundraising activities. Online outreach and social media are no longer cutting edge, rather they are part of the price of doing business as a nonprofit. Nor should your online efforts be siloed at your organization. They should be an integrated part of all you do. Online outreach and direct mail efforts should be integrated. Give supporters multiple ways to donate – because that leads to more gifts. Care2 recommends that if your organization is about to send out a direct mail piece, send out an online fundraising appeal on the same issue a few days before the mail piece arrives and a few days after it has been delivered. They also recommend you include an online giving option on all direct mail.

Also make this the year you step up monitoring of these efforts. Use your web analytics. Read your email delivery and open rates reports. Note how many people forward your content to a friend.

I hope your reaction to this first chapter is, “of course, duh!” I hope you have done everything described here. But if not – and you're not where you should be – make this the year to check off this list:

- A well-branded, easy-to-use website
- The ability to process secure donations
- An email campaign tool that complies with federal anti-spam laws
- A website analytics tool (like Google Analytics)
- A social media strategy
- A listening tool (so you can monitor online conversations)
- Great follow-up for online donors and supporters
- Smooth integration between online and offline efforts
- Regular reporting on all of your efforts so you can learn and correct as you go

Now that we've checked off the basics, let's turn to how online giving is evolving – and the ways your activities need to evolve in response to ensure success.

CHAPTER 2: THE TALE OF THE BROKEN MAGICAL BUTTON

CHANGE TO MAKE: Do the Marketing So the Technology Works

A couple of years ago, I led a session on fundraising at a major conference. Midway through the presentation, I described Network for Good to the more than 100 nonprofit professionals in the audience. A man in the middle of the room raised his hand.

“I have a DonateNow button from you,” he said. “But it doesn’t work.”

It was a dark moment in public speaking!

So I said to the man – and everyone else in the room – that I was anxious to fix the problem and would get to the bottom of why people could not make donations from his website as soon as I finished my speech.

“No, that’s not the problem,” the man responded. “You can make a donation. The problem is, no one is clicking on the button.”

That was a problem indeed.

The story of the “broken” button is a great reminder of the limits of technology. You can have a huge donate button on your home page – or a snazzy Facebook page – but that does not mean anyone is visiting or clicking. Unfortunately, a DonateNow button is not filled with donor-attracting potion and social networks aren’t magical money machines. They don’t work without great messaging, compelling engagement and marketing savvy. I fear we’ve gotten so enamored with the tools that are available – and the seeming ease of adopting them – that we are forgetting the hard thinking that has to go into making them work.



Does it work? Yes. Is it magic? We wish...

This year, make sure that all the online outreach you are performing has the necessary thinking behind it. To compel donors to give online – or anywhere for that matter – you need to always answer four questions for them: Why Me? Why Now? What For? and Who Says?

- **Why me?** *Your audience needs to care about what you are doing.* Show them why what you’re doing is personally relevant to them. They need to connect with you on a human level. Use pictures, tell stories and do anything that can help your audience relate. Listen to your audiences. Echo back to them what you are hearing and tie it to your work. You want your supporters to feel they are seen, heard and engaged from the start.
- **Why Now?** *Most people donate online on two occasions. The first is towards the end of the year; people are in charitable mindsets and looking to make year-end tax contributions. Another is when there’s a humanitarian crisis such as the earthquake in Haiti. What do you do the rest of the year?*
 - o Create a sense of urgency and immediacy in your appeals. Explain why a donation is needed right now.
 - o Break down what you are currently doing and show any immediately understandable or visible results that will make people want to take action.
 - o Set a goal and a deadline. There is plenty of research to show that people are more likely to

act if they feel a goal is within reach – and they can help you achieve it with their gift.

- o Engage your most ardent supporters in a personal fundraising effort. It's hard to say no to people we love, so you can bring urgency to your cause by having your champions reach out to those in their circles of influence. If Holly is raising money for her cause for her birthday, that's compelling – and timely. She's only turning 29 once!

- **What For?** *People know you're a nonprofit organization and you need donations to help your cause. But where exactly is a donor's money going? What will they get in return for their donation - personally and in terms of your programs?*

- o Don't just focus on need; explain the impact a donation will make. This is so important, it's the focus of a whole chapter in this eBook.
- o Show them that you will manage their money carefully so a potential donor knows it won't be wasted or inefficiently used.
- o Clearly show which programs are being helped by a donation or what good is going to result.
- o Share human interest stories and success stories. Demonstrate how other donors made an impact or how donors impacted other individuals in need.

- **Who says?** *The messenger is often as important as the message.* Use trustworthy messengers – people you've actually helped or other donors – instead of just you. A whole chapter of this eBook is devoted to this issue, but for now remember this: in studies people report friends and family are the most influential in determining where they give money. Think about how you can get your supporters to speak for you among their own circles of influence. This is especially important in approaching social media.

Nonprofits have been neglecting these key messages for too long online, as if technology can do the hard work of convincing for us. It can't! The time is now to fix any weak messaging or engagement strategies. Are you answering these four questions everywhere you are online? If not, you won't achieve your online goals.

CHAPTER 3: THE CURE FOR NONPROFIT NARCISSISM CHANGE TO MAKE: Rethink and Restructure Your Donor Relationships

The biggest thing that needs to change this year is how we think about our donors. We are in the midst of an enormous generational shift that has major implications for our work. The Greatest Generation of older, civic-minded Americans who wrote checks out of a sense of duty and trusted charities to use their donations wisely is moving on. The torch has passed to a far more demanding series of donors, who view their giving as an investment, and want to be informed of the progress.

Boomers want a report back on the impact of their gift, and younger donors expect engagement and involvement. They are anything but passive. Think of it this way – just as in marketing we have left the broadcast era where consumers passively take in promotional messages, we have left the low-expectation donor era.

That means it's not enough to declare a need and send a thank-you. Today's supporters increasingly expect engagement that makes them feel seen, heard and involved. They are not walking wallets or ATM machines. They are partners who expect a relationship with the organizations they support. They want to be talked to as individuals, thanked and updated.

This is especially true online. With most of what we do online – Facebook, Foursquare, gaming, etc. – being highly personal and extremely interactive, we have to provide a more intimate and involved experience for our supporters with our technological tools. Otherwise, we will alienate nearly everyone.

This means we have to completely reorganize not only our approach, but also how our organizations are structured. We need to tear down the walls of our organizations' technology, marketing, fundraising

and communications departments and rebuild the organization in a way that creates a completely supporter-centric experience. A supporter is a real person, not a volunteer vs. an online donor vs. an offline donor, and she expects to be treated as such.

If a complete reorganization is impossible, then at least consider how to reorganize your fundraising efforts with a focus on the constituent experience at each touch point with your organization. If you aren't sure, role play. Have a Be Your Donor Day. Go to your website. As the donor, ask yourself: Is it apparent what your organization does? Do you see something that forges an emotional connection? Are there tools to share what you are seeing via social networks, right on the home page? Are the voices of donors and supporters clear in the content? Does the website feel like a community or a brochure?

Keep going. Donate online and offline. How and when are you thanked? What happens after that? Call information and ask for your 800 number and your local number. Call both and see what happens. Sign up for e-News. Tweet your support. What happens?

Be critical – because your donors will be.

Here is what you want to look for:

1. Did someone acknowledge you? How? How quickly?
2. Did you get an opportunity to say how you wanted to be acknowledged?
3. Was there follow up both online and off?
4. What was the substance of the follow up that resulted? Was there specific information on what resulted from a gift or gesture of support?
5. Was the tone warm and grateful?

6. Was there a chance to provide feedback that was acknowledged?
7. What was the tone of the acknowledgement? Was it consistent with your organizations' desired brand?
8. How does the experience feel over time? Did they treat you like an ATM or a participant in important social change?

If you still need convincing about how important this process is, go to www.charitynavigator.org and read the comments tabs of some major organizations. You'll see the ire you create when donors don't have a positive experience in supporting an organization. The Internet has amplified their dissatisfaction – and made it permanent.

Here are some quotes from real – and angry – donors about one charity featured on Charity Navigator:

I have never received a single email from [charity name] that does not ask for donations first. The total revenue of this "charitable" organization in 2007 was over \$30 million, with a CEO earning @\$300K and a huge part of the pie being spent on fund raising. What's wrong with this picture? Why don't they publish annually, a list of their accomplishments, since many of their alerts seem to indicate a lot of sound with little fury! Too much focus on the freebies and advertising, for me! I'll send my money to groups that work for the animals, not themselves.

The more I give, the more they deluge me with mail and offers of gifts. Even when I have written on the donation form to NOT send me a gift, they have sent it, so I guess they don't read what the donor wishes.

Do a "walk" online and in the shoes of your donor at least once a quarter. It will surprise and perhaps horrify you. That's okay. It will very quickly uncover where you are failing to make the donor feel amazing about his support of your organization – and supply the insight needed to improve the situation.

Pay particular attention to your online tools. Are you using them to enhance the donor experience or are they lacking? If they don't work well, fix them or stop using them.

Here's the good news: If you do this well, you will truly stand out. Most nonprofits aren't focused on their donor experience online. When you start doing that, you will be a wonderful anomaly. You will delight, engage and entrance the people you want to reach.

CHAPTER 4: NEED IS NOT ENOUGH CHANGE TO MAKE: Get More Tangible and Impact-Focused

Here is another paradigm shift required this year: From need to impact.

Fundraising is not about what you need. Really. It is about what the donor – through you – can achieve. It's about giving donors the gift of knowing they changed the world for the better. It's not about your goals – it's about your donors' aims.

Everyone knows you need money. So do the other 1.8 million nonprofits in the United States – and the millions more around the world. If that's all you've got to say, you are just another organization with yet another appeal.

What is special about you? The answer can't simply be that your programs need support. It must be that with your donor, together you can achieve a difference that no one else can.

I'm going to explain this again, in another way, because it is so important.

Look at this nifty little cocktail napkin from the Suddes Group at www.forimpact.org:



The folks at Suddes Group explain that our sector is plagued in defining itself by what it is not. We talk about how we are not for profit. We are charities that need your money.

We need to stop building our case for support around a need-based tax categorization and instead talk about how we make a difference. This is what donors want from your organization this year. That means we have to change how we frame our work in all of our online outreach. In addition to putting the donor at the center of our fundraising efforts – which we covered in the last chapter – we must shift our engagement with them from a focus on what we need from them to what we can accomplish together.

So how do we talk about impact? By talking about individuals – one person or animal at a time. Avoid talking about massive numbers, mind-numbing statistics or intangible outcomes. (There is plenty of research on why this is ineffective in conveying impact and motivating giving and it's laid out in Network for Good's recent eBook, *Homer Simpson for Nonprofits: The Truth about How People Really Think and What It Means for Promoting Your Cause*.) This will give people the emotional connection to your work that is so essential to the donor relationship.

Online tools, from websites to Twitter, can be especially helpful in making that individual connection and showing the impact of our work.

Kiva (www.kiva.org) has done an excellent job of taking the abstract idea of microenterprise loans and making it about helping real people improve their lives. Their home page is always a collection of stories from people

being given loans – and the people who give them. Kiva recently has to make more clear exactly how the money flows – ie, not directly to a single individual – but the concept is now very well executed.

Another gold standard is www.donorschoose.org. Here's a great example of changing a conversation. Instead of saying "our schools need money," look at how DonorsChoose focuses on impact:

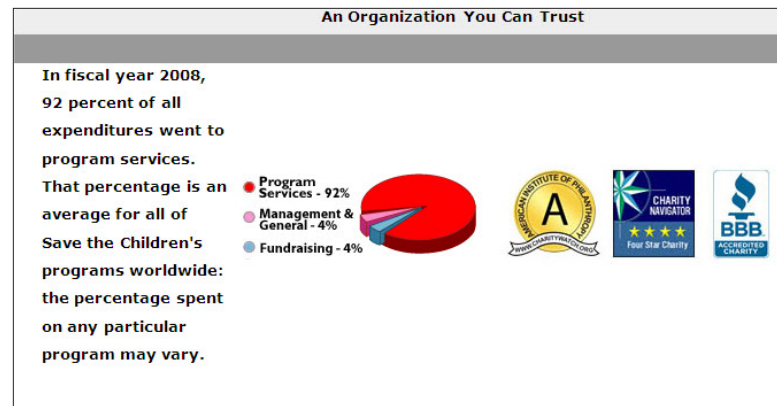


On your website, Facebook page, eNews and everywhere else, put these individual stories front and center. Then, to the side, provide a quick glance into how much of your donors' funds are going to that human impact – i.e., your programs. Mercy Corps typically does a very nice job of this on their website. Most of the real estate is devoted to a human story and then, on the bottom of the page, they have this statement:

Over the last 5 years, Mercy Corps has used 88% of our resources for programs that help people in need. America's premier charity evaluator gives Mercy Corps four stars in organizational efficiency. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Mercy Corps is a 501(c)3 charity. Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by U.S. law.

I'm an even bigger fan of the way Save the Children communicates similar information:



The bottom line: Do the best job you can showing where the money goes, in a human, authentic and transparent way – in all your outreach online.

Think of the people coming to your website or engaging with you on a social network as both sophisticated and wary. Because they are. They have heard marketing messages all their lives and they don't take them at face value – nor do they automatically react to appeals. They need convincing. Make that persuasion integral to your home page and everywhere else you engaged with those sophisticated, wary folks online.

CHAPTER 5: EXITING CENTER STAGE CHANGE TO MAKE: Switch Up Your Messengers to Attain Social Proof

If there's one theme I come back to over and over like an iPod stuck on replay, it's this: your outreach is not about you. It's always about your audience. This is the central tenant of good marketing, of audience-focused communication and certainly of fundraising.

But my refrain has one problem: the word audience. An audience brings to mind a group of people quietly listening while you hold forth on stage. And in this day and age, there is no such thing as a passive group of people content to simply listen. As should be clear from this eBook, everyone (from your funders to your donors to your volunteers to your constituents) expects participation. They don't want to have you talk and tell; they want you to listen and enable.

This is an enormous power shift. We are no longer the Mission Control of our message. Our supporters are building their own centers of control. When they talk about us, act on our behalf, or, increasingly, raise money for us, they are creating millions of message outposts for our mission online.



This is a scary thing and a good thing.

It's scary because it's never pleasant to experience loss of control. But it's a good thing because these outposts are something we desperately need. Over the past few years, trust has eroded in traditional, official messengers. We increasingly look to people like ourselves for reliable information.

Most Trusted* Media According to Internet Users in Canada and the US, 2008 (% of respondents)

	Canada	US
Recommendations by friends	46%	48%
Online news	42%	38%
Newspapers	44%	34%
TV news	43%	33%
Product comparison sites	26%	31%
Industry Websites/expert reviews	32%	29%
Company Websites	29%	27%
Industry magazines	30%	24%
Wikipedia	26%	23%
User forums/reviews	19%	20%
Company brochures	21%	18%
Free papers	22%	15%
Private blogs	7%	9%

Note: *respondents who ranked the media an 8, 9 or 10 on a scale of 1-10 where 1="don't trust at all" and 10="trust completely"

Source: TNS Media Intelligence, "Digital World, Digital Life," provided to eMarketer, December 15, 2008

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www.eMarketer.com

Imagine you're lucky enough to be planning a Caribbean vacation. You need to choose a hotel. Do you make your decision by going to www.marriott.com? Or do you go to www.tripadvisor.com? When you're booking a restaurant, do you believe the ads online or do you look at what people had to say at Zagat's or Yelp? Do you call an airline to ask about the quality of their puddle-jumping prop plane service or do you ask the friend that just returned from your destination?

I suspect the nontraditional messengers – the Trip Advisors, Yelp and friends – have far more influence over your decision than do the companies promoting their own services. The TNS Media Intelligence Survey backs this up: 65% of Internet users trust friends and user forums more than any other media.

The same goes for charity. People aren't just going to your website, reading your mission statement and believing all you say. They are looking at GuideStar, Charity Navigator, the BBB, donor reviews at Great Nonprofits. And they are listening to what their friends say. Cone research shows 76% of givers are motivated by friends and family – above nonprofits, celebrities and other traditional messengers.

Together these factors add up to a big lesson for 2010: You need to let other people – trusted people – speak for you. This is the year you must exit center stage. Change your messengers. It should not just be you out there online – it should be trusted leaders in your community, online thought leaders and your most ardent supporters.

Technology makes it easy to highlight nontraditional messengers. Your website, social media, email outreach – all can highlight voices other than your own. In addition, through features like tell-a-friend and personal fundraising pages or widgets, you can even put the fundraising message in the hands of these messengers.

This is a good idea for three reasons:

First, personal fundraising is based in a two-way relationship, not a one-sided promotion.

The traditional model of marketing is one-sided – the person selling something (or seeking donations) makes a case to an audience and hopes people will listen and act. By contrast, people-to-people fundraising is based on two-way communication; it is a conversation between individuals rather than a speech from an organization. It puts the cause-related message in the mouth of the person most likely to prompt a donation: someone the audience knows. The act of giving becomes an attractive way for the audience to play a role in the relationship –

to show that he or she is someone who cares about doing good, who wants to be a supportive friend, and who is a part of something larger than himself/herself.

Second, the personal fundraiser is an authentic and authoritative messenger. People listen to other people.

They look to human beings, not corporations or causes, to communicate and connect with. Messengers from outside an organization are often more credible than the organization itself. That's why an outside messenger – a donor that fundraises for an organization – has the potential to cut through the communications clutter. The messenger has become as important as the message. Marketing guru Seth Godin calls this "Flipping the Funnel." That's because instead of an organization trying to work a sales funnel to qualify prospects and prompt action, the funnel paradigm is flipped. The organization hands its supporters the funnel, which when inverted, takes the shape of a megaphone that can be placed in the hands of thousands of supporters. Many megaphones are better than one funnel, says Godin.

Cause champions are authoritative because they know how to reach their circles of influence, and they naturally communicate in the most effective ways – in a conversational tone and through highly personal means.

For example, the Transverse Myelitis Association says it "facilitates support and networking opportunities amongst families; provides educational information; functions as a clearinghouse for articles and research literature; and investigates, advocates for and supports research and innovative treatment efforts" for a "rare neurological disorder that is part of a spectrum of neuroimmunologic diseases of the central nervous system."

A person who had Transverse Myelitis used a Network for Good charity badge to fundraise for the cause. The person, named "James," featured his picture and this message: "I became a ventilator dependent quadriplegic, paralyzed from the neck down, due to Transverse

Myelitis, a rare neurological disorder that affects the central nervous system. I am trying to help raise funds for education and research.” This is the voice of an authentic messenger.

This type of anecdotal example is reinforced by quantitative research. Peter Deitz’s group fundraising benchmarking data estimates a 35% response rate compared to a 0.3% response rate with traditional online fundraising. When people we know ask us to help, we listen.

The third reason people listen to personal fundraisers is that their message is based in story.

Story is at the heart of personal fundraising and its effectiveness. There is no more powerful form of communication when it comes to moving people to action.

Storytelling often comes more naturally to supporters than to charities themselves. Donors tend to talk about their personal experiences with a cause, which makes for

What if people do something online that hurts your organization? What if they say mean things? Here’s what I recommend:

1. **BE LISTENING FOR IT:** Be sure you have Google Alerts set up to monitor what people are saying about your organization online. Keep tabs on Twitter (via [Tweetbeep](#), for example) and YouTube.

2. **WHEN YOU FIND SOMETHING INSULTING, ASSESS WHO IS SAYING IT AND WHO IS LISTENING.** Is this one crazy person with no audience? You may want to wait and watch. Or is it someone who talks to people in your audience? Even one noisy person can be a problem if they have or can rapidly build a following with people who matter to you. Or, if the traditional media picks up on their diatribe. I generally err on the side of judging someone worth responding to rather than ignoring them.

3. **ACT FAST ON THE SPOT WHERE IT STARTED:** If you need to respond, do it now, **IN THE VENUE** where the situation started. Slow reactions are bad reactions. Things move at light speed on web 2.0 and you don’t want something to spiral out of control before you get in a response. It’s okay if you don’t have all the answers or every piece of needed information - just be **TRANSPARENT** about it. “I’m really concerned with this and looking into it” is better than radio silence. “I’m concerned our staff said that to you and am finding out what happened so I can give you the response you deserve” is better than nothing. Dominos was right to respond to the video on YouTube - and to put

spokespeople out there where ever it’s getting airtime. By responding to a Tweet on Twitter, you ensure rapid communication as well as achieve the potential to keep the controversy within the community in question. (Hence achieving a tempest in a twitterpot.)

4. **BE HONEST, TRANSPARENT, FRIENDLY AND NONDEFENSIVE:** This is key. If there is misinformation out there, correct it in a helpful, non-combative way. My organization’s own crisis communications plan (hope you have one, too) sets out the following principles if we’ve made a mistake:

- Be sincerely and profusely apologetic if we’ve done wrong.
- Take responsibility.
- Err on the side of open, frequent communication.
- Be absolutely honest.
- Ensure what we say is accurate - if we’re not sure, say we’re not sure.
- Do all we can to fix problems and mitigate harm.
- Say what we’re doing to ensure it doesn’t happen again.

That last one is important.

5. **REMEMBER IT IS A CONVERSATION:** This isn’t a monologue by the critic or by you nor (hopefully) is it a war—it’s a conversation. When you respond, be open to reactions and answer questions. You can’t post one response and call it a day, you need to keep tabs on the situation and participate in the ongoing conversation.

compelling stories on a scale that individuals can relate and respond to. The effect of these personal stories is remarkable as a recruitment vehicle for charities.

At Network for Good, we saw a 540% increase in new unique donors year-on-year directly attributable to friends-to-friends fundraising. In addition, participating charities shared similar results. A board chairman for the nonprofit Family Pride, which raised \$30,000 through a Six Degrees campaign noted, “Family Pride figured out that 50% of the donors through my charity badge were completely new to the organization.”

This story illustrates my last point, which is that technology amplifies the message of nontraditional messengers. That is great when you have a passionate supporter and less fun when you have an outspoken critic – but both deserve your time, attention and engagement. (See the green box on page 14 for what to do about messengers who are vocal critics.)

Here’s what you need to make happen this year: Put third-party endorsement from a trusted messenger on all of your online outreach. Experiment with alternative messengers for your website home page, your email outreach and your correspondence with donors. You shouldn’t be the voice of your work – it should be your supporters, beneficiaries of your services, volunteers, etc. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Do you have a rating from Charity Navigator or reviews on GuideStar? Include it on all of your outreach.
- Include donor testimonials in your appeals.
- Have volunteers write your thank-you notes.
- Have someone whose life changed because of your donors’ contributions write your next appeal.

Last, don’t just ask your fans for money – ask them to spread the word. Make sure it’s easy for them to evangelize on your behalf. How do you do that? Read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: WHERE'S MY SUITCASE? CHANGE TO MAKE: Think Portable in All Outreach

This is the year you need to think inside out in your online outreach.

You've spent the past decade or so getting a website together and trying to drive people to it.

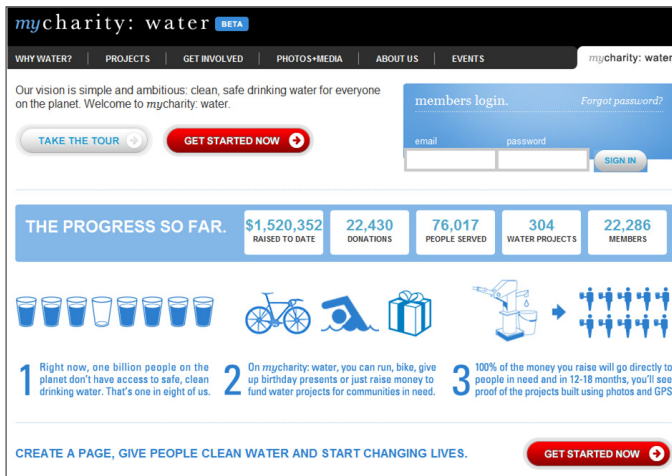
Now is the year to drive the content on your site out into the web – and not just through your own efforts but also through your supporters. Instead of looking at Facebook, Twitter, widgets and others as tools for you to start conversations about your organization, also think of them as tools for your supporters. The ultimate power of these tools is not what they can do – but who is using them.

Every single thing you do has to include a way for people to take your message to their own circles of influence. You want people to pack up anything they like and transport it online, like a super-duper cyber suitcase.

One reason this is so important this year is tempo. The speed of information flow has gotten so fast – virtually instantaneous – that you simply can't be the only one communicating online. You need other, passionate people taking your content into their own communities often and adapting that content to their needs and interests. None of us can keep up alone.

So how do you ensure this happens? Here are some tips.

- Have great content. If something is fascinating and wonderful, people will want to share it.
- The next step is making it easy to share. Network for Good estimates that about 5% of your donors might be uber-activists who would champion your cause and recruit others. Make sure you are making it easy for these supporters to take your content to where they congregate online. First step: do you have RSS on your website?
- Next step: do you have links to your presences on Twitter and Facebook on your home page?
- Do you include ShareThis or another service throughout your website that allows supporters to share your content on any social network they inhabit? You want to make it easy for your supporters to integrate your cause into social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Change.org. Your supporters' presences on these sites have implied viewer trust and therefore the greatest potential for converting viewers into a new community of donors.
- Do you have logos in a format that people can grab to put in their own posts and content?
- Think low-tech too. Is it easy to print great content from your website in case people want to share information that way?
- Create campaigns for specific needs that your supporters can promote. Charity Water has gone as far as to create a tool for supporters to build their own fundraising page (see below). But you can do this with tools as simple as tell-a-friend on your email campaign tool (Network for Good's EmailNow does this nicely), as well as tell-a-friend features on your donation forms (Network for Good's DonateNow service has this built in).



I am asked almost weekly how to convince nonbelievers in an organization to give social networking efforts a try. Here are some tips:

1. Change the subject: If you're having a debate over the value of social media, you're having the wrong discussion. The discussion should be about your organization's goals – with social media being the means, not the end (see #2).
 2. Make it about what your boss already wants: Don't position your web idea as a social media initiative; frame it as your initiative to support your boss's goals, in your boss's language.
 3. Make it about the audience: A good way to depersonalize the social media debate is to make it about your target audience's preferences rather than a philosophical tug of war between you and said boss.
 4. Sign your boss up to listen: Set up Google Alerts and TweetBeep for your boss, so she or he can see that there are already many discussions about your organization going on online. Once this is apparent, two things are likely to happen. First, it will become clear that your organization no longer controls your message online – so worrying about social media causing a lack of control is not worth fearing. That day is already here. Second, it will be hard not to want to join those conversations online – which is what web social media engagement is all about.
 5. Set some ground rules: Set a social media policy for your organization, so it's clear how to respond to what you're hearing – and what types of initiatives have internal support.
 6. Start clear and small: If you're going to start an initiative, make it a small one with clear goals so you know how to measure success.
 7. Report, report, report: Share every little bit of progress and give your boss credit for it!
- Last – a word of caution. Don't think you have all the answers. This isn't a crusade, it's a learning experience for everyone. You boss's recalcitrance may be well founded. Make sure there IS a good case for your initiative and if it does fail, share and learn from what went wrong. There is no shame in gaining knowledge from mistakes – for you, or your boss.

CHAPTER 7: BE GENEROUS AND LAZY CHANGE TO MAKE: Point More Than You Build

At about this point in this eBook – if not sooner – I can hear your thoughts. How the heck am I supposed to find the time to do this?

My first answer is, you will spend more time on all of your work if you don't spend time on these things. They'll make you far better at engaging people, building a base and raising money – so you'll save time and effort in the end.

My second answer is, you should not be thinking in terms of shortages of time and scarcity of resources. This year, that has to stop. You should be approaching your donor – and your life – from a place of abundance. (No, you're still in my eBook and not an ashram.) I'm serious. If you're focused on fundraising, you're probably focused on inspiring generosity in other people. But how generous are you? I've found in life, in fundraising and in social media, the more generous I am, the more successful my efforts. Scrooges in terms of sharing information, credit and/or time get little.

When you're doing your online outreach, give credit to your supporters instead of yourself. Listen and follow more than you talk and recruit. When people re-Tweet your content or spread the word, profusely thank and highlight them. Spend more time pointing to the work of others and celebrating what they say than you do talking about yourself. Rather than pontificating on a topic, share the thoughts of another person and praise their insight.

The more you do this, the more popular you become. It sounds paradoxical, but it works.

Which brings me to laziness. The more you choose to highlight the work of others – and point to their content – the less you have to produce yourself. This is a lovely benefit of being generous – it saves you time.

For example, if you're panicked at the thought of blogging, don't. Identify the influential bloggers who are talking about your issues (with google blog search or www.technorati.com) and research their posts. Comment on their blog and engage them on their content. Over time, send them customized emails about why your organization's campaign is relevant or compelling to their readers.

If you don't have time to Tweet, don't. Highlight the Tweets of people discussing your issue area on your site and in your outreach. Point to their content rather than generating your own. It's the generous – and lazy – approach, and it works well as an engagement tool.

Remember:

1. Point, don't build.
2. Share, don't create.
3. Applaud more than you hold forth.

CHAPTER 8: PAGING MISS MANNERS CHANGE TO MAKE: Overhaul Your Acknowledgement System

I can't believe I am writing a chapter on this – it should be fundamental – but here we are in 2010, and the number one reason we lose donors is how we treated those donors.

An international eCampaigning Review Study that recently analyzed two million donors to 50 nonprofits found 70% of the nonprofits didn't send a follow up email within a month. And 37% never sent a thank you email for online donations.

Worse, I'll bet if I asked you to tell me the last time that you stopped supporting a charity, it would have a lot to do with a lack of thank yous and a barrage of appeals.

In fundraising, we tend to focus on what we can extract from our donors. Instead, we should focus on what we can give our donors: gratitude, social impact, good feelings. The money will follow.

Think of your donors and how they feel. It is a very personal, emotional choice to give away money to something you care about. You, as the organization these donors support, want to handle those strong feelings of your donor with care. They have acted in a way that is deeply meaningful to them. If the only way we react to their gift is with a tax receipt, we're not only being rude, we're being disrespectful.

It is far easier to keep and cultivate a donor than to go find a new one and convince them to care about your cause. That's one reason to give thanks early and often in your online outreach. Another is that your gratitude bonds the donor to your cause. And, because most nonprofits stink at online relationship-building, if you

are good, you are going to stand out, particularly in 2010.

These are tough times. The jobless rate is high. People are still pinching their pennies. They are getting barraged with appeals from nonprofits, and they are going to be increasingly critical and selective about where they are giving. And if you want to be top of mind, and you want to be the nonprofit that they aren't going to reduce their donations to or stop giving to entirely, the way to do that is to differentiate yourself with your outreach and with your thanks.

Take the advice of Kivi Leroux Miller of Nonprofit Marketing Guide: "Think about how much time a typical nonprofit spends on generic 'outreach,' like newsletters, with the purpose, at least in part, of generating new supporters. If you are so pressed for time, wouldn't those precious hours be better spent thanking the people who have taken the next step and given you money, no matter how much or through what method?"

Make the year 2010 one in which you bestow lavish thanks on your donors. And do it in a way that is timely, personal, emotional and focused on them.

Here are some ideas for getting started:

- Use a service that issues immediate receipts to online donors. At the very least, the donor should get an acknowledgement right away. (I wouldn't be COO of Network for Good if I didn't point out DonateNow does this for you.)
- Follow up with a personal email – or even a handwritten snail mail note if that is possible.

- If you are using a marketing tool like EmailNow, segment your audience. Group donors in a way that allows you to message them more personally and appropriately.
- Tie the thank-you to the specific appeal for the donation and be tangible about how the gift will be used. It is not enough to say, “Thank you so much for your investment in childcare services,” or, “Thank you so much for helping to save the environment.” Show exactly how the donation made a difference through stories about real people, animals or places.
- Sign your email, or your note, or your direct mail pieces from a board member or executive director.
- Give the donor credit in all of your online outreach. We want to be mindful of the fact that our donors make our work happen. And we want to make sure that they get the credit for the work that they do. We want to list their accomplishments. We want to put them front and center in all of our communications.

On the theme of gratitude, thank you for reading this eBook. Thank you for being so committed to your donors that you want to do better by them every day online. And most of all, thank you for the work you do every single day to make the world a better place. The world is fortunate to have you.