

Four Tips for Creating Effective Nonprofit Communications

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The COVID-19 pandemic has gripped our country's nonprofits with urgent questions about financial stability. Will donors continue giving? How can nonprofit leaders effectively reach and inspire supporters to keep charitable support coming and to keep their doors open? Perhaps more than ever, now is the time for nonprofits to focus on improving their written communications. The following article provides four key tips from guest author and attorney Raydia Martin, who is a freelance editor and founder of Advocate Editing, a communications editing service assisting advocacy organizations with producing high-quality, effective content and educational materials. Raydia's services include proofreading, copyediting and developmental editing. For more information, visit her website, www.advocateediting.com, or contact her at raydia@advocateediting.com.

From their inception, nonprofit organizations have been the nation's micro-level problem solvers, providing direct social services to marginalized and vulnerable populations impacted by social and economic disparities. With the rise of digital media, nonprofits have extended their influence into the public advocacy arena, using their content to raise awareness of pressing social issues. Here are several tips for nonprofits who want to use their communications tools to create high-quality, compelling content that moves readers to support their mission to transform people and communities.

1. Tell a Story

As organizations with first-hand experience working with marginalized communities, nonprofits play a unique role in telling the stories of the people they serve. Consider producing content that raises awareness of the social issues affecting your clients, in addition to informing your readers about your organization's events or fundraisers.

2. Show readers how your organization is making measurable change

In a time where illegitimate organizations are rampant, sponsors and donors are hesitant to give unless they know you are a credible and trustworthy organization. Share how you are using the support you receive to achieve measurable results for hurting people and communities. Did you provide bookbags full of school supplies for inner city children? Inform readers about how your program enriched a child's education and share how many children your program served. Did you give care packages to homeless youth living on the

streets? Tell readers about what items were provided and include an anecdote and picture of a youth whose life was made easier because of your efforts. It is stories like these that reassure your supporters that your organization is “putting its money where its mouth is.”

3. Write clearly and concisely

Readers are more likely to stay engaged with content that is straight to the point and easy to comprehend. Avoid using long, rambling sentences. Instead, express your ideas with short to medium-length sentences using the least amount of words possible. If including data, use formatting that is appealing to the eye. Bullet points, tables, charts and graphs are ideal formats for presenting facts and data. Also, avoid using professional jargon that a layman may not understand. Nothing curtails a reader’s interest more than needing to pull out a dictionary every few words.

4. End with a call to action

It is always a good idea to end an article, blog or email by asking your readers to take actionable steps to support your cause. At the end of your content, ask readers to donate to a specific fund, share content on their social media pages, or sign a petition. Include links for easy online donations or links allowing readers to share content directly to their social media pages. The goal is to make it easy for your readers to show support and quickly spread the word about your work.

With today’s technology, your organization has a tremendous platform to raise awareness of social issues, and your content is critical to giving a voice to the voiceless. With these tips, you’ll be sure to produce engaging and effective content that fosters trust and garners support for your efforts to create societal change.

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