



Making the most of the Web and email to raise more money online

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CHAPTER 1 Internet Strategies for Success

In This Chapter:

- **Why do nonprofits need to be online?**
- **Who's raising money online**
- **What nonprofit organizations are doing online**
- **Developing your organization's Internet strategy**
- **Internet strategy resources for nonprofits**
- **Case Study: The Family Violence Prevention Fund's Internet Strategy**
- **Case Study: Doing Justice To Online Fundraising**
- **Idea Hot Sheet: Online Fundraising Best Practices**

The Internet has opened up a whole new world that nonprofits large and small are using to expand their universe of influence and support. The Internet lets even small or local organizations reach out to potential supporters around the world and around the clock. Fundraisers are especially excited about online opportunities for locating new donors and for adding a new communication channel for cultivating existing donors, even if they are giving by mail or at events.

Most organizations are, or should be, using email and the Web as part of their fundraising programs. In addition to building relationships with your current donors, your online campaigns will help bring many more people to your site, grow your email list, and generally increase your visibility and activity on the Internet.

Building an online presence is about so much more than creating an online brochure for your organization. It's about using the Internet to build relationships with constituents so your organization can better fulfill and support its mission. Often, this means using the Internet to complement existing programs; in other cases this means creating new programs that you couldn't have dreamed of before.

Successful online fundraising programs generally have two major components. The foundation is an

informative, interactive web site and an email communications program which, together, help build relationships with your web site visitors and the people you get to sign up for your email newsletter or online advocacy program. The second component, often overlooked, is a strategy for attracting new people – especially potential donors – to your site, so you can begin the relationship-building process.

This handbook is organized around these two components. In Chapters 2 through 5, we'll talk strategy and offer nuts-and-bolts information on how to use your web site and email to build relationships with potential and existing donors. Then, in Chapters 6 through 8, we'll discuss ideas and tactics for driving traffic to your site and developing special campaigns and promotions, including advocacy. Finally, in Chapter 9, we'll pull all of the information together to help you outline your pri-

orties, develop a plan, and determine the resources you'll need.

Why do nonprofits need to be online?

Online fundraising can't exist in a vacuum. The success of your online fundraising program will be largely dependent on your organization's overall Internet presence as well as your traditional offline activities. So before we delve into the specifics of online fundraising, in this first chapter let's talk more generally about why the Internet? What are nonprofits doing online? How can your organization effectively integrate the Internet into its strategy for fulfilling its mission?

In spite of an overall economic slowdown in the U.S. and much-reported trouble in the Internet economy, usage of the Internet continues to grow at a tremendous pace. In 2001, there were 149 million American households online, or 54%. In San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., over 65% of households use the Internet. By 2005, American online households is expected to grow to 194 million, or 68%.

What does this mean for nonprofits and fundraising? With the Internet's growing importance, widespread use, and influence, nonprofits have new opportunities for communicating with their constituents, getting their work done, and garnering support. The Internet isn't replacing other media, but it is taking its place alongside them. Most notable is the role that email is playing in the operational capacity of nonprofit organizations. Email has created a sea change as a tool for communicating with donors and colleagues, alerting activists, and disseminating information. Initially, the Web created a revolution in "brochureware," allowing nonprofits to reach many new supporters and media with simple sites. New services enable even nonprofits with the smallest budgets to sign up members, take credit card donations, sponsor online discussions, offer surveys, put up searchable databases, and much more. As a complement to existing methods, the Internet is a medium that has finally come of age for a non-

profit sector that is hungry for modern and effective campaign tools and techniques.

Who's raising money online?

So far, large, national nonprofits with strong brand recognition are raising most of the money online. But even some small, local organizations have been successful. These organizations have been able to develop an online constituency devoted to their mission and give people reasons to come to their sites.

What nonprofit organizations are doing online

Raising money is only one of the many ways nonprofits use the Internet. So as you develop your online fundraising program, remember to consider it as part of a much broader online presence.

Marketing. You can use the Web and email to complement and maximize your overall marketing efforts. Your web site can be a brochure, a news service, an information library, an activist center, a community meeting place, a store, and more, all in one. It allows you to present your mission and programs in their best light and interact in new and engaging ways with your constituents at their convenience. Your online communications can be delivered directly to people on their desktop computers or laptops, in the comfort of their homes or offices, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Education and Outreach. As a constantly evolving repository of information, your web site can play a unique role in disseminating information and engaging people. Its educational uses are as wide as you are creative and inventive. Make sure your education and outreach materials are easily accessible, downloadable or printable, and up-to-date.

Name Recognition/Branding. Web sites and email newsletters are key assets in creating a powerful and memorable brand for organizations. With your own Internet domain name and the "look" of your

web site, you can create a memorable virtual experience for your constituents. Use every opportunity to reinforce that your web site and email newsletters are fundamental parts of your organization. Just as people remember the name of your organization, they should also remember your domain name (URL).

Service Delivery. Some organizations can deliver their services online. If you provide information, help people adopt animals, or let people contact their members of Congress, you can offer these services on your web site. Even if you can't deliver your service online, often your web site and email newsletters can reinforce many aspects of your service delivery. You can provide detailed information on how your service works, enable payment for service, or offer tools to allow people to check on delivery status.

Sales/Distribution. Whether you're enrolling people for your events (free or paid), selling products, or distributing publications, your web site can play a key operational role. Using Yahoo! Stores or another system, you can create a catalog of products and services and accept online credit card payments, or let users download documents free.

Advocacy. Advocacy is one of the most important ways to engage people online. You can highlight important issues and suggest ways people can get involved – from volunteering to sending faxes to elected officials or corporate CEOs. Whether it's a hot political issue or an enduring social problem, your web site and email newsletters can become important resources for people seeking to make a difference.

Collaboration. The Internet offers great opportunity for collaboration with other organizations and companies, as well as among your members and supporters.

Fundraising. In partnership with Groundspring.org, or another donation process-

ing service, you can use your web site to raise money, as well as keep your supporters informed about how their financial support gets put to use and reinforce your other fundraising efforts. By bringing people to your site and then making a compelling case for giving, you can begin to build a list of online donors. (We'll talk a lot more about this.)

What about 9/11? Millions of donors gave online for the first time after 9/11. That means the online donors universe has probably expanded ten-fold. This new pool of online donors should give you more reason than ever to aggressively solicit email addresses from your current donors and other constituents – and investing in the Internet to broaden your donor base online.

Developing your organization's Internet strategy

The Internet opens up a whole new world of opportunities, so using it effectively may mean rethinking and reinventing your organization. After launching a web site or an email newsletter, many organizations draw such large and varied audiences that they begin to reexamine the way their whole organization works. It's never too late to rethink how your Internet strategy can integrate into your organization. In fact, it's worth doing annually to get a fresh perspective on your efforts.

Input from organizational stakeholders. When thinking about your online strategy, it's important to get all the stakeholders in your organization together as a group, including staff, Board members, volunteers, and clients or other beneficiaries. Web sites and email newsletters are often developed by one department, such as Communications or Development. But everyone in your organization should have a stake in them. Make the conversation broad, and connect your Internet presence to the broader strategic planning issues in your organization. Your program's progress will depend on a firm commitment at all levels of your organization.

Integrating online and offline strategies. A key factor in your online success is integrating the Internet into offline programs. In your planning and analysis of all of your activities and campaigns, consider ways to bridge the real world and the virtual world of your web site and email newsletters. Consider ways to modify your print materials (brochures, business cards, flyers, newsletters, fact sheets, booklets, books) to promote your Internet offerings. Make sure the Internet team in your organization thinks strategy, not just technical, and meets regularly with program staff to integrate the Internet into their work.

Committing resources. The Internet is not going away, and using it effectively means committing the appropriate resources. web site development and hosting, design, programming, and promotion cost money and staff time; so does email messaging. Managers need to allocate time and money

for staffing, budgets, relationships with vendors, and deliverables. Your online efforts will probably grow, and technologies will change, so you should be planning now to increase your Internet budget every year. Keep in mind that technology expenditures may increase your efficiency and save you resources elsewhere.

Effect on staff. Far too often, web site maintenance and online communications are tacked on to an already over-worked, under-paid staff person's responsibilities. But having an effective online strategy is staff intensive – they have to deal with vendors, create content, do outreach, evaluate effectiveness, handle a larger volume of email, and deal with in-house issues. Staff who will be involved in your Internet efforts should be clearly identified and empowered to get the work done. They'll need time, focus, support from managers, training, and software or tools.

Internet strategy resources for nonprofits

The Benton Foundation – www.benton.org
Resources for integrating the Internet into your communications strategies.

The Gilbert Center and Nonprofit News – www.gilbert.org
Lots of info, plus an excellent free e-newsletter (and a discussion list about Online Fundraising), produced by Michael Gilbert in Seattle.

Guidestar – www.guidestar.org
Check and update your organization's information in this comprehensive listing of nonprofit organizations, a self-proclaimed "donors guide to the nonprofit universe." The Guidestar Nonprofit Center has links to articles, nonprofit resources, and online vendors servicing nonprofits.

NetworkForGood (sponsored by AOL Time Warner, Yahoo! and Cisco) – www.networkforgood.org
Hundreds of carefully chosen links to useful online information on Web development, email, fundraising, and other issues of interest to nonprofits. Also offers a free online donation service.

OneNorthwest – www.onenw.org
This group focuses on helping conservation groups in the Northwest use technology, but its online resources are general interest. Check out the "how-to" articles and sign up for ONEList, a monthly e-newsletter of technology tips.

The Progressive Technology Project – www.progressivetech.org
Technology planning resource and courses for nonprofits.

Tech Soup – www.techsoup.org
"The technology place for nonprofits," offering nonprofit technology news, a community center, discussion groups, nonprofit discounts, and much more. Tech Soup, a project of CompuMentor (www.compumentor.com), features articles on computers, networking, Internet issues – all for nonprofits

Books

Fundraising on the Internet Second Edition

Editors: Mal Warwick, Ted Hart & Nick Allen
Jossey-Bass, 2002

The Nonprofit Guide to the Internet: How to Survive and Thrive

by Michael W. Johnston, Robbin Lee Zeff
John Wiley & Sons, 1999

Daniel Janal's Guide to Marketing on the Internet

by Daniel S. Janal
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000

Cutting Through the Emaze

by Todd Baker
Grizzard, 2001
Download at www.nonprofitwebsites.com

CASE STUDY

The Family Violence Prevention Fund's Internet Strategy

Family Violence Prevention Fund (www.endabuse.org) is one of the nation's leading nonprofit organizations working to end domestic violence and help women and children whose lives are devastated by abuse. The Fund started out on the Internet earlier than most nonprofits, and has had over five years to test techniques for outreach, fundraising and constituency engagement. The Fund has strategically integrated the Internet into its programs; today its web site plays a critical role in furthering its mission. This conversation between Michael Stein and Jeffrey Betcher, Program Manager at the Fund, reveals the various strategies

and issues that the Fund has wrestled with, mirroring issues that many nonprofits face in developing an online strategy.

Michael Stein: Jeffrey, when did Family Violence Prevention Fund start using the Internet?

Jeffrey Betcher: In 1995, knowing practically nothing. The Institute for Global Communications helped us get it going using the Rainforest Action Network site as a model. It was one of the best sites around. There was a buzz about the internet, of course, and we knew it was an important new way to communicate, but we didn't know much beyond that. We took write ups of our various programs and put them up, put in a "give" device using early encryption software, and sat back to see what happened. We're work-

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Family Violence Prevention Fund (endabuse.org). At the top left is the "endabuse" logo in white and blue. Below it, the text "FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND" is displayed. On the right side, there is a "NEWSFLASH" section dated "April 3 2002" with the headline "Campaign Invites Men to Tal...". Below the header is a horizontal strip of five photographs showing diverse people, including children and adults. The main content area is divided into three columns:

- TAKE ACTION:** A vertical list of three items: "1 RECEIVE E-ALERTS", "2 CONTACT CONGRESS", and "3 DONATE". Below this is a graphic for "Worth" magazine's "America's 100 Best Charities" list, noting that "FVPF makes Top 100 List".
- HIGHLIGHTS:** Two featured articles: "Coaching Boys Into Men" and "V-DAY San Francisco Raises \$500,000".
- PROGRAMS & RESOURCES:** Two columns of orange buttons. The "PROGRAMS" column includes: PUBLIC EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE, WORKPLACE, CHILDREN, JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL, IMMIGRANT WOMEN, PUBLIC POLICY, and ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE. The "RESOURCES" column includes: NEWSDESK, HEALTH REPORT CARD, CELEBRITY WATCH, GET THE FACTS, GET HELP, FVPF STORE, PERSONAL STORIES, ABOUT FVPF, and END ABUSE LINKS.

At the bottom of the page is a footer with the following text: "SITE SEARCH LEGAL NOTICES CONTACT FVPF JOBS & INTERNSHIPS COPYRIGHT © 2001 FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND".

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ing on our second major redesign now, and we receive 30,000 unique visitors per month, which we think is a lot of traffic. We're proud of that. But from the very beginning, I felt sure we were reaching people we had never reached before, and wouldn't have reached without the site.

The site went up shortly after we launched the first ever national public education campaign on domestic violence which focused on more traditional media, television PSAs and posters, etc. So, I think we were sensitized to anything that could be another avenue for the campaign. We also had a Communications Director who stepped forward to get the site going.

Michael: How does maintaining an Internet presence fit into your mission and goals?

Jeffrey: Initially our web site was designed for general outreach, marketing and information dissemination. We're now shifting our web site more towards constituency building, advocacy, wanting to construct a place where anyone who cares about our issue can get involved in a real way. We also have an e-commerce store that we built using Yahoo's tools, where people can purchase our complete line of awareness materials at cost with a credit card, and get technical assistance. The shift towards Internet advocacy is a very intentional strategy for us. The redesign of our web site will make it clearer to advocates and movement people how they can connect with us. We're actually hoping that the traffic patterns this creates on our web site will tell us something about our online audience and how they interact with us.

Michael: Regarding this shift in emphasis towards advocacy, how intentional was it? How did you arrive at the decision?

Jeffrey: The web site follows our programmatic emphasis, which is absolutely strategic. We feel there is a need for a coordinated constituency and political action on the issue of domestic violence. And we know that the Web is an extremely useful tool for that. There's always been a group of Internet-interested people at the agency that have helped us push the limits.

Ultimately our executive director provides the leadership. She's a believer in the Internet. It's considered primarily a communications strategy. Whatever the configuration, it seems key to have a staff person who's responsible for tracking effectiveness and reporting back to the whole agency. Everyone has an interest in the web site, and wants to know what's going on with it.

Michael: How has using email and email newsletters fit into your Internet strategy?

Jeffrey: We have an email news flash service that works like a Listserv, which goes out to approximately 4,000 people about every week. People subscribe to the service and we keep them posted on important news and events. It's particularly active when there is an issue in the news, and occasionally we use it to mobilize people to take certain actions.

Michael: What kind of experiences have you had in online fundraising and membership development using the Internet?

Jeffrey: FVPF isn't strictly speaking a membership organization, but we do very intentional financial solicitations. We have a development section of the site that tells people about giving options like planned giving. People can give directly to us with a credit card using our Yahoo e-commerce tool, and they can also download a form and send us a check. We don't get that much money this way, but we do get some new donors, so we

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feel that it's worth it. The most intentional thing that we've done recently is a combined direct mail and Listserv appeal. A message went out from our executive director checking in with subscribers about the usefulness of our Newsflash and thanking them for being on our list. We followed it with a short appeal message, and then they could click through to our web site where there's the full appeal: a story about a woman who was a homicide victim, to illustrate the trauma of domestic violence. We didn't get a big response, only half a dozen actual gifts, all new donors though. We have, over the years, received donations out of the blue from people who have visited our web site, some of which have been pretty sizeable. Those few occasions continue to justify the effort for us.

Michael: What kinds of changes did your organization have to make to use the Internet?

Jeffrey: Using the Internet grew naturally out of the efforts of our Communications Department. We've had to train and encourage everyone at our agency to fit the Internet into their work patterns. When our front line staff are answering the phones, or any of us are talking to people, we're always telling people to check out this or that document on the web site. And we've had to create feedback loops so we can put up the appropriate materials on the web site. We've also had to deal with the new communications medium that gets opened up. We get a ton of emails from our web site and our Listserv, and it's a quarter time staff person to respond and filter these. We've been positive about these changes, not resisting them, but turning them to our advantage.

Michael: Do you think that the Internet has helped you achieve your mission and how would you quantify this?

Jeffrey: I definitely think that the Internet has helped us achieve our mission. Many people have found us through the Internet who would never have found us. We tapped into a much larger constituency. People tell us regularly that this is how they found us, mostly via our web site. We get a lot of emails from people this way. Our organization and work is well known to certain groups of people, but we're not nationally recognized as a "brand name" nonprofit. But people remember our PSAs and connect with our issues, before they remember our name. So if someone can find us by searching on our issue or some other key, it's a big plus for us. With our emphasis on public awareness, constituency building and political action, the Internet is mission critical for us. We are very aware of the impact of the Internet on our work and have been able to reflect this in our fundraising and in our program development. Our recent efforts are exciting because we're trying to create the next generation of our Internet presence to reach more people and be more effective. We want our site to be fresh, exciting, interactive, engaging. It takes more resources to build and maintain, but we're hoping it will help make us even more effective.

To read the full interview, go to the Benton Foundation's web site:

<http://www.benton.org/Practice/Features/fvpf.html>

CASE STUDY

Doing Justice To Online Fundraising

Say you're a mid-sized, national non-profit with a strong direct mail experience and a solid communications strategy. You've probably already begun building your online program, but now you're ready to get serious about it. Some questions you might be asking: What's the best way to grow? What can you expect? And what tools will help you get there? This case study should give you some answers (and maybe a little inspiration, too!).

Earthjustice, the non-profit law firm for the environment, represents - without charge - hundreds of public interest clients, large and small. Founded in 1971 as the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, Earthjustice has played a leading role in developing and enforcing environmental law. From nine offices across the country Earthjustice attorneys take on powerful special interests and win.

We began working with Earthjustice to develop and implement their online fundraising strategy in 2001. The results have been dramatic and exciting:

- More than 500% growth in their online constituent list
- More than 300% growth in online giving¹
- Influenced environmental policy with thousands of faxes and emails sent by constituents

"We're thrilled with what's happened online over the last year. Our constituents love being able to act online quickly, we get great response to our monthly e-newsletter, and seeing our online income grow is, of course, terrific."

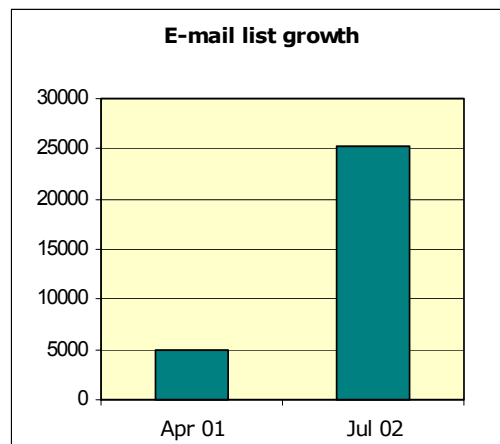
–Adelaide Roberts, Director, Public Support, Earthjustice

¹ According to *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* (6/13/02), the median increase in online giving during a similar period was 120%.

Step 1: Growing their list

A key initial goal was growing their email list. Several strategies resulted in increasing their list from 4,800 to 25,100 names in a little over a year, including:

- Placing e-newsletter sign-ups prominently on their site.
- Running partnerships with portals like Care2 to generate Action Alert sign-ups.
- Inviting donors via a postcard to give their email addresses and enter a raffle



Step 2: Cultivation

Earthjustice's email program and web site have become important parts of their donor and prospect cultivation. Key tactics include:

- Sending a monthly text and HTML e-newsletter, which generates average click-thru rates of 10% or more (click-thrus on the HTML version are routinely higher)
- Inviting donors and prospects to take action online, which increases their level of engagement with the organization
- Surveying donors and prospects online. 22% of recipients completed their recent survey, with the highest segment (donor/activists) returning more than 39%.

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Step 3: Raising money

In 2001, Earthjustice began a more aggressive Web appeal program. Specific methods include:

- A year-end holiday appeal to prospects that generated 43 gifts – all from new donors.
- A renewal campaign that included reminder emails sent to direct mail membership renewal recipients (who had email addresses) and on site renewal appeals. 137 donors gave a total of \$8,145 online.



- Special campaigns, including “Donate Your Rebate” and Earth Day. The Earth Day campaign consisted of series of messages during the four weeks of April: Learn, Act, Teach, and Give.

Step 4: Integrating with their offline program

A recent integrated matching grant campaign generated particularly impressive results. The annual appeal ran both off- and online, with the following elements:

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- Direct mail series which offered an online giving option
- Appeals on home and other pages
- A series of emails to 18,000 donors and prospects that included hard and soft asks in their e-newsletter and a “last chance” email postcard.
- Since October 2001, Earthjustice launched 29 campaigns with over 47,000 participants taking action.
- Over 65,000 letters were sent via email and fax to specified targets.
- Over 10,000 members were recruited via advocacy campaigns.

Using the right tools for the job

At the beginning of 2001, Earthjustice used low-cost, stand-alone vendors for their email messaging and online donation processing. While not the most robust tools, they were sufficient at the time. However, by late 2001, Earthjustice’s online program had really taken off and they were ready for a more powerful, integrated solution. They

selected GetActive Software because it combined powerful email messaging and a brand new, easily customized donation processing system with a well-established online activism product (which Earthjustice’s communication department was already using). Not only have the tools proved effective, but collaboration between the communications and development departments has significantly increased. Even the team at GetActive is impressed:

“Earthjustice has done an excellent job of weaving together online newsletters, advocacy, and fundraising, a unified approach to member relationship management that has yielded outstanding results”

— Sheeraz Haji, CEO GetActive Software



“Last chance” e-postcard generated almost \$15,000 in one day.

The results: 447 donors and prospects gave \$26,875 online – a 2.5% response rate from their online list, and representing 5% of the total generated from the campaign.

Advocacy adds to the mix

Earthjustice only began its online activism program in 2001. Not only has the program influenced environmental law and allowed donors and prospects to more deeply engage with the organization, but the organization has also developed a growing list of staunch activists.

**CASE
STUDY**

Some final thoughts

In many ways, Earthjustice's results are not unusual. However, they demonstrate a particularly fundraising program online. They're committed to investing online, willing to be creative and take risks, yet have realistic expectations. As a result, we've tested different strategies and learned a great deal about their list – and their fundraising outcomes are positive now, and will only continue to grow.

IDEA HOT SHEET !

Online Fundraising Best Practices

1. Invest in your web site

Your web site is critical to your online fundraising program: keep it useful and current.

2. Use email effectively

Email addresses are like gold – collect them everywhere, then use them for educating, activating, cultivating, and fundraising. Treat them like gold by having a strong commitment to privacy.

3. Cultivate relationships

Email and the Web make it easy to communicate and interact with donors and prospects. Serve their needs and expectations; invite their feedback and respond to it.

4. Promote your site

Even the greatest site won't realize its potential if it doesn't get enough visitors – and the right ones.

5. Think integration

Integrate online fundraising with your existing fundraising strategies and your organization's overall Internet strategy. Use email and the Web to reach new supporters and to strengthen relationships you've made through other channels, such as direct mail, phone, events, or one-on-one visits.

6. Be realistic

Online fundraising often requires a significant up-front investment. For most organizations, the pay-off will not be immediate. Think long-term, and manage the expectations of your staff and board.

CHAPTER 2**Acquiring and Cultivating Donors Online****In This Chapter:**

- **How can you acquire new donors online?**
- **How can you cultivate existing offline donors online?**
- **Using email to cultivate existing donors**
- **Using your web site to cultivate existing donors**
- **Integrating online fundraising into your development program**
- **A word about database integration**
- **Donation portals, charity shopping malls, click-to-give sites**
- **State Charitable Registration Requirements**
- **Online Fundraising Resources**
- **Case Study: The World Wildlife Fund Makes the Ask**
- **Idea Hot Sheet: Major Gift Fundraising Online**

Online fundraising is all about REACH and RELATIONSHIPS. With the Internet, your universe of potential donors expands exponentially, as does your ability to build longer-lasting relationships with existing (and potential!) donors near and far. People whom you could never have tracked down, even with all the money or time in the world, and people around the corner who never knew you existed, may visit your web site. As soon as they hit your site, the relationship-building process should begin. This chapter outlines strategies for acquiring new donors and building relationships with existing donors. It may help to think of the foundation of your online donor acquisition as the Web (usually your own site, where you can make the case for why a newcomer should support you), while the foundation of your relationship-building with existing donors will be email, which you can use to push information out and draw people back to your site.

How can you acquire new donors online?

Many organizations are reporting that the majority of their online donations are from new donors. The keys to acquiring new donors on your site are:

1. Bring potential donors to your site.
2. Make your site donor friendly.
3. Make the ask!
4. Collect email addresses.

1. Bringing potential donors to your site.

The first thing to do to increase the number of people clicking on your “donate now” button is to attract new visitors and encourage repeat visits to your site. While certain people will come to your site because they are looking for you specifically, many people in cyberspace (and in the real world, too!) will need to be made aware of your existence, the work you do, and the issues you deal with. You’ll need a strategy for getting the word out about your web site –

online and offline. WildAid, a relatively young nonprofit, placed billboard ads in downtown San Francisco that prominently featured its Web address – www.WildAid.org. WildAid subsequently saw a significant increase in the traffic to its site. While billboards are seldom the best way to drive traffic, imagine how your chances of getting donations increases if you have 15,000 people on your site per month rather than 5,000.

Chapters 5 and 6 cover strategies you can use to draw new traffic to your site and encourage repeat visits. Keep in mind that the more you can target your efforts to attract people who have an interest in your organization and the ability to make donations, the better.

2. Make your site donor-friendly.

If somebody is on your site, she's already taken the first step for getting involved – she came to you. To convert her into a donor, you must not only make her experience on your site a good one, you must also build her trust and give her opportunities to get involved. (The basic rules of fundraising don't change online – people who are involved are more likely to give. The beauty is that it's easier for people to be involved online.)

It's critical to remember that your site is more than a brochure. You don't want someone coming to your site and leaving, never to return, thinking they've learned all they can. Chapter 4 talks about strategies and tools for building an effective web site, involving visitors, and encouraging them to come back time and time again. However, there are several things you can include on your site to ensure it is **donor-friendly**:

- A short, crisp version of your mission statement. Clearly convey on your home page what you

do, how you do it, and why. Keep it short, including a link to more details for those who are interested.

- *Your privacy, security, and financial statements.* People will make donations only if they trust your organization. If you're asking people to provide you with personal information of any kind, be sure to display your privacy policy – your pledge about how you will use the information you are collecting. It's a violation of standard nonprofit "netiquette" to share your list of email addresses with another organization or company, but if you have any intention of doing so, you need to say so in your privacy policy and on every page that asks for email addresses. Some visitors will want reassurance that a page is on a secure server – so that information is encrypted before transmission over the Internet – before inputting their credit card information. Make sure your giving pages display a security symbol or statement. Finally, visitors want to know that your organization is financially responsible. At a minimum, post your Annual Report on your site. Many organizations are also starting

to post their 990 forms on their sites. 990s for all nonprofits are already available online through Guidestar (www.guidestar.org), so you may as well make yours easy to access for those who are interested. Posting your 990 also helps fulfill the IRS's requirement that you make the 990 available to the public.

- *Your successes and progress*, i.e. how donations make a difference. This will build confidence in and respect for your organization, and the likelihood that someone will give. For example, the Trust for Public Land's web site (www.tpl.org) has a button on the home page that highlights a successful project. Click on it and a small pop-up window opens with a short description of the public land the Trust preserved.

HOT TIP !

Go to www.groundspring.org to see a sample privacy policy or www.TRUSTe.com to use an online "wizard" to create a privacy policy. Be sure to adapt it for your organization, then

- **Contact information.** You want to be accessible to your donors, particularly those who may be interested in making a large gift and those who aren't yet comfortable giving online. Adding a footer on every page with your name, address, phone, and fax numbers – plus a copyright notice – is one effective solution.

3. Make the ask!

Again, the basic rules of fundraising apply online – it can take frequent “asks” in order to receive a gift. Most successful organizations put attractive membership offers or compelling appeals on their home page as well as including a Donate or Join link in the navigation on every page. Your appeals should give people reasons to give, and premiums like t-shirts or tote-bags can be effective (but also expensive). For appeals throughout the site, it's easy and logical to tie the “ask” to the page content. If someone is on a page about saving the tigers, your appeal can say “Help us save the tigers! Make a donation today!”

You can also incorporate asks into your content. At the end of an informative piece of copy, explain in one or two sentences how your organization is making a difference and invite the reader's support, with a link to the giving page.

Children International uses very effective appeals on their home page:

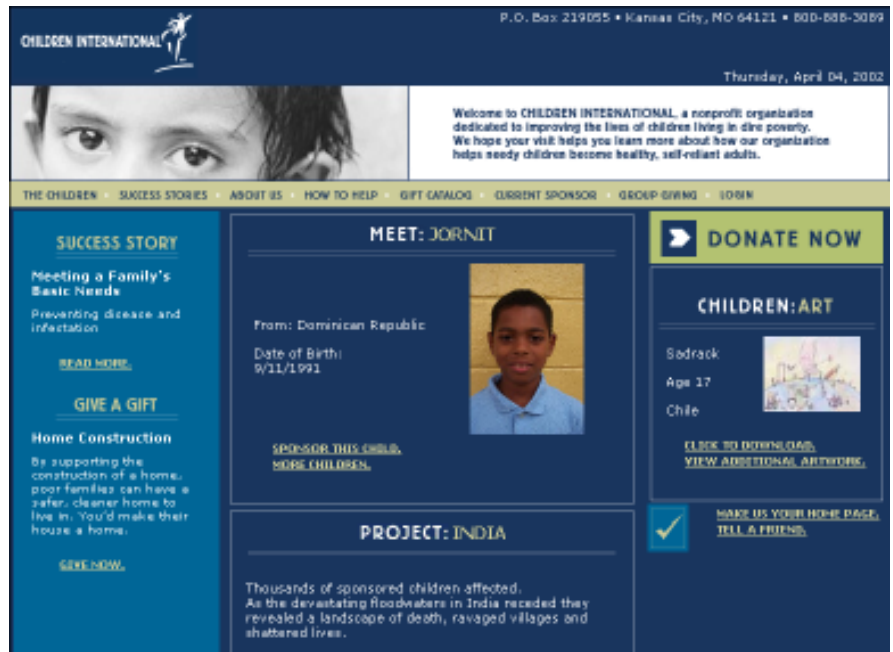
When someone clicks on your donation button, she should be taken immediately to a page where she can make her gift, not a page that distracts her with many options or further reasons why she should contribute. Include on your online donation pages a link to a form that people can fax or mail in if they don't want to use their credit cards online. Though an Application Service Provider (ASP) like Groundspring.org may be processing the gift on your behalf, you don't

want the donor feeling as if she has gone to another, unfamiliar site. Groundspring.org and many other ASPs enable you to make the donation page that sits on **their** web server look a lot like **your** web pages. (See Chapter 4 for more tips on creating effective online giving pages.)

- **Acknowledgments.** Most donation processing services (including Groundspring.org's DonateNow) are configured to automatically send an email acknowledgment, which online donors have come to expect. You should also send your traditional postal mail acknowledgment, and you may even want to develop an email welcome packet that outlines the benefits of being an online donor. It could contain some of the same information you might normally mail, but you may want to reference special “online member” benefits, like special features of your site.

4. Collect email addresses on your site – then use them! Most people probably won't make a donation on their first visit to your site, but if you get their email addresses you can start building your relationship via email and invite them back to your site.

The best way to collect email addresses is to offer an e-newsletter subscription on your home page (and other pages, too). Make the subscrip-



tion quick and easy – ideally a visitor types her email address into a box and clicks submit. Depending on your email messaging system, you can then ask for additional, optional information (such as name, zip code, or interests) that you can use later to personalize the messages and send targeted information. In your e-newsletter, in addition to news and calls to action, you can invite people to join your organization or make a contribution. You can also send a special stand-alone email solicitation periodically. The key is to remember that without that email address, a potential supporter may be lost forever. Chapter 3 discusses email messaging systems and newsletters in detail.

How can you cultivate existing offline donors online?

The best way to cultivate donors who have given offline – by mail, phone, events, or face-to-face solicitations – is to request their email address and send them a regular e-newsletter, encouraging them to use an e-channel to communicate with you, along with whatever channels have already been effective. Many donors won't want to communicate online. Just as the most "wired" person might still prefer to read a newspaper in the morning rather than log into msnbc.com, so a "wired" donor might prefer to respond to a letter rather than an email renewal solicitation. Plus, while some donors may actually prefer email, you'll generally depend on your existing channels of communication to continue relationships with donors who joined via these channels.

Using email to cultivate existing donors

Email is known as the "killer application" of the Internet because it gives you the opportunity to communicate more frequently and more efficiently with your supporters. Email messaging is much less expensive than mail, and the incremental cost for sending more email is minimal. The key to email cultivation is to start an e-newsletter and build your list.

1. Start an e-newsletter. The best way to use email to cultivate your existing donors is to send an e-newsletter with relevant, interesting information and opportunities to get involved. This will increase the perceived value of your organization (and the likelihood that donors will renew or increase their support). Stanford University's analysis of its monthly e-news confirms that e-news recipients are more likely to make a gift than non-recipients. (See: <http://www.stanford.edu/~jpearson/@stangifts.htm>.) Plus, by providing links to your web site in your emails, you can get your supporters in the habit of visiting your site often, deepening the connection they feel with your organization.

2. Build your donor email list. Of course, for your donor e-newsletter to be effective you have to get the email addresses of your donors. Most organizations are just starting to collect email addresses regularly, so you're not alone if your donor email list is small. But don't wait another day to start building it! Ask donors for email addresses at every point of contact, especially on donation and renewal forms. Use your new e-newsletter as an incentive for donors to give you their email address. Furthermore, many donors appreciate the fact that email communications and renewals save your organization time, money, and paper. Don't hesitate to tell them that.

Using your web site to cultivate existing donors

Your web site should make it easy for existing donors to get involved and find information about your mission, programs, effectiveness, progress, finances, and privacy policy.

Some organizations have experimented with "members only" sections of their sites, but it's generally not a good idea to limit your content for members only. What's more, unless you've got really valuable content, members aren't likely to keep track of a password. However, some groups have

created web site areas specifically for donors that contain insider information, success stories, staff profiles, and other features that deepen the donor's relationship with the organization. But, rather than keeping this content restricted, the section is available and even strongly promoted, since it can be an enticement for prospects to give.

Earthjustice's is one organization that has recently created a "supporter center".

No matter what, the best way to cultivate donors through your site is to make their experience on your site a positive one, give them reasons to visit often, and make your site a tool that facilitates their relationship with you. Let them donate and

your site. You can also build a sense of community on your site by including message boards or chat rooms, though you'll need to "work" them. (In Chapter 4 we'll talk about the nuts and bolts of building a great site).

Some organizations are recognizing their donors online. You may not be able to afford a real-world "wall of donors," but you could create one online, or you could create an online "printer's proof" of your annual report where you can direct donors to check their recognition name and level. (Of course, get permission from the donor before posting her name online!)

The Web is also a great place to solicit member feedback. With an online survey linked from the site or from an email, you can find out how members use your web site and email. Do they read your emails? Do they click through your emails to visit your web site? Do they come back to your web site, and why? Surveys need careful design, but can be effective evaluation tools. (Check out www.zoomerang.com or www.surveymonkey.com for free and low-cost survey tools.)

Integrating online fundraising into your development program

When well planned, your online and offline fundraising programs can complement and enhance each other. There are several ways to integrate online fundraising with direct mail and telemarketing.

Use email to boost response to direct mail.

In the same way that you might make a call telling donors to expect an important letter, you can email your file telling them to

watch the mail, or wait for the call. A special, stand-alone email is most effective, but you can also in-

register for events online. If your membership is hungry for the latest information or news about your cause, make sure you incorporate that into

corporate the message into your regular donor e-newsletter. You can also try following up a special appeal with an email, saying “we hope you read our recent letter, just click here to make your donation online today. It’s convenient and saves us money.” The first renewal effort might be conducted by email, followed by the usual multi-letter series, and eventually a phone call.

Offer the convenience of online giving. More and more of your donors may prefer to conduct their transactions online. When they receive a direct mail solicitation, they may want to make their gift online rather than writing a check, putting it in an envelope, finding a stamp, and putting it in the mailbox. Include on your reply device a Web address for an online giving page, in addition to the credit card and check options. Ideally, you should create a giving page specifically for that appeal so you can track the response, but at a minimum you can route direct-mail traffic to a unique url to track how many people actually went from the mail to the Web. Make sure the printed url is easy to remember, such as www.yourorganization.org/donation. This tactic is also an option when you survey your membership in the mail. In fact, when they go online to complete the survey rather than returning it by mail, you save the time it takes to key in the responses received by mail.

Promote your online program through direct mail. Promote your web site and e-newsletter in all of your print communications. Consider including a buckslip in a mailing or sending out a special postcard highlighting features on your site and announcing the launch of your donor e-newsletter. Tell people to visit your web site to subscribe, or include a reply device so people can mail you their email address.

A word about database integration

In the ideal world, you would have one system for managing all of your online and offline processes and data – donations, events, email messaging, letters, volunteers, etc. Though many Application Service Providers (ASPs) offering these services are moving in that direction, most are not there yet,

and even if they were, it is not likely that many organizations would quickly abandon their existing donor database management systems. (To see systems that integrate at least some of these processes, check out ASPs like Convio, GetActive, Social Ecology, and LocalVoice). So, the process of integrating data from all of the different places where it’s collected online and offline is likely to be an ongoing issue. The goal is to ensure that at every point of contact with your donors, you have the most current information.

For example, an existing donor makes a donation online. In that process, she gives you permission to send her your monthly e-newsletter. You then have to add her to your email messaging list and update her gift history and contact information in your offline database. Later, if you don’t put her email address in your offline database, you may send her a postcard in the mail saying “send us your email address so we can send you our e-newsletter,” when she’s already been receiving it for several months. Three months later, perhaps she unsubscribes from your e-newsletter. The next day you add to your email list all donors with email addresses in your offline database. Depending on your messaging system, you may have just re-subscribed her against her will. The point is that you’ll need to figure out a system for keeping all of your databases integrated by doing regular imports and exports among your systems.

Fortunately, Groundspring.org and most other ASPs offering donation processing, event registration, or email messaging let you download information from their site in a comma-separated or tab-delineated format for importing into your existing database. You may have to play with the data a bit to match the fields and code the records. It’s best to consider your offline database your master, then do periodic imports and exports from there. When you get new email addresses or address changes in the mail, you’ll have to export that info into your email messaging system. Furthermore, you may need to code donors who have unsubscribed from your e-newsletter in your

offline database so you don't import their email address into your messaging system. (If you have multiple email lists this could get tricky.) Develop a policy – if they have unsubscribed from your e-newsletter, does that mean you can't send them stand-alone solicitations? If not, you'll need a more sophisticated coding system – i.e., no email, no e-newsletter, no e-solicitation, etc.

Donation portals, charity shopping malls, and click-to-give sites

Donation portals are Web sites that offer a directory of nonprofits. They allow visitors to search for charities by mission or geography using the Guidestar database based on the IRS 990 tax filings or their own database of non-profits. Examples of charity portals include justgive.org and GiveForChange.com. Their job is to attract lots of traffic to their site, and encourage visitors to make contributions to the nonprofits listed. Usually your listing is free, and the portal accepts secure credit card contributions on your behalf. Most charge a fee or percentage of any donations and have no monthly minimum. Portals make money from advertising on their site or through the fees they charge; however, most aren't making any money and are closing! So be forewarned. Some individuals may use charity portals, and it can't hurt to be listed, but it's not likely that this will be a significant revenue stream.

Charity shopping malls return a commission to your organization when your members or supporters make online shopping purchases through their network of online stores. The problem with them (other than the failure of many of their e-commerce tenants in early 2001) is that most nonprofits don't get a lot of visitors to their sites, so the numbers they can send on to the mall is tiny. Plus, not all nonprofits are comfortable working with charity malls, sometimes feeling that it's akin to advertising or corporate sponsorship, or supports consumerism which may not mix well with an organization's mission. Examples of charity malls are iGive.com and Working Assets' ShopForChange.com.

While a few organizations have made modest money from these dot-coms, most organizations don't have the high traffic to make them work. Perhaps more important, however, is the fact that, like many other dot-coms, most charity malls and shopping portals have not been profitable and are failing.

The classic **click-to-give site** is the Hunger Site, which recruited advertising sponsors to donate the cost of a cup of rice to a UN food program every time a visitor clicked on the site. The site has been a viral phenomenon, logging over 100 million visitors donating 198 million cups of staple foods by early 2001, according to the site. In 2000, the site was taken over by the for-profit GreaterGood, which ran one of the big online shopping malls until it shut down in mid-2001. In late 2001, the site was re-launched. Care2.com's click-to-donate sites benefit pandas, big cats, the rainforest, and breast cancer prevention.

If you are considering these services, evaluate them carefully. Examine their Web sites thoroughly to see how they present their services, and how they feature the nonprofits that are signed up. Make sure you understand the setup, donation, and monthly fees. Don't get forced into signing a multi-year contract. Check with other nonprofits that have signed up, and find out how much money they've raised. Ask about the service's marketing and advertising, and make sure you understand what the service requires YOU to do as part of the deal. Some ask for buttons on your home page or announcements in your email newsletters. Finally, make sure you have full access to the donor information so you can cultivate that relationship, and find out if the site is using the donor information in any way.

State Charitable Registration Requirements

The borderless nature of the Internet raises myriad questions about jurisdiction and state charitable registration. If your organization has a donation button on its site, do you need to register with every state because users can access your site? How about if you send email with a solicitation

to people all over the country? What if you don't know where your email recipients live?

State Attorneys General, who generally handle charitable solicitation efforts, have debated this issue, but few states have actually changed the regulations to deal with the Internet. Organizations with large national direct mail programs are usually already registered in most states, so their Internet activities should be covered too. Other organizations more local in scope need to pay attention to how this issue evolves, because no standards have been established yet. The problem is that the laws on the books were created before the Internet existed and could conceivably require that any organization with a donation button on its home page register in every state. However, this would cost a nonprofit tens of thousands of dollars and a lot of time – a huge, unreasonable burden for small, local groups (not to mention the burden state offices would face in processing all of the registrations).

HOT TIP !

One benefit to using the Groundspring.org DonateNow service is that you don't have to worry about the state registration issue. The donations are technically made to Groundspring.org, which is registered in every state that

Though there is as yet no agreement about how Internet solicitations should be handled, discussion has included ideas like setting donation thresholds that would trigger a state registration requirement – i.e., if an organization received a certain number of gifts or a certain number of dollars from donors in a state consistently over a certain number of years, the organization would have to register with that state. Another idea circulating is to create a central registration process.

This is definitely an issue to monitor. For more information, go to the National Association of State Charity Officials web site (www.nasconet.org) and read the "Charleston Principles: On Charitable Solicitations Using the Internet." There's also a good article, "Internet Issues for Tax Exempt Organizations" by Alice Anderson and Robert Wexler, on www.techsoup.org.

Online Fundraising Resources

Network for Good – www.networkforgood.org

See the Nonprofit Resources section for articles and links about online fundraising.

The Internet Nonprofit Center – www.nonprofits.org

Posts an extensive FAQ for nonprofit organizations, bulletins, and a library of publications, information and data about the nonprofit sector.

The Nonprofit Matrix – www.nonprofitmatrix.com

A comprehensive guide to commercial ASPs and portal providers for the nonprofit sector, including up-to-date news.

Online Fundraising Resource Center – www.fund-online.com

Most interesting on this site are the excerpts from the book *Fundraising and Friend-raising on the Web* by Adam Corson-Finnerty and Laura Blanchard. Check out Chapter 2 for ideas on using the Web for Major Gift fundraising. Also included on the site are resources, essays, and analysis of online fundraising trends.

CASE STUDY

The World Wildlife Fund Makes the Ask

Not only is the World Wildlife Fund’s web site engaging and informative, it is an example of excellent online fundraising. Though World Wildlife is a large organization with a strong brand nationally and internationally, its strategies for acquiring gifts online can be a model for even the smallest organization.

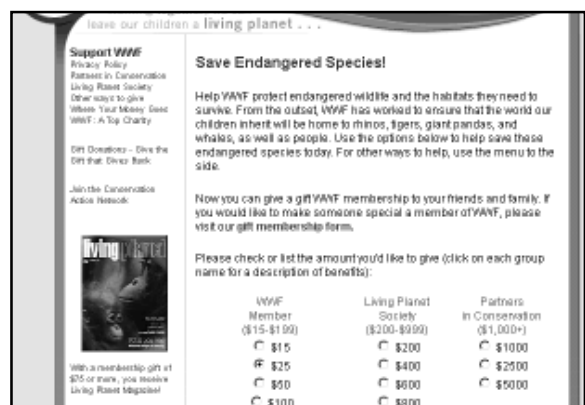
- From the home page, potential or existing donors can easily find information they may use to make a decision about supporting WWF – from what WWF does and WWF’s Annual Report to privacy policies and how to help.
- WWF includes on its home page :
 - 1) An **appeal** prominently placed in the upper right corner that includes a premium as an incentive for giving – a members-only t-shirt and a subscription to its print magazine, Living Planet (an example of integrating on and off-line communications).
 - 2) An invitation to subscribe to the **e-newsletter**. Even if a new visitor doesn’t make a gift today, at least she is on that email list for further cultivation and solicitation!



- On its other pages, WWF **ties the ask to the content of the page**. For example, on the

“Learn more about endangered species” page, the appeal has a picture of a tiger and says, “Help save wildlife – support WWF!” On the page about forests, the appeal has a forest image and says “Help WWF protect our forests.” When the donor clicks on each of these links, she is taken to a special donation page with a few sentences about how her gift will help make a difference on that particular issue.

Linking the “ask” to the content of the page.



WWF’s online giving forms (below) include a few sentences about how the WWF – and hence the donor’s gift – will make a difference. Though not visible here, every donation form includes a phone number and a link to a printable donation form for people who don’t want to give online.

IDEA HOT SHEET !

Major Gift Fundraising Online

“Online we should be looking for the gold nugget, not the small green peas.”

– Adam Corson-Finnerty
Director of Development
University of Pennsylvania Library

With all the talk about reaching the masses online, it's wise to think of your web site as a tool for major gift fundraising too. Of course, interpersonal communication will always be the foundation of any major gift program, but, like other donors, major donors are increasingly going to the Web to get information about an organization's mission, programs, and effectiveness when they are considering making a gift. Make sure that information is available and accurate.

Here are some ideas for cultivating major donors online.

- Speak directly to major donors on your site. For example, on it's "How you can help" page, WildAid.org tells major donors that 100% of their gift will go directly to programs in the field.
- Create a Web page on your site about a major gift. This will not only directly recognize that particular donor, it will show other potential major donors that you value and need their support.
- If you have high-dollar giving clubs or circles, create online giving pages outlining the special benefits.

- Provide information about making planned gifts and gifts of stock on your site. At a minimum, include contact information for your major gifts officer so a potential donor can contact him or her directly. The Trust for Public Land (www.tpl.org), the American Red Cross (www.redcross.org), and National University (www.nu.edu/donation/index.html) detail the many different planned gift options on their site. ASPs like www.stelter.com, www.newtithing.org, and www.giftlegacy.com can help you integrate planned gift tools (including a giving calculator) into your site.

- Develop an email messaging program for your major donors. Provide them with personalized "inner circle" communications, updates, and urgent alerts from your executive director.

For more ideas on using the Internet for major gifts, visit Adam Corson-Finnerty's and Laura Blanchard's web site at www.fund-online.com.

CHAPTER 3**Email Messaging Matters****In This Chapter:**

- **Building your email list**
- **Using email and e-newsletters**
- **Choosing an email messaging system**
- **Email Messaging Vendors and Resources**

“E-mail is more important than my Web site!”

– The Gilbert E-Mail Manifesto,
available in full at www.gilbert.org

*Sending email to your supporters and constituents is indeed one of the most effective ways to build relationships, keep interested people informed, and drive traffic to your web site. Without email, you’re dependent on people **remembering** to visit and revisit your web site. Of course, to send email, you have to have email addresses! This chapter covers the most effective ways to build your email list and the nuts and bolts of creating and distributing a regular email bulletin, including email messaging system options.*

While most people understand and accept that their names and addresses are sold and exchanged among magazines, insurance companies, and other direct mailers, the expectations and etiquette around email addresses are quite different. When someone gives you her email address and permission to use it for email updates, she is not giving you permission to exchange it with other organizations, sell it, or send her unreasonable quantities of email. Good “Netiquette” means following certain rules for obtaining and using email addresses.

1. Get permission to use an email address.

Anywhere you solicit an email address, include a brief explanation of what you will do with it, such as “We’ll use your email address to send you occasional email updates. We won’t share your email address with anyone, and you can ‘unsubscribe’ at any time.” On a Web form, this usually involves a simple check box. While a commercial standard is to have users check a box indicating they want mail and then reply to an email to confirm their subscription (a “double opt-in”), right now it’s generally acceptable for nonprofit organizations to have a pre-

checked opt-in box (“Yes, send me occasional email updates”) with no confirmation email that requires a reply.

2. **Retain that “permission”** by keeping your email recipients happy with the quality and quantity of email (and making it easy to unsubscribe at any time if they are not happy). If people do unsubscribe, be certain that their name is taken off the list immediately or before the next mailing.

Building your email list

When you’re collecting email addresses, you need to focus on both donors and non-donors. Don’t neglect one group in favor of the other. It’s critical to get the email addresses of your donors so that you can keep them informed of news and information that relates to their membership status with your organization. There is some news and event information that you will wish to distribute only to your donors, and email is a quick and effective way to do it. Luckily, it’s easy to collect the email addresses of your donors because you’ll have had some kind of direct contact with them, either in person, via the mail or on the phone. Also make an effort to collect the email addresses of donors that joined in past years, which you can do at membership renewal time.

Non-donors are a large group of individuals that have an interest in your programs or activities, but for various reasons haven’t had the time or financial freedom to become contributing members. We like to call these future donors! Non-donors should be asked to “stay in touch” by providing their email addresses. Everyone in your organization – staff, board, volunteers – can forage for email addresses in the community. There are many opportunities to ask for email addresses, and we’ll cover many of those below.

On your site. Get email addresses from your site visitors by making it really easy to get on your e-news list. You’ll probably use an email messaging system for sending your e-newsletter that offers a form for your home page where visitors simply

enter their email addresses and click “submit” to be automatically subscribed. (See the Idea Hot Sheet at the end of this chapter). Place the subscription form prominently on the home page and other high-trafficked pages – and give visitors a good reason to leave their name by telling them they’ll get something they want in your e-newsletter (for example, “Find out about gay and lesbian activities in your area – get our e-newsletter!). The more sophisticated messaging systems will let you collect additional information during the subscription process, but, generally, the more information you ask for, the fewer responses you’ll get. In the ideal setup, the user inputs their email address on your home page, clicks submit, and is then taken to another page where they can optionally provide additional information, such as first name/last name, zip code, and interests so you can personalize and target messages.

All print materials: All of your print materials should ask for email addresses and provide easy ways to sign up for the e-newsletter. You can invite people to send a blank email to an email address that you set up through your email messaging system; just by sending the email they will be subscribed. You can tell them to go to your home page and sign up there. Or you can tell them to mail or fax back the ad or form with their email address scribbled on it and you will enter it into the database.

Here are some of the print opportunities for collecting email addresses:

- Print ads in your own or other publications
- Letters that you send out regarding donations, events, or other activities
- Any printed forms that people are required to fill out with a pen should have a line for email address (leave enough room!).
- Pledge forms
- Print newsletters. (If you’re interested in more up-to-date news, just go to our web site and register for email updates!)

At events:

- If you're running a kiosk or a booth or having a house party, be sure to ask people face-to-face for their email address, and explain why you're doing it. Or you can set up a laptop and let people enter their email addresses and other information.
- You can announce a raffle or a contest, asking people to write their email addresses on the raffle stub to enter.
- If you're at a business event, you can always ask people to leave their business cards. Be sure to check if the business card includes an email address, since some don't.

In phone calls: Some telemarketers express concern that asking for email addresses might have a negative impact or reduce the time for placing other calls. This doesn't need to be a problem. At the end of the call, when the donor has either pledged or declined, the caller can ask: "Please give me your email addresses so we can stay in contact. Email saves us money, and let's us contact you when there's breaking news." It's an opportunity for the person on the phone to be in the loop, not an intrusion.

In person: This won't grow your list fast, but it shouldn't be overlooked. In a busy day, you might meet a dozen new people. Ask them for their cards or email addresses, then make sure their email addresses are entered onto the e-newsletter list. When you or others representing your organization give a speech or make a presentation, invite listeners at the end to give you their cards if they'd like to get your e-news.

Mailings: Mailings are good opportunities to ask for email addresses, because there's often a response mechanism built into the mailing. Make sure there's a line for email addresses – and possibly a premium or some other incentive. Double postcards are also good for collecting email, since people can tear off the reply postcard and mail it back to RSVP or sign up for something.

Premiums, contests and raffles: Any kind of donor contact that has a reward is a good opportunity to ask for email addresses. In the case of a membership premium, the donor is already excited about receiving a gift in exchange for a donation, so obtaining their email is usually easy. Contests and raffles are other good times, since the expectation of winning requires someone to do something, and giving their email address is easy and free.

Using email and e-newsletters

Now we'll cover the nuts and bolts of creating and distributing a regular email newsletter. Because email is such a personal and direct medium, recipients of email can be particular about issues such as frequency, formatting and style. The following techniques are designed to maximize your effectiveness and success.

Regular monthly e-newsletter: While your staff and volunteers are using email every day to communicate with individual donors and others, here we're talking about creating an official and regular email communiqué from your organization. An e-newsletter lets you communicate proactively to inform your constituents about official announcements, news, events, holidays, festivals, advocacy campaigns, giving opportunities, and more. An effective Internet presence means not relying solely on your web site. Rather than waiting for people to visit your site to see what's new, your e-newsletter takes the news to them on a regular basis, with hyperlinks back to your site where people can learn more, take action, donate, etc. Every time you send out an e-newsletter, traffic to your site will spike (as you can see from your site traffic reports). So there's no time to waste!

Headers and footers: An e-newsletter should be clearly branded with the name of your organization and should indicate that this is an official publication, with the same authority as a print publication. One way to brand an e-newsletter effectively is to use a standard header and footer on each issue. A header might include the name of

the newsletter, the name of the organization, the date of publication, and the Web address of your web site. Here's an example of a header:

```
=====
Twin Cities Tattler
The free monthly e-bulletin of the Minnesota Jewish Federation
March 2001 – Passover Special Edition
http://www.jewishminnesota.org
=====
= =
```

Here's an example of a footer:

```
=====
= =
You've been reading Twin Cities Tattler, the free monthly e-bulletin of
the Minnesota Jewish Federation. Subscribe for free at
http://www.jewishminnesota.org/. You can "unsubscribe" by
sending a blank email to 'unsubscribe@jewishminnesota.org'. Contact
editor John Cohen at 616-888-4564 or jcohen@jewishminnesota.org.
=====
```

Contents: The content of your e-newsletter should be designed with your audience in mind. Your goal is to interest and engage people. You probably will take most of the content for your e-newsletter from other sources, such as print publications, press releases, or individual emails. Keep a list of ideas for newsletter items as you're writing other materials. But don't make your e-newsletter too long, or readers will be overwhelmed. It's better to have a short e-newsletter – 4 or 5 items, each a few lines long, with links to additional information on your web site. Consider putting a table of contents at the beginning of each issue to make it easy for people to scan. Write in a direct and upbeat style to keep people engaged. Creating a consistent personal "voice" for the newsletter, so that it sounds like it was written by one person with (mild) attitude, can be especially effective. You can also configure emails so that they come from an individual – your director, president, or a well-known volunteer. The content itself can be as varied as the work of your organization, including:

- News about your cause.
- News about your programs and successes.
- Information about upcoming events and courses.

- Staffing or Board news.
- Updates on an advocacy campaign.
- New additions to your Web site's links.
- Seasonal Holiday resources.
- Announcement about hot discussions on your web site.
- Volunteer recognition.
- Volunteers needed for...
- We need your financial support now to help us...

Deciding on the frequency of distribution: Monthly is generally best, but frequency should be dictated by the ability of your staff and volunteers to write each issue on a regular schedule. You want to capture some "mindshare," but not overwhelm your subscribers. Eventually you might develop a weekly edition for people who want it. Pick a frequency and stick to it (unless you've got major news or a real crisis). Consistency is a guarantee of brand recognition and supporter loyalty.

Plain text vs. HTML: There are two kinds of formatting techniques for e-newsletters. One is plain text, which is a colorless and unformatted message, like most emails that you send and receive. Plain text is easy to create and can be read by all recipients, irrespective of what Internet service or software they use to read their email. HTML email looks like a Web page – colorful and formatted, sometimes with images and colors embedded into the message. HTML emails are more difficult to create and not even all people who can receive HTML mail will receive it the way you intend them to. We recommend that you start out with a plain text e-newsletter before you try anything else. We think you'll find the challenge of creating an e-newsletter exciting enough to warrant not delving into HTML emails right away.

Making it easy to unsubscribe: A key to good relations with your constituents is to respect individual wishes on receiving email. It's good Netiquette to honor people's requests to be removed from your distribution list. The footer of your e-newsletter should contain easy unsubscribe instructions. If people don't understand these instructions or don't see them, you'll likely receive email and phone requests to be unsubscribed and removed, which you'll then have to do manually before the next mailing. It's also good Netiquette to acknowledge by email that you've removed that person from receiving your e-newsletter. Most email messaging systems will do this for you.

Create a main edition: Initially, you need only create one edition of your e-newsletter. The main edition will contain different types of information since you're communicating with the broad range of your membership. The key to a main edition is regular and predictable distribution. If you decide that your e-newsletter is going to be monthly, then say so in the header, and stick to your schedule. If you decide to send it out the 10th of each month, people will expect to see it around that date, so don't disappoint them.

Create special additions: You can also create special editions based on a particular issue, theme, or event to grab people's attention. A Special Edition could also be crisis focused, such as a natural disaster or the approval of detrimental legislation. You know your membership best, so be creative in choosing different ways to present and distribute your e-newsletter.

Create other editions by segmenting your list: As you get better at managing your e-newsletter and grow your list, you can consider creating other editions. Many email messaging systems can segment people based on the profiles that they enter into the system. You can segment your list by gender, zip code, donation amount and frequency,

and interest and issues. Thus, you could create an e-newsletter edition for young adults, donors, women, new arrivals in your area, etc. Go slowly in creating other editions. Be sure you have enough email addresses – and a staffing or volunteer plan for publishing each issue.

Using discussion lists for small groups: A variation on the theme of an e-newsletter is to create a special discussion list – often called a “listserv” – for small groups of people such as committees, campaign teams, staff or volunteers. A discussion list differs from an e-newsletter in that anyone on the list can email a message to everyone else subscribed to the list. If you have 25 people on your event committee list, anyone can email a message to everyone else. It's really no different than using everyday email, except that the list of everyone's email addresses is stored in one location, so you never forget anyone. Because these discussion lists can generate so many emails every day, it's essential that you get explicit permission before you add anyone's name to the list.

HOT TIP !

Make sure your e-newsletter is set up as “announcement” or “moderated,” not “discussion” to ensure that you are the only one who can possibly post messages to the list.

Dealing with multiple databases of names: When you're building the subscribership of your e-newsletter, you may need to combine several databases that you've accumulated over the years. In addition to the direct registrations that your supporters will make on your site, you likely have a legacy system with thousands of names, some with email addresses. You may have access to other email lists from partner organizations and institutions. If someone has given you her contact information as part of a membership drive, it's probably safe to send them a copy of your e-newsletter. You need to be more cautious when obtaining email lists from partners. In that case, we recommend you not add people permanently to your distribution list, but instead send people a sample issue, and invite them to subscribe directly. On the Internet, people generally don't like being subscribed to e-lists without their consent. So be sure that you have their per-

mission to send them your e-newsletter regularly.

Choosing an email messaging system

A range of email messaging services exist – from free, simple, and unsophisticated to more costly, complex systems that are highly customizable and allow you to do sophisticated tracking and segmenting. The free or lower-cost solutions are likely to be perfectly sufficient for launching an e-newsletter. It's when you want to manage multiple email newsletters or do sophisticated segmenting and targeting that you need to consider the higher-end options.

You can send your email newsletter through your email software. Microsoft Outlook, Eudora and others all have address books where you can store hundreds of email addresses but we don't recommend it. When you use this technique, be very careful when you send out your email newsletter to use the BLIND CARBON COPY field (also known as BCC). That will avoid the practice of receiving an annoyingly large header of email addresses at the top of an email message. The downside to doing it this way is that you have to manually add and remove subscribers. When your email newsletter has a lot of subscribers, you won't want to keep doing this!

Topica and Yahoo!Groups: A more advanced technique is to use these Web-based email newsletter services. They're free, they're reliable, and they're easy to administer. They offer tools such as easy setup, open discussion or one-way distribution, discussion moderation, and archiving on the Web. These services automatically handle all the subscribing and unsubscribing for you. They also offer snippets of "programming code" that automate the sign-up process on your web site. Among the disadvantages: They sometimes include text advertisements (for credit cards, for example) in your messages; your email comes from their domain name; and you can't segment your list to deliver different information to different people based on zip code, giving levels, or preferences. Sign up for these free services at: www.topica.com or www.groups.yahoo.com (click on "Start a New Group" or "Help" to learn more).

DonorLink, LocalVoice, Groundspring.org, and Sparklist: Sparklist (www.sparklist.com) offers a range of newsletter messaging services, starting at \$50 a month for 50,000 messages and going up for shared or dedicated servers and custom programming. It will take you a while to learn the system, but the lists are very user-friendly for the subscriber. Sparklist offers excellent free phone support and overall good value. DonorLink (www.socialecology.com) and LocalVoice (www.localvoice.com) offer email messaging as part of a suite of other online fundraising services including member profiling, surveys, event registration, and donation processing. (DonorLink's system is actually a full donor database/relationship management tool.) Groundspring.org (www.groundspring.org), formerly eGrants.org, offers email messaging (EmailNow) as a standalone service or as a companion to their online donation processing service, DonateNow. EmailNow can send both plain text and/or HTML emails, allows list segmenting, has easy opt-in and opt-out tools, import and export of addresses, and excellent tracking capabilities. Each of these systems offer many of the features that make an email newsletter most effective for both the list owner and the subscribers, such as:

- Automatic subscribe and unsubscribe email addresses: i.e. join-mylist@sparklist.com.
- Failsafe unsubscribing: The "footer" at the bottom of every message contains the subscriber's email address and instructions for unsubscribing. Sparklist automatically recognizes members and unsubscribes them. No more "get me off this list" messages.
- Automatic error processing: Bad addresses are automatically flagged in your database and can be easily removed.
- Highly configurable: You can define the "From:" and "Reply-To:" fields for every message.
- Mail-merge: You can insert the member's name, e-mail address, or other information into the text of the message.

- HTML mailings: allows rich-text email with color, fonts, etc.
- Auditing: You can obtain confirmation of mail delivery (or failure), along with the time delivered, number of retries, or error message obtained for a given email address.
- Trackable URLs: You can track how many people click on the links in your message.

DoubleClick, GetActive, CTSG, ClickAction, Responsys: These high-end systems, which include all the Sparklist features and more, typically charge a setup cost of \$2,500 to \$10,000, then somewhere between \$30 and \$40 per thousand emails sent. They are database-driven, meaning you can collect data from your recipients when they subscribe or import multiple data fields so

you can personalize your mail and target it by zip code, gender, gift history, expressed preferences, etc. You can include “Web bugs” to know if people open your email or forward it. You can send HTML email and the systems “sniff” out whether the recipient can read HTML mail or should get just plain text. You can include trackable URLs, so you know who and how many people clicked on each embedded Web link in your email. You do all this, and get real-time reporting, on a password-protected site with pull-down menus and point-and-click templates.

These systems, hosted on the company’s servers (the “Application Service Provider,” or ASP model), typically have a steep learning curve and the handbook is of limited use; but the product can do amazing things!

Email Messaging Vendors and Resources

Any of these solutions might work for you. Your most important decision is to use email to communicate with and cultivate your donors and prospects, so you can bring them to your web site where they can get more involved and take action – donating, activism, or signing up for an event.

Email Messaging Vendors (many of these also have email messaging tips on their sites):

www.topica.com (free)

www.groups.yahoo.com (free)

www.groundspring.org (\$)

www.sparklist.com (\$)

www.socialecology.com (\$)

www.localvoice.com (\$\$)

www.doubleclick.com (\$\$\$)

www.getactive.com (\$\$\$)

ClickZ Network – www.clickz.com

A network of sites and free e-newsletters about commercial email marketing. Tens of thousands of articles, easy to search.

Databack Systems - www.databack.com

Take their free email course on composing great-looking email newsletters.

The Gilbert Email Manifesto – <http://www.gilbert.org/news/features/feature0025.html>

Michael Gilbert's elaborations on why "email is more important than your web site" and his rules of email.

The Levison Letter - www.levison.com/subscribe

Subscribe to this free email newsletter on writing effective email newsletters.

Books

Complete Guide to Internet Direct Mail: The Complete Guide to Successful E-Campaigns

by Steve Roberts, Robert W. Bly, Michelle Feit

Ntc Business Books, 2000

Email Marketing

by Jim Sterne, Anthony Priore, Jerry I. Reitman

John Wiley & Sons, 2000

Marketing With Email: A Spam-Free Guide to Increasing Awareness, Building Loyalty, and Increasing Sales by Using the Internet's Most Powerful Tool

by Shannon Kinnard

Maximum Pr, 2000

CASE STUDY

The Massachusetts SPCA's Monthly E-news

The MSPCA launched its e-newsletter in December 2000, sending it to 400 recipients. By offering an incentive and a link to subscribe on its home page, MSPCA grew its list to more than 5,000 in one year. This newsletter is fun, informative, and engaging.

From: Phil@mspca.org
 To: <ginger@donordigital.com>
 Subject: Fame, ferrets, and floppy ears
 Date: Tue, 20 Mar 2001 12:02:34 -0800

Customized "from" address

Inviting subject!

MSPCA E-NEWS, MARCH 2001
 Monthly news and information from the
 Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Clear header

Happy spring, Ginger!

Personalization is a nice touch!

Jelly Belly. The Big Goober. Critter Puff. These are just some of the names you call your pet when no one else is listening—at least the ones you were willing to report on our last email survey! You can read the others, too, by clicking here.
http://www.mspca.org/news_events/enews/feb_survey_names.htm

You're receiving this e-news because you gave us your email address on our web site. If you'd prefer not to receive it, simply follow the instructions at the bottom of this email.

Tell them it's easy to unsubscribe!

In this issue:
 WHY WE DON'T DISCRIMINATE AGAINST BREEDS
 SURVEY: DOES YOUR PET LOOK LIKE YOU?
 NOMINATE A HERO FOR OUR ANIMAL HALL OF FAME
 THE TRUTH ABOUT FERRETS AND OTHER EXOTIC PETS
 ABOUT THE MSPCA

Include a table of contents if your newsletter is long.

WHY WE DON'T DISCRIMINATE AGAINST BREEDS
 By Stephanie Frommer, MSPCA Shelter Operations Coordinator

People with dogs often use breed characteristics as a way of understanding their pets, behaviors. When the family border collie runs circles around the neighborhood children, we recognize normal herding behavior that has been bred into the dog. But when breed characteristics are used to make laws or policies, things get tricky. Find out why the MSPCA evaluates every dog individually instead of by its breed.
http://www.mspca.org/news_events/enews/march_01.htm#discriminate

SURVEY: DOES YOUR PET LOOK LIKE YOU?
 Do you look like your pet? Okay, so maybe your ears aren't as floppy as Jaspers or Jasper isn't quite as blond as you are, but do you resemble each other in some way? Click here and let us know!
<https://www.securedonationform.com/Clients/VNSurvey.asp?OrgId=294&SurveyId=81>

Surveys are a great involvement device.

CASE STUDY

THE TRUTH ABOUT FERRETS AND OTHER EXOTIC PETS
Ferrets can make great pets, but caring for them entails just as much effort as caring for a dog or a cat. And some exotic pets have very specific needs to keep them happy and healthy.
http://www.mspca.org/news_events/enews/march_01.htm#ferrets

Links to stories and involvement opportunities on the web site.

ABOUT THE MSPCA
The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is a non-profit organization which protects animals, relieves their suffering, advances their health and welfare, prevents cruelty, and works for a just and compassionate society. Learn more about us at www.mspca.org.

The footer includes clear information about the organization, its privacy practices, and how to join.

JOIN US
Your support of the MSPCA will help us help more than 60,000 animals every year. Please, join us.
<https://www.securedonationform.com/clients/VNDntnFrm.asp?OrgId=294&CampaignGroupId=230>

Trackable URLs help you learn your readers' interests.

YOUR PRIVACY
The MSPCA will never sell or trade your email address to anyone. Read our privacy policy at:
http://www.mspca.org/miscframes/privacy_policy.htm#top

Asking people to pass your e-newsletter on to their friends is a great way to get new subscribers!

PASS IT ALONG
Forward MSPCA NAME to your friends and colleagues. If you got this message from a friend, sign up for your own subscription at <https://www.securedonationform.com/Clients/VNSurvey.asp?OrgId=294&SurveyId=61>

QUESTIONS? FEEDBACK?
Do you have a pet care or animal welfare question? We may feature in our newsletter or on our web site. We love feedback, too. Drop us a line:
<mailto:webmaster@mspca.org>

The unsubscribe is clear and easy!

TO "UNSUBSCRIBE"
If you received this message in error or you would like to be removed from the mailing list, please click on Reply and type "unsubscribe" in the message subject line.

Don't forget your copyright info!

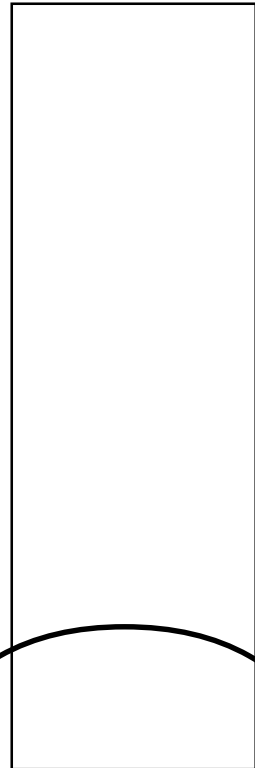
All contents copyright 2001 by Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals / American Humane Education Society, 350 South Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02130

IDEA HOT SHEET !

Adding an e-news Subscription Form to Your Home Paage

The email messaging system you select will provide HTML coding for the subscription form for your home page.

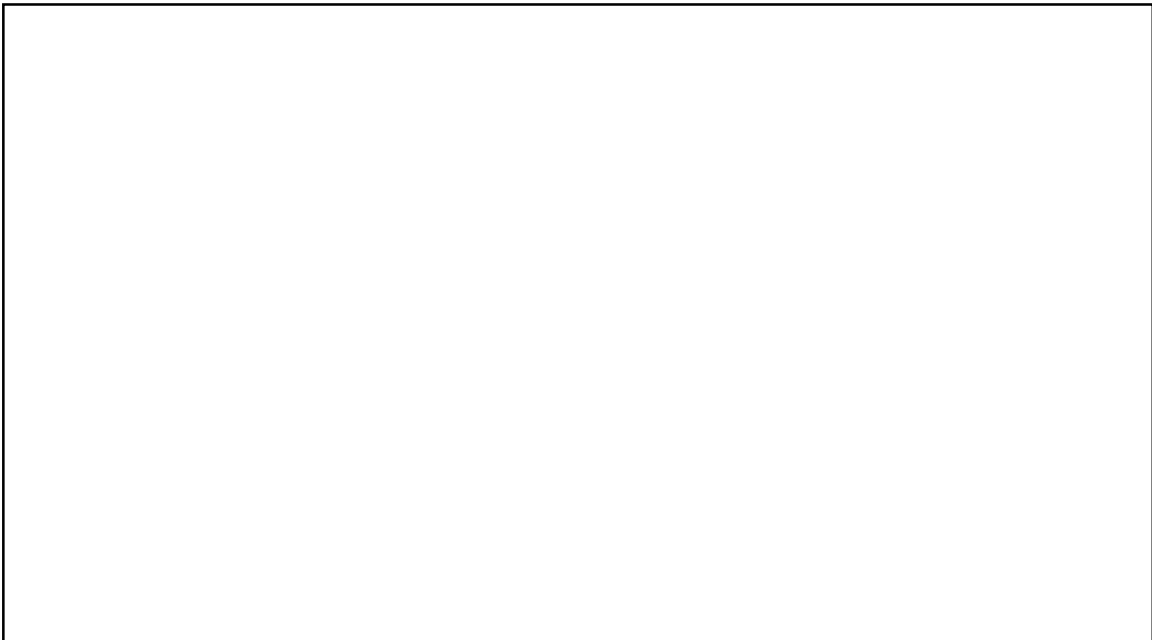
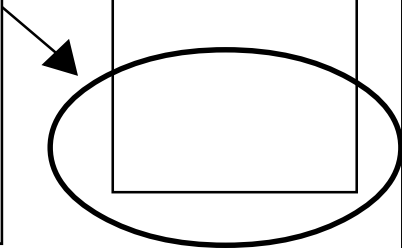
For example, once you've started your list at topica.com, you login to your "list manager" page and click on "HTML subscription page" under "About your list" in the left navigation. You are taken to the page (shown below) that contains the code for the subscription form. Cut and paste the code and paste it into the coding for your home page, or email it to your Web developer to do so. You can edit the topica logo, too.



This is the HTML code for Amazon Watch's e-news subscription form. It was copied from topica.com's site, then customized to match the look and feel of the rest of the site.

```

<FORM ACTION="http://www.topica.com/subscribe/amazonwatch_update"
METHOD="POST" TARGET="_blank" name="">
  <div align="center"><font size="2" face="Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif"
color="#CC6600"><b>Stay Informed!</b></font><b><font color="#CC6600"><font
style="font-size: 9pt" size="-1"></font></font><font style="font-size: 9pt" size="-1">
  <input type="text" size="14" name="email" value="enter email">
  <br>
  <input type="submit" value="Join list" name="submit">
  </font> </b></div>
</FORM>
    
```



IDEA HOT SHEET !

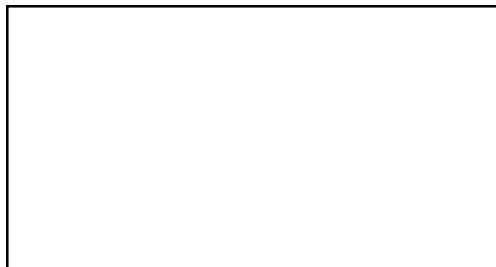
Premiums are Primo Online

Premiums are a great way to encourage people to sign up for your e-news. Here are some ideas on how to leverage a premium:

- Invite people to sign up for your e-news to be entered in a drawing for a gift certificate or other premium (see ideas below).
- Offer an inexpensive premium such as a decal or a bumper sticker just for signing up to receive your e-news. You'll need to also ask for their mailing address, which means you can cultivate them by mail too. But make sure you can handle the back-end fulfillment!
- Invite people to participate in an online poll and be entered in a drawing. When they answer the question, get their email address and tell them they'll be subscribed to get your e-news. Of course, you should give them the option of declining the e-news.
- Mail a postcard or include a buckslip in a mailing telling donors that if they subscribe to your e-newsletter their name will be entered in a drawing for a \$100 online gift certificate. Include a return-postage paid reply device in addition to letting them subscribe online.
- Tell your donors that if they forward your e-newsletter to 10 friends and copy you on the message you'll give them a tote bag or other item. Make sure

it's clear you won't do anything with the friends' email addresses unless they subscribe themselves (and make sure you have subscribe info in the e-news.)

- Possible premiums for a drawing:
 - an online gift certificate
 - t-shirts
 - your organization's print magazine or a subscription to your newsletter
 - a book or pamphlet published by your organization
 - a book or pamphlet with information about your cause
 - a white paper that can be downloaded from your site.



Do some brainstorming, evaluate what you already have in stock that can be used, or what would be most appropriate for and representative of your organization. Perhaps something from your online store? The American Red Cross of San Diego, for example, offers a chance to win a First Aid Kit. Of course, you have to be ready to fulfill! Remember, some premiums can be costly and a hassle. Factor that into your planning.



CHAPTER 4**Catching Donors in Your Web (Site)****In This Chapter:**

- **Content is the most important part of your site**
- **Content tips and tricks**
- **Give your visitors something to do**
- **Build community**
- **Ask. Ask. Ask.**
- **Developing your site... options, you got options**

Your web site and email are the cornerstones of your online fundraising program. A web site that provides valuable information and engages visitors will help ensure that visitors return to your site, tell their friends, and feel compelled to make a contribution. In Chapter 2 we made recommendations on specific donor-related information you should post on your site (success stories, a privacy statement, financial information). This chapter focuses on tips and tricks for developing an interactive, fresh, and dynamic web site, as well as information on setting up and evaluating your site.

Content is the most important part of your site

People come to your web site because they are looking for something – a phone number, services, news, action, etc. They want information. Give it to them. Here are ways to create content on your site that will help you meet the needs of your donors and your prospects.

Define your audience. Most organizations have several audiences – media, program participants, volunteers, activists, donors, community leaders, etc. Can each of your audiences find what they need on your site? It's useful to make a list of your audiences and what they seek on your site; then refer to the list often as you develop the site and update it. Remember to think from the outside-in, not from the inside-out.

Publishing offline content online. Each time you discuss producing a document for your organization – a report, a flyer, a newsletter, or an invitation – consider how it will translate on your web site. In some cases, you may post it word-for-word. In others, you'll edit it heavily.

Developing new content for the Web. Posting your offline content online isn't enough. For one thing, your print newsletter probably only comes out once a month, or once a quarter – your web site will need to feature more current news. Crisis information, photos, job announcements – you probably don't print and widely distribute items like these very often, but you can – and should – on the Web. How about posting photos of your recent event on your web site, then sending an email to your list with a link to the photos – and asking

people who couldn't come to make a gift?

Posting free content. You don't have to create all the content on your web site yourself – you can get some (free) from others. If you collaborate with other organizations, ask to repost their articles, and include a link to their web site. You can also take advantage of content found elsewhere on the Web. Using www.moreover.com, you can automatically post daily news updates on a variety of subjects for free.

Keeping content fresh. Take a look at your web site right now. Is the lead story about an event that happened three months ago? Have you changed the ask on your home page in the last month...or ever? It's hard to keep your whole site fresh, so select a few key pages (in addition to the home page) to change often. The pages you should change are the ones that people visit most frequently – your site statistics logs will tell you which – and the pages with dates and events on them. Change a few elements of those pages about once a week, and absolutely remove old events and dates. There's nothing worse than visiting a site with an old event featured prominently. About once a month, go through the site and select other pages to update and change.

Working with staff. Perhaps the most difficult part of keeping your site full of fresh content is getting your colleagues to produce it. Make it someone's job to keep people moving on this – and make sure that your executive director encourages and supports them. Invent a system or schedule for your colleagues to follow (this week, I write the tip...next week, it's your turn). Try using incentives (chocolate works great).

Writing and editing for the Web. It's true, writing for the Web is different. It's usually shorter. More casual. Funnier. Punchier. However, that doesn't mean it has poor grammar or punctuation, or is silly or rude. Take the same care with your online writing that you do with your offline writing. Keep

in mind that people don't generally "read" on a web site, so make sure that your key points are in short, easy-to-read, paragraphs and bullets. Then, make sure your longer documents are easily printable.

Other content tips and tricks

What kinds of content should you put on your site – and how? Here are some ideas:

- Don't put whole articles on the home page – post the first paragraph or two, then link to full article on another page to draw people further into your site
- Visuals, photos, maps, graphics, and cartoons help present information in a user-friendly format.
- A search function allows site visitors to find content quickly. (Try the Atomz Express Search tool – free at www.atomz.com.)
- Adobe Acrobat PDF files allow you to publish long-form content in its accurate, original form, but they are hard to read online. Post at least the executive summary in HTML so it's easy to read online.
- Put your contact info on every page as a page footer. Don't make people hunt for your phone number or your street address. (They also add credibility – this is a real organization.)
- Links to other Web sites show your knowledge of the field and allow you to be a portal to information your visitors want.
- Audio and video clips allow you to publish multimedia content, more popular now that broadband Internet connections are becoming more common
- Pop-up browser windows are amusing ways to get people's attention or keep them focused on a certain page – but use them sparingly. A pop-up browser window shouldn't appear every time your visitor clicks on a new page

- Calendars present event content in an easily understandable format.
- Consider translating some of your content into Spanish. Most organizations should at least include a Spanish-language summary of their work, linked from the home page.

Give your visitors something to do

The Web is an interactive medium. Your visitors are expecting you to give them something to do – and they’ll remember you, be more likely to tell people about you, and give to you if you make their visit meaningful, fun, or interesting. Many of the interactive devices listed below are available free or almost free on the Web. Check out www.freetools.com, www.freeindex.com, www.cgitools.net, www.mycomputer.com and www.bignosebird.com to get started.

Quizzes & polls. “What’s the largest living mammal? Guess in our free quiz!” or “Is the new Administration doing enough to ensure access to health care for the uninsured? Vote here!” People love to click buttons and check boxes. Quizzes and polls are an easy way to get visitors past your home page.

E-newsletters. Put a subscription box for your e-news prominently on your home page and on every page on your site. Keep the request short and sweet, “Sign up to receive our e-news!”

Tell-a-friend. Let your visitors spread the word about your great site. Place a link or button inviting visitors to tell their friends about your site or a particular campaign.

E-cards. An e-card is a digital greeting card. You may have received an email that said, “So-n-so sent you a greeting card! Click here to see it.” The link then leads back to a page with a greeting card image and personal message on it. More and more nonprofits are using e-cards to engage visitors on their sites and send messages about their cause

to prospects. They’re especially good for holidays and special campaigns. Adding e-cards to your site generally requires some programming knowledge, although some ASPs are beginning to add that function to their service package.

Advocacy. Email and fax action systems deliver advocacy tools for direct action. Some groups set-up their own action centers, and others take advantage of the various ASPs providing activist services. One tip to remember: sending email, while less effective, is generally free, while faxing usually costs more – but is usually more effective. Choose your methods accordingly. (See Chapter 7 for more on online advocacy.)

Build community

Using your web site to build community is appropriate for some organizations, but certainly not all. It looks bad to have a message board up with only a few old messages posted. Use these tools if your group is organizing around a hot issue, serves a particular niche (like people with a specific disease), or has a lot of volunteers who need to communicate with each other. Before you spend time developing any of these components, ask yourself who will be using the service? Why? How often? Is it just a few vocal people or does it really serve a broad range of constituents? And, importantly, who will monitor it? Once again, check out www.freetools.com, www.freeindex.com, www.cgitools.net, and www.bignosebird.com to get started.

Message boards. An online message board is like the bulletin board in the lobby of your building. It’s a place for your constituents to post useful information for each other. Often message boards are organized around specific topics (“child care,” “welfare-to-work moms,” “upcoming protests,” etc.). While they are often a one-way communication vehicle, many message boards are home to heated debates and long discussions about particular topics.

Chat rooms. Few nonprofits use chat rooms on their Web sites. They really only work if you have lots of people visiting your web site at one time for a specific, compelling reason. If you think your constituents are interested in online chat, it might work to promote an online chat “event” with an expert or high-profile member of your organization.

Members-only sections. There aren’t many reasons to have a members-only section, although many organizations seem to be interested in them. Perhaps you have content that is pretty unusual, particularly valuable or rather sensitive. If you’re set on having a “members-only” section, consider all the implications: your members will need a login and password to access it – how will you manage that? Will they keep track of their passwords? And what happens when members try to access it, don’t remember their passwords, and get frustrated? Adding a members-only section requires not only a good reason to have one, but a pretty sophisticated system to manage it.

Ask. Ask. Ask.

Don’t hesitate to ask for gifts or involvement on your site! Giving opportunities should be visible, easy, and compelling!

Donations. Remember the rule...make it easy! Make sure there is a clear, easy, one-click request on every page that will get your visitor to your donation processing page. See the Idea Hot Sheet on effective online giving pages at the end of this chapter.

Linking “asks” to page content. By now you know that saying “donate now” is NOT a solicitation, right? You have to make an appeal, and the way to do that online is by linking your asks to the content on the page. If you have a page about your services for kids, say “Help support better futures for these children. Click here to give.” It’s just

simple text – perhaps use a small, compelling graphic if you have one.

Planned Giving. More and more, major donors are checking Web sites before they make their stock transfer or bequest plans. Provide information about planned giving options and include an email form, contact name, and phone number for people who want to take the next steps. Consider including specific information on how to transfer stock or an online form where people can tell you of their interest in making a planned gift. Stelter.com and GiftLegacy.com are ASPs offering tools for integrating planned gift information into your site, including a planned gift calculator.

Volunteers. Running a successful volunteer program is hard work – use your web site to make the job easier by providing as much information as possible online. Provide clear, short volunteer job descriptions, and make them interesting – perhaps with some photos of volunteers at work. Let your volunteers know how organized you are by providing the right details – time commitment, orientation system, contact information, and a form for applying (the form will require some CGI knowledge, but is a pretty common item). The one thing your web site can’t do for you: follow-up – you still have to do that!

Developing your site ...options, you’ve got options

Evaluating and choosing an appropriate method for developing and maintaining your web site is one of the most important decisions you’ll make in your online fundraising work. Your choice will have significant staffing and cost implications. Many nonprofits find it works best to hire a Web developer to build a site and an internal Webmaster to handle the ongoing maintenance. Chances are, you’ve made a few mistakes already in this department, but that’s ok. Between tech-

HOT TIP !

Check out
www.volunteermatch.com
to connect with
volunteers!

nology innovations and your changing needs, you'll be re-doing your web site every couple of years. So, evaluate your options, select one (or a combination, more likely) and get going.

Outsourcing: Hiring a Web development firm (or sometimes a single freelancer) to develop your site is usually the best solution, since most organizations don't have the expertise to build a new site in-house. You'll need to develop a detailed RFP (Request for Proposal) that details what features and functionality you want. (Check out the resources at the end of the chapter for how to write an RFP). Be prepared to give copies of your materials to the firms submitting proposals – annual reports, direct mail, newsletters, etc. Review sites the firm has created and check references. Talk to people at those organizations about work style, communication, maintenance, problems, costs, and timeliness.

Web development costs vary dramatically. For a simple site, you may pay somewhere between \$5,000 and \$25,000. Be sure to find out all the costs in advance. Does the firm require that it host and maintain the site? How will you do updates? How much time do they budget for the various development stages – and how can they make sure you don't go over budget? Once you've hired a firm, be aware that you're both on a fixed timeline and project scope – and stick with it. That will save you money – and headaches, too. Also make sure you identify a point person to manage the project on your end.

The pro to hiring a Web development firm is that its staff has the skills and experience to build your site better and quicker than you could. And assuming you hire a good firm, you'll end up with a professional, appealing web site. Of course, the cons are similar to hiring a wrong person – you can easily waste time and money on the wrong firm.

Doing it in-house. These days, there are lots of Web savvy folks out there, and many nonprofits

have successfully hired a staff person who uses his/her own skills and the many free tools available on the Web to develop and maintain a good site. Often the Webmaster is also the main contact with an outsourced Web developer working on a new site or a full site redesign. The position requires a resourceful person filling the role, plus good supervision, clear priorities and deadlines.

The pros are that you'll have a staff person available all the time to

make quick changes and to keep the web site on the front burner, and the accumulated expertise stays in-house. The cons are that it's hard to find someone who has all the skills required – you'll need a budget to outsource some tasks – and once the site is completed she will only be using some of her skills to maintain the site. Of course, you can spend a great deal of time and money on the wrong person, and end up with a poor site. Use your best management ability to keep a tight rein on the tasks and their execution and be prepared to make tough decisions.

Working with ASPs. Application Service Providers (ASPs) let you “rent” complex programs running on their own computer servers; they often provide functionality that you could not afford to build yourself. The application generally runs on their site but is formatted to look as if it is your site, so when a visitor accesses the application, they likely don't notice that they've been taken off your site. Some ASPs provide one or two applications, others provide a comprehensive suite of applications that work together. The Groundspring.org DonateNow service is an example of a donation processing ASP.

Several ASPs like Convio and Virtual Sprockets are now providing content management systems as well as donation processing, email messaging, and event registration. The ASP designs the look and feel of the site and hosts it; you make changes to the site using a Web-based content management application. The application allows you to add new content to your site without knowing HTML, and

HOT TIP !

Download a great guide to many ASP services at www.compasspoint.org!

add features like surveys or calendars without knowing any programming.

The benefit to using ASPs is the ability to add sophisticated functions to your site without having the know-how in-house to produce or maintain them. The costs are generally reasonable as well. The cons are that ASPs are not custom solutions and may not be configured exactly the way you want. In addition, the industry is young and many ASPs (like other dot-coms) are going out of business. Back up your data frequently and have a “Plan B” in your pocket.

For a review of the many ASPs servicing nonprofits, go to www.compasspoint.org/enonprofit

Evaluating your site

After all your hard work building your site, you won’t get much of a chance to relax. Evaluating your site is central to the ongoing evolution of your site. You have several important evaluation tools available – use them! And make changes based on your analysis.

Traffic statistics. Access logs are a record of which page on your web site has just been viewed, and at what time. With this data you can learn which are the most popular pages on your site, which are least popular, where people enter your site, where they leave, what time of the day or week people visit, and much more. This type of information is critical to understanding usage patterns of your Web content. If several parts of your web site get little or no traffic, you should consider removing them or reorganizing them. If you’re putting huge amounts of staff time into maintaining parts of your web site, you should see a return on your investment; if not, reevaluate your strategy and priorities. Your web site access logs are a poll of your readers, so listen up and understand what they want!

If you’re not already getting access logs for your web site, contact your Internet provider that is hosting your site and ask them to help you. If they

don’t offer logs or aren’t helpful, consider finding another Internet provider that understands your needs. Some Internet providers can provide you with the software to analyze the data, others will only offer the raw log files, and then it’s up to you to purchase the software and do the analysis on your own. (WebTrends is one traffic analysis software package that’s widely used – www.webtrends.com).

Inviting feedback. Your web site should have contact information on every page, including a phone number. Make sure there is a clickable link for feedback to the Webmaster. Often, if a visitor is frustrated because they can’t find something or they’re simply impressed by your fine work, they’ll click and let you know.

You can also use short surveys on the site for feedback (plus, it’s a way to collect email addresses too). Resist the urge to place a long survey on the site. Just ask a few pertinent questions instead (“Did you find what you wanted on our site today?” “What else would you like to see on the site?”). Offer an incentive to complete the survey – one of our clients uses bumper stickers. Fewer people will complete a survey, but they’re the people who have something to say.

Gather up the comments from your email or survey regularly and look for trends. Is everyone complaining that they can’t buy your t-shirts online? That tells you what your next feature ought to be.

Usability testing. Usability testing helps you understand how people use your site and what problems they have. If possible, do some testing as you develop your site, then 6 to 12 months later. You can hire a specialized firm to do this testing, or set it up yourself. Read more at Jakob Nielsen’s www.useit.com, or in his and Marie Taher’s book, [Homepage Usability: 50 Websites Deconstructed](#).

Resources for Web Site Development

Free polls, surveys, message boards, cgi scripts, etc.

hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey

www.freetools.com/

www.freeindex.com

www.cgitools.net

www.bignosebird.com/

www.mycomputer.com

www.zoomerang.com

www.SurveySolutions.com

www.SurveySaid.com

www.Cahoots.com

Newsfeeds:

www.moreover.com

ASP information:

www.compasspoint.org/enonprofit

www.nonprofitmatrix.com

Web site planning & development:

www.makingthenetwork.org/toolbox/tools/webguide.htm

www.onenw.org/toolkit/webdesign/

Event registration tools:

www.eRSVP.com

www.acteva.com

Books:

Homepage Usability: 50 Websites Deconstructed

by Jakob Nielsen & Marie Tahir
New Riders Publishing, 2002

Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity

by Jakob Nielsen
New Riders Publishing, 1999

Web Design in a Nutshell: A Desktop Quick Reference

by Jennifer Niederst, Richard Koman (Editor)
O'Reilly & Associates, 1998

Collaborative Web Development: Strategies and Best Practices for Web Teams

by Jessica R. Burdman
Addison-Wesley Pub Co, 1999

Customer-Effective Web Sites

by Jodie Dalglish
Prentice Hall PTR, 2000

Web ReDesign: Workflow that Works

By Kelly Goto & Emily Cotler
New Riders Publishing, 2002

Designing Web Graphics.3

by Linda Weinman
New Riders Publishing, 1999

Writing for the Web

by Crawford Kilian
Self Counsel Press, 2000

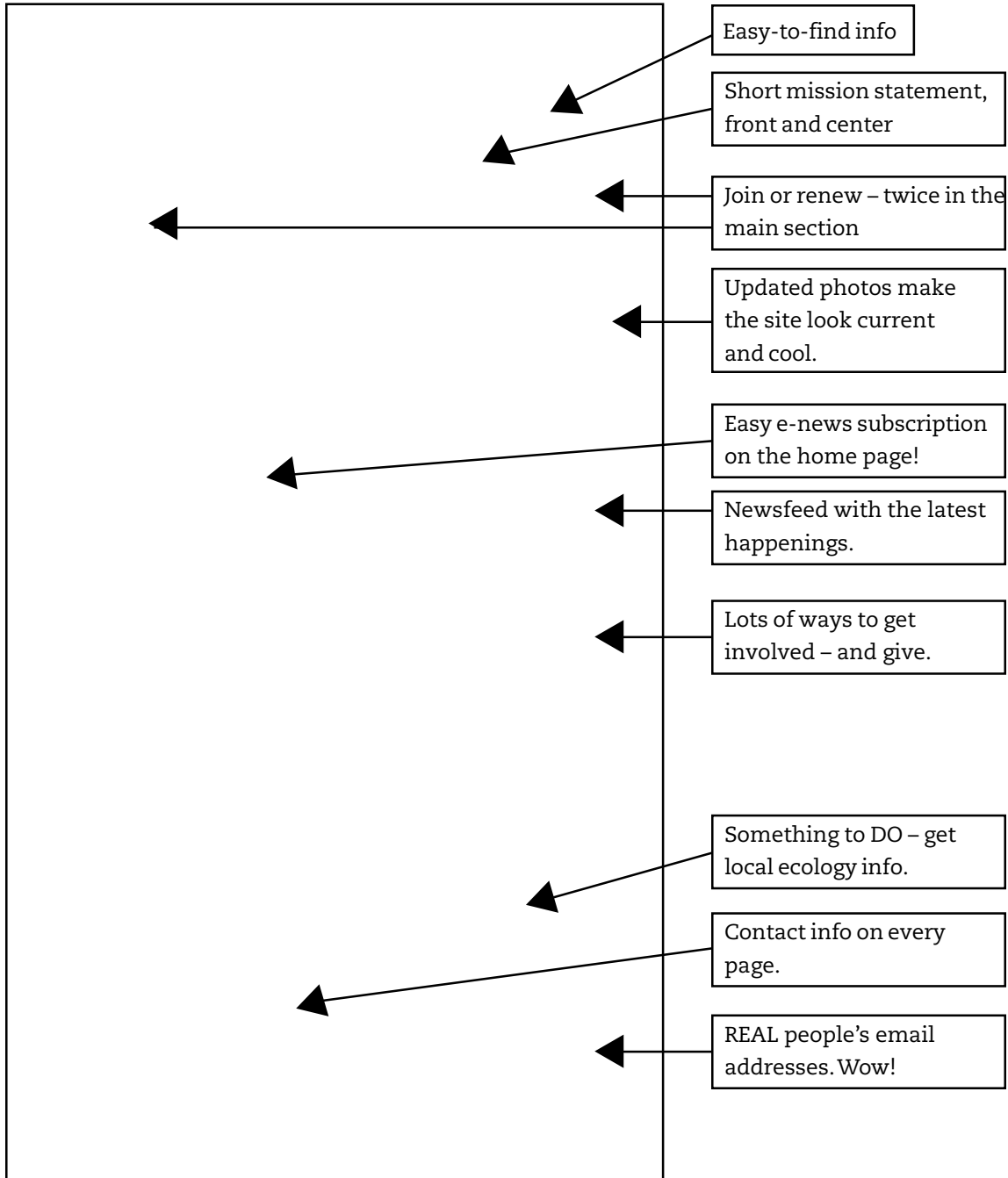
Wired Style: Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age

by Constance Hale (Editor), Jessie Scanlon, Hale Scanlon
Broadway Books, 1999

CASE STUDY

The Surfrider Foundation (www.surfrider.org) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting oceans, waves and beaches. They've been online since 1995 and have an active online community (surfers tend to be young guys, who tend to be online). They are a great example of how small and medium sized organizations can use Web sites to serve constituents and reach new donors.

The Surfrider site is not a slick, fancy design. It's simple, and not particularly attractive but full of content. Their site represents good "thinking from the outside in."



**CASE
STUDY**

The evolution of the Surfrider site is fairly typical. The site was developed and nurtured by a few resourceful people who were given the trust and support they needed to invest in it. Even now, the work is driven primarily by one person who motivates the others to keep it going. Of course, it's easier to keep people motivated when they like the results – and Surfrider staff report that the site has had a huge, positive impact on their work. In 2001, they got good traffic (about 150,000 user

sessions per month) and people sent a lot of complimentary emails. But how about the money? While Surfrider didn't keep detailed stats on their online fundraising; at the time of this writing, as of spring 2001, over 5,300 members had signed up or renewed online. At the minimum \$25 gift level, that's \$132,500, although a few donations have come in at the \$1,000 lifetime membership level! The site is Surfrider's #1 source of memberships – and memberships are the #1 source of revenue for Surfrider.

IDEA HOT SHEET !

10 Best Practices for Your Web Site

- 1) Content is key.
- 2) Keep your site up-to-date.
- 3) Collect email addresses.
- 4) Give visitors reasons to return.
- 5) Think from the outside-in, not inside-out.
- 6) Involve the user.
- 7) Make it easy...to find, to act, to give.
- 8) Ask for gifts. Link asks to the page content.
- 9) Develop and post a privacy statement.
- 10) Build your back-end for acknowledging and responding to incoming email, online gifts, actions taken on your site, etc.

IDEA HOT SHEET !**Effective Online Giving Pages**

Here are some tips on creating giving pages that are easy to use so donor won't abandon the giving process after deciding to make that gift:

- Don't ask for more information than you need, and don't distract the user with too many options.
- Minimize the number of clicks needed to complete the donation process. For example, the Groundspring.org DonateNow service asks for all of the donor information on one page.
- Match the look and feel of your site as much as possible for a better user experience. If customization is not an option, open the giving page in a pop-up window.
- Include an opt-in check box for receiving your e-newsletter.
- Show that your site is secure. The Groundspring.org DonateNow giving pages include a link to information about the security of the site, as do most of the ASPs processing donations for nonprofits.
- Give options for donating by phone, fax, or mail. Include a link to a printable form. Some people are still reluctant to give online.
- Include a brief sentence or two at the top of the page that reinforces why people should give. If you have multiple appeals, the text could be appeal-specific. Make sure it's brief, but include a link to more information or member benefits for those who need it.
- Thank the donor on the transaction verification page and send an automatic email acknowledgment. Include in the email acknowledgment a link to your web site. The more you can customize the acknowledgment the better.
- Send a mail acknowledgment, too.
- Don't send a visitor to what's clearly another site to make a donation to your organization.

HOT TIP !

A secure site's Web address will be "https:" rather than "http:" More and more people are savvy enough to recognize this is the sign of a secure server. If your site uses frames, the "https:" may get hidden.

If you must (i.e., if you're using a free donation service like helping.org), link directly to your own giving form and open the form in a pop-up window. Don't send the user to a page where they have to search for your organization.

IDEA HOT SHEET !

Online Donation Processing Options

Unless you expect to process a significant number of gifts online (say, over \$5,000 a month), it's probably not worth setting up your own secure giving system. Groundspring.org is one of several Application Service Providers (ASPs) offering quality online donation processing. As with email messaging, there is a wide range of services out there, from free and simple to more expensive and sophisticated. Most charge a set-up fee plus a small percentage of each gift. You'll have to research the one that best fits your needs.

At a minimum, your donation processing ASP should:

- Give you your own giving page customized with your own logo and language.
- Process your gifts in real-time on a secure server.
- Generate an email acknowledgment.
- Transfer the money to you on a regular basis (or deposit it directly into your Visa/Mastercard Internet merchant account).
- Provide you with real-time Web access to all of your donor information.

These are the bells and whistles that you should consider:

- Can you make the giving page match the look and feel of your site so the visitor doesn't feel she's leaving yours?
- How simple is the giving process for the donor? (The simpler the better!)
- Does the giving page invite the donor to opt-in to your email list?
- To what degree can you control the content on the giving page, the acknowledgment screen, and the acknowledgment email?
- Can you choose the suggested donation amounts?
- Can you change or update the page on your own?

- Does the system have memorial, honorary and monthly gift options?
- Can you set up more than one giving page (i.e., for regular gifts, renewals, campaigns, special appeals)? If so, can you create the new pages "on the fly" yourself, or does the company build each page for you? Is the data for different pages consolidated and coded?
- Are there distracting, irrelevant links on the giving page?
- Will you need a Visa/Mastercard Internet merchant account? (The main benefit to having one is that the money goes straight into your account and the donor's credit card statement has your organization's name, not the vendor's. But they can be costly and time-consuming, so most vendors offer theirs.)
- What does the donor's credit card statement read?
- Will the system send you an email alert when a gift is made?
- If not deposited directly into your own Internet Merchant Account, how is the money transferred to you and with what frequency?
- Is it easy to download the donor information for import into your existing donor database?

In addition to the service offered, you should also give very careful consideration to how stable the vendor is. Find out how many other clients they have, talk with their existing clients about the quality of service. Is the vendor charging enough money to stay in business?

We have worked with ASPs including LocalVoice, Convio, Charity Web, Groundspring.org, and GetActive.

CHAPTER 5**Working with the Groundspring.org (formerly eGrants.org) DonateNow and EmailNow Services****In This Chapter:**

- **How does the DonateNow service work for your donors?**
- **How does the DonateNow service work for your organization?**
- **Getting your DonateNow button**
- **How does the EmailNow service work for your donors?**
- **How does the EmailNow service work for your organization?**
- **Getting your EmailNow service**

If you are a nonprofit with your own web site, Groundspring.org can help you reach a new generation of online donors by putting a DonateNow button on your site and giving you the capacity to connect with your donors using the EmailNow service. Groundspring.org offers:

- Customized donation pages and real-time donation processing
- Email messaging tools that let you communicate with supporters and raise money online
- 24-hour access to your online DonateNow and/or EmailNow accounts

How does the DonateNow service work for your donors?

- A donor visits your web site and clicks on your DonateNow button or a donation link in your site navigation. (Groundspring.org provides you with a variety of button colors and sizes, or you can create your own).
- The donor arrives at your donation page, housed on the Groundspring.org secure Web server. This donation form is branded with your logo and language. And if you choose our Custom Service, we'll make the page match the exact look-and-feel of your own web site. Additionally, you have control over all of the various donation options available to your donor on the donation page.
- The donor enters and submits donation information.
- The donation is processed in real-time so the donor is notified immediately if the transaction fails due to an incorrect credit card number, insufficient funds, etc. The donor can then correct the problem and try again.
- After a successful donation, the donor is provided with an on-screen receipt and thank you message (written by you).
- At no point during the donation is the donor distracted with links to other organizations or information about other giving opportunities (as she might be at a charity portal site).
- Because Groundspring.org is a 501(c)(3) organization and the donation is technically made to us, we send an instant email to the donor that serves as the official receipt for tax purposes.

This email also thanks the donor for their contribution and includes your thank you message.

- The donor is returned to your web site after completing the donation.

How does the DonateNow service work for your organization?

- With your Account ID and password, you can access your account information from the “My Account” section of the Groundspring.org web site at any time (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).
- This secure password-protected section provides you with a detailed breakdown of your donations and Groundspring.org’s payments to you. (Donations are posted to the log nightly).
- You can download your donor information (name, email, address, etc.) into an Excel spreadsheet for integration into your donor database. We recommend that you send donors a mail acknowledgement in addition to the automatic email acknowledgement they receive.
- From the “My Account” section, you can also change any of your account information (donation options, thank you message, button color, etc.) at any time. All of these changes take effect in real-time.
- Anytime someone makes a donation to your organization, we’ll send you an instant donation notification email, complete with the details of the donor’s gift.
- At the end of each month, Groundspring.org will send your organization a single check for the aggregate amount of your monthly donations (if you haven’t received \$50 in donations, we’ll send a check at the end of the quarter) as well as a print out of all your donor information.

Getting your DonateNow Button

STEP 1: Complete the online application. This is located in the “Tools” section of the Groundspring.org web site, under “Donate Now”.

STEP 2: Mail your 501(c)(3) letter and an annual report (or other promotional materials) to the Groundspring.org office (PO Box 29256, San Francisco CA 94129-0256).

Groundspring.org will notify you by email when we have processed your application. We’ll also send you a welcome packet that includes our “Online Donation Agreement” for your signature.

STEP 3: Complete the Donation Page Setup. This can be accessed via the “My Account” section of the Groundspring.org web site using your account ID and password.

STEP 4: Mail a signed copy of the “Online Donation Agreement” to the Groundspring.org office (PO Box 29256, San Francisco CA 94129-0256).

After reviewing your Donation Page Setup and receiving your signed agreement, Groundspring.org will notify you by email that your account has been activated.

STEP 5: Return to the “My Account” section of the Groundspring.org web site, select your DonateNow button, and receive your HTML code.

STEP 6: Have your Webmaster paste the HTML code into the appropriate page(s) on your web site and begin accepting online donations!

How does the EmailNow service work for your donors?

- A donor or other interested individual visits your web site and wants to stay informed about the work that you're doing. Your web site explains that they can sign up to receive email updates from your organization on a regular basis. Your privacy policy explains that you're collecting their email address for the sole purpose of sending them email updates about your organization. Email updates can contain any kind of content, such as news, articles, opinions, events announcements, fundraising appeals or any other application information.
- Once they enter their email address and name on your site, this information is submitted and stored by Groundspring.org for your use. By submitting their email address they are giving your organization permission (also called opt-in) to send them email updates.
- Groundspring.org stores this information on its secure web servers.
- When donors and individuals receive the email updates sent by your organization through EmailNow, information will be automatically appended to the bottom of each message that explains how the recipient can unsubscribe (opt-out) from receiving the updates. The EmailNow system manages this information.

How does the EmailNow service work for your organization?

- When a donor or individual signs up for one of your lists, their email address and name is automatically added to your EmailNow list on the Groundspring.org secure web server.
- With your Account ID and password, you can access your account information from the "My Account" section of the Groundspring.org web site at any time (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).
- This secure password-protected section provides you with all the tools to manage your EmailNow lists. You can create a new message to send to your lists (or a list subset), run reports to find out the statistics on a message you've already sent, and change your settings for any of your lists.
- You can create a new message to send to your lists at any time. You get to decide who should receive the message, what the subject line should be, what the content of the message should contain, whether to send the message in plain text and/or HTML format, and when the message should be sent. You can cut and paste the actual message content from another software application such as Microsoft Word. If your email message contains hypertext links to web pages, you can decide to track the number of people who click on those links. You can send a test version of the message to yourself or other people on your staff to make sure the content and formatting are correct.
- You can run reports at any time to find out the statistics on messages you've sent and you can find out how many messages were delivered to their addressee, and how many messages bounced. If your email message contained hypertext links to web pages, and you decide at the time of sending to track the number of people who click on those links, you can view a report of which links were clicked and how often.
- If your organization uses both the Groundspring.org DonateNow and EmailNow service, you can track the number of online gifts that were generated as a result of that email message being sent to subscribers.

Getting your EmailNow Service

- STEP 1:** Complete the online application. This is located in the “Tools” section of the Groundspring.org web site under “EmailNow”. Make sure to fill out the appropriate payment information.
- STEP 2:** Groundspring.org will notify you by email when we have processed your application and when your EmailNow service is set up. We will email you your Account ID and password.
- STEP 3:** Complete your EmailNow list setup. Using you Account ID and password, this can be accessed via the “My Account” section of the Groundspring.org web site. You can now proceed to finalize the set up of a list, conduct a mailing, or receive your HTML code if you plan to put a signup form on your web site.
- STEP 4:** Have your Webmaestro past the HTML code into the appropriate page(s) on your web site!

IDEA HOT SHEET !

Tips for Using DonateNow

- Once you've signed up for the DonateNow service, think about how you'll integrate it into your site. Don't just throw a DonateNow button onto your home page without any context. You may want to explain somewhere on your site that you've partnered with Groundspring.org to gain online donation capabilities.
- Link your donation page from various places throughout your site – not just from a DonateNow button on your home page. Link it from your navigation bar, special appeals throughout your site, or asks incorporated into your copy.
- When you download the reports they will be in a zipped format. You'll need to unzip them using a program like WinZip, which you can download at www.winzip.com.
- Getting the HTML code for your DonateNow button. You can literally cut and paste this code into an email as text and send it to your Webmaster to add to your site.

Setting up your Donation Page

- Making your pitch. Your "Introductory Statement" should be 2-3 short sentences about why a donor's gift will make a difference. The donor has already clicked there to make a gift. There's no need to go into great detail about your organization, mission, and programs.
- Donation amount options. Consider your donor base when determining your donation amounts, but remember that average gifts are generally higher online. You may want to test different gift strings (since you can easily edit them), perhaps starting with \$35, \$50, \$100, \$500, \$1,000, and Other.
- Anonymous donation option. Unless your cause is a particularly controversial one, you probably don't want to allow for anonymous donations. If someone chooses to be anonymous online, you lose the chance of communicating with him or her in the future because Groundspring.org will not give you their contact information.

For more information about the Groundspring.org DonateNow service, go to www.groundspring.org and click on "DonateNow"

IDEA HOT SHEET !

Tips for Using EmailNow

- Create an eNewsletter to send regularly to your donors or supporters. Assemble engaging and useful information such as news, announcements and events. Create a header and footer to your eNewsletter that identifies your nonprofit agency and tells readers how to contact you for more information. Make sure you put hypertext links in your eNewsletter that link to appropriate sections of your web site, or to other web sites. Start sending your eNewsletter quarterly.
- Collect email addresses so you can build your eNewsletter list. You can:
 - o Put a signup tool on all the pages of your web site.
 - o Ask your staff to find email addresses from people they work with regularly.
 - o Have a signup sheet and collect business cards at conferences and add their email addresses.
 - o Ask your Board members to collect email addresses.
- Create seasonal email fundraising appeals. Coordinate them with your other fundraising events and campaigns. At the top of your email appeal, make your pitch for support, and then explain how people can give. If you use the Groundspring.org DonateNow service (or another online donation tool), put a hypertext link in your eNewsletter so people can click to donate easily.
- Groundspring.org's two services – DonateNow and EmailNow – are designed to work together. You can track the success of an email fundraising appeal by using the reporting tools built into EmailNow. When you view your EmailNow reports, it will show how many gifts were received as a result of an email fundraising campaign.
- Put an EmailNow signup form on the appropriate pages of your web site. Why not put the signup on ALL your web pages! Get the HTML code for your EmailNow signup form. You can cut and paste this code from your "My Account" section on the Groundspring.org web site and have your webmaster add it to your site.
- Create a weekly news service with EmailNow. You can collect interesting links to news article on the web. Then assemble them together once a week and send the headline plus the hypertext links to subscribers of your EmailNow list.

For more information about the Groundspring.org EmailNow service, go to www.groundspring.org and click on "EmailNow"

IDEA HOT SHEET !

Why Groundspring.org for Donation Processing?

There are many other online donation processors. Here's why Groundspring.org is the best service available:

1. We're a nonprofit – like you.

Groundspring.org is a nonprofit and as such, we understand the needs of your organization. We are dedicated to developing Internet-based solutions that support people and organizations working to create a healthy society and a sustainable environment.

2. We're here to stay.

As part of the Tides family of organizations, Groundspring.org is here to stay. We share the Tides Foundation's mission and 25 years of experience in social change philanthropy. No other online donation service can claim such commitment and expertise.

3. Our mission: help nonprofits – not profit from them.

Unlike other Internet services, our mission is not to make a profit – but to help you increase donations to your organization.

4. Competitive fees.

Groundspring.org does NOT charge a monthly fee for processing donations and takes only a small percentage fee in addition to credit card costs to cover administrative and technical costs.

5. Banking and state charitable registration requirements.

Unlike other providers, Groundspring.org takes care of charitable registration requirements throughout the U.S. and sets up merchant banking systems to process your donations – so you don't have to.

6. Customized donation pages.

Groundspring.org customizes your donation pages and thank you note so they contain your logo and language – your look and feel, not ours.

7. Donors stay with your site.

With Groundspring.org, donors go to YOUR clear, easy and customized donation page on our secure server and are then immediately returned to your web site. There are NO advertisements, links or other giving options on your donation page.

8. Donor information will never be traded or sold by Groundspring.org.

Period. As a nonprofit we are not in the business of selling or trading our data – now or ever.

CHAPTER 6**Driving Traffic to Your Site****In This Chapter:**

- **Publicizing your web site address**
- **Search engines and Web directories**
- **Links from local Web sites and portals**
- **Using email**
- **Viral marketing**
- **Newsgroups and Listservs**
- **Creating word of mouth**
- **Take advantage of holidays or special events**
- **Evaluating traffic on your site**
- **Resources for increasing traffic**
- **Case Study: Driving Traffic to StopTheWar.com**

Unfortunately, “Build it and they will come” doesn’t refer to Web sites. Even if you’ve built a rich, interactive site, the reality is that you have to work to drive traffic to your web site. This chapter covers the most effective techniques for doing just that using a combination of search engine listings, links to Web portals, email outreach, ad banners and holiday promotions.

Publicizing your web site address

The most basic thing you can do to draw traffic to your site is to include your Web address in all of your printed materials – your letterhead, business cards, newsletters, annual report, and direct mail. Whenever possible, try not to just list your web site address. Take full advantage of your existing communications by including an article or advertisement that highlights what’s available on your site – or what’s new. Or add some contextual information so that people will understand the value that your web site adds. For example, on a flyer that advertises an upcoming speaker, don’t just say “Visit our web site,” but instead say: “Visit our web site for a complete biography of Jorge Jimenez and a complete bibliography of his written works.”

Consider giving people incentives to go to your web site. For example, tell them they can register there for a drawing, or you can pose a question in your newsletter and tell them to log on to your site for the answer. It also makes sense to send a press release to on- and off-line media when you change your site significantly or add a new feature. They may write a sentence or two about your site, or they may simply make note of your Web address for future reference.

Search engines and Web directories

Millions of Web surfers use search engines and Web directories as starting points to find content that they’re looking for. Whether they’re entering a keyword like “environment” or “save the earth” into a Web search engine such as Google, or brows-

ing listings in a Web directory such as Yahoo!, people are constantly looking for things on the Web. Many nonprofits report from their data analyses that over a third of all daily traffic comes via a search engine or Web directory listing.

Getting listed with Web directories is straightforward, because they are set up to accept listing submissions from people and organizations that are launching sites. To get listed visit these Web directories and follow the instructions on their home page:

- **Yahoo** –
<http://www.yahoo.com/info/suggest/>
- **Hotbot** –
<http://www.hotbot.com/addurl.asp>
- **AltaVista** –
<http://altavista.digital.com/av/content/addurl.htm>
- **Excite** –
http://www.excite.com/info/add_url/
- **Google** –
<http://www.google.com/>
- **Lycos** –
<http://www.lycos.com/addasite.html>
- **Northern Light** –
http://www.northernlight.com/docs/regurl_help.html
- **Starting Point** –
<http://www.stpt.com/submit/submit.asp>

Revisit all these Web directories and update your listing twice a year or when you do a major overhaul of your site. That way you can either improve the listing description or identify new listing categories that you fit into.

In case you're wondering, Google – one of the most popular search engines – is not a Web directory, so it's not in this list. It's a search engine, which is covered in the next section.

Getting listed with search engines is far more challenging, because these Web sites don't accept listing submissions. Instead, they've built highly sophisticated software robots called "spiders" that surf the Web constantly, looking for new and updated content to add to their search databases.

Getting top listings is hard for several reasons. If someone searches for "pollution" or "hunger," they are going to find tens of thousands of pages dealing with these terms. It's unlikely your site – in Dallas or Des Moines or New York – is going to be in the first page of listings, especially because there are probably dozens or hundreds of other sites with more information on these topics than yours. In addition, some commercial sites may be paying to be listed more prominently.

To get listed appropriately with a search engine, you must install **meta tags** on all the Web pages of

your site. Meta tags are keywords and short descriptions of your content that are coded into your page and not visible to the naked eye. (To view meta tags on a specific Web page, open the page in your browser, select View/Source in Internet Explorer or View/Page Source in Netscape.)

Meta tags will help you maximize your search engine placement and assure that people can find you using keywords that match the content of your web site. You'll want to create and maintain a list of meta tag keywords that covers all the issues that you work on.

Meta tags need to be installed in the html header coding for your Home Page. Here's an example of how that coding looks for the National Council of La Raza, an organization working to improve life opportunities for Hispanic Americans:

HOT TIP !

Web directory registration is a great task for a volunteer.

```
<head>
<title>NCLR - making a difference for Hispanic Americans</title>
<meta name="DESCRIPTION" content="Making a difference for
Hispanic Americans by fighting poverty, reducing discrimination, and
improving opportunities through commu-
nity partnerships, advocacy and policy
analysis.">
<meta name="KEYWORDS"
content="Hispanic Americans, Latino
Americans, Hispanic Organizations,
Latino Organizations, Hispanic education,
Latino communities, immigration, guest
workers">
</head>
```

You'll notice how they use a number of variants of Hispanic/Latino in the Keywords. They're trying to anticipate all the keywords that people will type into search engines when looking for content. Have a brainstorming session in your office to come up with a complete list of keywords for your meta tags. Try to be as concise as possible. Also don't hesitate to review and update your meta tag keywords several times a year to make sure that you're covering all your issues.

"Spiders" analyze the content of your meta description for keywords, but the meta description is also the description that appears on the search result placement page. Without a meta description, the search engine usually displays the first few sentences of content it finds on your site, which often is not terribly descriptive.

The <title> tag in the header is not technically a "meta tag" as it stipulates the content that is displayed in the browser header for your page. However, search engines do analyze the keywords there, so you want to make sure it is as descriptive as possible.

Of course, you want to be on the first page of search results. This is a challenging task, at best. Our recommendation is that you regularly update your Web directory listings and your meta tags, and don't agonize about search result placement. Your real challenge is not merely to bring new traffic to

your web site, but encouraging visitors to return again and again. Also, you can take advantage of many other marketing opportunities, which we discuss below.

HOT TIP !

Look at the meta tags on other like-minded sites (or your competitors!) to get ideas for your own meta tags. Open the page in your browser, select View/Source in Internet Explorer or View/Page Source in Netscape to view the source code, then look for the meta keyword tag ("`<meta name="KEYWORDS" ...`").

Search engine registration

services: An alternative to personally visiting the leading search engines and Web directories is to use a service that offers registration for a fee. You may have gotten email solicitations from these companies, which offer to register your web site with hundreds of search engines and Web directories for about \$50. (If you want to check one of these services out, visit Microsoft's Submit-It service at [http://](http://www.submit-it.com/)

www.submit-it.com/.) Our experience has shown that these services rarely benefit nonprofit organizations, because they're designed for businesses selling specific products or services. They're rarely capable of handling charities and advocacy groups and we think you'll be more successful (and end up more informed) if you do the registration yourself.

Paid keywords: Most search engines and Web directories let businesses place display advertising that is tied to keyword search results. For example, if you buy the keyword "rainforest," your ad about rainforest conservation would display on the results page when somebody searches for "rainforest." This is an effective way to purchase highly-targeted advertising. Of course, many keywords have already been purchased. Pricing is based on how and where your advertising is placed on a search results page and on how many users click on your ad over time. To learn more, visit the search engines and Web directories we mention above and look for the "Advertise With Us" link somewhere on their page. You might want to test buying keywords, but don't expect it to be a significant marketing tool.

By way of example, consider Google's AdWords service (<http://www.google.com/>). Google places your ad on the right side of the screen on the search results page when your keywords are used by the searcher. With popular keywords, there are multiple ads that are displayed, with the pricier ones at the top of the page, going downwards. With cost-per-click (CPC) pricing, you pay only when a customer clicks on your ad, regardless of how many times it's shown. Minimum CPC's start at 5 cents and vary by keyword. You can't predict how many people will see your ad, but when the per thousand rate that you've paid for has been reached, you can opt to pay more to keep running your ad.

Link Popularity: Some search engines and directories are using the number of links to your site from other sites as a way to gauge how important or useful your site is and to rank it accordingly. Once you've spent some time marketing your web site with search engines and Web directories, there are some great online tools that will tell you how well you're linked. A free service at www.linkpopularity.com lets you enter the address of your web site, and shows you how AltaVista, InfoSeek and HotBot have your Web address listed in their databases. This is a useful tool to identify how popular you are on the Web. Over time, it will help you gauge the effectiveness of your marketing efforts. Another variant on this service is to use the AltaVista web site to look up specific Web pages on your site, not just the home page. The syntax for a search that you would type into the Alta Vista search box would be: "+link:www.myorganization.org/mypage.html" and it will show you sites linked to that page. This is a useful tool to identify Web sites that are linking to your content. (Google's Advanced Search also offers this service.)

Analyzing your search engine rankings: You can use software programs like WebPosition (www.webpositiongold.com) to analyze how your web site is currently ranked among the search engines. The software gives you a report of your actual rankings and analyzes your meta tags, keyword count, keyword content, and more to make recommendations on how you can alter your pages to improve your rankings. You have to make a decision about which recommendations to heed, and it can get complicated because the recommendations may vary based on which search engine you are trying to maximize for. But it's not a bad idea to do this analysis and get some ideas for overall improvements.

Links from local Web sites and portals

While you can expect to get up to a third of your web site traffic from search engines, the other key traffic source is from links from other local Web sites and portals. As people surf the Web, they often bounce from one web site to another looking for information, and use links between sites to move around. Getting these links placed is an important effort worth your time. Local Web sites are operated by your city or region, a local newspaper, TV or radio station, or a local institution like a museum or a foundation. In the San Francisco Bay Area, typical portals are:

• **SF Gate**, operated by the San Francisco Chronicle newspaper and a local TV station: <http://sfgate.com>

• **CitySearch:** <http://Bayarea.citysearch.com>

• **San Francisco Bay Guardian:** <http://www.sfbg.com>

• **SF Weekly:** <http://www.sfweekly.com>

HOT TIP !

Go to www.SearchEngineWatch.com to learn everything there is to know about search engine technology and techniques for improving your rankings. Beware how deep you dig – the world of search engines is complex.

• **BayArea.com:**

<http://www.bayarea.com>

You may already have some obvious sites in mind, or you may have to do a little research to track them down. Once you've identified these local Web sites, approach them with an email or a phone call and request a link. Use your charitable mission as your calling card to appeal for a prominent link. Whenever possible, make your request contextual to an event, a holiday or an issue. Maybe you're promoting an advocacy campaign that could be linked from the web site of a local TV station or alternative weekly newspaper.

When contacting other sites about a link, you should be prepared to respond to a request that you in turn place a link to their site on yours. You'll have to make the decision about which and how many other organizations you want to promote on your site. Many organizations develop a simple page of links to other organizations, or you could take the time to annotate those links, providing useful information to your site visitor. They just may find that link page to be quite helpful and return to it often on their way to other sites.

You can also request links from the sites of companies with whom you have a relationship. Maybe one of your staff has a spouse or friend that works at a company that would be willing to list your site on their public web site or on their private corporate Intranet. Many organizations have business relationships with vendors and companies that may be willing to place links, particularly for a fundraising effort.

Placing banner ads: Banner ads are another option. While banner ads are in decline, and often garner "click-through" rates of less than one-half of one percent, they can still be useful, especially when you get them free. Create several basic banner ads that you can use when soliciting links to your web site. Some Web sites won't mind placing your banner ad, while others will have policies against it. Some will offer to place ads for free, oth-

ers for a fee. It never hurts to request the rates for placing banner ads, so you can get an idea of what it would cost. Create banner ads in several of the standard sizes (below) to accommodate a variety of needs. If you have a good chance for free placement, you may also want to create special banners for holidays or special events.

Banner ad options have changed dramatically as Web users have become inured to the typical looping rectangle and square styles. Now, banners are likely to race across your entire screen or comprise fully half of a Web page as advertisers become more creative. Typical sizes include:

- Banner, 468 pixels wide by 60 pixels tall
- Box, 120 pixels wide by 90 pixels tall
- Skyscraper, 120 pixels wide by 600 pixels tall
- Messaging unit, 300 pixels wide by 250 pixels tall
- Vertical banner, 120 pixels wide by 240 pixels tall

For more details about banner ad sizes you can go to: <http://adreporting.lycos.com/specs.html>

Using email

We've already discussed the mechanics of using email in Chapter 3, but we want to emphasize here that one of the most effective ways to drive traffic to your web site is by sending out emails to your supporters and constituents. Include short pieces of information with links people can click on to get more details from your site. This "click through" effect will drive much traffic to your web site and will be one of your most steady stream of repeat visitors to your site.

Another suggestion for driving traffic to your web site is to place content on email newsletters of affiliated institutions. You'll have to seek out opportunities one email newsletter at a time, so start keeping an eye out for interesting email newsletters that can help you promote your site.

Viral Marketing

"Viral marketing" refers to the phenomenon of people e-mailing information and a link to your

site to all of their friends by email, who then forward it on to their friends, who then forward it on to their friends, and pretty soon, the whole world knows about you! OK, not quite. But viral marketing can be very powerful. Encourage viral marketing by putting a line at the end of your e-newsletter asking people to forward your news on to their friends and family. Or create clever stand-alone messages with links to really compelling pages that give people good reason to forward your message on. You can also add a “Tell-a-friend” component to your web site where people click a button to fill out a form on your site that sends an email to their friend with a link back to your site. (Be sure you include a line that says you won’t use the friends email address for any other purpose!)

Newsgroups and Listservs

Another way to drive traffic is to post information about it to newsgroups or listservs related to your cause. Listservs are email discussions or newsgroups that allow members to post messages to all of the other members. Again, you’ll have to seek out these opportunities one at a time, so it’s a good idea to keep a running list of listservs. You can search for listservs or newsgroups related to your cause at www.topica.com or www.liszt.com. Encouraging your staff to join and participate in these discussion lists can help increase the visibility for your organization and your site.

Make sure you monitor a list for at least several days before posting a message. When you do post your message, etiquette requires that you not post blatant self-promotion. Make sure your message is relevant to the conversation and of genuine value to the members. You can reference your web site directly in your message, or include it in the footer after your name.

Creating word of mouth

Other than the Internet-centric techniques discussed above, there are many other ways to create buzz about your site. The imagination and creativity of your staff, board and volunteers will help

you in your marketing efforts. Regular brainstorming sessions can help you develop new ways to market your Internet efforts. In the meantime, here are some techniques that have worked for other nonprofits:

- Sponsor a contest at a local school or high school to design a poster for your site or special event.
- Design a one-sheet flyer about your site that you post in strategic places and stuff into envelopes sent from your office.
- Print up little stickers with your Web address to give to kids or stick on envelopes.
- Set up a Web kiosk in the lobby of your office or at an affiliated organization, merchant, or store.
- Design a small color postcard to mail and pass out (cost: about \$100 for 500 from many online services).
- Print your logo and Web address on a mouse pad and distribute it.
- Work your site into an interview with or pitch to the media.

Take advantage of holidays or special events

Holidays and events are great opportunities to drive traffic to your site. Around Earth Day, many environmentally-conscious people will log on to the Web to get information about saving the environment and what your organization is doing to help. Make sure you give them the information they want. For Valentine’s Day or other holidays you can develop online greeting cards that people can send to their friends or family from your site. The more the cards can be branded with your organization’s names and images the better, and of course they should include a link so the recipient can click through to your site.

Evaluating traffic on your site

The core information resource at your disposal for evaluating where your traffic comes from are Web referrer logs. Your site's traffic statistics will include a section on "referring urls" – a log of the top pages or urls where people clicked through to your site, in other words, your site visitor's originating location. They show which search engines are sending you traffic, and what keywords they used to locate your listing. They show the identity of Web portals or other sites that link to you and how much traffic they send your way. They also show whether your Web advertising banners are delivering traffic to your site.

You can use the information about portals and other Web sites to target future marketing and promotion efforts, which we'll explore in the next chapter. In a hypothetical example, if you're in the children's advocacy field and you can see in your referrer logs one month that www.connectforkids.org sent you 80 visitors, then you need to be sure to send those organizations or portals your future news releases, or better yet – pick-up the phone and get to know that organiza-

tion better. Little by little, you can build an online promotion checklist that includes many of the Web sites you've discovered and by examining your referral logs. Review your referrer logs each month, and particularly after any news events you've been involved in and identify new sites that have sent you traffic.

In addition to Web logs, you can also monitor your traffic by tracking the number of subscribers to your email newsletter. Keep track each month of the number of people subscribed, the number of new subscribers, and the number of cancellations. Every quarter, compare Web access levels, email subscription levels and your organization's activities in the real world. This comparison exercise should help get a complete picture of the general trends in your Internet presence. Your trends should be towards growth, but can you spot the spikes that help you evaluate what worked best. Did you have an intern one summer that helped boost your traffic? Did the press conference last Spring double your site traffic because you made an extra effort to get our your Web address?

Resources for Increasing Traffic

How to Internet – www.howtointernet.com/tips.html

Tips on submitting your site to search engines.

Search Engine Watch – www.searchenginewatch.com

Perhaps the most comprehensive web site about how search engines work, registering your site, and improving your rankings.

Link Popularity – www.linkpopularity.com

Input your site's url to determine how many and which sites are linking to yours.

Web Marketing Information Center – www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/promote.htm

Some good free articles, others you have to pay for.

Web Position – www.webpositiongold.com

Software for analyzing your search engine rankings.

Banner Ad Specs on Lycos – <http://adreporting.lycos.com/specs.html>

Finding newsgroups and listservs – www.topica.com, www.liszt.com

CASE STUDY**Driving Traffic to StopTheWar.com**

To drive traffic to your site you may want to develop banner ads,

negotiate free or paid placement on sites, and get your site mentioned in e-newsletters. These strategies worked well for StopTheWar.com, a site developed for the Lindesmith Center-Drug Policy Foundation. In this case, the organization didn't want to drive traffic to its own site, www.drugpolicy.org, so they created a special site. But the same approaches can be used for driving traffic to your site.

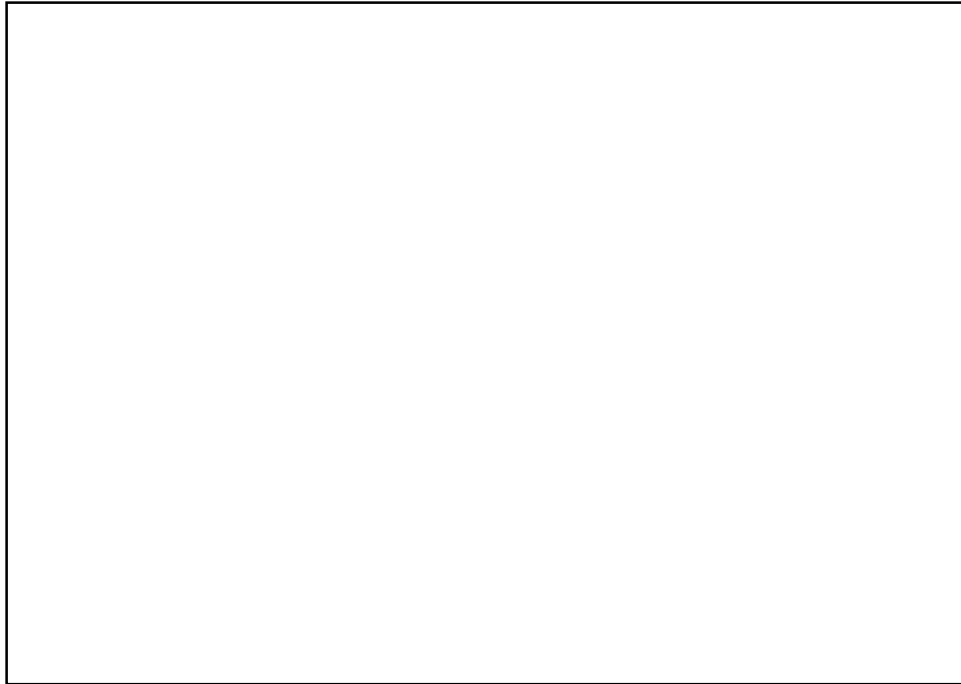
About the campaign: The StopTheWar.com campaign capitalized on the success of the movie "Traffic" to stimulate conversation about the fundamental flaws in the war on drugs. Images from the movie were incorporated into the site with permission from the producers. Two involvement devices were used – a game where people tried to win the war on drugs, and a call to action – sending a fax to President Bush. Entry in a daily drawing for a free Traffic DVD or video was offered as an incentive for participating. Building a great site with involvement devices, information, and incentives, however, was not enough. The site had to be promoted.

How it worked. donordigital.com and the Lindesmith Center worked together to drive traffic to the site using these online and offline strategies.

- Developed several banner ads of different sizes. The strategy was to be engaging and concise, offering a video as the incentive for clicking through. "500,000 Americans in jail, and we can't win the war on drugs," the first frame said. Frame 2: "We need a drug czar with new strategies. Tell the President and win a Traffic DVD." Frame 3: StoptheWar.com. Click here.
- Placed the banners on a "Download a Banner" page on the site with clear instructions on how to download them and place them on your web site.
- Identified and contacted like-minded organizations, news sites, and other Web sites asking them to:
 - 1) go to www.StopTheWar.com to download banners to place on their site
 - 2) link to the site from their site and/or
 - 3) email their lists with information about the campaign.
- E-mailed the Lindesmith Center's existing email list to announce the launch of the site. The email encouraged people to forward the email to their friends to help give the campaign a viral component.
- Identified email lists and discussion groups on issues related to drug policy. When possible, posted messages about the site directly to the list or contacted the manager of the list and asked him or her to do so.
- Included a "tell-a-friend" feature on the site to facilitate viral promotion. It was featured prominently on the home page and was easy to use.
- Submitted the site to search engines and Web directories.
- Issued several press releases to on- and off-line media about the site.
- Pitched stories about the site to targeted offline media, including newspapers, magazines, and tv producers.

**CASE
STUDY**

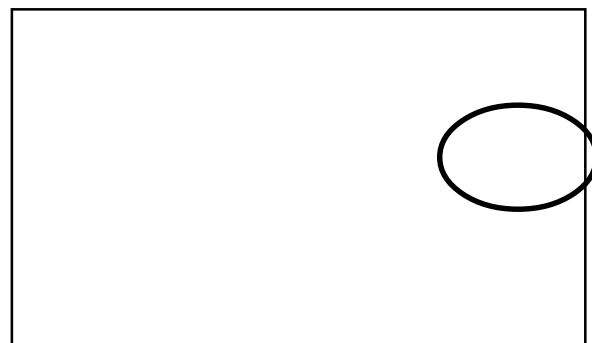
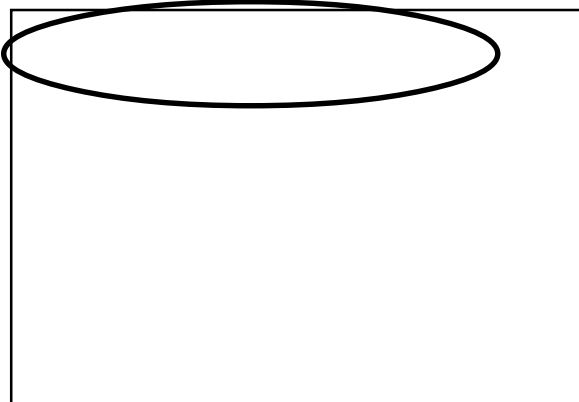
Here's the "Get Banners" page on the site:



Results:

- Over 200,000 user sessions on the site between February 13 – March 2001.
- Over 4,000 faxes sent to President Bush
- Collected over 10,000 email addresses of sympathetic constituents who can be cultivated and eventually converted into donors!
- Coverage in major print and online media, including USA Today, msnbc.com, ABC News, the Houston Chronicle, the Vancouver Sun, and the National Post.
- 31 donations totaling \$1,285 were made to the campaign through the Groundspring.org DonateNow service. The average gift was \$41.

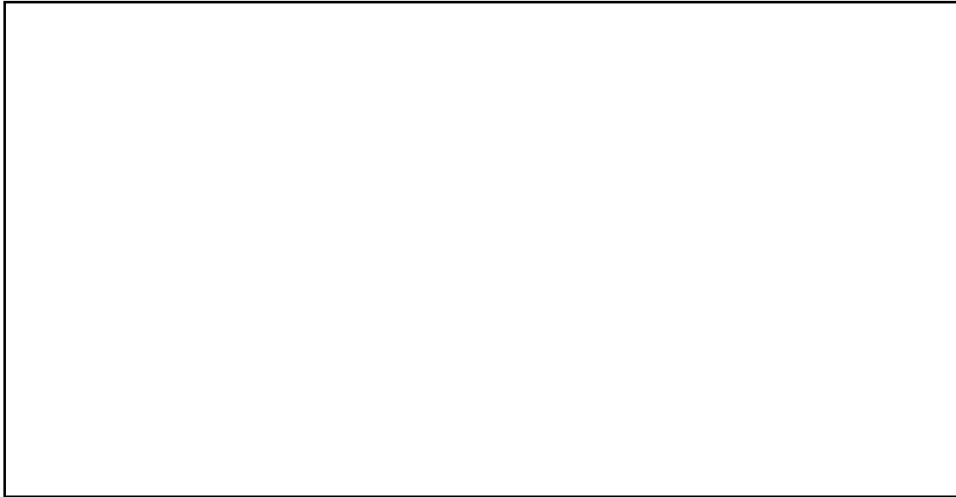
Here's how the banner looked when posted on several sites:



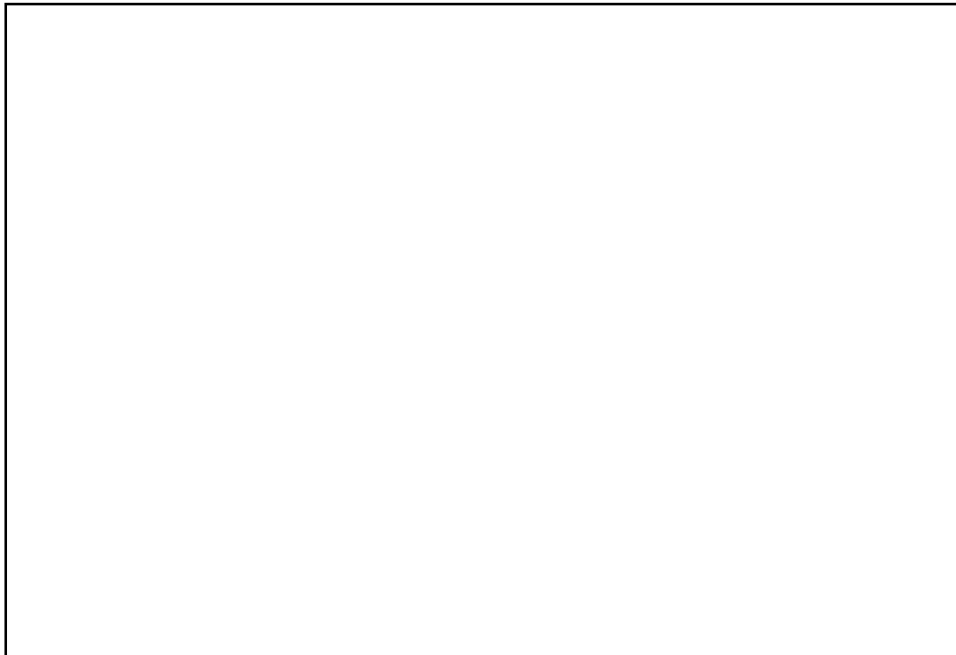
**CASE
STUDY**

The Utne Reader's placement of the StopTheWar banners resulted in over 400,000 impressions. The Utne Reader also included a blurb about the site in two of their e-newsletters for several weeks each!

Web referrer logs helped monitor where the traffic was coming from. MeridianMagic, a game site, was surprisingly one of the leading referrers.



The Lindesmith Center used a customized version of the Groundspring.org DonateNow service for their online donation processing. 31 gifts totaling \$1,285 were made in just several weeks.



CHAPTER 7

Picking Your Promotions and Partnerships

In This Chapter:

- **Promotions**
- **Partnerships**
- **Getting Started**
- **Case Study: Big Brothers Big Sisters of San Francisco and the Peninsula**

The Web isn't called the Web for nothing. It's millions of sites, billions of pages, all as close as a click. Special promotions and partnerships are part of the answer to driving traffic – and donor prospects – to your site.

Promotions are special campaigns, contests, event-driven information, and seasonal or holiday-related materials aimed at driving people to your site, or a partner's, to take some specific action. You may use some of the same on-going traffic-driving strategies we discussed in Chapter 5, but promotions and campaigns usually have a specific call-to-action and involve intense promotional efforts over a few weeks or months. They can involve a wide range of activities:

- An email and web site campaign around a specific issue or action
- A series of email messages to your list urging them to take a particular action
- An online petition on your site
- An offer that when you purchase something at a merchant's site, the merchant donates \$1 or a percentage of the purchase to your organization
- Almost any other special effort to drive people to your site to take some specific action, whether it's registering for an event, sending a fax, making a donation, or downloading a report

- A banner ad running on another site
- An offer of a free screensaver, or book, or t-shirt in exchange for an email address or donation

Partnerships involve creating a relationship with another web site, or an organization that has a web site or an email list, or both, to run a special promotion or otherwise drive traffic to your site.

Since most small nonprofits have limited resources for promoting their sites, they often seek partnerships with larger sites, or larger for-profit or nonprofit organizations who might be able to drive traffic to the nonprofit's site (or benefit it in some other way). Depending on your size, your location, your issues, and your staff and Board, you might seek partnerships with major e-commerce sites, national portals like Yahoo! or Excite, the local subsite of these portals (Yahoo! Bay Area or Yahoo! Chicago), a local merchant, your local portal (kansascity.com), the site of your local newspaper or TV station, or another nonprofit. If you're the Chicago Breast Cancer Action Center, you might partner with a large local hospital or medical practice, or the Chicago Tribune or a TV or radio station. If you're an animal shelter, you might part-

ner with a local pet store or veterinarian (assuming their sites get some traffic).

Promotions and partnerships with vendors, Web portals, and companies will allow you to get your message out to a wider audience on the Internet. The rise of media concentration in the industry, the overall growth of Internet traffic, and the specialization of Web sites in specific and narrow issue areas, creates opportunities that the nonprofit organization should seek out and use to its advantage.

There are Web portals such as those operated by media organizations (TV, radio, newspapers), and others that are strictly Internet focused (About.com, Yahoo, Alta Vista). A Web portal is any large web site other than your own which is a gateway to content from thousands of other sites, is heavily visited, and has the potential to disseminate your content to new audiences and drive traffic to your site. These partnerships can be extremely valuable at reaching a larger audience for your campaign.

There are several ways to identify Web portals relevant to your issues.

- First, do an email survey of a couple of dozen people in your field or issue area and ask them to list their top ten Web sites covering your issue.
- Second, visit the top search engines (Yahoo, Alta Vista, HotBot) and try typing in your issue key words to see what banner display ads are displayed; these are often commercial portals paying for advertising space.
- Third, review your Web site's referrer logs to see what other sites are sending you traffic.
- Fourth, once you've built your list of sites, visit them one by one and learn how they feature content. Try to identify email addresses, phone

numbers and the names of editors at these sites that you can contact. Build relationships with editors at Web portals that cover your issues and offer them content on a regular basis. Many Web portals strive to stay current in their issue areas so they can attract repeat visitors and thus sell advertising. They are generally delighted to receive content submissions from organizations in the field.

Don't forget that in addition to the many commercial portals, there are a large number of nonprofit portals that you should be in touch with for content placement and outreach. Here are just a few examples: JoinTogether.org, Alternet.org, Kidscampaigns.org, Mediate.com, MediaChannel.org, IGC.org, Freespeech.org, OneWorld.net, Idealist.org, and eActivist.org.

In addition to content placement, valuable collaborations can be created with Web portals to create reciprocal linking and content agreements that drive traffic between Web sites. These strategic agreements are popular on the commercial Internet where they are big money deals, but can work well and more affordably for nonprofits and advocacy groups. Since nonprofits want little in return other than exposure, many commercial portals are often delighted to promote your content regularly. It assures their readership that they're plugged into their issue area. Take care to evaluate any reciprocal requirements in the agreement. Some nonprofits may be uncomfortable running commercial banners or putting plugs in their email newsletters for commercial products or services. An ideal commercial partner should understand a nonprofit's reluctance and will suggest other options. Don't get locked into a partnership that doesn't respect your mission and values.

HOT TIP !

Environmental groups should investigate portal sites like care2.com, enature.com, and enn.com. enn.com offers news feeds, donation processing, and other content for affiliate sites.

Getting started

There's no magic formula for creating promotions or partnerships. Brainstorm some ideas for the promotions and some potential partners. Before you see a potential partner, it's sometimes useful to send them a creative brief or strategy memo that outlines what you have in mind. But you also want to invite their ideas – they may be good, and

they will help the partner buy into the project. Of course, many potential partnerships don't bloom for a wide variety of reasons. Don't invest too much time in developing a partnership, especially with big companies, unless there's a reasonable likelihood of success – you can waste a lot of time.

**CASE
STUDY****Big Brothers Big Sisters of
San Francisco and the
Peninsula**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of San Francisco and the Peninsula (BBBS) is a classic small to mid-size nonprofit with a vital community mission of youth mentoring. The group made the leap into the Internet in 1997 with the hope that it could help them inform people about their mission, raise money and find volunteers.

According to Jonathan Stein, BBBS's former Development Associate and Information Technology Coordinator, the organization developed a partnership with Netcentives to acquire new donors online. [NOTE: Unfortunately, like many other dot-coms trying to survive turbulent times, Netcentives folded in 2001. But the Netcentives partnership is a great model, none-the-less]

"Netcentives (www.netcentives.com) offers an 'online currency' called ClickMiles, that rewards people for accomplishing online transactions," he explains. "ClickMiles can be used to purchase products at hundreds of participating e-commerce Web sites, or they can be turned into frequent flyer miles at most major airlines. In the case of nonprofits, ClickMiles are used as an incentive to encourage people to make a donation or to make a larger donation. For a donor on the Web, if they donate at a higher level, they get more ClickMiles. If

they donate \$50, then they receive 100 bonus ClickMiles, donate \$100 and get 500 ClickMiles, donate \$1,000 and get 10,000 ClickMiles. It's a straightforward incentive that really worked.

"The nonprofit pays a fee to Netcentives for each ClickMile they reward the donor with. Working with Netcentives, we created a promotional system (i.e. how many ClickMiles does a donor receive per dollar donated) which we felt comfortable with, and within six months, we had netted \$10,000 in contributions," Jonathan explained. "These were new funds that we would never have obtained except via the Netcentives campaign. Add to this the number of new donors we were able to bring to our support base, it is clear to us that partnering with Netcentives was the right choice for our agency. We've continued our partnership with Netcentives, although they are no longer offering double the ClickMile awards."

To read the full interview with Jonathan Stein, go to the Benton Foundation's site:

<http://www.benton.org/Practice/Lessons/bbbs.html>

CHAPTER 8**Organizing Online Advocacy Campaigns****In This Chapter:**

- **Incorporating activism into your web site**
- **Email activism**
- **Running an online advocacy campaign**
- **How effective is online advocacy?**
- **Resources for online activism**
- **Case Study: The Million Moms Mobilize to Stop Ashcroft!**

Involvement helps build relationships with donors or potential donors, and one great way to involve people online is to enlist them as Internet activists. Unlike offline activism, which usually requires a time commitment, Internet activism can be as quick as a click. In addition to increasing the flow of communication to elected officials or corporations, Internet activism helps you identify supporters whom you can cultivate and convert into donors. When John Ashcroft was nominated for Attorney General by President Bush, 50,000 faxes were sent to Senators through the Million Mom March's stopAshcroft.com site, resulting in aggressive Senate questioning of Ashcroft's gun policies – and the addition of 20,000 email addresses to the Million Mom March e-list. (See the case study at the end of this chapter.)

Incorporating activism into your web site

The first step for launching your online activist program is to acquire the tools needed to send faxes and/or emails through your web site to your targets – elected officials, corporations, government agencies, or others. Get Active Software, Capitol Advantage, and CapitolConnect are the leading Application Service Providers (ASPs) for integrating issue advocacy into your site. The cost generally starts at several thousand dollars a year, depending on the scope of your advocacy. With these systems you can create issue-specific Web pages where users input their zip codes and contact information to generate a letter to their elected officials. Users can send a pre-written letter or edit

the letter to their liking. The letter can be sent as a fax or an email, or printed out and mailed.

Once you have the activist functionality built in to your site, you'll want to promote this feature prominently on your home page, like the American Lung Association of California does (www.californialung.org). The association invites people to join its advocacy network and take action on the most recent alert. Users input their contact information, which is remembered by the system the next time they login with their email address and password.

It's most effective to send your activists email suggesting specific actions and targets, with the mes-

sage already written. You can also configure the system to simply help your constituents identify and send their own messages to their elected officials. By typing in their zip code, users can identify their elected officials, get contact information, view committee assignments and voting histories, and compose messages. Here's iAbolish's Freedom Action Network using Get Active Software:

If you have a one-time campaign with a specific target (i.e., you don't need to identify members of Congress or the State Legislature by the user's zip code), and you don't expect to engage in online activism on an on-going basis, your Web developer can write a simple script to send faxes via an inexpensive online fax service like faxcube.com. Sending emails is cheaper and even simpler, but less effective.

Email activism

To grow your online activism, you should invite people to subscribe to receive action alerts by email. This is a great way to build your email list and notify people about your activist campaigns, rather than waiting for them to come to your site. When you send out an action alert, include information about the campaign and a link to the page on the site where people can take action. With sophisticated systems like GetActive Software (formerly Locus Pocus), you can send personalized emails to your activists configured so they can either take action by replying to the email or by clicking through to a Web page that contains their pre-filled letter to their elected official. All they have to do is edit the letter (if they so choose), and click "send"!

Here's a sample of an activist email from the American Lung Association of California:

From: pkneprath@alac.org
 Reply-To: alert-response-547462A19508B0404125654C310@actionnetwork.org
 To: ginger@donordigital.com
 Subject: Support SBx15—Energy Conservation
 Date: Wed, 04 Apr 2001 16:57:22 GMT
 X-Loop-Detect: 1
 Dear Ginger Lubkowitz,

We need your help in getting SBx15 approved by the Legislature and put on Governor Davis's desk. This is an important energy conservation bill.

You can take action on this alert either via email (please see directions below) or via the web at: <http://actionnetwork.org/take-action.tcl?key=547462A19508B0404125654C310>

We encourage you to take action by April 13, 2001

Support SBx 15—Energy Conservation

 This campaign is intended to generate public support for SBx15, a critical energy conservation bill to deal with California's energy crisis.

(information about the bill and instructions on how to respond follows)

Running an online advocacy campaign

Another way to grow your online activist program is to run a high-profile online advocacy campaign around a particular issue or event. Promote it like crazy using the same promotions and strategies for driving traffic outlined in Chapter 5 – develop banner ads and place them on other like-minded and/or high-traffic sites, ask other organizations to mention the campaign in their newsletters, email your own list about the campaign, work the media, etc. The most effective advocacy campaigns have a viral component, i.e., people forward emails about the campaign to their friends who forward it to their friends, and so on.

When you develop a high-profile campaign, you can either drive the traffic through your own home page or create a special page or mini-site with its own (clever) domain name, like stopAshcroft.com or StopTheWar.com. TechRocks, a group with extensive experience running advocacy campaigns, recommends that you give the campaign the same name as the domain, such as StopAshcroft.com or hugatree.org.

Designing your site. When designing the site for your online advocacy campaign, make sure the action is clear and simple. Don't overwhelm people with too much to do. Get them to the site and get them to take the action. In that process, you should acquire their email addresses, giving them the opportunity to "opt-out" of receiving future emails. You can also ask them to make a donation, but be patient. Even if you don't receive a large number of donations, you will have a larger email list of people who can be cultivated and, over time, converted to donors. Also, when designing your campaign site, keep in mind that the majority of the site's visitors will only view the first page. You certainly want to include links to additional information, but focus your energies on that first page.

HOT TIP !

Visit eactivist.org – an online activist web portal – to see a range of online activist efforts.

A clever or fun Flash movie adds another level of interactivity to your site and can help generate a buzz about your campaign. The StopTheWar.com site mentioned in Chapter 8 had an introductory Flash movie, a game inviting users to "win the war on drugs." Whatever strategy the viewer chose for winning the war, they lost. The

game ended on the home page for the site, where the visitor was invited to send a fax to President Bush. Flash technology is sophisticated and you'll want to hire an experienced designer. (To learn more about Flash go to www.macromedia.com.)

Tell-a-Friend. In addition to asking visitors to take action and make a donation, encourage them to email their friends about the campaign. "Word of mouth" marketing is just as effective online as it is offline, and it's easy to incorporate a "tell-a-

friend” function into your site. (Search for a free tell-a-friend script at one of the sites listed at the end of Chapter 4.) Again, make it easy – let visitors input the email addresses of up to 5 friends and provide a pre-written message that they can edit if they want.

Offering Incentives. You may want to offer an incentive for people to take the desired action, such as being entered in a drawing for a free DVD, tickets to a show, or airfare to your annual conference. Incentives like these may be effective at drawing in new names, but the long-term value of those names may not be as high, especially with a free product offer. They may not be as committed to your cause, and therefore not as likely to take another action or make a donation without further incentive.

Measuring your success. The success of your campaign will be measured by the number of people who came to your site and the number of people who took action. This will include the people who sent a communication to your target as well as the number of people who forwarded a message to their friend, signed up to receive your e-news, or made a donation while on the site. You can measure the success of your promotional efforts by tracking where the traffic on your site came

from. Your web site traffic logs should include a section on “referring urls,” and you can ask people who placed banners or mentioned your campaign in the e-newsletters to provide you with click-through statistics.

How effective is online advocacy?

Online activism is most effective for engaging constituents and drawing attention to an issue. Many elected officials aren’t handling or responding to email communications effectively, which is why you should make sure you promote to the media how many activists your campaign engaged. One Senator may not be able to respond to – much less count – the many emails that your campaign generates, but if it’s reported in the media and stimulates debate, then it has had an effect.

Faxes or emails? This is the big question. Faxes, phone calls, and letters continue to be the most effective form of communication, primarily because elected officials haven’t figured out how to handle their emails. Though most advocacy systems give you the option of letting people send faxes, letters, or emails, faxes and letters are more expensive, so you may opt for sending the emails.

Resources for Online Activism

GetActive Software (formerly **LocusPocus**) – www.getactive.com

The most advanced online advocacy system, integrated with sophisticated email messaging and donation processing.

The Alliance for Justice – www.afj.org

For information about the legal implications of online advocacy, get the book, “E-Advocacy for Nonprofits: The Law of Lobbying and Election-Related Activity on the Net.”

Capitol Advantage – www.capitaladvantage.com

Good tools, mainly aimed at reaching elected officials and government agencies.

Institute for Global Communications (IGC) - <http://www.igc.org/igc/gateway/tips.html>

Get Online advocacy tips for making your campaign more effective.

NetAction – www.netaction.org

Take their “Virtual Activists” training course.

OneNorthwest – www.onenw.org

Check out the “Activist Toolkit.” OneNorthwest focuses on helping conservation groups in the Northwest use technology, but its online resources are general interest.

The Organizer’s Collaborative – www.organizenow.net

Check out their “Technical Tips for Activists”

CASE STUDY**The Million Moms Mobilize to Stop Ashcroft!**

When President Bush announced the nomination of former Sen. John Ashcroft as his choice for Attorney General, the Million Mom March was well poised to mobilize against Ashcroft's long-standing opposition to any regulations of guns. They were already using CapitolWiz for their online Action Center, they had an email newsletter that went out to over 40,000 supporters nationwide, and they had a solid network of over 240 local chapters across the country. Working with Donordigital, they were able to develop and launch the stopAshcroft.com campaign within days after Ashcroft's nomination.

How the campaign worked:

1. The first step was building a web site where people could send faxes to their Senators, email their friends encouraging them to do the same, and make donations to the Million Mom March.

– The call to action was clear and easy – with the input of a zip code and two more clicks, the faxes were sent.

– The site was updated regularly with reports on the status of Ashcroft's confirmation hearings.

But once a site is built, the key is always drawing people to it...

2. So they created a Flash video about Ashcroft's position on guns and sent it to the Million Mom March e-news list of over 40,000. Recipients were asked to forward the video on to their friends to make the campaign "viral."

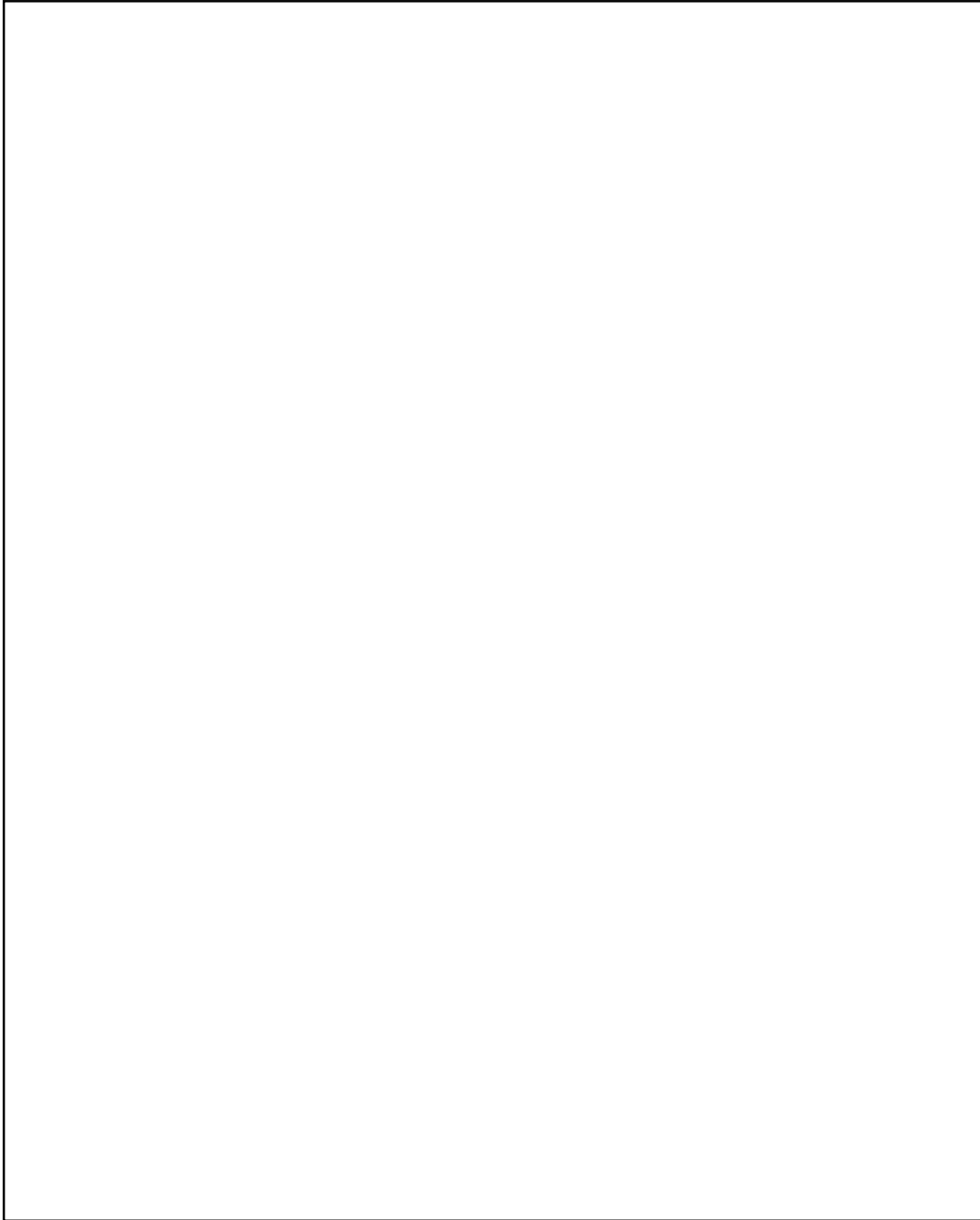
3. stopAshcroft.com banners were produced and placed on other Web sites – from other gun control groups to the Utne Reader. The Million Mom March also worked with a media consultant to generate offline media coverage about the site.
4. MoveOn.org was contacted and asked to include the stopAshcroft.com campaign in an email to its email list of 300,000+ supporters. The day after MoveOn e-mailed their list, over 13,000 faxes were sent through the stopAshcroft site.
5. The campaign momentum was maintained as Ashcroft's hearings proceeded by sending email updates to the MMM list and anyone who had faxed their Senator.

Campaign Results:

- Over 50,000 faxes and 12,000 emails were sent to Senators in every state asking them to oppose Ashcroft.
- Over 17,000 people watched the Flash video created to get the word out about Ashcroft's positions on gun laws.
- The MMM e-news list grew from 40,000 to 60,000 recipients.
- A screen shot of the web site appeared in Newsweek (January 22, 2001).
- The stopAshcroft.com campaign was mentioned in the Los Angeles Times, New York Times, on NPR, and other media.
- Although Ashcroft was ultimately confirmed, the vote was a narrow 58-42. The campaign helped convince Senators to ask Ashcroft tough questions on gun laws, resulting in Ashcroft publicly changing some of his hard-line positions.

**CASE
STUDY**

Here's the home page for the Million Mom March stopAshcroft.com campaign. The call to action was simple and clear: first and foremost, SEND A FAX. Then, tell a friend or make a donation. Links to more information were provided, and the site was updated regularly with news about the progress of the Senate hearings.



CHAPTER 9**Prioritizing and Allocating Resources****In This Chapter:**

- **Short-term priorities**
- **Longer term priorities**
- **The cost of doing business online: budgeting for your Internet strategy**
- **Summary: Allocating resources for your online fundraising program**
- **Technology planning and budgetary resources**
- **Case Study: Sample Online Fundraising Plan**

In this handbook, we've reviewed the components of an effective online strategy – donor relations, your web site, email messaging, driving traffic, and more. In this chapter we'll discuss what your short- and long-term priorities should be to launch your online fundraising program. Then we'll discuss the resources needed for a strong overall Internet strategy. Finally, we'll provide a summary of the costs and staff time your program may require.

Short-term priorities

These are things you can do that will have great impact right away and will lay the foundation for the expansion of your program (if you're not already doing them).

1. Start building your email list.

Collect email addresses at every point of contact with your existing donors (reply devices, events, etc.), prospects, and everyone else! Work with your Webmaster to put an e-news subscription form on your home page and other important pages on your web site.

2. Start a monthly e-newsletter.

Select your email messaging system (see Chapter 3), then send the first issue to all the email addresses you have, with an introduction and

the appropriate unsubscribe information. When selecting your system, keep in mind that you can start simple and inexpensive. When you're ready for a more sophisticated system, you can always import the names from whatever list you are using into your new system.

3. Establish secure online donation processing.

It's really hard to fundraise online if you can't accept donations through your web site. If you're not already working with Groundspring.org, consider using its DonateNow service. Other donation processing options are outlined in Chapter 4. Put a prominent link to your donation page on all of your pages.

4. Promote your web site in all of your existing communications. Don't just print your Web address. Give people a reason to go. "Visit www.ourgroupp.org for a free newsletter or to find out 10 ways to save energy."

Longer-term priorities for online fundraising

Your email messaging program and donation processing capabilities are the foundation. The steps below will require more deliberation, but will take your fundraising program to the next level.

5. Develop a plan. Your plan will evolve as you learn what works and what doesn't, but it helps to have a plan that serves as a road map.

- Include in your plan strategies for driving traffic to your site, building your email list, integrating email with your direct mail, and incorporating appeals into your site.
- Brainstorm partnership opportunities with other institutions and organizations.
- Consider adding an online advocacy component to your web site if that's part of your mission.
- Set goals for building your e-newsletter list, collecting e-mail addresses from donors, and acquiring new online donors; then figure out what you need to do to reach those goals.

You may want to work with a consultant on developing your plan, which can cost anywhere from \$3,000 to \$10,000, depending on the size of your organization and the scope of the work. (See the Idea Hot Sheet at the end of this chapter for a sample plan).

6. Focus on your web site. Chances are good that you'll need to invest money in redesigning or significantly improving your web site to make

it interactive and engaging and therefore more effective for fundraising. Work closely with your Webmaster and possibly other staff on this, using the tips and tricks outlined in Chapters 2 and 4. Make sure you add fundraising appeals to match the page content

7. Get the word out. Promote your site wherever possible – in publications, at events, etc. Evaluate your search engine rankings. Check your site's meta tags. Do you have meta keyword and meta description tags? Are they too long or overly broad? Register or reregister your site with the Web directories and search engines. Work on your links by starting with organizations that you already have a relationship with, then research and identify Web sites that reach constituencies that might be interested in your issue.

8. Develop donor and non-donor versions of your newsletter. The more you can personalize your e-newsletter, the more effective it will be. By creating a special version for your donors, you can not only tell them how their donations make a difference and express your appreciation for their support, you can also send them targeted renewal messages or special appeals.

Include in your non-donor special appeals, involvement opportunities, or incentives for joining or making a donation. As your list grows you may want to segment it even more by collecting member preferences and sending targeted information based on their interests.

9. Develop online fundraising campaigns. An online fundraising campaign is more than an appeal on your site. It's a special appeal that you aggressively promote – perhaps it's built around

a certain event (such as Earth Day) or around a particular issue (how President Bush's tax cut will affect the poor). Your campaign could include a Flash movie that's sent to your email list and forwarded on to friend after friend. Be creative!

HOT TIP !

Become your Webmaster's best friend! The success of your online fundraising could depend on it.

10. Establish online partnerships. What existing partnerships can you translate online? Are there other online partnerships you can form? What kinds of Web sites are people interested in your issue likely to visit?

The cost of doing business online: budgeting for your Internet strategy

So far we've focused primarily on taking the next steps for your online fundraising program. But to successfully fundraise online you have to take a special interest in your web site and overall Internet strategy. Here's an overview of the resources you may require.

Planning/development costs. Integrate your online work with the rest of your organization's strategic plan. From a staff cost perspective, you want to look at what you want to accomplish first, how much money you want to spend overall in your first phase, how you want to manage the project, and which employees will do the work. If you don't have staff devoted to your Internet work, you will probably want to assemble a staff committee to develop your online strategy.

REMEMBER!

Your up-front investment in online fundraising won't translate into donations right away. Email and the Web are inexpensive cultivation tools that will increase donations over time.

In addition to staff, you will have to make budget decisions on what vendors to use for your Internet presence – for designing (or redesigning) and hosting your web site, for example. While it is possible to design your site in-house, most organizations outsource the initial design to a design firm or consultant, then handle the maintenance and updates in-house. (Read more about outsourcing your web site versus hiring a Webmaster in Chapter 4).

Contracts for building Web sites vary tremendously according to the anticipated size of the site, interactive features, and any special technologies. Contracts usually start at around \$5,000 and can go as high as \$100,000 or more. Be sure to compare bids from multiple vendors, and, depending on the

complexity of your site, consider hiring a consultant to help you with the vendor selection process. TechSoup.org has an excellent section on working with consultants. A typical site for a smaller nonprofit might cost \$15,000 to \$50,000, though bids range widely.

Hosting your web site and making technology decisions is another cost factor. If you have a very simple site with little technology, your hosting fees can be as low as \$20 per month. If you have a more complex site that is database-driven, be prepared to pay between \$250 and \$1,000 per month or more. The "Create a web site" section of helping.org's Nonprofit Resources includes a link to "Poor Richards 20 Questions to Ask a Web Hosting Company."

Marketing and promotion. Often a web site launch has two phases – the "soft launch" and the "hard launch." For the soft launch, a site is made "live" without a lot of fanfare and promotion. Often organizations use this time to ensure everything works as expected, work out any kinks, and make final changes to the site. Then, when everything is in tip-top shape, the hard launch begins – a fanfare-filled series of announcements and events that drive traffic to the new site.

A combination of online promotional strategies (outlined in Chapter 6) and traditional public relations techniques is most effective for the hard launch, and the costs can vary based on the scope of the promotion and the degree of outsourcing. At a minimum, your launch should include e-mailing all of your lists and contacting relevant portals and sites. A more aggressive launch would include faxing your press release to known media outlets, developing an online campaign to drive traffic to your site, pitching stories about newsworthy features on your site to specific reporters, holding a public meeting or event to announce the launch, distributing collateral marketing materials (buttons, brochure, flyers, bumper

stickers, mouse pads, sticky note pads, posters, billboards), and more. A marketing firm or consultant might charge between \$2,000 and \$25,000 (and up!) to handle the launch, or you could handle the promotion in-house, investing less money but more staff and volunteer time.

Summary: Allocating resources for your online fundraising program

Here's a summary of the estimated resources required to launch and maintain your online fundraising program. Of course, they can vary greatly depending on the scope and how much you decide to handle in-house. Often you can save money by doing things yourself or using free tools, but this can be demanding on staff time and, depending on your staff's experience and expertise, can compromise the quality of the outcome. Hiring a consultant will cost more money, but with the right one, the impact on staff will be minimal, the project will be completed in a timely manner, and you will save your self some hard lessons about strategizing and implementation. Of course, you'll have to weigh your own resources to decide the best path for your organization. But here are some financial guidelines.

| Component | Fees | Staff Time |
|---|---|---|
| Email messaging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • system set-up • monthly e-newsletter | Free to \$2,500 Free to \$35 per 1,000 messages sent | 3-10 hours 4-5 hours/month |
| Donation processing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • system set-up • ongoing fees | Free to \$3,000 Free to \$20/month + 5-10% of gifts | 4-15 hours n/a |
| Ongoing email list and online donation management and database integration | n/a | 2-5 hours/month |
| Online advocacy tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • system set-up • annual fee for use of system | \$250 to \$1,500 and up \$2,500 - \$8,000 and up | 2-5 hours 2-5 hours/month |
| Search engine registration | Free to \$400 | 2-3 hours/quarter |
| Establishing links | Free | 2-5 hours/quarter |
| Online fundraising or advocacy campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creative development • Flash movie (outsourced) (optional) • creating Web page or site • collecting email addresses • outreach to media and other sites • consultant to manage the process | \$5,000 to \$30,000 The money and staff time required for a campaign will vary depending on the scope and the degree of outsourcing. | 20-40 hours Depending on the scope of the campaign and your outsourcing, count on being fairly consumed for a concentrated time. |
| web site design/redesign | \$5,000 to \$100,000 | minimum 100 hours |
| web site launch | \$500 (in-house) to \$2,000 (outsourced) and up | 5-100 hours |
| web site maintenance/management | \$20 to \$1,500 and up | minimum 10 hours/week |

Technology Planning and Budgetary Resources

Charity Village – www.charityvillage.com/charityvillage/research/rofr28.html

An article by John Kenyon entitled “Technology Budgeting Basics”

NetworkForGood - www.networkforgood.org

The nonprofit resources section includes web site development resources and articles on writing requests for proposals for building a web site.

ONE/Northwest – www.onenw.org

Online assessment forms and an online library of “how-to” documents and technical recommendations.

TechSoup – www.techsoup.org

The Technology Planning and Web Building sections include articles, worksheets, questions of the day, nonprofit stories, and more.

Npower – www.npower.org

Technology planning guides, trainings, and how-tos.

The Progressive Technology Project – www.progressivetech.org

Technology planning resource and courses for nonprofits.

CASE STUDY

Sample Online Fundraising Plan

This is a sample plan for an imaginary local animal rescue organization trying to take advantage of the Internet to become more national in influence. The specifics of your online fundraising plan will be unique for your organization, but the overarching themes will likely be similar. While this plan calls for a relatively high budget, you may want or need to dedicate less.

Online fundraising plan for Save the Animals (STA)

The goals of this online fundraising plan are to:

- Open an e-channel of communications with direct mail donors who want it
- Acquire new online donors
- Cultivate and resolicit existing and new online donors

The key to acquiring new online donors will be developing partnerships to drive traffic to our site, building a large email list for prospecting, and making our site even more successful in converting visitors into donors. In addition, we'll expand the opportunities for raising money elsewhere online. At the same time we will use our direct mail (and telephone) program to offer e-communications to those donors and to integrate online communication with other fundraising communications.

1. Web site

Our site should be a major tool in engaging and interacting with new and existing donors, while still meeting the needs of our various other constituencies – people seeking to adopt, kids, animal-lovers, etc. Some of our donors also probably visit our site now and then, so it needs to demonstrate

to them that they've invested wisely. They should see offline fundraising themes reflected on the site, new content, things to do, compelling features, etc. Many new people will also visit our site simply to look at the animals, without any intention of adopting. We'll need online mechanisms to engage those people, and to turn them into donors. Here's what we'll do to make that happen.

- We'll re-develop our site to improve its look and feel and increase its functionality. We'll focus on finding vendors and/or application service providers (ASPs) who offer easy-maintenance solutions to reduce the burden on staff. Then, we'll work make our site more appealing to our various constituencies with interactivity (surveys, contests), news, compelling appeals, easy event sign-ups, and new features like e-cards (electronic greeting cards).
- We'll maximize our giving opportunities on the site and give them high visibility on our home page and other pages, especially our most hit pages and those pages that tend to evoke strong emotions (animal pages).
- On an ongoing basis, we'll monitor opportunities for promoting STA's work online in the context of animal-related news and our many events.

2. Email messaging

- We'll develop an email messaging program for communicating regularly with donors and prospects. The program will initially include a monthly e-newsletter with donor and non-donor versions and occasional action or event alerts. Eventually, we'll build in targeted email messages for people with expressed interests in certain subjects like no-kill policy, dogs, feral cat

CASE STUDY

care, etc., and deliver email renewals for existing online donors; and solicitations and special appeals for both existing donors and prospects.

- We'll develop and implement strategies for building our email list. In addition to offering simple email sign-ups on our site, we'll design creative ways to build our prospect email list through incentives, such as offering a chance to win a gift certificate for people who subscribe to our e-newsletter.

3. Increasing site traffic

With a compelling web site and technology in place to manage content and donor relationships, we'll develop campaigns to drive traffic to our site. We'll work to improve our search engine and directory rankings and links, create and run campaigns on our site and elsewhere, and develop corporate partnerships and sponsorships to drive traffic to our site. Strategies will include:

- Finding an appealing, easy-to-remember URL
- Increasing our visibility on our offline corporate partners' Web sites through links, banners and special campaigns.
- Promoting our site as a no-kill information center by disseminating (free) content, tips, facts and interactive devices to other sites with links back to our site.
- Promoting our fundraising campaigns on media sites. We'll develop graphics and try to place them free on national, regional and local media sites.
- Promoting our events online through

event listing services like CitySearch.com, local media listings, and others.

- Maximizing our search engine rankings by improving our meta tags, buying some keywords, and paying for increased rankings at some sites.

4. Special Campaigns

We'll run a few targeted online campaigns throughout the year: one in December, and one in the spring.

- The December one will have a holiday focus with special holiday giving opportunities (gift memberships, with the calendar as one of its features) and also drive traffic to our store.
- The spring appeal will be combined with a no-kill (or other issue) awareness campaign with special Web pages and a strong tell-a-friend element. While it will have a fundraising element, the focus of this campaign will be to build our online reputation and our email list.

5. Integration with Direct Mail

- We'll use traditional communications channels to build our donor email list and promote our web site.
- We'll send a cultivation mailer to our lapsed donors inviting them to visit our web site. We can direct them to a special page on our web site that makes an appeal for why they should make another gift.

CASE STUDY

- As our email list grows, we'll test ways to use email to boost response to direct mail, such as:
 - Sending a pre-mail email that tells people that they'll be receiving an important letter in the mail or invite people to respond
 - Sending a post-mail email that says "We hope you received our recent letter. If you haven't had a chance to give yet, please give online today. It's fast, easy, and efficient."
- We'll promote some online services in our direct mail – especially our store during the holidays.
- We will develop a persistent program for gradually gathering the email addresses of direct mail donors who want to add email to their communications with us. We will test asks in the direct mail (P.S., buckslip, reply device, etc.) and track response to find the most effective and least expensive ways to gather email addresses without depressing gift response. We'll send test and track communications and resolicitations to these donors.

6. Tracking, benchmarking, reporting

- We'll evaluate the email messaging program by tracking the number of recipients that are converted into new donors and the number of gifts and renewals received from existing donors in direct response to an email solicitation. We'll also carefully monitor the overall giving levels of donors receiving the e-news versus donors not receiving the e-news to evaluate the e-news as a cultivation tool.

- We'll evaluate our site traffic to determine which content is most appealing and increase the visibility of that content, as well as tie in giving opportunities.

7. Budget

Expenses depend on many choices, but might include:

- Web site redevelopment (including back-end functionality) \$15,000-\$100,000
- Email messaging system set-up fee \$250-\$500 *one time*
- Web site maintenance \$1,000-\$4,000 *monthly*
- Email messaging on-going fees *up to \$250 monthly*
- Banner ad development \$5,000 *annually*
- Online campaigns \$10,000-\$50,000 *each*
- Consultant – ongoing monthly retainer \$3,500 *monthly*
 - Consultation on web site development
 - Development of online partnerships
 - Production and management of monthly e-news and up to one stand-alone solicitation to donors and non-donors
 - Email messaging system management, including monthly data imports/exports to integrate with offline database
 - Integration with direct mail
 - Copy writing for appeals for the site.

APPENDIX A

Resources

Online fundraising web sites**The Internet Nonprofit Center** –

www.nonprofits.org

Posts an extensive FAQ for nonprofit organizations, bulletins, and a library of publications, information and data about the nonprofit sector.

The Nonprofit Matrix –

www.nonprofitmatrix.com

A comprehensive guide to commercial ASPs and portal providers for the nonprofit sector, including up-to-date news.

Online Fundraising Resource Center –

www.fund-online.com

Most interesting on this site are the excerpts from the book *Fundraising and Friend-raising on the Web* by Adam Corson-Finnerty and Laura Blanchard. Also included on the site are resources, essays, and analysis of online fundraising trends.

Online fundraising email lists**Charity Channel** – www.charitychannel.com

This site has a slew of discussion forums about nonprofit fundraising, some specifically about online fundraising.

Donordigital Direct – subscribe at

www.donordigital.com

Nick Allen's periodic e-news about online fundraising, marketing, and advocacy.

Dot Org – subscribe at

www.summitcollaborative.com/dot_org.html

e-news with practical advice for nonprofits on making the most of the Internet. Written and edited by Michael Stein and Marc Osten.

The Internet Fundraising – subscribe at

www.internet-fundraising.com

changingourworld.com's monthly e-news focused on web and email campaigns.

Nonprofit Online News – subscribe at

<http://news.gilbert.org>

News, information, and opinion for the online nonprofit community. A project of the Gilbert Center.

Online Fundraising Mailing List – subscribe at

[//www.gilbert.org/fundraising](http://www.gilbert.org/fundraising)

A useful discussion list moderated by Michael Gilbert.

Email messaging

Vendors. This isn't a comprehensive list, but it's a start. Many of these also have email messaging tips on their site.

www.topica.com (free)

www.groups.yahoo.com (free)

www.groundspring.org (\$)

www.sparklist.com (\$)

www.socialecology.com (\$)

www.localvoice.com (\$\$)

www.doubleclick.com (\$\$\$)

www.getactive.com (\$\$\$)

ClickZ Network – www.clickz.com

A network of sites and free e-newsletters about email marketing. Tens of thousands of articles, easy to search.

Databack Systems – www.databack.com

Take their free email course on composing great-looking email newsletters.

The Gilbert Email Manifesto –

<http://www.gilbert.org/news/features/feature0025.html>

Michael Gilbert's elaborations on why "email is more important than your web site" and his three rules of email.

The Levison Letter –

www.levison.com

Subscribe to this free email newsletter on writing effective email newsletters.

Web site development

The eNonprofit: a guide to ASPs, internet services, and online software –

www.compasspoint.org/enonprofit

Download their must-have guide to many ASPs serving nonprofits. You can also order it in book format.

Big Nose Bird –

www.bignosebird.com/

"Everything you need to build great web sites." Free scripts, html tricks, design tips, image guides, and more.

Freetools –

www.freetools.com/

Free scripts to add polls, message boards, feedback features, and more to your web site.

Making the Network –

www.makingthenetwork.org/toolbox/tools/webguide.htm

This site walks you through the process of planning your site and offers you tools.

Moreover –

www.moreover.com

Add a free newsfeed to your site. You select the category or keyword, Moreover provides the code.

One Northwest –

www.onenw.org

Site planning resources, web development tools, and an activist toolkit.

VolunteerMatch –

www.volunteermatch.com

Lets you hook up with volunteers through their site or add a volunteer match component to your own site.

Web Monkey –

<http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/>

Quick reference sheets, tutorials, articles, resources, and more for developing your web site.

Zoomerang –

www.zoomerang.com

Free survey tools – with expanded features for a fee.

Privacy statements**The Direct Marketing Association –**

<http://the-dma.org/library/privacy/creating.shtml>

Check out the DMA's privacy statement generator – but be sure to adapt it for your organization.

TRUSTe –

<http://www.truste.com/>

TRUSTe is a nonprofit dedicated to promoting consumer trust and confidence in the Internet. The site includes privacy resources and a privacy statement generator.

Driving traffic to your site**How to Internet –**

www.howtointernet.com/tips.html

Tips on submitting your site to search engines.

Search Engine Watch –

www.searchenginewatch.com

Perhaps the most comprehensive web site about how search engines work, registering your site, and improving your rankings.

Link Popularity –

www.linkpopularity.com

Input your site's url to determine how many and which sites are linking to yours.

Web Marketing Information Center –

www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/promote.htm

Some good free articles, other's you have to pay for.

Web Position –

www.webpositiongold.com

Software for analyzing your search engine rankings**Banner Ad Specs on Lycos –**

<http://adreporting.lycos.com/specs.html>

Finding newsgroups and listservs –

www.topica.com, www.liszt.com

Online advocacy**The Alliance for Justice –**

www.afj.org

For information about the legal implications of online advocacy, get the book, "E-Advocacy for Nonprofits: The Law of Lobbying and Election-Related Activity on the Net."

NetAction –

www.netaction.org

Take their "Virtual Activists" training course.

OneNorthwest –

www.onenw.org

Check out the "Activist Toolkit." OneNorthwest focuses on helping conservation groups in the Northwest use technology, but its online resources are general interest.

The Organizer's Collaborative –

www.organizenow.net

Check out their "Technical Tips for Activists."

General nonprofit Internet management**The Benton Foundation –**

www.benton.org

Resources for integrating the Internet into your communications strategies.

CompuMentor –

www.compumentor.com

Newer site with articles on computers, networking, Internet issues – all for nonprofits.

The Gilbert Center and Nonprofit News –

www.gilbert.org

Lots of info, plus an excellent free e-newsletter

(and a discussion list about Online Fundraising), produced by Michael Gilbert in Seattle.

Guidestar –

www.guidestar.org

Check and update your organization's information in this comprehensive listing of nonprofit organizations, a self-proclaimed "donors guide to the nonprofit universe." The Guidestar Nonprofit Center has links to articles, nonprofit resources, and online vendors servicing nonprofits.

Helping.org (AOL Time Warner Foundation), Resources section –

www.helping.org

Hundreds of carefully chosen links to useful online information on Web development, email, fundraising, and other issues of interest to nonprofits. This is the #1 site for nonprofit info.

Npower –

www.npower.org/resourcesandlinks/index.html

Tools, guides, and resources for nonprofit technology planning and implementation.

OneNorthwest –

www.onenw.org

This group focuses on helping conservation groups in the Northwest use technology, but its online resources are general interest. Check out the "how-to" articles and sign up for ONEList, a monthly e-newsletter of technology tips.

The Progressive Technology Project –

www.progressivetechnology.org

Technology planning resource and courses for nonprofits.

Tech Soup –

www.techsoup.org

"The technology place for nonprofits." Tools, training, analysis, message boards, technology tips, nonprofit jobs, nonprofit discounts, and more.

Books

**Fundraising on the Internet
Second Edition**

Editors: Mal Warwick, Ted Hart & Nick Allen
Jossey-Bass, 2002

The eNonprofit: a guide to ASPs, internet services, and online software

By Michael Stein and John Kenyon
CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, 2002

**The Nonprofit Guide to the Internet:
How to Survive and Thrive**

by Michael W. Johnston, Robbin Lee Zeff
John Wiley & Sons, 1999

The Fund Raiser's Guide to the Internet

by Michael Johnston
John Wiley & Sons, 1998

Daniel Janal's Guide to Marketing on the Internet

by Daniel S. Janal
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000

Cutting Through the Emaze

by Todd Baker
Grizzard, 2001
Download at www.nonprofitwebsites.com

**Email Marketing
(aimed at general business audience)**

Complete Guide to Internet Direct Mail: The Complete Guide to Successful E-Campaigns
by Steve Roberts, Robert W. Bly, Michelle Feit
Ntc Business Books, 2000

Email Marketing

by Jim Sterne, Anthony Priore, Jerry I. Reitman
John Wiley & Sons, 2000

**Marketing With Email:
A Spam-Free Guide to Increasing Awareness,
Building Loyalty, and Increasing Sales by Using
the Internet's Most Powerful Tool**

by Shannon Kinnard
Maximum Pr, 2000

Getting Hits: The Definitive Guide to Promoting Your Web Site

by Don Sellers
Peachpit Press, 1997

Web Design

Homepage Usability: 50 Websites Deconstructed

By Jakob Nielsen & Marie Tahir
New Riders Publishing, 2002

Web ReDesign: Workflow that Works

By Kelly Goto & Emily Cotler
New Riders Publishing, 2002

**Designing Web Usability:
The Practice of Simplicity**

by Jakob Nielsen
New Riders Publishing, 1999

**Web Design in a Nutshell:
A Desktop Quick Reference**

by Jennifer Niederst, Richard Koman (Editor)
O'Reilly & Associates, 1998

**Customer-Effective Web Sites
by Jodie Dagleish**

Prentice Hall PTR, 2000

Secrets of Successful Web Sites

by David Siegel
Hayden Books, 1997

Designing Web Graphics.3

by Linda Weinman
New Riders Publishing, 1999

Web Writing

Writing for the Web

by Crawford Kilian
Self Counsel Press, 2000

Wired Style:

Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age

by Constance Hale (Editor), Jessie Scanlon,
Hale Scanlon
Broadway Books, 1999

APPENDIX B

Articles

“The Internet; Online Giving Is Up. Will It Stay There?”

by Reed Abelson

New York Times, November 12, 2001

“Outlook for Online Donations Is Cloudy, Experts Say.”

by Nicole Wallace

The Chronicle of Philanthropy, March 21, 2002

“All Aboard: More and more large nonprofit groups are raising money online, new Chronicle survey finds.”

by Shannon Kinnard

The Chronicle of Philanthropy, June 14, 2001

“The Gilbert Email Manifest (GEM)”

by Michael Gilbert

Nonprofit Online News, www.gilbert.org, April 10, 2001

“Web Issues and the IRS: A Hot Topic.”

by Grant Williams

The Chronicle of Philanthropy, March 8, 2001

“The E-Philanthropy Revolution is Here to Stay.”

by James E. Austin

The Chronicle of Philanthropy, March 8, 2001

“Apply the Lessons of Direct Mail to the Internet.”

by Nicole Lewis

The Chronicle of Philanthropy, March 22, 2001

Groundspring.org

Online Fundraising Handbook

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