

Ignite Passion by Connecting Online

Find personal ways to build online relationships.

By Jason Buys

What makes people dedicated, loyal, and passionate about a cause? Feeling connected to the people in a community and engaged with their progress.

While it's easy to get that connection in person, whether through staff, volunteers, or events, it's not always so easy to evoke online. Yet it's equally – if not more – important that your online presence ignites that same fire.

In fact, when done right, your website can be the single greatest tool in your arsenal for gathering donations and recruiting volunteers. Here's what you need to know to make it work for you:

1. Your website is the front door.

Your website is your digital entryway, dictating the next action of those who arrive there. Invite them in with these tips:

Create a clean, fresh design. Looks matter. Modern, simple designs and layouts call attention to your mission and story.

Use clear, concise messaging. You have approximately 0.5 seconds before users form an opinion of your site. Tell your organization's story with brief, impactful content. Use messages that reflect your mission and have resonated with donors and volunteers in the past.

Make navigation simple. Your site should have a plethora of resources about your organization. Make it easy to find them. Confusing navigation is the top reason a visitor will leave your site.

Make it responsive. Optimize copy and imagery for faster performance across all desktop and mobile devices so visitors can learn about your cause on the go.

Connection is key – and your chance to make one is short-lived online. Tell your story and offer ways for your visitors to engage from the start, and you'll build the foundation for an ongoing relationship.

“Include social media buttons on every page.”



2. Blogging leads to 55% more website visitors.

The odds of converting visitors into donors and volunteers greatly improve when you increase the amount of traffic landing on your site. And according to a study done by HubSpot, blogging leads to 55% more website visitors. Of course, you have to make sure those visitors are qualified. Here's how:

Educate. While the rest of your site content remains relatively static, your blog is your opportunity to tailor content to what your potential donors and volunteers need to know. Make the information you choose to share relevant, informative, and consistently updated so that visitors have a reason to return. The qualified ones will.

Engage. Your brand has a voice. Use it. Speaking in your brand's unique voice will naturally attract the types of donors and volunteers you want to work with. That attraction is the first step of engagement; action is the second. Make posts not only educational, but actionable. Strong calls to action will empower readers to make a move.

Go deeper. Ever fall down the rabbit hole of great content on a site you love? Make it *your* site that encourages others to do the same. Organize your blog posts by relevant categories, and add related posts at the end of each article to entice them to keep reading.

Your blog is a social platform that you have complete control over – use it wisely, and it will quickly become your best advocate in attracting donors and volunteers.

3. Getting social works.

When you integrate your social media feeds into your website, you give visitors an opportunity to see how you connect in other environments. Here are a few best practices for integrating social on your website:

Make social media buttons visible. Include them on the homepage and on the footer of every page, at the very least.

Enable social sharing. Make it easy for visitors to share your blog posts via their choice of social media platform with easy social sharing buttons.

Optimize content for social. When people do choose to share your content, make it attractive. Enable Open

“With even just a bit of promotion, the potential is unlimited.”

Graph and Twitter Cards to allow images to accompany your social shares.

Integrating social media will empower your advocates to spread your mission and message for you.

4. Creating an experience for donors keeps them coming back.

There's a common theme in making your nonprofit website work for you: Make it easy for the visitor, from clean design and easy navigation to simple sharing. The same theme applies to collecting donations – when you create a positive experience for donors by optimizing the donor page on your website, you keep them coming back. Here's how to do just that:

Show where the money is going. Give donors clarity in exactly how their donation will be put to work. They want to know the difference their dollars will make before they open their wallets. Steal a play from the San Diego Humane Society or the San Diego Zoo – they show a live feed of the kittens they're currently housing and the pandas hanging out.


Simplify the process. A simple snag in the checkout process can send a visitor packing. Keep the donation process simple, cutting out unnecessary steps and asking only for what's absolutely needed.

Practice gratitude. Sealing the positive experience means expressing exactly how grateful you are for the time your donor took to give. Do this through messaging both on the site and in a follow-up e-mail, where applicable. The

gratification donors feel after giving is amplified when they have a positive giving experience.

Connect supporters with your cause

Putting your website to work for you means connecting with visitors, inviting them in, creating a positive experience, and ultimately converting them into supporters for your cause.

Each new visitor you connect with is a chance to further your nonprofit's impact. What step will you take to put your website to work for you today? 

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“Tell stories that have resonated in the past.”

Form More Online Relationships

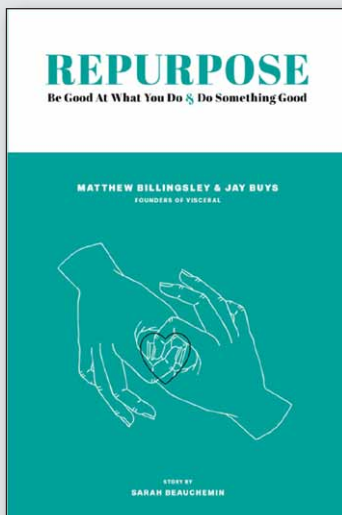
Check out these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

Why Telling the Right Brand Story Matters So Much (Vol. 32, No. 3)

Two Surprising Ways to Broaden Your Reach Online (Vol. 32, No. 4)

Create a Donation Page that Rocks (Vol. 33, No. 1)

Top Can't-Miss Resources for Nonprofits (Vol. 34, No. 3)



In their new book, *Repurpose: Be Good At What You Do & Do Something Good*, Visceral co-founders Jay Buys and Matthew Billingsley share their candid story of all the ups and downs, missteps, victories, and lessons they've learned by running Visceral for 10 years. They explain why time is the new money, how to apply your passion, how the right path oftentimes finds you, and the art of sticking with something that matters in our culture of instant gratification. By helping nonprofits master technology and social networking, Visceral is dedicated to “shaping brands and experiences that inspire change.” Connect with Visceral at thisisvisceral.com.