

A Better Brand = More Loyal Supporters

Is it time to revisit your brand?

By *Isham Colosetti*

Every nonprofit needs to update its brand strategy on a continual basis to meet supporters' needs. Have you looked at your brand recently? If not, here are steps to connect more powerfully with your audiences by taking a user-centered approach to brand strategy:

Begin with your internal stakeholders.

One of your most important audience groups is your internal staff. Don't change your strategy without first receiving their support. A new brand strategy often requires change in the efforts of staff members. They will sabotage your undertaking if you don't make sure they're on board.

Motivate staff by painting a picture of what success will look like. Also, create an image of what *not* doing anything looks like. Remind them in this way that the status quo is a pathway to failure. Inspire them to find ways to take part in the solution.

Perform market research.

Look closely at the people to whom you're aiming your messages. Do some research into who they are. You may find that your assumptions about them aren't backed by data.

Collect all the information you can. What you don't know about these audiences will hurt your ability to stay relevant. Ask these questions about them:

- **What do they like** to read?
- **What events** are they attending?
- **Where are they** in their life?
- **How do they interact** with other brands? What do they like and dislike about those brands?
- **How do they rate you** in comparison to your competition?
- **When did they first become aware** of your organization? If they became loyal supporters, when, how, and why did that happen?

Surveys are a good way to get general information, but one-on-one interviews and focus groups will provide a deeper dive into people's motivations, pain points, and passions. An added advantage of both surveys and focus groups is that they increase positive attitudes about your brand among those who participate in the studies. Circling back to your audience with key outcomes and explaining how the research will affect them will forge a trusting relationship.

INDIFFERENCE

LOYALTY

Design a marketing plan for each audience.

Analyze your research to clarify the needs and aspirations of each of your key constituent groups. Look for ways that your organization's mission and vision intersect with those wants and needs. Then study that place of intersection carefully. Use the overlap between your organization's vision and each audience's needs to create a unique value proposition for that group.

Next, use that value proposition as the foundation for your messaging. Based on that foundation, you can create a program and compelling message tailored to each constituent group.

Create new platforms.

Reimagine the platforms you use to communicate. It's easy to go back to the tried and true methods of communicating, and you shouldn't abandon those methods, but be open to new ways of reaching your constituents. Ask:

- **Where do they spend** their time?
- **Are there other brands, services, or events** that might help you reach them?

Recognize and respect the value of social media channels in public relations and communications, especially within the millennial audience. Commit to using social media in outcome-driven ways to drive actions like donating money

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and sharing information. Create an info ad that generates social interest or concern. Establish a voice for your brand within these platforms and begin showcasing your expertise by commenting on key issues and interests.

Turn supporters into advocates.

Identify brand evangelists – those people who are already devoted to your brand. Turn them into advocates by doing the following:

- **Make it easy for them** to share their enthusiasm and advance your agendas.
- **Ask** for their feedback. Follow up on their input and ideas.
- **Provide as many avenues as possible** for them to circulate your story to their networks and help you spread the good news. 



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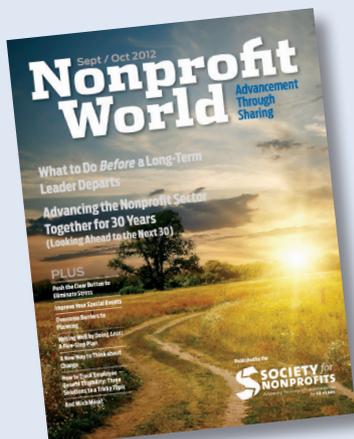
Looking Further

For more ideas on connecting with your audiences and revitalizing your brand, check out these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

- **Why Feedback Is the Key to Your Success** (Vol. 35, No. 3)
- **The Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Evolution** (Vol. 30, No. 6)
- **Remember Your Brand when You Market with Social Media** (Vol. 33, No. 4)
- **Quick & Dirty Research** (Vol. 19, No. 3)
- **Overcome People's Resistance with These Steps** (Vol. 38, No. 3)
- **Using Surveys & Focus Groups to Gather Market Data** (Vol. 13, No. 3)
- **Why Telling the Right Brand Story Matters So Much** (Vol. 32, No. 3)
- **How to Conduct Focus Groups** (Vol. 17, No. 5)
- **Top Five Ways to Engage Donors with Social Media** (Vol. 33, No. 3)
- **Top Can't-Miss Resources for Nonprofits** (Vol. 34, No. 3)
- **Ignite Passion by Connecting Online** (Vol. 34, No. 4)
- **How Mobile Marketing Can Work for You** (Vol. 32, No. 4)
- **Using E-Mail & the Web to Acquire & Cultivate Donors** (Vol. 21, No. 1)

“The status quo is a pathway to failure.”

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