



Accelerating Fundraising through Social Media

Here's a simple way to connect with supporters through online social networks.

By Ed Schipul

There hasn't been much cause for celebration at many nonprofits lately. The public has been distracted by the faltering economy, volunteers have been hard to find, and donor databases have dried up.

One bright spot has been the emergence of social media tools that can boost fundraising. Organizations that are testing social media strategies are realizing how

How do you make the Facebook Causes application really sing?

much potential these tools have. Fundraisers can click the mouse a few times and connect with people passionate about their cause, helping them spread the word, volunteer, and donate.

We're still early in the adoption curve. According to Blackbaud's analysis of Giving USA data, online

donations amount to only 5% of the contributions nonprofits receive. And it's not a panacea. Only a small fraction of the 180,000 organizations that use Facebook Causes have raised more than \$1,000.

But wasn't it just a few years ago that people couldn't imagine shopping, watching movies, and making friends online? What makes us think online donations to charitable causes are any different? In fact, in the first five days after the Haiti earthquake struck in January 2010, the top Facebook Cause for Haiti earthquake relief—benefiting Oxfam America—had raised over \$100,000. Clearly, a significant shift is upon us.

The Best Fundraising Punch

For now, the social media tool that delivers the greatest fundraising punch is Facebook Causes, which empowers people to mobilize their social networks to benefit U.S. registered 501(c)(3) nonprofits or Canadian registered charities. Every single Facebook user has the tools to create a Cause for an issue or campaign, recruit others to join, keep everybody informed with updates, and raise money.

Facebook Causes processes do-

nations automatically via credit card, tallies the results, and reports donation activity via a public "scorecard." The Causes platform works because it's deeply embedded in the world's leading social networks (there's an application for MySpace, too), and it can:

- Create community, and spread awareness.
- Connect people and ideas in new ways.
- Attract new donors and raise money for specific projects and programs.

How to Get Started

How does it work? First, your organization becomes a Causes partner. You receive a profile and access to a dashboard, where you can track donations and download donor contact information. When you're ready to start your own Cause, you can use the Facebook Causes application. Since Causes is a third-party application, you can have Causes, a Fan Page, and a Group on Facebook, if you so desire.

Keys to Success

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Choose an attention-grabbing title. Think of it as a headline. You want to captivate potential supporters.

Convey a sense of urgency so people know you need their help now.

Make your case in three points or less. As with other fundraising communication, the case needs to be simple and to the point.

Provide a concise description of where the Cause is currently, where the Cause is going, and what your goals are. Remember to include relevant links.

Use an evocative photograph that inspires people to take action.

Recruit, recruit, recruit. Use the recruiting tools associated with the Facebook Causes application to invite the maximum number of potential supporters every day, which

is 60. But don't stop there—take your recruiting outside the Facebook borders to newsletters and e-mail, too.

Facebook Causes is a great way to connect with and mobilize believers in your cause. Successful nonprofits of the coming decade will find ways to aggressively leverage this and other social media tools. ■

Ed Schipul is the president and chief executive officer of Schipul – The Web Marketing Company (www.schipul.com), which guides the Web marketing strategy for hundreds of nonprofit organizations.



Resources (at www.snpo.org/members)

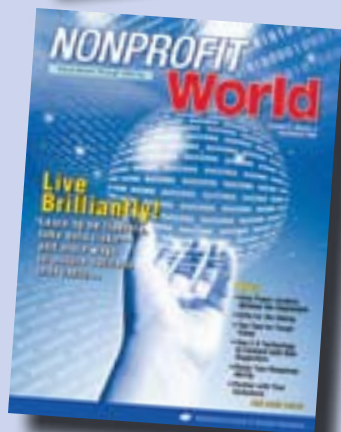
How to Make Social-Media Fundraising Work for You (Vol. 27, No. 2)

Using Social Media to Advance Your Goals (Vol. 27, No. 1)

Is It Time to Consider New Ways to Communicate? (Vol. 25, No. 4)

Using Web 2.0 Technologies to Connect with New Supporters (Vol. 26, No. 4)

Also see Learning Institute programs on-line: Resource Development and O for Opportunity: Exploring New Revenue Opportunities for Nonprofits (www.snpo.org/lino).



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