

Two Surprising Ways to Broaden Your Reach Online

Are you taking advantage of these creative ways to gain new supporters?

By Kelley Jarrett

Online marketing can take many forms. E-mail, Web design, user-generated content, and paid searches are all ways to improve your nonprofit's reach and increase Web traffic. What you may not have considered, though, is how you can actually impact viral sharing and improve interactive marketing on your Web site.

Here are two real solutions that will deliver results.

Social Media: Action Sharing

By now, your organization probably has a Facebook page and a Twitter account. Perhaps you've even started to feed live posts and tweets to your organization's home page. That's certainly the first step toward social media nirvana.

What you might be missing is the chance to let your constituents and Web site visitors do your marketing for you. We call this action sharing.

You have actions you want people to take on your site — donate, volunteer, register for an event, join, make an inquiry, or sign up for your e-newsletter. So how can these already-engaged users help you spread the word and acquire new supporters? By sharing the action they just took with their network of friends and followers! Free (and viral) marketing instigated by you, genius!


The easiest option for action sharing is to create a simple hyperlink using an action-sharing code that lets users tweet an action. For a bigger impact, you can work with an agency to create a lightbox that pops up on screen with a visual custom message when a user takes action on your site.

Nothing.org incorporated this type of visual element into its social marketing to let users share information about their donations with their friends. That simple step greatly broadened the organization's reach. It helped Nothing.org's leaders find new supporters they otherwise didn't have access to.

Interactive Maps

How are you highlighting your organization's impact online? One of the biggest opportunities to engage users is to help them see and feel your mission's impact by interacting with your Web site.

Schools are a no-brainer for interactive apps — Kent's Hill School has done a beautiful job showcasing their campus through a virtual map that lets Web users scroll over the buildings, click to see photos, and virtually experience what campus life is like.

However, schools aren't the only organizations jumping on board with this new marketing technology. Kids and Cars have created a national map that highlights incidents where children have been injured around vehicles. It's designed to educate the public and show the impact its awareness campaigns have on reducing the number of vehicle-related injuries to children. Food banks are another type of organization beginning to utilize maps — to show meals served in the community and the volume of people they've helped with the support they receive. Is there a way you can use interactive maps to engage your supporters and prospects? 

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Where to Find More

For more ways to gain new supporters online, see these articles from the Society for Nonprofits' Library at www.NonprofitWorld.org/members:

Harnessing the Internet to Raise Funds (Vol. 31, No. 2)

What's All the Fuss about ROI? (Vol. 32, No. 2)

Online Strategies for Year-End Fundraising (Vol. 31, No. 3)

The Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Evolution (Vol. 30, No. 6)

The Best Marketers Money Can't Buy (Vol. 32, No. 3)