

## Tips for Holding Virtual Fundraising Events

Online events can be even more profitable than traditional events. They're the perfect solution to times like this, with the coronavirus challenging us to become experts at "fundraising from six feet away," as Jackie Zimmerman puts it. Once you've mastered these moves, you'll be able to use them again in the future, whether it's a time of crisis or not. Zimmerman, a senior instructor at Blackbaud University (blackbaud.com) who hosts podcasts for sgENGAGE (sgengage.com), shares these important pointers:

### General Tips for Virtual Fundraising

**Emphasize your organization's longevity:** "We were here before, and we plan to be here after."

**Explain how people can be involved virtually** – donate online, sign up for your newsletters, follow you on all forms of social media, and so on.

### Livestreaming Ideas

Livestreaming can be a great tool to engage your networks virtually. Some ideas:

**Livestream your mission.** Picture, for example, your development coordinator (or any member of your staff) walking through a line of full kennels to share what receiving donations today will mean for these animals now and in the coming months.

**Engage active donors** (or team captains from your past events if applicable) to livestream from their homes. Ask them to talk about why they support your organization.

**Use Facebook to host** live streams or post specific messages.

**Pull out the pictures** from past years of your organization – your founder, your original board, examples of the impact you've had.

**Encourage selfies** that are part of your brand to be shared during the livestream.

**Ask people to reflect on** what they love about your organization. Use prompts such as "Share your favorite ORGANIZATION NAME moments."

**Invite people your organization has helped** to join a livestreamed chat from home to talk to your constituents.

- **How did our organization** change your life or your family's lives?
- **Why is our organization** so important to you still?

**What's new at your organization? Consider a virtual tour** of your facility, offices, and the like.

**Record the livestream** for those who can't attend so they can watch it later.

### There's an App for That!

SeenIt (seenit.io) lets you turn employees, board members, volunteers, and other supporters into content creators to help you go virtual. With this video crowdsourcing platform, any of your stakeholders can create engaging videos that support your organization's messages.

## The Power of Virtual Volunteering


Provide volunteer-at-home activities:

**Create a form on your website** where people can sign up to receive a card/message from a person your organization has helped.

**Plan a volunteer calling tree** or have volunteers write notes at home that can be sent out.

**Create a printable** for all supporters of your mission to send to their friends. What a fun way to get new supporters and happy mail!

**Get everyone busy on their phones.** A tried and true way to fundraise is over the phone. Phone calls are more personal than e-mail, and if you have your constituents' updated data, this is an easy task for volunteers.

**A final thought:** As a nonprofit, your unique advantage is (and will always be) your networks. You're uniquely positioned to bring people together around a cause they love and a mission they support. As always, be creative in connecting them. 

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*—Many thanks to Jackie Zimmerman and sgENGAGE for this helpful guidance. sgENGAGE (sgengage.com) is a comprehensive resource for best practices in marketing, social media, management, technology, and fundraising for nonprofits.*

## What's the One Thing?

Is there one magical thing, one secret, one answer that will ease this moment in time?

Urszula Lipsztajn (urszula.co) says yes, and the answer is this: Keep dreaming. Of better days. Of possibility. Of a new way. Of a time greater than this moment. Of all the things you want to bring to life.

From Oprah to Harriet Tubman and everyone you haven't heard of, if you look at any story of overcoming hardship you will find this message: Keep dreaming.

Psychotherapist Viktor Frankl, who wrote *Man's Search for Meaning* about his experience surviving concentration camps during WWII, found that people who had something to feel positive about – and imagined the outcome of that thing happening in real life – were much more likely to survive. Dreaming saved their lives.

Urszula suggests; "Pause. Take a breath. Explore some coaching questions":

- **What do you want** the world to look like?
- **What dreams do you want** to make real?
- **What have you already** overcome?
- **What are you** capable of?
- **What future** do you want to help create?

"We have a future to create together," she tells us. "So please – keep on dreaming."

*"Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."*

— Harriet Tubman



## Trends in Nonprofit Communications

Every year Kivi Leroux Miller publishes a nonprofit marketing guide, reporting about different aspects of nonprofit communication. The guide is based on surveys from a wide spectrum of nonprofits. It's the most accurate picture of how nonprofits of all sizes communicate to their constituents and the public.


This year's guide, the *2020 Nonprofit Communications Trends Report* ([nonprofitmarketingguide.com](http://nonprofitmarketingguide.com)) suggests several things that should concern nonprofits:

**While spending a large amount of their resources on social media**, many organizations aren't adopting the approaches that generate the most engagement. For example, they use less than 45% of their social-media posts to educate or to increase participation.

**Less than one-third of nonprofits' social-media posts** share uplifting content with direct calls to action. Nonprofits are weak at using inspirational stories to motivate giving and don't seem to realize the importance of providing clear, simple calls to action like *donate, volunteer, register, or learn more* to spur a response.

**Despite technological advances in e-mail management and engagement**, 78% of nonprofits never cut back the number of e-mails to unengaged supporters, and 69% never stop e-mailing no matter how long a supporter has been unengaged. E-mailing people who never open the message is, simply put, ineffective communication. Unengaged people who continue to receive an organization's e-mails are annoyed, at best, and resentful at worst, damaging nonprofits' reputations and relationships.

**Communication strategies are often left out of organizational planning.** Most nonprofit communication specialists would like more notice about activities and campaigns that are being planned within their organizations. Many would also like to improve their communication skills, a reflection of the too-common nonprofit practice of moving staff into positions with which they have little experience.

Setting communications onto auto-pilot and using resources poorly can harm an organization's good work. The human element of communication is still very necessary; there are no shortcuts to social change. This guide will help you examine the ways you communicate and decide if you're using your resources to best advantage. 

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## What's Your Organization's DNA?

Your organization's culture is like your DNA. It's what makes you tick, Ed Krow ([ed@edkrow.com](mailto:ed@edkrow.com)) tells us in *Strategic HR* ([edkrow.com](http://edkrow.com)). And one of the biggest drivers of your organization's culture, he says, is how you treat your people. If you say your people are your most important resource but rate them on their level of output, there's a disconnect. In that

case, you don't really have a culture that values people; you have a culture that values high productivity.

Krow provides some excellent tips to help you build a thriving culture. For people to be engaged in their work, he notes, they need to be both committed and motivated. It's important to differentiate the two, he says. Commitment is people's loyalty to their workplace. Motivation is a mental condition, such as "I'm enthusiastic" regarding what they do in the organization. Both are necessary for people to be truly engaged.

Surveys pinpoint 12 things people want from their workplace (in no particular order) that will drive their engagement:

1. **They know what's expected** of them at work.
2. **They have everything they need** to do their work.
3. **They have the opportunity, every day, to do** what they do best.
4. **They have received recognition or praise** within the last seven days.
5. **They work for an organization and an individual who care** about them as people.
6. **Learning and development** are encouraged.
7. **Their opinions** matter.
8. **The organization's mission** makes them feel their job is important.
9. **They work with people** who are also committed to doing quality work.
10. **They have a best friend** at work.
11. **Their supervisor has talked to them about their progress** within the past six months.
12. **They've had opportunities** this year to grow and learn. 

## Interested in Cause Marketing?

When a nonprofit and a business join in a cause-related partnership, it can be a win for everyone. The nonprofit raises money and visibility, the business sells more products, and consumers love this way of supporting a worthy cause.

Popular as cause marketing is, nonprofits are often unaware of state requirements for cause partnerships. For example:

- 6 states require commercial co-venture licenses.
- 2 states require surety bonds.
- 14 states require contract filing.
- 6 states require financial reports.
- 10 states require specific language in co-venture contracts.

*Cause Marketing Compliance* discusses these requirements and ways to meet them. You can download the white paper for free on the Harbor Compliance website ([harborcompliance.com](http://harborcompliance.com)).

"Compliance is more than a legal requirement," says Harbor Compliance's Sharon Cody. "It's also an important trust factor that can encourage higher donation and engagement levels."



## Your Greatest Risks

You'll need to overcome some new risks as well as a few familiar risks in the coming year, according to the Nonprofit Risk Management Center ([nonprofitrisk.org](http://nonprofitrisk.org)). Here's how to prepare:

**1. Reskill & Upskill Your Workers.** To be successful, organizations must help workers apply new skills in their existing jobs (upskilling) and in new roles (reskilling). As traditional roles disappear, largely due to the influence of technology, smart leaders are teaching new skills to fill future gaps. The authors of "It's Time for a C-Level Role Dedicated to Reskilling Workers" (*Harvard Business Review*, [hbr.org](http://hbr.org)) suggest that reskilling is a role as important as finance or marketing. "Many organizations need to add full-fledged systems for continuous learning through teaching, training, and assessing," they say.

**2. Guard against Fraud & Cyber Threats.** As data breaches and cyber-terrorism increase, be sure your controls and contingency plans keep pace. Check that you have robust cybersecurity and a clear segregation of duties.

**3. Pay Attention to Demographic Shifts.** Nonprofits face a crucial call to revamp their programs to meet their constituents' needs. The communities you once knew intimately might now be filled with new faces, belief systems, struggles, and dreams for the future. You need to thoroughly assess the changing needs of the community you serve, and that means investing in demographic research.

**4. Clash Or Collaborate with Competitors.** As for-profits grow their corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns, they encroach on territory once reserved for nonprofits. Be ready to compete against these social-good for-profits or collaborate with them. Be careful not to self-sabotage by relying on your nonprofit status as a differentiator.

**5. Contribute to Climate Action.** The public is demanding that all organizations take a stand against climate threats. Even if that's not your primary mission, you need to be an advocate for helping the environment. People will see you as either helping or hurting this cause. If they think you're not helping it, they'll donate somewhere else.

**6. Protect Your Reputation.** Nonprofit leaders are being scrutinized for questionable judgment and aren't quickly forgiven. MIT's reputation, for example, was badly tarnished after it accepted gifts from a sex offender. You can be tainted by the actions of your partners, funders, and other external stakeholders if you're not careful. You can no longer expect to keep your choices private or to avoid the consequences of those choices.

**7. Plan for Transitions.** Many nonprofits struggle to make succession planning and knowledge transfer a top priority. Thus, they face a crisis each time someone leaves. Be sure you have succession plans in place. Ask departing employees to share their quirkiest skills and insights before they leave. Transferring knowledge from mind to mind keeps this powerful currency within your organization and makes transitions easier.



## Thinking in Story

*Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins* by Annette Simmons ([harpercollinsleadership.com](http://harpercollinsleadership.com)) explains how to use stories to build powerful teams, communicate with impact, and maximize people's passion, purpose, and perceptions to assure successful outcomes.

**Gather stories** from your employees, board members, volunteers, and clients. To do so, ask them questions that connect them to sensory details. For example: "Tell me about your best day at work. How did you feel? Who was there? Where were you? What were your surroundings like?"

**Free yourself from your need for verifiable evidence** while sharing narratives. Stories are all about feelings, and there's no way to fact-proof feelings.

**During training, recount true cases** that mirror experiences familiar to your audience. Doing so will make learning more interesting, memorable, and valuable.

**To improve cultural awareness, ask people** from other cultures to tell stories from their lives. Such tales will help bridge differences, smooth communication, and create more effective teams.

**Use scenario planning** to test your strategies against a variety of possible futures. Making the future tangible provides insights into the plausibility of your vision.

**Use metaphors** to frame your messages. Metaphors are mini-stories that can help demystify complex ideas.

## Everything You Wanted to Know about Raising Funds

If the publisher is Emerson and Church ([emersonandchurch.com](http://emersonandchurch.com)) and the author is Tom Ahern, you can be sure the advice will be enormously useful. That's true of *If Only You'd Known, You Would Have Raised So Much More*.

The book promises to provide "airtight answers to 40 questions essential to your fundraising success." It delivers on that promise, and then some. Just a few of its gems, all backed by long experience and research:

**Don't worry about making your fundraising letters too long** or your type too big. Be as readable as possible. Break up the letter with bold type, bullets, and white space. Use short words and short, simple sentences.

**Remember that your donors** don't give to you. They give *through* you, to make something important happen. So be sure to let them know what you do with their money and how their gift has made a difference.

**When holding fundraising events**, your goal shouldn't be educating or entertaining donors. Your goal should be to *transform* donors so that they'll feel differently about their connection to your organization after the event.

**Don't give up on sending out newsletters.** Print newsletters can make as much money as direct-mail appeals. Do both.

Ahern backs up each of these nuggets of wisdom with details to help you make the most of them. Fundraising is all about connection, and this book is a treasure trove of good advice on connecting with donors.





## Don't Just Dream It

If you have big dreams and goals for yourself and your organization, that's a good starting point. But you also need to take action and make it happen. The authors of *Darn Easy* (McGraw-Hill Education, mheducation.com) set out steps to reaching your goals:

**Start with awareness.** Notice the language you use in your thoughts and speech. Make an effort to cut out negative words and focus on the positive. If you think or say, "This idea is going to be tough to implement," you decrease the chances of success.

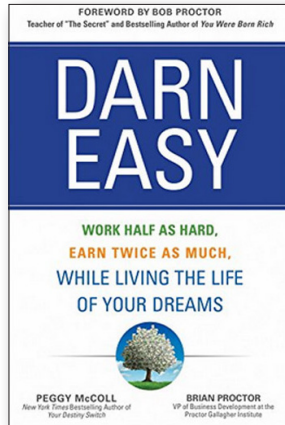
**Set goals that stretch you a bit further** than you think you can go. Stretch goals will help you expand your personal capacities while inspiring you to fulfill your dreams. When you're stretching, you're growing.

**Write down your objectives** in the present tense. Think of those objectives as if you're achieving them right now.


**Consider all the obstacles** you may face, but don't dwell on them. Instead, plan how you'll overcome them.

**Create regular practices** that will commit you to growth. For example, tell yourself that you'll speak daily to a client, donor, board member, or other organizational stakeholder. Or vow to check in routinely with a trusted mentor to talk over your progress toward your goals and make sure you're on track.

**Keep pushing forward** one tiny step at a time.



Whatever you can do,  
Or dream you can,  
Begin it.  
Boldness has genius, power,  
And magic in it.

— Goethe 

## The Power of Healthy Questions

Do you know how to ask the right questions – not only of others but of yourself? In *Winning Well* (harpercollinsleadership.com, letsgrowleaders.com), Karin Hurt and David Dye provide vital questions. Some examples:

**After a decision is reached, do you clarify** who does what, by when, and how you'll know it's been done? Are expectations clear to all parties? Check for understanding with questions like these: Joe, can you review the steps we discussed? What do you plan to do first? When's the completion date? Who will you pass the results to? When can they expect those results?


**Do you hold** accountability check-ins? Have you added regular times on your calendar to check in with people to see how they're doing? If things are going great, do you applaud the behavior? If not, do you use that as an opportunity for further coaching?

**Are people clear** about the criteria for success? For each problem to be solved, do they know what success will look like? Do they know what they can learn as a result of solving the problem?

**Does your team have the skills and equipment** to succeed at their tasks? (Don't guess – Ask them.)

**What's the single most important thing** you need to do for each of the next three days?

Not all questions are good, as Hurt and Dye make clear. Poor questions place blame and dwell on failure. Examples: Who screwed up? Why did you do that? What were you thinking? In contrast, winning questions focus on learning and problem-solving. For instance: What is your goal? What have you tried? What happened? What did you learn from what happened? What will you do next time?

What if someone answers your question with, "I don't know"? Your bonus question is, "What might you do if you did know?" That question, Hurt and Dye say, is like magic. When you ask it, you help people push through their ordinary blocks, share their ideas, and brainstorm solutions. *Winning Well* overflows with win-wins like this. 

## Is Your Website ADA Compliant? Here's How to Avoid Lawsuits & Costly Fines

As many as one in four adults in the U.S. have some type of disability. Many people with disabilities rely on adaptive tools to use technology. For example, someone who is visually impaired can use a screen reader to browse a website.


If a website isn't programmed to meet today's accessibility standards, adaptive tools won't work correctly. People with disabilities will be left at a disadvantage.

The federal government requires by law that websites and apps offering services to the public must comply with accessibility guidelines. Organizations that don't comply are at risk of financial penalties.

Lawsuits against organizations that aren't compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are on the rise. Fines can range from a low of \$10,000 to millions, not to mention enormous legal fees.

Having a website that meets modern standards will not only help you avoid costly lawsuits. It will provide you with improved search engine visibility as well, which means an increase in traffic to your site.


A service called Adaptable is helping organizations reach ADA compliance on their websites, apps, and other digital resources and is making this service affordable to nonprofits with a special rate. It's also offering a free website audit to nonprofits.

To arrange a free website audit, contact Chris Herlihy (781-801-5803, ch@adaptablelab.com) or visit [adaptablelab.com](http://adaptablelab.com). 

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## How Likely Are You to Reach Your Goal? These Statistics Tell the Story

A great way to keep your project moving forward is to build in accountability. Consider these statistics on the likelihood of reaching your goal:

- 10% if you hear an idea
- 25% if you decide to do it
- 40% if you decide when you're going to do it
- 50% if you plan how you're going to do it
- 65% if you tell someone you're going to do it
- 95% if you set up a time to report back to that person on how you did. 

—Michael Bungay Stanier, *Do More Great Work*, michael@michaelbungaystanier.com, boxofcrayons.com

## Reach across Borders to Build Relationships

Till now, there has been little information about boundary spanning in the public sphere. *Boundary Spanners in Public Management and Governance* (Edward Elgar Publishing, elgaronline.com) fills this gap. Nonprofits, with interests similar to public agencies, can benefit from the research reported in this comprehensive book.

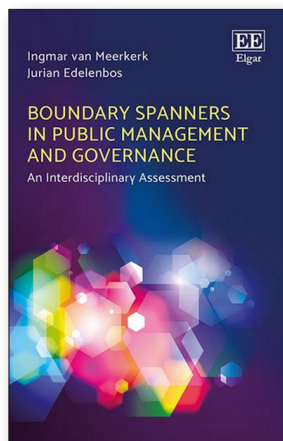
Boundary spanners are people who work across organizational and sector barriers to connect information, processes, and people. The book gives a face to boundary spanners, profiling their qualities, explaining the different roles they play, and exploring their experiences. The authors categorize boundary spanners into four types:

**Fixers** excel at finding resources outside their own communities to fix problems. They're pragmatic, result-driven troubleshooters, finding practical solutions by scanning the environment to seek out whatever resources are at hand.

**Bridgers** are leaders who build partnerships across community boundaries. They don't do the hands-on work themselves but, rather, bring people from different organizations together, then leave it to them to follow up.

**Brokers** are the ones who do the hands-on work. They're directly engaged in conversations among people from different organizations. Their main role is in developing an infrastructure for cross-boundary cooperation. They excel at tasks such as creating budgets and guidelines.

**Innovative entrepreneurs** detect windows of opportunity and come up with creative ways to connect people in different spheres. They have a drive to develop new ideas and build strategic alliances.




All effective boundary spanners share certain traits:

**They're adaptable** and empathetic.

**They're good at negotiation** and conflict management.

**They have great communication** and listening skills.

**They believe deeply** in collaboration, and they work to create a culture that supports it.

Intended primarily for researchers, this book also provides ample tips for nonprofit leaders. It's worth understanding the characteristics that define boundary spanners and working to develop them in ourselves. 

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## Beyond the Briefs

To explore issues raised in these briefs in more detail, take a look at these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

**Engage Donors with Social Media** (Vol. 33, No. 3)

**Mitigate Cyber Risks with the Right Security Controls** (Vol. 36, No. 1)

**Want to Hire Top Talent? Create an Irresistible Culture** (Vol. 33, No. 4)

**What's the Best Way to Avoid Financial Misuse?** (Vol. 36, No. 3)

**Planning to Succeed: Creating a Succession Plan** (Vol. 29, No. 3)

**Why Wisdom Is Being Lost – & How You Can Capture It** (Vol. 27, No. 6)

**Motivate Workers with Training Opportunities** (Vol. 33, No. 3)

**The Nonprofit Executive as Chief Learning Officer** (Vol. 16, No. 2)

**Negative Publicity: Do Nonprofits Have a Plan?** (Vol. 18, No. 6)

**Is There a Cause-Related Partnership in Your Future?** (Vol. 32, No. 1)

**Dealing with Change in a VUCA World** (Vol. 37, No. 4)

**Good Leaders Ask Dumb Questions: Leadership Traits in Defense of Asking the Obvious** (Vol. 36, No. 3)

**We Are Made for Story** (Vol. 37, No. 4)

**Think, Dream, and Do** (Vol. 28, No. 6)

**Are You Equipped to Lead in a World of Great Complexity?** (Vol. 37, No. 1)

**E-Mail Mistakes that Could Be Damaging Your Fundraising** (Vol. 36, No. 2)

**Creating Breakthroughs** (Vol. 26, No. 4)

**How to Accommodate Disabilities under ADA** (Vol. 18, No. 5)

**Show Off a Little: New Approach Forges Bonds** (Vol. 26, No. 4)