

Using Social Media to Spur Fundraising

You can use online channels to raise money, spark advocacy, and engage your community.

By Terrence Fernsler

Social Change Anytime Everywhere.
By Allyson Kapin and Amy Sample Ward. Softcover.
230 pages. John Wiley & Sons (wiley.com).

The always-on nature of technology has changed how organizations operate and how nonprofit organizations structure campaigns. Every nonprofit and social change organization has the ability to use many online channels to get its message out, foster a community, support activism, and cultivate donors 24 hours a day. Meanwhile, the Internet, social media, and mobile technology have evolved into very effective tools to facilitate social change.


These tools can integrate messages across platforms. *Social Change Anytime Everywhere* includes tactics to synchronize your messages and to measure results across multiple channels. It can help you use the tools to connect with constituents and engage new supporters.

The term “online multichannel” refers to tools that operate across several online platforms—e-mail, Web sites, social media, and mobile. The book begins with an overview of multichannel technology, and explains how you can use this technology to differentiate your organization from the pack.

Case studies, covering specific techniques and systems for success in advocacy, fundraising, and community building, illustrate strategies to use. The cases demonstrate what integrated multichannel campaigns in action look like, and how to equip such campaigns to be ready for mobilizing supporters and building community “anytime, everywhere.”

The authors offer advice for easing the transition from a reactive organization to a proactive social change organization that incorporates a variety of different channels and evaluates their effectiveness. Changes in technology are continuous, so an organization ready to exploit social media for social change must be a learning organization, and the authors explore what that looks like when using multichannel campaigns.

This book helps nonprofit organizations achieve real impact through the use of social media. If our organizations are going to help solve the most difficult social problems, we need the right tools, and we need to examine how these tools can create more nimble and efficient organizations.

Social media can help us receive feedback that will make our organizations more resilient and adept so that we can improve our response to community expectations. A multichannel approach helps us develop strategies to have meaningful and transparent conversations that better mobilize our communities to tackle social problems. 

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What Motivates People to Donate?

It's important to be realistic about how money impacts social change. Studies around the psychology of giving tell a story that might surprise you:

The more you ask people to suffer, the more money you'll bring in. Enduring pain can be motivating. That's why marathons are so successful in raising funds.

Donors want to save one person, not hundreds or millions. They connect with an individual rather than a large group. Show people the face of a single person with whom they can identify.

People are ruled by their emotions. The way to raise money is to get people to feel, not think.

Peer pressure causes people to donate more. Any time you can tell prospects how much others are giving, they'll tend to give more. For example, spurring competition (a form of social peer pressure) through online peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns is very successful throughout the nonprofit community.