

Marketing Strategy in Nonprofit Organizations: Promotion

1. Introduction to Promotion in Nonprofit Organizations

Introduction Promotion is a crucial element of the marketing mix, allowing organizations a channel through which to communicate their mission with the intent of engaging their audience. While the concept of promotion is no different, nonprofit organizations, especially those that focus on social causes, face unique challenges when it comes to promoting their products. Most notably, they have to promote an intangible product, in that services and benefits provided are not physically tangible items. But with challenge comes opportunity, and effectively addressing these hurdles has the potential to enhance their branding and marketing efforts. As nonprofits operate largely based on donations, promotion is a necessary tool that can be utilized to raise awareness about the organization, correct public misconceptions, build a brand, and motivate their stakeholders to act. As such, promotional efforts must be directly connected to organizational strategy, follow established promotion goals and objectives, and integrate with other business functions in a coordinated manner. Because word of mouth is among the most effective ways to engage new stakeholders, it is especially important that promotional efforts focus on engagement with those already connected to the organization. The environment in which nonprofit organizations operate is changing. In more recent years, nonprofits are increasingly acting like businesses, and NGOs are acting like nonprofits, necessitating a more strategic view when it comes to nonprofit marketing. Marketing is especially important to ensure the survival of nonprofits. As more organizations begin to champion similar causes, the importance of having clear and consistent marketing activities is even further underscored. Following this train of thought, marketing may support the operations of nonprofit arts organizations, where the utilization of marketing has been declared contentious. Indeed, it is suggested that organization fit and culture may impact the level of communication emphasis in nonprofit organizations. Given this contention and the unique nature of nonprofit organizations, more research is needed in relation to the role of promotion in nonprofit operations and the increasingly commercial communication implications for nonprofit organizations.

2. Importance of Promotion in Nonprofit Organizations

Promotion is important to nonprofit organizations! Promotion is the fourth marketing-mix variable (product, place or distribution, price, and promotion), which creates the value for the offering that encourages a transaction. Point-of-sale researchers found that Gen Z and millennials actually liked being marketed to and, more often than not, would describe a good marketing effort as "authentic." Such information is more and more important because it is getting harder for nonprofits to motivate people to give!

In this chapter, the role that marketing strategy can play in helping community-based nonprofits fulfill their missions is discussed. One of the places where marketing strategy can be particularly important is in "promotion." Why? Promotion is very important to reach people and raise visibility about how their organization brings value to the community, gets the attention of those potential supporters or volunteers who might be interested in partnership, and funds the work. More and more frequently, especially since the summer of 2019, more community-based nonprofits are seeking to build awareness campaigns to get the attention of potential volunteers for public service, be it as an election poll worker or based on a need created by disaster. Nonprofits have limited resources. They do not have a bank account that acts like a faucet of cash. Without finding creative ways that stretch out dollars in enough combinations that work, the community cause likely cannot reach the community-based organization's desired future situation. Furthermore, often when a "new" promotion trick that was once the best way to go is found, big businesses are already heavily using it and chasing away the very customer set that one thought would be easy to reach using it!

3. Key Differences in Promotional Strategies between Nonprofit and For-Profit Organizations

Nonprofit and for-profit organizations have longstanding differences, and understanding these distinctions can make a world of difference while strategizing promotion in the not-for-profit environment. In promotional strategies, the bottom line difference is this: for-profit promotional endeavors seek to maximize profit. This is the primary motivation for their campaigns. On the other hand, promotional efforts by not-for-profit organizations seek to educate and engage the community with their purpose, to generate and empower a pool of supporters. Naturally, the

target market in each case is different, which then also influences the means of communication and a whole lot of other aspects of promotion.

Nonprofit organizations may have some of their program revenue through selling goods and services but are predominantly funded by donations. Consequently, asking for donations is their main sales pitch. However, the for-profit sector primarily sells goods and services. A message that asks their customers to donate might not resonate with them, as all media, content, and promotional material distributed or spread will often focus on driving donations. At a very high level campaign strategy, a not-for-profit often thanks their donor community and invites continued support. A platitude of involvement is the clincher. In contrast, for-profits capitalize on profits; their content asks the audience to support programs that benefit themselves and their community. Asking for donations would be madness.

Promotion in the not-for-profit sector can be quite extensive in scale. Community-minded promotional messages might include online video campaigns, community service announcements, social media placements, website highlights, radio, public speaking, and billboards to name a few. In contrast, for-profit promotion walks a much finer line. A for-profit business will enhance its profile by involving itself with a worthwhile cause. Well-placed stories in the local press about one-off activations, social media mentions, word of mouth, and a donation to the cause are often part of the deal. In essence, for-profits also have a target market for their cause-related activity; it's their potential customers. This is key stamina-building performance and brand image. Understanding these differences was foremost when considering tactics and media placements in this area.

4. Understanding the Target Audience in Nonprofit Promotion

When it comes to promoting events, programs, and needs, a nonprofit needs to first decide who they are trying to reach. Nonprofit organizations should seek to develop a continuum of relationships with their community geared to the interests, skills, and time commitment of each constituent. You do not need to take on such a large project if you do not have the time now. However, you should consider this concept in putting your nonprofit's marketing strategy together. This means that not all of your target markets will receive the same messages.

Nonprofit organizations can identify target markets or “audiences” based on demographics, but some are also discovering that they must identify interests and activity levels to properly identify key markets. The more you know about who you are trying to reach, the more effective your market outreach will be. Treating your audience as one big pool means you are not putting a large percentage of your marketing messages in front of people who would benefit from the information. Finally, once nonprofit organizations have decided who they want to reach, they will conduct research to learn more about that group in order to decide the best way to market to them. With that being said, for our purposes we know that our intended audience/market is these two groups. And both have to be treated as our secondary rather than primary target. The Latina audience we will not ignore, but we cannot target our entire promotion towards them.

5. Utilizing Digital Marketing Tools for Nonprofit Promotion

The way people access and engage in digital activities suggests that building an online presence is essential. A website provides a foundation for various digital tactics. An email newsletter can inform subscribers of the donor and volunteer needs of an organization, providing essential information and updates with a more personal, direct touch than a website. Connecting a website with other digital tactics, including social media, email campaigns, and local business listings, allows an opportunity for search engine optimization improvement. Email signup can also capture visitors' emails for potential donation and volunteer purposes. Social media platforms offer the ability to engage with the community, develop relationships with community members, other organizations, and local businesses. Social media also provides a lens into the inner workings of an organization, as well as showcasing the outcome of the work being put into said organization.

Ready to engage in digital marketing? There are a few nonprofit staff members that should be aware of this: staff responsible for marketing and fundraising at the nonprofit level, tech staff that might make required changes and purchases, and possibly administration and oversight staff or board members. Although digital marketing efforts are often led by marketing and fundraising staff members, all staff members and volunteers should be aware of promotions and the online personality and values of the association. The utilization of appealing, tech-savvy websites and mastering the art of social media are important for communicating outward with

the community; the key term to bear in mind is 'communicate outward' – possibilities to share your story and the stories of others, all with an underlying message of how the potential funder or volunteer can help, and why they should. Websites are about conveying your message regarding your organization to the general public, volunteerism, and fund-giving in an attractive, appealing, and proficient manner. Once they visit the digital space, however, because the majority of potential volunteers and donors were not explicitly hunting for your organization, you must offer them a call to action in order to grow their initial interest. Establish a way to communicate on a regular basis and remind them of your existence. Consider a signature email newsletter or other marketing activities. Encourage them to become captivated, join, donate, and volunteer. Do not squander your time attempting to attract a crowd. Instead, invest your efforts in educating potential volunteers and donors about the purpose of this stage and what the following stages are. Plan for a subsequent visit from your digital guests.

6. Social Media Strategies for Nonprofit Promotion

Social media can be a nonprofit's best friend for building a network and getting the word out about their cause. A nonprofit needs to research its target market to gain a better understanding of the appropriate platform to choose for its social media strategy. There are many platforms to choose from, and the nonprofit needs to do the research to determine which platform will be most suitable for its target market. Two of the most popular platforms for most nonprofits are Facebook and Instagram. When a nonprofit puts content out for the public or stakeholders to see, the content should be engaging and shareable. The nonprofit should continue to post in an effort to build a community. Several different techniques can be used to advertise a nonprofit's social media posts to increase its reach. In addition to advertising, the nonprofit can also do influencer partnerships to increase its reach.

A challenge for a nonprofit to overcome is the constant changes of the various algorithms. For this reason, a nonprofit should put more effort into advertising and influencer partnerships on social media, which remains a successful practice. Another practice that a nonprofit may follow is to be transparent and keep the same voice and messaging, regardless of the avenue chosen or the message developed. Nonprofits face increased competition for a limited number of consumer donation dollars. The challenge for new nonprofits or those nonprofits trying a new avenue to gain entry to a population is getting the word out to that audience. With large marketing budgets and the quest for a good cause, it is a challenge to distinguish the

position of the new nonprofit from an established nonprofit. All of the marketing team's efforts need to be data-driven and adjust and/or reallocate the marketing strategies based on the results achieved.

7. Content Marketing and Storytelling in Nonprofit Promotion

Advancements in technology have greatly impacted the way nonprofits now do promotion and the tools they use. Content marketing is now king, and storytelling in the form of narratives that move audiences from supporters to champions can support your advocacy goals as well as your fundraising needs. Personal stories provide people with the facts and emotional unity that can inspire vision and investment. Core content areas that resonate include testimonials from people who have benefited from your work or volunteered with your organization. Testimonials need to be real and resonant. Additional core content includes special case studies that illustrate your evidence-based work, stories illustrating your history, and stories that connect with people and reflect a trend or event, and, of course, visual storytelling. Video albums, image stories, memes with quotes, etc.

Once you have your content, where do you put it? You can use it on your website, in your blog posts, in newsletters, and on social media. The big idea in distribution is to use it widely, more widely than you think you should. Your audiences are more fragmented than ever before, so your presence should be "omnipresent." Finally, you must tell true stories. Genuine stories engage audiences, and by cultivating relationships, you will earn increased engagement. As the digital marketing movement continues to deepen, cognitive overload has emerged as a challenge, and people do not read all the content we publish for them. To reach your audience, the right stories must be paired with the right channels. People are ultimately motivated to engage in your cause through stories of people, both central staff and local participants. Stories should offer hope for the future and display our grit and gratitude at all levels for the struggle this work represents. Most importantly, they should indicate why our values call us to serve. Nonprofits must continue to craft stories that speak to our commitment. As you produce your proven content, be sure to track your metrics to support your assumptions. Data analysis of content on websites, social channels, and newsletters will tell you a lot about the audience's response to your storytelling on that channel. Be sure to listen to the audience and respond to their needs.

8. Event Marketing in Nonprofit Organizations

A well-planned event can serve myriad purposes. It can raise awareness for a cause. It can introduce a new cohort of people to the work of an organization. It can educate people about a specific issue. It can provide a forum for community building, fundraising, and networking. Events can be as different as your end users and can be used as an effective marketing tool as long as the event assists in reaching the organization's goals. Types of events include ambassador or open house events, workshops, golf outings, auctions, raffles, marathons, galas for 200 to 2,000 guests, and even virtual events without the cost of refreshments and entertainment.

Every event also needs to fund the mission by bringing in enough money to cover all the expenses and adding extra in the form of profit. At the same time, social entrepreneurship is at the root of many non-profits leveraging activities such as the sale of goods and services as primary income sources. Promotion is key to this strategy and is often developed as an overall marketing plan that promotes all activities. Events support the promotion by providing something visually stimulating and new to capture the imagination and open the wallet. The promotion of your event can start with determining what type of marketing on an event-by-event basis is possible and then expanding the plan based on tools available and target clientele. The key to investment in event promotion is an understanding of who your constituents are. Getting the right people to your event involves developing partnerships, securing the support of sponsors, calling upon corporate partnerships, using your network, and providing solid reasons for people to attend or financially underwrite your event.

Of course, successful event management takes more than a good cause. Logistically, you need to decide your event date, brainstorm venues, and decide outside or inside, stick to an event schedule, decide on a theme, develop a budget incorporating in-kind donations, incorporate food and beverage needs, theme decorations, and donated items for patrons, and of course all the details that will ensure a successful and lucrative raffle or auction. The day of the event is simply that: one stressful day, where every detail has been attended to. The event staff should be happy, polite, and professional, understanding that they are the organization's representatives. Drive home key messages and follow up with thank yous including recognition to help the marketing circle continue by thanking your guests and encouraging their return. Do not forget to thank your vendors and committee with a handwritten thank you card.

Finally, incorporate a post-event report to evaluate the outcomes including key financials, photos, and feedback from your patrons. Of course, events can only be a tool if they are doing something for your organization, so why conduct them and what are the key messages you'll be providing? Other problems can include the development of events when you do not have strictly controlled financials and another more important mission activity. Another problem facing event management is the increased competition with most organizations and non-profits wanting the same funds and patron dollars. Correctly marketing your events is really important as a competitive edge is given to those organizations that have their story documented and can demonstrate why they deserve your limited time or money.

9. Collaborative Partnerships for Promotional Activities in Nonprofit Organizations

Whether seeking to enhance public visibility or communicate messages to specific target audiences, many nonprofits lack the personnel, skills, time, or money needed to implement successful promotional activities due to their limited resources. Even within organizations, staff and volunteers may not have sufficient expertise in marketing, branding, or media relations. Under such circumstances, additional resources may be found and made available through collaborative partnerships with other organizations, including nonprofits, businesses, and community groups. Strategic partners can provide information on additional promotional opportunities that help promote everyone's agendas. They also share techniques and tactics that have proven to be effective. For the collaborative efforts to be successful, entities must participate on relatively equal footing. At a minimum, all parties involved in a collaborative effort should receive mutual benefit and respect. It is also important that these organizations' missions or brands' "look and feel" are consistent. Additionally, collaborative efforts need to be ongoing and high-touch. The more time individuals spend getting to know each other, the better equipped they will be to produce a successful marketing effort. A lower level of staff also helps to keep the promotion to a more manageable level. A great deal of the success lies in the follow-up, and it is easier to keep up with a few other organizations' staff versus a large group. Here are a few examples of simple collaborative relationships: joint events including those where agencies reach out to companies to co-brand opportunities; brochures or features to list referral partners for goods or services where the nonprofit need is the complement of what another nonprofit does; creation of online

or hardcopy newsletters to feature articles submitted by referral partners; cross-promotion of complementary programs on each organization's website, blog, or social networking tools. While partnerships can be a valuable asset to nonprofit organizations, they can quickly go awry. Professionals noted some of the typical issues that can arise in partnerships, such as separate individual organizations' goals and objectives, too much competition for promotion, charity politics, and personality conflicts. Staff indicated that they have been successful through open and frequent communication with all marketing partners.

10. Measuring the Effectiveness of Promotional Campaigns in Nonprofit Organizations

Effectiveness of PR campaigns. Indicator measuring in the nonprofit sector Nonprofit organizations have to invest considerable resources into the organization of charity-raising and volunteer activities. To estimate the results of these activities, effectiveness should be determined. The system of indicators helps to measure the extent of these operations and to compare them with corresponding benchmarks. Currently, several types of campaign performance metrics and tools have been developed to evaluate their effectiveness. At the same time, non-commercial organizations have specific missions and objectives, so it is necessary to give recommendations for the measurement and monitoring of the 'not-for-profit' promotion. Key performance indicators form the components of the balanced scorecard, and in this context, the promotion results are measured in terms of financial indexes, the volume of calls and funds received, the number of participants, the number of customers, and fluctuations therein. It is recommended to measure the promotional activities based on outcomes rather than the output of the program. To achieve this, one of the main areas of research should include various factors to evaluate the various aspects and possible causes.

11. Ethical Considerations in Promotional Activities for Nonprofit Organizations

Ethical concepts and considerations are applicable to all of the functional areas of a business, including promotion. Promotion can raise some very tempting dilemmas faced by nonprofit organizations, in part due to the noncommercial environment, which is not governed explicitly by income and market shares. Since nonprofits do not seek to generate profits, their promotion and advertising can be seen as

manipulative or deceptive. Ethical fundraising affects all promotional strategies. Fundraising cannot be misleading or manipulative. Nonprofits have a moral obligation to fulfill all of their donors' wishes, in part because they are not constrained in the same way as others by the correct use of numbers. Charities must also abide by regulations and guidelines in order to keep their image and maintain trust spanning from their supporters. Transparent laws and regulations help subdue skepticism and create an environment that fosters externally imposed socially responsible behaviors. Promotion should be honest and plain, and fundraising activities should abide by the law.

Ethical responsibilities are owed to the people or groups directly or indirectly affected by activities, in this case, the individuals and communities that may be aided or hurt by noncommercial tactics. Nonprofits must take every step to make sure their fundraising and promotional strategies are ethical. To do so, they must focus not on the symptoms, such as merely developing a code of ethics, but on the underlying issues, such as the failure of organizational culture that does not commit the organization to ethical behaviors. Nonprofits also have ethical responsibilities to their staff and volunteers, potential beneficiaries, members of boards of directors, supporting organizations, sponsoring companies, funding organizations, other supporting organizations, and society at large. It will be beneficial for nonprofits to apply ethical principles to the act of raising money and promotion. The principles of marketing can shape and control both ways of raising money and promotion. All of the above relationships and perceptions assist in building a strong base to ensure the success of promotional marketing strategies. Ethical fundraising and nonprofit promotion will play a vital role in the advancement of nonprofit organizations.

12. Conclusion and Future Trends in Nonprofit Promotion

The need to promote your nonprofit has only grown over time, and marketing has merely become more targeted while attention has only become more scarce. It is no longer enough for marketing to be about branding; we are a world obsessed with data, and data can demonstrate the return on investment of advertising for fundraising over traditional ads. There are new opportunities in communications and promotions emerging from the ways the world is changing. Although not as lauded for its opportunity as automation and data, channels that offer more personal and in-depth experiences between the organization and the constituent now exist. Podcasts, virtual reality, and conversational social media platforms are not widely consumed avenues of content; they can have a big impact on

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engagement. It is time to move away from where every other nonprofit is fishing and start prioritizing where to fish and how.

As digital communication becomes more integrated into strategy, it is time for nonprofits to look critically at how to reach the increasing “experiential” cohort across all audiences now and for them to come. Social norms and values are shifting, with companies and brands being expected to display social responsibility and a dedication to settling at least some social wrongs. A good start is making good on their own promises and values—they must operate with the level of transparency that is possible and ethical given donor, recipient, and business considerations. As a values-driven sector, nonprofits must stay ahead of the curve by paying attention to shifts like these. Some already have focused on the personalization of both service delivery and ongoing interactions—recognizing that the organization has to adjust itself to the potential systems and to communicate with their interests and similarities to those they serve. This mindset shift also goes beyond day-to-day operations and seeps into the fiber of your marketing. Moreover, as generations such as Baby Boomers continue to age, the next generations will be forming both a larger part of the population and the economic market. Generations such as Gen Z and Millennials are either proving to be already charitable if in non-traditional ways or, with the right motivation, potential long-term members.

Ultimately, the nascent future of nonprofit promotion is a landscape of constant evolution. Strategic communication and promotional efforts will continuously need assessments and reevaluations. With new technological developments and organizations forging purpose-driven networks of companies, the future could hold unexpected platforms for charity promotion in unforeseen forms. The constituents themselves are also continually evolving in their engagement behavior. It is important for any nonprofit to continue to learn both about the nonprofit world itself and the changing context in which one operates. A belief that access to creativity and adaptability in marketing efforts is more widely available to nonprofits. Although it is not deterministic that the markets will shift, it does provide at the very least greater latitude to alter and expand the promotional mix—whether because constituents are willing to engage and experiment with more institutions and ideas, perhaps because non-traditional tools of engagement over time have shaped values and interests. At base, marketing itself is reevaluated change in the strategies, tactics, and campaigns to keep the current citizens’ awareness and the potential people they want to reach.

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