

# Nonprofit Communications Report

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MONTHLY COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR NONPROFITS

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## BOOST YOUR VISIBILITY

# Share Your Expertise Through Speaking Engagements

By Erin Sandage

Nonprofit organizations are struggling to stand out, and their public relations and communication efforts can easily get lost among a sea of competitive voices. Public speaking is a great way to boost that important visibility, says Steve Markman, founder and president, Markman Speaker Management (Needham, MA). Speaking at conferences, seminars and forums can give your organization exposure while setting you up as a thought leader.

Markman says public speaking has a lot of benefits, including being able to share your expertise with attendees, increasing your visibility in your sector, gaining branding for your organization and even generating new supporters. He shares his best practices for getting on a speaking circuit:

- 1. Create a high-impact presentation.** Markman says presentations should be educational, not promotional. "Audiences want to acquire actionable information they can take back to their organizations," he notes. "A solid, informative presentation will create instant credibility, obviating the need for a 'sales pitch.'"
- 2. Target the right audience.** The right speaking engagements, whether you're a solo presenter or panelist, will have audiences made up of clients and customers you want to reach, says Markman.
- 3. Be proactive about getting speaking**

**engagements.** Markman suggests aggressively identifying opportunities, developing relationships with event organizers and writing and submitting speaker proposals. "The results should yield an increase in the frequency of speaking engagements."

- 4. Learn the process for submitting a speaker proposal.** Processes can be formal, like filling out a Call for Speakers application, or informal, like simply sending an email to a decision-maker. Markman says no matter the process, take measures to submit all the required information — a presentation abstract tailored to the event objectives, bio and speaker expertise — and have it all in by deadline.
- 5. Be persistent.** Markman says it's OK to be persistent when it comes to earning a speaking spot. But it's best to reconnect with the event organizer with additional information to support your proposal. Follow up consistently with event organizations to help make your proposal stand out from others seeking the same slots.

Markman says these steps will help you contribute to your organization's marketing, PR and thought leadership development objectives. ♦

Source: Steve Markman, Founder and President, Markman Speaker Management, LLC, Needham, MA. Phone (617) 962-5711. Email: [smarkman@markmanspeaker.com](mailto:smarkman@markmanspeaker.com). Website: [www.markmanspeaker.com](http://www.markmanspeaker.com)

# Create a Not-to-Do List

“Our to-do lists always focus on what we have, should or need to do. Flip it!” says Productivity Consultant Lisa Montanaro. “Think of some items, activities, goals or projects that you can delete to free up some time, space and energy.” She suggests eliminating the extra noise, which will foster more opportunities to focus on wants and loves (instead of only needs, shoulds, and have-tos). A more balanced schedule can lead to fruitful tendencies and, ultimately, a happier, healthier life. ♦

Source: Lisa Montanaro, Productivity Consultant, Success Coach, Business Strategist, Speaker, Author. Phone (530) 302-5306. Email: [Lisa@LisaMontanaro.com](mailto:Lisa@LisaMontanaro.com). Website: [www.LisaMontanaro.com](http://www.LisaMontanaro.com)

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## WILEY

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

# Organize Virtual Town Halls For Your Community

By Megan Venzin

When Rowan College at Burlington County (RCBC; Mount Laurel, NJ) was forced to shift to a remote learning model last spring, students saw their higher education experience turned upside down. The last thing leadership wanted their constituents to feel was out of touch. In an effort to promote connectivity, the college’s Strategic Marketing and Communications Department, helmed by Executive Director Greg Volpe, launched a series of virtual town halls, which addressed topics like COVID-19, mental health and food access during the pandemic. These often put RCBC President Michael A. Cioce and other in-house experts center stage and gave students the ability to address concerns and ask questions in real time.

Using Google Hangouts, Open Broadcast Software (OBS) and Facebook Live, the organizers were able to create a clean and polished presentation and invite their stakeholders to join in on the conversation via live chat. “By opening the virtual town halls up to the community, we could be confident that we were helping current or prospective students every time,” says Director of Marketing Mindi Cahall.

These efforts did not go unnoticed by the National Council for Marketing & Public Relations District 1, who awarded RCBC with a Gold Medallion for Community Relations. RCBC also received a Silver Medal from the Collegiate Advertising Awards. Here Volpe and Cahall share tips for nonprofits that want to launch their own virtual town hall events:

- 1. Allow content to drive frequency.** “If you have the resources, something weekly or biweekly makes sense,” Cahall says. “We’d typically be preproducing the next episode as we were airing, so organizations with a small staff or limited content may want to host town halls less often.”
- 2. Plan topics in advance.** Launch your series with more than a single week’s worth of content in the can. A four- to six-week advance outline will provide time to secure guests, prepare their segments (don’t forget to run a practice call) and market the following livestream to viewers.
- 3. Appoint a moderator.** “Students tuned in on Facebook Live and submitted questions in the comment section — that was like our insurance policy so we didn’t have to worry about Zoom bombing or inappropriate language,” Volpe says. He then transmitted those questions to the president who could provide feedback during the stream. Other times, Volpe provided students directly with links and resources as needed.
- 4. Consider ADA compliance.** Some nonprofits (such as universities) need to provide live captions and a sign language interpreter to meet different needs for various audiences.
- 5. Spread the word.** Let your community know that these town halls exist. Email reminders, post on social media and share press releases when covering topics that local news outlets may find compelling. ♦

Sources: Greg Volpe, Executive Director, Strategic Marketing and Communications, Rowan College at Burlington County, NJ, Mount Laurel, NJ. Phone (856) 222-2514. Email: [gvolpe@rcbc.edu](mailto:gvolpe@rcbc.edu). Website: [www.rcbc.edu](http://www.rcbc.edu).

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# How to Speak With Greater Confidence

Whether you're making a presentation at a staff meeting, hosting an event or speaking with a potential donor, communication skills are key. When you speak with confidence, your listeners will be more confident in you and your message. Judith Quin, vocal confidence specialist, offers the following ideas to strengthen your speaking skills — with clarity:

- **Clarity of intention.** If you are not clear on *why* you are talking to someone, you will be less confident in speaking to them. What action do you want your audience to take or take away from what you're saying? This outcome doesn't have to be tangible. It could be "to go away and consider something." It might be "to give you an answer" or "to donate" or "to better understand." In the case of sharing an idea in a team meeting, the intention could be "to explore," "to suggest" or "to put it out there." And remember — it's not about you. Focus on how your talk or idea could have a positive impact on your audience. That impact could be for your team, your clients, donors, beneficiaries, the planet — anyone or anything for whom or which you've set the intention.
- **Clarity of content.** Clarity of intention helps to create clarity of content. Choose one main topic to speak about, supported by one to three (or maybe five in a longer presentation) key points, issues, benefits, etc. you will

share with your audience. This makes it easier for them to understand you, keeps you on topic and helps you move forward smoothly in your communication. This applies to all communication efforts, from sharing ideas in meetings to large event settings to one-on-one conversations.

- **Clarity of thought.** This is achieved when you have the other two elements in place (intention and content). Your clear purpose and your organized, on-point content provide an anchor to come back to if you lose track or if you are asked an unexpected question. Bringing your communication back to these elements will keep your thoughts focused. You'll be able to choose the best words and avoid "brain freeze."

Lastly, Quin adds, "When in doubt — breathe. To manage stress and compose yourself, breathe out through your mouth, fully and completely, through gently pursed lips. Then breathe in through your nose gently and slowly. Feel it expanding your body, filling every cell with oxygen, and allowing you to sit or stand tall and take up space. This slows your heart rate, which in turn slows the delivery of adrenaline to the brain, which then gives you time and space to think — and get back to your clarity." ♦

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Source: Judith Quin, Vocal Confidence Specialist, Your Whole Voice, London, England. Phone 020-3720-0779. Email: [connect@yourwholevoice.com](mailto:connect@yourwholevoice.com). Website: <https://yourwholevoice.com/>

## IDENTIFY PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

# Increase Awareness for Both by Partnering With For-Profit

Your organization likely sees itself as a partner in your community with for-profit businesses, and vice versa. Try some of these ideas to enlist these businesses' help in spreading the good word about your mission, programs and services:

1. Ask for their stories. Do they have employees who have benefited from your services, classes or programs? Examples might be a valued employee who has been promoted because she earned her degree at your college's evening program while working full-time, or a newly employed war veteran who received physical therapy at your hospital.
2. Provide free seminars for staff and families. Experts in your organization may have skills to share with employees in a variety of businesses. Providing free seminars on such topics may also help you reach a new audience.
3. Cohost a public event. Consider cohosting an education fair, a summer picnic and collection for food bank staples, or a holiday shopping party where your merchant partner gives gift cards to clients of a homeless shelter and discounts for your volunteers and staff. Look for events that increase visibility and build goodwill for both of you.
4. Promote a business partnership to your constituents. Be sure your organization's supporters know you are an ally of a hometown business. Write newsletter features with photos and acknowledge the business in event programs. Give the business extra copies of materials to leave for its customers to read and, in the process, learn more about your organization.
5. Involve them in cause marketing. When a successful business person supports a worthy cause, it can attract new customers who want to patronize good corporate citizens. Meet with these business's executives to explore how your cause can result in additional growth for both of you when you promote each other.
6. Target businesses' partners whose services make sense for you. Team up with a restaurant with a skilled chef who can offer affordable, healthy recipes to your clients or a makeup artist who can show a single mother how to look her best for a job interview. Find businesses whose employees provide services that work with your cause and build referrals for both of you. ♦

## BLOGS THAT GET READ

# Make the Most of ‘All-Star’ Content

Brainstorming fresh, engaging blog topics takes considerable effort. During weeks when time and inspiration are limited, the task may feel insurmountable. However, if you’ve been publishing for a while, the solution is likely already sitting in your client management system.

“Instead of trying to continually come up with new topics, I encourage nonprofits to circle back to their popular posts of the past few years to give them a refresh,” says Nonprofit Marketing Specialist Katy Teson. “Maybe you have a new perspective to share, statistics to revise or want to correct a message that didn’t age well. Updating older posts is an opportunity to

get more mileage out of existing content by keeping it relevant, both for readers and search engines.”

If your content schedule has fallen to the wayside, this is a quick and efficient way to get back on track and highlight some of your best-performing, all-star content. In cases where you are able to provide your audience with critical data or updates, it may even make sense to revitalize a post two or three times. “Just don’t forget to change the publication date to match the revised version of a post,” Teson adds. ♦

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Source: Katy Teson, Nonprofit Marketing Specialist. Email: [katy@wiredimpact.com](mailto:katy@wiredimpact.com). Website: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kteson/>

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## NONPROFIT MARKETING

# Use Social Media Marketing To Increase Engagement

An eye-catching Instagram post or thoughtful Facebook story could be your organization’s ticket to more patients, members or students. The aforementioned platforms are cost-effective ways to cast a wide net. When done correctly, advertising via social media can engage existing audiences and reach new ones.

“Some organizations are skeptical that marketing campaigns will make them look needy, greedy and sleazy, while others consider them a waste of money,” says Stewart Gandolf, CEO of Healthcare Success, LLC, a full-service healthcare marketing agency. “The first concern can be alleviated by clever creative, and, in terms of marketing being profitable, digital marketing is a good place to start.”

According to Gandolf, social media marketing has two categories: organic and paid. Organic refers to impressions that occur naturally. If someone is already in your network and regularly checks your posts, they may see your ad organically. Paid is just that — these ads carry a price tag. Those who click the ads are typically targeted by a set of criteria such as location, age, income level or other demographic information. Each category has its pros and cons, which Gandolf shares here (and elaborates on in [related blogs](#)):

### Organic

#### Pros:

- Costs nothing to the organization.
- Apps like Canva facilitate creation and distribution of free advertisements.
- Free resources like Hubspot offer tips to make the most of organic advertising.

#### Cons:

- Building an engaged following can be time-consuming.

- Nonprofits may need to run separate email campaigns to build followers more quickly.
- Facebook recently changed its algorithm and now only 2 to 4 percent of followers may see your posts.

### Paid

#### Pros:

- Very cost-effective.
- Makes it easier to reach thousands of people more quickly.
- Multiple ad formats from which to choose.
- Sophisticated targeting tools ensure only relevant audiences see ads.
- Retargeting campaigns help reconnect with those who have clicked your ads in the past.
- Produces measurable results.

#### Cons:

- It can become expensive.
- The landscape is competitive, and ads must be engaging to drive clicks.
- Apple recently gave iPhone users the ability to opt out of “ad tracking” across apps, which ultimately will lessen the effectiveness of social media “hyper targeting.”

Ultimately, nonprofits benefit most from a combination of both organic and paid social media advertising. “Facebook is great for storytelling, whereas visual messages go far on Instagram,” Gandolf adds. “Use social media to supplement your existing campaigns, and you are more likely to see favorable results.” ♦

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Source: Stewart Gandolf, MBA, CEO, Healthcare Success, LLC, Irvine, CA. Phone (866) 348-1742. Email: [Stewart@healthcaresuccess.com](mailto:Stewart@healthcaresuccess.com). Website: [www.healthcaresuccess.com](http://www.healthcaresuccess.com)

## PLANNING PROCEDURES

# Steps for Building an Editorial Calendar

It takes more than great writing to make a nonprofit blog a success. While a talented wordsmith is certainly an asset, a reliable calendar may be even more important.

“More than anything, an editorial calendar offers a way to stay organized and ensures that you share your message consistently while also providing value to the audience,” says Amy Steinmann, principal for Halbrooke & Elm Strategic Communications, a firm that lends support for small businesses and nonprofits. A well-maintained calendar is as much an accountability tool as it is a guideline for presenting clear and useful content to the people who need it most.

Steinmann, who has guided healthcare organizations in their blogging efforts, offers steps for building an editorial calendar:

- 1. Start planning six months in advance.** This time frame offers enough lead time for blog writers to prepare their topics but also leaves room to pivot if necessary. “The COVID pandemic was a situation in which a shift in content was necessary for many organizations,” Steinmann shares. “Even in instances where you have to change course, you may find that there is still highly relevant content. It’s nice to be able to look at your six-month plan and see what you can pull or update to fit your needs.”
- 2. Choose topics that reflect organizational goals and audience needs.** “For example, healthcare organizations that

want to raise awareness of services may consider sharing patient stories, profiles of doctors and staff or health tips related to awareness months,” Steinmann says. “Often organizations and associations that support awareness events can provide content and social media posts which can be used as a starting point.”

- 3. Publish high-quality content consistently.** While a weekly posting schedule is ideal, this should only be pursued if it can be maintained long-term. “If you’re only publishing once a month, it’s especially critical to make sure every post is well-written and engaging,” Steinmann adds.
- 4. Experiment with different formats.** “The traditional text blog is great, but try sharing the occasional two-minute video and include the transcript, or present an audio interview accompanied by a blurb with the highlights,” Steinmann suggests. “Doing so will keep your blog dynamic and interesting.”
- 5. Reference metrics.** “Check in quarterly to see how many views, comments and shares your posts have garnered,” Steinmann says. “It won’t give you a ton of data, but it can help you shape your content plan for the next six months.” ♦

Source: Amy C. Steinmann, MS, Principal, Halbrooke & Elm Strategic Communications, LLC. Phone (804) 404-8522. Email: [amy@halbrookeandelm.com](mailto:amy@halbrookeandelm.com). Website: [www.halbrookeandelm.com](http://www.halbrookeandelm.com)

## MEDIA RELATIONS

# Know What’s Key to Story Placement

**Q** *In your experience, what are the most important tactics you’ve applied to get articles placed in various media publications?*

“Communications professionals today understand that we are functioning in unprecedented times as the COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted so many of our institutions. As you strategize to amplify your messaging, during the pandemic and beyond, your ability to navigate challenges and opportunities to effectively communicate your organization’s vision is critical.

“It is essential to research, focus and pitch media opportunities and distribute news in a tailored and targeted manner to multiple media channels. Measure results to enable strategic goal setting. Use a variety of touch points to engage regularly with producers, reporters and influencers to reach key audiences, promote your mission and initiatives and position your organization as innovative and forward looking. Monitor media coverage, breaking news and trending stories as well as social sentiment so timely events propel you on a successful path to promote your leadership

and expertise and generate top-tier media engagement.”

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“When sending your pitch, it’s important to get right to the point. It’s also important to be relevant. You have to have a solid understanding of what is going on in your industry and how those topics are being covered. Make sure you are adding value, and if you can supply new data or information from a new and exciting angle, that can really help with getting placements too.

“Try pitching stories with a heartwarming or localized perspective. For example, our team here at Smith & Harroff created a series of press releases for the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) ‘Yes I Can Awards.’ By reaching out to local news outlets and spotlighting the accomplishments of exceptional local children in different parts of the country, we were able to help the CEC gain a broad range of national exposure for their efforts and programs.” ♦

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# Six Ways to Approach Post-Crisis Communications

Vaccines are plentiful and cities are open. However, nonprofits should consider how residual anxiety influences the messages they send to supporters. The post-crisis period provides a critical opportunity for organizations to remind their communities about their expertise and what specific benefits their stakeholders can expect from them.

"If, during 2020, you assessed your communications as *average* — congratulations! I believe that average is a success in a crisis situation," says President of nSight Marketing Melynn Sight. "But crisis is the new normal, and the same principles apply today as much as they did a year ago." Effective communicators are those who listen first, engage in a meaningful way and deliver solutions to common pain points — and that's truer now than ever. Here Sight shares six ways to approach post-crisis communications:

- 1. Show care for stakeholders.** Be proactive and identify the fears and worries that weigh on the minds of your constituents. "Kudos to the associations with meaningful short videos, social posts and a communications practice that does more than report the news; they show care and recognize the challenges members face," Sight offers.
- 2. Engage staff.** "Consider asking staff about the biggest challenges and what silver linings they uncovered from working at their kitchen table," Sight suggests. "Instead of reverting to business as usual, what lessons could help you be more effective at meeting your audiences' needs going forward?"
- 3. Survey supporters.** "Now is a good time to ask stakeholders (customers, members, donors, etc.) how you can best help them now that business is coming back (or blazing back) to normal," Sight says. Seek out one-on-one conversations, host a digital focus group, or send out a short survey ... whichever you choose, be mindful of the feedback you receive and use that to build a better plan for managing communications (crises related and otherwise) going forward.
- 4. Assess your current crisis communications approach.** "You'll never have a better time to look back at your communications process to consider what you did well, what you may have missed and what processes to change going forward," Sight says. And don't forget to follow the six specific steps to crisis communications [pictured in the infographic](#).
- 5. Relay a consistent message about the value you deliver.** "Develop key value messages and repeat them often to remind members why they should rely on you, especially during times of uncertainty," Sight says.
- 6. Look ahead.** "It's time to plan what your future looks like going forward — that means talking, looking and thinking beyond today's crisis and recovery," Sight shares. "With a bold vision, your leaders can mind the gap between today's situation and tomorrow's possibilities." ♦

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Source: Melynn Sight, President, nSight Marketing, Author, Breakthrough Value. Phone (913) 220-7753. Email: [melynn@nsightmarketing.com](mailto:melynn@nsightmarketing.com). Website: [www.naightmarketing.com](http://www.naightmarketing.com)

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## ENHANCE READERSHIP

# Add Variety to Your Magazine

Does your organization produce a regular magazine or newsletter for the benefit of your constituency? If you don't, you should. It's an important marketing and/or cultivation tool.

Whether you're just getting a publication under way or want to improve an existing one, choose from among this checklist of topics/features to add variety to your publication and increase overall readership:

- Features on current and former employees.
- Features/profiles on those served by your agency.
- Stories that tie your nonprofit's work to regional/national issues.
- A listing of board members.
- Board and donor profiles.
- Your mission statement.
- A summary of your organization's more recent achievements.
- At least one planned gift article: a realized planned gift and how it will be used, or a description of a particular type of planned gift and its benefits to the donor.
- A listing of your most recent new contributors/members.
- News about new, improved website features.
- A listing of volunteers and what they've done.
- Information on an upcoming event.
- A return form that invites the reader to respond: surveys, invitations to volunteer, gift pledge forms, purchasing items by mail and more.
- Trivia information or games about your organization and its history. ♦

# The CEO's Role as Chief Marketing and Social Media Officer

The best organizational leaders are powerful storytellers. Those who understand how to relate to their stakeholders — donors, volunteers, students and other supporters — become a positive extension of the brand they represent. Platforms like Twitter and Instagram made it easier than ever to connect with constituent groups in a down-to-earth way.

“Social media is a great way to communicate because you can control the message and how you deliver it to diverse audiences,” says John Rainone, president of Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (Clifton Forge, VA). “However, the focus should always be on authenticity.” Rainone, who is most active on Twitter, has used this outlet to network, broadcast important news and connect with others in higher education and the greater nonprofit sector. Here he offers advice to CEOs and presidents who hope to reach their communities on a more personal level:

1. **Build relationships.** Use Twitter hashtags, Facebook groups and LinkedIn categories to connect with others in your field. “Some of my very best friends were people I first engaged with online, before meeting them at a conference or similar event,” Rainone says.
2. **Showcase your work.** “I like to share articles, information about special events and news that impacts our college and

students,” Rainone offers. Keep a log of developments, photographs or projects that your followers may find interesting.

3. **Engage meaningfully.** “I usually tweet between 5 and 10 times per day unless I’m at a conference, for example, as that’s fertile ground for me,” Rainone says. “If I have access to strong content, quotes or photos, I will post more frequently, but only if I have something important to say.”
4. **Include a strong cover photo.** Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn all offer a landscape image field. Use it to display a photo of your campus or a visual that represents your mission — get creative and use something eye-catching with a crisp resolution.
5. **Use the profile to its fullest potential.** “Familiarize yourself with hashtags that have significant followings as they can help you identify with a community — I use #highereducation, #comm\_college and #nonprofits,” Rainone shares. The profile field is also a place to post details regarding your position, interests and professional associations. Doing so can build credibility and foster networking opportunities. ♦

Source: John Rainone, President, Dabney S. Lancaster Community College, Clifton Forge, VA. Phone (540) 863-2827. Email: [jrainone@dslcc.edu](mailto:jrainone@dslcc.edu). Website: [www.dslcc.edu](http://www.dslcc.edu)

## BRIEFS

### PHOTO ENHANCEMENT IDEAS

## When Taking a Group Shot ...

If you plan to take a group shot outdoors — in front of a new building, for instance — get close so people can be recognized rather than trying to get more of the facility into your photograph. Including a door or sign identifying the facility in the background is an added plus.

Another method is to have the group stand further away from the building but close to the camera. This way people can still be recognized while most or all of the building can be seen in the background. If you're using a camera with

a manual aperture, set it to the highest number possible to get the greatest depth of field. ♦

### ACKNOWLEDGE ACTS OF KINDNESS

## Reciprocate With Religious Organizations That Help You

To what degree do you thank churches, synagogues and other religious organizations for helping your cause? Sometimes the valuable contributions made by these organizations are taken for granted.

Here are some ideas to help you reciprocate with religious organizations:

- Provide a listing of upcoming church/synagogue events in your newsletter.
- Ask your volunteers to provide a special service: church cleanup day, mailing, etc.
- Offer to conduct one church service involving your nonprofit's employees or volunteers.
- Give a onetime special discount or free ticket to members of the congregation.
- Offer to collaborate on a benefit that will help your cause as well as theirs.

Those acts of kindness will not go unnoticed, and will no doubt come full circle in ways you may not have imagined. ♦

## GATHERING NEEDED PUBLICITY

# Track and Publicize Your Milestones

Reaching a milestone, like meeting a fundraising goal or logging a high number of volunteer hours, is a big deal. And sharing those achievements helps you raise awareness about your mission.

Ronald McDonald House Charities of New Mexico (Albuquerque, NM) tracks and shares multiple milestones with its supporters and the community. Melissa Gomez, community relations director, says they acknowledge milestones that are either goal-based, like a capital campaign, or based on data that tracks a notable accomplishment, like 35,000 families served.

“Anytime we are able to share our mission and the outcomes of our services, we feel this makes a positive difference,” she says. “When we are able to let people know that our services are available, we are able to help these families in their child’s medical care journey — hopefully, making it less stressful because there is one less thing to worry about: where they are going to sleep at night. We also see a positive impact from our community, people wanting to give, whether it is through in-kind gifts, monetary or with their time.”

Dawn Cannoles, project manager, says they use a comprehensive software tracking system to gather the business data used to decide which milestones to acknowledge. They enter and track details about:

- Donors and their gifts by date, amount, households, demographic data, lifetime history and trends.
- Guests by stays, occupants, patients, stay durations,

services used, cost and demographic data.

- Volunteers by hours served, location worked and lifetime history.

“Data is summarized in our system and allows us to monitor the status and progress of each category over time using a profile of system reports,” Cannoles says. “We also publish a monthly dashboard summarizing the year-to-date status of our programs, which gives us insight into the current year compared to the past two years.”

Triggers for recognizing milestones can be based on specific dates, like anniversaries; events, like volunteer recognition or donor campaigns; or a significant numerical accomplishment.

“It is also important to understand the types of milestones that are meaningful to our donors, grantors, guests and volunteers,” says Cannoles. “These are critical in helping to connect them with our mission and how they help us to accomplish it every day.”

Notable milestones are shared on social media, including Facebook and Instagram, and through press releases to local media and statewide outlets. Milestones are also shared directly with supporters through the quarterly donor and volunteer newsletters and other donor monthly communication emails. ♦

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Sources: Melissa Gomez, Community Relations Director, and Dawn Cannoles, Project Manager, Ronald McDonald House Charities of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM. Phone (505) 842-8960. Email: [mgomez@rmhc-nm.org](mailto:mgomez@rmhc-nm.org). Website: <https://www.rmhc-nm.org/>

## IMPROVING YOUR WEBSITE

# Explore New Image Formats to Improve SEO

In 2020, Google announced it would soon implement a major change called Core Web Vitals, an update to SEO guidelines that could have a dramatic impact on how your nonprofit website appears in its search results.

“At a high level, Google wants to force everyone to make their sites load faster for better user experience,” says President of Direct Online Marketing Justin Seibert. “One way you can prepare for this update is to optimize any images you use on your blog posts — as a rule of thumb, never use giant file sizes for your pictures.” Not only is it unnecessary to use high-resolution images on your site, but doing so can have a negative effect. When supporters must wait longer to access important information about your organization, they may grow frustrated, which can result in fewer conversions, donations and registrations.

“There are tons of new image formats you can leverage,” Seibert shares. “Some of my favorites are WebP, JPEG 2000

and JPEG XR.” Just make sure your client management system is compatible before utilizing images from these categories.

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Source: Justin Seibert, President, Direct Online Marketing, Pittsburgh, PA. Phone (800) 979-3177. Email: [justin@directom.com](mailto:justin@directom.com). Website: <https://www.directom.com/>

## Awareness-Building Ideas

If you have a particular topic that the public needs to know more about, host a “questions and answers” event that’s geared to that topic. Make it an open house event in which people can come and go but still learn more about the issue at hand through one-on-one conversations, displays, videos and a brief program at a designated time. ♦