5 Best Practices for a Successful Nonprofit Website

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Presenter: Tara Claeys, Design TLC designtlc.com

Online giving is increasing every year. A well designed website is the key to effective communication and fundraising.

There are five best practices to consider:

Website should be easy to find and trust

- Establish the website and domain with ".org"
  - ".org" websites are trusted by visitors
- Be sure that you have a secure website and a secure socket layer
  - "Https"
  - Google searches favor secure sites
  - Have a privacy policy posted on your website
- Include testimonials and case studies on your website
  - These are compelling messages for visitors
  - Have clients and/or board members offer these
- Include the charity's affiliation with nationally recognized charitable organizations such as United Way, Charity navigator
  - These affiliations provide further credibility enabling trust

Make your website is easy to use and understand

- Be sure that the website loads quickly
- Be sure that the website is mobile friendly - 50% of people access websites with their mobile device.
  - Google Mobile friendly is a tool for creating mobile friendly version
- Be sure that your website is easy to navigate
  - "Familiarity" of design is important. You want a layout that's easy to view
  - Put Donation button in the upper right corner

- ○ The "About", "Donate", and "Contact" pages are the most important and frequently visited
- ○ "Call to Action" - clearly state what you want visitors to do: DONATE or VOLUNTEER and make it easy for them to act.

Professional Design - Look and Feel of the Website
- It is not necessary to hire a design firm. Several hosting sites such as GoDaddy offer templates
- "F Layout" references top to bottom and left to right convention of how people look at a space. Have your website design accommodate this convention
  - ○ Put your logo in the upper left corner
  - ○ Put your action buttons on the upper right
- Photography is extremely effective
  - ○ Be sure that photographs are clear and tell a story - show action
  - ○ Emotions of people should be engaging, have eye contact with viewer
- Color - color is tricky as different devices (laptops, PC's, phones) can produce different shades.
  - ○ Most website development tools can help you select complimentary colors
  - ○ Select an accent color for key messages
- Fonts - Don't use too many. Select "professional" fonts (not Comic Sans)
- Do not center text - this is not easy for eyes to read.
  - ○ Center for headlines, otherwise left justify text
  - ○ Use bolding for action items

Relevant Messages
- Be sure that your mission statement is clear and concise.
  - ○ This is very important as it conveys to your donor who you are
- Include metrics of your success in addressing your mission
  - ○ This allows your donor to understand how their donation will be used and support the mission

- Update and refresh your site
  - 30% of donations are made in December, 10% in the last week of the year
    - Be sure to provide updated information at these times

Make it easy to Donate (or Volunteer)
- Create your own donation form
  - Keep it simple
  - Enable the donor to pay for the processing fee
  - Enable recurring donations - many people use the monthly contribution model
  - Include the ability to have corporate matches (Doublethedonation.com can facilitate finding companies that match)
  - Allow fund to be designated for specific use
  - Allow gifts "in honor of" with an email to the giftee
  - Allow multiple payment options: credit card, debit card, PayPal
  - Set up an automated receipt and thank you
- Third Party Donation Platforms
  - Donor Perfect, Network for Good, Bloomerang, Donately, Giving Lively, PayPal
  - These are all-in-one platforms. Each of these have different features and fees and limited flexibility