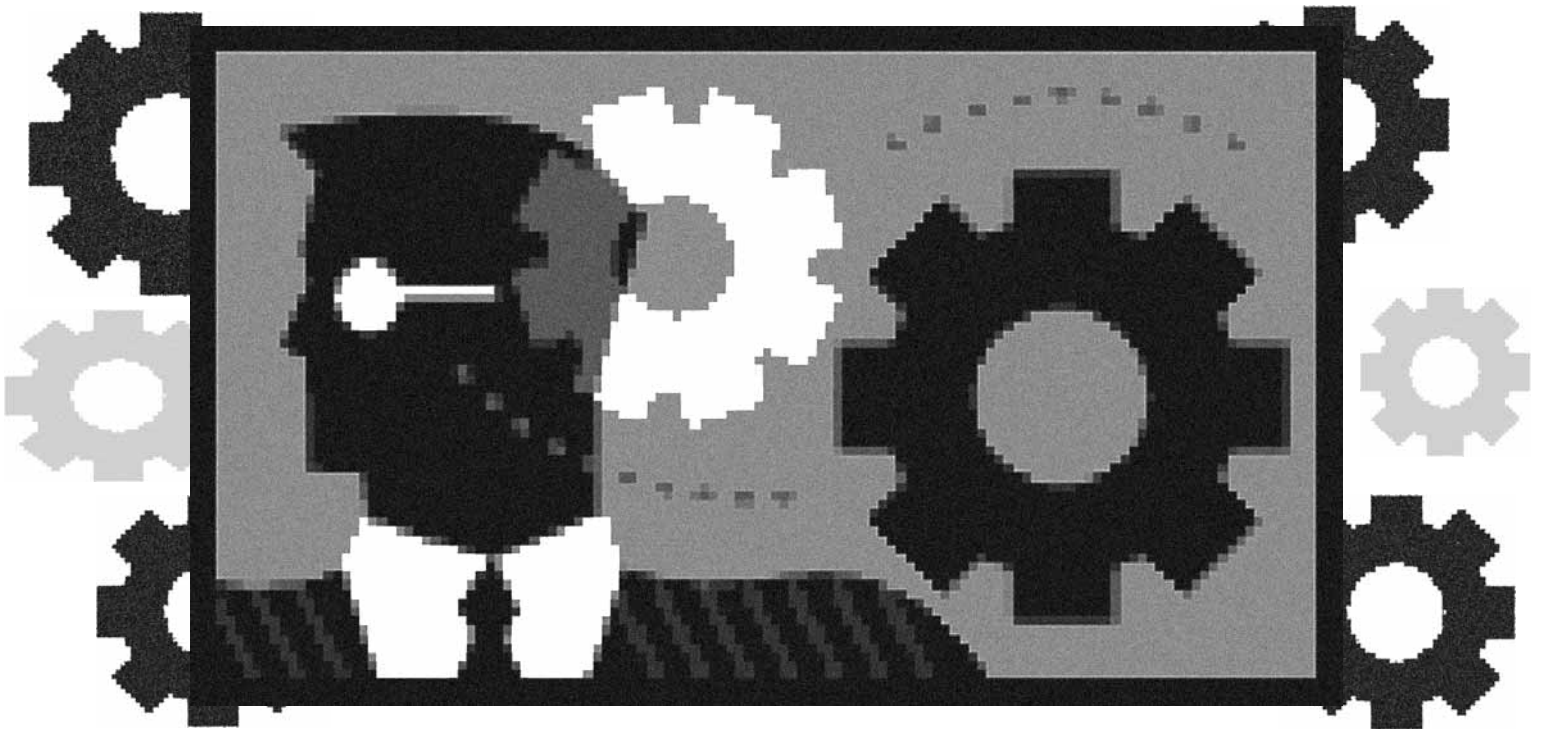


THE NONPROFIT ADVANTAGE

FALL 2007



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**NEW TECHNIQUES FOR
REACHING OUT TO
STAKEHOLDERS:
USING THE NEW MEDIA
TO YOUR ADVANTAGE**

By Andrea Obston

President, Andrea Obston Marketing
Communications LLC of Bloomfield

Think back to the ways you used to keep in touch with donors, volunteers and clients when you first got into nonprofit work. Unless you joined your organization less than five years ago, chances are your toolkit mainly included things like direct mail, brochures, newsletters and posters. But, those tools had one drawback in

(Continued on page 2)

Published by



CONNECTICUT
ASSOCIATION
of NONPROFITS

*...to serve, strengthen
and support Connecticut's
nonprofit community.*

NEW TECHNIQUES FOR REACHING OUT TO STAKEHOLDERS

(Continued from page 1)

common—they were only one-way communications.

Today, you've got additional tools that, if used consistently, enable you to set up and maintain two-way conversations with your stakeholders.

In other words, these tools help you build stronger relationships. And that's really what it's all about, right?

The most obvious tool is your Web site. Do you make the best use of it? Is it old or outdated (both in design as well as news)? Most agencies ran out during the Web site frenzy of a few years ago and had their Web sites done by eager techies with little marketing experience. If your Web site hasn't had a major facelift in the last three years, chances are it's not serving you as well as it could.

To find out if your site is fulfilling its potential, here are some important questions to ask:

- Is it loaded with animation?
- Are the links current?
- Does the "contact us" section show up on each page?
- Does it feature multiple ways of reaching you—including e-mail, phone and even snail mail?

Here's the most important question to ask: ***Can the search engines find you?***

The best Web site in the world is worthless if no one can find it. Over 80 percent of all online transactions begin with a keyword search and 75 percent of all searches are conducted through Google and Yahoo. So it makes sense to do all you can to help those search engines find you. The problem is that the algorithms they use are well-guarded and constantly-changing secrets. There are, however, some best practices your Web site should follow.

These include:

- Having appropriate meta-tags on copy and alt-tags (identifiers) on all photos;
- Adjusting the content so that 3 to 9 percent of the copy on each page contains key words your target audience will be searching for;
- Keeping all links and "contact us" e-mails up-to-date;
- Asking your Web site designer to put a Google site map on your site, in addition to your regular site map;
- Setting up reciprocal arrangements with allied agencies to link their sites to yours; and
- Keeping your news section up-to-date.



Your news section

Most nonprofits have learned to tell their own stories through press releases. They define success with those releases when they run in the paper. Today, that's just the beginning. Make sure you "repurpose" both releases and "pick-ups" (in the local paper) in other ways. Carry releases on your Web site. Organize them by topic (not date). Trust me, no one wakes up and says, "I wonder what the Cancer Society put out on Sept. 15th?" But they may very well look to your news site for a release about new diagnostic tools for breast cancer or new treatments for lung cancer. Organizing by topic allows visitors to your site to find what they need, and helps the search engines to find you. Also, when you post those releases,

make sure you imbed links in them that lead Web site visitors to relevant pages on your site. And make sure you archive anything that's over six months old.

When you are successful in placing a significant story in the paper or in a magazine, make sure you always request a PDF from the publication. Carry it on your site. You'd be surprised at the number of publications that will send you those PDFs at little or no cost. A few publications do charge for this. If the cost is too high, we'll usually suggest that clients carry the link to the online version instead. One note of caution: links can "age out," so monitor them frequently.

One last word about your news section: make sure it includes a media contact person and telephone numbers for reaching them 24-hours a day. Our site features my office, cell and home phone numbers. Reporters write at all hours of the day (and night) and those of us who offer ourselves as round-the-clock resources build stronger relationships with them.

Blogs

Blogs (which started life as online diaries called *weblogs*—hence the term blog) put many nonprofits into a quandary. Perhaps one of your well-intentioned employees or supporters has discovered blogs and has suggested you write one. Since the benefits of a blog aren't all that clear cut, think carefully about the pros and cons before making that decision (and committing precious hours to the task).

The good news about blogs is that the search engines love them, they drive people to your site, they demonstrate specialized knowledge in a niche and they are highly credible with their loyal readers. The bad news, especially for time-stressed staff members with nonprofits, is that producing them is very time-intensive. The only way to build a credible blog is to update it

(Continued on page 3)

THE NONPROFIT ADVANTAGE

A Quarterly Publication of



**CONNECTICUT
ASSOCIATION
of NONPROFITS**

90 Brainard Road, Suite 201
Hartford, CT 06114
Tel: 860.525.5080
Fax: 860.525.5088

www.ctnonprofits.org

CT NONPROFITS

Ron Cretaro

Executive Director

Karen Maciorowski

Chief Operating Officer

Gladys Alcedo

*Communications and
Website Coordinator*

Mark Berardi

*Training and Membership
Services Coordinator*

Jon Clemens

Policy Specialist

Nora Duncan

*Public Policy Director and
Nonprofit Cabinet Project Director*

Peggy O'Toole

Bookkeeper

Donna Rowland

Administrative Assistant

Julia Wilcox

Policy Specialist

©2007 by Connecticut
Association of Nonprofits, Inc.

For permission to reprint articles, contact
Connecticut Association of Nonprofits.

Article Submission:

We welcome submissions. Articles should be submitted electronically to galcedo@ctnonprofits.org for consideration. All articles are subject to CT Nonprofits' review and approval. Submission is no guarantee of publication.

Articles should be targeted to nonprofits in general concerning laws, employment/human resources practices, best practices, governance, administration, organizational capacity building, etc.; and should be informational rather than commercial in nature.

For more information, call 860.525.5080.

NEW TECHNIQUES FOR REACHING OUT TO STAKEHOLDERS

(Continued from page 2)

frequently. In fact, most A-list bloggers update their blogs one and two times a day.

An alternative is to search out credible bloggers in your area of concentration and cultivate them as you would any journalist. It's not as easy to find these "citizen journalists" as it is to find reporters for traditional media, but it is doable. You can search for bloggers by subject on Technorati.com and BlogPulse.com. If you track your organization and its subjects via Google News Alerts, they will also show up there. This last tip is something you should do, regardless of whether or not you're looking for bloggers. Google News Alerts will help you track your organization's name or any topic that interests you when it shows up on the web. The service will then e-mail you the link to the story. The service is free and accessible from the Google News section of that search engine.

This article only scratches the surface on new media. Look into a variety of other vehicles like e-blasts, e-newsletters, wikis and RSS feeds to name just a few.

Don't let the new media intimidate you. Just think of it as a great way to

encourage two-way conversations with the people you need to reach. And, while keeping up with them can feel like you're swimming upstream in an escalating flood of information, using them is an exciting and invigorating way to build and maintain relationships, long-term.

For more information about new ways to reach your stakeholders, go to www.aomc.com/gbafoundation. ♦

Andrea Obston is president of Andrea Obston Marketing Communications, LLC. Its subsidiary, Andrea Obston Crisis Management, provides public image crisis planning and management. The firm has helped nonprofits manage crises and create positive relationships with their stakeholders since its founding in 1982. Andrea Obston Marketing Communications is a firm that helps organizations grow through a B2E (Business to Everyone) marketing communications strategy. Expertise includes strategic marketing audits, brand development and marketing, public and media relations, media training, crisis planning and management, Web sites and Internet advertising. The 25-year-old firm, based in Bloomfield, offers workshops and seminars on a variety of contemporary marketing issues.



**CONNECTICUT
ASSOCIATION
of NONPROFITS**

*...to serve, strengthen
and support Connecticut's
nonprofit community.*

Connecticut Association of Nonprofits—the largest membership organization in the state dedicated exclusively to nonprofits in Connecticut—strives to serve, support and strengthen nonprofit organizations in building and sustaining healthy communities.

CT Nonprofits gives members access to networking opportunities, up-to-date information, cost-saving group purchasing programs, education and training, legislative advocacy, insurance programs and publications targeting Connecticut's nonprofit sector.

We are a collaborative of 500 organizations, supporting our members' needs so they may serve their communities to achieve their missions. ♦