

Nonprofit 911 – May 4, 2010

The 8 Online Fundraising Changes You Must Make in 2010

with Katya Andresen (Network for Good) and Alia McKee Scott (Sea Change Strategies)

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Rebecca Higman: I'm really excited to introduce our presenters. First we have Katya Andreson who is the Chief Operating Officer here at Network for Good. In addition to that, she is a speaker, as well as an author, and a blogger about nonprofit marketing. You can find her blog at NonprofitMarketingBlog.com. She talks about nonprofit marketing, online outreach, as well as the basics of social media.

So to date, Katya has trained thousands of causes in effective marketing and media relations. And her materials for nonprofits have won numerous awards. So we're really excited to have her leading our call today.

And with her is Alia McKee Scott who is a principal at Sea Change Strategies. So Alia in her every day job just helps nonprofit clients innovate engaging, inspiring and successful online fundraising advocacy and marketing campaigns. Just to give you some context, right now she's working with organizations like the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the Environmental Defense Fund, the International Rescue Committee, and Conservation International among others. But without further ado, I'm really just excited to turn the floor over to Katya to get us started.

Katya: Thank you Rebecca and welcome Alia. So for those of you who are on the line with us today, thank you so much for joining us. I'm so glad you're interested in how online outreach is evolving and how you can do it better this year, which is what we're going to focus on in this call. And as you're probably aware, the content of the call works off of an eBook that I wrote last month and which was originally released by Network for Good, which you can get for free at fundraising123.org.

So you don't feel like you have to madly scribble notes. Everything that I'm going to cover in terms of conceptually is in the eBook. But if you have read the eBook or you're familiar with it, don't worry, I'm not going to provide a boring summary. I invited Alia McKee Scott here today, who's one of the smartest people I know on online outreach, as well as a very entertaining co-presenter, to kind of have a conversation with me about the key points that are made in the eBook, to talk about her reaction to them, and she's going to be telling some stories and providing some interesting examples which sort of help develop these ideas a little further for you.

So hopefully, if you haven't read the eBook you'll have lots of good content. But if you have, you'll hear a lot of new stuff today as well.

That said, what I cover in here is eight changes you need to make in 2010 to the way you're probably going about online outreach. And I'm going to take these one by one. I'm going to provide a quick, two minute overview of the idea beyond each and then encourage Alia to react, and we'll have a conversation about each. And then we want to leave plenty of time for questions; about the last 15 to 20 minutes.

So if you have questions while we're chatting, or you want to react to something we're saying, we encourage you to send an email to fundraising123@networkforgood.org, and we would love to take your questions. So please, at any time, shoot us an email and Rebecca will be posing those questions to us and we will try to get to all of them today.

So with that introduction, the first point I'd like to make today is sort of an obvious one. It's not going to be surprising coming from me, but that is if you are not already doing the basics of online outreach, this is not a good thing. And I can say this with authority that 2010 is the first year I feel really strongly about this.

The amount of online giving going on and its growth has really reached a critical mass. And the explosion of social networks and new ways that people who care about a cause are self-organizing online has reached such a scale that it's no longer something we ignore. It's not really something we should only dabble in, it's something we should be doing and having a strategy behind it. And I'll give you a couple reasons why.

The first thing is an interesting thing happened in the last year, which is that email pulled even with direct mail in terms of influencing people's decisions to give money. And rates of online giving continue to grow every year, even during the recession last year, at the same time that direct mail rates are declining.

So we're beginning to see some trends where if you're relying on the old forms of outreach and ignoring online, that's probably not good just because those are bell weather signals to me that we need to be paying more attention to online.

Also, online donors tend to skew younger, they give larger gifts. So they're a desirable group for us to be going after. And the last point I'm going to make here, because I'm not going to read you all the boring statistics from the eBook, is that there's some new research that wasn't out at the time I wrote this eBook that just came out last week — the E-Benchmark study from M & R Strategies and NTEN. And in it there is something interesting for all of you on the phone.

I assume most of you are with small to medium sized nonprofits. And their most recent study on online giving in 2009, I thought the most interesting part about it was not everything I just said, and it echoed those things we're seeing across the sector and here at Network for Good, but they also found that small nonprofits are doing particularly well online. You all tend to have higher click-through rates on your emails, higher response rates, and you tend to get more ROI from your outreach online. And I'm happy to go into that more later if any of you want to pose

questions about it. I also have information on my blog about that at NonProfitMarketingBlog.com. But that's really good news as well.

So before I turn this over to Alia just about where things are heading online, I want to say what I mean by, "You should be active online." You should have a really well branded, really easy to use website that is completely optimized and you're tracking where people are going on the site and what they're doing, where they're getting stuck, where they're clicking, etc.

You should be able to process donations on that website. You should be able to email people who sign up to hear from you through that website and elsewhere with an email campaign tool that's in compliance with federal anti-spam laws. I mentioned web analytics. You should actually be using the data you're collecting on your site and figuring out what it means.

You should have a listening tool. You should be regularly monitoring online conversations about your issue and your organization. You should have a social media strategy, which we'll talk a little bit about today. You should have fantastic follow up, not just for the people who give offline, but the people who give online, too. And those relationships that you're cultivating with online donors should be smoothly integrated with your offline efforts.

And then you need to be looking at all the data and what you're collecting and all these efforts online and continuing learning from that in a feedback loop.

So I may have...your initial reaction to what I was saying today may have been like, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah Katya, of course I'm online." But I hope you're also doing everything on this list, because these are all really important components of online outreach, and most of us aren't necessarily doing all of them well.

So Alia, is there anything you're like to add to this idea that 2010 is a really good year to make sure you are fully ramped up online?

Alia: Absolutely, absolutely. Like you mentioned Katya, the online channel is incredibly important. But it's not just about the evolving technology of fundraising. It's about the evolving values like authenticity, clarity, connection and passion that the technology has unleashed. So it really is a paradigm shift for how your donors and prospective donors are expecting their relationship to be with you. And I think, Katya, in this eBook you have really articulated that shift well, and this is the beginning chapter of that shift.

Additionally, I don't want to bore folks with facts and figures, but in addition to some of the facts that Katya already mentioned and some that are in the eBook, Sea Change did a Wired Wealthy study which really was looking at the online habits of people who give over \$10,000 a year to a variety of charitable causes. And we found, and this was in 2008, mind you, we found that 80% of wired, wealthy folks gave at least one online gift. And while these people usually make up only 1% of a donor pile, they make up 32% of an organization's total dollar raised. So

the online channel isn't just for small dollar gifts anymore either. It's definitely a way that you should be communicating with your mid to high to major donors.

And then finally, another reason you should be online is rapid response for issues that are in the media. This is the prime channel people go to when news hits, when they read about something in the news. So if you don't have a strong online presence, if you aren't you doing all of those things that Katya mentioned earlier, you will be leaving money on the table during those prime fund raising periods, which, unfortunately, they don't come often enough for us as we're trying to fund all of these amazing causes that we're all working on. So that's just my little initial take on why 2010 is the year to really get your presence up to snuff online.

Katya: Great points Alia. And that last point about providing the ability to react very quickly and nimbly to events that are happening around the world with your online outreach, a great example that we have going on right now is the horrible, horrible oil spill that we're contending with off the coast of Louisiana. And Network for Good, for example, has a whole page of organizations that are mobilizing to do work there.

So I actually encourage you to shoot an email to fundraising123.org if you have anything to do with that, because we'll feature you on our site, which Yahoo is pointing to on a regular basis, for people who want to take action. But that's just one example. When something like this is happening are you an organization that helps [xx 10:17]. Do you have offices down there? Are you sufficiently prepared to position yourself as a way for people to help when they see the pictures that I'm afraid are going to be hitting the media in the coming days of the destruction and toll of the oil as it comes ashore?

Alia: Yeah, Katya I agree. And I know we have to move on, but on that point...and it doesn't even necessarily have to be such an urgent emergency. I have a client who works on sustainable food issues, and Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution has just increased the traffic to their website tenfold. So just being very savvy about things that are being picked up in the media, things that people are already talking about. And if you're working on those issues, make sure you get involved in that conversation online.

Katya: Great point. It's not just about emergencies. It's about opportunities. Now that I hope you are all mobilized to go expand your online presence and take it to the next level, I wanted to hit some of the things I think you should be thinking about.

And the second point I'm going to make today is that while we're all high on technology and all the opportunities it affords you, as Alia pointed out in some of her opening remarks here, it's not the technology, necessarily, that's so exciting. It's how it's tied into the way donors are thinking about charity right now and the way people are...the human relationships online and what they mean to mobilizing people for social action.

In other words, what I'm saying is this is about people and cultivating relationships with people, and the technology makes it a little easier. But if you don't do the relationship building and the work of cultivating actual people online, the technology's not going to work on its own. And I'll give you a quick story to illustrate that which is one of my favourite stories. It's an embarrassing story about me.

But I was giving a speech a couple years ago about marketing, actually. And I explained that I worked at Network for Good and that was my day job and that we helped nonprofits with online outreach and I was really passionate about helping them with that as well as marketing. And a guy in the middle of the room raised his hand in this big room of a couple hundred people and said, "Hey, yeah. I know Network for Good. I have a Network for Good Donate Now button on my homepage on my website." And I said, "Wow. That's really fabulous. Thank you so much." And I thought to myself, "Wow that's a really nice thing for Network for Good to hear that people are using Network for Good to raise money online. Isn't that wonderful?"

And then he raised his hand again and said, "Yeah. My button doesn't work." And I was really mortified in front of 200 people. And I said to him, "Wow. I'm really sorry to hear that. That's unusual that someone would click and not be able to make a donation, but I will definitely get to the bottom of it. Please come up to me right after this session and I'll sort it out."

And then he raised his hand again and I thought, "Oh no. What now?" and he said, "No. You don't understand. People can click to make a donation. No one's clicking on the button. That's the problem." And I thought to myself, "Well, that is a broken button, isn't it?" And I thought to myself, "And I think he's thinks it's a magic broken button. That this button is magic. That you put it up on the website and, amazingly, everyone kind of sees it, gravitates towards it and starts clicking."

And unfortunately a "donate now" button's not filled with donor attracting potion — I wish it were — and social networks aren't magical money machines. All these things we're going to talk about today, they don't sort of work on the basis of the way they were built. They work based on the relationships you build behind them. And that's a really important distinction.

And I'm really worried in 2010, which we're talking about online outreach, that we have gotten so enamored with all the fantastic technology tools at our disposal that we are starting to forget that it's not just the buttons, it's not just the widgets, it's not just Twitter, it's not just Facebook. It's the work we put into it and the way that we treat our audience and interact with our audience in those venues and the way we talk about our cause and the story telling we do. All that marketing stuff will make or break the technology.

So we don't want you all to have a bunch of broken donate buttons. We want you to have buttons that work. And so a cautionary point I want to make here is that we really encourage you to do the thoughts and strategies that you need to do to get them to work.

And I provide in the eBook my little four part framework. If you've been on other Nonprofit 911 calls you've probably heard it before, but very quickly, a good way to know if you're doing that work is to ask yourself: in your online engagement with prospects and donors, are you answering four questions for them at all times? And it's a good little checklist. I'll give you the four questions really quickly.

The first one is: Why me? Show people why what you're doing is personally relevant to them. They need to connect with you on a human level or none of this outreach is going to work. And you can do that with pictures and stories, by listening to your audience and echoing back to them what you're hearing and tying it to your work. You want your supporters to feel seen, heard and engaged from the start.

The second question is: Why now? And that's about the sense of urgency that Alia and I were starting to talk about. What are people seeing in the world right now that's giving them a sense of urgency about an issue, whether it's healthy eating or the environment because of the oil spill? What will make them anxious to do something right now for you? Can you break down what you're doing and show an immediately understandable or visible result that will really make people want to take action?

The next question is: What for? And this is becoming increasingly important. In fact, I'm going to talk about it as a point all its own in a couple minutes. But here I'm talking about what do people get in return for their donation, personally and in terms of your program? This isn't just about what you need, it's about the impact that the donor can make through you. So are you showing that? Are you making it really clear which programs are being helped by a donation and what good is going to result?

And the last question, and I'm going to talk some more about this too, because it's a really important one, later in the presentation today, but it's: Who says?" Because the messenger is often as important as the message. And who you have delivering information about your organization or engaging online or who is the public face of your outreach effort can really make a huge difference in the response you're getting. So we're going to talk about that more today — some alternative messengers that you need to be looking to this year.

Alia, what things would you add to making sure that that button works?

Alia: Well, like you said Katya, there are a lot of charitable choices out there, and technology alone won't differentiate your cause from the many others that are worthy of a donor's time and money as well.

I think under the "why me" category, another thing you can think about doing is really not just answering the question, which is important, but also walking the talk. And that means distinguishing yourself by developing a true relationship with your donors and prospects, right? That can really help make the case for "why me?."

Many organizations treat donors like online ATM's. And listen, I work for some of them and I understand what it's like to have a revenue target and to have to hit that target. But it is so, so important if you can break that cycle and establish a give-and-take grateful relationship that makes your donors feel heard, thanked and engaged from the start. You are going to have such a leg up over your competitors if you're able to do that.

As far as "why now?," I really like what you said in the eBook Katya about explaining why now in your appeals. And that's something that's sometimes very hard. You now, if you're a homeless shelter, February...right now we're in the coldest months of the year and your support can help us keep one more person out of the bitter cold.

The ACLU did something pretty drastic in December. They told their donors, "Hey. Our most generous major donor hasn't been able to renew their support because of the recession. So we have this crazy shortfall that we need your help to make up for."

If you're an arts organization, is there an exhibit on display that your donors' gift can help bring a classroom of elementary schools students to experience and learn from it? So always, a lot of times it's really easy to say, "OK, now give us your money." But why now? What makes the case for now?

Under "what for?," we're going to talk about this a little bit later, but I think organizations really need to strike the words "we need" from their vocabulary.

Katya: Amen to that.

Alia: And I write so many appeals and I can't tell you the amount of times that even I, after years of doing this, want to say "we need." It's more about what together we can achieve, right? So we're going to talk a little bit more about that later.

And again, on "who says?," I think we're going to cover the messenger piece of that in depth in a later chapter, Katya, so I'll save my two cents for then.

Katya: Sounds great. And this is a great segue, what Alia is saying into the next point I want to make, point three, which is probably the most single powerful important thing you can do this year is to rethink and restructure, to own a relationship. That's what we're really getting at here.

This chapter in my eBook I've gotten the most feedback on, and had some really interesting discussions around it. What I'm saying here is I think a lot of us are still operating like our donor base is the "Grace Generation." It's like a bunch of civic-minded, wonderful people who write checks out of sense of duty, and trust charities.

I don't think that today's donor fits that profile so much anymore, particularly online. I like to say that the torch has passed to a much more demanding, high-maintenance series of donors. They really view giving differently. They see this as investment; they want to know about the progress, the results of their gift. They want to feel seen, heard and involved with the

organization, not like an ATM machine, as Alia cited.

So, one of the points I make in the eBook here is, I really encourage you to see which experience you're giving your donors. Are you taking a check and sending them a receipt? Or, are you giving them that more relationship-based experience, where they feel very involved in the change that's being effected as the result of their gift?

A good way to know if you're doing well with that our not is something I like to call Be-Your-Donor Day. I encourage you to one day wake up, and instead of pretending that you're the development director, or the executive director, or the communications officer at your organization, pretend to be your donor.

Call the phone number and see what happens. Pretend to be a donor. Give a gift, and look for what you get in the mail from your regular acknowledgment system.

Look at your website with fresh eyes. How do you feel when you look at that? Do you know where to go? What happens when you sign up for the email list on your own website?

I try to do this regularly, and sometimes I'm shocked and amazed, and sometimes I'm appalled [laughter] at little things that I hadn't noticed before when I walk a mile in my donor's shoes, or in your shoes. The nonprofits who come to us to use Network for Good's training resources really help the exercise.

Alia, have you ever done Be-Your-Donor Day? What are some of your thoughts on that?

Alia: I love Be-Your-Donor Day, Katya. I think it's a brilliant idea, and I have done Be-Your-Donor Day. Like you, I've been shocked, and sometimes appalled at what I thought I was doing for my donors, and really, in actuality, what I was doing.

In addition to being your own donor for a day, I suggest trying out, maybe, some of your competitors. Maybe, some nonprofits that you think are doing an excellent job in your community, and also seeing how they're treating donors.

I think a lot of times as fundraisers, we forget that we're also donors to other organizations and causes. By understanding what moves us to continue being a donor, and have a strong relationship with nonprofit, that can only strengthen our program and what we put out into the world. So, I love Be-Your-Donor Day. I love the other nonprofit donors' days.

Recently I did this. I worked with the International Rescue Committee around the Haiti emergency. I gave lots of gifts to numerous competitors of theirs, in addition to the International Rescue Committee. I thought, number one, I needed to give to Haiti. And number two, I really wanted to see how these nonprofits would continue relationships with them — emergency donors.

I was really, really amazingly surprised at how sophisticated some of these organizations are these days with transitioning emergency-response donors into long-term donors of the organization.

In particular, I found that Mercy Corps sent me six pieces of cultivation. I made a \$25 online gift to them, and they sent me three online email follow-ups within six weeks. They sent me three offline pieces. Only two of those were appeals.

I thought that they did really nice job at creating this narrative arc into, “Hey, you came in for Haiti, now here’s the long-term development needs we need there, now here’s the rest of the work that Mercy Corps does.” So, again, I think that can be really important.

And really quickly...

Katya: Great example.

Alia: Before we move on from this point, Katya, I also think it’s important for you to map out several paths your prospects might make from lead- to long-term donor. In addition to being your donor, really think about what scenarios that they might take and structure your engagements across departments and silos that address these paths.

For instance, what happens when someone makes an online gift via your website? Do they get a mail acknowledgement? Do they get a phone call upgrading them to a sustainer? Do they get a new-donor welcome series thanking them? What happens when someone makes the gift via Facebook Causes? How do those folks get integrated into your stream?

What’s exciting and also very daunting about this new, online world we live in is people can come in from so many different angles. They can come in from mobile, they can come in from Facebook, they can come in from offline. Really figuring out what the path these guys take is important for you as a fundraiser.

Katya: Great point. Sometimes you and Mark, your colleague at Sea Change Strategies, talk about welcome mats. It’s such a great image, that you what to lay out a welcome mat for all sorts of prospects and donors who come. But then, beyond that, what you’re saying is, you want to really map the process forward. Do you invite them into the house? [laughs] Do you give them enough to eat? Do you offer them something to drink? Are you taking care of them over time?

Alia: Do you tell them where the bathroom is? [laughs] Or, you could say, “go on outside.”

Katya: Exactly. Actually, and I’m so glad you highlighted Mercy Corps, because that’s really a nice segue to point four that I’m going to make today. As promised, Alia and I are going to do a much deeper dive on this idea of getting more tangible and impact focused in your “ask,” and in your cultivation efforts, which Mercy Corps does a first-rate job of. Alia provided a great example from Haiti, how they went about doing that.

One more thing, here is, just as Alia noted, it’s not enough to say you need money. There are about 1.8 million other nonprofits in the United States, and they need money, too. That’s not really a particularly compelling way to frame what you do. Need is not enough.

There are some folks at something called [xx 27:08] Group who had done some 911 calls for us. The way they put it is, we really need to stop building our case for support around a need-based tax categorization. In other words, we're not profit, non-for-profit. And instead, talk about how we make a difference. That's what we're really getting at, here.

Alia and I did a really interesting deep dive on this very topic with another eBook, which was "Homer Simpson for Nonprofits: The Truth about How People Really Think and What It Means for Promoting Your Cause." Which is a mouthful, but it's a little book we wrote with Mark on behavioral economics, and what it has to do with fundraising.

Alia, I'm going to let you take that one, to talk a little bit about the connection here, since everyone on the line really needs to understand what we mean by moving the conversation from need and abstract ideas to something much more effective.

Alia: Great, great. In that book, we talk a lot about research that backs up why massive numbers and statistics are ineffective in conveying impact and motivating giving. In a nutshell, researchers across numerous experiments have found that the more lives that are at stake, the lower our emotional engagement level is. Paul Slovak, along with Deborah Small, they did an experiment in which they showed three different appeals to different testing groups.

The first appeal talked about what a gift would do for one little girl named Rokia. I think the country she was from was Mali, right, Katya?

Katya: Yes.

Alia: I forgot that important point.

Katya: You got it.

Alia: OK, great, great. The second appeal talked about Rokia, but then widened the lens and talked about the larger statistical population of other children like Rokia. Then, the third message just talked about that larger statistical population. It didn't hone in any one particular story.

Well, not surprisingly, they found that message one that focused on Rokia, the one girl, outperformed message three, which was the one that just talked about the statistical population.

But, what I think is even more important for us as fundraisers is that they found that message two was equally ineffective as message three, meaning that the minute that you start muddling that emotional, compelling story about one person, and you talk about the more lives that are at stake, the easier it is for people to disengage. And folks did not give to that appeal, even though Rokia's story was still front and center.

So I think, really, that just underscores how important it is to think about our work in terms of one person, one student, one tree, right? Otherwise, the need just becomes too much for our brains to handle and we tune out.

Katya: Well said. Thank you for that primer in behavioral economics. It's one of our favorite topics.

Alia: It is. And if you guys haven't read the book...I have to do this for you Katya...it's really, really good, if I do say so myself. You can get it at the learning center at fundraising123.org/homer. And I encourage you to check that out after you read the eight things you need to do in fundraising online.

Katya: Exactly. We know how everyone on the line is going to spend their weekend now, as they're sunning themselves, reading Network for Good eBooks.

The next point I want to make, point five, is a fun one, which is I want you to think about switching up your messengers this year. And the reason why I think it's fun is, while some of us may think it's scary to let other people speak on our behalf, I think it's a great concept. Because you know what? We're all really overworked. And if we have enthusiastic people who are effective messengers for our cause and really good and reaching their own circles of influence, we're not alone in our jobs of trying to communicate, and market, and fundraise. We actually have a bunch of people out there who can help us do that. And after today, I hope you can look at this as like an opportunity.

I'll tell you why I think switching up the messengers is so important. Imagine for a second that I give you \$1,000 to go take a Caribbean vacation. Doesn't that sound nice? I gave you the cash and I am like, "Go plan your vacation. Take whatever airline you want, stay in whatever hotel you want. Here's \$1,000 towards your vacation."

Now, what would you do? Would you go to Marriot.com and read the self-congratulatory language they have on there about their hotels there, or might you go to tripadvisor.com to look

at photos people took of that hotel and what they say about how it really is, whether it's good or not?

If you were thinking about dining out and having some conk fritters or fish, would you look at Zagat or Yelp, or would you just look at the ads in the local newspaper for their restaurants once you got to the island?

Do you get my drift? We are increasingly shrewd about what information we trust. I'd say my feeling is 2010 is the year when trust in government, trust in charities, trust in companies, trust in governments is really low. And traditional institutions and traditional messengers, we kind of filter out what they say because we know that they have a reason for saying it, which is they need our money, or they need our support, or they're trying to convince us to do something that's in their interest.

And so the real powerful thing about switching up your messengers to people who aren't employees of your organization is that your audience will naturally be more likely to trust those people. And that's a good thing. This is the year to exit center stage and let those people be out there talking for you.

And some of the people I am talking about that you might want to think about, are there trusted people in your community who are big fans of your organization or have seen its impact firsthand? Are their beneficiaries of your services? Is there a woman in Mali who can speak to how your development work has changed her life? Do you have volunteers or donors who love you who are willing to write your next appeal for you about why they support your organization? Any one of those messengers is better than you.

Alia, do you have other ideas on messengers?

Alia: Yeah, I love your point about where you go to plan a trip these days. Again, it's all about that paradigm shift where it's less about you pushing out information to your supporters and more about empowering your supporters to do the outreach, to do the recommendations on your behalf. They have enormous influence, and technology makes it much easier for them to spread their influence, right?

My big push here is for organizations to really begin tapping into the energy and enthusiasm of its core supporters. In this crowded, very oversaturated space, they can break through when you can't. And a lot of organizations talk about this, but not a lot of them are doing a good job at putting it into practice.

So I would suggest start identifying your most passionate supporters. Who are they? Are they your monthly donors? Are they people who have taken more than three actions with you online? Are they longtime donors? Are they a mix of these folks?

Second, how can you cultivate and steward them? Is this VIP access to your staff? Is this a special call from your beneficiaries? Is this an "ataboy" pat on Facebook? How can you make them feel special and a part of the inside circle of your organization?

And then, third, what is it that they can help you do? Can they tap into their social circles to help you broaden your reach? Can they raise money on your behalf? Can they review you on Charity Navigator or Guidestar? Can they provide testimonials for you to use in your appeals, like Katya was saying?

And then finally, use these messengers. Ask first, of course, but 99 times out of 100, they will be honored to provide their voice for your cause.

Katya: Great points. And I love your idea about encouraging them to go write reviews. I didn't touch on that very much, but just as we're looking at Yelp or Trip Advisor to make decisions about where we go and we eat and where we travel, donors are doing that, too. And they have more and more places they can go to read third-party information about what people think of your organization. And so that's a good idea to have some of those messengers in those places too providing their perspective on the good work that you do.

Alia: Can I say one thing there, Katya, too?

Katya: Yeah!

Alia: I think it's really important for you to go to Charity Navigator and Guidestar today, if you haven't, and look at what people are saying about your nonprofit organization. There are a lot of organizations that are being badly reviewed, and I am talked by the silence on the part of your organizations. I'll just tell a very quick story about how you can try to turn these things for good.

I moved to Austin about a year ago, and I was looking for a hairstylist. And I, of course, went to Yelp, because I am a tried and true Yelper. And I was looking at this one salon, and someone had given the salon zero stars. They said, "I went there. I had the worst haircut of my life. I can't believe that they even let me leave the hair salon looking like a freak!" [laughs] I know a lot of us can raise our hands and say we've had that experience.

And what happened was the salon owner contacted this Yelper and said, "Listen. Come back in. We'll give you a free haircut." She was monitoring what people were saying about her on Yelp. And the woman came back, the Yelper came back, and said, "Listen. I want to put a correction out there. I think it was just a very bad moment. I had the most amazing experience on my second time, and I just want to correct what I had to say."

So if you can proactively discuss what people are saying about you online, you can use the opportunity to change their perspective about you.

Katya: Great story. That's wonderful. And I think the model there is perfect. If you do go to Charity Navigator or Guidestar today and you see people dissing you or saying negative things about you, it's really important how you react. So that salon owner didn't write back and say, "You're hair looked fine," or, "What are you talking about," or, "We're very proud of the work we do here." It wasn't defensive like that.

The salon owner said, “Wow, we’re terribly sorry you had that experience. Please let us set it right.” They were not defensive, they acknowledged the person’s frustration, they did it in a very listening, warm way, and then they offered to help contribute to a solution that would turn around the situation. That’s a great model for you to follow.

So if you see people saying something negative like, “I gave to this organization. I’ve gotten four direct mail pieces. I don’t know where my money went. I’m really angry,” you should not go on there and say, “Well, our policy is to send X pieces of mail. I’m sorry if you didn’t like that.” Or, “I can’t imagine you got that many pieces of mail.”

No. You want to go on and say, “I am so sorry. We are so thrilled you gave us a gift, and I feel terrible that you are not feeling good about that gift anymore. And let me tell you a little bit about where that gift went. And what mail would you like? What more can we do? Tell us how we can change. We’re listening. We’re so glad that you supported us. We want to set this right.”

And what will happen is you will turn that negative comment into a positive. People will think, “Wow! This organization is out there listening, and they turned around the situation and they listened to their donor.” And because so few organizations are listening to their donors or doing it in a public way, you can actually make lemonade from lemons. You can really turn that into a huge win for your organization in terms of online outreach.

Alia: Great point Katya. Great point.

Katya: So I’m going to turn to point six right now, which is…we’ve talked a lot about donor relationships, and showing your impact and things like that. I want to talk a little bit about where to do that.

I’d say most of us have probably spent the better part of the last decade trying to get people to come to our website. We build a website and we just keep trying to drive traffic to it, which is not a bad thing. That’s a good thing, and we should always want people coming to our website.

But that’s not really enough anymore. What we actually want is not just this idea that we are a big magnet that’s just trying to draw everyone into us and keep them there stuck to us like a paper clip on a giant magnet. We actually want to become more of a place where people get drawn in, and then they get so excited and interested in the experience they have with us they want to take it elsewhere online.

We want to turn our model inside out. This isn’t just about making people come to us, it’s about encouraging them to take anything off our website, any of our content, any of their stories, and bring out online wherever they are. And, it’s about us going out beyond our own website and meeting people where they are.

In other words, you need to get thinking portable in all your outreach. You need to think in terms of outposts all over the Internet, and you need to think in terms of fans, not just on your site, but all over on the Internet. That’s a really big paradigm shift. This is the first year I’m really pushing

it. Because as I said at the outset here, I think there's a real critical mass of people who understand how to take messages out online, who are active participants in very large networks where you can really get an amazing amplification effect of your messages.

This is really worth doing this year. One reason that it's so important is just tempo. The speed of information flow has gotten so fast — it's virtually instantaneous now — that you can't be the only one communicating online. You need these people taking your content into their own communities, adapting it, riffing on it, and taking it other places just to keep up, if for no other reason.

So I want to give you some quick tips on how to go about insuring that happens. One is that the best way to get people talking about you is to have something worth talking about. Do you have fantastic stories and content you're putting out there? That's the single most powerful thing you can do. Because that will get people talking and enthusiastic, and some of the portability effects on talking about it will happen much more naturally.

So you want to get them really motivated with fantastic ideas and content, not all of it coming from you, right? You're putting your other messengers and their stories out there, OK? And then you want to make it really easy to share. There are a lot of people who would be happy to talk about your cause on their Facebook page, or to Tweet something that you're doing, or to email a friend, OK? They might even be willing to print something out and to show it to a friend. So you want to make it real easy for people to take your messages out into their human relationships.

Alia, what might you add to that?

Alia: I think that you hit all of the important points, Katya. I like to think of it as a tool kit where your content, your really inspiring and compelling content, is the backbone of each piece of the tool kit. And then you use all of these amazing tools at our fingertips — Twitter, email signatures, again, thinking low tech about this stuff, videos, stories, logos, badges — and you work on channelling those out. So it all starts with really great content, and you use the tools to get them out in as many ways as possible.

Katya: Great. OK, and that brings me to my favorite point to make today, which is number seven. We're getting toward the end here and we've got some great questions coming in which we're gonna take. That is that, in doing this, you are gonna make your job easier. Because I bet at this point of this conversation today, you're saying "Alia, Katya, that's all very nice, but how the heck am I'm supposed to find time to do all this? You've got to be kidding me. I'm busy enough as it is."

I can totally understand that. But the first thing I'd say about that is, if you do these things, you're actually gonna become more efficient and better at what you do and smarter at what you do. So actually, you will save time and effort in the long run. But if that's kind of cold comfort and you don't really believe me, I want to add a couple of other things, which is, the best way to think

about all of this online outreach and the principals behind it that we're talking about today is come at it with an idea of abundance.

And I don't mean to sound too kind of new agey or strange here, but we have this problem in the nonprofit sector, where we're constantly thinking about, we don't have enough time, we don't have enough resources, we don't have enough money. When you do that, you come across with this need-based messaging and you are less likely to try and to go engage people, because you just feel like you can't do it. It's not a very empowering thing.

What I'm saying is, think about your job as this amazing gift where you have all these fantastic programs full of amazing stories, and by unleashing that and getting that out there, you are enabling people to do one of the most amazing things in the world, which is changing someone else's life, or do something to make the world better, which will make them feel wonderful about themselves.

And by highlighting all these other messengers and all these other people who are your fans, you are going to create a huge amount of goodwill, OK? And you will be generating more and more goodwill in more and more abundance, and you will be in a place where you're not gonna have to be operating from principle of scarcity.

There's an amazing thing that happens along the way. The more that you take what other people are saying and put the spotlight on it, the more you find messengers besides yourself and let them have their voice, the more you do that, the faster your word spreads. Because when you go out online and do online outreach, if you're very self-promotional and focus on yourself, it leaves people cold. And if you're just about trying to get stuff for you, it doesn't work very well, particularly in social networks.

If you're going out and applauding people who are talking about your cause in different places, and highlighting them, and being generous in all the voices you're using, and all the different content you're pointing to, then people love you and they talk about you. By becoming less self-promotional, you actually get more promotion, if that makes any sense at all.

And the great side effect of this, of what I like to call "pointing more than you build," which is a point I'm driving toward here, the more you highlight what other people are doing that's related to your work, or that supports your work, the lazier you can actually be, to get back to my first point, about time.

The more that you point to other people's content, the less you have to produce yourself. The more you let other messengers speak for you, the less you're messaging yourself. And the more your message [xx 46:48].

So if you're panicked at the thought of creating things or doing things, don't do it. If you don't want to blog, don't blog, find influential bloggers and highlight their fantastic content, right? And engage them, right? That's lazy, it's generous, and it's highly effective.

You don't have time to Tweet. Highlight the Tweets of other people on your home page. Set-up a stream where you're pulling feeds from the Internet, conversations about other people. The more that you share, and the more that you point to others, and the less that you build and create, the more impact you're actually gonna have. So it actually pays to be generous and lazy in the long run.

Alia, do you have any to add to that one?

Alia: Yeah, Katya. I think that listening is the key to all of this when you're first trying to do this, right? So finding out where the conversations are happening about either you or your cause, you can easily set up Twitter searches, you set up Google alert, you can find those blogs that Katya was talking about that are talking about your topics. And then I'm going to illustrate this with a story.

I rescued my dog from a local rescue organization called Blue Dog Rescue in Austin, Texas. And I had such an amazing experience with them, I Tweeted something like a Twit pic of my dog and said that Blue Dog was the best. They gave me a shout out. And they said, "Thank you, Alia. We're so glad that you had a..." You know, they were following me...they were doing a search, because they weren't following me at that time.

And just them giving me a shout-out on Twitter made me feel so good that not a day goes by that I don't give them a shout-out in some online thing, right? Because I know they're looking, I know that I can help them out, and I know that they think it's important enough to listen to what people are saying about them online. So I think listening is the key to this at first.

Katya: That's exactly right. And that's really at the core. And I love your story about the dog. But do you hear the way Alia talks about it? How excited she sounds when they gave her a shout-out? That's a great example of when you're generous and you point to other people. It just motivates them to spread the word even more about you, which is a really just a wonderful thing.

OK, I'm going to hit the last point very quickly so that we can leave some time for questions. I can't believe that I'm actually making this last point or that I even still have to. But here we are in 2010, and the number one reason we're losing donors is how we're treating the donors, which kind of brings us full circle on the discussion today.

Particularly with online donors, we are not doing such a hot job, once someone actually does donate, in thanking them and sending them the kind of cultivation follow-up that Alia's talking that she had with Mercy Corp. That happens all too rarely.

And so, I think in our sector we really tend to have this kind of bad tendency to focus on the unconverted. Like, "Oh, who hasn't given before? Where can we find new donors? How do we get more people giving to us? How do we convince those people who are our supporters to love us?" And too little time looking at the people who do love us and thanking them over and over again.

So I really encourage you this year to please, please, please lavish thanks on your donors and do it in a really timely, personal, emotional way that focuses on them. That's so, so critical. Alia, what are some thoughts you have on thanking donors?

Alia: Just very quickly so we can get to questions, remember it is easier and cheaper to keep a donor rather than get a donor, and so many organizations aren't doing what they need to do when it comes to acknowledgements. It is better to over thank than under thank. That's all I'm going to say.

Katya: [laughing] I love it. Thank you. Rebecca, how about lobbing some questions at us?

Rebecca: Sure. Absolutely. So just as a reminder for those folks who have not sent in questions yet, the email address is fundraising123@networkforgood.org. So Alia, maybe you want to take a stab at this first one. We have a question from Tim and Tim says, "Our website has 'Donate Now' from Google Checkout, PayPal, Network for Good, as well as a donation form that can be downloaded, filled out and sent via snail mail. Having all of this, what are some of the best ways we can draw attention to these options?"

Alia: Well, I think the first thing...Well, it's good that you have the buttons. You have the technology in place. I think the first thing that you need to do is this goes back to that case of the broken buttons issues that Katya pointed out in Chapter 2, I believe. You need to make the case for why people need to click on those buttons, right?

So what I would do is make a huge, beautiful, compelling story and photo on your home page that augments those buttons. And in that story, show your impact. What is the impact of that gift? If someone clicks on that button and gives you \$25 or \$100, what is it they're going to do, and really show a beautiful face of a beneficiary looking at them straight in the eyes. I think that is the key piece to drawing attention to your "Donate" buttons.

Another thing that I would do – oh, go ahead. Go ahead, Katya.

Katya: No, no. You finish and then I have one thing to add.

Alia: Right. Another thing I would do is just make sure you've got a few calls to give on that homepage. Or you can – excuse me, I'm sorry. Make sure there are a few calls to give around the homepage, and also, if you want to take a test drive, get someone who hasn't been to your site and ask them, "Where would you go? How would you make a gift if you wanted to give a gift to my organization?"

You can find a lot in a very cheap user test like that – just seeing how people’s eyes track across your homepage and where their attention is drawn to.

Katya: Yeah, I totally agree. The key is putting the focus on the people who are benefiting from what you’re doing, not necessarily what’s the actual process is of what they’re getting. And then I would say, it sounds like you have a lot of buttons which makes me a little nervous.

There’s something called the paradox of choice, so that the more buttons, the more stuff you put in front of people, the more you’re going to lose them along the way. So you want to make it really easy for people to see a story about, say, a family or some children, hopefully just one, and to click and then be able to start making donations right away.

If they click and they see five different ways to give, and then they click and they go through several steps of giving, you’re losing people at each stage there. So what you want to do is make it...you want to actually eliminate choice. You don’t want too many choices there or you’re going to hurt your results.

Rebecca, do you have some other questions for us?

Rebecca: Yes, absolutely. So Katya, maybe you can take this second one. This question says, “We have a website as well as a Facebook page, and I just registered for a Twitter account. I’m having enough problems drawing attention to our Facebook page and was wondering if Twitter is really that important for a small nonprofit. And also, if you have time, what are some of your thoughts about how to get fans, or actually, more recently, steer folks to your Facebook page?”

Katya: OK. Well, the first thing I’d say is it sounds like from your question you’re very focused on Facebook versus Twitter. And what I would say here is to take one step back and say, “Why am I doing this outreach via social media?” Like, “Do I have a lot of people who care about my issue in these places and is it worth engaging with them there in terms of what I’m trying to accomplish in building relationships with prospects and donors?” That’s really the first question to ask yourself.

Then you want to ask yourself, “OK, now that I know why I’m doing this, where should I be doing it?” And I don’t know whether you should have a Facebook page or a Twitter account. It really depends on if you have a critical mass of people [xx 55:02] your issues in those places. That should dictate your decisions.

So I hope that you’re not just kind of putting up a fan page, but that you are actively listening and following different causes and conversations within Facebook and online in general about your issues so that you know where people are coalescing and where they are self-organizing, because that’s where it makes sense to go take your message to them. And that’s what drives Tweets and fans and gets people excited.

Another piece of advice I give you in terms of getting more, since we don't have fans on Facebook anymore, any likes to your Facebook page, if you do everything I just said, and if you are out there doing what Alia and I recommend in terms of pointing to people and thanking them and going out and using these to put the spotlight on other people, you will build up a fan base that way.

If you put up the page and are just hoping people are going to come and check off "Like" and come to you with just sort of a one way conversation, it's going to be a really hard path for you. Alia, what would you add to that?

Alia: Agreed. Agreed, and I think the quality of the conversations you're putting out will attract other folks, too. Like if people see if you are...again, what Katya was saying, if people see that you're listening and that you are using your Facebook engagement, or your Twitter engagement, or whatever social outreach engagement as a way for not only to push content but to receive it and communicate about it, then that attracts people, and people will talk about their experiences with you and word of mouth will get out.

Katya: Yep, I agree with that. Rebecca?

Rebecca: Excellent. So we are nearing the end of our hour, but we have a couple of questions and I'm hoping we can sneak in just under the wire. We have a question from Sonya, and this is kind of a great one on one question I'm sure a lot of folks on the phone can relate to. Sonya wanted to know if our presenters have any advice for a brand new start up nonprofit that doesn't have any online presence yet. Where should Sonya start?

Alia: Oh, this is exciting, Sonya.

Katya: It is. You can do it right from the start.

[laughing]

Alia: Well, see Katya, I'll jump in here and then please let me know what else, additionally, you would say. Well first, I wouldn't forget your basics, right? So as Katya talked about in Chapter 1, I would first start with a well-branded, easy to use website with the ability to process secure donations. And I, you know, email is still, I love social network outreach and I think it's a very important part of the whole online passage, but email is still the gorilla in the room when it comes to online communication vehicles. So I would get an email campaign tool that complies with Federal Anti-Spam laws, and then I would get a website analytics tool so I can at least start to gauge how things are working with those first three things that I'm doing.

Then I'd put on my layers. I'd do a social media strategy that lays out the goals. I'd make sure there was a listening tool involved. I would do great follow-up from my online donors and supporters. But, you know, that website is still...website and email and the ability to process secure donations would be my first advice to you, Sonya. Katya?

Katya: Sounds like we're getting some static from someone. I'm not sure if it's you, Alia or you, Rebecca, but someone may want to change phones.

Alia: Let me see. It might be my headset. Hold on one second. Is that better?

Katya: Yes, that is better. And Rebecca, do you want to feed us one more question? We'd be happy to take it before we wrap up here.

Rebecca: Great. Sure. Katya, so if you want to respond to this one from Karen. Karen wrote in and said, "Our lawyer has recommended the language on our 'Donate Now' page that says that we cannot accept donations online from out of state. This is to avoid having to register in every state as a solicitor. What's your experience with that?"

Katya: OK. Well, I'll take a crack at that one. First of all, I am not a lawyer, so you should listen to your lawyer, not me, would be the very first thing I'd say. Second thing I would say, though, is this is not ideal at all. You're basically putting up a button and then limiting who can give, which is not great at all. So I don't think that this...your lawyer may be correct depending on the tool you're using to collect online donations, but you do not want to have that be your long term solution. You want to accept online donations from every state.

Actually, Network for Good has a whole article online, which I'll have Rebecca send you, that gets into all this detail. But Network for Good, we are registered in every state, OK? So if you are accepting donations through Network for Good, that may be something your lawyer might want to look at to see if that puts your lawyer more at ease. But again, I am not a lawyer, and your lawyer should review your state's policies and other state's policies. But I can assure you that if you are using a Network for Good tool, at least we are registered in every state that you need to be registered in.

But this is something that is coming under increased scrutiny of late, and I really encourage all of you, if you just have a Google Checkout or a PayPal button and you haven't registered or you haven't looked into this issue, you really need to look into it, because there's going to be more and more scrutiny by state Attorney General offices of online giving as more and more people move their giving online.

So Rebecca will send that around. You can also find it in our learning center, I believe, if you search under state registration. Correct, Rebecca?

Rebecca: Yes. Great. Perfect. All right. Well, it looks like we have run over our hour a little bit, so thank you to everybody who sent in your questions. But really, thank you everyone who just joined us and was able to take an hour out of your day today. We know how busy everyone is, and we're really excited to have been able to talk about the eBook; more than what's just in there, but to give some more examples and really turn this into a discussion.

So thank you everyone for taking the time. Also, of course, thank you to both our presenters. We're really glad that you were able to join us today.

Katya: Thank you!

Alia: Thank you!

Rebecca: Excellent. So again, I just want to encourage everybody to keep an eye on www.nonprofit911.org. Not only will we be posting the audio file and written transcript from today's call, but we will be updating with our Spring and Summer Nonprofit 911 series calls so you can register and participate again in the future.

So thank you everybody. Have a wonderful rest of your day. We look forward to having you on a future Nonprofit 911! Have a good one!