

**Nonprofit 911 – October 21, 2008**  
**Cranking Up Your Email Marketing for Fall Fundraising**  
with Kivi Leroux Miller  
Sponsored by Network for Good

The MP3 audio transcript can be found at  
[www.fundraising123.org](http://www.fundraising123.org) or [www.Nonprofit911.org](http://www.Nonprofit911.org)

**Jono Smith:** Good morning and good afternoon everyone. Welcome to the October 21 Nonprofit 911, sponsored by Network for Good. My name is Jono Smith and I am the marketing director here at Network for Good. We're really happy you joined us today for our call, Cranking up Your Email Marketing for the Fall Fundraising Season.

Now, we recognize this is obviously a bit of a scary time for fundraising, perhaps the most terrifying that many of us have ever experienced given what's going on today. Everyone is fearful about their financial future and here we are, unfortunately, on the verge of fundraising season.

We've been hearing from many nonprofits who feel both worried and even inadequately prepared for a recession, if we're even willing to use that word. But, even when the economy looks bad, your online fundraising and marketing doesn't have to suffer. That's one of the reasons why we're together on the call today.

In fact, we think the important fact about economic downturns is that they regularly come and just as regularly leave. But, downturn or not, it's important that we don't assume a defensive posture.

As fundraisers and marketers, we really need to create plans and strategies for dealing with the downturn that are as detailed as those drawn up for normal times. Times like this really demand that you go about fundraising and marketing organizations smarter and more effectively than ever before.

And that's why we're thrilled to have Kivi with us on the phone today. Kivi's an expert in online fundraising and marketing and she's got some great advice to share today to inform your email marketing strategy. And you're not alone. We've had over 300 people register for today's call.

Before I introduce Kivi, I just wanted to welcome everyone who's attending their first Network for Good Nonprofit 911 call. As you probably know, Network for Good is a nonprofit organization, just like most of you on the phone. Our mission, quite simply, is to make it easy and affordable for nonprofits to raise money online.

Nonprofit 911 is one of the many free resources that Network for Good provides the nonprofit community to help organizations increase their online fundraising and nonprofit marketing results.

In addition to Nonprofit 911, we also provide online fundraising services. If you're not raising money right now on your website, we hope that you'll consider Network for Good for your online fundraising email marketing needs.

And since today's call is about email marketing strategy, I have to put in a plug for Network for Good's on email Outreach service, called EmailNow. In fact, everyone who registered for today's call will be receiving an email coupon that will let you save 50% on EmailNow. But, enough of the sales pitch. This call is not a vendor review or a down-lower sales pitch. This call is about email strategy.

So, just a few housekeeping items: As I mentioned, all the lines have been muted and this call is being recorded. So, if you do need to jump off early or you want to send the call to a colleague later, you will be receiving an email from us within about 24 hours with a link to the transcripts, which you can download as an mp3 file and play on your computer or your personal listening device.

And we'll also, within seven days, make a text transcript available at [www.nonprofit911.org](http://www.nonprofit911.org). And if you'd like to reach us at anytime during the call or if you'd like to ask Kivi a question, we will be allowing some time for Q&A at the end. Please email your questions at [fundraising123@networkforgood.org](mailto:fundraising123@networkforgood.org).

At this point, I am very pleased to introduce today's speaker, Kivi Leroux Miller. Kivi is a nonprofit marketing consultant, trainer, blogger and she's been helping nonprofits to communicate more effectively with their supporters, both online and off, for more than 10 years.

We're really happy that she has donated her time today. She's got some great expertise on eNewsletters and email fundraising and email outreach. And without further ado, I am happy to turn the floor over to Kivi.

**Kivi Leroux Miller:** Thank you very much, Jono, and thanks to Network for Good for inviting me back. This is the second call I've done this year on email marketing and really enjoyed the last one and hope it was useful to everyone. So, I'm glad to be back again.

Rather than speak for 45 minutes solid, I would really love it if we took a break about 20 minutes in and took a couple of questions, Jono. So, if you do get those via email, by all means just feel free to interrupt or we can stop at the halfway and I can take a few, and then we can do the rest at the end.

**Jono:** Absolutely. And as Kivi mentioned, we want to keep things as collaborative as possible. So, definitely chime in with your questions to [fundraising123@networkforgood.org](mailto:fundraising123@networkforgood.org).

**Kivi:** I have put together an article that's basically of the list of my speaking points today. I just loaded it on my website about five minutes ago. You should be able to find it there. If you go to NonProfitMarketingGuide.com, right on the front page, you'll see a

note that says "Speaking Notes." The first item under that says "Steps for Creating a Nonprofit Email Campaign or eNewsletter for Network for Good Nonprofit 911 call."

What I'm going to do here for the next hour is pretend that I have been teleported to one of your organizations and dropped into your office and told to launch a fall marketing campaign on email. Now, maybe it's an advocacy campaign. Let's assume we're going to want to do some fundraising in there. But, I'm basically going to run you through all the steps that I would take if I were asked to do this for your organization.

Some of these steps, hopefully, you've already taken care of. You can check them right off your list. Others are going to be improvements to what you're already doing. And for those of you that this whole idea of doing email marketing and email fundraising is new, this will definitely give you a very solid backbone to work from. So, let's go ahead and jump right in.

The number one tip is to get an email newsletter service provider. There is no way around this. It's something that you really have to do. You simply cannot do mass email marketing, even if it's only to 20 people out of Outlook or Gmail or any of your other desktop email systems that you use when you're emailing your co-workers or your friends or your family. You need to use an email newsletter service provider to do this kind of marketing.

And there are a number of reasons for that, which I'll go over a few of those. Obviously, Network for Good's EmailNow powered by Emma system is a good choice. I actually just did a demo with the Network for Good staff on that last week, so I could see how the tool works. It's a big improvement over some of the things that have been offered in the past. It's a very solid, respectable tool and it's one that I will continue to recommend personally.

Network for Good does not pay me in any way to say that. I honestly believe that the Emma tool is one of the best on the market. Network for Good is now able to offer it to you for a very reasonable price, so do consider that. If you are interested in other tools, you can look around on my website and blog and find some links to other folks' as well.

Why shouldn't you use Outlook? A lot of people say, "Well, we have a pretty small list. Can't I just do it in-house?" And, no, you can't do it in-house. You've really got to go to a professional email newsletter service provider. There are a couple of reasons for that.

The first is that they do lots of things for you that you simply can't do yourself. They're going to give you code that you can put on your website for signup forms, so people can sign up for your list, they can unsubscribe from your list. They can do that all on their own without you having to do a single thing. So, it's a big timesaver for you. They also offer all kinds of tracking reports.

They'll be able to tell you how many people opened the email and who opened it, which links they clicked on, what they did there; all kinds of good tracking that's going to tell

you whether your particular messages are effective or not. You'll be able to compare over time which email messages got the best response. You simply can't do that on your own if you're sending from your desktop email.

And then, perhaps the biggest reason is because they take care of all the can-spam compliance for you. They really make it easy for you to stay in compliance with the law and to avoid being labeled a spammer.

Now, there has been a little bit of question in the past about whether the federal spam legislation applied to nonprofits. Most of us said it did. But, just recently the regulations have been revised to say that yes that federal law does apply to you. It does apply to nonprofit email.

So, you've really got to comply and when you sign up with a newsletter service provider, they will help you do that. They'll put your address at the bottom. They'll put the unsubscribe link at the bottom. They'll take care of a lot of that for you.

And, again, it also protects your own email that you use for every day work and transactions at work. You don't want email coming off your desktop, through your IP address that you use for work to be seen as spam.

And so, when people get your email newsletter, if they don't remember getting it, or for whatever reason they tag it as spam in AOL or whatever system they're using, it's going to reflect back on the email newsletter service provider. They have people on staff that manage that, that do nothing but work on making sure that their IP addresses are white-listed and that your email gets through.

It doesn't reflect on your personal email address. So, that's what you really want to avoid, and that's what getting an email newsletter service provider will do for you. It's definitely worth the money. You can get these services for thirty bucks a month. It's more than enough for most non-profits, and by far, it's an excellent investment.

I have a little article on my blog that talks about how are you going to spend a thousand dollars if you only have a thousand dollars a year to do non-profit marketing, and spending the money on an email newsletter service provider is part of that thousand dollars. It's very important.

OK, so you've got that. You've got this system through which you're actually going to do your email newsletters, or your email campaigns. What do you do next? Well, you get your list in shape. And your list is incredibly important to your success.

There have been lots of different studies that have shown that the more people you have on your list, and the better quality your list, the more successful you're going to be in both creating advocacy, where people are clicking on links, and sending letters to legislators, and making phone calls, and forwarding your emails, as well as in your fund-raising. You're going to raise more money, the better list you have. It's a very simple,

straight-forward connection.

So, first of all, like I said, if I was dumped into your non-profit - I just mysteriously showed up in your office today and was told that I was going to do your fall campaign, after making sure that we had an email newsletter service provider set up, I would take a real close look at that list.

I'd want to try to figure out who's on it. You need to understand the typical person on your list, or typical few people on your list. Who are these people that you're emailing? And you need to develop content that works for them, and we're going to talk a little bit more about content specifically in just a minute.

Once you kind of figure out who's on your list, you need to think about if there are any really obvious ways that you can segment that list. One of the beautiful things about email marketing over print in particular is that it's very easy to break your list into different groups, and to manage those groups.

And people can be in multiple groups. You don't have to decide group A or group B; they can be in both or one or the other. And what this allows you to do is to really target your content for the specific people on your list.

So, for example, if some of you work in childcare organizations, part of your audience may be parents who are sending young children to childcare. Another segment of your audience may be the daycare providers. And so, the content that you would send to the providers would likely include lots of regulatory information, best management practices, that sort of thing that parents are not necessarily going to be interested in.

They may have a passing interest in some of that, but only as it really relates to their child's experience within the daycare system. So, you've got two different audiences there, and you could very easily segment your list and send a newsletter to the parents that's very oriented towards parents and raising happy, healthy kids. And then, you could have a separate newsletter that's really oriented towards the daycare providers, and making sure that they're doing what they need to be doing professionally. So, it's very easy to do in email.

You can also segment your list based on how often people want to hear from you. And again, there have been a lot of different studies that have shown that people are happier with non-profits, and they're happier to get email from non-profits, when they have some control over how often that email shows up in the mailbox.

And you really can't come up with a blanket statement. Some people are going to be happy to hear from you weekly or every other week. They're going to be people that are more engaged and connected to your mission and your cause, usually, and want to feel like they're really part of it and making a difference, like they're really on the team with you and implementing your mission.

Those kinds of folks are going to want to get email from you more regularly. There are some people that really just want to have more of a passing connection. They want to support you financially, they want to hear about what you're doing with their donations, they want some feedback, but they don't need the blow-by-blow on what's happening week-to-week.

So, for those people, maybe getting an email only once a month or every six weeks, or even less than that, would be more preferable. Both of those people are still big supporters of you financially, but they have a different connection to your organization, and a different need for information from you.

And again, there have been a couple of different studies that have talked about this. I don't have the links on the page yet, but that's one thing I'll do this afternoon, is link you to some of this additional information.

OK, so we know who's on our list, we've thought about segmenting it a little bit. Who else do we need to put on here before we start our campaign? You need to look at all the different places that you're collecting address information from people, and get people to sign up for your email newsletter at the same time.

So, if you have any sort of forms - registration forms, volunteer forms - if you're asking people to sign up for your print newsletter, ask for their email and have a little box that says, "We're going to add you to our email newsletter list. Check here if you do not want to receive it." Or, "if you want to receive it," that's up to you.

You can decide whether they're saying affirmatively, "Put me on" or "Leave me off," either way. But, you're getting permission to use their email. So, before we do any big campaign, let's really think about whether we've got all those off-line addresses in our database.

Now, really, the best practice is for those people to say, "I want you to email me," and to really affirmatively agree to get email. That would be the best practice. However, if you have an existing business relationship with somebody, which means you're already sending a print newsletter for example, if you have that person's email address, it's OK to go ahead and put them on your list.

Again, it's not perfectly ideal, but it's an OK practice. And as long as you have the opt-out, unsubscribe link at the bottom of every email, which you will have if you have an email newsletter service provider, it's OK to go ahead and do that.

So then, the question becomes how do we keep managing our list over time? And you want to make sure that you're managing the list to remove bounces. People's addresses go bad all the time, and there's always going to be what's called "churn." You're going to lose a certain percentage - as much as 20% - of your email list every year, and it's not your fault necessarily.

People's addresses change, they go bad, they fill up, or they forget to check it, or the server is just down at the time you happen to email. So, you want to be watching, and if you're getting... usually, I say if you're getting more than three bounces of any kind, whether it's a hard bounce or a soft bounce or a spam bounce, or whatever it is, go ahead and just take that person off your list, because those sorts of things are tracked and included in whether you're tagged as a spammer or not.

So, you want to keep that list really clean by removing those bouncing addresses. Carefully managing your list, making sure you're emailing to people who want to get your email, sending them content that they really want and are looking forward to, and therefore, will not hit that "this is spam" button in their email, and then making sure that you're getting rid of these bad addresses over time is really the best way to avoid spam filters.

Everyone wants to know, "How do I stay out of the spam filter?" There are certain things you can do with the content and design of your email message, but what's really going to do it is managing that list. And so, that's why I really started with this, and I've spent so much time on it already, is just because it really is critical to your success as an online fundraiser and online communicator, as well as to staying out of the spam filter. List management is really where it's at.

So, once you've got your list together, and you feel like your current list is in good shape, you want to make sure that it's really easy for people to add themselves. And so that's my third point, is to make it really easy for people to join your list and to manage their own subscription.

Again, you want to get that code from your email newsletter service provider. They'll give it to you, and you can put it right into your website template. That's the ideal place for it. It would be great if that little sign-up box could appear on every single page of your website, because you have to remember Google is going to send people to where the best pages are in your site, and oftentimes that is not really your home page.

The really good content is often deeper in your website, so that's where the Yahoos and Googles of the world are going to send people. So, wouldn't it be best if you had that email newsletter sign-up form right there on that great content?

Because I'm suggesting you put it into your template, it means you need to keep it pretty small and brief. You don't want to be asking for anybody's life history here. All you really need to be capturing is their email address and usually their name. It's a good thing to capture their name too, so that you can customize your email a little bit. You can do the, "Dear John O.," or "Dear Kitty," in the email.

But, keep that form very simple. Don't request a lot of additional information. You can always go back later and have people supplement their records, once you capture them. You want to offer incentives for people to sign up. And this is really - don't just say, "Get our free newsletter." Tell me what's going to be in that newsletter.

A lot of you host events. If you're doing any kind of arts organization, performing arts, any sort of public events, tell people that they can get a sneak peek at the calendar, or they can get first dibs on tickets or registration to events, if they're on your email newsletter list. And then announce the calendar, and announce the events to your email newsletter list a week before you send it out to the media or in your print newsletter, that sort of thing.

So, that's a good incentive. You can offer special downloads to people, and white papers, or how-to tips. Every non-profit can write a short, little how to do something, based on implementing your flyer. I don't care who you are, you can put together a flyer that tells people how you can implement your mission.

So, if you work and you're trying to reduce animal cruelty, you could put together a little how-to sheet that says, "What to do when you see an abused dog in your neighborhood." If you work for an environmental group that's trying to prevent global warming, you can put, "12 tips on how to reduce your energy use and help save the planet.

Whatever it is, you can come up with a little quickie how-to and you can give that to people who subscribe your newsletter as a bonus. What else can you do? I'm sure you have lots of ideas out there.

Another program that I've seen some non-profits implement is using a tool within a lot of newsletter service providers' packages, which is called an auto-responder. Now, you don't want to refer to it as that, because people are not going to understand what they're signing up for.

But, you can call it an email series, or a seven-day series, where what you do is you use the auto-responder functions within your email newsletter provider, and when someone signs up, they get the first email on that first day, another email the next day, a third email on the third day, or you could set it up where they get a separate email each week for six weeks.

But, it's a set, automatic email that goes out to them that again, could include different sorts of tips or helpful information, very much directed toward making the reader's life easier in some way. So, that's another sort of bonus that you can use with your email newsletter service provider to entice people to give you their email addresses.

OK, what else do you need to do to really get people to sign up? You need to think about the whole issue of the double opt-in versus the single opt-in. Double opt-in is where I sign up for your email newsletter on your website, and automatically, I receive one of those emails that says, "Hey, Kivi! Thanks for signing up for our email newsletter. We want to make sure you really want this. Click on this link now to confirm."

And I click on the link in the email. That's the double opt-in. So, the first time was when I went to your website, the second time is when I click on that little email. That confirms

for you that I'm a real person and I actually want to get this email from you. Now, that is the best practice. That is what you should be shooting for.

The problem is that a lot of those confirmation emails, those links never clicked on. And for some organizations, it can be as high as 50% of the people that sign up for your newsletter won't actually go and click on that link. They'll either forget about it, or that message itself will go into their spam filter and they won't go look for it.

And so, you can lose a lot of people there, which can be pretty sad for a non-profit that's trying to build up their list. So, if you just want to do the single opt-in, you can do that. You can have them just sign up on the website, and then they're automatically on your email list.

The problem is that you need to devote more time to manually managing your list at that point, because once the spam robots out there see your form, there's form spam. And what happens is "Buy Viagra" will sign up for your email list with a bad email address. And there'll be cuss words, and all kinds of crazy stuff - it'll be really easy to spot, usually.

But, what happens, these people are trying to cause you trouble, because you get charged for either the number of addresses on your list, or the number of emails you send. And if you only do single opt-in, you're going to get dinged on both of those counts. That bad email address is going to be on your list, so you'll be counted for it, and then you'll send email to it, and you'll be counted for it. And it'll bounce, so that'll make you look bad.

So, it's just like spam, it's there to cause you trouble. If you do single opt-in, you're going to have to manually scan the people that are signing up for your list. You'll have to log in to your email newsletter service provider, actually look at the list, and manually delete those bad addresses.

They are usually really obvious, a jibber-jabber of letters and numbers - it won't look like a real email address most of the time. But, it's one more step that you have to take manually to manage it that you can avoid if you do the double opt-in.

You always want to link to your privacy policy. One of the big concerns that has come out through the Wired wealthy study - and again, this is another study that I'll add links to - was that people are really concerned about giving non-profits their email addresses, because they think you're going to go off and sell them to other non-profits, and it's going to start this vicious cycle where they're suddenly getting email solicitations from everybody.

So, it's a legitimate fear, and you can counter that by including a link anywhere you're asking for emails - newsletter sign-up sheets, donation forms, any of that - go ahead and include that link to the privacy policy, and say you won't sell, rent, or trade the information, and then don't do it. You've got to keep that promise not to sell somebody's email address. That will help alleviate some of the fears.

You want to have people change their email address themselves, if you can. This is one of the things you should be looking for when you're evaluating which service providers to use. Does it let the person go in and correct their own email address? Or do they have to completely unsubscribe and re-subscribe?

That's a harder step to take than simply clicking on "update my address" and changing it from Gmail to Yahoo or whatever it is that you want to do. Let people do that. And then again, look at your offline forms, anything that you're using offline to collect email addresses, and come up with a system to put those all online, whether it's every Friday you sit down and enter them in to Excel and upload them to your service provider, or whatever it is.

But, go through that process of getting the new people online. OK, I've spent about half the time just talking about managing your list. And I'm doing that again because this is really a key component to success.

But, if we do have some questions, Jono, I'd be happy to take those names now, and then in the next portion, I'll actually talk about the content, the real meat of what goes in your newsletter and what it's supposed to look like.

**Jono:** Great, we do have about six or seven questions already, so let me try and synthesize a few of them together. Here's just a quick one from somebody in Canada, and they are wondering how spam applies to Canada, if there's parallel legislation that you happen to know about.

**Kivi:** I actually don't know the answer to that. That's a really good question, though, and I'm happy to find that answer. Jono, do you know?

**Jono:** I do not. I do not know much about the laws in Canada, but we'll do a little research and maybe Rebecca can do a quick search. She's on the line as well, and we'll see if we can answer that before the end of the call.

**Kivi:** OK, that's a great question, and I'm sort of disappointed in myself for not knowing the answer, because I know I have a lot of people on my own list who are from Canada, so we'll get that answered for you.

**Jono:** And let's see here... Greg says, he talks about how to drive people to your website so they can opt in for autoresponder emails. How do you advertise, especially at a local level? How do you essentially build a really great email list?

**Kivi:** You know, obviously getting people to the website is critical if you want them to sign up online. There's a couple things here. First, you should be letting people sign up in lots of different ways. So, that's why I've been talking about connecting with people offline, asking if it's OK to put them on your email list even though you're meeting them in person or over the phone. You really want to have an integrated approach for collecting this contact information. But, then again, there are several ways that you can drive people to your website.

Having a blog is something that I think all nonprofits should really consider. It's not going to be right for everybody, but blogging has a number of really good search engine benefits. The search engines love blogs for a couple of reasons.

First, they tend to be updated much more frequently than static websites, so the blogs really like that. There's this natural linking between related blogs and related websites and content that Google also likes. Really think about adding a blog, and I'm actually doing - a little plug here - I'm actually doing a webinar on nonprofit blogging next week, and you can get the information at [NonProfitMarketingGuide.com](http://NonProfitMarketingGuide.com) about that. Just make sure your website is on everything you do. Plaster it everywhere. Anything that you print and distribute should have your website on it. Your business card should have your website on it. You should be listed in all sorts of directories.

For example, if you're talking about local outreach. Are you on the Chamber's Website? Lots of newspapers have websites now that will allow nonprofits to include links in different sections. Lots of local governments will link to different nonprofits, especially if you're providing a real service to people within the community. So, think about all those other places in town, both offline and online, where you can get a link.

**Jono:** OK. This question comes from Erin, and Erin says if we collect names from the Internet can we "subscribe" them to our lists as long as they can unsubscribe later?

**Kivi:** That is generally a really bad idea.

**Jono:** Just a similar question to add to that. Jeannette says we have email addresses from people who have not agreed to receive emails from us. How do you suggest we ask them to be added to our list?

**Kivi:** OK. There're all sorts of - there's good, better, best. Now there're best practices. There are things that are OK but not ideal you can still do. Then, there are just things that are a really bad idea. So, on the really bad idea end of things would be finding people you think should be on your list and just sort of scraping around the Internet, searching for their names and then finding their email and putting them on your list even though they have no existing connection to you whatsoever. That is a bad idea and you should not do it, because you are spamming at that point. That is the definition of spamming is connecting with someone on email who has not asked to receive contact from you in any capacity.

Now, in this sort of gray area is this idea that you already have an existing, called an existing business relationship with the person. So, maybe they're already getting your print newsletter. Or maybe they've come to one of your events before. But, you have a real connection that you could explain to somebody to say, 'look, you contacted us about our event, you came to our event, you already get our newsletter, you donated to us last year.' Any of those would be considered business connections that you already have. And in that case you can legally add somebody's email to your list, even though it's still technically not considered a best practice. You can still do it.

If you're going to add a whole bunch of these people at once, this is a good way to use the segmenting. You can collect all these different emails for people that you already have some sort of relationship with, but have not emailed in the past. Upload them to your service provider all at once and put them in a segment so you know that that's a group. And then, you send them a specific message that says, we're emailing you for the first time. Here's why we think you're going to really enjoy getting this newsletter. Talk about those benefits to them. Make it really worth it for them. And then, depending on your system, you can have a link that lets them sort of do that double opt-in right there. Or you can just say and we're going to keep emailing you unless you unsubscribe.

Having that specific double opt-in link where they confirm, yes, please continue sending me email would be the better option. Not all the systems allow you to do that. But, at a minimum you're sort of fessing up to - we know this is the first time we've emailed you, and here's how to make us stop if you want to do that.

**Jono:** And just to add something to that point, I actually did a little test about a year ago, and rented a very small list and compared the rates to our opt-in list. And our opt-in list for Network for Good, for example, the average open rate is in the 30-40% range. And with this list that we rented, the open rate was under 5%. So, it became very clear to us that renting lists was not a great idea for a number of reasons. Generally, people don't want to hear from you if they haven't already given you permission to hear from you.

**Kivi:** That's right. Absolutely. And there are all kinds of people out there that will try to sell you lists and talk about the value of that. And you can certainly find nonprofits that have bought lists and it has worked for them. But, they're usually really, really, really big lists. And really big budget buys that are probably not going to be within the reach of people on this call. Generally, it's a bad idea. You have to do a lot of work to turn it into a good idea.

OK. With that, should we go ahead and jump into some of the content tips, Jono?

**Jono:** Let's do it.

**Kivi:** OK. So, just a quick review of what we've done - 1) Get an email newsletter service provider, 2) Get your current mailing list into shape, 3) Make it really easy for people to join your list and to manage their own subscriptions.

OK. So, you've got your list together. Now, what the heck do you actually send to these people? That's what we're going to talk about now.

First of all, Step Four is creating an editorial calendar for a few months at a time. You don't want to really look at this as this sort of short-term thing that you've just got to do this week and then you can check it off your list until two weeks from now when you have to do it again. Try to have a longer-term view of this. And this is especially critical if you're trying to do fundraising. You need to really think of it as a series of emails that you're putting together. Think about what's going on with your organization in the next

few months. Think about the different things that you know you're going to be working on. And start thinking about creative, interesting ways to talk about those things.

You not only want to think about what's going on in your organization, you want to think about what's going on in your larger community. And make connections to that. You also want to look at the calendar. We've got holidays coming up. So, you've got all kinds of potential connections there, interesting twists on your mission related to the different holidays that are coming up. So, incorporate that all together.

Try to come up with a little game plan for what you're going to include in each email for the next few months. How often do you send? How many of these emails are we talking about? Well, it really depends. And if you've had an email newsletter put in place for a couple of months or a couple of years, you probably have a pretty good sense for how often people want to hear from you. You can sort of tell. It's sort of that sweet spot between you having enough content and feeling like you've got really good stuff to say, versus people really clicking through and opening, and not unsubscribing because you're mailing them too much. Or hitting that spam button because they don't hear from you often enough and they don't recognize you.

You've got to find that nice, sweet spot. Most nonprofits that do successful email campaigns email more frequently than you probably think. I would say do it monthly at a minimum, and then work up from there. If you're just starting out, and you really have no idea and you really do want to try to get fundraising or advocacy out of your email campaign - it's not just sending our information. You're really trying to get people to act in some way, I would say shoot for every 10 to 14 days. Start there, and then adjust accordingly based on what you actually see happening with your response rate.

Plan out some topics. Mix in good information that talks about what you're doing with very specific calls to action and some fundraising appeal. You don't want to hit people up for a donation every single time you email them. Even the presidential campaigns don't do that. OK. I must get - I'm on the Obama list, and I must get an email every other day asking for \$25. But, in between, they're just telling me something good that's going on. I don't get hit up every single time. So, use that calendar to intersperse some of these things, good information with those calls to action and fundraising appeal.

And then, be prepared to adjust a little bit as you go along and you see what's really going on in the world today. Obviously, just in the last six weeks we've had this big turmoil in the economy. That might affect some of the topics that you're talking about or the angle that you use in the headline, that sort of thing. So, always be aware of what's going on and adjust that editorial calendar.

Being timely and current are big bonuses in email marketing. There have been a couple of different studies that have shown that a really timely subject line that really tells the reader that this was written today or yesterday, it really is obvious that this is something very current. Those are going to get opened more often. Really connecting to the headlines is a good trick to help you position your information so that it gets opened. You

can also, when you're thinking about your editorial calendar, think about creating an evergreen series for new subscribers. And again, this is using that autoresponder function within your email newsletter service provider.

The folks at Common Knowledge, which is a consulting firm, have released a study, they call it Rapid Donor Cultivation. What they do for their clients is create this email series. And when someone first joins the email newsletter list, they get thrown into - I think it's a six week series, or 45 day series. And they get a couple of emails right away, and about two days pass or a week passes, and they get another email. Then, a few days pass, and they get another email. And what the series does is introduces this new person to the nonprofit, to what they do, really gets them connected to the work and engaged in the work and it all comes together with an ask, with a request for a donation.

Other studies I've seen say that you should ask for that donation in the second email that you send after someone subscribes. There are different schools of thought on this, and you can certainly try different techniques. But, really think about this idea of creating this autoresponder series that can go out to those new subscribers to really bring them along. So, that's the big picture of thinking ahead about what you're going to talk about.

Now, let's really focus in on those specific email messages. So, here you want to write and design your email message, always with your reader in mind. So, we're going to talk a little bit about how to do that content-wise and how to do it with a design. Talk directly and personally to your reader. When your email shows up in somebody's email box, you have to remember that it is competing against personal email from coworkers, friends, family. These are all one on one conversations that people are having with each other over email. Those are the emails that I open first and you open first. What you want to do with your organizational email is to try to sort of mimic that.

Make it more of a personal connection where you're really speaking as a human being working at the nonprofit to that single email newsletter reader. And there are a couple of ways that you can do that. You want to really focus on your subject line, make it very intriguing to the reader, very benefit laden. Don't just put Smithville Nonprofit Newsletter, October, 2008 as your subject line. That's a complete waste of space. You want to actually talk about what's in the newsletter and make it really interesting to me as the reader. What's going to really - and this is where you need to know who's on your list. This all goes back to really knowing and managing your list. You know who those people are, you're going to be able to write a subject line that's going to be of interest to those people. It's going to make me want to open that email.

Again, being timely, being helpful, being interesting, give me things that are important to me. And this is where I talk a lot about - I use a gift analogy. When you're giving gifts to people, you think about what they want. You want to be a good gift giver. You don't want to be the cranky old grandma or grandpa or mean aunt who thinks that they know what you want, and then gives you socks and toothbrushes for Christmas. You want to be the cool aunt, you know, the hip older sister who knows exactly what you want and goes and gets you that game system or whatever it is you want for Christmas. That's the kind of

email marketer you want to be. You want to be giving people what they want. If you know who's on your list you can do that.

Timely, helpful and interesting - that's what you're shooting for. And you also want to make sure that your readers really understand how important they are to your success. You want to treat the people on your email list like partners in your organization in achieving your mission. This is absolutely 100% true if you're doing fundraising. People want to be thanked repeatedly, and they want to get feedback on how their gift was used before they give again. One of the most common reasons people stop giving to a nonprofit after the first gift is they didn't feel like they were thanked or they didn't understand how the money was spent. And so they, therefore, have no idea what you would spend the next check on. So, use your email to give your reader's feedback on what you're doing with their donation and to thank them profusely for doing it.

I don't know how many of you read Jeff Brook's DonorPowerBlog.com. It's another great blog you should be reading, of course, in addition to mine and Kaya Anderson. Jeff would say that you should give the donor credit all the time for everything you do. That's a little bit of an exaggeration, probably. But, he would say in your email marketing that you should give the donor credit for all the great things that you are doing. And thank them for making those things possible. Don't take credit yourself, as the organization; give that credit to your donors in your email.

Always remember that your executive director and your board are not the audience for your email newsletter. This can be really tough for small organizations, especially if a lot of your staff is volunteers or you're doing three different people's jobs at once and the only real feedback you get internally is with your board. But, they are usually not your target audience. So, remember the feedback that you get from the people on your list and the click-through rates and the open rates, that's what's going to tell you what belongs in your newsletter. Not necessarily the people within your organization.

Of course, if your board is made up of all of the people that are the same folks that are on your list, then you can maybe use them as a little bit of a sounding board. But, still, they're going to know much more about your organization, and have a completely different take on it than the average person on the street. So, they're not the ideal sounding board.

You want to include specific calls to action. When you're asking people to give money or asking them to do something for you on your behalf like an advocacy, take action on an advocacy call, or email somebody, you want to be specific. Don't just say support us. I don't know what that means. Don't say help us. I don't know what that means, either. Be really specific. Donate. Donate \$25. Volunteer an hour next week. Sign up for a two-hour shift on the weekend or in the evening. Register for our conference. Tell a friend about this newsletter. Forward this newsletter. Learn more about this topic by reading the article on our website. List the link. Write an email to this person. Make a phone call. Whatever it is, be very, very specific. You have to remember, people are reading their email at a lightening speed. So, they don't have time to figure out what you mean by

support or help. You want to be very, very specific about what you want people to do.

In terms of what the design should look like, you've got to remember that most people are using that preview pane in their email reader they've got. All kinds of other stuff is going on on the desktop. And in reality, they might have a couple of inches vertically where they're viewing that email. What you have at the very top of your email is really important, because that's all they might see. So, even if it's just a little bit of teaser text or a table of contents, make sure I know in the first couple of inches at the top of your email, what goodness I'm going to get when I actually scroll down. Tell me what's below.

Use more text than images. Email is really a text-driven medium, whereas the web is much more visual. You can include images in email, but you have to know that a lot of those images are not going to be seen, because people are going to have them turned off. So, the default in a lot of Outlook setup is for images to be turned off, and you'll see that little box that will sometimes have a red X, and there'll usually be a little bit of text there. I still get emails constantly from nonprofits and commercial companies where it's all images, and it's all just these black boxes with red Xes, and I've got nothing but the subject line to tell me what's in those emails. And you can guarantee I delete them without even looking most of the time unless it's just this incredibly amazing subject line, which is usually not the case. So, you really want to make sure you have lots of text towards the top, and that that text is wrapping around any graphics, so that I'm not just seeing a bunch of red Xes in boxes at the top.

You want to appeal to skimmers, because again, people are going through their email really quickly, so you want to use good headlines, good subheads. Short chunks of text. And you want to send in what's called the mime format. You're sending an html, which is all the colors and different shaped fonts and shades of colors and all that, but then you have this backup plain text version that also goes out at the same time. It's read automatically. So, if a person's email reader doesn't process that html, that plain text will come up automatically. Otherwise, they're going to see html code, which, obviously, they're not going to be able to read and they'll delete.

So, those are some real basics about the design. I'm happy to answer any questions about that. I just want to do a quick plug for doing some split-testing. And again, this is something that's fairly easy to do with most email newsletter service providers. Especially if you're doing sort of high-stakes email where you're trying to raise money at the end of the year, it's a good idea to come up with, say, two or three different versions of your appeal letter and label them a, b, c. And pull out 100 people and send-send version a to a hundred people, version b to a hundred people and version c to 100 people. And see what the results are. See which version gets opened the most, which gets clicked on the most, which produces the biggest actual amount of donations. And use that information to put together the letter that goes out to the rest of the list.

This is called split-testing. And it's something that's really valuable and you can learn a lot from. And you can do it all throughout the course of a year. You don't have to do it every time you email. Even if you do it a couple of times a year, it can be very instructive

and really help you better understand what people are most interested in and what's really appealing to them the most.

Then, finally, you just want to keep measuring and tracking everything over time. When you use these providers, they'll tell you how many people opened, what they clicked on, where they clicked, what they did after they clicked. You'll be able to see who's unsubscribing. So, if you notice a huge unsubscribe problem after a particular email, you might want to take a closer look and really try to figure out what was going on there. You also want to look at those bounces, get those off the list. Keep working at it, and then you go right back to the top and start over.

That's basically it. If you're on the website on [NonProfitMarketingGuide.com](http://NonProfitMarketingGuide.com) and you're looking at the tips I wrote, at the very bottom you'll see a link to another article that was an article that I really used on the call I did just a few months ago. It's *Ten Surprisingly Easy and Startling Ways to improve your nonprofit eNewsletter*. I expand on some of the tips I talked about today in that article. And then, you'll also see a link to the weekly webinar series at [NonProfitMarketingGuide.com](http://NonProfitMarketingGuide.com) where we do a lot of work on online marketing. This week we're going to be talking about defining your audience. Next week it's blogging. With that, I'm happy to take any questions. And, of course, I encourage everyone to sign up for my email newsletter too at [NonProfitMarketingGuide.com](http://NonProfitMarketingGuide.com).

**Jono:** Great. Well, we do have a bunch more questions.

**Kivi:** Great.

**Jono:** Just to close out the question about Canada, Rebecca did some quick research and Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act covers online privacy in detail and contains many provisions relevant to email marketing. It looks like there's also some current anti-spam legislation is progressing through the Canadian Parliament. So, if you do a Google search on Canada and spam, I'm sure you'll be able to get an update on both of those topics.

**Kivi:** And I will add that to my article later today as well.

**Jono:** Great. Vicki asks a really fundamental question. Could you speak briefly to the staffing or resources needed to support an eNewsletter or email marketing campaigns.

**Kivi:** Sure. This is a very common question. Before I answer it, I want you to think about how much time you invest in a print newsletter. I was just at a conference last week, and was talking to a few nonprofits about this. Several of them say that they, from start to finish, will spend 40 hours a month, or a quarter, on their print newsletter, including all the writing and the graphic design, working with the printer and the mailing house and blah, blah, blah - all of that. That's a lot of time for probably pretty limited results. I'm really down on print newsletters right now. Email can be much quicker because it's shorter. You're not sending out... If you look at an eight-page print newsletter, that might be four or five thousand words. You're not sending out four or five thousand words on email. Shoot for five hundred to a thousand, tops on email.

So, it's shorter. I think, it's actually easier to write because you have to be so quick and pithy and to the point. I think, it's actually easier to write in some ways. If you use one of the templates that the service providers offer you, and that's something else you should look for when you're evaluating them. And they all have free trials, so you can sign up for almost all of them for free for 30 days. Check out their templates. It's pretty easy to do the design. You're really just sort of doing some cutting and pasting. It's actually less time-consuming than laying out a publication in Publisher, for example. I would say look at the trade-off there in moving to email. I think, in general, you're going to find that doing emails does not take as much time as it does to do print.

Now, when I sit down and do an email newsletter, I usually write two short articles and then I have to update a bunch of the links to the different webinars I'm doing. And do some work on my lists. I probably spend probably five hours for each email message. Jono, do you have any sense for what you guys spend on an email message that goes out from Networks for Good?

**Jono:** Granted, we have a big list here. So, we probably spend a little more time than the average person does. But, I would say that on average, on a weekly basis we spend about two to three hours on the content development piece, and then about an hour or two or three on the actual execution of the campaign.

**Kivi:** OK. So, those are some good, a good ballpark target for getting your email newsletter out.

**Jono:** And you were just talking to me a little bit about print newsletters. And Jeanette asks a question I wanted you to drill down a little bit more on that. She says so what would the difference be between our print newsletter - we've done one for 30 years and people like it, and an email newsletter. What we send now by email is only a calendar of events once a month, with periodic updates in between.

**Kivi:** You know, it all goes back to your list. If the people on your list truly, truly love your print newsletter, then I think that's fine. The problem is that a lot of nonprofits think that people love their print newsletter, and then when they actually go out and ask people if they're reading it, they don't know what they're talking about. They don't even remember getting the newsletter, or they can't tell you what was in the last issue. Like I said, I'm sort of down on the longer print newsletters right now, just because they are so time-consuming and expensive to produce. I'm recommending that nonprofits start shifting towards email. And if you still need to send something in print because your list demands it, the demographics demand it, you just don't have very many people want email or for some reason people just really prefer the print in the field that you're working in, then really pare that thing down to two or four pages. And really come up with an editorial calendar that integrates both the print and the email.

Last week, I also met several nonprofits that were only sending a print newsletter twice a year, which I think is crazy. Twice a year is not enough contact for people to really connect with you. You need to be connecting with people much more regularly than that, and a twice-a-year print newsletter is not going to do it. So, I think, shorter print

newsletters, postcards are a great way to still stay in print, but push people online, push people to the website with the cheater that you put on the postcard, and then integrating some email contact in there - I think, that can work.

**Jono:** And we've gotten a couple of emails from folks who are having a hard time accessing some of the URLs and remembering the URLs. I just want to remind folks that you're not going to miss anything. We're going to send out an email after the call with links and reminders to ever topic that can be covered. So, we will make sure that everything is available and accessible to you by an email after today's call.

**Kivi:** Yeah. And it's always my sort of Murphy's Law that any time I'm doing something like this something happens with my web server, so if you're not able to get that page right now, you'll be able to get it later today. But, again, it's NonProfitMarketingGuide.com and the link to the article that I talked about today is right there on the home page.

**Jono:** OK. Kelly says, if a person signs up for your eNewsletter is it OK to send them a strictly fund-raising appeal over email? Would you advise it, if a person has donated to you before offline, is it OK to send them a strictly fund-raising appeal over email? Would you advise that?

**Kivi:** Yes, you can. I think, you're going to be more effective if you've got that supporting communication that's talking about the good work that you're doing and really giving that feedback to the donor on how their gift is being used. That's going to really lay the stage for you to do the full-blown appeal.

But, there is no problem with asking somebody for money over email. There's no problem with asking them over email if they've given offline before. It's cheaper for most nonprofits to process online payments when you take into account all the staff time involved in processing offline payments. I don't have a problem with that at all. I don't see a problem with that. You've got to set the stage. You don't want that email to just hit them cold. But, if you've done that and you've really worked out a good calendar, you're communicating with people regularly about the work that you're doing, then asking is not a problem. That's what you should be doing.

**Jono:** And Kivi referenced the report earlier by Common Knowledge called Rapid Donor Cultivation. We'll also include a link to that. I think, that provides a great case study of an organization that built up, through great content, to the fund-raising ask for people who hadn't specifically opted in for a fund-raising, so to speak.

**Kivi:** Yeah. I'll include that link, and then I'll also include the link to the Wired Wealthy Study, which was Sea Change Strategies and Convio and a couple other people I'm probably forgetting. But, this was looking at major donors that gave online and some of their preferences. Being able to decide how often they got email and the information about the privacy policy was incredibly important to those major donors who gave online. So, that's another good study to look at if you're really trying to get some of the larger gifts online.

**Jono:** Mary Ellen asks what's the best way to find out how often people want to be contacted by email.

**Kivi:** It's not going to be the same answer for everybody. A lot of it is going to depend on how they view their relationship with your organization. So, it's really best to give people the choice, and depending on which service provider you're using, you can set that up so that people can make that selection either when they sign up or when they manage their subscription. You can set it up where it's just one more piece of demographic data that you collect from them, like their address or their phone number. You can ask them what their preference is for frequency. And then you can sort based on that, and you decide who gets what email based on how often they want to be emailed. If you can't segment out your list like that, then it's sort of a crap shoot, where you're just hoping to get the right frequency to the majority of the people. You're just trying to hit the right frequency. And so, that's why I say usually, if I'm just shooting in the dark, I say try every two to three weeks. And go with that.

**Jono:** A couple folks write in basically saying we don't have the time or the resources to do this, but can we, for example, are there consultants or companies that we can give our donor list to and ask them to run an email campaign for us.

**Kivi:** You can find a consultant to do anything for you. Nonprofit marketing, so certainly. You want to find a communications consultant who's good at writing and good at online design. When you're designing an email newsletter, it's just like designing a web page in a lot of ways. It's the same HTML code. You set it up a little differently because it's going to be viewed in an email reader, not on a website. But, it's the same basic code. So, someone that knows how to code a website is going to know how to code for email, usually. Just find a consultant that can do that for you, and there are certainly many of them out there.

**Jono:** OK. We've had a couple of folks write in to say they're using their webhosting company as their email blast service, and they manage their lists, but they don't really make the emails look very pretty. Can you talk about the benefits of using your webhosting provider versus an email service provider.

**Kivi:** In my experience, the email that you get is sort of an add-on to your webhost is going to be pretty insufficient for what you really need to do this well. You really need to sign up with a company that is going to offer you the real tracking and list-building tools that you need. You should have complete customization over the emails. They will offer you templates so you can use those as a starting point. But, if you get to the place where you can design your own email in Dreamweaver or whatever HTML program you're using, you should be able to cut and paste, basically, that full HTML code out of Dreamweaver and into the email newsletter. You should have that kind of flexibility. So, I would say really I wouldn't use the free emailing that comes with a webhost.

**Jono:** I definitely agree on that point. And I realize we've actually run over our allotted time, so I wanted to give Kivi an opportunity to make any closing remarks.

**Kivi:** I just want to thank Jono and Network for Good for having me. Again, if you haven't visited the page yet that I was talking about, you can find it at NonProfitMarketingGuide.com. I'll spend the next few minutes here making sure I have the rest of the links online, so if you want to check back in an hour or so, the page should be completely updated. And I'm happy to answer any additional questions. You can reach me on email at Kivi@Ecoscribe.com or you can find me on my website too. There's a contact form there as well.

**Jono:** Great. And we want to, of course, thank Kivi for donating her time today. And thank everyone for attending today's Nonprofit 911 call. And I just want to end on the point that I started on, which, obviously this is definitely a bit of a scary time economic-wise for nonprofits. But, I really want to encourage folks not to take a defensive posture and really to be aggressive about their online fundraising and market and email marketing is a really green and cost-effective and easy, affordable way to do that. I hope you'll take some of the tips that Kivi offered today and pair those up with a great email service provider. We'd be thrilled if you worked with the .NETwork for Good and our non-profit email service.

And I would love to hear about your success stories, and even your failures. Because we can all learn from that as well. So, you can always email at [fundraising123@networkforgood.org](mailto:fundraising123@networkforgood.org) to continue this conversation about email marketing. We hope you'll join us again on a future Nonprofit 911 call. We've got some great speakers lined up that will take us through the remainder of the fall and the holiday fundraising season. And if you visit the Network for Good learning center at [www.fundraising123.org](http://www.fundraising123.org), you can learn more about those. So, thanks again to Kivi, and thanks again to everyone for joining us today, and have a great day.