

Nonprofit 911 – September 2007

Crafting Your Call to Action

With Katya Andresen

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Katya: I'm really happy you joined me today. If you're like me, the summer seems to come to a screeching halt and we're well into fall before I even knew what hit me, personally, and suddenly we're here in fundraising season. Many of you may be anxious to get your campaigns underway and motivate people to give money or volunteer or take action at this time of year.

Good for you, for being focused on that this time of year. This is certainly the time of year for it. At Network for Good, as you know, we process donations for a lot of different charities as well as run the Charitable Giving portal at www.NetworkForGood.org. We find that across all of those platforms about 40% of our giving is late in the year.

It's a good time of year to be focused on getting people to take action because they're most likely to do it now. What I'm going to go over today are five steps to improve your call to action. What do I mean by a call to action? That's when you're asking someone to do something.

In my experience with the non-profit sector, myself, in working with organizations like yours, this is a very common place where we fall down in our job as marketers. We tend to sometimes hope that simply by communicating about what we do we will create awareness and that somehow by creating awareness people will do something.

What I'm going to focus on in the call today is instead of raising awareness or having a vague call to action like, "Stop Global Warming," or that kind of thing, we're going to really hone in on how to get people to do something very specific like give us their email address or give us a donation right now.

I think that should be the goal of all marketing. One of my mentors, Bill Novelli, who I worked with at CARE and now runs AARP, likes to say, "If we're just in the business of creating awareness, we might as well be shoveling pamphlets out of airplanes." I couldn't agree with him more. It's not a propaganda campaign, it's a marketing campaign or a fundraising campaign and we want people to do something specific.

What's the first step to getting people motivated and getting them to do what we want? The first step is to respect and know your audience. I want us all to get in the mindset today of humility because I think humility is really the key to success. By humility, I mean we're thinking of others, namely our audience, before ourselves.

I mean we're going to recognize that we're not the center of the universe and people aren't waiting around to hear what we have to say. All of us have options in life for spending the precious time we have. We have short lives and a lot of things competing for our attention. So we have an obligation to make a very good case why people should devote some of their life to taking the actions we're asking for.

It's a big thing to ask someone to take time out of their day to come volunteer for our cause or to fill out an online donation form or to send us a check. If we can't make our case confidently and convincingly and completely in a short amount of time that honors the time and point of view of our audience, then we should really leave people alone.

I think if you can get in this place mentally going into the fundraising season and honoring your audience, respecting their time, you're going to find yourself working a little differently. You're going to naturally gravitate toward messages that will resonate to your audience. You're going to gravitate toward not excess amounts of words.

You're going to gravitate toward fundraising materials that get straight to the point. You're going to tend to be more likely to make it easy for people to give. Those are all the right things. We want to respect our audience's time. We want to know them. We want to address what they care about. That's the way we want to come into fundraising season.

The second thing I want to talk about is focusing on getting the audience to do something specific, which is not the shoveling-the-pamphlets-out-of-the-airplane approach and work backwards from there. So we don't want to market from our mission. We want to market to a desired action. If some have you have heard me talk before, I like to talk about marketing as a reversal of the normal order we do things.

If we are thinking about how to get our audience to take our message in rather than focusing on how to get our message out, we're reversing the way we normally work. The way we normally work is to [design] our program, wordsmith our mission statement, and then tack on marketing at the end as a means to get that message out.

What I'm talking about is reversing that order, starting with the audience and what we want them to do very specifically and working backwards

from there into our strategy for communicating. So that means we can't put out our mission statement and then tack the call to action on to that and expect that's going to do enough.

Let me give you an example from a corporation. There's a very famous corporation whose mission statement is to bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world. Any ideas who that might be? Maybe not, right, because mission statements aren't really meant to be communication vehicles.

That actually happens to be the mission statement of a company that wants to sell you shoes. It's Nike's mission statement. Nike, of course, is not famous for the slogan: "Bringing inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world." They're famous for "Just do it." The reason I give this example is this is what happens when you work backwards from getting someone to do something.

If Nike had started from their mission statements and went on into call to action, they would have landed in a very different place. They have a mission statement that's great. It guides the essence of the organization. We have all our mission statements, that's great. It's our letter. It's our North Star. It helps us remember what we're here for.

In terms of communication this fall, in terms of fundraising, in terms of asking someone to do something, we want to start from what we want people to do. So when Nike started from selling shoes, they got into the message of "Just do it." Buy the shoes and you will feel powerful, like someone who can run 10 miles, like someone who is a powerful person.

They're not asking you to run 10 miles. They're asking you to buy shoes. They're asking you to "Just do it." Let me give you a mission statement from a non profit that uses Network for Good's services, some friends of ours. They're called Malaria No More and their mission is to end deaths due to malaria.

If they started their call to action, "End death due to malaria," they would land in the wrong place. They're instead focusing on what they want people to do. How do you end deaths due to malaria? What's our "Just do it" message? What they want people to do is to buy a bed net, in other words a chemical-coated net that you can put over a bed in an African country which is infested with malaria-carrying mosquitoes and that will prevent malaria deaths.

So their message is, "Donate \$10 for a bed net." Again, that's a good "Just do it" message that focuses right in on what they want people to do. By the

way, their entire website is full of world-class marketing and calls to action. Every page has calls to action—www.MalariaNoMore.org.

I encourage you to get on there and explore. It's a beautiful example of just crystal clear calls to action throughout everything they do. They're one of our top fundraisers month after month after month. I believe a lot of it is because they have a very simple message and a very clear call to action that connects right away.

The third point I want to get into is, okay, you're respecting your audience, you know what you want them to do, and you're going to work backwards from there, so how do you actually construct the call to action? That's what I want to cover next. There are five attributes of a good call to action.

The first one is you want your call to action to be highly specific. This is a little tricky for some of us. We're working to do a lot of different things and we're working toward grand goals, often. I referred to "Stop Global Warming" earlier. That's not a very good call to action because it's not very specific.

I don't know what I am supposed to do to stop global warming. I have no idea. I am certainly against global warming. I would like to stop it. But I am not left with any understanding of what I'm being called upon to do nor a compelling reason for doing it. What you want to do, even if you're addressing a pretty big social issue, is boil it down into an action someone can take that's pretty specific that will make the problem better.

That's why buying a bed net is an excellent call to action to fight malaria because it takes a huge problem, which is hard to understand in terms of scale and scope, and reduces it to a dollar amount and action that will actually make a difference and is understandable and tangible and highly specific.

That's the first thing you want to do. Read over your email, your fundraising letter, your website, any communication you're doing, to make sure that what you're asking for is very specific. If you're asking someone to give online, are you putting the button right in front of them? If you're asking someone to write a check, is there an envelope in there?

What exactly are they supposed to do? Think through all the steps. Do you have a PSA running? Does it ask someone to take action? Does it tell them how to do it? Is there a number to call? Is there a website that's repeated throughout so people know what specifically to do? The second thing is feasibility.

This is a really important one. If we're tackling something like global warming or poverty or cleaning up our national parks or other issues like that, they're pretty big issues and people might feel the problems that your organization's trying to address are rather intractable and if they had to do something to address it, it would be a lot of work.

There are a lot of social psychology theories that have looked into why people take action. People take action when something seems really easy and not overly risky. If you can figure out a way to boil down volunteering or giving or perhaps you want someone to use the human services that your agency provides, you want to make it look really easy and simple for them to do.

That might be offering support by signing a petition. It may be just surrendering an email address and you're telling them that that will help to some end. Remember, there is a continuum. You want to get someone to take an action, even a small one, because that creates something called momentum of compliance.

If someone does something small, then down the road they're more apt to do something more and perhaps write you a big check or make a big online donation at the end of that spectrum. Not everyone's going to give right away. Some people will, but for those who don't, you want to offer some easy things to do to support you at the outset and you can build your call to action to bigger things.

Don't make your call to action so big and intimidating and huge that you alienate the people who would be willing to take baby steps because the baby steps lead to bigger steps. So feasibility is very important. The next thing I want to talk about, after being specific and feasible, is being free of barriers.

This is where you go do a test of whatever your call to action is, whatever the material is, whether we're talking about a website page, an email, or what have you, and show it to some people who don't work closely with you, maybe some of your relatives or friends, and ask them to try to take the action that you're asking for and watch closely what happens to them, what barriers they hit.

You want to make sure that once someone has decided to take the action, it's not hard to follow through. This is where you get into usability. If you're talking about things online, how easy is it to find the Donate button? How fast can they check out? If you're getting someone to sign a petition or sign up for volunteering and show up for volunteering, how many steps are there?

Which ones can you remove? Where did people get hung up? Again, people want to do things that are easy. They don't want things to be overly difficult. It doesn't honor their time by making things overly complex. It's not respectful of your audience. So you want to check what barriers can you remove?

By doing some of that and putting what's in front of you by watching them try to take the action, you're going to see barriers you didn't even anticipate and that's going to be really useful so that when you roll out your campaign you will be able to alleviate those barriers or minimize them so that more people will convert to action.

The next one is filmable. This is like a little litmus test. If you think you're specific, feasible, and free of barriers, and you think you've got a good call to action, one good last test is to imagine that you have a video camera and you're filming the person taking the action. "Stop Global Warming" wouldn't pass that litmus test because how do you film someone stopping global warming?

What would they be doing? If you can create in your mind a visual of it, then your audience will be able to, too. If you don't have a clear visual, they won't either. They won't be able to picture themselves doing it and they won't be likely to do it. Another one I put on here is first priority. This is kind of harkening back to the point I raised about momentum of compliance and thinking about what you're asking people to do.

Are you going for a baby step? What are you doing there? It's really interesting, particularly in fundraising season, to ask what your first priority is. You definitely have audiences who you want to give money, no question, or volunteer or take action. What about the people who aren't going to do it right then?

What can you do on your site and in your outreach for people who aren't going to click the Donate button right now so that you can cultivate them over time and get them to the donation by the end of the year? What can you do to engage them? What I mean by first priority is your first priority, besides getting donations, is shouldn't you have a priority of building your email list or getting people to give you permission to hear from you more often?

Somehow think about how you can build your community of people who might be likely to support you, not just your donors going into the fundraising season. One of the examples I'm always using—some of you may be tired of it but it's a good one—is Care.org. They have a power circle. They're getting you to put in an email address and you get your

name in a visual moving graphic on their website. What's the point of that?

For people who aren't ready to donate, they put up something kind of cool that gave you a opportunity to participate in and all you had to do is give them an email address that they can then go back to and get that person down the road of baby steps toward a donation, which is what the end goal is for them.

It's useful too to think about if you're a health agency, say you're an organization tackling a certain disease, for example. Some of you are on the phone. If you're doing something like that, in your outreach and on your website, do you have a place where people can sign up for free tips about managing their disease or helping a loved one who has the disease.

Think of things that you can offer people that solve problems for them which would be so tantalizing that the person would be willing to be in closer communication with you. That might be a first priority for you this fall, not just the dollars but the relationships and building those going into December and then certainly going into the New Year.

Those are the five tests to a good call to action. I really recommend you run through those. Look at all the materials you're getting ready to send out. Make sure that you're succeeding on all those fronts. I want to give you another example. I mentioned Malaria No More as being month after month after month one of the most successful fundraisers using Network for Good's tools.

Another very successful fundraiser is the [Carbon Fund](#). If you click on there, you'll see they've taken "Stop Global Warming," which is a call to action and they've really transformed it.

What they're asking people to do is purchase a carbon offset depending on what they're doing. They've got such a wonderfully specific call to action. You show exactly what you're buying the carbon offset for. It's very easy so it passes the feasibility test. It's free of barriers. You can certainly picture yourself doing this.

You can picture yourself taking action to negate the environmental negative consequences of what you might be doing. They just do a fantastic job of that on their website. I really recommend them as another site that does a stellar job with call to action and there's something to aspire to.

Again, their results speak to their success in shaping a really effective call to action. That is a little checklist to figure out, "Do I have the right call to

action?” You want to ask someone to do something and you want to make sure the thing you’re asking them to do meets all these criteria. You also have to frame the action to answer three questions.

These are incredibly important that you answer these three questions to get someone to the actual donation. These are the three questions I want to put in front of you. You need to answer in everything you communicate over the next few months—and always frankly but particularly the next few months—for everyone’s who’s looking at your material: Why me?

In other words, why the heck should that person care about you? Why now? This is really important in fundraising. Why should they give to you now as opposed to later or never? Last, what for? Let me take those one by one because this is really important. Why me? This is where if you go to Malaria Not No More or Carbon Fund you see it’s very focused on the donor.

The sites are very donor-centric. I already know more it’s about what you can do, about what your \$10 does, and right now they’ve got Dave Beckham up on their homepage, lucky them. They get to align themselves with a celebrity like that. They’ve had non celebrities up on their homepage before but sometimes they just have a compelling picture of someone’s who’s been helped by getting a mosquito net.

There’s a face-to-face contact right away. There are endless amounts of audience research that show the way you answer the question “Why me” is you get someone to connect to something very human, something on a very individual level. People will go for a picture of a puppy. They will look at a human face.

They will read a story about someone who’s had an interesting or emotionally gripping experience. You need to make that emotional connection right away. You can do that with humor. If you go to Malaria No More, there’s a very funny video, actually, on there of Beckham making a penalty kick and they’re playing off the soccer net and the bed nets.

That’s one way to forge a connection. Carbon Fund does it by telling your actions to the action they’re asking you to make. You want to answer that “Why me” in some way. No matter how abstract, you have to figure out why it should matter to the person and describe it in a very human way that people can relate to.

Next you have to answer “Why now?” You’ve planned a great call to action that meets all the criteria, number three, but why should someone do it right now? I’m going to give you a tip right here. You’re very lucky

because you're heading into the time of year where "Why now" is really easy to answer.

The [time of year] is coming to an end. People are thinking about their year-end giving, so "Why now" is in the one time of year where it's going to be pretty easy. People are going to feel some sense of immediacy. You have fall campaign goals. Why now? Because we need this goal for the end of the year to accomplish these things.

You have reasons to express "Why now?" I want to tell you a story about Dance Theatre of Harlem, which is another non profit that uses Network for Good's services that we know and love here at Network for Good. In 2004, they actually had to close their doors because they got into such dire financial straits.

They laid off all the 44 dancers who were in their ballet troop, which is very famous. They tried to raise money and they needed to raise their \$0.5 million debt and reopen. Things were very tight, needless to say. One of the things they did was implement an online giving program. They put together an email appeal.

They put a button on their website above the fold. The one you can see now at their website, which there's a link to it on our page there for today's seminar. The DonateNow is actually flashing, which is not a bad thing. They did all of those things and they had the "Why now" down, didn't they?

They were on the brink of utter disintegration. That, obviously, was the reason people wanted to save them. Now am I suggesting you're going to threaten you're closing your doors? No, but if you have a serious financial need for something, absolutely highlight that. Don't highlight it to the degree of blackmail where "We need your donation or we're bye-bye."

It's important to say, "We have this specific need and to make this really wonderful thing happen we really need your dollars at this time of year." The more specific you can be, the more credible and compelling you're going to be in terms of setting those goals? Why do you need "x" amount at this time of year?

What are you going to do with that? That brings a really nice sense of immediacy and answers "Why now?" The next one I have on there is "What for," which I'm already starting to segue into a bit here. Donors are really skeptical these days. Once they are leaning toward giving, the initial leaning toward giving comes from the emotional part of themselves.

They feel a connection to you. They want to do something. You've made it look relatively easy to do something so they're ready to do that. They're ready to give that money or ready to take that action, ready to sign up to volunteer. They're right there and right before they decide to do that, though, many want one other question answered.

They want to know, "If I do this, where's my money going to go?" That last intellectual thought which enters into the emotional process is becoming more intense and more pervasive as charity scandals and general consumer skepticism become more intense. What you want to do, framing your call to action, you need the "Why me," and the "Why now" around your wonderful call to action.

You also need to show very specifically what will result. After someone asks, you need to go tell them what resulted. This is so important. I say it over and over again but I'm going to say it again: The number one reason people stop giving to a charity is how they were treated by the charity and they don't really feel like their money went to the right place or they just kept getting asked for more money.

You need to do a really good job showing what tangible difference will result. People are giving because they want to do something good. So what are you doing to give them the assurance that something good is going to happen? "These little girls are going to be able to do ballet at Dance Theatre of Harlem" or "Our ballet troop will continue."

"You will offset your carbon and we're working to make the environment cleaner." "The world will be a better place as a result of what you're doing." "We will get a bed net to someone in need of one in Africa and you will make a difference to fighting this deadly disease. You are saving a life."

That's really important to how you frame things. I want to make a few observations now about what's going on in our culture. I've done a lot of reading about trending and thinking of our own holiday content this year at Network for Good. This year there's a really interesting confluence of seemingly contradictory national news.

You have people who are very disheartened by a year of pretty negative events—war in Iraq. We're on the brink of a recession some believe. We keep hearing about home foreclosures. A lot of people react to a pervasive sense of cocooning or feeling like they want to be close to home. A lot of people who study national trending are find that people are turning inward because they do feel like there's all this overwhelming bad news out there and what else is there to do but concentrate on their own life and try to shut it out.

In fact, if you take a group of people and ask them are they better off than their parents, everyone says, “Yes.” When you ask them if their children will be better off than them, most people will say, “No.” Our country is at one of it’s most pessimistic times ever. I’m saying to you, if you’re answering “What for” or “Why now,” to channel some of that sentiment that people are feeling into concrete good that they can accomplish in their communities, for themselves, for someone who makes a difference.

When people are feeling overwhelmed, you don’t want to come at them with an apocalyptic, global, negative approach this holiday saying, “Oh, things are terrible and therefore you must help. Things are terrible here. Things are terrible there.” You want to focus not on gloom and doom but on, “We know it’s been a bad year.

Here’s the good news: You can make the end of this year better by doing these things. These things will make a difference and you can feel good about it.” I don’t know if that all makes sense to you but I’ve done quite a bit of thinking one this lately and I did just want to convey that at the end here of my monolog before I get to your questions. I think it’s important to be cognizant of that national news.

Last piece, before I get to some of your questions, is communicating the call to action. You’ve gone through the steps. You’re cognizant of your audience and what you want them to do. You have a great call to action. You’re framing it around language that makes it clear why it’s relevant to people—Why me?

You’re making it a call to action they want to respond to immediately, in other words, you’re answering “Why now?” You’re making it clear what their action will result in, which is the “What for?” Now you have to go get it out there. I just want to remind you that you want to think about that call to action and think of at least three ways to get it out.

The first, of course, is to be doing it on your website. We’re very focused in helping you on your website here at Network for Good. If you missed the last non-profit, 911 call, it’s available on the audio and transcript. You might want to listen to that because that’s all about websites. You want to go ahead and communicate on your website.

You, obviously, also want to do it with email outreach and traditional mail outreach and all the other ways you traditionally reach your donors. Segment your message. Look at your donors. Figure out who will respond to what calls to action. Are they active regular donors? Are they donors who haven’t given in a while?

You want to figure out where they are and what types of folks they are and class your message and call to action to each and get it out there through those means. The third thing I wanted to toss out to you this year is this is the first year for many of us that we're really starting to engage in a strategy to do more outreach online beyond just the world of email but also through social networks.

I really encourage you to experiment with getting your call to action out to those communities this holiday season. It's a little bit overwhelming to follow the rapid growth of Facebook and last year all the talk was around MySpace. We keep hearing about the exponential growth of these online communities. I get a lot of questions about that.

"Should I set up causes on Facebook?" "Should I do this?" "Should I do that?" This holiday, why don't you experiment with this third item here? It doesn't need to be a massive undertaking, if you're not doing anything with Web 2.0 right now. Experiment a little. Make a list of five, ten bloggers who have some authority who are blogging on your issue and start a conversation with them and see if you can engage them in some kind of effort to get people interested in your cause and to support it this holiday.

If you have useful things for the readers of that blog, try to get that blogger to get out that information to his or her readers because then over time they may become not only people accessing your resources but donors and supporters as well. How do you do that? You go to Technorati.com and you type in your issue, the name of your organization, and you check out the different blogs there are on that topic.

If you're not familiar with Technorati.com, it's a search of blogs. Go on there, check that out, see what people are saying, and try out five or ten bloggers this year and see what happens. Check out what communities there are in places like Change.org, which is a social networking site around good causes.

Set up your own personal Facebook page. If you're an organization, you can't have a Facebook page. You have to be a person. Set one up and start playing around and understanding the world of Facebook, if you're not already on there. You'll see that different people form causes on Facebook and support those.

That's another way to get your message out there. That's something you might want to experiment with. This year there are some great tips on getting started with Facebook and its relative value at Frogloop Blog, if you go in and Google "Frogloop." The Frogloop blog has had some great recent entries on should you bother to do the things I'm describing?

What's the potential return on investment? They have tables for calculating that. It's fantastic. They also talk about having realistic expectations about what you can do on Facebook. It's great for awareness, maybe not so hot for fundraising at this stage. All of that is really useful to look at as well.

Remember, this holiday, you're going to get a lot of your donors coming to your site. That's fantastic. You're going to email a lot of them. That's great. You may have potential donors out there, because this is the giving time of year, who might be more inclined to help you. You might want to go out and start exploring who they are.

I always like to say there's a passionate constituency for everything out there online. There are websites for everything. There are communities for everything. Some of those folks are bound to be fans of yours or potential donors of yours and it's really worth going out and finding them. Again, if you don't have a Google Alert set up, for heaven sake's, if nothing else do that this holiday.

What am I talking about? Go to [Google.com/alerts](https://www.google.com/alerts) and type in your name, your organization's name, your issue, and Google will send you an email every time anything's mentioned online about you or your issue. That's another good place to go try to find who out there you could be starting a conversation with.

I want to stop talking because I'd love to spend the last third of our time together here simply answering your questions. I'm going to turn the phone over to Jono who's going to be helping me emcee and find out what you all are enquiring about. Again, he'll give you the email address for writing in.

Jono: Thank you, Katya. I've got a great question here from [Cara] who says, "We have six different programs that would each have their very own different call to action. Number one, for example, shop our farmer's market, take our gardening classes, et cetera. Is this a sign of weakness or this common for non profits? I'm just worried since your examples sound so focused."

Katya: It sounds like you have some wonderfully specific calls to action like, "Shop at our farmer's market. Take our gardening classes." That sounds absolutely terrific. That's wonderful that you have things that are so specific. I don't think it's a sign of weakness. I think it's wonderful. I think different supporters of yours are going to want to take action in different ways and it's wonderful that you have different courses of action for them to take.

This is getting back at something I mentioned in passing but should probably come back to and spend a little more time on just briefly in answer to your question and that's segmentation. It is really important to remember that not all your audiences are the same. It's really important when you're looking at your email list and your supporter base to start to be able to flag who are what types of people.

One thing, if you don't know who they are, you're going to have to find ways to get them to start self-selecting. One thing you could do is send out an email that highlights some different things they could do and track where they're clicking and then start monitoring them in your database according to what types of things they like to do.

Another thing to do is if they showed up for certain events of yours, you can make some judgment calls about what actions they're most likely to take. You don't want to put 20 things in front of someone to do. They'll have something call option paralysis and do none of them. It's not bad to give them two or three options of things they could do.

To the degree you can segment your list more and more to tailor the calls to action to those separate audiences, the higher your response rates will be and the more personalized your approach will be, which would always be a very good thing.

Jono: Here's a question from [Kerri]: "When writing an appeal, is there a one-page limit recommendation? This is what I was always taught but now I'm hearing conflicting opinions."

Katya: Thank you for that question, Kerri. I'm smarter on that topic than I was a week ago thanks to a fellow blogger. I have two answers to your question. Shorter is better when you're communicating things online, i.e. via email, on your site. People, when they're online, are in scanning mode not reading mode.

I just read an interesting piece of research. When people change a button from "Read more" to "Continue," the response rates skyrocketed because people don't like to read online. They want to skim and the word "read" sounds like they're going to something long. By saying "continue," it sounded less imposing.

If you're doing an email appeal, shorter is better. Now, direct mail it turns out the inverse seems to be true. I'm a writer and I always like being succinct, so I was a little surprised but the results speak for themselves. Donor Power Blog by a great blogger, Jeff Brooks, I highly recommend his blog.

He just had a series of posts in the past week, if you go visit that, where he shows that with direct mail the longer letters test better. That was shocking to me. I'm not a direct-mail person. I'm much more of an online person but I believe him and he gives some examples in there. I used to work at Care and I know that we had a lot of folks in our direct-mail department who were highly talented who did write long letters.

They taught me something that Jeff mentioned in his blog this week, which is "Do you know what the most read part of your direct-mail letters is? The PS." My advice there is go longer for direct mail. Remember direct mail and online are entirely different. Have a PS that has a great call to action and case for taking action and you should be in good shape this fundraising season.

Jono: We're getting a lot of these questions where people are feeling like they've been left behind in the revolution of blogging and Web 2.0 and social networking. They're wondering how to get caught up. It seems like there are so many different sites to deal with.

Katya: Sorry that I went so fast and slammed with you a lot of information. Let me make it really easy. Just do two things and you're going to be in fantastic shape. First thing to do when you get off the phone and while you're in the zone, go to Google.com/alerts. What that does is, for free, Google asks you for tag words or names that it will always search for 24/7, online for you.

When anything on any of those topics appears in a blog or on a MySpace page or on a website, they will send you an email. There are a lot of constituencies for everything out there and there are people out there you should be cultivating, you don't have the time and the day to necessarily go find them.

Let Google do it for you, so that's the first thing you should do. Google Alerts are wonderful. I recommend you set one up for your name. I have one for Katya Andresen. I have one for my boss, Bill Strathmann, our CEO so that I can keep an eye on what people are saying about him and I consider it part of my job to manage his reputation as our CEO.

I have one for Network for Good. I have one for Six Degrees, which is another website we run for Network for Good. I have one for online giving. I have one for charity badges. I have Google Alerts for all the things that I'm involved in professionally that I want to be monitoring online.

Why are you monitoring these things online? You can start to get a feel for where people are talking about you and your topic. If you set up these alerts, over time it sends you an email and it has a link right in the email of where you're mentioned. You click on it and you go read it. After a few weeks of this, you're going to start to see some trends.

"Gee, it seems like there's a blogger who talks a lot about my topic," or "It seems like we're appearing a lot on this person's MySpace page." You'll start to be able to develop a list of places that might be good to start developing a relationship with because they might become proponents for your cause.

The second thing I mentioned was www.Technorati.com. It's sort of like a Google blog search. It looks over blogs—those are like web diaries and there are about 70 million of them now, believe it or not—and it combs through them to see if anyone's talking about you or your issue. That's another wonderful resource to go on to.

At www.Technorati.com, you can just do searches. You can search for blogs, blog posts, which are entries in blogs. You can also set up a watch list so that it gives you a little page that's all your own where you can check in periodically and it monitors all your terms on one page for you. Those are just some free resources that will get you started in seeing what people are saying about you.

One last thing, Technorati has a nice tool that lets you know how important that blogger might be. If that blogger doesn't have anyone reading the blog, then they're probably not worth huge amounts of your time in terms of cultivating them. That's where that green authority figure comes.

If you type in www.NonProfitMarketingBlog.com, you'll see I have an authority ranking of over 200. That means over 200 bloggers link to me. That's a pretty good authority rating. That means I probably have in the neighborhood of 20,000 readers a month. I'm probably someone you want to cultivate as a level of blogger.

If you see someone who has an authority of zero, you might not want to cultivate them. If you see someone who has an authority of 2,000, you want to do everything you can to get to know that person. I hope that's clear. We're going to soon do a call that will be solely devoted to social networks and we can delve into that some more.

Jono: Great. We've had a couple of questions from different people about collecting money online. A couple folks have expressed some unease about collecting money online because of the donation processing fees that

result from that. When you use a credit card, for example, there's a transaction fee. A couple people have wondered if that's ethical. Can we do that? What reaction will our donors have? Do you have any experience on how donors react to that type of fee?

Katya: Sure. Most consumers aren't aware if they go to Starbucks and buy a coffee with their Visa card that Starbucks has to pay some of the cost of that coffee to Visa or American Express, but that's the way the world works. That's the bad news. The good news is nearly all consumers understand that it takes money to raise money and that it's not free to collect money and raise money online.

They know that there is some fee associated with that, so that's the good news. Put those two together, in our experience and we have a lot of experience with this because we have thousands of non profits using our services and we run <http://www.networkforgood.org/go>, which also has fees. Consumers understand that non profits have overhead.

If they see fees of 15% or 20%, they know that's not very good. If they see fees of 3%, they usually understand that's not bad. In our experience, on www.NetworkForGood.org where we let people give to any charity, we're extremely transparent and up front about our fees. We give donors the opportunity to deduct the fee before they give to the charity or add it.

The vast majority choose to add it, so to me that sends the signal that they understand there are fees. We make it clear we don't profit from those, that those go to credit card companies, and we've gotten nearly all positive feedback because of our transparency and because of their understanding there are fees and they're feeling that the fees are exorbitant.

If you use Network for Good's services, you're going to be able to keep your fees quite low. Our custom DonateNow product, which you can find out more about by clicking on that banner, has a 3% fee. When we set up the page for you, donors are going to check out right through with their credit card.

They're not going to be hit with any additional fees, so we don't find with our customer DonateNow customers any issues with the fees there. Again, remember, the keys are if people ask about your fees to be very honest with them, transparent about them, and also to make clear non profits don't profit from fees.

There are fees involved in credit cards. Last, and a most important point, online fundraising is by far the most efficient way for your donors to support you. It is the cheapest way, in terms of administrative costs, by a

long shot. It costs as much as \$1.25 to acquire a new donor through direct mail.

It costs \$0.65 to acquire someone through telemarketing. It costs less than \$0.10 to get someone online. The actual transaction cost, again, across the board are much cheaper online so it's important to tell your donors, "It saves you money when they give to you online." Sorry, one more thing, which I didn't hit earlier.

This fall ask your donors to sign up for recurring giving because that's especially cost effective for you and easy on their wallets. If you use any of our services, it comes with them. We automatically let people sign up for a monthly gift. We find that about 40% of donors choose to do that and that's unbelievably high and fantastic.

You know you are assured a steady stream of donations so you can spend all your time thanking your donor and telling them how wonderful they are every month instead of asking them for money every month. Think about, when we talked about call to action, what you're asking for. Are you asking for them to make a big end-of-the-year gift or are you asking or are you asking them to make a modest gift this year for every month and can you name that program a special program and give them special recognition for being a steady donor? That's something you should really think about.

Jono: Cindy writes in with a question and she says, "I'm not clear on the 'Why now?' I feel that our goal is not what we'll get someone to donate. It needs to be about them. Can you give some examples, please?"

Katya: It looks like Cindy's from a children's foundation or from a children's hospital. I assume your donor list has people who have been to your hospital or have had people who have been to your hospital. I think it would be relatively easy to get someone to donate by talking about what your hospital's done for children, their children, or children like theirs.

Your fundraising goal, you're right, that's not necessarily the most part of "Why now?" What are important are those children. "Why now?" Because your programs will help this many children by the end of the year. Put your goals in human terms rather than dollar terms because particularly when children are involved that is one of the most human, fundamental, emotional causes that anyone would like to support.

Jono: A question from the West Coast from Julie: "Do you have advice for organizations that just do advocacy?"

Katya: Sure. With advocacy the same rules apply. You have to answer a “Why me, why now, what for,” absolutely with advocacy. With advocacy you need to make the actions really easy. That’s why online petitions and notes to members of Congress are so popular online because they are easy. People feel like they did something and it is engaging.

I think all the same rules apply for advocacy. The other thing I would say, this is for everyone else on the phone who are not doing advocacy and just donations, to remember there are studies that show people who love to get involved in advocacy are much more likely to give later. Most people, the first thing they did for a charity online was an act of advocacy, not donating.

That’s good in terms of that momentum of compliance and those baby steps that we talked about earlier. Perhaps someone’s not ready to give but maybe they would take some other action in support of you that’s advocacy related.

Jono: A question from Bill: “We are in need of building staff capacity. That doesn’t seem very sexy, but if we can’t hire another organizer we can’t organize an incredible program, which is their campus tour of a procession for the future. Is there specific advice regarding asks for building capacity?”

Katya: That’s a really interesting question. I talked about the “What for” being important. A lot of people don’t want to have their money go to overhead and that can be really frustrating as a non profit because, as you point out, if you don’t have sharp people to run your programs, you can’t have a fabulous program. So it’s a little bit of a Catch-22.

I would encourage you to take a rather radical approach there and be very upfront about the staff and have a little fun with the concept. If you’re recruiting for staff, can you frame that in a really interesting way? Are they a swat team who are going to meet some real human needs? You don’t necessarily want to recruit for a fundraising staff, but are they a staff who is going to have an impact on your programs and what would the impact be?

I’ve seen some examples of non profits that have actually fundraised for specific people and had a lot of luck with it. One example that comes to mind is an organization called The Advocacy Project that used our Six Degrees fundraising badge, which is another way to get involved in social networks that we will do another call on because it’s too big of a topic to cover right now.

They raised money for Peace Fellows going to Nepal. They really have done beautiful fundraising materials and they have a lot of pictures of the Fellows and they're telling the story of those people. I think it can be very compelling to call attention to people. Again, staff capacity is not what you're fundraising for.

You're fundraising for people who are going to do something really neat. You need to focus on what the neat thing they're doing is. The Advocacy Project focused on what those people would be doing in Nepal and also humanized them and focused on their stories, which was great. Stay away from words like "staff capacity," because, again, that starts to sound like administrative overhead and that's what people are not very amenable to supporting.

Jono: We have a question about some suggestions for engaging donors—finding potential future donors. Katya suggested sign a petition, email lists. Folks were wondering if there were any other suggestions that come to mind.

Katya: I think a really underused approach that I alluded to briefly earlier was solving a problem for someone. There's just not enough of that out there. I'm amazed by how many sites I go to for health-related causes or domestic violence related causes that don't have on there a way to sign up for tips.

You are all on this call because we're giving you free tips, aren't you? We actually have a list of tens of thousands of people who are on Network for Good's list to get free tips on fundraising and marketing. That's how we build our list. We offer people help for free. We solve problems for them for free and we develop a relationship with them and we hope you'll use our services as a result.

If not, we're a non profit and, heck, it's our mission to help make you more effective anyway. My point is all of you have pretty interesting resources. You're experts on something. Is there a way to turn that wonderful content knowledge you have into compelling information that someone would want to sign up for?

I'm not talking about just a typical e-newsletter. Can you give policy makers a shortcut for making decisions because you have great materials and issue briefs that you could chop up and send out as weekly updates that give them nice, concise briefings on different policies? Do you have tips for coping with a disease?

Do you have things you can do that can help your donor? That plays off something that's so important called a principle of reciprocity. People give back to you the kind of treatment they received from you. If put out

something free and help someone, they're going to come back and want to help you.

It's the most powerful thing in terms of human interaction. Try to think that way when you're thinking about sign ups and you might come up with some more out-of-the-box ideas.

Jono: We have a question about something called Second Life. It's been written up a lot lately in *Time* magazine and *Newsweek*. It's a virtual community. The question comes from the International Society for Technology in Education. They've actually developed an active membership online using Second Life—great networking and awareness for their organization. Tara asks: "Katya, what's your take on Second Life?"

Katya: I think Second Life sounds like a good match for you, Tara. In looking at your organization's website really quickly, you're focused on a society for technology in education, so you have a lot of technologists and people who are pretty sophisticated, I imagine, and active in online communities, which sounds like a good overlap for Second Life.

I'd say for 90% of you on the phone, if you don't have Google Alerts set up and you're not talking to bloggers and you're just out dabbling in technology, I would stay away from Second Life because it's a huge investment to set up communities on Second Life and it may not be a natural overlap for your audience.

If you think your audience is people who are really into technology and spend a lot of time online or are interested in virtual worlds, then that might be something you want to explore. If not, no, I would not invest in it at this time. I think it's great that Tara's doing that. I'm not surprised she's had great response because she is fulfilling the principle of open-minded moments and audience targeting.

This is a really good piece of advice I have to give you: Think about where your audiences congregate. What types of people are they and where do they hang out? Her types of people are probably hanging out on Second Life. Where are your audiences likely gravitating? That's where you want to go.

That's how you answer the question. "Should you be in Second Life," is not the question. The question is, "Where are your audiences?" From that will follow where you should be investing your efforts. If you don't know where your audiences are, use Google Alerts and exploring bloggers and start to dabble a little bit online and you'll start to be able to answer that question for yourself.

Jono: We have time for one last question. This question comes from Zero to Three. Zero to Three's mission is to support the healthy development and well being of infants, toddlers, and their families. Jane asks: "What suggestions do you have for call to actions for an organization like ours that has a less tangible mission, like offering programs rather than somebody Malaria No More who offers bed nets?"

Katya: In terms of answering questions specific about your site, I would love to spend a few minutes playing around. But I imagine your programs for Zero to Three's are probably pretty compelling. By telling a story of those programs, that's going to be a little more exciting on being a resource for the first years of life.

To answer that, I'd like to go back and look at your site specifically and email you. On a more holistic level, for people on the phone, if you're tripped up on how to make things more tangible—a couple thoughts. One is focus not on your programs or your processes but your end point and the stories of where you get people and use that as the essence of your communication.

Maybe you're a program that trains paralegal professionals to help people who can't afford a lawyer. That's less exciting than some of the outcomes of people who got representation in cases. The stories are going to be stickier. All of you have great stories to tell and I'd really emphasize that. The second part of what I wanted to answer was we actually have a much better answer to that question coming up.

We're going to be sending out to all of you who are on our list, and all of you are on our mailing list because you're on this call. We hired a magazine writer. She writes a lot of the angel stories for *People* magazine. We asked her to take two or three of the causes that use Network for Good's services that complain they have trouble making their stories tangible.

She wrote up their stories. We're almost done reviewing those and we're going to be putting those up on a learning site and she's going to write up her tips for turning intangible causes into tangible ones with great stories. That's an added resource we're going to have ready very soon for you and we'll notify all of you when that's up and running because that's going to help provide a more complete answer to my question.

I think that would be a good topic. Maybe we should just talk about that topic as an entire upcoming teleconference and bring the writer on there because we do get a lot of questions about that. For those of you who emailed and did not get your question answered, I will email you personally and answer. We always do this. Even if we don't have time to

answer on the call, we will take the time to answer you via email after the call.

Jono: Our last question comes from [Deborah] who's the development director for a foundation in Syracuse. She asks: "How do you engage donors in creating the "Why now" for building an endowment?"

Katya: That's a really good question. I'm not an expert in building endowments but I can give you an inexperienced opinion. I can also tell you my alma mater just sent me a building endowment email that was how not to do it. They said, "It's the beginning of our fiscal year and we need this endowment goal and to send it."

I thought, "I don't care what your fiscal year is." This abstract endowment goal you've set internally to the university, why should I care? I still have emotional ties or I would have thrown it up on my blog as a horrible example of fundraising because I was so embarrassed for my alma mater. That's how not to do it.

How to do it? Again, this is all about not why you and why you have an endowment goal but why them. What does that endowment going to do? Why do you need one? Why is it needed for the university or institution, if you're not a university? If you hit that goal, what good things will happen that they should care about?

I really encourage that because a lot of capital campaigns just talk about dollar goals without explaining why something like an endowment is important and explaining it. How do you get to that? Think about the last time you were at a dinner party or with a friend and they asked what you did and you were talking an endowment.

Someone inevitably at some point in your life has probably asked the question, "What's an endowment and why do you need it and what do you use them for?" Think about how you answered that question for them and then start framing your message from there. We tend to get really caught up in the weeds of our own work and think it matters that we have these things.

It's always nice to be shaken out of that mindset by our audience when they ask, "What is that anyway?" Think about how we would explain it to someone who had no idea and that might be a good place to start. I think I have some resources I can send you via email that pertain directly to endowment as well.

Jono: That brings us to the end of our Non-Profit 911 call for September. Thanks, everyone, for joining. As I mentioned at the start we had over 500

people on the line with us today, including a large international group. Canada especially was well represented, so thanks for taking the time out of your day.

Katya: I just wanted to thank everyone so much for joining us. To assure you, I'll be answering any unanswered questions. To close, with a call to action that Jono mentioned during the call. If you're not raising money online or you're not sure what you're doing or you're not happy with your solution, click on "60-day free trial" and try for 60 days one of our products.

Get your feet wet with it, see if you like it. That's my closing call to action. We encourage you to join our next call and stay in touch with us. Thanks again, so much, for giving us some of your valuable time. We know you're really busy and we hope it was an hour well spent. I hope you have an extremely successful fall fundraising campaign. The world will be a better place for it if you do so thanks so much.

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