

Marketing Strategies in the Digital Age

by Jacqueline Bassey, MBA, CAPM

On July 13, 2023, the School of Business at Molloy University continued its workshop series regarding Professional Development and Community Capacity Building, sponsored by a Mother Cabrini Health Foundation grant. This grant creates opportunities for nonprofit organizations on Long Island to receive training, mentoring, and technical assistance for staff at all levels. This workshop was titled “Marketing Strategies in the Digital Age.” Panelists included Dana Lopez, Director of Marketing & Communications at The INN; Meryl Rosenblatt, DPS, Associate Marketing Professor at Molloy University; and Jessica Strauber, MBA, Personal Lines Assistant at Royal Brokerage. The workshop was moderated by Dawn DiStefano, DPS (Assistant Professor, Molloy University), and Brian O’Neill (Assistant Professor and Graduate Business Program Director, Molloy University).



Dana Lopez



Meryl Rosenblatt



Jessica Strauber

A synopsis of the Marketing Strategies in the Digital Age workshop follows.

The Importance of (Digital) Marketing Strategy

A **marketing strategy** is an organization's long-term plan to gain a unique competitive advantage. A **digital marketing strategy** is part of a plan, or in some cases, a completely different one, created to gain a competitive edge through digital channels. A strong digital marketing strategy will include several types of digital media (e.g., email, social media, online advertisements). It allows an organization to maximize the impact of digital media to reach the target markets it aims to reach. Digital marketing strategies also help employees formulate a marketing plan that aligns with a nonprofit's goals. Creating a strategy is critical for nonprofits to raise awareness of their organizations, reach their target audiences, recruit new volunteers and employees, and drive membership and donations. Since we live in a digital age (i.e., many people receive information from digital platforms), utilizing a digital marketing strategy is crucial to achieving these goals. Dana Lopez noted the importance of utilizing a digital marketing strategy, especially for recruitment purposes. "Recruitment includes board members, volunteers... any person who can support your organization in some way, shape, or form," said Lopez. "They have to have a deep connection to the organization. They're not just there to be present on paper; they want to be part of the solution. The more storytelling you can do *digitally*, which is where the majority of people are receiving their stories and information, the better results you will have finding people who share the same passion for your mission."

Nonprofit Marketing Trends and Marketing Strategies

Just like corporate businesses, nonprofit organizations are also affected by marketing trends. Since the pandemic, a large bulk of nonprofit giving has remained virtual. Many nonprofits have invested more time and money into building email and social media campaigns with a call-to-action button to donate. Donors do not need to send physical checks or cash but can make credit card payments online to save time. Gen X and Millennials are currently responsible for the shift in the digital age, and as Gen Z enters the nonprofit world as donors, the shift into a digital age will continue to grow. They are almost guaranteed to make donations online instead of using traditional methods such as mailing checks.

Target audiences vary by nonprofit, so understanding, identifying, and reaching a target audience based on its needs is key. Addressing this audience's needs will not only increase a nonprofit's attractiveness but it will also help the organization create strong relationships with a new generation of donors who could become loyal donors for decades to come.

Meryl Rosenblatt, DPS, discussed one of the most important ways nonprofits can reach their audiences effectively: social media. "Creating a relevant and creative message on social media and continuing to maintain it will make a nonprofit successful," said Rosenblatt. She also discussed the importance of identifying and leveraging partnerships and sponsorship opportunities. In addition, interpreting data must be included in the strategy.

Segmenting by market, audience, and stakeholders is vital, as different and personalized messages must be communicated to different groups and individuals. When creating a nonprofit's strategy, defining the segmentation variables is key. Although the targets will differ based on campaigns and messages, some common types of segmentation variables include demographic, geographic, psychographic, behavioral,

needs-based, or value-based. Not all have to be used at once, and some might never be used depending on the defined goals of the organization. However, when building a strategy, it is important to identify which segments will be used for different purposes.

Measuring and Tracking Success

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) demonstrate how effectively a nonprofit achieves key organizational objectives. KPIs may include donations, year-over-year (YOY) growth, donor retention, acquisition rates (i.e., how many years a donor has given, or how many new donors were acquired over a quarter), fundraising return on investment (ROI), website views, donation conversions by channel, email open and click-through rates, and landing page conversion rates.

A major benefit of digital marketing is that, in most instances, reports can be generated automatically (click rate, reach, likes, comments, etc.). Nonprofits must know how to interpret this data. An example of this would be comparing two social media posts. Perhaps one had a higher reach, resulting in more clicks and donations. Nonprofits could analyze if the messages in the post were different and create a future post based on the more successful of the two or segment the target audience based on the data.

Importance of Social Media

When someone hears the term “Digital Marketing Strategy,” the first thing most people think of is **social media**. Although this is not the only channel that should be used, it is simple to use for both the organization and the donor and is cost-effective. Social media posts reach an audience quickly. When nonprofits use direct mail, they could also use social media to give donors a sneak peek, which may entice them to open the mail when it arrives. Organizations can also use visuals (i.e., photos or videos) to accompany their stories, which makes the messages more appealing and interesting. Jessica Strauber described the importance of social media, noting, “It’s hard to have your voice heard when you are not on social media because when you think about it, everyone is on their phone, computer, or some sort of social media platform,” she said, “and it is important to be able to reach those people... and keep them engaged with visually appealing, attention-grabbing posts.” Depending on which target audience an organization is trying to reach, a wide variety of social media platforms could be utilized. Instagram and TikTok work better for younger audiences, and for more general or seasoned audiences, organizations should utilize Facebook and Twitter. Depending on the organization, posting the same thing across different platforms could also be appropriate to reach multiple audiences.

Maintaining and monitoring the channels is one of the most important things to remember when running social media pages. Be responsive to questions or comments. Encourage interaction. On some platforms, such as Instagram, up to three posts can be “pinned” to the top of the page. Reserve these posts for important campaigns, achievements, or information. Creating a “call to action,” such as via a “donate now” or “learn more” button, will draw audiences in further and increase engagement. Finally, post consistently. When creating a digital marketing strategy, schedule when and how often content will be posted on each social media channel.

Additional Resources

- Industry Trends
 - Effective Marketing Strategies: <https://www.digitalinformationworld.com/2023/01/effective-marketing-strategies-for>

- Digital Disruption Marketing: <https://www.doxee.com/blog/digital-disruption/marketing-strategy-for-a-charity-and-nonprofit-organization/>
- Measuring/Tracking Data: <https://www.salesforce.com/products/crm-analytics/overview>
- Customer Segmentation: <https://blog.hubspot.com/service/customer-segmentation>
- US Chamber of Commerce – nonprofit strategies: <https://www.uschamber.com/co/grow/marketing/marketing-strategies-for-nonprofits>
- Social Media Trends
 - Trends for 2023: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/6-social-media-trends-nonprofits-2023-funraise>
 - Social Media Guide: <https://www.constantcontact.com/blog/social-media-for-nonprofits/>
- Fundraising Trends
 - The Fundraising Effectiveness Project: [analyzing and improving donor retention](#)
 - The Haas Jr. Foundation: [helping smaller nonprofits develop successful fundraising programs](#)
 - National Council of Nonprofits - published fundraising trends: [Quarterly Fundraising Report](#)
 - Digital Donations: <https://doublethedonation.com/digital-marketing-for-nonprofits/>

Jacqueline Basse is a graduate of Molloy's School of Business, earning her B.S. in Marketing and her MBA in Management. She has professional and various experience in several industries, including Real Estate, Corporate, Retail, Hospitality, and, more recently, Nonprofits. Jacqueline is currently the Leadership Giving Officer for Catholic Health's St. Francis Hospital.