



Marketing and Outreach

Transforming your dream into a functioning nonprofit organization takes effort and careful planning. In addition to establishing your vision, mission and values, there's the environmental scan to perform, recruiting your Board and volunteers, determining your programs and services, fueling your startup costs, and setting up your financial management systems.

And now you need to promote your nonprofit through marketing and outreach. Your community, your donors and your clients need to know you are open for business and ready to serve. The most productive effort comes from planning effective communication strategies that lead to doable tactics...the actual action steps that you and your volunteers will carry out.

Let's explore how to build a successful marketing and outreach plan.

Understanding Basic Terminology

The difference between marketing and outreach

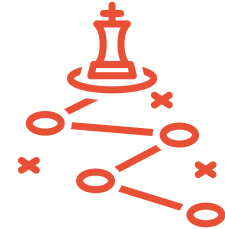
Outreach is a type of marketing that focuses on reaching out to potential donors, sponsors, volunteers, even your prospective clients. You might email or call someone, meet up with a friend or two, or attend a gathering where you have the opportunity to share information about your nonprofit. Whether planned, or in the spur of the moment, a lot of outreach happens on a one-to-one basis or with small groups. These activities usually have a lower financial cost, but a bigger cost in time.

Marketing encompasses **everything** you do to promote your nonprofit; from the moment you conceive your dream...to recruiting others to help...to requesting donations...to encouraging word-of-mouth recommendations. Often there are financial costs involved with marketing.

You may decide to invest in printed informational brochures or advertising for a special event. However, many free and low-cost opportunities exist. Consider posting flyers on community activity boards, sharing on social media platforms, submitting PR releases to area newspapers and other media, or pursuing speaking engagements.

The difference between strategies and tactics

Strategy is the plan. **Tactics** are the individual action steps that bring the plan to life.



Mapping out a strategic plan should always come first. It should be in line with your vision, mission, and values. Invest the time to research what other nonprofits are doing, and consider what's doable for you to achieve within 1 month, 6 months, 1 year, and 5 years.

Establish benchmarks for goals to reach so you can track results and develop procedures to evaluate which strategies, as well as tactics, can be improved upon or to consider ditching altogether in the next cycle.

While strategic plans are not carved in stone, they should not be changed without careful thought and data. Tactics, on the other hand, can easily be adjusted to correct the course of action or take into account new possibilities and opportunities.

First Steps to Creating Your Strategy

- Define your strategies and identify your primary goals. Are you looking to:
 - Raise money?
 - Reach more people in need of your programs and services?
 - Increase your visibility within the community, such as through being featured in articles, or invited to guest speak?
 - Increase your volunteer base?
- Determine the budget you have available
- Determine the types of events to host
- Identify any activities that are not workable due to time involved or cost
- Determine how the efforts will be measured and evaluated
- Identify the key people involved
 - Who will be tasked with coming up with the tactical action plan?
 - Who will be in charge of carrying out the plan?
- How will reporting to the Board or committee chair be handled?

Some Marketing and Outreach Ideas

Here are just a few examples for handling outreach to donors, volunteers, and media sources:

- Direct mail
- Email
- Phone calls
- Cross-promotion with other groups
- Social media
- In-person meetings and group gatherings



There are many excellent resources available in books and online with ideas to consider. Some resources even provide detailed action step plans. Many ideas used by for-profit businesses can be adapted for use by nonprofits as well.

>> **Nonprofit Community Growth 101: Simple Ways to Increase Engagement**

<https://blog.elevationweb.org/nonprofit-community-development-101-simple-ways-to-increase-engagement>

>> **10 Nonprofit Marketing Ideas for 2022 and Beyond**

<https://www.constantcontact.com/blog/nonprofit-marketing-ideas/>

>> **Microsoft 365 Resources for Nonprofits**

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/nonprofits/microsoft-365>

If you're a little shy about bringing attention to yourself, or speaking in public, you are going to have to get over that quickly! To make your dream a reality, you need to be prepared to knock on every door and try every option to promote your nonprofit. If you are clueless about marketing, consider working with a marketing professional. Many offer discount services to nonprofits or even pro bono help. Just like any business, you do need to spend money to make money.

The opportunities are out there. Believe in your dream. Invest time and effort into creating specific marketing and outreach strategies that can be carried out with practical, repeatable action steps. Learn to take those baby steps and build on each success.