A Nonprofit's Guide to Internet Marketing

Cost-Effective Opportunities to Accelerate
Online Marketing Success for Your Nonprofit
Organization

By Everett Whitehead



Part 1: How Online Marketing Benefits Nonprofits

The simple truth is that the internet has gone mainstream and should be thought of as a critical medium to be included in any nonprofit's marketing strategy. By integrating the web into marketing efforts, you increase the chances of exposing the greatest number of interested people to your nonprofit organization. Marketing on the Internet is one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to convey your organization's message and encourage others to join your voice.

Why use online marketing as part of your marketing strategy?

- ✓ Extend awareness about your organization, causes, and issues. Online marketing allows your organization not only the ability to use traditional text, but also video, images and audio to reach interested parties and spread awareness about your group and the issues that are important to it.
- ✓ Greater pool of potential donors. Web marketing helps your organization to nurture existing benefactors as well as recruit new donors. Additionally, because of the expanded reach of the web, many small donations scale up to bigger ones. The contributions of 50 people who each donate \$5 have just as much value as 5 people who give \$50 each.
- Faster outbound and inbound communication with the press. Communicating with the media is streamlined over the web. Your website and other online properties become powerful PR machine. Also, your organization's pamphlets, news releases, event notifications, and reports can be easily distributed to online news hubs.
- Superior measurability of campaign effectiveness. Unlike other forms of advertising, the nature of the internet allows you to comprehensively track every click, impression, and registration that has resulted from your online marketing campaign.

- Larger pool of potential members. Internet marketing can expand your membership rolls by recruiting new members from around the world at a lower acquisition costs than traditional marketing.
- ✓ Tangible reputation management. Your organization's reputation becomes a concrete element able to be read, analyzed, and influenced. A positive reputation then becomes its own asset, stimulating further interest and improving your standing with the community.

Part 2: Types of Internet Marketing Campaigns

This section introduces you to several of the major disciplines within online marketing and identifies key opportunities that nonprofit organizations can utilize to further their cause.

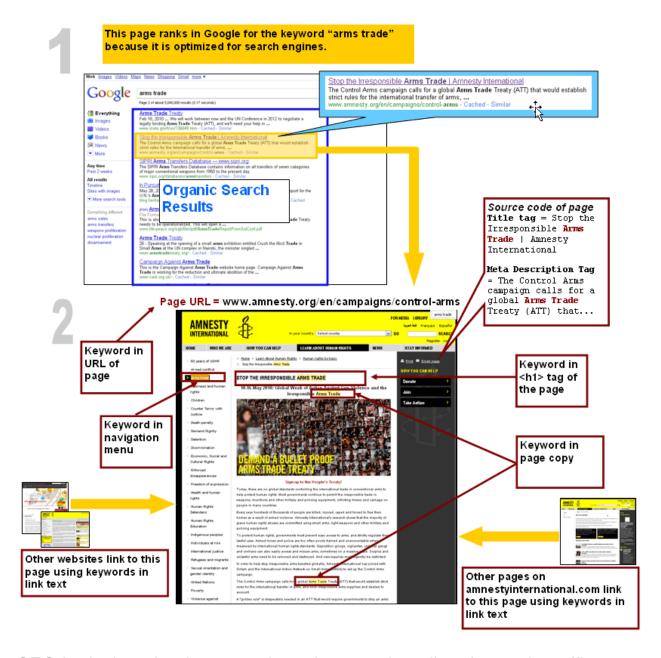
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

What you should know:

Search engines use a secret algorithm, a set of rule-based actions, to determine the most relevant webpages (or other content) to return in response to user's search. Generally, the higher you rank in the search results for these terms, the more traffic you'll attract to your website.

Search engine optimization or SEO is about getting your website to the top ranks in search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing for specific keyword phrases related to your nonprofit's services, events, issues, etc. In other words, the goal of SEO is to align your website with the search engine's algorithm as best as possible in order to increase the probability of your site appearing in the search results for pertinent keyword searches. Top rankings can be accomplished by changing the structure, code, and content of your website. When done correctly these changes facilitate search engines in discovering and understanding your site content. SEO also seeks to increase the number of other sites linking to your website as this is an important factor search engines use in determining your rankings for keywords. Lastly, SEO is a long term online marketing strategy and it may take

several months to see the payoff, but the return-on-investment can be very high. Below is an example of key SEO elements at work for Amnesty International for the keyword "arms trade".



SEO is designed to increase the volume and quality of organic traffic coming into your website.

The Opportunity for Nonprofits:

- Search engines do not charge a fee to list your website among organic search results, so this is a great opportunity for nonprofit organizations to expand their reach online.
- Many search engines incorporate images, videos, press releases, books and shopping feeds in their search results which may represent a tremendous opportunity to create an engaging user experience for your nonprofit within the search engine results.

How to get started:

- 1. Identify keywords that are related to your nonprofit using the Google Keyword Tool.
- 2. Assign an appropriate keyword to each page on your website. You will optimize the page for this keyword.
- 3. Add the keyword to the title tag, meta description tag, meta keyword tag, header tag, alt attributes, main site navigation, and URL to its respective allocated page when feasible, being careful not to overdo it and sacrifice user experience.
- 4. As best as possible, incorporate the assigned keyword into the main body of content of its assigned webpage. The main page content should have between 300 500 words of copy.
- 5. Ask partners, donors, and members to link from their website to your nonprofit site using the keywords you selected as link text. Identify blogs, forums, and website directories and install links to your site using your keywords, being careful to follow any guidelines that the owners of these communities have set. In some cases, you may want to send a friendly email to the owner of related websites politely requesting a link to your site.

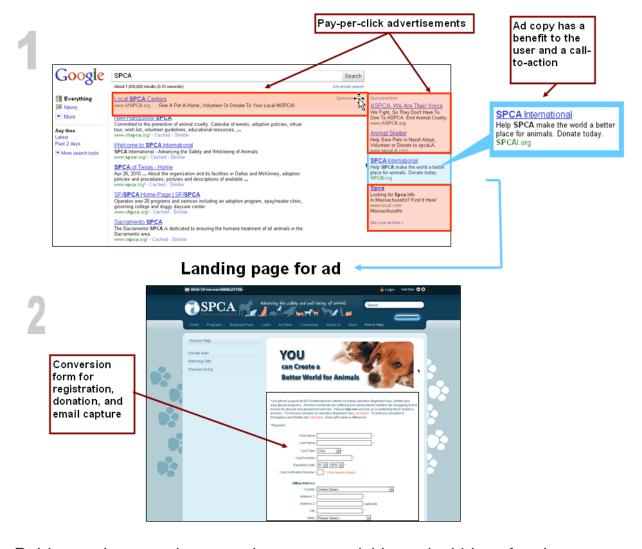
Paid Search Marketing or Pay-Per-Click (PPC)

What you should know:

Most search engines allow marketers to place paid advertisements next to organic search results. The amount paid and positioning of these advertisements is determined in a real time auction where you bid a maximum amount you are willing to pay for each click on your ad. Basically, search engines look at the keywords you're bidding on, your ad, the quality of your destination page and other factors in order to calculate a "quality score". Your quality score determines the minimal amount you must pay for each click on your ad. The higher

your quality score, the lower your starting minimal bid. Therefore some users will pay more than others to bid on the same keyword.

Unlike SEO, with paid search marketing you have control over your search engine ad and can determine the exact location a user will be taken after clicking the ad. This location is called the landing page. Many landing pages have registration forms, email capture devices, and content that site visitors will find engaging. The structure of a paid search campaign is illustrated below:



Paid search campaigns can be set up quickly and within a few hours or days you should be able to gauge the effectiveness of your program. Some of the more popular paid search advertising networks are, <u>Google Adwords</u>, <u>Yahoo Search Marketing</u>, and <u>Microsoft Adcenter</u>.

The Opportunity for Nonprofits

- Google offers Google Grants which according to their website is "a unique in-kind donation program awarding free AdWords advertising to select charitable organizations. We support organizations sharing our philosophy of community service to help the world in areas such as science and technology, education, global public health, the environment, youth advocacy, and the arts."
- The price per click on many paid search marketing networks is relatively low. Per click costs can start from \$0.05 and up depending on the keyword.

How to get started:

- 1. Sign up for a paid search advertising network such as Google Adwords or Yahoo Search Marketing. Apply for any benefits these networks grant 501(c) organizations.
- 2. Identify keywords that are related to your nonprofit using the Google Keyword Tool or other keyword recommendation tools.
- Create ad copy according to the specification of the ad network you select. Your ad copy should contain a compelling offer/benefit that the user will receive and a call-to-action. A call-to-action refers to phrases like "learn more" or "donate now".
- 4. Design a landing page or select an existing relevant page on your site to send users who have click on your ads. Whether or not you create a new page or send users to a current site page for your PPC program, make sure your landing page fulfills the promises listed in your ad copy and entices the visitor to perform a desirable action (submitting an email address, making a donation, signing up for a newsletter).

Social Marketing (SM)

What you should know:

Social marketing is about connecting with new people, developing brand loyalty and fueling advocacy. Nonprofits thrive on social networking websites like Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, and Linkedin. These are places where people who may be interested in hearing about your causes congregate and where communication between

you and interested parties flows bidirectionally. People go to social networking sites to interact with your nonprofit and to meet others who are concerned about the same issue. Visitors to your social media profile will be looking to engage with you and your content; be careful not to disappoint them.

Two great examples of nonprofits utilizing social networking sites are <u>Greenpeace's Facebook profile</u> (left) and <u>The American Red Cross's Twitter profile</u> (right) below. Both represent engaging social media efforts.





There are also social media sites such as <u>Flickr</u>, <u>Slideshare</u> and <u>YouTube</u> that allow you to post images, presentations, videos, and other digital media related to your nonprofit. Imagine posting videos of your organization in action for the world to see on YouTube, then building support from members of the community – and over time converting passive followers to sponsors and activists for your organization.

Lastly, the social marketing world should be seen as an interconnected ecosystem with content being shared between your website, social networking sites, social media sites, social bookmarking sites (like <u>Digg</u>) and online communication platforms as illustrated in the figure below which examines how the American Red Cross transmit content across social media:



The Opportunity for Nonprofits

- ✓ Many social networks give special privileges and advanced features to nonprofit accounts:
 - Facebook for nonprofits http://www.facebook.com/nonprofits
 - Flickr for Good http://www.flickr.com/good
 - YouTube for nonprofits http://www.youtube.com/nonprofits
 - Linkedin for nonprofits http://learn.linkedin.com/non-profits/
- Leverage the power of networks to grow your organization's membership and supporters to spread greater awareness about its issues.
- Creative campaigns can spread virally through social networks which can gain attention for your nonprofit association.
- Facebook Advertising is a demographic profile targeting ad network which is easy to set-up and cost-effective to run.

How to get started:

- Decide which social networking or social media websites fit best with your organization's marketing strategy. Take an inventory of your digital assets. For example, if your nonprofit has an extensive library of videos, consider setting up a YouTube Channel.
- 2. Customize your profile on social sites. Make it a unique experience for your visitors. Ensure your profile has a professional look and it is aligned with your organization's brand.
- 3. Promote your profile online and offline. Add links to your profiles in your outbound communication. Add social sharing icons to your primary website and blog.
- 4. Create a plan to interact and respond with your social profile followers regularly because ongoing communication is important. Post news, events, promotions, and anything that may be relevant to your visitors. Don't abandon your social media profile it will work against you.

Other Types of Online Marketing

Email Marketing / Newsletter. These are regularly scheduled communications to your membership via email. An email newsletter may contain information about events, news, and issues related to your nonprofit company.

To launch, you'll need an email newsletter service such as <u>Constant Contact</u> or <u>Aweber</u>, plus someone to grow your list of email addresses and create outbound communications at regular intervals. Be sure to email your list regularly but don't overdo it and risk having people discontinue receiving your correspondence.

<u>Viral Marketing.</u> Viral marketing is about introducing content with highly communicable qualities into a social community in the hope that it will spread rapidly through the network. This content can be games, interactive features, ebooks, images, videos, and more. Viral marketing campaigns often reflect out-of-the-box thinking and highly creative content themes. A classic example of a successful viral marketing campaign is <u>Burger King's Subservient Chicken website</u>.

The first step to trying to spark a viral marketing campaign is to get your creative juices flowing and decide what you can do to attract attention online. Then whichever form your idea takes – perhaps a compelling video or an interesting graphic - unveil it to the social media community and see if it takes off. Viral marketing campaigns are most successful when the major influencers within a network view the content as something worthy of passing on to his or her followers.

<u>Blogging.</u> A blog is a body of articles, ordered by date, which discusses one or more topics. A blog can be an entire websites or a section of a website. Because a blog's purpose is to either start or participate in an online conversation, most blogs allow readers to leave comments under individual entries. Blogs are a powerful approach to communicating and interacting with interested parties.

There are many free blogging platforms that you can use as the base for your new blog. The most well-known are Wordpress.com (if you don't want to host the software on your server), Wordpress.com (if you do want to host the software on your server), Blogger, and Typepad. You should add new postings to your blog regularly to keep visitors returning to your site.

<u>Podcasting.</u> Think of podcasts as a pre-recorded or live audio broadcasts distributed across the internet. If the podcast is previously recorded a listener can download and listen to it at his or her leisure. When podcasts are streamed live, often the host interacts with listeners via Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites.

Start podcasting by purchasing a computer microphone if you don't already have one. Plan what your podcast is going to be about and record it digitally or broadcast it live over the web. Once you've recorded your first episode upload it to <u>iTunes podcasts</u> or <u>blogtalkradio.com</u>. You can also place the podcasts along with a transcript on your own website.

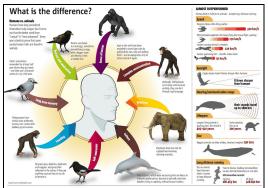
<u>Display Advertising.</u> This refers to graphical and Flash banner ads strategically placed on web pages according to the subject of the page content or demographic/behavioral profiles of visitors to the publishing site. Online display advertising can be extremely cost effective if the campaign is set-up correctly. You may choose to pay

for your display advertisements on a cost-per-click (CPC) basis or for every 1,000 times your ad is shown, called a cost-per-impression (CPM) basis.

Google Adwords, Microsoft Adcenter, and Yahoo Search Marketing each have networks that allow marketers to place display advertising on third party websites. You may also wish to contact perspective publishers directly and bypass banner networks. A great resource for educating you through the process of getting your banner campaign set up is BannerReport.com. Ensure your banners are professionally designed so that they will get noticed and be clicked by a visitor.

Infographics. Infographics are just as they sound - information depicted in a visually engaging way. Infographics often include graphs, charts, and timelines alongside a written description of what the data represents. Infographics can have viral qualities about them as they are designed to be easily passed around the web, as well as offline from person-to-person. They also help to simplify complex concepts into an easily digestible format. Nonprofits can use infographics to relay information about their company or to dissect issues they are passionate about.

To get started you'll need a graphic designer, a graphics design application and a concept you wish to illustrate in your infographic. Don't forget to link back to your site from the infographic. You may want to consider creating a special landing page with appropriate calls-to-action on your site for visitors who enter through links in your infographic. View the example information graphics below or draw more inspiration by going here.



Part 3: Working With Internet Marketing Agencies

t may benefit your nonprofit organization to retain the services of an online marketing agency. You can leverage the expertise, technology, and manpower of interactive agencies to augment the success of your web marketing campaigns.

What to Ask?

Here are some questions to evaluate the fit between your organization and a candidate online marketing agency:

<u>Can I see your portfolio?</u> Asking to see an agency's work for current and past clients is a good way of determining if the partnership will be mutually beneficial. Pay attention to the agency's client list and identify other clients that might conflict with your nonprofit's ideals.

What is your experience working with nonprofits? Has the agency ever worked with a nonprofit organization and do they understand the unique approach nonprofits use to achieve their goals? It's important that your agency recognizes the sensitive nature of your nonprofit's reputation and not endangers it through reckless methods.

<u>How do you plan to do it?</u> Every agency has a different methodology for marketing on the web. Get a feel for the agency's approach and decide if their methods will be effective and are uniform with your association's style.

How will success be measured? A reputable online marketing agency will provide you with periodic reports of key performance indicators (KPIs) for your online marketing campaign. These KPIs will vary depending on the type of web marketing campaign.

<u>What are your capabilities?</u> What is the agency able to do and what resources do they have at their disposal? Does the organization have any proprietary technology or unique specializations that will be leveraged to help drive the success of your e-marketing campaign?

It's very important to understand your potential agency's assets and competences.

<u>How will my account be managed?</u> Understanding who will handle your group's account, and how it will be managed is an important consideration. How many people will be assigned to your team and what are their roles? And what is the protocol for communicating with them?

What is your fee structure? Understanding fee structure and payment terms are very important, especially if your organization has a tight budget for advertising. Be sure to ask about monthly payments, or other plans, as well as smaller details. Each agency is different, and like any for-profit organization their intent is to make money.

Warning Signs

Here are some warning signs to be on the look out for when searching for an e-marketing agency:

- The agency will not commit their fee structure to print.
- The contract lacks a reasonable cancellation clause.
- The agency demonstrates no definite methodology for achieving the goals of your online campaign.
- A reference check of the agency yields complaints from past clients
- The agency guarantees an unrealistic expectation for success.

Part 4: Go Get'em!

Hopefully, this guide has achieved its goal of not only explaining the benefits that internet marketing can provide your nonprofit, but also how to think strategically about your online presence and how to initiate e-marketing tactics in a cost effective way. Thank you for taking the time to read this guide and we wish you the best of luck in expanding your online marketing success.

I Can Help! Drop Me a Line

If you have any questions or comments concerning this document, please feel free to contact me at http://everettwhitehead.com/contact/. We can also be retained for consulting and implementation of any of the online marketing programs mentioned in this guide. This guide can be downloaded from http://everettwhitehead.com/seo-thought-leadership/a-nonprofits-guide-to-internet-marketing/.

About the Writer of this Document

verett Whitehead has worked in internet marketing and online business since 2001. He specializes in search engine optimization (SEO) and has done work with brands such as Gillette, Fixodent, Zipcar, Game Show Network, and Sony. Everett holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) with a specialization in ecommerce from New York Institute of Technology. You can review his blog or connect with him on Linkedin.

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