Nonprofit Communications Report

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MONTHLY COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR NONPROFITS

Inside

GENERATING EVENT PUBLICITY

Know What It Takes to Capture Editors' Interest

By Erin Sandage

Attracting the eye of an editor for your event can be a challenge in an increasingly competitive marketplace. PR Expert Meghan Ely, owner of OFD Consulting, says fresh and inspiring is the name of the game when it comes to ensuring your event is editorially competitive. She adds editors are looking for innovative details, creative themes, interesting menus, interactive entertainment and even an exotic locale.

"The level of celebrity in attendance can also impact its chances of being featured. Do you have a keynote speaker of note? Someone well known being honored? Distinguished guests? Any of these scenarios may increase your chances for publication."

Organizations need to do their research when preparing a media strategy for events. Ely suggests looking at the recent coverage of your desired publications to see what events they consider timely.

"Find more recent nonprofit events they covered and seek out any consistent elements," she adds. "This will give you a better idea of the information and details you'll want to compile to send over to the writer when the time is right."

Also, Ely advises being mindful of the photography style media outlets gravitate toward so you can hire a professional whose work will complement the targeted outlets. Give your photographer a list of anticipated details and guests to capture.

"As unglamorous as it sounds, the best way to capture the attention of the media is to pitch the right person. Don't discount the impact you'll have on finding the right journalists in a position to feature your event."

Pitching your event depends on each media outlet's submission process. Ely says offering a set of complimentary tickets to journalists is an option, but you want to treat them the same as any guest, giving them ample time to decide if they'd like to attend. If possible, invite them to any VIP components and give them insider access to either the keynote speaker or event honorees.

"If it makes more sense to pitch the event for coverage after it's taken place, time is of the essence, as events will date themselves quickly," she adds. "Gather the basics of the event details and background prior, and be sure to contract the photographer for a quick turnaround on the photos. Have the targeted writers well researched in advance, so you can quickly email a pitch with the details they need to determine if it's a fit for publication." ◆

Source: Meghan Ely, Owner, OFD Consulting. Phone (804) 543-6400. Email: meghan@ofdconsulting.com. Website: www.ofdconsulting.com

Make Use of Your Business Cards

Is there a particular message you would like to convey to the public, such as your mission statement, or "We could sure use an hour of your time!"?

Don't hesitate to use the back of your business card to print an important message — one that invites action. Doing so allows you to get a key message across in a subtle but lasting way.

Not only do business cards help to provide contact information, but they can also allow you to market particular programs or services. ◆

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WILEY

MEDIA RELATIONS

Keys to Establishing Positive Media Relationships

A good relationship with the media is built on trust. In this fast-paced world, you must be able to deliver quality information in an efficient manner or risk missing out on airtime, print stories and other important mentions.

"Positive relationships grow when your entire staff understands the foundations of media relations," says Jessica Duff, executive director of communications for Pulaski County Special School District (Little Rock, AR). "The successful image of our school district relies on our department's ability to handle media requests in a professional manner." Duff, who previously worked in broadcast television, suggests nonprofits appoint someone who can prepare assets and interviews as a way to assist reporters and prevent them from circumventing the system to locate reliable sources on their own. "Developing the relationship with them directly means we can take unnecessary pressure off of our teachers and principals," Duff adds. She shares other keys to establishing positive media relationships:

1. **Avoid playing favorites.** "Every reporter and television station should be treated with equal love," Duff says. "If you're scheduling interviews, make sure you offer them across the board." Especially when dealing with sensitive information, it's best to wait until it's possible to share details at once to many rather than leaking your story to a single preferred outlet.
2. **Have go-to experts at the ready.** "I've told our COVID lead that they are on standby for any daytime and nighttime requests," Duff offers as an example. "It's a lot easier to get those local TV spots when you have someone knowledgeable and accessible."
3. **Get to know new reporters.** "Local media often announce when they've taken on a new reporter, and what we can do in our role is take a moment and reach out to them and let them know you're available to help them out when needed," Duff shares. "Taking the first step of introducing yourself is a great way to build rapport and make a connection with the producers in your market."
4. **Text when it makes sense.** "Channels have beat reporters who follow local legislation — get to know who is on which beat, and, after you've made a personal connection, gather their phone numbers and send them text messages ahead of big releases," Duff suggests. "When I'm about to announce something important and I want to make sure my contact sees it, I simply send a text to give them a heads up."
5. **Practice patience.** "Reporters are often on deadlines with quick turnarounds — be patient with them, and they'll be patient with you," Duff says. "You can work together, and the treatment will be reciprocal. It should never feel like one side is doing all the follow-up." ◆

"Reporters are often on deadlines with quick turnarounds — be patient with them, and they'll be patient with you."
— Jessica Duff

Source: Jessica Duff, Executive Director of Communications, Pulaski County Special School District, Little Rock, AR. Phone (501) 234-2038. Email: jduff@pcssd.org. Website: www.pcssd.org

PROFESSIONAL OPINION

Tips for Dealing With Media Contacts

***Q** What is the most valuable piece of advice you have received — or you would give to other nonprofit communicators — regarding dealing with media contacts?*

"Be willing to be a source of information even when the story isn't about you or your organization but may be about your industry or related to a topic in industry. You might not get quoted or even mentioned in the story, but just allow a few minutes for the writer to ask a couple of questions to clarify or help the writer understand something that isn't immediately clear. Sometimes these kinds of comments are called 'on background' or 'off the record,' but that terminology can make people nervous or put them on the defensive. Be willing to have a conversation that might not result in a direct quote; it all goes along with relationship building. Sometimes I need your help, and sometimes you need my help.

"Also, check in when you don't have an immediate press release or event coming up. Drop a line to say, 'Hey, are you working on anything related to (fill in the blank) right now? We have XYZ coming up in ABC days/weeks/months and would love to talk to you about it.' That way you're on the reporter's radar if it turns out they're interested."

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"The first question to ask a member of the media should always be, 'What's your deadline?' Then once you have that critical piece of information, deliver."

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"Remember to say thank you again after the story is published. It really goes a long way and people often forget, as they're busy celebrating the win internally. If you can, report back on any mission impact the article/story produced. This may increase the likelihood that the reporter will come back to you (or that they'll be receptive to your pitches again) in the future." ◆

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TARGETED MARKETING

Create Sports Marketing Partnerships

Developing a sports marketing partnership can help you reach an increasingly skeptical public audience and show you share the same values as the community, says Rachel A. Tyree, director, communications and community relations, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Los Angeles, CA).

"Partnerships with sports teams can provide relevancy and credibility and can be even more effective than an advertising or marketing campaign," she says. "Sports teams not only bring people together to cheer on for a victory as fans, but they, the organization, the coaches, the players and sometimes even the mascots can use their trusted community platform to deliver key messages and branding for an organization."

Many opportunities can benefit from a sports marketing partnership: promoting and supporting an awareness day, week or month; fundraising opportunities; green initiatives; opening a new health center or clinic; and health promotion campaigns, like quitting smoking or getting vaccinated.

"Nonprofit organizations are in a great position to leverage their mission and values to align with a local sports team," says Tyree. "Many such organizations will be open to meeting and discussing opportunities with nonprofits to help support their goals and impact that both types of organizations — sports and nonprofits — have in a positive way on a local community."

She suggests the following steps when starting a partnership:

1. Do your research to determine what teams are in your market.
2. Determine your budget, goals and objectives for what you want to get out of the partnership. For the budget, Tyree suggests starting where you feel comfortable as you can always increase it later in final contract negotiations.
3. Make the pitch to the person you need to get buy-in from at your organization.

Tyree says each partnership she has worked with started with a simple outreach email or phone call to the executive or sales office. She notes some sports organizations have community relations liaisons who can connect you to the right person for developing a partnership package that benefits your organization and the team.

When negotiating the partnership, Tyree advises not to be afraid to ask for more so your organization can reach its goals, whether those are to reach a new audience, increase awareness or something else.

"More than likely, the representative working with you is going to want to deliver — and to deliver more than promised — so go ahead and engage in the back-and-forth to determine the right solutions for your organization. In the end, your organization will hit a homerun out of the park." ◆

Source: Rachel A. Tyree, MPH, Director, Communications and Community Relations, Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Los Angeles, CA. Phone (323) 540-3650. Email: rtyree@ph.lacounty.gov. Website: http://publichealth.lacounty.gov//

COMMUNICATIONS ESSENTIALS

Is a Boilerplate Really Necessary?

A boilerplate, or "About Us" statement, is used in public relations to give background about your organization. More importantly, boilerplates let the community know who you are and what you do and should not be overlooked.

Jennifer Clark, marketing communications manager for the Northern Illinois Food Bank (Geneva, IL), says she's a big fan of boilerplates and uses the food bank's boilerplate as the "About Us" description on its website, social media channels, new releases, grant application, annual reports and publications.

"Essentially, the boilerplate is the organization's elevator speech, a powerful synopsis that concisely conveys what you do, who you serve and why you exist," she says. "When a member of our community — a team member, a food sourcing partner, a donor, a volunteer or a neighbor — tells our story, they're able to rely on the boilerplate's messaging to accurately and consistently describe the food bank."

Clark says the food bank's boilerplate has provided accuracy and consistency across its communications.

"Because our organization is growing and evolving, we regularly review and edit our boilerplate to ensure it reflects our current organization. It's important that all of our constituents have this updated messaging, so they can confidently amplify our organization's purpose." ◆

Source: Jennifer Clark, Marketing Communications Manager, Northern Illinois Food Bank, Geneva, IL. Phone (630) 443-6910, ext. 142. Email: jennifer.clark@northernilfoodbank.org. Website: www.solvehungertoday.org

MEDIA RELATIONS PRACTICES

Keep a Mental List of Shareable Verbal Stories

Public relations teams spend hours typing up inspiring anecdotes to share in press releases or post to the public-facing pages of their nonprofit's website. However, verbal stories can also go far when communicating with members of the media and should not be overlooked.

"You should keep on hand a quick snippet to share easily when introducing reporters or other important constituents to your mission," says Annette Sutfin, senior manager of philanthropic experiences for Southwest Human Development, Arizona's largest nonprofit dedicated to early childhood development. In other words, be confident enough to engage in quick conversations that relate to your upcoming initiatives or events and why they are important to the well-being of your community. Familiarize yourself with the details, and don't forget to mention the who, what, when, where, why and how in your short story and put the emphasis on your most important "characters," whether those be your volunteers, your donors, an important venue location or something else entirely. Those casual exchanges paired with compelling storytelling techniques may lead to potential press coverage, or at the very least, jog the memories of editors and writers as they are fielding pitches for local news stories. ◆

Source: Annette Sutfin, Senior Manager, Philanthropic Experiences, Development, Southwest Human Development, Phoenix, AZ. Phone (602) 633-8416. Email: ASutfin@swhd.org. Website: www.swhd.org

IMPROVE WEBSITE FUNCTIONALITY

Find More Ways to Seek Website Feedback

Website visitors can be valuable resources, especially following updates or when a fresh new design is introduced. Some organizations provide an open field form on their "About" page users can fill out and submit whenever they encounter trouble with functionality.

"We insert a statement in the footer of our emails as well as on our homepage that tells users to contact the administrator if they experience issues with links or on our site, along with the email address," says Rizwana Kadernani, website administrator for The Seed of Life® Foundation, an organization that is committed to restoring nature through reforestation and ending hunger with education and engagement. "We also have a chatbot on our website that records questions and offers suggestions." The second avenue, which is powered by PURE CHAT, is especially convenient because users can report items without needing to open a new window. "We receive emails even when PURE CHAT is offline, but many organizations have started substituting Facebook messenger as their chatbot service instead."

So far in 2021, the foundation has received a handful of emails from international users posing questions or reporting site concerns. "We learned it's good to give audiences options to contact us in many different ways, so it's easier for them," Kadernani says. "Otherwise, people get frustrated, and then it's hard to gain that trust." ◆

Source: Rizwana Kadernani, Website Administrator, The Seed of Life® Foundation. Email: admin@the-sol-foundation.org. Website: www.the-sol-foundation.org

ADVERTISING BUDGETS

Know Your Rationale for Advertising Decisions

Q What science goes into making your nonprofit's advertising decisions?

"I ask myself, 'Is the organization I'm spending with a partner with us, or is it just transactional?' We tend to spend with media companies that give us love in return and are truly vested in our programs and mission. Typically all advertising is tied directly to a fundraising initiative and the group gets involved outside of just running the ad. They volunteer and host events as well as give us more free exposure in addition to the ad buy. We currently have three partners — two radio and one television — with whom we spend. Both work with us to develop the messaging, and, in general, it's a very collaborative relationship."

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"I've always used the same rationale when I've managed ad budgets for businesses: expected ROI and estimated number of click-throughs or impressions (digital). One nonprofit I worked with asked for comparisons to impressions through billboards, print, radio and TV ads. And finally, consider whether the investment syncs with the goal of brand awareness, raising funds, recruiting potential donors, volunteers and other important factors."

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"Nailing the target audience is my first step: Who is it that we're trying to reach through a particular initiative? Then I look at the outlets that would reach that specific audience and the type of creative that would best support those placements. For RMSC, we're trying to reach families with kids, so I'll focus on ways to get in front of the parents. That often means advertising on digital channels like Facebook and Instagram, Google search and display retargeting. These digital channels can offer a lot of ROI when implemented well, so I turn to these outlets first. When running a larger campaign, I'll work with our media buyer to consider radio, out of home (like billboards), and ads on cable streaming services. Since these traditional outlets are pricey, I spend more time considering placement to make sure they're hitting the target audience I defined at the beginning." ◆

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COMMUNICATING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Connect With Constituents Using TikTok

Show off your wit and win over the Gen Z audience with short, not-so-serious videos. The admissions team at Tulane University (New Orleans, LA) amassed more than 10,000 engaged followers and produced multiple videos that racked up more than 1 million views with their award-winning TikTok account.

"One was about the things you hear on college campus tours, and the other was about when moms hit on the director of admissions," says Director of Admission Engagement Owen Knight. "It's goofy content that might not be viewed as the most 'professional' per se, but it does show prospective students that we know how to have fun in this crazy world of college admissions." Tulane's TikTok team consists of four student workers, as well as a half-dozen staff members. Here he shares advice with nonprofits who want to connect with their constituents via TikTok:

1. **Move on trends quickly.** "This platform moves a million miles per hour, the algorithm is fickle and you need to strike at the right moment," Knight explains. "Take ownership of your campaign or put it in the hands of someone who doesn't require red tape."
2. **Embrace the Gen Z sense of humor.** "TikTok is Gen Z's platform, and you are a visitor there," Knight explains. "They're funny, they're self-deprecating and they love to laugh — it's very much their space, so you need to get into this mindset when creating relevant content."
3. **Be lighthearted.** "Don't take yourself too seriously," Knight says. "The most successful TikTok creators can poke fun of themselves and be pragmatic."
4. **Stay tuned into the platform.** "Check in regularly to see what's happening, and take note of where the algorithm leads you," Knight suggests. "There's always going to be someone on the platform who is interested in the thing your nonprofit is doing, so take comfort in that, and don't get discouraged if some posts don't perform as well as others."
5. **Post with purpose.** "I think posting nothing at all is better than posting a poor attempt at a trend," Knight says. "We try to post at least once a week, and when it makes sense we'll repurpose those videos as reels on Instagram to boost visibility."
6. **Use outside editing software.** "I use an outside iPhone app called Splice that enables me to extract the sound so I can make more precise edits," Knight explains. "TikTok has quirks when it comes to overlaying text or timing video with music, so I recommend using an outside app and uploading later." ◆

Source: Owen Knight, Director of Admission Engagement, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA. Phone (504) 327-7603. Email: oknight@tulane.edu. Website: www.admission.tulane.edu

TIPS TO CUT YOUR WORD COUNT

Avoid the Doubles and Triples

"Piling up verbs ('engage, inform and entertain viewers') or adjectives ('a profound and meaningful tribute') is one of the most common ways writers add unnecessary verbal clutter to their sentences," says Casey Mank, co-founder of Bold Type, LLC, an all-female-owned writing training and consultation company based in Washington, DC. "These lists aren't adding as much rhetorical flair as we think. Often, the reader really doesn't need the added nuance that an additional word or two can provide."

Mank cautions writers (especially subject-matter experts) to look out for needless use of doubles and triples. "Try asking yourself, 'Would the reader really miss one?' If they can still understand your larger message without one of the words, do them a favor and snip it from your draft to help with both brevity and readability," she says. ◆

Source: Casey Mank, Co-founder, Bold Type LLC, Washington, DC. Phone (570) 441-2032. Email: casey@boldtype.us. Website: www.boldtype.us

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ENHANCE YOUR WRITING SKILLS

Five Tips for Eliminating Writer's Block

Several factors can bring about writer's block: lack of a clear writing plan, too little research, anxiety and even boredom. Following these simple steps will help to diminish writer's block:

1. **Explain it verbally first.** This can be done by phone to a friend, a colleague in the office or as a voice recording on your cellphone that can be played back to capture salient points.
2. **Push your "refresh" button.** Walk away and get a snack or a drink. Then come back and read what you've written.
3. **Do more research.** Gather more information than you need so you have a good deal of useful material from which to choose.
4. **Read items you've written in the past.** Reading finished drafts of your own work can help you see ways that you've overcome writing obstacles in the past.
5. **Write it down.** Jot down all of your ideas in no particular order. Doing so will help organize your thoughts and kick-start your creativity. ◆

INSIGHT INTO CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

How to Get Beyond Basic Information

Perhaps you're doing a donor or board profile for your newsletter or magazine. How do you conduct an interview that gets beneath the most basic, obvious information? These tips will help you peel back the layers and probe for more meaningful facts:

1. Give the interviewee all the time he or she needs to respond to a question, even if it results in moments of silence.
2. When a response grabs your attention, ask probing questions that get at the detail. If the topic grabbed your attention, it would likely do the same for your readers.
3. Try a few "off the wall" questions to see what they produce: "When you think back to your childhood, whom did you most admire and why?" ◆

MAKING PRESENTATIONS

Get to Know Your Audience

When beginning a presentation, focus more on the people to whom you're speaking rather than the presentation itself. You can't teach or change their behavior unless you first connect with and attempt to understand them.

To move from being presentation-oriented to people-oriented:

- Conduct some advance research to find out what you can about the makeup of your anticipated audience — geographic representation, organizations they represent, knowledge/skill level about the topic on which you're talking.
- Ask for a "show of hands" on some key questions when you're first getting your presentation under way.
- Throw a provocative question out to the audience and ask for some responses. Then study the crowd as responders share their answers. ◆

ENHANCED COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Improve Communication During Difficult Conversations

While debate and disagreement can spark new directions and organizational success, uncontrolled conflicts can alienate staff members and damage organizations, says Becky Schueller, principal, Rebecca Schueller Training & Consulting (Bemidji, MN).

"The problem isn't conflict," Schueller says. "It's how we treat each other during conflict. Most people go into the nonprofit world because they want to make a difference. Relationships are critical to get the work done, and when we have strained relationships, it's really hard."

Schueller suggests creating a "team-designed alliance" to establish guidelines for "how to agree to disagree." Starting with a general statement that a healthy, positive environment will benefit individuals and the team, the document sets standards and rules of engagement for communication and conflict. Here are a few of her tips:

- Have team members agree to disagree in a "clear and respectful manner." This usually means waiting until emotions subside before communicating orally or in writing, especially when using lightning-fast digital communication like social media and email.
- With co-workers, avoid discussing their behavior outside their presence. Rather, if there's a problem you need support with, suggest taking up the issue with a supervisor or human resources for constructive advice.
- Rather than wasting energy "venting about the small stuff," use it for the big issues your organization is tackling.
- Recognize all team members are critical to getting an organization's work done. Avoid "toxic venting" and support a "positive organizational structure." Make sure your organizational culture encourages praising colleagues for doing things well.
- Let others speak first to show you care about what they think. Be willing to make concessions. Instead of judging, ask questions. Don't look at the problem in terms of victims and victimizers. Look for solutions and ways to prevent the problem in the future.
- Use a "yes-no-yes" sandwich to set boundaries. For instance, if a colleague asks for help on a project, you might say you would like to help, don't have time today, but would be glad to pitch in tomorrow.
- Create a talking circle in which each participant can speak their piece for several minutes and give their own views without responding to others' ideas.
- Always evaluate results and follow up to make sure a conflict has been successfully resolved. "Even if it went fairly well, think about what you could have done differently," Schueller advises. ◆

Source: Becky Schueller, Principal, Rebecca Schueller Training & Consulting, Bemidji, MN. Phone (218) 333-3832. Email: becky@bemidjiconsulting.com. Website: https://bemidjiconsulting.com/

BRIEFS

Develop Business Alliances

How many relationships exist currently between your nonprofit organization and businesses? Can you identify them?

By identifying all existing relationships between your organization and various businesses, you can examine ways to build on them and further develop mutually beneficial relationships. And by evaluating them as a group, you can better prioritize where the greatest potential exists.

Begin by listing an inventory of all current relationships with businesses. Next to each business, list the relationship that currently exists. Once you do that, you can start to consider expanding potential strategic alliances. ◆

Find Your Expertise Niche

To achieve communications success, identify some facet of professional expertise — customer relations, direct mail marketing, etc. — and strive to become highly proficient at it.

Position yourself as someone who knows little and then seek out people who have a track record of doing what you want to do. Ask them what they did, how they did it and what they think you should do to succeed.

Not only will you become even better at performing those duties, but you will also gain the respect of others with whom you come in contact. ◆

PowerPoint Handout Tip

- When providing a printed handout of your PowerPoint presentation, include space for writing notes next to each PowerPoint screen image. This allows people to take notes right on the handout rather than on a separate sheet of paper. ◆

USEFUL RESEARCH STUDIES

What You Should Know About 'Elder Gen Z's'

By Megan Venzin

A passionate group of young people are entering the workforce, and they'll soon become the donors who back nonprofit causes. These empathetic, social-media-loving individuals are equipped with smartphones and strong opinions. Born between 1998 and 2004, marketers refer to them as "Elder Gen Z's."

"They definitely care about brands and organizations that are doing good," says Dana Arnold, chief growth officer for Hiebing, a full-service marketing agency with a robust in-house research and insights team. "We asked the question, 'Are you likely to buy from brands that make the world a better place?' and 80 percent responded, 'Yes.' We followed that up with, 'How much do you care about honesty and transparency? and 90 percent of them did." This insight means mission-based organizations have a leg up with this critical segment.

Arnold refers to Hiebing's Elder Z Research, which used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect responses from a 1,000-plus-person sample of individuals between the ages of 17 and 23. The group was surveyed first in November 2019 and again in October 2020. "Mental health is a huge issue for Elder Gen Z's," Arnold shares. "During our first wave of research, 54 percent reported struggling with anxiety, and now more than 74 percent do. We saw those numbers increase dramatically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic." And yet, socializing seems to be on the decline. "Only half agreed that they enjoy going out with friends, which begs the question: Is this fact contributing to the data around anxiety?" Arnold notes.

Knowing these individuals prefer to spend their free time at home and tuned into social media (71 percent of respondents say they spend more than three hours on social media daily), nonprofits should pounce on this opportunity to reach Elder Gen Z's where they already are. TikTok usage jumped, with 56 percent mentioning it in their top four platforms in 2020, compared to just 26 percent in 2019. They also log on to Instagram (77 percent), Facebook (48 percent), Snapchat and, to a lesser extent, Twitter, to interact with others, read news and source entertainment. "Elder Z is so used to be being entertained," Arnold says. "Social media is not only a resource for them, but it's their primary source of entertainment. Nonprofits are sitting on a goldmine of compelling emotional content that can be used in these spaces," Arnold suggests. "It can be funny, it can pull on the heart strings — it's all about how nonprofits harness the power of their messages within social media platforms."

Keep a close watch on Elder Gen Z's and create opportunities for them to engage digitally with your missions. They're already interested in social change, and they'll be calling the shots soon enough. ◆

Source: Dana Arnold, Chief Growth Officer, Hiebing, Madison, WI. Phone (608) 256-6357. Email: darnold@hiebing.com. Website: www.hiebing.com

USEFUL BLOG TIPS

Look to Misinformation To Brainstorm Informative Blog Posts

Living in the age of social media means nonprofit communicators must work twice as hard to provide readers with accurate information. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything recently, it's that misinformation is a potent threat, and once a theory has legs, it's extremely difficult to combat. However, taking steps to do just that may present ideas for relevant blog posts.

"Our organization is focused on ending homelessness, so our content is geared around educating our readers that homelessness is solvable," says Bethany Snyder, senior engagement strategist for Community Solutions. "We often choose topics based on questions we get or common misperceptions about ending homelessness." The pandemic has amplified the homelessness crisis, and Snyder and her colleagues have taken to the nonprofit's blog to address myths and common narratives surrounding the topic.

"In a recent post, we address how homelessness is not a people problem but rather a systems problem," Snyder explains. For example, there is a common misconception that homelessness is a personal choice, but this just isn't true. Most people do not "want" to live on their streets, but due to barriers outside of their control, it is often the only option they can envision. Many factors can lead to homelessness, making it a complex issue that's already difficult to understand, especially when homelessness is perceived as an individual problem and this notion is promoted through many narratives. Well-written blog posts can help communicators break through the noise, promote accurate information and provide useful content at the same time. To check out the post to which Snyder is referring, see https://community.solutions/why-is-homelessness-a-systems-problem/ ◆

Source: Bethany Snyder, MPP, Snyder Strategies, LLC. Phone (612) 759-3352. Email: Bethany@SnyderStrategies.me. Website: www.snyderstrategies.me