

CONTENT MARKETING

for

NONPROFITS



A **Communications Map** for
Engaging Your Community,
Becoming a Favorite Cause,
and Raising More Money



KIVI LEROUX MILLER



Additional Praise for *Content Marketing for Nonprofits*

Kivi helps leaders think clearly and strategically about nonprofit communications as a whole, telling the organization's story with a consistent voice and message, and being intentional about the goals of communications and marketing. Kivi's work is applicable to nonprofits of all sizes, urban and rural. Her methods and guidance are clear, straightforward, and can be readily implemented by an organization's staff team.

—**Suzanne Wilcox, organizational development director,
Montana Nonprofit Association**

Marketing has changed. Interrupting people with ads, spamming inboxes, or sending direct mail doesn't work like it used to. Now, you have to capture people's attention, earn their trust, and be invited into their lives all while competing against countless other entities vying for their attention. Great content matters more now than it ever has before. Kivi has put together a comprehensive guide for those new to marketing as well as seasoned veterans that will help you successfully reach your constituents and future supporters through great content. Pay attention to what Kivi has to say. You'll be a better marketer for it!

—**Frank Barry, director of digital marketing, Blackbaud**

Content marketing is a brand-new world for the nonprofit sector, which traditionally has relied on *target marketing* for communicating with its donors and other supporters and would-be supporters. Brand-new worlds can often be scary, especially if you try to go it alone. In authoring this book, Kivi has offered herself up as your intrepid guide. Whether your organization is young and wiry, or steadfastly entrenched in the "but we've always done it this way" sand trap, she talks—and walks—you through this new and vital approach to nonprofit communications. Her clean writing and authoritative-but-accessible style pull it all together in a way that feels like sipping tea and talking shop with a savvy friend and colleague.

—**Margaret Battistelli Gardner, editor-in-chief, *FundRaising Success* magazine**

Kivi's fabulous book is a must-read for fundraisers! We all know that fundraising has changed. And our donor communications strategies must keep evolving, too. Successful fundraisers have got to master this new art of continued, interesting communications

to our donors. We have so many new ways to keep in touch with them—but what to do and how to do it? What to say? Thank goodness for this book because Kivi gives us the answers. She shares a clear blueprint for keeping our donors informed, interested, connected, and most of all—happy with us. If we follow her recipe, then we will be rewarded with the holy grail of fundraising—long-term sustainable gifts and contributions that you can count on year after year. Thank you, Kivi!

—**Gail Perry, author of *Fired-Up Fundraising: Turn Board Passion into Action***

The web changed the way all of us find, review, use, and share content. This book is a critical piece for all organizations looking to create content that appeals to the community, generates the kind of attention and brand awareness that nonprofits need, and ultimately supports conversion of readers to supporters and donors. Every nonprofit communications, marketing, and online engagement staffer should have this book!

—**Amy Sample Ward, coauthor of *Social Change Anytime Everywhere***

Content marketing is a jungle full of tigers, snakes, and slimy little creatures that want to suck your blood. Content marketing is also a great tool for making a lot of impact without spending a lot of money. This book will help you navigate and survive the content marketing jungle—successfully.

—**Jeff Brooks, TrueSense Marketing and author of *The Fundraiser's Guide to Irresistible Communications***

This book is what you've been waiting for! It is filled with a-ha moments and is a smart, fun roadmap to transform your nonprofit communications.

—**Lori L. Jacobwith, master storyteller and founder of the Ignited Online Fundraising Community**

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Content Marketing for Nonprofits

***A Communications Map for
Engaging Your Community,
Becoming a Favorite Cause, and
Raising More Money***

Kivi Leroux Miller

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Foreword

A few years ago, I gave a speech on fundraising at a conference. Midway through the presentation, I mentioned my work at Network for Good to the more than one hundred nonprofit professionals in attendance. This prompted a man in the middle of the room to raise his hand.

“Do you have a question?” I asked.

“I have a Network for Good Donate Now button on my organization’s home page,” he declared.

I smiled. How lovely to have a fan and client of my organization in the crowd. I thanked him and launched back into my presentation.

But he raised his hand again. So I called on him once more.

“You know that button?” he said. “It doesn’t work.”

This was certainly not what I wanted to hear. Embarrassed, I apologized. I said to the man—and everyone else in the room—that I was anxious to fix the problem and would get to the bottom of why people could not make donations from his website as soon as I finished my speech.

“I’ll call my chief technology officer,” I assured him.

Just as I was about to resume speaking, the man waved his hand once more. I wondered if I should pinch myself. The situation was becoming eerily reminiscent of a bad dream. With trepidation, I called on him one last time.

“You don’t get it,” the man told me. “You can click and make a donation on my website. The problem is, no one clicks on the button.”

Ah. This wasn’t broken technology. This was broken fundraising.

I have grown to love that man because our exchange makes for a good story, and it captures nonprofits’ biggest marketing challenge, which is getting people

to care. In addition, his broken button shows both the opportunities and limits of the great technological changes that are roiling our world and our sector. The number of tools and the amount of noise around us grow by the day. We see shiny objects everywhere, and we imagine they might fix our problems and magically enhance our work. Whether they fulfill that promise or not, we tend to attribute our success or failure to the technology.

I hear three schools of thought about technology and the changes unfolding around us. One is wildly optimistic: we are more connected than ever, and this is creating an opportunity to reimagine and revolutionize every industry. Technology has transformed music, publishing, and banking. Philanthropy is next—and when it goes digital, we will unleash the generosity inherent in us all on an unprecedented scale. Another view is wary: our text-messaging, smartphone-wielding selves are losing the ability to focus and reflect deeply. The traditional conversation has changed into mediated connection, leading to our isolation from each other. Small, inconsequential digital actions do little to change our relationships with our causes or the face of marketing and fundraising. The third view is cynical. It's best summed up by a wonderful question posted on Reddit recently: If someone from the 1950s suddenly appeared today, what would be the most difficult thing to explain to him or her about life now? My favorite response was this: I possess a device, in my pocket, that is capable of accessing the entirety of information known to man. I use it to look at pictures of cats and get into arguments with strangers. This school of thought says we're using technology in a way that really makes no difference, and so there is nothing new under the sun when it comes to our work.

So which is right? All of the above. It's up to us which scenario proves true in our situation. That's because the broken button is not about what the technology can or can't do. It's about what we do or don't do. That's the good news and the bad news. You—the very person reading these words right this minute—get to determine whether or not your button or Facebook page or YouTube channel performs—and whether today's technological changes will prove trying or transformative to your cause.

How do you do that? That's the very question this book sets out to answer. It explains the way technology has changed our work. It delves into the way our

constituencies expect more of us. And then it describes how to embrace these new realities and turn them to our benefit by focusing on better content that drives deeper engagement.

In other words, this book decodes how you get people to click on your button. It's not by having a higher powered button—it's by having better content around the button and leading to the button.

If I had to sum up why this book matters, I'd say it's because of what it makes possible. It shows how to inject soul into your use of technology so your constituencies enter a world of unleashed generosity—and not just cute pictures of cats.

You can do these things. When you read this book, you learn it's not that hard. And even if it were difficult, you'd have to do it anyway. You have no choice. Your relevance and survival hinges on what you say—and what others say about you. People will click a donate button, "like" a page, or show up in real life to volunteer only when you tell, share, and spread compelling stories (activities also known as content marketing).

So turn the page and read this story on how to make that happen.

Katya Andresen

Author, *Robin Hood Marketing:
Stealing Corporate Savvy to Sell Just Causes*

Preface

I wrote my first book, *The Nonprofit Marketing Guide: High-Impact, Low-Cost Ways to Build Support for Your Good Cause*, because there wasn't a good handbook or survival guide for nonprofit communications directors, especially at smaller organizations. I also knew many nonprofit executive directors doing it all on their own, and I wanted to create something for them too.

My intent in this second book is not to update *The Nonprofit Marketing Guide* but to advance the conversation about what it means to be a good communications director today and how to use one of the biggest marketing trends—content marketing—specifically in the nonprofit sector.

If you are new to nonprofit marketing or work for a very small organization, I suggest you start with the first book and use this one more as a crystal ball for what your future will hold someday. If you've been at nonprofit marketing for awhile or you work for a large or well-funded nonprofit, I hope this book will become a trusted guide that you can turn to for both direction and inspiration. Fundraising professionals, especially those interested in donor retention, will find more content specifically for them in this book than in the first.

What Is Content Marketing?

Content marketing isn't just a new buzzword for the same old communications your nonprofit has always produced. It's a different way of thinking not only about why and how you communicate but, more importantly, about how your program participants, the supporters of your work, and the influencers in

your community use, interact with, and in many ways, help you coproduce your communications.

All those communications pieces you've been creating for years—newsletter articles, direct mail letters, press releases, web pages—are content. What's different now is that instead of just pushing that content in front of people, we want to use the content we create to pull them to us, attracting them to our cause, rather than interrupting them with it.

Here's how I define content marketing for nonprofits:

Content marketing for nonprofits is creating and sharing relevant and valuable content that attracts, motivates, engages, and inspires your participants, supporters, and influencers to help you achieve your mission.

If you take an objective look at what many nonprofits share through their communications today, you might conclude that reporting on all of your nonprofit's past activities (the narrative equivalent of summarizing last month's to-do list) while also promoting its upcoming activities (which usually means asking people to do something for you) is what works.

The problem is, it really doesn't. I'm not sure it was ever all that effective, and in today's world, it definitely doesn't cut it. To connect with and engage participants and supporters, you need to do more than summarize your work. You need to put those people front and center in your communications strategy, building relationships with them much like you would with friends, so that you become one of their favorite nonprofits.

It's a Long Trek

Throughout this book I compare content marketing to a long backpacking trip into the backcountry. It's a little wild out there, but you'll be prepared for most of it!

In part 1 you'll get a fuller sense of what this journey involves and the benefits of getting started with content marketing. In part 2 you'll look at the people going on the trek with you and redefine your marketing relationships.

In part 3 you'll plan out the journey with several communications documents, making sure you are ready from start to finish. In part 4 you'll look at making it happen, and how to put one foot in front of the other as you implement your content strategy.

Finally, in part 5, you'll get trail-tested advice on how to use the most popular communications channels and tactics for nonprofits today.

Stop, Think, and Discuss

In the chapters in parts 1 through 4, you'll find lots of boxes with questions that will encourage you to stop, think about, and discuss what you've read and how you can apply it to your nonprofit. Please also stop by ContentMarketingforNonprofits.com, where I will be sharing more exercises and worksheets that support the content in this book.

One final heads-up: the chapters in part 1 are stat-heavy. If you are not a numbers person, don't worry—the rest of the book isn't as data dense. Also note that marketing data do shift frequently, so if you need the most up-to-date numbers, check the chapter references for the websites of my sources or visit my website for this book at ContentMarketingforNonprofits.com. Many of the reports I quote are updated annually and sometimes more often.

Let's get started!

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Kivi Leroux Miller

