



NONPROFITS & SOCIAL MEDIA: A MISSED CONNECTION

Navigating the ups and downs of
social media donor engagement

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Introduction

Romeo and Juliet, Napoleon and Josephine, Antony and Cleopatra, Superman and Lois Lane. The great love stories all began with an initial meeting and then progressed to deeper connection, mutual affection, and commitment. And so it is with social media and nonprofits: There's potential love there—but the two are stuck in the longing-glances-across-the-room phase.

The social media universe has expanded beyond a gathering and sharing place for a relative few to being woven into the fabric of daily life for billions—3.196 billion people, in fact (*Smart Insights, 2018*). With half the world involved, and with the power to influence everything from shoe purchases to elections, social media is arguably the most important development of this century. It's big, and it has the potential to be even bigger for nonprofits as an assembling, motivating, and donating hub.

The potential for a deeper relationship between the nonprofit world and the social media realm is there. Social platforms are already being heavily and effectively leveraged by thousands of nonprofits and NGOs to attract supporters and volunteers. And as social brands follow Facebook to roll out more tools for in-network fundraising, social media will continue

its rapid ascension as a primary source of growth for charities across the globe. According to research from CRM firm Neon, 55% of people who engage with nonprofits on social media end up taking some sort of action.



Social media users grew by 121 million between Q2 2017 and Q3 2017. That works out at a new social media user every 15 seconds.

— Brandwatch

However, the relationship between the two is still at arm's length, as social media for nonprofits in 2018 is still about a missed connection: Many organizations are simply not getting as much as they could and should from social media—especially those who persist in managing their pages, posts, tweets, channels, and streams as one-way communication mediums rather than a means to connect and converse.

But let's get specific. With all its potential for growing constituencies and coffers, how well is social media being leveraged by charities in the United States? You're about to find out.

How Can This Study Help You?

Social media has the potential to be the greatest source of support for your charitable efforts. Because, when done right, social media should be the top end of your donor funnel.

Social media is the place where you increase brand awareness as your organization tells its story. These platforms provide access to large, potential constituencies for your organization to leverage for web traffic and the golden prize... email addresses.

From there, the doing-it-right nonprofits take these followers on a “first date” by adding them to their email list. Once on the list, hopefully, an optimized conversion series is in place to continue to drip-feed the story of the organization, taking the donor into a deeper and deeper relationship with the cause. Email, of course, does the heavy lifting for conversion to donor.



For more information about optimizing your online fundraising, check out Dunham+Company’s “Online Fundraising Scorecard” study.

This study will give you practical tips, best practices, and industry benchmarks related to the optimizing of your social media profiles—and hopefully lead to a true connection with your donors, which will ultimately drive more support for your cause.

That’s the value proposition. Now, let’s look at the numbers.



Study Methodology

This study was designed to help identify the gap between how organizations use social media to relate to their donors, and how they can better leverage these assets. Social media is an excellent way to keep your donors informed—and fill the pipeline with potential new donors. And we want to help you do just that.

So we did the work, looking at 151 nonprofit organizations to see how they handle donor questions and interactions via their social media channels.

Each organization was graded on the following:

1. Adoption of the main social media platforms
2. Response time to general inquiries over social media channels
3. Integration between website and social channels for sharing
4. Content they posted on social media

Our goal was to identify the current trends in social media, and then develop industry benchmarks and identify best practices that will help organizations optimize their donor relation and retention efforts.

What follows are our findings, analyses, observations, and recommendations. Stepping up your organization's social game will make a difference, and it's time to get started.

Executive Summary



Daily time spent on social media is rising, now standing at around 2 hours and 15 minutes per day. This means 1 in every 3 minutes online is spent on social media.

– Global Web Index

This study digs deep into the relationship between charities in the United States and the most popular social media platforms at present. What we found is that nonprofits have in recent years invested heavily in social media real estate. The bad news is, charities are still viewing social as a broadcast tool for announcing things or raising awareness rather than as a dialog with constituents or a way to deepen those relationships.

Among the more significant findings, we learned:

- + In recent years, there's been widespread adoption of the largest social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube among nonprofits in America.
- + Charities aren't producing/sharing content often enough and not in the optimal mix for maximum user engagement.
- + In general, charities are optimizing Facebook, but missing many opportunities for enhancement on YouTube and Instagram,

which is limiting their success in connecting and generating response on these platforms.

- + Nonprofits aren't generating nearly as much engagement from their social media endeavors as they should be. Attracting an audience doesn't matter if you can't develop a relationship with your audience.
- + The nonprofits we profiled are no better at responding to comments, questions, and donations than they were when we studied them more than four years ago. They therefore continue to keep the crowd outside the gates.

Of course, there is **some** good news mixed in with all of the room for improvement. Nonprofits are investing in more content, including video, and many are following best practices for solid-to-fantastic returns on those investments.

Social Media Mistakes Nonprofits Make

Before getting into all the research about what's working and what's not, and offer some suggestions for improvement along the way, we thought it would be a good idea to get some thoughts from Nils Smith, author of *The Social Media Guide*. In his work consulting nonprofits around the world on social media and innovation, Nils sees a lot of consistent strategic errors, but was kind enough to narrow them down to the top eight:

Mistake #1: Not Listening

If you went to a party full of people you didn't know and talked only about yourself, it wouldn't go very well. Likewise, when investing in social media, a minimum of 50% of your time should be spent listening, and the majority of your talking should involve responding to other people's content and messages before you focus on your own.

Mistake #2: Trying to Be on Every Platform

It's important to choose the one, two, or three social networks you can do well, and then invest your time in those communities to connect most effectively with your target audience. When it comes to social media, depth is far greater than width.

Mistake #3: Doing the Same Thing and Expecting the Same Result

If there's one constant on social media, it's change. Ten years ago, almost all content was text-based. As smart phones became more common about five years ago, posts with photos seemed to dominate. Today, more than 50% of all content consumed on Facebook is video. You have to adapt and adjust your communication methods, while maintaining your core message.

Mistake #4: Assuming It's Free

Most social channels require a level of advertising investment in order to be utilized most effectively. You don't have to spend a lot; but if you're willing to spend a little, you'll see much greater engagement and growth than if you're trying to do it organically.

Mistake #5: Not Responding

Imagine you went to an event, met some people, asked them a question, and then walked away. The quickest and easiest way to lose a community on social media is to ignore them. It takes time, systems, and processes to effectively respond to a growing community; but to succeed on social media, it's essential that you be responsive.

Mistake #6: Ignoring the Data

Social media's technology now gives us access to tons of data: How many people see our posts, read our tweets, watch our videos -- and for how long. It's this stream of information that tells you whether or not something is or isn't working, so you can more effectively engage your community. Don't obsess over the numbers, because that can be extremely unhealthy. But don't ignore them either.

Mistake #7: Getting Locked In on One Platform

For now, Facebook has "won" social media, but don't forget that many were left high & dry when MySpace evaporated. New channels will come along where you can build significant engagement and reach new audiences-- if you adopt early and engage effectively. In an ever-evolving space, not diversifying engagement can limit your growth opportunities long term.

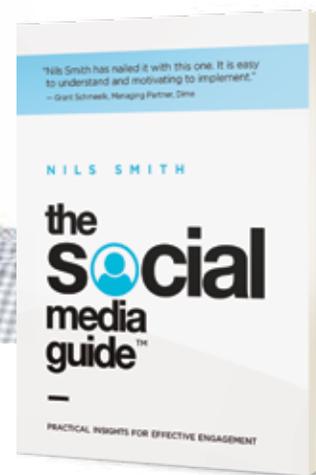
Mistake #8: Believing There's a Silver Bullet

Viral videos can be amazing, and giant businesses have been built off of them. But even in successful viral campaigns, be they accidental or intentional, a complex strategy followed and social connections were made. There is not a silver bullet when it comes to social media. And while there are tactics you can use to give your efforts a major boost, it's important that they're tied to your overall marketing and communication strategy.

These counter-productive ruts prevent many nonprofits from getting more out of social media. Hopefully, your organization thinks differently, and is already on the way to realizing some of social's relatively unlimited potential.



Nils Smith is the author of *The Social Media Guide*.



Some Verticals Do It Better Than Others

Do some nonprofit verticals engage on social media more effectively than others? *Definitely.*

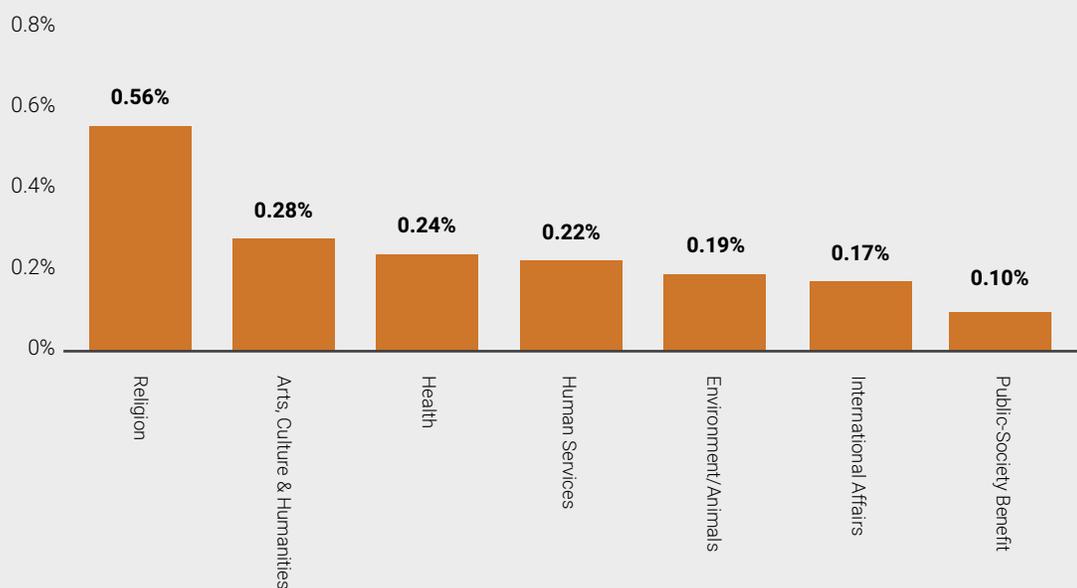
For this study, we crafted an overall engagement score by combining the median number of engagements (likes, retweets, etc.) per social post and divided it by the median audience size across all four platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube). We then categorized each organization by nonprofit vertical.

The result is the following chart, which shows the most-to-least engaged social media audiences.

The most engaged nonprofit vertical is Religion, with 0.56% of their audience interacting with this vertical on social media. This represents twice the engagement as the second place vertical, Arts, Culture & Humanities (0.28%). Health comes in third place with nearly one quarter of a percent of their social audience responding to their posts.

The least engaged social audiences belong to Public-Society Benefit (0.10%), International Affairs (0.17%), and Environment/Animals (0.19%), respectively.

% Audience Engaged (Engagement / total audience)



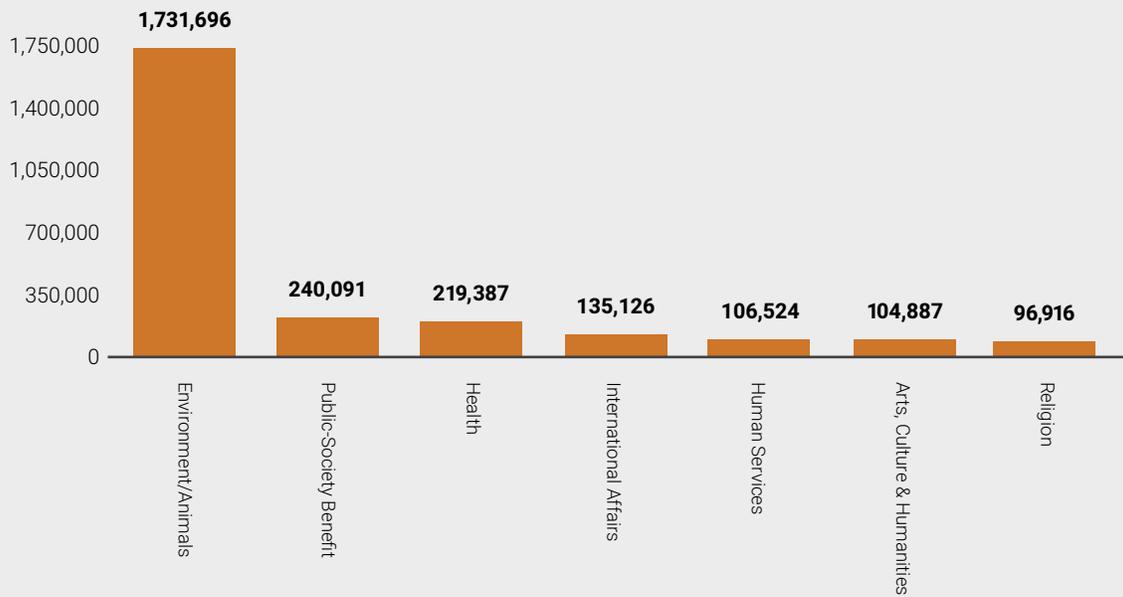
What about total audience size on social media? Which verticals have the largest audiences, and which have the smallest?

We realize that audience sizes might skew the engagement score above, especially for verticals with larger social media footprints. The best example of this is the Environment/Animals vertical, which has a median total audience size of 1,731,696. This is more than seven-times greater than that of the second-largest nonprofit vertical,

Public-Society Benefit, at 240,091. The third largest audience belongs to the Health vertical (219,387), with the rest of the verticals in the 100K range.

Needless to say, the larger the audience, the more difficult it is to keep that audience engaged. So it's not shocking to see Environment/Animals toward the bottom of the engagement chart above given the gargantuan social following this vertical has in comparison to the others.

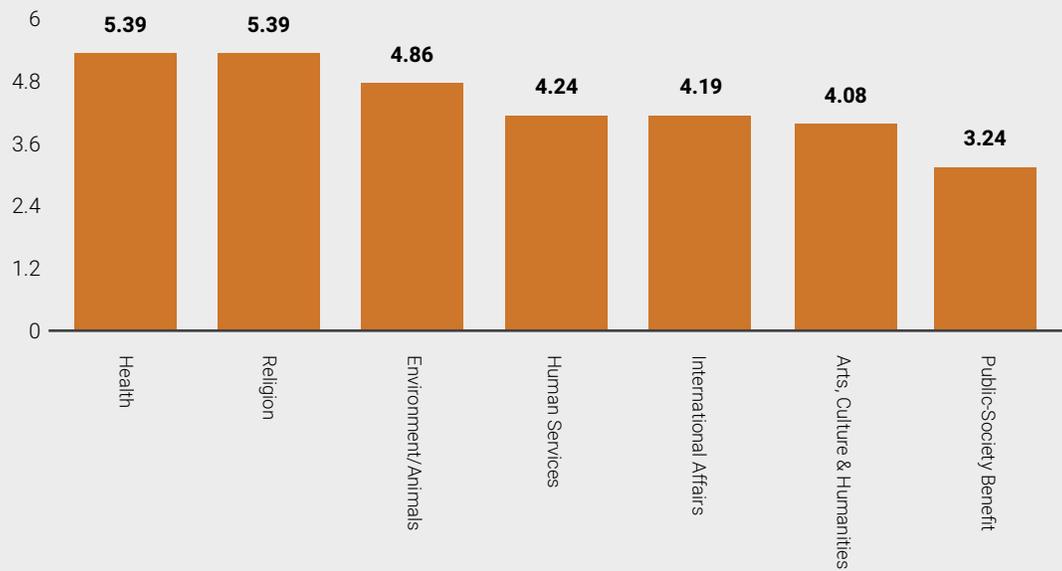
Median Total Audience (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram)



Conversely, the Religion vertical (most-engaged social audience in the first chart) also has the smallest median audience size, likely contributing to the increased engagement score over the other verticals. This highlights an apparent lack of attention in growing a social media presence among religious nonprofits.

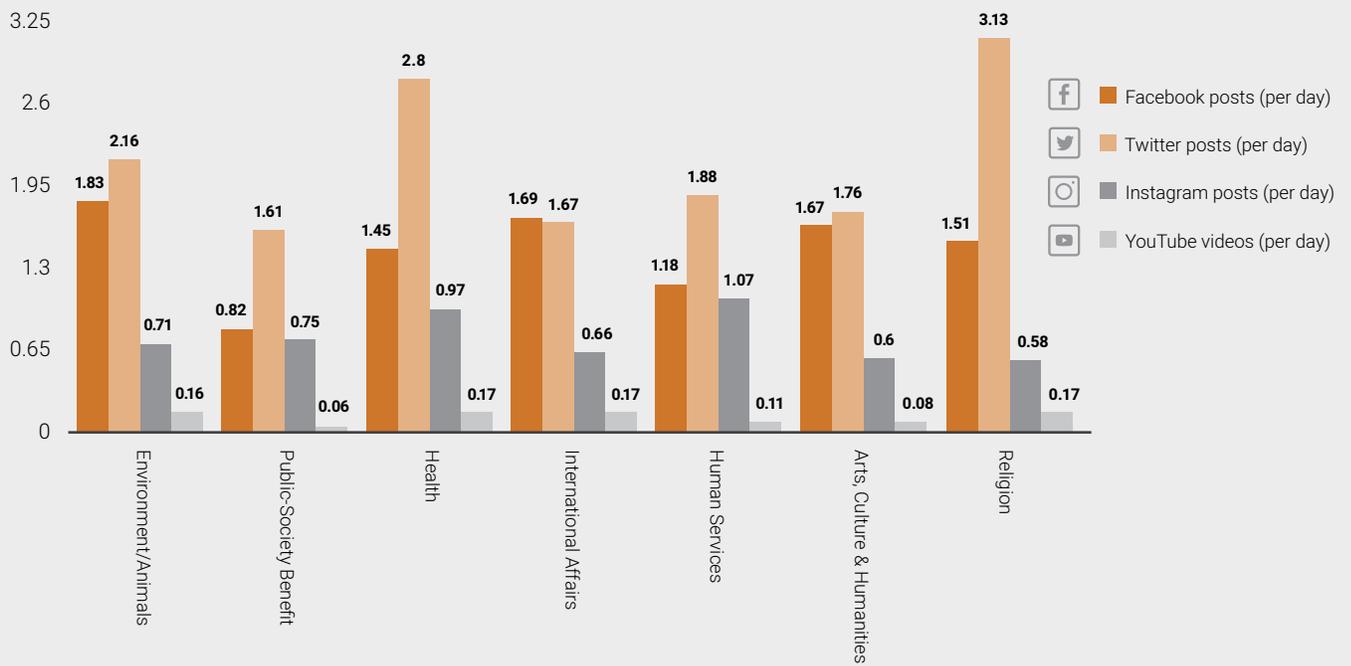
Of course, the other factor contributing to these scores is frequency. How often are nonprofits posting to each of the top four social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram)? Which verticals are posting the most? And which post the least?

Post Frequency Score



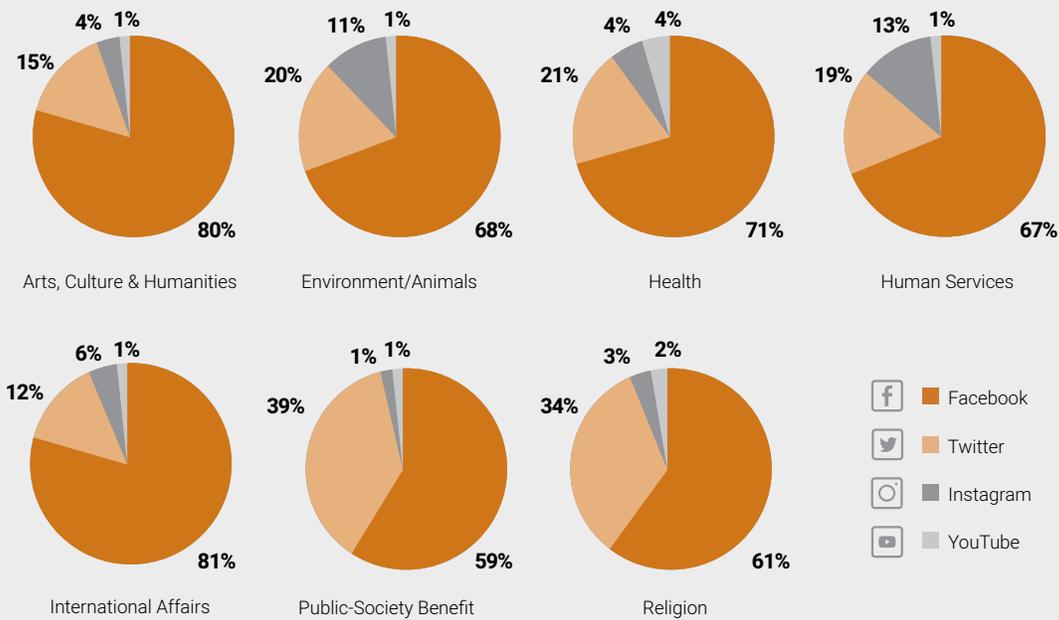
The Health and Religion verticals are tied for first place when it comes to who posts most often to social media, with frequency scores of 5.39. They're followed closely in third place by Environment/Animals with a score of 4.86. Public-Society Benefit is securely in last place as the least frequent to post to social media, with a score of 3.24. This represents 40% fewer posts than the two leading verticals and is likely why Public-Society Benefit has the least-engaged audience (0.10% above), though it also has the second-largest social media footprint.

What social platforms are being prioritized over the others? Most organizations are clearly prioritizing Facebook and Twitter as their top two social media channels, by posting to them more frequently than Instagram and YouTube. Three verticals (Public-Society Benefit, Health, and Human Services) are posting to Instagram almost as frequently as they are on Facebook, and Instagram is clearly garnering increased attention from nonprofits.



Five out of the seven nonprofit verticals post an average of one YouTube video per week, with the other two verticals (Arts, Culture, & Humanities and Public-Society Benefit) posting new videos even less frequently. Comparatively, this makes sense given the increased time investment that video requires over non-video posts to the other social platforms.

Interestingly, six out of the seven nonprofit verticals are tweeting more than they are posting on Facebook. The only vertical to post more on Facebook than Twitter is International Affairs, but it's really a tie between the two platforms (1.69 posts per day on Facebook vs. 1.67 tweets per day on Twitter). What's more shocking is that for every nonprofit vertical evaluated, the median number of Facebook fans greatly exceeds the median number of Twitter followers, as seen below.



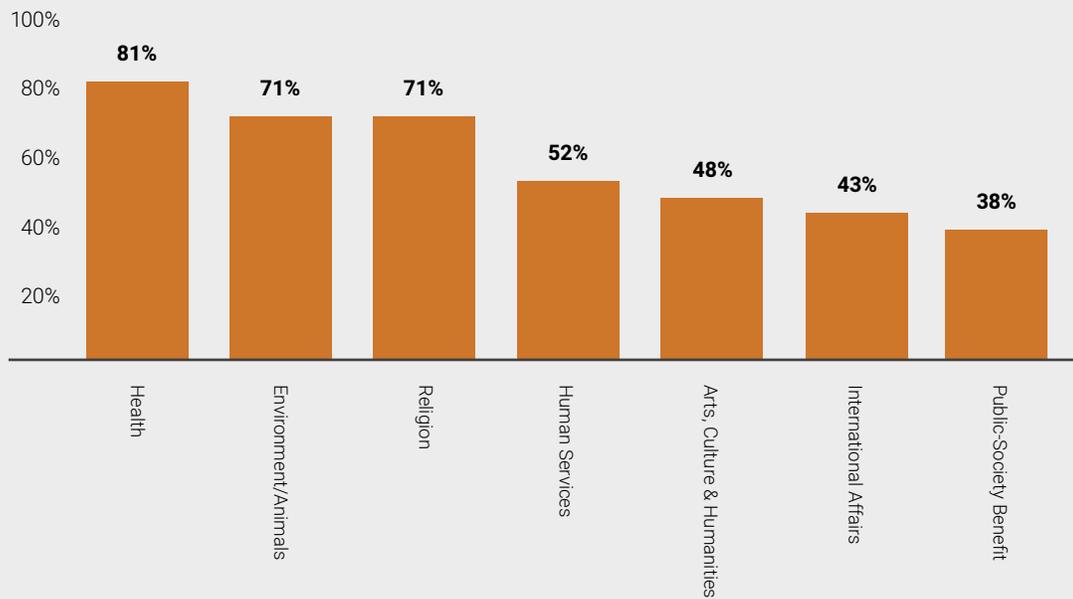
If nonprofits want to engage with the most people on social media, it would make more sense to post more often on Facebook, where their audiences are several times larger, than trying to fish more frequently in Twitter's relatively smaller pond.

So what's the verdict? Which verticals are better at being social than the others?

To arrive at an answer, we assigned scores to each vertical based on what position they ranked for each of the three areas: audience engagement, audience size, and post frequency. We then summed up these ranks and converted them into an overall score.

The Health vertical placed first with a score of 81%, followed by a tie for second place between Environment/Animals and Religion, with each receiving a 71%. After these first three verticals, there's a sharp decline in scores down to about the 50% range (Human Services and Arts, Culture & Humanities), followed by another drop-off with International Affairs and Public-Society Benefit landing solidly at the bottom.

Overall Score



Unpacking the Research

Part 1: Platform Adoption



Close to half the world's population (3.03 billion people) are on some type of social media.

— Statusbrew.com

The first, most obvious step for any nonprofit hoping to engage an audience on social media is to build the bridge between the organization's home base (website) and the various outposts in social media country. Connecting your website with appropriate social channels is job number one.

By now, the vast majority of charitable groups in America have staked out space on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, et al. There's room for growth, especially when it comes to integrating social media icons/links into nonprofit websites.

First, let's look at platform adoption. Here's what we found:

Ninety-nine percent of nonprofits have a presence of some sort on Facebook. File this under "Duh," but virtually every organization has a place carved out on the world's biggest social media channel. At least one charity in our study still isn't playing ball, but hey, Babe Ruth didn't get 100% of the votes when he entered the Baseball Hall of Fame. There's always a holdout.

Ninety-one percent of orgs have a Twitter account. With the second-most adoption among U.S. charities, the wild, wild west of Twitter is a place for semi-regular tweeting—and then completely ignoring the audience. More on that later.



In Q4 2017, Twitter estimated an average of 330 million monthly active users across the globe.

— Sprout Social



Ninety-three percent of orgs have a YouTube account. Surprised? You shouldn't be. YouTube—the second largest search platform in the world, in addition to being the largest video aggregator/provider—is fast becoming an essential channel for virtually every entity, large and small, across the globe.

Eighty-two percent of orgs have an Instagram account. Even Grandma is using Instagram now, and the most progressive charitable organizations are learning new ways to use it to communicate and connect through emotive imagery.



Instagram was the fastest-growing of the three social media platforms we tracked, with a 44% increase in the number of followers. Nonprofits saw a 13% increase in the number of Facebook fans and a 15% increase in the number of Twitter followers.

— m+r benchmarks

Eighty-two percent have a LinkedIn presence. More than four out of five organizations have a page on this platform, and that doesn't include the other ways LinkedIn is being utilized for recruiting and influence.

Sixty-four percent have a Pinterest account. For image-heavy causes, this channel may be worth the time.

Seventy percent have a Google+ account. Evidently, it's still a thing. Primarily for SEO juice.

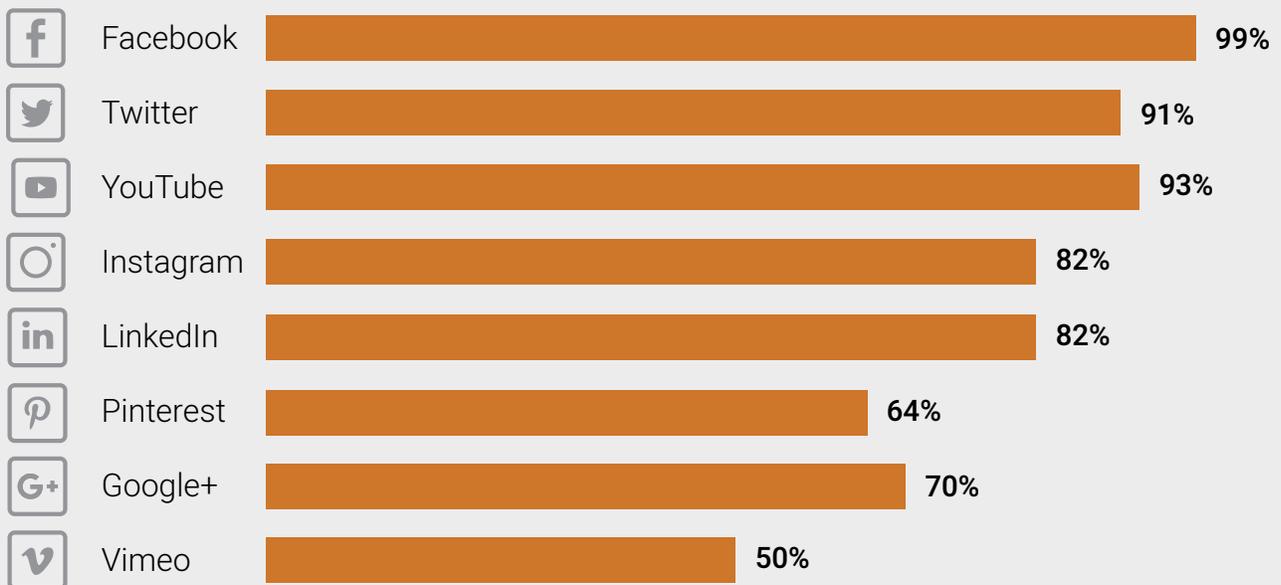
Fifty percent of charities use Vimeo. Clearly, YouTube is the more widely adopted video channel, but many organizations are using both.



In 2012, the average internet user had three social media accounts—now the average is closer to seven accounts.

— Sprout Social

Social Media Adoption by Nonprofits



Other Random Numbers

Only **48%** of nonprofits in our study have a Flickr images account.

WhatsApp? What's that? Just **2%** of orgs have or use WhatsApp.

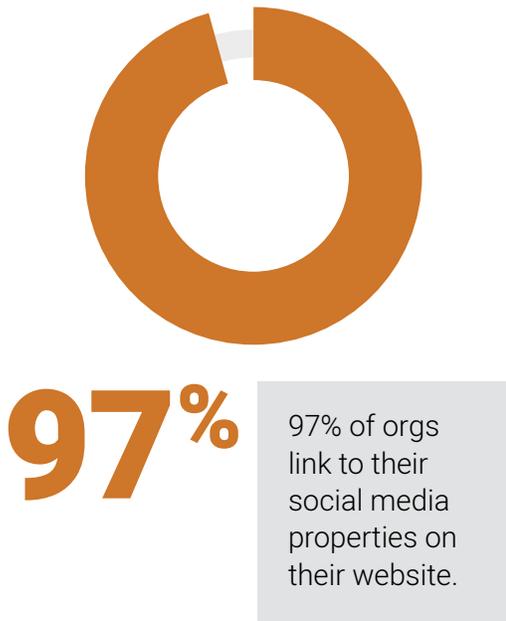
Four percent of nonprofit organizations have a SnapChat account. But **83%** of them (5 out of 6) use SnapChat Stories.

Unpacking the Research

Part 2: Integration

After a nonprofit discovers a social network and sets up an account therein... is that it? For some, it is. For the savvy, effectively leveraging these channels entails integration with one's own properties. Here's how that part looks in 2018 according to this study:

Ninety-seven percent of orgs link to their social media properties on their website. That's meaningful progress in recent years, with only a small fraction of nonprofits failing to let website visitors know how to connect with them on social media.



Sixty-nine percent of orgs ensure that these social links open in a new window, rather than taking you away from the website. Just because it's important to provide access to your social channels, it doesn't mean you should literally send all of your traffic away from your home base.

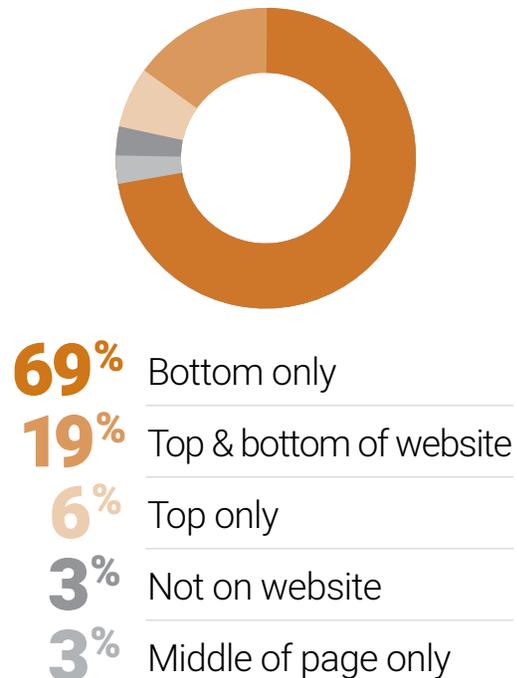


69%

69% of orgs ensure that these social links open in a new window.

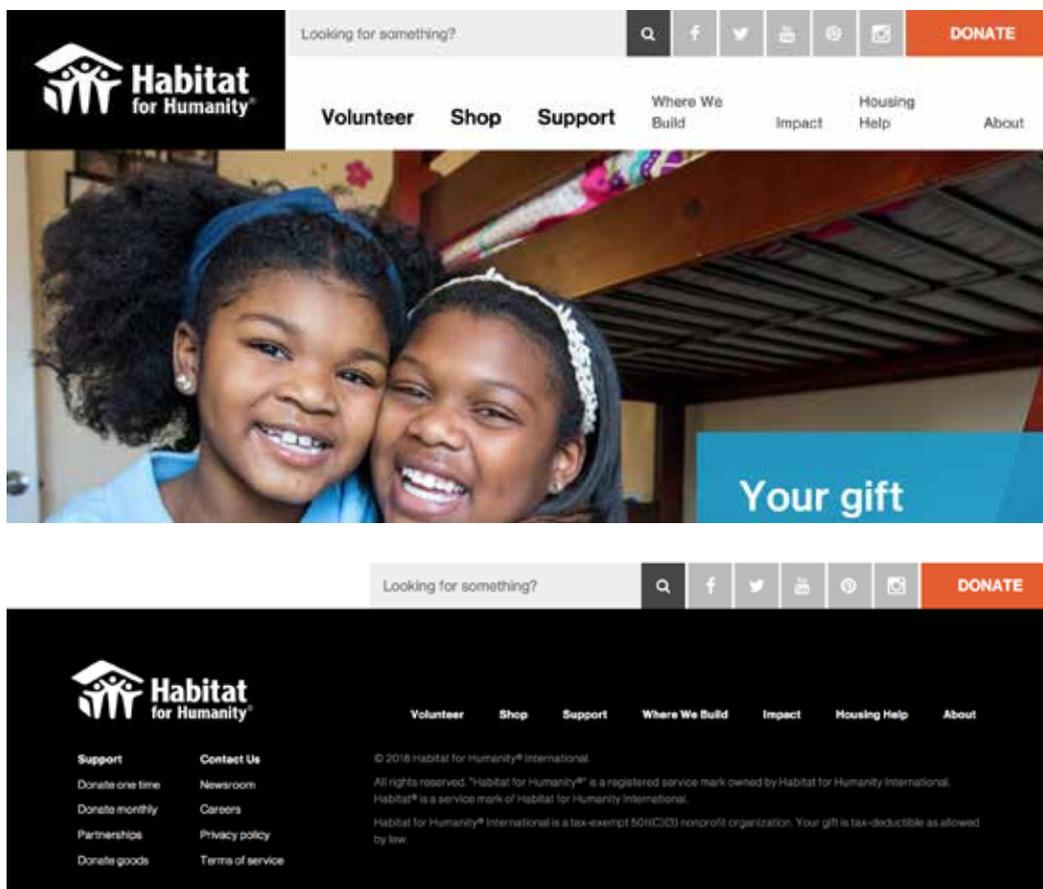
Social Media icon placement on website

(top and bottom together is ideal)



Needless to say (probably), when it comes to promoting one's social media channels, top and bottom together is ideal. The research shows that, basically, **only 19% of orgs have optimal social media promotion on their website.**

With **97% linking to their social pages on their website** (good), the lack of prominent positioning is sub-optimal (bad).



THE BOTTOM LINE

Charities are investing more in content and related efforts for their social channels, and they're doing a much better job of making it obvious that they actually have them and how to get there. That's the first step.

Unpacking the Research

Part 3: Audience Size

It's a numbers game. When it comes to social media, that truism has never been more applicable: Greater volume of likes, follows, and subscribers gives charities scale to motivate, mobilize, and monetize for greater growth and impact.



For every 1,000 email addresses, nonprofits had an average of 474 Facebook fans, 186 Twitter followers, and 41 Instagram followers.

— m+r benchmarks

Generally speaking, the bigger the brand, the greater the social following, but by adhering to best practices, some smaller nonprofit organizations manage to generate outsized congregations of fans.

Let's look at the numbers for the 151 charities analyzed in our research:



FACEBOOK

The average number of Facebook likes per organization is 627,986. Sure, a like is the minimum commitment possible, but over half a million fans per charity indicates that we're getting better at drawing a crowd on the world's largest social media platform. How does your Facebook footprint compare?

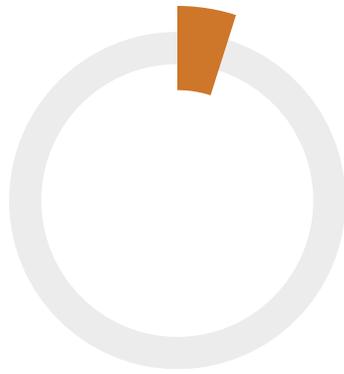
Since the average Facebook audience size figure might be influenced by a few really large organizations, we also note that **the median likes-per-brand in the study is 106,070.** So if your Facebook page has less than this, you're very likely falling behind your peers in reach, awareness, and influence.



TWITTER

What's the average number of Twitter followers per nonprofit? It's 318,746—but with a median figure of **25,540.** Obviously, Twitter—especially now that it's essentially morphed into more of a news service than a social network—isn't a priority for nonprofits in the United States.

The percentage of nonprofits following the people who follow them on Twitter is only 3%. This percentage being so low highlights how nonprofits are disproportionately concerned with growing their presence and reach, while failing to realize the importance of growing relationships with their followers. To put it another way, most nonprofits are focusing on quantity of followers, while neglecting the quality of connections with their Twitter followers. This aligns with other data in this study that reveals an approach to social as a megaphone or bulletin board rather than a place to cultivate relationships.



3%

3% of Twitter followers are followed back.



INSTAGRAM

There were 111,265 Instagram followers for the average charity, and a median of 8,496. Expect these numbers to grow dramatically. Instagram has become one of the three primary social channels for nonprofits. Now approaching 1 billion active users, the platform is booming and is arguably the most effective social channel for attracting and engaging an audience.



YOUTUBE

The average number of nonprofit YouTube subscribers is 24,589, and the median number of subscribers is 2,040. This makes this social platform second or third most popular for nonprofit time and energy.

The study-wide average number of Total Views by nonprofits is 8,095,254, and the median number of Total Views is 1,027,164. The content here is growing and so is the consumption.

Overall, the charitable organizations we studied have identified Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram as the necessary elements in their social ecosystems. This isn't surprising given the types of content that create aggregation opportunities for charitable entities with the resources to tell their stories. It's where the people are, and there are relatively obvious ways to connect with them.

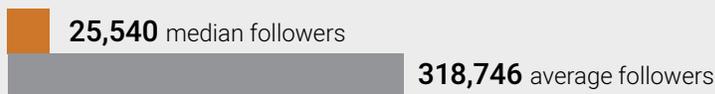
Audience Platform



Facebook



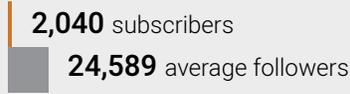
Twitter



Instagram



YouTube



Unpacking the Research

Part 4: Content

Your story is, literally, everything. By telling it frequently and consistently, you make the most of all of those social accounts your organization maintains. It's the actual words and images which make it possible for your charity to connect and engage with the people "out there" who may care about your impact enough to support it.

Quality and volume are both factors in the success of nonprofits on social media. So how much content is the average charity in American sharing, and what types are they producing?



FACEBOOK

The average number of posts per week per organization studied: eight to nine, or a little more than one per day.

So charitable organizations need to focus on creating more content to drive engagement. The older the content, the less likely it will be shown on the newsfeed. For this reason, posting more often will get you exposure in the newsfeed organically. Dunham+Company recommends three to five times per day and even more if you have timely relevant content.

On average, **the organizations in our study posted one video every five days to Facebook.** Facebook gets more than 8 million video views a day according to [Social Sprout](#), and video gets 1,200% more shares than any other type of content. For this reason, nonprofits should continue giving people what they want—and the people want video content.



Almost 60% of U.S. internet users selected Facebook to watch videos online in Dec. 2017.

— Sprout Social

Nonprofits posted **nearly one image-based post per day (about seven per week) to their Facebook page.** Image-based posts are the most frequent type of post on Facebook, and according to [Buffer](#), image-based posts get 39% more engagement than any other type of posts.

On average, text-only content was posted to Facebook once every three days (two to three text-only posts per week). Text



Charities post on Facebook once every day



Photo and video posts see three times as much engagement as the next highest post type.

— Rival IQ

isn't horrible, as these posts can be great for communicating an announcement or an opinion piece. Text-only posts should be added into the content mix on Facebook for added engagement.

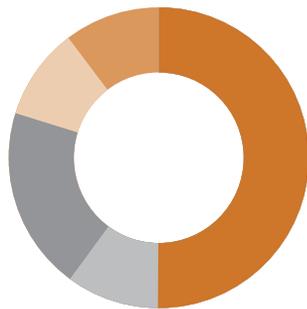
With Facebook's algorithm constantly changing, the types of content you post for maximum engagement are very important. Dunham+Company has developed the following formula for an optimized Facebook presence.

A balanced content strategy would consist of a variety of types of content

that is going to drive up engagement while also sending traffic back to your website. Here is the proven, recommended strategy for Facebook content based on testing with hundreds of social media profiles with a variety of nonprofit sectors:

So, when done right, optimized content equals brand awareness, which turns into leads on your email list, which turns into real dollars for your nonprofit. Great content equals great results. In the immortal words of Mr. Miagi, "If do right, no can defend."

Formula for Optimized Facebook Content



- 50%** Inspirational
- 10%** Conversational
- 10%** Celebrational
- 20%** Informational
- 10%** Connection

TESTING ELEMENT



THE TEST: When taking client A through a complete shift in Facebook content, Dunham+Company was able to increase the reach by 772% while increasing the engagement by 356%.

With another client, Dunham+Company was able to increase the reach by 107%, the engagement by 163% and, best of all, boost their web traffic and web income by 45% (yes, that's right—with real dollars coming in) through the shift in the Facebook strategy.



Content Mix via Facebook (orgs averaged the following):

- + 2.5 Inspirational posts per week, or one every 2–3 days
- + 1 Conversation post per 2 weeks
- + 1 Celebration post per week
- + 4 Information posts per week; or one every 1–2 days
- + 1 Connection post per 2-3 weeks

As noted throughout, nonprofits focus too much on informational posts, using Facebook as a billboard for their organization and not connecting to the audience through inspirational, conversational, celebrational, and connection posts.



YOUTUBE

As the second-largest search engine in the world (behind only its parent, Google), YouTube is probably the most underrated social media channel.

How much is enough? **Seventy-four percent of nonprofits uploaded new videos at least once every six weeks.**

Certainly, more video content requires more investment, but be sure to ask your team if you're doing what you can with today's resources and prioritizing video in your content mix.

And what about length of videos? **The average video of nonprofits studied runs six to seven minutes.** While research shows that the rise of smart TVs means that users have a higher aptitude for longer formed content on YouTube, this isn't a bad length for a nonprofit.

Only 46% of orgs upload video content on a consistent schedule, rather than all at once. Just like on any social media channel, consistency is key to



Study Averages by Content Type:

- + Inspirational: 31.42%
- + Conversation: 6.55%
- + Celebration: 10.54%
- + Information: 47.36%
- + Connection: 4.13%



Charities post a video on YouTube once every week



building an audience. On YouTube, your subscribers will expect videos from you on a consistent basis—so give the people what they want for a fully optimized channel.

U.S. charities post an average of one video per week via YouTube. One video per week is great, if you can manage and afford it. Even better? One *good* video per week. #babysteps



INSTAGRAM

Video on Instagram? Evidently not. Video content consumption is up 40% on Instagram ([Buzzfeed](#)), but nonprofits aren't riding this wave. **The average charity only posted video content on Instagram 12% of the time**, presenting an opportunity to stand out from other organizations.



Nearly a fourth of social media influencers believe Instagram is the top avenue for influencer marketing strategies.

— Sprout Social

On average, **charities post to Instagram about once a day**, or about six times a week. Again, this suggests an opportunity to double down on the fastest-growing channel in social media.



Charities post on Instagram once every day



TWITTER

Moderate frequency on Twitter most likely reflects the shift in thinking about how to best leverage this evolving channel. **Organizations in our study averaged about 2 tweets per day or roughly 13 per week.**

THE BOTTOM LINE

Nonprofits who are “winning” at social media are those who are developing and deploying more content. Text, photos, videos—the right material in the right mix is driving greater engagement.

Unpacking the Research

Part 5: Optimization

Let's be frank: Charities are blowing some of the basics, which reduces their effectiveness. By failing to take advantage of social media's tools and features, many nonprofits settle for less engagement—and fewer actual transactions.

Just how well are today's charitable institutions managing the blocking and tackling of platform optimization?



FACEBOOK

On Facebook, **only 8 out of 151 evaluated (5%) have the Rapid Response badge active.** With engagement being a key metric affecting your algorithm score to get your content exposed within the Facebook newsfeed, this is a huge area that needs to be improved upon across the board.

 Very responsive to messages



More than 33,000 chatbots are active on Facebook.

— Sprout Social

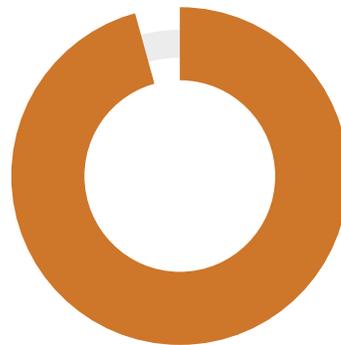
On the other hand, **16% of organizations are deploying Facebook Messenger Bots.** This is... cool. Bots are a super-efficient way to engage, regardless of available manpower, and leveraging artificial intelligence will be a bigger and bigger thing in the ongoing evolution of social media.



16%

16% of organizations are deploying Facebook Messenger Bots

Nintey-five percent of charities have the profile image optimized for the brand's persona/personality. This score merits an A++ from our judges.

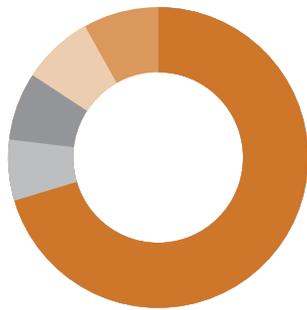


95%

95% of charities have a profile image optimized for the brand's personal/personality

Almost all organizations profiled choose to employ the call-to-action buttons on their Facebook pages, with only 3% eschewing this option. Almost all nonprofits are taking advantage of Facebook's call-to-action functionality. Needless to say, asking page visitors to do something you want them to do increases the likelihood that they'll do it.

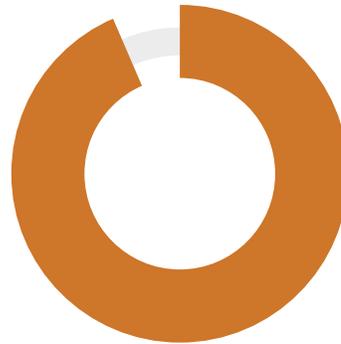
Most Popular Calls to Action



More good news: **96% of nonprofit About sections on Facebook include the organization's contact information.** Better still, 98% include more information about the organization—and 100% link to their website. Well played, nonprofit people.

Then again, **only 46% of charities are using both the About section and Facebook's new Story feature on their Facebook page** to really communicate who they are and what they're all about.

Ninety-six percent of charitable groups have taken the extra step to optimize their cover photos to fit the organization's brand identity. So hooray for sharpness, vividness, and quality.



96%

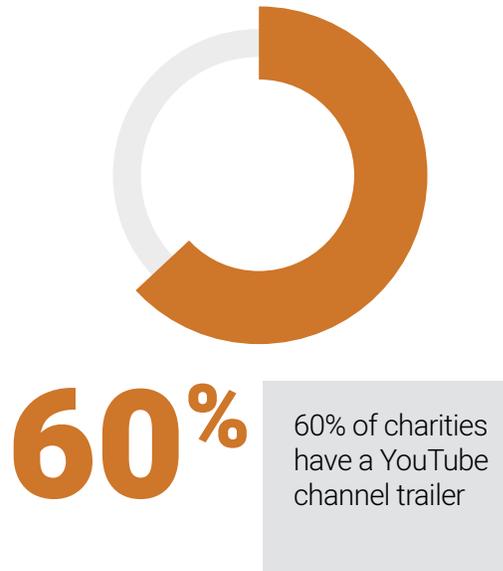
96% of charities have a cover photo optimized for the brand

But why not really take advantage of the space? **Only 24% are using video in the cover photo section,** and just 31% of organizations are using call-to-action copy along with their cover photos. (Cue the Losing Horn sound effect.)

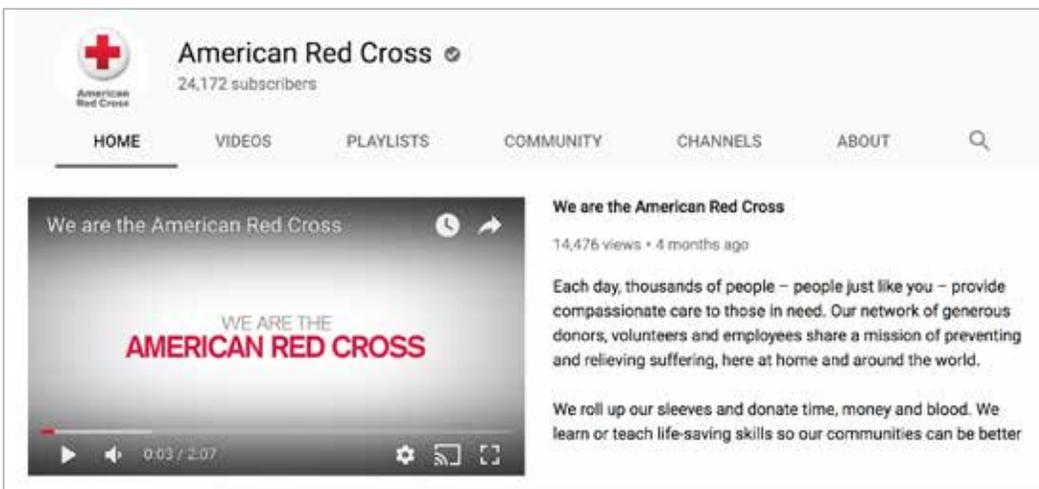


YOUTUBE

Only 60% of charities have a customized channel trailer. With your YouTube channel likely appearing high in your search engine results, traffic to your channel will be made up of people with high affinity for your organization—so give them a warm welcome. The YouTube trailer is the perfect spot to customize a “Welcome! You’re in the right place!” to these newcomers and to explain what you are all about. And, let’s not forget to ask them to subscribe to the channel!

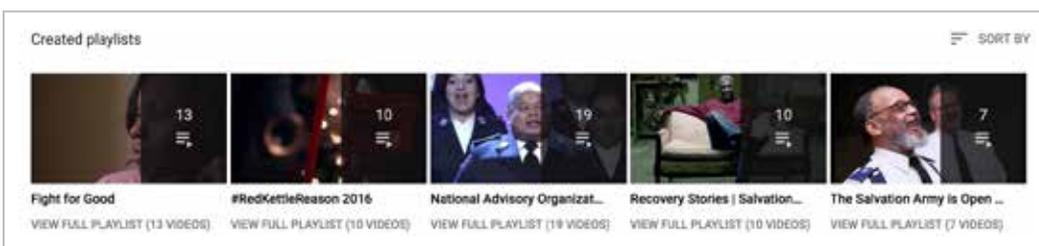


Example of Custom Trailer:

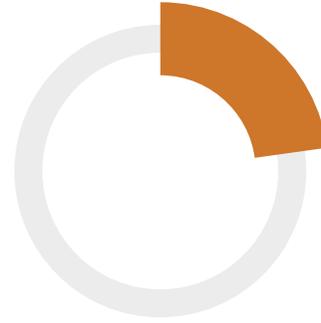


Nearly 90% of those studied employ playlists (89.9%), which serve to better curate the content for the users. Great job, (almost) everyone!

Example of a Playlist:



Only 12% use their organization's name in the titles of their videos, missing out on the SEO value of YouTube. Again, as a Google-owned property, when optimized for SEO, titles on YouTube become important in generating organic traction for your videos. Call another meeting on Monday, and get this fixed!

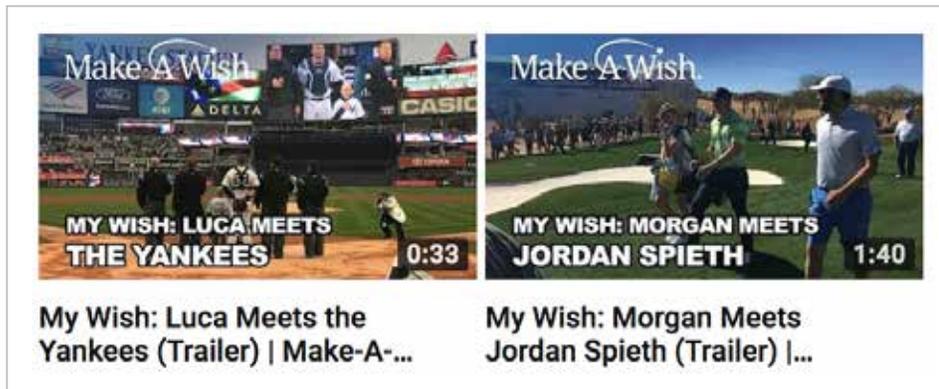


Twenty-two percent of nonprofits use custom video thumbnails for their videos. By taking the time to create these more appealing images, charities can and should generate more views.

22%

22% of nonprofits use custom video thumbnails for their videos

Example Thumbnails:



Only 45% of organizations are consistently using the Description field to tease their content. Again, more views may result from a bit more effort when posting videos.



On a positive note, **73% of charities on YouTube are utilizing end screens once their videos are over.** That still means 27% of charities are missing an opportunity to more deeply engage their viewers with other content. #missedopportunity

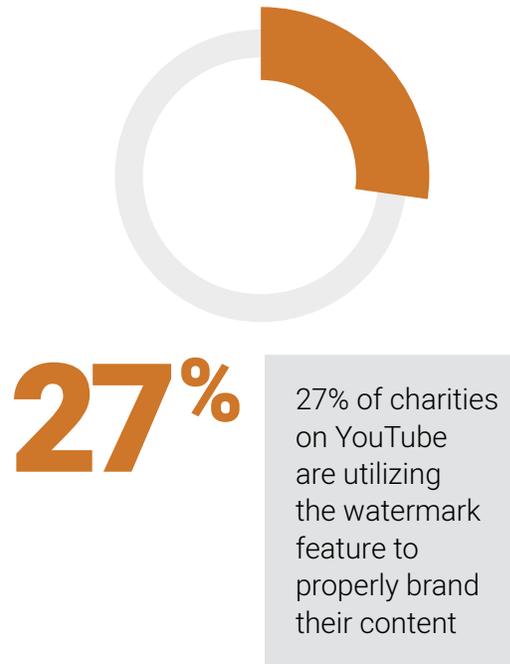
73%

73% of charities on YouTube are utilizing end screens once their videos are over

Three out of four organizations are not using call-to-action tools to drive people to action. This could be because of the relatively small size of their YouTube channel and/or not having these cards and annotations available to them. But don't miss the lead in this story: *You Should Do This Now*.

Cross-promotion is (almost) a thing: **43% of nonprofits on YouTube are including links to their other social properties or website** in their descriptions.

A mere **27% of nonprofits are using the watermark feature to properly brand their content.** Whenever a sentence begins with "a mere," you know it's probably not going to be good. And indeed, this is another big, missed opportunity. When optimized, this is such an easy way to get your viewers subscribed to your YouTube channel while they are consuming the content.



Example of a Watermark:



94% of orgs are making their YouTube profile picture and cover photos congruent with their other social media pages. This is good news, as it makes it easier for those engaging across channels to immediately recognize this is the same organization they've encountered elsewhere.



INSTAGRAM

Only 39% of nonprofit organizations are verified on Instagram. Oversight, or rebellion? Skipping the verification just slows your roll.



39%

39% of charities are verified on Instagram

Example Verification:



Nearly two-thirds of nonprofits (66%) have mobile-optimized text in their profile photo—but that means about 34% aren't considering mobile, which is especially important for Instagram.



58% of nonprofit social media happens on mobile.

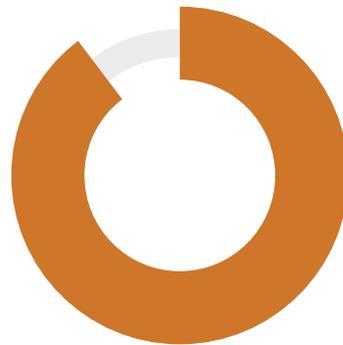
— (<https://nonprofitssource.com/online-giving-statistics/>)

Congruence rules! **Eight-five percent of charities using Instagram have handles that are consistent with their other social media properties.** #congruence

con·gru·ence
kən'grōōəns/
noun

1. agreement or harmony; compatibility.

Ninety-three percent of charitable organizations are correctly using the bio info on Instagram to reinforce the brand/mission description. This is great, as again it only makes sense to avail yourself of every asset available to reinforce the what, why, and how of your charity's existence.



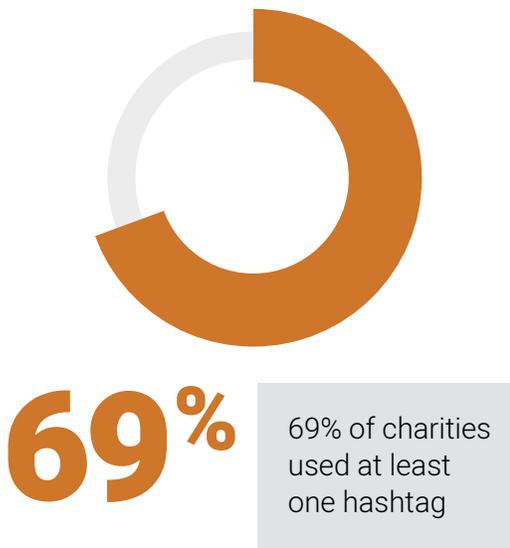
93%

93% of charities optimized their Instagram bio



Big miss? **Only 49% of nonprofits are using “Link in Bio” in their Instagram posts to drive people to calls to action.** Using a link in the bio is a great way to drive traffic back to your website. This may be the most egregious strategic oversight among charities trying to engage an audience on social media.

Sixty-nine percent of Instagram posts by nonprofits include at least one #hashtag. The uber-majority of charities in 2018 are playing the hashtag game, but should probably be employing more of them.



Instagram posts with at least one hashtag have 12.6% more engagement than those without.

— Sprout Social

Only 7% of Instagram posts by nonprofit organizations include a geotag. According to our friends at Sprout Social, posts with location have 79% more engagement than those without.

Example of a Geotag:





TWITTER

Seventy-nine percent of organizations have Twitter handles consistent with their other social platforms. It is always a good thing to keep them consistent for SEO and brand recognition purposes.



Thumbs-up: **93% of charities have Twitter bio information that reinforces their mission/brand.** As with other social channels, it's critical to provide information at every turn, as (hopefully) you'll be meeting new people every day.



Thumbs-way-down: **Only 56% of nonprofits are verified on Twitter.** Perhaps there's a lack of knowledge regarding how to go about getting verified, but doing so will enhance your visibility.

Example of Verification:



56%

56% of charities are verified on Twitter

THE BOTTOM LINE

In general, charities are optimizing Facebook, while there's a ton of opportunity for enhancement on YouTube and Instagram. The extra effort to properly frame your content, connect the dots for potential supporters, and gain official status from social channels will move the needle on growth and engagement.

Unpacking the Research

Part 6: Engagement

The whole point of social media for your organization is this: Talking to and listening to real people who share an interest in your mission. To the extent that they click, like, watch, share, retweet, comment, and save, it's evidence of connection and support.

Low engagement can be attributed to a number of factors, such as content that fails to garner reaction/response, ineffectual optimization and/or calls to action, totally ignoring metrics and trends, and even totally ignoring what people are doing and saying. But that's not your organization, right? You have it all together.

So what about everyone else? We analyzed the engagement metrics for the nonprofits in our study, and here's what we found.



FACEBOOK

On average, charities in the United States received 70 likes per post. This is not what we in the research business call a "good number" since it's lower than it should be, especially based on the size of Facebook followings. This indicates low engagement and/or a lack of leveraging paid reach.

Audience Engagement

(Median Likes per Post / Median FB Audience Size)

Arts, culture & humanities:	0.04%
Environment/animals:	0.03%
Health:	0.08%
Human Services	0.09%
International affairs	0.05%
Public-society Benefit	0.06%
Religion	0.81%

Each Facebook post only reached 7% of a nonprofit page's fans. Meanwhile, 38% of the audience reached by a given post was not already following the nonprofit.

— M+R Benchmarks



TWITTER

The average for nonprofits in the study was one retweet every two days, or about three per week.

This is poor engagement, and the lack of response to those being engaged with on this platform suggests there are some fundamental flaws in the way tweets by nonprofits are being managed.

Example of a Retweet:



Along those lines, **charities on Twitter averaged just about 2 likes on 1 of their tweets per day**, or about 10 per week total. This is likewise tepid engagement and again points to flaws in what is being tweeted, when, how much, and how the call-to-action is being handled.

Charities are not generating as much engagement as they should be. On Facebook, the likes and shares are too low at this stage. The figures are worse still for Twitter.



INSTAGRAM

It's good to note that **nonprofit posts on Instagram received an average of 309 hearts per day** and about 3 comments per day. Love is in the air.



YOUTUBE

But what of YouTube, you ask. Here's the data, which you can compare to your organization's response and decide if you should be doing better (you should be).

Engagement on YouTube

Average number of views per video: 3,487 /

Median views per video: 391

Average number thumbs-up per video: 41 /

Median thumbs-up: 4

Average number of thumbs-down per video: 2 /

Median thumbs-down: 0

THE BOTTOM LINE

All that noise you hear is actually silence, as nonprofits are not generating enough activity to accurately claim to be engaging their audiences. Is your organization getting the most out of where you are and what you say?

Unpacking the Research

Part 7: Response



The average response time for a brand to reply on social media to a user is 10 hours, while the average user will only wait 4 hours.

– <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-statistics/>

As mentioned before, social media isn't a billboard or radio tower. Instead, social media is the penultimate two-way channel for conversation—connecting hundreds, thousands, and millions with brands and missions they share a passion with.

Leaving all of those comments, questions, and shares—and even donations—to float into the atmosphere without reaction from your organization is like turning your back on a donor who approaches you at an event.

The people who interact with you... need to be interacted with. That's the expectation established by our for-profit counterparts. So what's happening "on the ground" in social media when it comes to nonprofits monitoring and responding to people?

The average nonprofit in our study responded to a message on Facebook within 19 hours. This represents a

sizable disconnect between response time and user expectations. In fact, perhaps as a result of the growth of social followings in recent years, the response time is actually slower than in [our 2015 study](#).

Only 27% of organizations responded to tweets directed to them. Of the few that responded, it took an average of 19 hours to get a response via Twitter. Again, this is several steps back from a few years ago.



27%

Only 27% of organizations responded to tweets directed at them



Only 38 out of 147 nonprofits we were able to measure in this area (26%) actually responded to our questions on Facebook. The rest never replied. These results point to one of the biggest challenges nonprofit organizations are grappling with on social media (whether they know it or not): It's bad for business when people get ignored after they interact with your cause on Facebook.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The nonprofits we profiled are no better at responding to comments, questions, and donations than they were when we studied them more than four years ago. Not to sound repetitive, but it's a flawed strategy to use social media as a megaphone and not a telephone. And thanks to our ChatBot friends, this is not the logistical challenge it used to be.



26%

26% of organizations responded to questions on Facebook

Likewise, **only 27% of charities on Twitter replied to our tweets** asking them a question. #hello? #goaway

The Big Picture

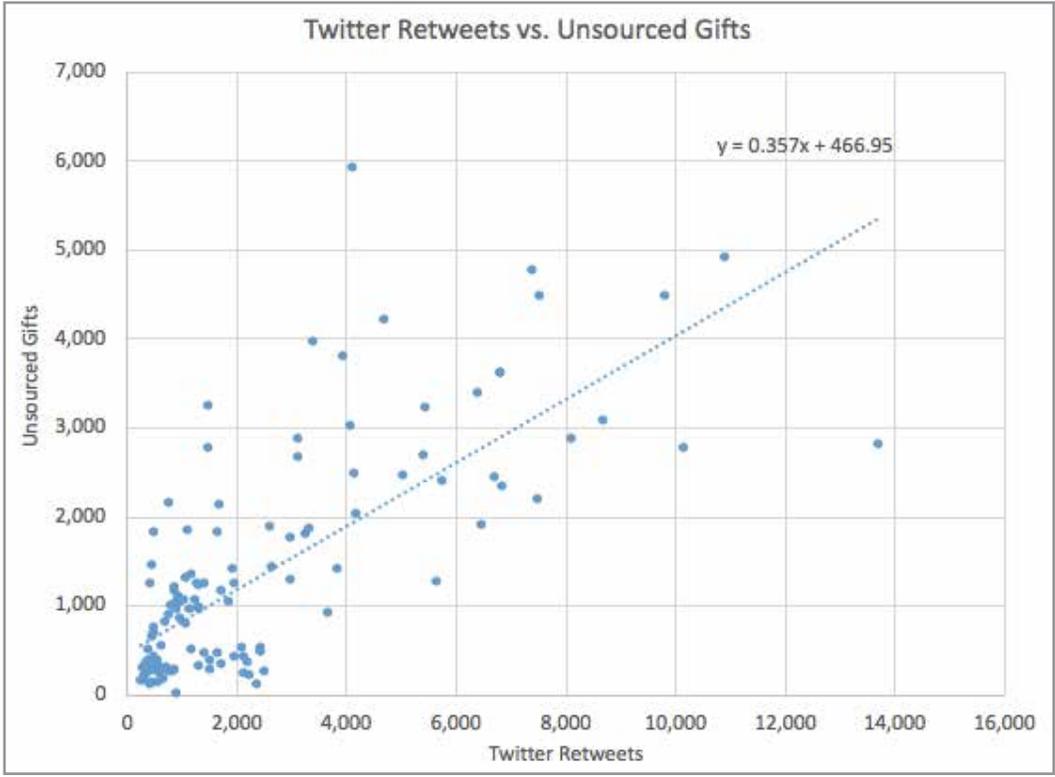
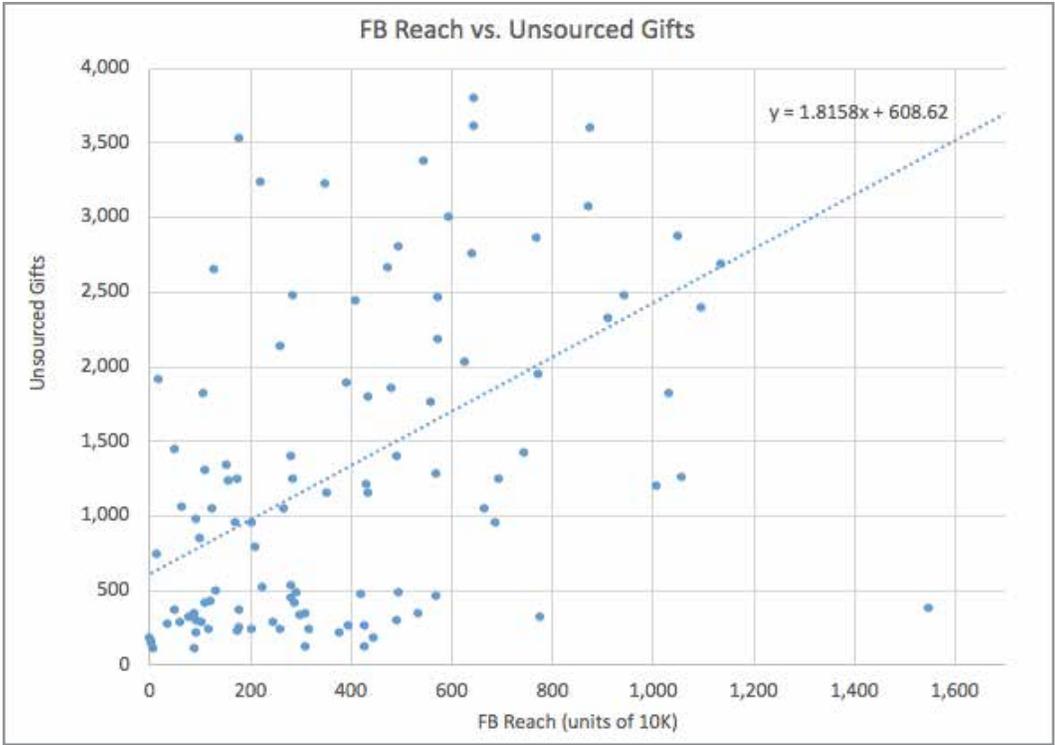
Wait, I Can Also Raise Money with Social Media?!

Your Social Media Fundraising Checklist

The answer to that question is, “Sure, why not?” It’s not necessarily going to change your world just yet, but you can indeed generate financial support for your efforts through the world’s largest social media channel. Here are some tips for doing more (Yay—another list!):

1. Facebook does have its own donation functionality, so it’s not difficult to ask for money on this platform. No, you don’t get the donor information to cultivate them and develop an ongoing relationship, but maybe that will change at some point. For now, Facebook provides the tools, and it’s especially useful for a crowdfunding or #GivingTuesday type of campaign.
2. Sometimes it also makes sense to do donor acquisition ads on Facebook for special campaigns or, again, events like #GivingTuesday.
3. Playing the (slightly) longer game is really the way to go these days (think lead generation). That entails first turning your Facebook community into email subscribers (through lead ads and boosted posts that send traffic to your website). Then, convert those email subscribers into donors through ongoing communication and cultivation.
4. It doesn’t happen overnight, so be patient. It can take up to 12 months to see the positive ROI on the initial spend, but once it starts humming you’ll turn it into a cash machine. Also, keep in mind that not every lead-gen offer is unique, so you might get inexpensive leads that never convert.
5. Yes, your increased brand awareness actually results in revenue. As your audience grows, so will your unsourced web giving (see charts below). The more engaged the public is with your brand, the more they come back and donate.





Regardless of how much you're leveraging it for already, Facebook has been more progressive and aggressive about creating fundraising opportunities than any other social platform. Set some modest goals for testing it more in 2019.

Final Thoughts + Next Steps

We read the headlines, listen to the Millennial guy in our marketing department, make some tentative investments in manpower and material, and hey... we're doing social media. Right?

Maybe. Does your nonprofit have a strategy and a plan, rather than a checklist of "Do this or someone will ask about it" items? Or, are you one of those organizations already using social media as a community-building, momentum-powering, revenue-generating, world-shaking machine?

What are those charities doing that others aren't? Here are the main differences between the getting-it-done champs and the not-so-much folks in our study, as well as the associated recommendations for your next marketing/development meeting:

1. Nonprofits that are most effectively using social media see it as a channel for two-way communication, rather than a way to blast away with a boombox on top of a tower. ***Don't broadcast—interact. Social media is okay as a soapbox, but much more impactful for your mission long-term as a one-on-one conversation.***
2. Those doing it right have also taken the time to optimize each and every element for certification, connectivity, and response—in all channels currently invested in. ***Take those little steps to make it easier for potential supporters to learn about you and support your efforts.***
3. Developing and deploying more and better content is also a key, with the most successful charities creating and sharing in the most efficacious mix, with a focus on more video and imagery. ***Create what you can, where you can, and follow the trends about what people are consuming.***
4. The nonprofits that are killing it on social are actually generating engagement with fans and followers. ***Work on facilitating more engagement with all that content your team is developing by closing the loop in certain areas of channel optimization.***
5. It's important not to ignore people and to respond when followers say or do something. ***Invest in the ability to monitor and respond to people through human or AI resources.***
6. Lastly, many charities are taking advantage of opportunities to generate income via social channels. ***Set up the necessary elements to actually raise money through your social media.***

To move from mere existence to the group of nonprofits who get it, and are getting it done, make note of these recommendations, call a meeting or two, and focus on the next level.

For nonprofits, this is the beginning of a great love story.



Acknowledgments

The Nonprofit Social Media Scorecard involved dozens of people (and hundreds of pizzas) all working together to make this information possible. Thanks to all who lent a hand to, laid some eyes on, and/or otherwise labored with us.

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Thanks to Tom Perrault for copywriting, Debbie Calevich for coordinating, and to Derek Scott for editing magic and approving stuff.

About Dunham+Company

Most nonprofits have a vision to change the world. To right the wrongs, replace injustice with justice, and bring hope where there is none. But their resources restrict the impact they envision. At Dunham+Company, we understand the struggle to successfully raise more money and reach more donors to impact more lives. Beyond the competition for the charitable dollar, most organizations lack the full complement of skills needed to achieve fundraising success. That's where we come in.

With nearly 40 years' experience in fundraising and marketing, Dunham+Company knows a thing or two about delivering more results to our clients. It's why we've created our carefully honed five-step Cause+Effect approach:

- + A biblical foundation to fundraising

- + Holistic thinking that builds sustainable growth in income
- + Integration that connects on multiple levels through multiple channels
- + Trusted advisor partnerships that bring the highest level of expertise
- + Proprietary data and research tools

Just like the law of cause and effect, we join forces with our client's cause to create a catalytic effect that not only transforms their organization, but also touches more lives all around the world.

Visit www.dunhamandcompany.com to keep up with our latest research, and join our mailing list to receive information and insights on what's working for our clients and in the world of fundraising.



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