



Internet Assessment Responses

Introduction

Nonprofits face increasing competition for support every day. Fortunately, the Internet offers unparalleled opportunities to better differentiate your organization, increase involvement, and operate more efficiently. By leveraging the Internet to market your organization, you can build stronger relationships with your constituent community — including donors, members, volunteers, and employees — to better support your mission both now and into the future.

In general, your Web site should help you:

- ◆ Inform and engage your community of potential supporters
- ◆ Build better relationships with your current supporters
- ◆ Increase your overall donations, event registrations, and other types of participation

To help assess your current Internet marketing efforts, someone at your organization recently responded to our 25-question survey. Following, you will find advice on each answer, as well as a composite of all 500+ responses to the survey. While it is interesting to compare your Internet marketing to the composite picture, we encourage you to give more weight to your individual responses. For example, more than half of the organizations that responded still don't send an email newsletter to supporters, but if you're one of them, don't let the statistic lull you into maintaining the status quo. Rather, consider the benefits of adding an email newsletter — especially if you are able to do so before other organizations competing for the same donor dollars.

Overview

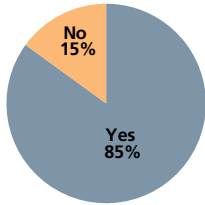
The Internet Marketing Assessment is organized into four main sections:

- ◆ **Best Practices**
 - ❖ A “No” on numbers 1- 6 means your organization is not adhering to generally accepted Internet Marketing best practices.
 - ❖ Best practices ensure that a Web site meets the expectations of its visitors and acts as an effective marketing vehicle for the organization.
- ◆ **Visit Value**
 - ❖ A “No” on numbers 7 - 11 means your organization is not providing optimal Web site visit value to your constituents.
 - ❖ Visit value means that a Web site has “sticky” properties – it feels fresh and trustworthy and offers information and experiences that make a return visit likely.
- ◆ **Constituent Relationship Management (CRM)**
 - ❖ A “No” on numbers 12 - 18 means your organization isn't applying the principles of CRM to its Web site, either because your systems don't allow it, or simply because you haven't tried it yet.

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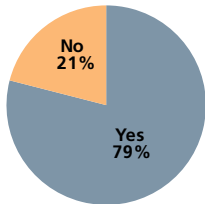
- ❖ CRM ensures that the complete relationship a supporter has with an organization is acknowledged with every interaction and that transactions can occur online or offline with the same results.
- ◆ **Online Giving**
 - ❖ A “No” on numbers 19 - 25 means your organization is not optimizing its online giving program.
 - ❖ Online giving is more than a “donate now” button (although a prominently placed link to giving is important). The Web site should make the online giving experience as rich and personal as other methods of giving.



Responses

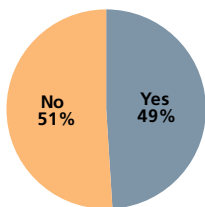
1. Is your mission statement clearly stated on your Web site?

If your mission statement isn't listed, is a clear and concise explanation of who you are and what you do easy to find? The best way to attract support is to make what you stand for apparent and then market yourself to people who have an affinity for your mission.



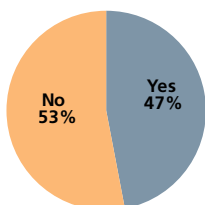
2. Is your branding consistently represented through all sections of your Web site?

It can take hundreds of impressions to cement a logo or other iconic impression into people's minds. If your logo is already known, take advantage of that fact by displaying it consistently — a picture is worth a thousand words, and you're reminding people why they are on your site and why they should support you with every glance at it. And if your logo isn't well known yet, that's all the more reason to imprint it into a potential supporter's consciousness. Plus, applying a consistent look and feel makes your organization appear more professional and trustworthy.



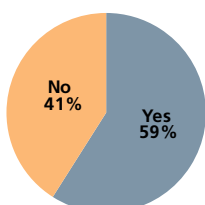
3. Can the person responsible for offline functions (i.e.: events, memberships, alumni relations) add or update corresponding content on your Web site?

Keeping your Web site content fresh can be almost impossible for a single person, even if that is all he or she does. Because one person can't possibly be the expert on everything in the organization, by the time information is collected and posted, the information could very well be stale again. Consider investing in a tool that makes it easy for the person closest to the information to do the updating — it is the most efficient way to keep your site up-to-date.



4. Do you send an email newsletter to supporters?

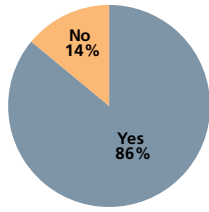
Every organization of every type and size should prepare an email version of the news it distributes to constituents. It is a convenience that donors expect and appreciate, it is easy and inexpensive, and it is perhaps the single most effective way to attract new supporters, thanks to the viral marketing or “pass-along” phenomenon.



5. Has your email subscription list grown over the past 12 months?

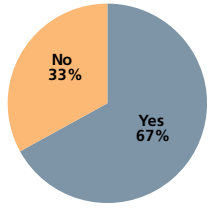
If your email subscription list hasn't grown in the last 12 months, it is likely that you are preventing it from doing so. Older constituencies don't count as a reason for lack of growth; according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, the fastest growing group of Internet users is the 50 to 64 age group. These days, growing your email list is as simple as providing the option to receive communication via email, but you may also consider offering

anonymous electronic news subscriptions that allow marginally interested parties to learn more about you before providing a great deal of personal information.



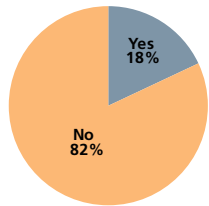
6. Is your Web site address printed on all of your marketing materials?

Your Web site allows people to get to know you, support you, and interact with you 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week, without undue burden on your staff. No other marketing vehicle can compare. If you are not thinking about how to drive traffic to your Web site in everything you do, you should start right away.



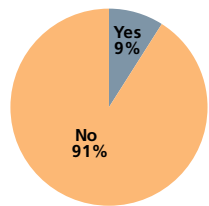
7. Is your Web site content updated at least monthly?

If your site content is not updated frequently, it gives the impression that the site isn't a trustworthy place to find information. Think of it this way — if the *TV Guide* was published less than monthly, and only featured regularly scheduled recurring programs, would you use it as a reference? Before long, you would most likely find a source that reassured you weren't missing any special programs. Updating your site regularly, even if nothing significant has changed, gives visitors confidence that someone on your end is invested in ensuring the Web site is a reliable source.



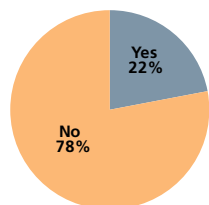
8. Do you offer members-only sections for certain visitors to your Web site?

If you plan to ask for someone to join a giving club or membership group, a great way to provide extra value is to offer the person dynamic Web content based on that affiliation. For example, if you offer membership, a benefit of membership could be access to special reports, events, photo galleries, and more. Your Web site can also be used to share documents that are only relevant to certain groups, such as board members, all based on a secure login.



9. Can your supporters interact with each other through your Web site?

The phenomenon of social networking has captivated the next generation of donors. More than 2 million people now have *LinkedIn* pages, and that number has grown 172% in the last year alone. More and more people are looking online to find others who share their interests and passions – what more logical place is there for them to commune than through you? By providing a forum for the people who are most passionate about your mission to build relationships with each other, they will simultaneously grow more loyal to you. Plus, you provide yet another reason for them to frequently visit your Web site, where you can market your events, volunteer opportunities, advocacy campaigns, and requests for donations each time they stop by.

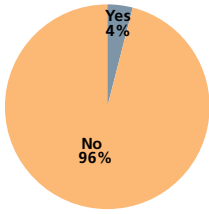


10. Do you have dynamic content, such as headline news, that is updated on your Web site automatically?

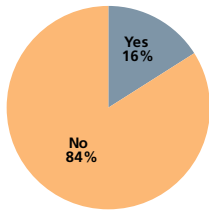
Providing dynamic news updates, such as RSS (Really Simple Streaming) news feeds, is a “really simple” way to make sure your site is constantly changing and provides value to the visitor.

11. Do you allow supporters to create their own pages on your Web site?

Just as people want to network with one another and build communities online, they want

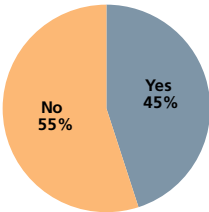


to create places on the Internet that represent who they are. In fact, a staggering 55 million people now have *MySpace* pages, up 93% in the last year. Providing a platform for your supporters to share their stories and speak on your behalf is a wonderful way to spread your message exponentially while showing your supporters how much you rely on them.



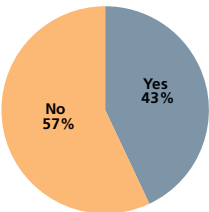
12. Do you provide supporters the ability to advocate on your behalf via your Web site?

Advocacy is about more than influencing legislation. If you are looking for a way to galvanize support while collecting valuable information that can improve your marketing messages, an advocacy program is worth considering. Your Web site can make it easy to motivate, deliver, and track the grassroots efforts of your supporters.



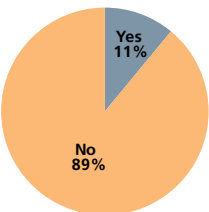
13. Do you advertise volunteer opportunities and allow volunteer registrations on your Web site?

More than one in three Baby Boomers will volunteer, versus 1:4 of the previous generation, according to a study by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Your Web site can help you cultivate this explosion of interest in volunteering without putting strain on your volunteer staff. By providing information on volunteer opportunities and requirements alongside an easy way for potential volunteers to express interest in a given position, you send the message that you have a legitimate need for volunteers and that you are organized and will use volunteer hours wisely.



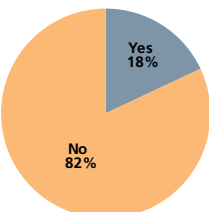
14. Do you accept event registrations online?

Your Web site is one of the most effective marketing tools you have. With it, you can put information about your events in the hands of people you know and people you haven't met yet. But providing information is only part of the equation. You risk missing a golden opportunity if you don't allow interested visitors to register for your events while they are on your site and think about how they can become involved with your organization.



15. Do you allow event participants to solicit sponsors/donations on your behalf through personal pages on your Web site?

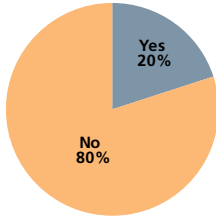
Once you are using your Web site to market your events and collect registrations, the natural next step is to allow your most avid supporters to drive traffic there. One way this can be done is by providing supporters personal Web pages where they can collect sponsorship dollars in support of participation in "-athons," tournaments, or fundraising challenges. Called "Team-" or "Sponsor-Me" fundraising, this exciting new spin on volunteer solicitors can boost excitement around your events and dramatically increase the money you raise from them.



16. Do you maintain profiles of your supporters that include records of their Web activities, along with demographic data and offline activities?

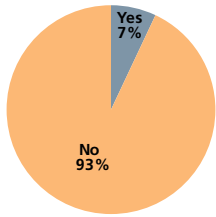
If your data on a constituent doesn't include their online activities like event registrations, you are missing opportunities. Many organizations still operate as though there is a curtain between their constituents' online and offline activities. This keeps them from ever truly knowing what motivates their supporters' actions and, in turn, inhibits them from improving their marketing messages.

17. Do you allow supporters to make updates to their personal information (address, marital status, contact preference, interests, etc.) on your Web site?



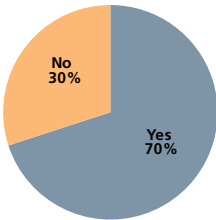
For a Web site to be truly interactive, it must receive information as well as give it. These days, people expect a Web site to catalog certain information about them, in order to enhance their online experiences. But don't risk offending your constituents by not using the information they provide elsewhere. For example, if you are going to ask for their address when they register online, make sure any changes are reflected in the database of record. To the visitor, all doorways into your organization, whether they be virtual or physical, arrive at the same place, so if they "tell" you via the Web, make sure your systems are as responsive as if they told you face-to-face.

18. Does your Web site change to provide unique or personalized content if a visitor logs in?



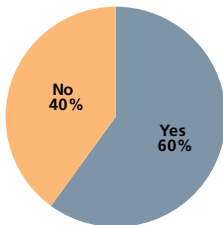
You probably keep an enormous amount of information on your constituents. Age, past giving history, volunteer experience, alma mater – all of these details are only worth storing if they are helping you build stronger relationships and increased levels of support. One of the easiest, most scalable ways to use that information is through your Web site. When someone logs in to your site, you should use dynamic content drivers to acknowledge them by name and display information that is unique to them based on their demographics and entire online and offline history with your organization.

19. Does your organization accept donations online?



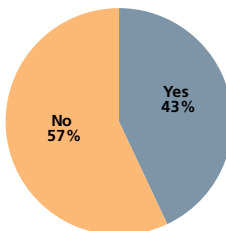
According to the Federal Reserve Board, the "debit (card) is becoming the dominant form of payment for most consumers." Plus, more than 65% of Americans engage in online banking. If your organization accepts donations, it is absolutely expected that you accept credit and debit card donations online.

20. Is the link to make a donation visible on your Web site's home page?

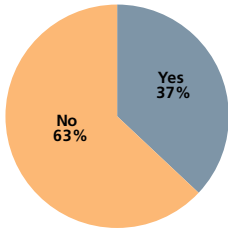


If you are going to provide the convenience of donating on your Web site, you should make it as easy as possible for people to do so. Part of that is making the donation link on your home page. First, it allows people who read a direct mail piece or attended an event to find your Web page through a *Google* search and get right to the donation page. It's also a subtle reminder to people visiting your site for other purposes that you can't exist without their generous support.

21. Do you allow tribute gifts to be made through your Web site?

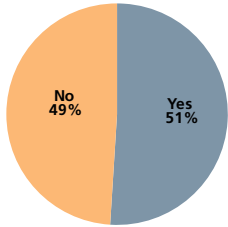


Allowing tribute gifts through your Web site is one of the best ways to extend your network of support. More and more frequently, families are choosing to honor their loved ones through gifts to charity. Offering the convenience of online tribute giving gives families an easy way to share information on how and where to give and also allows their friends to make tribute gifts at any time, from anywhere, and to learn more about your cause in the process.



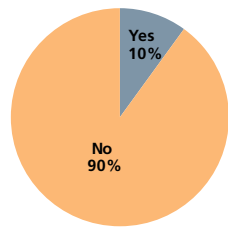
22. Do you offer the option of monthly or recurring giving on your Web site?

If you are going to allow people to make gifts online (and you absolutely should!), it only makes sense to allow them to set up recurring gifts while they are at it. Made popular in Canada and the UK, a recurring gift allows a donor to have a small gift regularly debited from an account. This is a terrific way to engage younger donors or to allow people on a fixed income to contribute significantly over time.



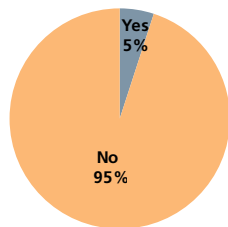
23. Are online donations instantly acknowledged via email?

Providing instant electronic acknowledgements for gifts made online is another simple best practice that makes a donor feel appreciated and inspires confidence that the transaction was handled smoothly.



24. Does your Web site recognize a visitor who has donated before?

Perhaps the most important way your Web site can acknowledge its recognition of a visitor is to say “thank” you the moment a repeat donor logs on. A simple dynamic welcome meets the expectations of someone who regularly shops or banks online and makes the visit warm and personal — the perfect mood to set when hoping to inspire continuing support.



25. Does your Web site display different gift amount options based on a visitor’s complete giving history?

If you’re going to ask for gifts online, those gifts should acknowledge your repeat donors’ complete giving histories, whether the gifts were made online or through any other medium. This is much more than a nice acknowledgement of a donor’s relationship with you — it’s been proven that targeted asks result in higher gifts. Consider this: the average online gift is \$57. But organizations that use the details of their relationships with donors, including their complete online/offline giving histories, to personalize the content delivered during Web site visits raise an average of \$149 per gift!

about Blackbaud

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