

DIGITAL MARKETING FOR THE SOCIAL SECTOR

The social sector is always starved of funds. Unfortunately, costs associated with designing and printing are steep and, if you're thinking of running billboard campaigns or broadcast ads, publicity costs can easily spiral into the tens of thousands. Since many small voluntary sector organizations rely on unpredictable sources of income like grants and donations to make ends meet, such expenses are clearly out of reach. Thankfully, social media is free and it facilitates the promotion of activities without spending a penny. Better communications with stakeholders has the potential to transform the fortunes of the sector. As a charity sector marketer for over 3 years, I've seen some excellent marketing, from both large and small charities. However, I've also come across a lot of widely held misconceptions about what marketing is, and I fear that they are preventing some charities from raising funds and gaining supporters as successfully as they could. to reconsider what makes good marketing, and the role that it has.

Social Media should be seen as one channel in a communications strategy that covers other digital channels like websites, SEO and mobile content delivery as well as offline tools. Engaging with citizens on social media is seen as an effective way to engage in two-way dialogue in a citizen's own space and at their convenience. It's quick and instant. **There is little point in just "doing some social media" with no plan.** Like all activity, objectives need to be set, a target audience identified and the necessary resources and budget secured. It is good to see that most public sector bodies are embracing some social media activity, with social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn) having the highest usage at 71% followed by micro-blogging (Twitter) with 69% usage. Measuring the effectiveness of your digital strategy and social media activity is vital to understand how users engage with your website to improve customer journeys. You won't reap the full benefits of social media unless you use it to have conversations with your stakeholders. This is particularly true of Twitter. Social media experts advise charities to follow the "rule of thirds", i.e. one third of your tweets should be used to push out your charity's content, one third to engage in conversations, and one third to share content from other useful sources. I believe that good marketing can transform charities, boosting profile and fuelling growth. You might be driving significant traffic to your



website, but if they are all dropping out before completing their task and reverting to phone contact, then this can be seen as an expensive failure. These failures need to be identified so that they can be remedied. This can only be done with robust analytics and the skills to interpret them.

Tracking and measuring the performance of integrated marketing campaigns is very important in being able to work out the returns on your marketing investments and whether or not the campaign achieved its objectives and had any effect on your customers or target audience. By measuring the performance of each campaign you are continuously learning and thereby improving which allows you to fine tune campaigns and understand how your target audience interacts with the various touch points and messages you broadcast. The digital world has made tracking online behavior and visitors much easier as marketers strive to understand where visitors come from, what pages they viewed, how long they spent on your website, which sources are sending quality traffic and most importantly, did visitors turn into leads or conversions. Integrating marketing activities such as paid search, social media, email, print and your website is essential in delivering consistent and relevant messages through to your target audience and being able to achieve your objectives and goals for your marketing activities. Integrating online marketing activities with your existing offline marketing strategies allows for brand and message consistency across all channels. This builds brand reputation and reduces the risk of confusing potential customers and clients who will come across your business from various touch points.



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