

Talking 'Bout My Generation: Connecting with Multiple Generations of Donors

By Linda Lombardi

One of the constants of nonprofit work is the need to cultivate the next generation of donors and activists. It can be a bumpy road if you don't plan your messaging and approach well. Older generations can feel pushed out of the very causes they helped launch. Meanwhile, younger generations cry out for change and inclusion only to feel excluded from "the room where it happens." How can nonprofit marketers and fundraisers reach across the generations and bring everyone to the table?

STRONGER TOGETHER

Compare the four primary generations of donors—Mature, Boomer, Gen X, Millennial—and you'll see there's more that unites us than divides us. Exploring the primary characteristics of these generations provides insight into communication methods nonprofits can add in their donor engagement strategies to create lasting relationships.

GENERATIONAL BREAKDOWN

First off, let's clarify who we mean by each generation group, since opinions vary on start and end dates of generations. For our purposes, Matures were born 1901 through 1945, covering both the Silent and Greatest generations; Boomers were born 1946 through 1964; Gen Xers were born 1965 through 1980; and Millennials were born 1981 through 1996.

GENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Never before has there been such a wide array of communication options. From the classic approach of direct mail to the modern invention of instant messaging, each generation has its preference. By tracking what your supporters respond to, you can create engagement that bridges the generation gap once and for all. Based on our experience helping nonprofits engage donors, and generational characteristics

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Telling Stories Through Words & Images

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What Our Donors Really Think of Us

By Megan L. Den Herder



What do our donors really think of us, and are we doing all we can to give them what they need? It can be scary for us as nonprofits to take a step back and see if we are actually providing our

donors with what they are expecting. Are we responsibly using their money? Are we providing them with adequate results and updates on those results? And finally, are we doing enough to further our mission that these donors want to continue to support it?

In 2018, National Audubon Society set out to discover the answers to these questions—from our approach to the current political environment, to how our donors engage with us and to their own personal relationship with our

mission. Audubon itself has undergone many changes in the last few years—no small feat for an organization that is older than a century.

In the membership direct response program, specifically, we had a goal to shift our donors' focus from a transactional, magazine-based relationship to a mission-focused and bird-centric one. Part of this success in achieving this goal can be attributed to our use of donor surveys and using donor feedback to influence messaging. The biggest piece of this has been our Donor Insight Panels, which Audubon has conducted with the assistance of Sea Change Strategies.

Audubon sent out its first Insight Panel survey in January 2018. It was an invitation asking certain segments of our most loyal and ardent supporters to participate in a monthly survey

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President's Perspective

Explore Your Creative Side!

By Marie Kosanovich



I never thought I was that creative. My mom, on the other hand was always the creative one in the family. Whether she was sewing a new outfit for me, decorating our house for the holidays or baking her famous peanut butter, chocolate and oatmeal cookie bars, her creativity seemed to have no bounds. (Just ask anyone in my family about "Mom's Cookies," and their mouths will water—I promise!) Whenever memories of her come to mind, I am overwhelmed with images like these that demonstrate her creative side.

My dad, on the other hand, expresses his creativity through words. He would tell us stories all the time about how my Baba (his mother) grew up in Selo Tuk (a small village in the former Yugoslavia) and immigrated to the U.S. when she was just 18. I visited Selo Tuk for the first time a few years ago, and it immediately felt like home as a result of the stories Dad painted with his words.

Images and words. That's what we work with every day to try and evoke different emotions through any direct response campaign. And while one is not more important than the other, there's a delicate balance of both within any package. Some packages rely more on imagery, where others rely more on the message itself.

Many test ideas stem from changing the balance between the amount of words and images within each package. In fact, there's a tendency to think of "adding more" to a package whenever we want to be more creative. Long letter versus short letter. Insert versus no insert. Souped-up fancy carrier versus plain carrier. And while my mom subscribed to the "more is more" theory when it came to cooking, the same theory doesn't always work in direct response. There have been multiple tests in which the plain carrier wins over the souped-up fancy carrier—where the lack of images and words evokes a feeling of curiosity.

Being creative isn't always about adding more—it's thinking about things in a different way. Sometimes not having a huge expense budget forces you to be even more creative! We recently had one client who slashed costs by 70% on an expensive gift-wrap premium package, which forced us to be creative. As a result, we sent out a reminder package that raised more than double the net revenue compared to the year prior! The truth is we all have a creative side to us, whether your creative specialty is that of images, words, numbers or, in the case of my mom and dad, creative ways to celebrate family.

So, if you're looking to learn more about the creative process and explore your creative side, I hope you will join us at the 14th Annual Bridge to Integrated Marketing Conference on July 10 through 12 at the Gaylord National Hotel. One of the many tracks we planned is "Telling Your Story: The Offer, Copy and Images." Want to see some creativity that earned results? Plan to join us on July 10 at the Gaylord, where we will celebrate the combination of results and creativity at the 40th anniversary of the MAXI (Marketing Awards for eXcellence and Innovation) Awards Ceremony!

And while I can't share the recipe for "Mom's Cookies" with you, I just might give you one to taste...but only if you ask me creatively.

Best,
Marie Kosanovich
mkosanovich@lautmandc.com

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Calendar of Events

WED JUNE
12

Mail Plans/Segmentation Plans
Webinar 1:00pm - 2:00pm



THUR JUNE
20

Lunch and Learn,
Breaking Integration Myths
12:00pm - 2:00pm
SEIU, Washington, DC



WED JULY
10

2019 MAXI Awards Ceremony
4:30pm - 6:30pm
Gaylord National Hotel &
Convention Center
National Harbor, MD

WED JULY
10

- FRI JULY 12
14th Annual Bridge to Integrated
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THUR AUG
8

Summer Happy Hour
5:30pm - 7:00pm
TBD, Virginia

Photos: iStock/Getty Images

Deadline for registration is 24 hours before the event, space permitting. Cancellations must be received 48 hours in advance. No-shows will be billed. Register at dmaw.org or call (703) 689-3629.

Quick Takes

Every month DMAW asks people in our industry for their 'quick take' on a topic

Give an example of an interviewee that stood out or, in essence, told their story really well. What were some of the key characteristics that stood out?



JACKIE
When I am interviewing someone who does not come from a nonprofit or another agency, I look for the person to share how their experience will translate to the job in question.

Recently I participated in a great interview in which the person was able to tell the story of her career in a way that really made her stand out.

This candidate drew on her experience in project management and highlighted how she developed systems for tracking deliverables, maintaining a schedule and monitoring all the details of the project.

It was really impressive and exactly what Avalon needs from a program manager—organization, planning and accountability. Even though the experience was not specifically for direct marketing, her systems were sure to translate—and they have!

— Jackie Biancolli Libby
Sr. VP & Director of Client Services
Avalon Consulting Group
jackieb@avalonconsulting.net



JEFF
When interviewing for a new job, you'll have a better chance of distinguishing yourself from your peers by incorporating storytelling.

Many people have similar backgrounds. What will give you an edge is your ability to tell real-life stories about the challenges you've faced, the steps you took to address them, why you took those actions, and then quantify the ways in which they made an impact on your organization's success.

I encourage candidates to prepare a library of their stories in advance, making sure they are relevant to whatever skills and experience are critical to success in the role. You can also jot them down along with the questions you want to ask as memory joggers during your interview.

Bonus tip: When submitting an online application, try appending a few of them to your resume. Or better yet incorporate them into a personal website, and provide a clickable link to it on your resume.

— Jeff Rothman
President
Rothman Talent Solutions
jeff@rothmantalent.com



SYLVIA
The last candidate I interviewed for a project management position with our company really made an impression on me with her willingness to throw herself out there.

She volunteered to come in and give the job a try, to do a sort of extended working interview, even though she knew I had reservations about the fact that she was overqualified for the position.

Ultimately, I selected another candidate, but she really made an impression with her willingness to jump in and give things a try.

— Sylvia Taylor
Director of Marketing & Client Relations
ProList, Inc.
staylor@prolist.com



TAMI
She had a contagious energy and enthusiasm as soon as I met her. Those characteristics stand out most when I think back to an interviewee I encountered early in my career.

Her thoughtful, relevant questions demonstrated that she had researched the organization and the way she framed her previous experience and strengths to illustrate how she would be a good fit for the role further underscored how well prepared she was.

Problem solving, adapting to change and a high level of motivation were all strengths that shined; however, it was her ability to converse and her confidence in what she was able to offer the organization that was absolutely key to the interview.

— Tami Pellas
Sr. Director, Product Marketing
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Talking 'Bout My Generation

Continued from page 1

described in "Communicating Across Generations" by Frank Widman and Valerie Strilko, Network for Good proposes the following communication styles for each generation:

- **Matures** respect authority and respond to tradition and long-term commitment. Highlight your organization's history and your position as a leader in your field.

- **Boomers** are dedicated, hardworking, goal-oriented individuals. They expect quality services and treatment. Put your nonprofit's work front and center. Inspire them with your story and your mission.

- **Gen Xers** risk being overlooked in favor of their Boomer and Millennial counterparts, and will be discerning and wary about whom they align themselves with. They are fiercely loyal once they commit to you. As they enter the peak of their careers, many Gen Xers are looking for proactive ways to support organizations they believe in.

- **Millennials** are drawn to transparency and access. As donors, they're interested in more than just their name on a donor list. They want to contribute in different ways. Incorporate more targeted contact and engagement as part of cultivating this

generation. Bring them into your work on a deeper level. While your younger donors may not be able to make major gifts today, cultivating that relationship now will pay off in the long run.

THE MODERN DONOR

Regardless of generation, the modern donor expects accessibility and transparency from the nonprofits they support. Digital tools engage current donors. Keep these tenets in mind when creating your messaging and communications campaigns.

- **Share and connect.** The most frequent action taken by the modern donor is connecting with an organization's social media. Use your website as a hub for donors to connect with you. Provide easy ways to share information about the specific causes that resonate with them.

- **Engagement, then participation.** The modern donor doesn't want to be bombarded with messages or endlessly solicited. Audiences today are more likely to tune out irrelevant messages quicker than in the past. It is critical for nonprofits to provide consistent, relevant content and build a relationship with their contacts before asking for a commitment.

- **Authenticity is paramount.** Trust and transparency are increasingly important for all donors; especially Gen Xers and Millennials. Be direct and transparent about your mission and how you use donations. Incorporate peer testimonials wherever possible.

- **Involvement, not just awareness.** More and more donors today—particularly Gen Xers, Millennials and their successors—are interested in having an active, not just financial, involvement with the causes they support. They view themselves as collaborators, not hands-off donors.

The most crucial takeaway from any generational analysis is that a donor's preferred method of communication doesn't always depend on their age. Our best advice is to go straight to the source—ask your supporters how they prefer to be contacted, record that information in your donor management system and use it to create a deeper level of engagement.

For more on generational giving, visit <https://bit.ly/2WIOmBm> to check out Network for Good's infographic, "Bridging the Donor Generation Gap."

Linda Lombardi is the content manager for Network for Good.

Meet the EdgeMark Team.



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OUT OF THE TRENCHES: YOUR DIRECT MARKETING COLLEAGUES TAKE A BIG-PICTURE LOOK AT THINGS

A Mail Donor and a Digital Donor Walked Into a Bar...

By Mark Gould



"I don't get it. Is that a joke?" If that was your first reaction to the title above, you likely were not among the fortunate, dedicated marketers who braved last winter's

first snow dusting to attend DMAW's Lunch and Learn, "Digital First: Why Translating DM Content Just Won't Cut It!"

While the title above doesn't serve as a setup for a joke, it does set up a concept that everyone who attended understood. That is, while these two audiences may share much in common, each is unique and needs to be served differently.

Our marketing bartenders for this fantastic educational event were: Kaitlin Juleus, senior communications strategist at Blue State Digital; Sarah Dunlap, senior manager of digital fundraising at Partners

In Health (PIH); and Orwin Evenson, associate director of digital marketing at International Rescue Committee (IRC).

Sarah began the event by recounting how PIH originally set out doing its email marketing the wrong way, whereby it simply took its most effective direct marketing letters and used the same copy on its emails. She said the thinking was, "If copy worked well in mail, why not use it in email?"

Sarah gave an example of an email PIH sent early on to over 106,000 records in which they received only 18 gifts for around \$1,000. Her team went back to the drawing board to craft a totally new message that was optimized for online. In its initial send to a test segment that was one-third the size of its initial email audience, the team generated five times their original results. From this story,

Sarah, Kaitlin and Orwin transitioned into the meat of their presentation, "8 Ways to Think Digital First."

CONDUCT RAPID RESPONSE

Whether it's a tweet from the President or a natural disaster, there's nothing faster than digital to let your organization respond to breaking news.

To illustrate, Sarah explained how PIH was able to use the speed of email to send an emergency appeal that raised over \$90,000 in just over 12 hours after damaging floods and mudslides hit Peru.

Orwin shared a similar story, in which IRC was able to send an e-appeal less than four hours after a stabbing attack on a refugee family in Idaho. The email raised \$250,000 for the victims of the attack.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO PIVOT

The low cost and flexibility of digital makes it easy to apply learnings and make tweaks in real time, with little cost lost when you want to throw out things that aren't working. Sarah noted how last year email donations on Giving Tuesday were way under goal. At the final hour (literally 11 p.m.), they shifted gears and sent a "Final Notice" email that activated donors who had not yet responded. It generated over \$100,000 in last-minute gifts.

TEST AND OPTIMIZE

Unlike the time and expense required to conduct tests via mail, digital allows marketers to cost effectively test and receive feedback on multiple strategies (subject and from lines, body copy, graphics, ask strings) with virtually no down time in waiting for results.

Orwin noted how in just half a day he can test seven different messages in online ads and roll out what's working best by day's end to the full audience.

Sarah noted how PIH conducts an annual "Hunger Games," when before each Giving Tuesday, they challenge three copywriters to craft three different messages that are each sent first thing

Giving Tuesday morning. Within two hours, they're able to determine a winning message that is sent to the full universe. Last year's winner had a +74% donation rate over the other two!

GET GRAPHIC AND ANIMATED

There are many techniques you can try online or in email that are simply not cost-effective to do in mail.

At IRC, they were able to test a long timeline email that contained lots of four-color photos and animation. It raised over \$200,000 in July, typically a low giving season for them.

At PIH, they've had success with a cultivation email that uses images, video and animation throughout. As this email was purely cultivation, with no fundraising, there was no way it would have been feasible to test via mail.

TAKE RISKS

Digital lets you try things you may not be willing to take a risk on in mail. That's because you can fail in digital with only minimal cost.

Sarah noted how at PIH there was concern over how much politics the team could bring into its messaging. The team dipped its toe in the water using an email test in which one message invoked President Trump and the second message was general in nature and did not invoke Trump's name.

Their test showed the more political message generated a 153% higher-response rate.

BUILD DAISY CHAINS

Digital is also ideal for sending multistep engagement messages prior to making an initial dollar ask, what Sarah referred to as "sneak fundraising."

At PIH, Sarah said one example that's been effective is to start with an "International Women's Day Quiz." After contacts complete the quiz, they are then sent to a page asking them to sign up for email. From there, contacts are finally taken to a donate page. This effort has helped PIH raise \$57,000 and 44 new monthly donors.

BE MORE TARGETED

Yet another great advantage digital affords is the ability to readily tailor your messaging to best appeal to different

audience segments. At IRC, the team has tested targeting messages by political affiliation and/or state.

For example, the team has found that while messages that invoke President Trump generally outperform those that don't, they can often improve results even further by omitting references to President Trump in messages sent to red states—customization that would be much more costly to execute in mail.

MAKE IT SIMPLE

At PIH, Sarah said the team uses a strategy developed by the Obama campaign, in which donors who have previously registered are given the ability for one-click giving, where there's no need to fill out any contact fields or a credit card number. It works especially well when a topic is in the news and there's a sense of urgency.

At IRC, Orwin said there has been a continual push to make it easier to give via mobile. This starts by designing all pages and emails with a "mobile-first" mindset. This focus makes it easy for donors to respond and give immediately when they

first get IRC messages, wherever they are, even if it's when they're standing in line at the grocery store.

Q&A

One final note of interest came from the Q&A, where the presenters were asked if they have done any tests with regard to optimal email volume—specifically, reduction of email volume.

Sarah said that at PIH, there's always a concern that the team is emailing too much. In fact, there has been no adverse effects—the more emails they send, the more donations they receive.

Orwin said that at a previous job, this team did a specific test of volume with its year-end volume campaigns. One group held back from a higher volume of year-end emails while the other received the regular volume. He said the high-volume group had significantly higher dollars and engagement, and that the unsubscribe rate was the same as the group that had the lower volume.

Mark Gould is the director of direct marketing at AIPAC. He can be reached at mgould@aipac.org.

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2 Ways to Tell a Story, and Why You Should Use Them Together

By Elizabeth Varel



I was talking to a friend of mine who photographs some pretty famous celebrities, musicians and fashion campaigns. During our conversation, I realized that a lot of the things she said about photography were the same things I say about writing stories. These two mediums share a lot in common—a main character (or hero), a location, an emotional connection, a description. One is done with words, one without. Used together, they can serve as one very compelling motivator for nonprofit direct mail (as well as social media).

'A TALE AS OLD AS TIME'

People have been telling stories since the beginning of time. And there are several reasons for that—verbal and written stories were one way of recording and sharing history through generations. Another way of doing this was by drawing pictures, some of which date all the way back to prehistoric times. The oldest cave paintings date back to 28,000 years ago.

These ways of communicating—and how important they are—have not changed. While we may not be writing epic tales like Beowulf (975 AD) or painting scenes in caves, we still continue to communicate stories by updating our Facebook page, telling our spouse how our day went or posting pictures to Instagram. Stories are very much part of the human experience.

And that's why stories—written and photographic—are key strategic tools for nonprofit direct mail fundraising. Stories allow potential donors to make emotional connections, and research shows that people tend to commit stories to memory; they can extract the specific details of a story or a photograph, even after some time has gone by.

Whether you're developing your brand story or sending out a direct mail campaign asking for donations to support your cause, a well-told story is a nonprofit marketer's

best friend. Let's look at some traditional storytelling techniques to create a story that hits home.

1. FOCUS ON ONE PERSON

Donors are more affected by the story of one than the story of many. Perhaps that's because it's less overwhelming to imagine helping one person than trying to help hundreds of them. That means focusing on one main "character" can help your story have more impact.

A single main character also fits in naturally with traditional storytelling techniques—all stories need a hero, one individual character around whom the tale is built, who encounters obstacles and overcomes them.

2. INTRODUCE THE OBSTACLES

There's no story without a myriad of problems the hero must face and conquer. And nonprofit fundraising would not exist if there were no problems to solve! Try to stay focused on one to three major obstacles rather than getting bogged down in every issue that exists—that's too much for readers to process.

3. EXPLAIN HOW WE CAN HELP THE HERO OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES

Typically, the hero overcomes all the challenges on their own. But in this scenario, our hero needs help. This is where your potential donor becomes the hero—the person with the ability to help solve the problems, to make things better. Explain how their donations crush the obstacles.

4. DON'T FORGET TO FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE

Helping communities get clean water, helping young people find shelter, providing food for the homeless—nonprofits are out to help humans solve problems, and the situations can seem dire or even hopeless. Make sure your story

balances the negative with the positive. One easy way to do this that appeals to donors is sharing how your organization is succeeding in making a positive change. For instance, you might include how many people have access to clean water or how many kids had a safe place to sleep.

Now that we've looked at writing a story, let's look at driving that story home with donors through photography.

Photography is powerful—a single photo can have an immediate, emotional and visceral impact on a person in an instant. For example: As I write this, the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris is on fire. There are pictures of it all over the internet. These images are shocking, they are heartbreaking—and I won't forget them.

Digital marketers know how important images are. One reason for that is simply data analytics. We know more people respond to content that includes images. Facebook posts with images (or videos) receive more engagement; the same is true for Twitter and LinkedIn. Instagram, which has one billion users worldwide, is all about sharing pictures. People love pictures.

That's why it's important to use photography in direct mail fundraising campaigns. Any story you write, any character challenged by any obstacle, is going to be more effective with potential donors if you've got a powerful image to ground those potential donors into that reality. While you imagine a story in your head, like an internal movie, pictures make it real.

Pairing a story with photography can help your direct mail fundraising campaigns go further. This is a great way to build your brand through powerful messaging and increase your response rate.

Elizabeth Varel is the creative director and chief copywriter for EdgeMark Partners, a full-service marketing agency that specializes in production management. She can be reached at evarel@edgemarkpartners.com.

What Donors Really Think

Continued from page 1

containing questions about things such as what their favorite birds were, what they like about Audubon and where they see Audubon's place in the environmental fight.

Segmentation included our mid-level donors, monthly donors and three-plus-year donors who gave \$50 or more. Of the original 40,000 invited, 1,313 participated, a 3% response rate. We continue to see high response rate (average 27% of all participants) month after month. From a pure engagement and cultivation perspective, these numbers are very high and show that our donors want to personally communicate with us as much as possible. There is no donation ask, soft or otherwise, tied to these emails—they are purely for our information and donor cultivation.

The donors love these panels. In January 2019, we rolled out a renewal for 2018 participants, as well as an invitation to new sustainers, new mid-level donors and other people who qualified based on the segmentation. This resulted in nearly 100% continuing to stay in (only three people opted out!) and 938 new participants.

The surveys are themed each month, each with a different goal. We have asked for self-

reported demographics, which happily line up with what we see in our own file analyses. From what our donors see as Audubon's role today—on the ground, in the field, on the Hill and in their mailbox—we have learned that our donors expect us to be the forefront of bird conservation and the defenders of the environment. After nearly 18 months of this program, Audubon has been able to use these results to inform messaging across all of its channels and scale that messaging to all audience groups.

One of the key parts of these surveys has been open-ended questions. We ask them all sorts of things: how they first became interested in birds, a recent birding experience they had that was meaningful and with whom they like to share birding. We get a variety of answers to these questions, from the types of birds at people's feeders to exotic birding trips abroad.

We also ask our donors what more they want from Audubon, if they have any questions for our staff or leadership, or what they think Audubon can be doing better. These questions complement similar ones with multiple-choice answers, only this time we can dig deeper into their previous answers. For example, some donors wish we would be even harder on the politicians who

are threatening the environment, whereas others think that Audubon's unique position as a voice of reason puts us at an advantage in the battle for protections for birds.

While these surveys have been incredibly influential from a messaging construction standpoint, they have also been useful in helping Audubon with other marketing initiatives. The most recent survey focused on birding equipment and cameras, as well as bird-related travel, has helped Audubon's brand marketing team with its corporate partnerships, such as Canon and Lowe's. Our upcoming survey is about Audubon's social media channels and how our donors engage with those.

For the foreseeable future, Audubon will continue to send these surveys; they are a quick and efficient way to take the pulse of our membership and to find out what is important to them. With so many threats to the environment and, specifically, to birds, we know that our donors can count on us to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow.

Megan L. Den Herder is the director of direct response marketing at National Audubon Society. She can be reached at mendenherder@audubon.org.



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GREATER ENGAGEMENT: WORDS OF WISDOM ON EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING THAT DRAWS IN YOUR SUPPORTERS AND DEEPENS RELATIONSHIPS

What Nonprofits Can Learn About Storytelling From Marvel Superheroes

By Brett Meyer



Marvel's recent event movie, "Avengers: Endgame," earned more than \$1.2 billion worldwide—in its opening weekend.

Over just a few days, according to NPR, more than 100 million people went to see a movie that prominently features the Norse god of thunder conversing with a sentient, starship-piloting raccoon.

Consider that for a moment. Talking raccoons. Millions of people.

"Endgame" is the culmination of 12 years of storytelling across more than 20 interconnected movies. I grew up reading comic books, Marvel in particular, so when it introduced the concept of the Avengers at the end of the original "Iron Man" in 2008, I had a good sense of what it hoped to do—and I thought it had little chance of success. Following complex story arcs across multiple comic books was one thing, but maintaining a consistent throughline involving dozens of characters over more than a decade?

Marvel placed a bet on a single idea: Tell compelling stories that connect with audiences, and the rest will fall into place. This is something social change organizations should take to heart.

My involvement with nonprofit communications started, coincidentally enough, about the time the Avengers saga began. Over those years, I've noted time and again that the sector loves to talk about itself. We did this. We collected this many donations. We spend 90% of our revenue on programs. We served this many people. Please support us, because we do good things.

I don't mean that sarcastically. Our sector should talk about itself, because the work we're doing is more essential now than it's ever been.

I just know that there are more effective ways to tell stories. Cognitive psychology has found that people are much more

likely to remember a fact if it's wrapped in a story. Storytelling at its best is transportive: You should forget the world around you. In fact, researchers at Ohio State University have found a cognitive basis to the impact storytelling has on us: "Transportation is a convergent mental process, a focusing of attention...The components of transportation include emotional reactions, mental imagery and a loss of access to real-world information; the resulting transportation may be a mechanism for narrative-based belief change."

That's crucial, because what we're all doing—from the Red Cross to the latest hopeful Instagram influencer to Marvel Studios—is competing for attention. There's only so much attention to go around, so the ability to focus it, to make people forget everything else for a moment while they engage with your stories, is what will set your organization apart.

"Endgame" is over three hours long, and I did not see a single person get up. NPR calls that a "driveway moment," when people stay in their cars to hear the end of a story. That's what we need as a sector, so here are two quick lessons we can borrow from Marvel.

TELL DIFFERENT STORIES TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Most Marvel movies are lumped together as "superhero films," but that's not really the case. "Guardians of the Galaxy" is a comedic space opera. The original "Captain America" is a war epic. "Spider-Man: Homecoming" is a coming-of-age flick. "Age of Ultron" is apocalyptic sci-fi. By appealing to different types of moviegoers, Marvel was able to build a combined audience of staggering proportions who were excited to see "Endgame."

Consider the case of a small museum on the Oregon Coast. It should be telling very different stories to the one-time visitor

from Ohio than to supporters in Portland. Segmenting your list isn't enough; you have to get the message right for each audience group to build a wave of support.

FIND THE RIGHT TONE

As part of your storytelling strategy, you need to establish a tone that's right for your organization. Across its movies, regardless of genre, Marvel has used a blend of humor and bald sentiment that largely comes across as earnest and real. At the end of the original "Avengers," the final scene shows the heroes, in full costume, eating shawarma in a hole-in-the-wall restaurant. It's hilarious, relevant, human.

DC, Marvel's superhero competition, by comparison has gone dark and edgy. For me at least, their style has felt ponderous and self-important in a way the Marvel films don't.

What might that mean for your organization's stories? Let's say you do international development. A study from the *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing* has shown that "negative" tone and imagery may be slightly more likely to lead to actual donations in the moment, but positive tropes can lead to more favorable associations with your organization itself. That might lead you to reflect positive impacts and outcomes, to encourage long-term support and engagement rather than one-off giving.

There's so much more we can learn from popular culture, but the basics will remain the same. Tell your stories. Make them compelling. The rest will fall into place.

Brett Meyer is chief strategy officer at ThinkShout, a digital agency in Portland, Ore. He'll be speaking at the 2019 Bridge Conference about other lessons you can borrow from video games, movies, comic books and more.

CASE STUDY: A CLOSER LOOK AT DIRECT MARKETING CAMPAIGNS IN ACTION

Consumers Are Confusing

By Rich Handloff



How many times do you have a conversation with a significant other and you can't believe they reacted so negatively? Have you had a conversation with

your boss that you were prepared for, and they didn't agree with your proposal? Have you tried to have a conversation with a three-year-old that didn't go the way you wanted?

Anticipating how people will react to things is tough. That's why marketing teams exist. As marketers, we are always trying to anticipate what a consumer will do. Consumers run our lives, as they can make or break a sales or fundraising goal. If we could only figure out ahead of time what consumers want, the life of a marketer would be simple—and there would likely be far fewer of us working in marketing.

Consumers are not predictable, and that is what makes our jobs as marketers so interesting. Many companies spend a lot of time and money on consumer research, asking consumers for their opinions, presenting pricing scenarios and offering scenarios to see which might resonate with consumers. Consumers are very opinionated and like to provide feedback, but their opinion is much different when they just have to give an opinion rather than act with their credit card.

My experience is that the best research is to simply try things. You get to market faster, and you get real results from real consumers who use their credit card to make a purchase or a donation. What better way to learn what works than to ask consumers to actually make a decision rather than ponder a decision.

Recently, we were looking to get some consumers to install and update our app on their phone. We did a series of four very similar emails. When we were working on the promotional plan, we were fairly certain we needed an incentive to get consumers to take action. We sent out emails during four consecutive weeks. All four emails focused on the benefits of

downloading the app. The first email did not have any incentive, the second email incentivized consumers with a sweepstakes and chance to win \$100, the third email offered free swag as an incentive and the fourth email was simply benefit-oriented.

Any marketer would want to analyze different variables, time of day, etc., but our initial thought was that the incentives would pull the best. In fact, we were wrong. The first email with no offer had the best response. One could argue that the product sold itself initially. Of course, there were a lot more learnings from this program, but we are glad we did it live as opposed to researching it, because it gave us an idea of what consumers would actually do.

At *The Washington Post*, we used to spend a lot of time researching and analyzing consumer decisions. In the past

five years, our philosophy has changed, and we now test, experiment and innovate rapidly. Our culture has shifted—failing is acceptable as long as it happens fast—and we are able to pivot and try new things.

Understanding a consumer will never be simple. Consumers are tricky, and things around us are rapidly changing. As a marketer, it's important that you continue to test and refine, and not be afraid to fail. Don't research an idea to death. Try things, and you—and your organization—likely will see success more rapidly.

Rich Handloff is currently the director of consumer marketing at The Washington Post. He has extensive brand strategy, marketing communications, audience development, product management and customer service experience. He currently lives in Rockville, Md. with his wife and two daughters. He can be reached at rich.handloff@washpost.com.

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Tell Me Your Story

By Stephen Godbout



You have a great story to tell, and what could be more interesting than the story of YOU?

I would argue that it's the story of me, but since I'm writing this for your benefit, let's stick with your story.

No matter who you are, you share one thing with every other man, woman and child: You're human. As a result, you love stories that you can relate to, because they allow you to experience how you fit into the larger scheme of life.

So, stories that include you as the reader grab your attention and pull you in, which give them staying power. You read. Watch. Listen. And respond.

Think about any television series you've ever binge-watched. Something in the storyline grabs you up front. You grow



STORIES CAN CREATE AND SUSTAIN CIVILIZATIONS BECAUSE THEY CONNECT US TO ONE ANOTHER THROUGH TIME AND SPACE. THEY REVEAL A COMMON BOND WE ALL SHARE: A HUMAN-TO-HUMAN CONNECTION.



attached to the characters, or you're fascinated by the content—and how it applies to you. Through these stories, you not only identify with the heroes and heroines, you are connected to them by your shared humanity. So you continue watching as the story unfolds.

And the best of these stories leave you so intrigued as to what will happen after each episode ends that you are triggered to watch the next one, and the next and the next.

So why are stories so powerful? And most importantly for our purposes, what makes stories so powerful that they motivate a donor to want to give you money? Or make a prospect want to join your organization or cause?

The short answer is stories have not only captured your attention and fascinated you since you were old enough to comprehend them, they have created, shaped and sustained the world's greatest religions, societies and civilizations for thousands of years. Now that's power!

Stories can create and sustain civilizations because they connect us to one another through time and space. They reveal a common bond we all share: a human-to-human connection. When you read a story that bonds you to the characters or storyline, you realize that you are not alone.

These stories give you hope, and a deeper understanding of how you are part of the human experience. You empathize with the characters' experiences, whether good or bad.

Beyond this, the power of stories can be traced back to when your ancestors lived in caves and were discovering what was safe and what was dangerous through experimentation.

Say Jane, a cavewoman of outstanding communication skills for her time, is out gathering water for her family. While at her local stream, she notices a rugged caveman in a tattered tiger skin cloth scavenging for food. Then Jane sees the caveman pick an enticing red berry from a bush with peculiar purple leaves. Suddenly, the caveman's entire body begins convulsing. He grabs his throat. His airway is swelling shut. His face turning red and blue as he struggles to breathe.

You know where this story is going. The caveman dies.

And you have just learned the origins of the first stories ever told and how stories helped us survive as a species. Because Jane, who witnessed this terrifying event, goes back to her family and tells them the story of this poison berry and how it killed another human. And she warns them to stay away from it.

After thousands upon thousands of these stories helped us survive through the eons, we finally arrive at how to make these powerful stories motivate your donors to take the action you want.

First: One of the reasons it is so difficult to convince people to part with money is the idea of money triggers the same part of our brain that is activated by painful events. A good story helps override the pain trigger with empathy, sorrow, anger or some other powerful emotion.

Second: Begin with the problems, struggles, difficulties that affect people, nature, animals or whatever your organization works tirelessly everyday to address and solve. If you can include people, great. If you can't, get creative. A tree can tell a story about deforestation and how it's destroyed his friends that he's known since the time of the Egyptians.

Third: Bring your donor into the solution, using action words and painting a vivid picture of how the people in your organization will use your prospects donation to help other human beings.

Fourth: Weave in the story of your organization. The best example I have seen of this is how Helen Keller worked for the American Foundation for the Blind for 40 years. She was not only a beneficiary of the organization's work, she was instrumental in helping others with similar challenges benefit as well.

Finally: You don't have to tell your entire story all at once. In fact, think of those shows you binge-watched. Keep your donors interested over a long period of time. We have so many channels now to tell our stories: through social media, emails, letters, videos, calendars, note cards, events, websites, person to person and, yes, pictures—which are still worth a thousand words. Use them frequently to engage your audience and advance your storyline overtime.

With the right type of storytelling, you'll bond people to your organization for a lifetime.

Stephen Godbout is a copywriter and creative director with 16 years of direct marketing experience. He can be reached at stephen@copybygod.com.

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News Notes

● **Facebook** unveiled new features for Messenger at its annual F8 Conference in San Jose, Calif., according to Business Insider. The new features are aimed at getting developers to make more chatbots for the Messenger app. There are three new features that will allow marketers to



our growth," Judith Maloy, CEO at Polaris Direct, said in the release.

get granular marketing and upload chat data, tactics that are core to the way marketers have long used email and direct marketing to send targeted messages and email. A new lead-generation template allows advertisers to use Messenger to get consumers to interact with the app before being directed to a human representative, the release said. In addition, developers have the ability to create reminders that follow up with consumers after they've left a Messenger app and download the list of sales leads manually through a CRM software.

● **Polaris Direct** has expanded its strategic marketing team by welcoming Kevin Horan as its newest member, according to a press release. Horan joins the team as an account manager and will be responsible for leading internal and external marketing project efforts. "His experience and skillset are a great match for what we are trying to achieve. With the acquisition of several new clients, building an experienced account management team is an important next step in

● **Publicis Worldwide** has announced that it is acquiring Epsilon from Alliance Data for \$4.4 billion and forming a strategic partnership with the remaining parts of Alliance Data's business, according to a press release. "[Publicis] is bringing the necessary technology, the expertise and the talent to complement our offer in creativity, media and business transformation, and help our clients leapfrog their competition and grow profitably," Arthur Sadoun, chairman and CEO of Publicis, said in the release.

● **Todd Kintopf** has joined Royle Printing as manager of mailing and distribution services, according to a press release. In his new role, Kintopf will oversee all aspects of mailing and distribution. "We are very pleased to have Todd join our team. His experience and tenure in mail and distribution services will be put to good use as Royle grows and expands our service offering in these areas. We are continuing to invest in equipment, technology and partnerships, to provide customers with highly-efficient and cost-effective solutions. Todd will play a lead role in helping us fulfill this plan," Chris Carpenter, president and owner of Royle Printing, said in the release.

Is something exciting happening in your company or organization?

Tell us about it!

Email the editor, Nhu Te,
at dmawadvents@dmaw.org



DMAW Educational Foundation

Your Gifts...Keep Giving!

By Lynn Waller



Every year, the DMAW Educational Foundation hosts its Annual Silent Auction at the Bridge to Integrated Marketing and Fundraising Conference.

For those who have attended the Bridge Conference in the past, you may recall seeing us in the Solutions Showcase. The Silent Auction serves a critical role for the Educational Foundation—it raises the funds we need to support the Foundation's programs, including:



WE ARE CURRENTLY ACCEPTING DONATIONS FROM DMAW MEMBERS (AND FRIENDS) FOR THE AUCTION ITEMS WE WILL SHOWCASE AT THE BRIDGE CONFERENCE. ITEMS SUCH AS SPORTING EVENT TICKETS, CONCERT TICKETS, VACATION RENTALS, GIFT CARDS FOR SPA DAYS OR TO YOUR FAVORITE RESTAURANT, ACCESSORIES, HANDCRAFTED ITEMS, WINE AND MORE ARE ALL APPRECIATED.



• The annual **Professor's Institute**, where professors from the Mid-Atlantic region learn from industry experts about current direct marketing trends and topics they can take back to their classrooms.



- The **Spring and Fall Collegiate MAXI Competitions**, which give students the opportunity to develop and present integrated marketing campaigns for nonprofits.

- The **Mentor for a Day** program that allows students to shadow a marketing professional for a day.

These programs are at the heart of the DMAW/EF mission to introduce, educate and inspire the next generation—and none of it would be possible without the generosity of donors like you.

That's right, we need your help!

We are currently accepting donations from DMAW members (and friends) for the auction items we will showcase at the Bridge Conference. Items such as sporting event tickets, concert tickets, vacation rentals, gift cards for spa days or to your favorite restaurant, accessories, handcrafted items, wine and more are all appreciated. If you, or your company, are

interested in donating an item you know will attract bids, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact me directly or email silent@dmawef.org. Donors can take a tax deduction for the full fair market value of every item donated.

And if you aren't able to donate goods, that's okay—you can come by the auction tables, located inside the Bridge Conference Solutions Showcase, on July 10 and 11, and place your bid! It's a great way to give back to the industry while taking home a little special something for yourself or a friend.

Bid early and bid often at the DMAW/EF Silent Auction! For more information about the DMAW/EF, visit dmawef.org.

Lynn is a VP at CCAH, managing the integrated fundraising strategies for several nonprofit organizations. She is also a DMAW/EF board member and chair of the 2019 Silent Auction Committee. She can be reached at lwaller@ccah.com.



Did You Know?

The DMAW/EF, a separate nonprofit organization from DMAW, relies heavily on contributions from DMAW members to fund its work.

Please donate today!

Member Spotlight

Alexandra Bednarek worked in New York City at Imagine 360, a marketing firm that specializes in B2B website design, email marketing and print. After three years, she moved to Philadelphia and landed her first direct marketing role. There, she had the pleasure of working with organizations, mostly in the membership and health care sector. After visiting organizations and learning how passionate they are about making an impact on the world, her career path was solidified.

Throughout her career, she has collaborated with many clients, which is what she has always valued the most. She strongly believes that working together as a team and understanding goals are important. She wants nothing but the best for her clients, so she strives to deliver them the essential tools to help them succeed.

Location: Audubon, NJ

Education: Rowan University, B.A. in Public Relations and Communication Studies

DMAW Member Since: 2018



ALEXANDRA BEDNAREK
Digital Account Executive
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Describe yourself in three words.

Caring, loyal, fun.

Describe your life in six words.

I live life to the fullest.

Who do you consider your mentors?

My motto has always been to "make a friend a day," because you never know who will inspire you one day. And it's so true—I've had the pleasure of meeting and learning from the brightest people throughout my career. My previous and current colleagues all have taught me what it's like to be part of a team and to be a professional in this industry. Because of their guidance and leadership, I've learned the importance of being a part of something bigger, and that's helping people.

What advice would you offer a novice who wants to move up in direct marketing?

Learn something new every day, because it will allow you to become more versatile in this industry.

What is the most helpful step you took to advance your direct marketing career?

Learning from my peers and not being afraid to use my creativity has allowed me to advance and grow in my career.

Alexandra's Favorites



Restaurant Zahav, Stogie Joe's, Le Virtu



Films "The Wizard of Oz," Garden State" and "It Happened on Fifth Avenue"



Books "A Letter to a Young Poet," "Death of a Salesman" and "Me Talk Pretty One Day"



Music Pearl Jam, Brandi Carlile, Radiohead, Fleetwood Mac and The National



Leisure Interests Playing guitar, songwriting, reading poetry, cooking, going to the beach and spending time with family and friends.



Quote "Life begins at the end of your comfort zone." — Neale Donald Walsch

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