

GO FOR
BROKE
*WITHOUT
GOING
BROKE*



amenable

So it's time for a change.

If you've downloaded this, chances are good that you're interested—at least a little—in figuring out how to improve your nonprofit's communications, whether through a brand refresh, website update, or marketing push. The problem, however, is that doing so costs money, and you likely already have your budget distributed where you really need it—your work itself.

We understand.

That's why we've made this resource to help you navigate the tightrope between improving your communications and the reality of financial constraints. Throughout the following pages, you'll find info about why branding is important, ways to connect with your audience, and some tips for how to raise funding.



Strong Communications Matter for Your Team

First, let's talk about why supporting a brand through marketing or a revamped website even matters. Shouldn't the work you do speak for itself? Yes, of course! Unfortunately, your work may not have as clear of a voice as you assume, so branding can help people better interpret or understand your work. And that understanding begins within your organization itself.

Before your work ever reaches your target audience, your internal brand has already started to shape your team's attitudes and understanding of what you do. Don't take our word for it—In a 2015 study by Hellen Gross and Maren Rottler, internal marketing was found to reinforce team buy-in, and, perhaps more importantly, attract volunteers to get involved in the organization itself. What does this mean for you? Essentially, the better you articulate your vision, the more excited people will be to share it with you.

Strong Communications Matter for Your Partners

Beyond the internal value of a strong brand, there's reason to believe that it will attract attention from outside your organization too, ideally in the form of the funds you need to keep everything running smoothly. Because of that, the short-term cost of a communications boost will ultimately be offset by the long-term payoff of better engagement, increased investment, and increased recognizability.

Sarah Durham, an entrepreneur and creative consultant, argues that this focus on communications culminates in a process unique to nonprofits: “brandraising.” The similarity to the word “fundraising” isn’t coincidental—By building a strong brand, nonprofits engage in work that complements the more tangible necessities for operation, namely funding. They are, in other words, two sides of the same coin. Likewise, effective communications can help cultivate trust by showing you will take the time to connect with your audience. Finally, strong marketing can help cast a vision for what a volunteer’s involvement could look like.

A pink piggy bank is centered in the image, set against a solid blue background. The piggy bank is a simple, rounded design with a small ear on top and a coin slot on its side. The text is overlaid on the piggy bank, appearing as if it is written on its side.

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THE *RELATIONSHIP* *BETWEEN* BRANDING AND ACTION

Like Durham, Jeff Brooks, a professional fundraiser for nonprofits, stresses the role of branding in reaching donors in his book, *The Money-Raising Nonprofit Brand*. He writes that for the average donor, a brand probably isn't consciously significant—They know who they want to support, and they will continue to do so. But, he argues, without that brand awareness, nonprofits will fall off donors' radar. In other words, that subconscious awareness secures funding. Brooks suggests that there are three areas nonprofits should concentrate on for donors:

1. The action you put before them.
2. What they see.
3. How they experience your organization.

As you can see, each of these are tangled up in effective communications, and they are something you have control over if you're strategic about communicating well. That's why, difficult as it may seem, it's worth investing in better branding, web design, communications, or marketing.



FUNDRAISING AS COMMUNICATION

Based on the way a stronger brand can encourage emotional buy-in, we encourage you to use the project itself as a way to connect with your audience. For example, you can pitch the website or brand as a targeted way to fulfill the mission of your organization, which allows you to seek donors specifically for that project. It's a win-win—You get to see the long-term payoff of strengthening your brand, and the donors get to the short-term payoff of easily seeing their money at work.

Plus, if you choose to pursue a project with us, we'll coordinate with your team to ensure that your donors receive clear and timely updates. That way, they can rest easy as they see where their money is going and how it will contribute to the work of your nonprofit.



Framing the Project

If you do choose to ask for donor help with a specific brand-related project, consider first what questions they might have before you write your “ask.” Many of them might be similar to the ones you had before reading this booklet. For example:

- What will this actually accomplish?
- Why aren't you spending the money on your work?
- Why can't you just re-allocate funds for this project?

In the next section, we'll show you an example of what a support letter could look like, and you'll get a better idea of how to navigate those questions.

Dear reader,

We're writing for two reasons: First, we want to say thank you for your continued investment in our work. Second, we want to make you aware of a new way you can support that work through a one-time project.

It's possible you've noticed, but our website—quite frankly—isn't great. It's difficult to navigate, and if you aren't already familiar with what we do, you're unlikely to learn by visiting the site. That's a problem when so much of what we do is based on reaching people. With that in mind, we're pursuing a complete overhaul of the website so that we can paint a more accurate picture of our work.

Unfortunately, like everything, websites cost money, which is why we're reaching out to partner with you again, rather than diverting funds from our regularly scheduled work. You might be wondering if it's worth it, and that's a fair question—research suggests that clear communications increase engagement, and in work like ours, that engagement is crucial. With your help, we can encourage it.

If you choose to support the web redesign project, you can expect to receive regular updates about the status of the project, design decisions, and estimated timeline. It's a short-term way to see a long-term impact.

As always, thank you for your continued support,

Signed,

Us

AN EXAMPLE

If you're not in a position to run a campaign specifically for communications, branding, or a website, don't worry—There are still ways to make it financially doable. **One great way is to consider looking for grants, either specifically for such a project or to free up resources from your other projects.**

One option might be the [Google Grants program](#). Under this program, your nonprofit may be eligible for \$10,000 worth of Google text ad placement each month. This could bolster engagement with your work while freeing up resources for a focused branding project.

Additionally, there are more traditional grants available for nonprofits, and you can check on these opportunities at sites like [grantwatch.com](#) or [grants.gov](#).





**Now that you know a bit more
about what we can do, want to learn
more about what we could do for you?**

Email us at hello@weareamenable.com with any questions you have.
We'd love to hear from you and have a conversation!

REFERENCES

Brooks, J. (2014). *The money-raising nonprofit brand: Motivating donors to give, give happily, and keep on giving*. Wiley.

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