



# BEST PRACTICES FOR NON-PROFITS USING WEB 2.0

WHICH NONPROFITS ARE USING WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGY IN AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO LISTEN AND TALK WITH THEIR CLIENTS AND CONSTITUENTS AND FURTHER THEIR MISSIONS? A LOT HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT WEB 2.0, OR THE SOCIAL WEB, TO COMMUNICATE AND SHARE INFORMATION. HAVE YOU SEEN NONPROFITS DO THIS EFFECTIVELY? HOW ARE THEY USING THE POWER OF THE WEB TO SPREAD INFORMATION AND HAVE VIRTUAL CONVERSATIONS WITH THEIR SUPPORTERS?

Alexandra Samuel answered, we work with a wide range of non-profit and change-oriented for-profit organizations who are using the web to deliver their message, but more crucially, to engage audiences in a conversation. Some of the best practices we note:

1. Focus your site on a particular goal or conversation, rather than a general mandate. For example, the UN Foundation has had a dazzling success with its Nothing But Nets website, which focuses specifically on providing malaria nets to kids in the developing world.
2. Invite your community to make contributions other than money. Non-profits often experience 'donor fatigue' because so much of their public interactions hinge on asking for money. The web is a great place to ask for other kinds of contributions - whether that means connecting people directly with people who need their expertise or services or asking them

to share their personal experiences (as with the March of Dimes' Share your Story project).

3. Play nicely with other non-profit (and for-profit) organizations. The web is just that: a web of interconnections. Succeeding in an internetted environment means working effectively with others, collaborating, and interacting - it's not just about getting your own message out there. So being a good 2.0 non-profit means engaging with conversations and ideas on other blogs. Change Everything, a project of the Vancity credit union, is in the middle of a contest that will award \$1,000 to a non-profit organization - and the contest has fuelled a great deal of interest and awareness of non-profit activities in British Columbia.
4. Don't feel that web 2.0 means building your own online community. In fact, it's a lot easier to ease into the web 2.0 culture by making effective use of existing web tools - whether that means fostering internal collaboration by choosing a common del.icio.us tag to use when storing your favorite web sites, or creating an iGoogle page that lets you constantly see the latest news in your key issue areas, or creating a photo-based petition on Flickr (check out the Oxfam example). Or try setting up a Facebook group - we attracted 1,300 people to a Flickr group within 3 weeks of launch. Once you're comfortable with the idea of web 2.0, you can start thinking about whether it makes sense to build some community features into your own site.
5. Be gentle with yourself, and your colleagues. It's a big challenge for most non-profits to shift from message delivery to conversation, or from approaching your members as donors to seeing them as content contributors. For organisations that have been all about the message, and

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have approached that for decades from a paradigm of message control and careful rollout, it is a genuine (and at times frightening) adventure to bring your audience into the conversation in public, and before you've got everybody lined up to stay 'on message'. Be patient with colleagues who need to get comfortable with this new approach.

6. Stay current with how other non-profits are using web 2.0, and learn from their experiences. A great way of doing that

is to track the 'nptech' tag on del.icio.us, where people from all across the non-profit sector share the latest resources on nonprofit technology activities; it's a great place to find blog posts or tech developments to comment on. And Compumentor's NetSquared project is dedicated to helping non-profits make the most of web 2.0.

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