

Transform Your Nonprofit with Inbound Marketing

How to Turn Strangers into
Inspired Advocates

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(excerpt)

Introduction

Building awareness for your organization's mission used to be relatively straightforward. You and your staff used the bulk of time and resources on one-to-many marketing tactics such as solicitation letters, glossy print newsletters, and in-person events. Whether you were a local or national organization, you might also use PR, radio, TV, transportation signage and other traditional methods for getting the word out about your cause.

The problem, however, is that while these tactics still work in some cases – according to research by the Stanford Social Innovation Review, survey results show that while 70 percent of respondents agree that they learn about a cause through traditional media – they're quickly becoming less effective for a number of reasons. One, individuals have become harder to reach; two, research shows that people – especially Millennials (the 25 – 34 age group) – get involved with causes in ways that traditional nonprofit methodologies ignore; and three, social media has completely shifted how your donors, volunteers, members, and fundraisers now interact with your organization.

People are harder to reach

At the 2012 HubSpot INBOUND marketing conference, Brian Halligan, HubSpot's co-founder and CEO talked about how his life differs from his dad's life.

“My dad had three inputs into his life: he watched TV, he read two newspapers a day, and he talked on the phone a lot – especially at work. If you wanted to reach my dad by phone, you dialed 411 and asked Information for either his work or home number. My dad came home from work every day at 6:30 and would sit at the kitchen table opening his mail. He got a lot of mail, and he read everything, so this would take about twenty minutes. My dad also read the *Boston Globe* newspaper everyday. He – and his friends, co-workers, and neighbors – all watched the same television shows and sat through the same commercials night after night (this was of course before DVRs and remotes). If you wanted to reach my father, it was easy: call him, advertise to him through traditional media or send him mail.

“My life is very different from my father’s,” Brian went on. “I hate the telephone. I hate the phone so much I don’t answer many calls (except from my investors – ha!) and use Caller ID to screen who is calling. At HubSpot, I don’t have an office. I have a desk. The only time I open mail is when I put my MacBook Air on my desk and it starts to slide off due to the mountain of mail sitting there. That’s when I open my mail. I don’t read the print newspaper. I pay bills online. Email – that used to be a good way to reach me, but I use Gmail, and Gmail comes with this nifty Priority Inbox feature. I tell Gmail which messages I want to see at the top of my inbox – the rest get filtered below the priority messages. Guess which ones I respond to?”

While Brian is talking about the changes that have affected how consumers shop, learn and live, these very same rapid changes have affected nonprofits as well. As new technological mediums have disrupted old ones, we’ve adapted habits in response – almost without thinking about it. For example, consider how we accessed breaking news only ten years ago and technology, such as Twitter, has changed these habits.

The “fundraising pyramid” has changed

The top of your fundraising pyramid is just that – a small, concentrated piece of your whole universe, made up of older, rich donors who, though important, won't be able to add to the strong foundation of your future fundraising efforts. While they're reliable for contributing large sums of money to help you reach your yearly goal, they are high risk, high reward from an investment of time and resources perspective. Inbound Nonprofits have learned the secret of inverting the pyramid; instead of focusing on the few rich donors at the top (as seen in Figure 1), they've shifted their focus to the people who comprise the pyramid's "base" and "core" – their recurring and annual donors.

The Fundraising Pyramid

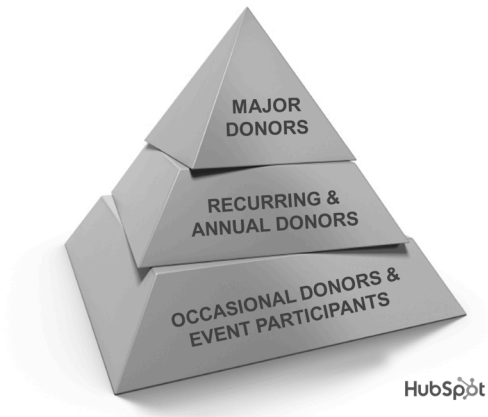


Figure 1: The Fundraising Pyramid

Why the change? These groups consist of the Millennial (20-35) and Gen-X (36-50) generations – the very people riding (and even driving) the wave after wave of technological innovation. If you focus on building the relationships with these individuals, sharing stories they can relate to and providing the information they’re looking for, they’ll naturally down the inverted pyramid, and over their lifetime they’ll become the major, rich donors that you know so well. As you’ll read in later chapters, Gen X and Millennials are fluent when it comes to technology and how to use it, from shopping and paying bills to connecting with friends, families and

the organizations they care about.

Your donors are now in control

Despite our seemingly disconnected world, and the moats we've built around ourselves, our need to connect is stronger than ever. This need for connection extends to the causes and people we care about – whether it's purchasing and consuming “local” organic food or supporting critically ill family members through fundraising events. According to Blackbaud's 2011 Peer-to-Peer Event Fundraising Consumer Survey, 69 percent of respondents reported they take action because of their affinity to a cause – with an organization's mission and impact being its greatest differentiators. “Peer-to-peer fundraising is personal,” state the authors of the survey. “Organizations can support this personal activity by coaching participants to share their story.”

As a nonprofit executive or marketer, your job, which has always been challenging, is now even more so. You face myriad challenges – from a “greying” of your donor base to banging your head trying to figure out how to reach seemingly unreachable people. To successfully reach

and engage your target constituents, *you must now match the way you build awareness about your organization and its mission with how your donors, volunteers, fundraisers and members want to connect with you.*

That's what you'll learn with this book. Whether you're a fledging organization or an established one, you'll learn how to use inbound marketing tactics to grow your nonprofit and turn strangers into supporters, fundraisers and new donors – people who eventually become inspired advocates for your cause.

Inbound Marketing is a new way to connect with your audience

Where did the term “inbound marketing” come from? Our founders, Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah, came up with this term to describe the process Dharmesh was using to get his blog, OnStartups.com, “found” by thousands of people online. Started in 2005 as part of his thesis work at MIT, Dharmesh’s blog pulled in more interest and more traffic than most of the venture-backed startups Brian was working with before founding HubSpot. When Brian and Dharmesh began talking, they used the term “outbound” to describe traditional marketing practices, such as tradeshows, direct mail, and telemarketing

(practices that were becoming less effective as Brian was quickly learning at his job), and “inbound” to describe what Dharmesh was doing – writing blog posts and commenting on others, posting his content to social media sites, etc. HubSpot, which they founded in 2006, was born out of those conversations. (You can read their full story in their book, *Inbound Marketing: Get Found using Google, Social Media, and Blogs*, Wiley 2010.)

The principle concept of inbound marketing, which we’ll cover in detail in Chapter 1, is about creating a new system of reaching your constituents. Over the years HubSpot has mastered inbound marketing practices through its work with almost 10,000 businesses and enterprises, including several hundred nonprofits (as of 2013). But, like Brian and Dharmesh, we, too, kept seeing a sea of change with regard to nonprofits and how they generated awareness. Due in part to lower start-up costs, these organizations used the new tools, such as websites and blogs, social media, and email marketing, to promote their causes and generate awareness far beyond their local borders. Inbound marketing is

what separated these new organizations from more established nonprofits.

Why we wrote this book

The nonprofit organizations we work with fall into two groups: they either understand the value of inbound marketing but get confused by the “business” language surrounding it (leads, conversions, cost per lead, etc.). If you’re working at one of these nonprofits, this book will give you a new vocabulary specific to nonprofits to help give clarity to what HubSpot has been preaching to businesses, as well as compelling information that you can use to help “sell” inbound to your board members or management team. The second type of nonprofit organizations we work with are those who know they need to change their marketing and fundraising mindset but don’t know how to get started. If you can relate to this, then this book is for you!

This book will take you step-by-step through the stages of the Inbound Marketing Methodology for Nonprofits. You’ll learn insights into what each stage means as well as discover best practices and marketing

tools you should use to support your inbound marketing strategy. To spark your creativity, you'll find real world examples and case studies throughout the book that show how other Inbound Nonprofits have been successful.

We hope you find this book helpful – and we thank you in advance for reading it. Without you and your organizations, we couldn't do what we love – helping organizations maximize their awareness for causes that change lives around the world. To be even a small part of something bigger makes everything we do that much more fulfilling. If you like what you read, or you have questions, you can find us personally on Twitter or LinkedIn – or the nonprofit section of the HubSpot blog. Please do connect with us – we'd love to hear your stories and how we can help in any way!

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August 2013