

Book Review

Wymer, W. & Grau, S. L. (2011). *Connected Causes: Online Marketing Strategies for Nonprofit Organizations*. Chicago, Illinois: Lyceum Books, Inc.

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According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (<http://nccs.urban.org>), there are more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States. Given the rapidly changing world of nonprofits and the increasing, numerous challenges facing these organizations (e.g., recruiting for volunteers, seeking new and sustaining current donors, informing stakeholders), an online marketing strategy and online presence is essential. This book seeks to assist nonprofit managers in developing the necessary skills to effectively evaluate, plan, and use online tools to bridge potential marketing gaps by developing an online response and alternative.

Dr. Walter Wymer, Professor of Marketing at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada, has co-authored or collaborated on nine books about nonprofits, ranging from marketing communication and nonprofit/business sector collaboration to nonprofit marketing and volunteerism marketing. He is widely published and a respected scholar in the field. Co-author Dr. Stacy Grau, Associate Professor of Professional Practice in Marketing at Texas Christian University, has focused on strategic planning and brand building efforts for nonprofits in addition to teaching in the Neeley School of Business at TCU.

The book is well organized; each chapter begins with a brief *overview* and concludes with *lessons learned* and suggestions for *further reading*. In ten well-written,

information packed chapters, the reader is introduced to the potential of online strategic marketing and completes the journey with digital insights and current research. The book is replete with interesting illustrations of online applications; for example, *Texting to save Haiti*. In January 2010, a 7.0 earthquake destroyed the town of Port au Prince. The Red Cross began a texting campaign that was publicized across a wide variety of media (e.g., local and national news, ESPN). The Text HAITI to 90999 campaign raised \$36 million. The power of online tools and social networking is becoming more readily apparent.

I basically divided the book into two sections. Section one (Chapters 1-5) focuses on nonprofit “branding,” the importance of website design and use of social media and the importance of a content strategy, and a discussion of “digital technology tools” (e.g., blogs, wikis, social networks, podcasting, widgets). The significance of “branding” was illustrated by the Obama Campaign for President, in which social media was used and the campaign raised 65 percent of the \$150 million from online contributors. And as the authors point out, the average donation was \$80.00. The obvious lesson: “do not underestimate the power of everyday people to give; small amounts add up.”

The book contains a variety of useful worksheets, ranging from website assessment and analysis to pointers for

visual and content design. These will prove very helpful for the nonprofit manager or organization in planning and evaluating key elements of an online marketing strategy. I was impressed with the specific discussions of online tools; they were sufficient in detail to inform, but not overwhelm, the reader. The format generally provides a description of the online tool, followed by its possible application and then an evaluation of its potential usefulness. I found this to be an important resource for developing or updating an online presence, as well as in designing a proactive online marketing strategy.

I found it easy and sometimes useful to jump to chapters that caught my eye (e.g., *Online Advocacy and Activism*), and I could comfortably fall back to previous chapters (e.g., *Social Media Content Strategy*) for a description and discussion of the more foundational aspects of planning, strategy, and technical aspects of various online technologies.

Section two (Chapters 6-9) addresses some specific nonprofit challenges (e.g., online fund-raising, volunteer recruitment, advocacy, activism, and public relations). I found these chapters to be very comprehensive and enlightening. For example, in a discussion of the “online volunteer recruitment efforts,” the importance and role of volunteers is covered, as well as a summary of insights for the development of a volunteer program. The authors discuss various motivations for and benefits of volunteering, which leads to an assessment of online approaches that may be successful in terms of creating a website to aid in recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers.

In my previous life, over 20 years, I worked for nonprofits. As I recall, defining who we

were, marketing services, recruiting volunteers, informing stakeholders and various publics, and constantly seeking resources created considerable stress on the organization and staff. Unfortunately, many of our efforts were generally trial-and-error; consequently, there were many unsuccessful endeavors at great expense in terms of time, energy, and scarce resources.

Today, online tools provide a powerful resource for nonprofits to more efficiently and effectively accomplish these and many additional tasks. But sadly, the availability and use of online tools, without critical assessment and strategic planning, may actually undermine the nonprofit’s mission and organizational goals. This book provides critical information to help avoid a trial-and-error strategy. It is not a simple process; adopting all the available online tools will not result in a successful marketing strategy. Careful assessment, planning, and ongoing evaluation are critical to success.

This book provides a very measured, clear, concise, and thorough examination of the important elements that should be considered and well-planned prior to the implementation of an online marketing strategy. The authors have created a valuable resource to aid in this investigation and strategic planning. The book helps the nonprofit manager understand the usefulness and potential value of various online tools (both positive and negative, given certain environments/challenges). This, along with the worksheets, numerous examples and questions, and rich details, provides a very timely and extremely useful asset for the nonprofit manager and his or her organization. Additionally, this book would be a useful text in courses related to community development, fund-raising, advocacy, social activism, volunteerism,

social work, nonprofit management, social movements, and social entrepreneurship.

I am reminded of Roger Maris of the New York Yankees baseball team. In 1961, he hit 61 home runs, breaking Babe Ruth's record of 60 home runs in a single season. Roger was quoted as saying, "you hit home runs not by chance, but by preparation." Wymer and Grau's book will help nonprofits prepare to hit those home runs in the field of online marketing.