



# TOOLS OF CHANGE

*Equipping Nonprofits with the Tools to Inspire Change*

NICOLE IRONS | LIBERTY UNIVERSITY | THESIS



Thank you to all my professional mentors and professors for the time and wisdom you shared with me.

A special thank you to all my friends and family who supported and encouraged me through this degree. Whether it was making sure I got some amount of sleep, bringing me coffee when sleep wasn't an option, or making my laugh when I needed to relieve some stress, thank you!

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NICOLE IRONS | LIBERTY UNIVERSITY | THESIS PROJECT

A thesis submitted to Liberty University  
for Master of Fine Arts in Studio and Digital Arts

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## ABSTRACT

# TOOLS OF CHANGE

Whether I am working for a small nonprofit in Indiana or at an elephant sanctuary in Cambodia I have seen consistent areas of struggle and shortcomings in nonprofit organizations. After years of working in different organizations the struggles nonprofits consistently face are a lack of resources in three main areas. These main areas of struggle are: visibility, funding, and people. The idea then occurred to me of why?

And while these resources seem to appear unconnected, what if they all stem from one problem? Could we create a tool (or set of tools) to help alleviate these main struggles? Is there a tool that can help nonprofit organizations gain the valuable resources they need in order to be more successful?

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the major problems nonprofits face through research. In addition to finding the major issues I am exploring possible solutions stemming from new ideas and looking at what for-profit businesses are doing in the current market. I believe the main reason for the lack of funding and people stems from visibility and am focusing on how visibility translates into tangible resources. As a creative-minded person it is an exciting challenge to try to find the missing link in a problem that has the potential to equip thousands to help hundreds of thousands of people. I believe the key to growth, sustainability, and overall effective change stems from being visible, understood, recognized, and

shared through communities, networks, and people. When a nonprofit is clearly recognizable and people have heard of the organization, know the purpose, and believe in their mission it is the next step is to support, donate, and volunteer. When looking at visibility several key questions need to be thought through. What action steps need to be taken in order to engage your supporter network as well as expand it? What framework needs to be intentionally created to have a strong clear message that will be easy understood, recognized, and will inspire like-minded people to support you? These questions can be broken into more bite size questions such as: What is our brand? Who is our main audience? What do we want to accomplish? How are we communicating with people? How can we communicate and connect to our audience better? What tools can we use to connect with people? Through research, case studies, and creative strategies I looked at possible potential resources nonprofit organizations can tap into and what tools would be needed for organizations to effectively use these resources.



● INTRODUCTION:

● CAPES &  
WORK BOOTS

● When we're young we could imagine ourselves as anything, yet the imagination of a child gravitates towards being a figure that helps others. As a child, I remember running around the yard and playing hero with the kids in the neighborhood. The few lucky ones each day got to play the hero and go around helping the other kids from the perils of being at the top of



the slide or guarded by a pirate. Each child chose their own unique powers but even now as I watch my friend's children play they imagine that they are in some way helping others.

As an adult I traded in my mask and cape for a computer and a pair of work boots but the driving force to help others never wavered. Whether I was working for a small nonprofit in Indiana or at an elephant sanctuary in Cambodia I started to see consistent areas of struggle and shortcomings in nonprofits. After years of working in different organizations the struggles nonprofits consistently face are a lack of resources in three main areas. These main areas of struggle are: visibility, funding, and people. The idea then occurred to me, why? And while these resources seem to appear unconnected, what if they all stem from one problem? Could we create a tool (or set of tools) to help alleviate these main struggles? Is there a tool that can help nonprofit organizations simply do their work better?



The purpose of this thesis is to explore the major problems nonprofits face. In addition to finding the major issues I am exploring possible solutions stemming from new ideas as well as looking at what for-profit businesses are doing in the current market. I believe the main reason for the lack of funding and people stems from visibility and am focusing on how visibility translates into tangible resources. As a creative-minded person it is an exciting challenge to try to find the missing link in a problem that has the potential to equip thousands to help hundreds of thousands of people. I believe the key to growth, sustainability, and overall effective change stems from being visible, understood, recognized, and shared through communities, networks, and people. When a nonprofit is clearly recognizable and people have heard of the organization, know the purpose, and believe in their mission it is the next step is to support, donate, and volunteer. Visibility is a huge umbrella word that can be translated to many different meanings. I define visibility as the message, voice, and the exposure

a nonprofit organization has. When looking at visibility several key questions need to be thought through. What action steps need to be taken in order to engage your supporter network as well as expand it? What framework needs to be intentionally created to have a strong clear message that will be easy understood, recognized, and will inspire like-minded people to support you? These questions can be broken into more bite size questions such as: What is our brand? Who is our main audience? What do we want to accomplish? How are we communicating with people? How can we communicate and connect to our audience better? What tools can we use to connect with people?

It can be an overwhelming task to look at an organization's visibility but I believe it is a critical step most are not recognizing. The truth is organizations do not want to ignore a toolbox of resources but rather they do not see the connection between tools such as branding, marketing, and social media and themselves. "We know our organization will

only be successful if we engage a community of people who join with us to make this possible. We invite them to be part of us and aim to be part of them” (Antoni Cimolino). Organizations see the need to engage people in their cause and recognize it as the linchpin of their organization. That said many use organic marketing methods that may only go as far as the people already involved with them. While this is a good path because it is personal, the setback to this method is the organization has no control on the message, and there is not way to see the results.

Every person has a cause they are passionate about in some way. With the number of organizations helping people it should not be a problem getting connected to an organization that is helping with the cause one cares about. By looking at the ways organizations currently use their visibility and explore new ways to improve visibility the ability of organizations to function better will improve as well.

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The issue is not a lack of nonprofits willing to help, but rather in the over-saturated world of information they go unseen, unknown, and their voice is deluded in the chaotic stream of present-day culture.

”

● THE PROBLEM:

# WHERE'S THE UNMUTE BUTTON

In present day society anyone anywhere can find an organization that is helping with a cause they are passionate about. The number of nonprofit organizations that are opening their doors to help people in different causes is increasing at a faster rate than ever before.

“The world now boasts more than 2 million nonprofits, fueled by a 35 percent increase in the number of organizations in the United States and Canada in the past decade alone” (Daw, 20). With the increased number of nonprofits opening their doors why are there still more people needing help? Some of the basic needs around the world such as clean water, education, basic human rights, and food are still not being met even though organizations are starting up daily. The problem is not the lack of organizations but rather the lack of clear visibility the organizations have. “In this complicated philanthropic marketplace, people are overwhelmed by a deluge of overlapping messages from a cast array of organizations – which are often difficult to distinguish” (Daw, 20). As a result of muddy messaging organizations will either stay small or shut down due to lack of resources in a short amount of time.

The main resources nonprofits are consistently searching for is funding, people, and visibility.

Funding and lack of volunteers (or staff) are both tangibly connected to pieces of the organization and are often the main focus. It is simple to see the need of these resources and the impact they make. If an organization does not have enough funding they cannot execute the projects they wanted to. In the same way if they do not have enough people they cannot accomplish the tasks they set to accomplish. Both of these resources have a reaction based on action relationship making it easy to track, understand, and translate to their supporters. Without \$5,000 we cannot build this well in this area or without 150 volunteers we cannot organize this race to raise funds are two examples that are common action/reaction methods of determining goals. Reaction based goals are good for funding and people based incentives but cannot be well translated to visibility. Since the format is foreign to many organizations they simply do not see the value, connection, or potential in investing time and staff.

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While lack of funding or people are resources is immediately felt they are parallel to a bucket of water when the true source of the fire is the lack of visibility. Visibility is a multi-faceted category of business that includes branding, advertising and marketing. If people can find out about an organization and its mission they are given the opportunity to learn about, support, donate, and get involved. Visibility is a huge blind spot of nonprofit organization and one of the reasons it has become such a problem is that traditionally nonprofits have not looked at how to best to execute marketing. Rather they have defaulted to relying on organic marketing where their network shares their personal experiences with others, often deluding the message. An excellent example of this method of visibility is explained by Carter Johns when looking at his organization that is helping people and families with cancer. “We traditionally had done things very lean and never spent money on advertising... We relied strictly on free public service advertising, and many of local affiliates created their own look. So, of course, the brand meaning was

getting terribly fragmented. With an explosion in the number of nonprofit organization and businesses supporting the cancer cause, there was increasing confusion in the marketplace about who we were and how we are different. It’s hard to build community when your brand meaning isn’t clear” (Daw, 178). Community is important and is a way to grow your impact however it should not be the main source of sharing/advertising a brand. “With such growth, its internal structures, programs, and communications hadn’t been able to keep up. The evolving marketplace required targeted new initiatives and even stronger political advocacy work” (Daw, 175). Marketing by word of mouth is a slow and very uncontrollable method to reach out and expand an organization’s support network. Due to these reasons it is important to look at ways the organization can be intentional and improve their visibility with focus. By developing tools for nonprofits to improve their visibility they are also being equip with the first step towards expanding their support network.

The first step to fully understanding the impact of visibility (or lack thereof) is diving into four main questions.

- *Why is it important to have clear, quality branding?*
- *Who are the audience nonprofits should be trying to reach?*
- *What digital forms of communication are out there and which have value?*
- *How can nonprofits start to improve their visibility without additional strains on their current resources?*

Once these questions can be answered the next step is to look at the environment organizations are living in today. The technology, demographics, and social norms that current society functions in today are vastly different than what they were ten years ago. Technology and trends are not slowing down, in fact, they seem to continue to improve and change faster

each day. With this warp speed marketplace it is easy to miss the train and get lost in the dust. Answering the main four questions is the foundation to creating a marketing campaign for a nonprofit that can adjust and change along with new technology.

After we have established the climate and resources available in today's current marketplace the next step will be to harness all this knowledge and cultivate tools to help nonprofits become more successful in their strategies. By looking at the way nonprofits do marketing and reconstructing the methods of gaining visibility the major deficiencies of resources common across nonprofit organizations can be met.

● RESEARCH METHODS:

# HOW ARE WE GETTING THERE?

Before trying to create a solution you must clearly understand what the problem is. With the goal of building tools to help equip nonprofits there needs to be a clear, comprehensive understanding of the needs of the organizations. There are thousands of nonprofits ranging in all demographics and it would be presumptuous to develop solutions for these



organizations based solely on the needs found in the organizations I have been personally connected with.

A perfect example of how a project can be extremely more effective if the problem is first clearly understood is the used car baby incubator. The problem was first acknowledged when babies' mortality rates started to increase because a lack of proper medical supplies. Due to the political and economical climate many third world countries lack resources to provide incubators to the hospitals and additionally the parts needed to fix the incubators they do have. In addition, many of the regions had inconsistent electricity further limiting the use of modern medical machines. While the main problem was a lack of proper medical equipment the circumstances around the issue had just as much importance in the process of creating a solution.

“ Rather than looking at what they do have and transforming it into a powerful brand they let their inspiring mission sit to the side of volunteer or funding campaigns. ”

By clearly understanding the problem and the external factors a creative and sustainable solution can be created. In this case there was not consistent electricity, funding for equipment or additional funding and knowledge to fix the modern equipment when it broke. One resource these remote locations did have was cars. Though it appeared to be unrelated looking at all the resources around a problem can lead to the best solution, which is exactly what happened.

“The conventional approach to this kind of problem would be design a low-cost robust incubator with some redundancy and some spare parts. However a company called Design

That Matters (DTM) took a more lateral approach. Instead of asking the conventional question ‘How can we build a low cost incubator that does not break down?’ they asked ‘What equipment if any is easily maintained in third world (locations)?’ The answer to that question is cars – more specifically Toyota cars” (Sloane). By completely understanding the problem, reframing the question, and evaluating the resources surrounding it, the design firm was able to create a much more sustainable solution. They created an incubator made from parts used in Toyota cars. This solution not only solves the problem, but also is self-sustaining which is the ultimate goal of nonprofit work.

Like the availability of cars in third world countries, there are potentially beneficial resources nonprofits hold but have yet to tap into. One of the resources is the value of their mission. This is a trait that is consistent in all the nonprofits I studied and worked for. They have already developed a brand or the 'why' people should care and get involved in their message. "Values, trust, relationships, benefits, and promises are all associated experiences of your brand. Whether you are deliberate about your brand or not, you are by the very fact of engaging with the community creating a brand for your organization and that brand comes across in everything you do" (Hart, 102). Nonprofits are founded on a purpose but most are not fully developing their brand and making sure they are creating a clear, focused message that showcases the why behind what they are working towards. Rather than looking at what they do have and transforming it into a powerful brand they let their inspiring mission sit to the side of volunteer or funding campaigns. In order

to have visibility work effectively a strong brand is needed for clear messaging.

If an organization has the goal to build 200 wells in Kenya a strategy plan is put in place that covers every step in order to make this goal a reality. The cost of each well, manual labor needs, and all other moving parts in a huge goal are all streamlined and organized in steps, list, and categories. The efficient systematic method of breaking down a huge goal into actionable steps often is discarded when it comes to visibility and branding. While the dream of every organization is to be known, supported, and funded by the entire global community the reality is there are some margins that can be planned out and make the marketing much more beneficial to the organization.

Creating a plan, defining specific goals, and understanding your audience is the starting point in building a marketing plan. "The first step in creating any nonprofit marketing strategy is defining who it is you are trying to reach.

The alternative—skipping this step and creating outreach and fundraising campaigns for the general public—is a complete waste of time” (Miller). “Unfortunately, many nonprofits are still pursuing outreach strategies for the general public that are, generally and predictably, a failure. They are so afraid they might offend someone that they end up impressing no one” (Miller). In order to expand your visibility you need to define your audience. “To define your audience, first you need to recognize that most nonprofits have multiple audiences...Call them your target audiences, target populations, supporters, participants, clients, newsletter readers, website visitors—whatever you like. Your next challenge is to segment those audiences into specific groups, held together by common characteristics or values. To do so, you’ll need to define what ties the people in this group together, what they value, and how you can connect those values to your cause” (Miller). While this may seem counterintuitive to narrow your audience it does bring focus and direction.

Nonprofits organizations can be found in all stages from needing to start a marketing plan, developing a brand, to having a strong brand but not using the brand to its full potential. The second roadblock in increasing visibility is not seeing the value in investing in social media marketing. “Social media has the potential to change a wide variety of management practices in nonprofit and public organizations” (Campbell). Technology is rapidly changing so it is easy for people and organizations to easy fall behind, however intentionally connecting with new digital resources can have immediate and sustainable rewards. “The power of the Internet enables individuals and businesses to reach a wide audience and accomplish many goals with a single web site, a communications effort, or a fundraiser” (Finlayson). Social media is the child of the Internet era. “The undeniable truth is - Social Media is a platform for real networking, growth and engagement for any venture irrespective of the industry. There was a time in the digital world when marketing was merely confined to website building and

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ANTONI CIMOLINO

pondering information over the first ten pages of Google.com. Today, the most powerful source of marketing – be it, online or offline is undoubtedly ‘Social Media’ (Rajsekar).

Websites are now a default expectation rather than an option if an organization wants to be able to connect with a community and a presence on social media is becoming just as important. “Organizations can no longer

rely solely on phone calls, mailings, and event marketing to raise money and engage new donors. Today’s nonprofits need to be innovative in their efforts, and that’s why the smart ones are investing heavily in their websites and digital marketing. Not only is online marketing less costly and time-consuming than traditional campaigns, it can actually be more effective at collecting donations, engaging new donors, and increasing awareness” (Ironpaper). While

digital marketing can take many forms including emails, websites, and advertising, social media can be a huge path to consistent communication. This communication if harnessed correctly can engage and grow your support network. At first it may appear social media was going to be another trend that would quickly come and go however the research monitoring its success and influence is indicating it is a much more powerful marketing tool than anyone predicted.

“Because it appeared quickly, social media has developed a reputation by some for being a passing marketing interest, and therefore, an unprofitable one. The statistics, however, illustrate a different picture. According to Hubspot, 92% of marketers in 2014 claimed that social media marketing was important for their business, with 80% indicating their efforts increased traffic to their websites. And according to Social Media Examiner, 97% of marketers are currently participating in social media—but 85% of participants aren’t sure what social media tools are the best to use” (Demers).

The American Red Cross is one good example of how a well-established brand founded in community values can be impactful when partnered with social media’s reach. While they already had a good support network the American Red Cross was one of the few nonprofits to see the value in social media as a way to connect and communicate with their community. In a series of interviews with supporters of the Red Cross they expressed the impression the organization’s social media had on them:

“The social media tools the American Red Cross uses the most to build relationships are Twitter and Facebook. A southern participant (chapter) believes that social media is becoming more useful: “It’s actually better, we get more response from our postings on Facebook and Twitter than our more traditional – even from the chapter’s main website.” Twitter is used by the participants who not only post tweets on local events, but also follow local media reporters and other chapters. A midwest region interviewee stated: “I love keeping a pulse on all different technologies,

Twitter makes that especially easy, people are sharing a lot more. Even chapter-to-chapter we're able to share our story ideas" (Briones, 39).

Using social media The American Red Cross improved the relationships of current supporters as well as introducing the organization to new ones. "According to Digital Market Ramblings, 11.9 billion searches are conducted on the search engine every month. That is a sizeable amount of traffic that nonprofits should capitalize on by creating strong online content" (Alligance Software). Part of this online content is built in the daily posts of social media and the more their network shares their content the more visibility they will obtain. Most of my research came from the studies of for profit organizations due to the fact the nonprofits are not using this marketing tools. "What little research that does exist on nonprofit social media utilization, in turn, regards the heavy reliance on basic informational uses, such as update frequency, as a lost opportunity for deeper engagement with supporters" (Nah). There isn't much research

done on the effectiveness on communication of nonprofits through digital platforms because the truth is most do not utilize these tools. “At least half of all nonprofits surveyed dedicate fewer than one person to social media, with many organizations assigning all social media responsibility to one-quarter of one team member. And although around 25% of respondents reported having an particularly social media policy, the vast majority of the industry simply appears to be winging it” (Vivo). Changes are happening in the nonprofit world and according to Content Marketing Institute’s 2015 “State of Nonprofit Content Marketing” – Sixty-nine percent are creating more content than they did one year ago.” While this is improving the need to continue to improve and more importantly develop tools to help is becoming more critical.

The American Red Cross is a good example of a nonprofit organization using social media to expand their visibility and the methods they used are very common when looking at for-

profit companies. These companies are working for a profit and do not have the same strong value-driven brand but are consistently more successful at marketing due to the time they spend and marketing methods they implement. The next step in my research is to look at the marketing methods for profits are successfully using, the influence social media has, and the reason nonprofits are missing this critical area of potential growth.



● CURRENT CLIMATE:

# VALUE OF A BRAND

● When looking at developing tools to improve organizations' visibility it is important to fully understand the environment these organizations live in today. One culture factor to take into consideration is the mindset and perspectives of the audience. "Understanding the new up-and-coming generation is a little like learning a new language...To be successful fundraisers, we

need to understand how to communicate to our audience segments in order to make the right kind of ask” (Hawthorne). With the advances in technology skepticism has become a prominent trait in the generation known as millennials.

By the definition from Dictionary.com, millennial refers to the generation of people “born from 1980 onward, brought up using digital technology and mass media; the children of Baby Boomers.” This is the up and coming generation and the skeptic nature of this generation creates the need for a clear, direct mission and brand from the organization. “Millennials represent more than half of the consumer population... (They) hate waste and inefficiency with a passion. This generation wants to look under the hood... and if they find wrongdoing, they run away from poorly run organizations. If you are running a weak organization today, they’ll remember that when they have the resources to be a serious donor. Once (they) have formed an opinion about you and your brand, it is hard, if not impossible to

change their minds” (Altman). With millennials being the target demographic due to the increasing influence they have in the market a clear brand is needed for success. A brand is not simply a logo and letterhead. “Values, trust, relationships, benefits, and promises are all associated experiences of your brand. Whether you are deliberate or not, you are by the very fact of engaging with the community creating a brand for your organization and comes across in everything you do” (Hart, 102).

The good attribute that is also a trait in the Millennial generation is their excitement for change. This generation has grown along side the ever-changing world of technology and they view change not as unstable but as a positive force in the world. They believe the world can change because they have seen it happen again and again through phases of technology. This generation of people want to be involved in a cause that will change a problem into a solution so if a nonprofit can show the ways they are positively creating change millennials will support them.

“ Millennials are a cause-minded generation,  
which is excellent for nonprofits. ”

In addition, this generation wants to be a part of something more than what they see in front of them. They want to not just be acknowledged but constantly engaged in the organization more inline with a partnership or friendship. “Relationships are important to millennials. (They) grew up with 24/7 connectivity—to friends, to brands, basically to the world. So approaching them with a blatant ask for money right away may turn them off and send them in search of an organization that’s more interested in engaging with them on a deeper, more consistent level.” (Hawthorne). The best attribute about this generation is they are cause minded and knowing their perspective can

help an organization communicate and engage them in a conversation that will turn them into dedicated supporters. This attribute was showcased during political elections in 2016. According to the study done by The Millennial Impact “Millennials don’t feel loyalty toward political parties, but instead vote based on which issues they care about and which candidates they believe best speak to those issues.” Millennials are a cause-minded generation, which is excellent for nonprofits. The next step for nonprofits after knowing their audience is to develop a clear brand then use the digital tools to tell this generation their story.





● **BRANDING:**



**IMPORTANCE  
OF YOUR  
STORY**

Visibility is difficult to obtain for many reasons but one simple reason is there is a lot of anonymity shrouding it. Definitions, tools, and language are always evolving and obtaining a clear understanding of these different pieces is the first step to being able to create good visibility for your organization. Visibility includes many elements, however

some of the main components include branding, marketing, and advertising.

The first part of good visibility is branding. An organization's brand needs to be clear and understood but the brand is much more than a logo and font. "Brand is not the name, the tag line, or the pretty colors... The brand is the set of expectations and beliefs the marketplace has about what you do" (Placek, President and CEO, Lexicon Branding). The nonprofit's brand should not be ignored and underdeveloped but rather be the keystone to its identity. The most significant asset a nonprofit has in contrast to a corporation or business is the reason behind the work they do. Nonprofits are established on wanting to help right a wrong, fill a need, or step in when disaster strikes. They are not established to primarily make money but are created to serve a purpose more than themselves, an attribute people gravitate towards when they see it. According to West's Encyclopedia of American Law, a nonprofit organization is defined as "a corporation or an association that

conducts business for the benefit of the general public without shareholders and without a profit motive." This is a wide demographic pool that includes organizations big and small, local and international, and covers all causes, countries, and ages. The benefit nonprofits hold is they already have depth to their message and have already developed a story or the 'why' people should care and get involved in their message. Based on this message the brand can be full translated into a mission statement, logo, website, marketing material, and social media exposure.

A brand can carry an organization through good times and bad. In addition it can make a great first impression on people predisposing them towards a personal and emotional connection to the organization's mission. "Because it is linked to reputation, a strong brand drives tremendous economic, social, and political gains for its organization. In fact, in most cases, brand accounts for more than 50 percent of a nonprofit organization's, market value" (Daw, 20). At the base, a brand is the organizations

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Brand is not the name, the tag line, or the pretty colors...The brand is the set of expectations and beliefs the marketplace has about what you do.

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PLACEK, PRESIDENT AND CEO, LEXICON BRANDING

mission and story or the ‘why’ but the next layer in a brand are the visual elements and the platforms that are used to communicate the message. These platforms include the printed material such as letterheads and advertising as well as websites and social media.

The old saying ‘don’t judge a book by its cover’ is a pleasant thought but the reality is the current culture is visually driven and the first

impression will leave a mark on relationship that person will have with your organization. While it is possible to change a person’s opinion it has been reported that it can take up to “ten positive impressions to make up for one negative one” (Owen). It is to the advantage of the organization to make a good first impression and that starts with your logo. “Branding identity and a strong company logo is an essential piece of the marketing puzzle, but finding

and using the right company logo is often misunderstood and even implemented poorly or incorrectly” (LogoOrange). The organization’s logo is the cornerstone of their visual brand. It is an element that will be used in all areas of marketing and will establish brand recognition. As an organization expands its network the logo will visually tie the marketing campaigns to the organization continuing to develop the organization’s story. It’s important to note that a logo does not have to include every aspect of your organization. The main purpose of a logo is to have a symbol that is unique, clean, easy to recognize, and aligns with the characteristics of your organization.

The style of the organization’s visual brand should be created based on the logo. A strong color palette, promotional materials, website, business cards, and overall graphic style can be established on this foundation. This may seem unimportant to a nonprofit organization, but the benefit of a strong visual brand can be easily found in the for

profit market. One example is the company Coca-Cola. “Coca-Cola is everywhere. The iconic American brand is recognized instantly around the globe and sold in more than 200 countries. On average, more than 10,000 soft drinks from Coca-Cola are consumed every second of every day...1.9 billion are drinks trademarked or licensed by Coca-Cola. It’s the most widely distributed product on the planet.” (O’Reilly). Having a strong brand is a critical asset for profit driven companies and these companies have capitalized on it. The brand recognition of Coca-Cola has converted into a loyal customer base and has even become part of the culture in some regions. Top brand name companies such as Nike, Target, Wal-Mart, and Starbucks all have strong loyal customer bases due to the brand recognition that has been cultivated by strong branding. While these companies are huge examples of how beneficial branding can be it is just as valuable to a small nonprofit organization. The key to this asset is the ability to share what your organization is doing and the value it



has in the community and has it linked back to your organization. Due to the number of organizations that are sharing stories and work they do it is critical to have a clear connection between your nonprofits and the successful stories you are a part of.

Logos, advertising, and marketing material are all collective pieces that fall under the umbrella of a company brand and live in the digital and printed world. While it is especially important for retail companies such as Coca-Cola or Target to have branding that can be printed on products, most nonprofit organizations will be sharing their stories online. “Moving your brand online is moving beyond images, tag lines, and graphics and into the space of experiencing your brand. This is where the greatest challenge for nonprofits is and the greatest opportunity” (Hart, 103). An organization should have their name, logo, and mission clearly showcased in their office however the biggest impact will be in the digital world. An organization’s website is an enormous part of the audiences’ interaction

with the organization. It is not only the place to find knowledge about what the organization does (and is currently involved in), but is also a way for supporters to connect, donate, volunteer, and more. When asked about the importance of a web presence Heyman stated, “Our biggest supporters can now easily get involved with helping to spread the word about our fundraising campaigns, new programs, volunteer requirements, impact, and needs. Those of you with a development background may have heard that the most effective kind of ask is a peer ask, and modern technology facilitates that through viral marketing.”

Websites are no longer an optional communication tool but are more essential than business cards or other traditional marketing materials in sharing information about an organization. Professionals in the marketing industry have seen this transition as a positive change because they now have the ability to share much more detail about their message than previous printed material

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Websites are no longer an optional communication tool but are more essential than business cards...

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would allow. “Virtually all keepers of brands have recognized the power that Internet holds in building relationship with their different audiences. It is a noisy landscape to be sure, but nonprofit organizations have a story to tell that sets them apart from consumer-product-driven brands... Nonprofits, have embedded in their very culture, articulate with their mission statements, and delivered through their programs, brands that are saturated with values that can serve to build relationships that are instead based on you as a member of your community- not just a consumer” (Hart, 101).

Today’s social climate is in warp speed. Trends come and go in a matter of a few days rather than years or months. New technology is getting modified, edited, and recreated in live time and the younger generations are not slowing down. Visibility is not about keeping up with the latest trends but rather finding and utilizing key tools that can fuel the organization. With the millennial generation moving fast nonprofits branding needs to be clear, accessible, and defined to make a great first impression, dictating the relationship between the audience and nonprofit.

● THE MISSING LINK:

# MIND THE GAP

● When I lived in London I used public transportation daily. As the train would pull to the station people would impatiently shift their weight, and you would hear a digital monotone voice echo 'Mind the Gap'. At first, I liked the novelty and it would catch my interest, however, after a few days I became like any other impatient commuter numb to the warning. If technology

were a train, the majority of nonprofits are still on the platform as businesses and society has boarded to go to the next destination. Rather than looking at where they are and where they need to be going they have let the gap between them and technology keep them from reaching their full potential. They haven't ignored the gap but rather ignored the entire train and chose to stay on the platform.

With the world becoming more accessible each day through technological advances we are seeing more opportunities to share your voice across many communication platforms. The ability to expand a nonprofit's network and increase their visibility is becoming easier and more lines of communication are developing as technology continues to advance. "First and foremost, technology is the greatest empowering force of the masses in history. It gives voices to the voiceless, names to the nameless. It flattens hierarchy and allows information to flow freely" (Heyman, 216). Whether it is a water shortage in northern Africa or a devastating flu outbreak

in South America the ability to be aware and get involved is becoming easier to do on a local or international scale. Many of these critical causes are being shown in news headlines however these are only the flashy news lines and many other noble causes are being ignored. While mass media often covers catastrophic events, they do not communicate the small yet significant issues many organizations are working towards resolving. In addition media rarely shows the organizations that are stepping in to help. This is where the potential of social media can be seen. Social media such as Facebook is a social network of people that can connect friends, family, co-workers, or like-minded people together. By building a social media presence an organization can continue to engage current supporters in their network on a daily basis while also reaching the network each supporter has individually cultivated. The issue is not a lack of nonprofits willing to help, but rather, in this oversaturated world of information they go unseen, unknown, and their voice is deluded in the chaotic stream of present-day culture.

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First and foremost, technology is the greatest  
empowering force of the masses in history.  
It gives voices to the voiceless, names to the  
nameless.

HEYMAN, 216

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Mass media is showcasing the issues faced in the world at a high level overview and only hit on the immediate high impact problems such as an outbreak or war but social media is a personal conversation that can have much more meaningful engagement.

Mass media and the general public cannot be relied on to effectively communicate due to a lack of consistency and focus, therefore organizations need to ask, what is my voice? Perhaps more importantly, what should be my voice? What the organization says is determined by their mission but the way they can communicate their mission can be shared across many different platforms. “Technology is unique in that it is both an internally and an externally facing tool. Within a nonprofit, it can play a crucial role with helping manage information... Externally, technology can support marketing and engagement efforts, enabling you to raise funds, alert the community to your efforts, keep tabs on partners, and more” (Heyman, 219). The world has become much larger as technology

has grown in a few short years. “With such growth, its internal structures, programs, and communications hadn’t been able to keep up. The evolving marketplace required targeted new initiatives and even stronger political advocacy work” (Daw, 175). Organizations are seeing the potential in communicating in new digital ways but are not fully utilizing the potential these pathways have. Platforms for communicating in social media such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram are all newer platforms that have the potential to be lines of communication between organizations and their audience. Each is made for different capabilities so it is important to understand the full potential in each as well as what ways you organization could use them.

One of the social media platforms nonprofits are starting to use but not to its full potential is Facebook. “Facebook is a social networking website and service where users can post comments, share photographs and links to news or other interesting content on the Web,

play games, chat live, and even stream live video. Shared content can be made publicly accessible, or it can be shared only among a select group of friends or family...” (Nations). The potential Facebook has at its foundation is the ability to expand networks of people whether that be friends, people in the same organizations or clubs, family, co-workers, etc. Being able to engage one’s supporter base on a personal level is a huge asset to an organization. While organizations are seeing this attribute as important they are still not utilizing this communication tool to the best of its ability. “Nonprofits overwhelmingly (88%) said their most important communication tools were email and their websites, even though fully 97% of them are on Facebook. This may have to do with the fact that in their mind, the pinnacle of engagement is a donation (47%). Clearly, simply getting folks to retweet or comment (18% each) is helpful only to the extent it culminates in financial support, which still typically happens through a donate page” (Lee). There is a clear disconnect between engagement and value in

the mindset of nonprofit organizations which is determining the value placement on visibility in a nonprofits priorities.

Traditionally organizations have been able to use an  $A + B = C$  model of success. For example, 500 supporters list + Christmas donation cards = 150 donations. Even if the success rate is miniscule or a complete failure it is definitive and easy to track. This method of tracking success is not a bad, however visibility and marketing potential cannot be measured using the same methods. Digital tools such as Facebook and social media cultivate a network of supporters and connect with an organization on multiple levels. Rather than seeing clear  $A + B = C$  results, visibility and marketing results are more of a spider web of potential making it more complex and harder to track. While the results are more complex it does not mean that visibility is less valuable.

By not seeing the value in digital communication and marketing nonprofits are missing the train of technology and also

hindering their potential to new resources, supporters, and volunteers. The lack of value is causing a lack of importance and there for minimal marketing is hurting the organizations potential from the start. A marketing strategy is the first step towards harnessing technology and growing visibility. “The first step in creating any nonprofit marketing strategy is defining who it is you are trying to reach. The alternative— skipping this step and creating outreach and fundraising campaigns for the general public—is a complete waste of time” (Miller). The concept that an organization has a target audience can be an uncomfortable notion for many organizations. They are passionate about their cause and want everyone to be involved but the reality is this strategy is not effective or realistic. “Unfortunately, many nonprofits are still pursuing outreach strategies for the general public that are, generally and predictably, a failure. They are so afraid they might offend someone that they end up impressing no one” (Miller). Vague and generalized marketing strategies simply no longer work in the present



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Vague and generalized marketing strategies simply no longer work in the present culture and by not making a plan and defining your audience your marketing will never be at the highest success rate it could possibly do.

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culture and by not making a plan and defining your audience your marketing will never be at the highest success rate it could possibly do.

Rather than looking at creating marketing strategies, defining their audience and then using the new digital tools available many organizations are still relying on old community based strategies. They have defaulted to organic advertising and their message is never communicated until someone in their current network of people shares with others, often deluding the organization's main message. "We traditionally had done things very lean and never spent money on advertising," explained Carter Johns. "We relied strictly on free public service advertising, and many of local affiliates created their own look. So, of course, the brand meaning was getting terribly fragmented. With an explosion in the number of nonprofit organizations and businesses supporting (a) cause, there was increasing confusion in the marketplace about who we were and how we are different. It's hard to build community when

your brand meaning isn't clear" (Daw, 178).

Community is important and way to grow your impact, but it should not be the main source of sharing/advertising. Harnessing technology in ways such as establishing an Internet and social media presence can have a far greater reach while giving the nonprofit full control on their brand and message. "Internet does best when used to engage people, it is this engagement that will sustain your organization over the long run" (Hart, 106). After establishing the importance of digital marketing the next step is to look at how effective these tools really are.

Since the public sector of business has the goal of selling monetary goods they are constantly perfecting the most efficient methods to communicate to a wide audience. "The first rule of any technology...is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is the automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency" (Bill Gates). The digital age has given a common foundation that several platforms have developed on (Web, Facebook,

Twitter, Instagram, etc) and has created an unbiased place for nonprofits to come and share their story. Successful marketing and branding can be seen in daily life and is reflective in the amount of influence companies such as Nike or Coke-Cola have today. Nike is recognized worldwide as a household brand that has been connected with the most elite athletes. Over the years they have continued to evolve and to stay in the top of their field after establishing their brand. “In 1973, they called their brand Nike after the Greek goddess of victory. A design student Carolyn Davidson created the famous ‘swoosh’ logo for \$35. Today, the estimated market value of Nike is about \$10.7 billion” (Living Media India Limited). This is one of many examples of how effective marketing strategies can grow a business. The Nike cooperation did not simply act on what they knew but continued to evolve, and add new marketing tools to their business toolbox as they developed. One of the largest tools Nike used was giving endorsements to up and coming athletes. “In 1985 the Jordan I was released in red and black to match the Chicago

Bulls uniform... The Jordan I went on to sell over \$130 million that season and Michael Jordan went on to become the greatest basketball player ever. In 1996 Michael Jordan created Jordan Brand, a division of Nike. In 2012, Jordan Brand controlled 58 percent of the U.S. basketball shoe market and is widely considered the elite brand for basketball footwear and apparel. Jordan’s endorsements have carried Nike to the top of the sneaker market and have inspired countless athletes, brands and sneaker designs” (Eby). The ability to see, utilize, brand and then capitalize on marketing tools is a huge reason for Nike’s success.

Though not common, some large nonprofit organizations have translated athlete endorsements into a marketing tool they utilize. Charity:Water has developed an excellent campaign where people can donate their birthday to raise funds. They have had many well-known people donate their birthdays such as Matt Hasselback who donated his thirty-fifth birthday. He was able to raise \$10,435 for clean water projects in Ethiopia (Charity:Water). While these endorsement-

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As explored there are a lot of resources available but the possible visibility in social media has the most potential in this current culture.

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based campaigns are often successful they are not easily created and often are not applicable to the standard organization. The important attribute to this tool is to cultivate a spirit of creativity in your organization's marketing and explore new ideas, tools, and technology.

Nonprofits are not selling products like a typical mainstream business so the marketing campaign will be different simply because of context. However, the underlining tools that these companies use to successfully engage their audience with their message is important to acknowledge and unlike athlete endorsements there are some tools that can be used no matter the size or connections the organization has. "The Internet has also given billions of people a voice in an unprecedented way, being able to reach and appeal to wider audiences. Even those living under repressive governments have been able to organize and communicate due to the Internet. But overall, the effects of the digital era have been unevenly felt, with some gaining the majority of the dividends while others lag behind. By

holding this conversation we aim to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" (Nah).

Being able to give a clear mission to a defined audience with a strategic marketing plan can yield much better results. "To define your audience, first you need to recognize that most nonprofits have multiple audiences...Call them your target audiences, target populations, supporters, participants, clients, newsletter readers, website visitors—whatever you like. Your next challenge is to segment those audiences into specific groups, held together by common characteristics or values. To do so, you'll need to define what ties the people in this group together, what they value, and how you can connect those values to your cause" (Miller). After a marketing strategy and defined audience is established the next step is to look at the methods of communication, advertising, and marketing. As explored there are a lot of resources available but the possible visibility in social media has the most potential in this current culture.

● POTENTIAL:

# SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE

● Social media has sprouted from the digital revolution and in a few short years has become a pillar in social networking, engagement and marketing campaigns. Defined by Merriam Webster, social media are “forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content

(photos or videos).” Examples of social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogging, and Snapchat. While a website can be stumbled upon without much direction, social media is creates more of a personal connection to supporters. “Social media is becoming more and more about one-on-one connections, rather than being a one-to-all type of communication platform. This means investing resources into doing social media well, including someone who is dedicated to social media management” (Dunham and Company). A parallel example would be the contrast in engagement with a newspaper ad and a door-to-door salesman in the 1950s. While the newspaper ad has the potential to reach more of the population it was not being seen by people with sparked interest. In contrast, the salesman that would engage in a conversation with an individual household would make a personal connection and spark more intentional interest from the audience. “The ability for any organization – no matter how small – to adopt cutting-edge social media technologies presents substantial

opportunities for a more level playing field. It also potentially ‘changes the game’ with respect to the types of resources and capacities organizations need and the strategies they may adopt in order to successfully capitalize on their social media presence” (Nah). The unique trait that runs through all social media platforms is the multiple uses in each. “Social media have provided nonprofit organizations with platforms for communicating with supporters. Social media allow nonprofits to determine their form of communication, frequency of communication, and level of interaction” (Sillah). In addition to communication an organization can also build incentives, events, and connect people about the work they are doing. All these ways of connecting with a new or current supporter base make it one step easier to go from learning about an organization to a long-term invested supporter.

Social media platforms have continued to grow and have become a stable source of information. “Social media has been relegated to a “marketing

thing” in many organizations—but it’s important for the development team to have a hand in your social media, especially in the responses. Marketing and development should work together to define who answers what types of questions and mentions, so everyone feels heard and donors feel appreciated” (Dunham and Company). Right off the starting line the ideal structure for using social media is a problem source for nonprofits. Organizations lacking the funding and people they need to be more effective with what they currently have so to ask them to spend more money or allocate a staff member’s time to a new set of tasks is an uphill battle. “Lack of funds, exhausting their resources and overshooting their budget are the common problems faced by NGOs. Social media will help them reach out to potential donors, social workers and other users – First and foremost social media sites are a platform for social interaction” (Campbell). Nonprofit organizations need to first understand the functionality social media has and the potential of support they could obtain because of it. After the potential

effectiveness and value is seen then there needs to be tangible ways to use social media without straining the current resources.

My grandmother recently turned 79 this year and has never had Internet in her house. That said she has had a smart phone with Facebook on it for two years and is one of the first people to like or comment on any of my posts. A key feature of social media’s value stems from the availability and use it has to the entire population of people. The growth of engagement in the last ten years has been consistently increasing from 2008 showing that 24% to now in 2017 81% of the United States population has some form of social media (Pew Research). While technology has been making huge steps forward specifically in smart phones and app development, social media platforms have began and transitioned with each new version.

With the ability to access social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook anytime, anywhere at just a few taps on a phone these platforms have



become a part of daily life. “Social platforms have become the new leaders in the digital media industry, evolving well past their beginnings as digital communication networks and becoming full-fledged media distribution channels and entertainment centers. Today social dominates users’ attention. Nearly 20% of total time spent online in the US across both desktop and mobile devices is on social platforms” (Adler). The amount of time people are spending on these social platforms is continuing to increase. A study arranged by Pew Research looked at the engagement levels in the United States population in 2013 and 2014. In the course of a year substantial growth can be seen.

“As in 2013, Pew Research asked users of each platform how often they engage with the site, whether on a daily, weekly or less frequent basis. Facebook users are highly engaged with the platform. Fully 70% say they use Facebook daily (including 45% who do so several times a day), a significant increase from the 63% who visited daily in August 2013. Most Facebook users are

actively engaging with their networks on the site. As opposed to simply reading or viewing content, 65% of Facebook users frequently or sometimes share, post or comment on Facebook” (Pew Research Center).

As social media is increasing its influence it is not limited to a specific age range. While the primary audience ranges from teenagers to young adults (ages 15-29) older generations, such as my grandmother, are becoming increasingly more active. “Fully 71% of online American adults use Facebook. Usage among seniors continues to increase. Some 56% of Internet users ages 65 and older now use Facebook, up from 45% who did so in late 2013 and 35% who did so in late 2012” (Pew Research Center). The reach these platforms have showcases the value they have to businesses. The ability to reach the majority of the population multiple times a day is incredible.

In the for-profit sector marketing leaders are seeing this potential and learning new ways to use

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The ability for any organization – no matter how small – to adopt cutting-edge social media technologies presents substantial opportunities for a more level playing field. It also potentially ‘changes the game’ with respect to the types of resources ...

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it for their companies benefit. “In an era when resources for social programs are scarce, the idea of scaling up well-performing efforts so that social problems are mitigated more efficiently, effectively, and widely has become compelling. Great interest has developed in finding the drivers of successful scaling of social impact that will allow innovative, smaller-scale social programs to move rapidly and efficiently from helping just a few people to helping more people more dramatically” (Bloom, 11). The value a social media presence lies in the potential exposure and networking an organization can tap into. Businesses are starting to showcase the number of followers on social media to show how much influence their business has and people have starting successful careers working in social media alone. With this new market universities have started developing degrees with social media marketing at the core of the programs. The influence of social media is constantly changing but one fact is certain, it is not a trend, and is not disappearing anytime soon.

Before looking at ways to build a social presence the next step is to understand the individual social media platforms and the value each has. I will primarily focus on the top three platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter due to the engagement levels and the diversity their audience has. All three of these platforms have a wide age range, are used in different ways, and have a community that is engaged daily. Each organization will have a more defined audience and supporter demographic however all three of these platforms can be used and could be beneficial to the organization no matter their location, size, or cause.

In 2017 it is harder to find a person that does not know what Facebook is than to find a person with an active account and is daily using both the mobile and desktop version. This online networking platform has continued to expand its tools increasing its influence and becoming entrenched as part of everyday culture. “Facebook is not really a website anymore. Rather, it’s a vast, branded utility. It’s like another

World Wide Web, but with a profit motive. As a communications technology, it has radically changed the ways we connect with one another. For many online users, Facebook is to our era as revolutionary as the telephone was a century earlier” (Rayport). As technology has continued to plow ahead there are new paths forming and Facebook is perhaps the biggest company to take full advantage of the digital era. What started as a networking site has become an outlet for sharing thoughts, photos and videos, posting jobs and volunteer opportunities, connecting with friends, family, and much more. The ability to connect with people across the world is addicting which is one factor helping increase the amount of people using it. “Facebook is magnetic as a function of its social engagement. People are drawn to it, because people are drawn to people. That’s why we gather in crowds for sporting events, political rallies, and mass celebrations on New Year’s Eve” (Rayport). With the constant stream of people checking on their Facebook network the conditions to expand visibility for an organization is perfect.



There are several ways organizations can use Facebook to expand their supporter network. The first step is to simply make an organization page. This is a page similar to a personal user page but has specific attributes pertinent to a business or nonprofit organization. By starting (and populating) a business page you are opening up the ability to share and post your organizations actions, stories, and the ability to receive messages from users.

Messaging is an action people can take to directly connect with your organization. Like emailing, Facebook messaging shows the entire conversation but unlike email, the user doesn't have to leave Facebook in order to write a private message to the organization. While the ability to message a supporter or potential supporter is beneficial the most value for visibility is in the ads and posting capabilities. The exposure an organization can have on just the Facebook social platform is huge and is only increasing with time. "Worldwide, there are over 1.86 billion monthly active Facebook users which is a 17 percent

increase year over year. (Source: Facebook as of 02/01/17). What this means for you: In case you had any lingering doubts, statistically, Facebook is too big to ignore. There are 1.15 billion mobile daily active users (Mobile DAU) for December 2016, an increase of 23 percent year-over-year" (Zephoria Digital Marketing). The good news for organizations is there is huge potential making is a valuable use of time and resource to build a Facebook presence.

Facebook ads are common to for-profit businesses but are still not commonly used for nonprofit organizations. While these are paid advertisements the benefit is they can be focused to the nonprofit's ideal supporter network. A parallel marketing piece would be a billboard. The local community sees the billboard most often and therefore it has the most impact on that community within a certain radius. Facebook ads can be tailored to show in certain areas (perhaps surrounding the multiple locations where an organization is working) but in addition to gaining exposure

to that community the ad can be clicked on and led the person to take action. Facebook ads are not limited to the current network the organization holds which is excellent for gaining new supporters in the community. “(Facebook) serves one in four of every display ad on the Web. It accounts for nearly 10 percent of total time spent online by U.S. Web users (just ahead of Google)” (Rayport). These ads can be modified and with a little fine-tuning can increase an organizations exposure. The organization pays for leads and impressions and has a cost-per-click model. The down side is an organization that is interested in Facebook ads is competing for the same real estate as all the other businesses. The more influential and better visibility an ad can have the higher the cost of that placement.

Unlike Facebook ads, posting is free to an organization. While they can boost a post or pay to have it more visible, the initial cost of posting on this platform is free. Organizations can post about whatever they are doing and the

media includes text, hyperlinks, photography, and videos. By posting about your organization the voice and works you are doing can be shared daily. This daily exposure helps to build a relationship with your community and supporter network. “It’s like a new global telephone network, except that, rather than carry voice and data, its “content” is personal profiles and connections; rich media; real-time messaging; and an endless array of features, functions, and third-party apps” (Rayport). The good news is the amount you can post is not limited however it does take time and resources to create posts and content. Facebook does allow you to schedule out posts and preview them but does not do as well of a job showing the reports in direct connection to a single post. The good news is the traffic and potential is enough to make Facebook and other platforms a priority in marketing planning. With the average visit being 20 minutes (Infodocket) there is time to make an impression on a large audience and translate effort into positive results.

Instagram is another popular social media platform that is centered on sharing photography and videos. “Instagram is a fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures. Snap a photo with your mobile phone, then choose a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever” (Instagram). This platform is more focused than Facebook on the tasks and experiences a user has. It was purchased by Facebook in 2012 and since has made transitions to become more integrated with Facebook. One example of this crossover is the ability to create a post on Instagram and post to Facebook as well without leaving the app. Facebook has expanded this feature to other platforms including Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr, and Swarm. While it may appear to be a smaller social media tool the focus of Instagram is one of its strengths.

At the core Instagram is a platform to share videos and photography. People can follow friends, interests, and organizations with accounts and like, comment, and repost their

posts. The clear purpose people can easily more and within the platform and with little guidance start using the platform. Almost 50% of Americans daily use Instagram and the engagement levels are even better than Facebook. “Instagram engagement is approximately 3.5 percent more than Facebook and Twitter. The bottom line, Instagram engagement delivered 58 percent more engagement than Facebook; 120 times more than Twitter. While currently, Instagram is closing in on 500M viewers (2017), it is projected to have one billion users within three years” (Serio). Instagram capitalizes on the truth that people become more engaged in visual storytelling. They can like, comment, message, or share a post and by doing so start to feel a connection to the organization. This platform is an excellent way to share pieces of your organization’s story one post at a time or continues to grow on your foundation by sharing updates and new work. Geotags or digital tags that link your image to a location connect your post with a community and can boost

your visibility. Instagram defines geotagging as “a technical term for storing the latitude and longitude of your current location with your photo. This data is collected by the GPS device in your phone or tablet and is accessible to Instagram if you grant permission.” Geotagging can be beneficial for a few reasons but one is the exposure you get as well as the content from your support base. “Geotagged images allow you to source user generated content (UGC). All of these posts are content created by your audience and customers. If they are publicly sharing their experiences, you can regram that content (if it’s in line with your strategy and branding) to your account. This acknowledges your existing customers and shows them appreciation but it also shows you audience another perspective of your business” (Herman).

Another important element in a post is hashtags. Hashtags are most effective in Instagram and Twitter and are summary keywords that allow a wide audience to search and find your post easier. “A hashtag is a label used on social

media sites that makes it easier to find posts or information with a theme or contains specific content. Hashtags simplify the process—Searching a hashtag pulls results for each post using that hashtag. Using a hashtag helps you reach your target audience, and likewise makes it easier for others to find your information. Hashtags compel an action—When a user sees a post that is of interest, they will likely spend time looking through content brought up by the hashtag.”(Taylor). For example if you posted a picture of a group of volunteers painting a house your caption may read ‘Thankful for wonderful volunteers who aren’t afraid to get messy’. By only having the caption the search will only pick up on words in the caption (such as volunteer) however if you added hashtags that are commonly used such as #nonprofit #BeTheChange #community your post will appear in many more searches. Being in more searches means your organization is expanding visibility, which is the first step to expanding your supporter network and gaining valuable resources.



Twitter is another social media platform that utilizes hashtag like Instagram however, unlike Instagram, Twitter focuses on text rather than imagery. “Twitter has become the de facto way of sending instant news about a fresh offer to hundreds or even thousands of potential customers. And businesses are finding that they can pick up a business contact or receive customer feedback within minutes because of a simple tweet” (Kate Horstead). Twitter can be a way to establish an informal, familiar and personal relationship with your network. It is a platform that can be used to easily dispense information quickly to a large audience.

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are all social media platforms that have unique benefits but all help expanding your organization’s visibility. “Every opportunity you have to syndicate your content and increase your visibility is valuable. Your social media networks are just new channels for your brand’s voice and content. This is important because it simultaneously makes you easier

and more accessible for new customers, and makes you more familiar and recognizable for existing customers” (DeMeyers). Visibility has potential to help an organization in every way not only by introducing the organization to new people but also maintaining and engaging the current supporter base. Social media is a new sector of marketing tools however while it may be young it is powerful and utilizing platforms such as Facebook and Twitter can produce incredible results.

## SUMMARY

# RESEARCH WRAP UP

The American Red Cross is a good example of a nonprofit organization using social media to expand their visibility and the methods they used are very common when looking at for-profit companies. These companies are working for a profit and do not have the same strong value-driven brand but are consistently more successful at marketing due to

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What the organization says is determined by their mission but the way they can communicate their mission can be shared across many different platforms.

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the time they spend and marketing methods they implement. Making a marketing plan, establishing a comprehensive brand, then utilizing the new digital resources organizations can expand their visibility. “Every opportunity you have to syndicate your content and increase your visibility is valuable. Your social media networks are just new channels for your brand’s voice and content. This is important because it simultaneously makes you easier and more accessible for new customers, and makes you more familiar and recognizable for existing customers” (DeMeyers).

The benefit of expanding visibility is it will expand your supporter network creating a larger base to gather other needed resources such as funding or volunteers.

In addition to case studies and literature reviews I have partnered with Project World Impact to further explore the climate of nonprofit marketing. This marketing firm’s mission is to help connect nonprofits with new, valuable tools ranging from marketing, networking,

funding, volunteering, and more. “Project World Impact is an online hub that connects socially-conscious people with organizations working to affect positive change in the world.” PWI has developed a central online hub for nonprofits to connect to a global community of both organizations and like-minded people. I have partnered with them to find the critical needs of organizations and possible solutions the PWI team can develop. While I am diving into the research and possible solutions the PWI team is excited to be able to give the direct feedback of nonprofits in their network to someone to develop marketing tools.

By combining the knowledge obtained from research, and communicating with the Project World Impact team (and their network) I established a clear foundation for why visibility is critical to nonprofits. I then made brainstorming organizers, and task lists to see what available resources could be reorganized to function better for the overall welfare of the organization. After finding the potential

I developed several possible solutions that I partnered with Project World Impact to work through. The team met with me and developed a strategic plan of the best solutions and weighed how much benefit verses how much cost it would take for each solution. With the collaboration of the PWI team and research findings I have created a tool that will be beneficial to all nonprofit organization, no matter the size or location.

The background is a solid teal color. There are several vertical lines of varying lengths and colors (white and light teal) extending from the top and bottom edges. Each line ends with a small circular dot of the same color. The lines are positioned at approximately 18%, 57%, 73%, and 77% of the width from the left edge.

THESIS PROJECT

# PART 2

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## PART 2

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● DESIGN PROCESS

# THE PROBLEM

Rather than searching for additional donors or scrapping together additional volunteers, I believe the key between nonprofit organizations staying afloat and thriving, lies in expanding their visibility. The first step is to see the available potential areas of growth and then translate the potential into results. The next step in expanding visibility is to see the obstacles nonprofits currently face and build a set of tools that will help nonprofit organizations overcome them.

If people are able to find out about an organization and their mission, they are provided with the opportunity to learn, support, donate, and become involved with the organization. Nonprofits need to understand the potential success they could have with digital marketing in an easy, tangible way before they will allocate time and limited resources on a digital campaign.

Questions first must be answered before moving forward. Why should visibility be focused on? Why is it important to have clear, quality branding? Who is the audience that nonprofits

should be trying to reach? What digital forms of communication are out there and which have value? And lastly, what tools can be created to help harness all this knowledge together to connect nonprofits with the potential found in visibility? I have fully explored these questions in Part 1: Research of this thesis and now am developing a social media tool to tap into the potential I have found in social media marketing.

As I have researched I have also developed a relationship with Project World Impact whose mission is to equip nonprofits and connect them to a global network of like-minded supporters. All research and preliminary design has been executed independently from Project World Impact however the first build of this product will be in collaboration of PWI.



The background features several vertical lines of varying lengths and colors (white and light grey) with small circular dots at their ends, creating a minimalist, architectural aesthetic.

DESIGN PROCESS

# COLLABORATION WITH PWI



[www.projectworldimpact.com](http://www.projectworldimpact.com)

Through the past sixteen weeks I have been collaborating with Project World Impact to develop tools that are beneficial for nonprofit organizations. I found the organization last year as I was developing my thesis and wanted to find an organization that was forward thinking as well as cause-minded. A small snapshot of Project World Impact and their history:

*Project World Impact is an online hub that connects socially conscious people with organizations working to affect positive change in*

*the world. The vision for PWI was born when our founder and CEO, Chris Lesner, decided to apply his extensive marketing expertise to help nonprofits raise money, gain visibility, and further their mission. After being inspired by the needs of the nonprofits he encountered, Chris left his company and assembled the PWI team. Each team member at PWI is skilled, hard working, and passionate about helping nonprofits connect with supporters and expand their impact.*

- Bill Lesner, Project World Impact

● DESIGN PROCESS

# THE SOLUTION

By increasing an organization's visibility it increases the overall awareness with the general population creating a large supporter network, more donors, and more volunteers. While researching the needs of nonprofits and the marketing tools that are available in the digital world I found a huge gap between nonprofits and social media. One of the main sources of visibility in the current culture is through social media and it is not a trend to will be disappearing. Social media has become a tool for companies, individuals, and groups to communicate and connect with others.

“Nonprofits overwhelmingly (88%) said their most important communication tools were email and their websites, even though fully 97% of them are on Facebook. This may have to do with the fact that in their mind, the pinnacle of engagement is a donation (47%). Clearly, simply getting folks to retweet or comment (18% each) is helpful only to the extent it culminates in financial support, which still typically happens through a donate page” (Lee).

Knowledge, time, and skill are the three major roadblocks between nonprofits and social media. While these organizations can easily be educated on the importance of this marketing potential the time and staff support needed to build a social media presence is still a problem many organizations face. Due to this need I developed a software tool that will allow a nonprofit to connect to all social media platforms, quickly see what is trending in their demographic, and schedule posts in advance. This not only saves time but allows an organization to plan ahead and build successful social media campaigns. The tool is called SoapBox.

DESIGN PROCESS

SAY HELLO TO  
**SOAPBOX**



When researching for visual inspiration and brain web mapping I keep circling back to the idea that before technology there was a simple way of standing out in a crowd. People would grab a box, stand on top, and start to voice their opinion. The slang of ‘get off your soapbox’ is still used even as the communication tools have changed. The product Soapbox is a platform for all-social media

scheduling and is an organizations platform to showcase their voice. The ability to see trends in multiple communication, schedule posts ahead of time, and track engagement will save organizations time and resources.

● DESIGN PROCESS ●

# COMPARABLE PRODUCTS



There are a few social media schedulers currently on the marketing however they have not been tailored to the needs of nonprofits. The biggest hole is with all the programs they served one or two media forms (such as Twitter and Facebook) but not all platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

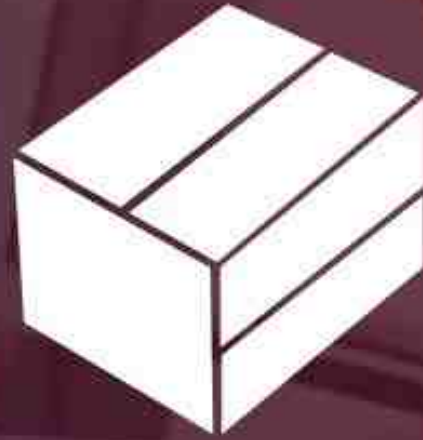


“ We know our organization will only be successful if we engage a community of people who join with us to make this possible. We invite them to be part of us and aim to be part of them. ”

ANTONI CIMOLINO

● DESIGN PROCESS

# PRODUCT BRANDING



# SOAPBOX

YOUR PLATFORM FOR ALL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING

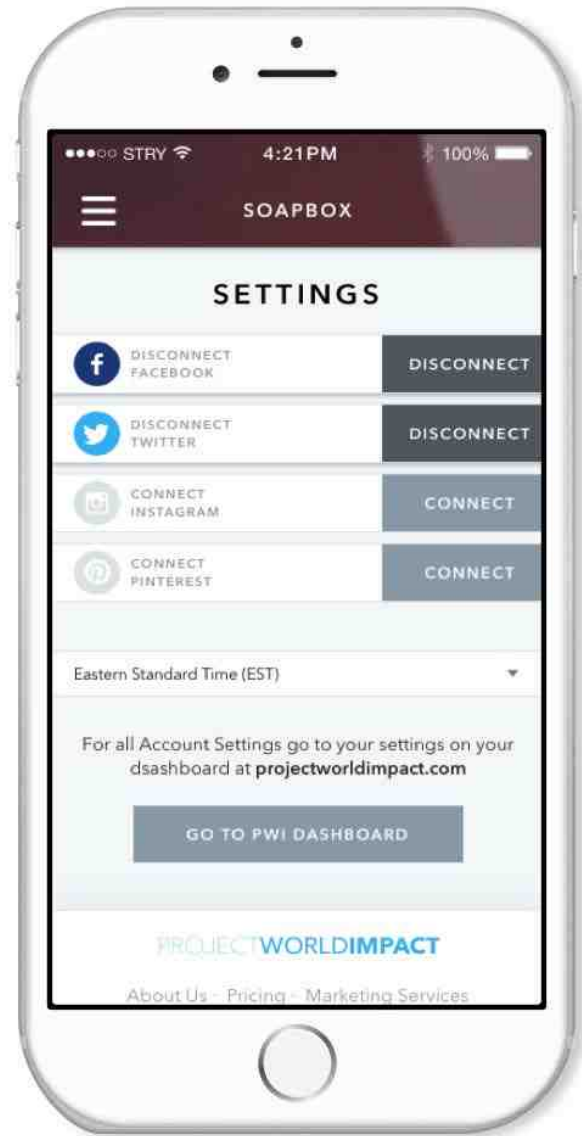
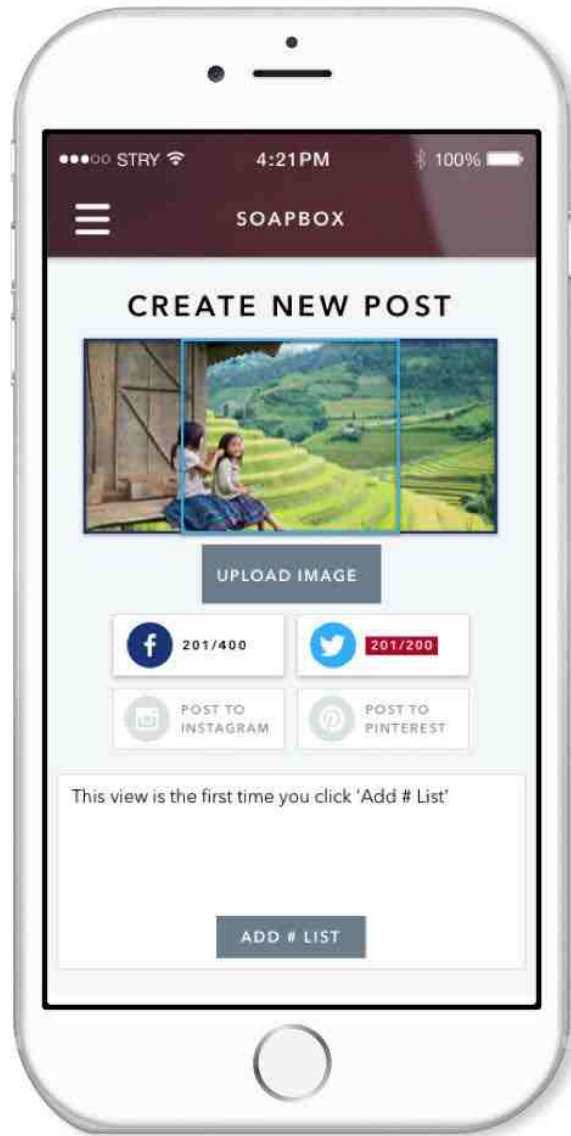
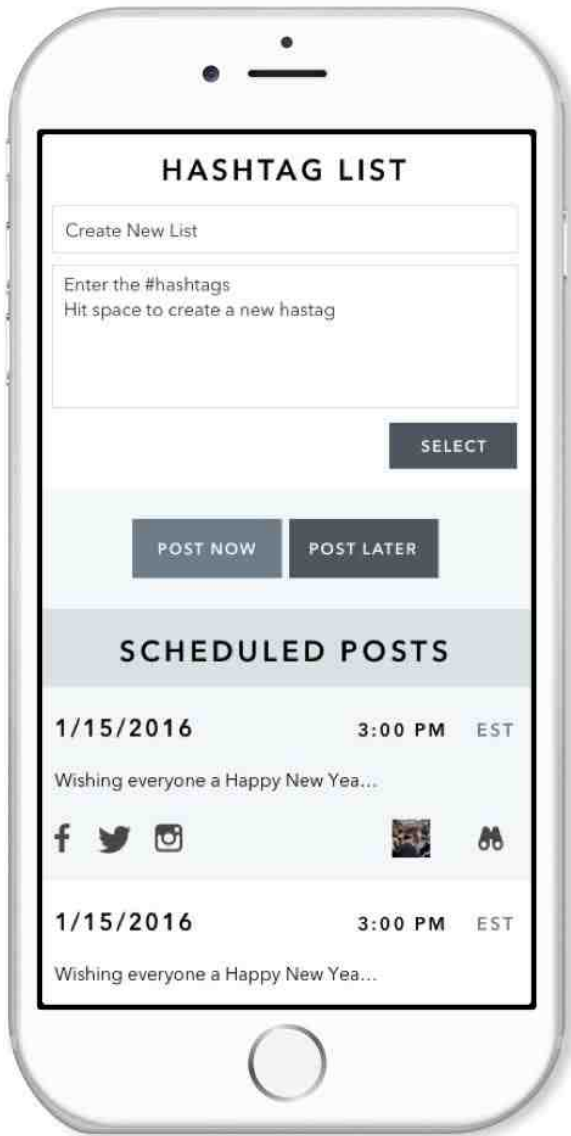


SoapBox is the first social media scheduler made specifically for nonprofits. Some scheduler apps limit you to one or two platforms or limit scheduling features on certain social platforms.



With SoapBox , you can easily schedule, manage, and publish content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. Receive specific nonprofit insights, stay trending, and keep your followers engaged throughout the day and night. Use the same set of hashtags frequently? Create and manage saved lists that include your most used hashtags (along with other suggestions) and easily insert them into your posts.

You set the schedule and provide the content and the rest happens effortlessly









COUNT

SCHEDULE NEW

COVER 

**TWITTER TRENDING WORLDWIDE**

**18 MINUTES AGO**

#FelizMartes

Renato Sanches

#EuQueriaMesmoEraTa

#RecountVP

#LIKEIWOULD

**1 HOUR AGO**

#FelizMartes

Renato Sanches

#EuQueriaMesmoEraTa

#RecountVP

#LIKEIWOULD

**2 HOURS AGO**

#FelizMartes

Renato Sanches

#EuQueriaMesmoE

#RecountVP

#LIKEIWOULD

**TWITTER TRENDING UNITED STATES**

**18 MINUTES AGO**

**1 HOUR AGO**

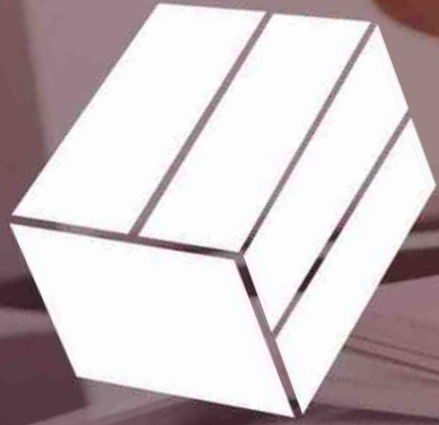
#FelizMartes

Renato Sanches

QueriaMesmoEraTa

#Feliz

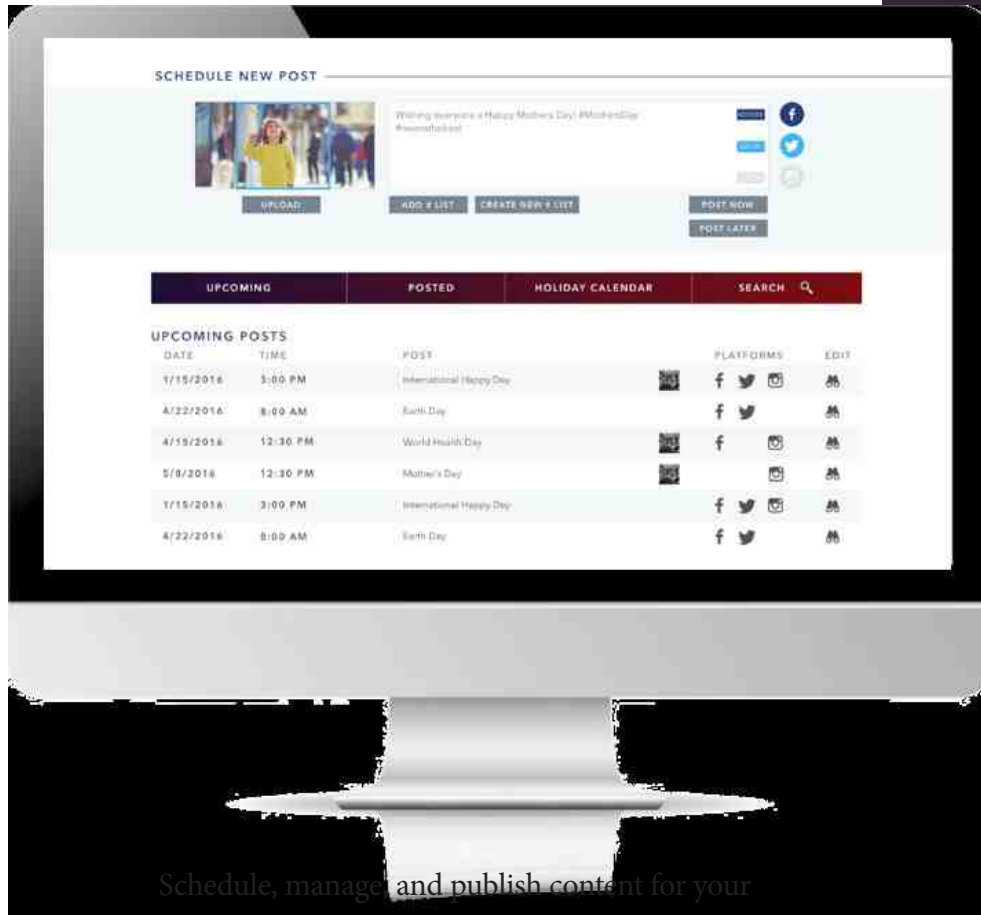
Re



# SOAPBOX

YOUR PLATFORM FOR  
ALL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING

...social media ahead of time something else  
...awesome this business tool is.



Schedule, manage and publish content for your nonprofit on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram).

**SOAPBOX**  
YOUR PLATFORM FOR ALL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING

Schedule your social media ahead of time something else here about how awesome this business tool is.

f t i p

**FEATURES**

Some scheduler apps limit you to one or two social platforms or limit scheduling features on certain social platforms. With Soapbox, we allow you to easily schedule, manage, and publish content on all of the big four social media networks: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Features include viewing your upcoming and past posts, photo uploads, and scheduling the same post on multiple platforms at once. Use the same set of hashtags frequently? Create and saved lists that include your most used hashtags and easily insert them into the post.

**WHY DO SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING?**

And according to Social Media Examiner, 97% of marketers are currently participating in social media-but 85% of participants aren't sure what social media tools are the best to use. This demonstrates a huge potential for social media marketing to increase sales, but a lack of understanding on how to achieve those results. Here's a look at just some of the ways social media marketing can improve your business.

- 1. Increased Brand Recognition**  
Your social media networks are just new channels for your brand's voice and content.
- 2. Improved Brand Loyalty**  
Published by CommerceConvert, 33% of Americans who follow brands in social are more loyal to those brands.
- 3. More Opportunity to Convert**  
Every post you make is an opportunity to share your story and connect by standards to loyal supporters.
- 4. Speak the Language**  
Studies have shown that social media has a 100% higher lead-to-close rate than outbound marketing.
- 5. Know your Audience**  
See what is trending and connect with what people are interested in.

**PRICING**

This would only be relevant for organizations that currently do not qualify for the PWR membership. Are you a nonprofit and interested in becoming a member? Visit [projectworldimpact.com/register](http://projectworldimpact.com/register) to get started today!

NONPROFIT	BUSINESS
<p>✔ Connect with 10 Social Accounts</p> <p>Up to 4 Team Member Log In</p> <p style="background-color: #2c3e50; color: white; padding: 5px;"><b>FREE</b> <small>With PWR Membership!</small></p>	<p>✔ Connect with 10 Social Accounts</p> <p>Up to 12 Team Member Log In</p> <p style="background-color: #2c3e50; color: white; padding: 5px;"><b>\$2,000</b> <small>Yearly</small></p>

PROJECTWORLDIMPACT    Terms   Privacy   FAQ   Marketing   Support Center    f t i p

“


Nonprofits overwhelmingly (88%) said their most important communication tools were email and their websites, even though fully 97% of them are on Facebook. This may have to do with the fact that in their mind, the pinnacle of engagement is a donation (47%). Clearly, simply getting folks to retweet or comment (18% each) is helpful only to the extent it culminates in financial support, which still typically happens through a donate page.


KEVAN LEE

”

## CREATE NEW POSTS



 111 X 111 Pixels preferred  
(light blue line preview)

 111 X 111 Pixels preferred  
(light blue line preview)

UPLOAD IMAGE

 WORD COUNT  
201/400

 WORD COUNT  
201/200

 POST TO  
INSTAGRAM

 POST TO  
PINTEREST










One of Poland's major health concerns is air pollution. After the construction of coal power units  
#GetInvolved and #MakeADifference on projectworldimpact.com! #Health #GlobalHealth #GiveBack  
#nonprofit #charity #donate #DoGood #PWI bit.ly/2jhRJsI

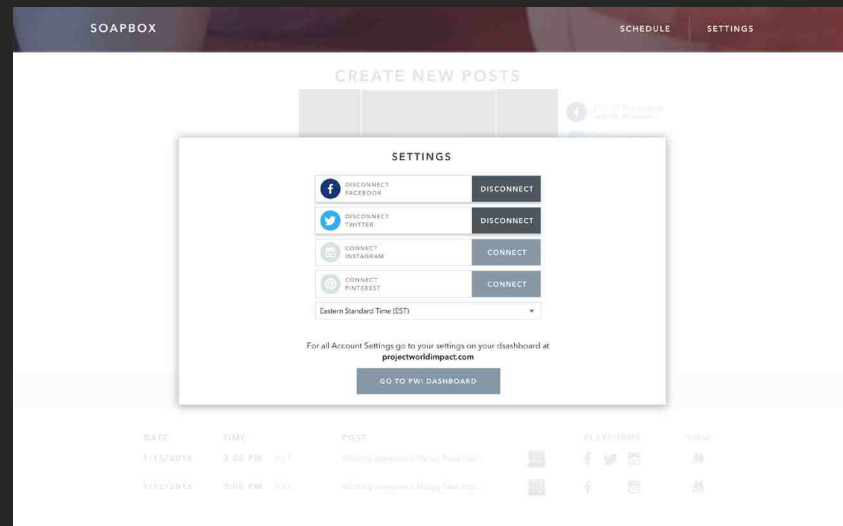
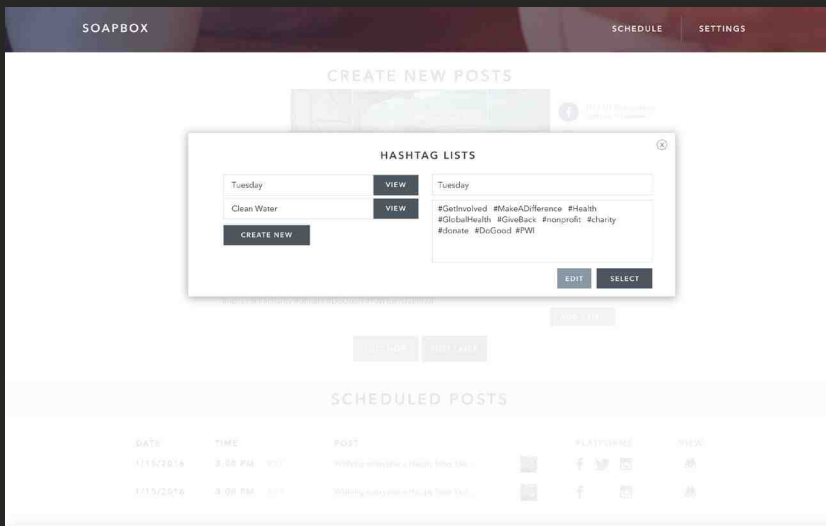
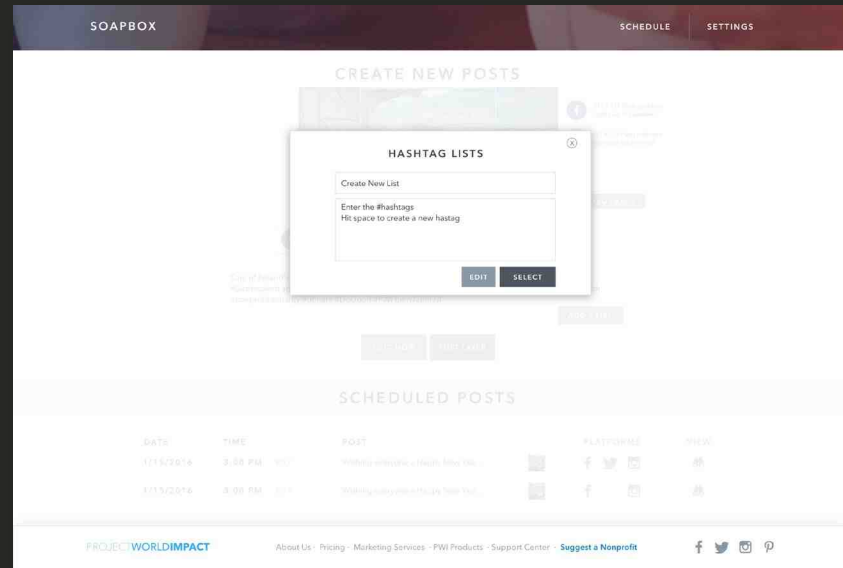
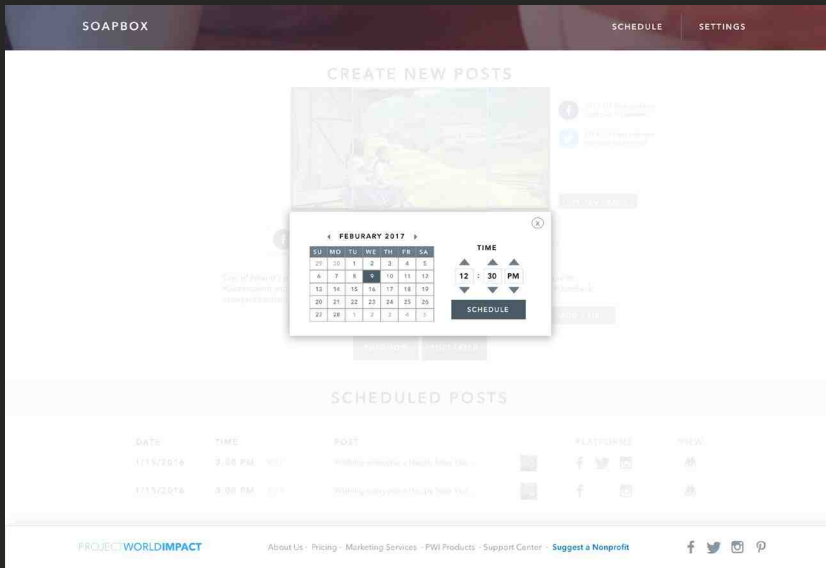
ADD # LIST

POST NOW

POST LATER

## SCHEDULED POSTS

DATE	TIME	POST	PLATFORMS	VIEW
1/15/2016	3:00 PM	Wishing everyone a Happy New Yea... 	  	
1/15/2016	3:00 PM	Wishing everyone a Happy New Yea... 	 	





● RESEARCH SUMMARY

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# TOOLS OF CHANGE

*Equipping Nonprofits with the Tools to Inspire Change*

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