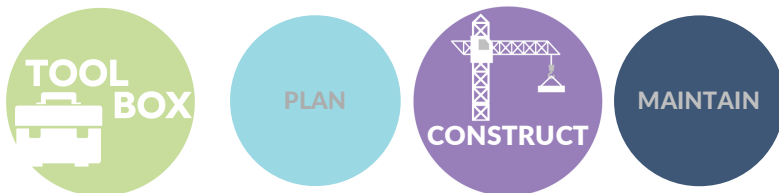


USING TECHNOLOGY FOR FUNDRAISING



Advancing technology is both a friend and foe to nonprofits, as the desire to stay current often conflicts with financial constraints. Organizations may feel frustrated trying to keep up, but **a lot of useful and basic technology can help you develop funds** – without using all of your current funds in the process.



Your primary technology focus for fundraising should be your organization's own website. If donors are interested in your program, one of their first acts will be to search you. If the website is out of date, disorganized, or confusing, some will stop looking. Before beginning fund development, investing in an experienced web designer or having a skilled employee devote time to your site is essential. **Think of this as a visual representation of everything happening in your program.**

Websites might have:

- A welcoming home page and an inviting introduction to the program.
- Current contact information for administrators and/or Board Members.
- Headlines for upcoming events and/or a link to a calendar.
- A recent newsletter or publication.
- Clear descriptions of services provided and how to access them.
- Testimonials from a few perspectives highlighting the positive impact of the program.
- A photo gallery, within the guidelines of appropriate confidentiality.
- Opportunities for volunteering, touring, or becoming more involved.
- A Thank-You section devoted to recognizing your current sponsors (with permission).
- A donation link, preferably with the ability to donate online immediately.



Social Media

Nearly as important as your main website is your agency's presence in social media. A potential donor might search you first via social media before even trying your website. As the name implies, **these types of communication lead to social interaction, meaning you can engage large numbers quickly and use the power of social messaging to your advantage.** In many cases, a small bit of information experiences exponential growth with little effort, replacing the need for expensive advertising.

If you plan to use social media, you might consider implementing clear policies about social media content, the ability for others to comment or participate, and how you will address misunderstandings that happen publicly online. Have a system of checks for approving wording and only a few people in charge of official posts. Everyone associated with your organization should be aware of and agree to certain conduct rules when interacting online professionally.



Video

You can enhance your online presence, whether on your website, in emails, or social media, by incorporating video to supplement text and photos. **A short piece featuring your program, testimonials, or your role in the community can weave music, images, voices, and story into one powerful visual.** If done well and promoted correctly, a video can deliver a compelling and emotional message. Use the video to encourage viewers to act.

Production does not have to be expensive, but should have a polished feel. A local college or high school audio-visual club often provide talented workers who want experience or course credit. You may also consider asking a local TV station for the donation of time or consultation.



Email Lists

Email lists are likely the **most common basic technology for communicating about a program.** It's important to remember just a few tips for this tried and true method:

- More is not always better. Communicate often enough to keep readers interested and feeling valued, but not so often that they start tuning you out and deleting messages.
- **Give back as much as you ask.** Do not focus every email on asking for more money or more help. Vary the information each time and highlight the bright spots happening in your agency.
- Respect people's privacy. Remove names promptly from the list if you are asked to do so, and thank them for their previous participation.
- Recognize when there are people on your list who do not use email and would be better reached through a different method.



Feedback

Don't forget that technology is not just helpful for sending your message out, but also for **soliciting feedback and helping your organization improve**. You can utilize your email list and your online presence to conduct surveys about previous fundraising events, campaigns, publications, and services. As referenced in several of the **Plan** and **Maintain** articles, asking your donors for their input and advice makes them feel valued and contributes to future loyalty.



Mobility

When designing electronic communication, whether for current partners, potential donors, staff, or clients, remember that most people read a high percentage of their messages on the go. **Make sure newsletters and donation emails can be viewed on a mobile device**. A message or document that won't open easily is likely to get quickly deleted and forgotten.



Consistency

Be consistent in your message regardless of the method of communication. Donors want to know their money supports a clear goal, so **seeing the same themes emerge in emails, newsletters, social media, and on your website as they have already read in a mailing or on a flyer inspires confidence in the strength and stability of your program**. Review your messaging goals frequently within your team to stay on course and focused.