

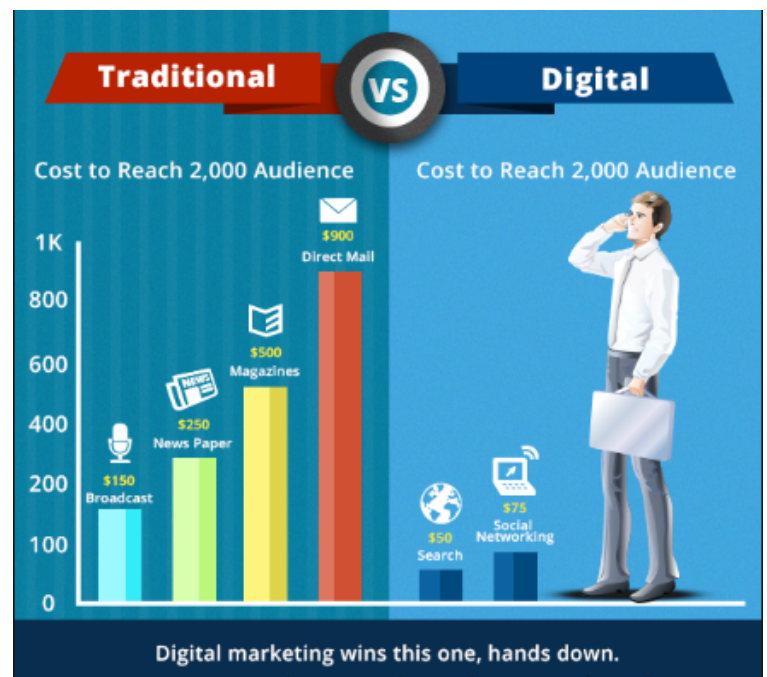
Digital Strategy and Non-Governmental Organizations

By Hannah Clark

Value

Since NGOs are in the nonprofit realm, they rely on donations to keep their organization running. In order to change the world, NGOs need supporters who stand behind their vision. The world is growing more and more digital; fading are the days of print newsletters, TV ads, and catalogs. Most of the potential audience for an NGO looking for donations will be online. If an organization does not have a good website, social media, or advertising campaigns, there will be little to attract potential donors.

A startup NGO has decided to optimize its social media, SEO, advertising campaigns, and its website. However, they do not begin to see any results. No one seems to want to donate, or even sign up for your newsletter. This may be because they have focused on each entity separately rather than all together.

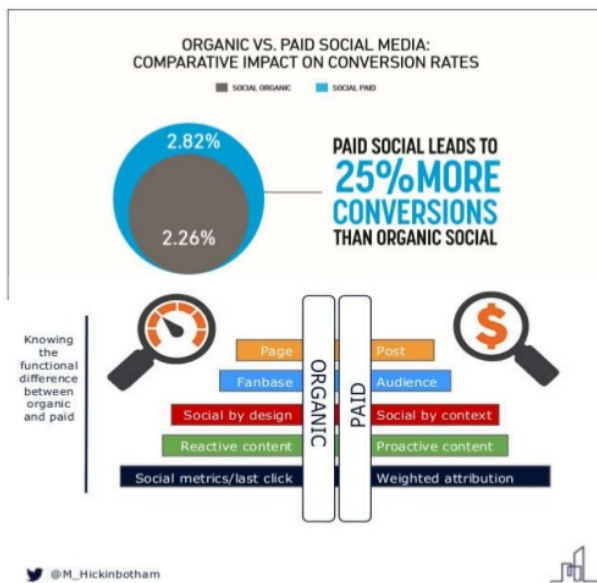


Graphic 1: Traditional vs. Digital Marketing

What are the goals for an organization? Is each platform working together to help you achieve that goal?

The value of a holistic digital strategy is that potential donors will be informed about and pointed to one place: the essence of what an organization is. If ads do not reflect the same purpose and goal as social media, how will donors know what an organization is about? The value of paid advertising is that it allows for reach to a wide audience and direct them to a specific, targeted place. Social media also leads to respect and reputation for an organizational brand. SEO is essential because search engines are the platform on which NGOs can meet their audiences where they are. In terms of cost effectiveness, digital marketing is a much more cost-effective way to get the name of the organization known across different platforms, as evidenced by the infographic above.¹

Paid v. Organic Content



Graphic 2: Paid vs. Organic Content

Paid content is content, usually in the form of an ad, that enables organizations to reach a wider audience than they would normally. The organization will pay the platform, whether it be the search engine or the social media site, to distribute content across their platform. Organic content, however, is content generated by the organization, via their website or social media,

that they can optimize to naturally show up on search results. The content can be geared towards certain tags or keywords, but is not distributed in exchange for

¹ Mercer, C. (2014, July 7). Traditional vs. Online Marketing. Retrieved from <https://seriouslysimplemarketing.com/traditional-vs-online-marketing/>

payment. The differences between paid and organic content are outlined in Graphic 2.²

The value of paid content is that it is not limited to a single platform or page of a search engine. Paid content allows for advertisement across multiple outlets and pages on the Internet. It also is easily accessible to potential audiences, and can be targeted to those audiences.³ Organic content has value in that it challenges organizations to have the best possible online platform. It helps organizations find their niche online, a unique place or search page that only they can fill. Organizations who are able to gain a high standing in organic searches are likely to remain there, meaning their hard work will pay off.⁴ A strategy for both types of content is essential because solely organic or paid content can only go so far. If an organization has stellar ads, but poor website setup, then people in an audience may not want to return. If an organization has outstanding website content that shows up in organic searches, but does not invest in paid content, they are missing out on a large audience that could help them expand.

There are two types of paid content: that which is distributed via social media and via search engine. Paid social media content is limited to the platform on which you choose to promote, except those platforms which are linked. For example, your Facebook ad can show up on Instagram, but not Snapchat since the platforms are not owned by the same company. Paid social media content will link back to the organization's page or website. Paid search engine content is not limited to one website. When using Google AdWords, one can choose to have their ad distributed on the Display Network, which is a network of websites and search engines, such as Google Shopping and YouTube.

² SGC Softech. (2017, April 13). Purpose of facebook | why your business needs facebook | Organic vs Paid Facebook Result | Sgc Softech. Retrieved from www.slideshare.net

³ Shethna, J. (2017, August 22). Paid Search vs Organic Search - Learn the Difference. Retrieved from <https://www.educba.com/paid-search-vs-organic-search/>

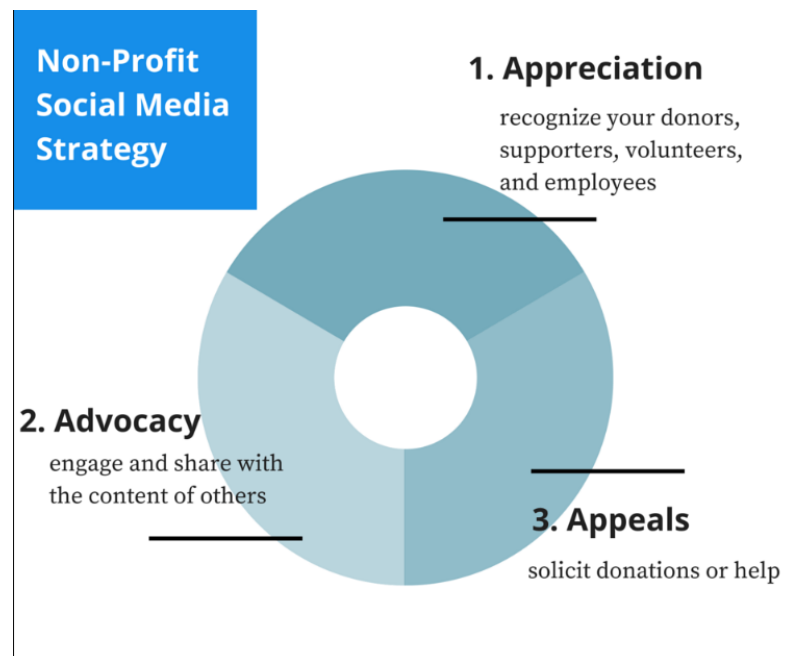
⁴ Shethna, J. (2017, August 22). Paid Search vs Organic Search - Learn the Difference. Retrieved from <https://www.educba.com/paid-search-vs-organic-search/>

The Role of Social

Audiences are more likely to hear about an organization via social media rather than organic search. This is simply because if paid content is implemented, the user will have the content shown to them rather than having to seek it out. Good social media incites and audience's curiosity. If best practices are implemented to tell the story of an organization, the profile will lead them to the owned space or website if it is linked. Best practices to make one's social media content and website content complement one another is to overlap the subject matter of content. Start the conversation about the work of the organization on social media, then expand it on the website. Having a blog or press releases helps supplement social media content. Organizations need both because there are so many people who are more likely to find your organization on social media than on the Internet. SEO can only go so far; social media is much more accessible. Social media can also be a substitute for a newsletter; also able to be real-time in terms of providing updates.

Social media can be used to aid in engagement and the different types of conversions for an NGO, as illustrated in Graphic 3.⁵

Within social media, it is important to utilize both paid and organic content to draw audiences to both the profile and the site. The primary purpose of organic content is to build a brand



Graphic 3: Social Media Strategies for Nonprofits

⁵ Lee, K. (2015, June 16). Social Media for Non-Profits: High-Impact Tips and the Best Free Tools. Retrieved from <https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-non-profits>

following and loyalty, while paid content is useful for building awareness and short-term influence.⁶

Tools

Google Analytics helps organizations keep a close eye on the performance of their website, and how it can be optimized to have improved performance. Analytics tracks performance of certain pages and elements, and collects demographic information to know an audience better. The various ways to track clicks and conversions show the real-time results of a campaign, whether it be advertising or SEO. One of the best ways to track performance of an organization's campaign is via UTM codes, which are bits of code that can be attached to a URL that track the source and medium of the campaign. UTM codes can be used to track both online and offline campaigns, measuring the rate at which users make conversions based on the campaigns that brought them to the site.⁷ An example

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http://www.abcppc.com/?  
utm_source=Chicago%2BTribune&utm_medium=Newspaper%2BOctober&  
utm_campaign=Chicago%2BPPC%2BSale
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of what a UTM code looks like can be found in Graphic 4.⁸

Graphic 4: UTM Code

The most useful Analytics reports that can be used by NGOs are the Traffic Acquisition and Landing Pages reports.⁹ The Traffic Acquisition Report tracks the sources and media from which users landed on the website. It displays whether users came from another website that linked the site, a search engine, social media, or a direct input of the URL. The Landing Pages Report measures which

⁶ Patrick, S. (2017, February 22). Paid vs. Organic Social Media: How to Strike the Right Balance. Retrieved from <https://www.business.com/articles/sarah-patrick-paid-vs-organic-social-media/>

⁷ Launch Digital Marketing. (2012, September 26). UTM Codes to Track All of Your Marketing Campaigns. Retrieved from <https://www.launchdigitalmarketing.com/what-are-utm-codes/>

⁸ Retrieved from <https://www.launchdigitalmarketing.com/what-are-utm-codes/>

⁹ Saleh, K. (2016, May 30). 7 essential Google Analytics Reports every marketer should know. Retrieved from searchengineland.com

pages users came to first, and how successful the pages were in keeping them and leading them to a conversion.

Other effective tools in helping an organization jumpstart their digital strategy are Meltwater, Google AdWords, and Google Webmaster Tools. Meltwater is a tool that creates reports based on social media data. The reports can be made into customizable dashboards, with data including a global heat map, a diagram of social media sources, media exposure, and social reach. These dashboards can be centered around specific users or keywords and tags. Meltwater helps organizations determine what aspects of social media are worth investing in, and how they can find their niche within each platform. Google Adwords allows organizations to create advertising campaigns across multiple platforms, whether it be the Google Search Engine Results Page (SERP), or via the Display Network, a web of connected websites that are able to distribute the created ad. AdWords also has the tool of a Keyword Planner that aids in the optimization of which keywords to distribute for for each ad. AdWords can also be connected to Analytics to track the performance of each campaign and collect more data. The final tool to aid NGOs in their digital strategy is Google Webmaster Tools. This is an interface that helps a user determine whether their website is falling into all necessary parameters and collects data regarding search traffic in order to improve SEO.¹⁰

The NGO Sector

For NGOs to be relevant online, they must be driven by the desire to affect social change. This means that their online content must address socially relevant issues in a new and creative way. Two campaigns that have excelled at this are the #Knowyourlemons campaign and the #BigTobaccoBeLike campaign. The #Knowyourlemons campaign was created to for Breast Cancer awareness and prevention. The infographic¹¹ went viral on social media, resulting in millions of

¹⁰ Vaughan, P. (2017, September 5). 15 Google Marketing Tools You Should Be Using. Retrieved from <https://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/11249/16-google-tools-to-improve-marketing-effectiveness.aspx>

¹¹ Retrieved from

views and donations.¹² The nonprofit organization Truth has utilized lesser known facts and widely known celebrities to raise awareness of Big Tobacco's role in the smoking epidemic that has met a resurgence. This campaign has aimed to combat the conception that smoking cigarettes is cool, and utilizes social issues that



Graphic 5: #Knowyourlemons

youth are passionate about.¹³ Some challenges faced by the NGo sector as they expand to the digital world are the fact that third party verification is becoming more necessary. People want to know exactly where their money is going before they donate to an organization. They do not want to put blind faith in an organization who is not using their money ethically, since there is more opportunities for scamming or unethical behavior in the digital world. Some opportunities for NGOs as they enter the digital world are that they are much more personal and humanitarian than corporations. They have a large potential to draw people in with emotional impact, and the inherent desire to improve the world can be capitalized on when combined with art and creativity. The art of social media and website creation and optimization can be used for the good end of helping others.

¹²Hughes, D. (2017). The 5 Best Social Media Campaigns of 2017 (So Far). Retrieved from <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/2017-4-4-the-5-best-social-media-campaigns-of-2017-so-far/>

¹³ Lile, S. (2017, April 5). 17 Creative Visual Marketing Campaigns by Nonprofits. Retrieved from <http://blog.visme.co/nonprofit-marketing/>