
nten

Digital Success
for Nonprofits

Digital Success for Nonprofits Workbook

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	Introduction
04	About
05	How This Workbook Will Help You
06	Who This Workbook Is For
07	Website Goals
09	Target Audiences
11	Key Metrics
13	Online Advertising
17	Social Media
19	Search Engine Optimization
22	Next Steps
23	About the Author



Whether you've tried digital ads, multi-part email campaigns, or profiles on every social media site or not, the most significant indicator of your potential digital success is your website.

At NTEN, we know that nonprofit staff are doing everything they can with fewer resources than they need. Time, budget, and staff are stretched across many competing priorities. Regardless of where your content may go around the web, your website must be the priority. Without it, no investment in social media or ads or anything else will be successful. But with limited resources, what does investing in the website mean? How can you make the most of your work?

This workbook is designed to help you make targeted changes to your website, leading to better communications and fundraising results. Whether you work in communications, fundraising, IT, or leadership, this workbook will help you make the necessary decisions to get your organization on track for digital success.



NTEN envisions a just and engaged world where all nonprofits use technology skillfully and confidently to meet community needs and fulfill their missions. We support organizations by convening the nonprofit community, offering professional credentials and training, and facilitating community skill and resource sharing. To learn more about professional development opportunities, visit nten.org/education.

Google for Nonprofits

Spread the word about your nonprofit's mission, engage new supporters, fundraise in more ways online—do all this and more when you join Google for Nonprofits. To learn more, visit google.com/nonprofits.

HOW THIS WORKBOOK WILL HELP YOU

If you've struggled to:

- Find new donors
- Build your email list
- Improve your online advertising
- Convert social media followers into supporters

Then follow along with this workbook as you learn how to:

- Use your original website content to reach new audiences
- Improve your website's technical infrastructure to convert website visitors into supporters

WHO THIS WORKBOOK IS FOR

This workbook is created explicitly for nonprofit professionals responsible for their organization's website and online marketing but who are not technology professionals. You might work in communications, fundraising, or administration.

No advanced technical skills are required to use this workbook. However, you may need help from a web support person to implement some of the strategies. This workbook will help you learn the vocabulary to communicate your expectations to your web support person.

WEBSITE GOALS

Let's start by setting goals for your online marketing campaigns.

Time, budget, and creativity are always in demand at your nonprofit organization. A successful online marketing campaign focuses on finding the most effective investment of your time, budget, and creativity.

Online marketing is an easy place to get distracted, as there is always a "shiny new thing" to try. Executive directors, board members, and colleagues are quick to add even more ideas to your list.

Popular nonprofit website and online marketing goals to inspire you:

- Make a donation
- Sign up for email
- Send a message via the contact form
- Request a service
- Complete the volunteer interest form
- Register for an event
- Complete a survey

Help yourself and your team focus by choosing a maximum of three goals for your nonprofit website and your online marketing campaigns.

What if we want to set more than three goals?

Online goals are most effective when they link to your offline priorities. To help focus and limit the number of online goals, think about how to tie your website and online marketing goals to specific annual campaigns, such as a year-end appeal or a membership drive. Think about tying your goals to your organization's overall strategic goals. Or think about tying website goals to specific budget line items.

What if one of our goals is to "raise awareness"?

If one of your goals is to "raise awareness," please consider updating the goal and making it more specific. "Raising awareness" as a goal is vague, difficult to achieve, difficult to measure, and, most importantly, difficult to justify when allocating budget and time. If you need inspiration for a more specific goal, refer back to the list of popular nonprofit goals above.

DOCUMENT YOUR WEBSITE GOALS

1.

2.

3.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Improve your online marketing campaigns by defining specific target audiences.

All website visitors are not the same. Visitors' website habits vary according to age, location, device, income, primary language, sense of urgency, physical abilities, and desired outcome.

Match your online marketing strategies to your specific target audiences' needs. For example, if one of your target audiences uses their mobile devices as their primary computer, your online marketing strategies should focus on an optimized mobile experience.

As you decide on target audiences, encourage your team to be specific. Consider the differences between current target audiences and potential target audiences. For example, consider whether there is a difference between what current donors want to know and what potential donors want to know.

Popular nonprofit website and online marketing target audiences to inspire you:

- Potential service recipients
- Current service recipients
- Potential donors
- Current donors
- Potential event attendees
- Potential community partners
- Journalists and other members of the media

What if one of our target audiences is “the general public”?

Much like “raising awareness” as a goal, having “general public” as a target audience is difficult to achieve and difficult to measure. Instead, encourage your team to review your goals and assign specific target audiences for each one.

Document Your Website Target Audiences

As you document your target audiences, remember to add notes about qualities that affect how each audience interacts with your website, such as a mobile user, a Spanish speaker, in a hurry, senior citizen, what question is on their mind, etc.

	Target Audience	Notes re: specific needs, qualities
1		
2		
3		

KEY METRICS

When you define, document, and monitor key metrics for your online marketing campaigns, you will:

- Improve your overall outreach results
- Effectively allocate your time, budget, and creative capacity
- Choose the best channels for investment and best channels for experimentation
- Communicate success with your team and stakeholders

What are the key metrics for nonprofit websites and online marketing?

A key metric is a specific piece of data that helps you understand whether your website and online marketing are successfully achieving your goals.

Popular nonprofit website and online marketing key metrics to inspire you:

- Conversion rate
 - A conversion rate is the percentage of visitors to your website that complete a desired action. For example, the percentage of visitors to your website that makes an online donation would be your online donation conversion rate.
- Total number of transactions
 - For example, the total number of donations or total number of event registrations
- Total amount of money raised
- Pageviews for key landing pages

You may also choose to set additional parameters for your key metrics, such as:

- A specific period
 - For example, the number of donations in December
- A specific acquisition channel or campaign
 - For example, the number of new email signups from social media

What should we do with our key metrics?

Document and monitor your key metrics monthly and quarterly. Review and use the key metrics to adjust your outreach strategies. Invest in strategies that are yielding positive results. Be prepared to abandon the strategies that are not yielding results, according to your key metrics.

Also, be prepared to adjust key metrics as your campaign progresses, and you learn more about your target audience and their behavior. For example, you might have started a campaign that focused on social media donations, but your key metrics tell you that your social media audience is more willing to sign up for your email newsletter. In that case, you would adjust your campaign to promote email signups and adjust your key metrics to monitor the conversion rate for email signups, rather than the conversion rate for donations.

Document Key Metrics for Your Website Goals

As you document your key metrics, remember to add notes about other defining qualities such as specific periods, specific acquisition channels, or campaigns.

	Goal	Key Metrics	Notes re: specific period, acquisition channel, campaign
Website Goal 1			
Website Goal 2			
Website Goal 3			

ONLINE ADVERTISING

Online advertising, specifically Google Ad Grants, is an important source of high-quality website visitors for many nonprofit organizations.

How will a landing page improve our online advertising?

All digital advertising is most effective when the keywords, ad copy, and landing page work in harmony to target one of your website and online marketing goals. For example:

- Search query: How can I donate to a food bank?
- Ad copy: “Donate to a food bank”
- Landing page URL: ournonprofit.org/donate-foodbank
- Landing page headline: Donate to a food bank

What makes a landing page effective?

A landing page is effective when it generates more conversions for your organization. Qualities of an effective nonprofit landing page include:

- Echoes the ad copy and reassures a visitor that they are in the right place
- Communicates the authority of the nonprofit organization
- Communicates the transparency of the nonprofit organization
- Focuses on one task and eliminates distractions
- Makes the task easy to complete
 - Especially for mobile visitors since most Google Ads visitors are on mobile devices
- Clearly communicates a successful transaction
- Offers a relevant follow-up action

My organization uses XYZ tool for our online forms. Does this advice apply to us?

Absolutely.

If you're stuck using a specific form tool, and there is no possibility of upgrading to a tool that gives you more control, then do your best and aim to complete as many items as possible from the attached checklist.

If you can choose a new form tool, select a tool that gives you control over the design of the form elements and provides your website visitors with a streamlined mobile experience. Popular form tools include WuFoo, Unbounce, and Mailchimp.

If you're relying on a website support vendor to create the form, use the attached checklist to communicate expectations and requirements. You and your organization deserve the best.

Special note regarding the Google for Nonprofits program

If you are running advertising via Google Ad Grants, you may have to use a specific domain for your landing pages. Please verify that the domain you are using for your landing pages adheres to the policies of Google Ad Grants.

Landing Page Optimization Checklist

Reassure the website visitor:

- Echo the copy from the ad
- If applicable, echo design elements of the ad, such as featured image, font, color palette

Communicate transparency & authority:

- Send the website visitor to a branded URL
- Send the website visitor to an HTTPS URL
- Display organization's logo in the header, and link logo to main website homepage
- In the footer, link to privacy policy and about page
- In the footer, display organization's contact information

Eliminate distractions:

- Minimal page header, preferably just the organization's logo
- No top menu
- No sidebar
- No popups
- No social media links
- No search tool
- No additional calls-to-action
- Simple footer style

Focus on the conversion:

- Keep the form as simple as possible
 - No extraneous form fields
 - Just the form fields you absolutely need and will use to fulfill the visitor's request
- Easy to complete fields
 - Avoid asking the website visitor to type a narrative
 - Avoid calendar widgets
 - Avoid asking the website visitor to set a password

- Make the form mobile-friendly
 - Ensure form fields stack on mobile devices
 - Ensure mobile keyboard doesn't render a form field inaccessible while completing the form
- Make the form accessible to users of all abilities
 - Ensure each form field has an available label
 - Ensure users can tab through the form with their keyboard
 - Ensure the form has high contrast between text color and background color
 - Ensure the form uses a large font size
- Design the form for conversions
 - Use a bright, unique color for the submit button
 - Clearly label the submit button

Let the user know the submission was successful

- Send the user to a unique Thank You page that:
 - Confirms the form was submitted successfully
 - Explains the next steps for the intended action
 - Offers a suitable next action

For example: Share this page on social media

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a powerful way to communicate with supporters, but also a source of bewilderment for many nonprofit professionals.

Social media visitors tend to convert at the lowest rates compared to other types of visitors. For most nonprofit organizations, email subscribers, organic search visitors, and even Google Ad Grants visitors convert at higher rates than social media visitors.

Is there any way to improve conversion rates for social media visitors?

When investing your time, budget, or creativity into social media marketing, focus on sending visitors back to your main website, specifically to a relevant landing page. Refer back to your website and online marketing goals to guide you as you create social media posts and choose which landing pages to feature in those posts.

Special note regarding website technology and Open Graph tags

Open Graph tags should be part of every page on your website. They are hidden from visitors and visible to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Open Graph tags communicate important information to social media sites, displaying that information when the web page is shared in their network.

When editing Open Graph tag content for your web page, remember that most social media users browse via their mobile devices. Edit the Open Graph tag content to accommodate the needs and goals of mobile social media users.

Your ability to implement the checklist items related to Open Graph tags will depend on your website's technology. You may need an additional plugin. You may need to reach out to your website software vendor.

To assess whether you already have access to this feature, look for the ability to set a title and image for use when sharing your web page content on social media. You should have the ability to set this content on a per-page level, not on a site-wide level.

For popular website software such as WordPress, there are widely available, easy to install, and easy-to-use plugins that offer this ability. A favorite for WordPress is Yoast SEO.

For smaller or proprietary content management systems, contact your web support person.

Social Media Sharing Checklist

- Create a customized landing page for each platform and use this link in the bio section of your organizational profile

Ex: ournonprofit.org/facebook

- The customized landing page should target the specific platform's audience with specific copy, content, and call-to-action

- Each social media post should focus on a specific request

- For inspiration, refer to your list of goals and list of key metrics

- Link back to your nonprofit website as often as possible, preferably to a landing page

- When sharing a URL on social media, choose marketing-friendly URLs

Ex: ournonprofit.org/campaign-name

- Optimize the content of Open Graph tags for social media visitors

- Open Graph Title

- Aim for a title between 60 and 90 characters

- Open Graph Image

- Aim for an image that is about 1200 pixels wide and about 600 pixels tall

- Aim for an image with a file size less than 5 MB

- Open Graph Description

- Aim for a description that's less than 200 characters

- Test the mobile experience since most social media users are using mobile devices

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

For most nonprofit organizations, search engine visitors are an important source of potential leads for any given goal. Most nonprofit websites get at least 50% of their visitors from organic search, and most of those visitors are Google search engine users. Search engine visitors tend to be new to your website.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a complex specialty and overwhelming to most people. Nonprofit organizations can benefit from SEO without requiring that nonprofit staff become SEO specialists.

How can a nonprofit organization leverage SEO as a tool for online marketing?

As a nonprofit professional, your goal is to incorporate simple SEO strategies into your existing content creation process to connect more website visitors to your website content. Your content should still be well written and of high quality. SEO edits should be secondary to your website content's primary function.

Special note regarding website technology and meta tags

Meta tags are part of every page on your website. They are hidden from visitors and visible to search engines like Google. Meta tags communicate essential information to Google, which displays that information in a search results page.

When editing meta tag content for your web page, remember that most search engine visitors browse via their mobile devices. Edit the meta tag content to accommodate the needs and goals of mobile search engine users.

Your ability to implement the checklist items related to meta tags will depend on your website's technology. You may need an additional plugin. You may need to reach out to your website software vendor.

To assess whether you already have access to this feature, look for the ability to create a meta title and meta description for search engines to use. You should have the ability to create this content on a per-page level, not just on a site-wide level.

For popular website software such as WordPress, there are widely available, easy to install, and easy-to-use plugins that offer this ability. A favorite plugin for WordPress is Yoast SEO.

For smaller or proprietary content management systems, contact your web support person.

SEO for Nonprofits Checklist

Choose a keyword phrase relevant to the page's content

- Think about what search query your target audience will enter into Google
- If applicable, include geographic location
Ex: Donate to a food bank in Chicago

Use those keywords in your:

- URL
Ex: Ournonprofit.org/donate-foodbank
- Page title
- Subheadings
 - Use the H2, H3, and H4 header tags
 - Never use the H1 header tag for anything other than the page title
- Link text
 - Rather than using “click here” as your link text, use a keyword-rich phrase such as “[donate to a Chicago food bank](#)”
- File names
 - Especially for images and PDFs
- Page content
 - Incorporate keywords into your page content, as long as it serves the primary purpose of the content

When possible, write long content (more than 1,000 words)

Optimize meta tag content to appeal to search engine visitors

- Meta title
 - Try to keep the title under 60 characters
- Meta description
 - Try to keep the description under 160 characters

Make sure that your page is included in your website's sitemap

- A sitemap is a dynamically created list of the pages on your website. An effective sitemap is auto-generated and auto-updated by software on your website and is formatted correctly to communicate with search engines.
- Most sitemaps are created by a plugin or by the software that powers your website.

NEXT STEPS

Document your website

- Goals
- Audiences
- Key Metrics

Prepare your website

- Landing Page Optimization
- Social Media Sharing
- SEO for Nonprofits

Apply for the Google Ad Grants program

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yesenia Sotelo is a digital skills teacher and web developer.

She elevates ambitious nonprofit professionals by teaching them how to use the technology tools of modern marketing.

Yesenia can teach you how to use website analytics, optimize for conversions, and understand how to leverage website technology for online marketing.

Her SmartCause Method for building websites is especially designed for the way nonprofits collaborate, make decisions, and grow.

She won the Lifetime Achievement Award from NTEN for her work teaching digital skills to nonprofit professionals. Find her at smartcausedigital.com.