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Nonprofits Fail to Track Marketing Impact, Survey Shows

More than 55% of Nonprofits Frustrated by Lack of Resources and Leadership Support for Marketing, But Only 37% Do the Tracking that Generates Increased Budgets and Confidence

Maplewood, NJ – Newly released survey findings drawn from 350 nonprofit communicators show that few nonprofits track the results of their marketing efforts, so can't demonstrate the effectiveness of their efforts to reach critical audiences.

"Many nonprofits have no idea what's working and what's not, or how to target their resources," says Nancy Schwartz, blogger at [Getting Attention](http://www.gettingattention.org) (www.gettingattention.org) and president of [Nancy Schwartz & Company](http://www.nancyschwartz.com) (www.nancyschwartz.com), who conducted the survey. "Nonprofits that don't evaluate are basically throwing their marketing resources into thin air. Evaluation should be built into every marketing budget and job description."

The *2007 Getting Attention Nonprofit Marketing Survey* investigated strategies and effectiveness in the field. Schwartz sees tracking effectiveness as the path to securing critical budget increases and leadership support. While evaluation is challenging, she says, "It is just as crucial as getting campaigns out there."

Evaluation options, according to Schwartz, include the purely qualitative – such as a communications audit and audience research via focus groups – and the quantitative such as counts of unique visitors to different Web landing pages or advocates who email their representatives in response to an e-campaign.

Funders have also started to ask that grantees evaluate marketing impact. Bruce Trachtenberg, Executive Director of The Communications Network (an association of communicators who primarily work for and with foundations), says, "If grantees receive support to help them expand their reach, grow and extend their services, or better position themselves to catch the attention of new donors, advocates or volunteers, the only way they can show that this money is being well used is to track and assess the results of their marketing efforts."

Survey respondent Claire Steigner, development officer for Father Bill's Place, says she needs to know which communications are most effective for each of her target audiences – donors, community partners, and volunteers. "That's the only way we can market effectively to each audience, especially with limited resources."

Jennifer Vick, communications consultant and former Resource Development and Communications Manager of ARC of East Central Iowa, says measuring communication impact is a challenge. "I can easily report my outputs – how many PSA's were sent, brochures handed out, articles placed – but without impact data it's hard to establish benchmarks."

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More key findings:

- **2006 Marketing Successes Many and Varied, including:** surpassing fundraising goals; gaining leadership buy-in; finalizing pithy messaging that's used consistently; and launching a communications calendar.
- **Nonprofit Marketers Want to Hurdle these "Big 3" Barriers** faced in 2006:
 - Over 55% of communicators cite lack of resources and/or leadership support as major challenge
 - 32% cited lack of clarity in messaging and marketing agenda
 - 52% are frustrated at missing fundraising, media coverage or other marketing goals.
- **2007 Marketing Agendas Concentrating on 2 or more of 5 Key Opportunities** – Over 55% of nonprofit communicators are focusing on these strategies:
 - Targeting campaigns to specific audience segments
 - Integrating confusing communications silos so program and organizational marketing is coordinated with fundraising, membership and volunteer communications
 - Evaluating impact.
 - Training colleagues, volunteers and board members on marketing plans and messages
 - Experimenting with Web 2.0 social networking channels to find out what works, and what doesn't -- from MySpace to podcasts and video blogs

This analysis is based on data submitted by communicators working in or with over 350 nonprofit organizations and foundations, working in a broad range of issue areas from civil rights to homelessness. The survey is the first in what will be an annual study of trends, successes and benchmarks in nonprofit marketing.

Survey available for review at www.nancyschwartz.com/survey.html

More detail on survey results at www.nancyschwartz.com/2007_nonprofit_marketing_survey.html

About Getting Attention/Nancy Schwartz

The Getting Attention blog and e-newsletters (www.gettingattention.org) are no-charge, high-value sources of ideas, tactics, and tips for nonprofit communicators focused on helping their organizations succeed through effective marketing. Publisher and Editor Nancy Schwartz also provides nonprofit marketing services via Nancy Schwartz & Company (www.nancyschwartz.com)