



MARKETING YOUR NONPROFIT

with zero budget



DonorDrive®
PEER-TO-PEER FUNDRAISING
by Global Cloud®

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Nonprofit marketing budgets are notoriously small, if they even exist.

Organizations have depended on advertising gratis on traditional media and posting on social channels to market their mission. Unfortunately this gratis advertising in conventional media has dried up and social media channels now expect organizations to pay in order to get posts seen. But that's not really an obstacle anymore.

We really are in the Golden Age of Digital Marketing right now and there's no reason why your organization can't take advantage of the powerful marketing opportunities available (even if there's no budget for it.) Many organizations are driving results in marketing today with absolutely no budget coming from donor dollars. For this book we spoke with:





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*Vice President of Client Success
at DonorDrive*



Ed Lord

Chief Strategy Officer at DonorDrive



Anne Baum

*Search Marketing and Analytics lead
at DonorDrive*



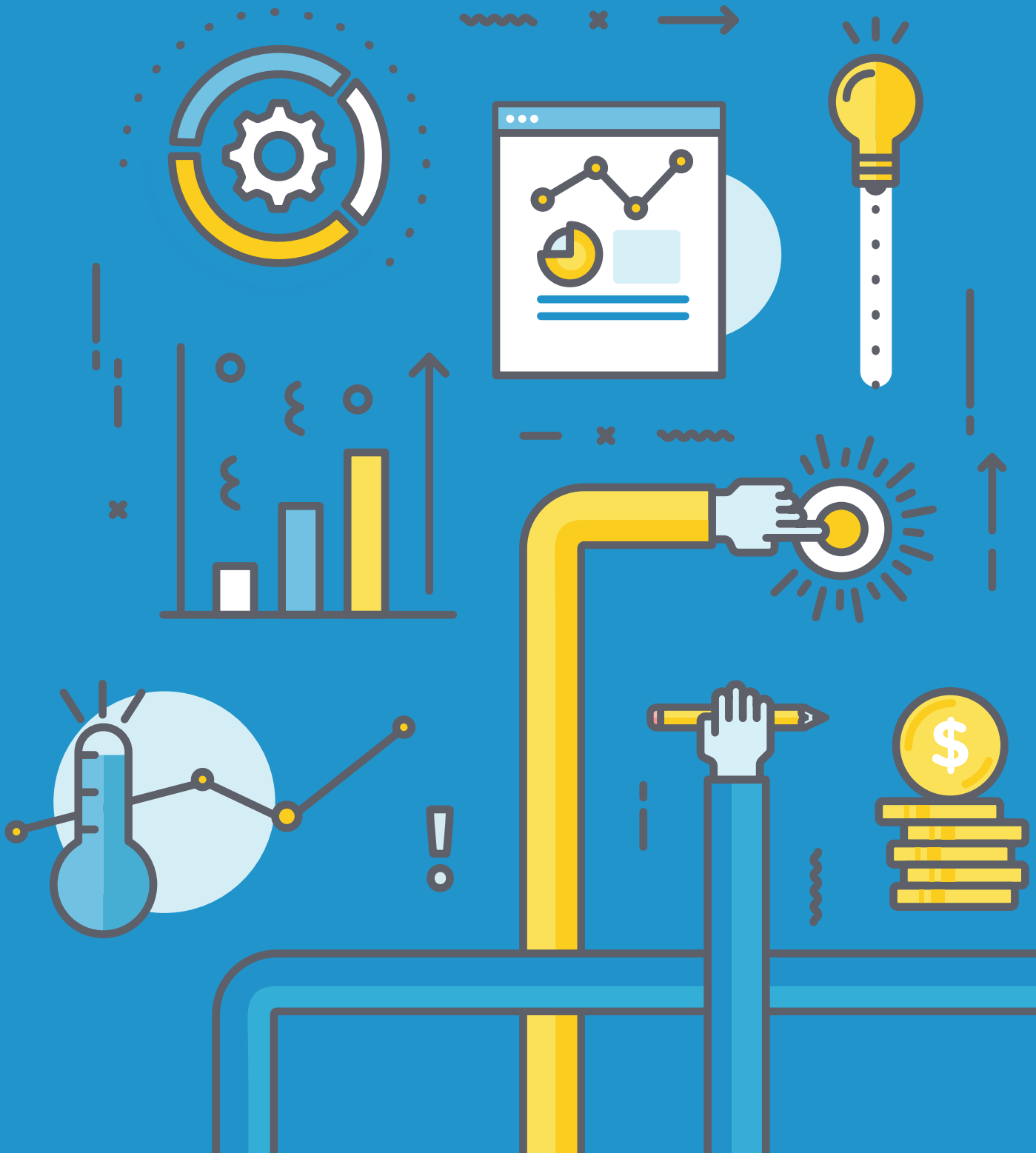
Josh Weum

*AdWords Digital Ambassador
at Google*

**Through their combined expertise, this guide will show you how
your organization can be most effective with marketing today.**



How to Build a Marketing Budget





How to build a marketing budget



For many organizations there's minimal money for advertising. And if there's any money there, it's likely to be the first thing cut from the budget. As Michelle Steed notes: *"Most organizations don't have much of a budget for marketing, period. They're putting their money to their mission and don't have the luxury of that line item."* Fortunately there are two ways you can build a marketing budget without having the money coming from within by:

- **Getting your corporate partners to pay**
- **Making the ask on behalf of marketing**
- **Applying for a Google Ad Grant**

Getting your corporate partners to pay

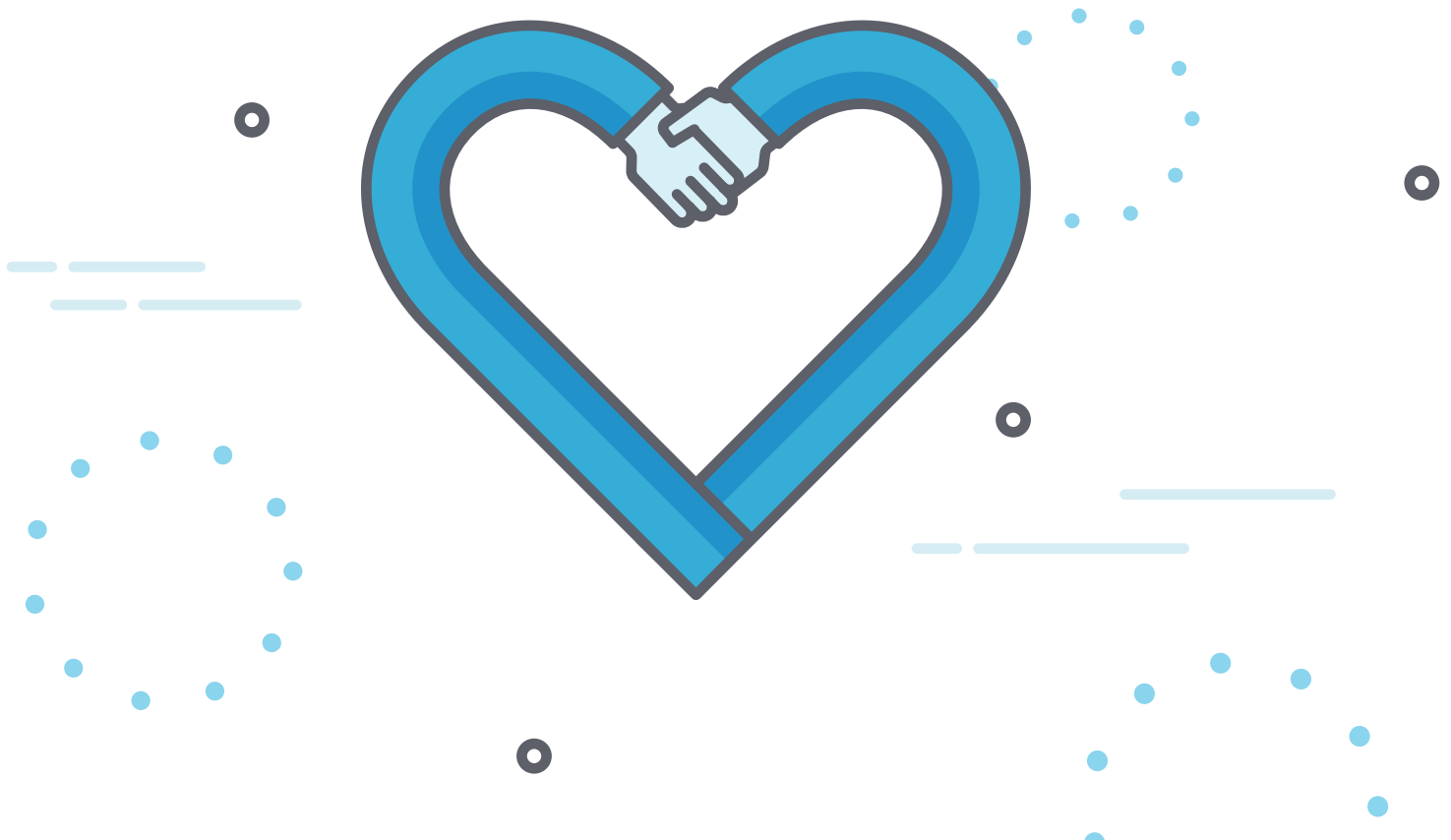
Sponsoring your event isn't all that a corporate partner can do for you. They can also help foot the bill for your advertising. There are two ways to go about doing this. One is to make advertising dollars part of your sponsorship package. The other is to get your partner to give you space in their advertising. Michelle notes that sponsorship money can have strings attached. *"There are organizations faced with the reality that some of their marketing spend will be driven by partner expectations. So how you spend these dollars may be dictated by recognizing that partner, if that's built into your package. Fortunately not every partner is looking for that."*



Making the ask on behalf of marketing your organization

A current [trend](#) in giving is for supporters to help cover costs associated with giving and running your organization. As more of your supporters adopt this thinking, you may find some of your big donors see the value in marketing and are willing to give a little more specifically earmarked for marketing your organization. This doesn't affect current donation levels. The budget may be small, but these marketing dollars won't be cut, since they have an accountability to the donor attached to them.

Michelle sees that the second option of sharing space has its advantages: *"If a sponsor comes in because they want to be associated with your mission, they think it's beneficial to their brand. So it benefits them to use your mission in their advertising. Your partner already has everything in place to piggyback your cause on their advertising."* Your corporate partner benefits from this as much as you do. Michelle feels that most organizations already have partners willing to do more: *"Leverage the relationships you already have and try to maximize them."*





*"Your partner already has **everything** in place to piggyback your cause on their advertising."*

Google Ad Grants





Google Ad Grants: \$120,000 annually in free money

We've given Google Ad Grants their own chapter because of the big impact they can have on an organization. Many nonprofits are not aware that Google offers \$10,000 a month in Google Ad Grants for search advertising to each qualified nonprofit. As a matter of fact, many organizations that hear of the program think it's a gimmick or that they're fighting thousands of organizations to get a portion of \$120,000. In truth, Google is very generous to offer \$120,000 in Ad Grants to every organization that qualifies. If you have no internal marketing budget, this is a great way to get free Google Adword advertising that can increase awareness, recruit participants and drive donations. Many organization that have been recipients of Google Ad Grants have had amazing success stories, like DonorDrive client Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. Michelle sees these as a no-brainer: *"If you can get Google Ad Grants and you can be smart about using them: awesome. Take advantage of something like that, because it's a gift."*



*"**Global Cloud** was able to more than double the spend towards our allocated Google budget, as well as get our cost-per-click at a cheaper rate. Immediately we saw an increase in donations."* **-Children's Miracle Network Hospitals**

Like any grant, a Google Ad Grant requires that your organization is 501(c)(3) and that you go through an application process. The organizations that have been the most effective with their Google Ad Grants have invested the necessary time to create and manage the campaigns, as well as have invested in expertise at bidding and measurement of Google AdWords ad success. Some nonprofits make the investment of having a staffer certified in both Google Ad Words and Google Analytics. Other organizations enlist outside help to manage their program for them. CMN Hospitals managed their program internally the first year and then enlisted the help of Global Cloud, makers of DonorDrive, to manage their Ad Grant program.



Google Ad Grants Case Study Highlights

When Children's Miracle Network Hospitals® first considered Google Ad Grants, they saw an opportunity to receive \$10,000 a month of in-kind advertising to promote their cause. Since 1983, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals have raised \$5 billion that has saved and improved the lives of kids in 170 children's hospitals across North America, providing 32 million treatments to children annually. The Google Ad Grant would give them the opportunity to spread awareness of their mission and grow their programs.

The problem is that maintaining an Ad Grant program is not for the fainthearted. Nick Ward, Vice President, Digital Marketing at Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, faced the same issue that many nonprofits immediately discovered: *"Creating a strategy, implementing and maintaining an Ad Grant program requires a substantial amount of an organization's resources."* What's not obvious at first are the restrictions of the program, like a \$2 maximum spend on cost-per-click ads, or campaigns that are limited to keyword targeting. According to Nick: *"These all made it difficult to meet the full value of the budget that Google had given us. We managed the program internally for a year and decided that we'd move management to an agency in hopes of spending the full budget we were allocated, as well as getting a more effective spend of those dollars."*

CMN Hospitals turned over management of their Google Ad Grants program to Global Cloud, a certified Google Partner. Nick saw an increase in the success of their program: *"Frankly, the results were dramatic. Global Cloud was able to more than double the spend towards our allocated Google budget, as well as get our cost-per-click at a much cheaper rate. Immediately we saw an increase in donations as well."*



The basics of Ad Grants

With so many organizations looking to effectively make use of Google Ad Grants, we asked Anne Baum, our lead AdWords expert, what the most important elements are of an Ad Grant program for an organization: *“First, it’s important to understand how Ad Grants fits into your overall marketing strategy and to define the success metrics. It’s also necessary to clearly define your goal with the ads: promoting brand, events or fundraising.”* Anne sees that working with a certified Google Partner that has an intimate understanding of Google Ad Grants (like Global Cloud) immediately removes the burden of the project off the shoulders of the organization: *“The relationship will go more smoothly if roles of the agency and organization are clearly established. Determine who within the organization is managing the relationship and make sure everyone at the nonprofit has complete awareness of the program to avoid wasteful marketing overlap.”*



If you’re looking to have your Google Grants managed by an agency, make sure they’re a Google Partner.

Enlisting experts in Google Grant management typically leads to a larger and more effective spend of your Ad Grant, as well as improved engagement with supporters. If you’re looking to have your Google Grants managed by an agency, make sure they’re a Google Partner. Google Partners have certified staff that have been schooled by Google and passed qualification exams. Global Cloud has certified experts in both Google AdWords and Google Analytics.

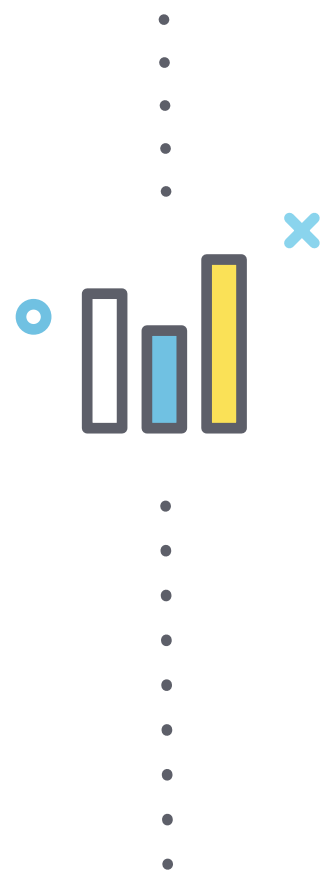
Why search advertising excels

Unfortunately other search engines are not as generous as Google is with grants. Fortunately Google is by far the largest search engine. Search advertising is a very powerful tool. Those

seeing a targeted social ad are more likely to be interested in the content than the average viewer, but those using search are seeking your message, since they're actively looking for that content. They're much more likely to engage. For example: Someone who may be in your city for an extended business trip may be searching for a charity run that week. Or someone who supports organizations fighting a particular illness may be looking for similar nonprofits to support. People who find your organization through a search ad are much more likely to engage.

How Google AdWords ads are made for micro-moments

Mobile search has now eclipsed desktop search with [62% of lifestyle searches](#) initiated on mobile. Search is such a big part of our lives that (on a whim) we'll search out what's on our mind with the phone in our hand. Google calls these micro-moments. According to Josh Weum of Google: *"Micro-moments happen throughout the day in all of our lives. Those are the times when we really want to connect with something and when technology really merges with that concept."* While we might think of micro-moments mostly benefiting business, Josh notes they can be just as powerful for organizations: *"For organizations, the payoff is when your nonprofit is the one that can get these people the information they're looking for or get them the connection they need. And what we really want to recognize is that during these moments people are qualifying your organization. During these moments is when they are inquisitive, when they're looking for an organization to give to. Or maybe they're thinking 'I just got a new pet and I want to give to a pet organization' or 'my cousin has cancer I want to figure out a way that I can do something to help.'"* If your organization can effectively use an AdWords ad to steer a searcher to what they're looking for, then Google Ad Grants can really help boost awareness, engagement and donations.



Where to Advertise





Where to Advertise

We've addressed Google Ad Grants in detail, but there are many other digital channels you can advertise on. Media choice is rampant today. As Ed Lord notes: *"Be aware that your audience is more fragmented by all the options available. For example, terrestrial radio has been supplanted by satellite radio, Spotify and the iPod on their phone. These listeners have a broader choice and you must find the channels to reach them where they are."*

The channels they are a-changing

The biggest change in marketing is as it drifts from more physical mediums, like newspapers and billboards that are geography-based, to virtual mediums, like social and search, that are always available in the phone in their hand. Many organizations are reporting that traditional local mass media they've depended on in the past (like newspaper, radio and television) haven't been performing well for them. If your local traditional outlets are giving you free space or time, by all means take advantage of it. Even push these media partners to play a bigger role by interviewing you about an event or campaign for the news in order to get a little extra mileage. But if you're paying for advertising, there may be digital options with better ROI. Michelle realizes the apprehension around digital marketing: *"It's still a new space for organizations. But now you can track success today and see how effective things are. You can change on the fly, which is great. It's something you couldn't do with conventional media."*



Which social channel?

You've probably tried many social channels and already know the ones you and your supporters are having the most success with. These are the same channels you should be advertising on. While it may seem logical that you'd reach a different audience on a different channel, you'll do better to capitalize on your organic success by promoting on that same channel. The next page is a brief overview of the big social channels for advertising.

Keep it fresh

Keeping your social media channels up to date goes well beyond adding a new post. Make sure your branding and descriptions are current and all your links are working. Social media makes it simple to update your page and there are many organizations that modify their cover photos regularly (sometimes daily) in order to keep things from looking stale.

It's also important to verify that your page and post images are sized correctly so they'll look clear and fill the space allotted. Channels regularly change their required dimensions, so what looks fine one day can look blurry and mis-sized the next. Check each channel's help pages for the current sizes.





Twitter advertising includes sponsored tweets and ads. Generally a good value, Twitter also offers useful targeting options, including geography (down to the zip code) and the ability to put a sponsored tweet into the timeline of an individual.



Facebook advertising includes sponsored updates, ads and retargeted ads. The audience is big and diverse, so you can target a large number of like-minded people.



LinkedIn offers sponsored updates, ads and in-mail emails (that they'll send on your behalf.) Generally LinkedIn is a good channel for engagement if you're trying to reach a business audience, like potential corporate partners or participants for business-oriented events.



Instagram offers sponsored posts. Note that the Instagram audience has quickly aged and is no longer just teens. Generally it's good for marketing visual content.



Reddit offers a twist: Ads can be the start of a conversation with your supporters. (You can also turn off comments if you want.) The audience here is as large as Twitter, but almost exclusively under-30 males. Our DonorDrive clients who fundraise through virtual video game marathons see much activity here.



Pinterest has Promoted Pins. The audience here is mostly 25-34 year-old women. Aspirational visual content is a must if you plan on engaging here with this gender and age group.



Snapchat is the newest trend in social media, but the minimum spend here is high and many organizations can't play.

How to Spend a Marketing Budget





How to Spend a Marketing Budget



While we're in the Golden Age of Digital Marketing, it's also still the Wild West. As we move from conventional marketing channels to brave new digital channels, it's more important than ever to know how to spend those hard-fought advertising dollars.

How to effectively market in social media

While social media is a great tool for your supporters to use for peer-to-peer fundraising, organizations have found the effectiveness of the updates from their official nonprofit account diminishing. That's because most social channels are showing updates from businesses and nonprofits to fewer and fewer of their followers. The numbers for organic reach are down so low that your updates are seen by just a few percent of your followers. So you may have 2,000 followers on a social channel, but maybe 40 are seeing any given update organically. Meanwhile many nonprofits have found that paid promotion of posts or ads on social mediums can be very effective even with spends as small as \$100 a month.

Promoted posts or ads?

Most social channels give you the option to boost your posts by showing them to more of your followers and people like your followers. Promoted posts look like more your normal posts, not like ads. Promoted posts can pass under the "click bait" radar and may be more likely to be read. An advantage to promoted posts is that you've essentially already tested them. If the update already received a high number of likes when posted organically, it's a good candidate for success when you promote it.



The other option is to create ads for social media channels. These may fill up more screen space than updates (depending on channel) and can give you more options for creativity. They also can have call-to-action buttons, which can result in more clicks. Generally you get more targeting options and a bigger audience to present your ads to.

So which is more effective: an ad or a promoted post? Honestly it varies greatly with organizations having blazing success with either one, while getting a lukewarm reception with the other. It's best to try both with a low spend to see which works more effectively for your nonprofit.



Promoted posts can pass under the “click bait” radar and may be more likely to be read.

Targeting your audience

A huge advantage of online marketing is that you can target your audience. Michelle notes there's a very different approach with targeting: *“It used to be that you sprayed everywhere and hoped your marketing would hit something. But it cost a lot of money to do that. Since you don't have a lot of money to spend and you don't get a return with something really broad like that anymore, it's just not cost effective. Nonprofits have to be really strategic in how they're looking to spend the limited funds available. With how you can reach people differently now, through social media and search advertising, you can narrow down your audience more effectively for less cost.”* Segmenting or targeting the audience in online advertising is as easy as selecting criteria such as location, gender, age group, interest group, etc. This lets you present your message to your target supporter profile and not to the masses. If you're connected to supporters on Twitter or LinkedIn, you can put your message directly in their timeline on channels like Twitter and LinkedIn. Your spend can be small and still hit the audience you want.

Monitor and revise

Social media ads can give you instant success statistics which allows you to adjust your campaign while it's running. By tweaking the audience or message based on what's working, you can substantially increase engagement while reducing your spend. Generally if you're going to sponsor updates, pick the ones that did the best organically. These will likely get the most engagement when you back them with money.



Creating a supporter profile

Sometimes we think of our database as just the place we keep the email addresses. But the data there is so much more valuable according to Ed: *"You want to look at your database and see who your most likely supporters are and build profiles of them by segment. If you're doing a breast-cancer walk you most likely will target women over 30 since they'll be the ones most interested in participating."* By building profiles of your supporters, you identify the target audiences to market to. Ed sees that the deeper you dig into your database, the more likely you are to find groups to market to: *"Segment within your database and discover who supports your run, who supports your mail programs, etc., to match profiles with your other programs."* And Michelle notes another important group in your database: *"If you identify your most active volunteers, they'll recruit for you. You can then support their effort with marketing. So you're using marketing to back the organic effort. Grassroots is grassroots for a reason."*



While digital marketing can be tricky, savvy organizations are discovering that it can very effective at reaching those you most likely want to engage with.

How to Market for Free





How to Market for Free

There are many things you can do that will supplement your paid marketing that won't cost you a cent.

Market to your database

Ed notes that your most important audience is the one that you've already cultivated. *"Many times people are not doing internal marketing. You have your database and if you have a new idea that you're rolling out, it's important to market it to supporters. And don't forget lapsed supporters, you may be able to reactivate them with a new event."*

You've been cultivating data about your donors and participants for years. Take the time to dig deep into your database and segment your list. Here are a few places to start:

- **Your biggest donors**

Know who they are so you can communicate with them personally

- **Event participants who bring in the most money**

Treat them with the same respect you give your largest donors.

- **Those who donate year after year**

Even when someone makes small donations, their overall impact can be big. Try creating an exclusive club for those who have given more than five years.

- **Lapsed donors**

If they used to give, but don't anymore, find out why and see if you can bring them back.

- **Lapsed event participants**

If you lose a participant, you've also lost the donations they brought in. Do your best to get the participants back and they'll bring the donors back.

- **Event team captains**

Each is responsible for bringing in 10 times the dollars that an individual participant does and deserves special messaging.

- **Those who donate dollars vs those who just donate time**

One should get the ask and the other should get the ask to volunteer.

- **Those who respond by email vs those who respond by postal**

Make sure you're messaging them through the correct medium. Also, try to get an email for those who send you checks by post so you can show them how easy email and online giving can be.

These segments are just the start. When you segment your database deeper, you can be much more precise with the parameters than you can with those offered by social media and search advertising. The more data you have on each contact in your database, the more ways you can dissect the list in order to target and put a specific message in front of the supporters most likely to respond to it. For example, a message that encourages legacy giving is likely to play well with a regular donor, but likely to seem brash to someone who donated \$10 five years ago. The more accurately you pair message with the segment, the more likely you are to achieve your campaign goals.



Email is powerful and costs nothing

Almost every nonprofit has an email marketing tool they're already paying for. If your organization is currently sending all emails to your entire list, you can save money by segmenting and then use that cost savings to fund your marketing emails. There's often pushback within nonprofits about sending more emails to supporters. The common comment that is that the organization is already sending too many emails, evidenced by a high unsubscribe rate. The problem may be a result of not segmenting your list correctly. If one email blast goes to everybody on the list, those who may have donated to your organization once because a friend walked in your signature event may have no interest in receiving email at all. But those among your core supporters may feel you're not sending enough email. Supporters with a vested interest in your cause typically want more communication, not less. With proper segmenting, you can send email sparingly to those with little interest and more frequently send email to those with substantial interest on a regular basis. When you send the right target the right message, you'll see your open rate go up and your unsubscribe rate go down.

When it comes to the right messaging, you should build different campaigns for the different segments. To keep event participants engaged, set up year-round communications thanking them again and showing what you did with the money they raised. For lapsed donors you may just want to send one strong email to try to bring them back. And for your biggest donors and fundraisers, go deep in explaining your successes and challenges. You'll also need to make sure your list is accurate. For example, don't send solicitation emails to people who gave just last week.



*But those among your **core supporters** may feel you're **not sending enough** emails.*

Social media is still free

While we've focused on paid social media in this book, your organization's social pages still get organic traffic, no matter how small that may be. Make the most of it. Ask your supporters to share and like. Once a message leaps from your page to your supporter's timeline, the organic reach improves.

Your website, the forgotten marketing tool

Having a great organization site is a necessity in order to make the most of all the traffic that your advertising drives there. If supporters can't find what they're looking for and leave your site in frustration, your marketing investment was wasted. Here are a few suggestions for site improvement:

- **Steer supporters to the important things**

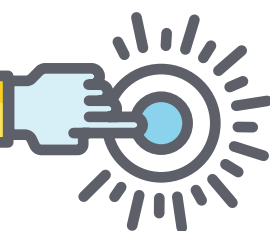
A common problem with websites is that visitors are looking for something, but get stranded. Make it easy for them to take the next step. If you're promoting your walk, make sure there's a button or clear link to the registration page. If you write a blog post about the success your organization is having battling an illness, link the reader to more information about it on your site. The more pages they hit on your site, the more likely they are to engage with your organization. And a simple "Donate" button at the top and bottom of every page makes it easy for supporters who want to give on impulse.

- **Create landing pages for campaigns**

When a powerful, targeted campaign leads a supporter to a generic giving form, you can expect a high bounce rate. Create an appropriate landing page and form for each of your targeted campaigns for a clearer message and better tracking of your success.

- **Make sure your site is up to date**

A page that encourages supporters to register for last year's walk makes a site look abandoned. Remove old pages from navigation and regularly keep all content fresh.



- **Use SEO in site copy**

Search Engine Optimization makes your site easier to find by organic search. On your pages incorporate keywords (search terms that a supporter would use in searching for your site.) Include these in headlines and body copy of that page. We have a handy [guide](#) to SEO for nonprofits.

- **Tag your pages**

When you create a web page you should have access to write a meta description. This tells search engines what that page is about. Write a clear description of what the page is about using keywords. Proper SEO will improve your page rank and boost organic search results.



How to Tell Your Story





How to Tell Your Story

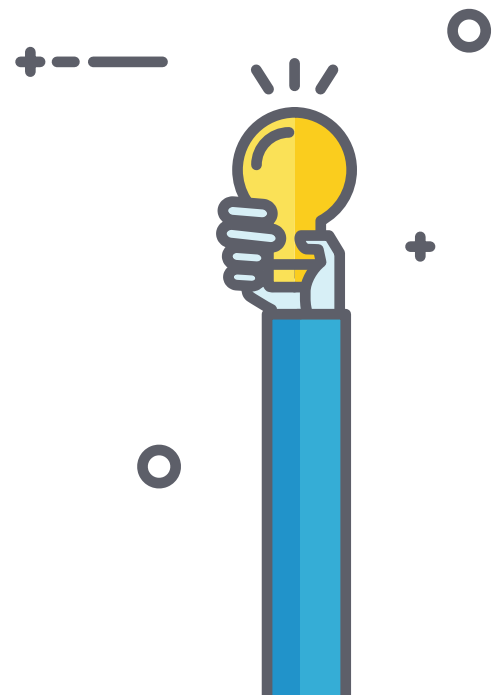
Every nonprofit has stories to tell. Maybe they're about a thankful recipient of your organization's help, breakthrough research you're funding, a law that you've been a part of changing or the amazing success of your programs. These stories are content that newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, cable and news sites may be looking for. Telling your story costs nothing. While success is unpredictable, the stories that resonate are worth all the effort you put in.



Telling your story costs nothing. While success is unpredictable, the stories that resonate are worth all the effort you put in.

If you've tried pitching news stories to the media in the past and have had little success, it's likely you need to revise your approach. We recommend the plan below for each story you tell:

- **Give your story a hero**
- **Use multimedia to tell your story**
- **Start with a blog article or press release**
- **Promote your story**





Give your story a hero

Make the story about a person. The human interest angle helps the reader more easily relate and understand. It's also likely to get more media attention. If your story is about research, focus on the doctor or a patient in a trial. And if you must be cautious that putting someone in the spotlight and offend someone equally valuable to your organization, do two stories.



Use multimedia to tell your story

When you interview your hero for the story, take photos and shoot video. If you have access to a photographer and videographer, this is the time to use them. Telling your story visually can have a big impact on its popularity. It also puts your organization on video channels like Vimeo and YouTube.



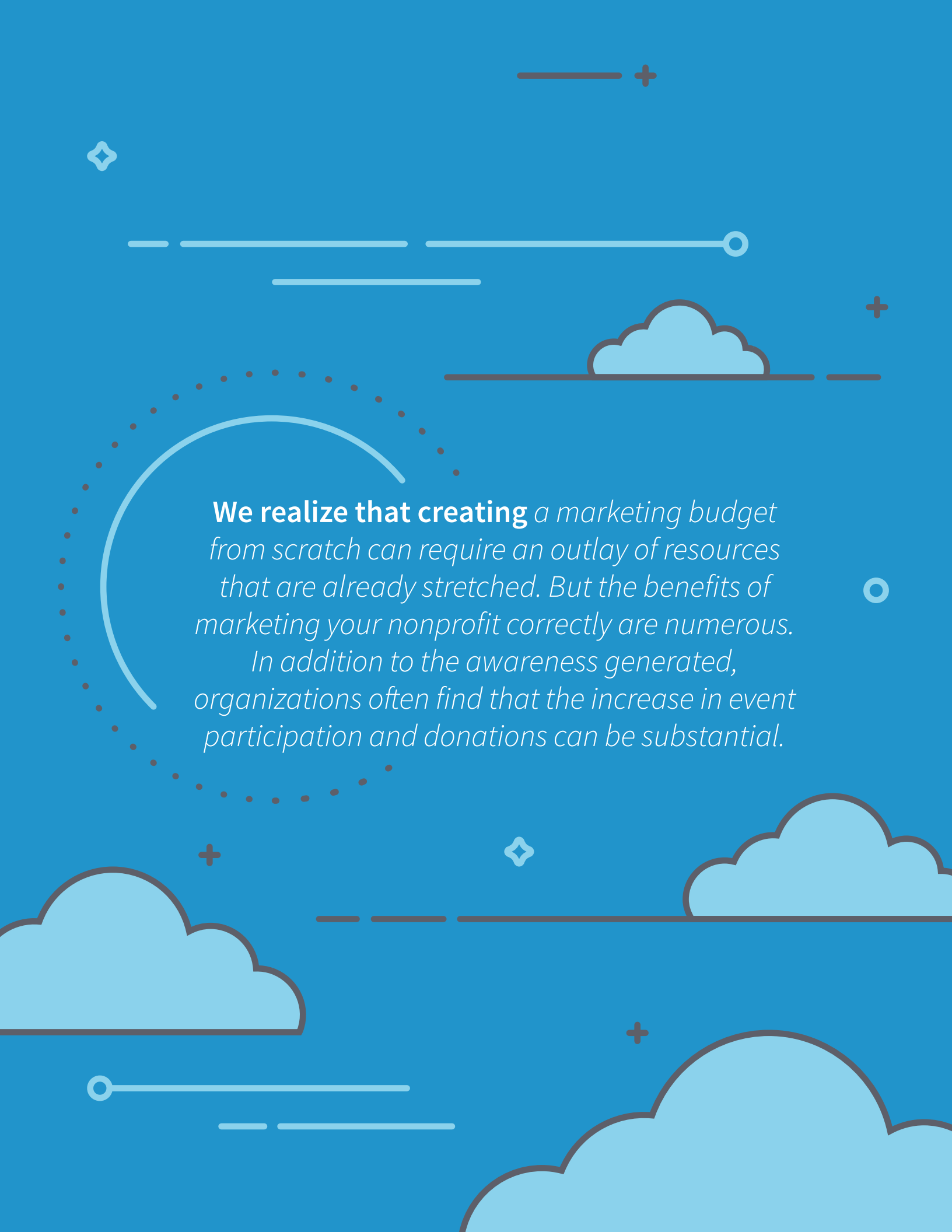
Start with a blog article or press release

Self publishing your story is a necessity. This gives you an easy way to present it to the media so they can tell your story to their audience. The more details you include in the story, the easier you make it for them to research and write the story. When you tell the story on your blog, you have complete control over the branding. You can write a press release and publish it for free through a service like pr.com. Press releases are useful for getting your story exposure beyond your circle of supporters. pr.com releases are indexed by Google and score well in search results.



Promote your story

Once your story is live in a blog article or press release, pass the link to the media, to sites affiliated with your cause, to passionate bloggers, etc. Develop and maintain a media list so you can clue these contacts in on all your stories. When they use your story, they'll be looking for photos, video, and access to the hero of your story. Make sure you can provide these quickly. And, as with anything you add to your site, post a link to your social media accounts to promote your story.

The background is a solid blue color. It features several stylized white clouds with dark blue outlines. There are also various geometric shapes: a small white four-pointed star in the top left, a white circle with a dot in the top right, a white circle with a dot in the middle right, a white circle with a dot in the bottom left, and a white four-pointed star in the bottom center. A white dashed line forms a semi-circle around the text. A white solid line forms a semi-circle around the text. A white solid line forms a semi-circle around the text.

We realize that creating *a marketing budget from scratch can require an outlay of resources that are already stretched. But the benefits of marketing your nonprofit correctly are numerous. In addition to the awareness generated, organizations often find that the increase in event participation and donations can be substantial.*

Thank you for reading our *Marketing Your Nonprofit with Zero Budget* eBook

And thanks to our contributors: Michelle Steed, Ed Lord, Anne Baum, and Josh Weum. Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and our blog to stay on top of the latest news in peer-to-peer fundraising.

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About DonorDrive

Since 1997 Global Cloud, makers of DonorDrive, has provided nonprofits with effective digital marketing. As a Google Partner with certification in Search Advertising, Display Advertising and Google Analytics IQ, Global Cloud helps nonprofits manage their Google Ad Grants, effectively increasing both effectiveness and ROI. To find out more about our Google Ad Grants program, please [contact us](#).

