

## How Nonprofits can use Marketing to Survive a Recession

Did you know that 7% of the workforce is employed by nonprofit organizations? The number increases to 14% if you count volunteers. In fact, charitable giving contributes \$300 billion to our economy.

Most nonprofits exist due to someone's passion for a cause or a desire to help people in need. Similar to the private sector, nonprofits have to make important decisions on sustainability and how they will continue to grow and serve their constituents. Because they typically are consensus driven, these decisions can pose a problem at any time but are especially critical during an economic downturn.


In our present economy, nonprofits face dire straits. Endowment values have dipped with the demise of Wall Street. Now more than ever nonprofits need to distinguish themselves to win the mind share and dollars of their loyal supporters.

There is a tendency to pull back during a recession, waiting for better times to return. Instead of waiting for better times, nonprofits need to gear up their marketing and fund raising efforts to make sure they have sufficient operating dollars and enough in reserve to further their philanthropic activities. The question is how do you gear up your outreach efforts without spending your already scarce dollars on marketing?

For starters, turn to your volunteers. Volunteers are the backbone of your organization. As true believers, they will step up to help out in tough economic times. Create special projects for them and give them the opportunity to lead a high profile project. Their participation will help get the job done and their status in the community will boost the image of the organization. In addition, by tapping a strong and dedicated volunteer, you increase the reach of your own staff, freeing them to tackle cost cutting projects internal to the organization.

Another low expense tactic is to use public relations. This isn't just sending an announcement about the latest addition to your board; it requires that you create a compelling story that will grab the interest and hearts of your readers.

Tell an upbeat story. Describe how the organization makes a difference in the community, how the work of dedicated volunteers changed someone's life. Talk about your high profile volunteers and their enthusiasm.



During the tough times of a recession, don't ever forget who your stakeholders are. Use the Internet to correspond with your valued donors. Create an e-newsletter to publish success stories about the organization's work, about goods and services that improved someone's life. Provide your donors with reasons to give by publishing stories of how their dollars have helped those most in need.

Feature your most important donors in a story or donor profile. People like to see stories that acknowledge their commitment and support of a favorite charity. Make sure the photos are large. Go ahead, let the photo take a quarter or half page. There's nothing worse than a tiny photo that no one can see!

Whatever your concerns in an economic downturn, never neglect your donors. Make sure they know how important they are and how much you appreciate them. When economic prosperity returns, they'll remember how you stayed in contact during the hard times and they'll reward you for it.

**About Dyer Stephenson:**

Dyer Stephenson is a marketing consulting firm specializing in strategic planning for growing companies and nonprofit organizations. Contact them for an in-depth consultation at [info@dyerstephenson.com](mailto:info@dyerstephenson.com)