



# **The Entrepreneurial Nonprofit: Communication Strategies for Microenterprise Development Organizations**

By Susan Glenn and Joanne M. Saltzberg

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## About the Authors

**Joanne M. Saltzberg** is the CEO of Women Entrepreneurs of Baltimore, Inc., one of the leading microenterprise development organizations in the US. For over thirty years, in both her professional and personal life, Joanne has advocated for the economic empowerment of women. She is a frequent guest speaker and writer on women's economic issues and nonprofit management. An entrepreneur and economic activist, Joanne has also run a successful management consulting business and donated countless hours serving on nonprofit governing boards.

**Susan Glenn** is a Baltimore-based writer and communications consultant. Her company, Glenn Write Communications, specializes in helping nonprofits and small businesses communicate clearly and cost-effectively. Susan credits her professional association with Women Entrepreneurs of Baltimore for much of her business success. WEB helped her to see herself as both a writer and an entrepreneur and that made all the difference.

## About the Designer

**MZ Addy** is a Maryland-based designer and communications consultant. With more than 25 years in both print and digital media, MZ has helped dozens of non-profits, small businesses, and major corporations create brand identities and related marketing materials that convey their missions with integrity. MZ has designed and installed large-scale marketing exhibits locally and internationally for clients such as Mall El Jardin, Cite Europe, Mohegan Sun Casino, King of Prussia Mall, Burpee Gardens, Jos.A. Bank, and Simon Malls. MZ holds a Masters of Arts in Publication Design from the University of Baltimore.

## Introducing *The Entrepreneurial Nonprofit*

Newsletter? Website? Brochure? Annual report? The resource-strapped nonprofit often begins its communications planning with the “products” we need rather than the outcomes we desire. After all, the fundraising letter is, well, raising funds and the newsletter is sharing news, etc.

But are we truly planning for long-term outcomes or simply plotting a course to meet annual objectives? Are our communications reaching the right audiences with the right messages to deepen their connection and support for our cause?

In this e-book, we’re going to share some ideas on how microenterprise development organizations can transform our communications by practising what we teach and applying entrepreneurial savvy to achieve truly long-term goals:

- Enabling more individuals to achieve financial security through entrepreneurship
- Strengthening the microenterprise community as a whole
- Building financially-sustainable MDOs capable of creating long-term economic change in our communities

Communication  
Strategies for  
Microenterprise  
Development  
Organizations  
(MDOs)

**The Entrepreneurial Nonprofit: Communication Strategies for MDOs**

## Rethinking the Role of Communications

Let's begin with a painful truth:

Most small nonprofits, including MDOs, need to redefine their development models and, in the process, rethink the role of communications within that model.

Yes, we can all get better at chasing grants, cultivating donors, and stretching resources. We can tweet, blog, and flog until the cows (or cash) come home. But a permanent role as supplicant puts our existence, our mission at risk from competing government funding priorities, a mercurial economic climate, and intense donor competition. We need to find new ways to financially sustain ourselves.

Applying an entrepreneurial mind-set to our communications can help us do just that by:

- Aligning our communication tasks strictly to the outcomes we seek
- Refining our brands and our message to their simplest, most compelling elements
  - Leveraging every available communication and marketing opportunity
- Maximizing low cost/no cost resources for developing and delivering our message
  - Increasing revenue from our existing services and products

**The Entrepreneurial Nonprofit: Communication Strategies for MDOs**

## Aligning Communications with Strategic Goals

A thoughtful communications plan both aligns your communications with long-term organizational goals and identifies the specific steps for reaching those goals. In the following chart, we show you the steps for creating such a plan. But before you follow its course from input to outcomes, here are a few tips on maximizing resources and avoiding common pitfalls:

- **Don't reinvent the wheel.** There are great, free communications planning tools that every resource-strapped nonprofit should know about.
  - **Smart Chart 3.0** is a downloadable, interactive tool that takes you through a detailed communications planning and decision-making process. Created by the nonprofit Communications Leadership Institute in conjunction with communications experts at Spitfire Strategies, it takes you through the planning process step by step.
  - Several foundations have also funded Communication Toolkits that provide a host of forms, templates, and sound advice. Check out the resource chart on page 10 for our list of favorites.
- **Avoid dangerous shortcuts** -- There's no way around it. You **HAVE** to know where you are today before deciding how to get where you are going tomorrow.
  - A review of your strategic plan goals keeps your focus on long-term outcomes as you begin your communications plan.
  - A brief stakeholders' survey tells you how donors, volunteers, funders, friends, and clients perceive your MDO today. It tells you where your organization's mission intersects with stakeholders' personal values and how well you're meeting the needs of the market.
  - A communications inventory or audit simply gathers samples of your recent brochures, newsletters, stationery, e-publications, board and staff talking points, proposals, annual report, etc. and answers these basic questions:
    - What are the key, recurring points made in your publications? Are those points framed consistently across all channels?
    - Are those points persuasively aligned to advance your long-term goals?
    - Is there a consistent look and "feel" to your publications? And is that "feel" consistent with your mission and values?
    - Are you using the same metrics?
    - Do your publications project a professional, competent, and trustworthy image?

If you get through the stakeholders' survey and find everyone loves and understands your MDO, you can skip the rest of this ebook. If you finish the inventory and find your key message points are clear, consistent, and designed to reach your MDO-destination, then give your staff a raise, your board flowers, and yourself a well-deserved rest. But, if your answers to the questions above were "I don't know," "Not so much," or "Nope," then work your way through the process we've outlined in the next section using some of the great resources on page 10.

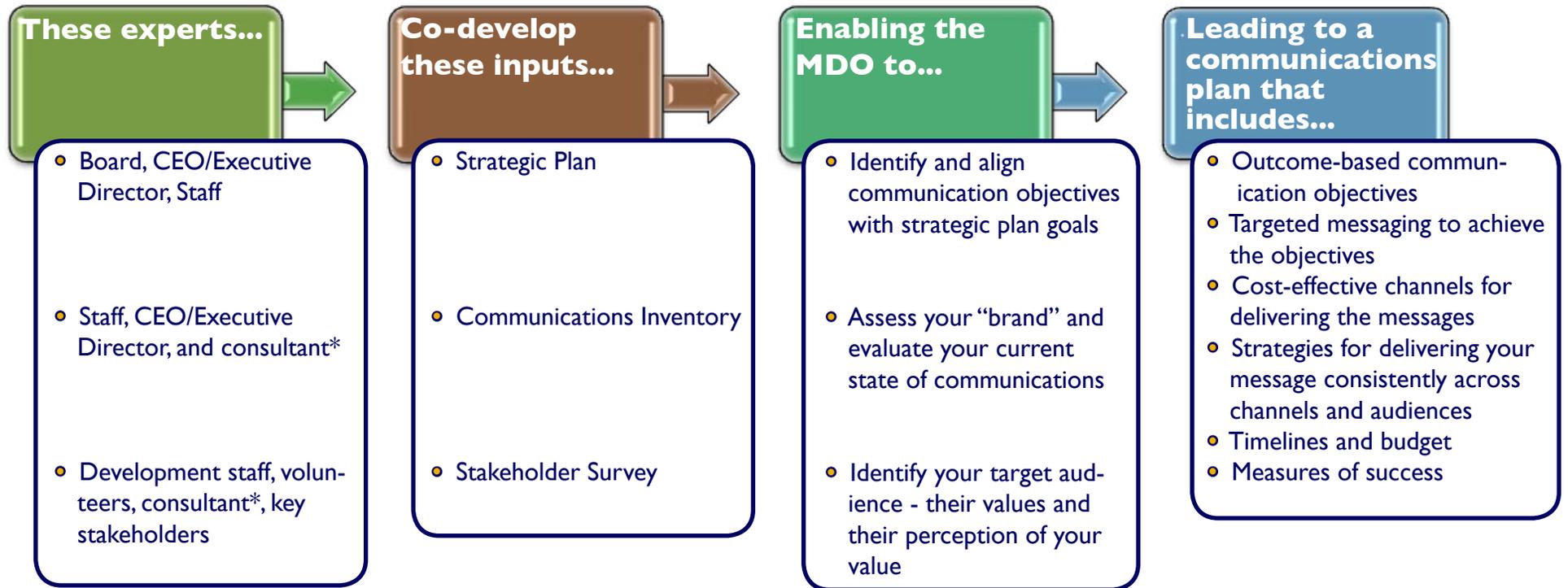


### A few practical tips . . .

**Stakeholder survey:** Volunteers, board members, and local colleges are great resources for conducting the stakeholder survey. While the survey could be automated through a tool such as SurveyMonkey,<sup>®</sup> a telephone survey gives you an opportunity to create stronger connections in the process.

**Communications Inventory:** It sounds simplistic, but laying all your communication samples out on a table can tell you very quickly whether your communications need a "tune-up".

## The Communications Planning Process



\*Consultants optional based on staff expertise and financial resources.

## Refining Your Message, Your Brand to Achieve Your Goals

As you work through the communications planning process, you'll clarify how well your existing message and brand are aligned to meet your MDO's long-term goals. You'll decide whether your brand needs a simple tune-up . . . or a complete overhaul. Here's a bit of context to help guide your decision.

### **Brand**

Think of your brand as the personification of your organization. An effective brand creates an emotional connection to your target audiences and projects an image of the organization consistent with the mission. Through words, graphic design, typography, and imagery, it demonstrates who you are, what you do, who you serve, and even what you value. To attract funds, friends, and clients, your brand has to convince the "market" that your MDO is the right organization for the right job. If your brand doesn't currently measure up to that expectation, you'll need to make strategic decisions to revamp your brand. How do you know how your brand is perceived? The stakeholders' survey told you. How do you know which components of your brand need "tweaking"? The communications inventory gave you the clues.

### **Message versus Mission Statement**

A mission statement DESCRIBES what your organization intends to accomplish. Your message CONNECTS that mission to your audiences emotionally and intellectually, PERSUADING them your organization and your cause are worthy of their support. What does your message consist of? To be effective, it usually comes down to 3 to 5 recurring key points, "massaged" for each target audience. The facts underlying the message don't change, but the emphasis does depending upon the audience values you uncovered during the stakeholder's survey.

### **Logo and Graphic Identity**

Your logo is not your brand, but it is one of your brand's most important components. It is the shorthand, visual "identifier" of your MDO. Your graphic identity, ideally defined in an identity package, is the standardized, visual representation of your brand across communications channels. As the most widely used, recognizable representations of your brand, your logo and graphic identity are areas where the nonprofit practice of "making do" should simply not be done. If you don't have a brand identity that follows some of the very basic guidelines in the following sample, it is time to invest in professional graphic design services.

### **Tagline, Getting Mileage out of Mission**

An effective tagline synthesizes your mission into a single, concise phrase. Suggesting action, evoking emotion, or both and combined with a dynamic logo, it makes your message and your brand memorable. Think the American Red Cross: Together, we can save a life.

## The Identity Package: Establishing Brand Image



Incorporating a professionally designed logo into an overall design strategy, the identity package establishes:

- acceptable logo usage, sizing, and placement
- preferred typefaces, styles, and font sizes
  - color palette by PMS (Pantone Matching System) spot color so “company colors” are reproduced consistently across print and digital media
- layouts for stationery, business cards, brochures, and reports

When coupled with a tagline that gets to the heart of your mission in eight words or less, the logo is one of your most powerful branding tools.

## Staying on the Brand Wagon: The In-house Style Guide

Just as the identity package or graphics style guide helps define and maintain your visual identity, an in-house style guide can help keep your organizational voice consistent and professional. And, if you've ever spent staff time debating "work force" versus "workforce" versus "work-force", you'll find its worth investing the time to create a customized guide that defines:

- Accepted name and abbreviations for your organization and its major programs
- Required logo usages
- Preferred language and usage for referring to your clients in terms of gender pronouns, economic status and ethnicity
- Spelling conventions for frequently used words (e.g., workforce, childcare, healthcare)
- Boilerplate language and format for: IRS-required fundraising disclosures, the mission statement, funder acknowledgements, etc.
- Guidelines for presenting impact – how to write clearly and accurately about numbers, percentages, and percent change
- Formats for common business communications such as e-mail

### E-mail Signatures and Voice Mail: Where Style Equals Opportunity

If your MDO sends just 30 e-mails a day and receives 50 telephone calls per day for 250 days per year, that's 20,000 opportunities to reinforce your message and identity.

Don't miss those opportunities. Define a consistent e-mail signature format and voice mail greeting that includes your tagline or a quick statement of your accomplishments.

"Welcome to MDO, where we've helped thousands create businesses, jobs, and brighter futures since 1989. For general information ..."

For broad or common usage questions, two of the most popular style guides are available both in print and online as a subscription service:

[The Chicago Manual of Style](#)

[The Associated Press Stylebook](#)

For internet usage questions, consider [The Yahoo! Style Guide](#)

Finally, here are two examples of in-house style guides from major organizations. Far more extensive than MDOs may need, they'll help you to identify your own unique usage issues.

[British Broadcasting Corporation](#)

[Rutgers University](#)

# Recognizing and Leveraging Opportunities

Great Fundraising Opportunities! Read all about them!

Let's expand our programs to the county through webinars and distance learning. We'll seek funding from their economic development office.

Adopt a pet is holding their annual auction.

Mostly yellow today  
Highs in the upper 80s  
Tonight 60s

# THE DAILY NEWS

June 30, 2010

### Local Tech Firm to Lay Off 350 Workers

These workers are great candidates for entrepreneurship. Contact their HR dept. about offering our program on-site for a fee.

### Census Bureau Projects Demographic Changes in County: Military Base Realignment Drives Change

Let's co-host a consumer workshop with our green business grads, serving the public, supporting our grads, and promoting our MDO.

### Farmers' Markets Boom with 'buy local' movement

Let's leverage the buy local sentiment with op-ed pieces, fact sheets, and interviews promoting our client entrepreneurs. Let's follow the Kauffman Foundation's Entrepreneurs Movement.

We target some of the same supporters and our programs could help their clients. Let's look for opportunities to collaborate.

### State Unemployment Claims Hit 9%

Let's tweak our fundraising message to focus more on the jobs we create.

### Government Extends Energy Tax Credit

MDOs teach aspiring entrepreneurs that there are opportunities in crisis and income potential in trends. By practicing what we teach, MDOs can seize the opportunities in the headlines.

## Maximizing Low Cost/No Cost Communication Resources

From interactive planning tools to affordable e-marketing and webinar services, a wealth of no cost/low cost tools can be used to promote our MDOs. We've waded through the available resources and compiled our favorites, by category, for you below.

Free, downloadable toolkits for planning your communications strategies

- The Communications Toolkit – from Cause Communications
- Tech-Savvy Toolkit: Communications for Non-profits from NPower Seattle
- Communications Toolkit - from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Smart Chart 3.0 – an interactive communications planning tool from Spitfire Strategies and Communications Leadership Institute

E-marketing services for creating and delivering your messages

- Constant Contact
- Convio
- Boomerang

- Robin Hood Marketing: Stealing Corporate Savvy to Sell Just Causes by Katya Andresen
- Branding for Nonprofits: Developing Identity with Integrity by DK Holland
- The Nonprofit Marketing Guide by Kivi Leroux Miller
- Homer Simpson for Nonprofits, a free e-book by Katya Andresen, Alia McKee, and Mark Rovner

Affordable sources for professional illustrations and stock photos:

- Veer
- Creatas
- Shutterstock

User-friendly online meeting and webinar services

- [www.GoToMeeting.com](http://www.GoToMeeting.com)
- [www.webex.com](http://www.webex.com)
- [www.dimdim.com](http://www.dimdim.com)
- [www.freebinar.com](http://www.freebinar.com)

E-newsletters, websites, blogs, etc. on non-profit marketing:

- [www.gettingattention.org](http://www.gettingattention.org)
- [www.fundraising123.org](http://www.fundraising123.org) from Network for Good
- Katya's Nonprofit Marketing Blog

Experts explain social media at:

- Beth's Blog
- Nonprofit Tech 2.0
- Techsoup.org's Social Media Bootcamp (includes a comprehensive list of social media resources)

## Increasing Revenue from Existing Programs

MDOs design great programs but often fail to maximize the revenue potential underlying those programs. By using the latest communications technology and entrepreneurial savvy, we can convert an ongoing expense into a revenue source and bring services to a broader market. Consider this:

With affordable and easy-to-use webinar technology, we can:

- Offer our programs and services to a wider audience, generating additional fees to support our mission
- Host business conferences online, minimizing facilities' costs and the drain on staff resources
- Offer low-cost, online workshops and Q&A's featuring the small business experts who make our current trainings so valuable
- Invite our clients to share their expertise and success stories in a dynamic online environment

With user-friendly e-publishing tools, we can turn our wealth of existing training materials into affordable e-publications marketed to the broader small business audience. And, by building a "publication expectation" into the process as we develop our programs, we can increase each program's revenue potential from the outset . . . at little additional cost.

With communications-savvy and our built-in audience of program graduates, we can create membership organizations, networks, and subscription services that are valuable, affordable, and doable with limited resources.

By collaborating more strategically with other MDOs, the SBA, and key stakeholders, we can share these communication products – cross-promoting webinars, e-publications, and networks that serve our clients while advancing our missions and diversifying our revenues.

## Afterword

In this brief e-book, we've shared some strategies for integrating communications into long-term organizational goals by maximizing low cost/no cost resources. Just as importantly though, we hope we have sparked an industry conversation about applying MDOs' considerable entrepreneurial expertise to strengthen, not just our communications, but our MDOs as a whole. To that end, we invite you to tell us how your MDO "practices what you teach" by e-mailing us at [info@webinc.org](mailto:info@webinc.org). Tell us what makes your MDO an "Entrepreneurial Nonprofit" and we'll share your stories in a future publication. By leveraging our resources, relationships, and considerable entrepreneurial expertise, together we can strengthen the microenterprise community, our programs, and our financial positions. And those are truly long-term goals.

## Resources: The Complete List

### Marketing and Nonprofit Communications -- Books

Andresen, Katya. Robin Hood Marketing: Stealing Corporate Savvy to Sell Just Causes. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006.

Holland, DK. Branding for Nonprofits: Developing Identity with Integrity. New York: Allworth Press, 2006.

Miller, Kivi Leroux. The Nonprofit Marketing Guide: High Impact, Low Cost Ways to Build Support for Your Good Cause. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010.

Andresen, Katya, Alia McKee, and Mark Rovner. Homer Simpson for Nonprofits. E-book available at <http://web.networkforgood.org/201002ebook/>

### Useful and relevant blogs and websites

Andresen, Katya. Katya's Nonprofit Marketing Blog: Getting to the Point. Located at <http://www.nonprofitmarketingblog.com>.

Kanter, Beth. Beth's Blog. Located at <http://www.bethkanter.org>.

Mansfield, Heather (blog creator). Nonprofit Tech 2.0. Located at <http://nonprofitorgs.wordpress.com>

Network for Good Learning Center. A Fundraising Guide for the Overworked Nonprofit. Located at <http://www.fundraising123.org>

Techsoup.org: The Technology Place for Nonprofits. Social Media Bootcamp Resources. Located at <http://home.techsoup.org/Pages/socialmediabootcamp.aspx>

Schwartz, Nancy. Getting Attention! Helping Nonprofits Succeed Through Effective Marketing. Located at <http://gettingattention.org>. (news letter, blog, and website at this location)

### Style Manuals

Goldstein, Norm, ed. The Associated Press Stylebook. New York: Basic Books, 2004. (available online at <http://www.apstylebook.com>.)

The Chicago Manual of Style. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Available online at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>.