**Nonprofit 911 – May 15, 2008**
Our Web Site Stinks! Tips & Secrets for a Successful Website Redesign
with Michael Weiss
Sponsored by Network for Good

The MP3 audio transcript can be found at
www.fundraising123.org or www.nonprofit911.org

**Jono Smith**: Hello! Welcome to the May 15 Nonprofit 911 sponsored by Network for Good. This is Jono Smith. I'm the Marketing Director here at Network for Good. We want to welcome you. We are really happy that you joined us today.

Before I introduce our speaker for today, I just want to let you know a little bit about Network for Good, if you're not familiar with who we are. We are a nonprofit, just like most of you on the phone. Our mission is to help other nonprofits raise money online.

Nonprofit 911 is just one of the many free resources that Network for Good provides the nonprofit community to help organizations increase their online fundraising and nonprofit marketing results. In addition to Nonprofit 911, we also provide online fundraising services directly to nonprofits, including Custom DonateNow, EmailNow and the Donor Management Suite, which more than 3,700 small to mid-size nonprofits use to raise money online.

So, if you're not raising money right now on your website or if you don't have a way to do that that you're happy with, we hope that you'll consider Network for good to help you with those services. And while this is not a sales call, I invite you to visit www.fundraising123.org to learn more about how you can take advantage of a free 60 day trial of Network for Good's Custom DonateNow.

We've had over 200 people register for today's call, "Tips and Secrets for a Successful Website Redesign." Before we get started, I just wanted to offer a few housekeeping items. All the lines have been muted and this call is being recorded. You should have received an email from us this morning with the slides for today's call.

If you did not receive that email, they are also right now. You can go to www.fundraising123.org and click on the "Training" tab. You can get those and follow along with today's speaker. But if you're not in front of a computer, don't worry. You can always continue your learning at www.fundraising123.org after the call.

I also wanted to remind everyone that we will be posting an MP3 audio recording of today's call, just like we do for all our Nonprofit 911s. Again, that's under the Training tab at www.fundraising123.org. We'll also have a text transcript available within about five to seven days.

If you need to reach us during today's call or if you'd like to ask our speaker, Michael Weiss, a question, please email us at fundraising123@networkforgood.org. Michael will present today for about 30 or 40 minutes and then he'll take your questions. So, once again, you can email us any questions you have about website redesign at fundraising123@networkforgood.org.

At this point, I would like to introduce today's speaker. Michael Weiss is the CEO of imagistic, which is an award-winning, full service Internet software and services firm. His business development and marketing prowess has been a driving force behind imagistic's growth over the past seven years. His knowledge, vision and ability to speak English, not technology, have helped turn nonprofits into long term clients and partners of imagistic.

And I'll also mention that imagistic helped build our online fundraising learning center at www.fundraising123.org, which we're very proud of and want to thank Michael for all the hard work that his imagistic team did with that project.

Along with his extensive management, marketing and sales experience, Michael has a background in education and counseling. He started the Crossroads School, Paul's Middle School and Daniel Webster Middle School, all located along Los Angeles.

Michael holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Boston University and a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Loyola Marymount University, which also happens to be my alma mater. And I'm sure all that psychology background comes in great need when you're building websites. So, I want to thank Michael for donating his time today and without further ado, I'm going to turn the floor over to Michael Weiss.

**Michael Weiss**: Thank you, Jono. I do agree that having a psychology degree is always helpful when dealing with any type of client. So, what we're going to do today is I'm going to take you through a bunch of slides and I will make reference to these slides as I'm moving through them. And, again, if you don't have them, you can get them later. They're more just talking points, so I will still talk about everything that's on them so don't worry if you don't have them.

So, on slide one, as you can see, it says we need a new website. That's a nicer way of saying our website stinks, which is the title of this phone seminar. And really, what I want to focus on is if you are looking at either creating a site, which I'm sure most of you already have a site and you're looking at a redesign. There are a lot of things to think about when doing a redesign and there are a lot of reasons as to why you are thinking of doing a redesign.

It could be to have a better look and feel, a better brand presence, maybe make your donations module seem a little bit more in the forefront and give people more reason to click on things, to get more information about your organization to your constituents or to your end users. So, there's a whole bunch of different reasons.

So, I'm going to move to slide two, which is basically an introduction of me. As Jono said, I realized that my bio on my website is a little old. I've actually been doing this for over 10 years and what has happened in the last five or six years is that we didn't make a strong reason to do this, but it just happened that in imagistic, probably 75% of our clients are nonprofits. Clients range, as Jono said, anywhere from Network for Good to the ACLU to Revenue Watch, the Human Rights Watch to Southern Poverty Law Center and some local nonprofits here in Los Angeles, the first five, LA and others.

So, that's just a little bit of background on me. If you go to slide three, this is basically the agenda for the call. What I want to talk about is the development process. I spend a good amount of time on that because I think it's one of those things that a lot of clients or nonprofits don't think about in terms of what is in store for you, what should you expect when you take on a redesign project? All vendors have a process, a lot of them are very similar and I'm going to talk about that process, but I think it's important for you to understand what a vendor is going to expect of you and what you should expect from your vendor.

We're going to talk about budget because I know that that is always a key point for any company, whether you're a for-profit or a nonprofit. It's never the situation where sky's the limit when it comes to money. And so, I have a slide and some examples of different sites and what they cost.

And then, I want to talk a little bit about assessing a vendor. There are a lot of times where it's important for you to make the decision whether you're going to handle this in house or you're going to handle this out of house. Chances are, I'd say 90% of the time, most companies and organizations are outsourcing this type of project. To give you an example, the ACLU has a very large marketing and IT group, but we've been working with them for two or three years because when it comes down to it, building websites is not your job. It's something that's important to your organization, but it's really not your core competency, so it makes sense to outsource that.

So, I'm going to talk about how to choose a vendor and what you should look at and we can do some questions and answers on some resources. So, slide four is the development process. And really, how do you get started? Well, the idea is to sit down and start by looking in. Look inward and have the internal conversations where you want to discuss what you really need. It's not what you want, but it's what do you need.

A lot of organizations will say, "Well, we want social networking and we want people to set up profiles and we want people to talk to each other." I believe that's always nice to have and it may be a want, but it really comes down to what do you need. And that involves you having internal meetings with your stakeholders. Talk to your people, talk to the different departments, if it's a program department and a development department, a marketing department. You're Executive Director and all of that, and really start to hone what it is that you need.

Are you looking for donations, because you don't have donations? Are you looking for advocacy and maybe there's a way that you can get an advocacy section on your site. We can talk about if you want to use third party providers for that and all those sorts of things. But really, what you want to do is put together a request for proposal and it doesn't have to be a 500-page document, but it should be more than just five or six bullet points so that everybody who gets the request for proposal can answer all of your questions.

And by putting together this document, it allows you to compare apples to apples. If you just go out to people and say, "Hey, we need a new website and we want this, we want that" and you're not clear on your objectives, then what's going to happen is you're going to get proposals from five or six different firms and the budgets are going to range from $5, 000 to half a million because people don't know exactly what you want. So, again, look internally, have these discussions and figure out what it is that you really need.

Then, you want to get a short list of firms. You really don't want to go, probably, to more than three to five firms, because if everybody's going to turn in a 30-page proposal, or even a 20-page proposal, it's a lot of bedtime reading. So really get your list down short.

I was recently involved in an RFP process. I was told that five firms would be answering it. I called my contact, and he said he got 25 proposals and that he would probably get back to me in a month. And I realized, at that point, that I probably shouldn't have answered that one, because who knows what's going to happen with that.

And, when you are putting out your RFP, request solutions. Don't just request for information: "Oh, who are you?" You don't ask your vendors, "Who are you? How long have you been in business?" I mean, that's all important, but at the same time, ask for solutions.

So, if you're looking at a donation, and you need donations, ask them for their opinion. Maybe there are three or four different opinions they can give you on donations. Maybe they say, "You know what? Just use Network for Good." Done. Or, "Oh, you're on Blackbaud? Let's look at this." "Oh, you want to do advocacy? Maybe you wanted to use Democracy in Action." Or maybe they'll give you their opinion on advocacy, because advocacy may not be the best use of your money and the best use of your time and budget. So you'll have your own criteria, but select a firm that fits your needs.

Now we will move to slide five. So, when you choose your vendor and you get your RFP done and it's time to begin the process, you're going to move into the discovery process. And really, this is the time to do what you just did all over again, but this time with your vendor, because I guarantee you you've missed something.

Again, you're going to put together a statement of work. And basically, it takes your RFP and it breaks it down into a statement of work. And the way I always look at it is this way, that the proposal is a 50, 000-foot view. It's an "I think we've got a good idea as to what you're looking at. Here's a general scope."

The statement of work will bring that down to 10, 000 feet, and it will detail the breadth of the scope. This is when you're having your internal teams and your vendor sort of break down all the different buckets of what you're going to do. And that is, "OK, we're going to redesign the home page. We need a new logo. We want a new color palette. We're going to add donations. We're going to add a content management system. We're going to have an email newsletter."

And again, it's just broad strokes of the breadth of the scope, so you have a good idea of what it is that you're going to do. It looks at your top-level needs and priorities.

And you're going to be working with your vendor. You could tell your vendor, "Well, we've got an event in August, so we need to be up by then." And then the vendor can say, "OK, let's prioritize, because we only have eight weeks. Your CMS isn't going to be ready, but we can get everything else ready, and then the CMS can be launched with work flow afterwards." So again, there are a lot of discussions.

You're going to set up a parking lot during this time, which means someone's going to make a suggestion: "Oh, by the way, we really want to have this Flash movie of how we help homeless find homes." OK. That's great. But within your budget and within your time, you're not going to make it in this first phase. Put it in a parking lot.

It's always great to bring everything up at this point during discovery. It is the time where you are blue-skying and putting everything up on the whiteboard, and then you prioritize and you say, "OK. We can do this now, and we can do other things later."

There's a lot of paperwork involved in this. There are a lot of notes going back and forth between you and your vendor. This is the time that you should expect to be busy on this project. This is when it is up to you to educate your vendor, or your internal team, about what you want, who you are, and your objectives for the site. So there are a lot of notes going back and forth. And I want to be clear: There are no pretty pictures at this point. We're not talking about design. We're not talking about anything. We're just setting the breadth of the scope.

So then we move to slide six, which is the development process. Part of the development process is putting together the functional spec. This is when we take the 10,000-foot view of the breadth of the scope and the statement of work and we bring it down to sea level. And this is when we detail the depth. So it's really about what is going to be built.

We understand. Let's say, for instance, we say, "OK. We want a content management system, because we've got 400 pages of content, we've got four editors, and we want to grow this to 2,000 pages of content because we are going to set up affiliate offices across the country and each one of them is going to have their own section, and we want to give them control.
OK, that's great. You've discussed that and you've said that in your statement of work in the previous phase, but now you have to figure out how that is going to work. What kind of content management system do you need?

And I'm using this as an example. This is when we will look at different solutions. There are open-source solutions: there's Drupal, there's Jumla, and all of those. We can talk a little bit about those in a minute, and I'm sure there are already questions flying about those. And then there are other solutions. There are hosted solutions like Crown Peak. There are installed systems like Ektron or Red Dot. There are Microsoft solutions. You want to talk about all of them, because there are some that will work for you and some that won't.

Many times, it comes down to cost, because Microsoft and Ektron are expensive. If you're a smaller non-profit, you don't want to blow $70, 000 on an enterprise content management system if you don't need it.

So we're really going to get into the depth of each of the modules—even donations. You might say, "We want to do donations but we don't have a lot of money, so we're going to use Network for Good because they can handle everything. We also need CRM, and network for good can handle that as well." Or, you might say, "we want donations, but at the same time, we want to have people make donations in honor or memory of people. We want to have e-cards. We want to do all of that."

We are really going to drill down now into every single bucket, every single module, and break down all the details. It's a lot of work. But if you plan all of this and you talk about it up front, your expectations are managed; as well the development process and putting it all together will run a lot smoother.

During this phase as well, you're going to identify your audiences. Is it donors? Most of the time it's donors, because the majority of you are looking to build websites to not only broaden and extend your brand and strengthen it online, but also to attract donors and have people get involved. The involvement can be through giving you money online, writing big checks and sending them in, maybe doing some volunteer work, all that type of stuff.

But you're also going to look at who else your audiences are. Maybe it's the people you are actually helping, maybe its politicians, maybe it's kids, maybe it's volunteers, maybe it's commissioners and the media.

There are all different types of media, and this is where you really want to break this down. Because before you get into design, before you really get into the depths of information architecture, you want to have an idea of who your audiences are.

Now, you may already say, "well, we know who our audiences are." But there are different ways to attend to those audiences online.

For instance, we did first5LA.org. If you're in front of a computer, you can go to first5LA.org and look at it. They have four or five different audiences, but their main audience was parents, because they wanted to educate parents on their services and what they do. And as you can see, it's pretty clear.

And I have that later on here in the slide that you can look at. I do a 'before' and an 'after' of that. But again, they also had commissioners, and the media, and they had grantees, and we really need to make sure that all of them are talked about and were identifying them.

So as I said, the functional speck is really the end result of this. You go from your proposal to your statement of work to your functional speck. We're doing a content inventory of your current site to see all the different pages you have in sections. We're doing wireframes.

We'll get into the next slide right now. Let's move to Slide Seven, and that's 'Information Architecture'. I believe this is the most important step in any project, whether it's for a non-profit, whether it's a small five-page site or it's a 10, 000 page site that's made up of 20 different templates.

Information architecture is key and you cannot skip this step. It's not rocket science and it doesn't need to be a long process, but you need to build your wireframes.

A wireframe is not a site map. A site map is the flow chart, the different boxes with the arrows that say "from the home page to programs to donations to advocacy to about us to news. That's a flow chart.

The wireframes are basically architectural drawings. They're line drawings. And they're not hand drawn. They're usually built using Microsoft Visio. People use Photoshop, some people use Word.

If you go to slide eight, you will see some wire frames that we created for one of our clients. I blocked out their name, because I didn't ask for permission and I don't think they'll have a problem. But as you can see, the one on the left is the "news" landing page. As you can see, there's an area for an image. There are different article listings. Below, there's an area for a video gallery/audio podcasts.

And again, there's no design here. There are no pretty pictures. But what this allows you to do is visually see the layout of the site and have discussions about it. This allows you to visually look at something. And it's always refreshing to start to see stuff rather than read it all the time, so they understand. Everybody wants to start seeing things.

This is a great time where you can say, "Look, we have our top mast." It says, "Our Work", "News", "Publications", "Multimedia", "Donate" and "About Us". And then people can say, "You know what? I don't want to call it 'Our Work'. I want to call it 'What We Do'." And that's when you start talking about your nomenclature. You start talking about your taxonomy. And you say, "You know what? The video gallery/audio podcast box at the bottom, I want those up top."

And what's great about this process is that you can start to look at things, and move them around, and have discussions about it. You start to say how the features and the functionalities are going to work. And you can do all this before you're in design and before you're in development, and it will save you time and money.

The other thing that's great about this process is there are no colors. There's no emotional response to any kind of design element. As soon as you start putting colors and pictures and all of that, we know (we all know) that there is an emotional response, meaning, "Wow! That's a lot of blue." Or, "I don't like that picture." And you're not paying attention to the content and how it's laid out on the page.

So you can see on the right, there's a picture of a map that we had to say, "OK, this is where a map is going to go." But again, it's a chance for you to look at how the content is going to lay out, and how you can move things around, and how you can start naming things, and start thinking about how things are going to be driven maybe by a CMS, or things are going to be an RRS feed, and all those types of things.

So IA is very, very important. And once you get through IA (Information Architecture), you get through all the wire frames, you get the functional spec done, basically you have what we call a bible. And anybody can take that and build from it.

And the idea is that document brings you down to sea level. And it says exactly how users are going to use the site, how you as a staff are going to admin the site, how different features (if there are third parties coming, for instance), how networks are good if you're going to use them, or if you're going to use Democracy In Action, or you're using a Razor's Edge module, and how all of those are going to tie in, or if you're going to use constant contacts. Again, all of that stuff is discussed. I know it's sometimes a lot of work. It's a lot of reading.

And I implore you, that if you are overwhelmed by this document, you have your vendor or whoever wrote it take you through it page-by-page so that you understand what's going on. Because whoever wrote this understands it, and they're going to build from it. So they expect you to understand it as well so that when you see the final site, it's very clear as to what was supposed to be built.

This is the type of situation where you should not feel afraid to admit that you don't understand something. Not only are you spending a lot of money. For some of you, even $5, 000 is a lot of money for your organization. You're spending a lot of money. You're spending a lot of time. You're spending a lot of resources. It's clear that you need to understand everything that's going on, and you shouldn't be afraid to ask questions. And we'll talk about that with the vendor in a little bit.

So on slide nine, it's now time for the development process. And we're talking about design. And as you can see, now come the pretty pictures. Wire frames are done. We've talked about your audiences. We know what your brand is. Maybe you already have your logo and your color palate. Now it's time to build. Maybe the home page is where we start.

This is, by far, the most emotional and difficult phase of any project. This is when the people who said, "I don't care about this." Maybe your executive director... And I apologize if there are any EDs on the phone. But a lot of EDs say, "You know what? Marketing, you guys, you take care of it. Just show me when it's done." And the next thing you know, you get a home page up and the ED sticks their head in and they say, "Oh, you know I went to UCLA. I want UCLA colors." Or they may say, "Wow, that's a terrible picture." And that's fine, but this is when all the emotional pulls start to come out. And this is when the different stakeholders finally visually see how everything is going to lay out.

If we've done our job correctly and we've done our wire frame, it shouldn't be too much of a surprise. But it always is. So you want to keep the cooks in the kitchen to a small group. Design, again, can take a long time. It can be a scope-creep issue. It can be the time where for someone the light bulb goes off over someone's head. And they say, "Oh, we forgot to add this." And that's when you kind of want to go back and look at your scope and look at your schedule. And if there are too many around, you're going to start to look at budget issues.

So again, important, you've got to do it. But once you get through your home page design. Then you're going to get into your landing page designs and other different templates that you're going to build. And all of these have been spelled out in wire frames in the functional stacks.

So at this point, you know you're going to have a content management system and you're going to have four templates. You're going to have a home page template. You'll have an article template. You'll have a donate template. And you'll have an about us template.

Whatever it is, you'll know at this point, and that's how they're going to... That those are the different pages they're going to build.

Then you go to the next slide, which is slide 10. And this is the development. This is when things are getting built. And this is the longest phase of the project. And it can be pretty much the least interesting to you, because at this point you're... For all intents and purposes, most of it is done. It's been very top heavy in the beginning, because you've been not only educating your vendor or your internal team as to what you want, but you've been able to express your opinions, talk about content, talk about all sorts of things. And now it's time to build it.

So what do you do during this phase? You can sit back and wait. You can be as involved as you want. But your role is to be available for reviews, questions, and a little bit of Q/A. So a vendor is going to start pulling things together and start showing them to you. They'll do an alpha. They'll do a beta. It's for you. For the vendor to call and say, "Hey, you know we never really understood how we were going to handle, you know, email campaigns." And so maybe some things will come up. This is software development. Things are always going to come up.

What's really important is to pay attention to testing and Q/Aing. You'll be called upon if there's a content migration. So if you've got an old site that has a content management system, and you've got 500 pages of content, and you're moving it into the new site with the new content management system, not only are you going to help put the content in, we're going to look to you (or a vendor's going to look to you) to say is it all right, is it all correct.

This is when we're also looking at maybe translation. Maybe you've decided to have a Spanish site. And you've used a localization feature on Drupal or on another content management system. You're going to want someone who can read Spanish to go through the pages and make sure that they're correct.

So there's a lot of Q/A. And you're going to make donations to make sure "Donations" is working. You're going to add your name to email addresses to make sure the email addresses are working. And it's a development process you're going to go through it. So basically what happens: you go through alpha, beta, and then you get to delivery.

And so now I'm on slide 11. The title of it is, "You redesigned, and all you got was this T-shirt." And it's a picture of a guy with his hands up wearing a T-shirt, because basically the question is, "What now?" We've got our new website. What did you get?

Well, we got a new website, OK. But now, what have you signed up for. Maybe during discovery and requirements you said, "Wouldn't it be great if we did a spotlight on one of our grantees every week?" And then all of the sudden you went live, and you realized, "Oh no, someone's got to write that content."

So there are a lot of things that you want to talk about, and make sure you're clear that you could have all these great ideas like, "Hey, let's have a poll every day." OK, now someone's got to write those polls. Someone's got to manage this website.

This is when content management solutions come into play so that you don't have to go to your vendor to have them create different modules and do stuff. This is when you have a system that allows you to do it. So these are things that you just want to think about.

One rant, you know, is not a blog. If you're going to have a blog, you've got to stick to it. And be clear about it. "Hey, we're going to make updates once a week on this blog." People expect blogs to be daily or every few days. And again, these are things that you have to think about. Who's going to handle that? How are you going to manage it?

And the final bullet point on this is: guess how long until you get to do it again? And the bottom line is that we all know that a website, unfortunately, does have a shelf life. It has a shelf life because technology changes, trends change, expectations of the end user change. If you're doing a really, really good strong redesign, it should be good for at least three to five years. But if it's a redesign with technology and you're adding new things in here, probably the same, three to five years. But as you all know, and as a vendor I can tell you, 90 percent of the clients are calling and saying, "Hey, can we have social networking?" That's because everybody thinks that social networking is what they need, because it's the buzz word of the day.

And so these are the types of things that you want to think about. But again, your donation module, your content, your "about us"--obviously that'll change over the course of three to five years, because there's turnover and people leave your organization and come to your organization--news and press releases, events, if you have a calendar; all of that's going to be changed. But hopefully, the structure of the site and the design of the site will work for you for three to five years.

The other thing is that once you launch, it's nice to take a breather, sit back for a few months, and see how the site is working. Maybe you put Google Analytics on there, so you're going to look at your trends, you're going to at your statistics, and see how people are using your site. And then you can come back after two, three, four months, and say, "Wow! Nobody is going to our donations page." Well, that's because the donation module is not very clear on the home page. "OK. Let's look at that." So you could do different little tweaks here and there.

And then you also want to look at your parking-lot items. "Oh, you know what? We really want to do that Flash movie now. OK. Let's do that." And it's really nice to have a list of phase-two items, or parking-lot items, so that you can continually add things to your site that brings your users back.

I suggest you don't come out of the gate with everything. Even if you have 20 things you want to do and you have the time to do it, why not do 12 to 15 of them, and then after you launch, over the course of a few months, add these other sections, add these other features and functionality, and then your users say, "Wow! They're really up-to-date. They're really keeping it fresh. They're giving me new things." These are things to think about. And that's also what you want to think about when you're prioritizing what your users want.

Let's see. As I continue to move, let's get down to budgets.

So, slide 12. The little title is: "This isn't poker. It's a partnership." And really, what that means is: "Don't hold your cards so close to your chest." If you have a budget, put it in your RFP. If you have a budget, tell your vendors how much you want to spend. Or if you don't know, tell them a number that scares you.

So, if you go them and say, "Wow! $25, 000 is out of the question," then they know what to build for you. They know if they're the right vendor, first. They might say, "Wow. We can't do anything for less than 50." Or they might say, "Wow! 25! We could do a ton." That helps them understand what they can do for you.
But it also helps them set up your expectations of what you're going to get. If you only have 25, 000, chances are--and you need a CMS--you're going to get a simple CMS solution. You're going to get a Joomla or a Drupal. You're not going to get an Ektron or a Microsoft or a CrownPeak. If you have 50, 000, maybe there's the discussion.

So I want to talk about budgets, and talk a little bit about it. Up to $2, 500, basically, is a shoestring budget. And really, what you're going to get out of that is brochure-ware. You're going to get four to six pages, no technology--very little technology. Maybe you'll have donations because you use someone like Network for Good for your donations, and that's a separate budget item. But you're really not going to have anything that's too fancy. So really, what you want to spend your time and money on for something like that is your design and your content and making sure that your users understand.

Now, there are a lot of solutions--like Drupal has this, and I know CrownPeak is launching this, and Ektron just recently launched this--where they are selling their systems with pre-built templates. That helps you out a lot with a shoestring budget. It even helps you out with a small budget, as I have listed here, of $2,500 to $25,000.

With that, you don't have to spend a lot of time on information architecture and design. It's pretty much laid out for you. You will, obviously, apply your logo and your color palette and maybe some imagery, but really, the structure and the framework of the site is in place. Therefore, you can really spend your time talking about your content, talking about your work flow and how the back end is going to work, and maybe some additional features.

So, again, shoestring is up to 2, 500. I'm going to be honest with you; you're not going to get a huge site.

Small is 2, 500 to 25, 000. That's where you're going to get a CMS. Maybe you're going to use a third-party donation. You're going to spend a lot of time. Maybe you're going to have 50 to 60 pages of content. You're could use a Google search; there's a free search for Google, and you can put that on there.

A medium site is anywhere from 25, 000 to 50, 000. You're starting to get a little bit more into features and functionality. And really, what it starts to come down to with these types of projects is you have more time for discussion. You have more time for the discovery and the planning process, because you have a bigger budget.

It's not, all of a sudden, "Wow! We have $50, 000. We can get everything." It's, "Wow! We have $50, 000; we can take our time: we could have a couple more conference calls with our vendor, or we could have a couple more meetings with our vendor, or we could have some meetings internally and then go back to our vendor."

I want to be clear that just because the budget goes up doesn't mean that your features and functionality set goes up: it's just that you have more time. And any good vendor is going to charge by the hour. Now, of course, they'll set you a fixed budget; but it is based on a bunch of hours. So, if you've got a project manager, a designer, and an information architect, all in a two-hour meeting, that's a six-hour meeting according to the vendor. So these are the things that you just need to think about.

And then the large sites are anywhere from 50, 000 to 100, 000. I'll be honest with you:

we've built sites up to half a million. It all depends on the features and functionality that's going on the site. Time is money, as we always say: these projects take time; this is not a four-week project. Even the shoe-string project is going to be six to eight weeks, because this isn't your core competency and your main job. You have other things to do, so there's time in between.

The one thing that I want to talk about is that you can negotiate rates but hours are hours. So I have there $20 an hour to $200 an hour. That's where vendors are, in terms of how much they charge. You get what you pay for in this industry. I'm not saying you have to go for the $200 guy all the time. But anybody who's in the $75 to $125 an hour is probably a seasoned professional who's doing this.

Now, you can, again, as I said - a 200-hour project at $20 an hour is a $4, 000 project; it's not that much. But, at $100 an hour, it's a lot more money. So, again, if you do a good RSP and you're able to compare apples to apples, and all of your vendors come back and say "Wow; this is a 300- to 400-hour project", then it's a question of which one you want to choose based on their rates. You know, get discounted rates.

So what I'm trying to say here is that hours are hours and any good vendor is going to be able to say "Yeah, this is a 400-hour project"; if you get four vendors who say "Yes, this is a 400-hour project" - but, again, their price might differ, based on their hourly rates.

So let's talk about - I think we're cruising along, but I want to leave time for questions.

I want to just go to the next slide, which is slide 13, which is "Do I Need a Vendor?" And chances are the answer is "Yes", because, again, it's not your core competency and you want to outsource this.

So, really, here's what you want to do when you're looking at a vendor. First, you want to understand their process, their methodology. How do they do it? Do they go through discovery and requirement-gathering? What type of documentation do they put together? Do they put together statements of work? Do they put together wireframes? Do they put together a functional set? For a $5,000 project, do they insist that they do a functional set? Well, that's a little overkill for a small project. You really want to understand how they work.

You also want to understand how they deal with change orders and scope management - meaning they're in a discovery meeting and it's a $10, 000 budget or a $20, 000 budget and someone in your team raises their hand and says "Oh, by the way, we need an advocacy tool", and they say "Oh. Well, you know, bla bla bla bla bla, we can't do that, we can't do that" or they say "OK. Let's talk about scope; let's talk about your priorities."

You really want to understand how they deal with that scope management in the beginning. And, then, when something comes up when you're in the middle of development and there's a change order, how do they handle changes?

You want to get an idea of their project team. And, really, what you want to do is you want to find out if they're a 20-year-old kid sitting in a garage working on stuff or if they're a real firm. And, if you don't care about the 20-year-old in his garage, then that's fine; but you want to understand how they work.

You want to talk about expectations, what you can expect from them and what they can expect from you.

One of the things that I have in here, that I don't have listed by it's in my notes, is you want to get references. You really, really want to talk to people who have worked with them. There's nothing that speaks better than talking to a vendor's past clients. And, hopefully, they'll give you - chances are, like any reference, they're going to give you the good references, because no-one gives away bad references.

But this is your chance to ask them questions, like "How often did they come and meet with you?", "How was their communication?", "How did they handle change orders?", "How was their design?", "Did you like their design?", "How did they handle technology?"--those sorts of things. And maybe compare your project to this other client's project and start to get a little bit of feedback.

I do believe that you want to have in-person interviews with the team. You don't want to just choose your vendor based on proposals. Meet them. Get a feel for them. This is a relationship. Ninety percent of their job is to be client management and to manage your expectations. Get a feel for who they are. Meet with the project manager. You could meet the CEO of the company and love them; but, then, your project manager you may not like. I highly suggest that you do this.

Now, if you are in Alabama, and all of your vendors are from New York and LA and Dallas, then you want to have phone conversations. And if you can, have video calls, if you can. But you really want to meet them.

Is experience with a nonprofit important? It's not key, but it's nice, because not only do they understand how to deal with nonprofits, their bureaucracy and their red tape and their budget issues, but they also know how to deal with people who are extremely passionate about what they do.

We have a lot of for-profit clients, and I'll be honest with you, the marketing departments that we work with don’t really care. It's just a job to them. But you guys, you believe in what you do. For some of you, it's your entire life and it's your passion. And a vendor who can understand that--and this is my psychology degree talking--will be a better vendor. They'll be able to listen to you. They'll be able to understand your issues and your problems a little better.

You want to ask them if they have specific answers for specific problems. That goes along with "How do they handle certain things?"

And really, what's your sense of trust, honesty, and fit with them? How does it feel? If it's a big project, you guys are going to be together for six months, maybe a year. For instance, the ACLU has been a client for two and a half, three years. Southern Poverty Law Center, for us, has been a client for seven or eight years. And basically, at the end of the day, we all like each other. We come to blows. There are speed bumps in any project.

But really, can you trust this vendor? Do you think they're honest? Do they fit with what you're doing? And it's very, very important that you do this. And as I said--I'm speaking as vendor--but tell them your budget, tell them what you expect, and see how they come back to you.

Slide 14 is my top-10 never-dos. And I'll go through this quickly.

10: Never think this is going to take four weeks. This is going to take longer.

9: Never think you can do this alone. Whether you're going to have your internal team or you're going to have a vendor, you can't do this by yourself.

Number 8: Never skip the information architecture phase.

Number 7: Never do this without an RFP. You have to put together an RFP. Like I said, it's not a bullet-point list, but it could be a two to three page document that breaks down what you're doing. You have to do this.

Never send your RFP to more than five firms. That does two things. One, if the good firms that you want know that there's more than five, they may not answer. Secondly, you don't want to create a lot of work for yourself.

5: Never choose a vendor based on price alone. So you've got two vendors and two great proposals--one's coming in at 10 grand, and one's coming in at 20. Find out why they came in at 20 and learn a little bit more about what they're doing, because they may be the better fit, and they may say to, "The $10, 000 guys don't understand this, this, and this, and at the end, it's going to cost you the same as if you went with us."

Never ask your IT manager to manage this process alone. They have other things to do with their time.

Number 3: Never start without a budget in mind. Again, it's really impossible for you to know what the exact budget is, but come up with a number that scares you, or a ceiling.

Number 2: Never start this process without key stakeholders involved. You always want to get your ED and all the managers in your department involved in the beginning so that they are heard, that you have an idea of what they expect, and then you can tell them to go away so you can do your job.

And number 1: Never hire your boss's nephew to do this. I call it nephew marketing. It is a very, very tough thing to do.

And actually, I should put in here number 0: If you're getting someone to do this pro bono, be prepared for a long process. Because people believe in pro bono work in the beginning, but then they're paying clients always come up top, and the pro-bonos go down below when it comes time to client service.

If we move forward, real quick--and I think we still have some time. I wanted to show you some before and afters.

If you go to slide 15, this is First five LA. First five LA's home page before we worked with them is on the left, and the redesign is on the right. As you can see on the one on the left, very primary colors, kind of hard to know exactly who they are and what they do. It took me about a half-hour playing on this site to figure out that the flower on the right that says "About Us," "Community," "Our Projects," and "Funding" is the actual navigation for the site.

There is a ton of content. It's actually too much and overwhelming. I don't know exactly who the audience is and what they expect. So, what we did is we worked with them and we came up with what's on the right. It's got a nice picture. That is a Flash movie, and that kid kind of comes up, and there are different images. But we came up with the "Help them learn, keep them healthy, and keep them safe," which is really their three main objectives for their parents and caregivers, and it's very clear that they want them to go there.

And then on top of it is a nav, a sub-nav, up top or a main nav "Programs, " "Community Impact, " "Policy and Advocacy, " "Research, " "Partnerships, " and "Resource." These are for the other audiences.

There's a very clear search box. There's About Us. There's a calendar. There's a spotlight. It's chock full of information. There's a lot of content and I understand it can be, "Wow, that's a lot of content." But at the same time above the fold, above on your main screen you really see this happy image. You see areas that you can click on and it's very clear and directive where they want you to go.

And I'll move on and I'm sure that you guys might have some questions about these. On the next one, I'm sorry let's go back real quick. I want to be completely transparent and honest. This was an enormous project. It's a Drupal install, but at the end of the day -- and please, don't fall off your chairs -- this was a $300, 000 project by the time we were done. Just being honest...

The next slide is a site that we just did again using Drupal for the Southern Probably Lost Centers, Southern Juvenile Defenders Center. On the left is what it looked like before us. I would say this is a shoestring budget website.

This is, you know, a $2500 website. There is no technology, very simple. That map is the only picture that was on the site and it's boom, done. Here's some simple information. There is nothing compelling about it at all. There's no clear understanding as to actually really what do they do?

If you look on the right, what we did is we brought a picture of a kid really up to the front. It says welcome title because this is a -- they haven't put all their content in, so this is just a beta screenshot. But it's very clear across the top what the navigation is. There's a search, and again, it gives a little bit more life. There's some color. It's compelling and all of this -- most recent resources, recent news and recent events -- is all being driven by the Content Management System. So, as they're adding content the home page is becoming update and more current.

Again, the idea behind this was, how do we give this a little bit more life? How do we kind of pull on the emotional strings, heart strings? And how do we make this compelling and allow people quick access to the content but at the same time get it across as to who we are.

The next slide, which is Slide 17, is -- I like this one a lot -- this is the O High Foundation. I'm on the board of the O High Foundation and I believe in these guys and been supporting them for 12, 15 years. I basically went to them. I said, you know, you guys are a -- you have a physical place in O High California and they have a retreat center and it's beautiful, but they are international in their programs and what they do.

And their website, the one on the left which is the one that's up now because we haven't launched yet -- really, again, compelling pictures, pretty pictures. It kind of shows who they are. But they look small. They don't look like an international organization. They look like a garage band is basically what I told them.

Their navigation is very confusing. Once you click in it gets even more confusing. There's no content on the home page that kind of explains who they are. You've got to click in there and get it.

So, we did is -- we put them on a Content Management System. And again, for all of these examples, they are all Drupal. But really what we did is that area where the big picture is, is that you can have --pictures are changing on that. There's a Search, which is obvious. But really, look what it says, "Help us Make a Difference. Donate Now, "--very clear what they want you to do.

Yes, you can read What's Hot. You can look at Spotlight. You can look at Our Initiatives. But in big, bold letters it's "Help us" and "We need your money; click here." And then there are other things. You can view the calendar so you can see their calendar events and you can join their mailing list. But there are action items, things you can actually do. And you can do within one click.

On their old one you got to click two or three times to even get to content. And, again, below that big hero shot and the "Help us make a Difference" are What's Hot at the O

High Foundation, a Spotlight and Our Initiatives all driven by the Content Management System.

Non-technical people can go in there and update it. At the same time, we brought their branding and their colors in. They really like their earthy colors. They like their logo so we brought that to life. We added a search. And search is important for a lot of clients.

And, again, the idea was make them look bigger than they actually are. And I think they look a very -- it gives them a sophisticated look. It gives them a professional look. It doesn't give them that home-grown look and it doesn't say we're just an O High. It makes us feel like we're a little bigger and people are going to take us more seriously.

And I'll be honest with you, the site on the left --- I don't know if I would click "Donate." I don't know if I would give that site any money because they kind of look, you know, like a little garage band. The guys on the right, they feel a little bit more sophisticated, established, and trustworthy. Why wouldn't I give them money after I read about them?

And then I think the last slide, which is Slide 18 is another Source five site that we did. It hasn't gone live yet. And that is, on the left was their site, that's their site now. Again, nice images, cute kids and it says, "Investing in our precious resource, our children."

But again, doesn't give any kind of sense of what they're doing and who they are. And who's the audience? What am I supposed to click on?

So we took the First five LA design, because First five LA allowed First five Bernardino to use it, and we applied it to it, and it gave it a little bit more professional look. And again, donations are not what they're about; they get their money from the state. It's more about: "How do we get parents involved? How do we get them involved? How do we get them information? How do we tell people about what's going on? And how do we get our other audiences compelled enough to click and go in?"

And so that's basically it. I'm sure there are questions. And Jono, I don't know if you're there, but I thought maybe we could take some questions now, if you like.

**Jono**: Great. Thank you, Michael. That was a great presentation.

**Michael**: Thank you.

**Jono**: And we do have some questions that have come in over email. But I want to remind folks that we've got time for about 10 minutes, so you can go ahead and email your additional questions to fundraising123@networkforgood.org.

OK. Let's start with a question from Shannon. Shannon's writing in from Northern California. And "When redesigning our site, should we have one person do the design and another person do the technical stuff, or does that have to be the same person? And what if we can't afford to hire a tech wizard? Are there ways of redesigning without being a technology expert?"

**Michael**: Ah. That's an excellent question. Depending on the complexity of the site and what you're redesigning, you can find designers who are very good at HTML and JavaScript and CSS and all the other tech-speak stuff, and you can find some really, really good designers who can do both. And that's a nice thing to have. It helps you save your time and money.

If you have a designer who's been working with you and has done a lot of print and has done a lot of your branding, and you just trust them and they understand your mission, then use them. But if you're going to use a tech partner, whether it's an individual tech guy, or wizard, as you said, or a firm, just make sure that they're aware that you're going to do this and that there is open communication between both.

A lot of designers sometimes don't think about technology, and design things that, while can be done, may be expensive. So maybe they do bleeding edges, or maybe they do images overlapping. So you just want to be careful, and make sure that there's open communication between both.

If you don't have a tech wizard, so to speak, or you don't have somebody who can handle a lot of your back-end stuff, or even build your front-end stuff, the solutions that CrownPeak and Ektron and Drupal offer is that you can get pre-built templates. And really, you're not going to do a lot of technology; you're going to focus more on your content and your design. So there are systems out there that exist that offer a lot of the technology already, and that might help.

**Jono**: Great. Thanks, Michael.

**Michael**: Sure.

**Jono**: And let's see here. Once again, go ahead and email us your questions at fundraising123@networkforgood.org.

And the next question is a long one, actually, from Tucker. And he's got several questions in here. So let me know if you need me to review these, Michael.

**Michael**: I'm reading it right now.

**Jono**: OK. So, "How can a site redesign increase our online giving potential, when so much of our success is from email solicitation?" And I'll just read all these, then we'll go back...

**Michael**: Sure.

**Jono**: "What are the best ways to capture contact info from first-time visitors to your website? For example, should we use a splash page? I know that a website should, first and foremost, support an email marketing strategy. What are the best ways to do that? I know it depends on the target audience, but is there a new trend to optimize design for 1028 by 768 versus 800 by 600?" And maybe, for the people on the phone who have no idea what that means, you can also clarify that.

**Michael**: Sure.

**Jono**: "How much multimedia is too much multimedia?" This one makes me chuckle. "Is Web 2.0 already passé?" I think that's a really interesting question. And then, finally, "What can we learn from successful political campaigns?" This is from Tucker, and he's writing in from a women and family-oriented organization. He's the director of online marketing here in Washington, DC.

**Michael**: OK. Well, I'll do my best to get through them.

"How can a site redesign increase our online giving potential, when so much of our success is from email solicitation?" I mean, that's a $64, 000 question, right? It comes down to like we did with the Ojai Foundation. You kind of bring it to the forefront, and you say, "This is what we want."

When you're looking at your design, you say, "OK. If online giving is what's important to us," then you bring that to the forefront. You make a donation module really clear on the home page. I mean, literally, on some, we've made them bright orange. We made them bright green. We made them bright red.

The new way of looking at a website, or studies have been done, is they kind of do an F. So they start in the upper left-hand corner, they go down, all the way down the left-hand side, and then they go back, and they go to the right and to the right. So really, the upper-left corner of your website, which is where most people put their logo, is one of the most important places. But right below that is where you could possibly put a donation module. Or, if you have a big image, like we did on the Ojai Foundation, right next to it is a donation module.

And so I think there's a lot of ways, through your design. And you make your donation a persistent-nav item, or you always have, "Hey! You like what you see here? Donate here." There are all different types of ways to get people involved in donations.

**Jono**: I would just add one point to what Michael was saying there. Some of the research we've done--and they're good--related to offline versus online giving, shows that well over half of the folks who make traditionally offline donations actually research their gifts online. So they typically only respond to direct-mail appeals or whatever the case may be. But a large portion of those, including the folks you may think are doing that, and those are older donors, are actually going on your website and researching before they actually write that check and drop it in the mail.

So, just to follow on Michael's point, you obviously want to, A, give them the best impression possible, and B, maybe some of those offline donors will convert that impulse to research into an online donation.

**Michael**: As long as you make it easy for them.

And I think that's a really good point, is it comes down to your audience and their age. Some of the people who are writing the big checks are the older folks, and may not be as web-savvy, so if you want them to donate, make it easy. Make it really, really easy. Don't create like these long forms and ask for their blood type and all this other information. Just make it very simple for them.

And that kind of goes down to the next question, which is, "What are the best ways to capture contact info from first-time visitors to your site?"

Splash page. I am not a fan of splash pages. But I'm a fan of email newsletter sign-ups on your home page, or again, donations on your home page. But really, I think you have to think about why you want to capture their contact information.

And because so many people are wary of giving out their email address for spam, be very clear as to why you want it. So, I think, on www.fundraising123.org, we were pretty clear. "Sign up for email newsletters," or however we stated it. I can't remember, Jono, because my head is...

**Jono**: "Improve your fundraising," I think, is the callback in there.

**Michael**: OK. All right. Yeah. Here's the action: "Improve what you need. Give us your email address, and we'll send you information."

I think, again, a splash page, which I'll explain is not your home page--it's a pre-home page--and a lot of people just skip those and don't do that. And without really knowing who you are, why would they give you any kind of contact information?

So I think, again, if it's important--and for the Fundraising123, we put that in the upper left-hand, because Network for Good wasn't looking for a donation; they really wanted people to sign up. So it's very clear, if you look at how we designed it--"Improve your fundraising potential, " or whatever it says there, and then it has the email address right there. So I think that's a good way to capture contact information.

**Jono**: One more point to that.

**Michael**: Sure.

**Jono**: And this kind of goes to Tucker's last question about "What can we learn from successful political campaigns." For example, if you go to Barack Obama's website, it starts with a splash page, where they're trying to capture your email address. And I think that works really well for Barack Obama's audience, but may not work as well for a lot of nonprofits. So it's important, as you are going around to different websites and looking where you can borrow political savvy or corporate savvy, to realize that you do have a different audience.

And some of what works for Barack Obama in terms of driving online giving may work for your organization, but having that splash page may not work for your organization. Your audience isn't necessarily coming to your website to get on your email list or coming to research your organization or research their gift. So the primary thing should be to make it easy for them to do that. But, alongside where they're researching your gift, you absolutely should have a way for them to give you their email address.

**Michael**: Yeah. And I think it's a good point about Barack Obama, or even Hillary Clinton. I mean, they're household names, and people know. Someone can go to barackobama.com and they know exactly why they're going, and they've heard the name, and it's trustworthy. Whether you're going to vote for him or not, the fact is that you know that. A lot of people may not know who your organization is, and they may say, "I don't want to give them my email address yet. I don't know anything about them." So you kind of want to lead them into it, but at the same time have it available.

I just want to skip down to the optimized design for 1028 by 768 versus 800 by 600. For those of you who don't know, this is screen resolution--so not how actually physically big your screen is, but the resolution on the screen. And basically, 800 by 600 is 800 pixels wide by 600 pixels high. 1028 by 768 is the same, just bigger in height and width. And basically, 1028 by 768 gives you more real estate on your screen.

Bottom line is this. 800 by 600, to use your word, is almost passé at this point. We've done a lot of studies and looking at it, and people are at 1028 or higher. And I think, again, it depends on your audience. If you're looking for donations and you're looking for people to do research and you're really going for more of a sophisticated group, then you definitely want to go 1028 by 768.

But you only want to go that way if you have a lot of content and you can fill that space. So, if you remember, on slide 18, I had First five San Bernardino. They developed their original site at 800 by 600. If they had designed it at 1028 by 768, everything would be floating, there would be so much space there.

But at the end of the day, I think, at this point in time, we're doing almost everything at 1028 by 768. It's rare that we'll do 800 by 600. If, for some reason, your target audience are underprivileged kids or kids at risk, or even kids in public schools, then you may want to think about 800 by 600, because they're going to be on old machines, and they're going to be on old browsers and old machines and old monitors, and chances are they're going to be set at 800 by 600.

So I think you want to think about who your audience is and who you're trying to reach. Again, if it's people who aren't as savvy or tech-savvy, or are lower-income, then you probably want to go smaller, just because chances are they haven't moved up to monitors that can handle that.

And then, going down to "how much multimedia is too much multimedia," well, again, it all depends on who your audience is and what your expectations are--and who your organization is. If you have a lot of video, and it's compelling, then have it, and then use it.

But it really comes down to: don't make it so that when someone comes to your site that it automatically starts playing a video. A lot of people look at these things at work. As soon as you launch your home page and a video comes up and the audio is loud, everybody can hear it. So you want to think about how you put your multimedia on there, especially video, and why your reasons are for doing it.

It also comes down to cost. If you're hosting that video, and you're going to pay for a transfer cost on the hosting, and the more people who hit it and all that, it may end up costing you money. So I would suggest embedding YouTube clips in there. You can do that for free if you put it up on YouTube.

And then there's other multimedia. And I don't know if, Tucker, you meant this, but there's podcasts, there's audio. I suggest doing that if you have it. Again, don't put it in the forefront; let people find it and choose it. But if it's your annual board meeting and you guys recorded it, then maybe that's something you put in your news and events or news announcements. You put a link to it there.

Or is it Flash? People look at multimedia as Flash animations or Flash videos, or that type of stuff. Again, depending on who your audience is and what their expectations are, there's nothing wrong with using it. I would just be careful as to how you use it and how much you actually put in their face. I think you allow people to find this stuff rather than fill the page with all different types of multimedia.

And it kind of goes down to is Web 2.0 is already passé? Which is actually a funny question because people are for some reason talking about Web 3.0, and I'm not totally up to date on that. Basically what Web 2.0 means, for those of you who don't know, it's the new way of designing things. Think Facebook. Think more text, less images. Think simple colors, creating sites that are SEO-search engine optimization-compliant. And it's not just design, but it's also different types of modules, and social networking, and all that type of stuff is very Web 2.0.

Do I think it's passé? I wouldn't say it's passé. Is it an overused term? Yes. Is there too much? Yes. Is it really what you need as a nonprofit? That's really the question, because a lot of what you do is about people, which means it's about imagery, and it's about emotional feelings, and about getting stuff out there.

I don't really think that many of the sites that I showed you, the before and afters, are really what you would call Web 2.0. They're streamlined, they're not as image heavy, but at the same time there's still imagery there. They're not having any kind of social networking. There are no real polls, or even the ability to comment on articles, and all that type of stuff that you would expect from these Web 2.0 type sites.

So I think you really need to think about who your audience is, and what their expectations are, and how you want to present it to them. But again, I think there are some good things that you can take from Web 2.0 design that can be applied.

And then, what can we learn from the successful political campaigns? I know that Jono mentioned it, but I think the bottom line is this, that one thing that they're doing is they're using open source solutions in Drupal, in really, really interesting ways. Barackobama.org, or whatever it is, is driven by Drupal.

Drupal came out of the Howard Dean campaign, or City CRM. It came out of that. And I think what they're doing is, not only are they creating compelling sites that allow you to get their information, but they're using email in a very, very sophisticated way.

I know that I am linked to Barack Obama on my LinkedIn, and I know that he's got thousands of followers on his LinkedIn site. I'm also on the Barack Obama Facebook group. And I think they're using the other sites in really, really successful ways to reach out to their different audiences. Because to be honest with you, I very rarely go to Barack Obama's site, but I read about things in my email, and I read about things on the Facebook group that I have joined, because I get my notification from that.

I want to go back up, and you said, "I know that a website should first and foremost support an email marketing strategy. What are the best ways to do that?" Well, from a design standpoint you want to be consistent in your design. So if you're sending out email campaigns, use the same branding images and the same branding elements that are on your website so that there's consistency.

If you're sending people emails, I would use HTML emails just because they're more compelling and people will open them. But a lot of people don't like images, so you want to offer both HTML and non-HTML emails. And you want to give people a reason to click in those emails.

And you want to use a tool that allows you to track those clicks. There are a lot of tools out there that when you send an email you can track the open rate, meaning how many people actually read it. You can track the click-throughs, so if someone actually clicked on something and went through, then you can track that and move through that.

But really you also don't want to overwhelm them with emails. I know that moveon.org and the NRDC, I get emails two, three, four times a week, and sometimes that's a little overwhelming. So I think you want to be selective and careful on the different things that you're offering them.

Maybe offer on your site different subject matters that they want to receive emails on, so they're not getting all of them. Maybe they just want to get emails on homeless issues.

Maybe they just want to get emails on international tragedies that are going on, like the earthquakes and the flooding and that type of stuff. So you give them a choice to choose, therefore, chances are they're going to read them rather than bombarding them with them.

**Jono**: Great. I realize we've run a little bit over, Michael. I just wanted to make sure you don't have a hard stop, if we can take a few more questions, if possible.

**Michael**: We can take a few more.

**Jono**: Great. OK. So we've had several questions about user experience and usability.

**Michael**: OK.

**Jono**: And I know, in your slides, you talked about information architecture and how this is the most important step in a website design. And so I was just wondering if you can give sort of Michael Weiss's view of the world related to user experience and usability, and specifically, is it possible to build a really usable website without spending thousands and thousands of dollars on these areas?

**Michael**: Yes. And I will get on my soapbox for a second, and I'll sort of give my breakdown of usability. Usability, it's an interesting word, because I think a lot of people, when they start talking about usability, are talking about, "Do we do usability testing?" So I'm going to talk about actual usability and usability testing.

Can you build websites that are usable and get their point across without breaking the bank or spending a lot of time on information architecture? The answer is yes, of course you can. Really, what you want to focus on is, again--and I hope I'm not repeating myself so much--but you want to understand who your audiences are, understand what their needs are and what your needs are, and how you want to reach them. So you want to think about your nomenclature.

I was working with one client, and, I don't know, they had "star" or something in the name of their organization. And a lot of their navigation was about "star." They used "star" in everything, and it just got a little overwhelming. And it wasn't clear as to where they wanted people to go.

So let's be clear about us, about our organization: management teams, staff. Be really clear, because people, at the end of the day, only want to be on your website three to five minutes. They're really not going to spend that much time there. If they're there for a half-hour, then you've done a good job and they're going deep and they're reading a lot of content. But really, you want to grab them at first, get them excited, interested, inspired, by maybe a home page image or a tagline or whatever it is, and then be really, really clear as to where you want them to go.

Now I'm going to get on my soapbox for a second. We believe--and you can see, in some of our designs, it has come true; in some of our designs, it has not; because clients are always right, and we do what the client wants, but we try to educate as much as we can--that you really want to have seven or less areas to click on on a home page, or on most pages. And I'm not talking about the CNNs, and I'm not talking about "The New York Times," because those are newspaper and news sites, and they can have 400 links if they want.

But really, you want to have less than seven, because that way it's very clear as to where you want your users to go and where they can go. If you overwhelm them with too many choices, they're not going to know where to go. And that means two things.

One is you're not clear on your content and you haven't done a good content inventory or understanding of the different buckets of content, because you're too spread. Secondly, by giving less clicks, while you're saying, "Hey, everybody, here's choices as to where you want to go, " you're really forcing them to make a choice and take a path that you want them to go down.

So, for instance, if it's "Learn more about our organization" is a big, bold thing on the home page, you're pretty clear that you want people to learn about who you are, and chances are they're going to click on it. If you want people to donate, and learn more about how to donate or how to get involved through volunteering, you make that kind of big and bold, and chances are you're leading them down that path.

So again, we want to be very clear on how we name these items and where we want them to go. We don't want to give them too much. And we want to get them to where they're going in less than two clicks. We don't want people to have to hunt and peck and try to figure it out. They don't want to. They want to get to your site, see what it is you have to offer, click on it, get their information, and move on.

Either they're going to move on from your site because they're not exactly who they thought you were, or they're going to say, "Wow! This is more. I want to go deeper." And that's, on the second-level pages and third-level pages, when you can get a little bit more content-heavy and start giving more links to maybe PDFs, press releases.

But really, at the top, keep it thin, keep it compelling, keep it visually appealing, and then you can lead them down their path. That's about usability. And again, that's where information architecture comes in-how the pages are laid out, how you're naming things in your nomenclature and your content.

Usability testing, a lot of people say, "Oh my God, we don't have money for that." You don't need a lot of money for usability testing, really, and you don't have to go out and get 20 different people and film them as they move through your site. There's paper prototype testing, which is you put the wire frames in front of them and you say, "Here's the home page wire frame. Where would you click if you wanted to make a donation?" And they point to the donation and they say, "OK, great. It worked."

Or, "How would you email our executive director?" And they say, "Well, I'd probably click on About Us, and then you bring up the About Us wire frame and it says, Staff, and they click on Staff. And then they bring up the bio's and there's the executive director's email address. And you can follow them that way. You can do that with two or three people, you can pull them off the street, or you can get people in your organization. It's not a big deal.

If you want to do other types of usability testing I suggest you do it before you get deep into development, and you do it right around the design phase, and you do the same thing, but you do it on a screen with maybe JPEGs of the home page and different pages. And you ask people, "How do I do this, how do I do that?"

You can get two to three people. It's not a big deal because chances are two to three people, or even five people, are going to be a nice slice of your users and give you a sense as to what's usable. Because most web users, give or take for all intents and purposes, are pretty aware of how things work and the expectations, and how you're going to click on things. So I think if you get three to five people you can probably get some good results.

I would not do usability testing at the very end when you're in the final stages of development, because if people find things that are really, really wrong with the site, you're going to have to go back. And you might spend a lot of money and lose a lot of time.

**Jono**:  Absolutely. And we've got time for one last question.

**Michael**: OK.

**Jono**: This comes from John, and he asks, "Can you recommend any legal resources for the terms and conditions, privacy policies, and statements, etc. that are required on websites, particularly legal resources that are sensitive to the nonprofit entity? Any advice you have on starting to write these pages would be great."

**Michael**: OK. That's a really good question, and I'm going to be honest with you. Obviously if you have lawyers you want to talk to your lawyers. But I'll be honest with you, you can believe this or not, but my guess is that the majority of terms of service, privacy policies, and all of that are taken from all the other sites.

Again, it's not a legal document in the sense that people have to click, "I agree,” or they have to sign on it. So you go to the bigger guys-the ACLU, the Southern Poverty Law Centers-and you read theirs, and you get a sense as to what they're offering. Obviously you don't do it word for word, but you can really understand where they're coming from.

That's what I tell most of my clients, go find someone who's like you and read their privacy policies. After you read four or five of them, I would say they're 90% the same all the way through. Because, again, it's pretty clear as to what it is that you need to say. So I think that if you look at some other sites, and look at their privacy policies, and get a sense of what they're doing, you can pretty much write your own.

But as for legal services, I apologize, I don't know any.

**Jono**: That's exactly what I did when we were writing the privacy policy for our Learning Center Fundraising 123. I did some research on different sites and realized we needed what amounted to a one or two line privacy policy, which was basically, any personal information that you provide us will not be shared with anyone else.

**Michael**: Right.

**Jono**: It can't be any simpler than that.

**Michael**: Exactly.

**Jono**: Obviously that's not going to work for everyone, but I think by borrowing from, as Michael said, what other nonprofits have done you can probably get about 99% there.

Great. Well, Michael, I want to thank you for donating your time today.

**Michael**: Sure.

**Jono**: And I want to thank everybody who dialed in. Our next Nonprofit 911 call is coming up in two weeks-a week from Tuesday-and the topic for that call is how to tap into corporations for support, and how to build a business case and establish the return on investment for cause-related marketing initiatives. So be sure and go to fundraising123 and read up on that call if you're interested in joining us. And once again, we'll be posting these transcripts up on fundraising123 shortly.

So once again, thanks for your time, Michael, and thanks everyone for joining us today. We look forward to speaking with you again on our next Nonprofit 911 call.