

Nonprofit 911 – July 22, 2008
**The Experts Are In! Your Online Fundraising and
Nonprofit Marketing Questions Answered**

with Katya Andresen (Network for Good),
Jocelyn Harmon (independent consultant) and
Alia McKee (Sea Change Strategies)
Sponsored by Network for Good

The MP3 audio transcript can be found at
www.fundraising123.org or www.Nonprofit911.org

Katya Andresen: My name is Katya Andresen, and I am the vice president of marketing here at Network for Good, and I'm very happy that you joined us today. This is a very special Nonprofit 911 call. We've never done anything quite like it. But it came about because we had so many questions during our calls. We don't always get to all of them, and so we just decided to open it up to all the questions you have about all things fundraising and marketing.

And I knew I could answer some of them. But I also wanted to have some smart people here with me to answer some of the ones that I was stumped by, so I have a couple brilliant marketers here with me today, which I'll be introducing in a moment. So, thank you for joining us. We're very excited that you're on the line, and we're very excited to try this.

Before I introduce our experts, I wanted to just let you know a little bit about Network for Good, if you're not familiar with us. We're a nonprofit organization, just like most of you on the phone, and our mission is to help other nonprofits, like you, raise money online.

Nonprofit 911 is just one of the many free resources we have at Network for Good to help you to raise money online. In addition to these Nonprofit 911 calls, which we have about twice a month, we provide online fundraising services for nonprofits. We have Custom DonateNow, which is a way to raise money on your websites; EmailNow, which is a way to do mass-email campaigns; and the Donor Management Suite, which helps you manage your donors in one place. We have 3,000 small-to-mid-size nonprofits who are using these services to raise money online.

So, if you're not raising money online right now, or you're not happy with how you're doing it, we of course hope you will consider Network for Good to help you. This is not a sales call, but I would be remiss, as a marketer myself, if I did not put in that plug.

I'd like to invite you to visit www.fundraising123.org, for two reasons. One, there's some useful information on those products on there. But also, there are about 600 articles on fundraising, on marketing, on social networking, on email, on websites. And some of the questions you're asking today are answered in there, and that's a great resource. You'll also see we have a coupon up there for you today, where you can get a 60-day free trial of

our Custom DonateNow service.

So, if you're on the line now, you're in good company. We've had over 250 people register for today's call: "The Experts Are In."

A few housekeeping items. All lines are muted. If you have questions for us, you can send them to us by email. We've gotten a bunch of great questions ahead of time, which we're going to be starting off with first, but then we're happy to take additional questions as they come in. And you can ask us questions by emailing us at fundraising123@networkforgood.org.

The reason we're recording this call is we find people like to go back and listen to our calls again or, if they miss them, to access them. So we're going to have a recording up by tomorrow morning. And then, if you prefer reading, we'll have a written transcript up at www.fundraising123.org or www.nonprofit911.org next week.

OK. Enough of the housekeeping. I'm going to let speakers today introduce themselves. I'm Katya, and I've already introduced myself. I have here with me, in Washington, Jocelyn Harmon. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Jocelyn Harmon: Sure. And thanks. It's a pleasure to be here. My name, again, is Jocelyn Harmon. And I am actually an independent consultant right now, working with several for-profits, helping them think about how to reach nonprofits with specialized services. I am also author of marketingfornonprofits.org, which is a place where I put my thinking around how nonprofits can leverage the Internet to change the world.

Katya: Great. OK. And now I'd like Alia McKee to introduce herself. She's joining us from Austin, Texas.

Alia McKee: Hi. My name's Alia, and I am a principal with Sea Change Strategies. And we are a consulting firm that helps nonprofits innovate Internet strategies to start conversations, to build meaningful communities, to grow their lists, cultivate donors, and, of course, raise tons of money online, which is what we're going to be talking about today.

Katya: Great. Thank you so much, Alia. And for those of you not familiar with Sea Change, you may remember Mark Rovner, who works with Alia, who's been on some of our Nonprofit 911 calls. So we really appreciate Sea Change and Jocelyn Harmon for donating their time today. They're fantastic resources, and it's great to get them answering your questions as part of their volunteering to support small and medium-size nonprofits. So thanks, guys, for that.

I'm going to start out by observing. We had one question that came up over and over again, from at least seven or eight different people. And we're going to take your individual questions, but to open, I thought we would try to kill a few birds with one stone.

And that question had to do with organizations that wanted to have more people to market to online via email. So, maybe they found their email list was sort of tired and wasn't producing much, or they had no email list, or a small email list, or a big, growing population in their community they didn't feel like they were collecting enough names on. And so the most common question was: "How can I expand my email list?" or "How can I build an email list?"

So I'm going to ask Alia to get us started with a few thoughts on that, and then we'll move into some of your specific questions. Then I'm going to get Jocelyn to weigh in.

Alia: Certainly. Well, there are no buts about it. The basis for a strong online program is both the size, but we can't forget, it's also the quality of your online community and those people who you are communicating with online. So, what I advise clients is that there are four key ways that you can revise your list size. And of course, Katya and Jocelyn, if you have additional ideas, please jump in.

So, as far as what I advise clients, it's media, and it's your PR, and making sure that all your media mentions are driving people to your website, right? And that there is a strong name-collection device on that website.

Marketing is the second piece of this. OK? That includes viral marketing, list-building campaigns that you do, all driving folks to landing pages that are aimed at collecting email addresses.

The third prong to this is search, right? A lot of nonprofits are not taking advantage of Google grants or online search activities around both your name, the name of your nonprofit, and the causes that you support, making sure that you're driving traffic to your website constantly.

And the final piece of this that I'd like to talk about is offline collection of email addresses. A lot of nonprofits I work with have very, very strong direct-mail programs, special-event programs. It's important you not forget to make email collection a priority in these pieces.

An example is I'm working with a client, and we sent out, along with one of their pieces of direct mail, an invitation to join an online webcast, right? Featuring a prominent member of their board and a semi-celebrity, I guess, that works with their organization. And when people were driven to that URL, they were asked to give their email address as part of that. So, definitely, making sure that you're taking care of all opportunities to collect email addresses offline.

I feel like I'm talking a lot. Katya and Jocelyn, do you have any additional ideas there?

Jocelyn: Sure. I'll throw in two really tactical suggestions. Don't forget about your email signature. Your actual email signature is a great tool for doing marketing, whether it's promoting an event or asking people to come to your web and sign up for your e-newsletter.

Another good one is, when people are actually on your site, give them something. Give them an incentive or a reason to join. Give them a discount on an event. Give them an article you've written or a white paper, and figure out how to get them to give you their email address in order to retrieve that item that they want.

Alia: That's a great idea. Another campaign that I'm doing, actually right now with a client, is we have a dollar-for-names campaign going. So, for anyone who takes action on this online petition we're doing with the client, a dollar is being donated to that client.

Katya: Online petitions are a great way to get folks to provide their email address. So I'd certainly second that one. This is Katya.

I'd also encourage you, to reinforce what Jocelyn and Alia both said, in terms of collecting names on your website, we visited a few of the websites people sent into us, and I think a common problem, where you're not getting many sign-ups on your website, is how you position what people are signing up for.

So, "Sign up for our newsletter" is sort of asking people to sign up so that, here, you talk about yourself, to put it really bluntly. OK? And that's not really enough of a value-added, unless they're absolute, extreme champion evangelists for your organization. Most people aren't going to find that quite compelling enough. So, if you're an environmental organization, instead of "Signing up for our e-news," "Sign up for green tips, " or "How to green your house, "A tip a day, " "A tip a week." Make it a little more compelling and kind of bake a benefit exchange into it, and you're going to do better.

And then, just to reinforce what Alia said about offline collection at events, I've been to, I don't know, maybe 10 nonprofit events in the last 18 months, and I can't think of a single one that collected my email address. I was at a table at a gala, or something like that. No one bothered to get my email address.

And the other pet peeve I have about special events is nonprofits are great at getting amazing speakers, people that bring you to tears talking about the organization and their personal experiences. And you're in this moment where you would do anything for the organization, and yet there's no call to action or no specific ask at the event. When people are sitting there, mouths agape at the stories they're hearing at your event, get them to fill out a card in front of their chicken dinner [laughs] that has your email address on it.

OK. So let's kind of dive into some of the specific questions. We're going to go into the order they were received, for fairness, on this list I have here. And we're going to kind of go round robin, and chime in if needed.

The first question's from Nicole, from the USO of Metropolitan Washington. And this is another common theme. We have a lot of questions about social networking. And she asks, "Which social networking site do you recommend to reach potential donors?"

Jocelyn: OK. The answer is it depends on your audience. And this is something that I tell Katya that she always harps on, but it's actually really key to any successful marketing. You're always figuring out what your audience needs from you and where they already live online. So there is no sort of magical answer to this question.

What I would suggest is that you could just Google. If you Google "social networking sites," there's an overview on Wikipedia which will tell you that there are hundreds and hundreds of social networking sites out there.

And you can find niche sites -- for example, like Care2, that focuses on what's called the LOHAS, which is "Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability." So those are women who are 40s and have a lot of money, a lot of disposable income. There are social networking sites that focus on African Americans. There are social networking sites that are dedicated, as we all know, to the Millennials--the much younger...

Katya: The youngest generation. Much younger than me.

Jocelyn: Yeah, really.

Katya: [laughs]

Jocelyn: So, again, figure out where your audience is, and then you go where they are.

I want to say one other thing, though. I'm not sure social networking sites are a great way to just develop a mailing list. I think they're a great way to have conversations with your supporters and develop communities. But if you think it's going to be sort of a one-shot, you're going to land a whole bunch of new emails, I would say that that's not the way to go.

Alia: I'm in complete agreement. Social networks are an extension of your online community. It's definitely an important piece of it, but it's not going to be a huge list-builder for you right now.

Another thing you could also do is do a survey of your list and ask them. Most likely, the people who are willing to take an online survey are pretty engaged online anyway, and they can tell you where they are.

Katya: Great. OK. And we're going to move on to Trista, with the David Lawrence Center and Foundation, which we actually visited their website. They focus on mental health. And Trista notes that she lives in a high-growth area, and there are a lot of new people moving to town. How does she get them? What's the best way to reach new donors if you don't have a relationship with them? Mailings? Advertising?

Hopefully we've covered the email part of your question. Alia, would you like to take a stab at finding new donors in other ways--i.e. mailings or advertising--if you're a relatively small, local organization?

Alia: Excuse me. Is this question geared towards me?

Katya: Yeah, I'm sorry.

Alia: This is Alia. OK. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I missed that.

I wouldn't recommend doing it. If you're a small-to-medium organization with a limited advertising budget, I would really shy away from doing any kind of large media buy. I would ask your friends or supporters of your organization. Do a member-get-a-member campaign, or some way that you can try and get those people who are most engaged with your organization to go out into the community. Maybe join newcomers' clubs, and try to figure out ways that you can reach those folks in a cost-effective way.

Katya: I think that's something that Jocelyn and I completely agree with. It's better to be highly targeted and go deep than to have limited marketing resources that you spread very thinly over a wide area in kind of a scatter-shot approach.

Because you are a mental health and substance abuse services organization, I think it would be useful to think of, as your community grows, who wins when you have a greater impact or have more people supporting you. So, I'm thinking of child advocates. The legal system is a good way to spread the word about your organization. There are a lot of groups that are support groups for substance abuse, for mental health issues, where it would be great to spread the word.

And I also recommend you do some desk-side briefings with a couple reporters. Alia mentioned the PR and media approach. Get to really know some reporters in your community, too, so that when there are stories about mental health or substance abuse in your community, you're sort of the go-to resource on that, and people get familiar with your organization.

Alia: And more and more, on that tip, too, don't forget about blogs. Unfortunately, and fortunately, the whole online media has changed the face of PR. So, as you're developing relationships with key reporters, you might want to take a look at some local community blogs that are pertinent to your organization that might cover you more easily. You could do a conference call for bloggers. You could become active on that blog itself by posting comments that relate to your issue. So that's definitely another piece of the puzzle.

Katya: Great. Absolutely. And since we all blog here, we are [laughs] all in agreement on that, so we're good targets as well. And if you're not familiar with how to find blogs or bloggers, at least go visit Technorati.com, which is sort of a search engine for blogs. And if you type in your community's name and phrases, like "substances abuse," etcetera, you might be able to find some people blogging about your issue. Or if you type in your organization, you might even find people blogging about you. It's a good place to start.

Jocelyn: A good trick, too, is, in the Google search bar, you can just do "blog: the name of your organization, " and any people writing about your organization in blogs will come up.

Katya: OK. So Melissa wants to ask how to capture email addresses. She's director of fund development at Alliances for Family and Children. I think we covered that. But she

has another part about her question -- it's a two-part question -- where she's asking about online donations. She wants to move in the direction of online donations and email blasts. Tips and advice to get started.

Again, we have great resources on getting started with fundraising at www.fundraising123.org. And Network for Good has a tool to start collecting donations online, to get you started in terms of the tools.

But in terms of the how-to, Jocelyn or Alia, would you like to take a stab at what constitutes a good email blast? What would be your tip for the first one or two things for her to do to get started with online fundraising?

Alia: Jocelyn, do you want me to go first? Or how would you like to divide and conquer?

Jocelyn: Go for it, Alia.

Alia: OK. Excellent. Excellent.

Well, the first thing I want to say is my first word of caution is that treating your online file as an online ATM is not the way to go. Right? So, fundraising blasts are a piece of your online communications. But I really encourage you not to forget about the cultivation aspect, sending out a very compelling and inspiring e-newsletter. Letting them know about what you're doing and your work without an ask is very important. Creating campaign themes -- a year-end campaign where there's a goal -- those kinds of basic fundraising tactics and translating them online is also important. But I definitely recommend treating it as a holistic approach, rather than just sending out appeal blasts to your file.

What I would do is I would map out a six-month calendar. Include where you would do you cultivations, when you want to do an appeal series, and then go from there.

Katya: Great advice, Alia. Thank you so much.

That segues beautifully, thank you very much, into our next question, from Jen. And her website is amextra.org. I'm not going to attempt to pronounce the name of the organization, because it's in Spanish, I believe, and I only know French. But she has some great questions, Jen does.

Her organization had received a challenge to raise \$16,000 in three months, and a partner said they would match that amount. She created a fundraising goal for the cause on Facebook, which has 331 members, and updates it each week on what the goal, the \$16,000, is going to go towards. And she's sending similar information out every week to her email list, the donors, which is about 100 people.

She doesn't have huge numbers, but she thinks it's achievable. But she's one month in and has only raised about \$1,500. Should she be worried? "What are tips to encourage people to donate? I've already been sending a reminder a week, where I try to make it personal,

interesting, easy to read, necessary, urgent, a picture, etcetera."

So it sounds like you're doing a lot of good things, Jen. I'll chime in with some initial thoughts on this. One is that there's some really interesting research on donor psychology that was highlighted in a great Sunday section in "The New York Times" a few months ago. And there was actually statistically sound findings on this issue. And what they found was matching grants are very effective at getting people to give. It can increase the conversion rate to giving in a campaign.

What's interesting is the fact that there is a matching gift is enough. They tested trickling the matching gift -- three to one, four to one, two to one. It had no bearing on the participation. So you've got one thing going for you, which is you do have a matching amount.

The thing you do not have going for you, which was also part of this research, was that people were very likely to give if they felt you were close to achieving your fundraising goal. And that kind of had two reasons for it. One, it made them feel important and great, like they could tip you over the edge of the scales and help your organization get a whole lot of resources. Also at work there is what I think is the principle of social norms -- in other words, people tend to do what other people are doing. And if they think a lot of people are jumping on board with this, they're more likely to do it.

So, why I think you have a problem there is you are only \$1,500 toward a \$16,000 goal, with a group of 300 members. So the math is tough. If I'm a member of your group, I'm saying, "Wow. That is a big goal. Not a lot of people are paying. I'm not sure they're going to get there or not."

Also, your deadline is two months out, which is the last piece I'll comment on. People go in right before the deadline. So, Alia was just talking about setting a fundraising calendar and goal. I think you probably need some interim goals would really help. Like daily goals that people can feel like they're getting close to would really help, so people feel like they're biting off [laughs] amounts that they can really have an impact on.

Another thing is you probably need a greater mass of people that you're soliciting. So it looks like you have 430 people between your email donor list and Facebook.

You're probably going to need more than that. So you're going to want to focus some of your energies not on just hitting those people over and over again, but finding a way for the people who have supported you to recruit their friends, family, to work their circles of influence to benefit your campaign, because you can't do this alone. You're going to need people to help you. And the best messengers for your cause are the people who feel passionate about it, who can reach out to the people that they have influence over. So those are my initial thoughts on that.

You also mentioned here that the goal meter on your Facebook cause looks worse than it is, because most of the money has been donated over your web page, [laughs] not

through Facebook. I can just see how that would be a problem. That's why it's important to have a Facebook daily goal, or something that makes sense in the context of that network. Again, that social norm piece is really important. It's also known as social proof.

Plus, you fear that the summer holidays are affecting donations, but you have a deadline. How do you get people's attention when they've just gotten home from enjoying a day at the beach? Again, you need a huge sense of urgency, and two months out doesn't feel very urgent when I just got off the beach and have been baking in the sun. So I think it would help to move up from your deadline.

Jocelyn, do you want to chime in here?

Jocelyn: Yeah. I think a really great way, too, to meet this goal is to chunk it up. So, for example, she has the 400 donors. If she can tell them how it will benefit if they do \$40 each, and then give them a mechanism for doing that easily, she might be more likely to reach her goal, too.

Katya: Great. Jocelyn, I'm going to kick this next one to you. It's a wide-open one. Alia, you might want to chime in when Jocelyn's done. It's Kelly, from World Hunger Year. And she says...

University Animal Clinic wrote, and they would like to know: "We have no official marketing plan. Where do we begin, without reinventing the wheel? Getting started is a hard first step."

Jocelyn: Well, you sow and you reap...

Katya: [laughs]

Jocelyn: Oh, no. Sorry, sorry. She's kicking me under the table.

I think kudos to you for starting with the planning stage, because so many of us, because we're so busy, jump right to tactics. So good for you for taking a step back and thinking through your plan and creating a plan.

Here's my advice. I think there's five questions to ask. Two are about your organization, and three are about your audience. And I know Katya has lots of thinking on this as well.

The first thing I think you've got to answer in your marketing plan is who you are -- and you have to do it really quickly -- who you are and what do you do. And then there's the "So what?" and "Who cares?" And people always think I'm crass when I say this, but just because you serve people who are in poverty, or because you do use development, or because you help people get well, doesn't necessarily mean people should care. There has to be more of a value-add or something unique that you bring to the table.

So you have: "What do you do? Why should anyone care?" And those are the two questions that are about your organization and your capacity.

Then you switch tacts and you think about your audience, and you think about "Who do you serve?" and then you think about "What do they need?" And that piece is so critical - and the piece that a lot of us miss because we're so committed to our causes. We forget to really think about the needs and how we're benefiting or our clients or our volunteers.

And what you almost want to do is think those two pieces up. You want to find the hook, or the sweet spot -- the inner section, if you will -- between what your audiences need and your unique value-add.

OK. So you've got those four questions. And then the last thing you ask is the tactical stuff, like, "OK, how do you reach them?"

So, if you can answer those five questions -- what do you do, why should anyone care, who do you serve, and what do they need, and then how can you best reach them -- I think you'll be on your way to creating a good plan.

Katya: That's fantastic. I couldn't agree more. Thank you. That's well-said, Jocelyn, on how to get started.

And I'd add, too, once you've done that -- and that's the hard work of marketing. Don't skip that part [laughs] and go to tactics. It's not about getting your message out; it's about getting audiences to take your message in. So you have to do the hard work of what Jocelyn just said. Really, really important.

And then, once you've done that, then you can do the fun, tactical part, like who would be good partners? Who are your competitors that you have to figure out who to deal with? What's going on in your marketplace or your local environment that you can kind of piggyback onto? What is the best way you can craft your message? What are the best avenues for getting out there? When are the best times, places, states, and minds to reach your audience?

That's all the fun of the tactical part of the marketing plan. But don't get the strategic part. And if you do that exercise, you're going to be in fantastic shape, because most organizations, including for-profit ones, don't do that hard work, and it makes all the difference. So, good for you.

Alia: Absolutely. And I'm going to jump in here, too. And also think about integrating across departmental silos. Seth Godin likes to call it the "meatball sundae." And marketing is the whipped cream and the cherry on top. But you really want to have the marketing be a part of that sundae, right? So you want to look at what your programs are doing. You want to look at what kind of reports, what your PR is doing, and try to plug into that as well.

Katya: Great. Fantastic. OK. Amy Felton, with Loudoun Volunteer Caregivers -- that's not too far from us. She says, "Hello, experts. This is my first week as executive director of a small nonprofit, with a small board and a small, [laughs] tired donor base. What can I

do, other than buying a list, to increase my prospects list?"

I hope we've answered that part of your question, in terms of getting new prospects. But I wanted to answer the other part of your question, which kind of gets at donor fatigue, which is you've got a small, tired donor base. And you're not alone. I espouse this statistic all the time, and I'm sorry if you've heard it from me before, but it bears repeating, which is the number-one reason people stop giving to a nonprofit is how they were treated by the nonprofit. So that is a big problem. We almost have more of a customer-service problem than anything else.

And when people said, "Well, why? What do you mean, 'how you were treated by the nonprofit'?" Well, to use Alia's phrase, they were treated like an ATM machine. People just kept coming back with me about more and more money they needed. It was all about what they needed and what they were doing, and not about what my gifts had achieved, [laughs] about what future gifts could achieve, and it just felt like this endless process of being hit up for money. And through our giving portal, networkforgood.org, one in five donors is choosing to be anonymous, because they're so afraid of getting on our mailing list as a nonprofit.

So, what you want to do, I think, is find out how you've been treating these folks and, for your small, tired donor base, go on a major charm offensive. Because you're probably inheriting a group of people who feel like they were walking wallets and have some real fatigue about that. So, while you're building your prospects list through all the great tips you've gotten from our panel today, focus on going back and trying to win those people.

It's easier to keep a customer than find a new one, and it's the same with donors. Go back and ask them. Tell them how much of a difference they've made. Ask them how they want to hear from you. Find out from them what they would like to know about where their support has gone. They're a ready group of people you can talk to to get good ideas from. You might even want to get a few on the phone. Call them up to thank them. There's nothing like talking to a donor directly to get some really good help with that.

OK. So I have a question here from Kelly, World Hunger Year, about Facebook profiles and causes. How can she spread the word and recruit fans and supporters?

Kelly, I can give you some basic pointers. But I'm going to suggest that you go to our fundraising123.org, and under our training tab, we have a Nonprofit 911 call about two, three months ago, with Randall, from Causes on Facebook, who did an entire hour-long session on Facebook -- all the ins and outs of it, how a cause likes to campaign versus an organization's case versus an individual's case. And he has handouts, and there's all kinds of stuff posted right on our site.

But the short answer I'm going to give, before moving on with this, is, I think, more than anywhere, Facebook, the messenger, is extremely important. So when you ask a room of people the last time they used a charity, most are going to cite because someone they know asked them. They're going to tell some story about someone they know's mother

had cancer and they were doing a walk. They're going to have some personal story.

And Facebook's all about personal relationships. That's why it grows so fast, because we want to see what our friends are reading and talking about and doing and the videos they're posting and where they are right now, and we're also going to be willing to support them if they ask us.

So, just putting up an organizational page on Facebook will do nothing. You need to find people active on Facebook who will spread the word about you to their friends and family. There's only so much you can do as an organization without some network of supporters who can go friend-to-friend through Facebook.

And so, go ahead and check out fundraising123.org/training. The April 1st, 2008, "Causes on Facebook: Everything You Need to Know About Using Facebook as a Nonprofit Marketing Tool" will answer your question more completely.

OK. Elizabeth, from New York Road Runners Foundation, says, "How do you determine suggested individual giving levels and perks? That is, we have never publicized giving levels of \$50, \$100, \$1,000, etcetera, but would like to begin to do so. How do we determine the levels and perks we should provide in return?" That's her first question.

Her second question is, "When is an organization ready to launch a large direct-mail effort? We've received quotes in the \$30,000 to \$50,000 range, so obviously, this isn't something we undertake lightly." I'm going to ask Alia to take this one.

While she's thinking about individual giving levels and perks and large, direct-mail efforts, Elizabeth, I will again put on my marketing hat -- sorry -- for Network for Good. But no, I know, with our Custom DonateNow tool, and I'm sure with other tools out there, you can do testing.

Usually, the right answer is to test different things. You can test different giving amounts. You can test different things, and see the results you're getting accordingly. It's hard to know what's going to happen without making some assumptions and putting out some scenarios and seeing what donors do. People are notoriously poor predictors of their own behavior. So predictive research stinks. Like you could call a list of donors and say, "Would you give it \$50 or \$100, " and they're all going say, "Oh! \$100! Of course!"

Alia: [laughs]

Katya: Because they want you to think they're nice and generous. But people don't really do what they say they're going to do, necessarily. So testing would be one of my suggestions. Alia, do you have anything to add to that?

Alia: Yeah, absolutely. When you're first starting -- and believe me, clients, this is one of the most-asked questions I get -- I would take a look at your past performance and take a look at that average gift. Right? And what I would do is I would tier your publicized giving levels around that average gift. Right?

So, have one level below the average gift, then the second level be that average gift, or right around it, and then work up. Because, in fundraising, you're constantly trying to upgrade people, get them to give you a higher gift than what they gave you before.

And then I totally second Katya's message about testing it. Maybe you'll find, in a campaign, that when you've gone out with these giving levels, you had a lower average gift. Right? And you want to test that and just see what your performance is doing.

Katya: That's fantastic. Thank you so much, Alia.

Jocelyn: I want to say one other thing about giving levels.

Katya: Yeah, sure.

Jocelyn: You don't have to invent all of this on your own. And so, one of the things that I did when I've done special events is I get on other people's mailings and I look at what other folks do, and I get ideas from that. So that's also something you want to do, because you're really competing against a universe of all the other events that are going on in the world. So it's always fine to go and benchmark your favorite groups, or other groups you respect, and see how they organize their levels.

Katya: Great idea. We're all about beg, borrowing, stealing savvy from elsewhere. So thank you for that suggestion. It's a good one.

We had another question about email marketing, from Kelly, who's involved with MUFHA, a nonprofit organization, and asking, again, about finding email addresses. And Jocelyn had one idea we forgot to mention on collecting email addresses, so she's going to hit that one.

Jocelyn: Right. We forgot to talk about tell-a-friend. And that's always something you can put on. And most of the major email platforms now have that functionality. So, for example, one of the things that Katya is saying here in response to a lot of these questions is it's always easier to keep the donors you already have, right, to build on an existing relationship, than to get a new donor.

So, again, from the strategic perspective, we're hoping that you all will, because you have limited bandwidth for fundraising, think about deepening your relationships with your existing supporters. So, one of the things you do is you treat them well and you treat them nicely. And then, if they are having a good experience, hopefully you'll ask them to spread the word about you. It's just a really important thing to think about.

Katya: Great. Thank you. Well said. Jocelyn, I'm going to ask you to proceed. We had a good question -- and then I'm happy to chime in on this one, too -- about some corporate vendors that James Hasty is trying to fundraise with...

Jocelyn: Ah, yeah.

Katya: And he's saying that he's gotten some challenges. He has some corporate vendors who have established discounted rates with his faculty. But when they're solicited, they say, "I'm already giving. I'm giving enough, because of my discount." How do you encourage charitable donations from these corporations?

Jocelyn: Right. It's a really important question. And I think, if you're going to get into the business of trying to get money from corporations, like any audience, you have to put on the corporate hat. You put on your corporate hat. Corporations basically want three things, right?

They want more revenue, more money in the bank, they want to retain or recruit the best employees in their network, or they want more market share, which eventually leads to more revenue.

So I think one of the things, I think, James is going to have to do is he's going to have to get serious about creating benefits or articulating for these companies how he's going to help them achieve one of those three goals.

More and more, especially in the economy right now, cause marketing campaigns, revenue from corporations are coming from marketing departments and they're few and far between as people cut back. So you really have to be able to provide benefits.

You can't just assume, like you wouldn't assume with any donor, that they're going to give to you just because you have a relationship. You have to have a benefit that you give in return.

Katya: Great! Thank you. I couldn't agree more. You need a win-win with a corporate partner. And they're feeling good because they handed you a check is not enough of a win-win. So thank you for that.

I'm going to answer a question that was very similar from Susan from The Center for School Mole Health and Betty from Palestine and Various Art Council.

Both of them had a legal question which was, "To do online fundraising, you have to be registered in each of the 50 states as conducting fundraising. How daunting! What am I supposed to do?"

So there's some really healthy debate on this. If you have a conservative lawyer they're going to tell you that you should, to be safe, be registered in the state for the State Attorney General's Office, for any state where you're soliciting online donations, OK?

Now, that is a perilous process I can attest to because I worked with someone who does that for us. And here's the good news about Network for Good's tool which is: we are technically a donor advice fund. When you use our Custom DonateNow service the donation goes through Network for Good as a donation to Network for Good and then we cut you a check or send you an EST.

Why that's nice for you is we register in all the states that require it. So because the donation technically goes through and to Network for Good, we do all the state registrations every year, submit our 9-90, it costs several hundred dollars a state, there's some common forms but it is a bit of a headache. We take care of that for you.

Some of the other services don't do that and so that's something that is costing you to break out and hide at the thought of seeing all this about legal situations, please consider our services because you can get around that.

OK. I have a question here from Edith from Hesperian. She wants to ask advice about an organization seeking to convert annual donors into monthly donors.

I'm going to hit that quickly and then I'm going to shoot it over to you for any comments on a recurring donor program and a segue into a question we have from Kurt about his website, Land Choices.

So, real quick, converting annual donors into monthly donors, first of all, let me say: fabulous Edith for thinking about monthly giving. It's one of the smartest things you can do as a fundraiser. We find 30% to 40% of the volume going for a site is monthly giving and that'd be a great situation to find non-profit in is you're thanking people every month instead of hitting them up every month.

How do you do that? Well, our donation form asks right away when you're making gifts is, "Do you want to give us a monthly gift?" And so, I encourage you, whenever you're asking for money you ask for the monthly pledge, not just a onetime gift.

So the most obvious answer is when you ask your annual donors for money, how are you asking them? It would be great to frame up this year as your annual campaigns, ask them to be giving their year-end gifts, but sign up to give every month next year, clearly ask. And it's clearly a win for them and a win for you.

It's a win for them because it's convenient because it is not one big hit to their pocketbooks at the end of the year when some of us are sort of funds. And also it's great for you because it's steady support you can budget for and it will help people all year long.

The last idea you can think about packaging it in an exciting way. You Save has an ambassador program, Care Way where I used to work as a child per month that's profiled when you support the program. Package the good that you do in a way that might stay in line with the monthly gift. So there's some tangible tie to the idea of giving every month.

Alia, if you want to add anything to that you could paraphrase what Kurt was asking and take a crack at that question, that would be great.

Alia: Sure. First I'm going to talk a little bit about the monthly giving. Also, I think it's important for new donors to be asked to make a monthly gift while the iron is hot. I know that a lot of organizations are concerned that if someone makes a onetime gift that maybe

they shouldn't follow-up immediately with an ask for a monthly gift of support.

I think it's ingrained as a nice thank you and just as catchy of a saying, "Thank you so much for making a one-time gift. This is how you can put your support to work for us each and every month. Would you consider becoming a monthly supporter?"

I've done that automatically online and have had great success in converting first-time online donors into monthly donors by doing that within the first three days of them making their first online gift. So that's definitely something that you want to consider there.

All right. So I am going to talk about Kurt's question about Land Choices. And this involves their website. His question is, "Pretend you're a prospective donor who heard about Land Choices. You go to our website to learn more. From the first second you visit our home page what don't you like about Land Choices? And after you visit a couple of pages, why wouldn't you make a donation?"

OK, that's a great question. So if you guys have access to Internet by your phone go to LandChoices.org. This is the first time I've been to this website.

I'm actually going to start with the things that I like and then I promise I'll go to the things that maybe I would change. The things that I like, number one, I love that you have your brand essence, your positioning statement right there underneath that photo. So many non-profits do not do this on their home page and I think that's such a mistake. So kudos to you on that.

I really like the way that you have your donation ask there. It's compelling, talking about doubling your gift. You're talking about how small donations are incredibly important and most likely people who are just going online to your website are not going to be your major donors yet. Of course major donors do visit your website, but it's nice that you have that as a low ask there. And then of course I really like the photos.

What would I change about the home page? I would make the sign-up for our e-newsletter a little bit more compelling. So many people's inboxes are so full these days. I think we really need to do a step above the rest in trying to get people to sign-up for the e-newsletter as Katya said earlier, Get Green tips or make it a little bit more compelling to give up that email address.

I do like that there's a monthly donor ask here on the home page but one thing that I do want to caution is, when I'm looking at optimizing someone's website I'm going to try to give as many opportunities to get an email address and then what you do is you cultivate people into becoming a donor to your organization.

It's a really big jump from a site visitor to a donor to your organization. Most often the channel is, they hear about you, they become a site visitor, they give you their email address, you cultivate them with some really compelling email content, and then they'll

give you a gift. So that's something that I would change. I would put several opportunities to give an email address on this home page.

Why wouldn't I give a gift to this organization? Because I wasn't ready to and I wanted to learn more about you. So I'd want to give my email address and I'd want you to send me some really great content that gets me to fork over my credit card.

Katya: Great advice. By the way, congratulations to Kurt from Land Choices because his tagline just won a contest for non-profit taglines which is: helping preserve the places you cherish. So congratulations! You got a good tagline on there.

OK. We have a lot more questions so I propose we're going to do a speed round.

[laughter]

Katya: We're going to move really fast through a bunch of questions and just try to give a couple under-one-minute thoughts to some of these so we can get to as many as possible.

Kenny, from Joint Cities, wants to ask about affiliate and partnership purchase programs, for lack of a better word: "When you get money from someone's site when a purchase is made from your referral or link, are they a good source of income? If so, recommendations on how to find good matches, what to look for in a legitimate link, and pitfalls would be appreciated."

This is a good question. And frankly, at Network for Good, my phone rings off the hook with people trying to get us to link to them, or with different search programs or other things that they say will generate revenue for nonprofits. Alia, do you have any advice on the merit of some of these programs or things to look out for?

Alia: You know what, Katya? I sort of missed the first part of that question.

Katya: Sorry. The question is about affiliate and partnership purchase programs. Like you get money from someone's site when a purchase is made from your referral links. Yeah, go ahead.

Alia: For a small-to-medium nonprofit, a lot of times, I don't think the effort is really worth the return. Prove me wrong. Prove me wrong. But I've yet to see a small-to-medium-size organization really take advantage of that, where it's cost-effective for you. But, Katya, if you disagree, let me know.

Katya: I agree. And I think it's distracting. You will be lucky if you can get a donor to surrender their email address or give. Complicating matters with other offers is really tricky, and the more kind of asks you put in front of someone, the less likely they're going to convert to one of them, so I'm not a big fan.

OK. Sally, from Dallas-Fort Worth Dachshund Rescue, has an all-volunteer rescue organization, which is great. She has a benefactor who will put up some money for her

organization, which is really nice. So we talked about matching gifts, and I hope we've talked about what you need to do to get the max out of the matching gifts, and please think about that research I mentioned before.

But quickly, with a speed-round question, her personal financial manager she's got to put \$500 and something dollars for her organization. Nice job, Sally. And he's talking about doing a nice little dinner with 10 people or so, to get engaged in the organization.

She's thinking, should it be a brainstorming gathering? Who should she invite? Local business leaders? She says her board's kind of weak and ignores her. Should she ask her benefactor to invite his clients? And she doesn't want to pitch his financial services, so she doesn't want a hidden-agenda problem. What do you suggest?

Jocelyn: Well, because I believe in friends-to-friends, I suggest you get him to invite his friends. I think the financial planner, he knows who has a lot of money to give to Dachshund Rescue. So I would vote for that.

Second, what to do for the dinner? You want to grab people emotionally. So I would find a way to get dogs involved in that dinner, or your work. Bringing people who have had a first-hand experience with your organization who can talk compellingly about it is much better than a brainstorming session. You want to engage people with your organization and get them to relate to it in a way that really tugs at their heart strings and makes them feel personally invested.

You may not want to ask for money at that event, but you want some ask. Don't leave an event like that, with 11 people around the table, without asking them for something specific, like, "Can I add you to the e-news list?" I mean, I would try to make something a little more compelling than that, but you want to be able to secure these people as a relationship going forward.

Katya: OK. Quick question from Ecologic.org. They have a new website, and their e-news sign-ups have decreased since they have their new site. Really quick, Jocelyn, one minute. We looked at your website, ecologic.org, and we have some reasons why you're not getting many sign-ups.

Jocelyn: Right. Again, Katya was talking a lot about getting benefits. Right? We always are wanting to give benefits to our audience, and we always want to think about what our audiences want from us. Ecologic, on their forum, says, "Sign up for our newsletter."

Again, I think Katya already mentioned it would be a really good idea if they gave me something. I want something, as a consumer, for them, as a way to engage me in the organization. So, maybe "Top-10 tips for being more environmentally conscious," or something like that. Also, we think that they might want to enlarge the button a little bit. But the benefit exchange is really, I think, the key issue or thing that we would change.

Katya: Yeah. OK. Rita wants to know: "How do we get international donations? Does Network for Good support them?" Yes, we do. That was fast.

[laughter]

Katya: OK. We have another website someone asked us to look at: ariselife-skills.org. Edmund Benson wrote from ARISE Foundation to say he has the donate prominently displayed, and he's never gotten a donation to his website.

So we were intrigued and we checked it out, Jocelyn and I did. Our quick feedback on this speed round is that you've got a few issues with your site. One, we did not find your donate button right away; we had to look for it for quite a while. And second, your site comes across as very sales-oriented. It looks like a commercial site. You have sales. You have a lot of flashy stuff. You have a lot of money-back guarantees. This looks like a for-profit enterprise to me.

So, one problem you've got is I don't think you need donations because it looks like you're making money. You've got a monthly sale going on. So you might want to think about your positioning there.

Also, your home page, it talks about how you have a street named in your honor and some news about your organization, which is nice. But again, we need to make this about the donor and the people you're helping, rather than about yourself. That's the key to marketing is to focus on the audience. So I would recommend that you shift from what you've done to the kids you've helped, their moving stories, and how the donor can help them, and pull of the more sales-y stuff, and I think you're going to see at least one donation through that donate button.

Mary O'Meara asks, from Neighbors West-Northwest, "What advice can you offer for fundraising for a nonprofit that's a coalition of associations? We offer direct services to several neighborhood associations that have their own fundraising needs and projects. And when it comes time to do fundraising at a coalition level, there is a lack of understanding for the need to do so. How can we help get the message of the importance of fundraising at the larger level across?" What a great question.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Katya: I think it's really difficult, having worked for a couple of associations. You're competing against your own members, essentially. And you're competing against all the other great causes out there, like saving children and puppies. You can talk, in your ask, about the fact that you leverage the resources of many groups to do more than any one group would be able to do alone.

But to be totally frank, it's very difficult to raise money for associations. One thing I would suggest -- although this is not your question -- is that you look at different revenue streams, because associations, capacity-building organizations, it's really hard to raise money from individual donors.

Do you have any comments, Alia, on that? I'd be curious.

Alia: I think I second what you had to say. It's a very tough position to be in.

Katya: Do you want to talk about Nancy's question, Alia?

Alia: I sure will. I sure will. So Nancy said that she volunteers with a new, small, spay-neuter group. But her problem is, which comes first, as far as doing action and outreach versus fundraising? She says, "We want to provide assistance to encourage spay-neuter, but it costs money." So, how can they implement an action program if they don't have money, and how can they raise money if they haven't implemented an action program?

So my advice is outline the action program, right, that you want to implement, and go up to your donors and say, "If you donate to this, right? Then we can do X, Y, and Z." There is no better ask than to have a program that you want to implement, but you need money to do it. And then you can point to other communities that have had success doing this, maybe do some outreach and show what other communities have been able to do once they got the funding to put their action plan into action. And I think you'll be set to go.

Katya: Great. OK. Jocelyn, there's a question here from Lisa. She says people aren't reading her newsletter, or it's bouncing a lot. What should she do?

Jocelyn: Well, she also says that she has a really high bounce rate on her website, and unfortunately she's not in a position to redesign at this point. I'm going to venture to guess that this is an issue of content.

People spend, as we all know, very little time on websites. We're all so busy and reading e-newsletters. I would suggest she streamline, maybe take the approach of even just highlighting one special opportunity or one special benefit for a donor each month--so, basically, the less-is-more idea. She's going to have to improve her content if she's going to ensure that people actually read the material, I think.

Katya: OK. Barbara, from Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, asks about Facebook. I think we've covered that pretty extensively. But she also has a question I like. She says she wants her CEO to do a blog. He travels a lot. He meets a lot of people. He has great stories. He can relate to what happens to the organization in the big picture. He's not really into this idea. He thinks it might take a lot of time. He thinks no one will read it. She did some fake blog entries in his voice to show him how it could work, but he was unconvinced.

This is where I come down on this one: if he doesn't want to do it, I don't think it's going to work.

Alia: Yeah.

Katya: I have to say, as a blogger, it is...

Jocelyn: A ton of work.

Katya: A ton of work! It takes a HUGE amount of energy, and you have to be really into it, or you shouldn't be doing it at all, because you will never, ever be able to turn him into a blogger if he is not one.

That doesn't mean you can't have a blog. And quite frankly, maybe your CEO is not the best spokesperson. If he's not big into writing, he might not be the best person. Who have you helped, or what champions or advocates do you have who would like to pursue blogging gung-ho? Or, if you don't want to start a blog yourself, what bloggers in your community are talking about your issue that you could reach out to and engage them so they're spreading the word on your behalf?

Jocelyn: It sounds like she may want to blog.

Katya: Yeah. Actually, you sound like the one with passion, Barbara, so we nominate you as the blogger of the organization. Let us know how it goes.

OK. Alia, do you want to talk about adoptadoctor.org? They asked us to look at their website and said, "How can we get more hits?" This is Ray. Ray, we think you're asking about traffic. We're not sure. Alia?

Alia: Yeah. Well, as far as traffic, I just did a quick search on Google, and Ray, you are really optimized very well. All of the top organic search results lead to Adopt a Doctor. And then it looks like you've even bought some search terms, so that is terrific. What I would do is really work on your PR and your media. Any time you are doing any kind of PR pitches, really, push the Adopt a Doctor URL. If you can push a petition or something else with that PR, I think you'll see an increase in web traffic, because you really are optimized for search, which is a great first step.

Katya: Great. Thank you so much.

OK. We're moving on to some questions that have come in in the last few minutes. Jocelyn, do you want to read David's question?

Jocelyn: Yeah. Sure. So, David says, "Hi. I'm David. I'm new to online fundraising. Can you give me a basic overview or a checklist of the different components that need to be in place in order to have a successful campaign?"

We sure can. The first thing, obviously, you're going to need is a list. Right? You're going to need people to send to. The next thing you're going to need is a content, an ask, something you're going to talk to them about.

Also, though, if you're going to do blast emails, you're going to have to get some sort of a technology platform that enables you to do that. You cannot do an e-communications campaign through a traditional Outlook vehicle; you'll be regarded as spam. So you could check out EmailNow from Network for Good, or many of the other tools out there, and that, hopefully, will get you going.

Katya: Great. OK. Anthony. Anthony sounds like he is on the right track. He asks, "My name's Anthony. I work for an organization that offers abstinence education for teens. I have a question concerning how to develop a marketing plan. I have defined what I want each audience to do, researched what they value, developed messaging and a benefit exchange for each audience, and analyzed competitive environmental forces. Sound familiar, Katya?"

Jocelyn: Woo-hoo.

Katya: Wow. Yes it does. And Anthony, way to go. You are 100 years ahead of most of us in your marketing already.

But now he's hit the wall, which is he has a nonexistent budget, actually, not just a small budget, and it's hard to design and execute a marketing plan based on that. So his question for today is: "What are some key ideas or thoughts that would relate to developing a marketing plan for a small nonprofit organization, while considering the lack of any funds to support it? In other words, how do I take all this information I've gathered and turn it into a tangible, executable strategy that effectively reaches our aims with very little funds?"

Great question. And boy, that could sum up what we all face in our day jobs every single day, Anthony. Great question.

OK. First thing I'm going to do is plug an upcoming 911 call we have on developing a marketing plan. So that might be useful to you in thinking about some tactics you can do for a low cost.

My main issue is, when you have very little money, you really need to focus on being very targeted, going deep, harnessing champions, and also hitting people with your scarce resources in the time, place, or state of mind when they're most likely to take action. So, I think I had this little mantra in my book, if I remember it correctly, which was something like: "Better to concentrate and inundate than to spray and pray."

Jocelyn: [laughs]

Katya: In other words, you don't have very much money. And so what you need to do is -- you've done fabulous research. You should know who your low-hanging-fruit audiences are. You know which teens are most likely to take this message to heart. You know who they listen to. And you may not need a lot of money to tap into that.

If they're listening to their friends, and you know they're people who are real champions -- and I know that there have been successful programs in other communities with abstinence-champion teens in certain communities who have special programs or rings that they wear or different things like that that don't take a lot of money to run as a program because they're led by the champions. And boy, when you're talking about teens, teens listen to other teens. They don't listen so much to other authority figures or billboards or mass-marketing campaigns.

Social networking is a good way to have teens reaching each other. Instant messaging and things like that are relatively low-cost to get your message out.

Think about when they're most likely to take a pledge. Or I don't know what the action you have you want them to do is, but you want to think about when they're most likely to be thinking about that and willing to take action, and target your marketing dollars into those what I call "open-minded moments, " because you don't have a lot of chances to get people, and you want to hit them where you can.

Kim asked me a related question on a benefit exchange: "How do you get people to buy into your organization and donate during tough times?" I'm going to ask all of us to weigh in on that really quick.

My entire blog this week is devoted to benefit exchange, actually. And I think the components of a good benefit exchange are you offer an immediate reward to someone for taking action. It's personal, it's deeply related to their values, and it's something that comes from a messenger they trust, would be my framing for good benefit exchange.

Any words from you, Alia, on how to get people to buy into your organization during tough times?

Alia: Yeah. I completely agree about the messenger. What we're doing a lot with organizations right now is having, actually, appeals come from donors, talking about why they give, and why they give to that particular organization, so it really elevates that organization in the eyes of the recipient. So I definitely agree that the messenger is key during tough times.

And if your organization sort of can key in to some of the issues that are front and center in the news these days -- if you're an environmental organization, then you can talk about how you're working to try to combat \$4.00-a-gallon gas. If you can plug into sort of topical issues, then I think you'll be able to plug through.

Jocelyn: Great suggestion. This may hurt your cash flow in the beginning, but this may be a great opportunity for asking people to do annual donations -- not give everything they would give at this time, but spread it out for them, if you can afford to do that with your cash flow.

Katya: Monthly, you mean?

Jocelyn: Monthly.

Katya: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Oh, I said "annual."

[laughter]

Katya: She means monthly. Ask for monthly. Ask for monthly. [laughs]

And then Kim also asked about tax receipts for people who donate a large amount of money and want to deduct it. We'll answer that one offline.

OK. I'm going to pause here for a second. We are running just at time here. I'm willing to stay on with Jocelyn, and we'll check in with Alia and see if she's willing to stay on for five more minutes to take a few more remaining questions.

For those of you who have to get off, don't forget to visit fundraising123.org for information about our services, information about future trainings, and lots of articles on the topics we cover today. If we did not get to your question, or are not getting to it in the next five minutes--there are only a handful of you -- we will be emailing you personally and making sure that you get a response.

And last, before we move on, I want to invite all of you to visit our respective blogs. A plug for our blogs. Your blog URL, Jocelyn, one more time?

Jocelyn: www.marketingfornonprofits.org.

Katya: OK. And Alia? The Sea Change blog?

Alia: Yes. www.seachangestrategies.com.

Katya: OK. And that's another great blog. And then mine is www.nonprofitmarketingblog.com. And what I'll do after the call is, if it's not already up there, I'll make sure we get up links to all of them because we can continue the discussion there. We might post some of the answers to questions up there as well, since there have been so many good questions that other nonprofits would benefit hearing the responses to.

OK. Let's see. We're going to take just a few more questions and stay over, for those of you who are willing to stay on the line. We have a question from Rachel: "Are there ethical guidelines around collecting email addresses and being explicit about how the address will be used, as well as this permission-based issue?" Jocelyn, do you want to talk about that?

Jocelyn: Absolutely. Anything you're going to do with your donors, period, you should be transparent about and you should be open about, especially in the online space. It's not because it's ethical -- well, it is because it's ethical. It's because it's the right thing to do. You're building relationships first and foremost with people, so treat people how you would want them to treat you.

Katya: Yeah. Good advice. Not to mention you'll run afoul of spam laws and you're going to get blacklisted if you don't follow some good principles of permission-based marketing.

We have a really intriguing question here from Elizabeth, from Spinal Injuries

Association. This one is fascinating. I'm a big "no" on this, and I want to hear what the other panelists say.

She says she just attended a national fundraising convention, and one of the big things to come out of the convention was that you should take the donate button off the front of your website. I nearly fell out of my chair when I heard that, because I spend all day long not only telling people to put a button on the front page, but to make two of them and make them really big.

Alia: [laughing] Yeah.

Katya: So I could not disagree more in that Mark, Alia's colleague, likes to talk about welcome mats. There are people who are going to visit your website who are ready to give, are interested in supporting you, and I don't think you want to play hide-and-seek with them in terms of your donate button.

I'll give you one personal story, and then I'll ask Alia and Jocelyn to weigh in.

At Network for Good, we made our donate button bigger and cleared a lot of clutter off our page. And I'll tell you what happened: our conversion rate went up 30%. And I've read plenty of research. There's a good study out now from, I believe it's DonorEdge. Is that the one with best practices? They say the color of donate buttons, and the size of donate buttons. It was fascinating. But they found the bigger the button and the brighter the color, the better, basically. Alia, do you disagree? Agree?

Alia: No, I completely agree with you, Katya. To me, that's crazy. I just finished a huge, extensive campaign with a client, doing multi-variant testing, where we tested tons of different items on their home page at one time, tried to see what increased conversions, and the bigger the button, the better.

Katya: Yeah. I'm with you. Elizabeth, send us the name of the conference organizer, and I'll write him a personal letter. [laughs]

Alia: [laughs]

Katya: OK. Sackett Sound, a nonprofit with enough sense to make it easier for consumers to identify environmentally and socially friendly apparel and textiles, asks, "How do you encourage discussion and debate in your online communities, while still keeping it appropriate, without constantly moderating?"

This is a great question. What do you do? How open do you keep it? How much do you try to control the message? How much do you do? What do you do when people say negative things? Jocelyn, do you want to take a crack at that?

Jocelyn: Sure. There is a group I've come across recently called Social Signal, and one of the things that they do is they specialize in helping people have conversations. [laughs] Which is actually not so easy, as we're all figuring out. And one of their principals talks about herself as being the Martha Stewart of social networking sites. I would suggest you

guys check that out and look at some of their references.

Again, there's a question in the online space, or just in terms of relationship-building, about how transparent you are. I think it's good to have rules of the road for your social networking site, but I don't think you can control the conversation. If you do, people will get shut down. So I think you run a fine line. Obviously, you're not going to have people saying inappropriate words and things like that, but you need to give them the freedom to express their views, otherwise you'll turn people off. I don't know...

Katya: Yeah. I mean, I think you have to err on the side openness and letting people say negative things.

We've actually had a really great experience with that at Network for Good. We've had some of our nastiest critics online end up becoming big buddies of ours [laughs] because of the honest discussion we have and the openness. And then people see that we're an organization that's willing to have a dialog about anything and really listen to what people have to say, which it has a lot more to gain. People are going to say things that you don't like out there. So you can be a part of the conversation or you could ignore it, but you can't control it, I'd say.

Alia: Absolutely. And from a marketing perspective, controversy tends to help spread the word a lot better than everyone just agreeing and getting along. So, as long as you're willing to have the conversation and have the dialog, then go for it. Go for it.

Katya: That's a really, really good point, Alia.

OK. We're going to wind up with one more question here. It's a pretty tactical one, from Andra Moss from International Senior Lawyers Project: "We have a donation of \$10,000 that we could use as a matching grant, or a donors-will-double-your-donations for new donors. Should we use this now, or wait until our year-end giving push? Will people who give in September also give in December?"

So, timing of campaigns, framing of matching grants. Alia, do you want to take a stab at that?

Alia: Well, if you were talking to me last year, I would say that year-end doesn't need a match. Right? Year-end giving, usually you're going to get people who are opening up their wallet, making that tax-deductible donation before December 31st. And what I would do is use the match for other times of the year, when you're needing a boost in revenue and it's not year-end season.

I'm seeing a lot of organizations right now going out with matches. And I think that this has to do with the state of the economy, where people are sort of bringing out the big guns throughout the year. And I have a feeling this year-end season, we're going to see a lot of matches at year-end.

So, I don't really have a definitive answer for you. I'm sorry. I just don't have a definitive

answer for which will be better. I think it really has to do with the economy. And of course, this is an election year, and people are being asked to give quite a bit, so I think that even going out with a match in September might be tough because it's going to be a really crowded climate.

Katya: Great, Alia. OK. We're going to wrap up now, but I'm going to ask for one final word from our panelists here. Alia, there's a question you're in a great position to answer, because it's probably some of your clients, which is: what's an example of a really good website? Can you provide an example of a couple of nonprofit websites that are doing the stuff we're talking about today really well?

Alia: Great. Great. Well, I think Environmental Defense Fund has a great website. And I work with Environmental Defense Fund. I think they could become a little bit more inspiring on their website, but as far as the basics of name-collection, donation, using PR, using social networking, I think that they're doing a great job of that.

This is not a client of ours, but I think kiva.org is a terrific website. And I also think that NARAL Pro-Choice America has a really solid website, where they've got all they're I's dotted and their T's crossed.

Katya: Great. And I'd throw in the mix the Monterey Bay Aquarium site, which I actually think is also one of your clients, but I love their site. And I love their e-news. So, consider signing up for their e-news. I think they did a really nice job with that as well.

Alia: Thank you for that. I forgot about the Monterey Bay Aquarium. How could I do that? [laughs]

Katya: OK. Jocelyn, do you want to wrap up with your thoughts, and then we're going to conclude for the day?

Jocelyn: Sure. I'm going to leave you with two strategic thoughts. And the first is you've got to be with your audience. You've got to get to know your audience, know your donors. A lot of these questions that were tactical questions can best be answered by really just going to your donors or having deeper relationships with your donors so that you know how they like to hear from you, when they like to hear from you, what they like to hear from you, etcetera.

And also, in all your collaterals, you've just go to lead with benefits for you donors -- what's in it for them. And the last thing I think that, hopefully, we impressed upon you today is think deep, not wide. So, again, if you have a small budget--I don't know what your saying is, the spray business...

[laughter]

Katya: Concentrate and inundate! Concentrate and inundate. Right?

Jocelyn: Less is always more. Do more with the donors you have rather than trying to engage more folks and not having enough resources to take care of them all.

Katya: Great. Thank you for those wise parting words.

Jocelyn: [laughs]

Katya: I wanted to remind you that our next Nonprofit 911 teleconference is on August 19th at 1:00 eastern. And, as promised, it's on a results-driven marketing plan, which sounds like something we got a lot of questions about today. It's free, as always. Tiffany Meyer will be leading it. We encourage you to sign up. More information is at fundraising123.org. Click on the "Training" tab.

Thanks, everyone. And special thank-yous to Jocelyn and Alia for all of your counsel.

Jocelyn: Thank you.

Alia: Thanks for having us.

Katya: Bye-bye.