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What Every Not-For-Profit Should Know: The Power of Electronic Communication

E-mail has had arguably the greatest impact on business since the industrial revolution. It has made it possible to communicate instantaneously over great distances with one or multiple people at almost no cost. It can be an invaluable tool that every not-for-profit must use to remain competitive, but is your organization utilizing it as effectively as it should?

Here are some helpful hints for getting the most out of your email communication.

1. Professionalism – Spend the time to compose your e-mail communications professionally. It is a representation of your organization even if it is in an electronic format.
2. Stay on topic – The majority of people who receive your e-mail will skim it as opposed to reading it in depth. A long e-mail can appear intimidating and they may choose to put it off to later or delete it all together. Keep your emails short and to the point. Bullet points can be particularly helpful with this.
3. Personalization – Personalize your e-mails. Type in your recipient's names instead of using the generic Dear Donor or Sir/Madam. If you're sending out a mass e-mail use your mail merge option to personalize your communications.
4. Rewards – If your email is going to perspective donors, towards the end of your communication let them know they will receive a small reward or token of appreciation for their donation.
5. Include Links – Before closing out your email be sure to include a link to your organization's website. Encourage them visit and learn more about your cause and upcoming events.
6. Avoid Weekends and Holidays – Whenever possible avoid sending out emails on weekends and holidays. Many people don't check their e-mail while they're away from the office and return to discover they're overloaded with new messages. This may cause them to be liberal with the delete button, and they may trash your message without actually reading it.

7. Keep it Simple – When it comes to e-mail simplification is still the key. Plain text works best and ensures the widest possible audience for you communication, but if you do wish to use html, include an option for plain text so your recipients have a choice.
8. Use Your Subject Line – Your subject line is the most important part of your e-mail. Use it. Tell your recipient's what your emails about. Your subject line can encourage your recipients to read your email or delete it.
9. Moderation – When utilizing any form of direct marketing moderation is the key. Besides the danger of your organization being identified as a spammer, if people feel they receive too much communication from you or your not-for-profit they may begin deleting your emails without reading them. People are creatures of habit you don't want them to get into the habit of trashing your emails. Keep your communications to only once or twice a month.
10. Call to Action – Any form of direct marketing should have some type of call to action whether it's a link to your organization's website, instructions for making a donation, or even your contact information if they have a question. Your recipients should always be aware of their next step.

There are few marketing tool more effective or cost efficient than e-mail. However, in order to realize its full potential you must use it properly. For more information on how email marketing can benefit your organization contact Scott Cote, Director of Practice Growth at (214) 461-1467 or by email at scote@lgt-cpa.com.

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