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## Kleenex Gets Punk'd: Social Media Marketing for Nonprofits

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In the nonprofit world, “social media marketing” is nothing to sneeze at. As I learned at the second annual Craigslist Foundation Nonprofit Bootcamp, telling the story of your organization online is one of the most effective ways for nonprofits to connect with audiences and attract new donors.

In a workshop called “Social Media Marketing and Campaigning for Nonprofits,” See3 Communications and Greenpeace offered new solutions that nonprofits can use, despite limited resources.

I already knew that places like MySpace, YouTube, and Facebook provide unique platforms for nonprofits to tell their stories. But as I learned at this workshop, being online is only half the story. Creating a coordinated strategy and campaign around social media is vital to success.

Daniel Hartman of See3 Communications suggested the following strategies:

- Be portable
- Take advantage of RSS feeds, banners, widgets, and video

If you use a network like YouTube, don't just passively slap up video. It takes a focused campaign. Be sure to:

- Create a branded account
- Use effective keywords in tags and descriptions
- Make and respond to comments
- Coordinate promotion to your list and via partners to reach a threshold for featured status

The next speaker, Beka Economopoulos, a field organizer for Greenpeace, offered an interesting case study

which utilized fairly simple strategies and provided fascinating insights into how they used video to leverage their existing audience—and attract new audiences. At the onset of her talk, she reminded the audience to never “fetishize the technology.” Instead of the popular mantra “the media is the message,” she suggests replacing that with “the message is the message.” No matter how you do it, have a good message and execute a campaign effectively.

But how can nonprofits use the power of the Internet to do this? Economopoulos suggests that web pages should never be static and that nonprofits should think of themselves as destinations—places for users to come and talk and even better, engage *offline*. Online and offline integration are key to creating community. As an example of this, Greenpeace used these very strategies to take on a corporation—and simultaneously spread their mission virally.

Greenpeace challenged Kimberly Clark, a well known corporation that produces tissue products of 100 percent virgin fiber, to stop destroying thousands of Canadian old-growth forests at alarming rates. Kimberly Clark’s recent advertising campaign, “Let it Out,” challenges consumers on the street to sit down on the couch, take a tissue, and talk about what makes them cry or better yet: actually cry. A Greenpeace volunteer on MySpace messaged Greenpeace when she heard that Kimberly Clark was shooting the commercial in Times Square in New York City. Greenpeace felt it was the perfect opportunity to get their message heard, too.

Undercover Greenpeace representatives effectively hijacked Kimberly Clark’s ad campaign and made a [video](#) for Greenpeace on MySpace in the process. Instead of creating new messaging, Greenpeace used Kimberly Clark’s language and media against them by participating in these man-on-the-street interviews. Greenpeace reps “let it out” by talking about the things that made them sad: how Kimberly Clark is clear cutting forests. Their resulting video, “Kleenex Gets Punk’d,” got serious traction on MySpace, with 77,000 views and 272 comments. Later Greenpeace used the same video and banners at Kimberly Clark’s annual shareholders meeting to demand a more forest-friendly tissue.

The result? According to Economopoulos, not only was it good for Greenpeace’s brand, it upped their “cool quotient.” It also proved to her that it’s better to push exceptional content less frequently than to bombard the market with “too much stuff.” In addition to the video, she then reached out to blogs, prankster and art sites, and environmental and progressive news sources.

Economopoulos advises “when entering a community, shut up and listen.” Know your audience, figure out who the influences are, and reach out to them. Who is writing comments on your site? Who are the users shaping the debates?

She also suggested the following strategies:

- Grassroots recruitment: recruit people to send in photos and get involved in your cause (make it fun)
- Make good use of your bulletins
- Motivate your base: encourage users to tag their photos on Flickr, so they can see themselves online and be more involved in the cause
- Make newsletters personal. Greenpeace has a picture of the same representative at the end of each newsletter, so users can email him and truly get to know the organization.

An offline event is another way to reach your core audience. Greenpeace did a “Save the Whales” campaign by encouraging communities to run their own campaigns. Potential participants had access to everything they needed via the Web (it was all downloadable) and were even sent whale cookie cutters, too! They made cookies and invited their friends to their homes to sign petitions.

But unlike a typical campaign, the Greenpeace audience approached Greenpeace, *asking how they could get involved*. What motivated them? It all goes back to the Kleenex video ...

When Greenpeace blasted thousands about the Save the Whales campaign, they strategically placed the Kleenex video in the email, too. Users enjoyed the video so much that they responded by embedding it in their pages, blogging it, and, as a result, asked Greenpeace how they could get more involved. Greenpeace responded by requesting that they start their own “Save the Whales” campaigns. Greenpeace was able to respond directly to those most interested in their mission. Such tactics take bumper stickers to a whole new level!

How else can you take your message to new audiences? In addition to YouTube and MySpace, there are resources that appeal to slightly older communities as well, such as Gather.com and Citizenspeak.org, and yes, DivineCaroline.com!

For training resources, the workshop suggested:

Echoditto.org

The Progressive Exchange

Nonprofit Congress

To learn more, the workshop suggested that nonprofits do a Google search for “nonprofit technology” or “nonprofit social media.”

Related Story: [A Day of Leadership and Collaboration: Nonprofit Boot Camp](#)

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