

## 6 Unique Online Fundraising Techniques for Your Nonprofit Part 1 of 6

### Overview

Every nonprofit knows that fundraisers are critical to their existence. Without donations, no resources are available to support the primary cause or purpose of the organization. While most traditional media channels have been exhausted, new opportunities have arisen in the online sector. By tapping into cutting-edge online resources, your organization can achieve fundraising objectives that far exceed established boundaries. But what are these mysterious online tools and how do you put them to work for your organization? This series attempts to answer these questions and more by breaking down the vast online resources into six manageable categories. These categories include:

1. **Social Networking**
2. **Online Auctions**
3. **Email Campaigns**
4. **Wiki Pages and Event Calendars**
5. **Blogs**
6. **Online Raffles**

### 1. Social Networking

Social Networking is a broad term that describes online communities who share common friends, interests, goals, etc. Why are they so important to nonprofit organizations? "As a [social network] user, you get notified when your friends start using an application; you can then start using that same application with one click. At which point, all of your friends become aware that you have started using that application and the cycle continues. The result is that a successful application on Facebook (a social network) can grow to a million users or more within a couple of weeks of creation" ([Marc Andreessen](#)). The translation of this excerpt to your nonprofit is that social networking platforms facilitate unmatched viral fundraising possibilities. The list below gives a summary of the unique characteristics of some of the most important social networking sites.

**MySpace-** This is the largest of all social networks on the web. According to [Alexa](#), a web information company, [MySpace](#) is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most visited site in the United States. MySpace users communicate on blogs and forums, share pictures and videos, and create groups based on common interests. As of July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007, there were 19,950 Non-Profit and Philanthropic groups on the website.

**Facebook-** [Facebook](#) has strong appeal to college and high school aged individuals and is primarily focused on sharing pictures and posting messages. "According to [TechCrunch](#), "about 85% of students in supported colleges have a profile [on the site]. [Of those who are signed up,] 60% [log in](#) daily. About 85% log in at least once a week, and 93% log in at least once a month ([Wikipedia](#))." While not the appropriate platform for all nonprofits, Facebook can be used to reach a younger segment of viewers.

**Care2-** [Care2](#) has approximately 7 million members and is specifically focused on community activism. Human rights groups, environmental groups, etc. are found on this networking site. Blogs, forums, and pictures are all used to connect users. Additional features include the ability to create and sign petitions on the website ([techsoup](#)) and submit these petitions to lawmakers.

**Squidoo-** [Squidoo](#) is a network that is designed for individuals or organizations to effectively communicate their area(s) of expertise. The site allows users to create "lenses" which are a single page describing the topic of focus. Unlike MySpace or Facebook, Squidoo is focused on providing a springboard or directory of content on the web. For example, a nonprofit might create a page about their cause/purpose on a lens. The lens would have some useful information on it as well as links to other online resources which have further reading on the subject. The website also contributes a significant portion of their [revenue](#) back to nonprofits and the lens creators (who themselves are often nonprofits).

**Profile-** The best way to get started on one of the networking sites is to create a profile for your organization. You have two options for how to do this.

**Company Profile-** This is a more conservative and professional approach where the organization creates a profile and outright states its business purpose.

**Personal profile-** This is when a representative in the organization sets up a personal profile to speak on behalf of the company. This will have his/her picture friends etc. and will be less commercial in feeling.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches and ultimately your organization will have to decide (or do both). However, it is important to understand that implementing a successful profile of any sort requires a *continual intensive effort*. The organization will need to update the profile regularly, add new announcements, comments, and friends and overall be involved in the community. Many nonprofits have made the mistake of setting up a profile and then never updating it or getting involved. You cannot simply display your cause and expect to be successful; creating personal relationships and online contacts is required. Marc Ruben's "[10 Commandments of MySpace Advocacy](#)" is an excellent resource for how to maintain a successful profile.

**Groups-** Community organizations must become familiar with established groups that are focused on their cause and sign up to become members. This will connect the organization to a network of resources and possible fundraising supporters. For example, an environmental nonprofit may be interested in joining a group such as "I'm Going Green," which currently has 9,155 members ([The Huffington Post](#)).

**Charity Badge-** Now that you have an idea what social networks are and what different platforms are available, you will need to learn how to use them to raise money for your organization. Keep in mind that unlike other online fundraising channels such as a raffle or auction, the primary role of social networks should be to create awareness and community around your group and the fundraising aspect should be secondary. Creating a charity

badge is an easy and effective way to spread the word about your organization and receive donations that extend beyond your geographic constraints'. A [charity badge](#) is a small widget often including a picture, brief description of the organization, and link to where you can make a donation. They are valuable on social networking sites because they can be easily duplicated and shared between friends with common interests. Charity badge creators include [ChipIn](#), [Network for Good](#), and [CareBadges](#). To learn more about charity badges read my articles, "Charity Badges to Raise Dough?" and "7 Tips to Make Your Charity Badge a Success."

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