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MAXIMIZING ONLINE FUNDRAISING POTENTIALS

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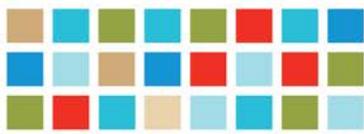
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INTRODUCTION

This project was prepared for St. Joseph's Health Centre Guelph, a non-profit organization that provides resident long-term care, complex continuing care, and rehabilitation services for individuals within the City of Guelph.

This project explores the practices and strategies that are used to design websites and social media marketing approaches that are adept in fundraising, as found within the literature. The aim of this project was to:

1. Identify evidence-based best practices and strategies for designing and creating interesting and engaging person and family centred health care and healthcare fundraising websites; and,
2. Identify evidence-based best practices and strategies for sharing patient success stories through social media marketing in hopes of encouraging external clients to donate.

This report has three main sections. The first section, 'Why Fundraise Online,' describes the importance of fundraising through the use of websites and social media platforms, listing critical facts that non-profit organizations should be made aware of.

The second section, 'Why Do We Give Online,' describes the psychological dimensions that have been used to explain why individuals contribute in online contexts, focusing in particular on the role of Atmospherics and the Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance (P-A-D) Model.

The third section, 'Maximizing Online Fundraising Potentials,' describes the application of the P-A-D Model to websites and social media contexts as found within the literature, and lists the best practices through which Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance can be heightened within these environments.

It is hoped that the following information will provide readers with a preliminary understanding of the practices and strategies that are most recommended within the literature when it comes to designing websites and social media marketing approaches, based on the psychological dimensions of giving. It is further hoped that this information might help to inform any decisions that are taken with respect to the design and creation of fundraising websites and social media marketing approaches.

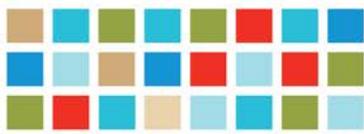


METHODS

We conducted a literature scan to find the most important academic and grey resources available relating to: evidence-based best practices for designing interesting and engaging healthcare fundraising websites, and social media fundraising approaches.

Google Scholar and Primo were used as the main search engines for this work. The search queries used included:

- “Atmospherics” AND “Website”
- “Atmospherics” AND “Website Design”
- “Atmospherics” AND “Fundraising”
- “Atmospherics” AND “Website” AND “Fundraising”
- “Atmospherics” AND “Website Design” AND “Fundraising”
- “Website Design” AND “Best Practices”
- “Website Design” AND “Fundraising”
- “Website Design” AND “Increase Fundraising”
- “Website Design” AND “Best Practices” AND “Fundraising”
- “Website Design” AND “Increase Fundraising” AND “Best Practices”
- “Website Design” AND “Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance”
- “Fundraising” AND “Online”
- “Fundraising” AND “Online” AND “Best Practices”
- “Fundraising” AND “Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance”
- “Social Media” AND “Fundraising”
- “Social Media” AND “Fundraising” AND “Best Practices”
- “Social Media” AND “Fundraising” AND “Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance”



WHY FUNDRAISE ONLINE?

The web provides non-profit organizations with a means through which to reduce costs, raise awareness, reach new and larger audiences, and mobilize visitors for certain causes or programs of action (Bennett, 2005; Harrison-Walker & Williamson, 2000; Wenham, Stephens, & Hardy, 2003).

It also provides non-profits with an important source of potential revenue. *Blackbaud* (Cited in MacLaughlin, 2013) found that in 2012 donations obtained through online fundraising increased by 10.7% from 2011, and made up 7% of total donations received. Meanwhile, Flandez (2012) found that more than 59% of non-profits that utilized online fundraising saw their total donations increase in the last year. It has also been found that when donations are made through credit cards, donors contribute 15% to 20% more on average than when donations are made through cash or cheque (Bennett, 2005; Harrison-Walker & Williamson, 2000).

Despite these revealing facts, most non-profit organizations only use their websites and social media platforms to provide information or collect donations rather than to stimulate fundraising (Goatman & Lewis, 2007; Pratt, Yakabov, Glinski, & Hauser, 2009). Only 2% of non-profit organizations in the United States, for instance, have raised between \$10,000 and \$25,000 US on Facebook in a year, and only 1% raised between \$25,000 and \$100,000 US (Blackbaud, 2014). Further, Wenham, Stephens, and Hardy (2003) and Bhagat (2004) both found that most non-profits fail to implement best practices that have been recommended for fundraising online.

WHY DO WE GIVE ONLINE?

The literature identifies a number of evidence-based best practices for designing interesting and engaging healthcare fundraising websites and social media fundraising approaches, most of which are based on the psychological aspects of giving. Specifically, the literature focuses on 'Atmospherics,' which Turley and Milliman (2000) define as "The means whereby an environment creates emotional reactions in visitors, encouraging them to stay in the setting, browse and evaluate, or discouraging any of these events" (P. 194). In other words, the atmosphere of a given environment influences one's emotional reactions to, and consequently, attitudes towards, that environment, whether it is of physical or virtual nature (Bennett, 2005).

It follows that a given website's atmosphere can either encourage or discourage visitors from remaining on that website. In terms of fundraising, Bennett (2005) asserts that the longer a visitor remains on a non-profit organization's website, the greater the prospects



are that this person will either make a donation or submit their contact details, which can be used to foster a long-term relationship with the visitor in question.

In assessing the effects of Atmospherics upon websites, the most widely used metric identified within the literature has been the Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance (P-A-D) Model, which was first conceived of by Albert Mehrabian and James Russell (1974).

The P-A-D Model asserts that one's emotional responses to a given environment are best captured through measuring one's feelings of Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance. Pleasure refers to the extent to which one feels pleased, content, and/or satisfied within an environment (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001; 2003). Arousal refers to the degree to which an environment stimulates, excites, and/or energizes its visitors (Matthews, Davies, & Holley, 1990). Lastly, Dominance focuses on whether a visitor feels influential, dominant, and/or in control in a specific environment, rather than feeling as though the environment is influencing or controlling this person's actions (Bennett, 2005).

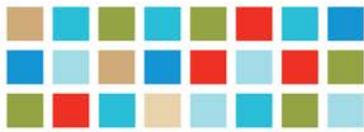
These emotional responses together determine the extent to which one wants to remain within or leave a given environment, and the degree to which one is willing to purchase goods or donate whilst being there (Foxall, 1997; McGoldrick & Pieros, 1998; Sweeney & Wyber, 2002; Bennett, 2005).

MAXIMIZING ONLINE FUNDRAISING POTENTIALS

Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance manifest themselves in online fundraising contexts as well. The literature has based most of their best practices off of these feelings of Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance. This section will review these distinct manifestations and best practices, with specific attention paid to those techniques that are focused on optimizing online fundraising through the design of websites and social media marketing approaches.

A. Pleasure

In terms of Pleasure, websites and social media can foster so much satisfaction that visitors can enter what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1975; 1977; 1988) coined a 'State of Flow.' Flow, as he defined it, refers to "The holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement" (1975, P. 4). It is a state in which an individual engages in certain activities with absolute immersion vis-à-vis complete involvement, high levels of concentration, and significant personal interest (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

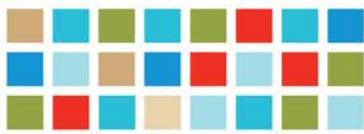


Chen, Wigand, and Nilan (2000) assert that when individuals enter a ‘State of Flow’ in an online environment, these individuals experience decreased levels of self-awareness, potent interest in the online environment and its contents, engrossment in the immediate task, and feelings of telepresence, which refer to sentiments of intimate involvement in the subject matter of the virtual environment in question. In terms of non-profit organizations, Bennett (2005) explains that Flow emerges “As the visitor becomes engrossed with a site’s subject matter and begins to share the charity’s passion, commitment, and desire to make a difference in a troubled world” (P. 137).

With this manifestation of Pleasure in mind, Table 1 presents the best practices through which Flow can be established in both website and social media contexts, which will in turn increase the Pleasure visitors experience.

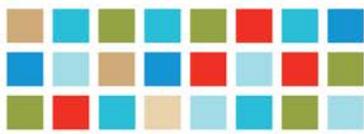
Best Practice & Rationale(s)	Practical Implementation(s)
<p>Provide A Transformational Experience.</p> <p>Donors want a transformational rather than a transactional experience.</p> <p>The amount of transactional elements included within the contribution process should be limited so as to ensure visitors remain within a State of Flow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of using ‘Add To Cart’ or ‘Checkout’ or ‘Submit’ when processing donations, use ‘Add Gift’ or ‘Donate’ or ‘Send Gift.’ • Reduce the number of Information Fields (e.g. Name, E-Mail Address, Physical Address) that individuals have to complete in order to donate to no more than 13 at the most (Frontier, 2015). • Avoid using a CAPTCHA, which can interrupt visitors’ Flow. Consider using payment providers such as Stripe that automatically fight fraudulent transactions. • Avoid asking donors to review and confirm details before finalizing the donation. • Use ‘In-Line Validation’ to reduce errors in, and subsequent abandonment of, online donation forms. In-Line Validation instructs the donor immediately in real time when an error is made without leaving the page. In-Line Validation has resulted in a 22% increase in success rates and a 31% increase in feelings of satisfaction among donors (Frontier, 2015).





Best Practice & Rationale(s)	Practical Implementation(s)
<p>Be Consistent With Visitors' Values.</p> <p>Content that matches up with one's values is more likely to lead to increased satisfaction than content that does not match up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the non-profit organization's mission statement on the home page. Ensure the mission statement outlines the values and ideals of the organization in a clear and explicit manner (Waters, 2007).
<p>Be Interactive With Visitors / Followers.</p> <p>Donors should be perceived of as partners with the non-profit organization rather than as mere sources of funding (Sargeant & Jay, 2004).</p> <p>"Non[-]profits should strive to develop more visitor-to-visitor and visitor-to-organization online tools and strategies in order to foster a closer sense of community and involvement" (Persaud, Madill, & Rubaj, 2009, P. 15)</p> <p>Non-profit organizations can improve the capacities among visitors to share the organization's message and cause with others. This will, in turn, increase visitors' satisfaction while on the website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate feedback forms, visitor reviews, testimonials, chat rooms, blogs, and/or forums to increase levels of interactivity. Only three of the 50 Canadian non-profit websites Persaud, Madill, and Rubaj (2009) examined provided a feedback form. Only eight provided visitor reviews and testimonials. None provided chat rooms or forums for visitor-to-visitor or visitor-to-organization dialogue. • Dedicate a significant portion of the home page to the promotion of online registration via name and e-mail address. Place this registration form in a prominent location with an image or graphic to draw visitors to it. • Create original content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and other social media platforms that inspires individuals to engage with you. • Use Hashtags (#) on social media to identify and follow like-minded individuals. Engage these individuals in dialogue to start a relationship with them so as to cultivate satisfaction.





B. Arousal

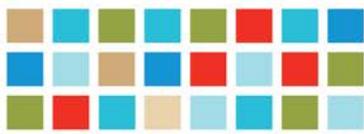
In terms of Arousal, websites and social media platforms can offer novel, unfamiliar, and/or complex stimuli to visitors through interactive multimedia mechanisms that physical environments do not feature. These multimedia mechanisms can intensify the Arousal that is sparked through non-profit organizations’ active solicitation of visitors, which is one of the principal methods through which potential donors are stimulated and energized.

A number of studies have explored the methods non-profit organizations utilize in their fundraising endeavours, concluding that those organizations that actively solicit contributions (e.g. asking visitors to contribute through a welcome message that pops up when visitors land on the website) receive more donations than those that just passively present opportunities for individuals to donate (e.g. the inclusion of a donate button on the website) (See Bekkers, 2005; Bryant, Jeon Slaughter, Kang, and Tax, 2003; Desmet & Feinberg, 2003). Pitts, Blose, and Mack (2014) explain that “These message stimuli operate through the production of emotion and the development of a link to the personal values of the donor which, in turn, motivate giving” (P. 16). Active solicitations also mediate visitors’ perception of need and the capacities of the non-profit to deliver, encouraging them to donate (Sargeant, West, & Ford, 2001; 2004; 2006).

With these aspects of Arousal in mind, Table 2 presents the best practices through which Arousal can be improved on both websites and social media platforms.

Best Practice & Rationale(s)	Practical Implementation(s)
<p>Use Expressive Aesthetics.</p> <p>Visitors need to be stimulated into action and persuaded that a need does indeed exist and that something needs to be done.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confront visitors with attention-grabbing headlines; shocking and illustrative portrayals of distressing situations as captured through video and/or images; brief case histories or patient success stories that demonstrate needs and achievements; and/or educational mediums. • Feature competitions between donors (e.g. anyone who donates is entered into a draw for a prize of some sort, like a tour with the non-profit’s CEO) or list rewards that contributors receive for donating (e.g. an invitation to a donor appreciation dinner) to incite Arousal.



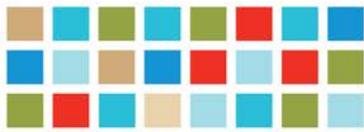


Best Practice & Rationale(s)	Practical Implementation(s)
<p>Demonstrate Impacts.</p> <p>“Showing your donors where their dollars will go makes an incredible impression on donation amounts. Donors have been found to give up to three times more to charities that show the problem being solved and where their dollars will go” (Frontier, 2015, P. 10).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show potential donors what certain amounts of donations can purchase. For example, indicating that a specific donation could purchase a certain number of long-term care beds would suffice. • “Pictures or videos that show the impact of the funded project, or a blog post that explains how funds raised from a marathon will be used, are both excellent and transparent ways to thank donors and fundraisers” (Steiner & Miranda, 2014, P. 4). • Tell authentic and original stories on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube using pictures, videos, and captions to connect the donor with the impact their contribution made. These multimedia stories will stimulate and excite donors.
<p>Avoid Over Solicitation.</p> <p>“Soliciting for money too often or without any context could actually alienate your audience in the end” (Steiner & Miranda, 2014, P. 4).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit when there are current events, awareness days or campaigns, and audiences that relate to the issue concerned. • Pay close attention to, and jump in on, Hashtags like #GivingTuesday and #IceBucketChallenge. Ensure you do not ‘hijack’ the Hashtag when doing so though.

C. Dominance

Websites and social media platforms are, depending on the visitor, newer environments that not all individuals are familiar with. As such, it is imperative to ensure visitors have greater levels of control to alleviate the uncertainties and anxieties that might be encountered while browsing the web, as shown, for instance, in the concerns some individuals experience when confronted with financial transactions online (Bennett, 2005).

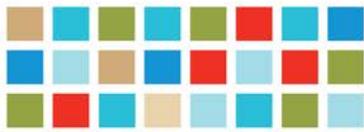




Examining retail environments, Foxall (1997) argues that Dominance is best fostered through the creation of ‘Open-Environments’ in which individuals are free to choose from a plethora of different options and/or to determine the rules to which they subscribe in coming to a decision about product purchases. Similarly, in online non-profit contexts, Dominance is fostered through constructing an Open-Environment where visitors are left to determine their own donating circumstances.

With these dimensions of Dominance in mind, Table 3 presents the best practices through which Dominance can be improved in both website and social media contexts

Best Practice & Rationale(s)	Practical Implementation(s)
<p>Use A Clear, Organized Structure.</p> <p>“If a website does not give users a good experience, they will not come back, particularly if there is an alternative website that is easily accessible” (Persaud, Madill, Rubaj, 2009, P. 5).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites need to load fast. Eroglu, Machleit, and Davis (2001) found that slower download rates lead to lower levels of Dominance among visitors, which discourages them from remaining on the website. • Use Action-Oriented Navigation, which enables visitors to take action as soon as he or she lands upon the website. Typical options on Action-Oriented Navigations include: ‘Share,’ ‘Become An Advocate,’ and ‘Donate.’ • Follow the ‘seven plus or minus two’ rule with respect to Navigation. The rule asserts that individuals absorb five to nine options in a list before forgetting the first options. As such, you should have at most seven main navigation options. • Ensure the structure of your website is explicit and obvious. Information that explains what is going to happen in a transaction and what occurred should be provided in an overt fashion. • Use both Breadcrumb Navigation, through which visitors can see the path taken to get to the page they are on (i.e. ‘Home – About Us – Founders); and Left-Pane Navigation, through which visitors



Best Practice & Rationale(s)	Practical Implementation(s)
	<p>can see which section they are in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the website is Responsive, which refers to the quality of being viewable on all different platforms (e.g. Laptops, Smartphones, Tablets, etc.). If a website is Responsive, potential visitors feel increased levels of Dominance. To be Responsive, the website’s text must not need to be pinched; the website’s size must be scaled down for ease of scrolling; and the website’s links must be spaced out enough to allow for accurate selection. Try using Google’s Responsiveness Test Tool. Having a Responsive website is important as <i>npEngage</i> found that 25% of users use mobile devices on an exclusive basis while <i>Donor Drive</i> found that mobile giving doubles when a website is Responsive.
<p>Provide Lots of Options.</p> <p>Restricting the options available to donors creates a Closed-Environment rather than an Open-Environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer multiple and diverse donation options (e.g. \$5, \$15, \$25). “Donors, especially first-time donors, aren’t experts in giving and need your assistance to determine an appropriate gift” (Frontier, 2015, P. 10). • Encourage and provide options for monthly contributions, which contribute 42% more than one-time contributions contribute in a given year (Frontier, 2015). • Let the donor indicate how his or her contribution is to be spent. “The donor can be invited to specify that the money be used only for certain purposes, that it should go to a named function or area, or that specific types of activity are preferred.” • Offer visitors a plethora of opportunities to support the organization through the inclusion of a donate button within the website’s header, which will be included across all pages. Ensure the donate





Best Practice & Rationale(s)	Practical Implementation(s)
	<p>button is unique in colour and shape to draw attention to it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate social sharing buttons on your website that contain a fundraising message and link. According to <i>Artez Interactive</i>, 15% to 18% of donations made in peer-to-peer campaigns were made through Facebook. The inclusion of these social sharing buttons will enable donors to let their contacts know that they contributed, which could help you reach new potential donors.
<p>Be Credible.</p> <p>As a relatively newer medium that some individuals might not be comfortable with, it is important to not just create an Open-Environment but to create a safe one too so as to alleviate concerns about online transactions.</p> <p>In 2011, 74% of individuals reported the desire to view financial records prior to making contributions (Frontier, 2015).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and display certification services such as eTrust, Verisign, BizRate, and BBB. Include the following documentation on your website: Latest annual report, latest financial report, historical financial reports, privacy policies, ethical fundraising standards, and information about tax credits. All of this information should be included on the donation page, and illustrative graphics should be utilized to ensure easy comprehension. Consider using <i>Canada Helps</i> or another Third-Party Service, which collects donations on a non-profit's behalf. <i>Canada Helps</i> is a useful service as it includes most of the information listed above in a generic form.





CONCLUSIONS

This brief literature scan has reported what we found to be the most important and most relevant findings from the literature surrounding online fundraising.

The findings offered here provide some preliminary information about the best practices for designing interesting and engaging healthcare fundraising websites and social media fundraising approaches, which could be used to improve online fundraising endeavours.

It is important to note that this report constitutes a brief literature scan and that most attention was directed to those materials deemed of highest importance and relevance to the project. To build on this preliminary resource, additional research exploring a larger breadth of materials is required.



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