

How to Improve Your Non-Profit Website

A non-profit or foundation should have a website. It is one of the best ways to tell your own story accurately and in a context of your own design. Your website is your non-profit's digital home. It represents you online 24/7, bringing your work to life and motivating supporters. Non-profit websites must be engaging, effective, and purposeful.

A strong website is one of the most important assets any organization can have. Readily available information, intuitive design, powerful storytelling, and prominent calls to action can help non-profits achieve their goals more than you might think. It is what donors, volunteers and constituents all see, and it is ultimately how they judge the legitimacy of your non-profit at a glance.

Why non-profits need good websites:

- 1) Websites are where most people go to learn about an organization, so a strong website will communicate everything someone should know about your organization. **Your website should be the center of your brand.** Everything your organization does and believes in should be reflected in the content of your website, so that visitors can gain a strong understanding of who you are and what you do.
- 2) A bad or outdated website could hurt you. If people decide to donate or engage with your organization online and they see that you have a very outdated website that does not reflect any recent work or accomplishments, they may come to the conclusion that there is nothing going on. This could turn away potential contributors and create a reputation that your non-profit is not successful. **Creating a space that shows good things are happening with your organization boosts engagement with your public and makes people want to get involved.**
- 3) **Being able to direct people to your website will make it easier for you to share information and to improve the visibility of your organization.** A good website that you're proud to share with others adds value to your organization. Having a place that you can link to in every newsletter, email, and social media post that people can go to learn more about your work is an important way to spread awareness for your cause. And the opposite is also true: having an outdated, hard to navigate website can make your organization seem less legitimate, and make people more wary to interact with you online or in person.
- 4) A strong website is visually pleasing in order to give a positive impression of your organization. **Utilizing website design to create an interesting and informative website will draw visitors to your mission.** Design elements allow you to create a look and feel that engages your visitors in a strategic way. A great design will tell an organization's story and draw people to your cause.
- 5) **Having a functional website gives visitors the ability to interact with your organization directly.** A confusing or poorly constructed website will frustrate viewers and cause them to minimally engage with your organization. Implementing ways for visitors to donate, view an event calendar and volunteer all within one website makes it easier for you to connect with your audience (and for your audience to connect with you!) and increase support on many different levels.

Best Practice: Focus Your Homepage

The Web is a World of First Impressions...Users form an opinion of a website within the first few seconds of loading it.

To create an effective non-profit website you've got to focus on your homepage.

- **Prioritize content** - What content elements are most important and deserve prime real estate? Remember YOUR goals as well as your AUDIENCE'S during this exercise, and stay strong - not everything everyone wants fits, or even belongs, on the homepage.
- **Make sure it's scannable** - Use of headers, content blocks and visual design will allow for users eyes to follow the right path of content.
- **Provide choices** - not everyone accesses your site in the same way; make sure you provide different ways to access information to accommodate.

User Types and User Journey

Not everyone visiting your site is going to be the same type of user. You could have volunteers, donors, partners, or clients accessing your site at any given time. Each of them has a very different set of needs and desires, and each of them should be able to navigate your site easily, which is known as navigating with cognitive ease. You need to anticipate your varying users' needs and give them what they're looking for.

It's important that your user journey pathways are clear and free from cognitive load. Make sure you're not overwhelming any of your users with too many forms of navigation, too many call-out boxes, too many images... basically too many/too much of anything! Keep it simple and easy!

Must-Haves

There are a few things that you absolutely must have.

- Mobile-Friendly Site
- Search Engine Optimization
- Hero Message
Include a short, concise message on your homepage that cuts directly to the core of what your organization does. Be simple, concrete, and give your visitors a reason to care.

Your Donation Form and Thank-You Page

The ease-of-use of your donation forms will make or break donor interactions on your website. If it's too long, donors will abandon the form. The average ecommerce transaction takes about 3 minutes and 58 seconds. The average non-profit donation takes a little longer, at around 4 minutes and 15 seconds. Keeping forms simple and easy is critical.

Your donation form isn't the only part of your online giving that's important. What happens on your thank-you page *after* a donation can have a big impact on donors returning to your site. The thank-you page is the most underutilized tool in non-profits' toolboxes. It doesn't have to be an expected exit page - you can use it to get donors to take action. Research shows that people feel best when they've just given, so help them continue to celebrate that with your content and

imagery. You can link to other sections of your site that show how their donations make a difference, other ways to get involved with the organization, or offer ways to share on social media.

You can also do a quick home page check for the essential items listed below

1. Hero Message



2. Obvious Calls-to-Action

Our hospital ship provides free lifesaving surgeries for people where medical care is nearly non-existent.

\$50	\$100	\$150	\$300	\$ Other
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[DONATE](#)

3. Clear Contact Information

In addition to contact information on the home page, this is what you should see when you click "Contact Us." What a great message to site visitors!

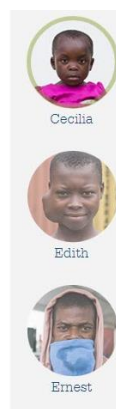
we always have time for you

Thank you for taking the time to contact Mercy Ships. Simply fill out the form below, and we'll get back with you as soon as we can.

Need to touch base with one of our national offices? Contact information for all 16 locations can be found below. Or, if you prefer, you can also call or write us.

4. Impact Information

cecilia's reason to smile



meet Cecilia

Country: Cameroon
Age: 3
Surgery: Orthopedic

Cecilia's legs were normal when she was born but as she grew one knee twisted. Without help, her life would be a painful struggle.

[see the whole story »](#)

5. Testimonials

Testimonials

Pedram Hajjarian

"...This is a great non profit with an awesome friendly staff and volunteers. I'm glad they're still going strong and donating bicycles they fix...."

Edward Yu

"... This place does good work. The people are nice. And they have some very good deal on both new and used bikes. And it's a good cause!..."


Chelsea Taber


"...We had such a great experience at GKB! Their mission is fantastic, their employees are knowledgeable and friendly, and they have a great selection of new and used bikes. We left with two bikes, and are very happy customers!..."

Some other action items to include:

- Setting your call-to-action apart visually from the rest of your content. For example, place your donate button in the top-right of the page and use a bright colour.




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10 am to 6 pm

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[Donate Now](#) 

- Simplify your donation form by cutting down on the extra information asked for, don't require a phone number, and don't add a ton of images, videos, and/or distracting text.
- Make sure your donation form matches your website branding and theme, especially if you're using a third-party provider.
- Improve your thank-you page by asking donors to do something after they make a donation, such as sharing your form on social media.

There are so many simple ways you can make your website more inviting to keep visitors coming back. What are you waiting for?