

GNOF COMMUNICATIONS ESSENTIALS – FAQ's from VIRTUAL TOWN HALL

- 1) Do you recommend any free or low-cost tools for mass texting?

<https://www.wholewhale.com/tips/free-cheap-mass-texting-nonprofits/>

- 2) I'm at a nonprofit where our families/clients are often times donors so I'm worried about overcommunicating in those areas of overlap. Do you recommend trying to segment this out so that we're not giving communication fatigue?

Reach out to families/clients and donors directly and ask what information they wish to see throughout this period. Then, tailor communication based on audience and based on how your organization has communicated with audiences during normal operations. Always ensure that information is useful and necessary for the audience.

- 3) Many of us are receiving a lot of communications right now, often from places that don't seem relevant through email subscription lists. How can we be sensitive to not overcrowding in-boxes, repeating information, and making more noise than necessary?

Think about the critical information your target audience needs communicated. This is a judgment question. Simply put, check yourself before you communicate. Are you sending out messaging because you feel obligated to communicate or because you are offering a needed service or communicating important information specific to your organization or soliciting support that is needed for your organization? If none of the last three questions are a clear 'yes,' then do not communicate.

- 4) What should we do when we accidentally miscommunicate?

The response here does not differ from what you would normally do to address a miscommunication. Using the same channel through which you miscommunicated, directed to the same audience, and as quickly as possible, identify the specific information that was wrong, share corrected information, and apologize. This should be fast, clear, simple, and through exact same channel through which you initially miscommunicated.

- 5) What can a nonprofit do if its annual fundraiser or gala has been cancelled in light of the coronavirus?

(1) Using the same method(s) of communication through which you advertised the event, share that your event has been cancelled in light of COVID-19 (but that your organization is continuing to accept donations - share the way that people can continue to donate); (2) if the event has been postponed rather than cancelled, communicate the method and timeline according to which you will announce a new event date; (3) if the event is now virtual, share this event to the target audience that would have otherwise attended the event in-person

- 6) Should we use our communication tools (especially social media) to highlight community small businesses that regularly donate, such as sharing their take out menus, gift cards, online orders, etc? Other ideas?

Revisit planned social media posts to ensure it is informational, educational and relevant during a time of crisis. If there are existing resources that do this, share those existing resources (the more that we duplicate efforts, the more noisy and confusing this information feels to the general public). If there are not existing resources that do this, you can create a resource repository in collaboration with other nonprofit organizations that may want to communicate the same information.

- 7) We're struggling with "information overload" and wanting/needing to respond to everything. How can we prioritize messaging particularly around services we're still providing AND continue to fundraise?

Addressed above in question #3.

- 8) At what point/ when do you recommend getting your statements going out to the public legally vetted?

If you are giving advice or a directive to your clients (related to your services or otherwise), get it legally vetted

- 9) What are the best ways to reassure current program participants to stick with us through this?

Do they benefit from continuing to work with you through this? In other words, are you able to continue to provide your services in a manner that abides by city-wide safety mandates as well as CDC recommendations? If this is not the case, it is okay to direct your clients to service-providers who are in the position to do so. If you ARE in a position to provide your services in a manner that is compliant with public safety requirements, get the advice/directives that you provide to clients legally vetted before communicating out your services in the channels through which you normally communicate.

- 10) Obviously, we're all in crisis-response mode at the moment, so fundraising pleas would seem tone-deaf. When things return to something like normal, though, what should we keep in top-of-mind as we transition to calls for support?

Speak in plain terms about (1) the necessity of the service that you provide, (2) the size of your clientele, (3) the alternative that individuals face in the absence of your services, (4) the resources your organization requires to carry out those services. Speak directly to people's rational sensibilities and frame donations as an opportunity for individuals to support their community. People are looking for these opportunities!

- 11) Thoughts on including solicitations and/or communicating the financial impact to the organization in these communications?

Be transparent about the needs of your organization and programs/services provided and communicate those needs in a manner that is relevant to this time.

- 12) With all the communication that is so important right now, how do you feel about sprinkling in a little levity with pictures of clients/customers on social media?

Humor and levity can be great temporary antidotes to fear and despondency as long as they are paired with real information that people need.

- 13) Would you suggest pulling any planned GiveNOLA campaigns?

Do not pull your GiveNOLA campaigns. Frame your needs in terms of helping your organization survive this time. Acknowledge that some people are unable to give and that they should disregard any solicitations for support if COVID-19 has impacted their financial circumstances. Other people, though, are in a position to support. This will create important feelings of mutual support and community.

- 14) I've already received one general email from a funder saying that expectations on program deliverables will be relaxed due to COVID-19, but we're still a little on edge about what our grant funders expect from us during this time. How can we get reassurance that they'll remain a funder (some are multi-year) while also being reasonable about expectations?

Grant managers/funders are human beings, too. Pick up the phone and talk to them directly about the implications of COVID-19 for your organization. Establish norms for communication that they can rely on to get updates from you/your organization throughout this period. Level-set on a human level and remain reliable in providing consistent, clear, honest updates.

- 15) Tips for fundraising without sounding tone deaf to what is happening with donor's personal financial situation?

See answers 10, 11, 13, and 14 above.

- 16) If we had a planned campaign for GiveNOLA would you suggest we switch to our new needs as they relate to the funds spent to deal with COVID-19?

Communicate about your organization's needs in the way you normally would in a GiveNOLA campaign. Put it in human terms: how many clients will continue to benefit? Is their need for your services increased due to COVID-19? What about your staff- how will this enable them to remain on your payroll? Put it in clear, human terms.

- 17) Where can we find all the virtual town hall materials on the website?

<https://www.gnof.org/covid19-nonprofits/>