

The Networked Nonprofit by Beth Kanter & Allison H. Fine



Reviewed by: Lauren Evans

By the authors' definition, "networked nonprofits...are easy for outsiders to get in and insiders to get out." The age of digital media and social connectedness is upon us, and it's not going away. To be relevant in today's day and age, it is critical for nonprofits to not only maintain a social media presence, but to use it efficiently and effectively, and strive toward becoming a networked nonprofit. In my review, I'll discuss my key learnings from the book.

- *"Social media powers social networks for social change"* is the equation the book is built upon. Our social media channels possess great power in supporting our poverty alleviation efforts around the globe, and we need to embrace social ways of behaving.
- *"Organizations that connect with their ecosystems find their worlds filled with a variety of new resources."* The authors cited Surfrider Foundation's model of being a social network rather than an organization. They empower people to create local chapters, and they give them the tools and support to do everything from hosting events to lobbying lawmakers in an effort to raise funds and awareness for their work. I don't think we should be a social network, but I do think we can learn from them about how we can mobilize support for poverty alleviation by creating what the authors call "free agent activists" – those who will champion our cause and bring others in to grow our social network in an organic way. We could also use this to our benefit in finding freelance work to save on resources via social outreach.
- Social media builds social capital: trust and reciprocity.
- Social mapping is a beneficial tool for nonprofits to strengthen effectiveness of the digital strategy. In a team setting, it determines the who, why and how to mobilize. There are many ways to do this, and there are free tools out there for support, like [Mailana](#).
- It is important to focus on the periphery, and figure out how to mobilize them. For Whole Planet Foundation, it's people outside the four walls of Whole Foods Market. Right now, we're just getting our feet wet with this, and once we develop a strategy as a team, we can all work together to listen to what's going on around us and harness the collective power of social media.
- Nonprofits cannot ignore the rise of Millennials, as these people ages 18-33 are the largest living generation. What's interesting (and challenging) about this demographic is that they're passionate about causes, not necessarily about organizations. Our music initiatives have been building steam over the past three years, and these events attract a large base of Millennial fans. I also think that pursuing a partnership with the Hunger Games will be a powerful way to mobilize support for poverty alleviation through the Millennials demographic.
- Social hubs are a powerful forum for fans and followers and the periphery to communicate with each other. This can build nonprofit social capital in a natural way that is not controlled by the nonprofit. What about a hub for our Team Member Volunteers to share stories and support each other, all hosted in our social channels? These 400+ people would share that content with their

social networks, who would then have the opportunity to learn about our mission and how to get involved. What about a social hub for our supplier partners to have a forum to share best practices, learn from each other and figure out how to work together? They are all keen to learn from what others have done. Instead of re-creating the wheel, they want to make the wheel better and stronger. The result of the supplier hub would be inspired creativity that would strengthen our supplier partnership program, without any resources from our team.

- Be a listener. We can use free tools like Google Alerts and Board Reader to monitor relevant conversations in the digital space, and we can use those conversations to build social capital.
- Content curation and our blog – we can strengthen our credibility and trust with our network and periphery by using our blog to discuss dashboard findings and what we are learning as an organization over time. Our audience wants to know how projects are evaluated and how the money is used. How can all of us on the team add compelling content to the blog to build credibility and enhance human connection?
- Do the fewest things well to meet our mission. We have done a great job as a team streamlining what we do year over year, focusing on what will drive the greatest impact. This will continue to improve over time as we work smarter and more efficiently as an organization.
- Ask supporters how they want to become more involved. This will yield far greater results and deeper engagement than telling them what to do.
- Crowdsourcing is a powerful tool when used correctly. The authors provide tips and questions to ask yourself as a nonprofit exploring a crowdsourcing or crowdfunding campaign.
- In 2007, the Humane Society created a powerful crowdsourcing social campaign in the wake of the Michael Vick dog fighting scandal – they launched a YouTube contest called “Knock Out Animal Fighting.” Anyone outraged with the story could upload their own content to the Humane Society’s YouTube channel. The public could view the videos and vote for their winner. The Humane Society encouraged every viewer, every blogger, every member to spread the word and turn this overwhelming outpouring of energy into action. What if we explored doing something similar - “Knock out Poverty,” using the power of our network as well as that of Whole Foods Market, our partners and our periphery to drive the world to take action to help the poor?
- Nonprofits can view their projects around the world with Google Earth. Charity:water is an organization that does it well to give transparency to their community building efforts around the globe. What if we could zoom in on the actual water well that Team Members built in India, and share that in our social world? Messages like these would reach far beyond the four walls, and it would help us build credibility through transparency.

At Daniel’s (our Social Media Specialist) recommendation, I read this book to learn more about how we could evolve as an organization and work together as a team to better leverage our social channels to build relationships and generate impact. I would recommend this book to our whole team and to nonprofit peers who are either just getting their feet wet with social content, or those who have been in the game awhile and are looking for ideas of how to adapt their strategy to keep up with the speed of digital evolution.