



# **21st Century Fundraising Resources**

**By Michael C. Gilbert, et al**

**2nd Edition**

**The Gilbert Center  
& Nonprofit Online News**

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by Michael C. Gilbert, et al



The Gilbert Center  
Seattle, WA, USA

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In continuous publication since 1997, [Nonprofit Online News](http://www.nonprofitnews.org) is a leading source of news, resources, and editorial opinion for the sector. Adopting the fast moving weblog publishing style years before it became popular, Nonprofit Online News has often been equally far ahead in identifying and articulating emerging issues. It is widely referenced and remarkably influential.

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Frictionless Fundraising has been described as the definitive overview of the promise of online fundraising. A thorough understanding of its implications provides a framework for analysis, planning, and online success.

[Content is Not King ... 16](#)

In Content is Not King, Andrew Odlyzko shows how connectivity is more important than content, starting with the clear example of email as the “killer application” of the Internet. Nonprofits have invested huge amounts of money in destination websites, but almost nothing in managing large quantities of email.

[Email Newsletter Marketing Model ... 41](#)

Over the last few years, a solid best practice has emerged in the field of cultivation through the use of email newsletters. The Email Newsletter Marketing Model defines that practice in a step by step manner that can be used for ongoing planning and evaluation.

[How Online and Offline Organizing Are Linked ... 47](#)

Nonprofits still treat online media as if it was a different world, but it’s critical to understand that stakeholders are stakeholders and every medium acts in support of the others. Whether your starting online and moving offline or vice versa, this article will offer valuable guidance.

[Online Donor Cultivation: The Quest for Metrics ... 49](#)

Two of the great opportunities of online fundraising are the ability to cheaply cultivate relationships with many donors and the ability to track that cultivation numerically. In other words, we have more opportunities than ever to really know how we’re doing and to improve.

[10 Tips on Writing the Living Web ... 53](#)

The web is a living thing, constantly changing and enriching its connections. That requires a style of honest writing that is somewhat unlike the writing of static media. Bernstein’s ten tips are: Write for a reason. Write often. Write tight. Make good friends. Find good enemies. Let the story unfold. Stand up, speak out. Be sexy. Use your archives. Relax!

### Additional Resources:

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## Contributing Authors



### Michael Gilbert

is the author of *The Basics of Nonprofit Email* and *The Campaign Cookbook*. He is the Publisher and Editor of *Nonprofit Online News*, which he started in 1997 as a means to keep himself and his colleagues informed and which has since become a premier newsletter of the field. He is often credited with helping ignite a revolution in nonprofit communication with his *Email Manifesto* and he is well known for his provocative and incisive commentary.

**More information:** <http://www.nonprofitnews.org/contributors#mcg>



### Andrew Odlyzko

is Director of the interdisciplinary Digital Technology Center, holds an ADC Professorship, and is an Assistant Vice President for Research at the University of Minnesota. Prior to assuming that position in 2001, he devoted 26 years to research and research management at Bell Telephone Laboratories, AT&T Bell Labs, and AT&T Labs, as that organization evolved and changed its name. He has written over 150 technical papers in computational complexity, cryptography, number theory, combinatorics, coding theory, analysis, probability theory, and related fields, and has three patents.

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### Miranda Mowbray

works at Hewlett Packard Laboratories, researching social aspects of the Internet. She co-founded e-mint, the association of UK online community managers, and is co-editor with Chris Werry of "Online Communities: Commerce, Community Action, and the Virtual University", publ. Prentice-Hall. She has advised several Civil Society organizations on online community strategy.



### Mark Bernstein

is founder and Chief Scientist of Eastgate Systems, publishers of *Tinderbox*, a personal content management assistant that's great for personal web work.. He came to hypertext after a brief career in chemical research. Since phasing into computer science, he has created *HyperGate*, a hypertext authoring system for the Macintosh that predated Apple's *HyperCard*, *Fontina*, Macintosh font management software, and *Link Apprentice*, a research tool received with considerable interest by the hypertext community. He was primary developer of *Storyspace* for Windows and of the *Eastgate Web Squirrel*.

**More information:** <http://www.eastgate.com/people/Bernstein.html>

**And:** <http://www.markbernstein.org/>

## Introduction

Fundraising is changing. The traditional business models of telemarketing and direct mail are in jeopardy. The speed and affordability of online communication are driving professional fundraisers back to their roots. They are examining the core practices of good fundraising and asking themselves what those practices will look like in the twenty-first century.


The answer is that we don't know. But we are starting to see the outlines of twenty first century fundraising: Organizations will be integrating their fundraising with other programs. Donors will feel like we are listening to them once again. Good fundraisers will be investing in the community, the network, and the connections between donors.

We're very pleased to be offering this second edition of Twenty First Century Fundraising Resources. It's been substantially expanded with five new articles and eleven new resources. If you haven't already read Frictionless Fundraising, you should start with that. The 105 resources are divided into 9 categories, including Community, Email, Design, Principles, and Websites, and are meant to be perused in any order you like.

Studying one article, or two - four resources, per day would make for an excellent thirty day course in modern fundraising. We recommend that you make the most of this volume by taking it slowly.

I would enjoy hearing your thoughts on all of this. Please feel free to write to me at the address below.

Thank You!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Gilbert", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

-- Michael Gilbert  
feedback@gilbert.org

## Frictionless Fundraising

How the Internet can Bring Fundraising back into Balance

By Michael C. Gilbert

To discover the real promise of online fundraising, we have to first start with the right vision of the craft of fundraising itself.

At the peak of the Internet capital boom, I was interviewed by the Chronicle of Philanthropy about “online fundraising”. I was very much a wet blanket. I said that consultants were at the very least letting nonprofits believe that the internet was some kind of “money spigot” and if they didn’t get with it they would lose out on the flood of donations. I disagreed.

There were too many companies (with indistinguishable dotcom era names) all of whose anxious and ignorant sales people were using their bloated marketing budgets to tell nonprofits that credit card transactions were the key to online wealth. So long as online fundraising was defined by the ability to take credit card transactions through a web interface, I was a skeptic.

The ability to take credit cards online is like having a checking account. It’s essential. But it’s not fundraising. Just ask yourself this question: When was the last time you opened a bank account for a nonprofit and had a thousand people line up to make deposits?

To discover the real promise of online fundraising, we have to first start with the right vision of the craft of fundraising itself. As with all attempts to empower nonprofit practices with new technology, it’s almost always a mistake to start with the technology itself. It is wiser to start with a pure understanding of the nonprofit practice that the technology is meant to serve. In this case, that means asking: What is fundraising?

### What is Fundraising?

Some of my readers will be familiar with a methodology I have pioneered in the nonprofit sector, which I call Information Ecosystem Mapping or sometimes just Communication Mapping. This four part diagram uses this method to represent the practice of fundraising as a series of stages of communication with a stakeholder:

# Content Is Not King

By Andrew Odlyzko

*The Internet is widely regarded as primarily a content delivery system. Yet historically, connectivity has mattered much more than content. Even on the Internet, content is not as important as is often claimed, since it is e-mail that is still the true “killer app.”*

*The primacy of connectivity over content explains phenomena that have baffled wireless industry observers, such as the enthusiastic embrace of SMS (Short Message System) and the tepid reception of WAP (Wireless Application Protocol). Combined with statistics showing low cell phone usage, this also suggests that the 3G systems that are about to be introduced will serve primarily to stimulate more voice usage, not to provide Internet access.*

*For the wired Internet, the secondary role of content will likely mean that the dangers of balkanization are smaller than is often feared. Further, symmetrical links to the house are likely to be in greater demand than is usually realized. The huge sums being invested by carriers in content are misdirected.*

Historically, connectivity has mattered much more than content. Even on the Internet, content is not as important as is often claimed, since it is e-mail that is still the true “killer app.”

## Introduction

The Internet is widely predicted to produce “digital convergence,” in which computing, telecommunications, and broadcasting all merge into a single stream of discrete bits carried on the same ubiquitous network. The popular images of convergence are heavily tinged with the flavor of Hollywood. “Content is king” is the universal buzzword, where content is usually taken to mean professionally prepared material such as books, movies, sports events, or music. The race is supposedly to determine which organization or alliance will dominate in providing content to users, ideally in advanced multimedia formats. A recent article concludes that “[the Internet] has become a mass medium used mostly by relatively passive consumers, and as such major content providers will dominate it” [MargolisR]. The book [Winston] also presents the Internet as the next step in the evolution of mass media. Many industry leaders appear to base their strategies on this thesis. For example, at Global Crossing, its recent CEO, Leo Hindery, was attempting

to turn this global Internet-based network into a mature content distributor. ... “I don’t want to be anyone’s dumb pipes,” says Hindery. “If all you do is racks and servers, that’s dumb. What we’re doing is melding the network and the content.” [Krause]

This preoccupation with content is not peculiar to North America. Norio Ohga, once CEO and recently chairman of Sony, says that “[w]ithout content, the network is nothing” [Schlender]. Juan Villalonga, until recently the chairman

# The Email Newsletter Marketing Model

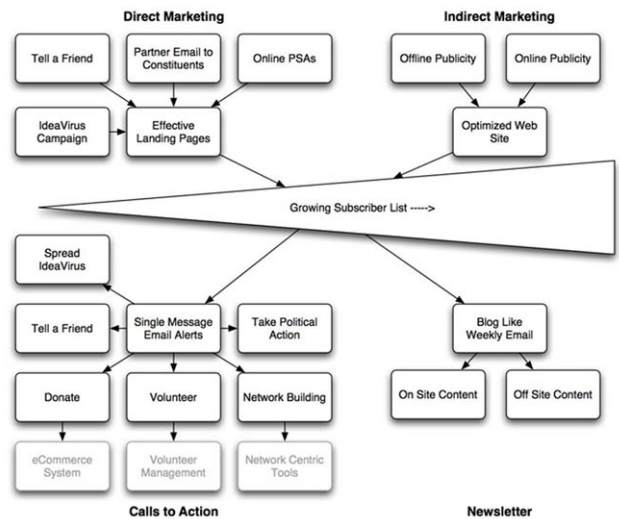
By Michael C. Gilbert

I recently had the privilege of developing an online marketing strategy for [Talk to US](#), an innovative international public education campaign. As part of that work, they agreed to let me share my description of that approach with my readers. The following article has been edited so as to be more generically applicable to any nonprofit organization.

Many nonprofit organizations are now using an email newsletter as the backbone of their online campaigns. The key reason for this is that without a person's email address and permission to correspond with them, we are in a much more difficult position to ask them to do anything - make donations, take action, volunteer, forward information to friends, and so forth. I recommended this classic, email-centric approach to [Talk to US](#).

Without a person's email address and permission to correspond with them, we are in a much more difficult position to ask them to do anything - make donations, take action, volunteer, forward information to friends, and so forth.

The flow of communication can be represented roughly in two dimensions. In the accompanying diagram, the horizontal dimension is used only to represent the increasing number of supporters, as captured by the number of newsletter subscribers. The vertical dimension represents the flow of users from a variety of first contacts at the top, to the newsletter relationship in the center, to various actions taken at the bottom.



(See page 46 for full size diagram)

## How Online and Offline Organising Are Linked

By Miranda Mowbray

**The purpose of online communication is to make offline life better. If it doesn't do that, it's a waste of time.**

A common misconception about online communities is that they are somehow separate from offline communities. In fact, many online communities have offline links right from the beginning, and successful communities that remain entirely online are extremely rare. My experience of years researching online communities is that if an online community is any good, then it is natural for its citizens to want to meet each other face to face.

This does not mean that face-to-face communication is superior to online communication: it's different. Some tasks are easier online, and others are easier offline. Organizations should aim to use the best of both. Offline communication is good for reaching decisions, making commitments, and (obviously) for links with offline organizations and offline activities. Online communication is good for geographically-dispersed or non-real-time conversations, for searchable archives, and for links to online material.

**Here are some ways in which online communications can enhance an offline meeting.**

Before the meeting, online communications can be used to distribute background information and agendas for the meeting, and to give introductions to the people who will attend. Votes on venues, coordination of transport, lift-sharing and accommodation offers can be arranged online, as pioneered by the Seattle protesters. Sub-group meetings can be organized, at the initiative of online community members. Invitation templates can be made available to distribute to offline groups.

During an offline meeting, online communications can relay highlights of the meeting in real time to people attending remotely. Blogs, chat rooms and other online communication spaces can allow remote participants to participate in question-and-answer sessions (for example) in real time.

Perhaps the most valuable use of online communications comes after the meeting, when a summary of the most important points, or a selection of the best photos, can be archived online, and a considered non-real-time discussion of open questions can be continued online.

Online communities have offline links right from the beginning, and successful communities that remain entirely online are extremely rare. My experience of years researching online communities is that if an online community is any good, then it is natural for its citizens to want to meet each other face to face.

# Online Donor Cultivation: The Quest for Metrics

By Michael C. Gilbert

The critical technology challenge facing most nonprofits these days is for them to find ways to leverage their communication strengths into online strategies. And in order to refine our online cultivation and stewardship practices, we need to further develop and understand our “intermediate metrics” and examine ways in which our offline practices and metrics might apply online.

I had the privilege of attending the Public Radio Development and Marketing Conference in Austin, Texas last year. I decided to take a look at some of the presentations on cultivation and stewardship, with an eye to their online implications. In this article, I’ll explore the themes that caught my attention and try to offer some practical applications of those themes. These thoughts were previously published in a slightly different form in the newsletter of the [Development Exchange \(DEI\)](#).

## Intermediate Metrics: What Are They? Why Are They Important?

I define “Intermediate Metrics” as those metrics that measure the steps that move a person from simply being a name in a nonprofit database to being a cultivated donor to that organization. All of us want to know what the factors are that will help us predict whether someone is likely to give, because that information will guide us in our communication with them. Intermediate metrics are, in essence, tools for assessing the progress we are making in cultivation. I’m very interested in these metrics and encourage nonprofits to look at these more closely.

Online fundraising is particularly well suited to tracking such metrics and therefore moving people along toward giving. This is because the cost of communication is so low and the level of interactivity so high, that we can easily track things that would otherwise be very expensive to discover.

For example, in my own work as the Publisher of Nonprofit Online News, I can suggest that the following intermediate metrics are all predictors of giving that can easily be applied to the online newsletters many nonprofit organizations:

- Do they receive an email version of the newsletter?
- Do they regularly click through to articles?
- Have they written to me personally? Did they get a personal response?
- Have they participated in surveys?
- Have they bought a publication?

# 10 Tips on Writing the Living Web

By Mark Bernstein

Show us the details, teach us why they matter. People are fascinated by detail and enthralled by passion; explain to us why it matters to you, and no detail is too small, no technical question too arcane.

Some parts of the web are finished, unchanging creations – as polished and as fixed as books or posters. But many parts change all the time:

- news sites bring up-to-the-minute developments, ranging from breaking news and sports scores to reports on specific industries, markets, and technical fields
- weblogs, journals, and other personal sites provide a window on the interests and opinions of their creators
- corporate weblogs, wikis, knowledge banks, community sites, and workgroup journals provide share news and knowledge among co-workers and supply-chain stakeholders

Some of these sites change every week; many change every day; a few change every few minutes. [Daypop's](#) Dan Chan calls this the Living Web, the part of the web that is always changing.

Every revision requires new writing, new words that become the essence of the site. Living sites are only as good as today's update. If the words are dull, nobody will read them, and nobody will come back. If the words are wrong, people will be misled, disappointed, infuriated. If the words aren't there, people will shake their heads and lament your untimely demise.

Writing for the Living Web is a tremendous challenge. Here are ten tips that can help.

## 1. Write For a Reason

Write for a reason, and know why you write. Whether your daily updates concern your work life, your hobbies, or your innermost feelings, write passionately about things that matter.

To an artist, the smallest grace note and the tiniest flourish may be matters of great importance. Show us the details, teach us why they matter. People are fascinated by detail and enthralled by passion; explain to us why it matters to you, and no detail is too small, no technical question too arcane.

Bad personal sites bore us by telling us about trivial events and casual encounters about which we have no reason to care. Don't tell us what happened: tell us why it matters. Don't tell us your opinion: tell us why the question is important.

## Fundraising Resources

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## Community

### Hype and Reality of Online Communities

<http://www.cio.com/archive/120101/people.html>

CIO Magazine has a hard hitting look at the hype and reality of online communities , with some nice words about how some nonprofit projects have done well.

### Tips on Facilitating a Social Change Email List

<http://democracygroups.org/maillinglisthowto.html>

The Organizers' Collaborative has published Tips on Facilitating a Social Change Email List . It's well founded, solid advice.

### Ending Online Communities

<http://designforcommunity.com/conversations/messages.pl/showThread?id=66>

This important piece has been making the rounds and speaks to a frustration I have with communities that hold on to life too long. In How to kill your community , Derek M. Powazek looks at how all good things come to an end, and can do so gracefully.

### Every Staff Member Should Join a Mailing List

<http://www.coyotecom.com/groups.html>

Jayne Cravens is someone I wish I worked with more closely. Since she works in Europe, instead I will point you to her piece on why every staff member of a nonprofit should be part of an email discussion group . She's sharp.

### The Myth of Interactivity on the Internet

[http://www.gerrymcgovern.com/nt/2002/nt\\_2002\\_03\\_18\\_interactivity.htm](http://www.gerrymcgovern.com/nt/2002/nt_2002_03_18_interactivity.htm)

In The Myth of Interactivity on the Internet , Gerry McGovern takes a hard look at, among other critiques, how we have devalued the concept of community by assuming that all we need is a bulletin board and we have instant community.

### Communities, Audiences, and Scale

[http://shirky.com/writings/community\\_scale.html](http://shirky.com/writings/community_scale.html)

In Communities, Audiences, and Scale , Clay Shirky looks at, among other things, how the scale of the Internet changes the quality of community connections.



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