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# Integrating Video into Your Nonprofit Communication Strategy

Posted by [Valerie Nolan](#) on February 25, 2015

Nonprofits often have difficulty seeing beyond traditional canvassing and fundraising methods for outreach, as a result, are missing out on the benefits of one particularly effective medium; video. Video is one the most impactful mediums an organization can use for their communication strategy, and some newer social enterprises have already caught on: [charity:water](#), [Mama Hope](#), and [Invisible Children](#).

When [Invisible Children](#) set out to answer these questions with a video campaign that became a viral success, almost overnight: “Could an online video make an obscure war criminal famous? And if he was famous, would the world work together to stop him?” They got their answer.

In J.S. Brown’s book, [\*Storytelling in Organizations: Why Storytelling is Transforming 21st Century Organizations and Management\*](#). Brown suggests videos may be the most powerful method of creating a strong mental impression of an organization in the public’s mind. For a long time, video has always been the chosen medium for social enterprises and humanitarian organizations to effectively

convey powerful messages to the public, in the form of PSAs, commercials, or documentaries.

Catie Foertsch said in *Internet Video Campaigns for NonProfits: How to Use the Power of Video and the Reach of the internet to Grow Your Donor Base and Engage Your Community*

“Video is the most powerful tool on the planet for communicating emotionally compelling stories.”

Michael Hoffman, President of [See3 Communications](#), a firm that helps nonprofits develop successful video campaigns, analyzed the driving forces behind Kony 2012’s massive-social-cause-video-success. In the article “[Why ‘Kony 2012’ works as an Online Video](#)”, Hoffman narrows down the campaign’s success to three major causes:

**Clear Objective:** “The organization told its own STORY first”

**Simplicity:** “It made the story SIMPLE”

**A Call to ACTION:** “It made the viewer the HERO”

It is surprising to many, to discover how little nonprofits allocate for video content, despite evidence of user research and testimonials of successful NGO video campaigns. See3’s *Into Focus Report*, a research collaboration with Edelman and YouTube, acknowledges that members of non-profit organizations are aware of the overwhelming power video integration will provide, yet continue to do very little about it.

One reservation NGOs have when considering the benefits of a video campaign for their cause, is the fear of perceived video production costs outweighing the return

on investment. “The key barriers to additional video production: budget limitations, lack of staff resources, and insufficient ability to measure or prove impact.”

The Into Focus Report offers a number of ways to break down these barriers with the most important cited as: devising a clear objective and attainable goal.

Hoffman said the question asked by Invisible Children for example, doubled as a clear objective (to raise awareness about the organization, and of course, centralize focus on Joseph Kony). This focus then provided a “villain” (Kony) for the “heroes” (audience) to call to action against

Integrating video into your communication strategy provides a tool through which your supporters, stakeholders, and interested audiences can connect personally and emotionally. This emotional connection subsequently gives individuals something in return, what Catie Foertsch, President of the former Yes! MediaWorks (now merged with [DigiNovations](#)), refers to in her article, “[Internet Video Campaigns for NonProfits](#)“, as an “emotional reward” and a “social relationship”. These two intangible “ROIs”, allow donors to feel the impact of their donations and make the relationship they have developed with your organization two-sided.

In addition to a clear objective, you must develop a strategy. Foertsch breaks down this process into four parts:

**Snapshot, Goals & Plan**

**Video Production**

**Video Distribution**

**Measure, Analyse, Tweak**

“...adequate work must be done on all four stages. Start skipping stages or skimping on some of them, and a campaign’s effectiveness will drop drastically” said Foertsch.

Next to deciding your objective and goals, Video Production is perhaps the most important step. Here, all of your hard work and planning come together, the vision comes to form, and the public will create an opinion about the credibility of your organization based on what you’ve produced; “the quality of your videos will make a statement about the quality of your organization” said Foertsch. Presenting the public with a polished product indicates credibility and cohesion, often giving your NPO the edge it may need to compete in a world over-flooded with information.

Production is also noted as the “second biggest obstacle identified” due to lack of staff resources, and insufficient ability to measure or prove impact [Into Focus Report 2013](#). The report offers three solutions to this, one being to hire an outside contractor or company to work on a part-time or per-project basis. For NPOs particularly hesitant to commit to long-term projects, crewing companies often have vetted, local production crews that can save nonprofits time and money.

In a study by Richard D. Waters Associate Professor at the School of Management, at USF and Paul M. Jones from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services called “[Using Video to Build an Organization’s Identity and Brand: A Content Analysis of Non-profit Organizations’ YouTube Videos](#)”, on strategic communication efforts by NPOs using YouTube and other social media outlets, “YouTube is the Fourth most visited website in the U.S.”(250) ”” making YouTube a very wise and feasible distribution outlet for organizations to take advantage of.

YouTube’s comment section also allows for a necessary feedback loop, reinforcing the stakeholder’s ROI by engaging in a two-way relationship, in addition to providing analytics useful for the final step: measure, analyse, and tweak. YouTube

offers a comprehensive [Nonprofit Program](#), providing a network to connect with other organizations, and features tailored to your organization's needs.

Videos allow viewers to experience, in their own homes, what they otherwise wouldn't be able to. Perhaps this is why KONY 2012 became regarded as the "fastest growing viral video of all time" reaching 100 million views in six days, and 3.7 million people pledging their support for efforts to arrest Joseph Kony ([Invisible Children, 2014](#)). It placed the viewer in the seat of these atrocities, and again, gave them a call to action making them the hero that could bring down Kony's demise.

There is an obvious cultural shift in media consumption today, for example, in 1995 an NPO would react to the suggestion of creating a website as necessary, but when asked about the possibility of having an entire web department dedicated to internet content, they would think it ridiculous and beyond their budget ([Into Focus](#)) – "We are in the same place now with video, people know they need it, or they are about to discover they need it, and nearly all of them intend to use it more."

The [Cisco Visual Networking Index](#) reports that by 2018, "the sum of all forms of video (TV, VoD, Internet, and P2P) will be in the range of 80 to 90 percent of global consumer traffic", so why haven't non-profit organizations taken better advantage of this medium?

There are lots of ways to integrate video into your organization's strategy, no matter the issue [or the location](#), without the objective of a viral video. Charity:water, often regarded as non-profit-video-vanguards, used their staff and volunteers to create a series of truly personalized videos to acknowledge and thank actual, individual, donors as part of their annual campaign ([Crowell 2012](#)). Project Hope, as noted in [PRNewser](#), "launched a series of online documentary short films that tell the story of lifesaving work its volunteers perform around the world" (Garcia 2012).

The possibilities are endless with a little creativity, don't to fall victim to the changing cultural landscape by letting this valuable outlet remain unused. The

resources are there and the channels are available. All your organization needs to do now, is decide how many people you want to impact with your story.

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#### About Valerie Nolan

Valerie's cool head and ability to put out fires with ease makes her a client favorite. She's the office IT wizard and our resident trivia champ, which should give you at least a hint as to how darn smart she is. She'd like to make an entry into the Encyclopedia of Life, continue to travel, and maybe even get over her hang-up about the strange texture of popsicle sticks on your tongue.