

The State of Nonprofit Websites in Minnesota: Strategic Business Tools Or Just Virtual Filing Cabinets?

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Research

- Analyzed how nonprofit organizations use their websites to communicate with key constituencies:
 - Audience(s) served
 - Functionality
 - Investment
 - Measurement

Major Sections

- Literature Review
- Original Research
 - Content Analysis
 - Expert Interviews
- Findings
- Recommendations
- Conclusion

Literature Review

Literature Review

- Elaboration Likelihood Model
- Heuristic Systematic Model
- Low Involvement Model
- Hierarchy of Effects
- Media Richness Theory
- Extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA)

Elaboration Likelihood Model

- Two ways to process and determine message meaning:
 - Central Route - think directly about issue
 - Peripheral Route - use less direct methods such as their impression of motives or the message's source
- Central route is a difficult way to convince people - requires people do analysis
- For the web, visual cues, design, streamlined content and endorsement by others may contribute to the way people process information.

Heuristic Systematic Model

- Limited information processing – people develop rules for processing, considering:
 - Structural characteristics (message length)
 - Speaker characteristics (status, experience, likeability)
- Systematic processing model – people closely read and seek to understand material
- For the web, people may use simple information processing techniques. We should:
 - Display expertise
 - Obtain endorsements
 - Create easy to digest content

Low Involvement Model

- Explains levels of involvement with television advertisements
- Low involvement – little personal interest
 - People will change their mind with repeated exposure
 - Logos, packages and design make a difference
 - Most common
- High involvement – interested, actively analyzing and connecting it to other experiences
- For the web, this study underscores the importance of design and repeat exposure (ads/search/social media driving web traffic).

Hierarchy of Effects

Process people take to be ready to purchase. Steps:

1. Unaware of a product.
2. Become aware of product.
3. Learn what product offers.
4. Like the product.
5. Develop a point of preference for a specific product.
6. Believe making a purchase or change would be wise.
7. Make the purchase or change.

Hierarchy of Effects

- Many ads focus on immediate purchases – important to recognize that people take time to make decisions.
- Web content should focus on different stages of the customer journey.

Media Richness Theory

- Considers how and why organizations process information.
- Seek to reduce uncertainty and equivocality:
 - Uncertainty - Need more information. Look to rules, data sources, structure.
 - Equivocality - Questions where no clear body of knowledge exists. Need to work together to find a solution.
- Face-to-face conversations are richer than document-based communication.
- Richer forms of communication needed to reduce equivocality.
- Web and systems can provide information and enforce rules.
Where equivocality exists, people may need to contact a human.

Extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA)

- Model for analyzing the amount of commerce interactivity found on websites.

Stage 1 - Promotion	
Layer 1 - Basic Information	Basic contact information
Layer 2 - Rich Information	More information is available, like costs and key contacts
Stage 2 - Provision	
Layer 1 - Low Interactivity	Forms are available
Layer 2 - Medium Interactivity	A greater ability to interact with the organization's services is available
Layer 3 - High Interactivity	Advanced graphics/interactivity available
Stage 3 - Processing	Advanced applications allow people to have a digital experience throughout the service delivery process

Content Analysis

Content Analysis

- Looked at about 40 Minnesota non-profit websites and analyzed:
 - Audience
 - Donor content
 - Volunteer content
 - Accessing services content
 - Functionality
 - eMICA

Audience

- 45% targeted people accessing services.
- 40% targeted donors.
- 15% had no clear audience.



DIABETES ASSIST DOGS

← Helping people with Type 1 Diabetes by alerting them when their blood sugar is low.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Summer Graduation

Join us in congratulating our new assistance dog teams!

[LEARN MORE](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 11, 2016: [Tails to Tell Tour](#)

June 18, 2016: [Summer Graduation](#)

[VIEW ALL EVENTS](#)

Targeting people accessing services



NORTHERN DIVISION
DOING THE MOST GOOD



TWIN CITIES
METRO AREA



GREATER
MINNESOTA



NORTH
DAKOTA

HOW WE HELP

WAYS TO GIVE

VOLUNTEER

NEWS

ABOUT US

ADVISORY BOARD

DONATE



Targeting donors



DADS
MAKE A
DIFFERENCE™

[Home](#)

[Program Overview](#)

[Middle School Curriculum](#)

[High School Curriculum](#)

[Evaluation](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Products](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Donation Form](#)

WWW  [dadsmakeadifference](#)

Search

DADS MAKE A DIFFERENCE ®

What's New

Welcome to Dads Make a Difference™, a Minnesota-based nonprofit organization with both a national and international presence. **Our Mission is to promote the positive involvement of fathers and to educate youth about responsible parenting.** We envision a future where society values and supports healthy male socialization and the important role of involved, responsible, and committed fathers in children's lives.

Our target audience is middle school-age youth, high school-age youth, young adults, and the teachers and other professionals who work with them. Dads Make a Difference is the umbrella organization for two exciting curricula:

- ✔ the original [Dads Make a Difference ®](#) curriculum taught by trained high school-age teen peer educators (male and female) to middle school-age youth, and
- ✔ our second curriculum, [The R Factor: Building Resiliency in Young Adults ®](#), taught primarily by teachers to young adults ages 16 to 20 years.

Learn about the importance of fathers in the lives of children, about planning for a healthy future as a responsible parent or mentor, about healthy relationships, and about the people who help share the important message of Dads Make a Difference.

Public Value Statement: Focusing on the role of fathers in raising children, Dads Make a Difference educates young men and

Be There: Dads Matter, a DMAD
Co-production with Twin Cities Public Television,
click here for more info.

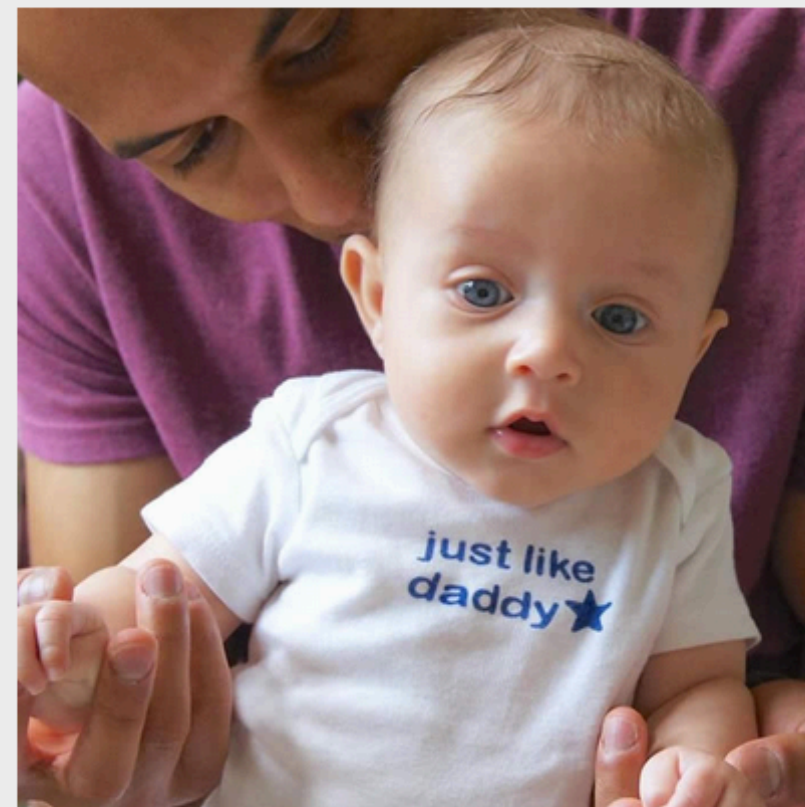
See [What's New](#) page
for DMAD updates.



DADS
MAKE A
DIFFERENCE

**CELEBRATES 21
YEARS in 2014!**

**VIEW PAST EVENT INFO
& PHOTOS**



"To become a father is to experience an infinite dependency on an infinitely small, frail being, dependent on us and therefore omnipotent over our heart."

No clear target audience

Donors

- 90% offered online credit card gift option. Most two clicks or fewer from homepage.
- 37.5% had in-kind giving options.
- 13% of sites had language thanking donors. This is an opportunity.

Volunteers

- 57% offered volunteering information.
- 37.5% had specific opportunities listed.
- Many sites had general information, few had specific opportunities and forms. Making volunteering easier is an opportunity.

Accessing Services

- 90% of organizations had information on accessing services. Fewer provided ways to get involved.
 - 75% provided contact information.
 - 12.5% provided a way to signup for services online.
 - Some organizations provide to a specific population and only use their website to solicit support.

Accessing Services

- 27% provided information on the larger cause they are working to solve. Most provide information about their services only.
- 17.5% provided information for current clients. Most serve new clients.
- 90+% offered service delivery offline only. Information available, service happens offline.

Functionality

- Fairly easy to use – most sites have at least average text and navigation quality.
- Larger organizations much more likely to have a news section and search functionality.
- 25% of sites have a blog.
- Few sites had forums/discussion boards.

eMICA

Stage 1 - Promotion	
Layer 1 - Basic Information	
Layer 2 - Rich Information	X
	X
Stage 2 - Provision	X
Layer 1 - Low interactivity	X
Layer 2 - Medium interactivity	
Layer 3 - High interactivity	
Stage 3 - Processing	

- Have good general information and basic forms, but little service delivery is occurring online.

Expert Interviews

Expert Interviews

- Interviewed nine nonprofit professionals and a consultant. Questions inquired about:
 - Audience
 - Content strategy
 - Update processes
 - Deciding when to redesign/add features
 - Measurement
 - What the best nonprofit sites look like

Audience

- Revenue drives audience focus.
 - Some organizations need to promote their services.
 - Another organization has thousands of volunteers and needs donor support to stay open.
 - Some focused on both, finding past service recipients can become donors.

Content Strategy

- **Marketing owned**
 - Some marketing departments create clear sitemaps and strategies, often during a redesign with a consultant who can help.
- **Product manager owned**
 - Others rely on product managers to relay news about business changes. Less centralized and managed.
- **Next level:** some organizations' marketing departments focused on frequent blog posts, aside from static content.

Update Processes

- Major challenge – many sites have unclear processes/ownership.
- **Static content**
 - Need to assign owners for sections of content and audit content periodically.
 - One organization focused on blog and news, writing more evergreen content in other sections.
- **Blog**
 - Some organizations have blog content calendars.

Deciding When to Redesign/ Add Features

- **Agency partner approach**
 - Redo their site every few years, working on enhancements as budgets allow.
- **Internal talent approach**
 - Make iterative changes more frequently, constantly testing and improving.
- Consultant thinks websites should change when the core business changes.

Measurement

- **Thoroughly integrated**
 - Number of volunteers, donors, etc.
 - Setting KPIs for whole site and each project
 - Quarterly analytics review
- **Basic**
 - Many organizations look at page views and other readily available data periodically.
- **None**
 - Some organizations listen to feedback, but don't check analytics.

What the Best Nonprofit Sites Look Like

- Reflect the organization's mission.
- Inspire people and allow them to take action.
- Stories, photos, video help.
- Charity Water website mentioned several times.



charity: water

[WHY WATER?](#) [OUR WORK](#) [ABOUT US](#)

[DONATE](#)

[FUNDRAISE](#)

[SIGN IN](#)

Clean water changes everything.

charity: water brings clean and safe drinking water to people in need around the world, improving health, education, and opportunity - especially for women and children.

[DONATE NOW](#)





WITH YOUR HELP

We've funded **22,936**
water projects for
7 million people around
the world.

SEE MORE OF OUR IMPACT

But we're not done yet. We need your
help. Here's how you can get involved.

Findings

How do nonprofits in Minnesota use their website to connect with donors, volunteers, and people seeking services?

- Primary audiences:
 - People accessing services: 45%
 - Donors: 40%
 - Not clear: 15%
- Focused on primary business needs.
- Some recognized that people who receive services may become donors.

What are the key elements of a robust website for Minnesota nonprofits? What kinds of content, design, and functionality are needed to produce a best-in-class experience? How advanced is the functionality found on Minnesota nonprofit's websites?

- **Basics**

- Static content about what they do.
- Consistent design and navigation.
- Cohesive strategy (unlike brochures).

- **Next level**

- News, events, frequent blog posts.
- More common among organizations with \$20 million+ revenue.

- **eMICA**

- Promotion and some limited provisioning activates.

1 in 10



SE Minnesotans are Food Insecure.

How you can help

NEWS AND EVENTS



Build self-reliance for second chances

Welcome people who have made a mistake and paid the price, back into our community.

[READ MORE](#)



Help seniors feel valued and connected

Restore dignity for older adults and boost neighborhood pride.

[READ MORE](#)



Help hope flourish through education

Support kids to widen their rivers of opportunity.

[READ MORE](#)

*Volunteers of America
Next level website with a news section*

How do organizations invest time and effort into their websites?

- **Content**

- Many organizations don't have clear content ownership.
- Some organizations have plans for blog/news – planning topics ahead of time.

- **Technology**

- Many use outside consultants to refresh technology every few years.
- Some larger organizations have a programmer who refreshes iteratively.

- **Maintenance is often challenging.**

What is the purpose of Minnesota nonprofits' websites and how do organizations measure their success?

- Inspire and drive action – no need for flashy graphics, just impactful content.
- During redesigns – think about audience, key information and organization.
- Measurement – some do none, some do rudimentary ad-hock work, some have key performance indicators measured regularly.

Recommendations

Define Audience and Purpose

- Inspire people to take action – forget fads.
- Most sites primarily serve donors and people accessing services.
- Online donation functionality is critical. Basic information on other gifts can go a long way.
- 90% of sites have information on services. Allow people to signup, as well.

Provide Organized and Error-Free Static Content

- Most sites have static content in a consistent template. Provide engaging content.
- Imagery is critical.
- Hardly any sites have peer-to-peer discussion boards. Don't focus on unnecessary functionality.

Develop an Ownership and Maintenance Plan

- Create a blog for new content, and have a plan for it.
- Keep static content evergreen.
- Have content owners for static content and setup a review period.
- Develop a plan for keeping technology current.
- Consultants can help with process.

Define Key Metrics

- Install analytics tracking.
- Develop key performance indicators tied to business goals and monitor on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion

- Focus on:
 - Sharing the organization's mission.
 - Making a connection with key audiences.
 - Providing opportunities for people to take action.