

On the Go with Our Heads in the Cloud



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Most nonprofits are constantly striving to do more with the same level of resources. Studies show that they often have to do more with less.

New technologies and the rise of social media have provided low-cost tools for nonprofits to spread their message and cultivate stakeholders and supporters. The latest in cost saving innovations are mobile technology and cloud computing.

In April, the Pew Research Center reported that *64% of Americans adults own a smartphone of some kind, up from 35% in the spring of 2011.* Last year, the worldwide usage of mobile devices outstripped desktop and laptop computer usage. Statistics reveal that mobile search, shopping, customer engagement and communication continue to trend past static device usage.

We have been told for a while now that the future is mobile. Well, welcome to the future.

The vast majority of customers, clients, partners, funding sources, influencers, mavens, and the public at large are walking around using their tiny computers as they go about their day, and keeping them close when they are not. A portal to the whole spectrum of your audience is open and accessible whenever and wherever. Your audience is mobile so should you be.

Here are some strategies for "going mobile." Start by Making sure you

have a mobile responsive website. The layout and content responds or adapts based on the size of the screen it's presented on. A responsive website automatically changes to fit the device you're reading it on.

Provide a way for your clients to sign up for courses and events or donate through their mobile devices via a mobile optimized online form or third party service.

Design your emails and marketing collateral with the mobile viewer in mind. Will people be reading it on the phone, or is it something to be sent via email as a mobile download? Don't try and do too much. Keep fonts large, sentences short, use single columns and get the recipient to click to your website for more information.

Try a text message fundraising drive. An article on the Nonprofit Hub website states that the Human Rights Campaign found that text message subscribers are 2.5 times more likely to donate than a non-text message subscriber. The Humane Society of the United States found that members who received a text message reminding them to donate were more likely to give online by 77 percent.

In managing your nonprofit, mobile technology is allowing team members to remain connected wherever they are. This results in more time servicing clients and networking with donors and less time stuck behind a desk. Depending on the sensitivity of the organization's information, put in place policies and practices for mobile communication by voice, text or email.

Ensuring that your communications, systems and practices are mobile friendly sends the message (excuse the pun) to your stakeholders and

supporters that your nonprofit is a professional organization that is responsive and sensitive to current trends.

What is cloud computing? What does it mean that "something is in the cloud"?

Cloud computing means that instead of housing software, applications and files on your computer or your own server, they are hosted by someone else online or "in the cloud". You gain access from anywhere using the internet. Gmail is a good example. Office 365 is another program that offered as a cloud based subscription. You don't need your own servers or storage.

First, let's review the advantages:

- Portability and convenience – you can access your files and programs from anywhere using an internet connection. Team members can access files from home, on the road or in the office. Work flow is increased by easy file sharing. Team communication is sped up with secure messaging programs.

- Cost savings – this is a big selling point for the nonprofit world. There is little IT cost when using the cloud. There is no server. Installs, upgrades, back-ups and other maintenance are done for you. You are not paying to power your own network infrastructure.

- Security – all your files and programs are saved off site. If there is a system crash at the office or one of your computers fails, everything is safely stored and ready to be downloaded.

- Environmentally friendly - with cloud computing, you only use the server space you need which decreases your carbon footprint and can result in at least 30% less energy consumption and carbon emissions than using on-site servers.

- Low cost options – there are many low cost, no-cost solutions like OneDrive, Dropbox, Hightail, Gmail, Office 365 subscription service, VaultPress.

There are a number disadvantages

as well. Without an internet connection there is no access so it is important to have a reliable internet provider. Many people are rightly concerned that their information is not secure. Cloud services providers have made security their top priority and you can do your best with strong password protection. And, it important to know that some applications don't run well in the cloud or need significant conversion to migrate. Fortunately, many cloud providers assist with migration.

If you are a little jumpy about this new amorphous cloud universe, don't go all in. Pick and choose which cloud based solutions you are comfortable with. That's what I have done. The more I have used cloud services, the more comfortable I have become with giving up important emails and documents that I used to hold tight on my laptop.

Cloud computing solutions are maturing and improving all the time. As the technology continues to evolve, costs will continue to fall and reliability and security standards will improve. I am certain that in the future, operating in the cloud will be as routine as all the other technological advances that used to bamboozle many of us.

There is an old Latin saying, *Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis*, which translates to "Times change, and we change with them". We have changed a lot with the technological advances of the past 20 years.

The portability, flexibility and cost savings of mobile technology and cloud computing will ensure they are two of the most profound and lasting changes so far. They have the potential to relieve nonprofits of the time, energy and costs that can be redirected towards their irreplaceable missions that assist so many in need in our communities.

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Capacity Corner: Upcoming Calendar of Events

From the Nonprofit Partnership

The Case Statement: Essential Elements for Fundraising Success

Wednesday, October 28, 2015, 9 am-Noon

Defined by the Association of Fundraising Professionals as one of the essential elements required for fundraising success, the case for support is a written document that explains why an organization both needs and merits philanthropic support. Gain understanding of the process involved in building a case statement including what to include and what to do with it once you have it while receiving peer-to-peer support and feedback.

Tesoro Foundation Nonprofit Partnership Leadership Institute:

Board Leadership Series – Purposeful Boards, Powerful Fundraising

Thursday, November 19, 2015, 9am-4pm

Join us for a full-day intensive workshop designed for executive/board teams to uncover best practices in governance and fundraising. This highly engaged workshop will help your organization gain tips and tools on board recruitment, structure, operations, and culture to understand the correlation between effective boards and successful fundraising.

From our Partners

The Benefits of Virtual Desktop Solutions

Wednesday, October 14, 2015, 11am PDT – Webinar

The webinar will cover the basics of virtual desktop architecture, options for deployment, and benefits of each approach. This is an introductory webinar and appropriate for users with general IT knowledge. For more info, visit: nten.org.

Using Collective Impact for Community Change

Thursday, October 30, 2015, Noon EST – Webinar

Understand how government, philanthropy, corporations, and social sector organizations of all types, acting in diverse settings, are implementing a collective impact approach to solve large-scale social problems, together. For more info, visit: boardsource.org.

CalNonprofits 2015 Policy Convention

November 3-4, 2015 – Oakland, California

Focusing on the economic and political forecast for California's nonprofit sector. Join experts from the economic and political fields for a discussion of what 2016 will bring. For more info, visit: calnonprofits.org.

MOBILE AMERICA

According to a study by the Pew Research Center in April 2015, Americans are connected to their mobile devices:

- 64% of American adults own a smartphone, up from 35% in spring 2011.
- 67% of cellphone owners check their phone for messages, alerts, or calls – even when they don't notice their phone ringing or vibrating.
- 44% have slept with their phone next to their bed because they wanted to make sure they didn't miss any calls, texts, or other updates at night.
- 29% of cell owners describe their cell phone as "something they can't imagine living without."



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