



# 2015

## Nonprofit Communications Trends Report

#npcomm2015



Nonprofit Marketing Guide.com

# Welcome to the 2015 Trends Report

In this fifth annual edition of the Nonprofit Communications Trends Report, we answer these questions for you:

**What's the norm for nonprofit communications?** We share what's typical in nonprofit communications today.

**Where are the points of conflict in nonprofit communications?** We point out where communicators, fundraisers, and executive directors disagree, as well as other statistical differences in the data – quiz style.

**What's the portrait of a typical nonprofit communications director?** We share a little more about the life and times of today's nonprofit communications directors.

**How are people *really* feeling about the coming year?** We share what has you most excited and most scared about 2015.

If you need help responding to any of the trends you see in this report, we at Nonprofit Marketing Guide are here for you. **We provide training, coaching, and consulting to nonprofits** on communications, marketing, and fundraising. Learn more at [NonprofitMarketingGuide.com](http://NonprofitMarketingGuide.com).

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Watch for this icon throughout the report. It will lead you to **new questions for 2015**, or to **results in 2015 that are big changes** from last year.



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# About the Survey

This is the fifth annual Nonprofit Communications Report. The trends you'll find in this report come from a survey fully completed by **1,535 nonprofits**, with the following participant demographics.

## Job Title

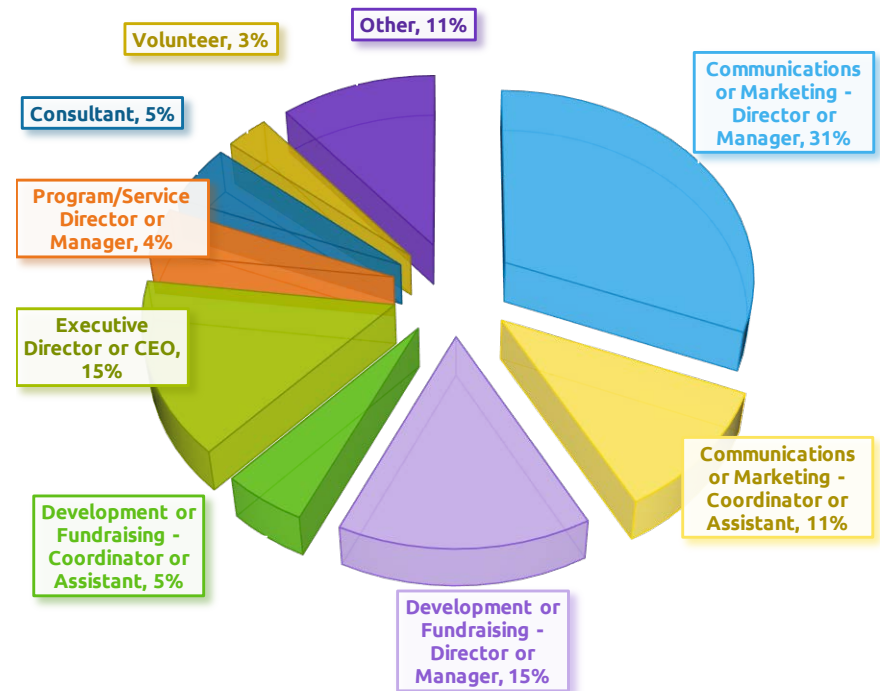
42% work in communications/marketing, 20% work in development, and 15% are executive directors. The rest are program staff, consultants or volunteers.

## Budget Size

49% have annual organizational budgets under \$1 million; 51% have annual budgets over \$1 million.

## Mission

25% are in Human Services, Housing, Food, Jobs; 15% are in Education; 11% are in Health, Disease, Medical Research; 9% are in Environment and Animals; and 7% are in Arts, Culture and Humanities.



## Location

87% of survey participants are in the United States, 7% are in Canada, and 6% are in 41 other nations.

The survey was conducted online in November 2014 by Nonprofit Marketing Guide.com, using SurveyMonkey.com, with additional statistical analysis at MarketSight.com.

*These 2015 demographics are very similar to reports from previous years.*

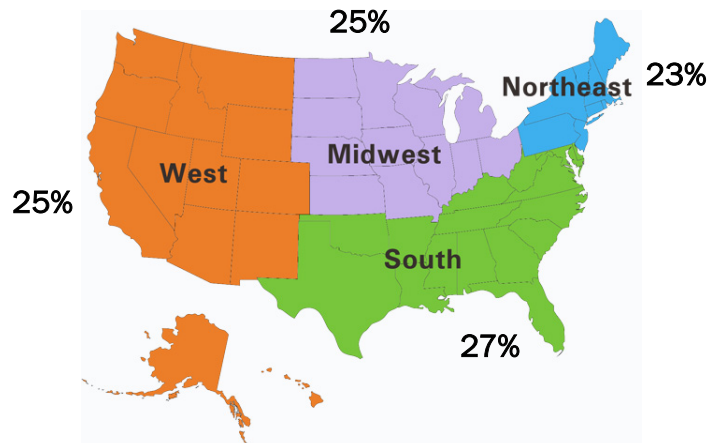
## U.S. States with Most Survey Participants

1. California (144)
2. New York (77)
3. North Carolina (64)
4. Texas (64)
5. Pennsylvania (62)

## U.S. States with Fewest Survey Participants

1. Delaware (2)
2. Hawaii (2)
3. Mississippi (2)
4. Arkansas (3)
5. West Virginia (3)

## Survey Participants Represent All 50 U.S. States



# *What's Different about 2015?*

## Donor Retention is Finally a Priority

For the first time in five years, **donor retention has jumped ahead of donor acquisition** as a major communications goal. It seems as though everyone has been talking about the importance of donor retention for years now, but we did not see that reflected in the priority communications goals for nonprofits -- until this year. Donor retention jumped from 4th to 2nd place in the list, and donor acquisition fell from 1st place to 4th.

## Frequency of Appeals – in Both Email and Print – Will Go Up

Over the last four years, despite conventional wisdom that frequency of print communications was probably falling and email was probably increasing, our data showed that both were actually flat (people were sending at the same frequency they always had). However, in 2015, **for the first time, we see a significant increase in the planned frequency of both print and email appeals.** In other words, nonprofits are asking for money and other support more often. At the same time, their print and email newsletter frequency remains about the same as in previous years.

Use the hashtag  
**#npcomm2015**

Refer others to  
**[npmg.us/2015](http://npmg.us/2015)**

# *What's Different about 2015?*

## **New Data on How Many Staff Work on Communications**

For the first time this year, we asked about FTE (full-time equivalent) dedicated to producing communications. The overall average was 2.5, but not surprisingly, there is a very close correlation between FTE and overall budget size of the nonprofit.

## **Where We Find Conflicts Over Communications**

We've added a new section on where we see the most potential conflict within organizations, primarily based on where Communications Directors, Development Directors and Executive Directors agree and disagree.

For example, Communications Directors prioritize the website, where Development Directors prioritize events and direct mail. Executive directors are in the middle -- both in the survey data, and in real life, trying to figure out where to invest limited resources! There's close alignment about the importance of email marketing and Facebook, but greater disagreement about the value of Twitter. We share more differences in the report.

## **Much Remains the Same**

Other trends are holding steady from previous years, such as which communications channels are most important overall and what communicators identify as their biggest challenges.

**Use the hashtag  
#npcomm2015**

**Refer others to  
[npmg.us/2015](http://npmg.us/2015)**

# ***Tweetable Headlines***

Use the hashtag  
**#npcomm2015**

**Here are some highlights from the report, each in a tweetable 140 characters or less:**

Refer others to  
**<http://npmg.us/2015>**

## **On Goals**

Top nonprofit comm goals for 2015: engaging community, retaining current donors, brand awareness <http://npmg.us/2015> #npcomm2015

The number of nonprofits saying donor retention is a top goal rose from 30% to 53% for 2015.  
<http://npmg.us/2015> #npcomm2015

For first time, donor retention now more important than donor acquisition to nonprofits.  
<http://npmg.us/2015> #npcomm2015

65% of comm staff, 44% of development staff feel responsible for community engagement goals  
<http://npmg.us/2015> #npcomm2015

72% of development staff, but only 12% of comm staff feel directly responsible for fundraising goals  
<http://npmg.us/2015> #npcomm2015

Lack of time, money, & ability to measure success top list of challenges for nonprofit communicators  
<http://npmg.us/2015> #npcomm2015

## **On Favorite Communications Channels**

Websites, Email, and Facebook continue to be the top communications channels in 2015.  
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Nonprofit communicators to spend most time on Facebook, e-newsletters, and PR/Media Relations in 2015. <http://npmg.us/2015> #npcomm2015

Executive directors like LinkedIn more, but YouTube less than comm and dev directors.  
<http://npmg.us/2015> #npcomm2015

Nonprofit EDs, comm and dev directors agree on importance of Facebook and email, less so on Twitter <http://npmg.us/2015> #npcomm2015



# ***Tweetable Headlines (continued)***

## **On Social Media**

Most important social media for nonprofits?  
Facebook (81%) Twitter (76%) YouTube (46%)  
[#npcomm2015](http://npmg.us/2015)

Instagram in 5th place among top social media sites  
for nonprofits in 2015 jumping Google+ and  
Pinterest [#npcomm2015](http://npmg.us/2015)

## **On Email**

Top calls to action for email appeals in 2015:  
donate; register for an event; use services  
[#npcomm2015](http://npmg.us/2015)

45% of nonprofits will email fundraising or  
advocacy appeals at least monthly in 2015.  
[#npcomm2015](http://npmg.us/2015)

Most nonprofits (62%) will send an e-newsletter at  
least once a month in 2015. [#npcomm2015](http://npmg.us/2015)

## **On Print/Direct Mail**

Top calls to action for direct mail appeals in 2015:  
donate; register for an event; advocate  
[#npcomm2015](http://npmg.us/2015)

Twice a year direct mail fundraising is most popular  
with nonprofits for 2015. 12% won't do it at all.  
[#npcomm2015](http://npmg.us/2015)

Quarterly print newsletters most popular with  
nonprofits in 2015. 32% won't do one at all.  
[#npcomm2015](http://npmg.us/2015)

**Use the hashtag**  
**[#npcomm2015](http://npmg.us/2015)**

**Refer others to**  
**<http://npmg.us/2015>**

# *What's the Norm* in Nonprofit Communications for 2015?

# *Communications at Your Average Nonprofit, At a Glance*

- “Engaging Our Community” is the top communications goal, but marketing, fundraising, and programmatic goals are all important to success.
- The most important communications channels, in order, are websites, email marketing, traditional social media, in-person events, print marketing, and media relations/PR.
- The biggest challenges are lack of time to produce quality content, lack of budget for direct expenses, and inability to measure effectiveness.
- Email appeals and email newsletters are both sent monthly.
- Direct mail appeals are sent twice a year, and print newsletters are sent quarterly (if at all).
- Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the most important social media sites.
- 2.5 FTE are directly responsible for communications.
- Facebook, e-newsletters, and media relations/PR are most time-consuming to produce.

## WHY Nonprofits Communicate

# Most Important Communications Goals

This is the biggest shift in the entire report, compared to previous years.

*Acquiring new donors* has dropped out of first place as a primary communications goal, with *retaining current donors* surging ahead from 4<sup>th</sup> place to 2<sup>nd</sup>, and *engaging our community* moving from 2<sup>nd</sup> place into 1<sup>st</sup> place.

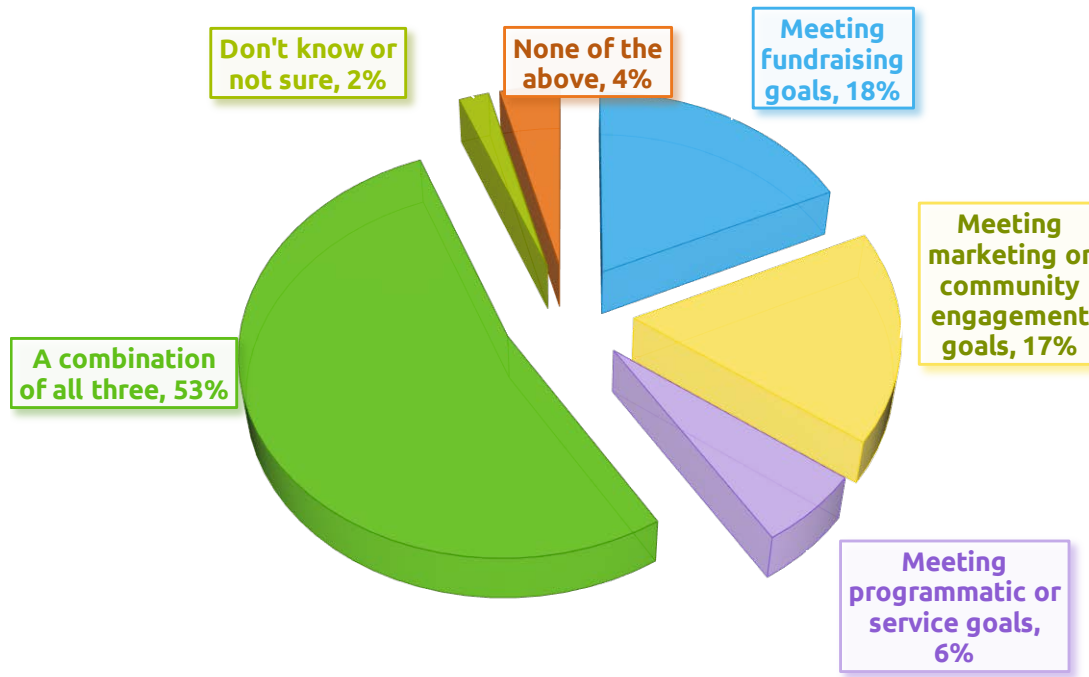
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1. Engaging Our Community (57%)</b>   | <i>In 2014, Engaging Our Community was in 2<sup>nd</sup> place, at 49%</i>   |
| <b>2. Retaining Current Donors (53%)</b> | <i>In 2014, Retaining Current Donors was in 4<sup>th</sup> place, at 30%</i> |
| <b>3. General Brand Awareness (51%)</b>  | <i>In 2014, General Brand Awareness was in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, at 39%.</i> |
| <b>4. Acquiring New Donors (50%)</b>     | <i>In 2014, Acquiring New Donors was in 1<sup>st</sup> place, at 53%.</i>    |
| <b>5. Thought Leadership (33%)</b>       | <i>In 2014, Thought Leadership was in 5<sup>th</sup> place, at 22%.</i>      |

*Percentage of Survey Participants Putting Goal in Their Top 3*



## WHY Nonprofits Communicate

# Which Type of Goal is Most Important to Your Success in Your Position?



**As to be expected, responses to this question vary significantly based on job title.**

Development staff are much more likely to focus exclusively on fundraising, where communications staff and executive directors are much more likely to define success based on a combination of programmatic, marketing, and fundraising goals.

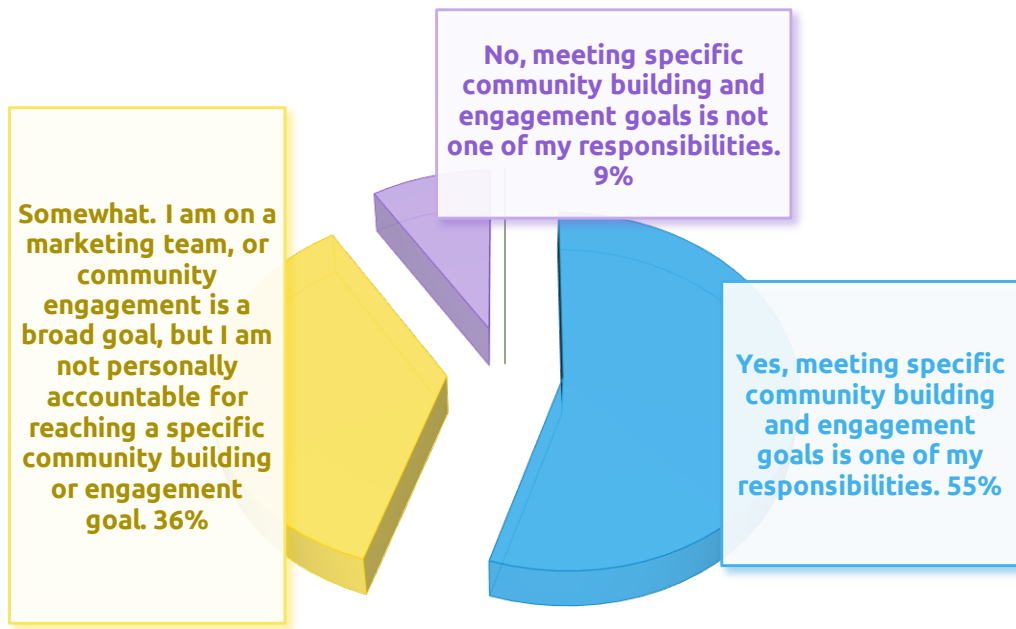
**NEW RESULTS**

*Throughout the report, when referring to "staff," we are combining survey participants in both Director/Manager positions and in Coordinator/Assistant positions. When we refer to "directors" we are including only those in Director/Manager positions.*

## Communications Responsibilities

# Community Building and Engagement Goals

**Are you directly responsible for specific community building and engagement goals (e.g. growing your email list or event participation, or improving email open rates or Facebook Page engagement)?**



**Communications Staff:** 65% feel directly responsible; 31% feel somewhat responsible; 4% do not feel responsible.

**Executive Directors:** 64% feel directly responsible; 29% feel somewhat responsible; 7% do not feel responsible.

**Development Staff:** 44% feel directly responsible; 43% feel somewhat responsible; 13% do not feel responsible.

NEW RESULTS

*Throughout the report, when referring to "staff," we are combining survey participants in both Director/Manager positions and in Coordinator/Assistant positions. When we refer to "directors" we are including only those in Director/Manager positions.*

# Communications Responsibilities

## Fundraising Goals

Are you directly responsible for meeting annual fundraising goals  
(i.e. raising a certain amount of money in the next 12 months)?

No, meeting specific annual fundraising goals is not one of my responsibilities.  
27%

Yes, meeting specific annual fundraising goals is one of my responsibilities.  
35%

Somewhat. I am on a fundraising team, or fundraising is a broad goal, but I am not personally accountable for reaching a specific fundraising goal.  
38%

NEW RESULTS

**Development Staff:** 72% feel directly responsible; 24% feel somewhat responsible; 4% do not feel responsible.

**Executive Directors:** 67% feel directly responsible; 25% feel somewhat responsible; 9% do not feel responsible.

**Communications Staff:** 12% feel directly responsible; 48% feel somewhat responsible; 40% do not feel responsible.

Throughout the report, when referring to "staff," we are combining survey participants in both Director/Manager positions and in Coordinator/Assistant positions. When we refer to "directors" we are including only those in Director/Manager positions.

## What Gets in the Way

# What are the Biggest Challenges for Nonprofit Communicators?

We asked survey participants to rank 13 different challenges on a scale of 0 (Not at all challenging) to 5 (extremely challenging). With just minor variations, this year's list is very close to the results from 2013 and 2014.

### What's Most Challenging ...

*Ranked by survey participants as very or extremely challenging*

**Lack of time to produce quality content – 38%**

**Lack of budget for direct expenses – 38%**

**Inability to measure effectiveness – 28%**

Lack of clear strategy – 25%

Producing engaging content – 22%

Producing enough content – 20%

Difficulty integrating communications channels – 19%

### What's Least Challenging ...

*Ranked by survey participants as not applicable, not at all or only occasionally challenging*

**Fear of failure or inability to experiment – 52%**

**Lack of buy-in or support from managers – 48%**

**Lack of knowledge or training needed to produce content – 48%**

Lack of buy-in or support from peers – 48%

Not really knowing or understanding our target audiences – 47%

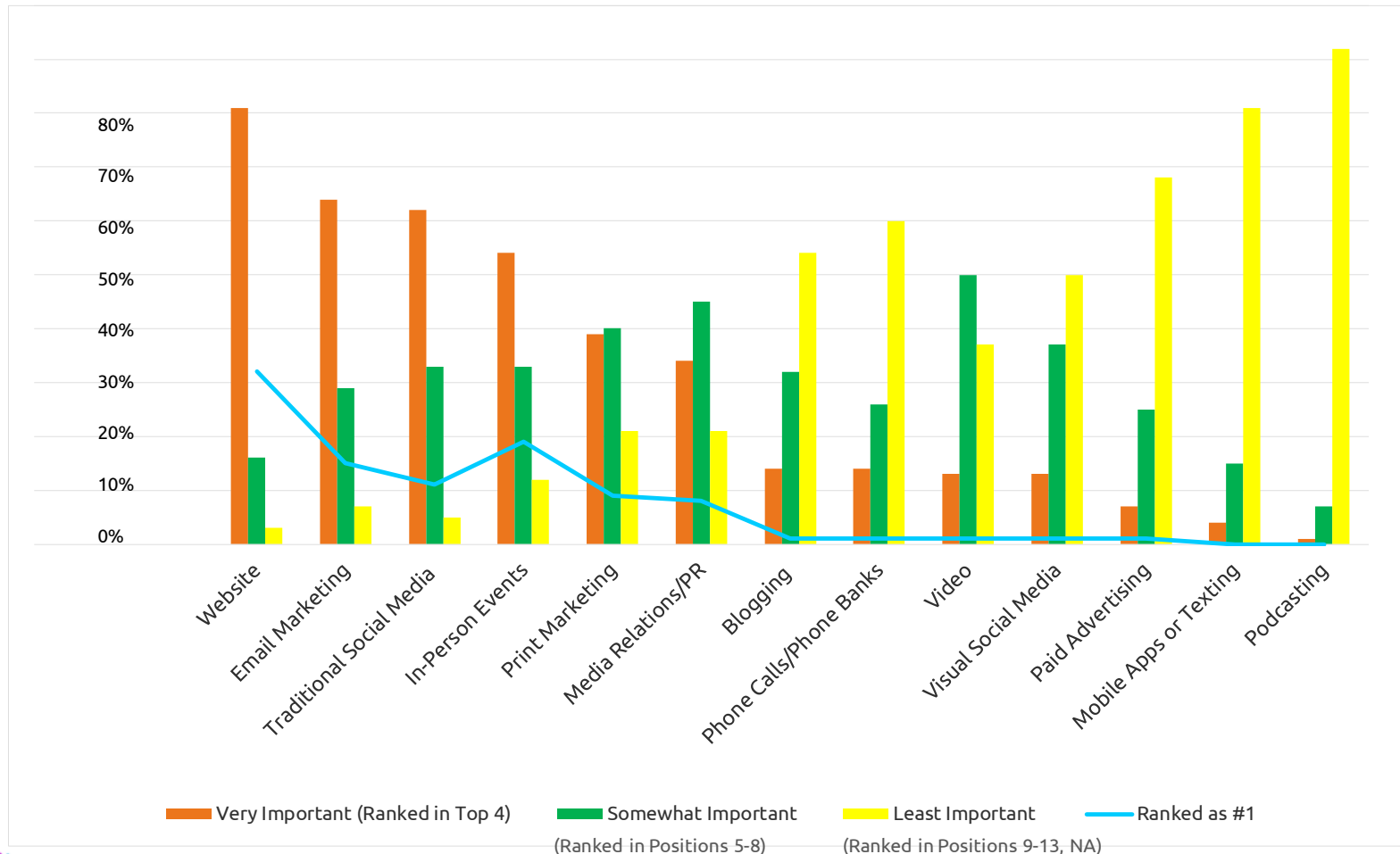
Unclear or unfocused messaging – 42%



## HOW Nonprofits Communicate

# *Most Important Communications Channels*

We asked participants to put 13 communications channels in order of importance. What we call the **Big Six** – **websites, email marketing, traditional social media, in-person events, print marketing, and media relations/PR** – remain the most important, as they have been since 2011.



# How Important Are These Communications Channels to Nonprofits?

	<b>Ranked as #1</b>	<b>Very Important</b> (Ranked in Top 4)	<b>Somewhat Important</b> (Ranked in Positions 5-8)	<b>Least Important</b> (Ranked in Positions 9-13, or NA)
<b>Website</b>	32%	81%	16%	3%
<b>Email Marketing</b>	15%	64%	29%	7%
<b>Traditional Social Media</b>	11%	62%	33%	5%
<b>In-Person Events</b>	19%	54%	33%	12%
<b>Print Marketing</b>	9%	39%	40%	21%
<b>Media Relations/PR</b>	8%	34%	45%	21%
<b>Blogging</b>	1%	14%	32%	54%
<b>Phone Calls/Phone Banks</b>	1%	14%	26%	60%
<b>Video</b>	1%	13%	50%	37%
<b>Visual Social Media</b>	1%	13%	37%	50%
<b>Paid Advertising</b>	1%	7%	25%	68%
<b>Mobile Apps or Texting</b>	< 1%	4%	15%	81%
<b>Podcasting</b>	< 1%	1%	7%	92%

"Traditional Social Media" includes Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+. "Video" includes YouTube.

"Visual Social Media" includes Instagram, Pinterest, and Flickr.

Source: NonprofitMarketingGuide.com/2015

## HOW Nonprofits Communicate

# *Which Social Media Sites Are Most Important to Nonprofits?*

For the third year, we asked nonprofits to rank the importance of specific social media sites to their communications plans. Little has changed among the top four sites, but we do see some interesting developments in the second tier, with Instagram growing in importance some 900% over just two years.



**1. Facebook continues to reign supreme with nonprofits, with 96% putting it in their Top Three social media sites.** A whopping 81% put it in 1<sup>st</sup> place as their most important social media site. Only 2% of nonprofits said they will not use Facebook in 2015.



**2. Twitter holds firmly in 2<sup>nd</sup> place, with 76% putting it in their Top Three.** Only 11% put Twitter in 1<sup>st</sup> place. About as many nonprofits, 12%, said they will not use Twitter in 2015.



**3. YouTube holds on to 3<sup>rd</sup> place, with 46% putting it in their Top Three.** 13% of nonprofits said they will not use YouTube in 2015.



**4. LinkedIn remains in 4<sup>th</sup> place, with 32% including it in their Top Three.** 22% of nonprofits said they will not use LinkedIn in 2015.

NEW  
RESULTS



**5. Instagram jumped into 5<sup>th</sup> place, leapfrogging over Pinterest and Google+ in the last year.** This is not surprising, as nonprofits said in the 2014 report that Instagram was the #1 social media site they planned to add or experiment with. They seem to have followed through. 40% of nonprofits said they will not use Instagram in 2015.



**6. Google+ is in 6<sup>th</sup> place, jumping ahead of Pinterest from last year.** 46% of nonprofits said they will not use Google+ in 2015.



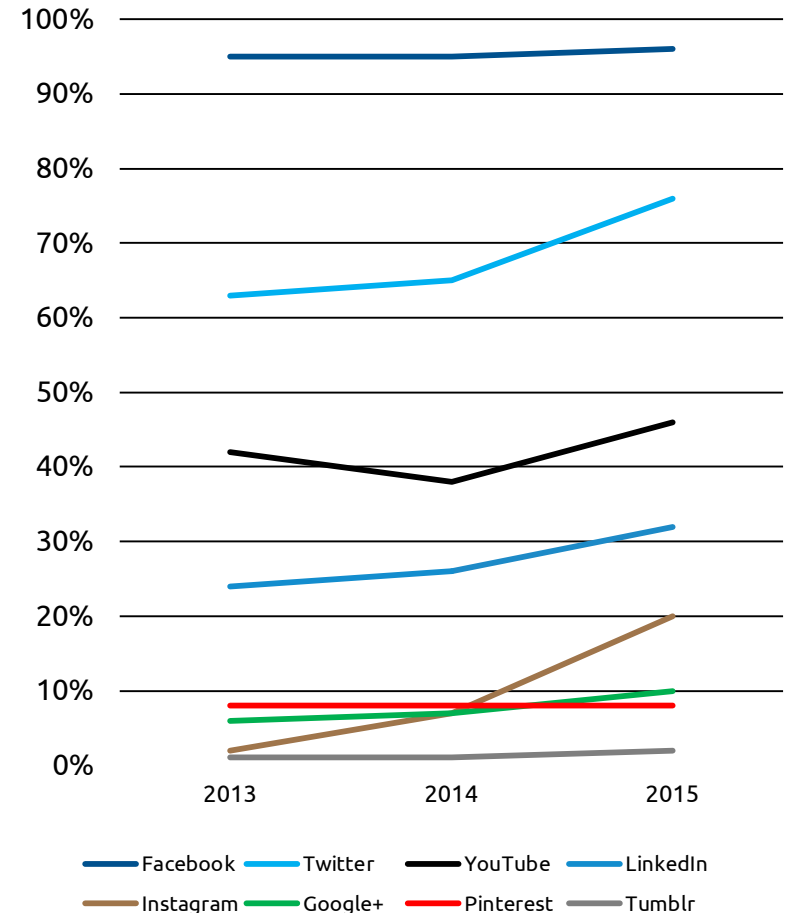
**7. Pinterest fell from 5<sup>th</sup> place in 2014 to 7<sup>th</sup> place in 2015.** 47% of nonprofits said they will not use Pinterest in 2015.



**8. Tumblr ranked in 8<sup>th</sup> place for 2015.** 66% of nonprofits said they will not use Tumblr in 2015.

## Top Social Media Sites for Nonprofits

### Nonprofits and the Social Media Sites in Their Top Three, 2013-2015

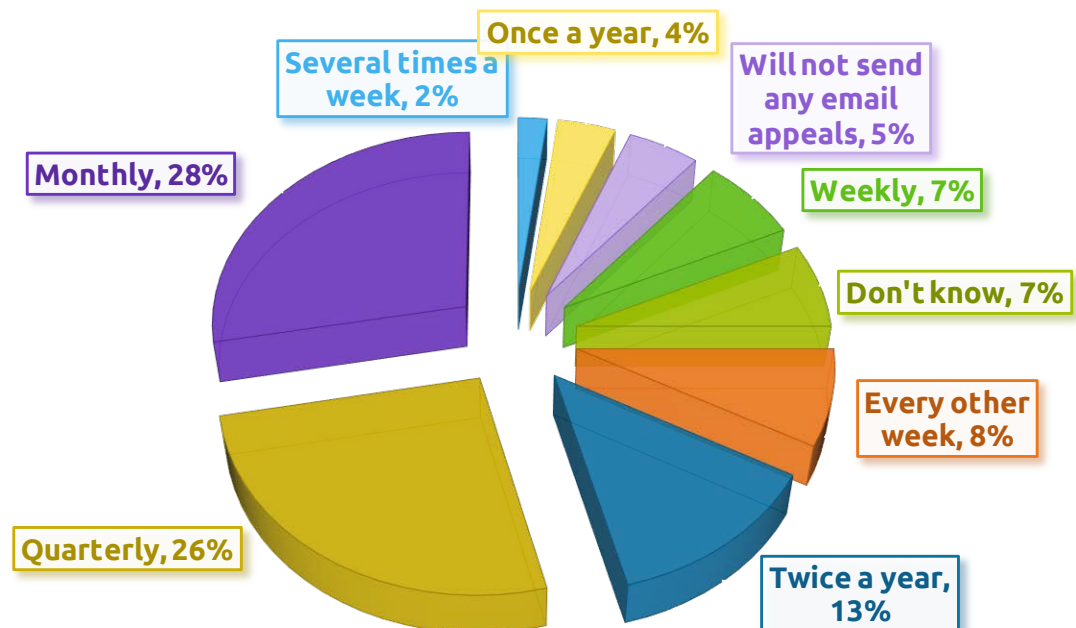


# WHEN Nonprofits Communicate: Email Appeals

## *How Often Will Nonprofits Send Email Appeals?*

**45% of nonprofits will email appeals (with a fundraising, advocacy or other direct call to action) at least monthly in 2015, which is up from 33% in 2014.**

Quarterly email appeals are the single most popular frequency at 26%, which is the same as 2014. Only 5% of nonprofits will not send an email appeal.

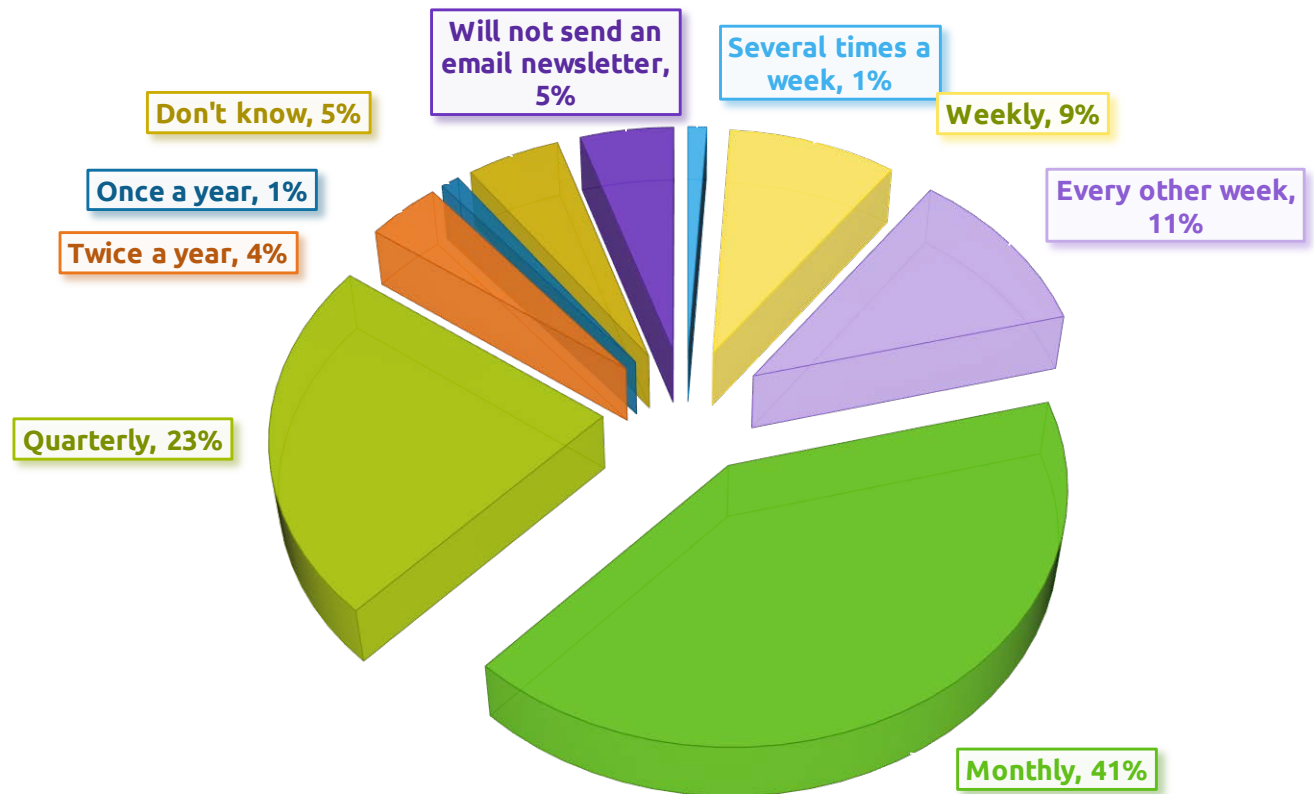


NEW RESULTS

## WHEN Nonprofits Communicate: E-Newsletters

### *How Often Will Nonprofits Send E-Newsletters?*

In 2015, 62% of nonprofits will send an e-newsletter (or other informational update) at least **monthly**. This is up from 59% in 2014. Monthly email newsletters are the most popular frequency at 41% (42% in 2014). Only 5% of nonprofits will not send an e-newsletter at all.



# WHEN Nonprofits Communicate: Direct Mail Appeals

## *How Often Will Nonprofits Send Direct Mail Appeals?*

As with email appeals, for the first time in five years, we see an increase in direct mail appeal frequency. 36% of nonprofits will send a direct mail appeal at least quarterly (28% in 2014).

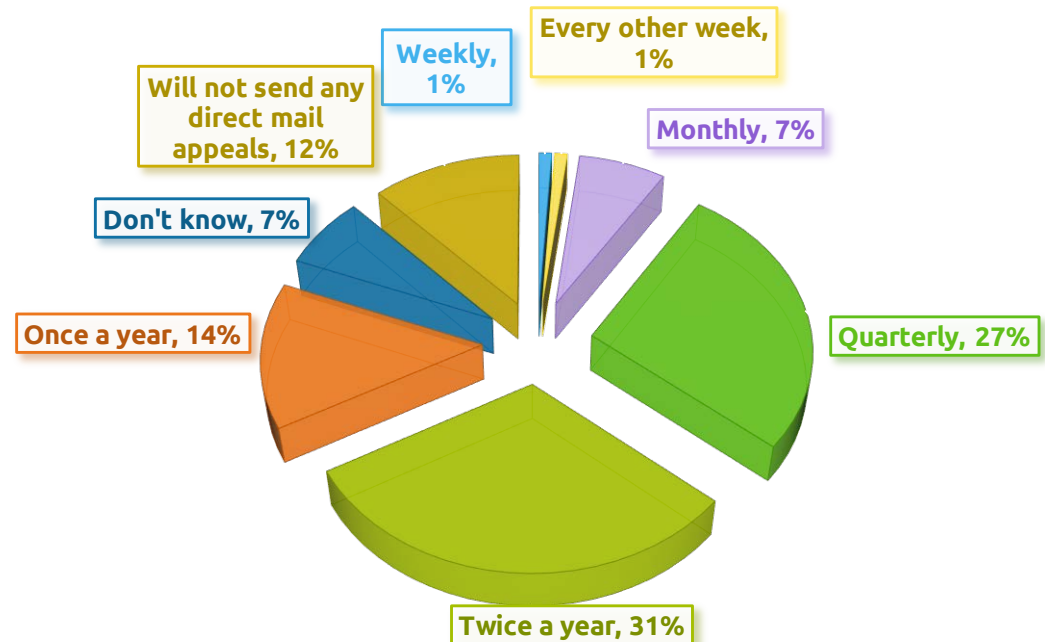
31% will send direct mail appeals twice a year, up from 29% in 2014.

27% will send quarterly direct mail appeals, up from 21% in 2014.

7% will send monthly direct mail appeals, up from 5% in 2014.

14% will send direct mail appeals only once a year, down from 20% in 2014.

12% of nonprofits don't plan to send print appeals in 2015, down from 15% in 2014.



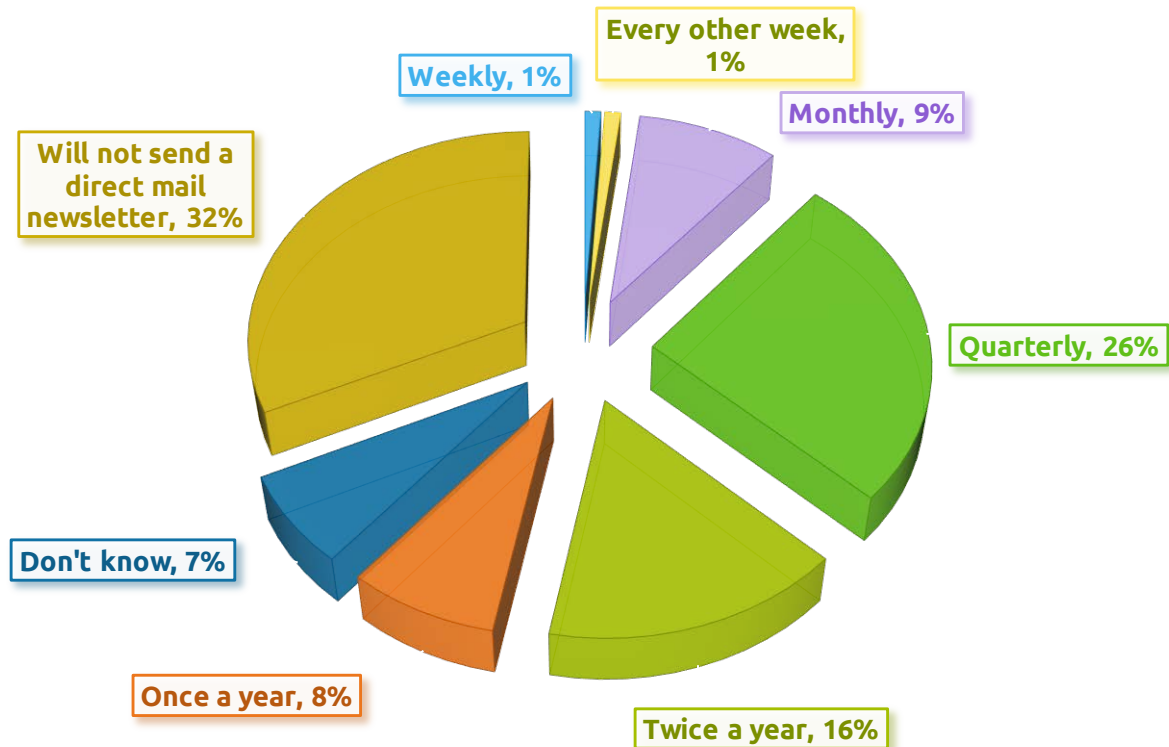
NEW  
RESULTS

# WHEN Nonprofits Communicate: Print Newsletters

## *How Often Will Nonprofits Send Print Newsletters?*

Quarterly print newsletters are the most popular frequency at 26%, up from 24% in 2014. The number of nonprofits sending monthly print newsletters increased to 9% in 2015, from 5% in 2014.

A third (32%) of nonprofits don't plan to send print newsletters in 2015 (31% in 2014).





# *What Are Nonprofits Asking for?*



**New this year, we asked nonprofits to share their top calls to action in both email and print. What are you asking people to do?**

## **Top Calls to Action via Email Appeals**

- Asking for a financial donation
- Asking to register for or attend an event
- Asking to otherwise use programs or services as a client or participant

## **Top Calls to Action via Print Appeals**

- Asking for a financial donation
- Asking to register for or attend an event
- Asking to advocate on behalf of the cause

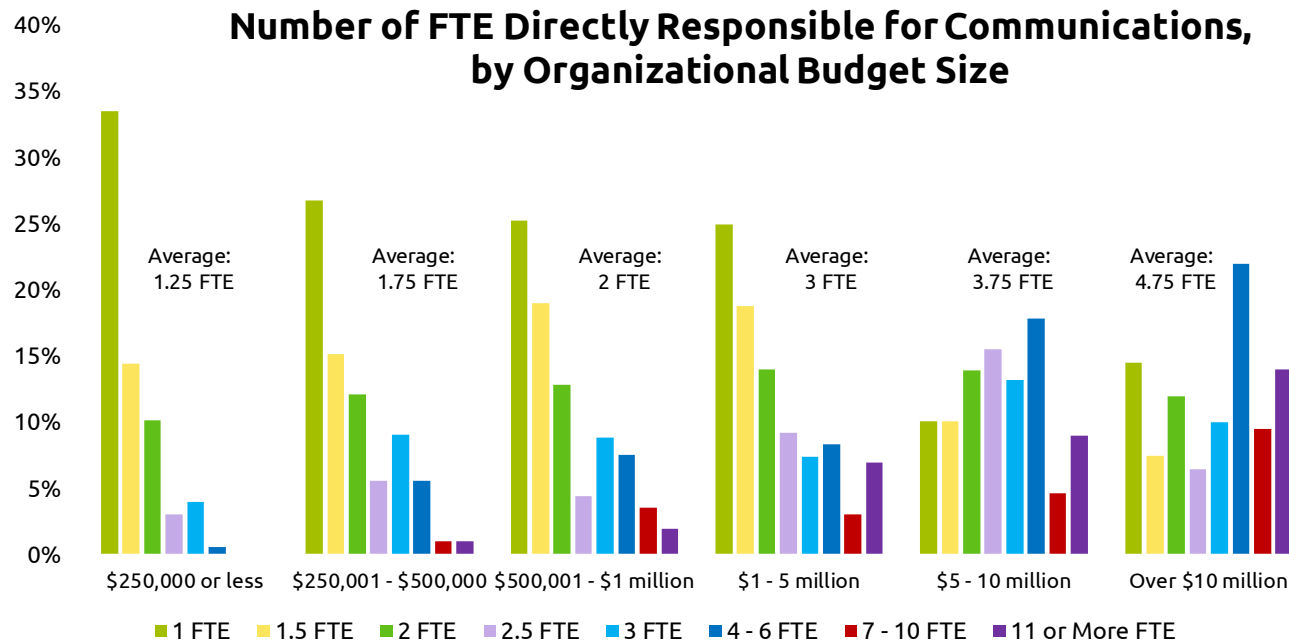
# How Many Staff Work on Communications?

NEW RESULTS

We asked another new question this year: **How many people in your nonprofit are directly responsible for producing its communications?** We asked for the total FTE or full-time equivalent, assuming that in many nonprofits, this responsibility is shared. **The overall average of survey participants was 2.5 FTE.**

*Note: Because of the way the question was asked, we believe this reflects the number of people with communications responsibilities – not the total amount of FTE dedicated solely to communications, which we expect is a bit lower than this average. That's a different question that we'll ask next year.*

Not surprisingly, we found a direct correlation between organizational budget size and communications FTE: The bigger your nonprofit's budget, the more communications staff you will have.

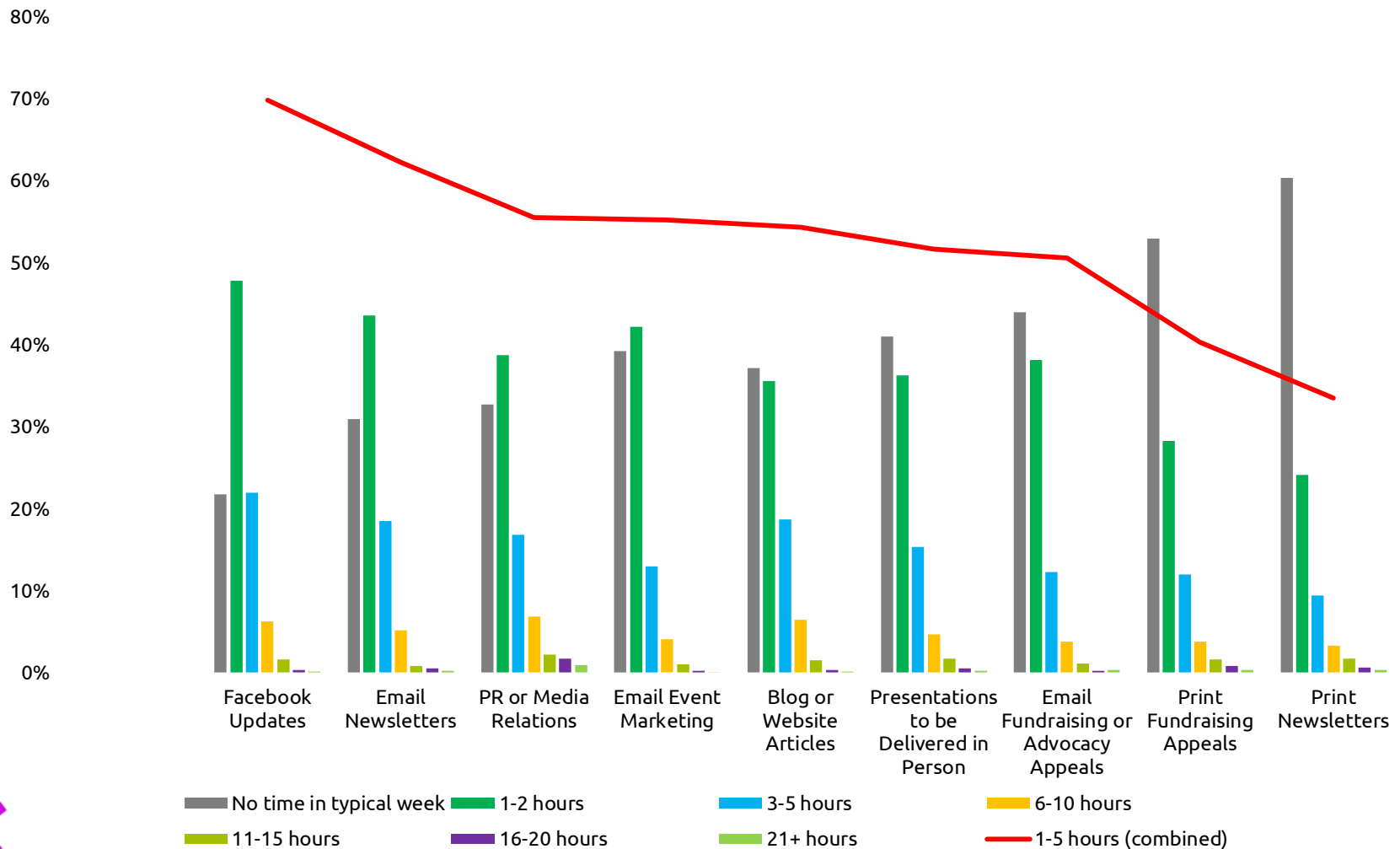


# How Much Time is Spent Producing Communications?

This year we asked survey participants to tell us how much time they spent in a typical week on various communications.

Type of Communications	No time in typical week	1-2 hours	3-5 hours	6-10 hours	11-15 hours	16-20 hours	21+ hours	1-5 hours (combined)
Facebook Updates	22%	48%	22%	6%	2%	0%	0%	70%
Email Newsletters	31%	44%	19%	5%	1%	1%	0%	62%
PR or Media Relations	33%	39%	17%	7%	2%	2%	1%	56%
Email Event Marketing	39%	42%	13%	4%	1%	0%	0%	55%
Blog or Website Articles	37%	36%	19%	6%	2%	0%	0%	54%
Presentations to be Delivered in Person	41%	36%	15%	5%	2%	1%	0%	52%
Email Fundraising or Advocacy Appeals	44%	38%	12%	4%	1%	0%	0%	51%
Print Fundraising Appeals	53%	28%	12%	4%	2%	1%	0%	40%
Print Newsletters	60%	24%	9%	3%	2%	1%	0%	34%

# How Much Time is Spent per Week Producing Various Communications?



Where are the  
*Points of Conflict*  
in Nonprofit  
Communications  
for 2015?

## Differences in How Important Goals Are, by Job Title

**Executive directors are squarely in the middle** of communications directors and development directors when it comes to the importance of specific goals. Naturally, development directors are narrowly focused on **donor acquisition and retention**, with communications directors leaning hard toward **general brand awareness** and **engaging community**.

Communications Goal	Overall	Comm Directors	Difference Between Comm Dirs and EDs	Executive Directors	Difference Between Dev Dirs and EDs	Dev Directors	Difference Between Comm Dirs and Dev Dirs
Engaging Our Community	57%	65%	14 points	51%	12 points	39%	26 points
Retaining Current Donors	53%	36%	24 points	60%	34 points	94%	58 points
General Brand Awareness	51%	68%	26 points	42%	17 points	25%	43 points
Acquiring New Donors	50%	33%	21 points	54%	35 points	89%	56 points
Thought Leadership	33%	40%	6 points	34%	18 points	16%	24 points

*Percentage placing the goal in their Top 3. Throughout the report, when referring to “staff,” we are combining survey participants in both Director/Manager positions and in Coordinator/Assistant positions. When we refer to “directors” we are including only those in Director/Manager positions.*

## Differences in How Important Channels Are, by Job Title

The biggest gap is over **traditional social media**, with executive directors giving it more importance. Communications directors strongly favor **websites**, while development directors strongly favor **in-person event** and **print marketing**. There is no disagreement over **email marketing**, and little over **media relations/PR**.

Communications Channel	Overall	Comm Directors	Difference Between Comm Dirs and EDs	Executive Directors	Difference Between Dev Dirs and EDs	Dev Directors	Difference Between Comm Dirs and Dev Dirs
Website	69%	76%	10 points	66%	8 points	58%	18 points
Traditional Social Media	46%	46%	6 points	52%	22 points	30%	16 points
Email Marketing	52%	53%	3 points	56%	1 points	55%	2 points
In-Person Events	42%	32%	13 points	45%	7 points	52%	20 points
Media Relations / PR	24%	30%	8 points	22%	4 points	18%	12 points
Print Marketing	27%	26%	6 points	20%	19 points	39%	13 points

*Percentage placing the channel in their Top 3. Throughout the report, when referring to “staff,” we are combining survey participants in both Director/Manager positions and in Coordinator/Assistant positions. When we refer to “directors” we are including only those in Director/Manager positions.*

## Differences in How Important Social Media Sites Are, by Job Title

**There's little disagreement over Facebook**, or second tier sites like Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest. The **biggest disagreement is over the importance of Twitter**, where communications directors are much bigger users. Executive directors are **more excited about LinkedIn** and **less excited about YouTube** than communications director or development directors.

Social Media Site	Overall	Comm Directors	Difference Between Comm Dirs and EDs	Executive Directors	Difference Between Dev Dirs and EDs	Dev Directors	Difference Between Comm Dirs and Dev Dirs
Facebook	96%	97%	3 points	94%	3 points	97%	0 points
Twitter	76%	84%	17 points	67%	5 points	72%	12 points
YouTube	46%	51%	11 points	40%	8 points	48%	3 points
LinkedIn	32%	29%	11 points	40%	11 points	29%	0 points
Instagram	20%	19%	3 points	16%	6 points	22%	3 points
Google+	10%	7%	3 points	10%	1 point	9%	2 points
Pinterest	8%	6%	6 points	12%	5 points	7%	1 point

*Percentage placing the social media site in their Top 3. Throughout the report, when referring to "staff," we are combining survey participants in both Director/Manager positions and in Coordinator/Assistant positions. When we refer to "directors" we are including only those in Director/Manager positions.*



# Who's Different from the Rest? Take the Quiz!

Does organizational size matter? How about mission statement? We compared nonprofits with **organizational budgets under \$1 million and over \$1 million, as well as organizations with 11 different kinds of missions** for significant differences\* with the 2015 trends survey data. The truth is, with a few notable exceptions, the differences are minor and inconsequential.

But let's have a little fun with those differences, shall we? **Take the quiz by circling your answers, then go to the bottom of page 36 to see what the survey says.**

Question	Answer A	Answer B
More likely to select General Brand Awareness as the number one communications goal.	Orgs with Budgets Under \$1 million	Orgs with Budgets Over \$1 million
More likely to select Acquiring New Donors as the number one communications goal.	Orgs with Budgets Under \$1 million	Orgs with Budgets Over \$1 million
More likely to select Retaining Current Donors as the number one communications goal.	Orgs with Budgets Under \$1 million	Orgs with Budgets Over \$1 million
More likely to select Acquiring or Retaining Program Participants and Volunteers as number one communications goals.	Orgs with Budgets Under \$1 million	Orgs with Budgets Over \$1 million
More likely to say they will not do video at all.	Orgs with Budgets Under \$1 million	Orgs with Budgets Over \$1 million
More likely to say they will not do print marketing at all.	Orgs with Budgets Under \$1 million	Orgs with Budgets Over \$1 million
More likely to select print marketing as their number one communications channel.	Orgs with Budgets Under \$1 million	Orgs with Budgets Over \$1 million

*\*Statistical significance confidence level = 99%.*

## Who's Different from the Rest? Take the Quiz!

Question	Answer A	Answer B	Answer C
Most likely to rank Twitter as their number one social media site.	International	Association, Membership, and Mutual Benefit Orgs	Arts, Culture and Humanities
Least likely to say that they won't do a print newsletter at all.	Environment and Animals	Arts, Culture and Humanities	Human Services, Housing, Food, Jobs
Most likely to say they will do a monthly print newsletter.	Human Services, Housing, Food, Jobs	Philanthropy or Grantmaking	Religion
Most likely to say they will not do a print newsletter at all.	Other Public Benefit Research or Advocacy Orgs	Education	Environment and Animals
Most likely to send email appeals weekly or every other week.	Health, Disease, and Medical Research	Religion	Association, Membership, and Mutual Benefit Orgs
Most likely to say they won't send email appeals at all.	Philanthropy or Grantmaking	Other Public Benefit Research or Advocacy Orgs	Education

*\*Statistical significance confidence level = 99%.*

# *Significant Differences\* by Budget Size*

As noted earlier, the significant differences in the report based on budget size or mission are minor. However, some do exist.

**Nonprofits with budgets under \$1 million** are more likely than those with budgets over \$1 million to:

- Say that a combination of meeting fundraising goals, marketing goals, and programmatic goals is important to their success (at 58%, compared to 47% for larger organizations).
- Select “Acquiring New Donors” as their number one priority communications goal (at 18% compared to 13%).
- Select “Acquiring or Retaining Program Participants” as their number one priority communications goal (at 9% compared to 5%).
- Select “Acquiring or Retaining Volunteers” as their number one priority communications goal (at 3% compared to 1%).
- Say they will not do print marketing at all (at 6%, compared to 3%).
- Say they will not do video at all (at 11%, compared to 6%).

**Nonprofits with budgets over \$1 million** are more likely than those with budgets under \$1 million to :

- Select “Retaining Current Donors” as their number one priority communications goal (at 28% compared to 18% for smaller organizations).
- Select “General Brand Awareness” as their number one priority communications goal (at 19% compared to 13%).
- Select print marketing as their number one communications channel (at 11%, compared to 7%)

*\*Statistical significance confidence level = 99%.*

# *Significant Differences\* by Mission*

The significant differences in the report based on mission are also minor. But here are few interesting differences.

## **Associations, Membership and Mutual Benefit Organizations and Other Public Benefit Research or Advocacy Organizations are both ...**

- Much more likely to rank Twitter as their number one social media site.
- Most likely to say that they will not send a print newsletter at all.

But they split on email appeal frequency. Associations, Membership and Mutual Benefit Organizations are most likely to send email appeals weekly or every other week, whereas Other Public Benefit Research or Advocacy Organizations were most likely to say they wouldn't send any email appeals at all.

## **Religious Organizations are ...**

- Most likely to say they will do a print monthly newsletter.

## **Environment and Animal Organizations are ...**

- More likely to send email appeals every other week (tied with Associations).
- Most likely to do a quarterly print newsletter, and least likely to say that they will not do a print newsletter at all.

**Quiz Key for Budget Chart:** B, A, B, A, A, A, B

**Quiz Key for Mission Chart:** B, A, C, A, C, B

*\*Statistical significance confidence level = 99%.*

# *Portrait* of a Nonprofit Communications Director

### Most Communications Directors are directly responsible for community building and engagement goals.

**68% said they are directly responsible for meeting specific community building and engagement goals.** These typically include goals like email list growth and open rates, event participation, and social media engagement.

28% are somewhat responsible for meeting specific community building and engagement goals. 19% are not responsible for meeting specific community building and engagement goals.

### Most Communications Directors are not directly responsible for fundraising.

**Only 14% said they are personally responsible for fundraising goals.**

39% say that are not directly responsible for specific fundraising goals. 47% said they are somewhat responsible, but not personally accountable.

### Who Communications Directors Report to

**65% report to the Executive Director**  
10% report to the Development Director  
7% to another Communications Manager

**Interested in how nonprofit communications staff spend their days?  
Check out our “Day in the Life” posts at  
<http://www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com/blog/category/day-in-the-life/>**

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## *Portrait of a Nonprofit Communications Director*

### **How Much Time Communications Directors Report Spending on Various Types of Communications in a Given Week**

Type of Communications	No time in typical week	1-2 hours	3-5 hours	6-10 hours	1-10 hours combined
Facebook Updates	12%	46%	31%	9%	85%
Email Newsletters	16%	48%	25%	8%	81%
Blog or Website Articles	20%	38%	28%	11%	77%
PR or Media Relations	20%	39%	21%	11%	72%
Email Event Marketing	32%	42%	18%	5%	65%
Email Fundraising or Advocacy Appeals	45%	38%	12%	3%	54%
Presentations to be Delivered in Person	46%	36%	13%	3%	52%
Print Newsletters	54%	24%	15%	4%	42%
Print Fundraising Appeals	57%	26%	12%	4%	41%

# *In Your Own Words*

**Nonprofit communicators talk about what excites them and what scares them about 2015.**

This year, we are sharing the answers to the questions about what excites you and what scares you about the coming year in three categories. See how communications/marketing staff, development staff and executive directors responded.



# *What Excites Communications Staff about 2015?*

## **Building community awareness through multiple communications channels.**

*"Our continued growth in engaging the community in our work via online media. This also spurs regular interaction by mainstream media coming to us for comment and perspective."*

*"Integrating and improving communications efforts and aligning communications with development."*

*"Making our website compatible with mobile."*

*"We're starting a blog!! YAY! A chance to offer great quality content for our members and supporters!"*

*"I'm very excited to develop a more comprehensive social media strategy."*

*"Learning new technology and understanding the changing digital and social marketing platforms."*

*"Creative opportunities with new channels for content distribution."*

*"This will be the year for quality digital content that's interactive and tells an engaging story."*

*"Doing a new YouTube series."*

*"I love a challenge! We just provided our staff with social media training about how they can be our ambassadors through these channels. So exciting!"*

### A fresh start, while reflecting on past performance and refocusing on internal goals.

*"Our strategic plan starts with a refocus as nonprofits as our clients. This excited me because it's my board-certified compass to keep myself focused."*

*"We are getting a New Director!"*

*"Clear strategy and new initiatives."*

*"Getting a clearer, more focused vision for the program."*

*"Getting clarity around our message will help everything, I think!"*

*"Modifying our mission statement, unifying our branding and spotlighting educational takeaways to reach a new audience."*

*"Having more staff capacity."*

*"Opportunity to break out of the 'we have always done it this way.'"*

*"Our new brand launch in February!"*

*"Growth and increased support at an organizational level."*

*"My agency works in the health care field and everything is changing around us at a rapid pace. This brings many opportunities to engage with new known audience members."*

*"The opportunity to tackle a couple of significant projects that will have long-term impact on the organization."*

### **Increasing impact within the community and getting community members more involved.**

*"Making a difference in the community. Pushing the boundaries of what has been the norm in our marketing and advertising."*

*"Being part of a very vibrant and dynamic community conversation about community food systems and their impact on food security, economic development, local farming and public health."*

*"The potential to find better ways to engage our audience."*

*"Challenge of deeper and broader outreach."*

*"Taking leadership on issues affecting very excluded people—educating others on the issues, impacts and solutions."*

*"If we are successful, we'll have build a really beautiful network of individuals and churches that will carry our programs for years to come. The idea of being a part of building that community is very motivating."*

*"Connecting with new and existing supporters in a way that resonates with them."*

*"Embarking on a large project to discover who our audience is, what they want, and how we can get it to them."*

*"The possibilities to increase community interaction, gain donors and spread our message across an increasing number of outlets—traditional, contemporary, and emerging."*

# *What Excites Development Staff about 2015?*

## **New opportunities to connect and build relationship with donors.**

*"Just the thought of next year and how great it's going to be for our organization."*

*"Making progress, thinking outside the box to generate more income and building relationships."*

*"Learning about philanthropic needs of donors and filling those needs."*

*"The ability to make a positive difference in the lives of others."*

*"Growth of our regular donor base. Testing new methods of donor acquisition. New integrated way of delivering projects in the office."*

*"Community engagement, learning from the community, then contributing value to the organization and community based on what's learned."*

*"The opportunity to strengthen our individual and major donor giving and to bring new supporters and advocates into our organization."*

*"The opportunity to try new ways of engaging our audience."*

*"New strategic plan to be more outwardly and community focused; meet them where they are instead of expecting to come to us."*

### A chance to refocus the goals of the organization and create strategies to fulfill its mission.

*"The potential to fulfill our mission in increasingly effective and powerful ways."*

*"That we are revisiting our strategic plan and that we will have more involved board members and high-level volunteers."*

*"The potential to finally have an official marketing and communications strategy of my organization."*

*"We have some BIG goals and I think I finally have the team in place that's going to make them come true."*

*"Building on effective strategies and formulas from 2014."*

*"Taking more time to plan instead of reacting to circumstances."*

*"Opportunity for our organization to move in a more cohesive and strategic direction that will improve fundraising and other types of engagement."*

*"We are hoping to get our organization organized enough to start applying for more grants, hence, bringing in enough financial support to move our projects forward and become more productive."*

*"Aligning our mission internally then turning from inward alignment to outward facing alignment."*

*"A refined and more manageable development plan that includes increased online fundraising efforts."*

*"Our agency's recently adopted strategic plan is equally outwardly focused as it is about internal goals so there is a lot of opportunity to align marketing to strategic goals in a meaningful way and to engage our community in being part of realizing the goals."*

### New technology that will shape development communications in the new year.

*"My organization is looking at multi-channel communications in a strategic way for the first time."*

*"Huge team effort required. If it's the last thing I do, I am going to make sure we get sorted with social media."*

*"We are working on having a better website as a place for us to start on our communication chart."*

*"The possibility of using more technology—mobile and perhaps an automated email marketing tool/platform."*

*"New online fundraising programs, integrated campaigns (online/print)."*

*"To rebuild our website and creating more marketing materials to use to promote our programs."*

# *What Excites Executive Directors about 2015?*

## **New opportunities and growth within the organization.**

*"Lots of room for improvement/growth."*

*"Expansion of programs and services."*

*"Our organization is at a tipping point in its organizational/product lifecycle; we see opportunities for innovation."*

*"More focus and direct strategy for growth."*

*"Many opportunities on the horizon to expand our services and to improve the quality of our work."*

*"The chance to map out a strategy for 2015 as I came into this position during 2014 and there was no strategy in place."*

*"We have a chance to really lay the groundwork for a successful future (much of which was ignored in the past) and get some small wins now, but knowing bigger wins are coming."*

*"Celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary."*

*"We are ahead of where we were last year in terms of planning our next season. This should allow for better planning and execution of marketing efforts."*

### More efficient communication with target audiences in order to receive more donations and have a greater impact.

*"Baby steps to progress. Each year, as we become more cohesive, we are making progress engaging our audience and stakeholders, which helps our budget!"*

*"We're opening a new urban farm in 2015—so many opportunities to communicate about the impact!"*

*"New opportunities for communication and interaction with the community."*

*"We are in the public awareness perfect storm due to the publication of a best selling book whose protagonist has a craniofacial condition. The possibilities for spreading awareness and acceptance of individuals with facial differences are endless."*

*"Ability to affect change and save children's lives."*

*"Ability to make a difference for East Tennesseans by improving local and global air quality."*

*"After three years creating and building our organization, it's time to communicate until it hurts!"*

*"Potential for growth in branding and understanding to the community."*

*"We have a PR and Marketing plan!"*

*"Launching our first ever fundraising campaign for a cause for which I think it is easy to foster support."*



### **Implementing new technology tactics and seeing how the results affect marketing and communication efforts.**

*"Starting to use social media."*

*"Learning new methods and technologies, creating engaging content, getting the public to understand the seriousness of hunger problems."*

*"The opportunities technology provides."*

*"Looking forward to building on our social media presence."*

*"Use of technology to leverage our efforts."*

### **Building and strengthening relationships with partners and alliances during the upcoming year.**

*"Our services are needed and being used. Gaining credibility for our expertise among clients and partners is growing our prospect pipeline."*

*"The expansion of the vision of the ministry and working with new staff and other organizations to impact more people and bring life to them."*

*"The fact that all the groups in our industry might work together to produce better results."*

# What Scares Communications Staff about 2015?

## Inadequate funding to perform essential functions and marketing projects.

*"We have more to raise than ever before."*

*"Lack of budget for training. Much to learn, limited resources."*

*"Lack of marketing and training budget. I have to teach myself a lot."*

*"Financial instability and tendency to 'chase the money'...ie apply for grants that get us off-focus/off-mission."*

*"Funding insecurity. Competing for funding with organizations that ought to be out allies."*

*"The high likelihood of not raising enough money to properly market the organization."*

*"Decreases in funding. Grant money is getting more and more scarce each year."*

*"It is the last year of a huge grant—and if we are not successful in finding other funding sources, then we'll have to seriously cut down in programs and in staff (jeopardizing our expert positioning)."*

*"Expectations vs. budget—people want us 'out there,' 'well known.' And we have no budget for PR and very limited media relationships. Those things take time/consultants, which we don't have funds for."*

*"Losing funding not knowing how or where to find grants and trusts that are suitable."*

### Messages won't reach the right audience or be heard.

*"That our message will get lost in the 'sea' of social media and media in general. People are simply swamped in too much information, and it's getting worse. Sometimes when there are too many choices, people give up."*

*"We're starting a blog!! How will we keep up?"*

*"Honing brand voice and creating content that is meaningful! It's a big job."*

*"Not having control of messaging across the organization—someone else does the newsletter, others do PR work sometimes, it's concerning."*

*"Not having clear key messages to work with still or a brand book."*

*"Too many forms of communication going out with no coordination, strategy, or quality control."*

*"Media noise that overwhelms our message in a too busy world."*

### Overwhelming workloads and not enough time to complete responsibilities.

*"There's a lot of work to do marketing wise and it's pretty much all on my shoulders."*

*"Adding to a very full plate without additional resources."*

*"Being spread too thin, losing focus on long-term projects."*

*"Too much to do, not enough time/resources to do it."*

*"So many channels—hard to prioritize and keep up with all the technological developments."*

*"Not having enough time to make a bigger and better difference through marketing and communications."*

*"Lack of time and resources to properly market our great opportunities for our patrons to enjoy."*

*"Worried that our expanded outreach will not result in growing our membership."*

*"Not having enough time or staff to reach the people we want to."*

*"Capacity to execute these multimedia and multichannel communications and marketing projects"*

*"I don't have time to do it effectively, so I'm scared I will fall on my face."*

### Inability to pick the right strategies, meet goals, or track success.

*"Being overwhelmed getting all of this information together and not meeting goals."*

*"Inability to track results back to what actually works."*

*"Not having enough people who are focused on the right things."*

*"Setting specific goals that may not be achievable by the end of the year."*

*"There are some big changes in the business model. Making sure that communications is aligned with these changes, that I engage people appropriately and get them excited, that I make a clear plan—are exciting and scary challenges both!"*

*"Lack of clear goals; no idea how I will be assessed in my work."*

*"Having enough time to sufficiently train staff and volunteers on the changes we plan to roll out."*

*"Not meeting those goals or not getting as much engagement as the Executive Director wants."*

*"Accomplishing my goals in spite of leadership. Failure to plan on their part means lots of emergencies and late nights for me. I can't plan for their whims, and it's frustrating."*

*"Developing a system to make sure all of these activities are done consistently, with regard for last minute projects/deadlines that will come up (as they often do)."*

*"Finding an effective system of operations, co-workers support for implementing organizational changes."*

*"That people will keep creating plans and never sticking to it—does not help in the process of trying to implement workflows or getting things done."*

# What Scares Development Staff about 2015?

## Insufficient resources to complete all projects adequately.

*"Having enough time to do what I feel is most effective while juggling multiple roles."*

*"Not enough resources—time, human, financial."*

*"The current economic landscape. It is hard to raise money in an economically depressed area."*

*"Insufficient resources to execute new and continuing projects."*

*"Lack of resources to test new methods."*

*"Not having the budget to execute the ideas."*

*"Not enough resources to get the job done—tight budgets, lack of work space for potential volunteers, aging computers and development software."*

*"Too few staff and unrealistic expectations from management will make the work difficult."*

### Poor internal communication causing inefficiencies.

*"Juggling responsibilities and lack of support/assistance from management."*

*"Undedicated board."*

*"Lack of commitment and understanding of needs of my department by VPs and CEO."*

*" 'This is how we have always done it,' 'we tried that,' 'I don't think that will work,' attitude from communication staff."*

*"Three years after a merger, there still isn't agreement for clear goals on the part of the BOT and we are struggling to support operations because we are underfunded administratively."*

*"Getting all of the organization's messages streamlined and coordinated through all the departments so we're having consistency with our stakeholders."*

*"Lack of true collaboration between marketing and development departments. Development must initiate all communications activities (social media, media relations, etc.)—there is no proactive activity on the part of marketing to include fundraising messages in every day appeals to our constituents."*

*"Competing priorities and a lack of direction or mixed messages from organization leadership."*

*"Not wanting to waste time on the wrong projects or programs."*

# *What Scares Executive Directors about 2015?*

**Not having enough resources—time, human, and financial—to carry out efforts in 2015.**

*“Being a successful fundraiser, utilizing my time effectively, fulfilling my role as Executive Director.”*

*“Lack of resources—especially time and money.”*

*“Lack of resources to fully take advantage of available opportunities.”*

*“Not having enough time to move forward with new ideas and options and thus resorting to doing (almost) everything in the same way it’s been done before.”*

*“The possibility of not having enough support and funds to grow.”*

*“We have to capture the momentum and utilize it to the fullest, lack of funding could keep us from taking full advantage.”*

*“Limited resources and ability for team to execute without burning out.”*

*“Not enough people to do what needs to be done to bring in the funds to keep it self-perpetuating.”*

*“Having enough human and financial resources to meet projected growth potential.”*

*“Not having enough volunteers to keep up with demand for services.”*



### Losing funding and support from donors in the new year.

*"Lack of buy-in or support really sums it up."*

*"The fear is that funders are nearing the limits of what they can or will contribute therefore can not further expansion."*

*"Lack of connection from work to donor engagement. Buy in is there for advocacy but the disconnection to the need for donating is scary enough to face closing our doors without sustainable funding."*

*"Grant funding—we have a high level of income from funders and sustaining that is always challenging from year to year."*

### The uncontrollable, outside world and how it can affect operations.

*"Fiscal challenges in the environment."*

*"The state of the world's economy."*

*"The federal government."*

*"How fast things change and keeping up with new technology and trends for nonprofits."*



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*Special thanks to intern Cameron Klass  
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and "what scares you" questions.*

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