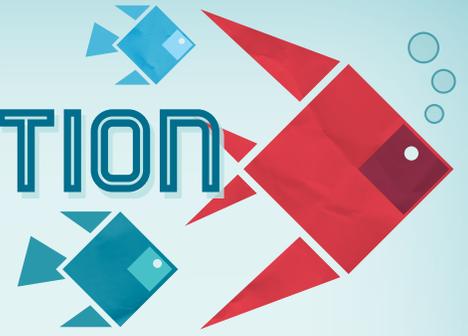


DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



SESSION 098

HOW TO THANK YOUR SUPPORTERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA WITH STEVEN SHATTUCK

Beth: Hello, this is Beth Brodovsky, and welcome to Driving Participation. Today I have Steven Shattuck. Steven is the VP of marketing at Bloomerang. He's also the executive director of his own nonprofit, Launch Cause. I was lucky enough to hear Steven speak at a local AFP Philadelphia chapter event, and he was wonderful, and I really, really love the fact that things Steven had to share about showing gratitude and thanking donors, and I feel like it's always a good time to talk about that subject. Steven, thanks so much for joining me today.

Steven: Sure, thanks for having me, Beth.

Beth: When you came in to see me, I think you traveled from the midwest you guys are, right?

Steven: Yes, Indianapolis.

Beth: Yes, so I got to see you there. How did you end up wandering into this world of weird work in nonprofits?

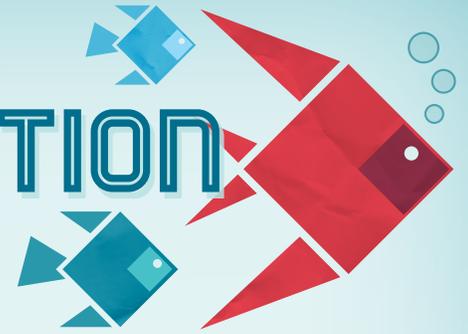
Steven: Yeah, it's kind of a long story. I was a film school dropout.

Beth: Really?

Steven: I went to film school for a year. I didn't drop out, but I transferred to a university in Muncie, Indiana, which is called Ball State. Some people may recognize it from listening to it. It's where David Letterman went. That's like our one and only claim to fame, and I got into there, sort of TV and video and multimedia program. So that wasn't too far of a cry from film school, but while I was there I took a lot of creative writing classes and I actually became a double major in English. I got out of school in four years and like most people, I followed a girl to another city, which was Indianapolis. We eventually got married, which was good, but I'm in Indianapolis and I've got this creative writing degree and I'm kind of looking for maybe

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky

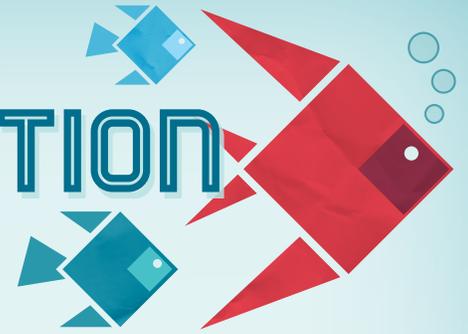


a marketing job, so basically anyone who will hire you know, a young liberal arts grad and I got a job at a marketing agency. The agency primarily made fundraising videos, so they were making like event videos. You know, the kind of video you would show before you make a big ask at a gala or a dinner or something. It gets everybody teary-eyed, and they get out their checkbooks and we were making website videos for nonprofits, colleges, universities. One of my favorite projects was I worked on the capital campaign for Butler University and they raised like \$60 million dollars or something crazy using some of the materials that I helped create, and so I kind of fell into the marketing side as well as the nonprofit side since we were almost exclusively serving nonprofits. So I did that for 5-6 years and I ended up at another marketing agency that was being run at the time by Jay Love who is the current CEO of Bloomerang and some people may recognize that name as he was the co-founder of eTapestry before it was acquired, and so I was working for Jay at this agency and both of us were kind of in this weird spot in our careers where we had come from the fundraising world of the nonprofit world, but we were outside of it for a short period of time and both of us were kind of feeling restless and wanting to get back into nonprofit, and Jay, at the time, it was around 2011-2012, he was just starting Bloomerang and getting Bloomerang off the ground so he kind of pulled me away from that company. I went to join him and got Bloomerang started and I've been doing that ever since, almost four years in. Yeah, I've always been kind of in the vendor side of the nonprofit world, but finally last year I started my own nonprofit called Launch Cause, which is a nonprofit incubator in Indianapolis. It's about a 7,000 square foot facility in Indianapolis where we have co-working space, we have cubicles, we have offices, conference rooms that can be rented out to nonprofits who need office space or nonprofits who maybe need like a third space they can work out of, meeting space, a place to have board meetings or events or trainings or events or things like that and it is itself a nonprofit, the actual entity so we're not any money off of that. If we break even every month I'm happy. So I've gotten to be on the vendor side and then the actual boots on the ground fundraising and running an actual organization. So it's been really fun for me.

Beth: It's so interesting and it's interesting how people sort of, I had the same thing. I actually worked in a nonprofit for eight years before I started my company, but it wasn't a fundraising focused nonprofit. It was a revenue generating nonprofit. They basically paid, they were a publishing company and did research and publishing in the medical arena and so it's kind of like consumer support for medical devices. Very cool stuff, but you know, you do that for

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



awhile, I know I left and was like, “Ugh, no more. I gotta get away from these people,” but it just kept coming back and coming back and I hit a point in my business where I’m like, “Who do I love working with?” When I made the list, I was like, “What do these people all have in common?” and I realized most of them were nonprofits, but they all had this sort of membership community building. For me, my story was that it was, all of them were people that wanted to attract people, get more involved, bring somebody from the outside. Find them, get them engaged, make them participate. Make them show up and stick around so at some point they’re inspired to give back. So I became very interested in moving people along that continuum of attraction to engagement to inspiration and that’s what we really focused my work around and that’s where this whole concept of participation is so interesting to me because that’s the middle piece of it. That’s that sort of, it’s like the glue that holds. Like you attract somebody and at some point you want them to give money to you. What’s the thing in the middle that helps kind of facilitate that conversion? I believe that it’s participation, so in the work that you do, I always ask people what does participation mean in your work or in your life?

Steven: Well, I can answer it this way by kind of laying out the Bloomerang philosophy and I don’t want to be too promotional, but you know, we’re a vendor, we’re a software ...

Beth: First, tell, in case somebody doesn’t know, just broadly, what do you guys do.

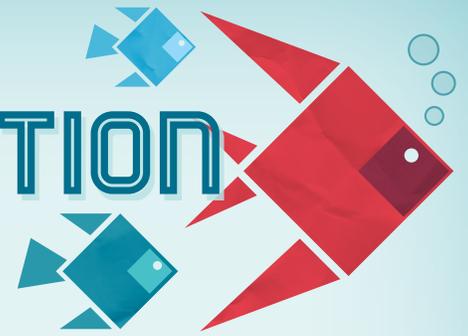
Steven: We’re donor management management software.

Beth: There you go. That’s good. Nice and brief.

Steven: That’s basically it and there’s a lot of donor management products out there and a lot of them are really good and I’m not afraid to say that. We have competitors that we get along great with and they’re great people and great products, so we’re the new kid on the block. You know, four years ago and it would have been easy for Jay and I when we were starting the company and getting it off the ground to just go out and advertise and say, “Hey, we’re Bloomerang, we’re the best thing. You should use us because we’re better than all these other people and this is why,” but we decided that culturally, specifically in the marketing department, that we weren’t going to do any of that. We were going to invest

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky

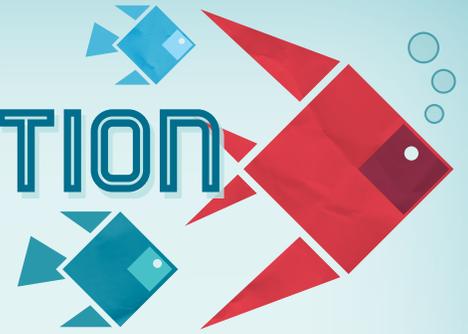


time in speaking at events, like the event you saw me speak at, creating educational content, creating a free webinar series that now gets thousands of registrations every week. You know, creating great blog posts that are educational, so that's all we do in marketing. We create educational content that all fundraisers can get funding out of, whether they use Bloomerang or not. I don't care if they don't if they're using those resources because I want fundraisers to be more effective and do a better job and get help if they need it and that philosophy is really sort of our guiding light and I think that you can really boil that down into the word participation. We didn't want to just be someone that sells a widget to a sector, we wanted to be active participants. So if you see us at an event speaking, you know we're doing that at our own cost. If you attend a Bloomerang webinar, it's free. We're not charging people for that. All the blog post and things that we publish, that is a concerted effort to be a participant in the sector rather than just another vendor that you can get a widget from, and that was really our philosophy and it's part of the reason why I wanted to create my own nonprofit. You know, we've got Bloomerang up and running, it's going great and I wanted kind of the next thing. I wanted to stay involved in the nonprofit sector in a different way, maybe in a more meaningful way in a lot of ways. So starting that nonprofit was an easy thing for me. There was definitely a need in the community and Indiana has a hundred co-worker spaces, but they are all geared towards for profits, for people making website applications and iPhone apps and software companies and it's hard for nonprofits. If you're starting a nonprofit you don't really know what paperwork to file and you need help and office space is hard to come by. It's expensive and I wanted to create a collaborative environment to help more nonprofits get their start in Indianapolis so that's kind of what we're all about and really that's what participation means to me. It's not just selling a product, but really being a resource for the sector that you're serving.

Beth: I love that because I feel the same way too. You don't want to feel like a vendor. I [unclear 9:42] walking into the room feeling like you're the outsider. It's never fun to work with a community like that so to give back, I call it the give first methodology, to participate and become both a resource for an opportunity to love them. That's why I do this podcast. It's been fascinating that I do it so that we can all learn and all of us become better at marketing and integrating marketing and fundraising and understanding that communication is sort of what drives that wheel from attraction to engagement to giving back, but what I've been amazed at, I have learned so much from the guests that have been on the show from vendors to people in nonprofits. It's been such a great way really for me to feel like I'm part of this

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



community because I'm learning too. Nobody knows everything. There's tons of areas in marketing that I don't have a specific expertise in and it's been an amazing opportunity to really learn about areas that I don't know about and also learn. It's been really cool to learn. What are you doing and what are you doing and I find it interesting so I hope everyone that's listening is also thinking that. I never knew you could do that and I never knew that something you could use maybe if you were an alumni association from a college that may be a professional or trade association could learn that as well. Maybe a charitable organization could say "I could see how I could use a piece of that in what I'm doing." Anything we can all work together to be a stronger sector is really cool and to not put these divides up because of how people are working together.

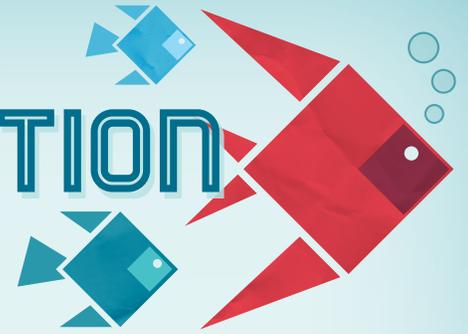
Steven: Yeah, all the reasons you just stated or why it was an easy invitation acceptance for me to come on the podcast because I completely agree with everything you said.

Beth: Awesome! So I thought your presentation that you did was great. Steven talked at AFP Philadelphia about thanking and showing gratitude and actually when we talked about it, that was the technical. One specific thing you mentioned about it a little bit was about using social tools, social sites, social methodology to actually directly thank people, and one of the fun things about having a weekly show is I can talk about one teeny tiny little thing and blow that up and just focus on that because we've talked on the show. I've talked to you. If anybody is interested in things like gratitude and thanking, the show that we did with Lynne Wester, of course I can never remember the numbers of the shows when I'm recording so Lynne Wester did a wonderful show on the process of ask, thank and then show gratitude. It was terrific, and then Shannon Doolittle also did a show about gratitude, too. They were two really good specific shows on gratitude and different processes to thank. So now, Steven gets to come on and talk about one very micro aspect of that that we didn't really talk about and we can explore that a little bit. That's why I love that. So you talked a little bit about how people are using social media to show gratitude, so why don't you talk a little bit about why that works, why that's something people should even consider?

Steven: Yeah, it's a big thing. I remember when I was talking in the session that you sat in on. The core presentation didn't touch on this at all. Someone raised their hand and said, "Can we use social media to do the things you're talking about?" and I got really excited because

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

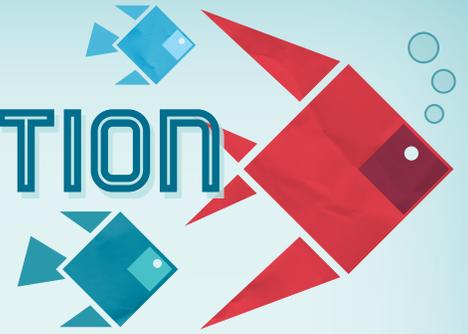
with Beth Brodovsky



the answer is absolutely yes. You can use social media to thank people, appreciate donors, acknowledge gifts, thank sponsors, thank grantees, thank volunteers, all those people who support you, but it is a super under-utilized channel for gift acknowledgment. I would even say they're critically under-used channels and there's so many places to start, but I think the best place is to say we as a sector are not good at acknowledging gifts in general I think and there's a lot of data that backs that up. We have a median donor retention rate in the sector of 43 percent, which is super low. It doesn't very low, but you know when you compare that to the for profit sector, companies need to have 90 percent customer retention rate or they're in a lot of trouble. So we have this donor retention problem and my sort of big hypothesis on it is that we don't do a very good job of thanking our donors, acknowledging gifts, acknowledging volunteers, thanking sponsors, all those people who support us. We concentrate on fundraising and raising those dollars and getting the gift, which is super important and we don't want to diminish that at all, but then we get the gift, we get the check or we get the online donation and kind of put our feet up and you know pat ourselves on the back and just assume that that person is gonna give again next year or whenever we send out that appeal, but there's been tons of research by the Lilly School of Philanthropy and AFP and the Fundraising Effectiveness Project and it shows that the number one reason people stop giving is that they were never fully appreciated. They weren't appreciated at all. The gift was not acknowledged. The Lilly School found that 13 percent of donors do not get thanked at all, let alone thanked quickly or thanked personally or thanked well. They just do not get a gift acknowledgment at all and the ones that do, they're boring. They send these thank you letters that are template that we just spit out of our printer and stuff in a mailbox and don't think too much about. We send receipts, literally receipts to online donors and it's not as though they just bought a gallon of milk for us or a tank of gas. They funded our mission, but we're sending receipts and then the only thing they get from us after that is an appeal or a promotional newsletter or whatever. We're not calling donors enough. So there's all these channels that we do use for gift acknowledgment, but don't use very well, but social media is one that we don't use at all for gift acknowledgment and can be really effective. There are some organizations, at least I've seen, that are using social media very effectively to thank donors rather than promote themselves or post inspirational quotes or cat photos or boring press releases and newsletters. That's not a great way to use social media. So my kind of theory on social media is to use it first for gift acknowledgment and then once you're doing that a little bit, you can sprinkle in more of those promotional things because if you can, and

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



we can talk about it, but if you use it first for gift acknowledgment, some really interesting things happen in terms of your audience and engagement and things like that.

Beth: I think this is such a great idea. I love that you mentioned in there, we started out talking about gift acknowledgment, but you also mentioned volunteer gratitude and volunteer things. The show is going to be going out right at the end of March if anyone is listening to it live and April is, there's a volunteer appreciation week or volunteer recognition week coming out in April, which I'm always a fan of just because Hallmark says it's time to say thanks to people, but it's a great hook. Anytime you can use something that's happening in the world, something that's happening in people's broader consciousness to connect into what they're thinking and tie your message in, that's really good. That's why I'm a big promoter of using Valentine's Day as sort of donor love day or volunteer love day or whatever it takes. Everyone knows that it's Valentine's Day so to wrap a gratitude message around that and tell people how much you love them is wonderful to jump in. You've got a little time. Volunteer appreciation week starts April 10. You've got some time that you can start to think about how you can do this, how you can share things on social.

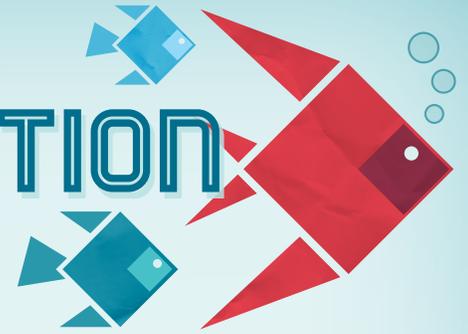
Steven: Yeah, and what you're talking about and I know you had Shannon Doolittle on the podcast and she probably touched on this is this idea of donor stewardship. Right?

Beth: Yes.

Steven: We need to be stewarding our donors almost constantly, but what we do is that stewardship piece to often takes a back seat to fundraising, you know sending appeals and making cases and trying to raise money, but what's interesting about donor stewardship is you can steward a donor, thank them for no reason, send them an update on a completed project, send them a success story out of nowhere. Not ask for money, but the dollars are all in when you do those things. I know it sounds kind of counter intuitive, but if you steward a donor without asking for money, research shows they are likely to give again and social media is an awesome, awesome channel for donor stewardship. It's not the only channel and I'm not saying you should stop calling donors and sending them emails and letters and all that good stuff, but I would sprinkle in social media to do all those things you just said. Thank donors,

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



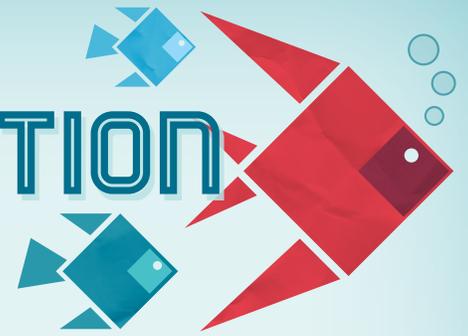
report on projects, thank volunteers, post photos and videos of an interesting donation or an in kind donation or something like that. That content does, it performs the best on social media because everyone enjoys it, it makes people smile and you're thanking someone and showing off your appreciation for a donor or volunteer. In a lot of cases it could be visual. You post a photo of the volunteer group who just came to the office or to your location. You post a video of a volunteer or a donor, that content performs the best on social media, but what do we do on social media? We're posting appeals and newsletters and press releases and event invitations and we're just kind of using it as a billboard and it's that promotional tool rather than making it social. You know, here are the people who support us, here's a person that just came to our animal shelter and adopted a dog, here's a little girl who just donated her stuffed animal collection to our shelter and here's a photo of it. That content really performs the best on social media.

Beth: What do you mean by that? Talk a little bit. When you were talking about performing, like how are you defining that?

Steven: Well I think that an organization kind of has to define that for themselves, but to me it's those vanity things first. You know, likes and comments and shares, which are vanity metrics. They don't necessarily equate into action. I definitely get that, but that content is going to get that more engagement versus an appeal or a newsletter. I mean, think of your own Facebook feed that you interact with. You're gonna interact with a fun photo that a friend just posted or a funny video or something like that. No one is gonna like and share your invitation to your upcoming spaghetti dinner. That kind of content doesn't illicit the same kind of reaction that a video of a volunteer having a great time on your facility or a photo of a family that just adopted a cat and you see them all together and they're smiling and they're happy. That content generates that engagement and then the other really interesting thing that it does is it also generates interest in that activity. So rather than asking for a donation, if you can visualize a donation that has just occurred, so a little girl donating her stuffed animal collection, inevitably people are gonna ask, "Hey I got some things that I want to donate. How can I donate or what can I do to help out as well?" That showing the result of an action is more effective than asking for the action, but not showing anyone who has actually completed it, especially in a visual way.

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



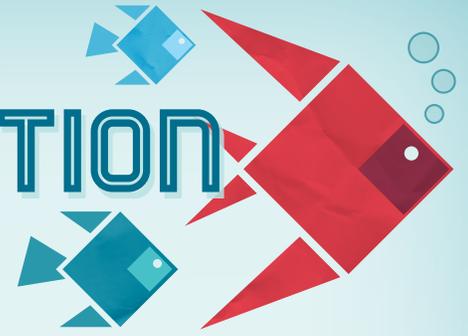
Beth: That's really interesting. It's funny too because it's like social is such a great forum for that kind of thing. You can actually show things like that so much more easily on a video sharing platform, on a photo sharing platform, on a you know, little slide share. There's so many ways you can do that kind of thing in such a little, like create a little micro-story about that. That's really interesting and

Steven: There's an organization called Texas Humane Heroes and I would invite your listeners to go to their Facebook page. Just go to Facebook and type in Texas Humane Heroes. They're an animal shelter. They're down in Central Texas and all they do on Facebook. They do not post articles or newsletters or press releases or they don't ask for money directly. All they do on Facebook. Anytime someone comes to the animal shelter, they take a photo of that family or that person with the animal they adopted and the human is holding a sign that says something like "I'm a Hero," "I just adopted" and they post that photo on their feed and that's all they post and people love it. It gets like three figure likes and two figure comments, lots of shares and that content performs so much better than the content I see on a typical nonprofit Facebook page where it's just "Here's a link to our coming gala," and it has two likes and no comments and no shares or some weird inspirational quote or a generic ask for money. Like that content doesn't really perform very well, but if you can show off the result of your mission and involve the people that have made that mission possible, so donors, volunteers, sponsors, people who adopt animals, whatever. It gets people thinking about the impact of their generosity rather than just trying to convince someone to be generous and I know that's sort of a nuance difference, but it is so much more effective on social media.

Beth: I think it's an important nuance difference and I'm gonna go all nerdy for a minute and mention that the way social media and social signals are working right now is that when you have a site, let's say it's a Facebook page and you're posting a bunch of stuff that gets one like and nothing happens. That's what's called sending a social signal. That's sending out the message to that platform, Facebook for example. You're putting out stuff and it's not really going anywhere. When you put out stuff over and over again that gets lots of likes and lots of shares, you're sending a signal to Facebook that people want to see your content. In doing that, everyone that's out there complaining that Facebook is ratcheting down the exposure for your content, you have a role to play in that. Yes, Facebook is doing that, but if you want

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



to have your stuff seen for free, the way to do that is to create things that people want to engage with.

Steven: And that's why it's so important to involve a third party in that post and that's why it's so ideal to include donors or volunteers because they're the best third party that you can include, especially volunteers. If you have volunteers come to your facility or an event, you have a photo opportunity, you have a video opportunity. You can capture that and when you post that photo or video, even if it's text, you can tag all of those other people in the post and right there, you multiply the amount of people that see your post.

Beth: Oh, that is a really good point. It's almost like you creating a little micro, it's like the difference between creating something and putting it out there and saying, "This stuff is for everyone," and creating something and saying, "Here, this stuff is for you."

Steven: Exactly.

Beth: That's interesting. I never really thought of it like that before, but that's true.

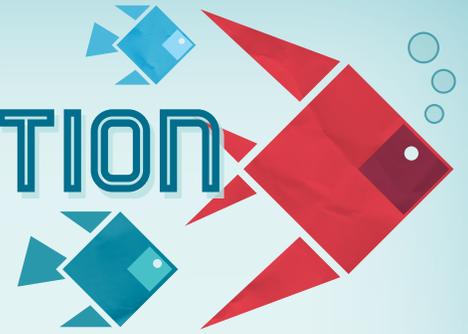
Steven: It's called social media for a reason and the content that we put out on social media is too often not social.

Beth: Right, that's so true.

Steven: It's a bullhorn rather than a conversation and I think that's why that animal shelter is so successful because they tag all those people in the photo and then what happens? That photo appears to all those adopters friends and family, all their Facebook friends. So Texas Humane Heroes, that content appears to their followers, but it also appears to many other strangers that they never would have been able to connect with online without that and that's why I go back to the gift acknowledgment piece because the gift acknowledgment, volunteer acknowledgment or whatever sort of support acknowledgment you're doing, it's an ideal way to weave in a second or third person in the content of the post. And you know what? It doesn't have to be that way necessarily. You can use Twitter to thank a donor one to one. You can send a tweet to a donor, "Hey, Steven, thanks so much for the donation, and we really

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



appreciate the support,” and that doesn’t go to that organization’s network. It’s the one-to-one interaction, but that one to one interaction is just as valuable because so much research shows that donors want to be thanked obviously. They want to be thanked quickly. They want to be thanked personally, and when I think of the words quick and personal, social media comes to mind immediately. It is the ideal channel and I’m not saying don’t send a thank you letter and don’t give them a phone call. Do those things also, but you can use social media for that one to one interaction. Maybe a board member through their LinkedIn account reaches out to a corporate sponsor, you know, maybe someone else in the business world. Have them send a LinkedIn message, “Hey, Jim, thanks so much for the support that your company gives this nonprofit I’m a board member of,” or on Facebook have your executive director reach out to a major donor or something like that. Have a fundraising person on your staff who has a Twitter account tweet a donor that you know is on Twitter and I wouldn’t be freaked out by that necessarily. So you can use social media for a one to one interaction in addition to those sort of more general sort of more mass distributed messaging as well.

Beth: So how does the publicness of social media factor into how people feel about the acknowledgment? I mean everyone knows, everyone watches the Oscars. Like who gets thanked at the microphone is always sort of a factor in the Oscars. Who did you forget? There’s something about having your name, your personal name used publicly in front of other people that makes people feel like even more honored in something like that. Does the same concept work in social?

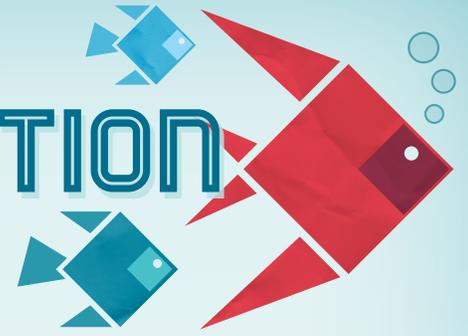
Steven: I think so. I think that’s why it’s so powerful. People love to show off the fact that they are philanthropic.

Beth: Even if they don’t want to admit that?

Steven: Absolutely, and I think they do in a lot of cases. I mean social media a lot of the time is about bragging and about being egotistical and nonprofits can tap into that a little bit. If I go volunteer somewhere, I can’t help but take a photo of it because I want to show off that I’m philanthropic and I support a cause that I believe in. There was a really interesting survey done by a marketing agency called Ogilvie, they partnered up with ...

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



Beth: Oh yeah, them.

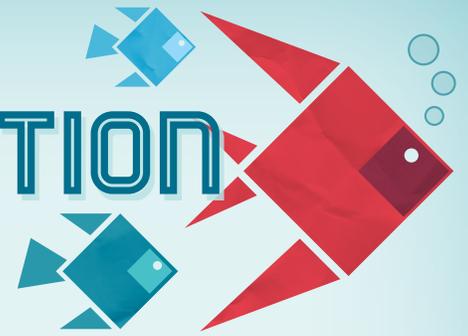
Steven: They asked like 90,000 social media users “Why do you share the content that you share on social media?” and the number one answer they got was to promote a cause that they believe in. Think about it. If you look at your Facebook feed, you have people sharing articles about nonprofits. They support causes, they support politicians, that’s already happening and nonprofits can tap into it so anything you can do to put the power in the hands of a donor or volunteer to further show off their philanthropy, it’s gonna be super powerful. If you thank someone on Twitter for their donation, 9 times out of 10 they’re gonna re-tweet it. If you post a photo of a volunteer on your Facebook page and tag that person, they’re gonna re-share it, they’re gonna comment and like on it. They can’t help it. You can tap into that little bit of an egotistical piece, but the one thing you people need to be careful of is privacy. I think privacy is a bigger issue where this is concerned. You need to get their permission before you do any of this. You need to make sure that they do not mind that you publicly acknowledge them and you don’t have to divulge gift amounts or frequency or anything like that. You can still thank someone in kind of a generic way. If you thank someone on Twitter, you don’t have to say, “Hey, Steven, thanks for that \$125 gift.” You don’t have to put that dollar amount. You can say, “Hey, Steven, thanks so much for the gift.”

Beth: But, Steven, is privacy a factor at all? Has it ever backfired on anybody or do you need to get permission first? What would you suggest to people?

Steven: I’d lean more on the conservative side that you should always get permission. You don’t want to be in a situation where you do thank someone or publicly recognize someone and they didn’t want that because that’s gonna lead to a lot of bad things. If you have a volunteer group come to your facility, have a photo release form. Ask them can we take a photo? Can we post it on Facebook? Most of the time they’re gonna say yes, but give them a heads up that you’re gonna do that. Collect information about your donors on your donation form. Ask them for things. What is your Twitter handle? What is your communication preference? Would it be okay if we use social media to acknowledge this gift with a little check box. The more you can do on the front end, that’s gonna avoid any issues, but I think that fundraisers, they kind of need to approach this from like a journalism perspective. Keep

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



your eyes open for those interesting opportunities. Do we have a volunteer group coming in today? Do we have a major donor visiting today? Do we have an interesting donation that just happened? Look for those opportunities and those story opportunities. Get their permission and then publish the content. In this case, asking for forgiveness is not better than asking for permission. Always ask for permission and you're gonna have people that are more active on social media than other donors. It's probably gonna be a small group of people, but I'm starting to see that on donation forms, specifically more often people asking me for my Twitter handle specifically and I've gotten tweets from organizations after I've made a donation. "Hey, Steven, thanks so much for the gift." It was a one to one interaction. It wasn't like publicly posted like a Tweet or Facebook post, but that one to one interaction is kind of nice. It happens quickly, it's personal, it sort of multiplies the effect of the thank you letter or maybe the email confirmation, you know the full acknowledgment that you get. It's not to replace those things, but it can augment those things and hopefully start a conversation because if you send a letter in the mail, that's not a conversation. It's hard to reply. I don't think a donor is gonna write you a letter back. Now email is a little bit better. You can reply to an email, but it's still a little impersonal. Social media, especially if it comes from a human rather than your brand account, I would try to get maybe a human account. Maybe a fundraiser on your staff or the ED or a board member, you know it's OK. "Hey, Steven, I just wanted to send you a quick tweet saying thanks so much for the support." You don't have to divulge any personal information or gift information at all.

Beth: You know that's interesting what you're saying, that all those different methods are distance-based methods, some more technical than others. Mailing something in the mail people would probably say that's not technology, but that goes out there into the world. It's asynchronous. That's the word I'm looking for. It's asynchronous communication. You know, you send an email, it's technology, it's asynchronous communication. Sending a tweet out, there's no guarantee somebody's listening right at that moment, but it's interesting what you're saying, that social media technology, people interpret as personal versus some of these other things and for a busy nonprofit that doesn't have the time to pick up the phone and call everybody to know that there is one type of somewhat mass communication technology that you can use that people are going to feel differently about, feel personal about. I think that's a really important message to let people know.

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

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Steven: Absolutely. There was a study done by Twitter actually.

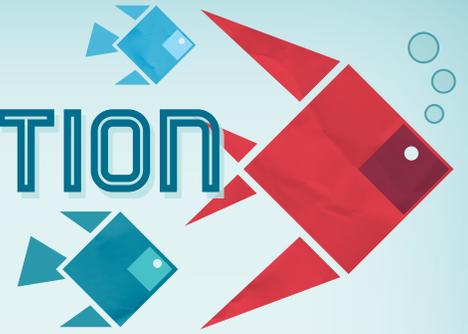
Beth: Shocking, right.

Steven: But Twitter found was the act of receiving, it was a neurological study. They did like MRIs and CT scans on people's brains and they found that receiving a tweet activated the same sort of sections of the brain that are activated when you receive mail, snail mail. Even though these are very different channels, they can sort of resonate in a similar way and sometimes even in a more impactful way. So when people say gift acknowledgments through Twitter, like you're crazy, Steven, neurologically it has the same affect as receiving a letter, receiving an email and it's more personal. You can respond right away. It's hard to respond right away to a letter and for me, the best thing is a phone call. I'm a phone call kind of guy for gift acknowledgment first and foremost, but I would say maybe second, maybe even third would be social media behind maybe email, but these are channels that can be really powerful if you employ them in a personal meaningful way.

Beth: I totally believe that. Just last night, I get a lot of people making connection requests on LinkedIn and everybody that's listening, please connect with me, somebody sent me a connection request. I looked at their profile, they were in the nonprofit world. I'm always happy to connect to anybody that's sort of in our space. We connected and I'm trying to use some best practices, and I sent him a note to say, "Lovely to connect with you. Just curious, would you like to talk? What made you interested? Maybe we can help each other," and he sent me a note back that he was actually a listener to the show and that it was very helpful. He just said a lot of really nice things and I'm telling you it made my day because everyone toils in their own little world and as much as it is wonderful to sit here and have this conversation with you, it's hard to hear from the listeners of media like this. I'm sure fundraisers feel the same way, like until that gift comes in, it's not always this personal thing and anything that you can do to take anything from anonymous to personal, it's sort of like when you get a cold call on the phone. Somebody is talking and talking and talking and then at some point they say, "Oh, I forgot to tell you. Your mother and I go to church together, and she's the one that told me that I should call," and instantly the wall goes down. Well, it's all about how you feel about your mother, I suppose, but in general, like the minute you take something out of like this

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

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anonymous “you’re bothering me” into “here’s why I’m talking to you,” it completely shifts the conversation and these tiny little things make people feel that you’re having a personal conversation with them and then imagine like what will change in their relationship with your organization after they feel you know who they are.

Steven: Yeah, and it’s one touch point, like it’s not the end all. You’re not gonna get a major gift because you sent someone one tweet and you’re not gonna get a major donor because you posted one photo of them adopting an animal, but it’s ...

Beth: It’s cumulative. It’s cumulative.

Steven: Cumulative. Stewardship. It’s meant to be multiple touch points. It is called stewarding. You’re stewarding the relationship into the future, but anything you can do to kind of sprinkle in these things, it’s gonna be meaningful for that one donor, but think of your audience as well. Think of your social media audience. They want content that’s entertaining and meaningful and authentic. They don’t want to see your stupid press release or your endless invitations to all your

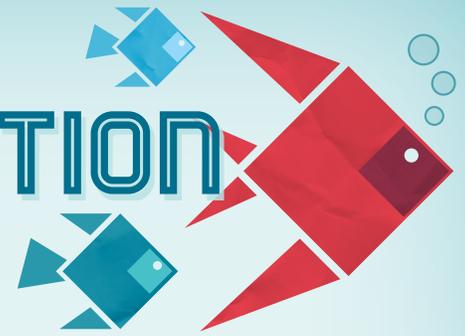
Beth: Or we just did a new website. My favorite press release ever.

Steven: Yeah. No one’s gonna interact with that, but if you’ve got this nine year girl who out of the blue came to your shelter and donated all of her stuffed animals, that is awesome, awesome content. I know I keep telling that story and by the way, the organization who posted that is called Wheeler Missions. They’re here in Indianapolis. Go to their Facebook page, you’ll probably have to scroll down a few months, but you’ll see it and it kills me because they have that great piece of content. They got like a gazillion likes and in the comments people are asking how do I donate, how do I get involved and then the rest of their content is the other kind of boring stuff that we’ve been talking about. I’m just like “No, keep posting things like that so you can see how well it did.”

Beth: Yeah right. There’s your split test right there. Exactly. So is there, so you mentioned a bunch of different types of content. You mentioned email type and like words and photos and videos. Does it matter? Does one work better than another? What do you recommend with

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



people and are there other types of things people should consider?

Steven: There's conflicting research and I don't like to rely on one survey about all of, there are some that say photos are best. There are some that say text gets more engagement than photo and video gets thrown in there. I think it's important for an individual organization to try many things and like you said, do their own testing because every community, every group of followers is gonna be different. Your followers may respond really well to video for some reason whereas my followers may prefer photos. Some are gonna prefer text. You just have to try different things and look at the results and play around with timing. You know, day of the week, time of day, the format, the length of text is something you should look at, but I think the one overarching thing that everyone should do and I don't like hard and fast rules in general, but I do think ...

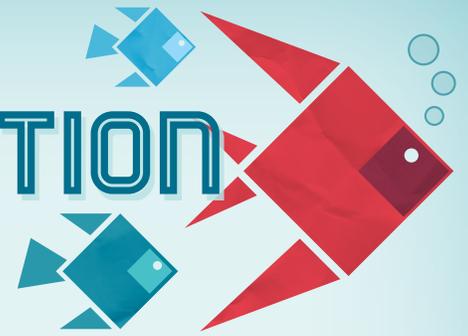
Beth: But we're gonna give you one.

Steven: But here is one and you should test it, but I think tagging a second person or second other page, some third party is really critical because right there you are multiplying the amount of people who are gonna see it right off the bat rather, and you touched on this earlier with the algorithm. Only 10 percent of your followers statistically are gonna see your Facebook content. So anything you can do to tag a person and get it in front of their audience, their followers as well, it's gonna multiply the amount of eye balls that see it. It's gonna be

Beth: I think that is an amazing tip and like you can find data that would pretty much support any argument that you would make and you can use that to like help you guide things, but also to recognize that if everyone is posting on Tuesdays at 2 p.m., that means that there's this flood of content coming in on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. So it's good to know what's popular, but it's also good to both test and maybe just go the opposite way just because there might be, it's like that blue ocean strategy. There might be room over here that nobody is capitalizing on because we're all following the rule that says you send your post out at 2 p.m. on Tuesday. So there's definitely that and the beauty of things like both email and social is like don't freak out. Every time you'll see on the news and I'm a marketing geek and so I'm always following

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



new technology and what's happening in the news and it's like, "McDonalds had this social media disaster," because they posted this thing. If anybody thinks that a tweet is gonna take McDonalds down as an organization, that's insane. That's not gonna happen. It's gonna be a blip of negativity that's gonna show up and then it's gonna be gone. So sometimes I feel like these things that we tend to focus on creating content that avoids anything bad happening and the reality is you've got to test things that may not work in order so you know what does work. So stop being afraid to fail. Stop only worrying about what is going to work and if it doesn't perform, it didn't work. No, it did work. It worked to give you a piece of information of what at that given moment people liked or didn't like. So I would just remind people, try it out and don't hold yourself to high standards for perfection because it's gone in a minute.

Steven: Yep, I completely agree. I think if your content is compelling and authentic you can overcome any day of the week or time of day or anything like that and people bash their Facebook algorithm, but the algorithm can work to your advantage in ways that content, rather than it being pushed down chronologically and gone, it can kind of hang around for multiple days and weeks and you can kind of use that to your advantage. I mean if you go to like the Bloomerang Facebook page, you won't find a press release about a new feature or a new pricing special that we were running. We don't do any of that because no one cares and it's not gonna get any engagement and it's spammy and it's advertising. It's boring. But you will see funny pictures from around our office or of employees or events that we do and the idea is it's social. We don't want to be selling constantly through our Facebook page. We just kind of want to show off our social side and that we are humans and we have fun. Any nonprofits can do the same exact thing while involving the people who support them directly rather than constantly just asking for money and posting out marketing materials and things like that.

Beth: That is great advice. Steven, thank you so much. I think that's a great place to focus on. I love your tip about tagging a second party. If people want to learn more about this work, your nonprofit or the work that Bloomerang does, how can they get in touch with you?

Steven: Twitter is good. Follow me on Twitter which is just @StevenShattuck. You know you can send me a LinkedIn request. That won't freak me out. Just search my name. You can go to

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



the Bloomerang website, go check out our team page. Check out my blog. I'm writing there weekly. We have a webinar series every Thursday. You can register for that for free. I would love to hear from you, you won't freak me out at all, especially on social media. I'm usually a little more liberal about the people I request and accept a request in following stuff so have at it.

Beth: That is fabulous. So I will have links to all of Steven's contact information on the show notes page. You can reach me @BethBrodovsky on Twitter and please link in with me also @BethBrodovsky on Twitter. The beauty of having an unusual hard to spell name is I'm the only one. So hunt us both down, and Steven, thank you so much for sharing your insight with both me and the nonprofit community.

Steven: Oh, thanks to you, Beth. I mean thanks for doing this podcast and the awesome work you do. I mean spread the word about helping people, I think it's awesome. So I think you deserve the thanks, not me.

Beth: Aw, thanks. I love it. I wish I could just do this and nothing else. It's so much fun! Thanks a lot. Take care.

Steven: Bye.