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Upfront

Nonprofits and the Net Tight budgets and a lack of technical know-how are keeping nonprofits off the web

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MARKETING

Nonprofits and the Net

Tight budgets and a lack of technical know-how are keeping nonprofits off the Web

Barely 10 years into the Internet revolution, it is hard to imagine living without the World Wide Web. The medium today is used by an estimated half billion people around the world for commerce, entertainment, information gathering, and a multitude of other activities.

So it would be logical to assume that nonprofits have mastered the technology, especially in the United States, where an estimated 149 million people use the Internet, right?

Not according to a study published last spring in the *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*. An analysis of 1,000 nonprofit organizations by researchers at the Rutgers Business School found that only 27 percent of nonprofit organizations sampled had established a Web site – and that less than 10 percent of those used their sites for sales or other commercial activities. Instead, most used the Web to disseminate information, draw interest in organizational programming, and raise funds.

In their article, “Nonprofit Web Sites: Prevalence, Usage, and Commercial Activity,” authors Howard Tuckman, Patrali Chatterjee, and David Muha noted that nonprofit development of Web sites depends on type of mission, as well as wealth. The researchers examined 500 nonprofit organizations selected at random and an additional 500 culled from five mission-driven cate-

gories: conservation, cultural, religious, civil rights, and science and technology.

Their analysis showed that 60

“Typically the ones that don’t have a Web presence are smaller groups that don’t have the people to do it.”

percent of science and technology organizations had a Web presence, but only 24 percent of religious groups did. Among conservation

groups, 34 percent had Web sites, as did 48 percent of cultural organizations and 51 percent of civil rights organizations. Only 36 percent of the nonprofits with Web sites used them for commercial activities, which the researchers defined as having either mission-related or unrelated goods for sale. Of these, civil rights groups rated the highest with 35 percent, and conservation groups were the lowest with just 12 percent.

The size of a nonprofit’s budget was shown to significantly influence whether the organization had a Web site. Nonprofits with smaller staffs and budgets had neither the expertise nor the resources to undertake construction of a Web site.

“Typically the ones that don’t have a Web presence are smaller groups that don’t have the people to do it,” said Tom Nickell, president of FaithandValues.com, which provides Web services to more than 700 religious groups across North America.

—Gerald Burstyn

The screenshot shows the website for FEED THE CHILDREN. The header includes the organization's logo and a search bar. A navigation menu on the left lists: About us, News & Press, United States Programs, International Programs, Accountability, Television, Partnerships, and Contact Us. The main content area features a large photo of a man holding a child, with a 'Help Now!' button. Below this are several news articles:

- Lakeview Church and Feed The Children join to help needy children and families in Houston**: Houston, Texas (Apr. 18, 2004) - Lakeview Church joined with international hunger relief organization Feed The Children to distribute five truckloads of food boxes and non-fat dry milk to Houston-area families in need today. Following a brief press conference at 10 a.m., more than 1,200 families received food boxes and non-fat dry milk at Houston's Minute Maid Park.
- The Florida Department of Agriculture joins Feed The Children to (stand) to help children and families in need**
- Charlie Ward teams with Feed The Children to help needy children and families in Georgia**
- NSBA teams up with Feed The Children to help young children learn the value of community service**
- WYBA All-Star team Cash teams with Feed The Children**: Bringing food to homeless children and families in need
- Feed The Children teams with the USDA**: Participating in the events surrounding the NADAC-100 Open