

Stanford SOCIAL INNOVATION^{Review}

Technology for Change Supplement
Invading the Darkness of Child Sex Trafficking
By Marissa Gunther

Stanford Social Innovation Review
Summer 2020

Copyright © 2020 by Leland Stanford Jr. University
All Rights Reserved

mean making a donation, other years it might mean writing a letter to a congressperson.”

And when communication goes awry by pinging supporters with information that doesn’t resonate for them, Rhodes’s team can quickly observe the misfires and rectify them.

“If click-throughs aren’t happening on a specific topic, we know to back off on that topic, either at an individual level or at a population level,” he says. “But that’s the granularity of data we’re looking at these days, and our digital team has only gotten better at using that data.”

POINTS AND PLOTS

For all of the power that data can bring to bear on creating lasting and meaningful relationships between organizations and their supporters, it still isn’t enough. Donors’ demands for deeper connections require not just real-time and personalized information, but also moving stories about the good that the nonprofits they support are doing in the world. Technology can help here, too.

“It’s the stories that draw people in, and technology is at the heart of that,” says Aparna Kothary, director of technology operations at Global Citizen Year, a nonprofit that helps organize gap year study-abroad programs for high school seniors. “You can really build the tools to be able to collect those stories, with more frequency and more quality.”

The nonprofit’s website features fellow stories, blog-style updates by overseas participants in the program. It also provides alumni stories, multimedia packages about Global Citizen alumni that include videos.

At UNICEF, such stories are numerous and delivered on its website and over social media. A couple of the campaigns include airlifting midwives to help pregnant women give birth in conflict zones in Nigeria and turning harmful plastic waste into plastic bricks to build schools for children in Côte d’Ivoire. In response to COVID-19, the organization is using chatbots to provide evidence-based information to millions of young people across 42 countries.

By combining powerful data with engaging stories, organizations can execute what the *Nonprofit Trends Report* refers to as a “comprehensive engagement strategy” that ensures deep connections between nonprofits, beneficiaries, donors, clients, and partners. And by creating and strengthening those rich relationships, the collective goal gets closer, one story and one data point at a time: a better world for all. ●

Invading the Darkness of Child Sex Trafficking

How Shared Hope International uses digital tools and meaningful grassroots experiences to activate support.

BY MARISSA GUNTHER

For the past 20 years, Shared Hope International has been working to bring justice to vulnerable adults and children who have survived and overcome sex trafficking. Our small but powerful team of 18 staffers has managed to secure a global network and reach, leading prevention strategies, restoration programs, and justice initiatives to combat trafficking in the United States and abroad.

One of the main ways we have been able to provide our life-changing services is through the passionate and generous support of our advocates, volunteers, and donors. But in 2016, we noticed a declining trend in donor support. We knew we needed a solution to reengage with supporters and strengthen our reach within our community. By leveraging the power of our technology systems, we have been able to transform, grow, and deepen our relationship with our supporters, and ultimately extend our efforts to raise awareness about the realities of child sex trafficking in communities across the nation.

SUPPORTERS MAKE PROGRAMS POSSIBLE

Shared Hope’s three-prong approach to battle sex trafficking—awareness and prevention training, restoration and empowerment for victims, and justice through legislative advocacy—is changing the way society recognizes and helps sex trafficking survivors. Training equips professionals and advocates in the field with skills to increase the identification of people who are vulnerable to and exploited by trafficking. We provide a range of restoration services to victims—both directly and through support from other service organizations—that include safe homes, medical care, education, vocational training, therapy, outreach, and intervention services. In addition, our team of attorneys works with legislators at both the federal and state level to accelerate policy actions that protect victims and hold offenders accountable.



MARISSA GUNTHER

A national network of supporters raises money and works alongside Shared Hope to make these programs possible. One-hundred percent of our financial backers are private donors, and many of our donors have been with us since day one, 21 years ago.

Due to the increase in anti-trafficking organizations opening their doors, many of which Shared Hope provided training and support to, we experienced a severe decline in our number of supporters between 2014 and 2016. In order to survive as an organization, we urgently needed a strategy to restore relationships. After a deep dive into our supporters’ profiles, we quickly recognized that we needed tools to get to know them better, offer more meaningful engagement, and target them with bespoke strategies. When we realized our customer relationship management (CRM) system wasn’t meeting our needs, we turned to Salesforce. It had just what we needed: scalability, the ability to customize, and compatibility with a lot of other technologies that we wanted to use.

Now, four years into the use of the system, we've seen a dramatic turnaround.

After transitioning our CRM, Shared Hope reexamined our supporter outreach and landed on three strategies. First, we would raise awareness of the warning signs of trafficking and how to respond with effective, easy to share tools. Second, we would offer meaningful experiences for supporters through the pathways of advocacy, volunteering, and giving. Third, we would maintain our multiyear supporters at a high retention rate, increase new leads and supporters, and reengage lapsed donors.

WORKING THE PLAN

We began by segmenting our supporters in order to tailor communications and outreach. With the depth and breadth of our CRM, we have been able to build out a fuller picture of donor profiles, including their history of engagement with Shared Hope. Different giving levels are associated with a targeted engagement plan and actionable daily task lists that staff can review and complete. This segmenting has even helped our staff, board of directors, and volunteers to become more hands-on, enabling them to participate in annual phone call campaigns to reach out and thank all of our supporters. For individuals whose support has lapsed, a monthly email and regular calls highlight opportunities to reengage with Shared Hope. These customized supporter messages are organized and automated in our marketing system's engagement studio, Pardot, which was recently acquired by Salesforce and is offered on its AppExchange.

In addition to targeting our supporters by giving level, Shared Hope curates communications around particular programs and interests. Supporters who are interested in policy work, for example, receive targeted emails about our work and events around legislative initiatives. Onboarding new supporters has also improved; new contacts automatically receive a series of introductory emails describing Shared Hope's work and opportunities to get involved. Thanks to segmentation, we can create scripted outreach and build a foundation for conversations we weren't able to have before.

We're also able to collect important insights about our media mix strategy. Our marketing system tracks how individuals come to Shared Hope's website through our various media channels, which we use to adjust and strengthen new lead and supporter acquisition strategies.

With our up-to-date information, we can now be strategic about how we engage and

communicate with every single supporter in our system.

GROWING, MANAGING, AND EMPOWERING A NATIONAL NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Our supporters do more than just donate. We have more than 1,100 volunteers, called Ambassadors of Hope, who provide prevention education to communities and youth across 49 states and Washington, DC. In order to support and manage a large volunteer force well, we use our CRM to track contact information, resource requests, volunteer tasks, and hours. In addition, we can build a picture of our volunteer networks—tracking new supporters recruited by current volunteers—and highlight outreach and awareness opportunities in volunteers' communities.

We also invested time in developing new tools, using Shared Hope's research and expertise that can be easily and quickly consumed and shared by our network of volunteers, donors, and the general public. Some of these new tools include:

- A video series on child sexual exploitation and internet safety
- A new, inspiring activist toolkit that includes Shared Hope's latest book, *Invading the Darkness: Inside the Historic Fight Against Child Sex Trafficking in the United States*
- An initiative that provides weekly information tools to busy advocates, that take 15 minutes or less to read and share
- An advocacy engagement tool that provides our supporters with talking points and quick pathways to federal and state legislators to connect on policy issues in real time
- Interactive, self-paced online training programs for professionals

Another group of our volunteers, called Grassroots Heroes, amplifies our work in legislative advocacy. Individuals who support our campaigns can sign up to send preformatted tweets and emails to their federal and state legislators through Phone2Action (an AppExchange integrated application). Phone2Action automatically imports contact information for these supporters into our CRM and marketing systems, which frees up valuable time and labor for staff members. Single campaigns, including Shared Hope's work to circulate petitions and information around the 2018 clemency case of Cyntoia Brown in Tennessee, gathered 4,500 names in a

six-month period. And in 2019, our Grassroots Heroes used our Advocacy Action Center to make 8,798 connections with their legislators and raise their voices for stronger state laws. Every year, Shared Hope grades states on the strength of their laws and how well they protect victims and hold offenders accountable. We saw 10 states raise their grades in 2019, and we have our grassroots advocates to thank for helping our policy team make such strong progress.

During the first quarter of 2020, Shared Hope introduced our Weekend Warrior initiative, which aims to equip busy supporters with weekly, easy-to-share tools that can fight child sex trafficking in 15 minutes or less. By connecting digital ads about the initiative to our marketing system, in just six weeks we brought onboard 765 new advocates across the country—which means we also brought in 765 new supporter leads. We anticipate that this group of supporters will grow as we equip them with meaningful tools and provide easy pathways for them to engage with their families, friends, and colleagues.

Our more personalized and strategic outreach and engagement has also paid off, as we've seen our new support acquisition increase by 37 percent since fiscal year 2016-2017—a rise of \$368,070. We've also increased our total supporters by 19 percent, and we're maintaining multiyear supporters at a rate of 80-plus percent.

Next up, we placed our focus on expanding critical programs, with plans for staff to collaborate with national leaders, field experts, and our supporters on training, legislative advocacy, and policy work at Shared Hope's Institute for Justice and Advocacy. The institute will enable Shared Hope to dig even deeper on the issue of child sex trafficking, its causes, and solutions. Our expanded, more aggressive stance means taking on emerging challenges as they come. We just opened the doors of the institute on January 23, 2020, in the heart of Washington, DC, strategically located two blocks from the White House. We own the property debt-free thanks to a successful \$2.8 million, five-month capital campaign completed in 2019.

With the doors of the institute open and our scope of work ever-expanding, we are certain our strengthened relationships with our advocates, volunteers, and donor community will continue to help us achieve our mission. Years from now, we will look back on this time and say, "That's when the tide truly turned; that's when the eradication of sex trafficking dramatically accelerated." ●