



# Communicating During COVID-19: Five Tips for Nonprofits

## 1. Resist the temptation to lay low

At a time when relevancy, politics, and potential to offend need to be considered before making anything your nonprofit does public, it is tempting to pull back on your communications. Budget constraints and financial uncertainty only amplify the argument to reallocate your outreach dollars and lay low. Resist this temptation.

NPR reported in May that 60% of major companies have cut their advertising budgets. It's quiet out there and it's probably going to get quieter. There may never be a more affordable or opportune time to share your story. There may never be a time that the world needs to hear messages of hope and love more than now.

## 2. More Painkiller. Less Vitamin.

Consider if nonprofit organizations were segmented by these labels:

**CANDY** | Fun and enjoyable, but not necessary, and not helpful.

**VITAMIN** | Helpful, healthy, but often overlooked or forgotten.

**PAINKILLER** | Necessary, powerful and potent. A real solution to a problem.

Which of these categories does your organization's messaging place you into? Is it where you want to be? In a crisis environment, it's important to tailor your messages to be clear, direct, and driven by impact. You want to be a painkiller. Even if your cause is not directly impacted by COVID-19, you are probably solving an issue that is important. Make sure your messaging captures that impact.

Bill McKendry recently hosted a webinar titled *Doing More with Less* that covers this topic in more detail. Check it out [here](#).

## 3. Careful with that tone

The tone of your communications can be one of your most useful tools in developing a report with your audience, but it can also work against you. Humor, metaphors, analogies and slang that is common within your network or team may be offensive to your donors or clients. The extra step of a panel review with key stakeholders may help improve communication pieces, and help you develop the appropriate tone for your organization.

## 4. Know where your audience is (and isn't)

While many areas are reopening, several are also re-closing. Consider where your audience will be receiving your message, i.e. are they still getting mail at their office?

While the drive-time radio spot may have been a winner for your cause in the past, you may want to consider reassessing your ad spend and placement given stay-home orders and social distancing requirements.

Social media will continue to provide the most bang for your buck with usage up over 60% since the onset of the pandemic.

## 5. Testing new Tactics

As mentioned in #1 and #4, the pandemic has already had a sizable impact on advertising mediums. Now, while rates are more affordable and competition somewhat diminished, might be the right time to test some new tactics.

Is your organization near a metro region? Perhaps test an outdoor/billboard advertisement.

Have you only pursued digital communication to date? Test using the Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) program to see if it uncovers an untapped donor base.

A test is only as good as it's measurement so make sure you've set up parameters or tracking mechanism to gauge the effectiveness of any new mediums.

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