

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Whether you are a small organization wearing many hats or a growing nonprofit with staff members dedicated to storytelling, it is crucial to share your why, your how, and your impact with your audience. This guide will help you on your path to sharing stories that resonate.



TAKE STOCK OF WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE IN PLACE

One of Women Unite's! first steps in creating a communications plan is an audit. What pieces of collateral do you have on hand? What are your organization's strengths in this area? What are the areas that could use some improvement? Are there any that require immediate attention? Once your organization has an idea of what exists, you can think about whether or not they still work for you.

TIP:

Less is more. You don't need to share every detail about your work! In fact, details and information that's more "evergreen" (aka doesn't change often) helps ensure your collateral stays up-to-date for a longer period of time. You can use things like social media, newsletters, and impact reports to offer folks more information on your work and any exciting updates (more on how to use these tools later!)

Once you've sorted out where you are, you can think about where you want to go and what comms you need to get there. Some pieces WU! likes:

- **One Pager:** This document is a quick overview of your organization that exists on ... you guessed it, one page! It is a great starting point to introduce the reader to your mission, why you exist, and the programs that make your work possible.
- **Postcard:** A well-designed, shorter version of the one pager showcasing the mission and where to go to learn more.
- **Press Kit:** A press kit is a more detailed version of the one pager, typically geared toward the media and other publications. These have more detail on the organization's history, program overviews, and impact language that your organization consistently uses to tell your story. You can include photos to be used by the press, quotes, and showcase links to articles mentioning your work. A press kit can be printed, but WU! prefers digital versions that can live on your website for easy access.



FIGURE OUT WHERE TO REACH YOUR AUDIENCE

When thinking about telling your story, it is important to consider how your donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders like to be reached. Do you serve a constituency that is more likely to read a piece of mail than they are an email? Consider sending a mailpiece to their home a few times a year to keep them engaged.

The same goes for social media—you don't have to be present on every platform, just the ones your audience is most likely to engage with. If you have a very young constituency, consider Instagram and TikTok. Skewing older? Maybe Instagram and Facebook are the best ways to tell your story.

Social media is often a quagmire that takes *a lot* of time and resources. It's important to be thoughtful about the platforms you're on, the info you're sharing, and how you're measuring success!

Measuring success is critical to assessing how much you should be investing in social media.

Be sure to regularly ask yourself:

- What goals do I want social media to help us reach?
- How can I track our success toward achieving these goals?
- Are our posts deepening people's relationship and connection to our work?
- Am I being realistic about what social media can do for our organization?



MAKE A PLAN

A communications plan doesn't need to be stand-alone; the best one will be integrated into your organization's fundraising and stewardship plans. For example: if WU! is planning a monthly donor campaign in April, this will help dictate all of our communications planning. We'll include campaign language in our newsletters, social media platforms, on our website, and have multiple email blasts before, during, and after.

When we aren't in a campaign, we want to make sure to keep our audience engaged and informed on the work we do. We'll share impact stats, photos, and anything else we need to make sure our story is being told.

HARNESSING SOCIAL MEDIA

Let's face it: if you don't have someone dedicated to social media for your organization, it can feel insurmountable. But with a little planning, it can be manageable.

We recommend aiming for 2–3 posts weekly on each platform—and creating a plan for what that might look like, so that you aren't scrambling every single week to come up with content. Here's an example of a monthly calendar, filled with post ideas that are especially helpful in both the busiest and slowest of times.

WEEK ONE

Program Spotlight: Provide an overview of one of your programs, with existing photos or videos.

Meet the Staff: Introduce a new or existing staff member; include a photo and a quote from that person.

WEEK TWO

Impact Statistics: Showcase a statistic around your organization work with a fun graphic. For example “Our Community Education Program reached 278 people in Chicago last year, up 30% from the year before.”

Upcoming Event: Remind your audience about an upcoming date to keep on their calendar. This could be a volunteer opportunity or a fundraiser.

#Hashtags: Use these as excuses to highlight certain aspects of your work and hop on trending topics. For example, you could do a weekly #ThrowbackThursday or #FlashbackFriday to highlight past accomplishments.

WEEK THREE

Share your mission: Just because you can repeat your organization's mission, doesn't mean your audience has it memorized. Share your mission periodically on social media to remind people what you're all about.

Call for Volunteers: If you need volunteers at any point during the year, let your followers know! You can use these opportunities to highlight your work and impact as well as create space to directly connect more people to your work.

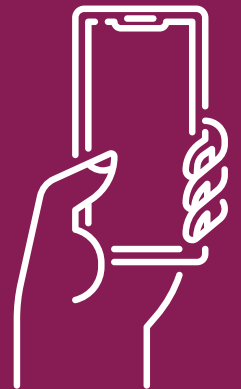
WEEK FOUR

Link to a blog post/news article: Share content that has already been created; whether that is a relevant blog post on your website, or a news article that is appropriate to your work.

Ask for donations: Remind your followers that your work is made possible thanks to gifts from people like them and that gifts of any size makes a difference.

TIP:

Want to stay fresh and leverage social media trends? Block off some time 1–2 days a week (or month!) to focus on creating a reel with a trending sound or jump on a popular meme. That's right—block off and schedule time to create content in real time. This approach allows your organization to leverage trends without spending all of your resources chasing them.



KEEP IN TOUCH WITH E-NEWSLETTERS

One of the easiest and quickest ways to keep your constituency updated is via e-newsletters; you can send a larger chunk of information than on social media, without worrying about it getting lost in ever-changing algorithms. Pick a frequency and stick to it; if you can swing monthly newsletters, great! If creating a quarterly bulletin feels more feasible, awesome!

Keep information easy to scan—informative headers on each section, visually broken up for someone scrolling through quickly, and links directing the reader to your website for even more information. Here's a sample of what a newsletter might look like:

1 Start with the star of the newsletter—the top spot should feature the most important information. Upcoming events, tickets on sale, a new annual report, etc.

2 Next, highlight any additional organizational updates. New staff, new office building, program updates, etc.

Create space to list any important upcoming events that your audience needs to be aware of between now and your next newsletter.

Consider a feature section to give thanks to those that make your work possible. This could be a partner organization spotlight, highlighting a volunteer, introducing key staff or board members, or even featuring donors (if they are willing—always ask permission!).

3 Finish with a soft ask and donation button. For example: “Our mission to help Chicago’s under-served communities is made possible by friends like you. Consider a gift today.”
[MAKE A GIFT BUTTON]

NOTE:

All newsletters should be formatted to show up well on a phone. Most email campaign platforms, like MailChimp, offer a “mobile preview” option so that you can make sure your newsletter shows up correctly on all devices.



COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

EXTERNAL

Canva

While we always recommend a professional graphic designer when possible, for smaller budgets and projects consider using Canva. Gone are the days of attempting to create a masterpiece in Microsoft Paint; now with a few clicks you can customize a premade template to keep a cohesive look to all your pieces.

Later

Sign up for a social media scheduling tool so you don't have to constantly log on to post on each individual platform. WU! uses Later, linking all of our channels to one central place. We have a social media calendar (like the example we shared previously) and are able to create content and schedule it ahead of time.

MailChimp

MailChimp is an easy-to-use platform for creating e-newsletters and other e-blasts that you send to your constituents. With drag and drop functionality, your organization can create nicely designed emails and schedule them to go to different contact lists that you set up.

INTERNAL

In order for your external communications to be successful, you have to make sure your internal communications are functioning smoothly.

Asana

One of the secrets to WU!'s success is thanks to solid project management. We utilize Asana to keep track of ALL of our projects, tasks, and deadlines.

Slack

Keep in touch with a team chat platform. Create channels around specific projects to provide updates, ask questions, or to share relevant memes and GIFs to get you through the workday.

Google Drive

Microsoft Office is no longer the only way to create documents. Google Drive allows us the same functionality to create text documents, sheets, slide presentations, and forms in a much more collaborative way.

TIP:

WU! recommends having brand and tone guidelines in place so that folks involved in communications have a sense of how to talk about your work, your organization, your stance on various issues, etc.



