

Go Bold, Brave, & Beyond in Your Communications

**End the pity party and break
communication silos, the animals
(and humans) deserve it!**

The Canadian donor base is shrinking and changing, making it the ideal time to innovate, adapt, and connect in new ways to new donors and along new storylines.

One of the best ways to do this is by creating more consistent, creative messaging that better connects with your audience and builds an engaged community - one of the top tips we share with our clients.

Below, our team of social sector experts explore strategies for opening internal communication lines, fostering collaboration, and elevating your storytelling.

phil

Break Communication Silos

How many passionate hearts and brains are working in your different teams?
Imagine if they came together more often to pool their perspectives and expertise.

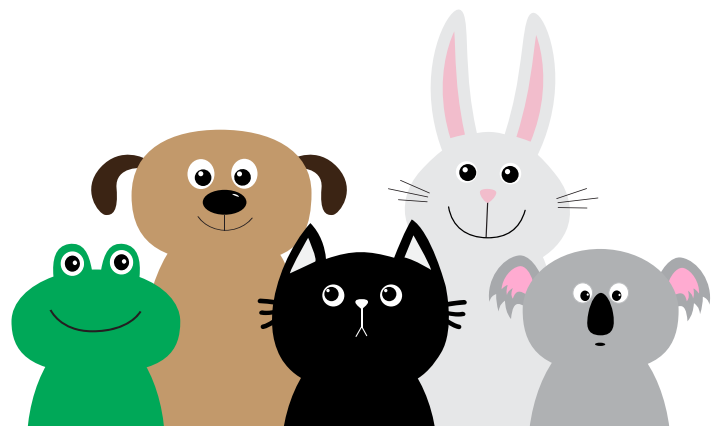
Fostering an organizational culture that encourages cross-departmental cooperation can leverage the strengths of your entire team to deliver unified and compelling messages that resonate.

This means being open to working with people who might not have been on your radar. Who else in your organization should be at the table when making decisions about how, when, and what to communicate to your audiences?

- Imagine the shelter receptionists and the stories they could tell! They see it all, from the heartbreaking moments when sick animals come in, to the heart-mending moments when those animals leave with happy families.
- Have you consulted your volunteers on what compelled them to offer their time and what working with your organization has done for them, their health, and your cause?
- What stories do your program team members have to share with your fundraising team about the inspiring work on the ground, as well as the needs of the shelter that could be part of a case for support or targeted campaign?

Collaborative projects yield superior results as well as build trust and interpersonal relationships within your organization (#retention).

To truly collaborate you will need more than friendly relationships and infrequent meetings between teams.



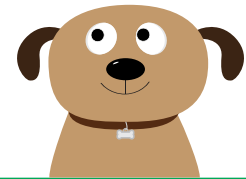
The best way to facilitate cross-team collaboration is to ensure they have...



Common Goals

- Each department has different functions and unique objectives. While they are all part of your organization's global vision they have different ways of working towards that vision. Communicate how all those departments move towards the same ultimate goal to unify your team.

dogs
have
owners



PRO TIP

Have one person in charge of sending out reminders to the team for stories. Create an old-school suggestion box, dedicated slack channel, or even a **stories@yourorg email** for people to submit their stories to. The responsible person then manages that inbox. Best yet, have an all-hands meeting and brainstorm on ways your teams want to collaborate.

Shared data and collaborative space

- Your teams all need access to the same data and documentation in one place.
- They also must communicate in the same tool(s), with specific channels, groups, or chats for easy collaboration on specific projects.

Audience alignment

- Different departments look at your (prospective) donors, adopters, foster families, volunteers, and other audiences from unique perspectives. It's time everyone looked at the complete lifecycle of your audience(s) together and understood the different stages of their journeys and behaviours.
- If you all speak to the same audience, in the same way at each stage of the journey, the message is clear and the experience is smooth.

Stop working in parallel and start working in coordination by aligning priorities and sharing information to offer more personalized experiences to your audience.

	Why are they IMPORTANT?	What do they NEED?
Receptionist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have good stories • They are the central nervous system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need ways/ reminders to send stories • Need to be valued
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have good stories • They are part of the story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need ways/ reminders to send stories • Need to be valued
Program Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have good stories • They know the needs of the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need ways/ reminders to send stories • Need others aware of obstacles blocking programs • Need money to finance their work
Fundraising Team*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the skills and tools to distribute stories and needs and reciprocally thank/lift the team • Direct link to donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need the stories and data to inspire donors to give

**Don't have a fundraising team? No worries! Outsource to a competent animal-loving team like Phil to pull together the stories and provide a plan for reaching your stakeholders.*

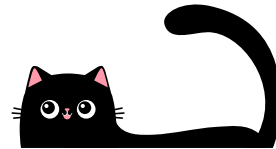
End the Pity Party

It is time to change the narrative around the challenges our non-human friends face by moving away from pity messaging to empowered storytelling.

People are drawn to hope-infused stories.



Dwelling solely on the negative can deter potential supporters and leave a sense of hopelessness or apathy.



Highlighting the positive and how even small efforts make a difference motivates.

What emotions do you want to be associated with your brand identity?

The way you communicate a message greatly impacts how that message is received. Do you want your brand linked only with heart-breaking images and stories of animal suffering, or would you rather share awe-inspiring tales of the regular and super-human efforts used to change the lives of those on two legs and four?

The power of positive emotions

Joy and awe are essential human emotions that improve physical and mental health. These emotions help people better cope with stress, calm the overactive mind, and even make us more likely to perform good deeds.

“Experiencing awe comes from what Dr. Keltner has called a “perceived vastness,” as well as something that challenges us to rethink our previously held ideas. Awe can be triggered from moments like seeing the Grand Canyon or witnessing an act of kindness.”

— *How a Bit of Awe Can Improve Your Health*, by Hope Reese, The New York Times

People love sharing feel-good stories, so word-of-mouth will spread with a more positive narrative. Take your audience out of their daily grind and negative news cycle and give them a reason to get through the rest of their day (or week!) knowing good humans are doing great work for our animal friends.

Show Impact

Did you follow through to the end of the story?

Did you share the solutions and show the results?

Your impact doesn't always have to be "we saved thousands of animals." Every bit counts and you have your unique way of moving the dial on your cause. Mix the qualitative with the quantitative to showcase that uniqueness and how it has a ripple effect on society as a whole, not just the animals themselves.

The first part of sharing your impact is tracking it.

Before you can show your impact, however, you need to think about why you're doing what you do and what the outcomes should be. Get serious about your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and goals so that you have something to measure! Once you're ready to demonstrate your tangible outcomes and build that credibility and trust with stakeholders, you need context.

Donors want to feel like they're part of something larger than themselves. They want to be part of a like-minded community and feel like they are making a difference. They need a clear picture of what their impact is on the wider issue they believe in.

Show that your organization is going beyond just treating the symptoms of a social problem. **Illustrating how you work towards eliminating the root causes** that create an unsustainable situation will help you build long-lasting engagement with your stakeholders.

PRO TIP

Before creating your impact report or social infographics, dive deep into your donor database. Who your audience is affects what metrics you share and how you talk about your impact for the year. If you are new to fundraising, you might need to do an audit or build an acquisition strategy.

Ask Phil about how to create
your Theory of Change!



Tell Compelling Human Stories

Behind every animal saved, lies a human story waiting to be told.

While we're all suckers for puppy-dog eyes and fluffy kittens, what about the family whose life changed after receiving an autism diagnosis for their little girl, and then how it changed again when she bonded with their new foster dog who they later adopted?

What about the story of a sick horse saved from the slaughterhouse pipeline and finally adopted into his forever home and now gets up to all kinds of adventures in his retirement with his favourite new person?

Sharing the inspiring stories of the humans involved in the lives of these animals, whether behind the scenes or in front, can trigger that joy and awe and in turn drive action.

THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

Can you branch out your storylines to show the impact your work has on human healthcare?

How do pets not only benefit the animals who are loved and cared for but contribute significantly to human well-being and improved mental health?

**Those who teach humanity,
aren't always human.**

Donald Hicks



The art of storytelling

It's hard to forget a well-told story. The kind of stories that leave us with some sort of lasting emotion and are imprinted in our brains for years!

The question is, do your staff have the skills to spot a good story?

A quick training in storytelling will help sharpen this sixth sense. It's also another opportunity to bring them together and build those inter-team relationships and bridges.

FUN FACT

Stories are remembered **22 times more often** than standalone facts!

A good story comprises:

- **Strong Characters:** Your shelter or not-for-profit is full of them.
- **Engaging Plot:** You don't have to look far for those plot lines, they're happening in front of and to your staff right now.
- **Vivid Setting:** There's nothing like the transition from squalor to shelter cage, to getting cozy on the family couch.
- **Emotional Resonance:** From tucked tail to wagging tail, the emotional rollercoaster is real!
- **Conflict and Tension:** The suspense of rescue, the nail-biting vet treatment and recovery, and the ups and downs of adapting to a new family life. Need we go on?
- **Voice & Style:** Your passionate tone and vibrant style shine through every day in your work, time to capture them and share broadly.
- **Resolution/Call to Action:** We're all part of the solution!

Effective storytellers:

- **Understand** their audience's interests and concerns.
- **Structure** their stories with a beginning, middle, and end.
- **Have a clear purpose**, whether it's inspiring action or conveying impactful ideas.

By mastering the art of storytelling and incorporating compelling human narratives, your not-for-profit can create a deep and lasting connection with your audience, inspiring long-term support for your cause.

Share & Follow-up Effectively

Sharing your message involves more than just posting and hoping for the best. Are you leaving your outreach success to the whims of algorithms?

When crafting compelling messaging, don't let it be a one-time affair. Repurpose and reuse it across various platforms and campaigns. This saves time and money and reinforces your brand's message consistently.

Re-purpose, Re-use, Re-engage

Re-purpose

Distribute your messaging across multiple platforms. Produce one piece of content and then share it via your website, newsletter, social media, direct mail, merchandise, and more.

Make sure to tailor the content to suit each medium. Your social media post can have the most exciting stats, while your newsletter will have additional sneak peeks or exclusive information for your subscribers.

Re-use

Just because a piece of content was created and shared does not mean you can't **use it again later in the year, next year, or the year after!**

Is there more to the story you can share again with updates?

GO LIVE!

Facebook or Instagram lives allow you to **interact directly with your audience.**

This personal touch point can do wonders for your organization and your cause.



George Carlin

Re-engage

Or just engage, really.

- Ask your donors in polls and surveys for **feedback** on their donor experience, their reasons for giving, etc.
- **Ask your volunteers to contribute financially too**, they're more likely to do so than anyone!
- **Ask for funds more often** throughout the year! You don't get what you don't ask for!
- **Be transparent** about where donations go, and the work of your staff.
- **Engage with donors** in a variety of ways, through in-person meetings, virtual interactions, and/or phone calls.
- **Focus on activities that foster a sense of community and connection** to the cause and each other. Can you run a neighborhood dog walk once a month?

Actively engaging with your audience on the regular builds community and enhances donor retention, which should be the focus more than the acquisition of new donors.

FAQ

How much time will it take? About 10-15 hours/week is needed to work on social media and properly manage your online community.

Do I have to be on every social media channel?

It's better to use one platform well than several poorly!

Did you know...

CBC radio "makes available to qualifying private and public organizations a limited amount of free time to assist them in promoting their public service aims and objectives"?

One Step Further...

Donor engagement goes beyond your organization's direct outreach—remember that any representation of your not-for-profit can influence the way donors choose to interact with your organization. Investing in not-for-profit branding and engagement strategies will lead to greater donor loyalty and, ultimately, more support for your cause.

Phil can help with all of that!

Reach out today!