Inspiring Action through Design

A Capstone Action Project

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Abstract

As I value the impact of nonprofit organizations in the community, I wanted to study the marketing and brand development strategies of these socially driven enterprises so that I can improve their communication output via my branding and design skills, and so that my stakeholder group can communicate their mission and brand message with clarity. The purpose of this paper was to address this research statement, explore the needs of my stakeholder group, and implement a viable solution. My stakeholder group consists of development and marketing staff in nonprofit organizations, commonly a group with limited funds, time, staff and knowledge resources. The group participated in my action research project – a pilot webinar to provide education on branding and communication improvements in their organizations. Surveys were conducted pre and post webinar and the results showed a positive change – an increase in understanding on the topics covered and actions that participants would implement within their organizations. The interest shown by participants is encouraging and shows that continuing down this path of creating a webinar series is a viable solution.

Keywords: action research, webinar, branding for nonprofits, communication for nonprofits
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CHAPTER 1 – Project Scope, Mission, Vision and Proposed Solution

Purpose and Scope

Throughout my seventeen years in the design and marketing industry, the large discrepancy between the quality of design output from nonprofits verses the for-profit world has been evident. Paying closer attention to this discrepancy in the last few years, has provided opportunities to take an active role in improving this at specific nonprofit organizations. These opportunities have provided an inroad to understanding the breakdown in nonprofits’ outward communication. Ongoing research has led to the identification of the root causes, namely a lack of resources in nonprofit organizations. This roadblock is due to limited finances and inadequate staffing, as well as a lack of knowledge regarding the importance of visual and brand communication within these organizations.

In following my passion in design and social impact, and given the discrepancy between the creative outputs of nonprofits verses the for-profit world, I have chosen to focus on creating accessible solutions for nonprofit organizations. Through the coursework at Claremont Lincoln University, researching the past, present and future of branding in nonprofit organizations has shed light and increased clarity on the topic. It is encouraging to see that there is a growing awareness about the importance and need for good branding, design and marketing in mission driven organizations. However, one thing that still stands out is that as effective as many of the creative professionals are in helping nonprofits, they do not seem to be creating a culture of self-reliance in the organizations that they are helping. Teaching nonprofits how to create clear messaging and control their brand internally would allow them to increase the impact in the social problems that they are working towards solving.
Mission and Vision

Deciding to focus on for my capstone project, based on the statements above, combines my skills as a designer and my passion for social justice. At this stage my mission can be stated as follows: To provide branding, design and educational services to socially driven organizations so that they can communicate and promote their cause.

The greater vision is that social enterprises driven to improve the community have access to quality design, branding and marketing services as well as the knowledge and know-how to be self-reliant in this area of communication. Focusing my efforts on those organizations that are driven to improve the community but have limited access to such services, will provide the largest impact. I would also like to take on the bigger challenge of educating non-profits so that they understand why this is a vital part of achieving their organization’s goals and teach them how to maintain internal marketing systems so that they are a more efficient engine for good.

Record of Initial Mindfulness

Learning mindfulness and the importance of its role in professional work has been hugely beneficial in thinking about my area of social impact. Furthering my skills of good listening has opened me up to first-hand accounts of the real issues that nonprofits face and deepened my understanding of how best to use my skills to fill the gaps in supporting them. Tools such as appreciative inquiry, design thinking and positive psychology have allowed me to find appropriate solutions and ask important questions. Since so much of mindfulness is in the daily practice, I have to mention that applying it personally has allowed me to grow leaps and bounds through meditation and more meaningful living.

Some initial questions that initiated my mindful capstone journey are as follows:
• At what stage of their organization's development do non-profit founders begin to think about branding?
• How cohesive is their message?
• What is the internal marketing or development landscape in a non-profit look like?
• Who are the current go to business services or organizations for social entrepreneurs?
• What education will be required to make non-profits understand the importance of design and branding?
• How much are they willing to invest towards strong communication of their message?

Proposed Solution

In the larger area of my social impact initiative, I have explored tiered solutions that will fulfill the vision and mission described. These tiers are a combination of: 1. using content marketing platforms to clearly articulate to nonprofit organization leaders why a strong brand foundation is important to their work; 2. creating a series of education webinars that teach nonprofit organizations how to manage their own brand; and 3. providing direct services to nonprofits to take their organizational brand to the next level.

For the capstone action project I chose to focus on point two, the education aspect – teaching nonprofits how to manage their own brand and how to be consistent on their brand message through webinars. The capstone project will be the pilot webinar.

Limitations

The largest limitation in regards to implementing this capstone action project is time. Designing and launching a webinar from scratch within the academic term’s ten week timeframe
is difficult, however it is doable. Designing the project so that it addresses specific branding topics that are quickly actionable and measurable for the stakeholder participants is key. This will allow the participants to provide valuable feedback within the timeframe set forth. An additional challenge that relates to the resource of time is the lack of it to dedicate to the project due to family and work schedules.

Definitions of Terms

- Branding: The process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product, service and/or organization in the consumers' mind, mainly through consistent messaging and reoccurring themes. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers.

- Design: Used in this paper in the context of graphic design. Design is art with a purpose. It involves a creative and systematic plan to solve a problem or achieve certain objectives, with the use of images, symbols or even words. It is visual communication and the aesthetic expression of concepts and ideas using various graphic elements and tools.
CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review and Initial Stakeholder Dialogue

Introduction to Literature Review

Through the sources compiled in this paper I will revisit the roadblocks of limited resources and knowledge and take a deeper dive into the specific components of education, leadership, creating self-reliance within nonprofits and what the future of branding for nonprofit organizations looks like. I will answer the following questions: What is the historic and current status of branding in the nonprofit sector? Who are some of the major players and what approaches do they take? What is the current culture of learning in nonprofits? What does the infrastructure of nonprofits look like? How are communication specialists working towards improving social missions within the current constraints of learning and infrastructure in nonprofits? What is the future role of branding in nonprofit organizations? What are some innovative ideas that have the potential to change the nonprofit branding and design world?

Past and Current Perspectives on Branding in Nonprofits

To initiate the research, I looked at how branding has been perceived in the nonprofit sector through articles, most of which have been published in the last decade. In the first article No Market for Marketing, published 2005 in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, the author discusses how the use of marketing in nonprofit organizations was lagging considerably behind. Szalavitz mentions that a roadblock for nonprofits is getting the Board of Directors to sign off on branding initiatives due to reluctance of mixing business practices in the nonprofit world. Szalavitz illustrates this point through an example of the Boys & Girls Club where the Board of Directors were initially reluctant to implement a brand strategy, but nonetheless they saw a large growth in the budget once they agreed to do so.
In the nonprofit realm well-formed brands such as Habitat for Humanity and the World Wildlife Fund are recognized and have strong brand equity throughout the world (Kylander & Stone, 2012). In the article *The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector* the authors allude to an important point in the history of nonprofit branding and marketing with differences between how branding was perceived in nonprofits verses how it is viewed now. The old way of branding left many nonprofit leaders feeling distrustful about the concept, seeing it as a business world’s tactic that should be used only for monetary gain and not social causes.

An article published in The Nonprofit Quarterly called *The Eight Building Blocks of Strong Nonprofit Brands* dives deeper into the perception and use of brand specifically in the nonprofit sector. This extensive article was published in the Fall 2015 edition of *Making Things Work: Considerations in Nonprofit Strategy*. It educates nonprofits about what a brand is and provides concrete suggestions on how to start the “snowball of perception and organizational success rolling” (Frumkin, 2015). Frumkin concludes the article with an important insight that nonprofits should be less focused on strategy and performance of their brands and be more focused on brand management – the for-profit world knows that the latter is a proven way to success.

These articles show that in the past it was a common occurrence for nonprofits to not even have a basic marketing plan. As referenced by Szalavitz, the author, the thought of using traditional business ideas “were seen as suspect and potentially contaminating,” (Szalavitz, 2005). In recent years branding for organizations across all sectors has become more commonplace, but there is still a need for better internal brand management in nonprofits.
Varied Approaches on Branding in Nonprofits

To answer the question “Who are some of the major players and what approaches do they take?” I researched to find two design agencies and one nonprofit that takes a different approach towards solving the issue. The two communication agencies Firebelly in Chicago and Big Duck in New York City focus on the nonprofit and mission driven sector. By becoming familiar with their work I was able to see the difference between Firebelly’s more creative, buttoned down approach verses Big Duck’s large agency approach. The nonprofit I researched is one who’s design and branding work I have followed closely, and have great appreciation for as they take a unique perspective, Charity Water.

Firebelly, Chicago

In the podcast Firebelly Merge, Firebelly’s founder Dawn Hancock and lead strategist Antonio Garcia speak to Doug Powell about the vision and methods the company takes on to work towards greater access to brand and design for nonprofits. Under the Firebelly umbrella, the company primarily provides creative services to its mission driven clients. A sub-brand under this umbrella is Camp Firebelly with the goal to empower design students to use their creative powers towards furthering good causes. Firebelly also has a 501(c)(3) foundation through which they provides a grant called the Grant For Good – one nonprofit applicant a year is awarded this grant covering all their design, strategy and marketing for that year (Powell, 2009).

Big Duck, New York City

Big Duck also works exclusively with nonprofit organizations with focused efforts on branding, fundraising campaigns and consulting. Due to the extensiveness of their services they only accept clients with large budgets. The CEO of the company is Sarah Durham, author of Brandraising: How Nonprofits Raise Visibility and Money Through Smart Communications. In
this book, the author speaks directly to nonprofits about how they can improve their own brand awareness. Durham also directly addresses the question that many nonprofits struggle with, “How can we do more with less?” The author breaks down the answer into three categories: the lack of resources, the lack of professional communications staff and the lack of funding for making communication changes (Durham, 2010, p. 25-29) – offering actionable advice to nonprofit leaders on how to work proactively to mitigate these constraints.

**Charity Water, New York**

In the blog post *Why Great Branding is Non-Negotiable for your Organization*, Charity Water’s creative director Vik Harrison shares that the organization’s vision from the start was to change how nonprofits are viewed and to restore a new generation’s faith in giving to charity. Harrison details how Charity Water intentionally grew their brand to empower people to give in a fun, trustworthy way (Harrison, 2015). Through their branding efforts they have inadvertently set a new standard for quality design and reminded the nonprofit world that branding and marketing does not have to be serious and stiff even when dealing with issues as serious as the water crisis around the world. An important and innovative aspect of Charity Water’s organizational model is that private donors fund one hundred percent of their operating costs. This allows all of their donations to go to the field (Guengerich, 2014). Having a generous operational budget allows for the funding of their creative team and creation of a multi-platform brand that has pushed through the roadblocks known to many nonprofits.

**A Look at the Learning Culture and Infrastructure in Nonprofits**

**Sharing and Communicating Knowledge**
In the first article I reviewed, *The Challenge of Organizational Learning* by Katie Smith Milway and Amy Saxton, the authors build a strong case for the importance of sharing and communicating knowledge within nonprofit organizations. Milway and Saxton take an in-depth look at the current knowledge gaps in the internal learning cycle in nonprofit organization, categorizing them into three barriers: goals, incentives and process. Through examples, surveys and interviews the authors found that nonprofits need to set internal learning goals that resonate with the organization’s mission, reinforce a learning culture through incentives and rewards and foster collaboration and staff involvement to create intuitive processes (Milway & Saxton, 2011).

Internal talent development

It is no surprising fact that nonprofits aren’t always able to hire the brightest minds, but perhaps there is more to be done internally to cultivate the right culture and foster growth of the leaders within these organizations. In the article, *Nonprofits Can't Keep Ignoring Talent Development* the authors discuss the lack of upward trajectory that is found in nonprofits. Their examples of DonoorsChoose.org, Good Shepherd Services and Bethesda Mission look at the positive culture created when nonprofit executives provide growth opportunities and mentorship to its employees (Landles-Cobb, Kramer & Milway, 2015).

**Leadership Trends**

Taking the issue of culture a step further, I felt it important to understand the viewpoint of some of the most successful nonprofit leaders. The podcast, *Leadership Trends of the 21st Century* features three leaders in influential nonprofits: the late Peter Goldberg (Alliance for Children and Families), Cathy Tisdale (Camp Fire, Girl Scouts, Chapter Red Cross), and Jim Gibbons (Goodwill Industries, National Industries for the Blind). Goldberg brings to light the human-centered nature of nonprofit organizations and highlight that the most successful
nonprofits stress the importance of those involved to be passionate and intent on the
organizations mission. He asks an important question that resonates with my branding and
technology driven approach: “how do mission driven organizations change with the changing
times but still stay true to their core mission?” (Goldberg, Tisdale & Gibbons, 2011).

Cathy Tisdale expands on this, discussing the struggle within established, iconic
nonprofit organizations of bringing their systems up to modern standards. New, innovative
mission driven organizations have been key in forcing long-standing nonprofits to look at their
shortcomings and move with the times. Jim Gibbons identifies the keys that have allowed
Goodwill to thrive as leadership, community and a culture of challenging the status quo. Jim also
specifies that its membership model for local communities encourages individuality as the
ultimate goal is their service in each local community. Centralization in Goodwill is focused on
providing resources and leadership development to its local chapters (Goldberg, Tisdale &
Gibbons, 2011).

**Infrastructure in Nonprofits**

To look at the issue of infrastructure in nonprofits I reviewed the comprehensive article
*The Nonprofit Starvation Cycle* by Ann Goggins Gregory and Don Howard. In this article the
authors analyze the issue of lack of infrastructure in nonprofit organizations by looking at why
nonprofits and funders continue to skimp on overhead. The effects of inadequate infrastructure
and overhead investments are felt far and wide throughout the organization, its outcome and its
beneficiaries. The article identifies research findings and reveal a vicious “nonprofit starvation
cycle” with three distinct steps in the cycle: unrealistic expectations set by funders, nonprofits
underfeeding their overhead to conform to these unrealistic expectations and lastly, the
misleading reporting response of nonprofits. Gregory and Howard found that the majority of the
change needs to be implemented at the beginning of the cycle by resetting funders’ expectations. If all stakeholders, government, private funders, nonprofits, donors take the correct steps to construct healthy organizations and maximize outcome to recipients, prospective funding change would be best realized (Gregory & Howard 2009).

If nonprofits move towards a culture of employee development and provide better internal education to its staff, my educational program can provide the growth that nonprofit employees in the development department crave and need to perform their jobs better.

Future Role of Branding in Nonprofit Organizations

Research and Insights

In the article, Branding for Nonprofits: New Research, New Insights, the contributing writer interviews Nathalie Kylander about the role of brand in the nonprofit sector. Along with her research team, Kylander talked to individuals in 41 organizations and could see a change occurring with how nonprofits perceive branding. Traditionally brand has been seen as a communication and fundraising tool, but the research shows that it is increasingly becoming more strategic embedded from the mission and vision, the internal brand cohesion to the external brand image. Kylander states that one thing that was a pleasant surprise in the research was the enthusiasm and support for branding within nonprofit organizations - ten years prior this was a “hostile” topic. When asked about the future she discusses her passion “to spark change in the way the nonprofit sector thinks about the role and potential of brand” (Kanani, 2012).

The article, Invest in the Future by Branding the Organization lays out the nuts and bolts of nonprofit branding and marketing in nonprofits and breaks it down into the multiple components. It summarizes the benefits of nonprofit branding, the importance of “living the
brand” as well as the roles of staff, the board, and all stakeholders at uplifting the nonprofit’s mission and brand. The author states that the future of branding in nonprofits is in “capturing the hearts and minds of their target audiences” and should be seen as an investment in the organizations’ tomorrow (Fogel, 2007).

In the article, *Influence and Impact: The New Nonprofit Digital Team* the author looks at the evolution of digital efforts at nonprofits and the trials that lie ahead. Through data gathered from 88 people responsible for digital at their respective nonprofits, the study found there has been a positive shift in building stabilized digital platforms (websites, social media and email) within nonprofits, as well as increased leadership and transformation within departments. The author concludes that the nonprofit sector is well on its way to advancement in staff development, resources and influence and that it is critical for leaders to support digital marketing for the success and future of their nonprofit institutions (Mogus, 2015).

**Skills of Future Nonprofit Leaders**

To take a look at how nonprofits leaders need to manage the futures of the sector, I reviewed the article, *How Nonprofit Leadership Prepares for Its Future*. In this article, the author looks into the skillsets that need to be honed to pass onto future generations - namely, “a business head with a charity heart”. Timing, credibility, integrity, financial savvy, passion, trustworthiness, communication skills, team building and creating a positive, productive culture are all among the ones identified by the author. A good culture that nonprofits are fostering is one of “shared leadership” where authority is broadly distributed (Lamb, 2014). I felt this article was useful for understanding the mindset of nonprofit leaders as much of my social impact work will include working with nonprofit leaders.
Nonprofit Communication Specialists

For this section I looked at two communication specialists that primarily serve nonprofit organizations but are outside of the direct field of branding and design. For each specialist I was able to find interviews where they discussed their business structure and passion towards nonprofit missions. To gain greater insight into their business structure, I followed the links provided to take a look at their business model and the breadth of their offerings.

**Kivi Leroux Miller**

The first one is Kivi Leroux Miller, an online educator, coach and consultant “who helps nonprofit communications professionals both learn their jobs and love their jobs” (Barnett, 2016). In the podcast interview by Noah Barnett of CauseVox, *What Makes a Nonprofit Successful*, Miller discusses why she focuses on nonprofits, the need she sees for nonprofits to improve their communications and how she has simplified the process to allow her teachings to speak to this.

Miller also mentions that a primary focus is to make communication and development team members feel supported so that they want to stay in the nonprofit sector. Her findings have shown that work done in an integrated team increases job satisfaction and output level. Discussed in the interview is the major problem of development staff in nonprofits feeling like they are being pulled in many directions all at once, essentially doing none of their tasks exceptionally well. This lack of focus produces mediocre results.

Doing some further research into Miller’s business model uncovered that she offers a leveled membership model: annual and 30 day membership, as well as a single pay option for each webinar or workshop (The All-Access Pass, n.d.). Miller teaches webinars and workshops
several times a month as well as runs an informative blog for nonprofit communication and development staff.

**John Haydon**

The second communication specialist is John Haydon, the founder of Inbound Zombie, a social media strategy firm in Massachusetts that helps non-profits increase awareness, amplify engagement, and obtain more donations online (Loomer, 2012). Haydon is also an online instructor with Charityhowto, an online learning resource for nonprofit organizations. Jon Loomer, a Facebook marketing expert interviews Haydon in the post *One on One: Making a Difference with John Haydon*. In this interview Loomer focuses on how Haydon got started with his nonprofit focus and passion for social justice and inequality. When asked about the uniqueness of his business, Inbound Zombie, Haydon answers “On the surface, Inbound Zombie provides digital marketing consulting to small and medium-sized nonprofits. But on a deeper level, what we do is resuscitate missions and inject them into the Internet! We help nonprofits figure out how to best use social media in a way that matches their available resources, and also gets them excited again about the mission of the nonprofit.” Haydon’s response shows that by providing much-needed education, nonprofits can be inspired to take their outward communication into their own hands.

Further research into Haydon’s business model, showed that he is currently most active in online training geared towards nonprofit teams and coaching. Similar to Miller, Haydon creates training content in varied price levels (Online Courses, n.d.) as well as partners with online networks like Charityhowto to create larger access to the knowledge and insights shared. An interesting fact that stood out is that both communication specialists have a similar seventy-five dollar price point for their online training videos.
Innovative branding concepts and models

User Experience

An important trend in the graphic design and branding world that must not be ignored is the increased interest in user experience (UX), the study of all aspects of a user’s experience with a company, product, service or website. In the article, *Designing Nonprofit Experiences: Building a UX Toolkit*, the author describes the UX techniques that can be borrowed from For-profit UX and the practices that are ingrained on nonprofit design that are of benefit to the commercial designer. Of particular interest to me and my area of social impact are these practices which include wrangling stakeholders, encouraging exploration and storytelling (Kruger, n.d.).

Impact Design

The article *The Future of Impact Design Education* takes a different approach and asks twelve designers “What will the education of impact designers look like ten years from now, in the year 2025?” The answers resonated strongly with my social impact mission and gave me insight into what designers view the future of nonprofit design as. Many of the answers included the topics learned in the Claremont Lincoln’s Social Impact program: connecting multiple perspectives, thinking across sectors, education, increased social awareness, designing “with” as opposed to “for” and a well-honed design attitude (Impact Design Hub, 2015). In the podcast *Episode 103* by Tony Loyd, the author with Krista Carroll of Latitude Elevates, CEO of a for-profit creative agency, powered by purpose. Carroll discusses how the agency came to be and Latitude’s social enterprise business model – donating 50% of their
profits to help women and children in the developing world. They work with three nonprofits who are in eighteen countries, with all the work funded from profits from their creative agency – so far Latitude has donated over two million dollars towards their social mission (Loyd, 2016).

In the video and webpage by Red Thinking LLC, another innovative idea is presented with the branding agency’s annual give back event called Brand Jam. Here the agency shuts its doors for twenty-four hours and focuses on pro-bono work helping three selected nonprofits clarify their brand messaging and outputting quality design projects. By focusing solely on these projects for twenty-four hours they are able to make big strides and impact on the organizations they are working with. They also open up this event to creative community members as participants in the output process (Brand Jam, Giving Back, n.d.).

Stakeholder Perspective on Branding in Nonprofits

I have identified two levels of stakeholders that will be vital for creating change through teamwork and collaboration. They are as follows: 1. Work closely with the nonprofit’s team (usually the development department) to implement strategies within their organization. 2. Build strong relationships with skilled design professionals that are instrumental to collaboration and the production phase.

Nonprofit Development Teams

In the capstone, I foresee a need to work closely with nonprofit development team members in order to reach the desired outcome, and a win-win situation. My goal with each nonprofit is to inspire, educate and facilitate a brand and marketing strategy within their organizations.

Design Professionals
Over the years I have actively maintained personal and professional relationships with some highly skilled developers and designers. These are people I approach when a project calls for specific skills outside of my immediate skill sets. I was able to have one of these colleagues participate in the timeframe of my capstone project.

**Stakeholder Roles**

In either proposed solution above I will need the participation and understanding of key stakeholders both within my organization and the larger community. Below is my list of stakeholders and their roles in their organizations. For the sake of privacy and as per our agreement all names have been omitted and will only be referred to by “Participant A” and “Nonprofit 2” etc.

Participant A: Senior Media Specialist, Nonprofit 1  
Participant B: Chief Philanthropy Officer, Nonprofit 2  
Participant C: Development Coordinator, Nonprofit 2  
Participant D: Marketing Development Associate, Nonprofit 2  
Participant E: Volunteer Coordinator, Nonprofit 3  
Participant F: Director of Marketing & PR, Nonprofit 4  
Participant G: Associate Director of Development, Nonprofit 4  
Participant H: Director of Development, Nonprofit 5

My stakeholder group consist of a design colleague and nonprofit development staff members with varied roles within their organizations. All the organizations operate at a county and regional level. Participant A is a design and marketing professional that shares a similar passion or vision and brings a unique perspective and skillset to the table.
For the nonprofits I have chosen to focus on two nonprofits that are varied in scope and
size. Their participation is vital to helping me understand the social problem at hand as they
allow me to learn more about the inner workings of the department that my services would serve.
The nonprofits selected need branding and design services to further their organization’s
mission. Within their organizations they are looked to for spreading the mission and message
through community involvement, fundraising events, volunteer outreach and financial or
advocacy campaigns.

**Stakeholder Interviews**

My stakeholder interviews were a combination of face-to-face, phone interviews and
email surveys. The interview method used was determined by convenience for the stakeholder.
My initial interview was simple questions to gage their interest and fit in the capstone project.
The questions asked to all participants:

1. How do you view the role of branding in nonprofits?
2. What issues do you perceive as being a barrier towards branding a (your)
   nonprofit?

Additional questions depending on the role of the participant:

3. At what level do you view your current creative output?
4. If none of the barriers were in place, at what level of creative output would you
   like to be at?
5. What easy improvements (from a business perspective) do you think nonprofits
   could make to improve their creative output?

Based on these questions I gained insight about the lack of understanding of what
branding actually is. I heard some worries along the lines of financial barriers – that is, the lack
of budget and not clear on how much of the budget should be allocated towards creative services. Participant A said “The biggest barriers are lack of understanding about what successful branding looks like, and even an internal consensus on if finite bandwidth should be devoted for branding activities”.

Participant B said: “For my team, cost is the largest barrier. We are not sure if we will be able to invest enough money into the brand development to truly get our name out there. We of course want to invest as much as we can so that we can reach as many people as possible”. Other concerns voiced by the stakeholders were about not having enough personnel resources or trained staff to handle the different avenues that nonprofits would like to put their effort in.

There was mention about restrictions from upper leadership about what the department’s focus should be, leaving little room for experimentation. Participant H said: “The first word that comes to mind would be restricted. As manager of the development team I would like to be able to test new concepts to see how our customers respond. It is however restricted by upper management. We could use some help on how to convince them to allow us to test some new ideas. Who knows, we might be able to find a more effective approach.”

This lack of learning culture discussed by the nonprofit team members was similar to my findings when reviewing the literature article, *The Challenge of Organizational Learning* by Katie Smith Milway and Amy Saxton. Two interesting facts stood out which apply directly to my issue: a large budget or staff is not required to create a learning environment. Secondly, by adopting simple technological tools, nonprofits can create a strong learning and information culture within their organizations. This would allow for a more productive workforce and provide higher impact towards their mission.
The issue of infrastructure in nonprofits was discussed in the article review of *The Nonprofit Starvation Cycle* by Ann Goggins Gregory and Don Howard. This article confirmed what participants discussed, that there is a real infrastructure issue within nonprofits that I need to be aware of and address in my education materials. The infrastructure issue is compounded by the funding sources nonprofit organizations are so reliant on, putting limits to where and how the funds are used. It also brought to light the underlying prejudice of nonprofits being expected to do a lot with small operational budgets. This means hiring the most skilled person for every position is often not a reality which can be afforded.

**Research Conclusion**

Through the source reviews and stakeholder interviews, I am encouraged that I am on the right track towards my social impact mission. I am now able to see patterns within the issue of nonprofit communication of their brands. The creative professionals researched have persevered in creating change in the design, branding and marketing industry. The research allowed me to expand my understanding on models that could be applicable towards the education component of my social mission. After confirming that there is a deficit in the learning and knowledge sharing culture within nonprofits, as well as a real lack of infrastructure within these organizations, I was able to look at the innovative methods that communication specialists are using towards providing education and support. Through researching the future of branding and design in nonprofit organizations, I am glad to see that the general consensus is that there is a growing awareness about the importance and need for good branding, design and marketing in mission driven organizations.
CHAPTER 3 - Methods Determined with Stakeholders

Many nonprofit organizations struggle with communicating a clear brand message. My professional experience and research has shown this is often due to limited resources and knowledge. Initial stakeholder interviews confirmed this to be true. This fueled my determination to create a social impact solution that creates affordable access and knowledge regarding brand creation and management in nonprofit organizations.

Project Goal Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

Taking the input from research, experience and stakeholders into consideration I was able to narrow down on the goal for this project: to pilot an educational webinar series that helps nonprofit development staff gain the skills they need to strengthen their organization’s brand and communication. Given that the topic of branding and communication is so vast, it would be impossible to cover all areas in one webinar. The limitation of the 10-week course time was also another factor to consider. These constraints meant that stakeholder feedback became essential to determining the specific topic of the pilot webinar in the series.

The stakeholder group consisted of eight development staff members from five mid-sized nonprofit organizations. I began the formal stakeholder recruitment process by sending out an email to potential participants that were working within nonprofit development teams. Many of the stakeholders were already familiar with my project and had provided some of the initial feedback described in chapter two. In the email, the goals and timeline of the project were clearly stated, what was expected of the participants, and what they could expect in return. Out of respect for their time I streamlined the steps considerably. I also assured them that their identity
would remain private. A copy of the invite to participate email and letter of privacy are attached in Appendix A and B.

Project Methods Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

The “how to” plan for this project was purposefully kept fluid and adjusted as the project progressed to allow for stakeholder feedback. Below are the methods and the step by step plan that brought the project into fruition.

Step 1: Clarify the Research Action Project

In this phase I clarified the vision for the capstone action project. This is the stage where I decided to solve the issue from the education perspective and launch a pilot webinar as my action project. I solidified the “why” behind my goals and objectives for the project. I included design colleagues perspectives in the process and began by asking questions of nonprofit development staff. All the early participants became part of my stakeholder group as defined in chapter two. Through research and listening I was able to solidify my vision for the project (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 106-112) and foster a collaborative spirit from the start with stakeholders. To clarify the project, I answered the following questions:

- What is my budget and time frame for implementation of a pilot webinar?
- What are some potential prominent messages to communicate in the webinar?
- What should (and should not) be included in the webinar?
- What educational content and deliverables need to be created? How will I go about creating these?
- What tools, systems and technology will need to be in place to streamline the process?
Step 2: Confirm Stakeholder Participation

In this stage I sent out emails to stakeholders clearly articulating why they have been chosen to participate, the level of commitment required for their participation and what outcomes they can expect. I sent out and collected signed privacy letters from all stakeholders and participants I assigned each participant a generic name as defined in chapter two (Participant A, Nonprofit 1, etc.).

Step 3: Baseline Survey

A baseline survey was sent out asking the stakeholders to answer five questions to assess the state of branding and design in their organization and identify the communication aspects they struggle with the most. The survey was sent via google forms.

Step 4: Gather Feedback

Feedback was collected from the baseline survey and used to identify the topic of branding that stakeholders were struggling with the most within their organizations. During this step I sent out the next email with date and time options for the webinar.

Step 5: Create Webinar Content

Webinar content was created based upon the feedback received. The educational content was based of my industry knowledge, feedback from design colleagues and professional literature sources. I used PowerPoint, Adobe Acrobat, Illustrator and Photoshop to create the slides and handbook for the pilot webinar. In this step I also created the final survey questionnaire to send out directly after the webinar.

Step 6: Webinar

I sent a reminder email to all participants with the confirmed date and time, and how to connect to the webinar. The webinar was setup as a Zoom meeting. The webinar was
approximately forty minutes long, consisting of thirty minutes of educational content and ten minutes of questions and answers. I recorded the webinar to review later and determine what areas could be adjusted and improved. For those participants unable to make the live webinar, I emailed an overview of the topics covered and the slide presentation shared in the webinar. I did not send out the live webinar as I felt it would be a breach of the participant privacy agreement.

**Step 7: Post Webinar Survey**

A post-webinar survey was emailed out directly after the webinar, as well as a PDF of the slides to keep on hand for future use. The questions asked on the survey identified the effectiveness of the content shared, improvements that could be made and additional topics that would be beneficial to the stakeholders. In the same style and format as the baseline survey, the post webinar survey was sent via google forms.

**Step 8: Compile Final Results**

The results from the webinar and surveys were compiled to show the area(s) of brand communication that nonprofits struggle with, and how successful the pilot webinar was in solving and improving the specific areas.

**Project Measurements Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders**

Measurement for this project will assess change through implementation of this project. It will focus on the usefulness of the pilot webinar to the participating stakeholders. The first survey will help determine what brand topic my webinar should cover. The last survey will measure whether the webinar format is both convenient and effective, and whether the stakeholders feel they can easily apply the content shared in the webinar. The ultimate objective is to measure the success and ease of access towards the social mission defined in chapter one.
Baseline Survey

The purpose of this survey (step three of the methods section above) is to identify what nonprofit development teams struggle with most in regards to their brand communication. In the baseline survey I will ask the following questions of the participants, all questions will be required:

• Please provide your title: __________

• What are the top 3 goals for your role in the organization?

• What would you say are your organization’s top 3 goals?

• Select the answer(s) below that best describes how you feel about your organization’s brand currently:
  o I think we’re clear and concise and well understood
  o I think there is some brand confusion about what we do and who we are
  o I think the community does not understand who we are and what we do
  o Other: ___________

• What are your ongoing struggles as it relates to communication and your role within your organization?

• Based on the struggles you identified, what skill(s) do you think you need to acquire so that it’s easier to fulfill your role?

Post Webinar Survey

Directly after the webinar I will send out a post-survey to all participants. The focus of this second survey will be to determine the success of the webinar and determine if there was positive change on the stakeholders understanding of brand management. Questions in this section will be roughly as follows:
• Please provide your title: __________

• Please rate how your understanding of each topic covered changed:
  o Why a clear, consistent brand is important: 1 (confused) to 5 (confident)
  o Building a strong framework: the written brand and the visual brand: 1 (confused) to 5 (confident)
  o Creating a brand experience – online and print: 1 (confused) to 5 (confident)
  o Effective storytelling: 1 (confused) to 5 (confident)
  o Brand management tools and resources provided (slides PDF included): 1 (confused) to 5 (confident)

• What action steps (if any) presented in the webinar will you implement in your organization?

• What action steps (if any) presented in the webinar will you NOT be implementing?

• Would you be interested in additional webinars regarding nonprofit branding and communication? Yes, No, Maybe.

• If yes/maybe, what topic(s) would you like to see covered?

• Additional comments? All feedback is welcome and would be appreciated

Methods Conclusion

If the measurements show that a webinar series can be useful to nonprofit organizations and does actually teach them how to manage their own brand, I can continue down this path and develop a comprehensive webinar series. To make this social initiative sustainable, I would conduct further research to determine what an appropriate fee for each webinar would be based on current competition, the value of the content shared and the cost of production and marketing expenses. Making the project maintainable would let me reach my goal of providing accessible
and affordable branding and design education to nonprofits so they are able to share their organizational message and mission clearly.
CHAPTER 4 - Results: Evidence of Change through Project Implementation

Actions Taken by Researcher and Stakeholders

To address the problem of a lack of access to branding and design services in nonprofit organizations, I piloted a webinar series that aims at teaching development officers how to manage and communicate their organization’s brand effectively. The pilot webinar became my action research project. To carry out the project, I followed the steps as set out in the methods chapter. Below is a summary of the steps completed in order. For details on each please refer to pages 22 to 24 of this paper.

Step 1: Clarify the Research Action Project

Step 2: Confirm Stakeholder Participation

Step 3: Baseline Survey

Step 4: Gather Feedback

Step 5: Create Webinar Content

Step 6: Webinar

Step 7: Post Webinar Survey

Step 8: Compile Final Results

Due to unexpected delays both on my part and stakeholders schedules, I had to make adjustments on the timeline along the way. My original schedule was to have the webinar completed ten days earlier than the date it was actually held – March 2nd, 2018. The delay was because it took longer for me to send out the initial survey (step 3). Stakeholders averaged three days longer to complete the questionnaire due to a holiday weekend (step 4). Creating the webinar content (step 5) and finding a day and time that worked for the majority of the participants (step 6) created an additional delay in timeline. By having the post-webinar survey...
ready to send out to participants immediately after the webinar and requesting a fast response I was able to get the project back on track.

Measurements of Results

The results from the baseline survey were very insightful. Five stakeholders completed the first survey. These stakeholders confirmed what my research had shown that nonprofit staff struggle with knowing how to communicate their organization’s brand message consistently, staying above water with their workload and organizational limitations due to lack of financial resources.

When participants were asked the top three goals for their organization, the results were a combination of:

1. Service and program improvements in the area of their specific social area. For example Nonprofit 4, indicated that they are primarily concerned with meeting the needs of vulnerable children now and over time.
2. Financial expansions - recruiting and engaging new donors, retaining current donors.
3. Resource and systems building within the organization.

When the participants were asked the top three goals for their specific roles the results were as follows:

1. Increasing brand awareness and their organization’s name recognition within the community.
2. Increasing resources, a combination of financial and volunteering.
3. Staying current, effective and on message across their social media, website and collateral.
All participants indicated that they felt “there is some brand confusion about what we do and who we are”. A participant further indicated that it depended on the market – “In some markets, there is brand confusion. In some markets, the community does not know who we are”. A participant additionally selected “the community does not understand what we do”.

Select the answer that best describes how you feel about your organization’s brand:

- There is some brand confusion about what we do and who we are (5 responses)
- Our brand is clear, concise and well understood (0 responses)

When the stakeholders were asked about their specific struggles in the area of their communication roles and how they could improve them, the results were diverse and insightful. For this reason, I felt it important to share these results in full. Please refer to the table below. Each row represents a different participant’s answer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are your ongoing struggles as it relates to communication and your role within your organization?</th>
<th>Based on the struggles you identified, what skill(s) do you think you need to acquire so that it's easier to fulfill your role?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Time to accomplish everything that needs to be done</td>
<td>• Building effective teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working within a nonprofit budget</td>
<td>• Negotiation training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Getting consensus within the organization as to what our messaging should be</td>
<td>• Time management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Distinction between our organization and others that are similar</td>
<td>• Learning about applications and tools that save time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Segmenting donor communication to cater to areas of greater interest</td>
<td>• Negotiating with executive level decision makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognizing and engaging high level donors</td>
<td>• Communicating in more illustrative and pointed language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicating impact of donation at every level of giving</td>
<td>• Time and task management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finding the time and method to educate and engage new partners in a mission that has multiple pillars and vast subsets in achieving its goals</td>
<td>• Event coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diversifying our communication, messaging, and interest</td>
<td>• Database management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn more about the community, and be more engaged and dynamic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the baseline survey helped me understand what areas nonprofit communication staff struggled with the most, and tailor my webinar content accordingly. Since all participants indicated that their organizations experienced brand confusion, I decided that “how to clarify a nonprofit’s brand” would be an appropriate theme for the pilot webinar. I broke down the content covered in the webinar into the following categories. Each topic was covered as thoroughly as possible within the time limitations, and actionable steps were included in each category. Some key slides from the webinar are shared in Appendix C.

1. Brand overview

2. The importance of a clear consistent brand

3. Building a strong brand framework
   a. The written brand
   b. The visual brand

4. Creating a brand experience online and in print

5. Effective storytelling as a branding strategy

6. Tools and resources for brand management and education

At the end of the webinar I asked participants if they had any questions. One participant asked for examples of one of the action steps suggestions I had made. Another participant made a comment about the richness of information covered in a short time. In the post-webinar email I sent the examples requested along with a PDF document of the slides shared. I also sent a link to the post-webinar survey.

The results from the post-webinar survey were perceptive. The participants rated each area of the webinar favorably, with all the results in the fours and fives on the scale of one to five. This indicates that the content covered improved their understanding of the topics covered.
Each participant expressed at least one action step from the webinar that they would implement in their organization’s branding efforts. Only one participant said there was one strategy mentioned in the webinar that would not apply to their organization. All participants indicated that they were interested in additional webinars (see graphic below). They provided feedback on the additional topics they would be interested in learning – these included: storytelling, email marketing, developing brand guidelines, and Facebook marketing.

In the final comment section, positive comments and suggestions for improvement were provided by the participants about the pilot webinar:

- “I like how you mentioned things you should and shouldn’t include in print and web marketing. I would love to see examples included too, I am very visual so I think it would help tremendously.”
- “Really good webinar for the amount of content overviewed within the amount of time provided.”
- “Loved the webinar and felt like everything was spot on. Would love examples of things you recommend, like: Here’s a sample boilerplate, here’s a sample
Facebook post about policy, here’s a Branding Guide, etc.”

Communication of Results to Stakeholders

The results from the baseline survey were shared with the participants at the beginning of the webinar. I provided an overview of the feedback received, as well as a summary of the research, and explained how I used these to tailor the webinar topic and content covered. At a couple of points in the webinar I mentioned the survey results as it related to the specific content. For example I said, “a few participants mentioned that they struggle with ____, so here’s a suggestion that can help with that”. All stakeholders received the final PDF version of this paper via email and were directed to Chapter 2 for industry research results and Chapter 4 for webinar results.

Assessment of Goal Achievement

The goal achievement for this project can be assessed in two ways:

1. Is this solution a viable option to solve the problem of lack of access to branding and design in nonprofit organizations?

2. Was the content taught in the webinar clear and actionable so that nonprofit staff can make improvements on their organization’s brand and external communication?

From the initial interest shown from the stakeholders to the finals results collected after the webinar, I feel confident to say these two goals were achieved. An educational webinar teaching nonprofits how to become experts on their organization’s brand is an effective solution. Similarly tailoring the content of the webinar to what nonprofit communication staff struggle with most means that the time spent in the webinar is well worth it.
CHAPTER 5 - Final Reflections and Recommendations

Overall Project Summary

As a first time social impact researcher, I found the process of implementing an action research project both fun and challenging. Starting with the big picture of my social mission “to provide branding, design and educational services to socially driven organizations so that they can communicate and promote their cause” and then narrowing down to the action project of launching a pilot webinar was beneficial. Researching all aspects related to the social mission, permitted me to deepen my understanding of the issues, the industry’s progress and limitations, and how best to utilize my skills and experience in creating a viable solution.

The step-by-step plan made me appreciative of the process and made the project itself more manageable. It allowed for objectivity in the methods, and being able to see what was practical, necessary and doable within the timeframe. In this manner, letting go of the elements that didn’t serve the mission well and could not be completed within the short timeframe became easier. Having the steps laid out in detail allowed me to stay focused on the next task, in turn reducing overwhelm and project creep.

Involving stakeholders in the process beginning at the research phase was probably the most beneficial part of the process. Finding and connecting with stakeholders that were the target audience for this project, and interested in the topic proved to be valuable. Their input helped shape the project and provided real world understanding of the struggles they face in their organizational roles. Without this input, the action research project would have leaned towards designing a solution that was beneficial in theory but not as effective towards solving the actual problem.
Consistency of Guiding Values

A guiding value throughout this project and my career thus far is self-reliance. Once the barriers in nonprofit organizations were clearly identified, I was determined to find a solution that allowed them to move past these. My vision for nonprofits to be self-sufficient in the area of branding and communication, to not rely on outside contractors and agencies, was a guiding principal in designing the solution. This way these organizations would not be held back by limited resources and become self-directed in spreading the message of their good work. Valuing education as a means to becoming self-reliant is what led to the webinar solution. In the webinar my value of honesty and transparency played a part as I was creating and presenting content. I was diligent on sharing only useful, true and tested advice, and consciously did not hold back on information that would be vital to their organization’s success.

My professional experience has made me value the importance of good branding in an organization. A thorough understanding of the “why” behind my social mission was important: a strong, clear, consistent brand amplifies an organizations efforts, catapulting the nonprofit into receiving imperative support and resources. This understanding was articulated to the stakeholder participants and was received well. The “why” helped to keep me on track on the project’s mission, molding my project instead of making blind assumptions. When I was overwhelmed with the process, the “why” reminded me what a successful outcome on the project could mean to solving this issue. Being in close contact with my stakeholder group, understanding their frustrations was valuable in applying the Golden Rule – it allowed me to put myself in the shoes of development staff and tailor my webinar message so that its most beneficial.
Project Impact on the Researcher

This project and the process of implementing it has been an eye opening experience. In entering the Social Impact program, I had a fairly clear idea of what I wanted my capstone project to look like. I assumed through the coursework of the program slight improvements would be made but that it would remain mostly the same. Reflecting on the process, I am surprised by how much the project evolved over time.

Through Claremont Lincoln University’s Common Core coursework – mindfulness, dialogue, collaboration, and change – my capstone project evolved considerably and took form. In mindfulness, I wrote my research statement to be: “Because I value the impact of non-profit organizations in the community, I want to study the marketing and development strategies of these socially driven enterprises, in order to better understand and improve how to structure my branding and design services, so that I can be a driver for greater access to affordable quality outputs and aid these organizations in communicating and promoting their cause.” As you can see here I was solely focused on providing design services to nonprofit organizations. In dialogue, I rewrote this statement to be more open ended: “Because I value the impact of nonprofit organizations in the community, I want to study the marketing and development strategies of these socially driven enterprises so that I can improve their communication output via use of my branding and design skills, so that my stakeholder group can communicate their mission and brand message with clarity.” Beginning open dialogue with stakeholders opened my eyes to possible new solutions.

It was not till the collaboration coursework that I really understood that an educational program in the form of a webinar or workshop series could be a viable solution. Through the change coursework I was able to further narrow down my research action project to piloting a
webinar. In reflection, I can see that collaborating with stakeholders was the single most impactful part of my process. The skills learnt throughout the common core process have improved my relationships both personal and professional, and improve the outcomes of my projects significantly. Specifically attaining listening skills, learning how to question my assumptions and gaining insight from the audience that I wish to serve has impacted me the most.

Project Impact on the Stakeholders

Based on the post survey results, the participants were positively impacted by this action research project. Their understanding of branding confidently changed from the content presented in the webinar. In Appendix D, I share the summary tables from the post-webinar survey when participants were asked how their understanding of each topic covered changed. Participants rated most sections as fours and fives on the one to five scale, with five showing an increase in confidence on the topic. The participants left the webinar with actionable steps that could be quickly implemented into their communication efforts and lead to positive results.

Another positive impact was noticed through conversations and email exchanges with stakeholders. Here the mentions of branding, design and marketing evolved among the nonprofit participants and their organizational teams through the course of this project. In the later weeks, these conversations were geared towards considerations on how to use their limited time and resources more effectively to improve their organization’s message sharing. Following a key slide share (Appendix C) of how to know if a campaign or marketing push is successful, two stakeholders mentioned that they will refer back to this list. Considerations like this within nonprofit organizations are crucial to continued success. One participant commented “asking the
question “did it position you as the go to organization or resource?” is one that I had not thought of before. Many of our campaigns are to further our position as the local expert agency”.

Overall Project Assessment

Overall the project was successful. Moving from an in-depth webinar or workshop series to a single pilot program kept it manageable within the ten-week timeframe. The strengths were that the solution carried out is a viable one, and met all the goals it set out to achieve – providing access to branding knowledge to nonprofit organizations, making organization self-reliant in the area of communication, and teaching them the benefits of sharing a stronger, more clear and consistent message.

Testing the idea through an exact process was beneficial to see where improvements can be made on the project. Here is a list of where I believe the weaknesses were and advances could be made:

1. Get earlier buy-in from stakeholders and involve them in more conversations from the start. Time and scheduling limitations made it difficult to this at the end of the project.

2. Go more in depth on a couple of branding topics to increase participant’s understanding of these topics.

3. Include quantitative measurements in the pre and post surveys. For example, number of new donors in the last month, social media engagement numbers, etc. This would have added an additional layer of information to the project.

4. Provide a workbook with follow through steps to the participants as the end of the webinar. These could then be submitted for further analysis.
Recommendations for Future Projects

My goal is to continue on this path and expand the webinar series beyond this action research project. Seeing that stakeholders would be interested in additional webinars, I would like to create a series of six, each focused on a specific topic and tailored to a subset of the demographics. For example, a branding guideline webinar for upper marketing and development management or sharing your nonprofit brand on social media webinar for development staff. By continuing the conversations already started with stakeholders, and actively seeking new participants, I hope to create a series that will benefit my core audience, and ultimately increase brand messaging throughout the nonprofit sector.
REFERENCES


The All-Access Pass. (n.d.). Retrieved from

http://www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com/resources/all-access-pass/
Appendix A: Ethical Guidelines

Updated consent form sent to participants to ensure their privacy

To Whom It May Concern,

I am doing an action research project about branding and design in nonprofit organizations, and I am asking you to be a participant in my research.

I will give priority to your interests at all times. To protect your interests in my final report, I promise the following:

- Your identity will be protected at all times in my final report.
- You are free at any time to withdraw from the research project, whereupon I will delete all data collected from you. I will report that a participant decided to leave the project, and reflect on ways the project might have been more conducive for all participants.
- I will make a copy of my research report available to you.

Please sign below and email back. Please keep a copy for your records.

Thank you,

Faeda Elliott

Researcher: Faeda Elliott
Date: 2/1/18

I have received an ethics statement from Faeda Elliott.

Signed ___________________________ Date ___________________________

NOTE: If at any time you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact the Dean of Capstone Studies at Claremont Lincoln University, Dr. Stan Ward. Please contact him by email: sward@claremontlincoln.edu, or call the university: 909-667-4400.
Hello [Name]

I am now in the final term of a Masters in Social Impact program (yay!) and working on completing my research action project as part of my final requirements. The project is regarding the role of branding and design in nonprofits as it relates to an organization increasing its mission (brand) awareness and increasing donations and volunteers. Given our previous conversations regarding this topic and your role with [Organization Name], would you be interested in participating? Your name and organization affiliation will be kept private, you will only be referred to as “participant A” or something along those lines.

Knowing everyone’s busy schedule I have kept the commitment from participants low. It would consist of:

1. Completing an initial survey (about 5 questions) sent via email
2. Participation in a 45 minute webinar/zoom call towards the end of February.
3. Completing a post survey regarding the webinar sent via email

Upon completion of the project, a copy of the results will be made available to you. The goal is that participants will leave the webinar with some key takeaways regarding branding that can be implemented within their organizations.

Please let me know if you are interested. If you are I will send you a simple participation privacy letter to keep on file. The initial survey will be sent out in the next 2 weeks.
Also, a final ask: If you have peers within your organization or at a different nonprofit that you think might benefit from participation, could you let me know please.

Thank you!

Faeda Elliott
Appendix C: Key Slides Shared With Participants in Webinar

**Why Nonprofits Communicate?**

- To raise money
- To recruit volunteers
- To reach the right audience for your programs
- To establish your leadership position around your core issue

**Is your brand communication effective?**

MEASURING IMPACT ON INCOME, PROGRAMS AND/OR ADVOCACY.

QUESTIONS TO ASK AFTER A CAMPAIGN OR BIG MARKETING PUSH:

- Did it help build successful relationships with individuals, corporations, foundations or grantees that support you financially?
- Did it increase donations?
- Did it reach the right people, keep them engaged and move them towards your mission?
- Did it help influence legislation and/or change people's perception?
- Did it position you as the go to organization or resource in your field?
The Written Brand –

LIST OF RECOMMENDED MUST HAVES AS PART OF YOUR ORGANIZATIONS WRITTEN BRAND FOUNDATION:

- KEY MESSAGES – Ideas that need to be communicated to articulate your organization's positioning. 3-10 are ideal with supporting bullet points. If kept short and written well, key messages make impactful headlines for marketing campaigns.

- KEY STATISTICS – A list of studies and statistics on hand that can be used consistently to demonstrate the need for your organization, specific programs and its impact measurements. Audiences appreciate information that is well thought out and makes them understand how their support impacts others.

The Written Brand –

If your audience is confused with your brand, you aren’t staying on point.

- Share your key messages more often across all communication channels.
- Keep the key messages rotated in your social media schedule.
- Add an “about the organization” section to the bottom of every marketing email you send out.
- Hand out fact cards with your mission statement and key facts.

Around the time you’re getting bored with your message, is probably the time when it’s beginning to resonate with your audience.

STAY THE COURSE AND STAY CONSISTENT!
The Visual Brand –

VISUAL BRAND FOUNDATION

Little (BIG!) things make all the difference in creating a cohesive brand:

• Use the same fonts consistently
• Work from a consistent color palette
• Use photos that are similar in style and convey the same emotions
• Create a strong visual style using style elements such as color blocks, rounded corners, clean lines, etc.

The Brand Experience –

ONLINE

Email guidelines:

• Keep your list segmented by type of supporter (donor, volunteer, program recipient, advocate) or by key demographics. Edit the content of your emails so that it speaks directly to the segment’s experience of your organization.

• Your emails should inspire action, and remain consistent with your written and visual brand. Your marketing communication emails are not the place to introduce new color palettes, themes or graphic styles — it will cause brand confusion.
The Brand Experience – ONLINE

Share more than organizational news only on SOCIAL MEDIA. Ideas:

• Share policy changes that are or need to happen in your industry sector
• Share key messages and key statistics
• Share stories from volunteers, donors, staff, community supporters and the end user of your programs and services
• Share your program goals
• Share big changes or news that are happening within your organization and community
• Whenever possible connect what is happening in the world to your social mission

Effective Storytelling

• Base the stories on your key messages. Accompany stories with photographs and videos.
• At the bottom of every story add an “about” section to remind people of your brand message.
• Pull quotes from the story and sprinkle them throughout your social media platforms, link to the full story on your website
• Collect stories from volunteers, donors, staff, supporters and the recipients of your programs. An easy way to do this is to add a “share your story” intake form on your website that you can direct people to. Keep the form simple, ask three questions and permission to follow up with them.
Appendix D: Post Webinar Survey Results

Why a clear, consistent brand is important

4 responses

[Bar chart showing responses: 3 (75%) for response 4, 1 (25%) for response 5]

Building a strong framework: the written brand and the visual brand

4 responses

[Bar chart showing responses: 2 (50%) for response 4, 2 (50%) for response 5]
Creating a brand experience: online and print

- 3 ratings: 3 (75%)
- 1 rating: 1 (25%)
- No ratings: 0 (0%) each

Effective storytelling

- 2 ratings: 2 (50%)
- No ratings: 0 (0%) each
Brand management tools and resources provided (slides PDF included)

4 responses