



# Campaign Communications Plan

December 2015

MOORE *ink.*  
PR & FUNDRAISING COMMUNICATIONS



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*Committed to clients with a cause*

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## Purpose and Approach

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The purpose of this plan is to provide the YMCA of Greater Seattle with a focused, integrative approach to using diverse marketing and communications strategies to advance its \$126 million capital campaign. The ultimate goal of the plan is to help the Y develop deeper relationships with existing donors and build new connections with prospective donors. Together with creative fundraising strategies, our efforts will not only raise money during the campaign, but also will sustain beneficial relationships long after the campaign comes to a successful close. For that reason, we offer universal fundraising and communications observations, strategies and tactics.

This plan was developed by Teresa Moore of Moore Ink. PR & Fundraising Communications in the summer and fall of 2015 following one-to-one interviews with four YMCA staff members and eight current or former board members/major donors; an in-depth review and analysis of the Y's existing campaign, marketing and communications materials and vehicles; the consultant's experience with more than a dozen nonprofit capital campaigns and other fundraising communications work with 150+ local nonprofit organizations; and observations and ideas gleaned from 16+ years of experience with the Puget Sound-area nonprofit and philanthropic community.

The YMCA of Greater Seattle is a stellar organization. It has a terrific staff, committed leadership and dedicated volunteers. You're raising \$11 million a year in private gifts – bravo! Our goal is to identify strategies and tactics to help you raise a lot more, to reach your campaign goal, and to sustain that momentum and build a robust culture of philanthropy that sustains the Y for years, if not generations. The observations and recommendations in this plan are intended to be constructively critical and creatively inspiring. If any criticism falls too harshly and inadvertently offends, we apologize.

Thank you for asking us to develop this plan and to be inspired along the way by the passion and commitment of your staff and supporters. Moore Ink. is deeply honored to be able to contribute to the success of the YMCA's campaign and its ongoing fundraising success.

## Organizational Assessment

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The YMCA of Greater Seattle is doing remarkable work in our community. From helping children learn to helping their parents lose weight, providing shelter to homeless teens to preventing youth suicide, ingraining a love of nature in children to developing the next generation of civic leaders, stemming gang violence to warding off diabetes... and much more. To some extent, much of this great work remains unknown – the victim of a lack of awareness or the leftover misperceptions of the YMCA of olden days. But to a larger extent, from the philanthropic perspective of this campaign communications plan, the Y's good work doesn't suffer from an awareness problem. It suffers from an identity problem.

*"FareStart is a restaurant but you still know that it's a philanthropic effort. That's not so with the Y."*

**Major donor**

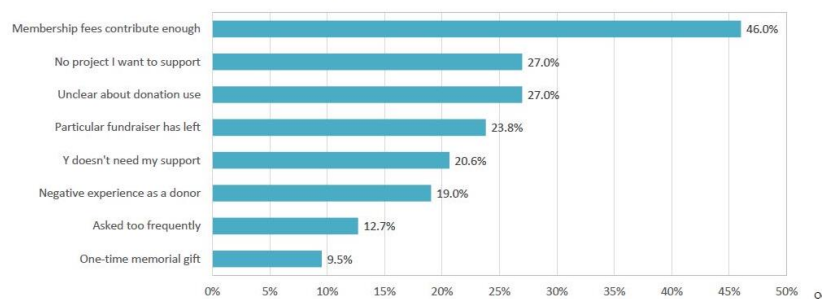
The YMCA does not present itself as a charitable organization, dependent upon and exceedingly grateful for donors' gifts. This plan will go into great detail and provide many examples of the lack of donor-centricity in Y communications. But this is more than an issue of a newsletter or a website. It is a culture that seems to relegate the charitable purpose of the Y to a far distant backseat to membership marketing, often making it impossible for the prospective new donor to recognize that (a) the YMCA is a nonprofit organization and (b) how a donation can make an impact.

In fact, many of the Y's most impactful programs – those most appealing to many donors – are nowhere to be mentioned on the organization's most public communications vehicle, its website.

This is not an issue peculiar to Greater Seattle. YMCA of the USA commissioned Cygnus Research to conduct a member/donor survey in early 2015, which included more than 1,200 Greater Seattle respondents. Among the national findings: "There is widespread confusion among all YMCA members and supporters – including staff and volunteers – about the YMCA's need for contributions, how much of the organization is sustained by membership fees, and what happens with membership dollars." Another finding: "Across all Y's participating in the study, roughly a quarter of respondents considered at least a portion of their membership fee to be a charitable contribution." Nearly half of both Greater Seattle non-donors and lapsed supporters feel membership fees sufficed as a contribution, and one in five believe the Y doesn't need their support.

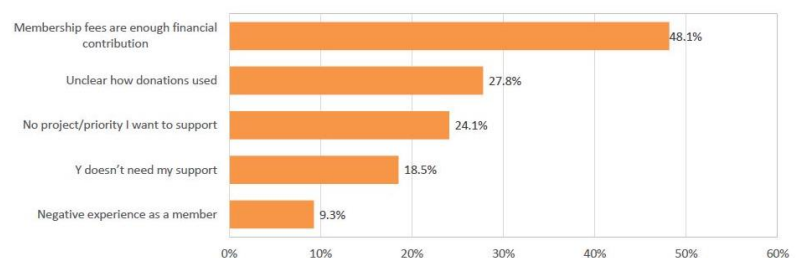
## Reasons Current Supporters Plan to Lapse

Those unlikely to give to the Y in the next 12 months were asked if any of the following were factors:

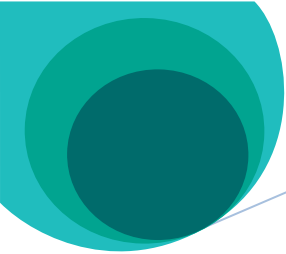


## Non-Donor Future Giving

Respondents unlikely to donate to YMCA of Greater Seattle in the next 12 months were asked if any of the following were reasons for their intention:



Despite these stark findings, the Y continues to fail to take even basic steps to extol the impact of financial contributions on its important work in the community (or, in some of its most prominent communication vehicles, to promote some of its incredible social programs as worthy of support). For example, except for a somewhat nondescript Donate tab on the website, there is nothing to indicate that the Y is a nonprofit charitable organization on the homepage. The words nonprofit, charity, impact,



give, you, difference, or any other common donor-resonating words fail to appear even once on the Who We Are page on the website. [More detailed website recommendations can be found on page 19.]

If the YMCA hopes to raise an unprecedented \$126 million, it must reach new donors. One comment we heard frequently in interviews was “the Y keeps raising money from the same people.” Reaching new donors means trumpeting from the rooftops not only the Y’s good work but its reliance on the community’s generosity to achieve amazing results. In most communications – in a notable example, the most recent issue of the Impact newsletter<sup>1</sup>, where not a single article mentioned philanthropic support for impactful programs – the donor’s role is silent, perhaps leading readers to assume the programs are cost-free or paid for solely with membership dues.

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*“The Y keeps going back to the same people over and over again for money. That stops working at some point. They must get to a broader audience for this campaign to be successful.”*

**Major donor**

In the analysis of the Y for campaign readiness, this cultural lack of donor centrality is one of two key issues to overcome. The second is an overall lack of focused donor communications. Even some of the long-time major donors and current/former board members interviewed for this plan could not state what differentiates the YMCA from other similar nonprofits or articulate why they choose to support the Y. (“Someone asks me” or “I just always have” were two responses.) The Y found it difficult to find donors who would even agree to be interviewed; of those who did, only about half expressed real passion and one was almost completely disengaged. Assuming the Y would choose its most fervent insiders for this project, the lack of engagement is a troublesome sign for the hopes of the campaign.

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*“There is virtually no communication throughout the year – no newsletter that I know of, at least I never get one, no e-news. If so, I’m not clear on what it is; it has no impact.”*

**Major donor**

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While the Impact newsletter is aimed at the wide audience of members, donors and volunteers, it is not truly a donor-focused newsletter (much more to follow on that). Not a single non-staff person could remember receiving it or reading it. The absence of a story-rich annual report full of gratitude also would go a long way to steward donors. These are just two examples of missed opportunities for using direct donor communications – not muddled by trying to make a message fit multiple audiences – to clearly show the incredible impact private gifts can make on children, adults and communities.

When it comes to fundraising, it’s not about the YMCA. It’s about the donor. In the Y’s current communications and culture, it’s all about the Y – what you do for kids and families, not what your donors do. Change that approach, trumpet your status as a nonprofit reliant upon and grateful for your donors, tell your story in multiple ways to audiences old and new, and you’ll succeed in the campaign.

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<sup>1</sup> Newsletters are undated. We refer to the one that has the little boy with the magnifying glass on the cover.

## Priority Recommendations

*The actions that will be most influential in advancing the Y's fundraising goals*

1. **Communicate impact directly to donors – and do it more frequently and in multiple ways.** One size does not fit all when it comes to showing donors the impact of their gifts, your deep appreciation for their support, and how much more they could accomplish if they donated again. Communications must be tailored for specific audiences and purposes. The Impact newsletter should be retooled for donors only and a different prospect-oriented quarterly publication created for non-donor members and volunteers. In addition, especially during the ramp up for a campaign and to capitalize on relationship-building during and afterwards, donor communications should be more regular, frequent and diversified. We make additional recommendations for improving the Impact newsletter and for new donor and non-donor outreach later in this plan.
2. **Acknowledge the Y's reliance on philanthropy everywhere.** We understand that memberships are the YMCA's financial bread and butter. Membership marketing must take center stage in high-profile communications vehicles like the website. But membership and philanthropy messages can reside harmoniously together. In fact, they must in order to educate prospective new donors about the need for their gifts. Take the website for example, where even on the Donate page it fails to note that the YMCA is a 501(C)(3) organization and that donations are tax-deductible:

Current text on website	Revision
Home page For more than 138 years, the YMCA of Greater Seattle has provided safe and caring environments, positive role models, creative activities and opportunities to serve the needs of others.	This is where community happens. The Y is a nonprofit charitable organization, here for the young and the old and everyone in between, for families and individuals, for those in need and those able to help, for everyone who cares about living healthier and happier lives and building a stronger community for us all.
Who We Are <b>For Community</b> Welcome to the YMCA of Greater Seattle! We're an inclusive organization of men, women and children with a shared commitment to nurture the potential of youth, promote healthy living and foster social responsibility.	<b>This is where community happens.</b> The YMCA brings people of all ages together to be active and healthy, educated and self-empowered, and engaged in helping to build a stronger community for us all. As a nonprofit charitable organization, we rely on our generous community to help us nurture the potential of youth, promote healthy living and foster social responsibility.

3. **Get donor-centric when writing for donors.** The Y does not follow best practices in fundraising communications, including:

- Make the donor the hero. You don't do it, the donor does.
- Use the word "you" often. Really, you can't overdo it.
- Thank the donor – a lot.
- Communicate impact, not just numbers served.
- Eschew academic (boring) writing, data and statistics.
- Tell stories, but always add how the donor made an impact.

The Matt Griffin Y Impact Paper (8-29-15) and the most recent issue of the Impact newsletter are good examples of missed opportunities to follow these best practices.

First paragraphs of articles in a recent issue of the Impact newsletter	Donor-centered revisions
Innovative, impactful, record-breaking – just another summer at the Y. Expanded programming, new partnerships and increased enrollment all contributed to truly making this the best summer ever by ensuring that kids have the tools they need to overcome barriers related to hunger, learning, water safety and safe spaces.	Innovative, impactful, record-breaking – just another summer at the Y. And you made it all possible. Your gifts enabled us to expand programming, create new partnerships and increase enrollment. Thanks to you, kids across King County ate healthy meals, learned new things and stayed safe at play and in the water.
Imagine not knowing where you'll sleep tonight or when you'll get another full meal. Now picture that as a seventeen year old. This is the reality of many youth like Lexus, who are aging out of the foster care system. But with the assistance of the Metrocenter YMCA's Young Adult Services, Lexus now has the support and stability to develop the life skills needed to eventually live independently.	Imagine not knowing where you'll sleep tonight or when you'll get another meal. Now picture that as a 17-year-old. This is the reality of many kids like Lexus, who are aging out of the foster care system. But thanks to you, Lexus now has the support and stability to develop the life skills she needs to eventually live independently.
<i>In both the examples above, the Y wouldn't have been able to achieve those great things without donor contributions. Don't take the credit. Give it to the donor. They are the heroes, not you!</i>	
Great communities don't just happen, they need to be nurtured, encouraged, and empowered. When people have a place to grow, learn, and connect then communities thrive, unite, and	Great communities don't just happen. They need to be nurtured and empowered. When people have a place to grow, learn and connect, they can build a strong and united community. For more than two

strengthen. For more than two decades, Sammamish residents have been asking for a gathering place and now that day isn't far off.	decades, Sammamish residents have been asking for a place to do just that, and now, generous gifts from people like you have created a place where they will build their community.
<i>This was one of the most egregious examples of not taking the opportunity to recognize and thank donors for contributing to the capital construction of this new branch, which would never have happened but for donor gifts.</i>	
It can be difficult for even the most outgoing teen to discover their talents and voice in high school. YMCA Youth & Government helps students like Denise Chen find their passion, confidence, and leadership in the courtroom instead of the sports field, an important opportunity for youth not connected with "typical" extracurricular activities.	When you make a tax-deductible gift to the YMCA, you're helping teens like Denise Chen find their passion, confidence and leadership in a place you might not always think of when you imagine the Y – the courtroom, not the sports field.
<i>The original article did a good job of playing on people's stereotypes about the Y, but it took a round-about route to get there. While we wouldn't always want to be so direct in talking about a tax-deductible donation, it can work when used sparingly.</i>	

The Matt Griffin Y paper was full of dry statistics and data, written almost like a treatise for a research class in college. It lacked emotion, passion and excitement – no “we did it!” bandwagon bravado. How did it get built? Why are children succeeding in school? How are you able to subsidize 90 percent of memberships? The donors did it! Yet, in more than 2,000 words in this “impact” paper, not a single word gave credit to the donors who contributed money for the building or the programs that made the achievements possible.

We know from neurological science and fundraising research that data does not lead people to donate. Storytelling does. So, while information in the report is impressive, it begs a powerful story to illustrate it, to pound home to donors that they made it possible, and to steward donors for future gifts. No matter who the audience was for the paper, donors deserved recognition.

From the Matt Griffin Y Impact paper	Donor-centered revisions
In its first year of operation, the YMCA Kindergarten Readiness program at Madrona Elementary School in SeaTac increased kindergarten readiness rates from 27% to 39% in a high-needs school	Elana Masai proudly recites the alphabet and counts to 50 as her mom, Yesah, beams with pride. By participating in the Y's kindergarten readiness program, Elana was one of dozens of her classmates at Madrona Elementary who hit the ground running at a high-needs school where virtually every child qualifies for federal meal programs and six out of 10 don't speak English at home.





(94% of students receive free and reduced lunch, 60% do not speak English at home)	Where once only a quarter of kindergarteners were ready to learn, now nearly 40 percent are – all thanks to the generosity of donors who are funding the life-changing work of the Matt Griffin YMCA.
<i>Numbers can be numbing. They prompt the brain into “uh-oh, I must do math” thinking, instead of focusing on major messages. Round up, turn stats into “six in 10” instead of 59%.</i>	

4. **Cultivate members as donors.** Reaching out to members informally, spottily and almost solely through the person-to-person, volunteer-driven annual campaign is a missed opportunity to cultivate those who most directly can appreciate the impact the Y makes on people’s lives. Of course, the annual campaign must continue. It raises critical funds for the branches and the Association. Yet, only about 10 percent of members donate – and that’s a good rate among YMCAs nationally. YMCA of the USA research indicates 25 to 30 percent of members will give if they are asked... but the Y doesn’t ask. Perhaps it’s because you fear offending members, perhaps it’s because you just haven’t figured out how to do so. We provide ideas for engaging members as donors – to the campaign and ongoing – beginning on page 14.

“Why don’t people give? We don’t ask them. There are a huge number of members and we don’t ask them to give. We don’t let them know that they are part of something bigger.”

**Board member**

## Goals for Communications

### *The broad results we seek*

- Messages will emphasize the impact donors make on the YMCA’s mission
- Diversified communications will reach existing and prospective donors and move them to action
- Wider outreach will raise awareness and help to forge relationships among prospective donors
- We will increase our efforts to treat members as a prospective donor audience
- Communications with all audiences will be regular and have consistent messaging

## Objectives

### *The specific and measurable outcomes of our efforts*

- The YMCA will meet or exceed its campaign fundraising goals
- The active donor base will expand
- Donors will understand the impact that their gifts make and will be inspired to continue and increase their giving – long after the campaign ends





## Primary Audiences<sup>2</sup>

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*Those who are essential to helping us meet our goals and objectives*

- Existing donors
- Prospective donors – especially members
- Community opinion leaders

## Strategies

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*The overarching ways we will approach our work*

- Address philanthropic culture issues holistically – integrating membership and fundraising
- Develop capacity within Marketing & Communications for best practices in donor communications
- Broaden fundraising cultivation and appeals to members
- Prioritize recommended tactics to implement the highest-impact changes first

## Tactical Action Plan

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*The specific steps we will take to achieve our goals and objectives*

### Messaging

5. **Hone and expand the message platform.** Earlier in Moore Ink.'s work with the Y, a message platform was developed to help focus campaign messages. This platform is a good start toward shifting messages from those that describe what the YMCA does to the impact and benefits of its work.
6. **Develop one-page messaging guides for the branches.** Using the message platform, provide branches with broad messages that they can use in their own member communications. Tailor those messages to the unique program offerings and community demographics.

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<sup>2</sup> The YMCA has many audiences: policymakers, corporate and foundation partners, schools, other nonprofits, etc. This plan focuses on strategies and tactics aimed at significantly improving relationships with existing donors, securing more major gifts and expanding member giving. Many of the tactics, while aimed primarily at this individual giving audience, also will work to improve relationships and raise awareness among other audiences as well.

## 7. Finalize the case statement, and test messages in focus groups of donors and prospective donors.

Moore Ink. also has developed a campaign case statement, a more detailed messaging document laying out the case for support for donors. Even the best-crafted messages can benefit from research to determine how they are resonating with specific audiences. Organizations and campaigns have turned 90 degrees (if not 180) based on how donors responded to what nonprofits thought were compelling cases for support. Professionally conducted focus groups – where the Y’s CEO, development staff, key board members and campaign leaders can observe behind one-way glass – can validate and provide direction for creating messages that will compel support.

### Donor stewardship

“I don’t hear any anecdotes, any stories, like ‘This happened in our program and never would have but for your gift’.”

**Major donor**

8. **Refocus the newsletter.** As noted earlier, the Impact newsletter misses opportunities to communicate in a targeted way to donors about the impact of their gifts – and to inspire them to give more. Here are additional specific recommendations:

- Employ an editorial board process that involves both the MarComm and Development departments in planning, overseeing, writing and editing the newsletter. Development should drive content strategically for donors.
- Change the format. Go to 8½ x 11. The small size and lack of a cover story and masthead make it look like a program brochure, not a newsletter. [See an example of a donor newsletter.](#)
- Add a date reference to the cover.
- Use a friendly, casual style. Refer to the reader (the donor!) as you, to the YMCA as we or us.
- Write livelier headlines with active verbs. Many readers only scan; your headlines should represent some of your most creative writing.
- Learn to write in AP style. It lends consistency and professionalism.
- The calls-to-action at the bottom of each story should focus on thanking donors and encouraging them to learn more or make a bigger difference, e.g., “Lexus has a whole new life thanks to donors who support the Y’s programs for former foster kids. To learn how you can make a difference, call us at 206-xxx-xxxx.”
- Don’t just tell good stories. Take a strong point of view. Be unabashedly proud and grateful. Sing the praises emotionally of the kids and adults who are succeeding thanks to donors’ investments.
- Include a donor profile in every issue. Inspire others to give by telling inspiring stories about others who feel great about supporting the YMCA.

- Feature campaign priorities in every issue during the campaign – represented through storytelling.
- Include a remit envelope in every issue. It's a soft (unspoken) ask that can pay dividends.
- When putting the newsletter on the website, switch to a less cumbersome page-turning PDF product than Issuu, which is very un-user friendly, commercial in advertising lots of other unrelated publications, and does not allow for uploading or printing.

9. **Snail-mail issues of the new Impact newsletter to every household that's donated in the past three years.** When it comes to fundraising, the hard-copy newsletter is not dead. Sure, many people will quickly recycle them. But yes, many people will read them. And yes, some people will actually send back the remit envelope and donate. But donations are not the ultimate goal. Stewardship is. If we do a great job of showing donors what a tremendous impact their gifts make, a mailed newsletter will earn its costs back multi-fold in donor loyalty, renewal and retention.

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*"We've moved away from paper and ink and the current annual report is very minimal. We can't keep doing that if we want to reach more donors."*

**Board member**


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10. **Produce and mail a gratitude report to donors.** The Y's annual report is a two-page online-only financial report with quotes from board members. It's nice to let others carry your message, but it misses an opportunity to credit donors for their contributions. Do a real annual report – people do still read them – but not the old-fashioned style with a boring regurgitation of everything you did last year. Instead, tell stories that exemplify achievements made possible by donors – and thank them for every one of them. Include a donor list – a terrific way to recognize and thank them. With three issues of the Impact newsletter and one annual report mailed to donors each year, they'll have a good sense of how they made a difference for the Y. [See an example of a gratitude report.](#)
11. **Distribute an e-newsletter in between issues of the print newsletter.** This is both a stewardship and a cultivation tool, so send it to everyone for whom you have email addresses – donors, members and volunteers. (Yes, this is an exception to the "tailor it to specific audiences" rule. This publication subs for Impact with volunteers and members.) Unlike the Impact newsletter, make the e-newsletter a bit more educational about how private funds make a difference. Keep articles short. Link to more info on the website. Promote events, tours and opportunities to get engaged. Pepper it with donor and kid quotes, "did you know" impact statements, brief stories, etc.
12. **Develop an organizational overview brochure or fact sheet.** The YMCA does so much, and nothing seems to exist that adequately explains it. For use in both staff and volunteer leadership education, as well as an impact piece with donors, create a two-page back-and-front fact sheet (still written in donor-centric language) or a gate-fold brochure.




## ***Major donor cultivation***

13. **Hold a major donor appreciation event to kick off the campaign.** Invite the top 250 campaign major donor prospects (not leadership gift prospects, but the next level down) to an after-work gratitude fest – “our chance to say thank you, give you the chance to mix and mingle over wine and cheese, and share some big news about the future of the YMCA. We’ll let you do the asking – any questions you may have – and we’ll do all the thanking – for the great past support you’ve given us through the years.” Introduce the campaign with lots of passion and excitement. Follow up within a month with individual invitations for cultivation meetings. Find a corporate supporter to underwrite the costs of the event in exchange for the opportunity to introduce Bob Gilbertson, earn kudos at the event, get a logo on the invitation, etc.
14. **Make a special VIP effort to engage past board members.** Board alumni, of course, are key prospects for major gifts. But they’re also prime campaign ambassadors. Reach out to them with personal invitations to the donor appreciation event, including a pre-event VIP reception. Show them deep love and attention. Make no ask, but follow up with an invitation to join a special campaign committee aimed at meeting a specific, lofty fundraising goal for past board members. Recruit a high-profile past board member to chair the committee. The Life Board also deserves an injection of new life. This might be the perfect opportunity to re-engage those members.



*“After I rolled off the board, no one ever reached out and asked me to donate (to the annual campaign). I just got a bill in the mail. They’re just not as buttoned down as they should be. If they’re not doing it with me, it tells me they’re not doing it with others. That makes me nervous about what else isn’t being done.”*

**Major donor**


15. **Develop a campaign PowerPoint presentation and leave-behind material.** Using the case statement messaging, develop a simple but compelling PowerPoint (no more than 12 slides) that can facilitate in-person conversations with major donor prospects. Include talking points for each slide so campaign volunteers can become adept at presenting inspiring opportunities to prospective donors. Leave prospects with a campaign folder that includes nicely designed individual sheets:
  - Cover letter unique to the prospect, thanking them for past gifts or praising them for supporting the Y and/or other great community causes
  - Overview of the campaign (inspirational language from the case)
  - Campaign FAQs
  - One-pagers on individual campaign opportunities of interest to the donor, e.g., a specific branch or camp

- Program support opportunities, with stories or quotes to show impact
- Testimonial quotes from community leaders and donors
- List of board members and other campaign leaders
- Campaign fundraising goals
- Motivational call to action and ways to give (multi-year pledge, stocks, etc.)

*"The passion and commitment of volunteers is amazing, but it's not as strategic as it should be in who's on the board. We don't do any training."*

*Board member*

**16. Train board members and other campaign volunteers in how to conduct cultivation and solicitation meetings.** Don't leave it to chance. There's a subtlety and skill to knowing how to inspire donors and when to make the ask.

**17. Produce and distribute a regular campaign e-newsletter.** Title it something lively and inviting and include updates on major gifts, grants, profiles of leadership donors, construction news, etc. Send the e-news every month to

campaign leaders, ambassadors, tour attendees, major donors and top prospects. Send periodic e-flashes to campaign leaders and major donors when the campaign receives a substantial gift or a major fundraising milestone is reached.

**18. Create a campaign video.** Use it for house parties, meetings with leadership prospects, on the website, in social media, etc. Include interviews with families and kids who represent what the campaign will accomplish in areas like academic achievement and community building. Pull heartstrings. Develop a creative brief to approach the video strategically, identifying main messages to convey, interviewees to represent specific areas of the campaign, key visuals, etc., before a videographer is hired or any shooting begins. [See an example of a campaign video on this home page.](#)

**19. Ask every board member to host at least one house party; train them and provide tools for conducting them.** House parties are tools for cultivation, not solicitation. Board members who balk at "asking my friends for money" can be supported and made comfortable in hosting house parties for eight to 10 friends and/or work colleagues who have the capacity to make five-figure campaign gifts. Over a one-hour coffee or happy hour, guests hear from a Y parent, a former foster youth or another person for whom the YMCA made a remarkable difference. A Y staff member provides a welcome/thank-you. The host speaks passionately about why s/he cares so much about the Y. Guests watch the campaign video, are provided with the leave-behind folder, and ask questions. No ask is made. The host follows up a week or two later with requests for personal meetings, accompanied by a major gift officer for further cultivation and/or an ask at a later date.



## *Member and community giving*

**20. Keep annual and campaign fundraising separate in 2016; combine it thereafter.** A very strong capital campaign push the first year will be most productive if it stands alone. In 2017 and thereafter, consider a combined campaign. This will likely require upping the sophistication level of the annual campaign and equipping volunteers with more training, tools and clear, compelling combined-campaign materials.

**21. Mail two campaign appeal letters to YMCA members in 2016, then keep it up post-campaign.<sup>3</sup>** Every YMCA benefits from the campaign. Make that point to branch members – while also appealing to their passion for the greater good of children, youth and families – in strategically timed appeal letters, including one at year-end tax time. Focus one of the appeals on broad social service initiatives that will benefit from the campaign – foster care, mental health, GED, violence prevention. Tell a personal, emotional story. Consider ghost-writing the appeal over the signature of a former client who’s now gone on to accomplish great things thanks to the Y.

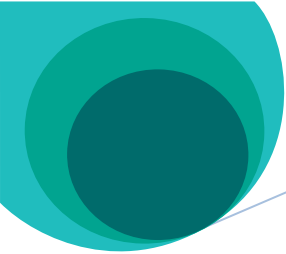
Focus the second appeal on how the campaign will support educational and teen leadership programs at the member’s own branch. In both, be specific about the fact that the YMCA is a nonprofit organization – educate members in a very basic way. When the campaign is over, continue the twice-a-year appeals in the same manner, segmenting them so that campaign donors can be thanked and informed about what their earlier gifts accomplished, and then invited to donate again. Don’t give up on non-donors!

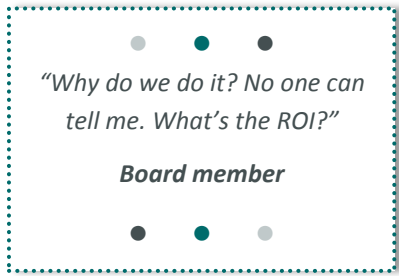
**22. Promote the campaign in every branch.** Design and display posters or prominent kiosks in every branch that herald the campaign as a great way to create a stronger community for everyone who lives here. Invite members to “ask the branch manager how you can make a difference”.

**23. Organize a spare change campaign drive in every branch.** During a one-month period toward the end of the campaign, invite members to empty their pockets and coin purses of their change every time they visit the branch into colorful campaign cookie jars. “We’re bringing the campaign to successful close – just a few hundred thousand dollars to go – and every dime counts!” At the end of the month, celebrate the money raised and thank members publicly. (While this might not raise a lot of money, it will reinforce the charitable nature of the campaign and engage members in it.)

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<sup>3</sup> The first few outreach efforts to members and other non-donors will require a great deal of finesse, expertise and experience in donor communications. While there are many tactics in this plan that Moore Ink. believes it could execute very effectively for the YMCA, we offer our strongest recommendation for professional counsel for donor appeals. This is largely uncharted territory for the Y. Our recommendation stems solely from a desire to see the campaign succeed, not a desire for personal gain.

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24. **Invite camp parents to invest in the campaign, then keep it up post-campaign.** Just as with members, camp parents are prime prospects to donate to the campaign – especially to the initiatives to improve existing camps. Segment the appeals – parents of kids who went to Camp Colman will learn about the impact their gift can make on improving that camp, and so on. Camp households would also be good prospects for the year-end appeal on social service programs.
25. **Rev up a workplace giving campaign for members in the fall.** Posters and signage in all branches can remind members that they can designate the YMCA to receive all or part of their United Way or other workplace giving donations. Make sure fall newsletters and e-newsletters include articles about workplace giving.
26. **Launch a breakfast fundraising event targeting the business community.** Unlike the vast majority of nonprofit organizations, the YMCA has no signature fundraising breakfast, luncheon, auction or gala. The absence of such an event perpetuates the notion that the YMCA is not a charitable organization. These events not only raise money, they give organizations a stellar opportunity to tell their story to a captive audience. Unticketed but with a minimum \$150 expected gift stated up front, guests are recruited by current and past board members, donors and staff and through targeted outreach to Y members and friends. The campaign is a perfect time to initiate what would become an annual fundraising event. Far more than the friend-to-friend annual campaign, a breakfast would give the YMCA the chance to share compelling stories about its impact on kids, families and the community face to face with casual donors and new friends. It's a chance to cement loose relationships and build new ones.
27. **Appoint a board/staff committee to do an ROI analysis of the A.K. Guy event.** The event has a long tradition at the YMCA in honoring a community volunteer, typically not a YMCA volunteer. In recent years, the Y has done a better job of introducing info about the YMCA's work into the event. Still, it consumes staff resources that might be better spent on a breakfast fundraiser that would raise money and awareness. "Because we've always done it" is not a good reason to continue it. The event deserves a focused and objective analysis. The board should empower the committee with decision-making authority in advance – the decision it reaches after its in-depth analysis will stand.



*"Why do we do it? No one can tell me. What's the ROI?"*

**Board member**





## *Public awareness and friend-raising*

- 28. Pursue a media partnership with KOMO-TV.** Advance the community phase of the campaign and bring in new donors by launching an advertising campaign with KOMO.<sup>4</sup> These campaigns work best when a nonprofit organization can bring prospective contacts for advertisers to the table – existing sponsors, other corporate donors, the companies of Board members – that may be able to access their marketing budgets (not their charitable giving budgets) to invest in an advertising campaign that promotes the YMCA and the cause of early learning, community building or another key social issue that the Y can own. KOMO-TV also will suggest existing advertisers who are connected to the issue. KOMO will produce the TV spots and provide two-for-one ads. Time the campaign strategically to occur just before or during the community phase of the campaign.

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*"We have to use this campaign to cultivate new donors. It's our third campaign and each time we talk about cultivating and maintaining relationships, but nothing is ever done."*

**Board member**

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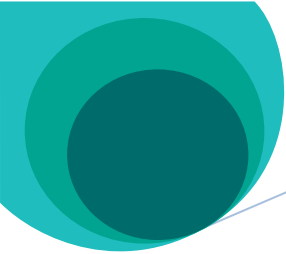
- 29. Develop an issue-oriented presentation that can be delivered to community groups.** Community groups like large Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs will not accept requests to promote your organization, but will say yes to compelling topical presentations. A 20-minute issue-oriented presentation (e.g., Educate 'Em Early: What We Can All Do to Help Our Community's Kids Get Ready to Learn, or Fostering Success: Unique Approaches to Helping Foster Kids and Families, or What Does it Mean to 'Build Community' – and Why Is It Essential to Us All?) will enable the YMCA to

position itself as the leading voice in our community for kids and families. A speech and a Prezi or PowerPoint presentation will provide the tools for speakers to make compelling presentations to opinion leaders. While the Y won't directly promote the campaign in the presentation, it can give examples of its work and encourage questions to learn more. [Read an example of a topical speech.](#)

- 30. Organize a speakers' bureau, conduct public speaking training and solicit speaking engagements.** The CEO is the Y's primary public representative, however, expanding speaking opportunities to include other key staff members – especially branch managers – will build internal capacity and expand opportunities for speaking engagements. Once the topical presentation is written and finalized and speakers are trained, the speech can be promoted to local Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis Clubs; PTSAs; American Legion, Elks and other fraternal organizations; faith-based organizations; etc.
- 31. Write a 5- and 10-minute Y "stump speeches" for "who we are" presentations.** Be able to powerfully and succinctly convey the impact of the YMCA with a compelling speech to deliver at

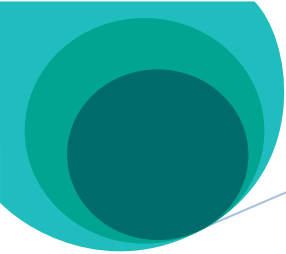
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<sup>4</sup> Moore Ink. can broker a relationship with a high-level senior advertising executive who enjoys putting together these kinds of social good campaigns.



venues that welcome presentations about who you are, e.g., workplace giving meetings for United Way. Brainstorm speaking opportunities with staff and board members.

32. **Invite campaign volunteers to deliver the stump speech at corporate brown bags.** Many businesses allow organizations to make presentations to their employees at lunch. Assign a campaign committee to develop a list of corporate prospects, create an outreach plan and solicit speaking opportunities for themselves.
33. **Organize a community forum or town hall meeting on kids and families.** What can we all do to ensure that our kids grow up safe, healthy and ready to learn? It's a compelling topic, and one that the YMCA can own as it positions itself in our community as a go-to expert and introduces itself to prospective new donors. Along with YMCA experts, invite University of Washington early learning specialists and other community partners to talk about health and wellness. Build in practical advice and tips. Save time for Q-and-A. Distribute a handout with the tips, along with YMCA campaign information. Charge a nominal \$5 or \$10 per person (people think things are of more value if they have to pay for it). Promote the event through schools, PTAs, press releases, radio PSAs, an ad in the Washington Athletic Club magazine, online calendar listings, YMCA publications and e-news. Invite media to cover the event.
34. **Recruit a Public Awareness Committee.** Identify people at local PR and advertising agencies, PR directors at corporations and other public relations leaders to invite to join the committee. Also include one person from each of the branch boards. Develop a job description for committee members with specific goals for helping to raise awareness of YMCA county-wide. The committee would be jointly managed by the Chief Development and Chief Communications Officers.
35. **Develop an annual strategic media relations plan.** Identify opportunities for pitching in-depth feature stories to major media such as *The Seattle Times'* Pacific Northwest Magazine, KING-TV's Evening Magazine and New Day Northwest, KUOW-FM and Crosscut (which has a special interest in foster care), and the *Puget Sound Business Journal*. Identify opportunities to place op-eds and respond to issues in letters to the editor. Position YMCA staff as expert spokespeople and highlight success stories in suburban newspapers (many of which have a broader circulation than the Seattle Times does in those areas).
36. **Write an op-ed that's ready to go at an opportune moment.** The quickest to the punch can earn space in *The Seattle Times'* editorial pages – prime opportunities to reach opinion leaders. When a hard news story hits – a serious bullying incident in a school, gang violence, a report on state dropout rates, a legislative proposal related to youth development – have an op-ed at the ready that can be tweaked to reference the news story and submitted the same day the news story appears. Take a strong position – how communities and parents can work together to prevent violence,



research on early learning, a position on a bill. Use examples from the YMCA but do not promote the organization. [Read an example of a nonprofit op-ed.](#)

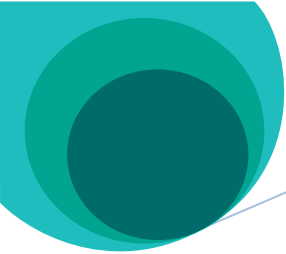
- 37. Send “donut” news releases tailored to club neighborhoods and towns.** Write news releases about youth development issues – how to help your child with homework, the role of athletics in developing well-rounded youth, preparing your child for college at a young age, how to instill healthy eating habits – and send them to community newspapers. Include the name of the local YMCA in the lead paragraph along with a quote from the branch manager later in the release. With the exception of the name of the club in the lead paragraph and the local director quote in the middle of the release, the article is the same for every newspaper. Close with a boilerplate paragraph about YMCA of Greater Seattle.

### ***Capacity building***

- 38. Hold a campaign kickoff celebration for staff.** The success of the campaign will hinge on engaging staff as ambassadors. Because we must broaden engagement of members as donors, branch employees are especially critical. They must be motivated to speak passionately about the campaign. Take a traveling campaign road show to every branch. Make it big and celebratory. Focus on “what’s in it for me” – how the campaign will benefit each and every branch. Equip staff with talking points they can use with members and friends.
- 39. Train staff in how to cultivate donors to the campaign.**<sup>5</sup> Invest in a big global campaign training day for all the branches. It’ll pay incredible dividends in raising their level of expertise. Not every staff member needs to be a frontline solicitor, but everyone needs to be an ambassador. Understanding where each person fits into the fundraising spectrum – from identifying prospects to thanking donors to accompanying the development team on asks – is key to engaging everyone in the success of the campaign.
- 40. Ensure that every staff member and volunteer can make the case for philanthropy.** As a segment of the branch training – and for each and every staff member, from accounting and maintenance to program staff – equip them with messages that help them respond passionately to the question, “What does the YMCA do?” Build it on creating personal “elevator speeches,” where everyone can tap into their own passions for the Y. Equip them with tools that simplify the campaign and the YMCA into a few crisp, clear, powerful messages.
- 41. Incorporate messaging and “who we are” training into staff orientation.** All staff members should be able to speak passionately about who the Y is – a nonprofit charitable organization! – and have a

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<sup>5</sup> We highly recommend Heidi Thomson and Jennifer Weber, two of the region’s best fundraising training consultants, for this work.



good grounding in what the Y does within their first week on the job. Make sure orientation doesn't simply provide facts, but sings with inspiration.

42. **Publish a monthly campaign e-newsletter just for employees.** Help them feel like special and important insiders on the campaign, worthy of up to date info on the successes and challenges of the campaign. Give kudos to staff members who bring in new donors. Celebrate branches that come up with creative ideas to engage members in the campaign. Announce big gifts. Keep a running “thermometer” (choose a cooler icon, somehow related to the Y mission) showing advancement toward the goal.
43. **Provide Writing for Dollars® training to development and marcom staff** – anyone who might write for a donor audience. Moore Ink. has developed a training session to educate writers about the unique approaches to inspiring donors and moving them to action. As noted earlier in this plan, it's not enough to be a good writer and tell good stories. With education and training, every writer can learn to be donor-centric and help the YMCA steward and retain donors and raise more money.
44. **Develop a style and language guide.** Build capacity among YMCA staff members to write in consistent, non-jargon, donor-focused style by developing a guide that addresses how to convey youth development or fundraising jargon in layman's terms as well as grammatical, punctuation and other writing styles to ensure consistency.
45. **In the search for a Chief Communications Officer, make nonprofit experience mandatory.** While most nonprofits wouldn't think of hiring a CEO who didn't have a background in the nonprofit sector, they are often quick to hire lead communications staff with solely corporate credentials. For a fundraising organization, nonprofit experience matters in communications leadership. Communicating the value to someone of parting with \$1,000 for which they get nothing tangible in return is very different from motivating them to buy a \$1,000 leather jacket.

### *Website and social media*

46. **Embed messages from the new message platform into the website.** The website is aimed solely at members – and indeed, members should continue to be the primary audience. But becoming more impact-and-benefit focused, rather than solely program-focused won't hurt membership marketing.
47. **Make the website more appealing to donors – and others.**
  - Rewrite the Who We Are page to emphasize the Y's impact, its nonprofit status and its charitable outreach.

- Rewrite the Donate page to note the Y's 501(C)(3) charitable nonprofit status, state that donations are tax-deductible and make an emotional appeal to donors. Use donor-centric language – what you the donor accomplish with your gifts. Include quotes from donors and a story about donor impact on a child.
- Add a tab labeled Impact. Include on that page info about social service programs like foster care, housing, youth violence prevention, mental health, etc. Also include Stories of Success.
- Move the Donate tab to the far right and put it in a different color than white.
- Eliminate the large Join icon from the Donate tab. Joining covers membership. It is not a philanthropic donation. Establishing a culture of philanthropy within the organization relies on dispelling the notion that a membership suffices for a charitable contribution.
- Modernize the photos. The stock, cutout photos are terribly dated, too small and just not representative of all the YMCA does. While multicultural, they all look very middle class and homogenous. Where are the little preschoolers who are benefiting from early education? Invest in a photo shoot that will enable you to use real photos of real people taken at real branches and programs. (Check out the photos on the [Portland-area YMCA](#).)


48. **Create a campaign website.** Put a link to it on the main website to the right of My Account, in a different color than white. Fill it with messaging from the case statement and stories that represent need and impact.
49. **Develop a more donor-focused social media strategy.** In an age when nonprofits are successfully friend-raising and sharing powerful stories about their missions and donor impact via social media, we offer a detailed analysis and recommendations to improve the YMCA's social media presence.

## Evaluation

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The YMCA will make a substantial investment of time and money should it choose to implement even just a few of the tactics identified in this plan. Return on this investment must be measured to help determine if resources devoted to implementing tactics have produced results. Understanding that improvements in communications go hand in hand with other activities, especially those in resource development, many of these tactics lend themselves well to quantifiable evaluation:

- Donations from members increased by \_\_\_ percent.
- Existing donor retention improved by \_\_\_ percent.
- More than \_\_\_ new major donors contributed.

- 
- The campaign met or exceeded its goal.

The implementation of this plan also can be evaluated be as simple as looking at an activity and saying, “We did it”:

- Messages became more donor-focused and were delivered more consistently.
- We overhauled our newsletter and published a gratitude report.
- Writing for the website is lively and consistent.
- Board members received training.

Once the YMCA has prioritized the tactics in this plan and created a feasible work plan for the next 12 months, quantifiable measures of plan effectiveness should be developed.

## Prioritization

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Working with its consultant, the YMCA can use the following process to rank the tactics that might have the greatest impact on the success of the campaign.

**Step 1:** Review the entire list of recommended tactics and determine whether they can be accomplished with current staff, technological and financial resources or whether they will necessitate additional resources.

**Step 2:** Review the list a second time and assign a priority level of 1, 2, 3 or 4 to each tactic, basing the rating on how significantly the activity will impact the campaign and long-term organizational objectives.

1 = Move immediately to implement this tactic

2 = High priority as well, implement if budget will allow along with priority 1 tactics

3 = Worth considering if resources exist after we implement priority 1 and 2 tactics


4 = Definitely on the back burner, at least for now

**Step 3:** When Steps 1 and 2 have been completed, secure cost estimates for implementing the highest-priority tactics and determine an annual fundraising communications budget.

**Step 4:** Create a detailed one-year work plan to implement the highest-priority communications tactics within the assigned budget.


## Prioritization Worksheet

Rating	Tactic	Can do now	New resources
	1. Communicate impact <u>directly</u> to donors – and do it more frequently and in multiple ways.		
	2. Acknowledge the Y's reliance on philanthropy <u>everywhere</u> .		
	3. Get donor-centric when writing for donors.		
	4. Cultivate members as donors.		
	5. Hone and expand the message platform.		
	6. Develop one-page messaging guides for the branches		
	7. Finalize the case statement, and test messages in focus groups of donors and prospective donors.		
	8. Refocus the newsletter.		
	9. Snail-mail issues of the new Impact newsletter to every household that's donated in the past three years.		
	10. Produce and mail a gratitude report to donors.		
	11. Distribute an e-newsletter in between issues of the print newsletter.		
	12. Develop an organizational overview brochure or fact sheet.		
	13. Hold a major donor appreciation event to kick off the campaign.		
	14. Make a special VIP effort to engage past board members.		
	15. Develop a campaign PowerPoint presentation and leave-behind material.		
	16. Train board members and other campaign volunteers in how to conduct cultivation and solicitation meetings.		
	17. Produce and distribute a regular campaign e-newsletter.		
	18. Create a campaign video.		
	19. Ask every board member to host at least one house party; train them and provide tools for conducting them.		



	20. Keep annual and campaign fundraising separate in 2016; combine it thereafter.		
	21. Mail two campaign appeal letters to YMCA members in 2016, then keep it up post-campaign.		
	22. Promote the campaign in every branch.		
	23. Organize a spare change campaign drive in every branch.		
	24. Invite camp parents to invest in the campaign, then keep it up post-campaign.		
	25. Rev up a workplace giving campaign for members in the fall.		
	26. Launch a breakfast fundraising event targeting the business community.		
	27. Appoint a board/staff committee to do an ROI analysis of the A.K. Guy event.		
	28. Pursue a media partnership with KOMO-TV.		
	29. Develop an issue-oriented presentation that can be delivered to community groups.		
	30. Organize a speakers' bureau, conduct public speaking training and solicit speaking engagements.		
	31. Write a 5- and 10-minute Y "stump speeches" for "who we are" presentations.		
	32. Invite campaign volunteers to deliver the stump speech at corporate brown bags.		
	33. Organize a community forum or town hall meeting on kids and families.		
	34. Recruit a Public Awareness Committee.		
	35. Develop an annual strategic media relations plan.		
	36. Write an op-ed that's ready to go at an opportune moment.		
	37. Send "donut" news releases tailored to club neighborhoods and towns.		
	38. Hold a campaign kickoff celebration for staff.		
	39. Train staff in how to cultivate donors to the campaign.		





	40. Ensure that every staff member and volunteer can make the case for philanthropy.		
	41. Incorporate messaging and “who we are” training into staff orientation.		
	42. Publish a monthly campaign e-newsletter just for employees.		
	43. Provide Writing for Dollars® training to development and marcom staff.		
	44. Develop a style and language guide.		
	45. In the search for a Chief Communications Officer, make nonprofit experience mandatory.		
	46. Embed messages from the new message platform into the website.		
	47. Make the website more appealing to donors – and others.		
	48. Create a campaign website.		
	49. Develop a more donor-focused social media strategy.		

### YMCA of Greater Seattle social media analysis

**Social media use is on the rise – and not just with Millennials.** More than two-thirds of American adults use social media today – almost a tenfold increase over the past decade, according to an [October 2015 Pew Research Center report](#). More than one-third of Americans age 65 and older use a social network, up from a mere 2 percent in 2005.

Even if you're not raising much money on social media today, it behooves every nonprofit to maintain a smart, strategic and responsive social media presence. Whatever platform you use, social media offers quick and powerful ways to get your message out your many followers – whenever you want to and on your own terms. You can also get rich, real-time data on how your followers respond to the information you share.

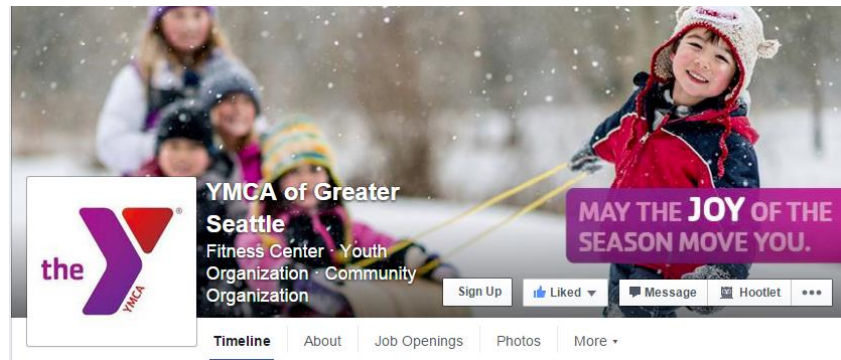
**You have a strong presence on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.** YMCA of Greater Seattle has good-sized followings on Facebook (4,300+), Twitter (2,000+) and a YouTube channel with an impressive gallery of videos. Your social media feeds feature a variety of engaging content. Posts about fitness and nutrition far outnumber those that focus on the Y's youth development and social responsibility work. To better support the message that “the Y is more than just a gym,” focus more of your posts on the impact the Y has on people – and not just those who go to the Y to exercise.

**Make it clear you're a nonprofit.** You'd never guess from your bare-bones “About Us” blurbs on Facebook and Twitter that the YMCA is a nonprofit. Flesh those out with language from your case statement.

What? You're a nonprofit?	Mission- and donor-centric message
<b>ABOUT US (on Facebook):</b> The Y: We're for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Let us know what you'd like to see on our Y's page!	The YMCA is more than a gym. We're a cause. We bring people of all ages together to be active and healthy, educated and self-empowered, and engaged in helping to build a stronger community for us all.
<b>ABOUT US (on Twitter):</b> Get the inside scoop on the YMCA of Greater Seattle!	

**Feature happy faces of healthy kids and families in your rotation of cover photos.**

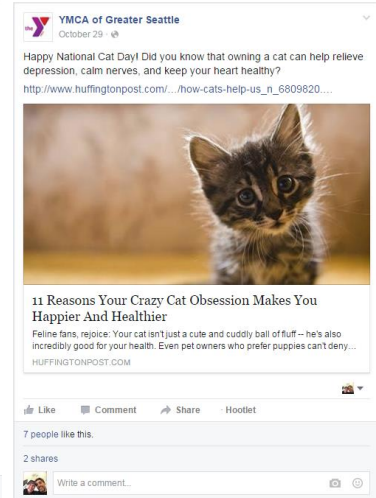
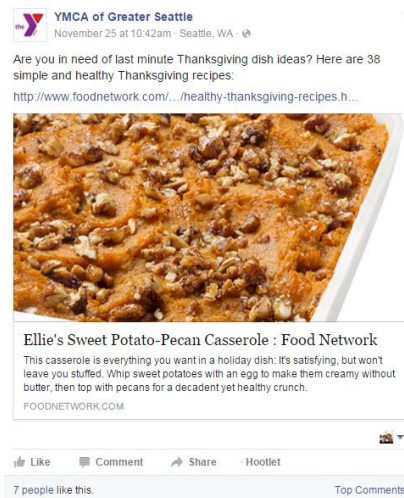
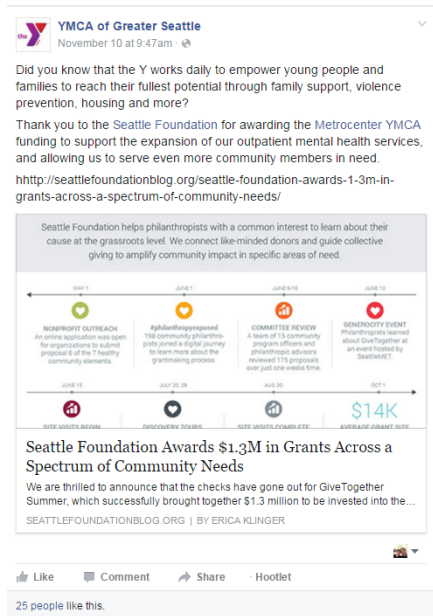
Smiling faces of active, healthy people show the **impact** you have on **people** better than text-only images like one about your Diabetes Prevention Program that ran in late November 2015.



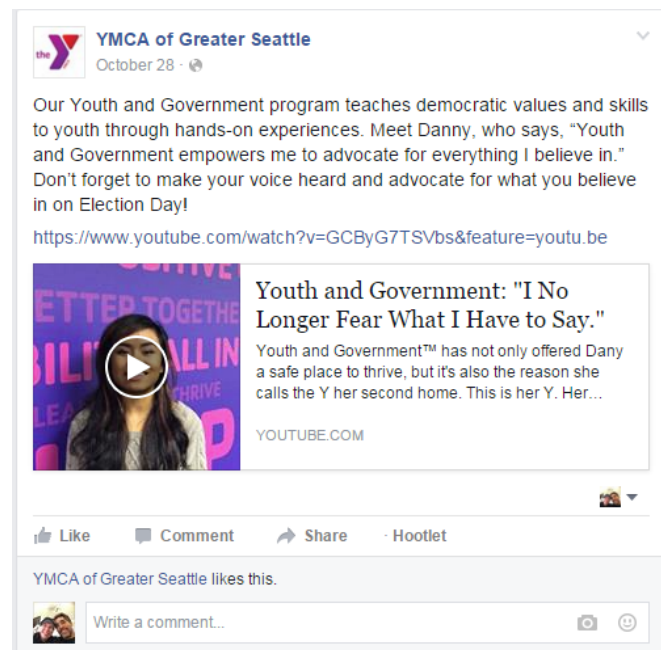
**Change your call-to-action button from “Sign Up” to “Donate Now” on Facebook,** like Campfire USA does. And consider streamlining the organization types listed below your name from “Fitness Center | Youth Organization | Community Organization” to the more streamlined subheader of “Non-Profit Organization.” Your gyms and camps can keep the “Sign Up” button, while the “Donate Now” button will better position YMCA of Greater Seattle as a nonprofit that can do more with the support of donors.



**Inspire your followers** by telling more stories about the many meaningful ways the Y makes life better for people – especially those who are vulnerable. Your followers want and need to know more about your mission-driven work. A recent post about the Seattle Foundation’s grant that will allow you to expand mental health services to people in need got almost four times the likes as your shares of Thanksgiving recipes and an article about National Cat Day.



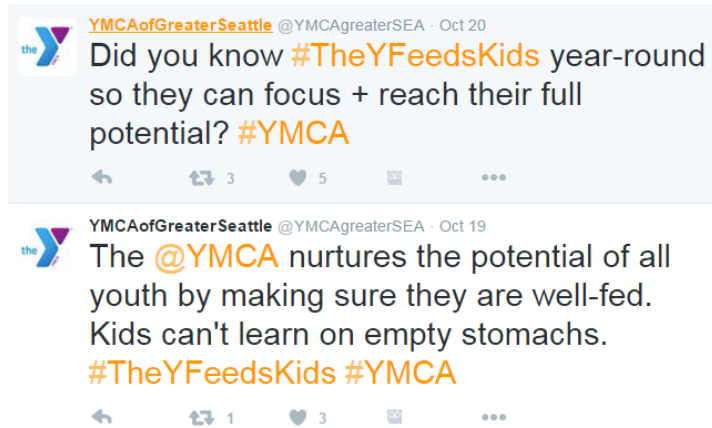
**Be brief and use catchier language when posting about your impact.** Danny, a young woman featured in one video shares a deeply emotional and inspiring story about her journey out of homelessness and the confidence she gained thanks to her involvement with the Y’s Youth and Government Program – but the Facebook post is wordy, heavy on program-centric language like “teaches democratic values and skills through hands-on experiences” and doubles as a call to action to vote on Election Day. A shorter, more compelling way to pique followers’ interest: “Meet Danny. Once homeless. Now a passionate and empowered advocate.”



**Another brevity tip:** Delete or shorten long URLs, which look clunky on Facebook and use up precious characters on Twitter.



**Be bullish about posting engaging “Did you know?” questions** and other compelling posts about your impact. Use hashtags that make your content visible to more than your own followers. Find popular hashtags that related to your cause(s) on [hashtagify.me](https://hashtagify.me). (Get more hashtag tips from nonprofit marketing expert John Haydon: [“Hashtag 101 – A Primer for Nonprofits.”](#))



**Measure your success and set goals for improving.** At least once a month, check your [Facebook Page Insights](#) and [Tweet activity dashboard](#) to see which posts are performing the best, worst and in between. (Social media management services like Hootsuite offer ways to dig even deeper.) Make note of the trends, listen to your audience and strive to do more posts that are performing well and fewer posts that aren't.

**Learn more from these social media experts who know nonprofits.** Follow them. Subscribe to their e-newsletters. They know their stuff and are always quick to share helpful advice for nonprofits whenever the rules of the road change (i.e., just when you think you know them all!):

- [Beth Kanter](#), author of Beth's Blog: How Nonprofits Can Use Social Media and co-author of *The Networked Nonprofit* and *Measuring The Networked Nonprofit*
- [John Haydon](#), digital marketing expert for nonprofits
- [Kivi Leroux-Miller](#), nonprofit communications expert, blogger and author of *The Nonprofit Marketing Guide*
- [Nancy Schwartz](#), nonprofit marketing consultant and author of the Getting Attention! blog
- [npENGAGE](#), online forum where bloggers with [Blackbaud](#) share social trends, best practices, reports and news for nonprofits
- [Nonprofit Tech for Good](#), a social and mobile media blog for nonprofits

**YMCA Campaign Communications Plan  
December 2015**

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