

Five Big Trends Changing Nonprofit Comms and Marketing Today

NONPROFIT
MARKETING GUIDE



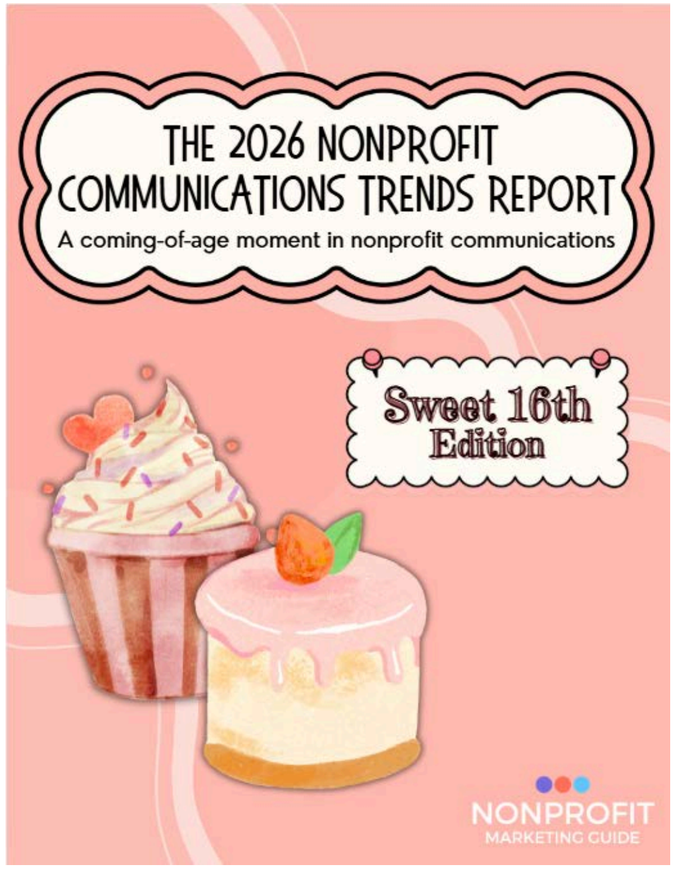
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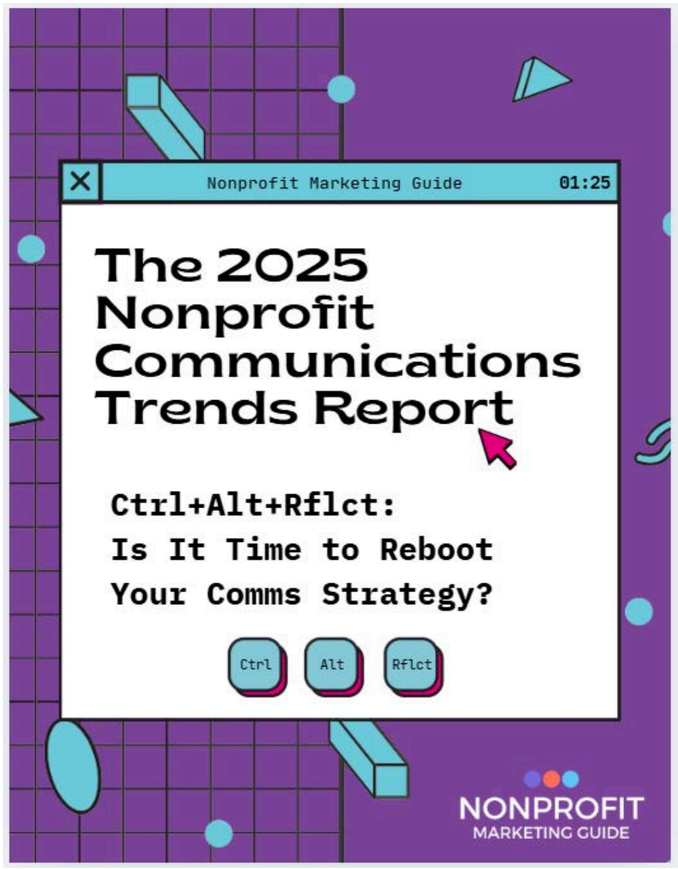
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We help nonprofit communicators:

- Learn Their Jobs
- Love Their Work
- Lead Their Teams

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Every year we go deep into the wonk of nonprofit comms work.

Today, let's look at some larger trends affecting our work.

TREND ONE

Today, social media is all media, no social.



A Short History of Social Media

2008-2012: Social was social. What you saw depended on who you knew.

2012-2015: Pay to play. Organic reach throttled back, engagement algorithm takes hold.

2015-2018: Engagement bait era. Engagement is rewarded so provocative content explodes.

2018-2020: “Meaningful interactions” over passive consumption in theory, but it’s really about time on platform.

2020-2022: TikTok disruption. Interest signals break social graph entirely; and video (especially vertical) fully rules.

2022-Today: All media, no social. Meta continues to move away from news/cause content. LinkedIn is having a moment because it still values thoughtful posts.



You Are Auditioning on Social Media

What content do you want to be known for?

What topics or vibes should people expect from you?

How many different staff members can you get on camera?

Your likes and comments may be plummeting. **Better metrics:** Watch time, saves, shares, and profile visits or follows right after specific content is shared.



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Your social audience is yours	The platform owns that relationship so act accordingly

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TREND TWO

Zero-click culture has changed what your website is for.



What Your Website Used to Be For

- **Discovery** — people found you through search and social links
- **Explanation** — telling your story to people who had never heard of you
- **Education** — teaching visitors about your cause from scratch
- **Credibility** — proving you were a legitimate organization
- **Traffic destination** — the goal of most of your other communications was to drive people here
- **Search ranking** — more pages, more keywords, more content meant more visibility



What Websites Should Do Now

- **Confirmation** — people arrive already knowing who you are, so they are checking you're worth trusting
- **Conversion** — making it fast and frictionless to take the next step, donate, sign up, get involved
- **Relationship capture** — getting an email address, SMS signup, or event registration before they leave
- **Deepening** — for the people who want more, giving them somewhere to go
- **Authority signaling** — demonstrating expertise and credibility to both human visitors and AI systems that are deciding whether you're worth referencing



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Optimize every page for search keywords	AI looks for authority and clarity; it cares less about keywords

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TREND THREE

AI is an audience you are likely ignoring at your peril.



What AI is Doing Today

- **AI is a referral source on its own.** Is your org part of AI's answers?
- **Is your website built like an FAQ machine?** Long content all about you and your programs is less likely to surface in AI.
- **Are others mentioning you in conversations about your topics?** AI listens to social proof (think reddit, press mentions, blogs that reference you as a trusted source).



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Your website is your only owned content that matters for discovery	AI pulls from everywhere — LinkedIn, press mentions, partner sites, and nonprofit directories all feed into whether AI knows who you are

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This is too technical for us to worry about	It begins with simply answering the questions people are actually asking.

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TREND FOUR

Your brand is your life raft, not your paint job.



Your Voice is EVERYTHING.

- **Your point of view and personality** is what stops the scroll.
- **Sound human** (imperfect, real, sometimes moody). Otherwise you sound like generic AI.
- **Talk about now.** What's happening today and tomorrow? AI often still thinks Biden is president.
- **Prove your humanity.** AI is an impersonator and a mimic. It has no soul, no lived experience, and prefers to be average. Don't be like AI.



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Your communications staff manages your brand	Your most distinctive brand asset is every human voice in your organization, coached or uncoached, ready or not

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AI can handle your content production	AI can handle volume. The distinctive human voice that cuts through has to come from you

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TREND FIVE

Invest in relationships and community. You'll have to reach them however they choose.



Comms is Completely Fragmented and Even More Change is Coming

- Even the email inbox is managed by AI now
- What might it look like if every digital channel you use to reach people is curated by AI?
- Will people care enough to find you on whatever new platforms prevail?



Conventional Wisdom

Build your strategy around your best performing channel

The Current Reality

Build relationships deep enough to cross channels

Invest in relationships and community, not specific channels.

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Get your message out widely to everyone	Build spaces where your community actually talks to you and to each other, in person or in chats/groups online.
Bring communications and fundraising in once the program plan is set	Strategic relationship building requires a seat at the planning table from the start

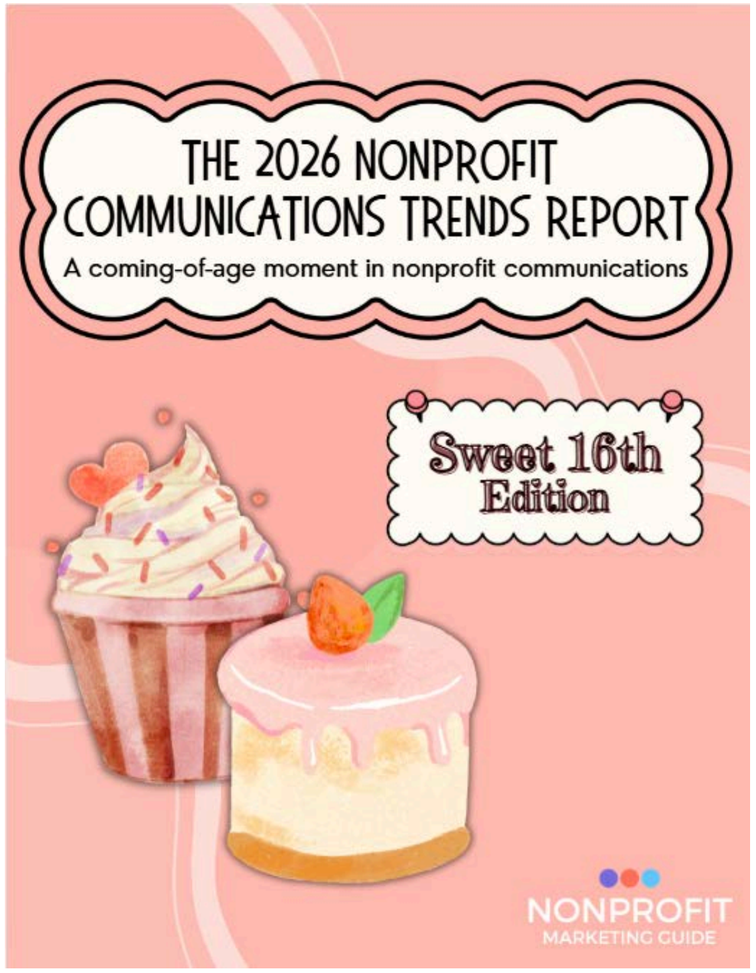
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NOW WHAT?

Acknowledge this is hard.

Give your comms staff authority and resources to help manage all this change more strategically.





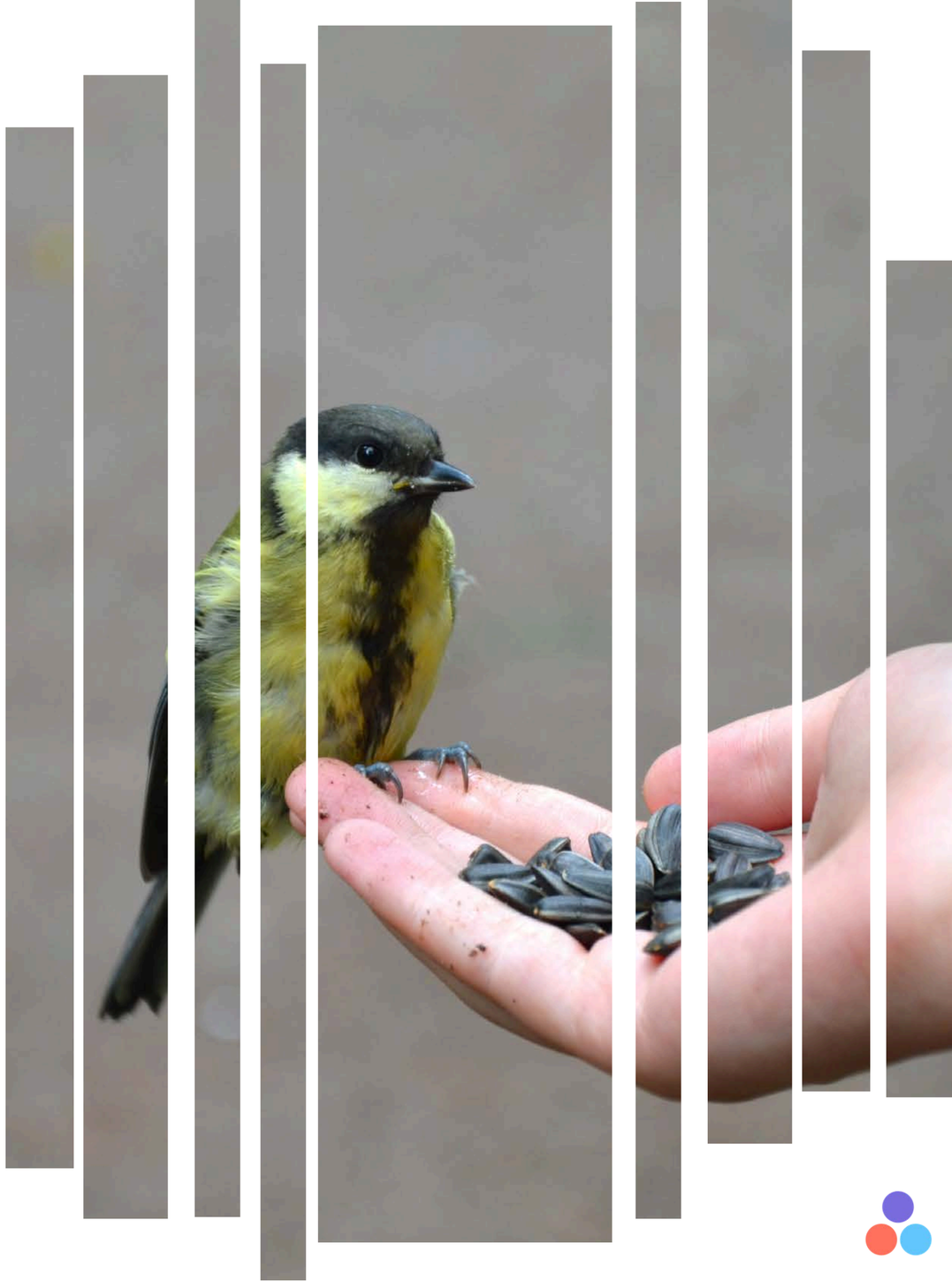
- Give your team **more than a seat at the table.** Engage them in all organizational strategy decisions.
- Stop measuring them on list size, follower count and other **meaningless metrics**.
- **Protect their time** for the work that actually builds relationships.

Your team is capable of **far more meaningful work.**

The systems around them – human (you as a manager?) and tech – **need to catch up.**

Channels will keep changing.
Algorithms will keep shifting.
AI will keep getting in between
you and your community.

Relationships
and trust
are the only things
that survive all of it.



For the love of all humanity and all things holy,

please stop publishing rando content.

Be intentional.
Don’t be afraid to stand out.
Be worth the time.



Join our free community
where we are figuring
all of this out together.

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