Interview with Donors Choose

We have two audiences we think about - our donors who give money to support classrooms, and our teachers... teachers comms are mostly via email, a bit of social media; goals are to keep them updated on what fundraising opportunities are available, how it works..... with donors it’s a little more complicated; the goals are once we’ve engaged them to get them to come back.  We do spend a decent amount of time on email.

From a communications perspective, to what extent is social media part of your strategy?  Our strategy is pretty segmented based on how we acquire the donor; we share stories of needs that are in the classroom.... we help donors understand whatever their interest area is they are mostly connected to their math project.... or if they are into geographic areas, we want to communicate to them.... so it’s a correspondence based project, they upload photos of the materials..... the story of impact and the story of the project being used....

To what extent do you promote or otherwise engage with your volunteer base to encourage them to collect and disseminate stories and information to advance your goals?

We do have them share with other people through social media, they can connect with Facebook, etc.  What happens is they post to a wall and lets them ....

We just hired a former teacher to really focus on this issue, we see this as a big area for growth, we realized a few years ago that a great number of our donors were coming in through our teachers that they were supporting directly, where the corporate partner would match... gave teachers an incentive to reach out and ask ....

We have a screen after the post of the project that is a three minute video of two teachers talking about how they fundraise for their classrooms, and we have links to the three calls to action.....  one of our calls to action is to give them template language for that.

We encourage them to chat with their principal, to put things on their school websites, we think that email and social media are the best way to do it.  We do share other ideas.  We have not encouraged teachers to go out to the media- probably a matter of us prioritizing.... we want to be able to do it in a very easy way that won’t result in a lot of work back for us, so scalable.... in our last school year we had 60,000 teachers using the site, we’d have to figure out internally who would be in charge of it.... if we wanted to issue press releases, who would do it, we are so lean.  We’d have to figure out who would be in charge of the inquiries.  But we know that local media does not drive donations, but it does drive awareness....

With media I don’t see any negatives, unless there is some misuse of the site, we have a team focused on media .... in terms of social media a teacher might tweet at 100 celebrities and it sees spammy and off brand- but we haven’t had a lot of problems with that.

You would be probably appalled and impressed by how little money we spend; I run the marketing for the entire organization and my second largest budget is our email provider.... we did once for one year but we have not ever hired .... we are crazy frugal so as much can go to classrooms, but we have been the recipient of ... corporate donations.  $350 prof development budget that they can spend however is best for them. We have a human capital team that will do a manager training, or someone will lead a brown-bagging session on a topic.

We don't spend a lot of time on tracking mentions, we don't spend a lot of effort on analytics, but it's very results oriented, tracking oriented, but our social media mention....