Nonprofit Organizations and the Emerging Potential of Social Media and Internet Resources

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to examine how social media and Internet resources are helping nonprofit organizations (NPOs) work to achieve their mission. Throughout the paper, three environmental nonprofits—West Michigan Environmental Action Council, Energy Action Coalition, and Greenpeace—serve as a microcosm for how Social Media is currently being used by environmental NPOs. This paper is focused on several different types of social media sites, including social networking sites, blogging sites, and multimedia sites. Examples are given of how these sites have been successful, and how they have been less successful than originally hoped. The effectiveness and usefulness of Internet resources and mobile giving to NPOs is also analyzed. I identify the barriers to effectively using these tools, and the shortcomings and problems caused by utilizing social media. This study includes a survey of college-aged Americans, who share their experiences regarding the nonprofits they follow through Social Media. These surveys provided insight into what approaches NPOs are using, and how effective these approaches have been. Finally, I give recommendations on how these NPOs can more effectively use Social Media, and warn the reader against over-reliance on Internet tools.

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