



Dear ,

Welcome to the Marketing Minute, our email newsletter. Our firm, LevinsonBlock LLC, helps entrepreneurial companies and non-profits grow through effective branding and marketing. If you have marketing questions or a topic you would like us to address in a future issue, [email us here!](#)

Communicating transparency and good stewardship

What are donors looking for these days? For one thing, they want organizations that they can trust to use their donations effectively.



The Problem

According to a recent poll, only 11 percent of Americans believe that charitable organizations spend money wisely, which ranks almost two-thirds lower than the percentage that believe charities do an effective job helping people. For an overview, read this [article](#) in United Way's website.

New Channels

Today's donors can share their experience with non profits online. To experience this, visit [Charity Navigator](#), which evaluates non profits based largely on fiscal responsibility and financial health. Each rated organization has a page where visitors can post comments describing their experiences. For example, on one organization's page, donors have posted complaints about the CEO's pay. On another organization's page, donors to an environmental non profit have complained about excessive use of paper in its direct mail -- and the organization has responded! Along with other online communities such as [Facebook](#), these sites represent an important communications channel for your organization -- one that can't be controlled, only guided.

Building Trust

Here are some steps you can take to communicate transparency and good stewardship:

- *Stories:* Two kinds of stories build trust with donors: emotional stories that show

your mission's human impact; and rational stories that express outcomes in businesslike terms. You need both to be credible. For example, a healthcare client of ours funded a project that resulted in a scientific breakthrough. Our communications told stories that presented the researchers as real people and highlighted patients who will benefit from the research. We also told this story as a great return on donor investment. Some donors want to be moved -- others want a good ROI.

- *Testimonials:* Collect and publish testimonials that emphasize how effective and efficient you are in fulfilling your mission -- of course, some of the most persuasive testimonials are from donors!.
- *Numbers:* Clearly communicate what happens to donations, how much goes to the mission, to overhead, etc. Post the numbers on your website in a prominent place. Diagrams are especially valuable in telling your financial story. Don't hide your numbers, If donors don't find them on your website, they can find them elsewhere!. If possible, release an annual report on a yearly basis. That way, you can point to a history of financial transparency.
- *Social Media:* Monitor [Charity Navigator](#), [Facebook](#), and similar sites, and respond in a timely way to feedback about your organization. Donor comments are becoming a much bigger part of decisions about where to donate -- this trend will only accelerate.
- *Tone:* Keep the language on your website or and email matter-of-fact. Don't use a lot of hype. Usability studies show that website visitors trust websites with a more objective tone. To learn more, visit [this link](#).

FACT OF THE MONTH

The name Wendy was made up for the book Peter Pan.

LevinsonBlock News

We have been selected to develop the website for St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction, an effective community-based organization in the Bronx. We'll keep you posted on a launch date.

For more information about communications and branding, website or print design, call or email me:

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Fact of the Month courtesy Paul Michael Neuman; www.froggyumpkin.com

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