From Roots to Results: Strategic Marketing for Environmental Organizations to Build Awareness and Mobilize Support

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1. Abstract

This paper explores the vital role of digital marketing strategies in empowering environmental organizations to effectively engage communities and mobilize support despite constraints in time, budget, and expertise. Through a comprehensive literature review and a case study of Speak for the Trees, Boston, key insights emerged regarding the challenges and successes of digital marketing in environmental advocacy. By emphasizing the importance of establishing strong brand strategies, clear marketing plans, creating engaging content, and leveraging social media and newsletters, this research underscores the transformative potential of strategic digital marketing initiatives. Furthermore, it highlights the need for environmental organizations to move beyond passive marketing approaches and embrace digital platforms as essential tools for advancing their missions. Ultimately, this paper advocates for a proactive stance in digital marketing, encouraging environmental organizations to leverage the power of online communication to amplify their impact and foster positive change for the planet.

Keywords: Environmental Organizations, Digital Marketing, Climate Justice, Tree Equity

2. Introduction

The effects of climate change are increasing in frequency and severity. Extreme weather events are exacerbating the impacts of a wide range of environmental justice issues including but not limited to public health, economic inequality, food and water insecurity, and climate displacement. The consequences of climate change are widespread and far-reaching; however, climate change does not affect people of all social groups, economic status, and geographic

location to the same extent. Those who do not have the political authority to advocate for themselves, namely coastal communities, racial minorities, low-income groups, and women, bear the brunt of the climate burden (Rice, 2023).

Climate justice is a "term, and more than that a movement, that acknowledges climate change can have disproportionately harmful social, economic, and public health impacts on disinvested populations. Advocates for climate justice are striving to have these inequities addressed head-on through long-term mitigation and adaptation strategies" (Simmons 2020). Climate justice encompasses the goal to address the climate crisis and alleviate the climate burden from those disproportionately suffering. And in order to advance climate justice, resources must be diverted from fossil fuels and carbon emissions as well as actively engaged in systemic changes that upend the mechanisms that have empowered corporate influence and obstructed climate policy for decades (Kinol et al., 2023). One way this can be accomplished is by raising awareness for and investing in environmental, nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and grassroots organizations that are on the ground and in touch with the climate mitigation and adaptation needs in their respective communities.

Environmental organizations are a key component to furthering climate justice. These organizations, ranging in size and capacity, work to pursue advancements in sustainability, renewable technology, environmental advocacy, social justice, and much more. While a key component of the success of environmental organizations and their respective mission is community engagement and awareness, these organizations often lack the resources and marketing capacity to properly curate their online presence and accessibility in this uber digital age (Hussey, 2021). And while larger, profit-driven polluting corporations have the budget for robust multi-level marketing teams, these smaller teams of environmental stewards generally do

not have the same access to resources in which to engage with the public (Turner, 2022). The competing force does not appear to be equal and opposite in this case.

This capstone research paper aims to investigate the best marketing and messaging strategies to optimize community involvement for environmental organizations given the constraints around time, organizational capacity, knowledge, expertise, and budget for digital marketing efforts. This research paper includes a literature review to identify the major challenges and successes of digital marketing. It then follows with a case study into a local environmental nonprofit, Speak for the Trees, Boston, including an analysis of their marketing analytics and identification of key lessons and best practices for replication by similar organizations. Ultimately, this work sheds light on the research question: how do environmental organizations strategically utilize digital marketing platforms to effectively build awareness, engage the public, and mobilize support with a limited budget and capacity?

3. Literature Review: Successes and Challenges in Digital Marketing

Marketing has long been associated with overconsumption, materialism, pollution, and corporatism. Is marketing "used to create and sustain the power of multinational corporations? That is promoting the consumerism that is ruining our world? The never-ending advertising efforts to convince people to buy things they do not need?" (Lefebvre, 2013). Or, R. Craig Lefebvre poses, is marketing "the most effective engine of economic development, providing a standard of living for many people that is unsurpassed in human history? The reason why we have so many choices at affordable prices to satisfy our needs? The basis for development of societies and the interchanges among them?" These questions do well to illustrate the paradox of marketing today in the United States. The notion that marketing is a driver of bad, and yet, it can

be a force for good. If marketing is said to be a part of the climate change problem, can it realistically be a part of the solution?

Marketing serves as a conduit for consumer empowerment, facilitating informed decision-making and promoting competition within markets. A study by Kotler and Armstrong (2016) outlines how marketing activities enable consumers to access a diverse range of goods and services, thereby enhancing their standard of living. By fostering competition, marketing encourages businesses to innovate and improve product quality, leading to increased consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Kotler et al., 2017). Similarly, marketing campaigns often serve as platforms for disseminating crucial information regarding health, safety, and environmental concerns, thereby contributing to public awareness and societal well-being (Smith & Taylor, 2019). Through targeted messaging and promotional strategies, marketing initiatives have been instrumental in addressing social issues such as smoking cessation, environmental conservation, and public health awareness (Hastings et al., 2013). Thus, marketing not only facilitates economic transactions but, when used for good, marketing can serve as a catalyst for positive societal change.

Environmental organizations (i.e., the span of nonprofits, NGOs, and grassroots organizations who persist with the sole purpose to pursue environmental advocacy, not profit) employing marketing strategies to raise awareness for their respective missions in sustainability, renewable energy, climate justice, etc. is a prime example of marketing being used "for good." These organizations could benefit substantially from consistent digital marketing. Digital marketing is the use of websites, apps, mobile devices, social media, search engine optimization (SEO), email, and other digital channels to advertise, and ultimately sell, goods and services. Digital marketing encompasses more than just internet marketing; it also includes offline

channels through mobile devices like Short Messaging Service or "SMS" (Barone, 2023; Revathi, 2018). Digital marketing is frequently seen as an extra tool for businesses to reach customers and comprehend their behavior, and it incorporates many of the same concepts as traditional marketing.

Traditional marketing refers to any form of marketing that reaches consumers through offline media. Advertisements in newspapers and other print media are basic instances of traditional marketing; other examples include billboards, mailers, television, and radio commercials (Mailchimp, 2022). Traditional and digital marketing strategies are frequently combined by businesses. The drawbacks of traditional marketing (Table 1) are generally understood to be a limited ability to target a specific demographic, a lack of connection with the audience, and a higher cost input for less results and return on investment (ROI) (Table 2, Figure 1). While traditional marketing retains its utility in communicating information to consumers through print brochures at local events or engaging the public through event partnerships, for example, it has somewhat been deemed obsolete in the eyes of modern marketing strategists. A resounding 72% of consumers prefer to learn about things through content rather than traditional advertising. This striking statistic demonstrates the necessity for businesses to embrace new-age content marketing strategies like blog posts, social media, and email campaigns (Eser, 2023). With the Coronavirus pandemic encouraging more people to work at home on their computers, digital marketing is more relevant and necessary than ever (Vislavskiy, 2024).

Table 1: Traditional Marketing and Digital Marketing Comparison (Yasmin et al., 2015)	
Traditional Marketing	**Digital Marketing**
Traditional marketing includes print,	Digital marketing includes online advertising,

broadcast, direct mail, and telephone	email marketing, social media, text messaging, affiliate marketing, search engine optimization, pay per click
No interaction with the audience	Interaction with the audience
Results are easy to measure	Results are to a great extent easy to measure
Advertising campaigns are planned over a long period of time	Advertising campaigns are planned over short period of time
Expensive and time-consuming process	Reasonably cheap and rapid way to promote the products or services
Success of traditional marketing strategies can be celebrated if the firm can reach large local audience	Success of digital marketing strategies can be celebrated if the firm can reach some specific number of local audience
One campaign prevails for a long time	Campaigns can be easily changed with ease and innovations can be introduced within any campaign
Limited reach to the customer due to limited number of customer technology	Wider reach to the customer because of the use of various customers technology
24/7 year-round exposure is not possible	24/7 year-round exposure is possible
No ability to go viral	Ability to go viral
One way conversation	Two way conversation
Responses can only occur during work hours	Response or feedback can occur anytime

Table 2: Average Cost per Thousand People on Digital and Traditional Marketing Platforms (Online Advertising Costs, 2021)	
Traditional Marketing Platforms	
Platform	**Average Cost per Thousand People (CPM)**
Billboard	$13-22
Radio	$10-20
Magazine	$140-1,300

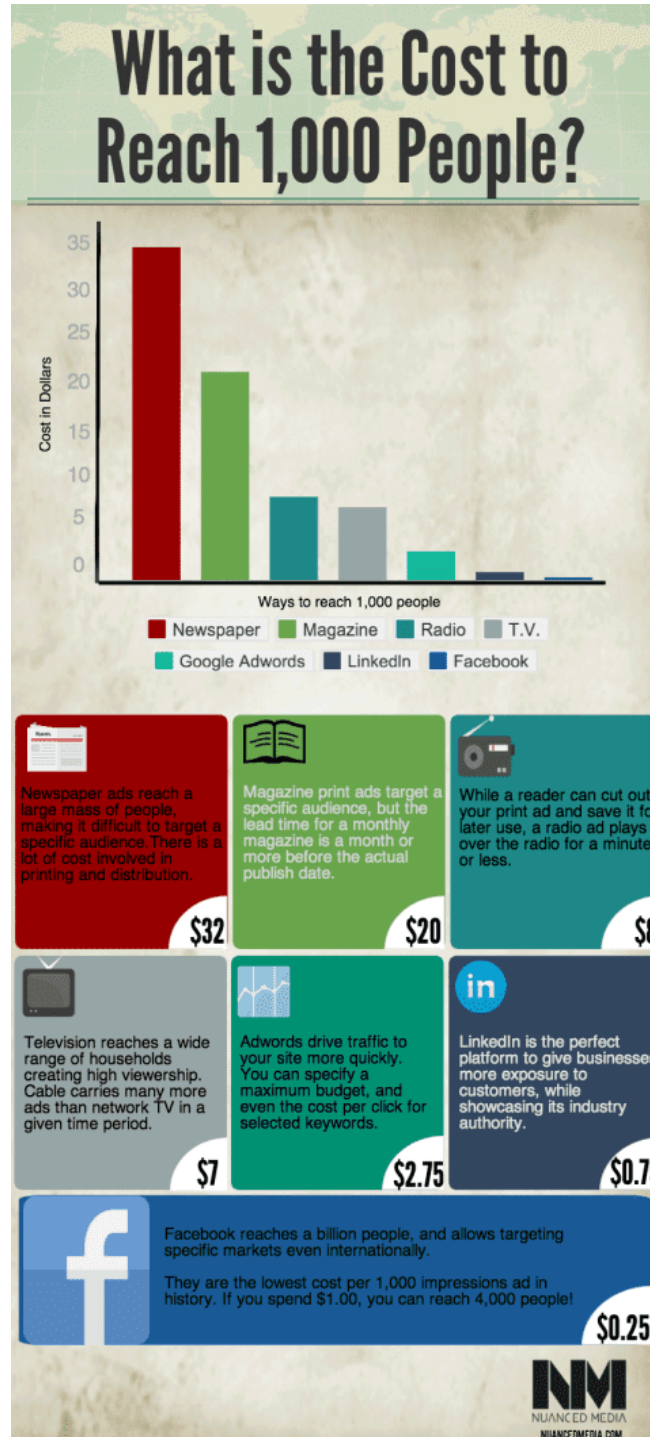|	
Newspaper	$10-45
Direct Mail	$500-1,000
Network Television	$20-30
Digital Marketing Platforms	
Platform	**Average CPM**
Google Search	$38.40
Google Display	$3.12
Facebook	$8.60
Instagram	$8.96
Twitter (X)	$6.46
Linkedin	$6.59

Figure 1: Cost to Reach One Thousand People on Seven Major Marketing Platforms
(Flannagan, 2014)

The figure displays average CPM of Newspaper, Magazine, Radio, Television, Google, Linkedin, and Facebook advertisements. The graphic compares four traditional marketing to three digital marketing platforms. Digital marketing platforms, Google, LinkedIn, and Facebook, offer the lowest CPM overall. Traditional marketing media, such as magazine ads may cost a business $20 or more to reach 1,000 people, whereas, the same return can be accomplished through digital marketing at a lower cost at an average of $0.25 per 1,000 people.

Consumers have access to information at any time and from any location using digital media. Organizations are able to generate buzz about their product or service on a much larger and more far-reaching scale: "with the presence of digital media, consumers do not just rely on what the company says about their brand but also they can follow what the media, friends, associations, peers, etc., are saying as well" (Revathi, 2018). Digital marketing, when used strategically, can enhance an organization's online visibility, expand their reach, increase the public's engagement with their work, and convert online viewers into loyal consumers as supported by these five secondary data points (Eser, 2023):

1. "85% of retailers believe that search marketing (including paid and SEO) is the most effective customer acquisition tactic."
2. "Video content produces 86% more views for businesses than those using only static visuals or text advertisements."
3. "61% of internet-enabled consumers perform research online before making a purchase decision."
4. "Businesses make an average of $2 for every $1 they spend on Google Ads."
5. "After viewing a mobile ad, 72% of users visit a store within 5 miles."

However, the ability to stand out in a world full of digital advertisements and online distractions is one of the main problems faced by digital marketers. When digital marketing is used ineffectively, consumers can grow more indifferent to digital advertising as they spend the majority of their waking hours on the internet. A HubSpot survey reveals that "57% of participants disliked ads that played before a video and 43% didn't even watch them" (An, 2016). As a result, marketers may feel pressure to discover their niche and find ways to cut through the clutter. The three step plan to accomplish this includes:

1. Establishing a strong brand strategy
2. Creating a clear marketing plan

3. Consistently posting engaging, authentic content

Before organizations decide to partake in digital marketing, they are to create a strong brand strategy complete with brand positioning and brand identity. A brand strategy is the "holistic approach behind how a brand builds identification and favorability with customers and potential customers" (Collins, 2022). Brand elements are the grounding visual and communications components of a brand strategy that allow an organization's audience to quickly recognize them, these elements include: brand name, brand mission and positioning statement, logo design, brand colors and fonts, content templates, brand association, and the continuous pursuit of brand equity. And while most organizations looking to improve their digital marketing have an established, and perhaps well-known, brand name and logo, they are often missing the other key elements that ultimately lead to brand resonance and customer loyalty. By prioritizing the comprehensive development of brand elements alongside digital marketing efforts, organizations can forge deeper connections with their audience, leading to sustainable competitive advantage in the digital landscape.

Next, organizations are to establish a clear marketing plan consisting of: a statement of marketing objectives(s), target market identification, competitive research, defined marketing mix (or the "4P's": Product, Price, Place, and Promotion), and budget allocation (Evans et al., 2018). Similar to brand strategy, organizations often have not solidified the totality of the information necessary to inform their digital marketing scheme before they create accounts and start posting sporadically:"84% of companies have a digital marketing strategy, but only 11% have a clear digital marketing plan" (Eser, 2023). For example, small businesses are notorious for creating social media without defining the objectives they have for marketing their product or

service in the first place (i.e., event turnout, sales, education, etc). Without goals, it is impossible to evaluate whether a marketing strategy is a good fit for the job.

Now that the organization has a strong brand strategy and a clear marketing plan, they can start to plan out their content calendar. Using a content calendar tool or spreadsheet, the organization can plan out their content schedule, taking into account factors such as posting frequency, timing, and content formats. It's crucial to align the content calendar with the capacity of the staff involved in content creation, distributing tasks evenly and considering outsourcing certain aspects if necessary to maintain consistency without overwhelming the team. This pursuit of consistent posting leads to a domino effect of increased engagement as, for instance, with Instagram, "78% of accounts on Instagram will favor your brand if you're more active" (How to Measure the True ROI, 2023). Throughout this process, authenticity is prioritized, encouraging the sharing of real stories, organizational updates, staff 'social media takeovers,' and experiences that resonate with both the brand and the audience as"90% of customers report that authenticity is an important factor in deciding which brands they like, but Millennials and Gen Z (almost 140 million people) now prefer brands that are 'real and organic' as opposed to 'perfect and well-packaged'" (Meester, 2023). The team will track their analytics to understand which kinds of posts and platforms are performing best and hone in on these kinds of content to maximize outputs towards their goals with digital marketing.

Using their established brand elements–logo, brand colors, fonts, and content templates–, ideal brand associations, brand positioning, marketing objectives, target market, competitive research, marketing mix, budget, and content calendar, the team is ready to expand their online reach and through this strategic and sustainable application of digital marketing. Because without establishing a solid digital presence, businesses risk fading into obscurity, unable to connect with

potential clients or customers (Digital Presence, 2023). In today's hyperconnected world, establishing a robust digital presence is not merely an option but a necessity for businesses striving to remain competitive (Karim, 2024). By strategically harnessing the power of digital marketing, organizations can effectively reach and engage with their target audience to drive growth and achieve lasting success.

4. Case Study: Speak for the Trees, Boston

4.1 Introducing Speak for the Trees, Boston

Speak for the Trees, Boston (SFTT), treeboston.org, is an environmental nonprofit local to the greater Boston area. SFTT engages in community-driven projects to empower residents and foster ownership over their spaces. They emphasize the transformative power of tree planting, care, and stewardship in connecting individuals to the global environment in the environmental justice neighborhoods of Boston: Allston/Brighton, Dorchester, East Boston, Mattapan, and Roxbury. By raising awareness about the importance of trees and facilitating partnerships with community organizations, they strive to engage local residents in their work. Additionally, they collaborate with regional and national environmental organizations to tailor programs to the specific needs of each neighborhood, prioritizing equity and addressing issues of diversity, race, socioeconomic status, and geography. Through advocacy efforts, they seek updated policies and funding to ensure tree plantings, tree giveaways, and the overall strategic investment in communities most in need (Speak for the Trees, n.d.). The nonprofit's named mission is to "improve the size, health, and equity of the urban tree canopy in Boston, with a focus on under-resourced and under-canopied neighborhoods. Our mission is grounded in four root values:

1. Urban resilience is critical in this era of global climate change.

2. All Boston residents deserve a clean and healthy urban environment, no matter their zip code.

3. Strong and green communities are the backbone of safe spaces, social cohesion, and livable neighborhoods.

4. All residents play an important role in solving local and global environmental challenges."

SFTT currently consists of a team of seven full-time year-round core staff, with the addition of four seasonal interns that change hands every four months for a total of 11 employees. The SFTT staff, while very gifted in their respective roles, are limited by the previously introduced constraints of time, budget, and organizational expertise in their current capacity to effectively harness their full digital marketing potential for event turnout, fundraising, tree utility education, and overall environmental advocacy. This case study into the SFTT Newsletter, Website, Instagram, Facebook, and Linkedin analytics aims to evaluate their current marketing strategies to provide evidence-based recommendations for building effective marketing strategies for similar organizations working in different environmental contexts or regions.

4.2 Assessing the Impact of SFTT's Strategies

Nonprofit analytics differ from those of traditional businesses due to the unique nature of nonprofit organizations. Unlike businesses driven primarily by profit motives, nonprofits often rely on genuine interest and emotional connections from their audience, as they typically offer services or initiatives aimed at addressing societal needs or advancing a cause (Azhar, 2023).

Therefore, nonprofit analytics not only gauge audience engagement but also measure the effectiveness of communication strategies in eliciting support and fostering meaningful relationships with stakeholders (Appleby, 2016).

Currently, Boston environmental nonprofit, SFTT, has active accounts on Instagram, Facebook, Linkedin, Youtube, and Twitter (X), in addition to their main website and bi-weekly newsletter. Youtube and Twitter (X) will be excluded from this SFTT analysis as these are not a marketing focus of the organization and their analytics were not obtained for the purposes of this analysis. These accounts are updated somewhat infrequently at an average of 1.84 times per week, compared to a national nonprofit average of 3.83 updates per week across the same digital marketing platforms (Email Marketing Statistics, 2023). These post updates range from 0.61 to 4.58 weekly depending on the platform, with Instagram the clearly favored platform for the Boston nonprofit (Table 3). This can likely be attributed to the SFTT team not updating their digital marketing platforms based off of a content calendar. And while planning out a content strategy at a minimum of three months in advance with automated posting integration (Figure 2) is commonplace for large corporations with robust marketing budgets, it is a seemingly impossible task for an environmental organization like SFTT.

Despite the challenges, research points to online consumers liking predictable posting behaviors from the organizations they follow: "when your content quality, quantity or schedule isn't consistent, it can confuse your customers. Keeping with a regular strategy not only helps create a better customer experience but it also helps build credibility, reputation and brand trust" (Simpson, 2019). And according to Techipedia, brands with consistent content messaging are 20% more valuable than those with inconsistent messaging (Hunt, 2011). In the digital age, where consumer expectations for reliable and engaging online interactions are high, consistent

posting schedules serve as a cornerstone for cultivating lasting relationships with followers. By adhering to a structured content strategy, smaller-scale environmental nonprofits like SFTT can effectively enhance their online presence, fostering greater trust and engagement within their community of supporters.

Table 3: Comparing U.S. Nonprofit and SFTT Average Weekly Frequency of Posting per Platform in 2023		
Digital Marketing Platform	**U.S. Nonprofit Avg. # of Updates/Posts per Week** (Dixon, 2024; Feehan, 2023; Email Marketing Statistics, 2023)	**SFTT Avg. # of Updates/Posts per Week***
Instagram	4.90	4.58
Facebook	5.95	1.46
Linkedin	3.30	0.70
Newsletter	1.15	0.61
Overall	3.83	1.84

*For Instagram and Facebook,, "updates/posts" were qualified by feed and story posts. For Linkedin, "updates/posts" were qualified by feed posts. For newsletter, "updates/posts" were qualified by newsletter releases. Website data was excluded from this table as its analytics are not quantifiable in these terms.

Figure 2: Example Monthly Digital Marketing Content Calendar

(Sahakians, 2015)

The example monthly digital marketing content calendar outlines a strategic plan for content distribution across various digital channels over the course of a month. It includes designated slots for different content types, such as blog posts and social media posts, ensuring alignment with the organization's content pillars and marketing objectives. By providing details on posting times, platforms, and responsible team members, the calendar facilitates coordination and accountability among content creators for effective execution of the content strategy.

SFTT's engagement rates across all three social media platforms notably exceed the average rates for U.S. nonprofits (Table 4). This suggests that SFTT effectively captures and retains audience attention, likely through compelling content and targeted communication strategies. Additionally, SFTT's newsletter boasts a significantly higher Unique Open Rate (OR), 52.83%, compared to the average U.S. nonprofit, 28.59%, indicating strong subscriber engagement and interest in the organization's updates and initiatives. Lastly, SFTT's website Bounce Rate (BR) is lower than the U.S. nonprofit average, indicating success in retaining visitors and encouraging further exploration of the website's content and offerings.

Table 4: Comparing U.S. Nonprofit and SFTT Average Rate per Platform in 2023		
Digital Marketing Platform	**Average U.S. Nonprofit Engagement Rate ER** (Valenty, 2023; Nonprofit Tech, n.d.)	**SFTT Average ER**
Instagram	1.04%	3.47%
Facebook	0.11%	7.63%
Linkedin	2.26%	9.12%
Digital Marketing Platform	**Average U.S. Nonprofit OR** (Jarvis, 2023)	**SFTT Average OR**
Newsletter	28.59%	52.83%
Digital Marketing Platform	**Average U.S. Nonprofit BR** (Significant Positive, 2023)	**SFTT Average BR**
Website	65.00%	58.20%

However, in further assessing SFTT's digital marketing performance in 2023 across key platforms–Instagram, Facebook, Linkedin, their website, and bi-weekly newsletter–, notable trends and opportunities for improvement emerged. On Instagram, SFTT experienced fluctuating total engagements, with a peak of 894 engagements in March and a low of 147 in December, while total reach steadily increased from 2379 in January to 5706 in March (Figure 3). Similarly, on Facebook, total engagements varied greatly, reaching a high of 187 in April but plummeting to zero in December, while total reach displayed significant variability, ranging from 573 in January to 6173 in April (Figure 4). Moving to LinkedIn, page views exhibited sporadic patterns throughout the year, with the highest recorded in November (227), while total reach remained relatively stable, ranging from 38 in September to 1570 in August (Figure 5). In terms of the newsletter, SFTT consistently maintained high unique open rates compared to intended recipients, with unique opens ranging from 863 to 1071 and intended recipients ranging from 1776 to 1900 throughout the year (Figure 6). Lastly, website analytics reflected steady growth in new users and total page views, with new users ranging from 1250 in January to 4456 in April and total page views ranging from 3331 in January to 13414 in April (Figure 7). These detailed numerical insights provide valuable guidance for optimizing SFTT's digital marketing strategies, indicating areas of success and opportunities for refinement across various platforms.
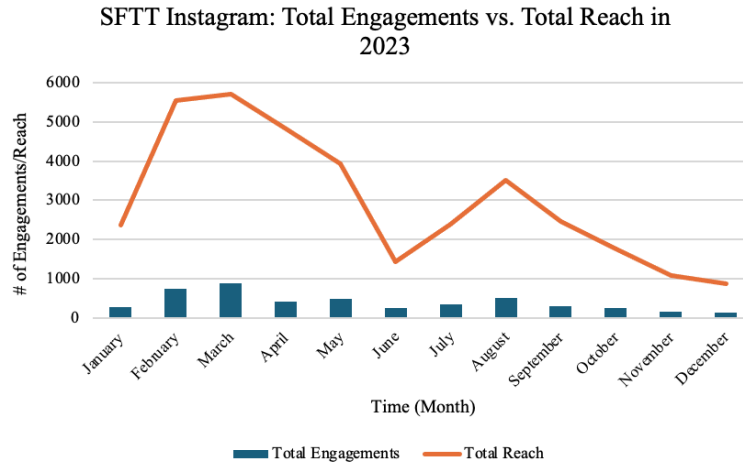
Figure 3: 2023 SFTT Instagram Trends Displaying Total Engagements vs. Total Reach

Trends in total engagements and total reach on the SFTT Instagram account throughout the year of 2023. The blue bars represent the total number of engagements (likes, comments, shares) received on SFTT's Instagram posts over time, while the orange line indicates the total reach, representing the number of unique accounts that saw SFTT's content during the same period. The graph provides insights into the effectiveness of SFTT's Instagram content in both generating engagement from followers and expanding their reach to a wider audience.
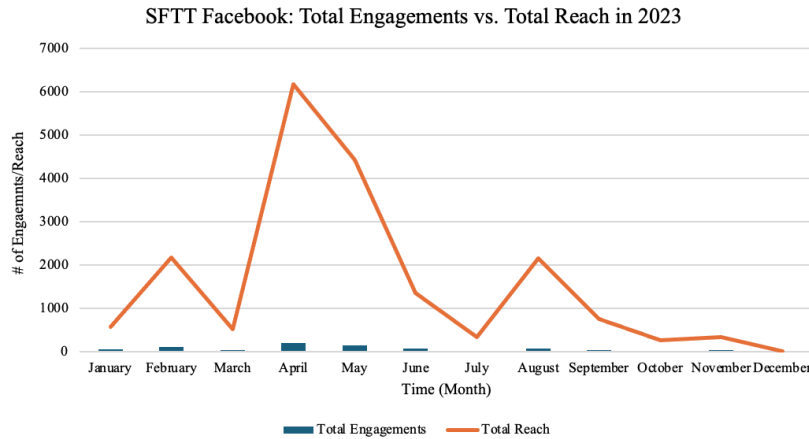

Figure 4: 2023 SFTT Facebook Trends Displaying Total Engagements vs. Total Reach

Trends in total engagements and reach on the SFTT Facebook page throughout the year of 2023. The orange line represents the total number of engagements (likes, comments, shares) received on SFTT's Facebook posts over time, while the blue bars indicate the overall reach, representing the number of unique accounts that saw SFTT's content during the same period. The graph offers insights into the effectiveness of SFTT's Facebook content in generating engagement from followers and extending their reach to a broader audience.
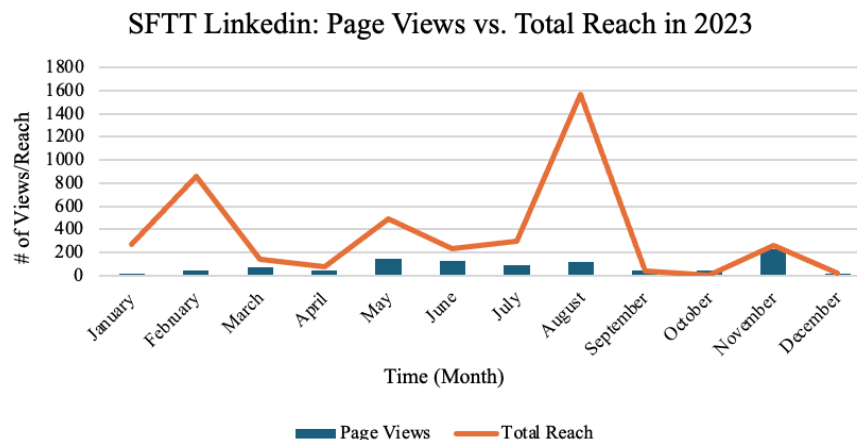
Figure 5: 2023 SFTT Linkedin Trends Displaying Page Views vs. Total Reach

Trends in page views and total reach on the SFTT LinkedIn page throughout the year of 2023. The blue bars represent the total number of page views recorded on SFTT's LinkedIn page over time, while the orange line indicates the total reach, representing the number of unique accounts that viewed SFTT's content during the same period. The graph provides insights into the effectiveness of SFTT's LinkedIn content in both attracting page views and expanding their reach to a broader audience.
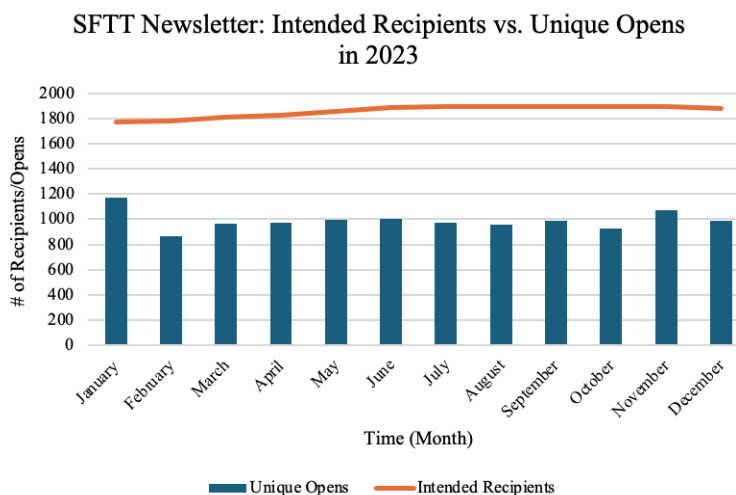

Figure 6: 2023 SFTT Newsletter Trends Displaying Intended Recipients vs. Unique Opens

Trends in intended recipients and unique opens of the SFTT bi-weekly newsletter throughout the year of 2023. The orange line represents the number of intended recipients, indicating the total number of email addresses the newsletter was sent to over time, while the blue bars indicate the unique opens, representing the number of individual recipients who opened the newsletter. The graph provides insights into the effectiveness of SFTT's newsletter in engaging recipients and encouraging them to open and interact with the content.
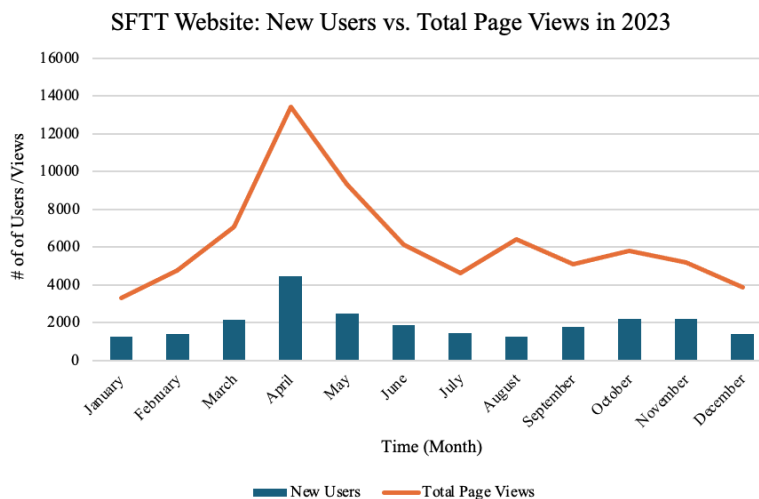
SFTT Website: New Users vs. Total Page Views in 2023

Figure 7: 2023 SFTT Website Trends Displaying New Users vs. Total Page Views

Trends in new users and total page views on the SFTT website throughout the year of 2023. The orange line indicates the total page views recorded over time, while the blue bars represents the number of new users visiting the website within the same period. The graph highlights any correlations or discrepancies between the influx of new users and overall website engagement, providing valuable insights into SFTT's online audience growth and website performance over the course of the year.

SFTT's peak performance in audience engagement and reach on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn during the spring months serves as a notable success, aligning with prime tree planting and tree giveaway weather. Achieving a peak total reach of 5706 on Instagram in March and a total reach of 6173 on Facebook in April underscores the success of their content dissemination strategies and audience engagement efforts during this season. However, despite these successes, there are notable areas for improvement. The drop-off in engagement levels during the winter months presents an opportunity for SFTT to enhance their digital marketing efforts, particularly regarding content creation and distribution. This drop-off could potentially mark the turnover of interns, who may contribute heavily to digital marketing content creation.

To address this, SFTT could implement strategies to maintain consistency in engagement levels year-round, such as developing a more robust content pipeline or providing training and support for new team members to seamlessly transition into their roles. Moving forward, SFTT

could also explore additional tactics to sustain engagement during periods of transition, such as leveraging user-generated content or implementing targeted outreach campaigns to re-engage their audience. By identifying and addressing these seasonal fluctuations in engagement, SFTT can further optimize their digital marketing strategies and ensure continued growth and impact in advancing tree equity in the greater Boston area.

SFTT is currently at a critical juncture where they have showcased notable successes in audience engagement and reach, but there remains untapped potential for further growth and impact in Boston. Recent successes and challenges underscore the potential of their digital marketing efforts to more effectively target and mobilize various stakeholders, including event attendees, volunteers, interns, corporate sponsors, local donors, and Boston residents. Formalizing their brand strategy, developing a comprehensive marketing plan, and prioritizing consistent content creation aligned with their organizational goals can further strengthen their digital marketing effectiveness. And when SFTT has the resources to do so, the organization should prioritize investment in capacity building and professional development for their digital marketing team. By enhancing their marketing expertise and progressively investing in digital marketing strategy, they will witness not only advancements in their mission of Boston urban tree canopy expansion but also substantial monetary returns through heightened engagement, increased support, and broader community impact.

4.3 Key Takeaways for SFTT and Similar Environmental Organizations

As demonstrated by these insights into Boston local environmental nonprofit, SFTT,'s marketing analytics performance, small-scale environmental organizations have the potential to succeed utilizing digital marketing platforms despite organizational shortcomings in marketing

expertise, capacity, and budget. By implementing deliberate, multi-step marketing strategies (Appendix A, B, and C), environmental organizations can compound interest on their digital marketing investments. And while rolling out new and improved digital marketing schemes, environmental organizations should consider this 20-step, start to finish, plan to achieve success in digital marketing:

1. **Understand the Marketing Landscape:** Recognize the challenges and opportunities of digital marketing for environmental organizations. Identify the constraints like time, budget, and expertise specific to your organization. Draft a plan to work around these constraints and maximize your marketing impact within your capacity.

2. **Establish Goals and Objectives:** Clearly outline the specific goals and measurable objectives of your digital marketing efforts, such as raising awareness, engaging the public, education, or mobilizing support. Refer back to these goals continuously to make sure your marketing strategy is bringing you closer to achieving these goals.

3. **Conduct Research:** Review existing literature and case studies to understand successful digital marketing strategies and best practices in your industry.

4. **Write Your Mission Statement:** Define your organization's mission statement according to your core values and desired future impact.

5. **Understand Your Positioning:** Make a positioning or perceptual map to analyze your organization's position in the market including your unique selling points and differentiators. Write a brand positioning statement using the Hubspot online template to ground your digital marketing work.

6. **Create Your Brand Strategy:** Develop a comprehensive brand strategy, including logos, brand colors, brand fonts, post templates, and other brand elements.

7. **Identify Target Audience:** Understand your audience's demographics, interests, and behaviors to tailor your content and messaging effectively.

8. **Solidify Your Marketing Plan:** Outline your marketing objectives, target audience, competitive analysis, marketing mix, and budget allocation for your digital marketing scheme.

9. **Get Your Staff on Board:** Educate staff with the importance of digital marketing. Align your team with your goals, your strategy, and marketing best practices. Establish a workflow that fits your staff's schedules and ensures timely content creation. Make sure each team member understands what their role is in the marketing plan going forward.

10. **Build Platforms and Profiles:** Set up profiles on relevant digital platforms like Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter (X), etc., utilizing your brand elements. Design a comprehensive and informative main website and weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly newsletter.

11. **Produce Quality Content:** Develop high-quality, valuable content that addresses the needs and interests of your target audience and highlights your mission. Make sure your content is diverse and engaging, incorporating stories, Tiktoks, reels, polls, infographics, and educational materials. Keep your content clear, concise, and visually appealing to capture and retain readers' attention. Ensure your branding is consistent across all social media channels, including profile images, bios, and tone of voice.

12. **Outline Your Content Calendar:** Plan out your content schedule, ideally 1-3 months in advance, considering factors like posting frequency, timing, and content formats.

13. **Make Campaigns:** Develop campaigns around holidays, local events, and relevant environmental issues. When your organization hosts an event or launches a new initiative, craft integrated marketing campaigns that leverage both story and feed posts, ensuring maximum visibility and engagement across platforms.

14. **Be Intentional with Your Messaging:** Use language in post captions that resonates with compelling calls to action in every post, directing them to take action such as signing up for events, volunteering, donating, or subscribing to the newsletter. This step ensures that each post serves a purpose in advancing the organization's goals and mobilizing support from their community.

15. **Optimize Your Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** Implement basic SEO practices to improve website visibility and attract organic traffic. Embed relevant keywords and phrases related to your organization in your website and newsletter to improve search engine rankings. Develop a strategy to acquire backlinks from reputable sources. Use your identified keywords in descriptive filenames, alt tags, and captions for images and multimedia elements. Confirm website content is optimized for mobile devices by shortening site loading times. Ensure your website is secure and protected against cyber threats. For social media, incorporate relevant hashtags into your posts to increase discoverability and reach a wider audience.

16. **Institute Your Budget:** Allocate funds for digital marketing efforts including free marketing options along with paid promotions (around your campaigns especially) and platforms as possible i.e. tools like [Loomly](#) for efficient content scheduling and management. Explore discounts for environmental organizations.

17. **Post Consistently and Authentically:** Stick to your content calendar and maintain regular posting schedules. Prioritize authenticity in content creation to resonate with your audience by incorporating community members and your staff's experiences in your posts.

18. **Track Analytics:** Monitor performance metrics, key performance indicators i.e. followers, likes, impressions, reach, ROI, open rates, click-through rates, and conversion rates, by updating an excel or google sheet monthly. Adjust your marketing approach based on these insights as necessary in order to optimize results and reach your goals.

19. **Experiment with Content Formats:** Try different content formats and different posting days, times, and frequencies to see what resonates best with your audience and drives higher engagement. Test different variables like subject lines, sender names, and content layouts to identify what resonates best with your audience.

20. **Engage Your Community:** Cultivate a sense of community and belonging among your followers by encouraging interaction and collaboration. Respond to comments, messages, and mentions in a timely manner. Showcase social proof with endorsements from popular local politicians and public figures. Collaborate with other organizations with similar core values to build trust and credibility.

5. Conclusion

The power of effective digital marketing for environmental organizations cannot be overstated. Through an examination of both literature and a real-world case study, this paper sheds light on the potential of strategic digital marketing to amplify the voices of environmental advocates, engage communities, and drive meaningful change. From establishing strong brand

strategies to leveraging social media, newsletters, and websites, environmental organizations

have a wealth of tools at their disposal to build awareness and mobilize support for their

respective missions. Now more than ever, it is time for environmental organizations to embrace

digital marketing not as a luxury, but as a necessity for achieving their goals. By pursuing digital

marketing with purpose and intention, environmental organizations can reach new audiences and

harness the full potential of marketing to create a more sustainable future for all.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Bounce Rate	the percentage of visitors that leave a webpage without taking an action, such as clicking on a link, filling out a form, or making a purchase, the lower the percentage, the better the performance (Dean, 2023).
Brand Association	a mental connection a customer makes between your brand and a concept, image, emotion, experience, person, interest, or activity (Holmes, 2021).
Brand Equity	a measure of overall consumer perceptions of any brand (What is brand equity, n.d.).
Brand Identity	the visible elements of a brand, such as color, design, and logo that identify and distinguish the brand in consumers' minds. Consistent marketing and messaging lead to consistent brand identity and, therefore, consistent sales (Tarver, 2022).
Brand Mission Statement	a statement that puts a spotlight on what your brand is currently doing and focusing on to fulfill its brand purpose (Brand mission, n.d.).
Brand Positioning	a marketing strategy brands develop to establish the uniqueness of their brand and convey its value proposition (What is Brand Positioning, 2023).
Brand Positioning Statement	an internal positioning summary that companies use to articulate and promote the value their brand brings to a target market and their customers (What is brand positioning and why is it important, n.d.).
Brand Resonance	the emotional connection between a consumer and a brand or product. The stronger the emotional bond, the higher the likelihood of purchase (Amati, 2022).
Environmental Justice	Everyone–regardless of race, color, national origin, or income–has the right to the same environmental protections and benefits, as well as meaningful involvement in the policies that shape their communities (Skelton et al., 2023).
Marketing	the process of getting people interested in your company's product or service. This happens through market research, analysis, and understanding your ideal customer's interests. Marketing pertains to all aspects of a business, including product development, distribution methods, sales, and advertising (Forsey, 2021).
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	a set of processes aimed at improving a website's visibility in search engines, like Google, with the goal of getting more organic traffic. SEO is about fulfilling users' search needs by creating relevant, high-quality content and providing the best possible user experience (Pavlik, 2022).
Unique Open Rate	the total number of definite receivers opening your email, the total number of unique recipient email opens divided by the number of emails delivered in the campaign, and multiplied by 100 (Sen, 2020).

Appendix A
Digital marketing best practices for key platforms:

4.3.1 Social Media Marketing

1. **Know Your Audience:** Understand your target audience's demographics, interests, and behaviors to tailor your content and messaging effectively.

2. **Consistent Branding:** Maintain consistent branding across all social media channels, including profile images, cover photos, bios, and tone of voice.

3. **Engaging Content:** Create engaging and diverse content that resonates with your audience. Mix up your content formats, such as images, videos, GIFs, polls, and infographics, to keep your feed visually appealing and dynamic. Encourage interaction through contests, polls, questions, and calls-to-action (CTAs).

4. **Active Engagement:** Actively engage with your audience by responding to comments, messages, and mentions in a timely manner.

5. **Strategic Posting:** Experiment with different posting days, times, and frequency to determine when your posts are most likely to reach and resonate with your target audience.

6. **Hashtag Strategy:** Use relevant hashtags strategically to increase the discoverability of your content and reach a wider audience.

7. **Influencer Marketing:** Collaborate with influencers who have a relevant and engaged following in your niche.

8. **TikTok Content Creation:** Create engaging and entertaining content for TikTok that aligns with your brand identity and resonates with TikTok's audience. Experiment with trending challenges, music, filters, and effects to increase discoverability and

engagement. Keep your content authentic, creative, and relatable to appeal to TikTok users.

9. **Visual Storytelling:** Leverage the power of visual storytelling to capture attention and convey your brand's message effectively.

10. **Community Building:** Foster a sense of community and belonging among your followers by creating spaces for interaction and collaboration. Encourage user-generated content, feature user testimonials or shoutouts, and create exclusive groups or communities for dedicated fans.

11. **Adaptability:** Stay agile and open to experimentation by trying out new features, formats, and trends on social media platforms.

12. **Data Analysis:** Regularly analyze your social media performance using analytics tools to track key metrics such as engagement, reach, clicks, and conversions. Use insights from your data to refine your content strategy, optimize posting times, and identify opportunities for growth.

(Sachs, 2023; Create engaging, 2024; How to Use Social Media, 2024)

4.3.2 Newsletter Marketing

1. **Define Your Goals:** Clearly define the objectives of your newsletter, whether it's driving website traffic, generating leads, promoting products/services, or building brand awareness.

2. **Personalization:** Use personalization techniques to address subscribers by their name and deliver targeted content that resonates with their interests and preferences.

3. **Compelling Subject Lines:** Craft compelling and concise subject lines that grab attention, arouse curiosity, and encourage recipients to open your emails. Avoid spammy language, excessive punctuation, and misleading promises to maintain trust and credibility.

4. **Clear and Engaging Content:** Keep your content clear, concise, and visually appealing to capture and retain readers' attention. Use short paragraphs, bullet points, images, and multimedia elements to break up text and make your content more digestible. Include compelling calls-to-action (CTAs) that prompt recipients to take the desired action.

5. **Consistent Schedule:** Establish a consistent sending schedule for your newsletters to set expectations and maintain engagement with your audience. Whether it's weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, stick to a regular cadence to stay top-of-mind and avoid being forgotten.

6. **Mobile Optimization:** Optimize your newsletters for mobile devices to ensure a seamless and user-friendly experience for subscribers who read emails on smartphones and tablets. Use responsive design, mobile-friendly fonts, and appropriately sized images to accommodate smaller screens.

7. **A/B Testing:** Experiment with A/B testing to optimize various elements of your newsletter, such as subject lines, sender name, content layout, and CTAs. Test different variables to identify what resonates best with your audience and drives higher open and click-through rates.

8. **Analytics and Optimization:** Monitor key metrics such as open rates, click-through rates, conversion rates, and unsubscribe rates to gauge the effectiveness of your newsletter campaigns.

(Glaeser, 2023; Steinbrinck, 2022; Understanding Your Newsletter Goals, n.d.)

4.3.3 Website Marketing

1. **Mobile Responsiveness:** Ensure your website is optimized for mobile devices, as a significant portion of internet users access websites through smartphones.

2. **Fast Loading Speed:** Optimize your website's loading speed to minimize bounce rates and improve user experience. Compress images, minimize HTTP requests, and utilize caching techniques to enhance loading times.

3. **Clear Navigation:** Design intuitive navigation menus that make it easy for visitors to find the information they're looking for.

4. **Compelling Content:** Create high-quality, relevant, and engaging content that provides value to your audience. Utilize a mix of formats, such as blog posts, videos, infographics, and case studies, to cater to different preferences and interests.

5. **Clear Call-to-Action (CTA):** Include clear and compelling CTAs throughout your website to encourage visitors to take desired actions, such as signing up for a newsletter, requesting a quote, or making a purchase. Use contrasting colors and persuasive language to make CTAs stand out.

6. **User-friendly Forms:** Design user-friendly forms with minimal fields and clear instructions to streamline the conversion process. Use autofill features, error validation, and progress indicators to enhance usability and encourage form submissions.

7. **Social Proof:** Incorporate social proof elements, such as customer testimonials, reviews, ratings, and case studies, to build trust and credibility with visitors. Highlight positive

experiences and success stories to reassure potential customers and encourage conversions.

8. **Security Measures:** Implement security measures, such as SSL certificates, HTTPS protocols, and secure payment gateways, to protect user data and instill confidence in visitors. Display trust badges and security seals prominently to reassure users about the safety of their information.

9. **Analytics Tracking:** Set up website analytics tools, such as Google Analytics, to track key metrics, monitor performance, and gain insights into user behavior.

10. **SEO Optimization:** Implement SEO best practices to improve your website's visibility in search engine results pages (SERPs).

(Essential Elements, 2023; Maximizing User Experience, 2024; Nikol, 2023)

4.3.4 SEO Marketing

1. **Keyword Research:** Conduct thorough keyword research to identify relevant keywords and phrases that your target audience is searching for. Use tools like Google Keyword Planner, Semrush, or Ahrefs to discover high-volume and low-competition keywords related to your industry and content.

2. **On-Page Optimization:** Optimize on-page elements such as title tags, meta descriptions, headers (H1, H2, etc.), and URLs with target keywords.

3. **Quality Content:** Create high-quality, valuable, and relevant content that meets the needs of your target audience.

4. **Optimized Images and Multimedia:** Optimize images and multimedia elements by using descriptive filenames, alt tags, and captions.

5. **Page Speed Optimization:** Improve page loading speed by optimizing images, minifying CSS and JavaScript files, leveraging browser caching, and using a content delivery network (CDN). Faster-loading pages not only improve user experience but also contribute to higher search engine rankings.

6. **Internal Linking:** Use internal linking to connect related pages and distribute link equity throughout your website. Create a logical hierarchy of internal links to help search engines understand the structure and context of your content. Internal linking also helps users navigate your website and discover relevant content.

7. **Backlink Building:** Build high-quality backlinks from authoritative and relevant websites to improve your website's authority and credibility.

8. **Regular Monitoring and Optimization:** Continuously monitor your website's performance using tools like Google Analytics, Google Search Console, and third-party SEO software.

(Bouboulis, 2023; Harsel, 2023; McCoy, 2023; Nicholson, 2024)

Appendix B

"Process to Guide Organizations Towards Successful Utilization" (Appleby, 2016):

Process to Guide Organizations Towards Successful Utilization

1. Identify Social Media Team and Assign Roles/Responsibilities
2. Define Investment Capacity (both financial and time)
3. Identify and Map Social Network and Key Audiences
4. Identify Goals and Set Measurable Objectives of Social Media Campaign
5. Identify Benchmarks and Timeframes
6. Choose Social Media Channels
7. Choose Metrics in Each Return Category (Appropriately Suited to Goals and Objectives)
8. Choose Data Collection Tools
9. Inform all NPO Staff
10. Implement Strategy and Begin Collecting Data
11. Analyze Data and Take Appropriate Action
12. Periodically Revisit Each Step to Adjust as Campaign Evolves and Goals are Achieved

Appendix C

10 Helpful Marketing Materials and Resources for Environmental Organizations:

1. [Nonprofit Organizations and the Utilization of Social Media: Maximizing and Measuring Return of Investment](#)

2. [How To Build A Robust Marketing Budget For A Startup Company](#)

3. [Marketing Budget Template For Startups](#)

4. [Connecting with Social Media to Drive Change](#)

5. [Integrating Metrics across the Marketing Curriculum: The Digital and Social Media Opportunity](#)

6. [Maximize your social: a one-stop guide to building a social media strategy for marketing and business success](#)

7. [Best Practices in Social Media at Public, Nonprofit, Education, and Health Care Organizations](#)

8. [Best Practices in Social Media: Utilizing a Value Matrix to Assess Social Media's Impact on Health Care](#)

9. [Guide to Social Media Metrics Tracking](#)

10. [Guide to Understanding Digital Marketing ROI](#)

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