

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS INSIGHTS | ARTICLE 05

# How Nonprofits Can Use Social Media to Build Community Trust

Nonprofits rely heavily on community trust to drive engagement and funding. By utilizing social media for authentic storytelling, consistent messaging, and culturally competent multilingual outreach, organizations can deeply connect with the diverse populations they serve.

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**PORTFOLIO SERIES**

Applied communication analysis connecting academic frameworks with experience in NCAA Division I athletics and nonprofit public relations.

# Executive Summary

Nonprofits rely heavily on community trust to drive engagement and funding. By utilizing social media for authentic storytelling, consistent messaging, and culturally competent multilingual outreach, organizations can deeply connect with the diverse populations they serve.

## The Barrier to Entry

A local nonprofit organization launches a highly effective, evidence-based wellness program designed to reduce stress through recreational group music-making. However, attendance from the surrounding neighborhood remains critically low. Despite having excellent resources, the organization’s social media presence consists entirely of text-heavy flyers and academic statistics written only in English. The community does not feel invited because the communication strategy lacks cultural connection, visual appeal, and linguistic accessibility.

## The Communication Challenge

Nonprofits often struggle to translate their on-the-ground impact into compelling digital narratives. They frequently lack the resources for large marketing campaigns and must rely heavily on organic social media. The challenge lies in moving away from purely informational broadcasting to building a two-way dialogue that fosters trust, encourages participation, and respects the cultural nuances of diverse local populations.

## Context and Organizational Importance

For nonprofits, community trust is the ultimate metric of success. If a target demographic does not trust the organization, programs will fail to reach those who need them most. Social media serves as the digital front door for these organizations. An active, empathetic, and culturally aware social media presence validates the nonprofit's mission, attracts volunteer support, and provides visual proof of community impact to vital grant-funding agencies and donors. Consistent digital engagement also gives nonprofit leaders useful feedback about barriers, questions, and services the community values most.

## Stakeholders and Audience Needs

| Stakeholder                       | Primary communication need                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Community Members (Beneficiaries) | Need to feel seen, understood, and safely welcomed into the organization's programs without language or cultural barriers. |
| Donors and Grant Organizations    | Need to see visual proof of community engagement and responsible resource allocation.                                      |
| Volunteers and Advocates          | Need easily shareable content to help amplify the organization’s mission within their own networks.                        |

## Strategic Analysis

Building trust in a community requires meeting people where they are, both digitally and linguistically. Applied experience managing communications for the Cincinnati Music & Wellness Coalition demonstrates the immense power of inclusive outreach. When promoting wellness programs such as HealthRHYTHMS group drumming or cultural exchange events, the visual content must reflect the diversity of the participants.

Furthermore, language access is a critical component of trust. Translating promotional materials and social media captions into languages spoken by local immigrant and refugee populations, such as Kinyarwanda and Swahili, dramatically increases program accessibility. It signals to those communities that they are not an afterthought, but a central priority. Social media must also be actively managed. Responding promptly to questions and comments humanizes the organization and builds rapid digital rapport.

## Practical Recommendations

- 1. Show, Do Not Just Tell:** Replace text-heavy graphics with high-quality photography and video showcasing real community members actively participating and finding joy in the programs.
- 2. Implement Multilingual Strategies:** Identify the primary languages spoken in the target neighborhoods. Provide translated captions and digital flyers to remove barriers to entry.
- 3. Engage Actively in the Comments:** Do not treat social media as a static bulletin board. Dedicate time daily to reply to comments, answer direct messages, and thank community members for their support.
- 4. Maintain Visual and Brand Consistency:** Ensure that the tone, colors, and messaging across Facebook, Instagram, and local newsletters are unified to build strong brand recognition.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

**Community trust is earned through consistent, accessible, and authentic engagement. Nonprofits must leverage visual storytelling and multilingual communication to prove they are deeply invested in the populations they serve.**

## Sample Communication Deliverable

**Multilingual Instagram Post Caption "Music has the power to heal, connect, and build community. 🥁**  
**Join us this Saturday at 10: 00 AM** for our free HealthRHYTHMS group drumming session. No experience is required. Just bring yourself! /// Muzika ifite imbaraga zo gukiza, guhuza, no kubaka umuryango. 🥁 Wifatanye natwe kuri uyu wa Gatandatu saa 10:00 za mu gitondo mu isomo ryacu ry'ubuntu ryo kuvuza ingoma mu itsinda rya HealthRHYTHMS. Nta burambe busabwa. Wowe gusa uze! 📍 [Location Link] #CommunityWellness #HealthRHYTHMS #Cincinnati"

## What This Demonstrates

This article showcases a strong grasp of digital marketing, community relations, and diversity in communications. It highlights practical experience managing nonprofit social media, executing multilingual outreach, and utilizing digital platforms to foster genuine audience engagement.