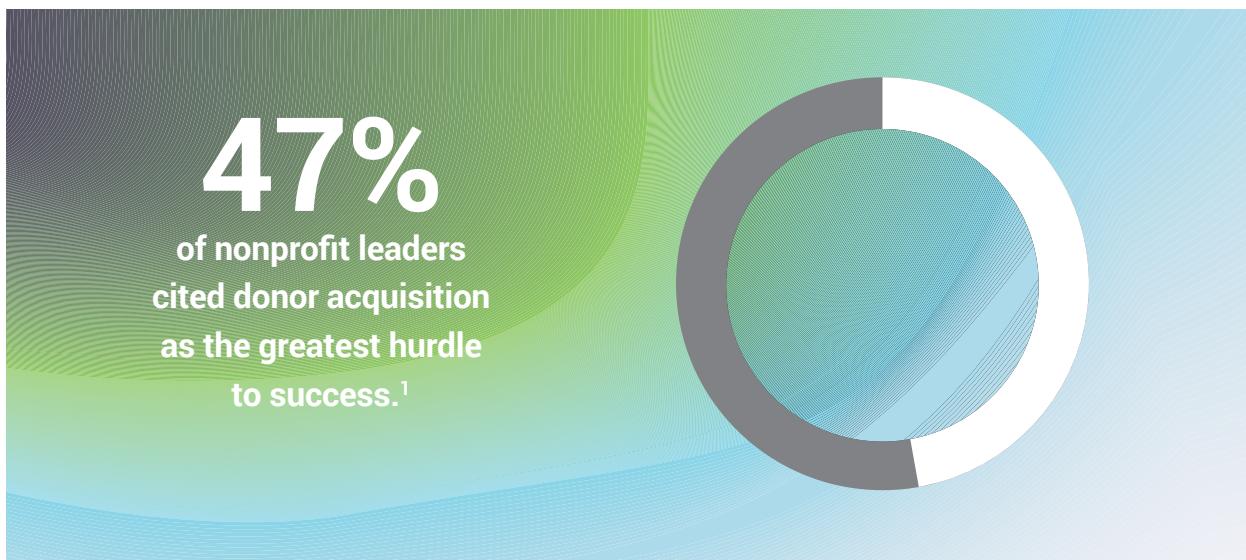


5 “Shameless” Marketing Strategies for Smart Nonprofits

It's Okay to Promote Yourself

At SullivanPerkins, we're very proud to have worked for dozens of worthy nonprofit organizations throughout our 40-plus year history, providing marketing solutions for foundations, conservancies, charities, healthcare centers, religious institutions, theaters and more. On some occasions we've found the good people who work at these good places can be a trifle squeamish about what could be seen as “for-profit” marketing tactics, with words like “hard sell” and “self-centered” and “unseemly” cast about. Yes, the noble intentions of nonprofit organizations need to be taken into account in the tone of the messaging and the sophistication of the imagery employed, but the fact is nonprofits must use many of the same marketing techniques and strategies as for-profit enterprises, including differentiating themselves from the competition. With more than 1.9 million nonprofit organizations registered in the U.S., the competition for donor dollars can be intense. With that in mind, and drawing on our decades of work with a range of nonprofits, here are five “shameless” marketing strategies your nonprofit would be blameless to adopt.



1. 2023 Nonprofit Leadership Impact Study, NonProfit PRO

1. "SHAMELESSLY" TUG THOSE HEART STRINGS

Many nonprofits exist to help people in need. The fact is it makes people feel good to believe they are helping their fellow humans address their adversities. Especially if they can put a face to the people they are helping. While it is crucial that you have metrics that quantify the impact you make, it is even more vital that you create an emotional connection to donors. Stories are more important than statistics. The top three reasons people provide for their philanthropic giving may be viewed as largely emotional, focused on how they make the donor feel. So don't be afraid to make your appeal emotional, as well.



Shameless Self-Promotional Example #1:

Communities Foundation of Texas Annual Report

This spread from the annual report SullivanPerkins did for Communities Foundation of Texas highlights some worthy end recipients of one of the nonprofit's charitable grants – a youth orchestra that got instruments they otherwise could not have afforded. It's good for the kids and, most importantly, it strikes a positive note for potential donors.

2. 2024 Give.org Donor Participation Study, referenced by fundraisingreportcard.com

2. "SHAMELESSLY" FLATTER CURRENT DONORS

Many nonprofits rely on sustaining relationships with a dedicated group of existing donors. Just because these donors have a deep and ongoing relationship with your organization, you should never take them for granted. And, with the emotional reasons people have for giving enumerated above in mind, it is important to validate those emotions. Make your donors feel good about their philanthropy; convince them they are making a difference and are, indeed, a part of something larger than themselves.

41%
of donors would donate again if they received personalized communication on the impact of their support.³



Shameless Self-Promotional Example #2:

The Catholic Foundation 2024 Annual Report

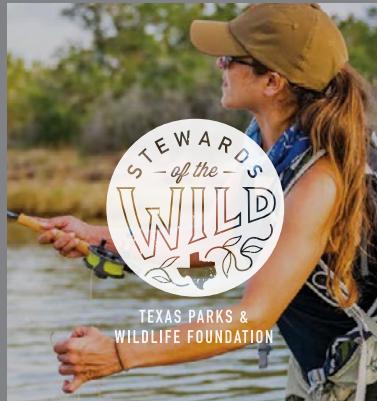
This annual report for the Catholic Foundation in Dallas continues a multi-year "We are the Foundation" campaign devised by SullivanPerkins to spotlight donors with family portraits and the stories of their motivations for giving and the impact they achieve. Across multiple platforms, the campaign reinforces that donors are not necessarily ultra-wealthy philanthropists but friends and neighbors in the Catholic community of DFW. Celebrating ongoing donors makes them feel valued and encourages a continued and deeper connection to the organization.

3. Network for Good study, cited by DoubletheDonation.com, 2023

3. "SHAMELESSLY" PANDER TO POTENTIAL DONORS

Most nonprofits deal with a great deal of churn in their donor bases year-to-year. So donor acquisition is always an issue. One group to target is "conscious consumers" who, while they may not yet be philanthropic donors, do make values-aligned choices in the products and services they choose to buy. As these consumers tend to be younger and more educated, and as their values-based consumerism goes hand in hand with optimism about nonprofits' ability to address social problems, they are well-positioned to become future major donors.

42%
of "Conscious Consumers"
are Millennials or Gen Z.⁴



Shameless Self-Promotional Example #3:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation's Stewards of the Wild Program

SullivanPerkins client the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation was hunting for ways to attract a younger generation to support their mission of conservation. SP developed the branding for this program targeted to emerging leaders aged 21 to 45, with opportunities for them to actively participate in the stewardship of Texas' wild things and wild places through education, networking and shared outdoor experiences. Efforts included social media outreach and fashionable merch.

4. 2025 Bank of America Study of Philanthropy: Charitable Giving by Affluent Households

4. "SHAMELESSLY" BOOST YOUR NUMBERS

Of course, we mean "boost" in the sense of "promote," not "overinflate." Though as noted above the decision to give is often emotional, it nevertheless needs to be buttressed by quantifiable indicators of positive impact. Such figures make it clear that your organization is well-run, effective and aware of how to make a measurable difference in advancing your cause.

59%
of Americans say the "accomplishments of the organization" are the #1 way for a charity to win their trust.⁵



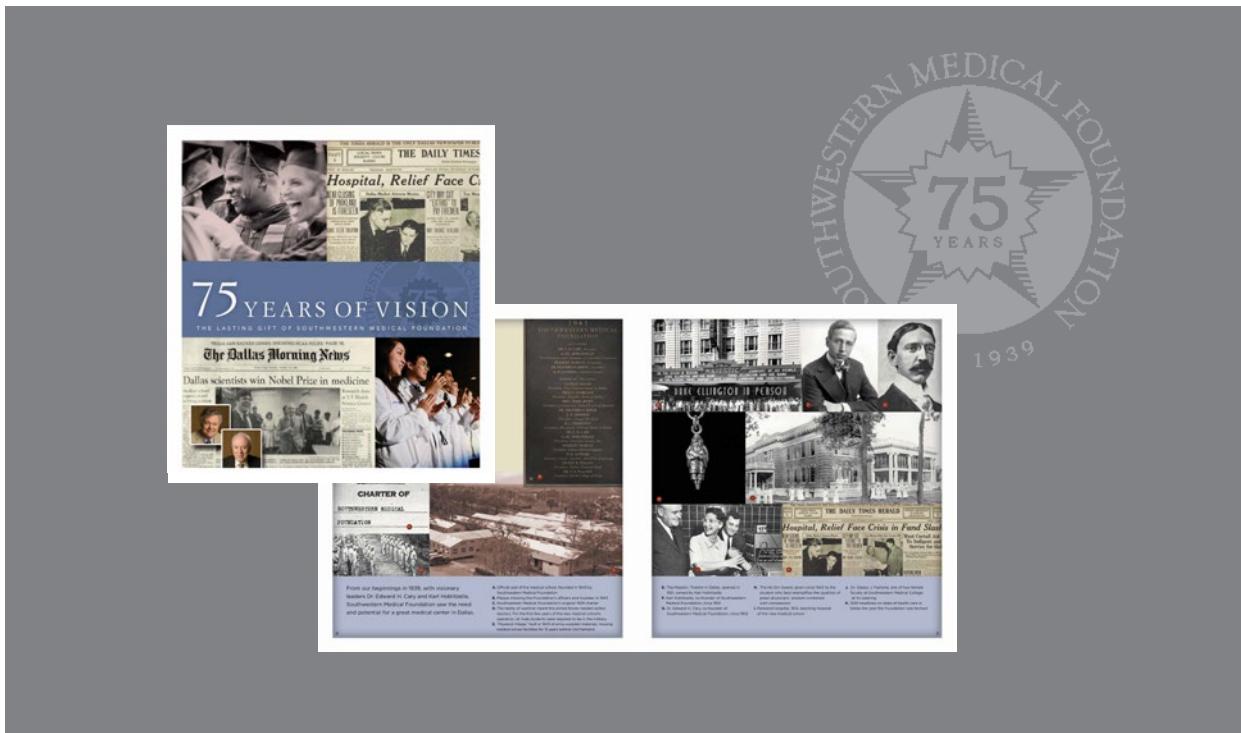
Shameless Self-Promotional Example #4:

Susan G. Komen Annual Report

Throughout this annual report SullivanPerkins handled for Susan G. Komen is a series of infographics quantifying the positive advances the organization is making in its campaign against breast cancer, underscoring the impression that a gift to them will make a real impact and establishing Susan G. Komen as a trustworthy recipient of philanthropic donations.

5. "SHAMELESSLY" CELEBRATE YOUR HERITAGE

The reputation of a nonprofit is extremely important in attracting donors. Research conducted by the Stanford Social Innovation Review suggests that nonprofits with strong reputations receive 50 percent more funding opportunities than those with weaker reputations. Longevity can be a key component in establishing that your organization is a respected community pillar, with decades of service attesting to a well-run organization, staffed by experts, that is "here to stay." So if you have been a trusted community resource for decades, make sure everyone is aware of it, especially if you've got a big anniversary coming up.



Shameless Self-Promotional Example #5:

Southwestern Medical Foundation 75th Anniversary Campaign

SullivanPerkins created a range of marketing materials, including social media, print collateral, email campaigns and event graphics, promoting Southwestern Medical Foundation's 75 years of advancing medical treatment in DFW and beyond. It was a year-long celebration that helped increase donations to the Foundation, just what the doctor ordered.

6. 2025 Bank of America Study of Philanthropy: Charitable Giving by Affluent Households

BONUS: Shamelessly Shout Your Mission

Your mission/vision statement should be a one-sentence clarion call that defines the good your organization does and provides inspiration to prospective donors. As such, you should shamelessly shout it out on any occasion possible, even the conclusion of a relatively obscure white paper on nonprofit marketing tactics.

Here are mission/vision statements from some of SullivanPerkins' current roster of nonprofit clients and their websites (where it's easy to make a donation):



At Texas Parks & Wildlife Foundation, our vision is for all Texans to have access to the wild things and wild places in our state, both now and for generations to come.

www.tpwf.org



The Catholic Foundation promotes compassionate charitable giving, builds legacies and stewardship that serves donors and the needs of the community.

www.thecatholicfoundation.com



HERO's mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities, through a focus on Texas habitats, Texas arts and the personal well-being of Texans.

www.herofortexas.org



It is the mission of Kitchen Dog Theater to provide a place where questions of justice, morality, and human freedom can be explored.

www.kitchendogtheater.org

For additional help marketing your nonprofit, contact info@sullivanperkins.com.