

# Not-for-Profit Industry

## How to Build a Brand for Your Nonprofit

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Brands are important for more than just commercial endeavors and profit-based companies. After all, the point of a brand is to make it easier for a customer or client to connect with a company—and to make it more appealing for them to do so. In short, branding is one of the most effective ways to raise awareness of your organization, even if it is a nonprofit.

Building a brand identity for your nonprofit follows a lot of the same patterns as building a for-profit brand label; the differences are in the specifics of your brand's message and connectivity. Basically, the biggest difference is not the branding itself, but what you do with it afterward.

With that in mind, let's take a look at how to build a brand for your nonprofit organization, starting from the ground up.

### **ESTABLISH YOUR MESSAGE AND IDENTITY**

In order to establish a brand, you need a core, something to build your brand around. When it comes to the core or center of a nonprofit, you likely already have a leg up on this; nonprofits tend to have mission statements built into them.

As you start your branding, take the time to really nail down the core of your nonprofit, and what its mission is:

- > Why was the nonprofit created?
- > What are its short-term goals, i.e., in the next quarter?
- > What are its long-term goals, i.e., in the next year or five years?
- > What values went into the creation of the nonprofit?
- > What is your nonprofit's mission statement?
- > If your nonprofit was a person, what type of person would it be?



That last question might seem out of place compared to the rest, but it is actually a vital part of creating your brand personality. [Brands are representatives of organizations](#), but branding also exists to draw people to organizations. That is hard to do with a big, impersonal presentation, so it is important to discern what traits your nonprofit has on a personal, individual level.

Your brand personality will influence both how your audience sees your nonprofit and how they interact with it. Everyone appreciates a nonprofit that is straightforward and trustworthy, but they may be less inclined to invest time or attention in your nonprofit if it seems impersonal.

Valuable personality traits for a nonprofit [brand personality](#) include:

- > Trustworthy
- > Family-friendly
- > Goal-oriented
- > Humorous

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- > Warm
- > Honest
- > Communicative
- > Responsive
- > Caring
- > Earnest
- > Environmentally friendly

Of course, the personality that your organization has will be largely dictated by the type of nonprofit it is; regardless, your audience and potential sponsors and contributors will definitely expect your nonprofit to present trustworthiness as well as deeply caring about your goals.

Your brand identity should be solidly in place as you start to craft your brand around it; that personality should influence the decisions you make moving forward.

### **COMPILE A BRANDING STYLE GUIDE TO KEEP COHERENCE**

Brand guides, or style guides, are an important key to cultivating and maintaining a coherent brand identity as you make decisions on visuals and content. Your [brand style guide](#) will contain the following:

- > Choice of brand colors, usually including at least one main color and two supporting colors
- > Choice of fonts, usually a range including heavy weight for headers and headlines, lighter weight for the main body of content, and specific font for CTAs (calls to action) and other pieces of content that need specific attention; all should be easy to read
- > Type of graphic style to be used for your visuals; this is important because there is a huge range of different graphic styles, and you don't want your visuals to clash with each other

Your branding style guide can include far more than these three basics, and in fact it is a good idea to get as detailed as possible. Branding guides are important as a reference point, both for the current branding efforts and for future changes as needed. If you hire a graphic designer who is unable to work with you five years later on a rebrand, for instance, your branding style guide is in place to help your new designer create on-brand, coherent, harmonious pieces.

### **Cole, Newton & Duran's Not-for-Profit Practice**

Our not-for-profit team has years of experience providing assurance, accounting, and tax services to a variety of organizations. Clients receive up-to-date information on the latest accounting developments and industry regulations.

Cole, Newton & Duran's team of professionals are involved in every stage of our client's engagement to ensure they are receiving high quality, responsive service.

Clients enjoy working with experts who help achieve their objectives. Clients receive industry knowledge and solutions they need to not only reach, but to exceed their strategic goals.

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### CREATE CONTENT—VISUALS, WRITTEN COPY, AND YOUR WEBSITE

With your style guide in place, use it to make decisions on the following branded visuals:

- > Logo design
- > Marketing and awareness materials
- > Promotional materials
- > Headers
- > Website design
- > Written content
- > Videos
- > Infographics

If you don't have a lot of experience with graphic design, don't worry—there are plenty of companies and freelancers who do, as well as [software designed for graphic design newbies](#). The main thing is to strive for coherence and harmony in creating these visuals and aim to make them as impactful as possible.

That will likely require a lot of revision and editing, so take your time as you put these pieces together and craft your website.

Your website is the main hub of your nonprofit; basically, it is your flagship. So make sure that it, too, is branded! Use the style guide to select colors, fonts, and graphics, and include your logo on each page.

The content that you include on your site is just as important as your visuals. Poorly written content can quickly turn a visitor away and reflects badly on your organization.

Make sure you include pertinent information, such as contact information and how to donate, and keep your site up to date with new events, fundraisers, and accomplishments.

Your site should be user-friendly and easy to navigate.

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### CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Once you have put all these pieces together, it is time to start making your branding efforts work for you.

It is recommended to tie your website together with a presence on social media, using platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. It is becoming common for Internet users to turn to official social media channels to find out more about a brand or organization.

Your [nonprofit's social media profiles](#) also give you a way to interact more frequently with your audience, answer questions, promote accomplishments, and let everyone know about upcoming events.

Of course, just like your site and all promotional materials, make sure that your social media profiles are properly branded and easily recognizable as belonging to your nonprofit organization.

Using all of these aspects—branding, website, and social media presence—will help you to build a nonprofit brand that resonates with your audience and moves them both to find out more about your organization and engage with your cause.

*The preceding is reprinted from the [Candid Blog](#).*

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### Contact Us

If you would like to discuss how Cole, Newton & Duran's not-for-profit team can help your organization with its tax, accounting, or consulting needs, please feel free to give me a call.

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