

5 Steps to NGO Success

Part 1: Collaboration

As NGO.Org states: “A non-governmental organization (NGO) is any non-profit, voluntary citizens’ group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, environment or health.”

But accomplishing your goals in an NGO is a big task, and now, more than ever, the money funding an NGO must be validated, with a definite return on investment.

So how can an NGO best accomplish its goals while responsibly utilizing funds? Several experts have offered their ideas. Here are 7 steps to success for you NGO.

1. Collaborate: As an Article at Sci Dev states:

“Accessing new technologies, and forging cooperation between researchers, designers and engineers, can be crucial for those working in poverty-stricken and politically volatile regions.”

First, don’t start from Scratch

By using off-the shelf solutions, NGO’s can prevent delays from defining a need, and solving the problem. **Civil Rights Defenders**, a Stockholm-based organization that works to protect human-rights campaigners in some of the world’s most volatile regions, dealt with kidnappings, and sometimes murders of its workers. Through collaboration with a Swedish tech company, they found an answer – A ‘smart bracelet’, which, when triggered sends out a message to social media using mobile and GPS technologies to warn that its wearer is in danger.

Look for the best solutions, even if they are not your own

Another example stated is SolarAid, a Nairobi-based NGO with a commercial arm called SunnyMoney selling cheap, solar-powered study lights to off-grid rural communities across Africa. The NGO, however, is always looking for other manufacturers to make its humanitarian aid more effective. Technology, durability, and price are important. So is the audience. Also developmental organizations such as the Gates Foundation, NASA, USAID, the Vodafone Americas Foundation often offer ways to network with other NGO’s offering different approaches to you NGO’s goals.

Listen to Your Audience

Only by talking to the people helped by your NGO can you truly provide the right solutions. As one researcher states:

“Collaborating with researchers and universities in the countries where technologies will be used is vital for successful development projects.”

The collaboration is “participatory”, Preziosi explains: “local acceptance of the study and constant dialogue with the community are essential.”

Empower Your Audience

To ensure continuation of programs and solutions, the local government, educators, and facilitators must be made a part of the solution, with power for implementation long after the NGO has moved to other parts of the world.

Training is imperative ... “You have to build the local capacity, to train people to operate and maintain technology. The collaboration with universities is very helpful.

“We try as much as possible to ensure that its operation and maintenance should be under complete control of the users, and that they have ways of solving any problems that arise. The idea is to transfer this as much as possible to local consultants and technicians or workshops.”

5 Steps to NGO Success – Part 2: Listen and Learn

Today the world changed, women are not a much victims as leaders, and animals are protected for their beauty and place in nature, rather than the stuff of trophies. The world has taken on a more realistic view of volunteerism in other countries, as well. As many well-meaning Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have learned, volunteers cannot simply march into countries in need of aid and automatically solve all the issues at hand.

As NGO expert Ryan Libre states at Matador.com:

Local knowledge is indispensable to every NGO. Even if you grew up in the city where you want to start an NGO, you still need to research and make contacts. Making solid local contacts and understanding the locals’ worldview is especially important if you want to work in a foreign culture.

Libre should know. Ryan Libre is a photojournalist based in Japan and Thailand who started his own NGO,

Libre believes that only by understanding the needs and limitations of the area you are helping, can you really understand the needs of those you wish to help. Otherwise you may do more harm than good.

There are around 40,000 NGOs operating internationally, across state borders, and many millions more operating domestically. The majority of them focus primarily on health, education, economics, industry, energy, the environment, human rights, justice and other social policy and governance issues. But how does an NGO succeed in getting feet on the ground? We’ve already covered Collaboration, and Listening & Learning from the desired recipients —

Now comes an important step in the Modern NGO – Market Yourself, and Raise Funds at the same time.

PART 3: Raising Money, and Awareness

Throwing money at a problem will not make it go away — but teaching others about the problem and getting them to help in the mission, through action or financial means, will help.

Originally, I was going to approach the two items of marketing & Fundraising as separate things, but really, they are part of the same machine. So, which first? Let's start cheap and basic:

Build a Website & Internet Presence

First, here is an article at Vandelay Design listing 40 Great NGO and non-profit sites

There is no easier way to get the message out than through the Internet— Keep it simple, to the point, and don't forget to offer ways to help, like a "Donate" Button. Often a Website is the first place someone will look when speaking to an NGO rep on the phone. Having an e-mail address that matches the site is a big plus. Your NGO isn't really helped by a fantastic intro email that must be responded to at ScoobyDooFan1138@gmail.com — Note that this is a battle still being fought with CEO's at all levels of the NGO and Corporate world.

- A great guide for the web strategy for NGO's can be found at the [website](#)
- Promote Your Accomplishments on the site. Investors want to know that they are not throwing their money away, and case studies, testimonials, and overviews can help.
- Offer photo essays, to illustrate the people being helped.
- Promote through LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and message boards related to your cause.

Asking for Money

On your site, and in your writings about your NGO, asking for money is often the most difficult part, and least fun part of the NGO business. But its importance cannot be undervalued. [NGO Media has some thoughts as well, especially when it comes to describing costs:](#)

Be honest about core costs

We all know asking for money to pay postage, lighting bills and transport isn't a great sell. While you shouldn't try to hide the fact you need to pay for core costs, you can weave them creatively into your fundraising asks. Write the truth — that these costs are core to making projects successful — rather than an optional add-on you'd rather not talk about

Create Corporate Partnerships

This goes back to Part 1: Collaboration. But a corporate partnership can have many different facets, as covered over at the [Sustainable Brands Website](#)

[In their 10 Tips for Creating Successful NGO-Brand Partnerships article,](#) finding the right match can be fruitful or frustrating for both parties:

Climate change, environmental destruction, endangered species, toxins and pollution are not new issues, but more than ever they are part of boardroom conversations and customer considerations. Navigating day-to-day business challenges can be difficult enough, so when crossing an intersection of environmental change, calling on NGO experts who understand your industry and the complexities of the issue can position your company ahead of the curve.

Other ideas can be found at NGOPulse.org, such as:

Get Media Savvy

This is critical and an article in itself, but in a survey of UK journalists by the Charity Media Monitor (March 2009) the following came up as being the key ways to treat journos:

Case studies – this is the best way for a paper to tell the story, without it being a shameless advertorial.

Don't just target the news desk – target all sections of the newspaper from features, travel and business through to recruitment

Build relationships with journalists at different papers, know what they need and target them appropriately.

Be available – make sure that you have people on call and can respond to queries at all hours. Don't become institutionalized and bland in your messages with stock phrases or the infuriating No Comment.

Don't forget your local press.

Spend time on the intro of your press releases and make sure you engage the reader. The golden rule is to e-mail press releases, but phone through exclusives.

This is the third in a Five Part Series on NGO Success by John Gallagher of iFormBuilder. To learn more about how iFormBuilder can help your NGO or other organization, [Visit our Overview Page, and get started with Mobile Data Collection, online or offline](#)

Take advantage of iFormBuilder, the Best Mobile Data Collection Apps for Android and iOS, used by NGOs around the world!

5 Steps to NGO Success: Part 4 Monitoring and Evaluation

In our previous posts, we have discussed the importance of collaboration, research and execution, and fundraising. If you are doing all these things right, you potentially are helping a great deal of people, and raising significant funds to better push the mission of your Non-Governmental Organization, non-profit, aid organization, etc.

NGOs must consider many facets in an M&E strategy:

1) WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS? What are the milestones of the project and what are the final outputs? Just by setting these goals, it will be easier to determine what you are looking to accomplish and if those goals are realistic. Stating a goal of "literacy across 100% of Country A" is valiant, but is it realistic? Increased school attendance by 30% and vaccination records collected in areas A, B, and C may be more realistic (although still a lot of work.)

CRS staff registering beneficiaries...

2) HOW DO YOU MONITOR your NGO? Not only do you need a methodology able to constantly monitor the development of the project, but you need the tools to monitor that development. Staffers need to be able to learn and use these tools quickly and efficiently. A mobile app for NGOs like iForm can be utilized easily, with custom forms created at iFormBuilder.com in our exclusive Form Builder platform. With the form pushed out to mobile devices in the field, users can collect data in real time, with results immediately being tabulated. One advantage to iForm is the ability to collect in offline situations, with the data uploading as soon as the device is in a Wi-Fi or cell area setting. (Truth in advertising: There are other acceptable ways to collect information, we just happen to think ours is the best! -jg)

3) WHAT IS THE OUTCOME? As started at the Funds for NGOs website, outcomes and impacts are more difficult to assess:

...It is clear how to measure the success of an implemented project by stating that a certain goal was reached, to measure the impact of an activity in community dynamics is more challenging. Thus, find your way to monitor what happens 'around the project'. For instance, you can elaborate on a strategy able to prove that not only these students are learning how to use new software, but also that by acquiring a new skill the quality of their lives is somehow improving. By designing a monitoring strategy able to assess outcomes and impacts, you will succeed in proving to your donor that the implemented activities will have a positive, long-term effect in the community. Further, you can draw on the results of your monitoring practice to design new follow-up projects or to ensure potential new donors on the NGO's capacity to proactively engage with real problems and positively affect the lives of those you and with whom you are working.

M&E is way to make the activities of your NGO transparent and easy to account for, and this will allow donors to better understand what their investment is paying for. If you don't meet your goals, this should be stated clearly— as it allows you to redefine your goals and figure out how to overcome the challenges you face. M&E provides insites to communicate with your donor and the general public througho ut the implementation of the project. This could lead to more funds to overcome issues such as staffing or political hurdles— or perhaps a different use of current resources to more efficiently push for improvement.

At iFormBuilder, we see the great need for powerful, yet easy-to-use monitoring and evaluation apps for NGOs, healthcare, engineering and educational organizations. But we also understand that these mobile data collection apps are not just a product, but a tool to better the world, help enrich lives, and let your organization focus on what it was created for.

This is the fourth in a Five Part Series on NGO Success by John Gallagher & Ryan Coleman of iFormBuilder. To learn more about how iFormBuilder can help your NGO or other organization, Visit our Overview Page, and get started with Mobile Data Collection, online or offline