Transcription

Digital Nonprofit Community Building Webinar
August 27, 2020

Caroline: All right. Well, it's 2:00PM. So, let's go ahead and get started. I'd like to welcome everybody here today. My name is Caroline, and I am with Boardable. If you've never heard of Boardable before, we are a central portal for all things nonprofit boards. You can store your documents, plan your meetings, build an agenda, poll questions, run reports, all kinds of handy things to help you run your board better. And you can sign up for a free 30-day trial, no credit card, no commitment of any kind at boardable.com. But with that, I would like to welcome our guest today. Brandon, welcome.

Brandon: Hi, welcome. Well, thank you for having me. I guess we can slide over to this first slide.

Caroline: Brandon, let's turn our cameras off real quick so that the sound is smoother. Hi, everybody. See you later.

Brandon: Does it sound better now?

Caroline: I don't know. Hopefully.

Brandon: All right. Okay. Well, my name is [Brandon Evans](). I wanna thank Caroline and everybody at Boardable for having me today. I've used Boardable, actually, on a couple of nonprofits that I either previously served on or serve on now, and it has helped so much. It is actually one of the things that I wanna talk about in this presentation later on. It is an app that you can use for something. And so we, today, are gonna go over quite a few things.

But first, I wanted to talk about why you're at this presentation, right? And so we all are dealing with this pandemic right now. We're all dealing with COVID-19. A lot of people are having to adapt, or change, or pivot to new types of work, new styles of work, new apps. You're on Zoom way too much I'm sure. These things that we're thinking about right now are, how do we continue with our nonprofits, with our businesses?

I work in politics, so with our political campaigns often, how do we do fundraising? How do we connect to people, right? And so I'm sure you guys have very specific problems to your specific places that you work or just in your life in general. And so throughout this presentation, what I really want you to do is to think about those problems. And I hope that the information that I'll give will help you solve those problems.

But a lot of times what's gonna happen is you're just gonna come up with new questions and other ideas and wanna talk about that. And so we have a Q&A section at the end. I think Caroline is also gonna stop, and we're gonna have some discussion in the middle as well. And so I just want you

to think about those problems as we are going through this presentation today.

And so why is this white guy talking to me? So, that was what I often think about when people that look like me are talking and giving these presentations. And so I wanted to give you a little bit about my background. I started off, actually, when I was a teenager playing a dance, did that in my early 20s, and bounced around job-wise for a while until I landed in marketing. And I did all kinds of jobs in marketing, and then switched a little bit to the tech industry.

I worked for a software company that has an AI platform for social ads. But throughout all of that, what I discovered was that what really fulfilled me or what really kind of kept me going on those hard days of work was helping others, and more to the point, helping others succeed in their goals or helping others make a large impact on their communities. And so I switched at that point from working in tech to working in politics and city government.

I started a small boutique agency called Wide Awake Digital where we call ourselves a modern-day communication company where we are communicating in all the modern ways that you can think of and traditional ways to help nonprofits, businesses, politicians, PACs, all kinds of things succeed in their goals. And so that's what I've been doing here recently. And through that, what I found is community engagement and community building and relationship engagement, in general, is key to success no matter who you are or where you are. And so one of the things that I know to be just a fact of life is if...

I think there's 52 of you on right now on the screen. If I could have coffee with all 52 of you right now one by one, I could probably succeed in whatever I was trying to get done, right? If we had an hour to spend with each other, sitting across at a coffee table, you know, we could form a

relationship, form a bond, find common ground, do what we need to do, right? But for most businesses, nonprofits, politicians, and campaigns, that's simply impossible to do.

And so that's why I've kind of put together this framework and learned from a lot of my peers and colleagues in different business sectors and on campaigns to kind of do some of the things that we're gonna talk about today. And so with that, agenda, what we're gonna actually talk about, and this wasn't the bio when you signed up, but digital tactics to maintain intimacy with supporters and donors is super-critical, I know.

How to find where your stakeholders are, not waste your time chasing the wrong people for your cause, speaking to your community in the right digital media, with the right language, using the right timing, and ways to make events, groups, discussions, and connections more tangible, even when everyone is separated physically, right? And so all those things are really topical right now, of course, because we're all, you know, hopefully being safe with this pandemic and cannot be together a lot of the times, right?

And so that's what we're gonna go over today. And the idea, again, is a little bit of, we wanna recreate that feeling of sitting across from somebody and having coffee, right? Or we wanna recreate that feeling of getting together and having a dinner party with people or going to a bar and having drinks with people. This is the idea we wanna recreate but digitally through different mediums.

So, goals. So, again, I've kind of said this in a long-winded way, but in reality, there's an acronym often used in politics and in other sectors called APE. You can see it spelled out here. One, we wanna activate people for our cause or business, right? Two, we wanna promote our cause or business, right? And then, three, we wanna engage people in a meaningful way that creates a community. And so this is just a kind of a known thing.

A lot of times on campaigns, this is, like, what we think about a lot. But I think you can take this to your marketing, to your nonprofits, and kind of keep this in a higher-level goal category, right? And so I know there's tons of different ways to set, you know, smart goals or, you know, into mom, if you're familiar with, like, Salesforce and tech companies, different goal-setting methods, right? But this is what...

If I could paint this on a wall of an office, I would every time because this is, in reality, what your marketing department needs to think about when you're creating a community and creating intimate relationships digitally or online. And so how do we do that, though? I've talked a lot already about how we do that, what's going on, and there is just a pretty simple formula, actually. And a lot of people call this a participation triangle also.

You might see diagrams of this filled out in a triangle, but it starts with your resources, right? And this can be your mental resources. This can be ideas. This can be your writing. Or if you're a designer, this can be designs or graphics that you're creating. This can be straight money for ads. This can be lots of things, right? But start with your resources, right? And so you need to have a clear understanding of what your resources are, what you're capable of doing from the beginning. And from that, you know, you go to engagement, right?

And so, you're thinking, "Okay. How do I get every supporter that I have engaged in this resource that I'm giving, right? And so that's the second step. And then the third step is mobilization, right? And if you think back, and I will slide back real fast to our three goals right here, the APE goals, this is the exactly those three goals just set up in a formula for you of how to do it. And so, you know, you are activating through engagement. And then mobilization is creating supporters to take their own actions. They give ownership over the things. You know, you create a permission structure for them to do things.

So, that's the formula that I always try to follow when I'm thinking about my marketing resources, when I'm thinking about something as simple as posting or tweeting. These are all things that I definitely think about even before I write that, right? And if you create the structure each time, it also frees you up to kind of think creatively within that structure. It kind of gives you guardrails to create a lot more because you know what you're doing, right? You know how to do it.

And so, moving on, the mobilization part is, I think, the hardest part, right? Probably a lot of you are pretty good at posting stuff online, posting in a Facebook group, having some sort of communication hub, which we'll talk about later like Boardable, for example. Facebook groups are really great one. Slack groups are really great. I've actually seen a lot of success recently with Twitter message groups, group texts, family group texts, co-worker group texts.

All of these things are communication hubs where you can move people up. It's usually called a ladder of engagement, but in reality, in this world we live in, like, it needs to be faster. It needs to be easier. So, we wanna create an escalator of engagement in fact. We wanna create something that is so easy for them to do that they don't think twice about doing it. Because we know more than anything right now, especially, that the world is really hard right now, right?

People are suffering, family members are sick. We have people losing their jobs or their kids are at home because their schools are shut down right now and so they're, you know, doing e-learning while trying to get their work done while trying to, like, clean their house and just have a life themselves. So, with all the burdens or hardships a lot of us are facing right now, we wanna make it as easy as humanly possible for someone to start on that ladder engagement with us and start down this not-so-secret formula here.

And so with that, where does that start? It starts as simple as someone liking, hearting, you know, sharing a post that you make online, right? And so one of the things that I've seen very successful and moving people down this engagement ladder of mine is what they'll do is they will search whatever it is, right? In politics, a lot of times, you'll search your candidate's name on Twitter. And we have set up welcome committees. We have set up rapid response groups.

And this can be in your marketing department, this can be volunteers. This can be coworkers from different departments that just wanna help and maybe they're really good at social media regardless of what department they work in, right? So, searching your candidate, you know, and then asking them to do a direct ask, right? And so, a lot of times what we'll see people do is someone will like or share something online, and then we will go and comment as a person.

Also, I think that's a good differentiator that I should point out is that when you're building a community, a lot of times doing all of this from your business page is not always the best route. And so I know some people like to have that clear division between your business and your personal life. I don't wanna break that for you, but at the same time, I will just say it doesn't work as well if you only post from your business page. And so having some sort of personal connection, kind of pulling that curtain back for people is something that works really well with connecting to people.

And so you would post beneath them and ask them, "Hey, thank you so much for sharing this post. We're really excited that you're supporting us. Can you share this with two or three of your other friends?" or, "Can you..." or, "Here's a link to our latest app, or our latest feature, or our latest policy point, or a fundraiser that we have coming up. We have our annual gala, but this year it's virtual. So can you please share it or attend or donate?"

And so what happens after you build that... And I'm a big data person also, so I also like to catalog those people. You can put them... You can literally copy and paste their name and handles and things in spreadsheets or you can add them to groups depending on what, you know, platform you're using. And from those asks, you wanna start building a community, right? And so, like I said, you need some sort of hub to make that happen, and so Boardable is a really great example if you're on a board together.

I don't know. Adding a bunch of volunteers might not be the best for that, but you can have Facebook group, you can have Slack groups are really popular with this, Twitter messages like I said. And what you end up happening is if you give these people ownership, if you give these people tasks to do, if you give these people a permission structure on how to help you, you will just see them start making magic happen. And so one of the candidates that I help with, we have a group of people that's about 75 people now that are...all they do is constantly make new graphics, GIFs, memes, all kinds of stuff for this candidate.

And what has happened over time with these people is, A, we haven't had to hire another graphic person. B, we haven't had to spend as much money paid social. And in reality, after creating this group within the first month, our reach online grew by about 400%. And that was simply because we were actively sharing things, actively creating 10 times the amount of content we could ever create on our own. And it was happening for free.

And I, again, don't wanna take advantage of people, but if people are willing and care about something you're doing, they will pour their heart into it and help you. Just like, you know, if you have a neighbor you're really close with or a family member you're close with and you need something, they'll help you and they'll do it. And that's the type of relationships we're trying to build.

Caroline: So, essentially, what you're saying is we can kind of draft a group of volunteers who are our, like, social media ambassadors and they are going to watch for other people mentioning our cause or our organization, and then ask those people to also spread the word?

Brandon: Yeah, in basic form. I mean, coming from a marketing background, we all know clear call-to-actions are where it's at and that transgress or travels through any department, any role that you may have, giving people clear call-to-actions, which can be as simple as sharing, as simple as tweeting, or as simple as, like, posting something for you works better than you think. And so functionally, how it happens in our group is we have a team, a Slack that we have where we brainstorm virtually now between our team, our co-workers.

And within that team, then we create calls-to-actions and initial graphics, again, going back to our resources. We always create something, initial graphics, initial posts, initial videos, whatever it may be, right? We create Facebook events. And then we post that within our supporter groups that we've drafted. And we actually have... For the one candidate I'm working with, we have quite a few. And we have a group that's dedicated to educators, we have a group that is dedicated to healthcare workers, and then we have a group that's more just generalized.

And each one of those, you know, we've been able to recruit, you know, a couple of dozen people all the way up to the general one has around 75 people now. And so within that, you have a lot of other discussions happening, a lot of, you know, like, sometimes complaining, a lot of, you know, things that happen you see in any group and naturally in the world. But there's also a lot of caring that happens, which is, I think, really important to point out and kind of implement on your own end.

One of the things we like to do is we like to also just ask how people are doing. We like to, you know, learn about our supporters and talk to them

and include them in things. I've said pull back the curtain a couple of times, I think, but one of the things that I think really creates that permission structure I talked about for them to make their own things is pulling back the curtain on how things are done and when things are happening, right?

And so say we had a really big video launch coming up. And this video, we really wanted to go viral. Well, we might show them in this group before we publicly launch it or we might, at the very least, tell them that it's happening, give them the exact time we're gonna post it, you know, have them come up with their own marketing plans for how we can promote this the best, and then go from there, right? And so pulling back the curtain and helping folks be able to help you is a huge function of this.

And one of the things that I think is a mistake or a misnomer that a lot of companies, especially or a lot of marketing campaigns do is they don't either allow or they don't make it easy. Again, people's lives are hard right now so you have to make it easy. They don't make it easy for people to help you. And so that is a function that you should always be thinking about is, like, "How can I remove the friction between this person helping me or not?"

Because if it's too hard, no one's just gonna help you. They are simply going to... They might still like stuff and share things when you post it or whatever, but they're not actively gonna go out of their way or spend their time helping you unless you make it easy. So, that's critical for sure.

Caroline: Do you like to pre-draft sample tweets or posts for people, or do you want them to kind of find their own voice with it?

Brandon: Yeah. Ideally, in a dream world, you like to have them have their own voice. A lot of times you need to pre-draft it, though. So, I would love if every person that we drafted into this supporter group just had an amazing, you know, authentic or organic angle of why they care and why they're

posting and are really solid about telling their story of self-right, which is an idea of why they care so much about what they're posting about. But a lot of times, that's just not reality. People either don't care that much or they just haven't...or just are not naturally gifted in that area maybe or whatever, right?

And it's no big deal, but you... So, a lot of times you need to kind of jumpstart that action. And after a while, they naturally become good at it, right? And so, one area that that is really easier than others, or two, I guess, is education and health care. Almost everybody has some story of education whether it's themselves or their kids, K through 12 or higher ed, whichever. Healthcare, very similar, right? Everybody has kind of been sick at one point or another or you know someone who's been sick, and especially right now with COVID.

And so, those are two areas that I've found that people naturally have a very good ability to tell stories and be very good storytellers. Sometimes in other areas or other businesses, it's just a little harder, right? If you own a lawn care business. It's a little harder to get people to talk excitedly about, you know, cutting your grass. So, it really depends on your business, how much effort you have to put into that specific section.

Some are easier than others, but I think allowing them to do it in the first place is huge, right? And so, until the last couple of years when I started trying to implement this and I saw others doing this idea around the country, I didn't see a lot of companies having people create stuff for the companies, right? And so we started to see it more and more in the last couple of years. A lot of people are creating testimonial videos and there's apps and software to do that now.

A lot of people are creating, you know, their own things. A lot of companies are putting together, which I think in the next slide... Nope, no. Not quite yet. So, a lot of people are putting together designer tool kits now. And so

you go to your company's website and instead of, like, having just a blog and whatever else, news section or whatever, you have a section called designer or supporter toolkit, whatever you wanna call it, right? And what it is...

Caroline: Yes.

Brandon: Yeah. Yeah. What it is, is you have your graphics, right? You have your logo, you have, you know, different files they can download. You have social graphics already set and ready to go that they can download and use with their posts. You have, you know, filters for their Facebook profile picture or filters for their Twitter profile or Twitter banner or whatever, right? And you have all...

Caroline: Zoom background.

Brandon: Yeah. Zoom backgrounds are huge in that right now. Yes. You're so right. And so, like, having all these things, again, makes it easy for people to just love what you're doing, share what you're doing, and promote them on your own. And again, it just makes life easier if you have a mass of people helping you do something, right?

Caroline: Yeah. I just put a quick poll in our chat and someone pointed out, "This is true. It doesn't allow you to choose more than one, which is kind of a bummer. But just out of curiosity, who is posting for most of our orgs? And it looks like that's fine on one or two staff members generally with a little [inaudible 00:24:59] And then the board members are really not pulling their weight here. Come on, guys."

Brandon: Yeah. I would say that's 100% accurate. In every place I've ever worked, it's been one to two staff members that handle across-the-board communications on social media especially, and then sometimes you have some other people. And so basically what I'm stating is if you could, you

know, have one or two staff members doing that still, but you had, you know, 45 volunteers everyday posting also, your life just gets easier, right? And if those volunteers can be board members, that's even more amazing, right, but we know how that goes sometimes. So, no offense to the board members on the call.

Caroline: Well, I love that idea about creating, like, a supporter's resource page. You won't have to do it. I mean, you would need to update it when you have new events or things, but for the most part, you could put the logo in there and put those social media handles, put some photos or graphics or whatever and just leave it there for people whenever they want it.

Brandon: Yeah. And so some really great examples of that, and not to get too political, but if anybody ever went to the DNC convention website for the convention that just happened, they had, I think, six different pages of things you could download. So, they had, like, dozens and dozens of graphics and they had, you know, Zoom backgrounds, like you said, and they had Facebook filters and, like, all kinds of stuff you could download.

And you saw that stuff everywhere, right? And so that's something that I think is just a really simple way to help your supporters online. Even in lower-tech or low-five version of that that I've seen done a couple of times is just create a Google folder that supporters can have access to, right? And it doesn't even have to be public on your website. Maybe you or your board doesn't feel comfortable putting that stuff public on a website, and that's okay. I understand that.

But you can just create a Google folder of all those assets and maybe you just give access to one person at a time as you bring people in. And so maybe it's a trusted 10 people that you have access to Google folder that has, you know, all these design files and headshots for people and, you know, like, all kinds of things that they can do and help with. And so, to go back a step, though, to be honest, to get that done, I think there's a couple

of things that you'll need to do in reality. And this goes back to the relationship question, this goes back to, you know, forming a community a little bit.

And I'm seeing some really great questions in here in the chat also, so I'm gonna stop at some point and answer some of those as well. So, relational organizing, it's usually called in the political world. It's also just what people called marketing back in the day. But what it is, is, especially for those folks that are in sales, if you're on the call, you'll recognize this a lot. Instead of cold-calling people or cold-emailing people or the pain of my existence, which is getting messages on LinkedIn.

Caroline: The worst.

Brandon: It's literally the worst, right? I could show you some, like, things that would make you cringe on LinkedIn right now that I've just been ignoring for months. And so instead of doing that, we just know that those success rates are so low, right? One out of, like, 1,000 people may message, you know, may respond or... And then if they respond, are they actually gonna close the deal, right? And it's the same idea if you're trying to draft volunteers or you're trying to fundraise for your organization, you're trying to get people to buy tickets to your charity event or your yearly gala event or whatever it is, right?

And so, relational organizing, you have better contact rates, better conversion rates, you're mobilizing the correct people, and I'll tell you why in a second, and you're not wasting your damn time, more importantly, almost more importantly in that. And so what it is, is if you think about it, I guarantee every person on this call right now has 10 people in their phone book or 10 people that they follow on Twitter, or Facebook, or Instagram, or TikTok, or Snapchat, you know, or Pinterest, you know, whatever you do, right? I guarantee there's 10 people right now that you can contact and you can ask them to do something.

And because it's you asking them, they will answer you and you will have a much higher success rate than if you are cold-calling somebody. And so how do we scale that, though, is the real question, right? And so, what we've done a lot recently is with everyone using Zoom now, and there's a little bit of Zoom burnout so you have to be careful with this. But with everyone using Zoom now, we've actually done, like, you know, Zoom parties where we get, you know, maybe we already have 5 to 10 or 20 or whatever it is existing volunteers.

We bring them on to a Zoom and we have already emailed them or messaged them or showed them on Zoom the things that they can share or the things that they, you know, can download, again, making it easy for them. And we have them sit there on Zoom, like, while we're all there hanging out together, call people, text people. Everyone has some crazy text group, whether it's your family or coworkers or friends or whatever, right? Text in that group like, "Hey, right now I'm volunteering for this organization.

No big deal if you guys don't want to, but I would love for you to check out their website, or I would love for you to simply go follow them on Instagram or Twitter or Facebook or whatever right now. I would love for you to buy a ticket to their events. Does anybody have extra $10 right now you can give to this organization?" Whatever your call-to-action is, I guarantee you'll get some of those to do it, whatever that close rate is, you know, 50%, 60%, 75% of the people that you do that, right?

And even better if you get a group doing that, you have 20 people doing this or 25 people doing this and they each contact 10 people, and then even better sometimes is if you're trying to really...if your main goal is to build volunteers, you can ask each one of those people if they're ever interested in volunteering and coming to a Zoom event like they're in right now, right? And so you start off with 25 people, and the next time you got

50 people, and the next time you have 75, and it keeps growing. And so doing something of that nature, and again, going back to a clear call-to-ask is so important, especially if you are doing it in a relational way, right?

And so, again, going back to one of the first questions or one of the agenda items was not wasting your time and talking to the correct people, right? And so, most likely, if you are talking to 10 people that you're really close with, they have similar values, they have similar motives even, they have similar ideas or, you know, leanings. And so they will care about the things that you care about, you know, 9 times out of 10, right? And even if they don't really care, they care because it's you, right? And so, again, like, if you're continually talking to people, you will end up reaching the right crowd.

You will end up reaching the right people that can help you and bring them in as volunteers because you are doing it in a relational way instead of, again, just like posting something on LinkedIn, which isn't bad, by the way, but it's also...you don't really know who you're speaking to or who's gonna see that every time. Or if you're cold calling people especially, it's, you know, horrible. You just never know what the results are going to be.

And so I think that's a huge part of this is to rely on your friends, coworkers, family that not only you have, but your volunteers have as well. And the idea being also with this that I should point out is that your organization hopefully already has a diverse volunteer base. I mean, that will just add to the strategy, right? If you have multiple people from multiple walks of life, you know, volunteering for you, you're just gonna have such an army of volunteers and this cohesive community coming together to do really great things. So, I will take a break and answer some of these.

Caroline: I was thinking, could you, while we sift through these questions, maybe just talk a little bit about how organizations know, like, which social platforms to use, for what people?

Brandon: Yeah. So, the saying kind of is that I stole from a follower or a friend of mine, but is to go where your people are, right? Don't go where you think you need to be, right? So, if some marketing consultant told you that you have to post on LinkedIn every day to be successful, maybe, right? That could work. But in reality, like, you should go where your people are, right? And so I think having a clear understanding of who the supporters of your organization are is a great first step. And so modeling what those people look like and most likely where those people are, right?

And so if you have an organization that has a largely, you know, middle-aged or older following, a lot of times those people are only gonna be on Facebook, maybe LinkedIn, but most likely, you know, just Facebook. And so if you have a largely younger following that is... I'm trying to think of an organization that would make sense for this. But if you have a largely younger following, a lot of times Instagram or Snapchat or TikTok if they're really young is gonna be more likely where your supporters are, right? If you have a more political thing, you know, Twitter is always, you know, kind of where everyone lives as far as that goes.

The other thing to think about also is the behavioral attributes of each channel. And so, you'd have this demographic of people that are your supporters to kind of try to figure out best of your ability where those people or a majority of those people are, right? But within that, you also have to factor in the behavioral attributes of each channel. So, on Twitter, for example, it's really great for creating a narrative or sharing small snippets of information. If you work in PR or marketing, it's where a lot of media and journalism kind of lives and breathes and learns.

And so you can create a narrative that moves to different channels from Twitter, right? But if you are trying to get people to take major action, Twitter is one of the worst platforms to do that. Period. Whereas Facebook is really great for making people take actions, right? You have Facebook

events, you have, you know, nonprofit like donation pages you can set up. You have all kinds of things you can do that allows people to never leave that, you know, profile or never leave Facebook, but still take multiple actions on your behalf, right? You can set up events, you can buy tickets. You can do all kinds of things.

And so, you know, if you're really trying to get somebody to take an action or buy something or, you know, anything like that, go to an event, then, yeah, you can share the information on Twitter, but that's most likely not where they're going to actually take that action, right? They're most likely going to see it, like it, maybe retweet it if you're lucky, but in reality, just keep scrolling after that. And then they actually don't end up going to your event because they saw it, you know, 17 days before the event was actually held or whatever and they forgot all about it.

Whereas Facebook, you have a Facebook event, they click Going or Interested, they get multiple reminders for it. You can connect that to Eventbrite or multiple other systems to send out email reminders or collect information that way as well, right? If you're running Facebook Ads, you can run ads to everybody who's ever clicked Interested or go into an event you've had. So, Facebook is really great for that. If you are trying to express something more visual or you're trying to express a feeling to people, and again, maybe they are a younger audience, Instagram is really great for that comparatively.

But again, people aren't taking a lot of outside of retail, I should say, because they're actually starting to do a lot of retail sales on Instagram now. But outside of that, you know, again, Instagram is not great for most people taking actions, right? It's really great for sharing memes or posting in your stories or, you know, doing things like that, but it's not going to necessarily be where you get people to take an action.

And so those two things, I think, finding your demographic, and then finding the behavioral attribute for each channel that fits your need the most, right? And so a lot of times these things are kind of competing or overlapping. You need people to buy something and you need people to share information at the same time, and so that's when posting on multiple of these social platforms kind of come in handy and tailoring those posts to those platforms.

What you'll also find is depending on your goal, your supporters will have preferred platforms and instead of, like, demanding that they post on Facebook only or whatever, you know, building supporter groups that are comfortable where they live and most likely where they had the most following and biggest network anyways. And so a lot of times this can be driven by your supporters that you're adopting and bringing into the fold in the first place.

They will kind of naturally lead on that and share things. No matter what you say, they're gonna share it where they wanna share it anyways. And so, you know, they're kind of taking the lead on that direction for you a lot of times. And so that's kind of also a little bit scary for people at times, you know, to lose some of that control, but I promise you, the net benefit is huge if you do that.

Caroline: Love it. Okay. To get to one of the questions in the chat here, and please do infer them as we go along here, everybody. Sandra mentions that as a volunteer, her role is to recruit volunteers and that that's not easier in person with COVID, obviously, and that's a major problem. So, how can we recruit via social media?

Brandon: Yeah. I 100% agree, Sandra. I would love to... Again, I started this off, I don't know if you were at the beginning here, but by saying if we could have coffee with 100% of the people we needed to recruit as volunteers, for example, we would recruit way more, right? And so I think,

again, it goes back to that relational organizing method, right? So, thinking about the people in your network that are maybe already volunteers, right?

That's a really great place to start. Or people who care about similar issues as you and asking them and being like, "Hey, you helped me on this project for a while now. Thank you so much, by the way, but we're really trying to push for more volunteers, and we're holding this event where we all make volunteer asks. Do you wanna come, and do you want to ask 10 people in your network to make volunteers?

We really wanna get 50 more volunteers by the end of this quarter." So, setting up a structure for people, again, which is the slide that we're in right now. Providing that structure really helps people...providing guardrails for people really help you in your goals. And so I would start with your existing network that you have and bring them into the fold, giving them ownership, which is, you know, right there in this as well over helping you do your job, right?

And so, I like to say this is a team sport, and so we're all in this together. And that is something that I was really bad at, to be honest for a long time. I'm still a little bad at asking for help. Instead of asking for help, I will sit there and struggle and struggle and struggle to get something done. And then when I could have, like, you know, days before or whatever hours before just ask somebody for help and it would have been done already.

And so, that is a lesson that I've learned over time, a weakness of mine that I'm trying to fix continually and part of it helping fix that is the structure of, you know, giving people ownership, giving them daily tasks also. So, in the Twitter message group I mentioned earlier, so we send them at least four to five probably tweets a day to share with their network, but as a simple task that's a really easy one, right? But we also give them usually one a little bit harder task a day, right?

Like, "Hey, we have a fundraising goal for today. We need to raise, you know, whatever it is, right? Like, 1,000 bucks today, 5,000 bucks today. We're going to... Here's an individual, like, code for each one of you and whoever helps us raise the most money, you know, we'll give you, you know, this shirt, or we'll give you a gift card, or we'll give you a night out," or whatever it is, doesn't matter. So, giving them structure, giving them ownership, and giving them daily tasks and that permission to help you, I think, can solve that problem for you.

Caroline: Love it. Okay. Linley mentions, "I help run an online support group for COVID patients using Slack. Ironically or maybe unironically, COVID makes accessing marginalized populations who could use this support group difficult as they often lack digital resources or internet resources. [inaudible 00:44:51] on overcoming some of those kinds of challenges?"

Brandon: Yeah. Well, first, thank you for running that group and support for those folks. They are much needed right now. Secondly, I would say that it is a huge problem across the board right now. We all are hearing stories of kids and parents sitting outside of McDonald's or Starbucks to steal the free Wi-Fi so they can do their schoolwork. We are really struggling right now. And one thing that COVID-19 across the board is showing us is our inadequate, unadequate, or inadequate...

Caroline: Inadequate.

Brandon: Yes. I can't say the word right now. But it's showing the things that we lack in general and it's showing... And broadband internet to me should be a utility, not a thing that only a certain select group of us have. In Indiana where we live, I'm not sure if you live in Indiana, but it is actually a huge issue outside of the major cities. And even within major cities, there's large gaps where kids and parents and folks don't have internet.

And when something like a pandemic hits and you can't really be together, that is a huge issue. So, how to fix that? I think it's a good question. There's a lot of larger policy ideas that I have across the board, but I think, in general, is to, in the safest way possible, again, recruit volunteers that are able to see some of these people in person if possible, right? And so you may not be the most... You can't see everybody again, right?

You're not gonna go to each one of these people personally, you know, but you may have 50%, 65%, or whatever it is of the group are capable and have internet access, right? And so, you know, giving them, again, daily tasks or giving them the permission structure to help you do these things. I would also say across the board like, yes, a lot of this is focused on social media and things like Zoom and things that do take broadband internet or internet in general, I will say calling people is really great as well, right? And so if they have a telephone, you know, that is a really great thing as well.

I am a millennial who hates phone calls, but I know not everybody shares that feeling. One of the things that I've also seen successful recently is if any of you used to see the phone trees, like, from church and other things, that is actually making comeback as well right now because of this exact problem. And so you may have three people that you call and check in on, but those three people each have three people that they call and check in on. And so maybe that's how you cover your group and add support to them. For those who don't have broadband internet is you create a phone tree that creates daily or weekly or however often you need to check-ins with your folks. So, that's a tough one, to be honest. That's the best idea I have, though.

Caroline: Yeah. One thing I always suggest too is to try, you know, much like the phone call, you know, if you can also send an email, put it on your social media, do the Slack channel, kind of try a couple of different channels in case someone is able to get online briefly and then they'll just

have the email or, you know, have some sort of a backup version of the communication.

Brandon: Yeah, for sure. Yeah. I think even if they don't have constant access, I can almost guarantee a lot of these people will have some sort of profile or email or something set up. And so they maybe can only check it every once in a while, but having that backup is nice too.

Caroline: Okay. We have another great question about finding sponsors for events. Do you find that there's a good method for that with digital community group?

Brandon: So, keeping track of your analytics over your reach and impressions, your shares, all that is really great information for a lot of companies and sponsors. If you can realistically and show them proof that, "You know what? If you are a sponsor to this, I guarantee you will be in front of 100,000 people's eyes, you know, because that's our reach on all platforms, you know, per week or per month or whatever," right?

And so I think that is one good selling point, especially for smaller nonprofits that maybe don't have the connections, personal relationships, or even board members that have a lot of, you know, just influence within larger companies that you wanna be a sponsor, right? So, what companies a lot of times they're doing or wanting to do if they sponsor it, they, A, probably do believe in your cause, which is great, but also, additionally, they want to get something out of it, right?

Nothing is free in reality, and so they want to sponsor this event because they know that you have a certain crowd of people that will look more favorably on their business if you sponsor them. It's as simple as that, right? And so that is one of the things I would say is just creating... Or when you create these structures, right, and you create these amazing groups, you're gonna see your reach, and especially on social but, in general, the

people that you come in contact with is gonna become much larger than it was before, right?

And with that, if you keep track of that data, you're able to give something back to these companies. And so it may not work every time depending on the size of the company or their own influence or exposure in the community, but a lot of companies, that is one thing they're interested. The money that a lot of times they use for these sponsors comes out of a marketing budget or a pool of money that they use every year.

It's a line item in their budget that they have 10 grand a year to spend on sponsorships or whatever. And if you're asking them for two grand, five grand, whatever it is, you know, you need to be able to prove that they're going to get ROI on it. And so that's my best advice for that is to keep track of the data kind of on the tail end of doing some of this stuff.

On the front end, if you haven't set that up and you're kind of just getting going and you're looking for these things, I think you can also kind of do a little bit of a guerrilla social media campaign where you try to recruit a lot of the employees of that company or the board members of that company or whoever to be in your own supporter group, right? And so kind of a bottom-up approach there, if 50% of their company is already helping and sharing your stuff, they're much more likely to be a sponsor of your event otherwise. So, those are two ideas that I have for that, for sure.

Caroline: Love it. Okay. We have another one here, and you've touched on this. Actually, before I get to this question, I do wanna mention what's on the slide here. This is our [crosstalk 00:52:50.704]

Brandon: Yes, go ahead.

Caroline: For next month, if anyone would like to join us for Legacy Fundraising with Lori Kranczer. It's going to be a lot of tips for having, like,

a dependable stream of gifts coming in like in a legacy fundraising situation. So, do join us for that. But I love this slide that you made. Okay. We have another question from Sue about board members do everything. How do we engage others? You've talked a lot about sort of drafting these teams.

Brandon: Yeah. I think, again, you kind of need to... Whether it's volunteers doing this or your board members helping you with this or staff members, however it goes, I think just recruiting people and creating these community spaces or communication hubs is critical for our first step, right? And we've talked about Slack, we've talked about, you know, Facebook groups, Twitter messages, Boardable itself. We've talked about a lot of places where that's possible, and I think all of those are really great.

You could simply download the free version of MailChimp and send out a regular email to these people. There's all kinds of stuff, but I think that is kind of your first step. And then, it doesn't really matter how small it is, right? If it starts out as two or three people and then, you know, each day or each week you add two or three more, you know, before you know it, you'll have a really active and large group of people who are dedicated to making whatever it is successful.

Caroline: Yeah. I think on the board member note, it does seem like it's especially helpful to sort of pre-package things for them so that they...and they're in the middle of their workday, they can just copy and paste some text, add a greeting, send it out to 10 people in their address book or whatever and, again, just making it as digestible as possible or as simple.

Brandon: Yeah, 100% I agree with that. I think that board members are almost always time-strapped, you know, but, like, most of us are any more, to be honest. And so I think that's just something across the board we need to think about, is how can I make it easier for people to, you know, kind of join me as a supporter? And again, it can start as small as someone liking

your posts, right? And so you just need to have that clear structure of what are those steps, you know, that you want them to take?

I want somebody to start off liking my posts or following me on social media. And then by the end of it, I want them, you know, creating graphics, or writing emails, or, you know, doing a fundraising campaign for me. And so how do we get that ladder of engagement or escalator as we called it in the presentation? So, thinking about that is clearly important and I think that making it as easy as possible during that time is also important.

Caroline: Great. Well, I don't see any more questions coming in for you, and it looks like we are almost to 3:00 here. Did you have any closing thoughts or [crosstalk 00:56:18.149]

Brandon: Yeah. I just think, in general... Yeah. I've talked a lot, but I think that this is something that can be really successful no matter what scale you're at, no matter how much resources you have. A lot of this came from the fact that I've worked at organizations or for people that don't have a lot of resources as far as money. And so we didn't... I saw some people ask about volunteers only and I've been in that situation as well where it's just a group of volunteers trying to help this cause or this person or, you know, whatever it is, this nonprofit that just started.

So, I've been in those situations and I think it works equally as well for those people, this framework and that kind of path that we put together here as it does for people who have a lot of resources, right? You may do things slightly differently, but, you know, I think in the end of the day that, like, building these people, making them feel welcome, and making it easy for them to help you is your path to success.

Caroline: Yeah, that's really empowering. No matter how small you are, if you can just get a couple of people spreading the word and go from there, you can make a lot of progress in a relatively short amount of time.

Brandon: Right. Yeah. There's a quote that, you know, "Never think that..." And I'm gonna butcher this right now but "Never think a few people can't make a difference because, in reality, that's the only people that have made a difference." I butchered that really badly. But, like, you know, the idea of being, like, everything that has ever been super impactful or huge has started somewhere, right? And so, you know, don't ever think that you can't make a difference, because you definitely can.

Caroline: Wonderful. Well, thank you so much for joining us today, Brandon, and talking about digital community building. And again, we will be sending out the replay tomorrow. And if you have more questions, you can contact me and I can get those to Brandon. He has nothing but free time.

Brandon: Right. I guess I should say that if you search Brandon Evans on, you know, Twitter or Instagram, or Facebook, you'll see me pop up. I'm more than happy to add all of you and feel free to message me. I'm happy to follow up with any questions you may have or help in general down the road if you need more help. So, just as a general call-to-action for myself.

Caroline: All right. Well, thank you again. And, everyone, have a great Thursday. We will see you next month.

Brandon: All right. Thank you so much. Bye

Caroline: Bye.