

Society for the Advancement of Information Systems

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Title: Uses of ICT for Effective Communication in a Nonprofit Organization.

Extended Abstract:

In this work we have chosen *Zakat Foundation of America (ZF)* to explore how the uses of state-of-the-art Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can further enhance the communication between the organization and its supporters. The main objective of the ZF can be summarized by the following statements:

Mission statement: Zakat Foundation fosters charitable giving to alleviate the immediate needs of poor communities and to establish long-term development projects that ensure individual and community growth.

Vision Statement: We help generous and caring people reach out to those in need. Our goal is to address immediate needs and ensure the self-reliance of the poorest people around the world with *zakat* and *sadaqa* (*Arabic words for donation*) dollars of privileged Muslims and the support of other generous donors. We believe that those whom God has granted wealth need to cleanse that wealth through charity, and those whom God has tried with loss are accorded a rightful share from the resources of the affluent.

Value Statements:

1. Compassion: ZF is dedicated to treat those they serve with utmost respect and care. ZF cares about the work, the people they serve, and those who contribute to help ZF deliver that work.
2. Sustainability: ZF will always maintain growth and program size in an efficient and sustainable manner to ensure long-lasting presence and impact, including programs that enable recipients to become self-sustaining.
3. Spirituality: ZF's work is inspired by Islamic principles of serving humanity to connect individuals and communities to one another.
4. Integrity: ZF is a partner that one can trust. As a nonprofit organization, it seeks to be transparent in all operations by making the financial reports publicly available.

Issues and Concerns:

1. ZF needs an overall revamp of its Communications Department in order to strengthen its weak brand image that often stops it from having a stronger, more cohesive outreach to more potential

donors. This can be measured by marketing research focused on assessing how recognizable brand/logo are. Metrics such as number of respondents able to correctly identify logo, familiarity with mission statement of the organization, and ability to properly explain what kind of work (humanitarian relief and development) the organization does can be provided from this research and study. Some strategies to accomplish this are listed below.

- Reinforce, through all communication means, that the ZF is “The Leader in Empowering Lives through Zakat” (the organization’s official motto)
- Create and standardize a branding and style guide to be used for all content and material creation
- Hire an independent marketing agency to evaluate ZF marketing contents and mediums, and then adopt what is suitable for the organization
- Use more sophisticated, multi-faith language that expresses common ground between faiths throughout the website and marketing materials

2. Also, ZF needs to divert resources towards grants and sponsorships as well as research innovative ways to raise funds and recruit more volunteers from all segments of the areas it serves, not only the Muslim community. Solutions to this problem can be very easily measured. The clearest and most applicable ways of measuring this are to measure the amount, in U.S. dollars, that ZF gets in one calendar-year from grants and fundraising done by volunteers. Also, ZF can take a count of the number of volunteers it has nationwide and identify them by age and location. Some strategies to accomplish this are listed below.

- Increase fundraising budget as the organization’s overall increases
- Hire Grant Coordinator to conduct grant research and prepare proposals and organization reports to potential grant providers
- Explore different subscription offers to grant resource companies and resources to facilitate research of grant availability
- Purchase new mailing lists to reach out to and offer volunteering opportunities to new communities and individuals
- Make more asserted efforts to reach new schools and youth groups to offer them volunteer opportunities

Area of Investigation:

This works intends to explore how ZF, particularly the Communications Department, sometimes referred to as the Fundraising and Marketing Department; can be made more effective in attaining it’s goal by using modern communication tools. The Communications Department is responsible for creating and disseminating all external communication materials. This includes, but is not limited to, newsletters, e-newsletters, online articles, blog posts, social media posts, mass mailers, and outreach to volunteers and larger activist communities.

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This is a work in progress and we intend to present more findings in the fourth coming conference. It is our understanding that the research findings from this study could be generalized to most nonprofit organizations operating with similar objectives.