



# Social Media for Social Change: How Nonprofits can use Social Media to Engage Stakeholders and Maximize Funding



Nina J. Shuken\*, Program on the Environment, University of Washington  
Site Supervisor: Peter Donaldson, Sustainability Ambassadors  
Faculty Advisor: Nives Dolsak, School of Marine and Environmental Affairs

## Background

- Nonprofits do valuable, grassroots work in their communities.
- A lack of consistent funding can make achieving their mission difficult.
- Social media can offer a free, high traffic marketing platform.
- By increasing the amount of social media resources a nonprofit has, they are able spread their mission to a wider audience while implementing call-to-action messages.



## Research Questions

- What are the key barriers that small environmental nonprofits are facing in regards to efficient social media use?
- What are the methods used to directly translate social media engagement into valuable resources, such as money and volunteer time?

## Internship/Methods

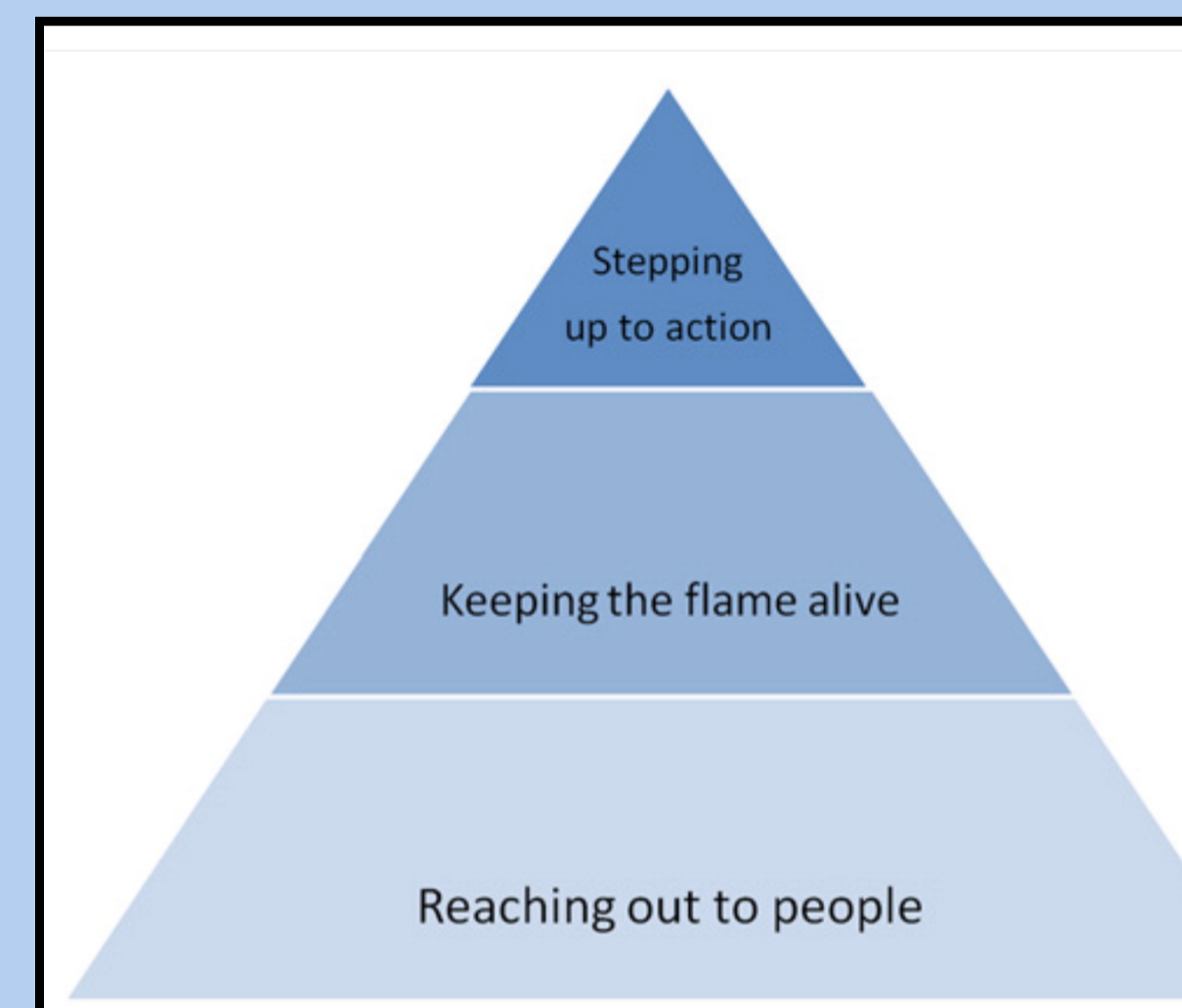
- 10-week internship with Sustainability Ambassadors during June-August 2023 (remote, Seattle-based).
- Tasks included creating resource sheets, writing short video scripts, and observing meetings with youth interns.
- Interdisciplinary study involving current research from communications, sustainability, marketing, and economics.
- Supplemental information from observations during internship and expert opinions.

## Results

### Features of Effective Online Communication Styles

- **2-way Communication** entails engaging the audience in a way that allows for them to respond (i.e. posing questions and asking for responses in the comments section, posting question boxes on Instagram stories, polls, etc.)
- **Values Based Communication** incorporates the values and mission of an organization into everything that they share over social media.
- **The Pyramid model of Social Media Advocacy** is a useful model for nonprofits to use when translating social media engagement into volunteer time and donations.

Figure 1. The Pyramid Model of Social Media Advocacy. The 3 main points are represented as each layer of the pyramid. This details the process of outreach, sustained engagement, and finally a call to action.



### Key Barriers for Nonprofits

1. Lack of educational resources for social media management.
2. Lack of consistent formatting guidelines and engagement style.
3. Lack of consistent delegation or strategy for social media creation and posting.

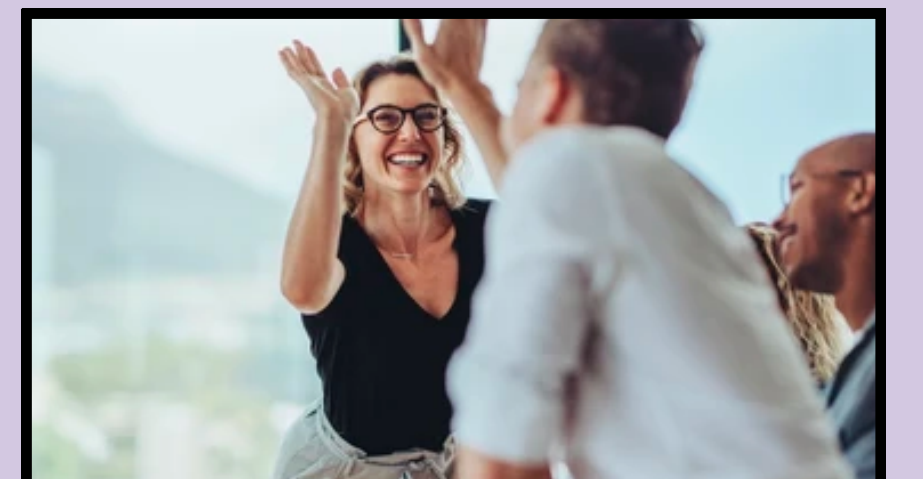
## Results cont.

### Solutions to Barriers

1. Create resource sheets and educational materials for a team within the nonprofit, to make the information accessible.
2. Decide on a set of formatting tools and share with others if there are multiple people posting to the same account.
3. Delegate social media responsibility to a team within the nonprofit where each person has a specific and clear role. Collaboration is key.

## Significance

- Nonprofits can use this research as a guide to manage their social media presence efficiently.
- By furthering their mission through social media, they can achieve more projects in their communities.
- This can create more green cities, schools, and organizations.
- By continuing to research how to make marketing tools accessible to nonprofits, we can give them valuable knowledge that goes past social media.



## Acknowledgments

Thank you to my friends and family for encouraging and supporting me throughout the duration of this project.

### University Land Acknowledgment

The University of Washington acknowledges the Coast Salish peoples of this land, the land which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot nations.\*