



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

SESSION 165

WHAT TOOLS AND TACTICS ARE YOU LETTING GO?

NEW YEAR 2018

Hello this is Beth Brodovsky. Welcome to Driving Participation and Happy New Year! This is really one of my favorite times of year.

Ever since we started the podcast we've been taking this time to reflect back on the past year and imagine what we want for the year ahead. In 2015 I must have been focused on becoming more efficient. Our show that year highlighted 4 Time-Saver Tools for Marketing on [Session 35](#).

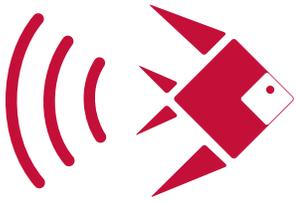
In 2016 I had seen a blog post about making marketing resolutions, so I polled our podcast guests about it; that became [Session 85](#).

And last year in [Session 137](#) we looked back on what worked over the year. So this year we are doing the opposite. I asked my guests—what tactics or strategies are you letting go of for 2018?

Letting go of things that don't serve me is a theme in my life. It's something I struggle with recognizing and taking action on, so I thought exploring what we've been doing in our marketing that isn't working—whether at all or any more—would be a great subject for this year's kickoff.

Also, I want you to notice that I don't do a year-end show. I do a new beginning show. You can't change the past but there is endless opportunity to impact the future. Twenty years ago my father's business burned to the ground two days before Christmas. What I most remember from that time is that he said the only way to look is forward, and he went out and bought a new computer and started over the next day. Hearing the stories my guests have shared helped me to shake off the thinking that we have to do what everyone else is doing or we have to do





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what we've always done or we have to do more just because there is more.

I knew this topic was important because when I sent out my request for contributions, Dawn Owens, the founder and executive director of The Link of Cullman County, replied, saying:

I so wish I could help you on this. I am trying to figure out what I am letting go of ... we are starting to use new stuff more than letting go.

Dawn Owens

[The Link of Cullman County](#)

I'm sure a lot of you listening feel like Dawn. It seems like in communications there is an awful lot of "and" and not much "or." There is this feeling that it has to be everything all the time and equally. And if someone else is doing it, you should, too.

So I asked our guests who have shared their insight with you over the years on this show to take a minute to reflect on what assumptions they've been working under that may not be serving them. Their answers really gave me some things to reflect on as we head into 2018. I hope you feel the same.

We'll start off with one of our most recent guests from [Session 162](#):

Hi, Beth it's Nick Ellinger with DonorVoice. In 2018 I'm letting go of demographics as a marketing segmentation strategy.

Looking at just predictive value, they're bested by commitment levels, awareness levels, satisfaction levels, donor identification, transactional information, behavioral information and probably some other things that I'm forgetting.

And every bit that you focus on demographics, you're ignoring these other





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more predictive segmenters. So, even though they're tempting because they're easy to use, anything that you can do with demographics, you can do better with some other segmentation—so they are out the window in 2018!

Nick Ellinger

[DonorVoice](#)

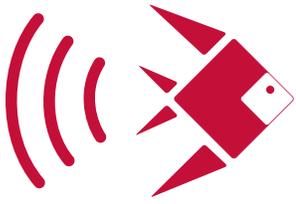
I so agree with Nick. In fact, in 2018 you'll be hearing from Chris Blockus on exactly that. Chris attended our Master Class on Audience Focus and grew his event by 50 percent in one year. It all started from one cool trick I taught him. Keep an eye out for Chris's story coming up this winter, and if you are not on our list to hear about our Master Classes, go over to nonprofittoolkit.net and sign up. We have a great lineup of programs this year, starting with [Website Makeovers Made Simple](#) on January 24th.

We picked that subject because figuring out when and why and how to redo your website can turn into a project in and of itself. And the next thing you know you don't do anything because either the costs or the workload seems overwhelming. Spencer Brooks from [Session 154](#) is thinking the same thing, and he sent this in:

I'm going to give up huge, massive website launches. You know these 3-, 6-, 9-month or more projects that take forever, they're super frustrating, stuff seems to get delayed or pushed back. The reason why I'm giving these up is I just believe they are fundamentally really risky. It puts all your eggs in one basket. There's a lot of decisions made upfront based on educated guesses and assumptions and so I'm giving that up in favor of lean, quick website launches followed up by a rapid iteration or a rapid feedback cycles based on what's working.

And why I really love that approach and I am really excited about this upcoming year is it lets you build a website that's based on actual results that you can measure and user information and data rather than doing a ton of upfront research on what your strategy is going to be and hoping for the best.





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This way will actually combine some of the research but then quickly get something out there and validate that it's working or make feedback and tweaks on it as needed. So that's what I'm really excited about. Giving up the huge frustrating risky website launches in favor of a quick, lean, iterative approach.

Spencer Brooks

brooks.digital

So if you are thinking about—and dreading—redoing your website, join me for this Master Class so I can help you plan the right project. You can go to <http://bit.ly/makeover18> to register.

Jamie McDonald of Generosity Consulting was with me on [Session 13](#). She wrote in to say:

In 2018, I'm encouraging nonprofits to shift focus toward sustainability. I'd love to see more nonprofit leaders decrease their emphasis on the transactional recruitment of one-time givers in favor of building a solid base of monthly donors.

The potential short-term revenue decline is far outweighed by the long-term loyalty of monthly givers. More importantly, the relationship shifts from one of asking once or twice a year to one of celebrating, thanking and appreciating 12 times a year. It's also a fantastic model for moving donors up the ladder of engagement, exploring ways to deepen their commitment financially and emotionally. Monthly giving is a no-brainer.

Jamie McDonald

[Generosity Consulting](#)

What Jamie says is really echoed by Pamela Grow. Pam helped the podcast get started way back on [Session 3](#) and her episode on storytelling is still worth a listen.





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Pam recommends something that may sound shocking to many of you. She suggests you give up #GivingTuesday. Because, she says, rarely ... RARELY do small organizations have their back-end systems in place. Their first gift systems, their monthly donor systems, their loyal donor and major donor systems. IF they get new donors via Giving Tuesday, what system do they have in place to KEEP those donors? Are they putting all their time and effort into #GivingTuesday at the expense of their year-end campaign? They could well be leaving money on the table.

Giving Tuesday is so contrived and time-consuming. And my inbox is filled with 99 percent crap right now. All “I, me, mine” about how great they are. My clients are using #GivingTuesday as a mechanism of gratitude. And, of course, when organizations are following a systematized approach, they’re raising far more throughout the year with far less pressure placed on year-end giving. Smart fundraisers never have to worry about stuff like #GivingTuesday or year-end. End of rant.

Pamela Grow

[Simple Development Systems](#)

But before making any assumptions, hear from Candi Summers, assistant director at BESTWA.org and my guest on [Session 131](#).

Candi wrote in to share that this was her second year planning, marketing and then running a #GivingTuesday campaign. She says:

“I think I’m finding my groove. I still hate #GivingTuesday because it’s so labor-intensive, BUT I will not stop doing it because it is a guaranteed way to get new donors.”

Candi Summers

[BESTWA.org](#)

Pam and I have talked many times about #GivingTuesday, and those of you who





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know our Nonprofit Toolkit product line know that I support the practice. But I agree with Pam that it shouldn't be a first line of defense. I often say that hope is a very expensive marketing tactic, and if #GivingTuesday isn't used as a bonus on top of a solid program it could easily fall into that category.

As you might guess, social media and Facebook in particular is a big topic of debate. I am thrilled to hear people questioning their use of these tools and evaluating return. As we were prepping this episode, Matt Hugg from [Session 33](#) emailed me an interesting report, and I asked him to share his thoughts on it:

Let's start with a clear statement. I'm no dyed-in-the-wool, raving fan of Facebook. I'm not against it, either. I'm kind of "favorably neutral." I entered the Facebook world through my hobbies and interests, not through a compulsion to share every slogan I see, track every place I go, or broadcast every picture I take.

And as the owner of my own consulting firm where I help clients build their nonprofit consulting firms), I also can read the numbers. If you want people to see you and interact with you, you gotta be on Facebook.

The numbers? Yeah, the numbers. In 2016 the Pew Center for Research completed a [study of Americans' social media habits](#). The number one social media platform? Facebook, and not just by a little. We're talking more nearly 80 percent of social media users were on Facebook. In an era where the news calls 55 percent a "landslide," you just can't ignore Facebook, whether you like it or not.

By the way, where were the others? All the rest in the study (Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Twitter) were less than 33 percent: less than half of Facebook. (Does that account for all of the social media universe? Of course not. Want to get overwhelmed? Go [here](#).)

To me, that says not "Facebook or which other." It says, "Facebook and which other." So, Pew made part of our decision easy. We'll post on Facebook. Now you face a hard choice ... saying "goodbye" to somebody. Let's face it, social media takes time, and unless you figured out how to get 25 hours in





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each day, you can't do it all.

The hard part is understanding your audience well enough to figure out which other social media platforms you should haunt. The Pew study helps with that, too, by breaking down the demographics of each.

Therefore, by applying a little logic, you can (almost) have it both ways. Pick the one or two non-Facebook platforms your target demographic is most likely to use. Then let Facebook pick up the rest since chances are (remember that nearly 80 percent?) the ones you leave off are on Facebook, too. You can even broadcast a note to the users of your lesser-used platforms to direct them to your Facebook page.

So, what am I going to drop? Hello, Pew?

Matt Hugg

ThinkNP.com

But not everyone feels like Matt does. Maggie McGary, social media manager at the American Psychological Association and my guest on [Session 71](#), shares a very different feeling. She says:

For me both personally and professionally, I'll be letting go of Facebook as much as possible.

For most nonprofits and associations, Facebook has just become a waste of resources with organic reach in the toilet and a new algorithm coming that will further diminish visibility of your content.

Facebook wants businesses to have to pay to play, which is fine ... but unless an association or nonprofit has a specific goal for which Facebook really drives results, I'd personally recommend spending that money elsewhere (assuming there even is any budget ... which usually isn't the case anyway). Facebook Live is getting a lot of hype and will undoubtedly continue to get more, and I think it's fine to experiment with to see what kind of engagement your organization gets with it, but my experience is that the vast majority of viewers drop off after 10 seconds and virtually nobody watches with the sound on ... so, is that really engagement?





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So that's my 2018 social media resolution: spend less time on Facebook ... and more time interacting with people IRL.

Maggie McGary

American Psychological Association

Elizabeth Weaver Engel, from [Session 6](#), is not recommending that you delete your organization's Facebook page. More than a billion people have active accounts, so they need to be able to find your organization there if they're looking. But she would recommend critically interrogating your investment in Facebook.

Like Maggie, she says Facebook is not in the business of helping your organization. They are in the business of making money. You're using their platform for free, which means they can change the rules of engagement any time they want to, and you have no recourse. And they do change those rules, frequently. Pretty much every change they make that affects organizational pages and degrades organic reach. You can still get your messages in front of people on Facebook, but you have to pay to do it.

For some organizations, paying for reach makes good financial sense. But I would argue that for most it really doesn't. I would strongly encourage organizations to do a clear-eyed accounting of their Return On Investment – both direct financial investment and investment of staff and volunteer time, – and if you discover that your ROI is in the red, scale back and devote those resources to audience engagement efforts that have a higher, more consistent return.

Elizabeth goes on to talk about how Facebook has affected her, personally.

I deactivated my Facebook account more than a year ago, and I don't miss it, she said.





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There are numerous studies that increased time on Facebook leads to decreased self-esteem and increased depression and anxiety. Elizabeth shared one from [Psychology Today](#) and another from [Harvard Business Review](#) and you can find direct links on the show notes page at <http://iriscreative.com/dp165/>

It makes sense, when you think about it, because you end up comparing your everyday life to your friends' highly curated timelines of only the most amazing pieces of their lives.

“But I'd miss the baby pictures! And how will I keep up with my high school classmates and my grandma?”

Here's the thing, she says:

Now that I'm not inundated with baby pictures, I've found that I'm much more motivated to go actually see the actual baby. In fact, now that I'm not under the illusion that I'm keeping up with my friends because I see their posts on Facebook, I'm more motivated to spend time with them in real life, listening to them tell me about their lives, and getting the juicy bits of their stories that don't make it onto Facebook.

Be honest: Do you really care about what's going on with your high school classmates? If you haven't seen them in 25 years, there's your answer. While it can feel good in the moment to see that the cool kids haven't done much with their lives, while all the nerds have great careers, as one of the nerds, I can tell you it's ultimately bad for your soul.

You know what your grandma would love? A phone call. A card, in the actual US postal mail. A visit.

Remember that if it's free, you're the product. Facebook is a highly addictive platform that creates a false sense of connection and encourages people to provide all sorts of private data about themselves that Facebook then controls, sells, and profits from.





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If a split feels too scary, I'd encourage a trial separation. Delete the app from your smartphone (or at least move it to the farthest back screen of apps) and pledge not to open the web platform for a week (there are all sorts of productivity apps that can block it for you, if you're afraid your willpower isn't strong enough). Then see how it goes. You may find that your life is better without Facebook. I know I have.

If you need more incentive to reconsider your relationship with Facebook?

Check out techno-sociologist Zeynep Tufekci's TED talk on the subject: [We're Building a Dystopia just to Make People Click on Ads.](#)

Elizabeth Weaver Engel

[Spark Consulting](#)

I'll put the link in the show notes page as well, so please visit www.iriscreative.com/dp165 to get all the links from this episode.

Sandy Rees has been my guest a number of times, most recently on [Session 152](#) talking about buying into yourself as a leader. Her perspective blends social media moderation with the audience focus that Nick talked about. She says:

I'm encouraging people to ONLY hang out online where their audience is. They don't have to be on Twitter or Pinterest or Instagram unless that's where their donors and prospects (or other audience) are. Too many people suffer from the "me, too" mentality and think they have to use these tools just because everyone else is. Not true. It's actually a big waste of time to Tweet if no one is there to hear you.

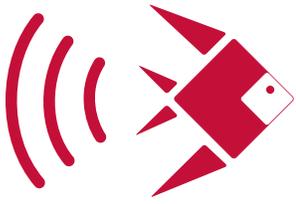
Two MUST-DO social media platforms are Facebook and YouTube. Everyone can reach their audience on one or both of those platforms, and we're going to see video become an even hotter tool in the new year.

Sandy Rees

www.getfullyfunded.com

And speaking of Twitter, that's where Adrian Segar and I originally connected





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back in 2009. His thoughts on the platform today are changing. He says:

Although I will continue to post and interact on Twitter as I have done for the last eight years, it's become clear to me that the value of this social media channel as a tool for conversations is diminishing.

I was a huge Twitter lover and user and am also finding that I spend less active time there. I will be very curious to see what happens to Twitter as a platform over the next few years. While we all complain about Facebook's monetization of data and advertising, I can at least understand how they make money and I can report that advertising there can be very effective. I still don't understand how Twitter makes money, and as our use of automation tools grows, I am sure Adrian is not the only one wondering if actual interaction is dead.

Adrian wrote more on the subject over on [his blog](#) and you can find a link to his article on the show notes page.

Adrian Segar

www.conferencethatwork.com

But social media isn't the only thing that nonprofits are evaluating for effectiveness. Listen to what another guest is done with:

Hey, Beth, it's Will Dennis from St. Joe's Prep here.

As I sit on I-95 in snowy traffic and think about the new year, I keep thinking about what tactic I am going to completely abandon going forward, either for my own sanity or a lack of results. And I think the number one thing that keeps popping into my mind is phone-a-thons.

I think there is great value in getting that extra contact, that extra touch. But the fact-of-the-matter is nobody's answering their phones anymore. Everyone screens calls, so at best you're getting a voicemail.

As we move further and further and further towards this peer-to-peer contact and using our best friends and our ambassadors to make contact for us, it's just simply not worth it for us anymore to organize an official phone-a-thon





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where we're having people come to us to make calls of which they're only getting through at about 5 percent. And it just seems silly.

I think in the New Year, my hope is to put my efforts more towards cultivating the relationships of those best friends and ambassadors and advocates. And giving them the tools to be effective communicators and giving them the tools to grow engagement on our behalf.

As I look into the future, as best I can without a crystal ball, I do see it being peer-to-peer. I barely talk to my wife on the phone anymore because of all the advancements we see in communication and technology—so I think it's time to jump ahead of the curve instead of hanging on to those things that have become not best practice but have just become practice.

So that's where I stand at as I'm looking down the tunnel towards the New Year and trying to close out this calendar year and do our push. That's what I see. I see a world where there're no more phone-a-thons ever again. There are phone calls to thank people. There are phone calls to make individual asks. But there're no more organized phone-a-thons merely because that's something that we've always done in the past.

So, my best wishes to you for a happy holiday season, a wonderful New Year and to all those out there listening and participating, let's do a weekend to rid ourselves of the things that are holding us down, and move forward to continue driving participation and to continue driving passion and what makes us happy in this world. So, take care of one another, and I'll talk to you soon, Beth, bye-bye.

Will Dennis

St Joseph's Prep

[Session 159](#)

Candi Summers also shared about how easy it is to get distracted:

I have an inbox FULL of free marketing webinars but I go to very, very few of them because it's easy to chase the next thing, but when you find what is working it's better to NOT muddy the waters. So, I'm trying to choose one or





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two voices I trust and just let my ears be open to them.

Luckily for me, Candi said I was one of them. I know we worked hard over the last year to create marketing education programs that add value. Candi is right; there is a lot of free out there, but think about what free costs. On Facebook, free usage is in exchange for data. In other situations, it is in exchange for an email address or a sales pitch. Businesses can't survive on giving away their core content for free so think what you might be giving up or missing out on. And whether the time it takes to cobble together free options is really providing you the results you want.

I know I make the mistake of trying to learn everything all at once. My suggestion for the new year is to figure out what you need to learn that will have the biggest and fastest impact and master that. Because taking on too much has its own cost. One of our upcoming guests for 2018 had some great insight on that:

Hi everybody, my name is Arianna Rehak, and I am with AssociationSuccess.org.

What I'm choosing to give up in 2018 is the absolute obsession with making things perfect before releasing them out into the world.

To give you an example, this past year I organized a virtual event called Surge 2017. It was so important to me that everything be perfect especially because it was our first event, and it was really about showing people what we could do.

So as a result, we were really late to publicly announce it. We did so seven weeks before the event. This was great in terms of creating buzz. People were excited about it—what is this new thing, and it's happening really soon.

But the problem was that there were a lot of scheduling conflicts. A lot of people weren't able to attend, simply because we hadn't given them enough notice. They really wanted to.

This was a really important lesson for me in terms of accepting that it's better to put something out there, even though the landing page isn't quite as





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optimized as I would want it to be. Even just a simple save-the-date would've made a huge difference to the event and also allowed for some feedback so we could use that to optimize.

Arianna Rehak

www.associationsuccess.org

And speaking of not trying to be everywhere, I love what Gail Bower from [Session 8](#) had to say on the subject:

I'm eliminating randomness.

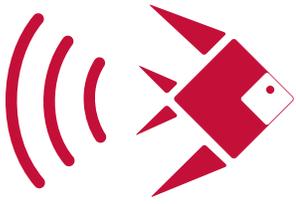
This is Gail Bower, revenue strategist for mission-driven organizations including nonprofits associations and even midmarket and larger for-profit businesses. I'm getting rid of randomness in 2018 because it doesn't serve me any longer.

For the entire history of my work I've always written. And in my writing, I write fairly regularly but without really an overall direction. I've always come up with topics based on what I experience in the world or based on a reaction something I've read, or based on something a client is struggling with, or based on a pattern of questions that audiences when I speak share with me wonder about.

I've always have plenty of things to write about but I've noticed lately that I've been less organized. The world has simply become too fast of a place. The media world especially is just simply too fast. And sadly I've become like a doggie in the park. A doggie who is fast on a scent on a trail and suddenly - a squirrel whizzes by - and the dog is off-track. The dog is chasing after the squirrel and totally forgets where he or she was going. I don't want to be like that doggie in the park (even though the dog is probably really cute and fun to play with).

So, in 2018 I want to be more deliberate. There're specific topics that I want to be writing about and sharing with your listeners, with my readers. I want to be more regular with my content strategy which includes two blogs and a client newsletter and a newsletter for the general community that I serve.





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I want to use automation more so that I'm more regularly getting content out there and in a wider fashion. And just generally be more deliberate with my messaging and my expertise because I recognize that nonprofits and membership organizations of all sorts are facing challenges when it comes to addressing their revenue issues and I have ideas that can help.

I suggest, Beth, that this is also a great approach for your listeners. We are confronting an overwhelming amount of information—some of it fake—and all of your listeners have great perspectives on their areas of expertise. We need these organizations to stand up and speak out and lead us. Share with us your expertise. Help us understand issues even more. Help us understand contrarian positions so that we have the real facts. That's going to be my approach for 2018. Thanks for inviting me to be part of your podcast this year.

Gail Bower

<http://gailbower.com/>

And however you decide to focus your marketing, the New Year is a great time to evaluate your processes and the technologies you use. Claudia Pennington from the SEO Audit Guide joined me on [Session 134](#) to talk technology. This year, she's making some changes. She says:

We've changed social media automation tools to use free tools instead of the paid tool we used before, Meet Edgar. We weren't leveraging all the features and with native scheduling tools and free automation tools, we didn't see a need to keep paying for Meet Edgar.

For Twitter, I'm using Dlvr.it and the WordPress plugin Revive Old Post. For Facebook, I'm using the native scheduling tool, but eventually I'll outsource to a Virtual Assistant to handle scheduling and growth since organic engagement is so valuable right now. I'm considering how I could leverage LinkedIn next year, beyond what automation would be able to do for me.

Claudia Pennington

<https://www.seoauditguide.com/>





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So, note that even a professional digital marketer is looking at where to spend her money and where a human element is still needed to get results. It is so easy to just pop in technology to make things more efficient and lose sight of whether it is still effective. Claudia also shared a great Harvard Business Review article on the value of a like that I think echoes what many of our guests are monitoring this year: [What's the Value of a Like](#).

And speaking of technology, too much isn't the only place people get stuck.

Claire Axelrad from Clairification was my guest on [Session 87](#), and she says:

We're well into the second decade of the 21st century, yet many nonprofits still operate like it's 1999. There's a pervasive anti-technology bias that's causing well-meaning organizations to shoot themselves in the foot.

You can either jump onto the technological rocket ship that's taking everyone else into the future, or you can get left behind.

Claire Axelrad

<http://www.clairification.com/>

For 2018, Claire suggests beginning with a thorough analysis of what you really need, and what those things might cost you.

Is it staff? Skills? Budget? Tools? What do you do every day, and what requires only periodic support? What are your staff's areas of expertise, and what skills do they lack? Determine whether you can train current staff in some of the missing areas, or whether there are some essential skills you're missing.

Since often tech folks specialize in a particular area, small nonprofits might consider outsourcing some of these functions to a professional team that can assist you with skills you lack on staff. There are companies specializing in IT support, website management, online fundraising, marketing and other functions. Develop a budget so you can use your resources wisely.





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Claire went into more detail on what technology to add and why, and you can download her full article on the show notes page.

This is such an important point. Without information, nothing is possible. It is easy to assume that help will be too expensive or not worth it. One time in the early days of my business we needed a new computer, but I thought I couldn't afford it. It was running so slow that we actually calculated how long it was taking a staff member to do a specific task and how many times she did it each year. When I saw how many hours she was spending doing what was basically a mindless task, her time was costing me double the price of a new computer. I ordered the computer that day—and, you know what, it not only instantly freed up the time of that employee but it made her job so much better. And she's actually still working for me over a decade later.

So, as we kick off this year, I hope you think about your communications in terms of what could work better. Give yourself permission to let go of what isn't meeting your goals, serving your audience or working for your team. Stop doing things because you have always done them or because everyone else does them.

And if there are things that have been hanging on your marketing list for too long and you'd like some help moving them forward, give me a call. Really. I'm always happy to talk to learn more about what you are working on and need to do next. Perhaps I can help or steer you in the right direction to find what you need. You can email me any time at beth@iriscreative.com and we can schedule some time to talk.

As always, thanks for listening and learning with me. I'm excited to see what 2018 brings so I hope you keep coming back as we explore what's next together. Happy New Year!

