



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

SESSION 192

DIGIVOLS: THE NEXT LEVEL FOR SOCIAL MEDIA AMBASSADORS

WITH SARA FALCONER

BETH: Hello, this is Beth Brodovsky. Welcome to Driving Participation. Today I am here with Sara Falconer. Sara is the Director of Digital Communication at the Canadian Red Cross. I came across Sara when I was submitting some presentations to this year's NTEN conference that's coming up. There was a terrific list of all the other people that submitted amazing things and so you may be noticing that over the last few sessions I've been grabbing a few of them and putting them out there because I know not everyone gets the opportunity to travel to a conference and hear somebody like Sara share her story. Sara, thank you so much for being willing to come on the program with me and help connect what you learned and the value that you created with all the rest of us in the nonprofit community.

SARA: Thanks so much for having me! I love talking about this with people that are interested and I always learn so much just from talking about it with you as well.

BETH: I love that, and I love having all kinds of different organizations and I know we've had a couple of ... I know I just recorded with was on a three-person team and now we're getting to talk to you from the Canadian countrywide Red Cross organization, which is really big, because I honestly think there is value, no matter what size of an organization that you're in. You can learn something and maybe try something from anybody at any size and I hope big people learn from small people and small people say, "You know, we may not have this, but we have this and we can try it." I'm so excited to come and talk to you today about a project that you've worked on, which is turning your volunteer community into really high level digital committed volunteers. We've been talking about that over all the years of the podcast about how to get people to become social ambassadors for





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you and you've created this amazing systematized system that really gets people involved. So I want to start off by asking in your world, in the world of the Red Cross, what does "participation" mean? What does a nationwide organization look to to demonstrate that the participation that's happening is really helping you thrive?

SARA: Well, for me, I think that the idea of participation is just so much about showing up, like really showing up. I don't want to phone it in. I want to feel challenged and inspired and I thrive when I have a chance to bring all of my experience and skills to help people in any way that I can and when I get a chance to connect with other people who feel the same way, I bring that energy and passion into helping others. That's just so fulfilling and it keeps you going, even in difficult times. So with an organization like Red Cross across Canada, we've been so lucky to find people who participate at that level, who really give so much of themselves in whatever way they're able to and who have so much passion and so much realness to those interactions so that as soon as you mention the concept of participation, that energy, that feeling of people giving in such an engaged way was the first thing that came to mind.

BETH: I love that. I feel like that's the place that we all want to get to and you've done an amazing job of getting people there, but before you started this journey to turn people into really committed volunteer social media ambassadors, what did things look like at the Red Cross? What was the problem you were trying to solve by even jumping into something like this?

SARA: Well I think we had the idea of engaging digital volunteers for quite awhile before we were actually able to implement it in a big way. We'd worked with ambassadors with people who showed our messages on social, who would help us to kind of amplify things if we were talking about a disaster or if we had a campaign or fundraising or whatever it was, we had some really supportive and wonderful people and so other than that, we had an opportunity to bring them into more of the actual day to day work at Red Cross in particular to what we





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do with responses and so we wanted to give them an opportunity for people to share their skills, whether it's related to social media or video production, graphic design, a whole bunch of different things, we knew we had volunteers who had these great skills that weren't being utilized and so we wanted to find a way for them to jump in and that's really important for an organization like us because we have such a need to ramp up our capacity in disaster times. So we definitely saw that if we could come up with a structure that would support it, it was gonna be really valuable. Of course it was an adventure getting there along the way.

BETH: Yeah, I'm sure. I think it's really interesting that you talk about that there were people out there that had skills and wanted to utilize them for the benefit of Red Cross and one of the words, in all of the times that I've talked about this subject, I haven't actually utilized the kind of current trendy term of 'influencer' and a lot of times when people think of ambassadors and social media ambassadors specifically, they go out and look for somebody who is an influencer. Can you talk a little bit about the approach you took about utilizing people that had skills and interests versus people that go out and maybe look at who has the most followers and can amplify our message, but where do you guys sit on what you were looking for?

SARA: Well you know in the past we've had great luck with those sort of high profile influencers or ambassadors the way that you would conceive of it maybe a few years back. Somebody who had tons of followers and influence on Twitter or other channels who would share our messages and how wonderful is that? We had people who were wonderful supporters, but we saw that there were also so many engaged users online who wanted to bring that energy to us and so I think what we've seen in recent years and other organizations have used terms like micro-influencers and so we don't think of it in exactly those terms, but we weren't necessarily looking for someone who has an enormous social media following as much as somebody who is quite engaged and who has those social skills and will share the message with their friends and family. People are more likely to take a message from somebody that they know personally than from a





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celebrity. It's still wonderful if you're a celebrity to support us, and we love it, but you know, if you are my friend, and I say, "Hey, this means a lot to me," I think you're a lot more likely to pay attention.

BETH: Right. I think that's really interesting to also focus on like the limitations on relying on celebrities' interest and bandwidth to tweet on your behalf.

SARA: Yeah and I think in times of disaster when we're experiencing something that's very public and major as an event, we'll have tons of support coming to us and it's so wonderful, but in the day to day times when we're struggling to answer peoples questions because they had a small house fire or if they need to know what's happening with first aid certification in their neighborhood, things that are in our day to day lives as Red Crossers, we're still gonna need people to engage and make you feel just as special and just as important for being part of our work at that time. Dealing with volunteers who can give of their time day to day is wonderful and then of course they're trained and comfortable with our systems so that when we're responding to a disaster, we can scale up a lot more quickly. We can't be [unclear 8:09] them in the moment when we're responding to a larger scale event. So it's worked out in so many ways.

BETH: What has changed in the world in this sort of communication, especially around disasters or problems or community issues since the smart phone came along?

SARA: Well, it's one thing to be able to communicate with your supporters, donors and media using smart phones and social. I mean you can tell stories, you can put all these really great opportunities to have people engage with your brand or your organization, but what we've seen in recent years is that we have such an opportunity to talk to the people that we're actually helping in a different way. So the real turning point for us was the Alberta fires in 2016. It just radically transformed the way we could interact with people. During the fires, over 80,000 people evacuated and many of them had SmartPhones. They were looking to





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us for help on Facebook and Twitter, even when they were fleeing the fires, sometimes even from their cars when they were evacuating. So our social traffic went up by over 6,000% over night and we didn't have 6,000% more staff. So we had to scale up very quickly because our small team needed to figure out how to monitor and respond to those very urgent needs 24 hours a day. So we looked to our volunteers for that support. We also had to train our social media team a bit on the fly to help people who had experienced trauma and who had many urgent needs, something that they would have seen [unclear 9:49] previously. We were able to introduce some other digital solutions around the same time as an organization, including online registration, electronic fund transfers so people didn't have to wait for that urgent assistance. We were the first organization that was able to do a lot of that. So it's been great to help people in so many ways when we had to do it over night essentially. So since then, we've just been trying to put more process and more capacity in place for all of those things, but we've seen so much change in recent years. I know that we'll see lots more in the coming years too.

BETH: I think it's so interesting to also share that you've got nationwide coverage that you have to support. How big is your actual team of paid staff?

SARA: The digital team that I work with is a team of eight and that includes our social media staff, video producer, graphic designer and the team that links up to the website so it's a very multi-talented team, one that works on all the pieces that need to fit into that digital content, but in addition to that, across the country, we've got wonderful communications teams in all of our provinces and other people in different programs who support the work that we do. We're just super lucky to have all of that capacity in different ways. So if we're responding to wild fires in BC or the recent tornadoes [unclear 11:24] we've got both people on the ground and people remotely that can work together as a team.

BETH: Right. That's sort of a blessing and also a challenge because you've got people in all different parts of the country that are paid staff, but then you also





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have this external volunteer corp. So how did you decide who to bring in and get them onboarded so that you could all really work efficiently together and not be crossing purposes and stepping on each others toes?

SARA: A big turning point with that piece of the digital volunteer coordination around it was bringing in a staff resource that's focused on developing that program. For a long time we had sort of tried to do it at [unclear 12:15] desks. You know how that goes usually so it's like we had this vision in mind and we knew that we could bring in this capacity and we knew that we could coordinate it in a way that was gonna bring so much value to the work that we were doing, but we didn't have that piece in place until we brought that staff member in. So it's been night and day just being able to have somebody help coordinate to make sure that we were all on the same page, that we have the proper resource for different events and campaign and things. [unclear 12:47] share a Google Doc to make sure that we have the same messaging and that it stays up to date when we're in disaster or just with day to day questions. We each have an editorial calendar, all those things just to help things go smoothly so we can keep building capacity without losing the [unclear 13:06]

BETH: I feel the same. We're a small team, but I can't rave enough about the value of a very simple Google spreadsheet that we share to keep everybody on track and everybody can go in and look and if somebody changes something, it's all in one place. I mean, it's super simple, but it works incredibly well. That's what we use to manage this whole podcast and there's five people involved in all the different moving parts related to getting this out the door. It's such a simple and effective tool.

SARA: Right and just the way that you have hundreds of different sessions that you're trying to keep track of, we've got hundreds pieces of content that are circulating and what stage is it at and who is responsible for that, do we have this beautiful story, but it needs editing and that sort of thing. So then of course





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we stay in touch regularly too. We're pretty much always messaging each other or just staying in touch day to day about any little changes and we have our regular meetings that are based around the editorial calendar to look at what's coming up and brainstorm some ideas for things leading up to GivingTuesday or whatever it is. So the system has worked really well, but the resourcing, we really have to foster the volunteer piece of it and bring them into that relationship, that really helped a lot.

BETH: How deeply do you let your volunteers get involved with this part of things, like the staff, the calendar, the management? Are they part of staff meetings or do you divide up the work so the staff makes the decisions, creates the assets and you're using your volunteers for distribution? How is it working?

SARA: We have a lot of opportunities for volunteers to sort of share ideas with us, to brainstorm and come up with new content to new stories that they want to explore. I would say that they have only a certain amount of time they can devote to us so I wouldn't anticipate they'd be able to participate in a staff meeting or something like that, but we do try to make time to hear their ideas, to help them if they have some excitement about doing a project, to make sure they're connecting with that team and so it really depends on what they're interested in out of that experience as well because we want to make sure that they're getting what they want out of it too. So if somebody is really interested in doing some animations or some graphics for water safety, then we will absolutely look to them for ideas and connect them to that team to help make that happen and some people are more interested in developing [unclear 15:58] monitoring and recording and things like that and so we'll give them opportunities to work on that too.

BETH: Honestly, I feel like for me, that's kind of the big giant elephant in the room taken away from this is that most of us that are looking for social media ambassadors, we're looking to say "here's what we need you to do for us. Now go do it." This idea that even though somebody may only have a little bit of time





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to donate to you, that there's space in the relationship for them to say "here's an interest that I have" or "here's a skill I want to build that I want to explore" and that you set it up so that they can do that in a way that's sort of monitored and connected with the goals of the team so you don't just let people go rogue and putting up whatever they think is funny because that can get risky, but that it's not just this top down, one way push out our stuff if you love us kind of thing, that there's different ways to get involved, not just with the organization, but them get involved with what they are interested in personally. Like maybe they're coming off of being home with little kids and they really are interested maybe in getting a job as a social media coordinator so they want to handle the calendar or maybe they're shifting from graphic design into video and they'd love to explore doing something video. The fact that you're giving them room to try out things that they are about and are interested in, this has to be helping deepen their value of participation.

SARA: Well we get so much out of it too. I want them to be having a good experience because they're driven and donating their time. They should get some new skills or have a positive experience, but many of them are bringing us really wonderful skills and insights as well. As you said, it might be a communications professional who has been off for awhile or just has a little bit of spare time. We actually have a paramedic on our team who when he's on the night shift will sometimes have time to work on some ideas or work on some monitoring with us. It's like all these different people bringing just a wealth of information and even if they're younger students, people that are starting out a little more, we get great insights from them. They have a whole different eye and ear for things than we do so it's a real win/win to open it up that way and I would not want it to be something they're not getting anything out of and that again is something that came over time. Again when we started, they would basically help us monitor and respond to like social posts, but there weren't many windows of opportunity because it did take some time to build structure around that and to figure out how it works and to make it so that everybody helps and gets support in what





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they're doing.

BETH: That's such a lovely thing for you to be willing to share because I think a lot of times when you're telling success stories it's so easy for it to sound like big, bang, boom and now we have a countrywide support network. Isn't that amazing and people think 'wow, I can't imagine getting from where I am now to that', but to see that even at a well resourced organization, like you didn't go from -100. You started at one step and like got that working and then learned and listened and evolved. You don't have to go out of the gate perfect to have it have value that you can build on.

SARA: Yeah, absolutely. Like if I could go back in time and do it differently, I think I would have had more structure in place before we started and the reality is that we didn't and so we figured it out as we went along and I think we had some volunteers that stayed loyal and stuck it out with us and we had some volunteers that lost interest because we weren't engaging them enough because we hadn't come up with ways for them to feel committed to us at that level like they had some urgency or responsibility for what we were doing together. So I think that's been a big step.

BETH: It's so easy to look at what you created now and think, "Gosh I wish I had it then," but I feel like in a lot of ways and I'm sort of like the recovering structure of myself. Like I always feel like I have to know all the answers and have like the whole perfect plan lined up before I get started, but the reality is sometimes what you end up creating is different. Like if you built a structure then, you might have put a lot of effort into it and it might not have been the right structure and who knows? Maybe it would have limited you from getting to where you are today. You can only take one pass. You just never know.

SARA: That's so true and I think so much of it is everything else that we do. It's about testing and learning. There were things were working and so we kept them and there were things that weren't and so we changed it and we'll probably keep





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doing that as the program grows. So absolutely, it's all worked out wonderfully in the end.

BETH: Exactly. So something I've been really talking to a lot of people about lately is this idea of experimentation. How at the Red Cross, a big old organization, how do you create this culture of like the comfort and willingness to try an experiment? Not everyone has the support of the people that need to say yes to try something that isn't going to come out of the gate perfect. So what's the culture like there and how did you get to a place where people were OK with you trying it and figuring it out as you went?

SARA: Well, I was very lucky when I came to Red Cross that they had already embraced a certain level of comfort with social and digital and it's part of what drew me to the organization and I had been with organizations before. I sort of helped them build their digital team you know from the ground up in some ways, but I didn't want to do that again. I wanted to come to a place that was already at a certain level and bring it to the next level and it's been really exciting to have that opportunity because I think people see the results in the organization. If there was any question about social and digital from Alberta on has been able to see just what a huge piece of it how we can support them and how the other teams do with those tools and technology and the ability to reach the people that we're helping in a whole different way. So I think it's a bit of how Red Cross works is we're trying to mobilize the power of humanity to make a difference in the world and whatever that is, different teams have their different strengths and different focuses and I think everybody kind of gets that we're always trying to do better and to bring more people in to doing the work with us. So in some ways, the social piece of it is such a perfect fit with that overall approach.

BETH: How do you think that doing it this way, having these well trained committed volunteer teams as part of your group, how has it changed the results that you're getting from your social efforts?

SARA: Well, in addition to the capacity and sort of different perspectives that





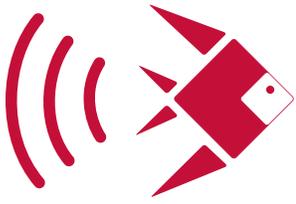
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we're bringing in and just sort of like the overall feeling that we have, that things have been improving, we do a lot of recording and measuring of what we're doing too. What helps, actually with what you were asking about previously as well, being able to tell the story of what we're doing, why we're approaching things a certain way, what we learned from it, what's working, maybe we increased visitors to certain content on the site. Maybe we got people to take part in a campaign or an action that we needed them to do or we have people that share content that's really important about preparedness, whatever it is, we can measure that and we have tools at our disposal to be able to show those results. So I think when it comes to disaster, we measure how quickly we can get back to the people, how many questions we've answered, what types of things are coming up and we can feed that information into our operations team in a way that we were never able to previously. So if people are telling us something on Twitter or on Facebook that our disaster team needs to know, we can pass it to them right away and they can take action on it. So being able to measure and to report kind of in real time and then overall that's a huge goal for us because of the volunteers and all the other investment we had around the same time.

BETH: That's amazing. Honestly, it doesn't really surprise me. One of the big reasons I wanted to start this podcast is because there was so much talk around this concept of engagement and engagement meaning likes and shares and basically activity online and it's really easy and the excitement around engagement and activity to lose sight of organizational goals. Like having somebody like a post or share a post is not an outcome that in and of itself is going to help serve your mission. It's an important step, it's an interim step. The fact that you are going into this saying we know what levers are important levers here, like the speed at which you can respond to a disaster. That's an important organizational lever to be able to say here's how we can track whether this that we're doing over here is impacting that over there makes a massive difference. Just out of curiosity, I'm sure people want to know. What kind of tools do you guys use to help you track, measure and report on that?





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SARA: I think with measurement tools and in general social tools, there's no one exact solution.

BETH: That's why I have to ask. Everyone has to cobble it together. What's your blender mix of things?

SARA: Yeah, the old Frankenstein monster. Like the core of our social listening is through Social Studio. They've been very supportive with us and we've been working with them for a number of years on monitoring. So that's what the digital volunteers use when they're interacting and sort of following the conversation. In terms of other tools, we use Hootsuite Campaigns for some of our user-generated content and some other pieces around that. Everybody kind of has their own pieces that they like to use. Some people are more fans of TweetDeck or Hootsuite or whatever and we have some flexibility in what we're doing, but if you have a tool that you really love you can go for that. From there, our head of social media, she's just got a real great mind for those analytics and numbers and slices and dices it in a way that we get so many good insights out of it and we build like a custom dashboard for our teams internally from that.

BETH: Wow! Like what? What did you build that in?

SARA: It's basically like when we were using Excel and not to feed into what's essentially like a Power Point doc that we share that has like this sort of like monthly results and trends and things like that. So we can share that really easily internally for people that are not necessarily as technical or don't need to know the sort of minutia of what we're doing. We can show them the trends, we can show them the important things that are gonna impact the work that they're doing. So not everybody can do that level of reporting. We do it at the sort of the monthly level and quarterly and then also for big campaigns or big disasters. We do a series of kind of customer reports and not everybody can do that, but it's been really useful.





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BETH: Yeah, but the fact that you can in power point and Excel, like tools that pretty much everyone has that probably with a little research, Googling, learning, searching could figure out how to use those tools together to create some sort of dashboard on your own, that's pretty cool. You don't necessarily need to buy super expensive third-party software, and in my experience, I don't know about you, I haven't found any one third-party expensive software solves all the problems. It doesn't matter what price point you're working at, it's still about what answers do you need and there isn't one perfect place where that's gonna show up for everyone.

SARA: Absolutely, and I think that's something that over the years I've seen at different organizations is a lot of it is kind of numbers and figuring out what it is you want to share, what makes sense for your audience, what you're presenting to your executive team versus what you as a social and digital team were looking at internally. They're probably pretty different. Not that you shouldn't share challenges or learnings that are ... it doesn't all have to be totally positive, but you also want to boil it down so that they don't just glaze over this huge amount of data.

BETH: You talked about the fact that you would have built some of your systems differently or your structure that you put together. Is there anything specific that you've learned over the life cycle of this process that if you were starting it over from scratch, is there anything kind of like this is one thing that I really wish we had done from the beginning or that we had to untangle? What would you do differently from what you did do?

SARA: A lot of it for me is around the onboarding process and just setting expectations on both sides to really ... we now do a survey with volunteers to see what they're most interested in, what they're experience is with, and then also setting expectations of what we need from them. If you're just like, "Hey, great. You're a digital volunteer and now you are with us," but there is no expectation that like once a month you need to take a shift or that you should interact with





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contact a certain number of times or whatever it is you set up as an organization of standards. It's pretty easy on both sides not to get what you're expecting out of it. So it's really cool to communicate those expectations and onboarding and set up a process around that. For us we would have luckily support from our volunteer resource team internally that we could lean on and we had previously been kind of handling the full onboarding of our volunteers by ourselves because we couldn't get any digital volunteers, but you know, there's things that all of our volunteers should know about what the Red Cross is, what our principles are, where we work and how we work just so that you have that basic understanding that any volunteer would have. So having that in place of being able to work with some of those other teams has been the main thing that I think is contributing to our success now.

BETH: I feel like just the fact that when you described that, you talk about on both sides, kind of just coming into it with that philosophy that there are those sides and that the volunteers are a factor and not just a set of minions. It has to really help with progress and culture and relationship in general.

SARA: Absolutely. We couldn't do without them and I think we have more opportunities now to show them that and empower them in what they're doing. The other two I actually forgot to mention previously that fits into that is we've got [unclear 32:13] social that the volunteers use to social content in their own networks and to be able to really help spread the message that way and so giving them that tool and letting them kind of run with it and even suggest content to us within that tool and things like that, it's empowering them to feel like part of the team because they are. We want to give them the support that they need, but we absolutely could not do the work that we do across Red Cross without our volunteers and [unclear 32:46] very much.

BETH: So what do you think has using volunteers done? Like what is a volunteer able to do that staff could not have accomplished?





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SARA: I mean part of it is that we have capacity in disasters and to know that if something major comes our way we can be there for Canadians at a level that we wouldn't have been able to previously, that we can monitor 24/7 which we do now. That's not something that we could have previously done. Just a range of perspectives that they bring to us is so wonderful. They give us insights into different audiences, some but not all are younger people, millennials. So they can teach us about that, they can teach us about different regions that we're not active in and I think they bring so much energy and passion. As a volunteer organization, the lifeblood of Red Cross is volunteers. It would be a bit of a disconnect not to have them as part of our digital team. To be able to say we're a volunteer organization. I think that's just been so special.

BETH: Speaking of passion, it's one of those wonderful qualities, but that in some cases can sometimes become a challenge At Red Cross you have a national brand that's managed at a pretty high level. How do you balance giving your volunteers and autonomy with the kind of corporate standards and brand language, look and style and all of that, where do you give them some room to express themselves without going rogue?

SARA: Well, our fundamental principles that guide all of our work because no matter what part of Red Cross you're involved in and that's internationally. So that's translated really well into the work of our digital team. For example, we're neutral, we're impartial. That's helps us to do the work that we're doing around the world. We can go into places that other people can't and so it's so important for us to live like that in our social sort of personas as well. Those principles are built into our social media policies. We take the time to really make sure that the volunteers understand what the ideas mean and why they're so essential to the work of the Red Cross. At the same time, we're like a humanitarian organization. I want our volunteers to have a voice. I want them to be human and to be themselves and to show our audience how passionate and caring they are. So I want them to be empowered. I think that the principles sort of give them the safety net that they need to do that and on a more practical level, they have a lot





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of training. They shadow with our team until we all feel comfortable that they're ready to jump in. They have that support as they're kind of learning the ropes and you know, the first messages that go out, they're definitely doing it hand in hand with our team. So we feel supported on both sides and they mostly are replying from the Red Cross special account that they share when they're on duty. So you can tell it's our volunteers interacting with you rather than our national account and that gives them more space to have a voice that is their own.

BETH: I really love that you didn't answer that question by saying, "We handed them the brand book, told them what colors it needed to be and how much space needs to be in the logo if they design it." You answered a question on how do they stay on brand with we share our values with them. It's top of mind for me right now because we're working on values in my company. I actually just ran a value session for one of our clients, and I'm really just seeing that you can't really disconnect organizational culture and values from organizational brand. I often say that you can't expect participation on the outside until you embrace participation on the inside and so really starting of by knowing who you are and what you do value so that you can communicate those values and attract the kind of volunteers that value what you value. There's a whole lot less probably rules and disciplinarian issues that even come up when people are aligned with what they believe.

SARA: Absolutely and it's not like ... if they're working on an asset that's gonna be shared publically, it goes through approval processes.

BETH: Right, exactly. Let me tell you, people are not designers.

SARA: I mean, myself, sometimes throwing out a thing like "Is that enough space?" There's a reason I have a graphic designer on my team because I don't have the expert in that either so I don't expect them all to be, but as long as they understand why we're doing something, then I think it makes it a lot easier to explain if you have to make changes to something or if the tone isn't quite right. Like it's a lot easier than if it just seems like it's coming out of a handbook.





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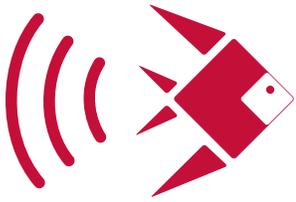
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BETH: Right and I think it definitely helps with the rationale when it's not somebody saying I don't like this, but here's how we're gonna realign it and adjust it. So after listening to all of this, if somebody that's out there says, "Boy, I would love to systematize this and really get structure in a group of people that have this level of commitment to help spread the word and spread their story', if somebody was a small organization out there that would love to emulate what you're doing, what would be one tip you could give them so that they could get started?

SARA: It's not the most fun tip in the world, but I think be realistic about what you can accomplish depending on the size that you are. A volunteer program of our size took a lot of time, investment, staff support, a lot of trial and error. It's not to say that you can't do it on a smaller scale and still have success, but I mean if your manager is expecting you to turn around with multiple people being supported and doing shifts on your social and things like that, I think you need to set expectations because if you are the person who has this vision, you need to also make the organization understand that it needs to be resourced properly. That doesn't mean necessarily that everybody is gonna have a full time person dedicated to it and some small organizations who don't even have a full time social media person. So to have somebody that was a digital volunteer person, I know it's not realistic, but I think just set expectations about what size that you can accomplish and what looks reasonable. Can you perhaps bring in a volunteer counselor once a month to share new ideas or maybe stick with one or two very dedicated volunteers that you already have a relationship with who know your brand and organization and get them to help you respond to some social questions and content or whatever it is. I think any of these things that I've talked about can definitely be applied on a smaller scale, but you would still want to be thinking about what they're getting out of the relationship, about what you're getting out of it, how you're setting those expectations between the organization and yourself and the volunteers and I think that's the best way to get started.

BETH: I think that's such a great tip, especially because there's all sorts of





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organizations out there, like the Red Cross deals with things that really align with getting up to a point where you have 24/7 coverage. If somebody that's listening is a professional services association or a ballet company, like even the requirement or the standard of what you're looking for would very likely be very different. So I love your tip of like being realistic and aligning what your goal is to what the needs are of your organization so you're not just building something because somebody thinks it's a great idea.

SARA: Yeah, that's it and once you start to see that success, once you have several volunteers that are doing things make sure that you let people know and it's so easy to kind of get caught up in doing and not like telling what you're doing internally and so take the time to do that report. Take the time to share a piece of content that the volunteers created that's really wonderful because nobody else is gonna do it for you. That's how you're gonna get more investment every time in the program as well.

BETH: That's like the big takeaway right there. Thank you so much Sara for sharing about this project. I hope we get to do this talk again at NTEN and that everyone who comes to NTEN, everyone that might be listening to come and be able to hear Sara do this in person and ask questions. If people do have questions for you in the meantime, how can they reach out to you?

SARA: Either Twitter or LinkedIn is great. My Twitter handle is [@SaraFalconer](#). I'd love to hear from anybody else who has experiences around this or questions that I can help answer and just really excited that this could happen.

BETH: Perfect! I will put links to Sara's LinkedIn and Twitter handle on the show notes page so be sure to go back and look for it there. Sara, thank you so much for sharing all of this with both me and our nonprofit community, and thank you everyone for listening. I hope we see you next time.

