



Ultimate Guide To User Generated Content For Nonprofits

PRESENTED BY LÚGH STUDIO

It's great when people talk about your nonprofit. But when they share it publicly? That's gold — and it's why user-generated content for nonprofits is so powerful.

This guide shows you everything you need to know about user-generated content (UGC) for nonprofits, including why it's so important and how to encourage more of it. Every organization can benefit from more UGC — and this guide shows you how to maximize its impact.

- What Is User-Generated Content (UGC)?
- How UGC For Nonprofits Differs From Business UGC
- Why UGC Is So Valuable For Nonprofits
- Where To Find (And Collect) UGC
- User-Generated Content At Nonprofits: How To Get It + How To Use It
- Non-Profits Winning With UGC
- Tools And Resources
- One Last Note
- Conclusion

WHAT IS USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)?



We've covered [user-generated content](#) on our blog before. Here is our definition of UGC in a nutshell:

Authentic content that is made by the people you serve and which casts your organization in a positive light.

User-generated content for nonprofits can take many forms. Here are just a few to get you thinking:

- A volunteer's Instagram story from a clean-up event
- A donor recording a video about why they support your mission
- A local family that you helped talking about their experience
- A [LinkedIn post](#) from one of your board members highlighting your impact

User-generated content is authentic and emotional. It's also more powerful than just about any content you might create "in house", because it carries the credibility of real people. It's storytelling — but from your supporters' perspective.

HOW UGC FOR NONPROFITS DIFFERS FROM BUSINESS UGC

It's important to understand how user-generated content for nonprofits differs from that of businesses. And to do that, we'll quickly look at two things:

- Why users create content for both
- How both kinds are generally used

WHY USERS CREATE CONTENT FOR BOTH

For businesses, user-generated content will be about [how a product or service has helped them](#). This sort of content is usually transactional in nature. Somebody spent money, and now they're excited about the result that a company got for them.

User-generated content for nonprofits is quite different. It will usually be about the difference that a nonprofit makes and why somebody chose to donate to them. Alternatively, UGC in this case can also be about how a nonprofit helped them with some kind of struggle.

HOW BOTH KINDS ARE GENERALLY USED

Businesses will use UGC to drive more sales. This kind of content is great at building trust and showing potential customers that the company actually does what it claims. The end result? Like all of its marketing: generating more revenue.

As for nonprofits? While there is certainly overlap here with UGC for businesses, there are some important differences. Here are four ways that user-generated content for nonprofits is unique:

- **Mission over product.** UGC isn't selling something, but rather [inviting people to join a cause](#). More important than "polish" is some kind of emotional resonance.
- **More diverse voices.** Nonprofit communities usually include volunteers, staff, donors, and the people served. Their user-generated content? It can (and usually does) come from any of these groups.
- **Trust and sensitivity.** This kind of UGC is all about sharing personal stories - especially from vulnerable communities. While this can be effective, it requires more care and permission than the for-profit world.
- **Impact-driven.** Lastly, nonprofit UGC often centers on gratitude or justice. This sets it apart from the focus on consumption or "trends" that a business's UGC often has.

Keep these points in mind as you go through the rest of our guide. It will give you useful context for the remaining sections.

WHY UGC IS SO VALUABLE FOR NONPROFITS



People don't necessarily trust organizations. Who they do trust? The opinions of people that weren't paid for them. This is why [social proof](#) is so essential: people see that others trust your organization, and are more willing to trust in you as well.

UGC is unsolicited, and (usually) unfiltered. That's exactly why it resonates: it's truthful. It builds the kind of emotional connection with your organization that you just can't buy. This makes user-generated content for nonprofits one of the "secret weapons" to [effective nonprofit marketing](#).

But that's not all. Here are four other reasons UGC is valuable for nonprofits:

1. It grows your reach

Every time a supporter posts about your cause, they are creating a miniature advertisement. This is an advertisement that their friends, family, and followers will see. With enough time this grows your reach. The result? More engagement, more followers, and more donations.

2. It makes your community feel valued

User-generated content isn't about your organization. It's about the people that support it. When you share a supporter's photo or video, you're essentially telling them that their opinion matters. This kind of recognition deepens your connection with them. Do this enough, and UGC can turn passive supporters into active ambassadors.

3. It saves time and resources

[Content marketing](#) is important for nonprofits. But like anything else, it takes time and effort to produce. The cost is real if you are creating each piece of content on your own. Thankfully, with UGC, you don't have to. User-generated content provides a steady stream of relevant, relatable material. This isn't just content that gets seen in the moment, but also material that you can repurpose across platforms later on. You need content; UGC gives it to you.

4. It enhances campaign performance

Lastly, user-generated content is one of the biggest "needle movers" for nonprofits' campaigns. Just think about it. Which one do you think is going to perform better: a campaign that simply asks for donations with no supporting content, or one that includes real supporter stories and images? If you want to increase conversions, shares, and [overall engagement](#), user-generated content can help.

WHERE TO FIND (AND COLLECT) UGC

There are a lot of places a nonprofit can search for user-generated content. You don't need some fancy tool to gather it — just a little bit of imagination. Here are some of your options:

1. Social Media

[Social media for nonprofits](#) is our first suggestion for finding UGC. Check platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) for:

- Tagged posts
- Mentions
- Story shares
- Campaign hashtags

Be on the lookout for what people say about you — a simple screenshot can work wonders!

2. Testimonials And Surveys

While social media platforms are great for finding UGC, sometimes you want to be more direct with an ask. This is where testimonials or surveys come in (and they can be as simple as Google Forms).

Simply [ask people for feedback](#). This can be a survey that you send to donors, volunteers, or program participants. Be sure to include open-ended questions and that you get their permission to quote them. Your biggest fans will often respond to this request, so surveys are a great place to gather "memorable quotes".

3. Email Replies And Direct Messages

Do you have an [email list](#)? If you send email frequently enough, supporters will start responding to them. There will usually be three different kinds of emails:

- Questions that they need help with
- Feedback for you on what you're doing
- Positive words that they want to share about your organization

These kinds of interactions can be powerful. Respond, ask for permission to share, and start using them everywhere.

4. Online Reviews And Platforms

If you want good user-generated content, but you don't have the time to gather it yourself, check [third-party site](#). Check out GreatNonprofits and Charity Navigator. These are often goldmines for authentic quotes and impact statements. The best places to put them? Your emails and donation pages.

5. Partner And Community Pages

Sometimes your collaborators or local businesses will mention your nonprofit on their own. If it does happen, these often take place on their websites or social channels. Stay on alert for these mentions: they can be great sources of UGC as well.

USER-GENERATED CONTENT AT NONPROFITS: HOW TO GET IT + HOW TO USE IT



HOW TO ENCOURAGE MORE UGC

Now that you know where to look for UGC at a nonprofit - how do you encourage people to leave more of it? This second part of the process is every bit as important as the first. After all: if you don't ask somebody to do something, oftentimes they won't.

Here are five options:

1. Ask Directly

As we said in the previous section, sometimes you just have to ask. Where you ask for UGC matters, though. Here are three things to consider:

- An email broadcast that you send out asking for feedback
- Surveys that
- A landing page after someone donates asking them why they decided to support your cause

These all get your supporters more involved and can result in an influx of UGC.

2. Run Contests and Giveaways

We all love winning prizes. Why not connect it to a call for UGC? Invite people to share their stories or photos, and then be clear about the prizes they can get when they do. Here's an example of what you might say:

"Post your favorite volunteer memory and tag us to enter a giveaway!"

This gives people an actual incentive to create UGC. And when you say a little bit of excitement? The things people say about you can turn into gold.

3. Collaborate with Influencers or Ambassadors

We have discussed [influencer marketing for nonprofits](#) before. Here's our take: while it shouldn't be your main marketing strategy, it can make a big difference for the right organization.

It's worth trying out for more UGC. Do you have influencers or supporters with strong followings? Invite them (or pay them, if your budget allows it) to create content on your behalf. And make sure they tag you. Their participation can be the catalyst to broader engagement.

4. Make Participation Easy

Your next tip is more of a general piece of advice. User-generated content for nonprofits is great. But sometimes, people simply don't know what to say. So make it easy for them. Here are the kinds of breezes you can use to make participation a breeze:

- "What inspired you to get involved?"
- "Share a photo from our recent 5K!"
- "Post a video telling us why this cause matters to you."

Sometimes, people just need a framework to get started. Give it to them, and the content they make for you will be better as a result.

5. Feature Supporter Content Regularly

This last one can't be missed. By showcasing your UGC online, you create more social proof for your organization. This creates a kind of snowball: people see the content other people make about your organization, and are more willing to do it themselves.

Three good places to consider:

- Your Instagram stories
- Your [weekly newsletter](#)
- The homepage of your website

When people see others being recognized, they're more likely to participate.

HOW TO USE UGC IN YOUR MARKETING

Once you have user-generated content for your nonprofit, it's time to use it. While there are a number of ways to make this content work for you, here are our six suggestions guaranteed to drive results:

1. Social Media

This is the obvious one. Share supporter posts (and make sure you get their permission). This mixes up your marketing and highlights voices from your community. Do this long enough and the results start to compound.

2. Fundraising Campaigns

Looking to [drive more donations](#)? This is where user-generated content becomes super useful for nonprofits. It's one thing to tell people where their donation is going. But real photos and quotes from donors, volunteers, or beneficiaries? That's when you start to craft authentic stories and increase conversion rates.

3. Email Marketing

Email marketing for nonprofits can be super effective. When you use UGC, the results are even better. You're only limited by your imagination here. If you're looking for ideas, here's what we suggest:

- Broadcasts devoted entire to one quote
- Email automations that incorporate donor quotes
- Fundraisers that link out to a video from a past volunteer

Think of nonprofit marketing as an ecosystem, and the UGC in emails as simply one part of it.

4. Website and Landing Pages

Anything that validates your work in the eyes of new visitors is powerful. Thankfully, this is exactly what UGC does, and it's why you should put it on your website too. Consider featuring testimonials or "quote cards" on [your homepage](#). This will quickly win the trust of anybody that just found out about your organization.

The same goes for your landing pages. If there is something that a new visitor is [signing up for](#), a little bit of UGC is helpful in getting their contact information. Even just a simple one-line quote can go a long way.

5. Printed Materials and Reports

User-generated content doesn't have to be digital. Odds are, you're creating multiple documents throughout the year that end up getting printed out. This includes annual reports, brochures, posters, and even [grant proposals](#).

Material like this is often some of the most important, but most neglected in terms of UGC. But there's no reason to miss this kind of opportunity. Try implementing (even briefly) real stories to bring your data to life. This is where UGC can truly make a difference at your nonprofit.

NONPROFITS WINNING WITH UGC

Sometimes, the best way to understand user-generated content for nonprofits is to look at organizations already doing it well. Below we've included four examples. Included is a brief description of what each organization does with UGC. Be sure to check them out:

- **Habitat for Humanity:** encourages volunteers to post from their build sites, often using the hashtag #HabitatBuild. These posts drive more awareness of the organization and demonstrate real-world impact.
- **No Kid Hungry:** uses photos and stories created by supporters in their campaigns. These are powerful, and help illustrate the difference that each donation can make.
- **charity: water:** regularly shares videos and posts from supporters doing fundraisers or creative donation drives. This is effective in inspiring others to start their own.
- **The Trevor Project:** highlights messages from LGBTQ+ youth and allies across social platforms. The result? A supportive and creative visible community.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

If you are serious about UGC at your nonprofit, you need to use the right tools. But one of the biggest risks? Getting bogged down in software you don't actually use. With that in mind, we've listed the five different kinds of tools that are resources, as well as a few options for each.

Social Listening Tools:

- [Hootsuite](#)
- [Sprout Social](#)
- [Mention](#)

UGC Rights Management:

- [TrueLoyal](#)
- [Nosto](#)

Design and Repurposing:

- [Canva](#)
- [Adobe Express](#)

Survey Tools:

- [Typeform](#)
- [SurveyMonkey](#)

Email Marketing:

- [Mailchimp](#)
- [Constant Contact](#)
- [Kit](#)

ONE LAST NOTE

We've mentioned it a few times in this guide, but it's important enough to close with: the importance of permission. User-generated content is valuable for nonprofits. It can truly be the difference maker in whatever goal you are trying to achieve. That's why it can be tempting to go "full speed ahead."

But this is never a good idea. Even if content is posted publicly, it's always best practice to get somebody's express consent before using their photo, quote, or video in your marketing. This is respectful. However, it's also important for protecting privacy (especially when working with youth or vulnerable communities). Also, it protects you from any potential legal action against you.

Just remember this simple rule: ask first. This will keep the user-generated content coming in, but in a way that's actually sustainable.

CONCLUSION

A nonprofit organization doesn't need a production team or a big budget to tell powerful stories. Your community is probably already doing it for you.

User-generated content isn't just a quick tactic. Rather, gathering it and using it should be an essential part of your overall marketing strategy. Not only does it build trust like nothing else, but it creates stories worth listening to and a deep sense of belonging in your audience.

Your job? Be smart enough to spot it, and consistent enough to use it.