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Nonprofit Leaders' Digital Marketing Strategies to Secure and Sustain Donors

Valayia Jones-Smith
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Valayia Jones-Smith

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Janice Garfield, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Peter Anthony, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Denise Land, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

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Abstract

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by

Valayia Jones-Smith

MS, University Maryland Global Campus, 2013

BS, Minot State University, 1998

Consulting Capstone Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

Without systematic strategies to increase their donor base, some leaders of nonprofit organizations might be unable to develop and sustain a solid financial foundation to support programs and services related to organizational missions, values, and goals. Grounded in the relationship management theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies three executive leaders of a nonprofit organization in the northeastern United States used to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, the organization's website, organizational documents, publicly available data, and organizational social media channels. Data were analyzed using Castleberry and Nolen's 5-step process. Three themes emerged: digital marketing is an effective tool to develop and sustain relationships with the donor base, developing digital marketing strategies based on donor base demographics might improve relationship quality with NPOs, and communication is a crucial factor that supports NPO leaders' efforts to secure and sustain relationships using digital marketing. A key recommendation is that nonprofit executive leaders implement digital marketing as a tool to foster quality long-term relationships. The implications for positive social change include the potential to build a consistent support stream from stakeholders, which allows executive nonprofit leaders to expand services offered to communities and customers.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my mother. You are no longer with me physically but forever live in my heart. All that I am and all that I have is because of what I learned from you. My independence, resilience, strength, integrity, and tenacity are because I witnessed first-hand the importance of those traits to thrive and prosper as a Black woman.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I give all praise and glory to my Savior, Jesus Christ. Without you, I am nothing. Your grace and love are constant in my life and never fails. Thank you to Saul for the support during this journey. Saul, you helped me maintain my sanity and provided support for me to recharge when needed. Saul, you were also vital to supporting my efforts to stay healthy and limit my contact with others during the pandemic. Nothing like having a personal UberEats, InstaCart, etc., available. Thank you to my best friend, Trinette Savage. Trinette, you provided so much encouraging support and talked me off the ledge many times. You are an incredible 4 AM friend, and I genuinely am thankful every day for our friendship!! To my three fur babies, Maxwell, Milan, and Marlee, there are no words for your unconditional love. Also, to my aunt Pat, thank you! You consistently provide the motherly support and love that keeps me going. I love and appreciate you more than words can ever express.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In this study, I served as the scholar-consultant for the leader of a nonprofit organization (NPO) selected by Walden University consulting capstone administrators as required for the consulting capstone doctoral study. I used the 2019-2020 Baldrige Excellence Framework criteria to explore what strategies some executive leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. I addressed the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, interview questions, a brief overview of the conceptual framework, and operational definitions used in this study as well as a review of the relevant scholarly literature.

Background of the Problem

The steady increase of the nonprofit sector in the United States has raised concerns regarding whether increased growth also increases challenges to remain financially solvent (Paarlberg et al., 2018). Digital marketing tools have transformed how stakeholders engage with organizations, allowing them to become active participants and establish and maintain long-term quality relationships (Appel et al., 2020; Seo & Vu, 2020; Wang & Kim, 2017). Funds donated to NPOs by individuals have grown over time and account for the largest source of charitable donations received (Herzog & Yang, 2018). Digital marketing is an accessible and affordable option for executive nonprofit leaders to grow and maintain their donor base by sharing their mission and goals with stakeholders regardless of geographic location (Milde & Yawson, 2017).

Executive nonprofit leaders do not have control over stakeholders' disposable personal income but can impact stakeholders' personal awareness about their organization (Quevedo & Quevedo-Prince, 2019). Knowing factors that can contribute to executive nonprofit leaders cultivating an emotional bond with stakeholders is critical and can assist leaders with defining and focusing on how to build quality relationships with stakeholders using digital marketing (Tripathi & Verma, 2018). Executive nonprofit leaders may use digital marketing to establish two-way communication through which they may receive and offer feedback with critical stakeholders (Pinto et al., 2019; Srivastava et al., 2018). Measuring digital marketing impact requires executive nonprofit leaders to measure intangibles like relationships and conversations (Milla et al., 2017). Managing relationships with the donor base is the foundation for leveraging digital marketing strategies to grow and sustain the donor base.

Problem Statement

The primary revenue sources for NPOs are individual and corporate donations, government grants, services and contracts, service fees, and investments (Shon et al., 2019). Over 75% of charitable giving comes from private or individual donors (Farrokhvar et al., 2018). The general business problem is without systematic strategies to increase their donor base, some executive leaders of NPOs might be unable to develop and sustain a solid financial foundation to support programs and services related to organizational missions, values, and goals. The specific business problem is some executive leaders of NPOs lack strategies to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies nonprofit executive leaders used to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The target population consisted of three executive leaders from a single NPO in the northeastern United States who successfully employed strategies to increase their donor base using digital marketing. Implications of this study for positive social change include the potential to identify strategies enabling NPO executive leaders to increase their donor base and sustain operations for providing community services not addressed by other nonprofits, government agencies, or corporate organizations.

Nature of the Study

There are three research methods from which to choose: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. I used the qualitative method for this study. Researchers wishing to explore and understand phenomena in-depth use the qualitative research methodology (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Collection and analysis of data with an iterative process occurring simultaneously is a key feature of qualitative research (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Researchers use the qualitative method to gain an in-depth knowledge of real-world strategies (Atkinson et al., 2001). The characteristics of or relationships among variables are measured in a quantitative study (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers who use the quantitative method rely on objective measurement and quantitative analysis (Firestone, 1987). I did not use objective measurement or to study relationships among variables in this study by testing hypotheses. Mixed methods research is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Harper, 2019). I did not use mixed methods for this study because I did not use the quantitative method. The qualitative method is appropriate for this study to gain an in-depth knowledge of real-world strategies that contribute to nonprofit executive leaders' ability to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing to achieve their organizations' sustainability.

Narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, and case studies are some of the research designs that qualitative researchers use. Researchers use a narrative research design to explore participants' personal experiences through their personal stories (Saunders et al., 2015). I did not explore sequence of events and details of the digital marketing strategies via participants' personal stories because the focus of the study was to explore digital marketing strategies that are effective in terms of increasing and sustaining the donor base for NPOs; therefore, the narrative research design was not appropriate for this study. Understanding human behavior to gain insights into cultural norms, rules, and routines is the focus of ethnographic studies (Malagon-Maldonado, 2014). Exploring the human condition by studying the lived experience of participants is the foundation of phenomenology (Malagon-Maldonado, 2014). I did not focus on human behavior in various cultures or life experiences of participants; therefore, neither ethnographic nor phenomenological designs were appropriate for this study. Researchers use case studies to gather data that not only relate to the present state but also include past experiences and situational issues that have affected the problem (Chini et al., 2019). Researchers can focus on the why of a phenomenon and tracing operational processes over time using the case study method (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2018), researchers use a single case study to explore past experiences and operational processes of a single organization of particular interest. I therefore used a single case design and in-depth analysis in a real-world context to gain insights regarding increasing and sustaining a donor base using digital marketing. Therefore, the single case study design was appropriate for the proposed study.

Research Question

What strategies do some executive leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing?

Interview Questions

1. What digital marketing strategies do you use to increase and sustain your donor base?
2. How did you select the digital marketing strategies used to increase and sustain your donor base?
3. How did you deploy the digital marketing strategies used to increase and sustain your donor base?
4. How, if at all, do the digital marketing strategies used to increase and sustain your donor base differ according to donor type (e.g., individual donors, corporate donors)?
5. How do you measure the effectiveness of each digital marketing strategy?
6. What more would you like to share about the digital marketing strategies your organization employs to increase and sustain your donor base?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I used in this study is the relationship management theory (RMT). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) introduced the RMT in the late 1990s. The most tested measures for studying relationship management are the measures by Hon and Grunig which focused on the four dimensions of relationship quality: commitment, satisfaction, trust, and control mutuality (Waters, 2008). Hon and Grunig also measured whether the relationship between the organization and individuals is mutually beneficial or whether one benefits the other based on the perceived expectation of the relationship (Waters, 2008).

Given the growing competitive environment in which nonprofit leaders must operate, securing and sustaining a donor base is imperative to support their missions. Digital marketing is a cost-effective way to grow the donor base (Bala & Verma, 2018). Donors are holding NPO leaders to a higher level of transparency and accountability, requiring NPO executive leaders to spend time cultivating quality relationships with both existing and potential donors (Waters, 2008). Charitable dollars given by individual donors totaled $292 billion in 2018 (Giving USA, 2019). A positive relationship between the leaders of a NPO and donors is the foundation for growing and sustaining the donor base and capitalizing on billions of dollars given by individual donors. Funds received from donors sustain NPOs and allow leaders to fulfill their mission and potentially expand their services. The RMT provides a holistic approach to successfully manage relationships with current and potential donors (Santouridis & Veraki, 2017). Building quality relationships is the foundation for growing and sustaining the donor base for a

NPO, which makes the RMT an appropriate lens to explore how nonprofit executive leaders grow and sustain their donor base using digital marketing.

Operational Definitions

Cloud computing: Services provided via an on demand or pay per use model that creates a shared pool of a network-based environment for sharing calculations and resources regardless of location (Subramanian & Jeyaraj, 2018).

Customer relationship management (CRM): Concepts, tools, and strategies used to manage good customer relationships in an organization (Anshari et al., 2019).

Social Media Technology (SMT): Refers to blogging, social media posting, email marketing, social media analytics, social media channels, and paid advertising using social media (Foltean et al., 2019).

Stakeholders: “Stakeholders are all groups that are or might be affected by the organization’s actions and success. Key stakeholders might include customers, the workforce, partners, collaborators, governing boards, stockholders, donors, suppliers, taxpayers, regulatory bodies, policy makers, funders, and local and professional communities” (National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST], 2019c, p. 51).

Web 2.0: A tool that can be used to communicate information using social networks facilitating collaboration and easy access to real time communication and allows the creation of user generated content (Anshari et al., 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

All research is subject to assumptions, limitations, and delimitations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The following sections summarize assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that influenced my study. Communicating assumptions, limitations, and delimitations provides a level of transparency to help readers understand perspectives of research.

Assumptions

An assumption is a condition that is believed to be true without either limited or direct evidence supporting the condition (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2017). I assumed that participants were forthcoming, honest, and transparent in terms of responses to interview questions, any follow-up questions, and questions from documentation. I also assumed that information collected from the interviews and documentation supplied by organizational leaders would yield sufficient data to support the process of answering the research question.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses beyond the control of the researcher and are closely related to the chosen research design (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). One limitation of this study involved the number of participants. The participants were three executive leaders from one NPO located in the northeastern United States. Another limitation was that the amount of data available about performance outcomes was limited by the size and age of the NPO. The single case study design limits researchers' ability to generalize (Yin, 2018). The goal of the study was to explain the complexities of digital marketing strategies for nonprofit leaders, thus eliminating the need for generalization.

Delimitations

Boundaries that deliberately confine a study are delimitations (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2017). The delimiting boundaries of this study were (a) the qualitative single case study design, (b) research population of three executive leaders, and (c) geographic location in the northeastern United States.

Significance of the Study

NPOs' executive leaders require revenue that exceeds the break-even point for their organization to thrive and serve their mission (Lange, 2019). This study could be meaningful to business practice because the results might suggest digital marketing strategies that NPO executive leaders can use to increase and sustain their donor base. The findings of this study could also be beneficial to NPO executive leaders in terms of achieving sustainability by providing successful strategies for increasing and maintaining the donor base using digital marketing. Achieving sustainability could allow NPO executive leaders to achieve mission-centered objectives that serve community populations and mitigate negative effects on programs because of decreases in federal funding. Findings from this study might assist leaders of some nonprofits in terms of moving their organization from a state of surviving to thriving.

According to Lange (2019), contributions from individuals account for 80% of charitable giving in the United States. Lange stated gaps due to decreases in funding from governmental programs are increasingly filled by nonprofits. Providing digital marketing strategies to secure and sustain funding might support nonprofit leaders in terms of achieving sustainability and allowing growth and the ability to serve and reach more people in need of goods and services.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to explore strategies nonprofit executive leaders used to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The relationship between NPOs and donors is vital to the nonprofit sector (Waters, 2008). The success of digital marketing efforts is dependent on the relationship between donors and the NPO. Without the support of donors, NPOs would cease to exist, and the ability to offer services and programs to support their mission would be nearly impossible, increasing the already significant gap due to decreased government funding and support for community programs (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2019; Shin, 2019).

A vital element of academic research is the systematic literature review that examines available literature that applies to a specific research topic, question, or phenomenon (Xiao & Watson, 2019). A literature review allows the researcher to strengthen their point of view (Faryadi, 2018). The purpose of this literature review was to provide relevant and credible supportive evidence regarding strategies nonprofit executive leaders use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing obtained from critical analyses and syntheses of various sources. The RMT was the theoretical foundation used to identify the strategies nonprofit executive leaders use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. For this study's literature review, as indicated in the operational definitions, the terms customer and donors are included as among the stakeholder(s) referenced by the author(s) of the articles I have cited.

Literature Review Search and Organization Strategy

The primary sources I used to gather literature review documents were Google Scholar and the Walden University online library. The following databases were used to retrieve documents: SAGE Journals, Emerald Insight, ABI/Inform, ProQuest Central, Thoreau, and Business Source Complete. I obtained additional information from client web sites and documents, public documents, nonprofit-related internet sites, magazines, newsletters, and books. The primary search terms were *digital marketing and donors*, *digital marketing and social media*, *nonprofit digital marketing*, *social media and fundraising*, *donor engagement strategies*, *nonprofit organizations*, *relationship management*, and *relationship management theory*.

In alignment with Walden University's Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program recommendation, at least 85% of the material used for the study are from scholarly peer-reviewed sources and were published between 2017 and 2021 (see Table 1). A total of 218 sources were used, of which 92% were scholarly and peer reviewed and 87.4% were published between 2017 and 2021.

Table 1

Professional and Academic Literature Review Content

	Total	Peer Reviewed	Non Peer Reviewed	Within 5 years (2017-2021)	Total % Peer Reviewed	Total % within 5 years
Journals	197	197	0	171	100%	86.8%
Books	6	0	6	5	0%	83.3%
Magazines/Newsletters	2	0	2	2	0%	100%
Online Resources	9	0	9	9	0%	100%
Total	214	197	17	187	92%	87.4%

The literature review is organized into 12 focus areas: relationship management theory, relationship management and business practice, additional theories, communication, nonprofit organizations, donors, digital marketing, customer relationship management, analytics and big data, consumer privacy, barriers and challenges, and industry best practices.

RMT

I used the RMT as the conceptual framework for this study. Digital marketing is an easy and affordable option available to NPO executive leaders which supports relationship building with donors (Ištvanić et al., 2017). Digital marketing allows NPO executive leaders the opportunity to build quality relationships involving tailoring communication based on preferences of donors. Communication with donors is a key component of the leadership criteria in the Baldrige Excellence Framework. Executive NPO leaders might use the RMT with digital marketing to target potential donors and existing donors based on demographic information, donor behavior, and donor interests.

Using a personal approach in digital marketing strategies helps to foster building quality long-term relationships with donors which may lead to donors contributing and supporting NPOs consistently.

The Baldrige Excellence Framework consists of seven primary criteria for performance excellence. The seven primary criteria for performance excellence are leadership, strategy, customers, measurements, analysis, and knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results (NIST, 2019c). Executive NPO leaders can use RMT-based digital marketing to meet the seven criteria for performance excellence. Digital marketing allows executive NPO leaders to implement improvement systems to measure and improve relationships with the donor base. In addition, becoming adept in terms of building and sustaining quality long-term relationships with the donor base may also increase NPOs' competitive position in an oversaturated environment with scarce resources (Laurett & Ferreira, 2018). Executive NPO leaders need to understand various types of relationships and how those relationships influence deploying successful strategies involving digital marketing to sustain and grow the donor base.

I was able to identify current, past, and future donors of the NPO as stakeholders based on the definition of stakeholders according to the Baldrige Excellence Framework to examine the current state of the client organization and address the research question for this study. The goal of the client organization was to identify strategies using digital marketing to sustain and grow the donor base. Even in the digital space, the client organization will need to appropriately foster donor relationships and have the ability to measure relationships, which is why the RMT was an appropriate conceptual lens to examine the research question.

There are different types of relationships. Long-term quality relationships do not just happen; they are multidimensional and take work and time to cultivate (Nota & Aiello, 2019). The process of managing relationships between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders is known as relationship management (Ledingham, 2005). The principles that are the foundation of organization-public relationships from which the RMT originated are:

- Relationships are transactional, goal oriented, dynamic, and change over time.
- Relationships have history and consequences and can be analyzed and measured by the quality, type, stakeholders involved, and maintenance strategies used. In addition, relationships are influenced by history, reciprocity, and their frequency and nature.
- Drivers of relationships are perceived needs and wants of parties involved and how relationships continue based on whether expectations are met depending on interactions between parties that support mutual understanding and benefits.
- Communication is critical to relationships but should not be the sole focus.
- The relationship is the focus and should remain the focus throughout the process and techniques used to manage the relationship (Ledingham, 2003).

The RMT is a versatile framework; not only does it support scholarly inquiry for researchers, but also can be used as the foundation for developing education and training, and monitoring and tracking program initiatives (Ledingham, 2003). The RMT is the seminal framework to measure ongoing relationship quality and build long-term relationships with key stakeholders (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Digital marketing requires NPO executives to select and deploy appropriate tools that support building ongoing quality relationships with donors. Developing a digital marketing strategy using the RMT allows NPO executives to measure the effectiveness of strategies and adjust as needed to build quality relationships with potential and existing donors.

The effective outcome of relationship management is a mutual understanding and benefit for both parties, which is developed from common interests and shared solutions to problems that can generate economic, societal, and political gains for organizations and stakeholders (Ledingham, 2003, 2005). According to Ledingham (2003), relationship management involves balancing interests of organizations and their stakeholders through the effective management of organization-public relationships, and to properly leverage the concepts of relationship management, knowledge of strategic planning and other managerial processes are needed. A successful digital marketing strategy which balances the interests of the NPO and donors will consider the NPO's strategic plan and managerial processes. Aligning the strategic plan of the NPO and managerial processes is critical in terms of developing a digital marketing strategy that will support attracting donors that share an interest in the mission of the NPO and a desire to provide ongoing support.

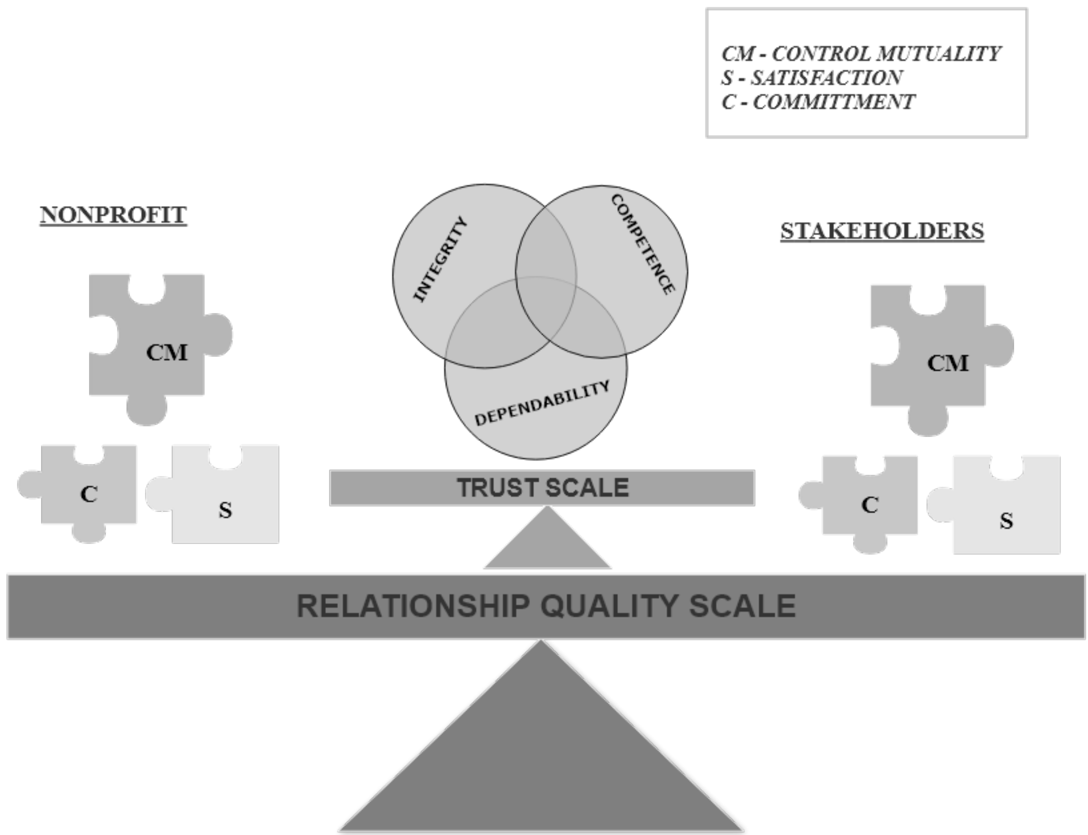
Public relations are measured via the effectiveness of an organization's public relationship and involves a continuous dynamic give and take of needs, expectations, and fulfillment that will change over time (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003). Each party in the relationship is equally important to achieving desired successful outcomes. The most productive long-term relationships are those that benefit all parties involved (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Interpersonal relationship building is the foundation for the RMT, and the state of the organization-public relationship is a predictor of how stakeholders choice to engage with the organization. (Ledingham, 2003, 2005). Public relations strategies improve organizational efficiency and stakeholder relationships (Pressgrove, 2017).

Relationship Quality

Hon and Grunig created a scale to measure the quality of relationships between an organization and stakeholders and also explored the nature of the relationship specifically if the relationship type is communal or exchange (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003; Waters, 2008, 2009; Waters & Bortree, 2012; Waters et al., 2011). The four dimensions of relationship quality are trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Waters, 2008). The four dimensions of relationship quality and the relationship types of communal and exchange make up the outcomes of a successful relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999). The trust scale is further broken down into the dimensions of integrity, dependability, and competence (see Figure 1). Cultivating quality long-term sustainable relationships is a delicate balancing act of various elements that become a dynamic puzzle.

Figure 1

Relationship Quality Scale



Executive NPO leaders need to consider control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment as well as trust, integrity, competence, and dependability, and provide continuous monitoring and adjustments to maintain balance (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Pressgrove & McKeever, 2016; Waters, 2008). It is also important to routinely measure and evaluate long-term relationships and adjust as needed to maintain quality relationships and strengthen stakeholder commitment (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Executive NPO leaders should develop goals that not only support the organization's mission but also enhance relationships with stakeholders (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Leaders can administer a questionnaire to both internal and external stakeholders that involves agree/disagree statements on a 1-9 scale pertaining to relationships to obtain stakeholder perceptions (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Relationship quality is complex and dynamic and is influenced by several subfactors. The level of trust between parties which is influenced by integrity, competence, and dependability can positively or negatively influenced relationship quality. In addition to trust, perceptions of control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment between NPOs and stakeholders contribute to relationship quality. The better the relationship quality between NPOs and donor bases, the higher probability donors will be open to providing monetary support (Waters, 2008).

Trust. How comfortable each party is when it comes to being open and honest constitutes trust (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Waters, 2008). Trust has been established as a critical foundation of most relationships (Boateng & Narteh, 2016). Trust is present in any relationship and there is some degree of implied trust which also comes with the risk of a participant's trust being misplaced inferring that without trust a relationship does not exist (Welch, 2006). Trust and relationship satisfaction have a significant positive influence on donor satisfaction (Santouridis & Veraki, 2017). Because of the critical role of trust among relationship management executives, NPO leaders when developing digital marketing strategies should not overlook blurred boundaries that can occur between paid and earned social media content, which can raise questions about transparency and ethics, damaging trust with stakeholders (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019).

Satisfaction. The donor's perceived level satisfaction is a measurement of whether the stakeholder has a positive view of the relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999;

Waters, 2008). When stakeholders are satisfied, they feel valued and appreciated and feel the executive NPO leaders are making sound and prudent decisions (Waters, 2008). A positive satisfaction level is more likely to support a long-term relationship with stakeholders and provide a foundation for regular support from stakeholders. In addition to a positive satisfaction level, stakeholders also trust executive nonprofit leaders to implement the services and programs to support the mission and community in an effective manner (Waters, 2008). Trust and relationship satisfaction are the elements that comprise relationship quality and have a significant positive influence on donor satisfaction (Santouridis & Veraki, 2017).

Commitment. How dedicated each party is to spending energy to grow and sustain a relationship is commitment (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Waters, 2008). According to Waters (2008), commitment is the strongest positive predictor to a long-term relationship. Commitment and trust are critical for new stakeholders for engagement and advocacy (Boateng & Narteh, 2016; Waters, 2008), but commitment and satisfaction are what drives a long-term supportive stakeholder (Waters, 2008). A stakeholder’s commitment to the NPO’s mission is a moderating factor for executive NPO leaders desiring to grow and sustain their donor base (Quevedo & Quevedo-Prince, 2019). Executive NPO leaders may choose to focus on personalization, advocacy, engagement, and collaboration with stakeholders. Boateng and Narteh (2016) indicated that these factors have a significant relationship with affective stakeholder commitment.

Control Mutuality. The level of satisfaction each party has with the amount of control they have over the relationship is control mutuality (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019).

Considering strategic stakeholders' and collaborating when feasible before committing to major organizational decisions has a higher success rate of obtaining stakeholder buy in instead of trying to persuade stakeholders afterwards (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Drivers of the relationship are the perceived needs and wants of the parties involved and how the relationship continues is based on the level that expectations are met dependent on the interactions between the parties, which in turn supports mutual understanding and benefit (Ledingham, 2003). Stakeholders feel more valued beyond their financial contributions, when executive NPO leaders consistently show they care about their stakeholders' opinions and ideas, which supports control mutuality (Sisson, 2017). Engaging donors using digital marketing allows donors to feel they are valuable to the NPO and may lead to an increased level of satisfaction.

Relationship Types

Relationships are both situational and behavioral and will come and go as the situations and behaviors change (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Achieving either a communal or exchange relationships is one goal of RMT (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Waters, 2008). Most relationships begin as an exchange relationship but develops into a communal one over time; however, for NPOs a communal relationship may need to develop first before an exchange can occur (Hon & Grunig, 1999). The expected benefits in a relationship characterize the type of relationship (Lee & Kim, 2020).

Communal Relationships. The dynamics of a communal relationship is where one party prioritizes the concern and welfare of the other party and gives to the other party without any expectation of receiving anything in return (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Lee

& Kim, 2020; Waters, 2008). Communal relationships have a higher level of trust than an exchange relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999) and fosters loyalty and commitment which may provide a competitive advantage (Ledingham, 2005). Most donors, specifically repeat donors, have a positive view of their relationship on all of the relationship dimensions and view the relationship as a communal one with NPOs (Waters, 2008). When targeting potential donors to grow the donor base for the highest chance of success, nonprofit executive leaders should dedicate resources to building communal relationships before asking for monetary donations (Hon & Grunig, 1999). The relationship with donors and NPOs can change over time between a communal and an exchange relationship and RMT will allow NPO executives to recognize the type of relationship and adjust the digital marketing strategy to fit the relationship. Although communal relationships are shown to characterize repeat donors there is value in exchange relationships with some donors.

Exchange Relationships. An exchange relationship is a quid pro quo relationship where one party expects something in return for giving a benefit to the other party (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Lee & Kim, 2020; Waters, 2008). An exchange relationship's outcomes may or may not be positive (Lee & Kim, 2020). The evidence indicated that executive NPO leaders develop different strategies for each stakeholder group in which an exchange relationship exists (Topaloglu et al., 2018). Executive NPO leaders may cultivate the relationships with exchange stakeholders by highlighting their unique expertise to create both an exchange and communal relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Until the development of RMT, little attention was paid to differentiate organizational public relations and the process to foster quality relationships that would support an organization with fulfilling its mission from general business management, advertising, and marketing (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). Rooted in public relations, the perspective of RMT focuses on balancing the interest of the external stakeholders with the organizations' interest. The core of RMT focuses on the quality of the ongoing relationship with the organization and its stakeholders (Arnold, 2017). Hon and Grunig (1999), argued that organizations which allocated resources to building and maintaining quality relationships with stakeholders were more effective than organizations that did not.

While most research has focused on applying RMT within similar or identical sectors, RMT in cross sector situations is one current challenge that RMT does not fully address. NPOs cannot survive in a vacuum and need to build alliances and support from other partners outside of the sector. The success of these alliances is dependent on overcoming organizational cultural differences and establishing a trusting relationship that aligns with both the short and long-term interests of the organizations (Tsarenko & Simpson, 2017).

Tsarenko and Simpson (2017) examined corporate and NPO partnerships using commitment and trust as the two primary mediators. Tsarenko and Simpson tested their relationship model by comparing managers' perspectives in each organization actively involved in an NPO and corporate partnership. The findings of the study suggest a contingency based approach when beginning a new cross sector relationship and that managers focus significantly on relationship fit to gauge the success of the relationship (Tsarenko & Simpson, 2017). Executive NPO leaders should dedicate time to align their mission with the goals of the corporate organization before entering into a relationship.

Another opposition to RMT is that most studies focused on the relationship status at one specific time. Relationships are dynamic and change over time, and research based on RMT should explore the longitudinal measurement of relationships (Cheng, 2018). According to Cheng (2018), the popularity of cross-sectional methods is only one of five identified gaps in RMT and related research. The other identified gaps are the idealization that RMT consistently results in the mutual benefits of both parties, lack of research on RMT and multiparty relationships, using trust as one of the measurements of relationship quality can be problematic, and the majority of research relies on unilateral self-reported survey data (Cheng, 2018). To address the gaps and provide a better way to manage relationships based on the various relationship complexities, Cheng proposed the concept of contingent organization-public relationship.

Building quality relationships with the donor base are essential to the long-term viability of the organization. According to Namisango and Kang (2019), social media use to foster quality relationships between NPO's and their donor base has increased over the years, moving from a novelty to a necessity. Cultivating and maintaining quality relationships with donors is critical to the long-term success of NPOs. This study's research question focused on strategies to build and maintain a donor base using digital marketing. Therefore, RMT was appropriate as the conceptual lens through which to view strategies executive NPO leaders use to sustain and grow their donor base using digital marketing.

Relationship Management and Business Practice

Building successful long-term donor relationships is critical to the survival of NPOs. Nonprofit executive leaders should make it a priority to dedicate resources to building and maintaining long-term donor relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Pressgrove, 2017; Waters, 2008). Due to limited resources and being prudent financial stewards, public relation strategies are used by NPO executive leaders for relationship management because relationship management strategies are more affordable than advertising options (Pressgrove, 2017). Effective management of stakeholder relationships promote the success level of the organization (Pressgrove, 2017). Competition in business including the nonprofit sector continues to increase; making the inclusion of relationship management as part of the organization's strategic plan and retention of stakeholders vital for NPOs to thrive (Santouridis & Veraki, 2017).

In 2010, the effect of the internet and other technologies was one of the most prevalent relationship management research streams (Levenshus, 2010). Digital marketing is one mechanism that executive NPO leaders may use to grow and sustain long-term donor relationships supporting the RMT principle that successful relationships with key stakeholders creates a beneficial win-win relationship (Levenshus, 2010). Executive NPO leaders will need to determine the most useful information to share with stakeholders using digital marketing that will resonate and support the goal of sustaining and growing the donor base. The success or failure of a specific program or initiative using digital marketing can be directly linked to the quality of relationships between stakeholders and the organization (Ledingham, 2005). It should not be measured by the quantity of messages produced or placed using social media technology (SMT).

SMT is increasingly being used by NPOs to build relationships with stakeholders online and facilitate collaborative support towards the NPO's goals and supports communal relationship building which are the strongest relationships for long-term support and commitment (Namisango & Kang, 2019). Digital newsletters, blog postings, making copies of the organization's annual report easily accessible, and engagement through social media channels are just a few ways executive NPO leaders can nurture quality long-term donor relationships. Leveraging other digital marketing tools such as YouTube, Facebook, and blogging to empower donors in a way that will give them a sense of ownership and control and be involved and act removing the barrier of location (Levenshus, 2010). According to Wang and Huang (2018), using SMT to communicate the organization's social responsibility evoked greater feelings of control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment toward the NPO.

Data collection and information sharing makes information technology an integral and critical part of successful relationship management in the current dynamic business environment (Santouridis & Veraki, 2017). Executive NPO leaders should use their website as a primary source to communicate and share information. Executive NPO leaders can use their website to demonstrate financial accountability to donors and provide their 990 IRS forms and any additional audited financial documents which will strengthen their social responsibility standing (Waters, 2008). The website should also be designed to encourage return visits, be easy to navigate, and communicate relevant dynamic and updated content (Levenshus, 2010). The overall website design should incorporate the aspects of RMT and using digital marketing strategies will allow executive NPO leaders the opportunity to begin two-way communication with the donors allowing donors to feel included strengthening the relationship (Seelig et al., 2019). Waters (2008) argued that annual donors do view the relationship with the NPO as an exchange relationship. The sharing of financial data, dynamic content, easy navigation, and content that initiates two-way communication allowing donors to feel included can support changing annual exchange donors to repeat communal donors.

One advantage of using digital marketing to build and sustain donor relations is the ability to use visual content. Due to the large amount of online content, it can be overwhelming for individuals, and finding strategies to cut through the noise to connect with stakeholders can be challenging (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). The strategies to build relationships in a crowded online environment can vary based on the chosen platform. Brubaker and Wilson (2018) conducted a longitudinal content analysis study of Facebook posts made by 100 of the world’s leading brands to investigate the relationship building efforts using visual content over 1 year and the level of engagement the visual content elicited. From the 1,393 posts analyzed, the results revealed that brands have a small but significant influence on the number of likes and shares received when the post contains visual content and the brand comments on the post (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). Executive NPO leaders may leverage visual content to support engaging stakeholders to form a communal relationship. In a communal relationship, each party’s primary focus is on the opposing party's interest (Lee & Kim, 2020). Executive NPO leaders that understand how to use visual content in their digital marketing strategy effectively have a better chance of standing out among the vast amount of content and cultivating quality relationships with stakeholders.

Many NPO organizations work with limited resources, which may directly influence how executive NPO leaders choose to manage relationships with stakeholders using digital marketing strategies (Sisson, 2017). Most relationships begin as an exchange relationship and then grow into a communal relationship as there are beneficial mutual exchanges between both parties building the levels of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction (Hon & Grunig, 1999). According to Sisson (2017), control mutuality can be one option to cultivate a higher level of engagement with donors using digital marketing strategies. Sisson conducted a study to explore the role of control mutuality in social media engagement using a survey with closed ended questions distributed by five animal welfare NPOs to their donors. The study's findings revealed donors who engaged with the NPO by liking or following the NPO on social media platforms had a higher level of perceived control mutuality than donors that did not follow or like the NPO (Sisson, 2017). When donors feel their opinions matter and that the NPO leadership listens, the donor perceives there is a balance of power in the relationship, increasing the control mutuality dimension of RMT (Waters, 2008). Donors need to feel a sense of control over the relationship to consider engaging and supporting the NPO (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). Understanding the role control mutuality plays in establishing and maintaining quality long-term relationships with donors can help guide executive NPO leaders' decisions when creating the digital marketing strategy of the NPO, especially with limited resources.

One of the many communication channels executive NPO leaders can use to manage stakeholder relationships is digital marketing. Demographic factors can influence how or when a stakeholder uses social media (Seo & Vu, 2020); however, leaders should not rely only on demographic characteristics for digital marketing strategies. Kapidzic (2020) conducted a study to explore what other factors beyond demographics influence social media use by academics in Germany to build and grow relationships. Kapidzic received 1,747 completed online surveys from academics working at German universities and used 1,500 in the analysis. Despite the academics acknowledging the high importance of networking and building relationships to support a career in academics, the study revealed the academics used social media sparingly as a platform for networking and relationship management (Kapidzic, 2020). Kapidzic (2020) also found that personal factors such as career aspiration and their belief in social media's effectiveness, not just demographic characteristics, play a role in social media engagement for relationship management. According to Grunig and Huang (2000), the same concepts exist in interpersonal relationships, and interpersonal communication, such as enjoying spending time together and sharing tasks, is seen in organizations' relationship management efforts with both stakeholders. Executive NPO leaders should consider the same factors that support interpersonal relationships and communications and personal attributes of external stakeholders when creating digital strategies to build, monitor, measure, and evaluate relationships.

Grunig and Huang (2000) posited relationships are more effective when symmetrical relationships benefit both the external stakeholders and the organization than asymmetrical relationships that only benefit the organization. Several variables influence the quality of relationships according to RMT; however, trust is fundamental for any quality relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Stanley et al. (2020) conducted an exploratory study using RMT as the framework to understand how medically underserved African Americans build relationships with clinicians and how the relationships impact their health outcomes. Stanley et al. used focused groups to discover the participants' experiences and their meanings with the primary clinical providers. The study results showed communication was critical to build trust needed to develop relationships (Stanley et al., 2020).

Trust is considered a critical factor in improving relationship quality, and communication is critical to improving trust. Without trust, external stakeholders will not engage or support an organization (Grunig & Huang, 2000). Executive NPO leaders should pay attention to communication using digital marketing. How stakeholders perceive communication can directly affect the level of trust by stakeholders, which, if managed appropriately, can increase the level of trust, increase other variables of RMT, and improving the relationship quality. Grunig and Huang (2000) stated executive NPO leaders can use RMT to develop and maintain relationships and relationship outcomes. Also, RMT is a model with indicators executive NPO leaders can use to monitor, measure, and evaluate the long-term effects of any programs initiated to cultivate quality long-term relationships with stakeholders (Grunig & Huang, 2000).

A review of the literature indicated executive NPO leaders can use RMT to establish, grow, and maintain quality long-term relationships with stakeholders. Using digital marketing, executive NPO leaders can quickly incorporate RMT into strategies to grow and sustain the donor base tailored to the organization's missions, goals, and values. A review and understanding of the business practices used by applying RMT can help executive NPO leaders understand and apply the appropriate business practices that are most useful for the leaders to grow and sustain the donor base using digital marketing.

Additional Theories

I considered other business-related theories before I selected RMT as the conceptual framework for my study. The other theories considered included: (a) stewardship theory, (b) general systems theory, (c) resource-based view theory, and (d) the technology acceptance model. After completing research on the theories, I concluded the theories were not appropriate based on the study's business problem and research question. I have included the theories' details and the rationale supporting why the theories were not appropriate for the study's conceptual framework.

Stewardship Theory

Competition in the nonprofit sector is steadily growing, which requires the ability to effectively enhance stakeholder loyalty (Pressgrove & McKeever, 2016). Stewardship is considered the final process in relationship management where the focus is on strengthening existing relationships (Harrison, 2018). Reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing are the elements that comprise stewardship (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Olinski & Szamrowski, 2020). Stewardship is critical to relationship management, especially for smaller NPOs with limited resources and supports the long-term success of the organization (Pressgrove, 2017).

Volunteers are also a critical component of the survival of NPOs. Using stewardship strategies to guide volunteers with how they perceive the relationship with the NPO is imperative for the continued support from volunteers (Harrison et al., 2017). Stewardship allows NPO executive leaders to maintain a quality bond between the organization and the stakeholders (Olinski & Szamrowski, 2020). Nonprofit executive leaders may use effective communication and stewardship practices to manage relationships with stakeholders and prioritize the importance of the relationships to the organization's survival (Pressgrove, 2017).

Nonprofit executive leaders should not solely focus on donor-organization relationships, and leaders must work to understand better how donors and stakeholders wished to be thanked (Pressgrove & McKeever, 2016). Stewardship focuses on the value of previously established relationships and the impact of the relationship on future organization public relations efforts (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Stewardship theory is part of RMT because it focuses on relationship management strategies but was not appropriate for the primary conceptual framework for the study because stewardship theory does not address building new relationships, which is crucial to increasing a donor base.

General Systems Theory

General systems theory (GST) originated from the biologist's Karl Ludwig von Bertalanffy's work in open systems and extended to posit that elements of a system have their own role and identity outside of the system they are a part of (Baecker, 2001; Teece, 2018; von Bertalanffy, 1972). The intent of GST was to present a framework that affords a holistic lens to view a phenomenon across different practices (Hofkirchner, 2019; Teece, 2018). Within the framework of GST, a NPO is one system, and the donors are another system. The nonprofit cannot exist without donors, and how the nonprofit performs influences a donor's interaction.

The use of transparency by executive leaders has also been linked to GST. Valentinov et al. (2019) stated transparency helps to maintain organizational boundaries because there is always an angle and an interest that transparency is being deployed, negating the concept of absolute transparency. NPO executive leaders should use transparency with stakeholders strategically. Transparent communication about the progress of objectives and goals and how donor resources are being used to support the objectives and goals is an example of transparent strategic communication.

Insight into why individuals choose to participate and be a part of mutual benefit organizations, such as NPOs, can be traced to prior research on GST (Bushouse, 2017). As society has evolved, GST remains relevant in helping to align the relationships of organizations and its stakeholders in any methodical situation (Hofkirchner, 2019). General systems theory is an appropriate conceptual framework for determining the interdependencies between an NPO and its stakeholders and how they may best work together to achieve objectives. General systems theory aligns with RMT. However, GST falls short in providing a solid foundation to explore how NPO executive leaders can increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing.

RBV Theory

Competition in the nonprofit segment has grown driven by three primary factors: (a) the increased number of NPOs, (b) the decline of financial support from governmental entities, and (c) for-profit organizations entering marketplaces previously served only by NPOs (Topaloglu et al., 2018). The resource-based theory provides a framework that examines the unique resources of an organization to determine why one organization can outperform another organization at any given time (Arik et al., 2016). The resources and capabilities of the nonprofit are essential to its profitability (Grant, 1991).

Unlike a for-profit organization, the sale of goods and services is not the primary revenue stream for NPOs; however, revenue is required for the NPO to pursue its mission and achieve its goals (von Schnurbein & Fritz, 2017). Given the growing competitive environment that nonprofits must operate in, breaking even is not enough to support their mission. A healthy cash reserved is needed to thrive and be stable, to allow nonprofits to whether a recession or respond to an unplanned event such as a significant maintenance expense, or a global pandemic and a budget surplus is also required to deliver positive outcomes for the population the nonprofit is serving in a way that truly makes a difference (Lange, 2019). Executive NPO leaders must determine what unique organizational resources they may leverage to garner financial support for long-term survival.

Investments in digital marketing to develop new relationships may be considered a resource input (Z. Wang & Kim, 2017). Donors and volunteers can also be considered resource inputs enabling the NPO to produce and provide highly efficient and effective valued market offerings even if the offerings are provided at no charge (Topaloglu et al., 2018). The primary and secondary focus of RBT is on firm performance and connecting stakeholder relationships to competitive advantage through organizational capabilities (H.-M. D. Wang & Sengupta, 2016). Exploring firm performance and connecting stakeholder relationships to competitive advantage through organizational capabilities is not the focus of this qualitative single case study. This study aimed to explore the strategies some executive NPO leaders use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing; therefore, RBT is not an appropriate framework.

Technology Acceptance Model

Part of a digital marketing strategy for NPOs is leveraging technology by using digital tools like SMT such as Facebook that encourages dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge sharing (Kagarise & Zavattaro, 2017) to increase and sustain the donor base. The technology acceptance model (TAM) is used as a model to determine the acceptance of new technology by users and posits when users are presented with new technology, multiple factors determine how and when they will use the technology (Verma et al., 2018; Zheng, 2020). TAM was developed by Fred Davis in the 1980s and used three factors; perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU), and attitude toward using the technology to predict actual system use (Dziak, 2017).

Some researchers believe digital marketing requires the use of new strategies to gain acceptance of use from stakeholders (Schaefer & Hetman, 2019); therefore, how well digital marketing is accepted by stakeholders is an element that can be imperative to understand before committing to a sizeable digital marketing initiative. However, the use of SMT has achieved mainstream adoption and has power in the form of connectivity and reach (Lim et al., 2019). Facebook has been around for 16 years ("Facebook Company Info," n.d.), and 69% of United States adults use Facebook, and 74% of the users visit the site at least one time daily (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). According to this data, we can infer that SMT, like Facebook, has been accepted by adult users in the United States.

The impact of social influence is not considered in the TAM framework limiting its application to exploring technology acceptance for initiatives that occur in the workplace (Taherdoost, 2018b). The elements of digital marketing have long been accepted and have a record of success for NPOs for increasing and sustaining a donor base. The focus of the study is not whether stakeholders will accept and use the technology associated with digital marketing, but to explore the successful strategies and best practices executive NPO leaders may use to increase and sustain their donor base.

Communication

As previously discussed in the business applications section, communication plays a significant role in RMT. Stanley et al. (2020) found the communication between low-income African Americans and their primary care team affected the level of trust low-income African Americans had with their primary care team. As shown in Figure 1, trust is a scale within relationship quality that requires a balance of integrity, competence, and dependability.

Using strategic communication is one way to keep stakeholders aware and builds support for the NPO by strengthening the relationship between the NPO and its stakeholders (Pressgrove, 2017). Communication and behavior with stakeholders should be in alignment with the organizational branding to increase what stakeholders remember and perceive are consistent (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Public awareness is dependent upon effective communication strategies to influence donors' decisions (Quevedo & Quevedo-Prince, 2019). Executive leaders should ensure the organization is operating at the highest level of transparency and integrity because there is no shortage of choices available to donors and donors do not have an infinite amount of funds available for donation and more than 60% of donors feel executive NPO leaders waste money (Waters, 2008).

Identifying strategic stakeholders as part of the organization's strategic planning process and developing a communication plan specific for the strategic stakeholders is one way to build and sustain effective long-term relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Communicating the progress, the organization is making to achieve the goals and objectives supports long-term donor relationships because donors that are satisfied with the progress being made have a higher commitment to the success of the organization and do not think they are being taken advantage of and are more likely to maintain support (Waters, 2008). The misuse of the funds or failure to provide transparent communication can damage the relationship with donors and make it difficult to build and maintain long-term relationships (Waters, 2008).

Clear and effective communication changes the behavior of both external stakeholders and the organization (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Executive NPO leaders can use digital marketing to communicate to their donor base, which will support building trust in the relationship. Executive NPO leaders should take time to carefully plan both the message and communication method because the message and the method play a role in stakeholder perceptions (Yang et al., 2020). When constructing a communication, executive NPO leaders should verify that the communication elicits the audience's feelings of fairness, accountability, and integrity. According to Hon and Grunig (1999), organizations that communicate effectively with their stakeholders increase the level of understanding between the organization and the stakeholders, developing better relationships, and decreasing the likelihood that either will behave in ways that will have negative consequences.

NPOs

One of the fastest growing sectors is NPOs, and they play a critical role in society by working to improve communities and making positive contributions to solve social issues. (Pressgrove & McKeever, 2016). Servicing people and communities by offering a variety of programs is the primary goal of nonprofits (Brown, 2017). The nonprofit sector in 2017 represented 5.4% of the GDP and contributed almost $1 trillion to the United States economy (Quevedo & Quevedo-Prince, 2019).

Many nonprofits fulfill needs in society for populations that would otherwise not receive any or adequate support, contributing to supporting social justice and making a communal relationship the best option for nonprofit executive leaders (Hon & Grunig, 1999). It is easy to start a nonprofit; however, the challenge is creating an efficient, thriving operational organization that can consistently fulfill its mission (Andersson, 2019). Ongoing funding is required for an NPO to stay operational. An NPO’s success is not due to the ability to avoid or minimize the various challenges but the ability to overcome the obstacles. Executive NPO leaders face the same challenges as for-profit leaders, such as obtaining resources and developing organizational capacity making funding for a nonprofit an ongoing occurrence to thrive (Andersson, 2019). Nonprofit revenues depend on disposable personal income and public awareness (Quevedo & Quevedo-Prince, 2019).

To effectively achieve their mission, executive NPO leaders are dependent on the donation of time, money, and resources from stakeholders (Xu & Saxton, 2019). For some NPO’s it can be challenging to quantify to stakeholders the outputs and results of the NPO (Becker et al., 2020). Santouridis and Veraki (2017) state increasing the level of trust and satisfaction increases the level of quality of the relationship between the NPO and stakeholders.

An NPO in the northeastern United States whose mission is to provide disadvantaged students with needed resources to overcome obstacles in their desire to achieve an education was used for this study. All monies donated go directly to fulfilling the NPO’s mission. The executive leaders cover the administrative expenses associated with operating the NPO. Executive NPO leaders may benefit from the knowledge of RMT and applying best practices to their digital marketing strategy to foster quality relationships with donors.

Donors

There was a shift in the literature on nonprofit marketing that moved the focus from targeted marketing to the general public and major donors to marketing towards all donors (Waters, 2008). The donors and those who benefit from the nonprofit's services are two customer segments of an NPO (Santouridis & Veraki, 2017). Employees, donors, and volunteers have similar information needs and comprise two stakeholder groups: (a) employees and volunteers and (b) volunteers and donors (France & Regmi, 2019). Executive NPO leaders can benefit from using RMT to monitor and measure donor and volunteer relationships.

One driving factor that leads to a donor's support is the contribution provides a way for the donor to demonstrate their concerns with social issues and the opportunity to be a contributing part of the solution to the problem (Bagheri et al., 2019). Another contributing factor for donor support is an existing relationship with an internal stakeholder of the NPO (Bagheri et al., 2019). Donors are less concerned with receiving information about fundraising and would prefer to receive information on the nonprofit's progress in fulfilling its mission (France & Regmi, 2019). Some donors may be motivated to support an NPO due to the fear that they may need the NPO's services in the future (Degasperi & Mainardes, 2017). Various factors drive a donor's motivation to contribute to an NPO. Using RMT with digital marketing provides the flexibility for executive NPO leaders to implement and measure digital marketing strategies.

Executive NPO leaders should not focus solely on the major gift donors but focus most efforts on growing and sustaining long-term relationships with lower gift donors that give consistently (Waters, 2008). Using digital marketing provides various ways to engage stakeholders. Elfarmawi (2019) states, engagement cultivates the relationship helping stakeholders feel a part of the organization past their monetary contributions. The feeling of inclusion has the potential to build trust and have donors advocate for the organization, which can lead to a long-term relationship (Elfarmawi, 2019).

Using stewardship elements combined with RMT is another option executive NPO leaders may employ to increase stakeholder loyalty to the organization fostering long-term relationships (Pressgrove & McKeever, 2016). Incorporating the four elements of stewardship; reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing combined with RMT's relationship quality model into the NPO's donor growth and retention strategy is vital to the success of any fundraising efforts and helps the NPO maintain ethical standards (Elfarmawi, 2019; Waters, 2008). Reciprocity is an essential element executive nonprofit leaders need to maintain long-term donor relationships. Demonstrating gratitude toward donors through public and sincere acknowledgments promptly is one of the most effective ways nonprofit executive leaders can display reciprocity (Waters, 2008). Leaders can achieve showing gratitude promptly to donors with digital marketing.

The ability to communicate gratitude to donors and engaging donors focusing on the various donor motivators using digital marketing may strengthen relationships. Potential donors need to be well informed, engaged, and motivated to support the social cause of the NPO to foster a long-term relationship that may lead to monetary support (Quevedo & Quevedo-Prince, 2019). Executive NPO leaders must be aware that building strong, trustworthy relationships with all stakeholders is essential to the sustainability of the NPO.

Digital Marketing

Information technology has led to the ability and necessity to track, maintain, and protect customer data providing executive NPO leaders with opportunities to achieve quality long-term relationships (Debnath et al., 2016). Web 2.0 has changed how people communicate, supporting peer-to-peer, two-way real time communication, providing executive NPO leaders the opportunity to reveal customer relationship management patterns (CRM) (Anshari et al., 2019). Using the web and social media promotes better two-way communication with the public, which may lead to more supporters that can increase charitable giving (Shin, 2019). Research has shown that enhancing relationships with donors lead to donor loyalty and retention (Debnath et al., 2016; Foltean et al., 2019; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Sota et al., 2018; Waters, 2008). Increase donor loyalty and retention due to quality relationships may help executive NPO leaders create a recurring income stream to support the goals of the NPO.

The internet is an integral part of daily life (Schaefer & Hetman, 2019). Convenience, experience, aesthetics, trust, and security affect online stakeholder behavior in nonprofits (Milla et al., 2017). Executive NPO leaders are using technology, processes, and information that best assist them with delivering their mission and communicating with donors so they may establish long-term relationships (Debnath et al., 2016; Sota et al., 2018). Using digital marketing strategies for growing the donor base, donor retention, and fundraising are ways for executive NPO leaders to make operations and processes more efficient and help achieve organizational goals.

Digital marketing is a cost-effective way for executive NPO leaders to target multiple current and potential donors with the ability to have instant analytics about how effective the marketing efforts are (Jadhav & Yallatti, 2018). The organizational budget size, age of the organization, and program service area are factors (Bhati & McDonnell,

2019) that may impact the NPO's digital marketing strategy's success. Measuring the effectiveness of marketing efforts using digital marketing and having access to crucial data to support relationship quality key performance indicators (KPIs) are essential elements of RMT.

Social media use, internet access, and use vary by generation. Millennials were born between 1981-1996, Generation X between 1965-1980, Baby Boomers between 1946-1964, and the Silent Generation were born 1945 or earlier, and Table 2 shows social media use and internet access by generation according to a survey conducted between January 8, 2019, thru February 7, 2019, by the Pew Research Center (Vogels, 2019). Younger generations are more responsive to online payment methods for donations (Nageswarakurukkal et al., 2020). As shown in Table 2, younger donors also have a higher percentage of internet use. Due to the reduced cost and increased efficiency associated with online donations, small to medium sized NPOs should invest resources in targeting younger donors (Nageswarakurukkal et al., 2020).

Table 2

Social Media and Internet Use by Generation

	Millennial	Generation X	Baby Boomer	Silent Generation
Smartphone	93%	90%	68%	40%
Social media	86%	76%	59%	28%
Tablet owners	55%	53%	52%	33%
Facebook usage	84%	74%	60%	37%
Broadband internet Access at home	78%	78%	74%	45%
Smartphone internet Access only	19%	17%	11%	15%
Use internet	100%	91%	85%	62%

Trust is a crucial element for relationship management and becomes more magnified when using digital marketing (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). Using mutually beneficial dialogue when communicating with stakeholders using digital marketing is one way leaders may build trust (van Wissen & Wonneberger, 2017). Measuring the relationship quality involves a two-way communication process (Hon & Grunig, 1999) easily achieved using digital marketing. Digital marketing allows executive NPO leaders to engage in two-way communication using social media platforms such as Facebook (van Wissen & Wonneberger, 2017). Also, digital marketing allows executive NPO leaders to target new donors based on identified personality traits that align with the NPO's mission (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019).

Organization Branding

The NPO's brand is the first impression to stakeholders and can support relationship building and maintenance with stakeholders. The NPO's brand can communicate the elements of relationship quality; trust, dependability, competence, and integrity (Waters, 2008). Building an organizational brand that is clear, consistent, and aligned with the NPO's mission, values, and goals is the foundation required before launching a digital marketing strategy.

Using digital content marketing (DCM) to increase stakeholder trust and brand recognition is constantly increasing (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities are an integral part of how an NPO operates, and the CSR activities should fit with the value and needs of the NPO's mission which may also fulfill the needs of the stakeholders that support the NPO by donating either money or time

(Yang et al., 2020). According to Yang et al. (2020), the creation of social media CSR communications should link relevant content, social media platform, and stakeholder interests cohesively supporting the NPO's brand. DCM that supports the NPO's brand builds stakeholder engagement, relationships, and trust, leading indirectly to stakeholder support via donations (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

Executive NPO leaders that adopt a brand-oriented philosophy may build better relationships with their stakeholders and increase the long-term success of the NPO. da Silva et al. (2020) conducted a study to explore the effects that brand orientation factors have on stakeholder's attitudes toward the NPO and how it may influence their intent to donate. da Silva et al. found a positive relationship between NPO brand orientation and organizational performance, and the most successful NPOs tend to be brand oriented. Executive NPO leaders that choose to use a warm and competent appeal in their brand increase the strength of the relationship with stakeholders (da Silva et al., 2020), building on trust a critical component of relationship quality (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Organization Website

As previously discussed, da Silva et al. (2020) showed the potential impact the NPO's brand could have on stakeholders' attitudes, intentions, and relationship quality. Websites are the nucleus of the brand image of an organization (Huang & Ku, 2016). The website is where stakeholders can find information on the organization, and it the home space for all digital marketing content that exists across the internet about the NPO (Grubor & Jaksa, 2018). Nonprofits with a higher level of web traction also have higher levels of contributions, grants, and fundraising expense (Shin, 2019). Strong search engine optimization is one way executive NPO leaders can drive visitors to their websites (Schaefer & Hetman, 2019).

Executive NPO leaders must determine and spend the appropriate amount of time and resources on developing the images, content, and organization of their website to elicit the intended call to action, be it donating time or money (Huang & Ku, 2016). Before embarking on a digital marketing strategy, executive NPO leaders should ensure their website communicates the appropriate brand image, is easy to navigate, free from error messages, has no broken links, and elicits the appropriate calls to action to grow and sustain the donor base.

Although executive NPO leaders’ can use their organizations’ websites to engage stakeholders into the mission and vision of the NPO; Twis and Hoefer (2019), found some executive NPO leaders have implemented only some of the industry suggested norms for increasing stakeholder engagement through their website. Many options allow executive NPO leaders to create and maintain a website with ease using drag and drop without a developer (Schaefer & Hetman, 2019). The scarcity of resources for some NPO’s makes this a viable and attractive option for executive NPO leaders to dedicate time to creating and maintaining the NPO’s websites using strategies to grow and sustain quality relationships with stakeholders.

Social Media Technology

With the increased use of technology worldwide, executive NPO leaders must consider how to build quality relationships and engage stakeholders online (Twis & Hoefer, 2019). SMT is a critical component for nonprofits. It allows executive nonprofit executive leaders to bring awareness to their programs, missions, and goals by promoting the organization or advertising programs and engaging with the community (Young, 2017). SMT benefits both the NPO and its stakeholders. Executive NPO leaders should not ignore SMT and should adopt SMT as appropriate to survive and attract donors because SMT has the potential to empower donors, increase the NPOs brand awareness, increase donor engagement, and contribute to the growth and financial stability of the NPO (Foltean et al., 2019).

SMT has become a critical component used by nonprofits to communicate and engage with current and potential donors (Smith, 2018). Given the low cost and easy access to SMT, it has become more widely used to connect organizations and stakeholders and is also a promising avenue for organizations that lack brand recognition (Auter & Fine, 2018). According to Sun and Asencio (2019), nonprofits that posted frequently and used dedicated funding for social media are more likely to view social media as helpful in increasing organizational capacity. Users can share content in real time using SMT, which has contributed to the growth of SMT for both individuals and organizations globally (Agostino & Sidorova, 2016).

Satisfaction and trust are vital drivers of donation intention, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and the level of trust stakeholders have from the NPOs' social media information increases their charitable behavior intention (Feng et al., 2017). Lee and Xi (2017) state online donations have increased and can be relatively quick and easy and can be the preferred method for younger generations to donate because of their close relationship with technology. According to Lee and Xi, using SMT for fundraising is an affordable, cost effective method to reach and communicate with a broader public (Lee & Xi, 2017). Social media allows stakeholders to create added value to an organization through user generated content, and stakeholders have become savvier due to the exposure to SMT such as Facebook (Dewnarain et al., 2019). NPO executive leaders that choose not to adopt the appropriate SMT may damage the organization's ability to develop long-term relationships, and the decision may also harm the NPO's brand (Foltean et al., 2019). Facebook and Twitter are two of the most common SMT's used by executive NPO leaders to manage their stakeholders' relationships, including their donor base.

The factors that improve relationship quality with stakeholders can be implemented and measured using SMT. Executive NPO leaders would be remiss not to take advantage of SMT when looking at ways to increase communication, engagement, and trust with stakeholders. The various SMT tools, combined with RMT, allow executive NPO leaders to develop, implement and track digital marketing strategies specific to the NPOs' needs to foster and improve long-term quality relationships with stakeholders efficiently while controlling costs.

Facebook. Approximately 3.5 billion people use social media, and 72% of people aged 16-55+ use social media several times a day, with Facebook receiving the most usage (Schaefer & Hetman, 2019). Kim et al. (2019) state Facebook is one digital marketing platform that is a vital part of many organizations' social media marketing strategy. Research shows that one type of posting is not superior to another, and organizational leaders should include both emotional and informational information related to the organization's brand to stimulate consumer engagement and eWOM (Kim et al., 2019).

Stakeholders prefer to like pages of NPO brands, and warmth is a crucial factor that influences a stakeholder's choice (Bernritter et al., 2016). Facebook messages framed as a loss have a more substantial positive influence on charitable donation intentions (Tugrul & Lee, 2018). Because of the widespread use of Facebook with both customers and organizations, eWOM is an essential metric used to measure the success of an organization's social media marketing efforts, and informational and emotional message strategies help generate eWOM on Facebook (Kim et al., 2019). One metric of fundraising success leaders can use as a measurement is the NPO's Facebook number of likes, the number of posts, and the number of shares (Bhati & McDonnell, 2019).

Facebook allows executive NPO leaders to engage in two-way communication with stakeholders, and two- way communication positively influences stakeholders' interest in the NPO (van Wissen & Wonneberger, 2017). As executive NPO leaders build the brand of their organization, they may use the brand power of the NPO on Facebook to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). The popularity and wide use of Facebook make it a logical choice for NPO executive leaders to use the platform in their digital marketing strategy to build relationships with stakeholders to increase and maintain their donor base.

Twitter. Another digital marketing platform executive NPO leaders may use to engage stakeholders and build and maintain quality relationships is Twitter. Twitter is considered one of the most important social media platforms for communicating with external stakeholders and requires support from the executive NPO leaders (Seo & Vu, 2020). Executive NPO leaders may use Twitter to communicate updates and photos that may inspire donors to support the NPO's mission (Nageswarakurukkal et al., 2020). Twitter has a more straightforward user interface that supports daily interaction with the public at large compared to Facebook, and executive NPO leaders may gain the most from implementing Twitter as either a one-way or two-way communication strategy (Gálvez-Rodríguez et al., 2016).

NPO leaders work to drive social change, and a critical factor needed for this to occur is public attention, and for social media to be helpful in speaking out on a cause, the message of the organization much reach current and potential supporters (Guo & Saxton, 2018). Executive nonprofit leaders need to consider using Twitter content as part of their communication strategy, how dependent they are on donor funding, the organization's size, and their online community size. All of these variables play a role in the strategical approach for building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders.

Building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders is a constant dynamic process. For Twitter to be an effective tool for growing and sustaining the donor base, executive NPO leaders need to maintain an active Twitter account by "tweeting" routinely and consistently (Dong & Rim, 2019). Different types of tweets serve different purposes and generate different outcomes (Guo & Saxton, 2018). Frequent engagement with stakeholders on Twitter may create a safe and comfortable environment that fosters communication with a lower risk, building trust with the organization (Ihm, 2019). According to Guo and Saxton (2018), additional factors that influence the communication's effectiveness by executive nonprofit leaders on Twitter are the network's size, the targeting and connecting strategy, and visual content. Guo and Saxton found that there is a significant relationship between the number of followers, the number of tweets sent, and the number of retweets and favorites.

Twitter is one social media platform executive NPO leaders may connect and engage with their stakeholders that may facilitate building a long-term relationship that may potentially support fundraising (Maqbool et al., 2019), but to achieve this, executive NPO leaders should first understand how to best leverage the platform ensuring the post is engaging and clear. According to Gálvez-Rodríguez et al. (2016), nonprofits with a high dependency on donor contributions make more significant efforts to utilize Twitter as a one-way communication tool. Research findings note that smaller NPOs use Twitter less than medium or large NPOs (Sun & Asencio, 2019). Regardless of the size and age of the NPO, research has shown using Twitter appropriately can positively assist executive NPO leaders with maintaining quality relationships with the donor base (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Nageswarakurukkal et al., 2020; Wang & Yang, 2020; Young, 2017).

Mobile Devices and Text Messaging

How we communicate with each other directly influences our relationships. Technology has changed how people communicate (Wallace, 2019a). Mobile technology continues to expand and has become common in the everyday lives of many fueling the growth of donation applications (Choi & Kim, 2016). As NPOs continue to face minimal funding challenges and increased demand for services leveraging mobile technology is an option that leaders may use to promote fundraising (Shin, 2019). People do not answer their phones and are inundated by emails, leading to a decline in direct mail responses (Wallace, 2019a).

Mobile technology has made it easier for NPOs to collect donations and communicates with existing and new donors and donating by texting has gained traction in recent years and provides a quick and easy way to collect donations (Shin, 2019). Overall, text messaging provides a fast response, a higher user experience (Zheng, 2020), and is the preference of younger generations (Vogels, 2019). Many international donors have limited or expensive internet access, and fundraising technology can be a more effective way of collecting monetary donations because the technology can eliminate barriers of time, geography, and currency (Zheng, 2020).

Executive NPO leaders should consider mobile donations as another venue to cultivate relationships when growing the donor base to allow gifts from donors regardless of their location. According to Wallace (2019a), texting has become a vital fundraising tool because it provides an effective and reliable option to communicate with donors in a crowded communication environment. Research recommends before running a successful donation by texting campaign; NPOs should work to build and cultivate relationships first (Wallace, 2019a). Engaging stakeholders with content and communication accessible on their mobile phones has significantly impacted stakeholders' brand recognition and loyalty to an organization (Wang et al., 2017).

Donation applications are a way to bring users and NPOs together (Choi & Kim, 2016), supporting two-way communication and stakeholder engagement. When choosing a mobile donor application, executive NPO leaders should select a mobile donor application with functions to match the target demographic because, according to research findings, the application's use increases if the cause is closely related to the user. More importantly, executive NPO leaders should be strategic with their communication efforts using mobile technology. According to Coelho et al. (2017), leaders should strive to ensure the communication alerts stakeholders of the message and gains their attention when communicating using mobile technology. Achieving these objectives will help leaders connect with stakeholders using honest interactions and genuine content and stand out to stakeholders bombarded with content (Coelho et al., 2017).

CRM

In many fields including, healthcare, science, and nonprofit, researchers have examined the use of CRM systems (Anshari et al., 2019). Customer relationship management systems have become one of the highest dynamic technology topics because the foundation of CRM focuses on improving long-term relationships with stakeholders moving away from focusing directly on a product or service and instead focusing on a holistic approach (Debnath et al., 2016). Customer relationship management has gained significant interest for many organizations, and regardless of the size of the organization, there appears to be some level of interest in the concept of CRM driving the motivation to adopt CRM in some significant way to assist with customer retention (Sota et al., 2018).

As the global culture has moved to a more digital focused culture, using a CRM system has become a vital tool associated with providing a high customer satisfaction level (Elfarmawi, 2019). Customer relationship management has become a critical tool for organizations that wish to improve their financial position through long-term relationships with stakeholders (Kebede & Tegegne, 2018). Research has shown that in the United States, utilizing a CRM system increases an organization's chance of delivering exceptional customer service, which leads to satisfied customers and supports long-term support and loyalty (Elfarmawi, 2019). Using a CRM system allows nonprofit executive leaders to deliver a more personalized and customized approach; tailoring communications to fit the preference of each current and potential donor and can help nonprofit executive leaders examine the role of big data to support growing and maintaining a donor base (Anshari et al., 2019). Executive NPO leaders can use a CRM to make it easier to include RMT in their digital marketing strategy and to track the outcomes and adjust quickly if needed.

Analytics and Big Data

Creating customized personal, honest, and transparent content to communicate with stakeholders can increase the NPO and stakeholders' relationship quality. Big data analytics has become easily accessible, reliable, and cost efficient due to the growth of cloud computing, and it can provide a pattern of donor's information that nonprofit executives can use to predict and assume the future behaviors of their donor base (Anshari et al., 2019). Data analytic models focused on charitable giving can provide executive NPO leaders with the ability to target donors with the traits that support charitable giving and save time and money by focusing their campaigns on an appropriate demographic (Foltean et al., 2019). Researchers have created models capable of predicting charitable giving levels using measurable and readily available characteristics used to describe donors on a national level (Farrokhvar et al., 2018).

Social media influencers (SMI) use artificial intelligence (AI) personality traits from IBM Watson to match organizations to audiences on various social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). Integrating (SMT) with CRM is one way to capitalize on the social media data that leaders may use for social media profiling, communications, automating donor retention efforts, and making informed decisions (Foltean et al., 2019). Besides the low cost, another advantage of digital marketing over conventional marketing is the ability to track how well the marketing effort is performing (Jadhav & Yallatti, 2018).

Individual donors account for 69% of the income to NPOs (Giving USA, 2020). Leaders may benefit from applying RMT to build long-term quality relationships with potential and existing donors. Also, individual donors earn more than 2% of the total United States Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and some of the variables that have the most significant influence on charitable giving are household income, previous year giving, and level of education (Farrokhvar et al., 2018). NPO executive leaders should monitor and use social media data and analytics to identify trends in donor behavior (Foltean et al., 2019) and use the knowledge of RMT to adjust how they interact with donors. Executive NPOs leaders have the opportunity to access and take advantage of the benefits from big data and use real time data and analytics (Anshari et al., 2019) from a fundraising event or interactions on their website or social media channels to gain knowledge of how best to maintain and grow donor relationships.

Consumer Privacy

Quality relationships require trust (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Building trust with stakeholders using digital marketing requires executive NPO leaders to communicate to stakeholders their personal information shared with the organization will be used appropriately and protected. Any organization using digital marketing or SMT is legally responsible for being good stewards of the personal data collected from customers, donors, and volunteers. On May 25, 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) became law with the primary goal of changing the approach to data protection, specifically how personal data is processed, giving increased protection of individuals' personal data (Crutzen et al., 2019). A digital marketing strategy consists of collecting personal information such as names and email addresses. There are two main roles and six principles (see Table 3) that are the foundation of the GDPR.

Table 3

GDPR Roles and Principles

Role	Principle	Principle Summary
Data controller - the primary entity responsible for and accountable for the personal data, even if using another entity to process the data	Data accuracy	Data that is not accurate should be corrected or deleted.
Data processor – any person not directly employed by the data controller that processes the collected data for the data controller	Data minimalization	Minimum data should be collected and only data that is relevant and necessary for the disclosed intended purpose.
	Integrity and confidentiality	The organization must have a system that is secure and maintains the integrity and protects confidentiality of the data.
	Lawfulness (Fairness) / Transparency	The organization must communicate truthfully and clearly about their intentions on how the data collected will be used from the beginning.
	Purpose limitation	The data collected is only used for the intended purpose.
	Storage limitation	Data collected that is no longer relevant to the needs of the organization will be deleted.

Digital marketing strategies allow nonprofit leaders to reach donors worldwide, including the European Union (EU). Informed and explicit consent from participants is required, and participants have the right to revoke the consent and retroactively have the personal data collected erased (Politou et al., 2018). Executive NPO leaders need to be aware of GDPR and ensure they take the appropriate steps to comply to avoid fines and build trust and loyalty with their stakeholders. According to Pilton et al. (2021), it can be challenging for stakeholders to trust someone they have not met and may never meet where the website is the mediator. To increase trust with stakeholders, executive NPO leaders should communicate transparency by using a privacy policy, a legal document, disclosing how the information gathered from stakeholders is disclosed and managed (Pilton et al., 2021). Any actions leaders may take to improve trust with stakeholders may support improving relationship quality.

Barriers and Challenges

Research has established that using digital marketing may benefit executive nonprofit leaders with increasing and sustaining their donor base (Anshari et al., 2019; Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Milla et al., 2017; Shin, 2019; Sota et al., 2018; van Wissen & Wonneberger, 2017). However, there are challenges executive NPO leaders should consider. Executive NPO leaders and their human resources may not have the appropriate knowledge in content marketing, search engine optimization, social media, and fundraising using text messaging (Rohm et al., 2019). Due to a limited budget hiring a resource or attending training to gain knowledge can be a significant barrier for smaller nonprofits. In the same vein, a lack of financial and human resources and a lack of knowledge in skills in SMT use are two of the four challenges identified by Sun and Asencio (2019). Low participation from external stakeholders and insufficient leadership support are two other challenges to implementing a digital marketing strategy for NPOs (Sun & Asencio, 2019). As indicated previously, SMT is inexpensive; however, it does require an investment of time to both learn the technology and, once implemented, stay engaged and keep the content updated, relevant, and fresh, which resource strapped NPOs may find difficult to sustain (Milde & Yawson, 2017).

The pros of social media are the ability to provide real time information and communication supporting building quality relationships; however, with this comes the cons, such as the loss of control over the branded communication and negative perceptions (Milla et al., 2017). Message framing can be a challenge for some executive NPO leaders. Erlandsson et al. (2018) stated positive charity appeals are more effective in improving attitudes toward the appeal or NPO, but the negative charity appeals can be just as effective and sometimes better in eliciting actual donations. As the NPO grows, executive leaders may need to decide whether digital marketing efforts should be focused on donors or on the digital marketing actions of other similar NPOs that could attract the same target donor base, and attributes such as the size of the NPO and available resources should be considered (Foltean et al., 2019). Executive NPO leaders should not let barriers deter them from using digital marketing to enhance their relationships with their stakeholders. Creating a digital marketing strategy supported by RMT aligned with the NPOs mission, goals, and values, follows industry best practices, and addresses any potential barriers either proactively or with a mitigation plan will support creating engaging long-term relationships with stakeholders.

Industry Best Practices

Knowing and following industry best practices for implementing and launching a digital marketing strategy to grow and sustain the donor base is crucial to its success. Executive NPO leaders may benefit from implementing a performance management system (PMS) framework focusing on methods and metrics to quantify social media use value (Agostino & Sidorova, 2016). A PMS helps executive NPO leaders because it supports the value created from the data of social media use and provides options that executive NPO leaders can apply to evaluate the impact of the organization's social media activities.

Hommerová and Severová (2019) identified a formula to calculate a NPO's sustainability: Management/Leadership + Adaptability + Production capacity = Sustainability. Lee and Xi (2017) found that sharing information about the impact of the donation and the nonprofit's mission statement significantly influenced the intent to donate. For donors that give annually, making them feel appreciated, encouraging the once-a-year donation, and tying contributions to an annual event are ways to maintain the yearly donors' support (Faulkner et al., 2016). Best practices are not solely focused on the technology but include key relationship building items that may support executive NPO leaders with building authentic long-term relationships with the stakeholders. It is important to conduct periodic routine social media audits because online consumer behavior is dynamic (Milla et al., 2017).

Using text messaging is one way leaders may build a relationship that may drive generation X and Y to donate to a charity they do not currently have a relationship with (Milde & Yawson, 2017). When soliciting donor support using text messages executive, NPO leaders need an integrated approach, beginning with advocacy, and taking time to pick the right system for sending text messaging considering future long-term needs and avoiding choosing the cheapest option (Wallace, 2019a). Additional critical tips for text messaging include ensuring the texts are short and engaging, realizing that not all information is appropriate communication for text messaging, using emojis, and being sure texts are responded to within 20 minutes (Wallace, 2019b). The research has shown (Bhati & McDonnell, 2019) smaller NPOs with limited resources can have a level of confidence that efforts and resources allocated to increase and sustain the donor base using SMT will provide a positive result. It is essential to acknowledge digital marketing covers a diverse range of forms leaders can use in relationship management, including smartphones, social media marketing, search engine optimization, and other forms of digital media (Schaefer & Hetman, 2019).

The strategies some executive NPO leaders use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing to provide support for building authentic long-term quality relationships and how the strategies can support the mission, values, and goals of the NPO was the premise of the research question and literature review for this study. Using the lens of RMT for this study, the client must develop an appropriate digital marketing strategy targeted towards creating and maintaining quality relationships with their donor base. The use of RMT supports the vital role communication, and trust play in relationship quality and ways leaders may employ to measure and improve relationships over time. The qualitative single case study design was appropriate to explore the strategies some executive leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing.

Transition

In Section 1, I provided a detailed explanation of the foundation for this study. Section 1 contains a substantial review of the literature regarding strategies some executive leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The literature review also covered the conceptual framework for the study, RMT. Other topics covered in the literature consisted of information related to executive nonprofit leaders implementing a digital marketing strategy such as SMT, best practices, and challenges. Executive nonprofit leaders who use RMT may be able to create and implement a digital marketing strategy to grow and sustain the donor base supporting the organization's sustainability.

In Section 2, I explain the study’s purpose and why I selected a qualitative single case study to explore what strategies do some executive leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The section also includes my role as the researcher and my ethical responsibilities, the participants, population and sampling, and data collection, organization, and analysis.

In Section 3, I used the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program 2019-2020 to answer the research question and provide an evaluation of performance outcomes for the client organization. I interviewed the study participants and reviewed organizational documents to collect data for the study. A summary of the key themes, project summary, and contributions and recommendations for future research are covered. Section 3 also includes the client's organizational profile and the exploration of other applicable sections of the Baldrige Excellence Framework.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 is the presentation of the project. The project components are the purpose statement, role of the researcher, a description of the study participants, the research method and design, population and sampling, and how I adhered to ethical guidelines during the research process. The description of the data collection instrument used in the study, the process I used for data collection, organization, and analysis, as well as the methods used to support validity and reliability are also explained in detail to answer the research question: What strategies do some executive leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies nonprofit executive leaders used to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The target population consisted of three executive leaders from a single NPO in the northeastern United States who successfully employed strategies to increase their donor base using digital marketing. Implications of this study for positive social change include the potential to identify strategies enabling NPO executive leaders to increase their donor base to increase and sustain operations for providing community services not addressed by other nonprofits, government agencies, or corporate organizations.

Role of the Researcher

The primary instrument in qualitative research is the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This was a single case qualitative study; therefore, I was the primary instrument for the study. As a previous owner of a small business for 2.5 years, I have used various digital marketing tools as part of overall strategies to grow and maintain a customer base. This study was the first time I investigated applying digital marketing tools to develop a strategy for nonprofit executive leaders to secure and sustain donors. I had no prior personal or professional relationships with any participants.

Ensuring ethical standards and guidelines are followed is ultimately the responsibility of the researcher (Cumyn et al., 2019). *The Belmont Report* is based on principles of justice, beneficence, and respect for persons. As the primary instrument for data collection, I followed the principles of *The Belmont Report* to adhere to ethical standards for studies involving human participants. *The Belmont Report* requires researchers to adhere to three basic principles to support ethical standards when research involves human subjects. The three basic principles are justice, beneficence, and respect for persons (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). Ensuring participants have the right to decide whether they want to participate in a study and can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative repercussions demonstrates the principle of respect for persons (Adashi et al., 2018; Miracle, 2016). The principle of beneficence involves protecting participants from harm and ensuring participants are informed of any potential known or unknown adverse events that may arise from participating in the study (Miracle, 2016). The third principle of justice involves selection and participation in a study which is fair and accessible (Ferdowsian et al., 2020). Inclusions and exclusion criteria for participation in a study should be determined before participant selection (Friesen et al., 2017). I informed study participants via email and during initial teleconference meetings regarding the scope of the study and details about their participation. I also obtained a signed consent form from each study participant via email.

I reviewed the client organization's website, public accessible information on the client as well as similar NPO's in the client's service area and documents provided by NPO leaders to initiate the data collection process. After defining the research question, I developed open-ended interview questions that aligned with the research question and supported the Baldrige Excellence Framework. I also had each leader complete the Baldrige assessment *Are We Making Progress as Leaders* to obtain information regarding the current state of the organization and strategies some executive NPO leaders use to grow and sustain their donor base using digital marketing.

Subjectivity is valuable in qualitative research, and a qualitative researcher cannot avoid subjectivity; however, a researcher can use reflective and interpretive thinking to minimize bias (Clark & Vealé, 2018). I was both the data collector and analyst for the study. I used both reflective and interpretive thinking to help minimize bias. One way for researchers to have a better understanding of how to interact with study participants is to use reflective inquiry at the onset and throughout the course of the study (Karagiozis, 2018). I used reflective inquiry at the beginning and throughout the course of the study, which allowed me to have a better understanding of how to interact effectively with study participants. Keeping a research journal, being sensitive and respectful of the rights of the study participants, and maintaining a nonjudgmental attitude not only helped me with minimizing bias but also enhanced the effectiveness of the data collection process. Research journals, maintaining a nonjudgmental attitude, and showing respect towards study participants are ways for researchers to understand their own personal assumptions and dilemmas that may influence the qualitative study (Karagiozis, 2018). Member checking is a multistep process that entails conducting followup interviews with participants after providing them with synthesized interview transcripts and a summary of analyzed data, and allows study participants to check and confirm information gathered from interviews (Birt et al., 2016). Actively involving study participants in the process of reviewing and correcting data from interviews helps reduce bias because it is a process used to validate trustworthiness and increase quality of study results (Birt et al., 2016). I used member checking to minimize bias and limit my personal views affecting the study.

Qualitative interviewing provides the means for the researcher to gain a holistic picture of events, and analysis of interviewees helps to bring clarity and simplicity to complicated processes (Lafrance, 2018). Semistructured interviews are popular data collection techniques in qualitative research because they are flexible and versatile (Kallio et al., 2016). In person interviews have been the most accepted method for qualitative data research, but with the Internet being widely available and advances in communication technology, videoconferencing is quickly becoming an acceptable alternative (Irani, 2019). Videoconferencing reduces geographical constraints and offers scheduling flexibility. Participants can participate in a comfortable environment of their choosing and the researcher can observe participants' visual cues, and has the option to easily record interview sessions if the participant consents (Irani, 2019). Due to the nature of qualitative research, the researcher must develop a semistructured interview protocol which allows flexibility to explore further information during interviews (McGrath et al., 2019). To obtain good qualitative data, the researcher should use an interview protocol which also helps to structure interviews so the researcher is able to obtain information required during the allocated amount of time (Yeong et al., 2018). I used the interview protocol as another tool to minimize bias as well as gather the information to support the research question within the scheduled time. I conducted semistructured videoconference interviews using Zoom with three executive leaders using an interview protocol with open-ended questions that correlates with the Baldrige Excellence Framework and aligned with the research question (see Appendix A).

Participants

Identifying and enrolling a sample of people representing the broader population is a critical component of conducting a case study (Knechel, 2019). To be an eligible participant in a single case, qualitative doctoral study participants must be executive nonprofit leaders of a client organization chosen to participate in the doctoral study. Participants in this study were executive leaders at NPOs who could provide information regarding strategies some executive NPO leaders use to grow and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants completed a signed consent form. A case study method supports diverse ways of collecting data, allowing participants to share practical information and challenges involving the research question (Yin, 2018). Selecting executive leaders at the NPO for this study provided data regarding the organization’s core competencies and future development areas that will be used with the Baldrige Excellence Framework to identify ways to efficiently and effectively fulfill their mission and achieve their organizational goals.

The consulting capstone administrator provided initial access to the client organization and executive leaders via an email introduction. I then contacted client leaders to schedule a call to introduce myself, answer any initial questions, and set up future meetings and communications. I informed executive NPO leaders of my IRB approval and provided them with the approval number 07-16-19-0990184. Executive NPO leaders identified and provided access to an additional leader as a resource for the study. During the study, emails were the primary form of communication. The client leaders and I also used Zoom for conference calls and ClickUp, a cloud-based app to manage the study timeline and deliverables during the study's early phase.

Multiple meetings with participants have been shown to lead to developed trust bonds with researchers (Pessoa et al., 2019). In addition to scheduled meetings, I also maintained consistent communication using emails and open-ended questions for executive leader interviews (see Appendix A). During the doctoral study research process, I adhered to Walden University's DBA research agreement, and the IRB approved data sources and Belmont principles.

Participants had diverse backgrounds, experiences, and appropriate characteristics. Participants all had previous experience successfully using digital marketing to sustain and grow the NPO's donor base. Using interviews to collect data from participants is a crucial characteristic of many qualitative studies. Interviews provide researchers with a direct approach to collecting detailed data to understand a phenomenon better (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Participants also provided organizational documents for analysis and review, and time was spent reviewing and discussing the client's website, Facebook page, and other publicly accessible data such as GuideStar. GuideStar is a website that provides up to date facts and insights on NPOs). All three of the identified study participants hold an executive role at the NPO, were active participants in its operations, were involved in activities to successfully support growing and sustaining the donor base, and had operational knowledge of the organization that supported answering interview questions.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Research involves following a systematic approach that investigates a phenomenon that makes the world visible (Fisher & Bloomfield, 2019; Mohajan, 2018). The research method is based on the research problem, personal experiences of the researcher, intended audience, and how data are collected and analyzed (Yin, 2018). Qualitative research involves exploring aspects of reality that cannot be quantified as well as an in-depth analysis of an identified phenomenon (Queirós et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). The experiences of people and how they interpret those experiences to develop new approaches is the purpose of qualitative research (Mohajan, 2018; Yin, 2018). The goal of this study was to explore the experiences of participants and how they interpret those experiences to gain an in-depth analysis of digital marketing strategies to secure and sustain donors.

Quantitative research involves exploring a phenomenon through an objective lens focused on a hypothesis (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Variables that can be measured are components of quantitative research (Fisher & Bloomfield, 2019). Variables are measured using instruments to determine if relationships exist in order to test objective theories (Queirós et al., 2017). Researchers commonly use statistical analysis to test variables in quantitative research, and the null hypothesis is either accepted or rejected based on the results of the analysis (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Queirós et al., 2017).

Mixed methods research involves both qualitative and quantitative methods (Fisher & Bloomfield, 2019). A critical component of mixed methods is that either a qualitative or quantitative design alone is not sufficient (Doyle et al., 2016; Yin, 2018). The integration of qualitative and quantitative data leads to an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon that would not occur with a single method (Doyle et al., 2016; Frias & Popovich, 2020; Yin, 2018). It is common for quantitative data to provide a foundation for the analysis of qualitative data in a mixed methods study (Doyle et al., 2016). The focus of this single case qualitative study was to explore the digital marketing strategies nonprofit leaders use to secure and sustain donors, not to test a hypothesis that can be measured using variables. Therefore, a qualitative research method was the appropriate selection for the study.

Research Design

A case study design can be appropriate when the goal of the researcher is to explore a specific phenomenon in detail (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Yin, 2018). Case study research occurs in its natural context, is detailed, and is supported by information from various sources that are collected and analyzed, such as existing documents and interviews (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Yin, 2018; Ylikoski & Zahle, 2019). Case study research is useful when researchers' goal is intensive analyses of situations defined by a specific time and space constraints (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Verleye, 2019; Yin, 2018). A case study design can be appropriate when the goal of the researcher is to explore a specific phenomenon in detail (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Yin, 2018). Participants in a case study can be a specific groups or individuals that meet certain demographic criteria, or are representative of targeted organizations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Verleye, 2019; Yin, 2018). The digital marketing strategies that nonprofit executive leaders used to secure and sustain donors were explored in this study; therefore, a case study design was appropriate for this study.

Narrative, ethnographical, and phenomenological designs are some designs a qualitative researcher might use. Researchers use a narrative design when the focus is on examining lived and told experiences of a single or small number of individuals (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). The relational aspect of narrative design allows participants time to build relationships with researchers (Haydon & van der Riet, 2017). This relationship is one way researchers can offer participants a level of trust and security needed to be open and transparent, eliciting a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Haydon & van der Riet, 2017). A narrative design was not appropriate for this study because the focus of the research was not on the lived and told experiences of NPO executive leaders.

Ethnographic research is a comprehensive qualitative research design in which the culture of a community is explored through the researcher’s focus on identifying and describing the participants' practices and beliefs (Mohajan, 2018). When conducting an ethnography, the researcher becomes immersed in the daily lives of the participants while observing and conducting interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the behavior, language, and interaction among the members of the group (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Thiele et al., 2018). Ethnographic researchers can observe rituals and customs, uncover practices, and develop cultural awareness and sensitivity (Mohajan, 2018; Ryan, 2017). I did not study the culture of a community to explore practices and beliefs; therefore, an ethnographic design was not appropriate for the study.

Phenomenological research focuses on examining the commonality of the lived experiences or phenomenon of several individuals (Thiele et al., 2018). How individuals speak and communicate with others about a lived experience is one attribute of phenomenological research (Adams & van Manen, 2017). The phenomenological researcher seeks to understand how individuals make sense of an everyday experience and determining what the individuals have in common (Mohajan, 2018). A phenomenological research design was not appropriate for this study because understanding the lived experiences and the commonalty of those experiences for nonprofit executive leaders was not the objective of this study.

An accepted and useful guideline for achieving data saturation for a qualitative research is when the data of the study yields no new themes or information from additional interviews (Boddy, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006; Nelson, 2017). The decision when data saturation is achieved is up to the researcher and is influenced by the study's purpose (Hennink et al., 2017). I achieved data saturation by reviewing and analyzing all data gathered including documents provided by the client organization and participant interviews. I used open ended questions in the interview process with the participants allowing me to obtain in-depth information from the study participants. Member checking helps to build trust between the researcher and the study participants (Brear, 2019). Member checking occurs by supplying the participants with a synthesized transcript of the interview and meeting with the participants after the initial interview giving the participants the opportunity to add to and edit the information provided (Brear, 2019). After the interviews were conducted using Zoom and transcribed using NVivo, I presented the participants with a copy of their synthesized interview transcript and the preliminary analysis of the interview for member checking. During the follow-up interview participants had the opportunity to verify the transcribed interview's accuracy and make any corrections and addendums.

Population and Sampling

The NPO for this study was selected and assigned by the Walden University Consulting Capstone administrator. The administrator provided the contact information for the NPOs, the president and vice president. I worked with the president and vice president to identify an appropriate problem statement during the initial meetings. The president and vice president then identified themselves and an additional executive leader of the organization as the study participants. Qualitative researchers sample deliberately using a sample strategy such as purposive sampling, and the sample size is usually relatively small because the size depends on obtaining enough in-depth information from the collected data to identify patterns and categories (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

I selected three executive leaders from a NPO located in the northeastern United States for this qualitative single case study population due to the research method, limited time, and resources. It is not feasible for a researcher to collect data from all cases and factors, such as time, resources, and research method, influence the sampling technique chosen by the researcher (Taherdoost, 2016a). When selecting a sample in qualitative research, the goal is to gather information that will provide the most benefit for understanding the phenomenon, which supports smaller sampling sizes (Alam, 2020). For case study designs and qualitative research, nonprobability sampling is often used (Taherdoost, 2016a; Yin, 2018). The population is the complete set of subjects with the desired characteristics of interest to the researcher, and a subset of participants selected from the target population is a sample (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). Purposive sampling is convenient, cost-efficient, and less time consuming and allows the researcher to include participants they believe will provide the best data for the research (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016; Taherdoost, 2016a). The executive nonprofit leaders selected for this study possessed meaningful experience and knowledge in strategies to increase and sustain a NPO's donor base using digital marketing strategies. The purposive sample of the president, vice president, and the additional executive leader had the needed knowledge and competence to provide meaningful information to answer the research question. The researcher is responsible for determining the appropriate sample size that will meet the study's goal, and due to the diverse variables that affect qualitative research, an absolute number of participants in a study do not exist (Sim et al., 2018).

Obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon is the aim of case study research (Verleye, 2019; Yin, 2018; Ylikoski & Zahle, 2019). Data collection from interviewing participants is a distinctive trait of many qualitative studies and affords the researcher the ability to gather rich and detailed data on the specific phenomenon (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). When the goal is to understand the participants' subjective views of the phenomenon, conducting an interview is the best approach (McGrath et al., 2019). The semistructured interview should be constructed using open-ended questions and allow the participants to freely express themselves in a quiet, comfortable setting that promotes confidentiality (Gill & Baillie, 2018). The data collected and analyzed in a case study should be detailed and varied, including methods like semistructured interviews and the analysis of organizational documents (Ylikoski & Zahle, 2019). I collected data using semistructured interviews with open ended questions and the analysis of organizational documents and websites.

Achieving data saturation is one way the researcher confirms the appropriate sample size has been chosen (Hennink et al., 2017). A researcher reaches data saturation when the analysis of the data collected fails to reveal any new information (Alam, 2020; Verleye, 2019). Qualitative studies focus on the quality of the data and not the number of participants and research has shown the majority of thematic codes of a qualitative study is identified in the earliest interviews (Hennink et al., 2017). I obtained rich and in-depth data from the study participants during semistructured interviews using open-ended questions.

The participants were provided with the interview questions via email before the interview to assist the participants in preparing for the interview and easing any potential anxiety. Working with the client organization months before the research question focused semistructured interview helped to establish a rapport. Researchers must build a rapport and develop comfortable interactions with the client not only during the interview but well in advance if possible (McGrath et al., 2019). I informed the participants the interview would take approximately one hour. I worked with the participants to schedule a date and time that fit with their schedule, where they could be away from the organization and free from distractions. I used Zoom to conduct the interviews. I recorded the interview using Zoom with the participant's consent. After I completed the interview transcription and synthesis using NVivo, I provided the participant with the synthesized interview transcript.

Ethical Research

Ensuring that research is ethical is the responsibility of the researcher (Cumyn et al., 2019). The researcher must demonstrate a high level of integrity both scientifically and ethically because the researcher is solely responsible for conducting the research and managing the collected data to the best of their ability (Cumyn et al., 2019). Before contacting the participants in my doctoral study, I received approval from Walden University's IRB (approval no. 07-16-19-0990184). The DBA Research agreement, which outlined the responsibilities of the client organization and Walden University, was signed by the executive director of my assigned organization.

Consent comprises five interlinked elements: (a) capacity, (b) information, (c) understanding, (d) freedom from coercion, and (e) freedom of choice (Ellis, 2019). Research participants must have the capacity to understand the information and make decisions, and the researcher must provide information at a level that the participant can understand and use to make an informed decision (Ellis, 2019). I obtained informed consent from all participants via email in compliance with Walden University's ethical standards. I sent individual email messages to the participants outlining the voluntary nature of the study, the interview procedures, benefits, and risks of participation in the study, privacy rights, and contact information for the Walden University IRB representative. I sent an email to the study participants to obtain consent for study participation and, I received an email response from each participant individually confirming consent to participate in the study. The participants were informed that they might withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me via email or phone. The participants did not receive any incentives or compensation for participating in the study.

The researcher is responsible for ensuring confidentiality and privacy, which helps to build trust and gain access to an organization (Saunders et al., 2015). A challenge for qualitative researchers is presenting quality detailed accounts of the phenomenon while maintaining the confidentiality of the study participants (Kamanzi & Romania, 2019). In adherence to Walden's ethical requirements for IRB approval, pseudonyms and alphanumeric codes were used to identify the organization and participants, and all identifiable information will be removed from the interview transcripts and other collected data to maintain the promise of confidentiality to the participants. Client V was the pseudonym used to identify the client organizations and alphanumeric codes such as Participant1 and Participant2. All information and collected data were stored securely electronically in password protected and encrypted folders and will be destroyed by securely deleting the folders after 5 years to further protect the privacy and confidentiality of the study participants. A researcher can adhere to ethical standards by obtaining informed consent, informing study participants about their choice to voluntarily participate in the study, how to withdraw from the study, and protecting the confidentially of the study participants and the data collected (Ngozwana, 2018). I adhered to ethical standards by obtaining informed consent, informing study participants about their choice to voluntarily participate in the study, how to withdraw from the study, and protecting the confidentially of the study participants and the data collected.

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection (Cypress, 2017). The semistructured interview is a standard method used in qualitative research, and when appropriately designed, the researcher can capture data in critical areas with the flexibility for participants to bring their viewpoints and perceptions (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Yin, 2018). I was the primary instrument for data collection for this study. I collected data from various sources including semistructured interviews using open-ended questions, the client's website, documents provided by the client, and publicly accessible information on the internet about my organization and the executive leaders. The guiding framework used for data collection was the Baldrige Excellence Framework. The executive leaders shared with me company documents and artifacts for analysis and review. I collected data using the Baldrige assessment *Are We Making Progress as Leaders* (NIST), 2019a) and the Baldrige Organizational Profile (NIST), 2019b).

I used Zoom to conduct and record the virtual interviews. I chose Zoom because it was a platform the participants were comfortable using. Zoom allowed for easy recording of the interviews and the ability to use video, which allowed the ability to observe body language and facial expressions. For some participants, seeing the researcher's face can provide a level of reassurance because the participants can observe the researcher's facial expressions communicating a nonjudgmental attitude supporting more open conversation (Heath et al., 2018). When conducting qualitative interviews, the researcher should maintain awareness about how their role may affect the conversation with the interviewee and respond reflexively (McGrath et al., 2019). The interview consisted of six open-ended questions related to the research question and the study's conceptual framework. The interview questions were provided to the executive leaders before the interview to allow the participants to review the questions. The interviews' recording allowed me to have a verbatim record of the interview and obtain a deeper understanding of the participant's meanings. Transcription of the recording was conducted using NVivo.

Conducting a reflexive and iterative interview process increases the quality level of the interviews, increasing the data collection (McGrath et al., 2019). After completing the interview, I provided the participants with a synthesized transcript of the interview, including my analysis for their review. I offered the participants the opportunity to provide further comments after reviewing the interview transcript with the analysis. Returning the transcript and the interview analysis to participants to review and then meeting with the participant to review and discuss the information providing the participants the opportunity to confirm and amend the collected interview information is referred to as member checking and is one way to reduce bias by having the participants confirm the results and increase the validity of the study (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking is one method the researcher can use to capture the participant's voice (Candela, 2019). I used member checking to ensure the participants validated the data collected and analyzed from the interviews and the study findings aligned with the voice of the executive NPO leaders. A copy of the interview protocol used is in Appendix A. Documents provided to me from the client organization were received electronically via email. In adherence to the Walden University policy, I will destroy all documents pertaining to the study after 5 years.

Data Collection Technique

The researcher collects in-depth, rich data about the case using multiple data collection methods in a single case study (Ylikoski & Zahle, 2019). Document analysis, participant observation, and semistructured interviews are various qualitative methods used to collect data (Alam, 2020; Moser & Korstjens, 2017; Ylikoski & Zahle, 2019). My primary source of data collection for the study was semistructured interviews. The researcher is responsible for disclosing and minimizing personal assumptions and biases while collecting and analyzing qualitative data is critical to obtain the most accurate representation of the phenomenon (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Researchers commonly use semistructured interviews in qualitative research, records the interview with the participant's permission, and the researcher also may choose to take notes while conducting the interview (Alam, 2020; Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Gill & Baillie, 2018). The researcher establishes the order of the questions in a semistructured interview before conducting the interview (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Traditionally, the researcher conducts qualitative semistructured interviews in person; however, the easy access to digital technology for video conferencing provides the researcher with an alternative way to conduct interviews without being face to face with the participants (Gill & Baillie, 2018). I conducted the semistructured interviews with three executive leaders of the NPO using Zoom. I recorded audios for all the interviews and video for one of the interviews using Zoom based on the participant's preference and technology access. I recorded notes and observations during the interviews in my research journal. I used an interview protocol to make sure I asked open-ended questions to cover the necessary topics and a copy of the interview protocol used is in Appendix A. An interview protocol contains open-ended questions to collect in-depth data and allow participants to speak openly about essential topics, and guide the interview's content (Gill & Baillie, 2018).

One limitation of using semistructured interviews is researchers should keep an open mind during the interview process because some relevant topics for the participants may not be addressed in the interview protocol and will need to be added (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). An additional limitation of semistructured interviews is that participants can be reluctant to answer questions about sensitive topics using a face-to-face or online video interview (Heath et al., 2018). The large quantity of data produced, the time to conduct the interviews, and the inability to generalize the data collected are other disadvantages of semistructured interviews (Queirós et al., 2017).

The diverse ways data can be collected using the case study method allows the researcher to an in-depth exploration of the information to understand the issues within the context of the phenomenon (Alam, 2020). The Baldrige Excellence Framework was also an essential source I used as a guide for data collection. It is common for researchers to use secondary data collected from documents to complement the interview data collected (Verleye, 2019). I obtained and reviewed organizational documents such as the website, strategic plan, donor demographics, and publicly available information from the IRS and GuideStar. All documents provided by the organization were received electronically via email. Information from publicly available sources and company documents, and archival records are secondary data types used as part of the data collection process (Verleye, 2019). Collecting data from multiple sources supports triangulation, which adds depth to the qualitative data collection process (P. Fusch, 2018). A disadvantage of using secondary data from public sources is the data can vary in quality and reliability, and the researcher needs to determine the authenticity and legitimacy of the data before including it in the research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).

Member checking is a way to reduce researcher bias by actively involving the participants in checking and validating the results (Birt et al., 2016). Conducting a follow-up meeting with participants after the participants have received a transcript of their interview and a summary of the initial analysis from the interview to review, correct, and provide additional comments is a way to conduct member checking (Birt et al., 2016; Thomas, 2017). After completion of the interviews, I transcribed the interviews and analyzed the data to summarize the interview using NVivo. I sent the interview transcript and the summary analysis to the participants for their review, correction, and feedback prior to a scheduled follow-up meeting. During the subsequent follow-up meetings, I discussed with the participants the interview transcript and the summary analysis and captured feedback for amendments to ensure the accuracy of the information.

Data Organization Techniques

It is common for researchers to use pseudonyms to rename study participants, supporting ethical best practices (Allen & Wiles, 2016). I used pseudonyms to protect the identity of the study participants. To protect the identity of the individual participants and the organization, I used the pseudonyms, Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Client V to represent the organization as a whole. Removing all personal identifiers to maintain the confidentiality of the data collected is a best practice in research (Agnisarman et al., 2017). In addition to using pseudonyms, I also removed any identifying information related to the participants and the organization.

Data is collected from multiple sources and various methods for analyzing the data is common for case study research (Yin, 2018; Ylikoski & Zahle, 2019). All data used for the study was in an electronic format. I transcribed and stored the interview data in NVivo. I organized the data received for the study using a folder structure on my computer hard drive, and also the data was imported into and stored in NVivo. I kept an electronic research journal that was stored in Scrivener and later transitioned to NVivo. I created preliminary codes, assigned each a color in NVivo, and used this structure to organize the data further. I used codes to group data in categories which facilitated with identifying the relevant themes. The researcher uses the codes to identify similar categories based on the research and detects the relationship to the phenomenon (Alam, 2020). Also, codes are used by qualitative researchers when analyzing open ended responses to facilitate organizing and grouping the information logically into categories and themes for the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019). The electronic files, including the audio and video recordings and the analysis, are stored both in a password protected file within NVivo and in a password protected folder on my computer where the data stored is encrypted and protected by a login password. The researcher's journal and the transcripts from recorded interviews are the primary data sources in qualitative research (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). My research journal, recorded interviews, and all data collected was stored securely in NVivo. Upon completion of the study, the NVivo files will be moved to an encrypted and password protected external hard drive locked in a personal safe in my home for 5 years, at which point I will destroy the data in compliance with the IRB and Walden University's policy.

Data Analysis

Methodological triangulation involves collecting data using several methods, including documents, field notes, and interviews (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I used methodological triangulation as the data analysis process for this single case qualitative study. Researchers may use triangulation to add depth to the data collected in qualitative studies (Fusch, 2018). I interviewed nonprofit executive leaders using semistructured open ended questions, and I also collected data from multiple sources. The additional data, along with the information obtained from the interviews, allowed for triangulation, which supported the study's level of quality (Alase, 2017; Birt et al., 2016; Verleye, 2019). Using a qualitative data analysis software can add significant value to the research

(Phillips & Lu, 2018). NVivo was used to analyze the data collected to assist with coding the data and identifying themes (Nelson, 2017; Phillips & Lu, 2018; Verleye, 2019). The themes were further analyzed to ensure they aligned with the research and to identify any potential gaps. Using a variety of sources of information is one way for the researcher to increase the quality of the case study (Yin, 2018).

I used NVivo to organize and analyze the data, triangulate the documents, and the coded interviews after I completed the data collection and member checking processes. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) that provides several advantages, such as more flexibility in the ways the researcher may categorize the data improving the data quality and minimizes the time it would take to analyze the data manually (Alam, 2020).

Researchers use semistructured interviews to communicate central themes' meanings in the participants' lives (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Responses to open-ended interview questions are analyzed using qualitative methods to code, organize, and logically group the data into themes to gain a fundamental understanding (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019). I imported the modifications and additions into NVivo. During the analysis phase, I reviewed both the recordings and the transcripts to increase my understanding of the qualitative data. It is imperative that the researcher focus on the participant's words during the transcription process, revisit both the recording and the transcripts, and verify the transcripts are accurate and reflect the interview holistically to gain an in-depth understanding of the qualitative data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Explaining and interpreting the meaning gained from semistructured interviews includes coding and identifying the data's significant themes (Alam, 2020). It is usually more challenging to analyze and identify themes using text data instead of numerical data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

I identified and employed best practices for using NVivo to collect and analyze qualitative data. I followed the process and steps identified by Castleberry and Nolen (2018), and Feng and Behar-Horenstein (2019) shown in Table 4 to identify themes and conclusions.

Table 4

NVivo Process and Steps for Qualitative Data Analysis

Step	Process
Initial case coding and data cleaning	Compiling
Importing the data	Compiling
Word frequency analysis	Disassembling/Reassembling
Text and matrix coding	Disassembling/Reassembling
Theme identification and analysis	Disassembling/Reassembling

Word frequency analysis, text and matrix coding, and theme identification and analysis were iterative steps conducted several times during the analysis process. I also imported the references for my literature review, created codes using the categories of the 2019 -2020 Baldrige Excellence Framework (NIST), 2019c) in NVivo, and used mind maps and concept maps to analyze, identify additional codes and themes to understand the strategies some executive leaders of NPO's use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing.

Thematic analysis is the data analysis strategy used for qualitative research designs to transform the data into workable themes and emerging conclusions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Roberts et al., 2019). Themes are identified from the data relevant to the specific research focus, the research question, the research context, and the conceptual framework and become the categories for analysis (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Roberts et al., 2019). Using a qualitative data analysis software (QDAS), such as NVivo, minimizes the potential for bias compared to when only human coders are used and can allow researchers to compare qualitative data across and within categories (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019). Themes group the core of the phenomenon being studied related to the research question or purpose of the study; and NVivo can develop data visualizations in the form of a three-dimensional map of code clusters (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I determined key themes based on the data analysis results that I used to determine the strategies some executive NPO leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. Using NVivo, I employed methodological triangulation to review the findings and validate the findings aligned with the conceptual framework and existing literature. Themes are the product of the coding and sorting processes; communicating the themes in a table gives readers of the study a brief display of the study's findings and the relationship between the themes (Clark & Vealé, 2018).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

The methods chosen for research, how the methods are applied, and providing the reasoning for the choice influences the reliability of qualitative research (Rose &

Johnson, 2020). Demonstrating reliability helps establish the relationship between knowledge and practice and supports the study's dependability or trustworthiness (Roberts et al., 2019). Defining the unit of analysis, the definition of the data collection and analysis procedures, and the protocol are various ways to show rigor and demonstrate the study's reliability (Takahashi & Araujo, 2019). Member checking the data collected enhances the accuracy of the data (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Triangulation supports both data saturation and reliability minimizing bias increasing the study’s level of reliability (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

I used member checking to verify the accuracy of the data collected from semistructured interviews with the research participants and strengthen the dependability of the study. The interview transcripts and a summary of key findings were sent to the participants via email for their review, feedback, and the option to add additional data. I conducted a follow-up interview with the participants to review and discuss the interpreted data and provide any additional data to support the study. After I received all the participants' feedback, I updated the data as appropriate and conducted a full analysis of the data to identify key themes. Thematic analysis allows the qualitative data collected to be both described and interpreted for meaning (Roberts et al., 2019). I also documented the information in my research journal, and I added the key themes to my codebook. Developing a codebook supports the possibility of replicating the study and supports an easier application of reliability testing, further supporting the research's dependability (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Roberts et al., 2019).

Validity

The perception of the overall quality associated with a research project is trustworthiness, which supports the project's validity (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Minimizing the researcher's bias which can be achieved by supporting trustfulness of the study's data is validity (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Credibility, confirmability, and transferability are some of the criteria used to evaluate the critical concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Daniel, 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The term validity in research is also synonymous with rigor and dependability (Takahashi & Araujo, 2019). Validity, in a case study, is supported by using protocols for the development and implementation of the case study (Takahashi & Araujo, 2019). Following an interactive and reflective process when conducting interviews adds validity to the qualitative interview process (McGrath et al., 2019).

To enhance the study's validity, I used and followed the criteria of credibility, transferability, and conformability. I conducted triangulation, saturation, reflexivity, and member checking. Providing a thorough description of the data, analysis process, and triangulation are ways to support the credibility of the research (Amin et al., 2020; Daniel, 2019). Triangulation is one method used in research to support the results reported from the data is a truthful representation of the phenomenon being explored (Moon, 2019). Collecting data from multiple sources and using various methods is a way to achieve triangulation (Alam, 2020; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Yin, 2018). I spent over 1 year working with the organizational leaders to understand the research problem better and build rapport and trust with the participants. Using methodological triangulation, I confirmed findings by cross-checking data and information from semistructured interviews, organizational documents, and publicly accessible information, and comparing results derived from NVivo and my analyses of data from various sources.

Member checking and saturation are methods that can increase the credibility of a qualitative study (Stenfors et al., 2020). Member checking and thick descriptions in the data analysis can ensure transferability (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). I used member checking to increase the credibility of this qualitative research study. I accomplished transcript review and member checking by providing the interview transcript and an initial summary of the interview to each participant that was reviewed and discussed in a follow-up interview. During the follow-up interview the participants had the opportunity to amend the information to increase the level of accuracy of the data. I provided the participants with the final summary and themes resulting from the data collection and analysis to review. I also gave the study participants an additional opportunity to provide additional information, feedback, and corrections on the final themes and summary analysis of the research.

Transferability is demonstrated by how the research findings may be transferred to another setting, group, or context (Lemon & Hayes, 2020; Stenfors et al., 2020). Using purposive sampling supports the transferability of the study findings (Cypress, 2017). It is the responsibility of the researcher to make sure the selection of the sample is based on the expert knowledge of the participants, and the participants have the appropriate knowledge about the phenomenon of the study (Forero et al., 2018). Thick descriptions support trustworthiness and validity, and the depth of the descriptions allows readers to determine how the study results may transfer to other situations (Amin et al., 2020). I used the purposive sampling method for the study. I also explained the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. I provided a detailed description and sound data about the participants and the context of the study to assist other researchers with using this information for future research.

Showing a clear relationship between the data collected and the research results and that the results are free from researcher bias is confirmability (Stenfors et al., 2020). Researcher bias is a potential threat to qualitative research because qualitative research is less structured than quantitative research, and the researcher must be aware of their perceptions and opinions to avoid tainting the research findings and conclusions (Cypress, 2017). Using triangulation, a researcher's analysis, codes, and themes can be better supported since the information is from different sources, which also supports the validity of the study (Rose & Johnson, 220). I met the confirmability requirements by maintaining a reflexive journal during the research process, where I documented notes and self-reflection that would be helpful and relevant during the study. Triangulation was also used to support the credibility and validity of the study. I used an audit trail to examine the process I used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data. I accomplished this by documenting notes during the interviews and continuous notes documenting the process while maintaining self-contemplation of my role as the sole instrument of the study. I spent time in a private, quiet room with no distractions to review the handwritten notes taken and transfer them into my digital research journal in NVivo and documented any additional recollections and perceptions from the interview after completing each interview. Reflexivity is the primary strategy used to understand researcher bias and occurs when researchers actively participate in critical self-reflection about their potential biases and the predispositions they bring to the qualitative research study (Cypress, 2017). I made a conscious attempt to set aside my own biases and opinions and truly listened to the participants to learn their experiences and meanings.

A key element of qualitative research is saturation (Saunders et al., 2018). Interviews, documentation, and observation are some of the qualitative research tools used to collect data, and saturation is reached when the data collected produces no new additional information (Alam, 2020). Saturation is commonly used in qualitative research to enhance the credibility of the study (Stenfors et al., 2020). Reaching saturation is a part of the validation and is the deciding factor when there is no need for additional participants, however, without saturation, the study cannot have the completeness required to support valid conclusions (FitzPatrick, 2019). I achieved saturation through the semistructured interviews with the executive leaders of the NPO and the review and analysis of information and documentation received from the client organization.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I presented a detailed explanation of the qualitative single case study. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies some executive leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. I was the researcher and performed the role of the primary data collection instrument during the study. The Belmont Report was the guide I used to ensure I conducted the study within ethical guidelines. I collected data using semistructured interviews following the interview protocol and analyzed secondary data, such as organizational documents. I used data from the participant interviews, secondary data analysis, member checking, data saturation, and methodological triangulation to support the study's reliability and validity.

In Section 3, I explained my analysis and key findings using the Baldrige Excellence Framework to assess and discuss the client organization. I interviewed three executive leaders of the client organization and reviewed organization documentation to collect data for this study. In this section, I provide a summary of the key themes, how the key themes contribute to the findings of the study, and contributions and recommendations for future research. By exploring the components of the Baldrige Framework, which are: (a) leadership, (b) strategy, (c) customers, (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, (e) workforce, (f) operations, and (g) results, I also include the client's organizational profile in this section.

Section 3: Organizational Profile

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore successful strategies some executive leaders of NPOs used to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The Baldrige Excellence Framework guides leaders at organizations no matter the sector or size to meet their missions and achieve their visions effectively and efficiently. Leaders use the Baldrige Excellence Framework to improve organizational performance and achieve sustainable results. I analyzed data collected for this study using a five-step thematic analysis process with qualitative data analysis software, NVivo to identify key themes. Key themes identified for this study were (a) digital marketing is an effective tool to develop and sustain relationships with the donor base, (b) donor base demographics and appropriate use of digital marketing affect relationships with NPOs, and (c) communication is a key factor to secure and sustain relationships using digital marketing.

Key Factors Worksheet

Organizational Description

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies nonprofit executive leaders used to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. Client V is the pseudonym for the client organization used in this study. Client V is a 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in 2016 located in the northeastern United States and specializing in student scholarships and financial aid. Client V focuses on providing disadvantaged children in a country in Central America with the means and support to further their education and achieve their educational goals. One-third of students in the client's service area drop out of school and live in poverty. Client V works with students who graduate from the 6th grade. Leaders provide support for high school students from 7th to 11th grade. There is no 12th grade as in the United States. When a student completes the 11th grade, they graduate with a baccalaureate degree. The primary mission of Client V is to increase the graduation rate of students, which might provide them with alternative options for earning income. Alternative options to earn income might support reducing the number of students and their families living in poverty. One hundred percent of donations received by Client V directly support the organization's mission. Leaders pay all administrative expenses from personal funds as part of their personal ongoing financial contributions to the organization's mission.

Organizational Environment

The organizational environment is one of two areas that compose the organizational description in the Baldrige Excellence Framework. The organizational profile is the foundation of what an organization does. The organizational environment includes product offerings, mission, vision, values, and culture, workforce profiles, assets, and regulatory environments.

Product Offerings. Client V supplies necessary products for each student to attend high school. There are two high schools in the area that students can choose to attend: One is an academically oriented school, and the other is a technically oriented school. Client V is the only organization that supports students completing a high school education in the area, which has one of the highest poverty rates in the country. The high poverty rate contributes to low attendance and retention rates of students after elementary school. Without financial assistance, students are unable to continue their education beyond elementary school. Leaders identify and select children who will receive support.

Client V leaders work with students, parents, educators, and other nonprofit organizations. Items supplied by Client V to high school students include school uniforms, backpacks, notebooks, textbooks, pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, erasers, Spanish dictionaries, geometry sets, and scientific calculators. The school uniform includes a high school uniform shirt, pants, socks, and shoes. A store designated by the schools sells school uniform shirts, but they are not usually available for purchase until after the school year begins. Client V also supplies students with backpacks when they enter the seventh grade, with the expectation to use them until graduation. Students also receive from Client V five notebooks, school textbooks, a Spanish dictionary, pens and pencils, a pencil sharpener, and erasers. Seventh grade students receive a geometry set, and 10th grade students receive scientific calculators from Client V. The approximate total cost to sponsor one high school student is $150. Special requests including bus transportation, recorders for music class, and tuition for English class are reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis. Items are grouped and delivered by car to each family. Backpacks are purchased in the United States by leaders to control the costs of backpacks. Americans and Canadians living in the community also provide in-kind donations for some products students need.

Client V’s primary product offerings directly contribute to allowing children to continue their education after the sixth grade. In addition, providing students support to continue their education supports building long-term quality relationships with students, their families, educators, and other stakeholders in the community. Leaders build relationships with students' families and support parents so they can appropriately support students. Maintaining acceptable academic progress is a requirement by Client V for students to continue to receive support. If, for some reason, a student does not maintain acceptable academic progress, Client V gives the student a second opportunity and provides them with additional support to improve their academic progress before they are terminated from the program.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders would meet with students to obtain clothing and shoe sizes. Client V leaders would then shop for and order the supplies and personally deliver supplies to each student. Since the pandemic, organizational leaders have created an alliance with a local organization, Partner A. Partner A staff members manage collecting children's clothing and shoe sizes and then distribute all supplies needed to attend high school. Partner A and Client V also work directly with students and their families to provide support during the school year and monitor their academic progress. In addition, leaders of Client V continue to build relationships with locals to assist with their mission. Having Partner A manage the purchase and distribution of student supplies allows Client V leaders more time to dedicate to growing and sustaining the donor base to offer more children the opportunity to further their education. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced schools to close and because of this, leaders expanded offerings of the organization to support teaching English to teachers in the local community. The future goals of leaders are to provide support for children who wish to attend college, including supplying each child with a computer and access to the internet, which is in direct alignment with the organization’s mission to support disadvantaged students with required resources to overcome barriers to achieve an education.

Mission, Vision, and Values. Client V envisions a world in which students have equal access to a quality and comprehensive education. Client V's vision was the catalyst for creating the organization as well as the primary mission of assisting students with adequate resources to reach their educational goals (see Table 5).

Table 5

Mission, Vision, Values, and Objectives

Mission
Provide disadvantaged students with needed resources to overcome obstacles in their desire to achieve an education. As such, our primary goal is to raise funds to support motivated and qualified students to further their education. Working with local educational institutions, parents, and local nonprofit charities, we support and follow each student's progress throughout the school year.
Vision
Client V will help to break the cycle of poverty through educational achievement and promoting the development of economically viable and self-sufficient communities. Both respect and nurture students to reach their potential and become contributing members of their communities. Strengthen cultural and educational values within the communities.
Values
Build and maintain trusted ethical standards by adhering to integrity, trustworthiness, honesty, teamwork, and accountability. Adhere to strong stewardship oversight of financial resources and all reporting to required governmental agencies, donor base, and auxiliary organizations. Maintain transparency of activities and financial standing. Provide informative supportive interchange with children and parents. Foster involvement of parents and communities. Respectfully follow and remain attuned to cultural norms. Foster mentorships within the local communities. Complement, enhance, leverage existing resources and/or efforts by other nonprofits where core mission and goals overlap.
Objectives
Identify factors where students are at risk. Provide educational resources to at-risk students Educate parents and communities on the importance of education.

Workforce Profile. Client V's workforce consists of five members of the board. Two members also hold organizational positions and manage daily operations of the organization. One member is the organization's president and treasurer, and the other member is the organization's vice president, secretary, and executive director. All members are unpaid. Occasionally, Client V engages volunteers in the local community to assist with organizational activities and operations. Board members have diverse backgrounds and contribute to the operational decisions of organization based on their area of specialty and needs determined by two members who manage daily operations.

Assets. Client V is essentially a small two-person organization. Client V is based in the United States and Costa Rica. Equipment assets include personal computers, routers, iPads, cell phones, and vehicles. Technological assets include internet access, Windows, Android, Apple iOS, Microsoft Office, WhatsApp, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and Apple Messages. Client V's intellectual properties are the organization's website and contents, Facebook page, a Microsoft Access database, photos, and videos. Client V does not maintain commercial office space.

Regulatory Requirements. Client V is a 501(3)(c) nonprofit with tax-exempt status regulated by the United States Department of the Treasury Office of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) since 2016. It is a registered nonprofit in New Hampshire and follows all regulations related to nonprofits for the United States and New Hampshire. Client V has a current certificate of good standing issued by the state of New Hampshire. Client V maintains appropriate financial records and performs annual tax filings. Client V does not use a third-party audit for financial records. Client V also has a profile listed on

GuideStar, which supports the transparency of Client V's financial standing with existing and new stakeholders.

Organizational Relationships

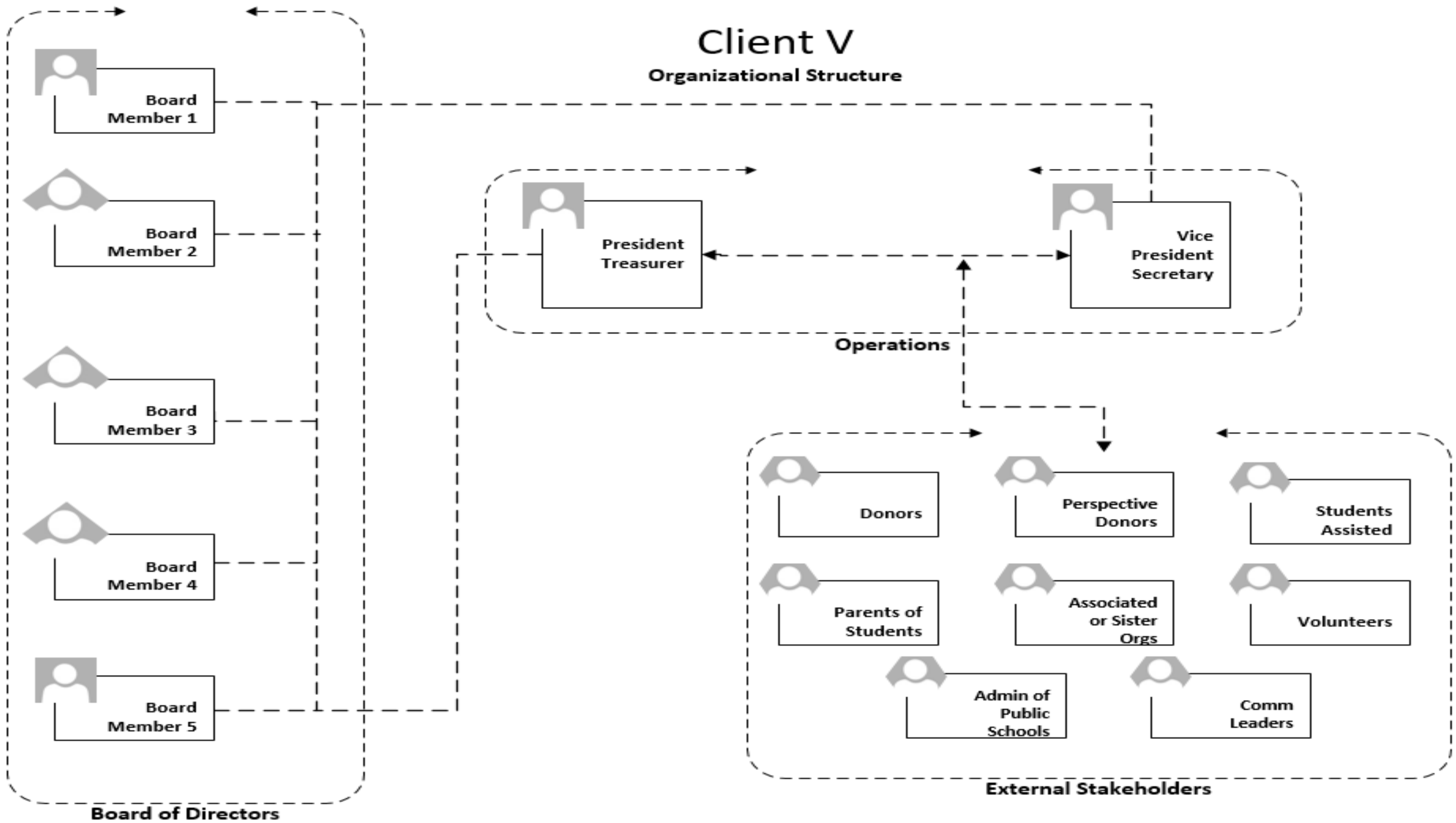
In the context of NPOs, the Baldrige Excellence Framework defines stakeholders as any person or organization that might be affected by the organization's actions or performance. Effective organizational relationships with both internal and external stakeholders are crucial to the successful management of an organization. Organizational relationships involve organizational structure, customers and stakeholders, and suppliers, partners, and collaborators. Developing and sustaining meaningful relationships with all stakeholders is critical to an organization's success.

Client V is a small NPO in which founders share daily operational responsibilities and select members to serve on the board. The board supports using a committee structure for audits, risks, and governance. The board meets a minimum of once a year to review the annual budget and discuss any strategic decisions. Client V uses expertise of sister organizations and volunteer assistance when needed. Client V creates a team-based sharing environment in which issues can be solved creatively and efficiently. When possible, Client V engages communities and family members in assisting with organizational plans.

Organizational Structure. Client V is a small two-person organization with a flat and functional structure. Founders hold positions on the board and multiple operational roles in the organization. They work closely together, and daily operational duties are assigned based on their respective strengths. For example, one of the founders works more closely with families of students because the founder has good Spanish communication skills (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Organizational Structure and Relationships



Customers and Stakeholders. Client V's stakeholders are existing donors, potential donors, students, the student's parents, associated or sister organizations, volunteers, administrators of public elementary schools, public high schools, decision makers, and leaders of local communities served. The students receive from Client V, the materials and support to continue their education after elementary school. The parents of the students receive from Client V information and support on their student's progress. The public school teachers and students receive from Client V English as a second language (ESL) instruction. As of a result of Client V's efforts the students, parents, and the local community benefit by improving the community's economic standing by increasing the opportunities available to the students after completing their secondary-school education.

Suppliers and Partners. Client V relies heavily on retail vendors as the primary suppliers of the students' materials for school attendance. The leaders purchase from various retail vendors all items the students need to attend secondary school. Client V purchases the students' school uniforms, shoes, and notebooks from local retail vendors. Client V uses Amazon to purchase additional items for the students not explicitly listed prior. Client V also leverages relationships they have established within the community with volunteers and sister organizations to supplement materials and support for the students and parents.

Organizational Situation

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies nonprofit executive leaders used to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The organizational situation analyzes an organization's strategic situation focused on the competitive environment, strategic context, and performance improvement system (NIST, 2019c). The environment for NPOs is inherently competitive. An increase in new NPOs and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have increased the options available to donors. Microsized NPOs, such as Client V, must compete with other larger organizations offering similar support and services. Using digital marketing is one option the leaders may use to promote awareness of the NPO's mission and support eliminating location barriers.

Competitive Environment

The NPO market continues to experience growth every year, increasing the competitiveness of the sector. Client V leaders are aware of the continued growth of the NPO sector and the challenges that accompany the growth. Client V is not well known and does not currently have a large donor base or market share. Client V's primary competitors are similar NPOs that have brand recognition, a more extensive donor base, and are more established. Client V developed a strategic plan to fulfill the organization's mission and achieve its vision and objectives, including navigating the competitive NPO sector.

Competitive Position. Client V is in its sixth year of existence. Client V has not increased its resource size, but the donor base has grown year over year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Client V has approximately 64 donors and 96 Facebook followers. Client V has had one major fundraising event resulting in donations totaling approximately $1,500. Due to limited resources, the growth of Client V has been incremental. Table 6 lists some of Client V's competitors in Costa Rica.

Table 6

Competitors in Costa Rica

Association Name	Year Founded	Location	Area of Interest	Notes	Direct Competitor
Competitor 1	2009	Potrero, Brasilito Guanacaste	Education, English, other	Funded by a foundation in Texas	Yes
Competitor 2	2005	Org A nonprofit	Education Healthcare		Yes
Competitor 3	2003	Papagyo Pennisula	Education, Healthcare	Funded by Competitor 9 – Washington DC	Yes
Competitor 4	2019	Nosara primarily	Variety of efforts in Nosara area	Funded by Competitor 9	Yes
Competitor 5	2006		Prevent high school dropout rate		Yes, greatest alignment with our goals.
Competitor 6	2000		Education		
Competitor 7	2007				
Competitor 8	1940	San Jose	School books for Kids, University Grant Program		
Competitor 9	2000	Washington D.C.		Funding for Competitor 3 and Guanacaste Fund	

Competitiveness Changes. Client V has participated in two events in the past years that have helped increase the organization's brand recognition and mission in Costa Rica. The most recent was participation in the annual Blues Festival in February 2020. During fundraising events such as the annual Blues Festival, Client V leaders can network, distribute information to attendees about the NPO and its mission, and solicit additional donations. Client V's competitive and collaborative situation is affected by some of the following factors:

- being a United States-based NPO and not a Costa Rican-based NPO,
- being a newcomer to the market compared to other competitors in the area,
- focusing on a specific rural demographic,
- lacking affiliates and partnerships, and
- confronting a language barrier

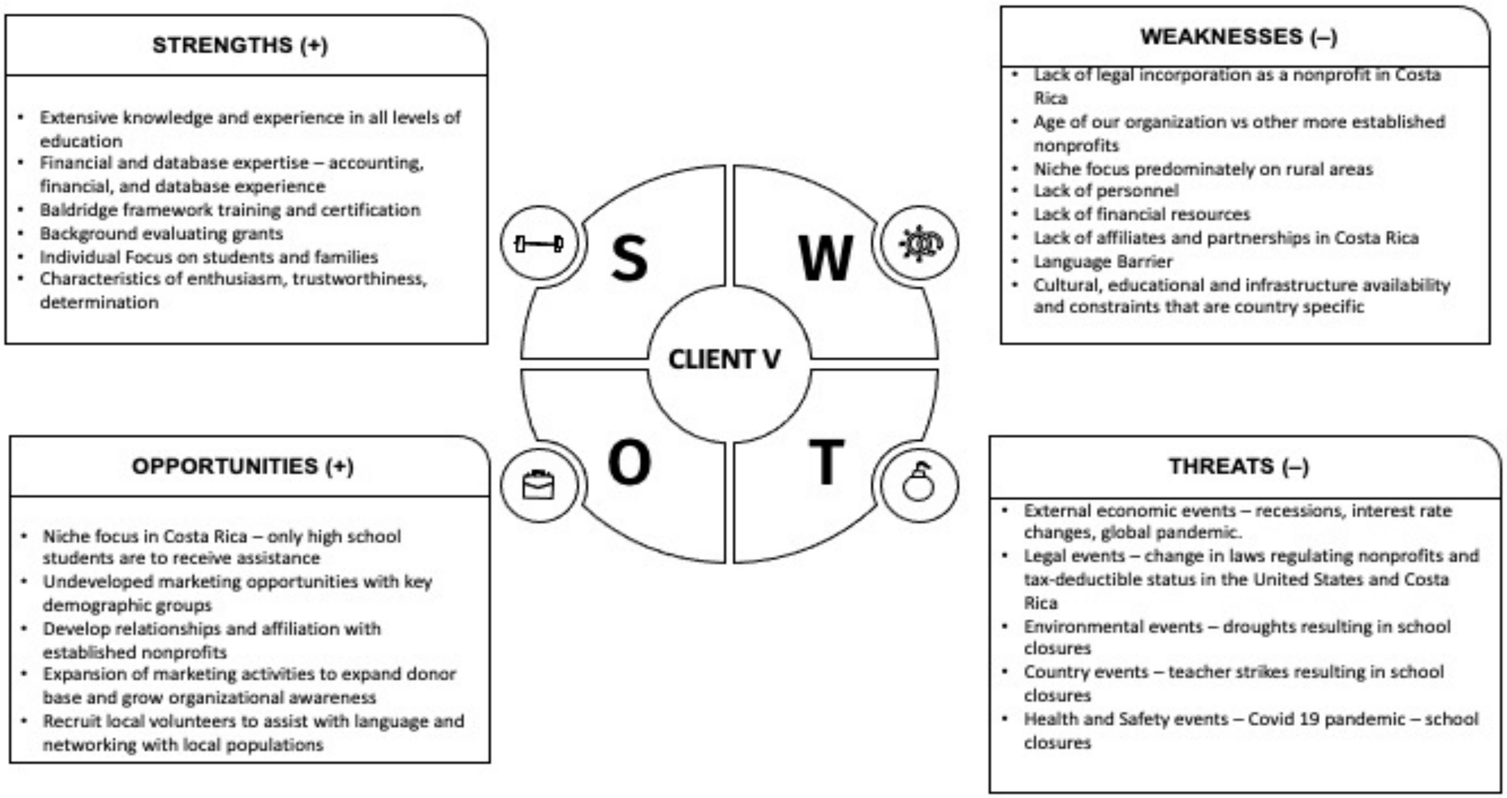
Comparative Data. There are various sources of comparative and competitive data available to Client V. Due to limited personnel and resources, Client V leaders do not currently dedicate a significant amount of time to researching and reviewing comparative and competitive data within and outside of the nonprofit industry. Client V leaders may use key industry sources for data such as GuideStar, Giving USA, and competitor's websites.

Strategic Context

Client V leaders review and update the organization's strategic plan annually. The strategic plan includes a section that analyzes the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis). Figure 3 shows the results of Client V's most recent SWOT analysis.

Figure 3

SWOT Analysis



Performance Improvement System

The Baldrige Excellence Framework is the foundation for Client V's performance improvement system. The vice president and one board member have extensive experience with the Baldrige Excellence Framework. The close working relationship of the president and vice president supports a continuous improvement culture in the organization.

Leadership Triad: Leadership, Strategy, and Customers

Leadership

Senior Leadership

Client V's senior leadership team comprises two founders who also are members of the board. The senior leaders are responsible for the daily operations and reinforcing the decisions made and actions taken to align with the organization's mission, vision, and values. The organization's strategic plan and the Baldrige Excellence Framework support Client V's continuous improvement culture. The board members have diverse backgrounds and expertise that complement and support the two capabilities of the two founders.

Governance and Societal Responsibilities

Client V's senior leaders work with the board members to ensure adherence to appropriate governance required in the United States for 501(3)(c) organizations. The organization's small size allows the leaders to communicate frequently and effectively and maintain the organization's focus in alignment with the mission. The leaders do not make organizational decisions unilaterally. The leaders collaborate and agree on all decisions made. Neither leaders nor the board members receive any form of compensation for their duties. Any organization with which Client V partners or collaborates is expected to adhere to the same level of ethical standards followed by Client V.

Client V leaders have worked to build quality, meaningful relationships in the community the organization serves. It is essential for the leaders to build and foster trust with the community members. The leaders support a culture of collaboration and inclusion. The community members, parents, and children in Client V's service population respect the president. The leaders go into the community to have casual conversations with the community members and listen to how they are doing. In return, the community members have embraced the leaders and invite them into their homes.

Client V does not currently employ a formal process for selecting board members or conducting performance evaluations for senior leaders. Client V does maintain an appropriate insurance policy to mitigate any risks from lawsuits due to activities in other countries. Client V files the required annual tax forms to maintain financial compliance at the federal and state levels. Client V leaders plans to make their tax filings and financial reports available to stakeholders on the organization's website and GuideStar by 2022.

Strategy

Strategy Development

The Client V president and vice president collaborate to develop the strategic plan and review and revise it annually. The leaders created the current strategic plan in October 2020. The president and vice president share the completed strategic plan with the other board members. The strategic plans include yearly short-term, and long-term goals. The strategic plan defines the time parameters for short-term goals as 2 to 5 years and long-term goals more than 5 years. The strategic plan includes, goals, objectives, KPIs, key performance administrative indicators (KAPIs), risk analysis and a SWOT analysis which the leaders use to address transformational change, prioritization of change initiatives, and organizational agility.

Client V leaders use the KPIs and KAPIs identified and documented in the strategic plan to collect and analyze relevant data to develop information for future success. Organizational resource constraints play a critical role when the leaders determine which key processes will be accomplished by the leaders. Figure 4 shows Client V's objectives. The organizational goals and objectives in the strategic plan are created by following the guidelines for setting goal parameters developed by the leaders. These parameters assist the leaders with achieving appropriate balance among the varying and potentially competing organizational priorities. Client V has also developed guidelines for developing KPIs and KAPIs. Figure 5 shows the developed guidelines. Figure 6 shows Client V's setting goals parameters, and Figure 7 shows Client V's goals. Each goal in Figure 7 has a direct correlation to Client V's three organizational objectives identified in Table 5. The goals meet the objectives to identify, provide, and educate the students and their families about the importance of education and educational resources available. Client V has five objectives, six goals, and 27 KPIs and KAPIs across five main categories.

Figure 4

Client V's Organizational Objectives

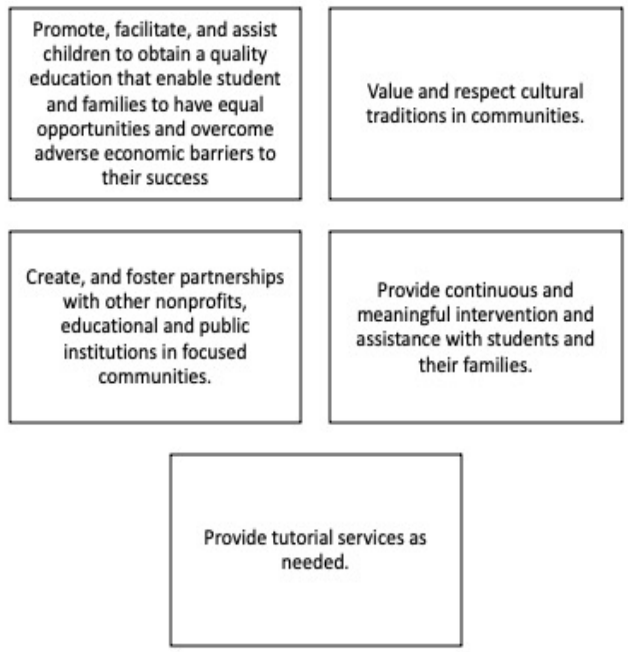


Figure 5

KPI and KAPI Development Guidelines

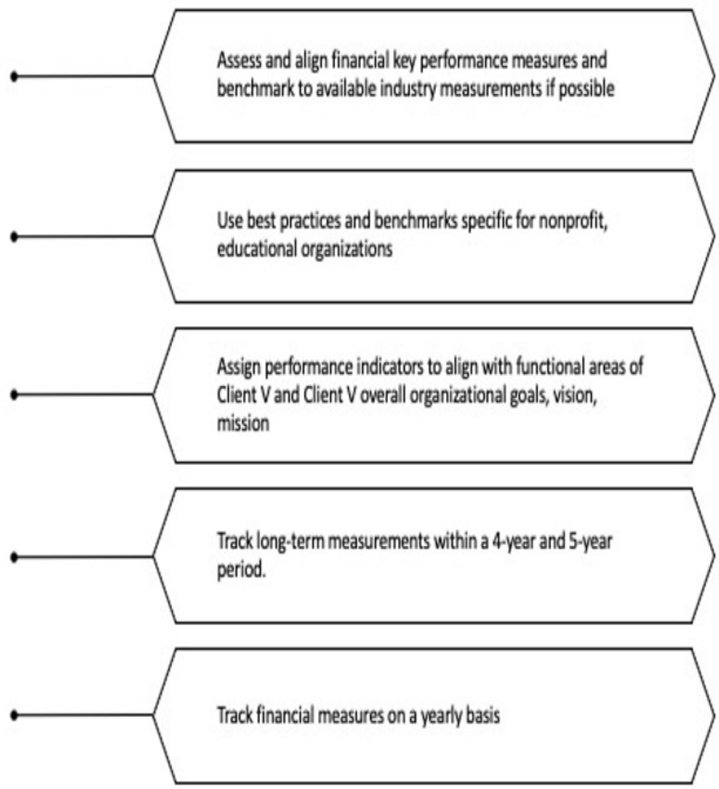


Figure 6

Criteria for Setting Goal Parameters

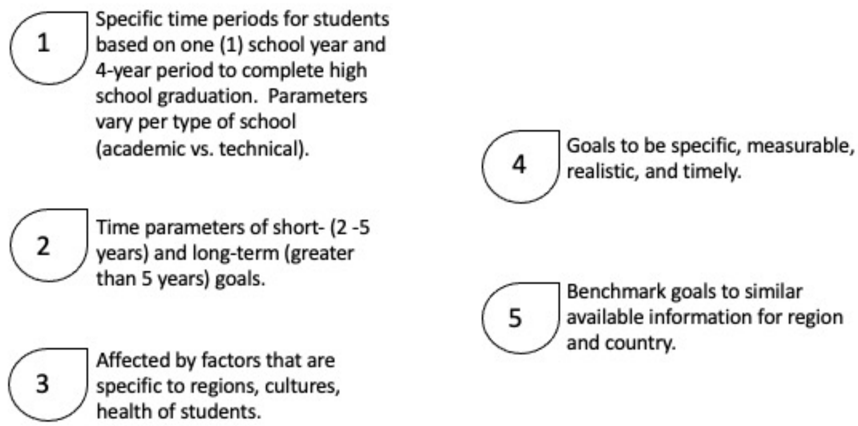
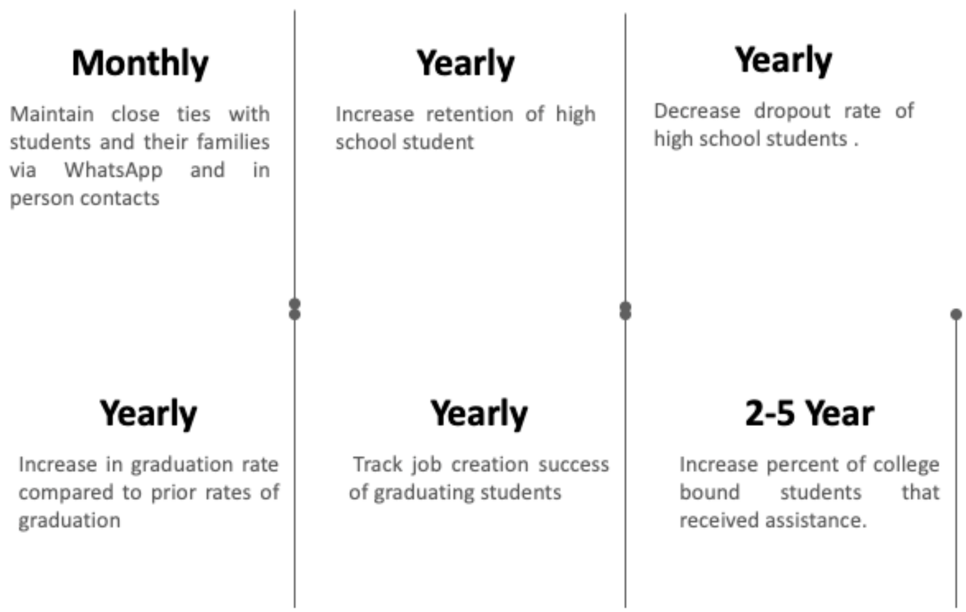


Figure 7

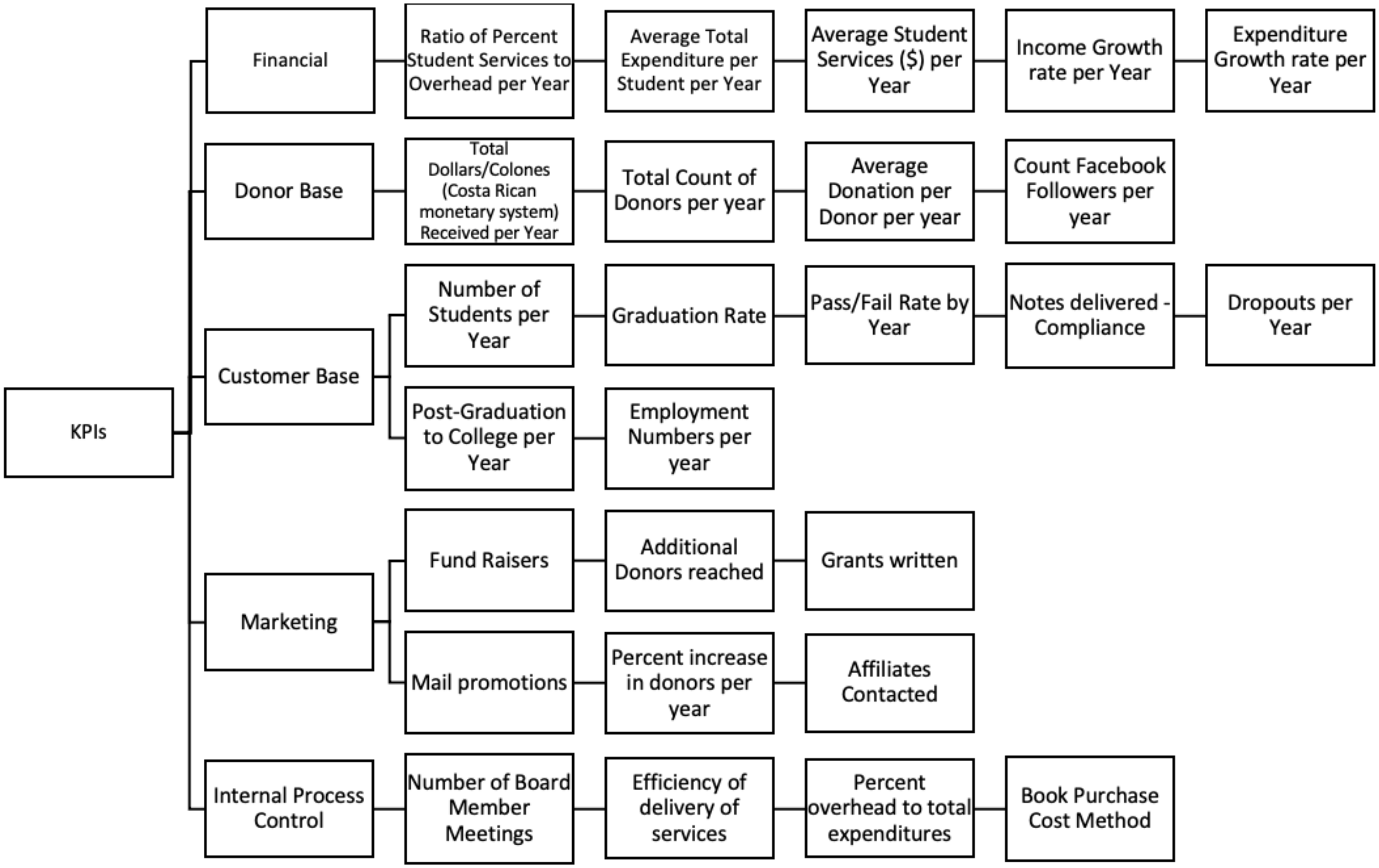
Client V's Goals



Strategy Implementation

Client V develops action plans based on the goals, and the KPIs and KAPIs established in the strategic plan and (shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8.) Client V leaders do not use a systematic process to implement, track, and adjust action plans. The president and vice president collaboratively develop the actions plans, and the actions plans are continuously adjusted as needed throughout the year based on internal and external factors. The small organization size and the ability to collaborate closely support innovation and the ability to pivot quickly. The president and vice president work on the various aspects of the identified goals, KPIs, and KAPIs based on their respective strengths. Client V leaders leverage the expertise of the board members when necessary to accomplish goals.

Figure 8


KPIs
Financial
Ratio of Percent Student Services to Overhead per Year
Average Total Expenditure per Student per Year
Average Student Services ($) per Year
Income Growth rate per Year
Expenditure Growth rate per Year
Donor Base
Total Dollars/Colones (Costa Rican monetary system) Received per Year
Total Count of Donors per year
Average Donation per Donor per year
Count Facebook Followers per year
Customer Base
Number of Students per Year
Graduation Rate
Pass/Fail Rate by Year
Notes delivered - Compliance
Dropouts per Year
Post-Graduation to College per Year
Employment Numbers per year
Marketing
Fund Raisers
Additional Donors reached
Grants written
Mail promotions
Percent increase in donors per year
Affiliates Contacted
Internal Process Control
Number of Board Member Meetings
Efficiency of delivery of services
Percent overhead to total expenditures
Book Purchase Cost Method

Customers

Customer Expectations

Client V leaders communicate and interact directly with current and potential students, families, and local educators they support. During these direct interactions, the leaders can receive direct feedback. One benefit of being a small organization and serving a niche demographic is the close relationships and interactions the leaders can have with the students, families, and local educators. Occasionally, the leaders communicate with some stakeholders using WhatsApp on mobile phones. Communication with existing donors is primarily via email and Facebook. Client V leaders approaches any new person they meet as a potential donor and will engage them in communication to inform them about the organization and provide them with business cards. External stakeholders can also communicate using a contact option on Client V's website and send a message or post a comment on Facebook.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Client V's primary product offering was the same for all the students in the segment they serve. The close relationship with the students and their families enables Client V to receive feedback constantly. The close, continuous engagement allows Client V to address any areas of dissatisfaction in near real time. During the pandemic, Client V leaders pivoted to change their primary product offerings to teaching English and supporting efforts to address food and other insecurities in the community. These efforts provided Client V leaders with continuous feedback from students, families, and the community and the opportunity to address and dissatisfaction quickly.

Customer Engagement

Client V leaders spend half of the year living in the community they serve. Living in the community allows Client V leaders to be very close to the voice of their customers and foster quality relationships. Client V can take the direct feedback they receive and determine future product offerings and customer segments. In addition to the customers' feedback, Client V leaders also maintains a close relationship with other essential community support resources and aligns their efforts with these community support resources to provide the most significant impact despite the organization's small size. In addition to receiving verbal feedback directly from the students and community members, Client V leaders use surveys to collect data on satisfaction and areas for future services and product offerings. The most pressing educational needs of the community deemed to have the greatest potential to provide the most significant opportunity to improve access to quality education for children in the community dictate the services offered by Client V.

The niche product offerings of Client V are focused on a single distinct market segment. Client V is actively working on plans to expand their product offerings to support children attending college and expanding the materials received by the secondary school students to include a laptop computer and reliable, consistent access to the internet. Another product offering is teaching English to the local educators and family members.

Results Triad: Workforce, Operations, and Results

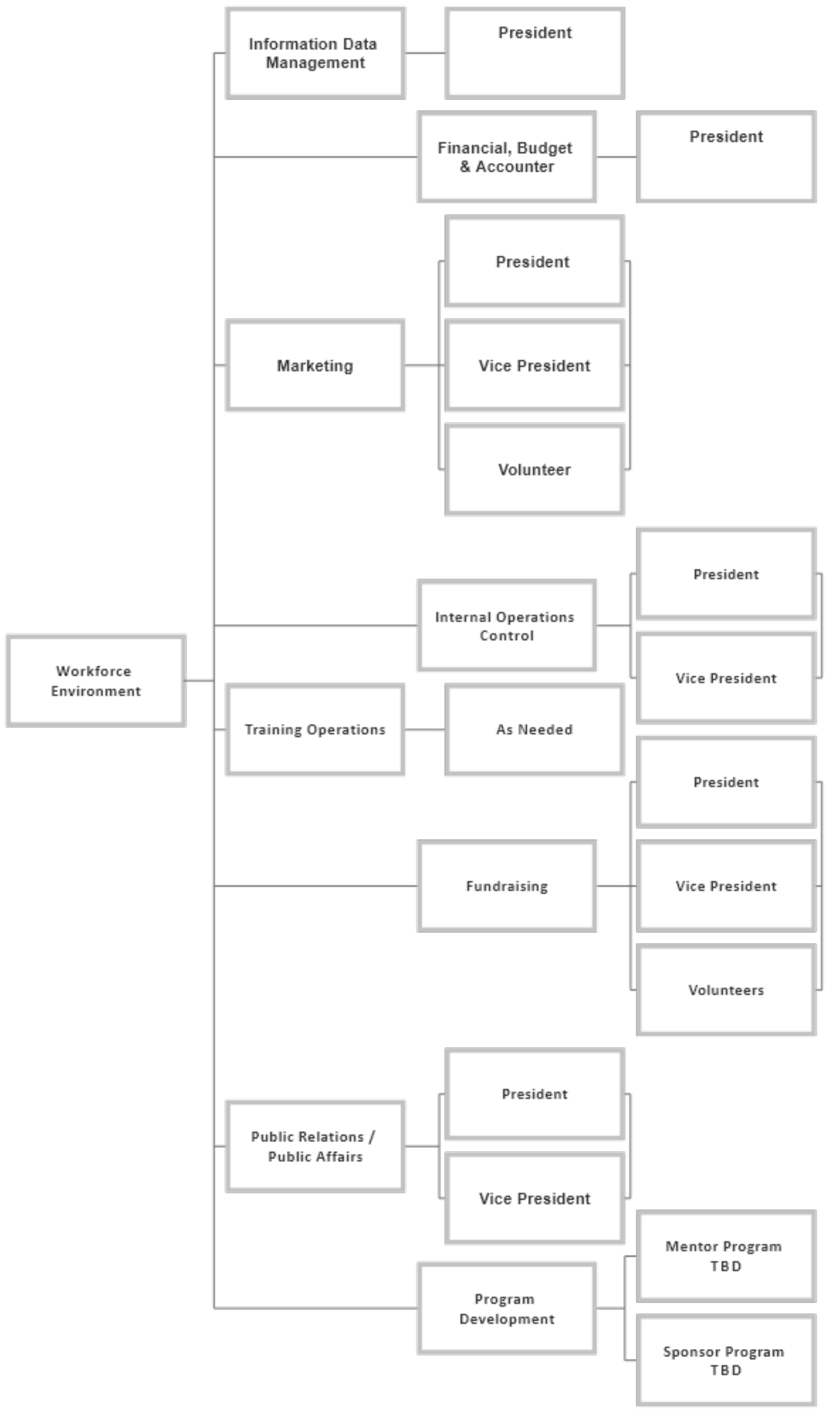
Workforce

Workforce Environment

Client V leaders determine workforce capability and capacity by reviewing the strengths and schedule availability of the president and vice president. When Client V leaders determine that a task is outside of their scope of knowledge and expertise, and it would take too long to acquire the skills, the decision is made to enlist external help. Local volunteers to assist with the students are recruited based on the current relationship the volunteer has with both the community and Client V. To keep expenses low, Client V leaders engage volunteers whenever possible. For example, the current web designer is a volunteer who supports Client V's website design needs. Figure 9 shows how Client V leaders currently organize and manage the workforce.

Figure 9

Workforce Organization and Management



Client V leaders identify five organizational characteristics for creating an effective and supportive workforce environment shown in Figure 10. Client V does not maintain a commercial office location, and the leaders run the organization from their home offices. Client V is a completely volunteer-run operation. No one is compensated for work or services that support the organization. The size and volume of the organization currently do not warrant a paid workforce structure. The founders have been successful in running the organization and providing support that does not negatively impede the success of the organization or their other obligations and responsibilities, which are their source of income. Workplace performance measures and improvement goals are in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

Figure 10

Client V's Organizational Characteristics

Workforce Engagement

The organization characteristics shown in Figure 10 are the foundation for Client V’s culture. Open communication is paramount to the organization’s operation, and the president and vice president are comfortable engaging in crucial communication when appropriate. The president and vice president possess high quality performance attributes and work to ensure that the organization’s brand reflects the high level of integrity and quality that is the organization’s foundation in alignment with the organization’s values listed in Table 5. Client V leaders do not use a systematic process for learning development, workforce performance management, and workforce development. Each founder is responsible for managing their personal development and performance that positively supports the organization’s mission. Client V leaders communicate regularly with their students and their families and uses surveys, as appropriate to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of initiatives implemented in response to learning and development opportunities. Client V leaders recognizes that the environment is dynamic and continuous evaluations and improvements are needed to meet the needs of their stakeholders; therefore, Client V leaders use the systems-based Baldrige Excellence Framework (NIST, 2019c) as the foundation of their performance improvement system.

Operations

Work Processes

The president and vice president of Client V continuously seek opportunities for improvement (OFIs) in their work processes. The KPIs and KAPIs in the marketing, donor base, financial, and customer base categories are used to track OFIs. Improving work processes increases organizational efficiency allowing the organization to continue to operate leanly with volunteers only. Time and money are significant factors that determine product and process improvement. External and internal factors can also drive changes to work processes. When this occurs, the president and vice president work collaboratively to identify and implement the new work processes as efficiently and fiscally responsibly. The leaders will also enlist any additional help needed from board members and other volunteers.

The decision to partner with a local, established organization to manage the delivery of supplies and be the primary point of contact for the students and their families will release time for Client V leaders to implement and deploy new product offerings and dedicate more time to raising the required funds to support the organizational mission. Figure 11 shows the critical work processes and the timeline before both the COVID-19 pandemic and Partner A assumed the responsibility of purchasing and distributing the supplies to the students each academic year. Figure 12 shows what changes leaders expect to occur in the vital work processes because of the partnership. Table 7 shows the specific products provided to students per year. For some supplies, such as student uniforms, there is only one vendor available. For other items such as backpacks, calculators, and notebooks, the vendor was chosen based on the one that offers the most attractive pricing when Client V is ready to purchase. With the partnership with Partner A, Client V will no longer be responsible for purchasing the supplies for each student; this will be the responsibility of Partner A. When schools reopen, Client V will be responsible for providing the funds to cover the supplies for each student directly to Partner A.

Figure 11

Critical Work Processes and Timeline Prepartnership

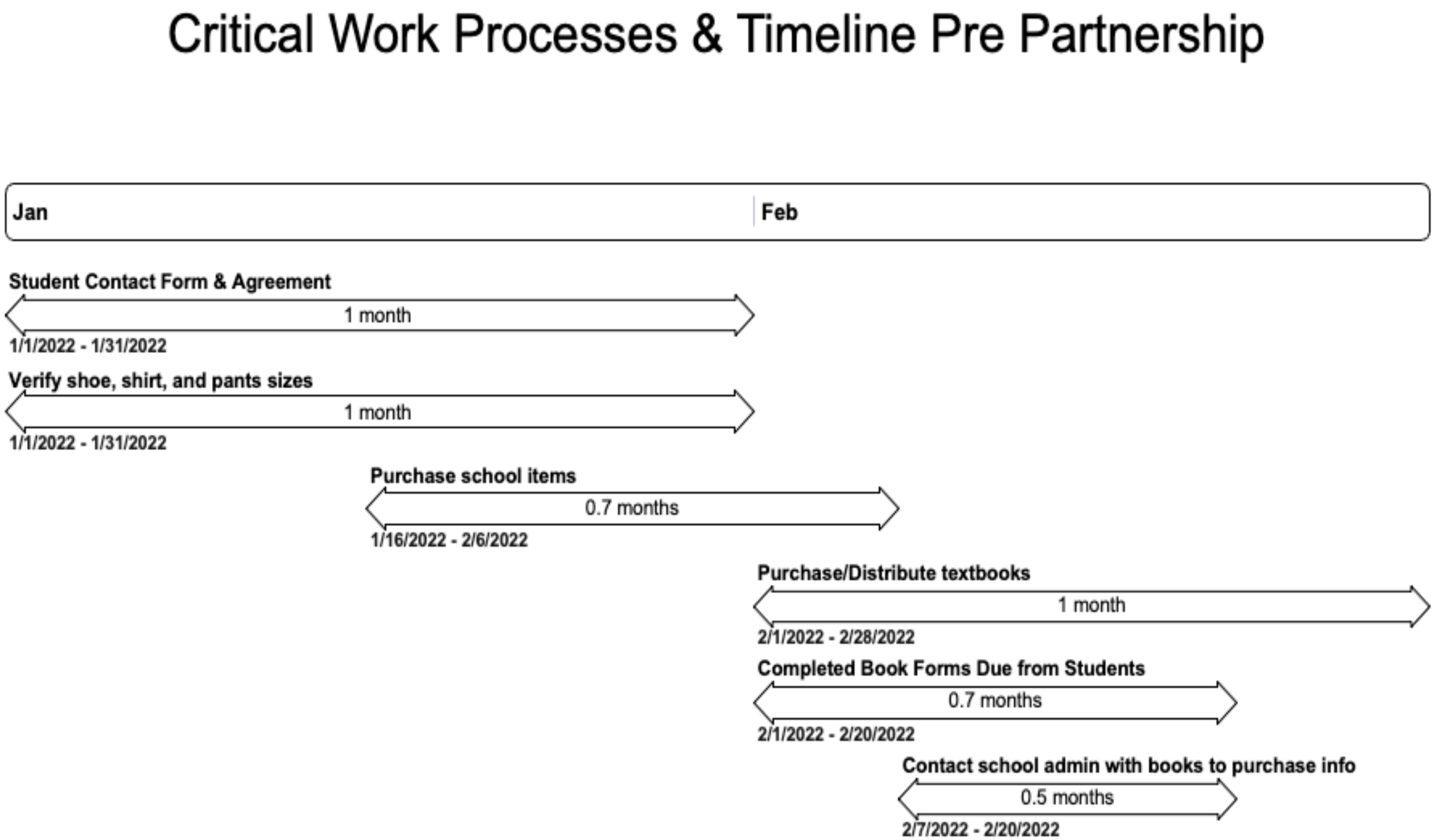


Figure 12

Critical Work Processes and Timeline Postpartnership

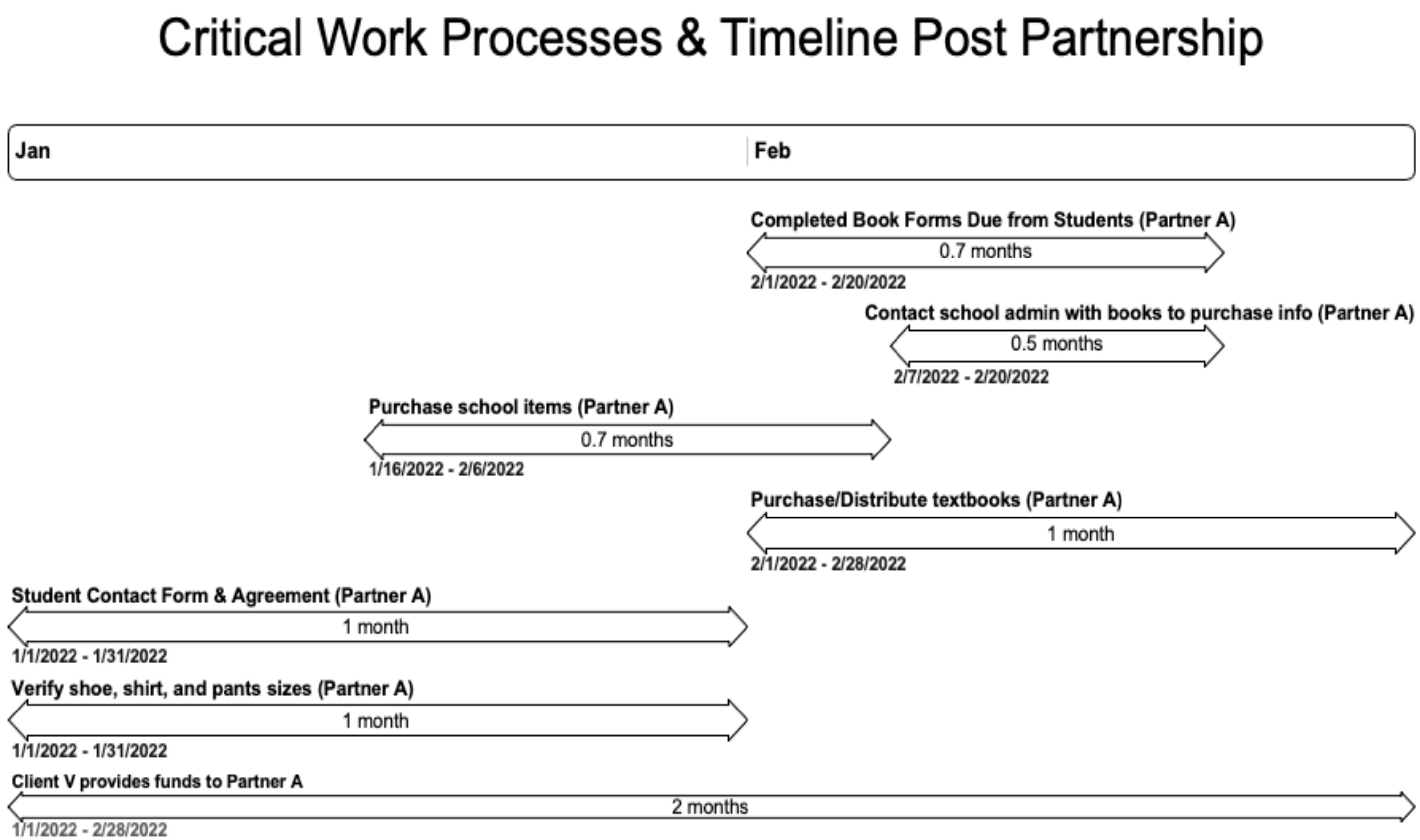


Table 7

Student Supplies Provided

Item	Qty	Grade	Frequency
Shoe	1 pair	All	Annual
Pants – sponsored students receive 2 pairs	1 pair	All	Annual
Socks	2 pairs	All	Annual
Shirt – School Uniform	1	All	Annual
Backpack	1	7th	One Time
Notebooks	Varies	All	Annual
Pens	Varies	All	Annual
Pencils	Varies	All	Annual
Erasers	Varies	All	Annual
Geometry Set	1	7^{t}th	One Time
Dictionary	1	7th	One Time
Calculators	1	10th	One Time
Bus transportation insurance	Varies	All	As needed
Recorders – music class	Varies	All	As needed
Tuition for English class	Varies	All	As needed

The risk analysis section of Client V’s strategic plan is the foundation for how the leaders choose to pursue strategic opportunities deemed intelligent risks. Depending on the opportunity, the leaders will personally cover the expenses associated with the opportunities. Client V leaders monitor and track the implementation of strategic initiatives so the leaders can make evidence-based decisions on how to pursue and improve the approach.

Operational Effectiveness

Client V leaders control cost by aligning the day-to-day operations with the budget and strategic plan. Client V is operated solely by volunteers. Neither the president nor vice president receives compensation for their role. The most significant organizational expense is the insurance coverage for the organization to maintain regulatory compliance. The president's and vice president pay the insurance expense from their personal funds. The leaders view the expense as a contribution to the sustainability of the organization financially. Other administrative costs are minimal, and the leaders also pay these from personal funds.

Client V leaders follow industry best practices to protect physical and electronic data and crucial operational systems to ensure confidentiality and appropriate access both physically and electronically to confidential organizational data and information. These practices include using strong passwords, properly securing workstations, encrypting and password protecting data, having adequate malware and virus protection software, and, when feasible, using two-factor authentication.

Client V leaders operate from a home-based office and follows appropriate guidelines to maintain a good safe working environment. Client V leaders do not regularly meet with stakeholders at their home office, so safety for external stakeholders is not a concern. Client V leaders follow best practices to maintain backups of critical organizational data and information to maintain business continuity. If a problem occurs with computer hardware, Client V can continue to operate in a minimal capacity using a tablet or a smartphone.

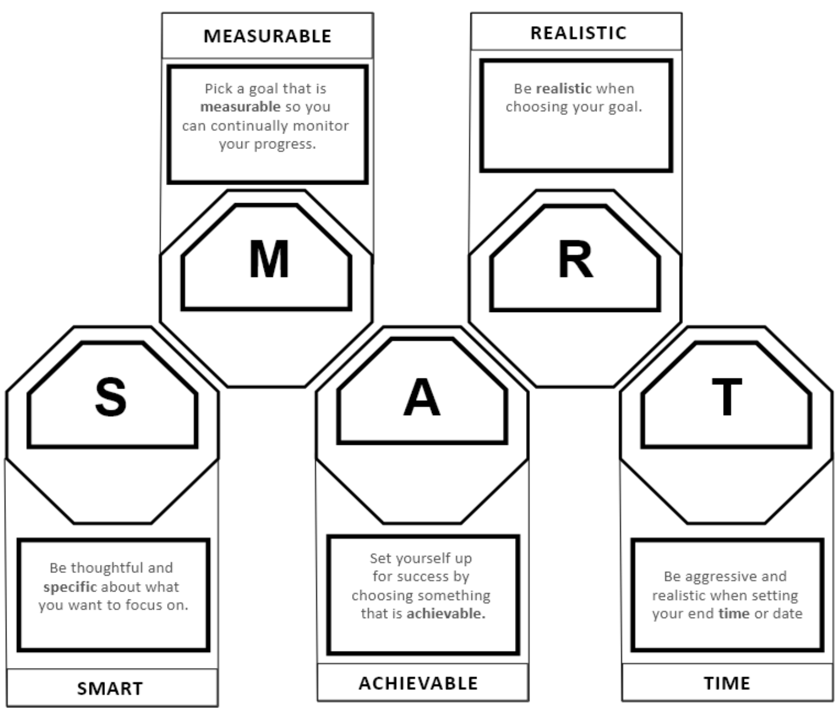
Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement of Organizational Performance

The goals, KPIs, and KAPIs in the strategic plan define client V's daily operational tasks and organizational performance. Client V uses a custom Access database designed by the president to track data that supports the organization's daily operations and overall performance. Figure 7 and Figure 8 show Client V's most recent critical short and long-term performance measures. Client V uses the guiding principle of creating SMART measures for the organization (shown in Figure 13). The SMART principle is defined in Client V leaders' criteria for setting goal parameters (Figure 6).

Figure 13

SMART principles



The goal timeline established for each measure in the strategic plan determines how the leaders track and review each measure. Leaders review annual goals monthly and quarterly. The leaders evaluate the organization's daily operations at least quarterly. The organization's small size supports the ability to operate in a lean and agile way to respond to unexpected organizational or external changes quickly and pivot and adjust as needed. Another strength of the organization's small size is working in a culture of continuous improvement and innovation using the Baldrige framework and without navigating internal barriers and resistance. Changes are made based on a collaborative decisions between the president and vice president. Client V leaders review and incorporates comparative data based on several factors such as availability and relevance to their organization. Client V leaders project the organization's future performance by reviewing all historical data and the current year's goals, KPIs, and KAPIs from the strategic plan. In addition, Client V considers any potential external events or barriers that may impact the organization's future performance and adjusts as needed. When the adjustments impact external stakeholders, leaders communicate the adjustments to the appropriate parties quickly and efficiently.

Information and Knowledge Management

The custom access database designed by the president is Client V's primary tool for organizational data and information. The president is primarily responsible for entering and maintaining the data in the database. The database has checks to help with data quality and integrity to minimize data-entry errors. Using the database, Client V leaders can provide reports to stakeholders in a user-friendly and easy-to-understand format. Client V also maintains the organization's financial data using a separate application. Similar to the custom database, this application allows for data integrity checks and notifications to minimize inaccurate data and increase the validity and data quality. In addition, Client V leaders can quickly produce financial statements and financial graphs for stakeholders as needed.

Client V uses the strategic plan, financial, organizational data, and communication with stakeholders to support knowledge management processes. Transfer of the knowledge is both verbal and written. Most knowledge is shared verbally between the president and vice president using supplemental documentation as needed. When developing formal processes, the knowledge to support the process the leaders capture the knowledge using the appropriate tool, such as in a Word document. Documentation is maintained using a version-control process to include the creation date, the date of any subsequent modifications, version numbers, and appropriate naming to support easy identification. Client V leaders do not use a systematic approach to sharing best practices. Instead, the president and vice president are continuously engaged in communication and decide to adopt and implement best practices that support organizational operations. Client V leaders are constantly leveraging their current knowledge and reviewing new resources to support how the organization operates. The core approach for Client V is to create a team-based, sharing environment in which issues can be solved creatively and efficiently.

Collection, Analysis, and Preparation of Results

Thematic Findings

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies nonprofit executive leaders used to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The research question for the focused on strategies that some executive leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. For this study, I collected data from semistructured interviews, the organization’s website, organizational documents, publicly available data, and the organization’s social media channels. The data were analyzed to identify key themes. The three primary themes identified were (a) digital marketing is an effective tool to develop and sustain relationships with the donor base, (b) donor base demographics and the appropriate use of digital marketing affects the relationship with the NPO, and (c) communication is a crucial factor to secure and sustain relationships using digital marketing. The themes revealed the importance of executive NPO leaders having basic knowledge of relationship management and the importance of incorporating relationship management into digital strategies to secure and sustain the donor base successfully. The following sections contain the summaries of the three primary themes.

Thematic Finding 1

A key theme revealed from the analysis of the data is that digital marketing is an effective tool to develop and maintain relationships with the donor base. The leaders’ previous successful experience with digital marketing and recognition of the growing role technology and social media plays in society contribute to the leaders’ desire to leverage digital marketing as a primary means to develop and maintain relationships with the donor base. The leaders identified the use of Facebook and their website as digital marketing tools currently used to sustain and grow the donor base. The executive NPO leaders understand that digital marketing allows the leaders to gather analytics in near real time to evaluate what is working and what is not, is a low-cost and efficient option vital to the leaders given their small size and limited resources, and digital marketing removes the location barrier between the NPO and stakeholders and facilitates two-way communication, building trust and support. The strategy to use digital marketing to grow and sustain the donor base aligns with RMT framework as a tool to measure the relationship quality with stakeholders using the measures introduced by Hon and Grunig (1999).

Thematic Finding 2

Client V leaders' goal is to expand its donor base by targeting specific demographic groups using digital marketing. The leaders know that selecting the appropriate digital marketing tools and messaging can potentially increase the donor base. The leaders have explained the type, tone, and distribution method of the communication factor in the success of digital marketing strategies to grow and sustain the donor base. The leaders track the communication preferences of their existing donors and use this information to group digital marketing efforts to reflect the preference of the donor base demographics. The senior leaders stressed the importance of attracting donors that contribute routinely using key demographic traits as one way to support the long-term success of the leader's ability to fulfill the organization's mission. Donor base demographics and the appropriate use of digital marketing affect the relationship with the NPO is another key theme revealed from the data analysis. Using digital marketing to target specific demographics to build communal relationships aligns with RMT as stakeholders that perceive the relationship to be communal will routinely support the NPO.

Thematic Finding 3

Another key theme revealed from the data analysis is that communication is crucial to secure and sustain relationships using digital marketing. The leaders explained the importance of communicating with stakeholders using the mode and content that is appropriate and meets the stakeholders' expectations. The leaders understand that digital marketing provides the ability to communicate with stakeholders using their preferred method. The leaders also understand that trust between the stakeholders and the organization is a critical factor. The leaders recognize that using strategic communications and aligning the communication with the organization's brand, mission and values are essential, and doing so enhances the NPO's integrity, competence, and dependability with stakeholders. The leaders understand the need for effective communication strategies that support transparency also increases trust, which positively influences donors' decisions. The leaders acknowledge the importance of strategic, consistent, and effective communication, and stakeholders expect communication that updates the organization's operations and does so in an authentic and relatable way. This theme is aligned with RMT because the executive NPO leaders are aware that trust from stakeholders is required to build and grow a donor base that provides consistent support to the NPO, influencing the number of students the NPO can support.

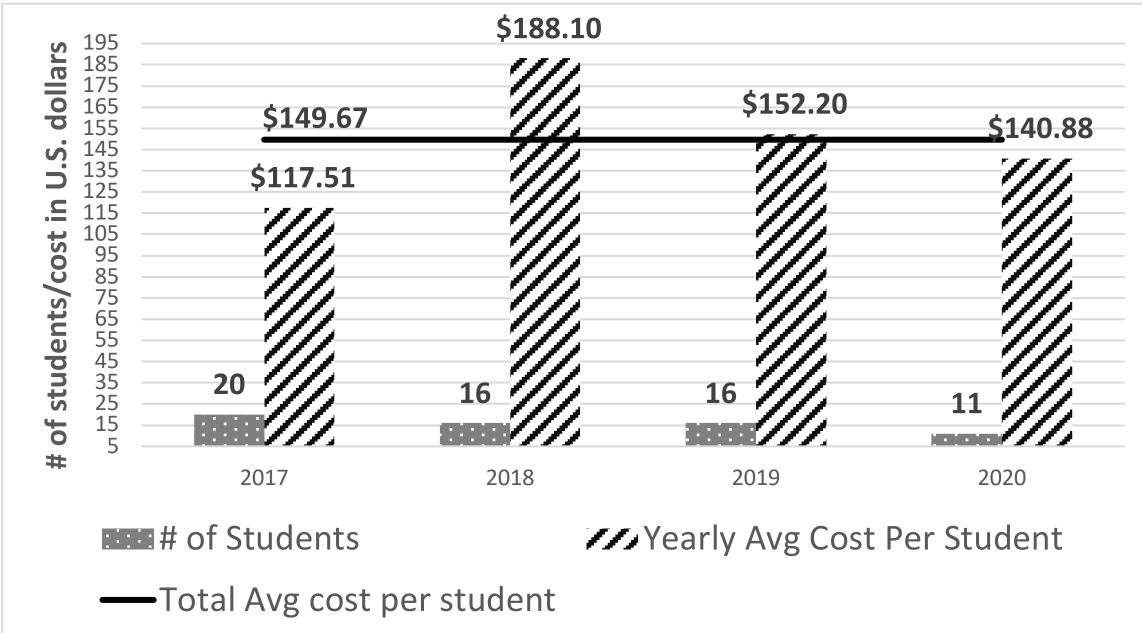
Product and Process Results

Client V provides financial support for children completing the sixth grade in a small community in Costa Rica to continue their education and obtain their baccalaureate. Client V is in its sixth year of operation. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Client V has expanded its offerings to teach English to the teachers in the community. Client V leaders measure the performance of their primary offering of providing financial support for students to further their education by the number of students they can offer support to each year. Client V cannot control the cost of the supplies the students need each year; therefore, the average cost per student fluctuates from year to year. Figure 14 shows the average cost per student per year since 2017, 1 year after Client V began operations.

Client V leaders are in the initial stages of identifying and implementing the

Figure 14

Average Cost per Student per Year



appropriate processes to support providing the data and information to measure progress and performance that they can use to align, improve, and innovate the product offerings and processes in alignment with the organization's missions, values, and objectives. With the limited resources Client V uses for the organization's daily operations, the leaders do not currently use a systematic process to measure process results. Client V leaders rely on the goals, KPIs, and KAPIs identified in the strategic plan as the foundation for measuring process and product results. In addition, feedback from stakeholders drives product and process improvement changes.

Customer Results

The small size of Client V's operational staff and the close relationship established within the community allows Client V leaders to receive frequent verbal feedback from the customers they serve. Client V also uses surveys to collect feedback from students, community partners, and donors. The leaders use the information gathered from verbal feedback and surveys to track stakeholder satisfaction and dissatisfaction. To facilitate relationships with stakeholders, the leaders engage and communicate with stakeholders using Facebook, direct emails, the organizational website, a blog, and WhatsApp. The leaders use Facebook and direct emails for customer engagement and relationship building. The leaders live in the community they serve for approximately half of the year. Being residents of the community affords the leaders the ability to obtain feedback from stakeholders continuously. The leaders are also able to establish trust and create and sustain long-term quality relationships in the community. Being community members is an additional positive for the leaders when working to gain buy-in from the parents to support their children to continue their education.

Workforce Results

The core of Client V's philosophy for its workforce is to create a team-based, sharing environment in which issues can be solved creatively and efficiently. Client V's workforce is primarily the president and vice president, who volunteer their time and expertise to run the organization. The structure of Client V does not support a formal process to track the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the workforce. Until Client V experiences consistent growth that supports expanding the workforce, the need for trackable processes and systems to manage and monitor recruiting, onboarding, and developing the workforce is not required. The president and vice president will engage in professional development as needed to support the organization's operation.

Leadership and Governance Results

It is a top priority of the leaders of Client V leaders to cultivate and maintain relationships with all their stakeholders. Both leaders consistently communicate with key stakeholders via phone calls, emails, and in person interactions. The other board members provide feedback and oversight of Client V's operations as needed in support of the president and vice president. The president is responsible for the fiscal management of the organization. Some of the fiscal responsibilities include timely and accurate filing of the required IRS Form 990, preparing financial reports, and budgeting. The board members meet annually to review the organization's performance and discuss any OFIs. The leaders of Client V follow all regulatory guidelines in the United States and Costa Rica required to ensure the organization maintains good standing. The leaders adhere to required and appropriate ethical standards and have not experienced any negative ethical or legal issues since the organization's inception.

Financial and Market Results

The president of Client V tracks and maintains the organization's financial results monthly. The president's review of the organization's finances allows Client V to plan for the number of students they can support, the amount of donations needed to support additional students, and what is available to cover any additional expenses directly related to supporting the students. Client V has had previous success with donors sponsoring a kid until graduation and has plans to increase this sponsorship model option going forward. From 2016 - 2020 the entire organization's expenditures were $10,449. The leaders do not use funds received from donations to cover overhead expenses, which from 2016-2020 were equal to 37%. The leaders use donations entirely to support the 63% of expenditures that support the program services provided by Client V. Figure 15 shows Client V's fiscal year 2019 Financial Report. Figure 16 shows Client V's donations by calendar year in U.S. dollars, and Figure 14 shows the number of donors per calendar year.

Figure 15

Fiscal Year 2019 Financial Report

Client V – FY 2019 Financial Report				
Line Number	**Description**	**Date**		**Amount**
1	End of Year Bank Statement	6/31/2020	$	3,244.61
2	Beg of Year Bank Balance	7/1/2019	$	2,251.11
3	Expenditures per Bank Statements		**$**	**2,323.29**
4	Expenditures per GES database			**$3,552.28**
	Additional Adjustments from Donation charged to Credit Card – Seidman/Tors not reflected in Bank Statements			
	Below Charges to Credit Card			
	Web Domain Fee		$	29.98
	SquareSpace Fee		$	144.00
	Brochure Printing – BluesFest		$	126.00
	Beals Insurance		$	744.00
	T O T A L		**$**	**1,043.98**
	Bank Balance Expenditures		**$**	**2,323.29**
	Adjusted Total add additional Expenses		**$**	**1,043.98**
	TOTAL		**$**	**3,367.27**
	Expenditure per GES database			$3,552.28
	Minus Adjust Totals Bank Statement		$	3,367.27
	Difference			**$185.01**
	End of Year Cash on Hand – Accts Receivable 2020		$	153.00
	Difference not accounted for			**$32.01**
	Add to GES expenditures – fees for ATM			**$6.00**
	Unaccounted for Dollars			$26.01
	Acct Receivable deposited in July 2020			

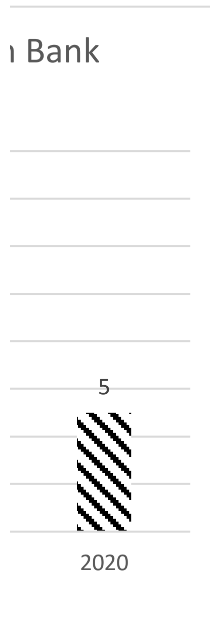
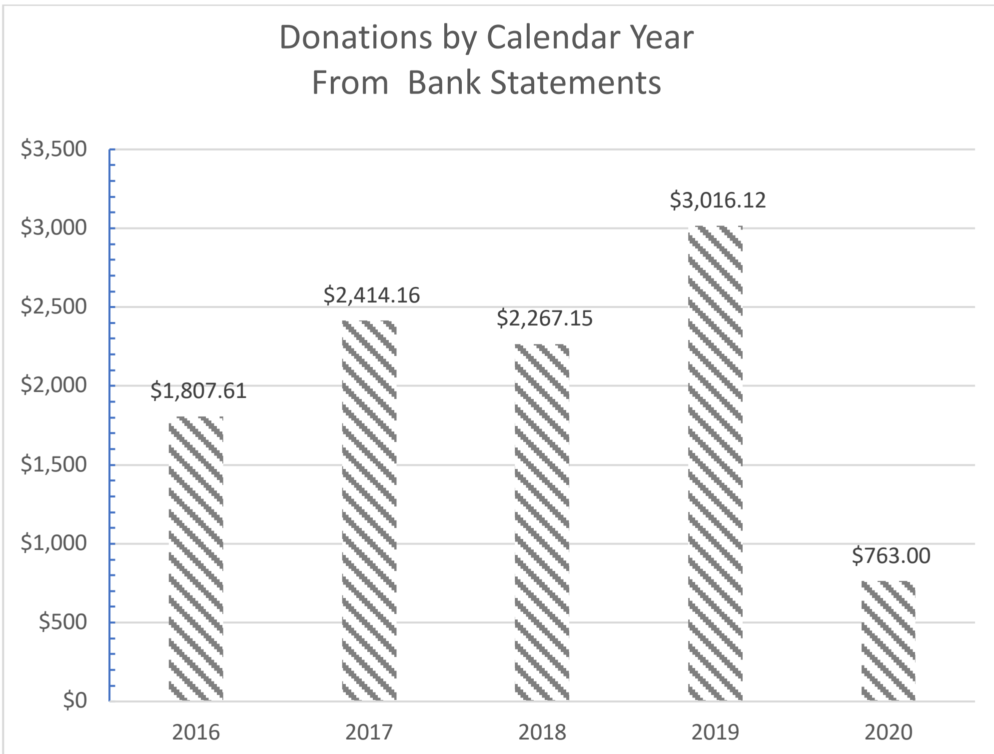


Figure 17

Donations by Number of Donors per Calendar Year



Key Themes

Using the 2019-2020 Baldrige Excellence Framework, the key themes revealed from the survey of the executive NPO leaders of Client V were process strengths, process opportunities, results strengths, and results opportunities. In alignment with the evaluation dimensions of the 2019-2020 Baldrige Excellence Framework, the key business factors used to analyze the process methods Client V leaders use were approach, deployment, learning, and integration. The key themes of the study are: (a) digital marketing is an effective tool to develop and sustain relationships with the donor base, (b) donor base demographics and the appropriate use of digital marketing affect the relationship with the NPO, and (c) communication is a crucial factor to secure and sustain relationships using digital marketing.

Process Strengths

The executive NPO leaders of Client V have implemented many effective processes to support accomplishing the daily operational tasks with a small team successfully delivering their services to the students in the local community. The leaders have created and implemented an effective systematic process to obtain and provide the supplies to the students. The benefit of having this process in place is that it supported an effortless transition to hand over these tasks to their new community partner Cresciendo Juntos. The leaders have also developed effective processes to build quality relationships in the community, identify OFIs, and pivot to address external factors out of their control. The president has developed processes to track and manage the donor base, including some key demographics and the allocation of revenue to meet the needs of as many students as possible each academic year. The president and vice president consistently manage tasks based on their strengths. When the leaders become aware of gaps and OFIs, the leaders quickly identify and implement solutions to address the issues.

Process Opportunities

Despite its small size, Client V has established some effective processes to support its mission and goals. Client V leaders might consider expanding its KPIs to include metrics to track digital marketing efforts. Some of these metrics might include increasing the number of Facebook followers and increasing traffic to the organization's website. The leaders might also develop and implement plans to increase the number of repeat donors and donors that give on a routine schedule such as monthly. The president maintains a custom Access database to track donors and students and does not currently support all the data required to use digital marketing to deliver a personalized experience to existing and potential donors. Updates to the database can be time-consuming. Client V leaders might consider an off-the-shelf commercial product specifically for NPOs to manage their donor base. Finally, Client V leaders might consider creating a formal process to identify and pursue additional partnerships to expand organizational capacity to serve more students and expand the program offered. Despite its small size, Client V leaders have established some effective processes to support its mission and goals. Client V leaders might consider expanding their KPIs and KAPIs to include metrics to track digital marketing efforts. Some of these metrics may include increasing the number of Facebook followers and increasing traffic to the organization's website. The Client V leaders might also develop and implement plans to increase the number of repeat donors and donors that give on a routine schedule such as monthly. Finally, Client V might consider creating a formal process to identify and pursue additional partnerships to expand organizational capacity to serve more students and expand the program offered.

Results Strengths

Executive NPO leaders might face challenges and barriers when using digital marketing to increase and sustain their donor base. The leaders of Client V have successfully identified and established critical KPIs and KAPIs to track their donor base and marketing activities. One achievement of Client V is that they have provided the support for 32 students to continue their education after the sixth grade in four years. Out of the 32 students, 10 students have graduated, and only 1 student dropped out and did not complete their education. Statistically Client V has achieved a 96.97% matriculation success rate. The leaders of Client V have become an integral part of the community in Costa Rica. The leaders have been successful in building quality relationships in the community. The relationships and the support they have provided to the children in the community supported Client V's ability to enter a partnership with Partner A. Client V has been able to deliver its mission without requiring large amounts of monetary support. Another major achievement of Client V is that 100% of the funds donated support the mission directly. Volunteers completely run client V. The leaders do not earn salaries, nor do they use any monetary donations to cover administrative costs.

The leaders' decision to use digital marketing to engage and communicate with their stakeholders has been an effective way to build relationships. Client V leaders have become adept in navigating the barriers and challenges associated with delivering support in-country outside of the United States, where both leaders are not completely fluent in the language used. Although Client V leaders have not yet implemented a systematic process to support students' past graduation, they have helped one student continue their education past the baccalaureate level. Most importantly, Client V's work in the community is having a positive impact and achieving the mission of providing children with access to quality education to support the children’s ability to contribute to the betterment of themselves, their families, and their community.

Results Opportunities

Digital marketing is dynamic and evolves quickly. The leaders of Client V have encountered challenges keeping abreast with the latest trends and best practices to effectively and consistently implement a digital marketing strategy that supports the consistent growth of the donor base. The leaders have established KPIs to track various donor metrics; however, the leaders have not aligned the donor KPIs with any discrete digital marketing efforts. The leaders should consider tracking their digital marketing efforts and aligning the efforts to donor outcomes. The leaders have built quality relationships within the community and can engage and receive feedback from community stakeholders often. However, the leaders do not discretely track the feedback because almost all the feedback received is verbal, and, therefore, the leaders might also consider implementing a systematic process to track student satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Project Summary

In this qualitative single case study, I explored the strategies executive leaders of Client V used to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The growth of the nonprofit industry has led to an abundance of choices available to donors requiring executive NPO leaders to leverage technology to expand the reach to potential donors and enhance the relationship with potential and existing donors (Saura et al., 2017). Executive NPO leaders can use digital marketing as an efficient, cost-effective method to increase and sustain their donor base while obtaining information to track and measure the effectiveness of their efforts (Jadhav & Yallatti, 2018). The inability to increase and sustain the donor base may result in NPOs not fulfilling their mission and eventually leading to the NPO failing to exist.

I explored the strategies of the leaders of an NPO located in the northeastern United States for this study. The RMT was the conceptual framework for the study. I used the 2019-2020 Baldrige Excellence Framework as a tool to examine Client V's organizational environment, organizational relationships and situation, leadership, customer, workforce, operations, measurement analysis, and knowledge management. This study's data collection sources consisted of semistructured interviews, the organization, website, organizational documents, publicly available data, the organization's social media, academic literature, NPO industry literature, and regular communication with the president and vice president of Client V.

Executive NPO leaders may use data from this qualitative single case study to identify strategies to evaluate their organizational performance, increase donor revenue using digital marketing, minimize overhead expenditures, create quality long-term relationships with stakeholders, contribute to social change that positively impacts a community, and sustain the organization long-term. Executive NPO leaders can use the Baldrige Criteria for Performance to analyze the organization to identify challenges, capitalize on strengths, and holistically manage all organization components to achieve the mission, goals, and objectives. Executive NPO leaders who use digital marketing to increase and sustain their donor base may develop quality long-term relationships with donors and build consistent monetary support.

Contributions and Recommendations

The results from this study might provide executive NPO leaders with strategies to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. Nonprofit leaders may use digital marketing to build relationships and brand awareness with stakeholders (Seo & Vu, 2020). Executive NPO leaders might recognize how digital marketing may improve communication with stakeholders. In addition, it is often beneficial for leaders to leverage the core competencies required for creating and maintaining solid relationships with stakeholders using a successful digital marketing campaign instead of spending money to outsource the work (Lee & Ng, 2021). This study may benefit executive NPO leaders, micro, and small businesses in improving the organization's leadership and management and the overall organizational performance by using the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program. This study might provide both NPO and for-profit business leaders with strategies to build organizational brand awareness and quality long-term relationships with stakeholders to retain and sustain the support needed for their organizations to thrive.

Digital marketing is constantly evolving and touches every organizational business process changing the look of business sectors worldwide (Makrides et al., 2020). I recommend the executive NPO leaders of Client V work to expand their digital marketing strategy, including investing time to increase their knowledge of the latest digital marketing best practices since it is a fast changing tool. The executive NPO leaders recognize the potential of digital marketing and how it can help increase and sustain their donor base to fulfill their mission, supporting their current programs and support to expand services and offerings.

To the academic community, I recommend that researchers explore how executive NPO leaders use RMT to demonstrate the benefit of digital marketing to secure and sustain the donor base. Stakeholders are aware and selective of the organizations they choose to support, and digital marketing allows executive NPO leaders a level of transparency with stakeholders and the ability to personalize communication so they do not become lost in the digital noise (Makrides et al., 2020). Researchers should continue to explore the various digital marketing tools used by and available to executive NPO leaders that will support increasing and sustaining the donor base for long-term sustainability.

Application to Professional Practice

The findings of this doctoral study contribute to improved business practices because, in today's technology dependent climate, the organization's success can depend on creating and implementing an appropriate digital marketing strategy that can help leaders build brand awareness and improve stakeholder relationships, increasing the organization's support from stakeholders. Organizational leaders need both a digital marketing plan and strategy to achieve organizational goals and increase long-term sustainability (Soedarsono et al., 2020). Technology and the internet provide an abundance of opportunities for possible measures to support an organization's goals. Because of the many opportunities available to collect information, leaders must pay attention to ensure the real meaning of the information is interpreted correctly from the data can (Saura et al., 2017). It is becoming increasingly difficult for NPOs to gain financial support from stakeholders and create the economic sustainability needed to deliver their mission (Lee & Ng, 2021).

Executive NPO leaders that make using digital marketing a priority to increase and sustain their donor base can foster quality relationships with stakeholders without addressing the barrier of location that can be problematic using non digital strategies. Many digital marketing tools available are free or incur minimum costs making it an attractive option for NPOs that are resource constrained. The engagement with stakeholders supported by digital marketing can help increase and sustain the donor base, providing a consistent support level.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study contribute to social change by providing executive NPO leaders with strategies to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. The implications for social change from the study findings also include inspiring NPO leaders to learn and implement digital marketing strategies to increase brand awareness and communicate their mission to a broader audience, potentially increasing long-term stakeholder support. In addition, NPO leaders can engage the stakeholders using digital marketing strategies in helping them retain consistent long-term support for the organization's mission and objectives.

NPO leaders can secure the support to sustain operations by identifying and deploying the appropriate digital marketing strategies. Digital marketing strategies can help executive NPO leaders expand their organizational capacity and increase offerings because of the increased funding for programs and services to more stakeholders. In addition, to increase and sustain their donor base that will provide consistent support needed to deliver effective quality services and programs to enhance the lives of the communities they serve, executive NPO leaders can significantly impact social change because using digital marketing is a low-cost option for two-way communication with stakeholders eliminating geographic barriers.

Recommendations for Action

This section includes recommendations for executive NPO leaders of Client V, and other similar NPO leaders can consider for increasing and sustain their donor base using digital marketing based on the findings of this study and the evidence presented by Client V. Seo and Vu (2020) found that support from leadership is the most significant factor associated with the adoption of digital marketing strategies at NPOs. The higher the support level comes from, the more likely the organization is to use digital marketing for external communication with stakeholders (Seo & Vu, 2020). The thematic analysis of data shows the importance of (a) digital marketing as an effective tool to develop and maintain relationships with the donor base, (b) appropriate use of digital marketing based on demographics can affect the relationship with the NPO, and (c) communication is crucial to secure and sustain relationships using digital marketing as the key themes that support executive NPO leaders in the development of digital marketing strategies to increase and sustain the donor base.

Using the Baldrige framework to evaluate the processes and results, I recommend the leaders of Client V (a) develop and implement a digital marketing strategy to increase and sustain the donor base, (b) leverage the demographic data of their existing and potential donors to develop the appropriate targeted digital marketing strategy, and (c) use communication strategically in the digital marketing strategy to build trust and increase and sustain donor relationships. The Client V leaders might also consider selecting a complimentary change management process such as Six Sigma's Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control (DMAIC) or Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) in addition to the continued use of the Baldrige Performance Excellence framework and criteria as a systematic process to help ensure continuous improvement of the organization's performance and better track the success of digital marketing strategies. Client V leaders might review competitive and comparative data of other NPOs to identify digital marketing strategies.

The Client V leaders acknowledge the need to increase their knowledge about current digital marketing trends. The Microsoft Access database currently used to manage stakeholder information has limitations and requires increasingly more time to maintain, limiting their ability to efficiently develop and track digital marketing strategies. The first step I recommend for Client V leaders is to invest time in taking appropriate digital marketing strategy courses for NPO leaders followed by selecting and switching to a commercial system to collect and track stakeholder information for NPOs that meet the organization's current needs and provide for future growth. A commercial system will allow the leaders to easily and discretely track key digital marketing KPIs. I recommend that the executive NPO leaders review digital marketing KPIs monthly and quarterly. Some critical KPIs to track are: (a) donor retention rate, (b) donor lifetime value, (c) average gift size, (e) donation growth rate, (f) email open rate, and (g) conversion rate.

I recommend that the executive NPO leaders create a digital marketing strategy that includes a brand makeover to increase the effectiveness of digital marketing as a tool to develop and maintain relationships with the donor base. According to Seo and Vu (2020), promoting the organization's brand was considered the most crucial function in digital marketing strategies, followed by engaging and interacting with stakeholders. In addition, I recommend the leaders consider viewing the organization's website as the nucleus of Client V's brand image and digital marketing strategy, and all other digital marketing efforts should align with the website. Finally, as part of Client V's digital marketing strategy to develop and maintain relationships with donors, I recommend the leaders implement search engine optimization (SEO) best practices and routinely collect and analyze website traffic data.

The use and engagement of stakeholders with various social media channels vary by demographic traits such as age and gender. Participant 2 shared that some donors only prefer to receive communication by email, and the leaders have not communicated the annual amount of $150 to sponsor a child to the stakeholders. Client V leaders have identified Facebook as one of their chosen primary social media channels for their digital marketing strategy. Men and women between the ages of 25-34 having the highest percentage use of Facebook of 12.5% as of April 2021 (Tankovska, 2021). Nageswarakurukkal et al. (2020) found that donors are more inclined to give using social media channels, and Facebook is the preferred channel that inspires the highest rate of giving. I recommend the leaders use donor base demographics when developing specific digital marketing strategies and develop multiple strategies that align with the demographic criteria expectations. I recommend that Client V leaders communicate the student sponsorship amount of $150. In addition, I recommend the leaders offer donors several options to contribute the annual student sponsorship amount of $150 by offering an auto-renewal option. An additional recommendation is for Client V leaders to offer options to break the sponsorship amount into smaller recurring payments. Some examples are $75 for 2 months, $50 over 2 months, or $25 every 2 weeks for 3 months, based on donor demographics and adding prominent and easy options to act on their website and other social media channels.

To address the emerging theme that communication is crucial to secure and sustain relationships using digital marketing, I recommend that Client V leaders develop and implement a plan to communicate consistently and frequently with stakeholders using the appropriate channels. NPO leaders should demonstrate regard and recognition in communications with stakeholders (Pressgrove, 2017). To assist with this, I recommend Client V leaders as part of their digital marketing strategy to increase and sustain the donor base, develop a content calendar and consistently create and share fresh content using their chosen digital media channels. Using a social listening tool, such as Buzzsumo, can help the leaders identify what content performs best, spot trending content topics in any given industry, and perform a competitor analysis to optimize the content, thereby increasing organic ranking, generating more traffic, and boosting exposure. How NPO leaders communicate their organizations' mission and activities can influence the strength of the relationship with stakeholders (Yang et al., 2020). Building trust using communication strengthens a donor's engagement with the organization, increasing the level of their donations (Liu, 2019). Client V leaders might also use digital marketing to share positive stakeholder feedback and testimonials and increase the usage of pictures in their storytelling. Communicating to stakeholders how the organization uses personal data shared by stakeholders can increase trust and willingness to engage online (Zluky & Purcell, 2020). I recommend Client V leaders update their organizational website to adhere to the latest privacy guidelines by adding a privacy statement, terms and conditions, and a pop-up notification about their cookies policy.

The results found in this study might assist other executive NPO leaders with efficiently and effectively identifying and implementing the appropriate digital marketing strategy to increase and sustain their donor base. The dissemination of the results of this study will occur via conferences, lectures, and training events. In addition, the dissemination of the study results may also occur using social media platforms, literature searches, and collaboration among professional colleagues.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study limitation was that I explored the experiences of one NPO located in the northeastern United States and did not obtain the experiences from leaders of other NPOs. I recommend that researchers consider using a multiple case study design to determine strategies some executive NPO leaders use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. Using a multiple case study design can help researchers gain a broader understanding of the strategies some executive leaders of NPOs use to increase and sustain their donor base using digital marketing. I also recommend that researchers consider a mixed method case study design in future studies to support the collection and analysis of quantitative data in addition to qualitative data of the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies.

I recommend that researchers explore the various digital marketing tools and the results the use of the tools have on stakeholder relationship quality at similar NPO and for-profit organizations. The level of stakeholder relationship quality may provide a broader perspective on the successful digital marketing strategies leaders should use to foster long-term quality relationships to support the economic sustainability of the organization. I also recommend that researchers explore the similarities and differences between for-profit organizations that use digital marketing for stakeholder engagement and brand awareness. This research might provide information on the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies of an NPO in comparison to a for-profit organization.

Reflections

I expected completing the doctoral research to be challenging; however, the challenges that I encountered during the process were above and beyond anything I had anticipated. The process was dynamic, and I had to adjust many times. My usual analytical, methodological approach to achieving goals was one of the primary challenges that I had to adjust during the process. Most importantly, I had to embrace that part of the process was successfully following the process. Another critical challenge was staying engaged and finding reasons to continue. The good and bad from this process are lessons that will be invaluable to me as I move on to the next season of my life. The president and vice president of Client V were incredibly understanding, supportive, and shared information honestly and freely. This process has reinforced that I should acknowledge my weaknesses and focus on my strengths. Learning to write at the doctoral level and the exposure to conducting qualitative research has provided me a foundation to build on in the future. This process also reminded me of the importance of NPOs and that a large team and resources are not essential to making a positive change in a community. All that is required is identification of a need and the passion for making a change.

Most importantly, making a positive change is about providing help and not how many receive help. Helping only one person makes a difference to that person, and that is what is most important. Finally, the doctoral study has increased my knowledge and understanding of the vital role digital marketing can play for executive NPOs to increase and sustain their donor base.

Conclusion

The objective of my research was to identify and implement successful digital marketing strategies to increase and sustain the donor base. Based on my research, executive NPO leaders use various relationship management techniques based on the target demographic, the goal of the communication, organizational goals, objectives, and KPIs to build long-term quality relationships with stakeholders to increase organizational capacity to achieve their mission. Executive NPO leaders require monetary support from stakeholders to operate and deliver their mission. The nonprofit sector continues to grow annually, making it increasingly more challenging to attract and maintain donors. Technology has changed the way we communicate and make connections. Executive NPO leaders looking to thrive will benefit from systematic processes to embrace digital marketing strategies to increase and sustain the donor base.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

1. Introduce myself as the researcher, thank the participant for taking the time for the interview, and explain the research summary.
2. Read the research question and provide a short refresher on the study topic.
3. Explain to the participant their rights of participation-noting specifically
    a. The information obtained during the interview will be kept confidential
    b. Participation is voluntary and the participant may choose to withdraw from the study at any time
    c. Participants have the right to and will have the opportunity to review, change, correct, and redact any data related to their participation.
4. Inform the participant of the interview process and the expected time the interview will take.
5. Inform the participant I will be taking notes, that the interview will be recording, and the interview will be transcribed.
6. Inform the participant a follow-up interview may be conducted to allow the review and validation of the captured data
7. Confirm the participant is still willing to participate and obtain a verbal consent from the participant to proceed with the interview, including the recording of the interview.
8. Proceed with the interview – allocated time is approximately 60 minutes

   a. Ask the predetermined interview questions – questions were shared with participant prior to the interview
   b. Conduct additional inquiry as needed depending on answers provided to predetermined interview questions
9. Wrap up the interview
   a. Inform the participant when they can expect to receive the data
   b. Remind participant that I will be contacting them to schedule a follow-up meeting
   c. Thank the participant
   d. Ask if participants have any additional comments, questions, or concerns
   e. Confirm participant has my contact information.
10. End interview protocol

Interview Questions

1. What digital marketing strategies do you use to increase and sustain your donor base?
2. How did you select the digital marketing strategies used to increase and sustain your donor base?
3. How did you deploy the digital marketing strategies used to increase and sustain your donor base?
4. How, if at all, do the digital marketing strategies used to increase and sustain your donor base differ according to donor type (e.g., individual donors, corporate donors)?

5. How do you measure the effectiveness of each digital marketing strategy?
6. What more would you like to share about the digital marketing strategies your organization employs to increase and sustain your donor base?