

Humility and Marketing the Jewish Organization

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By Miriam Brosseau

<https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/humility-and-marketing-the-jewish-organization>

"Who is honoured? One who honours others." – Avot 4:1

The school year and gala season are wrapping up, camps are springing into action, and even though it's not the crazy marathon of fall holidays, Jewish organizations are *busy*. When it comes to marketing communications, you just want to get the word out so that someone – anyone – will listen.

The instinct for most nonprofits is to use their marketing communications to talk about all the awesome the stuff *they* do – and just talk about it louder to more people. "Come to this program!" "Join us!" "Will you be there?" "Did we mention there will be food??"

And that's understandable!

But it's broadcast communications in a social, digital age.

The trouble is, while these kinds of messages might read internally as invitations, to the audience they're just shouting. And in a world in which every one of us is exposed to at least 3000 (some say 4000-10000) advertising messages a day, and organizational messaging is competing with Netflix, baby pictures, endless news, and avocado toast alike, shouting about all the "stuff" an organization does is not going to "stop the scroll" for our audiences.

Here's the heart of the issue: if an organization talks about itself too much, that doesn't leave a whole lot of room for its supporters to *find themselves in that story* – to get involved, to donate, to volunteer... to get activated in the multitude of ways that organizations need to make an impact.

The key to great nonprofit marketing, counter-intuitively, is humility. It's to stop talking about the *organization* and start talking about the people who make your work possible. Put the mission's *supporters* at the center of the story, make them (feel like) the hero. Stop talking *at* them and start talking *with, to, and about* them.

Which means Jewish organizations need to take a step back out of the limelight – a deeply Jewish concept, but also a tough one to put into practice when it comes to marketing. It goes against everything we've been taught over the last century about what's required for us to get the word out there.

Jewish organizations are not alone in dealing with this shift; you're in good company. When See3 started working with Make-A-Wish America, they felt similarly. Audience analysis indicated that their brand equity was plateauing. But why?

Below is their "about us" from 2015:

ABOUT US



Make-A-Wish[®] grants the wish of a child diagnosed with a life-threatening medical condition in the United States and its territories, on average, every 38 minutes. We believe that a wish experience can be a game-changer. This one belief guides us. It inspires us to grant wishes that change the lives of the kids we serve.



OUR STORY

Wishes make life better for kids with life-threatening medical conditions. This simple, but powerful belief drives Make-A-Wish.

[MORE ABOUT THE MAKE-A-WISH STORY](#)

Now, granted, this is an "about us" page and the point of it is to talk about, well, us – as in the organization.

But what story does this tell? Who's driving the impact? Where do I, the audience, fit in?

Consider this small shift – how does it feel different?

ABOUT US



SHARE THIS PAGE

Tens of thousands of volunteers, donors and supporters advance the Make-A-Wish® vision to grant the wish of every child diagnosed with a critical illness. In the United States and its territories, on average, a wish is granted every 34 minutes. We believe a wish experience can be a game-changer. This one belief guides us and inspires us to grant wishes that change the lives of the kids we serve.



OUR STORY

Wishes make life better for kids with critical illnesses. This simple, but powerful belief drives Make-A-Wish.

[MORE ABOUT THE MAKE-A-WISH STORY](#)

See the difference? In the [updated statement](#), the organization *leads with the community*. They are the ones who make all this possible. They are the heroes. Make-A-Wish itself carries that vision and acts as the *mechanism* to bring *their* impact to life.

The idea of making the audience the “hero of the story” – of practicing humility in nonprofit marketing communications – can be a nebulous concept. But putting these examples side-by-side helps to illustrate it more clearly. One story is all about what the organization does. The other is all about what others make possible through them (and, implicitly, you could, too – as a donor, volunteer, or another kind of supporter).

And the latter is far more inviting.

A hundred years of broadcast communications have taught organizations to share their products and programs loudly, to ever more people, in order to engage them in the mission. But it's this kind of humble marketing that works. Call it *tzimtzum*. Call it servant leadership. Whatever the term, this approach both allows Jewish organizations to live their values more fully and invite audiences into their stories to make a meaningful impact.

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