



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ARTS CONSULTING GROUP

JUNE 2010

Ten Outstanding Web Resources for Cultural Organization Leaders

Alec Dickey, Senior Consultant

School is out. The beaches and barbecues beckon. Summer has arrived and once again it's time for Arts Consulting Group's annual top ten list of websites to bookmark for your summer reading list. Listed below are what we think are the very best free web resources for board members and culture industry management professionals.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND MORE

Two online libraries stand out for the breadth and depth of information they provide. Both offer comprehensive information on a surprisingly wide range of governance topics:

The first, *The Complete Toolkit for Boards*, a collaborative effort by a number of entities, including visitors, offers extensive resources covering nearly every aspect of nonprofit operations. Well organized and concise, it is an indispensable resource for nuts-and-bolts information on effective governance, providing a vast collection of fact sheets, forms, board manuals, and sample policies. The only site to be included on our list six years in a row, it continues to tweak its presentation with new material and features, providing the web's single best source of free information on all aspects of non-profit operations. www.managementhelp.org/boards/boards.htm

The second online library, *The Nonprofit Good Practice Guide*, has a clean look and logical presentation that makes it nearly effortless to navigate, despite an almost overwhelming amount of information on topics from board structure and executive compensation to lobbying regulations and print marketing. We also like its clear article descriptions and the "Share" buttons next to each article which allow users to easily forward content to colleagues.

Visit www.npgoodpractice.org/Topics/nonprofitresources/Default.aspx to begin exploring this outstanding collection of governance tools and information.

Board Café, the always interesting collection of articles and opinion on governance topics, is no longer published as a stand alone newsletter. Instead, it has become a monthly column at the online magazine *Blue Avocado*. Aimed at nonprofit professionals and billing itself as "practical, provocative, and fun", *Blue Avocado* also manages to be forward-thinking and surprisingly wide ranging in the topics it presents. This month's issue includes an analysis of nonprofit embezzlement, nuts and bolts advice on reviewing nonprofit bylaws, a critique of how public policies on volunteerism may be hurting nonprofits, and a list of ten survival strategies for the arts. Visit www.blueavocado.org to read the magazine or sign up for a free subscription. An archive of *Board Café's* past issues, helpfully categorized into subject areas, remains available at www.compasspoint.org/boardcafe/archives.php.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

BoardnetUSA™, hosted by the nonprofit Volunteer Consulting Group, provides a number services to assist your organization in identifying and cultivating effective board members. Registered users are provided with full access to a database (searchable by geographic location, skills, and nonprofit interests) of candidates actively seeking to serve on nonprofit boards. According to the site, more than 80% of its users have been connected to a candidate (or a board) that they would not have otherwise known about. The site also provides a number of other resources for analyzing an organization's unique governance needs. www.boardnetusa.org/public/home.asp

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Last year we listed Twitter.com as one of our top ten recommendations. Social media can be hugely effective in developing audiences, but keeping up with Twitter feeds, Facebook pages and blogs can overwhelm even the most organized arts marketer. This year, we suggest a site that can help to keep your new media outreach programs under control. At www.hootsuite.com you can set up a free workspace that allows you to post content on several different social networks (such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and MySpace) at the same time. Even better, it allows any colleagues you designate to post content as well. The system also provides data tracking, allowing your organization to monitor traffic and determine which posts and networks are receiving the best response. Setting up an account is free and takes less than a minute, but we suggest first visiting the *OPEN Forum* article posted at <http://ht.ly/1QGUa> for an overview of this system and others like it.

FUNDRAISING

Guidestar has long been the internet's most visited source for researching detailed information about specific non-profit organizations. If your organization hasn't yet visited the site to review its profile (compiled from IRS 990 forms), don't delay, as it's possible to become far more visible to potential funders by providing supplemental information to Guidestar's basic overview. The site even rewards you for providing such information by offering a year of free access to its premium services. New features include a *TakeAction* section which, in addition to providing a suite of resources to potential donors, allows them to make donations directly to those organizations they are researching (possibly yours) with the click of a mouse. The site has also recently updated its resources for organizations facing revocation of tax-exempt status because of failure to file 990s. Guidestar requires registration for all users, even the casual browser, but the process is simple, fast and free. www.guidestar.org

ADVOCACY

NAMM (once known as the National Association of Music Merchants) has taken over the support and hosting of www.supportmusic.com. Some of the grassroots charm of the site may be gone, but it continues to do an outstanding job of providing resources to help organizations make a compelling case for music education. In addition to tracking current issues, providing action alerts, and offering "Grade Your School" assessments, the site delivers extensive tools for organizing local efforts, including new printable fliers, public service announcements, and resources in Spanish. It also provides complete information on how to apply for NAMM Foundation grants which support projects that encourage active music makers of all ages. (Preliminary applications accepted June 15 - September 30, visit www.nammfoundation.org/grant-information for details).

The resources available at the Americans for the Arts website continue to provide essential tools for anyone interested in arts advocacy. Among the helpful new features of its Arts Action Center is its local media search page (<http://capwiz.com/artsusa/dbq/media>). Click a spot on its interactive map of the United States and receive a complete list of local media. Then click any name on the list and receive current contact information for that news outlet. A fantastic resource for touring companies and exhibits, it even allows you to send emails to multiple news organizations with the click of a box. Just one of the many helpful tools available on this well designed and well executed site. (www.americansforthearts.org/get_involved/advocate.asp)

The Performing Arts Alliance's website (<http://paa.convio.net>) provides excellent advocacy tools for arts organizations, including up-to-the-minute updates on pending arts legislation and detailed recommendations on arts policy. Its *Take Action* section provides extensive information on mobilizing organizations and their key stakeholders into effective arts advocates. We like the nifty search feature which allows visitors to type in a zip code and receive profile information - including email links - for that location's congressional representative and senator. The site's *Issue Center* also provides helpful overviews and policy analysis on topics such as federal funding for arts education and how changes in the tax code influence charitable giving.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Volunteer Match, the web's most-accessed source for teaming volunteers with nonprofit organizations, is packed with helpful advice for governance leaders and volunteer managers. In addition to tools for tracking volunteer hours and a number of new reports on important trends in volunteerism, it has recently added a new blog and iPhone application. Its main mission, however, is still to match nonprofit organizations with effective volunteers. In the past decade, it has paired over four million people willing to contribute their time with organizations eager to tap their skills. Once the simple registration form is completed, submitting descriptions of your organization's volunteer positions is fast and free. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to promote your organization's activities to a huge number of people interested in its mission.

Visit www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/gettingstarted/ for more information.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

No review of tools available to board members on the web would be complete without mentioning *BoardSource*, hosted by the National Center for Nonprofit Boards. Technically, it doesn't qualify for our list because it requires visitors to pay a fee for most resources, but if you are not familiar with the site we recommend a visit to familiarize yourself with its many resources. www.boardsource.org

Finally, ACG's online *Arts Insights* archive features articles on a wide variety of topics. Visit www.artsconsulting.com/artsinsights to search past issues or sign up for a free monthly subscription.

###

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW ARTS CONSULTING GROUP
CAN HELP YOUR ORGANIZATION MEET
TODAY'S CHALLENGES MORE EFFECTIVELY,
PLEASE CALL US TOLL FREE AT**

(888) 234-4236

OR VISIT US AT

www.artsconsulting.com