



A River Network Learning Session

Shout it from the Rooftops: DIY Marketing Made Fun, Efficient & Cost Effective

December 4, 2025



WELCOME!

While you wait, please ...

- Introduce yourself in the chat – name, organization, where you're calling from
- Use the chat box for questions
- Open the evaluation form now & give us feedback after the session!

ABOUT RIVER NETWORK

River Network grows and strengthens a transformational national network of water, justice, and river advocates.

We envision a powerful and inclusive movement that ensures abundant clean water for all people and nature to thrive. We believe that joy and hope for our planet flows through our rivers.

Meet the network and search our Water Protectors Map on our website!

rivernetwork.org ←



OUR PRESENTERS



Brandon Hayes
Founder & Principal
Bold Bison



Patrick Williams
Director of Creative Services
Bold Bison



SHOUT IT FROM THE ROOFTOPS

D.I.Y. marketing made fun, efficient, and cost-effective





About Bold Bison

Bold Bison Communications & Consulting provides forward-thinking communications solutions, engaging strategy and facilitation services, and inspiring workshops and trainings for nonprofits, particularly in the conservation, climate, and local food movements, as well as the arts and cultural institutions.

Bold Bison is a professional affiliate of the Land Trust Alliance and is a Certified LGBT Business Enterprise® through the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce. For more information, visit [BoldBison.com](https://www.BoldBison.com)





Our Team



FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL

Brandon Hayes
He / Him



DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE SERVICES

Patrick Williams
He / Him





To Get the Most From this Workshop

- Reduce distractions such as phones and email.
- Listen actively to the experience of fellow participants.
- Take notes and ask questions.
- Center yourself and be present.





Popcorn Discussion

Who is responsible for marketing
your organization?



Not only is marketing one of your several full-time responsibilities, but the amount of advice can feel overwhelming, making it difficult to even know where to begin.



Goals for Today's Session

- Help you evaluate where your organization stands in its marketing journey so you can focus on relevant strategies
- Understand massive changes in audience behavior that are impacting the effectiveness of conventional marketing strategies
- Provide context, guidance, and organizational tools to help you develop your 2026 marketing plan



Breakout Discussion

What challenges do you face in testing marketing strategies at your organization?



Stages of Nonprofit Marketing





Stages of Nonprofit Marketing

- When sorting through the mountains of marketing advice, keep in mind where your organization actually is in its marketing efforts, so you can remain focused on relevant and helpful strategies.
- Three stages of growth: **Awareness, Reputation, and Differentiation**



Stages of Nonprofit Marketing



Awareness

Building up your audience and getting the word out about your organization.



Reputation

Cultivating a positive image for your org., especially as others share your story.



Differentiation

Clarifying how and why your organization takes a different approach than others.



Stages of Nonprofit Marketing

1

Awareness

Building up your audience and getting the word out about your organization.

Encouraging website visits, social follows, and email subscriptions

Tabling at community events

Swag giveaways

Direct mail and donation appeals

Building partnerships with established orgs.



Stages of Nonprofit Marketing

2

Reputation

Cultivating a positive image for your org., especially as others share your story.

Generating earned media for project successes and major events

Content marketing (blog posts, video series, targeted newsletters)

Annual reports and publications

Speaking engagements, panels, presentations



Stages of Nonprofit Marketing

3

Differentiation

Clarifying how and why your organization takes a different approach than others.

Brand development and strategic communications

Membership programs

Focused marketing campaigns and/or paid advertising



Stages of Nonprofit Marketing

- Three stages of growth: **Awareness**, **Reputation**, and **Differentiation**
- These are not mutually exclusive; you may be doing a combination of several or you may be trying to cultivate a reputation for your organization overall while building awareness for particular programs
- In our experience, most organizations will be focused on the first two whereas differentiation is more about branding and communications

Thinking about Audience





Centering your Audience in Your Marketing

When putting together a marketing strategy, start by thinking about:

- Audience
- Goals for that audience
- Key message
- Ways to reach them

Depending on your role or organization, you may have very different audience segments: donors, volunteers, and local residents or staff at partner organizations and potential program participants.

Not all strategies will work for everyone, which is why you want to be as specific as possible about your audience.



Missed Opportunities in Nonprofit Marketing

- Failing to provide value to your audience or blurring the distinction between communications and marketing.
- Recognizing that you have very particular habits for consuming social, websites, email, and print materials — then assuming none of those habits also apply to your audience.



Changes in Audience Behavior





Nonprofit Marketing Is Having A Moment

Many nonprofits have historically relied on a combination of free tools, guesswork, hope to get the word out about their work.

- Websites, social media, email, and mailing newsletters/appeals to any address they've got

Conventional marketing tactics have allowed organizations to reach larger audiences far larger, but **“spray-and-pray” tactics run into limitations.**

As a result, many organizations today are seeing the same donors, same folks at events, and reduced online engagement.



Shifts Are Driven By Two Major Trends

1. **Social media platforms are evolving** into a “pay to play” model, making it harder for most organizations to reach the audiences they’ve built up.

More importantly, **For You Page ate the follower.**

As generative A.I. accounts are flooding platforms, users are abandoning the platforms they’ve previously spent hours on per week.

Which means: **nonprofits can no longer rely on social media** to reach audiences in the same way as they have.



Shifts Are Driven By Two Major Trends

2. **Audiences are overloaded** (this is a well-studied social phenomenon).

Constantly receiving information means none of us are fully paying attention to anything; we are all operating at an attention deficit leading to that feeling of exhaustion.

This pattern is reflected in how audiences are using websites differently than in the past: **the average time spent on a webpage is 52 seconds** and **75% of visitors leave your website after 3 seconds**, never scrolling past the hero section.

Even when we reach our audiences, **we can't expect them to hear what we say.**



What is Actually Working at the End of 2025

Marketing that allows people to receive information when they want to be reached, knowing that varies greatly between audience demographics:

- Direct mail is still strong with older demographics and as well as younger audiences (who don't get much personalized, non-advertising mail)
- Email newsletters (not just e-blasts) that offer curated information
- Third-party validations from new or traditional media (news, podcasts, Substack)
- Small cultivation events, creative fundraisers, or exclusive access

All of these strategies only work if we have a clear understanding of who we are trying to reach and what we want them to do.



Developing Your 2026 Marketing Plan





Translating Learning into Planning

Building an effective marketing plan is easier than you think.

1. Conduct an audit of your 2025 marketing efforts. What worked, what didn't work, what can you let go of in the new year, and what do you want to test next year?
2. Based on your audit, review and refine your marketing strategies—and we have two exercises to help with this!



Setting Priorities for 2026

To identify your primary goals and activities for next year, ask yourself what foundational systems do we need to strength and are we missing opportunities to reach our target audiences, such as:

- Does our website have an newsletter sign up or connection to our social media?
- Are email addresses we collect at events actually making it into our list?
- Are we effectively reusing the content we develop across all of our platforms?
- Should we revisit our materials to make them more engaging to our audience(s)?

The answers to these types of questions are your organization's marketing plan for 2026. Even if they're not the most thrilling projects, **setting a stronger foundation is the smartest place to begin** for any organization that is trying to improve its marketing.



D.I.Y. Marketing Plan

In the chat, you can download a worksheet to help you conduct an audit of your organization's marketing efforts and identify messages and strategies to reach your priority audiences.

D.I.Y. MARKETING PLAN
River Network, December 4, 2025

1. *Organization Name:*
[Text input field]

2. *Describe what your organization does:*
[Text input field]

3. *Who is your audience? (Be specific.)*
[Text input field]

4. *What do you want them to know?*
[Text input field]

5. *What is unique about your organization?*
[Text input field]

6. *What values do you share with your audience?*
[Text input field]



Breakout Activity

Identify an audience or marketing objective where you haven't had as much success in 2025 as you had hoped.

Working in pairs and considering today's learning, brainstorm a new approach to test in 2026.



Today's Takeaways

Knowing where you are in your marketing growth can help you stay focused on strategies that are relevant and effect for your organization's needs.

Audience behaviors towards traditional methods of digital marketing are changing dramatically, so the standard playbook needs to change as well.

Trust your gut. If it wouldn't be effective for you, it won't be for your audience either.





Questions?





Join us on January 15 for More on Websites

Monster Under the Bed: How to Overcome Your Fear of Your Website

Does the thought of updating your website give you anxiety? Managing your website efficiently is a challenge for most organizations, but the reality is that when you have the right tools, there's nothing to be afraid of. In this workshop, we will cover some of the common challenges and easy, low-cost, and stress-free solutions for maintaining your website.

Thursday, January 15 | 2-3:30pm ET





Connect with The Herd!



hello@boldbison.com



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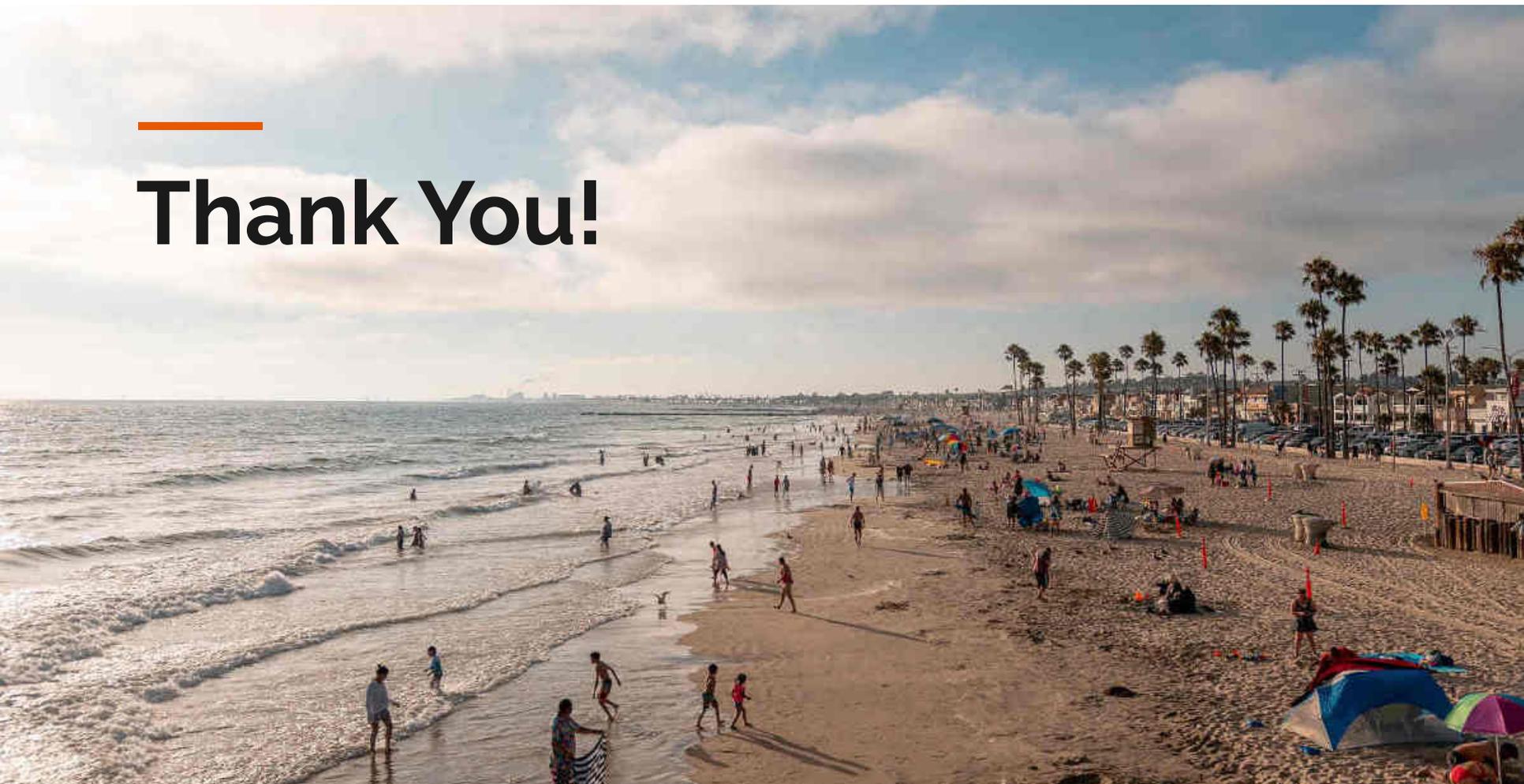
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Thank You!



BEFORE YOU GO

EVENT

Monster Under the Bed:

How to Overcome Your Fear of Your Website

 Thursday 01/15

 2:00-3:30pm ET

 Registration in bio

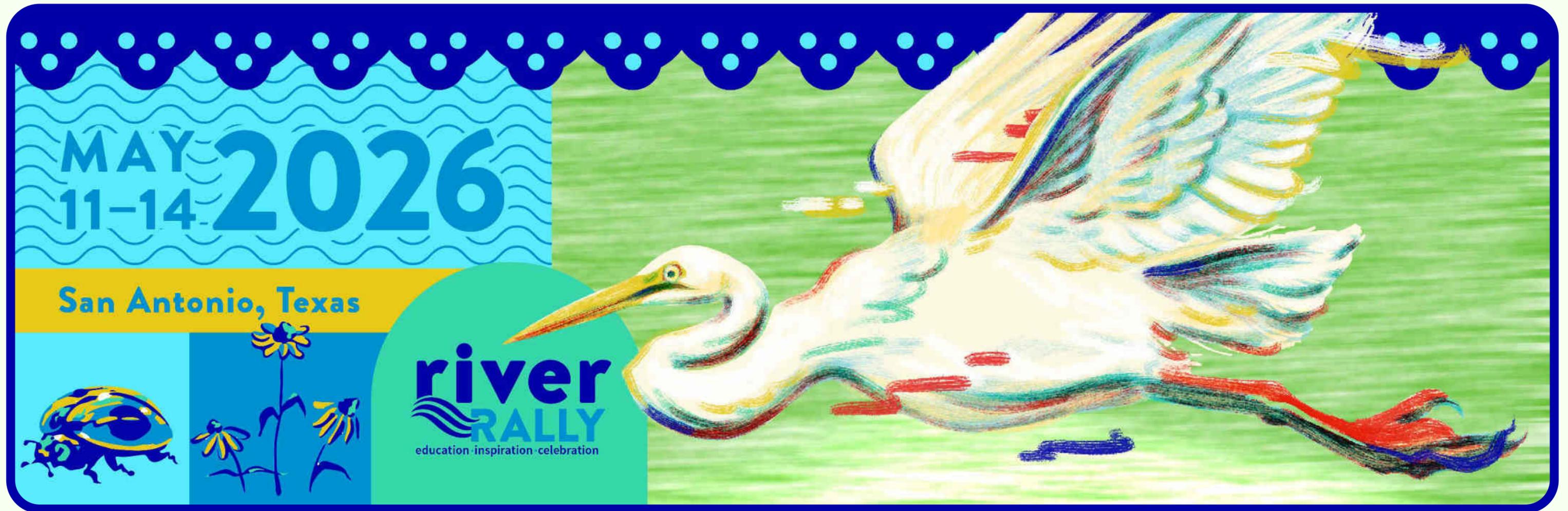


With speakers from



- Please fill out the evaluation survey
- Register for the final session in this series
- <https://www.rivernetnetwork.org/connect-learn/events-webinars/>

SAVE THE DATE!



May 11-14, 2026 in San Antonio, Texas

→ rivernetwork.org/river-rally

THANK
YOU!

