Put Your Mouth Where Your Money Is

Talking About the Value of Strategic Giving

By Rich Neimand and Dave Clayton
Foundations need to do a better job of talking about their work.

That conclusion comes from a survey of the nation’s most engaged citizens. The research points to good news and bad news for foundations.

The bad news: foundations face a sizeable awareness deficit among U.S. adults who serve as leaders for organizations with social and community purposes. Only 11% can identify an example of a foundation’s impact on an issue they care about. Only 15% can identify an example of a foundation’s impact on their community. Even more sobering, nearly half think foundations have enough money to fix many of the problems that government can’t afford to.

That last belief may have something to do with the way foundations traditionally focus on the dollars in their communications. For example, a study of news stories about foundations between 1990 and 2004 found that only slightly more than 1% focused on the impact—past or anticipated—of foundation activity. The rest were transactional.

But there’s good news, too. Nearly 9 in 10 want foundations to be more open about their activities, mistakes, and lessons learned. Half think foundations should have more influence in public discussion of social issues and solutions in American society at the national, state and local levels (whereas an average of only 13% think they should have less influence at these levels). Engaged Americans want foundations to speak up.

How can foundations answer this call for more communication and do it in a way that builds awareness of their work and value? It’s a question on the minds of many foundation leaders. We asked Rich Neimand and Dave Clayton, who bring years of experience in communication strategy and research in the philanthropy field, to offer some answers.

What follows is their take on how foundations can start talking today about the value they bring to society—and in a way that speaks to more than the money they grant.

Mark Sedway
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A confession

We have a confession to make—we’re not satisfied with our work. Over the last decade, we have twice been asked by national organizations representing the philanthropic community to research, analyze and develop a top-down message campaign to better communicate the value of foundations to policymakers and influentials. For different reasons, neither one of these campaigns saw the light of day. They were either too big to implement or too broad to be applicable.

Yet, we’ve had great success in working with individual foundations and grantees to communicate their value as an important tool for advancing their mission and speeding results. We know that communicating the value of philanthropy works from the ground up. We also know that it is still critically important for the philanthropic sector to build greater appreciation of its value. This brings us to an important question: Is there a common way for all foundations to strengthen their ability to create social progress by communicating their value—in their own way?

The answer is yes. And, we want to share our vision of why and how.

Foundations can and should give voice to their money. Giving voice to your efforts amplifies the impact of your financial investments. It makes clear that money is only one means to an end—that vision, expertise and strategy play equally important roles. It motivates and empowers policymakers, influentials, nonprofits, government agencies and even other foundations to rally around a goal and collaborate on valued outcomes they might not otherwise know they shared. That’s how you create enduring progress. That’s why it’s important to communicate the value of philanthropy.

The how is to differentiate philanthropy from charity. The cumulative lesson of the past decade is for foundations to give voice to their money by communicating the concept of strategic giving that is the heart of what they do. Strategic giving both links and differentiates well-understood charity and poorly understood philanthropy. One of the most effective things you can do to achieve your goals is to communicate through your everyday work that philanthropy is something far more powerful than charity. At the same time, by linking yourselves to the generous giving of individual volunteers and donors you become much more personal and much less institutional.

The Philanthropy Awareness Initiative (PAI) commissioned us to share our insights, rationale and suggestions for helping individual foundations move forward.

We’ll briefly cover the context, suggest five simple ways to change foundation behaviors, how to talk your new walk, provide a few examples from the field and, hopefully, leave every foundation with an easy way to advance their strategic goals directly. We believe that taking our recommended approach, you will also provide indirect benefits to your own work and the work of your colleagues as you improve understanding and appreciation of foundations in general.
The context: Cash without connection

In the words of the late Strother Martin to Paul Newman in Cool Hand Luke, “what we've got here is failure to communicate.”

There is an alarming finding in PAI’s research. Influential citizens who have leadership roles in organizations that work on social and community issues are largely unable to identify the benefit of any individual foundation in their communities and on the issues they care about. This isn’t endemic to a specific community. This is epidemic.

Think about all the money your foundation has given. Think about all the expertise, time, staff and effort that goes into your giving and programs. Think about the crucial role you played—and only you could have done—to create impact for individuals, communities and regions.

Now think about the missed opportunities that come with the failure to communicate. It’s not about getting credit. It’s about building credibility over time as an essential partner in improving the public good. The missed opportunity is allowing policymakers and influential to see you as a cash machine rather than engage with you as an engine for change.

That is a dangerous place for foundations to be, especially during a time of great financial stress, huge social needs and a rapidly changing world. There is a growing philanthropic sector with an invitingly large chest of money, the keys to which are shrouded in mystery and confused with charity.

The same PAI research reveals a huge opportunity. Influential citizens want to know more about foundations, their vision and expertise. Influentials welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with foundations and deepen their relationships beyond money. Foundations can change the equation with better communication about the value of philanthropy.

We have seen the benefits in our on-the-ground work with foundations and their grantees. While funding remains an ever-present need and desire among grantees and influential citizens that work with them, foundations that communicate their strategic objectives quickly become credible and respected players in the fields they seek to change. In these cases, influential, policymakers and potential grantees want to know where a foundation stands on an issue or approach because they respect their expertise as much as they appreciate their funding.

Seize the opportunity to go beyond being a cash machine. There’s a simple way to do it that doesn’t require foundations to do any more work than they are doing now. All it requires is that you be more vocal about the how and why as you go about your work.
Give voice to your money

Effective communication isn’t just a connective message; it’s a behavior that changes perceptions and ultimately the behavior of others.

If you feel uncomfortable talking about your foundation, you’re not alone. Many foundations want to keep a low profile and don’t want to be seen as grandstanding. Others do not want to claim credit for work done by grantees. A lot of foundations are uncomfortable communicating their impact, either because their goals are incomplete or because their work was part of a collaboration in which all deserve credit. These are legitimate concerns. Yet, there must be a middle ground where credit is taken while debts are acknowledged to other stakeholders, where areas of concern and focus are illuminated while ego is kept in check, and where incremental impact is discussed while people remain focused on the job that must be finished. You can and should have a frank, humble and inclusive dialogue on your role, strategic vision, decisions and impact. This will help influential Americans make the link between their experiences and your expertise, between their passions and your vision and resources for progress.

It’s not hard to do. Your work will gain greater power by changing your foundation’s behavior in five ways:

1. Communicate strategic giving
   How much is not as important as why and how. Communicate “strategic giving”—the difference between philanthropy and charity. Convey in language and action that philanthropy is more than money. Philanthropy is strategic giving: vision, expertise, strategy, collaboration and persistence to make sure investments in people, places and issues create lasting benefits for the public good.

2. Engage influentials in your vision and work
   Actively and personally reach each out to trustees, grantees, policymakers, community leaders and opinion leaders. Communicate your vision, strategy, work and results—and, where appropriate, invite them to join. The most effective way to do this is through one-on-one communication and relationship building. Social networks are not as effective with this audience as plain, old-fashioned networking. Pounding the flesh produces more than pounding out Twitter feeds.

3. Talk about how your strategy delivers results for individuals and society
   Move from concentration to confluence. Communicate how a specific interest leads to outcomes that benefit many. For example, how working to improve the health of the disadvantaged helps improve economic and social opportunities for all.
4 Illuminate the foundation/grantee relationship

Talk about why grantees were selected, the expertise they bring to the table, the strategies and goals you’ve set together and the metrics you’ve set to hold each other accountable for results.

5 Make progress by communicating your progress

Engaging influentials in your successes, set backs and failures helps them understand the challenges and the value you bring to finding lasting solutions.

How do you put these behavioral changes into action? Start by recognizing that foundation communications are not limited to foundation communications directors. The vast majority of foundation communication is delivered by foundation CEO’s, program officers and, in rare cases, trustees.

Everyone in the foundation must give voice to their money, to the power and value of their work—why they are involved, how they are involved and why it’s important. Unfortunately, people who are not professional communicators are often at a loss as to what to say. We’ve found that many foundation employees long for a way to communicate the value of their work beyond their own level of expertise. They just don’t know how. So the next step after convincing them to walk a different way is to give them some basic outlines of how to talk a different way.

How to talk the walk

We know from experience that it is impossible to develop one message for every foundation. Context is everything. But not everything is context. Often lost in the multiplicity of targeted messages for targeted audiences are the broader messages that work for all audiences. As a result, we find that people are often more concerned about inflection than general direction. That’s how they get lost.

There’s an easy way to get back on track. Effective communication moves from simplicity to complexity—from the forest to the trees. Most of the work we do with foundations and nonprofits is helping them explain the complexity of what they do by first starting with a general message, something anyone in the organization could say to anyone. Then we give them a set of secondary message concepts they can adapt to their specific work needs when their audience asks for more detail or specific messages. In other words, we give them a framework that doesn’t tell them what to say but rather the broad outline of how to be a more effective advocate for their organization, sector or issue.
Every foundation is different. Each has a unique point of view, strategy and set of resources. And, the issues and areas in which they are involved require attention to nuances. But differences between foundation interests and operations should not mask their communal similarities. Each is connected to a wider philanthropic community that shares traits and conditions on the macro level. So while nuance in micro operations is critically important, a decade of research on perceptions of foundations and philanthropy tells us that the context is the same for all foundations on the macro level. Therefore, we can develop a general message about the value of foundations to a general audience of influentials and policymakers. Here is how we would explain it:

*Foundations are the way people give back to their communities in ways that benefit all. They strategically focus giving to more effectively produce results for the public good. Foundations do more than just fund essential services—they provide the long-term vision, resources and expertise to solve problems and enhance our quality of life. People giving back to society in the way they choose creates diverse solutions that benefit all.*

The narrative above is an illustrative starting point for communication to the influential citizens you seek to engage. We’re not saying everyone should use it word for word. We are saying that everyone should adhere to its basic concept and make it their own. The more people use this simple message in their own way, the more it sinks in to the benefit of your mission and to the field collectively.

Before you make it your own—or dismiss it—you should know why we chose this particular direction and statement based upon what we know from research findings. Why that statement? Why does it work?

Let’s deconstruct it:

- **The first sentence links philanthropic giving with the charitable impulse almost everyone has.** It is important to move foundations away from the perception that they are faceless institutions to the perception that they are human endeavors with distinct personalities and passions. People need to see themselves in the image of foundations. Empathy is one of the steps toward epiphany.

- **We communicate how philanthropy is different from charity.** Research tells us that foundations absolutely have to go beyond the cash machine to communicate their value and utility beyond funding. It’s important to address the issue of direct funding, especially during a time in which there are overwhelming economic and social needs.

- **Finally, the message concludes with a statement that addresses the benefits of independence, allowing people the freedom to give back to society in the way they choose.** It is critical to protect the freedom of foundations to invest in ideas, issues and causes as they see fit. But what’s good for foundations must be linked to what’s good for the public. Diverse interests create diverse results for an increasingly diverse society.
Naturally, people want more information than just a simple message. They’ll have questions and want to probe deeper. We’ve created a series of secondary conceptual explanations to help foundations flesh out their general message to create greater understanding and appreciation. These secondary concepts range from reframing diversity to redefining accountability, focusing on the attributes and benefits that the majority of foundations share:

**Strategic giving produces results.** Foundations are a way for people to focus giving into strategic investments that produce results. Although some give money to charities, they are not charities. Foundations fund nonprofit organizations and work with them to correct problems and create enhancements to the quality of life for the benefit of all. Foundations also hold themselves and their nonprofit grantees accountable for making a lasting impact on the public good.

**Diverse interests produce diverse benefits.** Foundations choose to support causes they are passionate about—such as medical research, arts and culture, economic development, education, poverty and conservation. This creates diverse funding that touches and improves society from bottom to top. The freedom to make strategic investments through effective nonprofit programs creates a range of improvements that benefit all.

**Collaborating to improve the quality of life.** Foundations and their nonprofit partners collaborate with government, businesses, each other and communities to identify problems and bring people together to work toward solutions that improve the quality of life for all.

**The persistence to get things done.** In a world in which people increasingly desire immediate results and grow impatient with solving long-standing problems, foundations seek to make an immediate impact and a long-term difference. While foundations may fund and defund grantees or approaches over time, they remain dedicated to developing a lasting solution to improve the public good.

Admittedly, these are ideal statements—ones that not all foundations practice, but to which all should aspire. Research shows these are the key attributes and messages that make foundations very attractive to policymakers and influentials. Saying them will get their attention, but only for a while without accompanying actions. Practicing these attributes will develop stronger relationships that will bring greater power to your money and programs. Effective communication isn’t saying a message; it’s delivering a message through behavior and language.
Everyday application: Three examples

For years foundations have told us they cannot possibly do anything extra to communicate their value and, by extension, communicate the value of the philanthropic sector. Yet, all the research clearly shows that they need to do so. Yes, foundations need to take the time to map, reach out and engage in personal relationships with their most influential stakeholders inside, outside and throughout their foundation activities. Yes, foundations need an outreach strategy to engage the influential public in efficient ways through specific communications campaigns, social marketing, social networking and the latest, greatest and coolest thing out there. But it is not an all or nothing situation. Start with what your foundation can do most easily and then intensify your efforts. Not being able to do everything right away is no excuse for not doing the simple behavior changes that will allow you to be a more effective communicator—for your foundation, its programs, grantees and the philanthropic community at large.

To prove our point about the power of delivering the strategic giving message, we took some examples from the most common, and some would say tired, form of foundation communication—the annual report—to highlight how existing (and even obligatory) communication can be used to advance a better understanding and appreciation of the value of foundations. We also look at a Web site that is connected to a frequent email blast. These are “topline” communications vehicles and should be considered by all as the proverbial icing on the cake of foundation communications. They either summarize a year’s worth of work or communicate incremental progress being made in partnership with grantees. Therefore, they are reflections of—not replacements for—constant interpersonal interaction and communication between foundations, their grantees and influential stakeholders. Our point is that the message matters and the obligatory channels of Web site and annual report are necessary, but not sufficient for communicating your value.

Below are three examples (a Web site and two annual reports) from different foundations: two private foundations and a community foundation. We’ll describe each and highlight how they hit the touchstones for foundation behaviors.

In fairness to these featured foundations, we’ve taken these pieces out of context. They exist within wider and more robust communications programs that touch stakeholders in comprehensive ways. So as we describe each featured communication and critique how well they hit the touchstones for foundation behaviors, keep in mind that we are placing an unfair burden on one piece of communication to communicate everything in order to be illustrative. Also keep in mind that if your foundation considers its annual report and Web site to be its primary and most important forms of communication, our research indicates that you’re on a dangerous track. Repeat these words until they are seared into your brain: “Our printed annual report is not the extent of our annual communication. Our annual report is 365 days of active, engaged and highly personal communication between our foundation, its stakeholders in the community and nation, its grantees and the partners who share its concerns and causes. If we live an annual report we won’t have to produce one.”

Prepositions play an important role. Communications that talk with people are more important than communications that talk to people. The former is the cake, the latter is the icing. That said, let’s taste the icing.
HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

In the Spotlight is a feature on the Heinz Endowments Web site that provides an example of how foundations add value to their grantee work by giving individual organizations a prominent platform to tell their story. This approach is growing among foundations, as more and more are using this means to accomplish the end of promoting the grantees’ work and illustrating the results of the foundation’s vision and strategy. Foundations do a good job of communicating funding and what the grantee is doing, but often minimize why the foundation is investing in this specific grantee and how that fits into an overall strategy. Communicating all three is giving voice to your money and communicating the difference between strategic giving and charity.

In this case, the center of the Heinz Endowments home page (www.heinz.org) rotates through a diverse set of individual grantees with the invitation, “Learn about this new interactive project and meet our featured grantee organization whose members tell their own story from the inside out.”

When visitors click on the organization name they are taken to a “featured spotlight” where the grantee’s update is provided. The grantees provide multiple updates, running the gamut of historical overviews, news clippings, photos, media coverage, chicken dance contests and YouTube clips of productions. Some of the prose is idiomatic and full of grammar and typographical errors—leaving no doubt that this is an authentic and unfiltered voice of the work that is being done. Visitors can choose to click-through to greater detail and an archive of the grantee’s entries, or they can browse a list of all the grantees who have submitted spotlights.
Hitting the touchstones:

1. **Communicate strategic giving**
   Heinz moves far beyond a discussion of what it funded to tell people what they are doing and letting them see what is being done in real time. Not only do we hear their voice, we see the humanity behind it. The full range of grantees tells influentials and policymakers in southwestern Pennsylvania that Heinz is very active in their communities. Yet, from our perspective there is a missed opportunity here. More can be done to frame this grantee story with the Heinz story. Why this specific grantee? How does it fit in the context of the strategic objectives and vision of the Endowments? What else is Heinz doing beyond funding this work to create progress? Telling a human and intuitive story about the larger context and illustrating it with the specifics of the grantee’s story and voice would take this communication to the next level in defining philanthropy as strategic giving rather than charity.

2. **Engage influentials in your vision and work**
   This Web site is part of an outreach strategy to engage others in the foundation’s focus, goals and achievements. We learned of it through an email push and assume that Heinz is communicating with influentials within their geographic community, their sector and fields of influence. We know that this communication is only one part of Heinz’ strategic and personal engagement of influentials—it is the most public face of a lot of face-to-face relationship building. Yet, even here, more can be done to connect the vision, programs and grantees to the needs and interests of influentials. For example, how are these programs models for solving problems in the community? How can they be scaled to enhance the public good? How can others help?

3. **Talk about how your strategy delivers results for individuals and society**
   While each spotlight is highly personal and different, they show the impact on the lives of individuals and connect that with larger community outcomes. Again, the final step would be linking these specific grantee accomplishments to progress on larger program strategy.

4. **Illuminate the foundation/grantee relationship**
   The Web site shows a very close relationship between the foundation and its grantees. One feels that they are partners who are learning and making progress together. It is important to extrapolate these lessons learned and how they benefit larger scale solutions and progress further delivers on the message of strategic giving.

5. **Make progress by communicating your progress**
   Having the grantees talk about their work and progress in their own way moves foundation communications away from the hard metrics of return on investment to the larger understanding of the complexity behind making progress on human progress. There are wins, losses, redirections, surprises and epiphanies.
Many times you don’t even need to dedicate additional funding to communicating your strategic giving and raising your voice. Almost every foundation produces some form of annual communication and hopefully they mirror their annual efforts in their daily activities. The Cleveland Foundation used their annual report to strongly and purposefully communicate their value to the community—specifically addressing their role in tough economic times and outlining the steps they were taking to be of greater service to the community.

As we’ve seen consistently over the years (and in the PAI research) private foundations often lag behind their community foundation peers in the engagement of influential citizens. This is understandable given the different mechanisms for each, but there are some lessons all can benefit from in this example. In this case, the Cleveland Foundation highlights progress made as a means to encourage optimism and hope for future progress, with a nice reminder of their collaborative role, in their 2009 Report to the Community (http://www.clevelandfoundation.org/ReportToCommunity09/intro-essay.html):

As the largest grantmaking organization in Greater Cleveland, our impact is far greater than just the sum total of our grants. We are privileged to be in a position to help lead our community into the future by serving as a community think tank and incubator, by convening influential parties on issues of great importance, and by launching projects that pave the way for better days ahead.

Our community certainly faces serious challenges, especially during this economic downturn. But history shows us that new ideas and solutions take shape in environments characterized by problems and challenges. Just look at our foundation’s history. It’s no stretch to say that, for nearly a century, the foundation has been a spark that has ignited brilliant initiatives with lasting effect, even in the worst of times...

What follows are some historical highlights of progress made and similar highlights of potential solutions they are pursuing.
Hitting the touchstones:

1. **Communicate strategic giving**

   The framing statement and what follows ooze with strategic giving. You see their vision, their goals and the way they consistently seek to meet them. There is a strong emphasis on impact rather than sole source funding. The list of historical accomplishments focuses on community needs and opportunities, their catalyzing role and subsequent outcomes without mentioning dollars. The purpose excludes the transaction and is a valuable balance to other areas where current finances are reviewed in the annual report.

2. **Engage influentials in your vision and work**

   One of the best ways to do this is to talk about your partnership. The Cleveland Foundation highlights their role as catalyst rather than as an independent force, framing how others should regard them and their resources that extend well beyond being a potential source of funding. Knowing how personally involved community foundations are with policymakers and influentials, this annual report is a simply a reminder of 365 days of active collaboration coupled with a powerful global view of the gains made by all stakeholders. If not contained elsewhere in their communications, there is a strong opportunity here to invite influential citizens to become involved with the Foundation in tangible ways. The Cleveland Foundation does a good job of highlighting engagement in the abstract—a specific opportunity to join with them would only strengthen the message that they are intricately connected with the community.

3. **Talk about how your strategy delivers results for individuals and society**

   They’ve chosen to highlight past accomplishments that are fairly universal in their relevance to the community (parks and recreation green space, health care and the arts and culture district), making it easy for readers to attribute their own personal values for why these dimensions of the community are important to them. Again, one single piece of communication cannot be everything to everybody, but a complementary piece to identifying public contributions is explicitly explaining how individuals have and will benefit from the Cleveland Foundation’s achievements.

4. **Illuminate the foundation/grantee relationship**

   In this case, the Cleveland Foundation is explicit about the virtues of persistence and collaboration, framing those two principles as their unique value in community improvement. In addition, the foundation talks about the effort it is making to speed the granting process during a time in which many grantees and the people they serve are under severe stress. There is room to reinforce the relationship between the Foundation as a visionary convener that sets priorities and then identifies and makes grants to partners with the specialized expertise to deliver results. Furthermore, it is always helpful to include support and resources provided to the grantee that go beyond the financial transaction.

5. **Make progress by communicating your progress**

   Again, the historical results featured promote confidence and an expectation of future accomplishments very effectively. One opportunity to build upon this legacy, here or in other forums, is to highlight the incremental progress on current issues so that the target audience gets a feel for the process of progress.
THE DANIELS FUND

The 2008 annual report of the Daniels Fund, located in Colorado, is extremely effective in communicating why they are engaged in their efforts and how these motivations translate into objectives and broad strategies. Combined with the opening letter, the body of the report strongly frames their work as giving rather than grantmaking (http://www.danielsfund.org/PDFS/DANIELS_08_AR_web.pdf). It is a great example of closely linking the charitable sentiments that so many Americans act upon in volunteering and donating with the more structured concepts of philanthropy. In essence, they illustrate our core concept of strategic giving without ever saying so—and that’s the best way to do it.

The Daniels Fund ties their efforts and motives very closely to the life experiences and vision of their founder. This is evident in their Web site, but explicitly so in the example of the 2008 annual report. In the program sections of the report, each program is framed with a life experience of Bill Daniels (aging, alcoholism, amateur sports, etc.) and how his personal experiences developed his desire to address certain needs. The life experience is followed by a program goal that translates the motivations into specific objectives. This personal bridge frames the grantmaking as strategic giving, not charity and not sterile philanthropy.

Hitting the touchstones:

1. **Communicate strategic giving**

   In this case, personal motivation and the giving of money are so closely tied together that funding is clearly seen as desire to make a difference through tangible results. There is not a clear call to join the effort and the foundation’s role as catalyst and convener is not identified in the way the Cleveland Foundation does. That’s okay. Every foundation is different and some choose not to act as personal conveners but to let their money act as a catalyst for change. The difference here is that funding is actively promoted as a catalyst for change—for helping people but also for forging ahead with a strategic vision that can be emulated by others.

2. **Engage influentials in your vision and work**

   You cannot read this report without coming to the conclusion that the Daniels Fund has a point of view and a vision for what can and should be done. The why is the most emphasized and this makes a very strong link to the personal giving of influential citizens. A missing complement is providing the target audience with guidance about how they can become engaged in these causes.
3 Talk about how your strategy delivers results for individuals and society

While each program strategy is listed, the report does a better job of talking about outcomes for individuals—i.e., helping the aged live independently—than to how that improves the quality of life for all. While there is an implied link between better individual and wider social outcomes, the report could do a better job of making that link explicit. In this way, the various specialized programs—addiction, youth sports, aging—could aggregate into wider appeal. On the other hand, the Daniels Fund does a great job of communicating their strategic shift during the economic crisis. They increased support for the homeless, food banks and shelter for displaced individuals and families. This is an important distinction from the financial accountability to the moral accountability the foundation feels it must serve as part of its strategic vision.

4 Illuminate the foundation/grantee relationship

Within the context of a foundation that funds programs and services, the Daniels Fund does a good job of communicating why the grantee was selected and the quality of their work. While the foundation may not be involved in the day-to-day operations of its grantees, one certainly receives a strong message about the foundation’s insistence on quality and delivery of results. In this case, the Daniels Fund could provide a bridge between the macro program goal and the micro grantee spotlight, and communicate a more complete context and rationale for their investment choices. Who else are they investing in beyond the featured grantee and why have they made those choices as a means to accomplish their objectives?

5 Make progress by communicating your progress

An interesting wrinkle in the annual report is a cumulative total of giving to programs and geographies in addition to the most recent annual investment. This speaks to a sustained commitment, and they could consider communicating the progress achieved and lessons learned through those investments.
Moving forward

We’ve learned something important along the way. Communications directors need a tool that allows their organizations to be better communicators. Many communications directors have confirmed our suspicions that passionate and connective communication goes through a chain of semantic sanitation until it emerges as a less than clear but colorless message. This happens because everyone who touches a message isn’t on the same page as to what’s important to message. Therefore, it gets prioritized according to what works best for internal politics rather than by what works best for external communication. The result is often the foundation speaking about itself to itself.

One way to solve this problem is to share and discuss this document with your staff. Another way is to simply give them the five touchstones for changing their communications behavior and ask that they incorporate as many as they can into their daily communications in their own way:

Changing Your Communications Behavior

1. **Communicate strategic giving.**
2. **Engage influential in your vision and work.**
3. **Talk about how your strategy delivers results for individuals and society.**
4. **Illuminate the foundation/grantee relationship.**
5. **Make progress by communicating your progress.**

Tape these five behaviors to your computer screen and telephone. Ask yourself, through the course of your everyday communications, whether you’ve covered all five. When you do, you’ll more effectively communicate the value of your foundation and the value of philanthropy as a whole.