

Storybanking and Photobanking: How to Organize Stories and Images at Your Nonprofit

Most nonprofit communications pros don't have to deal with banking at work – or do they?

From small shared network files to pricey digital asset management (DAM) tools, the way you gather, organize, and share digital files - images, photos, video, audio, presentations and documents - has value and by most accounts needs a central place for deposits and withdrawals.

We at Nonprofit Marketing Guide get questions about organizing stories and photos all the time, so we set out to find some answers. What are communications directors using now? What do they love/hate about their current system (or lack thereof)?

We sent out a survey to our network, conducted interviews, read tech reviews and asked the pros to give advice about the benefits and challenges of collecting, organizing, and sharing stories – written and verbal.

We then developed this e-book to answer your basic questions like:

- Do you need a banking system for stories and images?
- What can you use to create a solid system?
- What is the cost?
- How can you get other staff members to contribute to the system?

Do You Need a Banking System?

The simple answer is “Yes.”

After hearing from communications directors throughout the sector –between those who have strong systems, those with systems that need improvement, or even those who have no system at all, it’s clear that **some form of banking system will greatly enhance your communications strategy.**

Having some sort of system in place can:

- Keep your assets safe
- Improve workflow
- Save you time and frustration
- Engage others in the process

“From time savings and increased productivity, to usage rights, asset protection and more, digital asset management’s day as an essential tool for creative directors has arrived. The rewards are plentiful, and the risks of not having DAM in place are just too great to ignore.” [Top 7 Reasons Creative Directors Need Digital Asset Management](#)

During our research, we received a lot of feedback from those who said their systems weren’t perfect. But there was greater frustration (in fact, “nightmare” was used to describe these scenarios) for agencies **without any type** of organization or system:

“I inherited a lot of things in storage with no organization system at all. Stories have been stored in folders by the person who wrote them, instead of a central location, and without any naming conventions - sometimes first name only, sometimes last name only, rarely with the word ‘story’ in the document name. The agency’s photos go back to 2004 in completely random folders, files have no naming conventions (unless Camera Dump 8/24/16 - X counts), no tags of any kind, completely not searchable in any way. We also have multiple photo storage accounts depending on who was ordering folders, which vendor they preferred personally and/or was a convenient location, i.e., Walgreens account. The whole thing is a daily, if not hourly, frustration.”

When asked to share lessons learned and/or advice for other nonprofit communications professionals, this communication director replied,

“Ask when you are interviewing about the current status of their storybank and photobank. Consider not taking the job depending on the answer.”

Keeping that strong sentiment in mind...

What are your stories worth?

Imagine talking to a family who doesn't have some sort of banking system. Their money is just stuck wherever they feel like leaving it... *This sounds absurd, right?*

Well, so does a nonprofit leaving valuable stories all over the place... desktops, laptops, mobile devices, Walgreens accounts, and one nonprofit director who inherited a decade of pictures of founders and initial clients in a cardboard box stuffed in a storage closet.

Thankfully, you don't have to experience a similar nightmare any longer. As people within your nonprofit grasp how stories and images help people make connections, they will be more likely to invest in banking systems in order to improve the flow and consistency of withdrawing stories that audiences connect with.

No matter how people come to get involved with your organization, it is important to capture stories and images that will connect with different audiences.

And for those in the organization who need to see how stories will help bring in money and other resources, remember:

People give, volunteer, and advocate because they connect.

When good stories are not getting captured or they take hours to find, then communications professionals lose time and valuable content necessary to make a social connection.

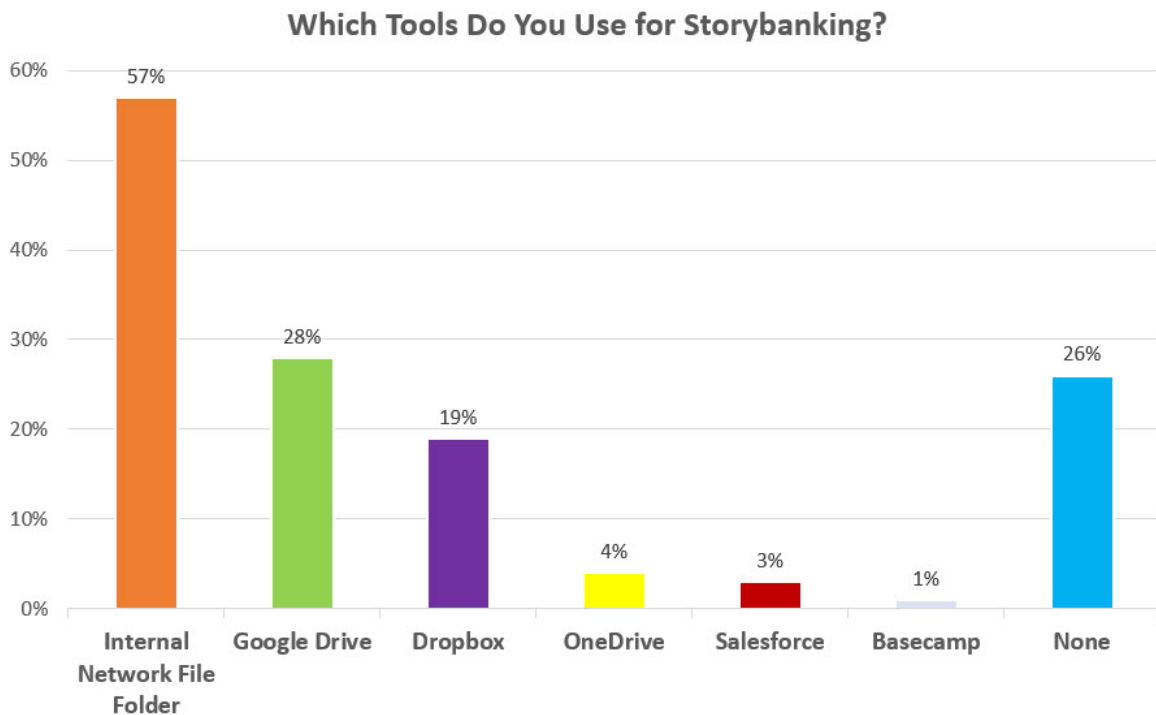
In order for storybanking and photobanking to be effective, **the entire agency must realize the value and be willing to make a time (and in some cases financial) investment.**

What's the Best System for Storybanking (Text Files)?

There is no magical solution; the answer seems to vary based on the size of the nonprofit communications staff, the willingness of other staff members to help, and the agency's budget for investing in software.

We asked communications staff to share storybanking and photobanking likes, dislikes, and stories in an August 2016 survey.

Here are the tools they said they used for storybanking:



Source: Share Your Storybanking and Photobanking Stories Survey

Shared Network File Folder

The majority of survey participants reported using an internal network file folder. That's a step in the right direction, but probably one of the most basic methods of banking.

This system is free and allows you to create a storybanking folder with topical subfolders on the organization's network.

Program Director Kathryn B. liked it for this reason: *“Our system is easy to use (because it's basic!) and available to everyone without a special login. People are getting into the habit of using it so even though contributions are intermittent, it's at least on people's radars, and we are gathering more stories and photos.”*

Other users of expressed frustrations about this shared file folder:

“Our storybank on the network is not really searchable. Everyone relies on me to find what they are looking for.” - Missy P., Communications Director

“We have a ‘library’ system that allows us to categorize stories into 1 of 6 areas, (History, Strength, People, Impact, Future, or Focus) but the banked stories are not well-used as people seem to always prefer something fresh. Also, nobody has time to add to the storybank with regularity because new entries have to be edited and formatted for consistency.” - Glenna, Director of Communication and Marketing

Pro Tip: If you are going to use a shared file folder system, be sure to **plan out file folders** and **create a strategy for how to name files**. Taking time to explain this in a meeting with staff members or by email will save you time and headaches in the long run.

Cloud-based Systems

Web-based tools have benefits, especially since they are more likely to be accessible from anywhere, including a staff person’s mobile phone. That means images can be uploaded as they are taken out in the field. The systems that follow are compatible with Windows, Mac, iOS, Android, and have mobile versions.

Pro Tip: Be sure you are comfortable with the privacy settings for each of these services. Most people accept that while cloud technology is amazing, it can be a little scary on the security side. Perhaps your storybanking system doesn’t require a lot of security concern for an agency, but it is definitely something to consider.

Google Drive - The most widely used of these is Google Drive which is part of Google Apps (newly the G Suite). For now, Google starts with the first 15 GB of *free* Google online storage. If you have a Gmail account, it takes less than five minutes to have Google Drive working on your computer and



automatically integrated with your other Google services, such as Google Photos. Just make sure it's **connected with your agency profile, not your personal account**. If your agency does not have Google email, you will have to set up an account.

Some online reviews describe Google Drive as limited. One reviewer wrote:

"You'll find it distressingly limited when working through the Web interface on certain types of files. Even simple MSWord documents need to be converted into Google Docs to be read or edited online. You can always download, edit, and upload the file easily enough, but that may be an extra time-consuming hassle for some people."

If you're looking for Google to hold up with formatting, then it's not the system for you. But for most nonprofits needing to store drafts of text and photos, it fits the bill.

Google Drive's simple-to-use filing system can be shared with users through an invitation sent to their email addresses. The recipient will need to upload to the Drive, but they don't need a password to edit the file (avoiding having to remember passwords was noted as a barrier for staff in some of the survey responses).

Another nonprofit friendly feature of Google Drive is being able to see someone edit in real time when documents are open in Google Docs, unlike an internal network file folder that would block access to a document your coworker left open on his or her desktop while they went out to lunch (true story).

OneDrive - OneDrive is pre-installed in Windows 10 on many desktops and devices, yet a fewer number of people are using this as a file sharing system. To start with, you need a Microsoft / Outlook / Xbox Live account to access



OneDrive, which you would probably already have if you are a Windows user. Previously, OneDrive provided a space of up to 15GB to store data with \$1.99 for an extra 100GB and \$6.99 for 1TB of space.

If you have an Office 365 subscription, you automatically get 1TB of space free. Plans range from free (not really designed for multiple users) to \$10 per user per

month based on storage needs, data loss prevention, information protection, and in-place hold to preserve deleted and edited documents.

Similar to Google Drive, if you have Office 365, OneDrive allows you to share files with other collaborators and work with team members on the same file in real time.

A perk for nonprofit communications professionals is that photos saved in OneDrive are automatically tagged based on visuals and OneDrive albums help keep them organized and searchable (but still promote your own tagging system).

Dropbox - Dropbox was the third most popular cloud-based software used among survey respondents. A free version is available. With over 500 million users around the world, Dropbox is one of the most used online data backup services in the sector. That's helpful for file storage or a backup system. This is also a better option than Google Drive for those worried about consistency in formatting.



Trello, Confluence, Asana, Evernote, Salesforce, Basecamp - Project management software is being used by a small but vocal group of our survey participants. Some of these systems have a free version (Asana, Trello, Evernote). Others get pricey for multiple users—ranging from \$0 to \$3,000 per year.

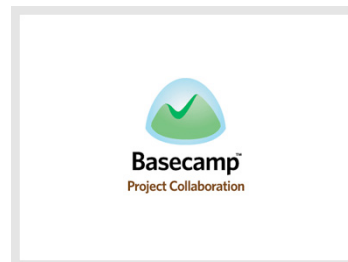
Interestingly enough, while this group of respondents was smaller, they reported the highest level of customer satisfaction in the survey. This is probably a direct correlation to project management capabilities.



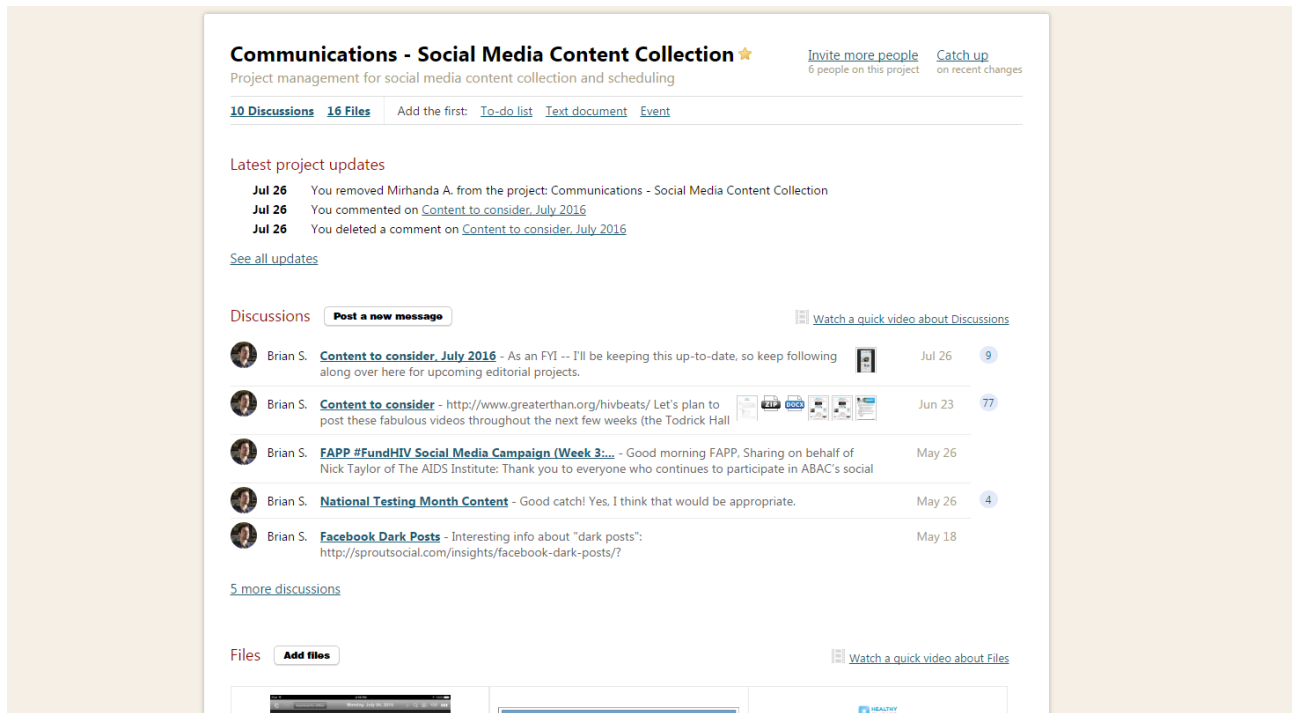
Case Study: Although Basecamp was not used by a large number of respondents in our survey, the software received a glowing review from Brian Solem, Director of Communications at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) and is a great example of how project management software works.

Their team has experimented with several project management tools, including SharePoint, a shared Word doc, basic group

emails, and more. Brian offered why he recommends this project management tool for storybanking and photobanking.



“AFC has been using Basecamp for years as a community-building resource and project management tool. The Communications team has made excellent use of this tool, as it has been a superb organizing and accountability tool for some of our longer-term branding and Web development projects. More recently, we have used it to share relevant, social-worthy stories among our communications team. We also use it, to a lesser extent, to coordinate our writing process for the many feature and news stories we produce each year including stories and profiles. We love its ability to track comments, set deadlines, and keep our inboxes free of the sort of difficult-to-organize clutter that we were wrestling with before. When I would forward requests for posts or things I saw in the news to our social scheduler and poster, things were getting lost in the shuffle. Now, there is a central repository for that content we can all add to and refer to as needed. However, Basecamp could benefit from a much more robust file-sharing component. It’s frustrating on a lot of levels and a missed opportunity for the software.”



We asked Brian, “How does Basecamp play into your day-to-day work with AFC’s three-person team?”

“Our communications team (director [me], social strategist [Ashley] and poster [Eryn]) all post to our Basecamp project and connect about story post opportunities, their appropriateness, engagement stats, and more. We work collaboratively to pick posts, and then we divide and conquer in terms of scheduling and writing posts.”

Inside Story: Jacina Sims reflects on AA LGBT Summit

- Internal review completed Thu, Jul 28
- Article posted to aidschicago.org Thu, Jul 28

[Add a to-do](#)

Inside Story: Harrison McEldowney, D4L

- First draft completed Fri, Jul 29
- Client review completed Tue, Aug 2
- Internal review completed Thu, Aug 4
- Article posted to aidschicago.org Thu, Aug 4

[Add a to-do](#)

Inside Story: EH

- First draft completed Brian Solem - Fri, Jul 29
- Client review completed Brian Solem - Tue, Aug 2
- Internal review completed Brian Solem - Fri, Aug 5
- Article posted to aidschicago.org Brian Solem - Tue, Aug 2

[Add a to-do](#)

Inside Story: Ava profile

- Connect Ava + Brian Ashley Slupski - Fri, Aug 12
- First draft completed Brian Solem - Fri, Aug 19
- Client review completed Brian Solem - Fri, Aug 26
- Internal review completed Tue, Aug 30
- Article posted to aidschicago.org Wed, Aug 31

[Add a to-do](#)

Inside Story: CBA story

- First draft completed Fri, Sep 9
- Internal review completed Fri, Sep 16
- Article posted to aidschicago.org Wed, Sep 21

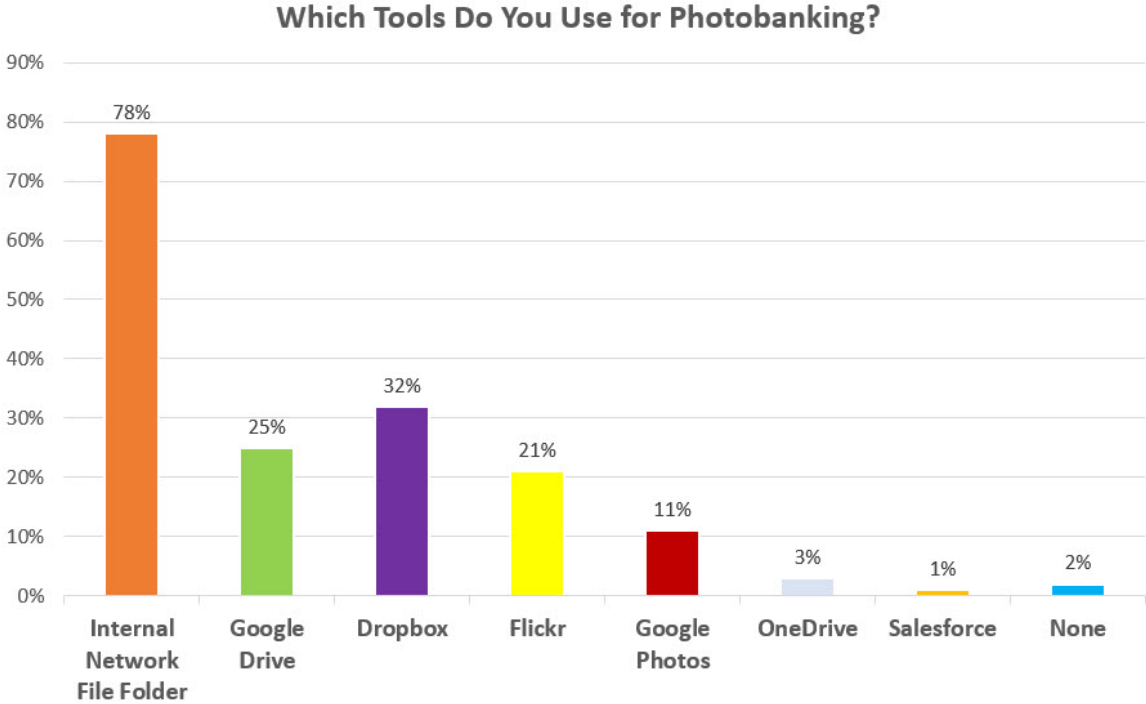
[Add a to-do](#)

How does Basecamp improve Brian's overall communications strategy?

“As director, I often receive requests from staff across our 115-person organization for posts and stories; I can then evaluate their appropriateness for our social feed and pass them along to our team to schedule them to fit into our overall weekly narrative story arc.”

What Is the Best System for Photobanking (Image Files)?

More survey respondents seemed to understand the need for photobanking pictures, videos, graphics, images, and art as well as understanding the growing trend in DAM software specifically for visual asset management. Many of the aforementioned tools in the storybanking section have enough capacity to serve dual purposes.

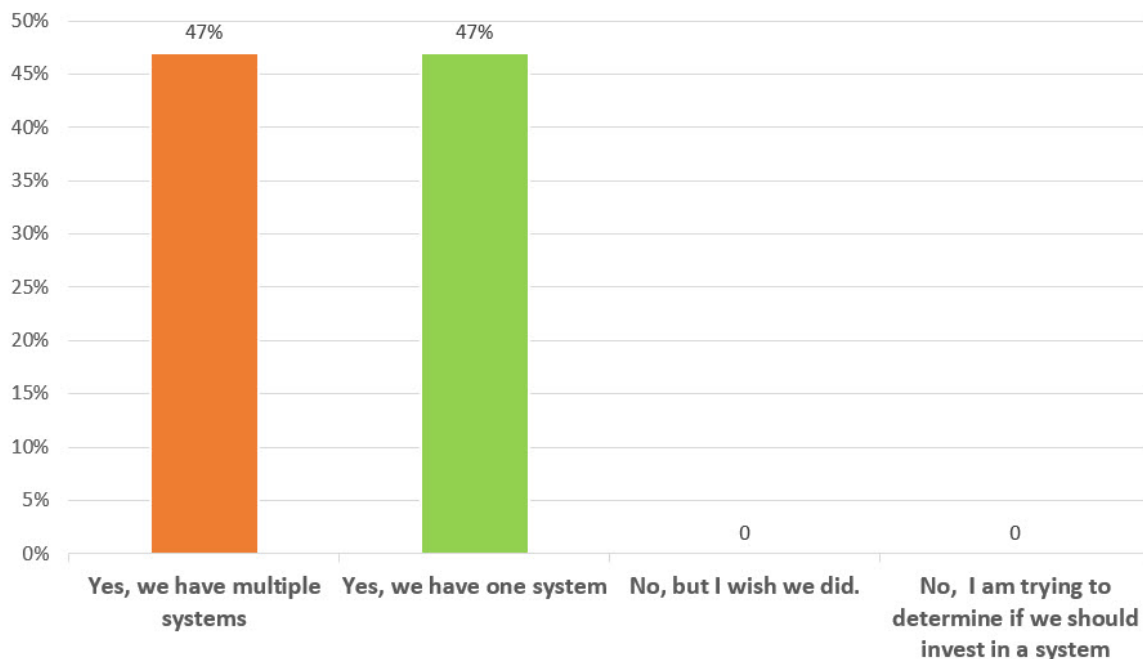


Source: Share Your Storybanking and Photobanking Stories Survey

But again, we find that many nonprofits are using multiple systems to store their images and videos which means they may be spending too much time trying to find exactly what they are looking for.

For those survey participants who answered they had a system in place, just as many nonprofits answered they had multiple systems as those who answered they only had one:

Does Your Nonprofit Use a Photobank to Collect or Share Stories



Source: Share Your Storybanking and Photobanking Stories Survey

The standouts for Photobanking systems:

Libris by Photoshelter - is a high powered visual asset management tool that has received rave reviews from nonprofits like the Shell and Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves.

Case Study: [Shell and Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves Team Up to](#)

[Fuel Visual Storytelling](#) highlights the nonprofit’s storytelling project to support their effort to reduce the economic, climate, and health risks of cookstove smoke by supporting the development of clean alternatives.



This case study is a good example of an organization who needs to collect and share high quality videos and images and how Libris was their best option for photobanking and videobanking. Libris helped the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves and their world-wide team gather and share content for commercials with Shell and developed a system that allows supporters, recipients, and friends to participate in a global photo album.

Another Case Study from Libris: [How Bates College Powers Visual Communications Across Platforms](#) highlights how the system improved their storytelling.

“Every student on this campus has a story to tell,” says Phyllis Graber Jensen, the Director of Photography and Video at Bates College.

Phyllis and her team at the Bates Communications Office use photos and videos, merged with words, to share a sense of place at Bates for students, prospective students, alumni and parents.

“People care about photography,” says Phyllis. “They value how it communicates – photography communicates about feelings, it’s sort of like a direct pipeline to people’s emotions and hearts.”

Libris has three plans for nonprofits - Basic \$3999, Professional \$6999 and Custom (varied).

Salesforce - is a Customer Relationship Management Product. The Nonprofit Success Pack has the capability to combine program management, community engagement, communications, fundraising, analytics, and build apps – which might make the investment an easier sell to agency leadership.



Salesforce has a number of testimonials from nonprofits that have cleaned up disorganized files. Here is one example:

“Ashoka – Innovators for the Public, a global organization supporting social entrepreneurs in more than 65 countries needed an integrated infrastructure to accommodate their rapid growth. They lacked a single source of institutional knowledge and an effective way of managing the organization’s most valuable asset: its network of nominators and entrepreneurs. They wanted to use cloud computing to integrate their 24 offices and 10 mission-critical programs, strengthen their cohesive identity, and drive networked collaboration around the world while reducing costs.

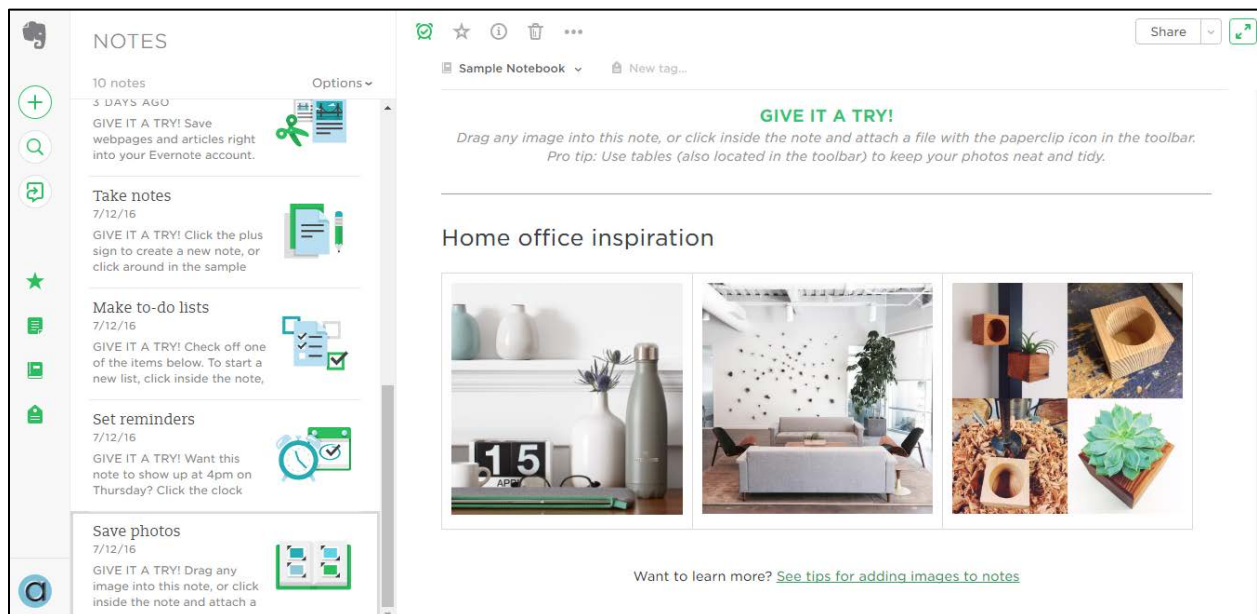
Ashoka evaluated Blackbaud, Kintera, Maximizer, and Microsoft Dynamics CRM, but chose the Force.com cloud platform for its flexibility...In just over a year, Ashoka replaced fragmented and out-of-date information stored in 30 different

databases with reliable, up-to-date data in Salesforce that provides consistent, real-time views of the organization's operations. They have enhanced organizational integration and communication flow via Chatter profiles, groups, and files; and overall organizational responsiveness has improved."

Salesforce has a 30 day free trial period and the Power of Us Program awards 10 donated subscriptions and discounts on additional subscriptions. For everyone else, packages range between \$36 and \$72 per month.

Flickr (a Yahoo Company) and Google Photos - are both popular cloud-based photo apps that can be downloaded for free. These programs might not require a lot of training for staff members (they can share photos with ease from a mobile device) but remember the importance of creating a filing system and tagging.

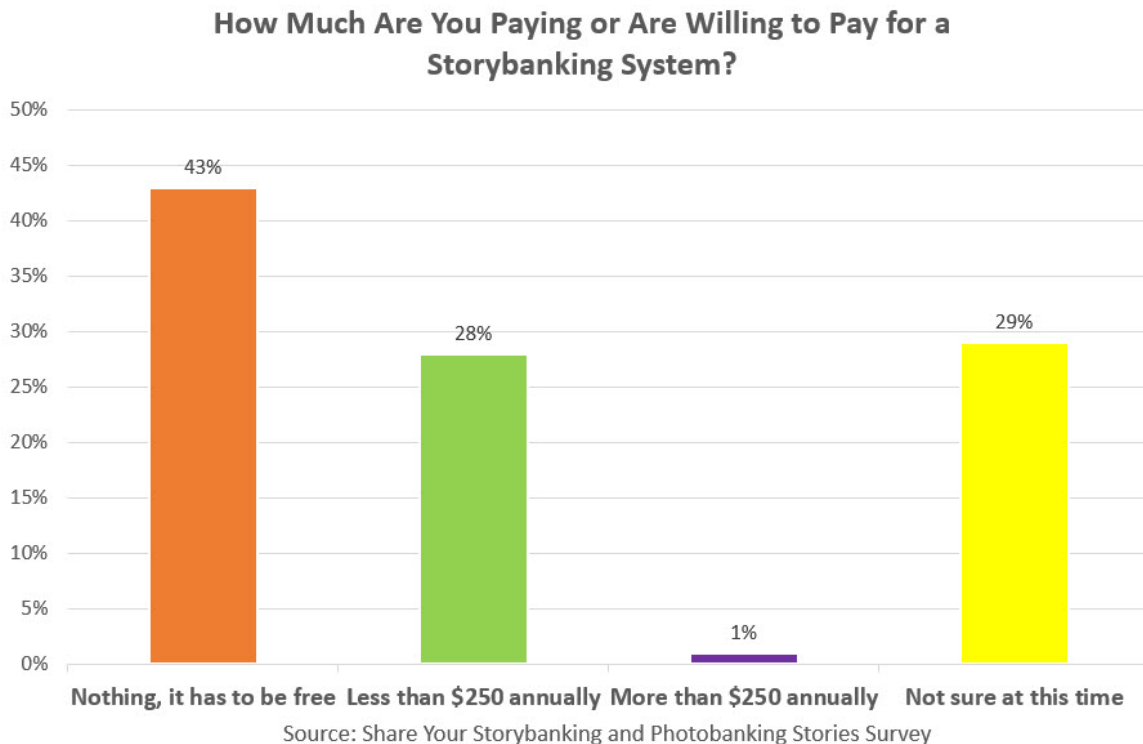
Evernote - is a favorite for Nonprofit Marketing Guide. It is often compared to OneNote with apps for just about every platform on the market. Setting up a free account will let you use Evernote locally on two devices, plus in any browser providing a limited amount of storage for note taking, to do lists, and adding photos. It works seamlessly with Google Photos which means staff members can transfer easily from a personal device. Note: The biggest file you can upload to a free account is 25MB (which could become an issue for video storage).



But the benefits include an easy to use program that allows the ability to search any text found in documents (a huge plus for people struggling with tagging). Also, if you have favorite clip art images online, Evernote has a handy Evernote Google Chrome Extension or a some like to call it “web clipper” so you can even bank your clip art in one click.

Price Matters

Twenty-six percent of those who responded to our survey did not have a storybanking management tool but recognized the value in having one. The driving force, like most aspects in the sector, is the price. In comparing responses from those using free systems and those paying for systems, it’s clear that the old adage “You get what you pay for” relates to storybanking and photobanking systems.



The good news is that most of the systems have a free or trial option, so this should give communications professionals the boost needed to go out and find the best storybanking and photobanking system for your agency. The key with all of these systems is labeling and naming the stories in a way they can be identified quickly.

Bringing the Team Along

Beyond selecting the most appropriate photobanking and storybanking system, one of the most common questions about banking was **how do I get other staff members to contribute?**

You don't have to do this alone. Having contributions from non-communications staff is essential. Here are a few pieces of advice gathered for helping you **avoid being a lone ranger** in contributing to your banking systems.

Tip from the field: *"I'll say it again and again because it's just that important - communications and marketing should start with Programs staff and should not be seen as a Development task. Your entire team should be marketers and communicators, at least with the basics."* - Kathryn B., Program Director

Avoid Chaotic Coding - Tag, Tag, Tag! Create a naming/tagging system and train others on how the process works. Your actual tagging system will depend on which software you use, as some programs have different "tag" or "label" settings. But at minimum, think about what's most important to include in the file name itself.

Tip from the field: *"TAG your photos right away. If you can, get staff to add tags and captions in Photoshop's File Info so all info travels WITH the photo."* - Frank T., Communications Director

Don't assume that staff members understand the basics of how to tag a word document or photo file. The best systems include first name, last name, dates, ANY (encourage staff members to get creative) related subject matter, e.g., Graham Porter, volunteer, golf tournament, Board Member, Great Smile (encourage staff to stretch in thinking about any way a story or image could be relevant in the future).

If you want quality photos and images, train staff and **give them examples**. What does a great story look like? The Who, What, When, Where and How is a great start, but encourage staff to capture details that help build the connection. For example, in the newspaper world, photographers are trained to take action photos over posed (or happy snaps) when covering nonprofit events because they tell better stories. If people who are trained to tell stories need this advice chances are the staff will too.

Tip from the field: *“I am super excited and thankful for them (non-communications staff) when they send along stories. I recognize them for their contributions in front of the board of directors. We share stories at board meetings. I'll interview/collect stories at an event to set an example, alongside a new staff person. Share sample questions with whomever you want to collect stories, if part of the storytelling includes interviewing donors, volunteers, etc. train them on how to approach the conversation. Set an example and do it yourself. Share the stories to remind others why it's important. Show the research that shows storytelling is more effective than blathering on about the nonprofit.”* - Sarah M., Development Chair

Also try to create deadlines, use reminders and provide friendly feedback on what is submitted. In Sarah M's case, she asks for submissions to be sent a week before the board meeting. Some nonprofits create awards and contests to encourage people to participate in banking.

Make it easy - When selecting the right system for the agency, consider the technology level of the team. A more complicated system or one that isn't compatible with everyone else's computer could inadvertently make you a lone ranger.

Tip from the field: *“Staff need to understand the basics of good stories and good photos. This might mean training on how to tell a good story and how to take a good photo because this is usually not instinctive for people.*

Providing user friendly tools for the team is very helpful. Not everyone is at the same technological level, so keeping the process simple and communicating specific requirements is key; this also helps with consistency. You have to make it REALLY easy and intuitive for staff to submit photos. I will take cameras and download photos. I'll take thumb drives - anything to get the photos, especially from people who are not tech savvy. And there are others who will login to a server and place photos. We have multiple ways. I also try to make it fun. Sometimes I run contests or give away Starbucks gift cards.

Implementing accountability is also important. Oversight helps ensure content is provided in a timely/consistent fashion and when there is a delay they can communicate that to the rest of the team.” - Jules T., Communications Manager

If you do have to fly solo - Acknowledge that other staff members are busy. Offer to help by interviewing the staff member about a topic or joining them to interview someone with a great story. This could be a great training opportunity for them without them even realizing it.

Banking Works!

So now that you know how banking works for other nonprofits, it's up to you to evaluate what you have (or don't) in place and make a well-informed recommendation to organizational leaders, staff, and/or your communications team about moving forward to organize, protect, and share your great stories, images, and videos. Armed with the knowledge of having some sort of banking system in place can improve workflow and assure that your fellow staff members help capture and share stories and images that will attract clients, donors, and/or volunteers to your good cause.

Good luck, and don't forget to share your stories with us at Nonprofit Marketing Guide! Email us at helpdesk@nonprofitmarketingguide.com with your stories and suggestions or corrections to this e-book.