

RIPPING OFF THE DIGITAL BAND-AID: RETHINKING NONPROFIT COMMUNICATIONS

Misinformation Scenario 2: Organizational Structure

Equal Futures (EF) is a large, well-known nonprofit whose mission is to advise and support small and/or new nonprofits on establishing themselves and meeting their yearly targets. In their weekly blog post, EF publishes articles advising community groups or smaller nonprofits how to best manage their resources—particularly their funding—in their philanthropic projects.

A new writer for the blog, Jamaal, just posted an article (approved through EF's editorial process) on the importance of transparency with stakeholders. Most of their article offers tips for how to educate a community about the work being done and to gain their trust: how to combat conspiracy theories about a nonprofit's intentions, suppress disinformation about key topics and concerns in the community, and communicate financial relationships in a trustworthy way. Within an hour of the blog post going live, an anonymous user known only as @Freedommm4147 posted the following comment:

"ITS NOT A CONSPIRACY!!! FOLLOW THE MONEY AND IT SHOWS UR ALL FUNDING THE ANTIFA AND LINING YOUR OWN POCKETS!!!"

The comment section quickly begins to flood with responses, nearly all hostile toward Equal Futures:

@CatLadiez622: What about your own funding transparency??? Not so fast to tell us where that came from.....

@HPorter: Heard they get their funds from Clintons...but only if they make sure the rest of us get nothing

@EllieMCK: I heard their funded by the Koch brothers actually. Would explain why they never seem to give BLM any help!!!!!!!

@Rick78: SO QUICK TO JUDGE US BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR OWN MONEY!!!! SHOW US WHERE YOU GET YOURS FROM AND I MIGHT SHOW YOU WHERE I GET MINE

@HelenRichards: As a community organizer myself, it's really disappointing to see that you place all the blame on communities for the spread of disinformation and for their lack of trust. In my experience, folks are open to getting help from orgs that are worthy of their trust. If you're getting so much push back, maybe you should be looking at your own practices. Where there's smoke there is usually fire.

Prompts:

1. What kind of responses are not just appropriate but EFFECTIVE in dealing with this PR storm of disinformation and misinformation?
 - a. How should Jamaal respond to the negative responses to their post?
 - b. How should Jamaal's editor respond? How should Equal Futures respond?
2. What kinds of steps might Equal Futures take internally to prevent something like this?
 - a. Organizational practices
 - Staff
 - Board
 - Volunteers
 - Community Members
 - b. Organizational Policies
 - Communications
 - Legal
 - c. Technological tools