

## Increase and Improve Your Group's Online Presence

One of the easiest ways to increase your organization's visibility is to do so online. More than 90% of reporters are using the web to research their stories. The general public gets in its share of usage as well -- 87% of teens are going online and more than 147 million adults engage in online activities.\* Your organization should set aside some time to ensure it has an effective presence online. The following tips should help. They focus on building your online visibility and are from one of Green Media Toolshed's monthly skill-building trainings.

*\*Source: Pew Internet and American Life Project, December 2006*

### How Do I Increase My Organization's Online Visibility?

*Step 1: Create an online press room.*

- An online press room is an area on your website that provides pertinent information for reporters, visitors to your site and your supporters. Think of your press room as an online version of your press kit.
- Create a direct link to your press room from your homepage.
- Make sure to include the following information:
  - Clear contact information for the person at your organization who reporters should call.
  - Recent press releases.
  - Background information on your organization.
  - Content to accompany a reporter's story, including photos, videos and MP3s.
  - A calendar of upcoming events.
  - Details about your organization's issues and campaigns.
- Keep it current. Be sure that you update information on a regular basis.
- Two great examples of a press room include the following (select the Press Room link in the navigation bar):
  - The Dogwood Alliance: <http://www.dogwoodalliance.org/>
  - Ogeechee Canoochee Riverkeeper: <http://www.ogeecheecanoocheeriverkeeper.org/>

*Step 2: Use additional resources to increase the appeal of your website.*

- If your organization isn't already blogging, it should be.
  - There are several inexpensive or free sites that allow you to create a blog, such as Blogger (<https://www.blogger.com/start>) and Typepad (<http://www.typepad.com/>).
- Use an RSS reader so that your site visitors can keep up with the newly updated content on your website, from blog posts to new press releases.
  - Are you unsure what an RSS reader is? Common Craft explains it to you in plain English: [http://www.commoncraft.com/rss\\_plain\\_english](http://www.commoncraft.com/rss_plain_english).
- Display your photos using a photo-sharing site such as Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/>).
- Post your videos using sites such as YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/>) and Google Video (<http://video.google.com/>).
- Make sure to add tags to the relevant content on your website.
  - Pew Internet's 2006 showed that 28% of internet users have tagged online content, such as photos, news stories or blog posts ([http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/201/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/201/report_display.asp)).
- Create an e-newsletter to provide your supporters with essential information about your organization, campaigns and events. Create an easy sign-up form on your website.
  - A great example of an e-newsletter is Frogloop, Care2's community blog for non profits. You can sign up for it here: <http://www.frogloop.com/subscribe/>.
- Monitor the coverage your organization receives or the issues it covers through Google News Alerts (<http://www.google.com/alerts>).
- Create profiles on social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Change.org. There are several ways your organization can use Facebook detailed here: <http://eweibn04.blogspot.com/2006/11/how-nonprofits-can-use-facebook.html>.

## Additional Online Resources

The following resources will help your group to enhance your online presence. It's not a comprehensive list of all resources out there, but it includes some of our favorites.

The Communications Network,

<http://www.comnetwork.org/downloads/Tips%20on%20Website%20Redesign.pdf>

- ▲ Outlines the questions you should ask before starting a website redesign.

FeedBurner, [www.feedburner.com](http://www.feedburner.com)

- ▲ Free tool that lets web content publishers manage RSS feeds; also has usage tracking capabilities.

Green Media Toolshed Media Training Center,

<http://www.greenmediatoolshed.org/training/>

- ▲ Tips on creating a press release, building a targeted media list and much more.

Journalist Feedback on Online Newsrooms,

[http://www.tekgroup.com/article\\_download.cfm?article\\_id=122](http://www.tekgroup.com/article_download.cfm?article_id=122)

- ▲ TekGroup International's survey on what reporters look for when visiting an organization's website.

NetSquared, <http://www.netsquared.org/>

- ▲ A project of TechSoup that helps nonprofits build their online, social web.

Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

- ▲ Add your organization to this online encyclopedia. According to Pews Internet's 2007 survey, more than a third of adult online users consult this site:

[http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Wikipedia07.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Wikipedia07.pdf).

### Meet the newest members of the GMT network:

- American River Conservancy
- Connecticut League of Conservation Voters
- Conservation Trust of Florida
- East Coast Greenway Alliance
- Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
- FUSE USA
- Global Justice Ecology Project
- High Country News
- Honor the Earth
- Kent County Conservancy
- Manitoba, Inc.
- NTEN – Nonprofit Technology Network
- Seaflow
- Urban Age Institute

### Were these tips helpful? Well there's more where these came from...

Green Media Toolshed (GMT) is a nonprofit organization that provides the environmental community with access to high quality communications tools for an affordable price. GMT's tools also feature access to an online media database of reporters and outlets, a gallery of more than 6,000 photos, media training content, and customizable web tools to assist members in their work with reporters as well as with coalition members and partner groups. GMT is also piloting a monthly skill-building training series to help our members get the training they need to keep up with the latest trends, tools, and strategies. Past online trainings have covered topics such as why your organization should be blogging, how organizations can use citizen journalism in their outreach, how to effectively target your audience, and how to develop your strategic communications plan.

GMT currently has more than 180 members that range in budget, scope of outreach and size of staff. For more information, visit [www.greenmediatoolshed.org](http://www.greenmediatoolshed.org) or contact Yvonne Archer at 202-464-5357 or [yvonne@greenmediatoolshed.org](mailto:yvonne@greenmediatoolshed.org). Mention that you attended the Chesapeake Watershed Forum to receive a 30% discount on new membership through the end of 2007.



## A Guide to Offering Ringtones Online

Cell phones have become ubiquitous in the United States, with almost three-quarters of the population owning at least one. They have gone from something used only in emergencies to being primary telephones, music players, mini computers, and, most commonly, high-tech accessories.

### ***Why ringtones?***

Until a few years ago, cell phones all rang with similar beeps and other computer-generated sounds. Not only was this impersonal, but it was downright confusing. Who hasn't heard a cell phone ring and reached into their purse or pocket to answer it, only to realize the ringing phone belonged to someone two tables away with the same ringtone?

As cell phone technology advanced, so did the quality of the sounds they emitted. In 2004, **23 percent of cell phone owners in the United States downloaded a ringtone. Ringtones grew to be a \$500 million industry in 2006**, with many musical artists and recording studios making big bucks by selling ringtones. Not surprisingly young people have been the early adapters of ringtones, particularly teenagers and young adults, but older people are downloading them as well.

The most popular ringtones are clips from popular music, but ringtones that make a statement have proven to be successful, too. The Center for Biological Diversity offers croaks, howls, and roars from endangered species in the form of ringtones to call attention to the creatures. Since December 2006, about 60,000 ringtones have been downloaded.

The World Wildlife Fund also offers animal calls as ringtones for cell phones, along with wallpapers and games. Greenpeace created two humorous downloadable ringtones to bring attention to Canada and Spain's resistance to outlawing the fishing practice of bottom trawling. The organization ripped the ringtones from a song from the movie South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut – "Blame Canada." The New York Philharmonic promotes its musical programs by offering ringtones of selected songs.

But **what can a ringtone do for a cause? For starters, it is something people can use to show their support – similar to an audio button or bumper sticker.** They are also a good way to reach small audiences with a message. Ringing cell phones are unavoidable. If a phone goes off while its owner is standing in line at a coffee shop, everyone in that line will hear the ten-second message. Ringtones are also still a novelty, especially ones that aren't pulled straight from popular songs. Their uniqueness draws attention, both from the people that happen to hear them and from the media.

### ***How can I make ringtones?***

Creating ringtones and making them available for people to download isn't difficult, but it helps to be imaginative and know which web services can help. **Read on to learn how to make ringtones from scratch and get them onto people's cell phones.**

## Step 1: Get Creative

Think about what you want to get across in your ringtone and how you can say it quickly. Ringtones should only be **about 15 to 20 seconds long**, so you do not have much time. And remember that the ringtone often will not play all the way through.

## Step 2: Pick Your Sound Byte

You can use any audio content in your ringtone, whether it is a clip from a song, a quote from a speech or movie, or anything else you choose. If you decide to use spoken word as your ringtone, it is a good idea to **overlay it with music so the sound doesn't get lost** in the buzz of a crowd.

Make sure to check each sound clip's copyright statement to make sure you can legally use and distribute it.

## Step 3: Create Your Ringtones and Make them Accessible

The trickiest part to offering ringtones is making them compatible and deliverable to all cell phones that can download ringtones. Different cell phone models and carriers support different formats and delivery methods, making it difficult to provide ringtones that are easy to download.

Luckily, there are services out there that do the hard work for you.

**Myxer is a service that makes it easy to edit, upload, and share ringtones, and it is completely free.** Use the following steps to get started:

√ Go to <http://www.myxertones.com>, click "Sign Up Now," and complete the registration form. A cell phone number will be your login, and this number must be able to receive text messages.

√ Once you've entered in your information, a text message will be sent to the cell phone number with a number needed to verify your account. Enter this number into the online form.

√ Create a profile for your organization. This profile will serve as your storefront, so be sure to include your website's url and a photo that represents your organization. Click "What Others See" in the left-hand side of the web page to make sure you are happy with your storefront.

√ Now you can upload your ringtones. Select "Share & Sell," and using the "Create a New Product" box, choose the audio clip that you want to turn into a ringtone. This file must be in WAV, MP3, M4A, or WMA format.

√ Once your sound clip is uploaded, fill out the form to give it a title, an image to be displayed along with it, and a few tags (or key words) to describe it.

√ On this page you can also edit your ringtone. Use the basic editing tools at the bottom of the page to shorten the length of your ringtone and determine where it should start playing. After editing it, listen to it to make sure you are happy with it. Once you click finish, your ringtone will be available on your Myxer page.

If you want to combine several audio clips in your ringtone, you'll have to use more sophisticated editing software. Audacity is a great recording and editing tool. It is free and built on open source software. You can download it at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>.

An article on LifeHacker at <http://tinyurl.com/ye3woe> explains how to use Audacity to create ringtones, and more in depth tutorials are available online at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/tutorials>.

#### **Step 4: Put Your Ringtones On Your Website**

Making your ringtones available on your website is the first step to promoting them and is a great way to get more information about the people who download your ringtones. **This is important because Myxer will only tell you how many people have downloaded each ringtone and not who they are.**

The easiest way to get this information is to **create an online form that people must fill out before they can download a ringtone.** First, create a web page that describes your ringtones and then link to the online form to download them. **Keep the form simple and only ask for the most important information you want to know, such as name and email address. Once the form is completed, you can send people on to your Myxer page to download the ringtones.**

#### **Step 5: Spread the Word**

Like everything else you put online, you will need to promote your ringtones in order for people to find them. If you have a base of supporters or an audience you think will be interested in your ringtones, reach out to them first. Then keep talking. Post an advertisement for your ringtone on your website's homepage, write about it in your e-newsletter, or write about it on your blog and MySpace page, if you have them.

It is also a good idea to send out a press release about your ringtone, particularly to technology writers and bloggers. For tips on writing a press release, visit <http://www.greenmediatoolshed.org/training>.

#### **Feedback and Lessons Learned**

There are only a handful of examples and vendors working in this space of using ringtones for social change campaigns. Additionally, technology and vendors are always offering new solutions and launching new products. Netcentric Campaigns is a resource for nonprofit and issue advocacy campaigns. We make as many resources as we can available for free. We try to keep the communities' learning experiences and case studies posted on [www.mobileactive.org](http://www.mobileactive.org). We request that if you use this guide at all that you return **the favor and give back to the community as much information as you can about your experiences, data, and campaigns.**

Feedback should be sent to Marty at [netcentriccampaigns.org](http://netcentriccampaigns.org).



## A Guide to Using Voicemail to Record Audio Files

New services are changing the way you check voicemail messages by delivering them to your phone and your email inbox, and by making them available online. Many people find it easier to receive messages via email because it allows them to organize and store them with related files on their computer.

A big advantage of receiving messages online or via email is that they are immediately more useful. This is because they are delivered in an audio format that most computers can play, making it very easy to share these messages with large audiences.

One way to **share your messages is to publish them online**. You may not want to publish most of your messages on your website, but it is **a great way to have your supporters share a story or experience in their own words**. For example, you can ask people to leave a message explaining why they are passionate about a cause, what they think of a hot topic in the news, or what their opinions are of a service you provide.

To publish audio files online, you will want to put them in mp3 format. This is one of the most popular audio formats. Most computers can play mp3 files and they are small so they won't slow down your website and it won't take forever for visitors to download them.

In this guide, you will learn how to record voicemail messages and publish them online using three different services. Each service is a little different and may have capabilities that will or won't work, for you. Below you can learn how to use each, and how to make sure you can legally publish your voicemail messages on your website.

### ***Getting Consent***

**To publish a message on your website, you need to get consent from the caller.**

Typically, organizations get consent by having the caller sign a release form. However, in this case, verbal consent should be sufficient. The easiest way to get consent is to ask for it in your voicemail greeting. For example, you could say the following:

“Thank you for calling the National Wildlife Federation. Please leave a message explaining why you are passionate about protecting polar bears. We will record your message and may publish it on our website. By leaving a message, you authorize the National Wildlife Federation to use your recording on our website, [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org), and in digital repositories managed by us. You must be 18 years or older to leave a message. If you are under 18, or if you have any questions, please call 555-123-4567.”

You can include a similar statement on your website and wherever you promote this campaign.

## ***Use GrandCentral***

GrandCentral is a free voicemail service that saves your messages and sends them to you in mp3 format. This service has several nice features that make it easy to promote your number and publish your messages on your website. It also gives you a new, local phone number, but, unfortunately, doesn't yet have local numbers in New Mexico and several Midwestern states. In the coming weeks, GrandCentral will add new area codes to its coverage.

The following is what you need to do to get started:

### **1. Sign Up**

Go to [GrandCentral.com](http://GrandCentral.com), enter the area code you would like for your phone number, and click sign up. Once you've selected a new phone number and filled out several forms, you will receive a verification email and a test voicemail message in your inbox.

### **2. Record Your Greeting**

Log into [GrandCentral.com](http://GrandCentral.com) and select "Greetings" under the settings tab. Click "Record New" and select the physical phone you want to use to record your greeting. You will receive a call on that phone that will walk you through how to record your greeting.

### **3. Promote Your New Number**

You are now all set to receive voicemail messages and record them. Next you need to tell people about your new phone number and how you want them to use it. The best way to do this is to promote it like any other campaign – tell your supporters, tell the media, and put it on your website.

One great feature that comes with GrandCentral is an easy to install "Call Me" button that you can put right on your website. Website visitors can then use this button to call you without having to dial your number on their phone. For step by step instructions on how to put it on your website, click "Edit Web Buttons" under the settings tab.



### **4. Manage Calls**

With GrandCentral, you must link your new phone number to an existing one, and the existing phone number will ring each time you receive a phone call. If you have a phone number that you seldom use, you may want to link it your GrandCentral account so you can turn the ringer off and send all calls directly to voicemail.

If that is not an option, you can still use GrandCentral. Whenever you pick up a call coming from your GrandCentral phone number, you will first hear an automated voice asking you how to handle the call. Simply press “2” to send the call directly to voicemail.

## **5. Check Messages**

You can listen to your messages from your email inbox and from [GrandCentral.com](http://GrandCentral.com). To receive your messages via email, click “Notifications” under the settings tab and select an email address. Now all your messages will be sent to you at that email address.

To check messages online, go to your inbox at [GrandCentral.com](http://GrandCentral.com). From here you can listen to your messages and download them in mp3 format.

## **6. Publish Messages on Your Website**

There are two ways you can publish messages online with GrandCentral. The first option is to post them in GrandCentral’s audio player, like you see here. To do this, select a message on [GrandCentral.com](http://GrandCentral.com) and click “Post.” You will see a snippet of html code. Copy this code and paste it into your website’s html code where you want it to appear.

You can also add just the mp3 file to your website. First download the mp3 from [GrandCentral.com](http://GrandCentral.com) – you can do this from your inbox. Upload this file to your website as you would any other file. Then you can link to this file from anywhere on your website.