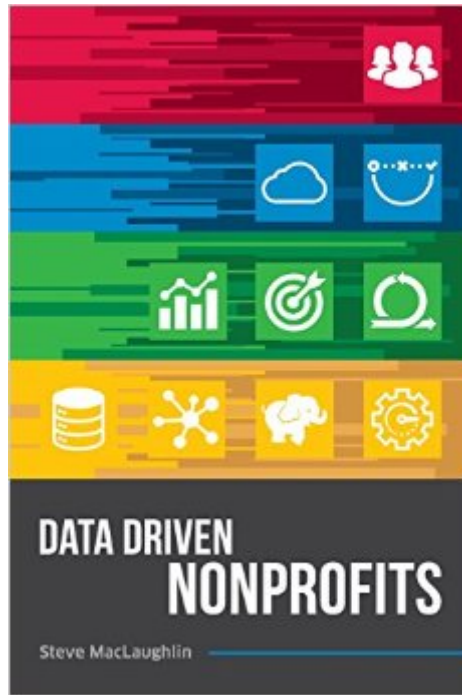


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# Data Driven Nonprofits



## Synopsis

Big Data is completely transforming how companies drive their decision making, but many nonprofit organizations are unprepared to make the most of this opportunity. Nonprofit organizations are vital to making meaningful change in the world and they have significant amounts of untapped potential in their data. Unfortunately, many nonprofits lack the strategies, skills, and guidance to make better engagement, fundraising, advocacy, and program decisions based on their data. *Data Driven Nonprofits* is a guide book for nonprofit organizations that want to improve their performance and increase positive change in the world. Learn from industry leaders and nonprofit professionals that have unlocked the keys to becoming more data driven. Data driven nonprofits accelerate change in the world when staff use data to influence strategy and inform decisions that produce value and impact. Author Steve MacLaughlin is a respected nonprofit industry, fundraising, and online giving expert. He explores how data driven nonprofits are shaping the world and what makes them successful. *Data Driven Nonprofits* will help you understand: • Why data is important to you and your nonprofit organization • How the nonprofit sector, technology, and big data are converging • What are some of the challenges to becoming more data driven • Why the culture of a nonprofit organization plays such an important role • How organizations of all sizes and causes have become more data driven • What the future holds for nonprofits that embrace a data driven mindset *Data Driven Nonprofits* contains insights and interviews from more than 20 respected charity sector experts. First-hand stories from not-for-profit organizations like Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, University of South Dakota, Indiana University, Worldwide Cancer Research, SCIAF, Royal National Institute of Blind People, Project HOPE, Denver Rescue Mission, Florida State University, Humane Society of the United States, VolunteerMatch, Crisis Text Line, and charity: water are featured throughout the book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Many organizations still use technology as an electronic filing cabinet. They don't use the power of that software to do what they could with, and that's because they don't understand what can be done with it." The above quote is one of my favorites from Steve's book, and encapsulates much of my experience with organizations over the previous twenty years. Understandably, many organizations don't have the staff to focus on data health and analysis. Outlined throughout the book are practical steps and ideas for organizations (of any size) to both maintain their data and leverage it to drive action. The book is a great reference for all levels across an organization. Whether you're an executive trying to make decisions for an upcoming comprehensive campaign or a volunteer coordinator looking to increase engagement, Steve provides guidance in using the data that the organization already has or is available through varied resources.

In the fundraising world there is much talk about becoming "donor-centric" (organizing around the interests, preferences, and experiences of donors) as well as becoming "Mission-centric" (aligning all activities with support of the organization's Mission). To be successful at either of these endeavors, however, requires that organizations first become data-centric, a notion self-evident in theory but somewhat akin to Bigfoot in practice - often spoken about, but rarely witnessed in person. This fun and surprisingly erudite read explores the topic of the data-driven nonprofit, with a mix of interviews with nonprofit CIO's, war stories from leaders in the digital revolution, and never-before-published industry benchmarks. The result is a combination of Harper's Index of statistics from the nonprofit world ("Total amount of untapped giving potential in the average nonprofit database: \$3,781,461"), irreverent comedy ("statistics are mostly T.B.U. - True But Useless"), and hard won wisdom from working with real organizations (the oft-cited statistic that "95% of Americans give to charity" is a myth). The real world aspect of the book will be most interesting to readers from the nonprofit sector. Steve outlines an organizational roadmap from tracking data ("Step Zero" where many organizations find themselves today) through to the leading edge of "prescriptive analytics" (Minority Report-style "what should we do next" modeling), as well as makes a compelling case for taking the journey and dragging others along with you. In short, if you work at a nonprofit in the 21st century, this book is for you.

"Every byte yearns to become wisdom," is one of my favorite lines from a great book that is full of them. MacLaughlin has written a text that will be accessible and instructive to both the reader who is new to analytics and fundraising as well as those who would self-identify as data nerds. Data Driven Nonprofits is driven by memorable examples and stories throughout, which is one of the points MacLaughlin makes in the book--having data does not make donors less "human," but rather the opposite--it allows nonprofits to more fully understand donors as unique individuals (the paradox of too much data). MacLaughlin's stories serve the same purpose by humanizing and making his assertions come to life instead of just pounding us with numbers. MacLaughlin did his homework, offering interesting history of how data and nonprofits came together, what the current experts in the field have to say about the subject, and also tracking down the origin of the mythical "95%" number (a number many of us in the field have seen/read!). I also loved the description of TBU--true but useless--a term I didn't know before but have seen in practice. The book ends by looking forward and discussing the future of fundraising as the ground shifts from direct mail to digital. MacLaughlin smartly explains how all change is gradual--but as his book demonstrates, those gradual changes can add up to serious shifts before we know it. I'm glad we have someone like MacLaughlin to catalog, interpret, and advise as we strive to better understand donors and support our passions.

I am not a data wonk. I'm a CSR professional, a nonprofit board member, a volunteer, and a donor. Big Data is not my thing. And yet after reading this book, I am convinced that to be effective in any one of those roles, I at least need to advocate for the use of meaningful data. Given my lack of Big Data direct experience, I was intimidated when I started reading this book - would it go over my head? Would it bore me to tears? And the answer to both was a resounding "no." The Data Driven Nonprofit is written in an approachable and interesting way, providing history and examples of what works and what's holding organizations back. While it didn't turn me into a Big Data expert, it did turn me into someone who will push for the effective usage within the organizations I'm personally involved. From the corporate perspective, it identifies a specific need of nonprofits as we consider how to build the capacity of our partner organizations; if skills-based volunteerism designed to build capacity of a nonprofit and companies have proven their mastery of Big Data, then my next step is to visit that department within my company to ask them to participate in a meaningful pro bono volunteer experience. This book is both fact-based and readable. It is a great tool for board members and nonprofit staff alike as the pressure mounts to continue to find funding to fulfill their missions. I'll be gifting copies of this book to those organizations where I serve as a board member.

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