

Agency for Change Podcast: Changemaker Alicia Osgood, Director of Communications, ANA Nonprofit Federation

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Alicia Osgood: 0:01

Tell the truth. It simplifies your life.

Announcer: 0:06

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

Lyn Wineman: 0:30

Hey everyone, welcome back to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. I'm Lyn Wineman, President and Chief Strategist at KidGlov, and I am so glad that you're here today. I know we have a lot of nonprofit leaders in our audience and sometimes being a nonprofit leader can feel very lonely. So today we're going to talk with someone who represents an organization that sees you, that hears you and that supports you. Our guest is Alicia Osgood. She's the Director of Communications from the ANA Nonprofit Federation and she is here to talk all things nonprofit, including their big annual conference that just happened last week. So buckle up, listen in, Alicia. Welcome to the podcast.

So great to have you here, and I know you have a very busy schedule, so we will just jump in. Alicia, I'd love to start by having you tell us more about the ANA Nonprofit Federation. I know we have a lot of nonprofit listeners and they'll be eager to hear more.

Alicia Osgood: 1:49

Well, the ANA Nonprofit Federation exists to help nonprofits drive growth for their missions. We do this through a variety of ways. We do this through our conferences, through our education. That's available not just in conference form but in training. We offer in-person trainings. We offer on-demand trainings. There's a la carte trainings. I just took one myself last week on AI. It was really interesting. We also have very practical services that help you do your job, like the Ask Research service, where if you have a marketing or a fundraising question that you can't answer, you submit an online request form and you can have our wonderful research team do all that work for you to find that answer that you need. We have a full-service government relations team that provides incredible advocacy for our members. We also offer unparalleled networking through our conferences and committees. The committees actually is what's really neat about the committees is there are free benefit of membership, there's no charge to

attend the meetings and we do a three virtual for our brand purpose, for example, which I'm the co-planner manager of.

Lyn Wineman: 2:53

That sounds like fun. Alicia, by the way, that sounds like a lot of fun.

Alicia Osgood: 2:56

We offer three virtual meetings and one in person, so you have opportunities to attend regardless, especially now, with travel budgets being what they are in the realities of the current situation. Our programs are designed to accommodate you, regardless of your situation.

Lyn Wineman: 3:11

Fantastic, since you mentioned the realities of the current situation. I'm just curious you're thinking on why is this work that you're doing at the ANA Nonprofit Federation so important right now?

Alicia Osgood: 3:25

Well, as communications director, it's my responsibility to make sure that the ANA nonprofit members are available, are aware of all those services I just listed so I do that through my newsletters. There's a weekly job publication I put out every Tuesday called ANA Nonprofit Careers. It lists opportunities that are available with nonprofits and the agencies that support nonprofits.

I also do what's called the Nonprofit Now, which comes out every Thursday and that basically lists all those things that I just talked about our mentorship program, our committees, our trainings that are available, our webinars that are available, anything that is in the ANA universe that would be applicable to a nonprofit that a nonprofit would be interested in. That email will list it out so that you don't have to go searching, because the ANA, as you know, is a huge organization with lots of different tentacles and areas that it covers. So it's a really nice feature to have that email every week that says this is what we have for the nonprofits, specifically going on this week. And there's never any shortage of opportunities.

Lyn Wineman: 4:24

Oh, I love that. Since you mentioned it, Alicia, I'd love to hear, because there might be people out there that are not familiar with ANA Can you tell us a little bit more about that parent organization as well?

Alicia Osgood: 4:39

Sure. So the ANA, we were acquired by the ANA back some years ago now. From what was the Direct Marketing Association Coming in as the Nonprofit Federation, the ANA, the marriage of the ANA and the Nonprofit Federation was a really great opportunity because, you know, ANA has all the brands.

And then you bring in the nonprofits and what's a really rich opportunity for both sides is through cause marketing. We provided an opportunity to connect with those brands and make those connections which, especially given the situation we're currently in. You know, this is really an opportunity for

everybody to step up, donors but also the corporate side of things, and I'm really hopeful that, if there was ever a time we can make those connections. Well, one of our in fact, one of our keynotes at our conference will be from Mattel. So we want to really get these marriages going.

You know there's been some reluctance on corporations to really support nonprofits as they should. A very small percentage, a very small number, actually are in there engaging with nonprofits and supporting them as they should, and we want to change that. You know, when it talked on the questions, let's say about questions about opportunities and challenges we have a real opportunity right now. Everybody does. Donors to step up, corporations to really stand behind nonprofits, but also to stand behind some of these initiatives that some of them, sadly, are backing away from around DEIB and you know, and some of their internal initiatives to try to support a better world. This is not the time to step back from that. It's a time to step forward and lean forward, and one way to do that is helping nonprofits fill the gaps. So I'm hoping we can really, when we're having these conversations at the conference next week, I'm hoping we can really delve into this and help nonprofits see through this. We already have nonprofits operating on a really razor thin margin.

Lyn Wineman: 6:28

Yeah, Alicia, I love what you're saying, because I've seen a lot of research recently about how consumers want to support brands that are making a difference in the world, and I'm sure ANA sees this on both sides, because you're working with the advertisers and the nonprofits. But bringing in Mattel to your nonprofit conference, that's a really bold move. Can you tell us more about that?

Alicia Osgood: 6:56

Well, as I said, we have a whole cause marketing track that's going to be available at the conference, not just the one keynote. I mean that's a huge opportunity for nonprofits and that's a unique value proposition that sets the ANA Nonprofit Federation apart from other organizations in the space, Because, as I'm sure you know, there's a lot of professional development groups out there for nonprofits What the ANA offers you that the other organizations don't is the connection with the brands, the direct relationship with the brands, the opportunity for nonprofits to serve on the ANA board of directors as they do like. For instance, American Heart Association will have Gerald Johnson as another one of our keynotes on the ANA board and he's head of the sponsorship committee for the whole ANA right.

So this is an opportunity for people to get together directly, talk to one another, network and start to get more. And obviously, Mattel is not a problem. Mattel is already supporting nonprofits obviously. But there are some corporations out there that have been reluctant to step in and, as I mentioned, we've seen corporations sadly stepping back from DEIB policies and doing things reacting the wrong way to what's going on.

Lyn Wineman: 8:03

Alicia, you are so generous in doing this interview with me, because the way this works is you're doing the interview before the conference but the podcast is going to air right after the conference. So I know you're really busy, but I just love to hear more about the conference. I know it's too late to register for this year, but it's never too late to start planning for next year. So tell me more about what you're excited about with the conference.

Alicia Osgood: 8:31

Well, I'm really excited because we have six keynote speakers coming in. Wow, we have seven tracks and so, literally within the program, you're going to hear from some really, you know star keynotes. American Heart Association I mentioned Gerald Johnson is going to be speaking. We've got Nancy Melinda from Mattel. We've also got Khalil Al-Khatib from Consumer Reports coming in. We've got Toon Walkman from World Central Kitchen. She's going to be in conversation with nonprofit journalist Paul Colery, who I'm sure you're familiar with, to the Nonprofit Times and all the great work they've done on behalf of the sector over the years. I know I'm forgetting somebody here.

We have six keynotes. so apologies if I left out your name there, but, as I said, we have a wonderful group of people coming forward. Oh, and Kimberly Cooper from the Kennedy Center. How could I forget She'll be there too as a keynote.

We also have Habitat for Humanity. Amy Dunham will be there she's their chief communications officer talking about how important brand is, but obviously how marketing gets a seat at the strategy table, because it seems logical, right? But people leave marketing out of these conversations and it's marketing's job to make what you're trying to do as an organization work. And so if they're left out of those conversations, how does that happen? How does that work?

Lyn Wineman: 9:49

Alicia, that's music to my ears because you're right, if marketing is at the table, we can really be the voice of the customer or the donor or the funder or the people who receive our mission, who are all important in the strategy, right, and that way we can be right there on the front lines helping to shape that strategy. But then also, when you have a marketing leader who is knee deep in the strategy, it's also easier and more effective for them to launch that strategy from a marketing perspective. It all becomes very seamless. So I love that you said that and you obviously have an amazing speaker lineup.

You know, one thing I love about a conference like the one you are putting on is that sometimes nonprofits, and nonprofit marketers in particular, can feel isolated. Right, we're in our jobs, we're alone and we're trying to figure it all out and we think we're the only ones that have certain issues. And you come to a conference like this and it's just re-energizing, not only to learn from the speakers but to speak with others who are in the same boat, walking in the same shoes, you know, and it can be really inspirational and re-energizing as well, and when you've got that energy, it just propels you forward. Do you find that as well?

Alicia Osgood: 11:17

Oh, definitely, and I think, with what's going on right now, the conference is at a very opportune time because we all really do need to talk and sit down with one another. We have an executive roundtable that's going to open the conference, which will give a chance for nonprofit leaders to be in the room together and talk about how their organizations are approaching this.

And those nonprofits will be, you know, obviously international relief organizations, but also US only organizations. They'll be from the run the gamut and be able to have conversations about how they're

approaching this, how they're getting through it. That's the kind of thing you really can't, there's no comparison for getting together and talking face to face about the issues.

Obviously, our government relations head, Christopher Oswald, will be there. He'll be presenting, and so he'll be able to interact directly with the members and to provide whatever. So we want to ANA wants to provide whatever support we can to help people through this.

Lyn Wineman: 12:08

That's fantastic. So, Alicia, you are obviously immersed in this world of nonprofits. I'm really curious what are some of the biggest challenges and opportunities that you are hearing are facing these nonprofit organizations today?

Alicia Osgood: 12:25

Well, I think the most pressing challenge right now is obviously the situation with the executive orders and cutting of support and that's where I, you know, earlier mentioned that it's very important for people to see this as the opportunity that it is. Nonprofits shouldn't hold back in their appeals. Definitely make clear look, we're losing support, so we need you to step in and fill that gap.

It's important to educate, but nonprofits already operate on a razor-thin margin. There's really no room for foolishness, as they say, to start with, and so we need to make the message of the conference very clear that you know you need to communicate to your donors that you need to support now. It can't be like later. If you've got donor advised fund, now's the time to pay out folks. If you're a corporation who has been a corporate partner of various nonprofits, now's the time to up your gifts, not roll them back. Reward organizations who stand up for their principles and say I'm not going to roll back my DEI programs, go ahead and cut my support, like the theater in Minneapolis did. Just say it. But then the donors and the corporations have to step up to fill those gaps.

One longer term thing that I think the ANA also, you know, provides unique services to help with the training and the education that we offer, which is really unparalleled. We have the camp program, the certified marketer program. Those are unparalleled services and they really help to professionalize and help people to do their jobs better, which ultimately benefits everybody, including the organizations, because one of my favorite expressions has always been that the organization is the 501c. Your employees are not. You're working for a nonprofit mission. You're working for a charity, but you are not a charity.

So it's very important for you know, for everybody to be part of professionalizing the sector. It means compensating people appropriately. It means making sure people have the proper education and resources they need to do their jobs more effectively. It's recognizing, you know, with all the advancements around AI. I did a piece with Paul Colery not long ago and one of the things he talked about was how a study showed that when people came back after COVID, AI had replaced a lot of those jobs.

Lyn Wineman: 14:56

Yeah or changed them significantly, right. And if you aren't used to embracing new technology, if you were one of those people that thought I'm fine, I'm just going to ease out of my career without worrying about AI. I got news for you right. Like AI is touching every corner of the world, I believe.

Alicia Osgood: 15:20

And we all have to, you know, have to be aware of this and have to you know and have to to make sure that we have our education up to date, make sure all of our skills are up to date so that we can compete, but also so that you know we can have that conversation, because I think that's been a longstanding problem is when you work for a nonprofit, like and I realized resources are small, but that is where you know the training programs that ANA offers. We have offerings that are included in membership fees. So there's not additional charges, things like the committees, the mentorship program. You don't pay additional for those. So it's, it's good to you know, take advantage of those things and talk to talk to the leaders and to the leaders and help, you know, help, make your help, improve your own situation, because it will benefit the organization.

Lyn Wineman: 16:03

Yeah, you know, Alicia, one thing that occurs to me too, as I hear you talk about this training. What I love about it is it's very specialized towards nonprofits, because I feel like, even though nonprofits need to run like a business and they need to make payroll and pay their bills and do all the things, it is different, it's a different nuance, it's a different type of business. From the marketing and branding standpoint, it's a very different way of communicating with people and it occurs to me that your training, then, is even more valuable because of how deep you are in this world.

Alicia Osgood: 16:42

Right. So we have you know and I should be clear that we have you know, of course the ANA training offerings. We also have the nonprofit training offerings, so they're actually two different. The ANA training is going to provide you the full, basically, marketing education.

And you can literally get certified through that program. And then the nonprofit trainings are obviously specialized nonprofit trainings and those could be in person, those can be online. We have the webinar program, we have the mentorship program, we have the conference that's coming up here. You know, we have a lot of different offerings, but it's I think it's important too to like to not to not get caught up in the vocabulary. That's another thing I always say. With marketing and fundraising, ultimately you're trying to support a mission and, as you know and as, hopefully, for-profits and nonprofits begin to work more together and to marry more cause marketing, to benefit, to benefit missions and to benefit causes, to be on the right side of things as we move forward as a society. That's going to that's going to change even more.

And you see a lot of and you also see a lot of changes. I mean a lot of the speakers, for instance Kimberly Cooper, who's coming in from the Kennedy Center. She has a heavily corporate background coming into the Kennedy Center. So you know those folks bring a lot of interesting you know perspectives from corporate and they brand that approach and that's a really you know valuable thing. I think learning from each other is important.

Lyn Wineman: 18:00

That's a great point, a really great point. So we've talked quite a bit about the conference and the trainings, but I'm curious once the big conference is over, what's on the horizon for the ANA Nonprofit Federation?

Alicia Osgood: 18:12

Well, once the conference is passed, what we do is we offer our regular, just standing group of education things like our webinars, our trainings, like I talked about. We'll have some things coming up on the horizon with that. We'll also have our committee meetings. The Nonprofit Organizations Committee will actually meet at the conference this year for their winter meeting. But, the Brand Purpose Committee meeting will be on March 26th. It'll be a virtual offering.

We'll have Visit California, which will be a very interesting conversation with what's happened in California and how Visit California is going to really help California navigate what's occurred so we'll be able to have them on, and we'll also have Ambar Thompson, the author, who'll come on and speak to everybody, so we'll have all of our regularly scheduled programming. So it won't be a big conference, it won't be six keynotes and seven tracks, but we'll still have those same services and I'll still be there putting out the nonprofit careers every Tuesday and the nonprofit now every Thursday, so that our members can find the services and know what's going on.

Lyn Wineman: 19:17

Fantastic. So, Alicia, what advice do you have for nonprofits right now? I'm really curious for those who are looking to strengthen their communications and just their overall strategies to fulfill their mission.

Alicia Osgood: 19:30

Well, I encourage members obviously members of the ANA Nonprofit Federation and if you're not sure if you're a member, because I know again a lot of large organizations out there you don't necessarily know definitely inquire at <https://www.ana.net/nonprofit> and visit our membership tab and, if you're not sure if you're a member, to reach out and make contact to engage with our services. We have a lot of, like I said, really valuable things to offer and I really feel that we need to help. We really need to help support our members right now. That's one thing I would. I would really encourage.

Lyn Wineman: 20:05

So, Alicia, those that are listening right now that may not know as much as they would like to about ANA and the ANA Nonprofit Federation, how can they find out more? How can they check out membership and the organization?

Alicia Osgood: 20:20

Well, actually, that's a great question. You can visit <https://www.ana.net/nonprofit> to check out the nonprofit specific area of the site, where it'll list out trainings and opportunities that we have and great content offerings. But also there is actually under the membership tab on the ANA site, there's actually a

section for nonprofit. On the ANA site, there's actually a section for nonprofit membership and you'll be able to go there and you'll be able to visit the 2025 membership grid, which has all three different levels of membership available to nonprofits listed there, and you'll be able to go through all the different benefits that are available for nonprofits.

Lyn Wineman: 20:57

That's great. That's great. We'll make sure for anyone who didn't catch that, we'll make sure to have that in the show notes as well on the KidGlov website. So, Alicia, I'm going to ask you next my favorite question. We've done about 230 episodes of Agency for Change. We've asked this question on every one because I'm inspired by motivational quotes and you obviously are a very motivated and inspirational person. I would love an Alicia Osgood original quote to share with our listeners.

Alicia Osgood: 21:29

Tell the truth. It simplifies your life.

Lyn Wineman: 21:32

Ooh, I love that. Tell the truth, it simplifies your life. That's good. I bet that's come in handy for you, for all kinds of people, right.

Alicia Osgood: 21:46

I think honesty is a really important thing and just being true to who you are, but also it's how you show respect for other people yeah it's by being honest with them that's and what the funny thing is you know they say, the realer you are, the smaller your circle is. Because what you find out, sadly, is a lot of people don't really like the truth that much.

They don't always want to hear it, but it's still important to say it because you have to live with the person you see in the mirror. And you really have a hard time doing that if you're not living an honest life and you're not being who and what you are.

Lyn Wineman: 22:18

Alicia, that's great advice. Thank you, you gave us great advice and a great quote all in one. I have really enjoyed talking with you today. I've really enjoyed getting to know you, learning more about the Nonprofit Federation. I'm really curious as we wrap up this conversation, what is the most important thing you would like people to remember about the work that you're doing?

Alicia Osgood: 22:41

Well, I think the most important thing is that we're helping nonprofits drive their missions, support their missions, grow their missions. We're here to help nonprofits do the really important work that they do. Make sure school kids get their lunch at school, because they're trying to take kids' lunches away. And I don't know what's in your mind, to even do something like that.

We're here to make sure that medical support goes to places in the world that are under attack. We're here to make sure that the arts continue to survive and can continue to enrich our lives in the way that they do and can continue to enrich our lives in the way that they do. We're here to make sure that hungry people I realize I mentioned the school kids, but hungry people period. We're here to make sure that when a natural disaster strikes, which is sadly all too frequent now, that our disaster relief organizations can get out there and provide the support they need. We're here to make sure that animals aren't abused and mistreated and that, if there are the ASPCA, one of our members can go in there and rescue animals that are in terrible situations.

You're here to help people who really can't help themselves. In the nonprofit sector, you're really doing the best work there is, and so it's our job as a federation to encourage more and more people to support that in ways that they haven't been supporting that to a sufficient level, and that's the job of the nonprofit federation and, being with ANA and in their powerful network, we have the ability to bring more people to the table to do that. So obviously this is airing after the conference, but at the conference we'll have had a chance to get everybody in the room, and big room, because it's MGM National Harbor. So it'll be a big room, but we're going to have the opportunity to get everybody together and plan our way forward.

Lyn Wineman: 24:29

Yeah, that's amazing. Alicia, that is big work and I love the way that you put that, because you're not doing the work yourself, but you're helping those organizations that are on the ground doing that vital work. You're helping them get better, stronger, more equipped to do the things they need to do, and that's really important. Alicia, I've got to say I believe the world needs more people like you and more organizations like the ANA Nonprofit Federation. Thank you for joining us on the Agency for Change today.

Alicia Osgood: 25:00

Well, thank you for having me. This has been a pleasure.

Announcer: 25:05

We hope you enjoyed today's Agency for Change podcast. To hear all our interviews with those who are making a positive change in our communities or to nominate a changemaker you'd love to hear from. Visit kidglov.com at K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com to get in touch. As always. If you like what you've heard today, be sure to rate, review, subscribe and share. Thanks for listening and we'll see you next time.