

# **Strategic Communications for Nonprofit Organizations**

**SEVEN STEPS TO CREATING  
A SUCCESSFUL PLAN**

**Second Edition**

**Sally J. Patterson  
Janel M. Radtke**



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# Acknowledgments

In 1993, Janel Radtke inspired me with her vision of a program designed to help nonprofit executives think more strategically about using communications to advance their mission. I became an advocate and a collaborator as she sought to interest others in making this dream come true. With support from Frank Karel, Joan Hollendonner and Vicki Weisfeld of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, an interdisciplinary team was convened to answer the question, “What should every nonprofit executive know about communications in order to leverage his or her work?” A theoretical framework was designed, a workshop model was crafted, and templates for a strategic communication plan were created. Janel, Tamar Abrams and I took the model on the road and worked with RWJF grantees and others to test and refine that model.

This book is built on the core principles of the Radiant Communications model—mission driven, audience focused, and action oriented.

In the 10 years since Janel’s death, our model has evolved, and the training team has grown. I would like to thank Tamar Abrams, Linda Cummings, Sam Davis, John Fairbanks, Buddy Gill, and Steve Otto for the many memorable moments we shared. We brainstormed, collaborated, and challenged each other to ensure that we gave our clients the very best communications tools and expertise. Priscilla Cavalca and Todd Nedwick managed the workshops and follow-up and allowed the team to focus on our work and the needs of the participants.

Books are written in isolation but become manuscripts, page proofs, and, ultimately, books with the help of talented editors. My thanks to Susan McDermott, Senior Editor, and Natasha Andrews-Noel and Lisa Vuoncino, Production Editors, of John Wiley & Sons, for their guidance, support, and advice throughout this process.

Since those early days, hundreds of nonprofits have followed the Radiant model and risen to our challenge to create bold and integrated communications strategies. This book is dedicated to them and the thousands of individuals who work at nonprofit organizations trying to make our world a better place. You are my inspiration.

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## About the Authors

**Sally J. Patterson** is the president of Radiant Communications, a strategic communications firm that counsels nonprofit leaders on organizational issues including board development, communications planning, executive coaching, and leadership transitions. Based in Washington DC, she has more than 25 years of strategic communications and public policy expertise including 10 years with public opinion research firms. She has provided strategic communications consultation and training to more than 700 nonprofit organizations.

Radiant Communications is a team of innovative professionals who challenge organizations to create bold and integrated communications strategies. Our approach is marked by a commitment to provide clients with the analytical and management expertise necessary to achieve their mission and advocacy goals. For more information, see our Web site at [www.radiantstrategies.com](http://www.radiantstrategies.com).

**Janel M. Radtke** was the founder and first president of Radiant Communications, Inc. In this role, Janel worked with nonprofit organizations assisting them in the planning, creation, implementation, and evaluation of their communications. Prior to launching Radiant Communications, Ms. Radtke was the first executive director of the Center for Strategic Communications, where she educated nonprofits about the creation and utilization of a strong and dynamic communications environment. Before joining the Center, Ms. Radtke was vice president for communications at Planned Parenthood Federation of America and co-founded the New York Law School's Communications Media Center. Ms. Radtke died in 1999.