

# How to use PR to promote your charity



# How To Use PR To Promote Your Charity

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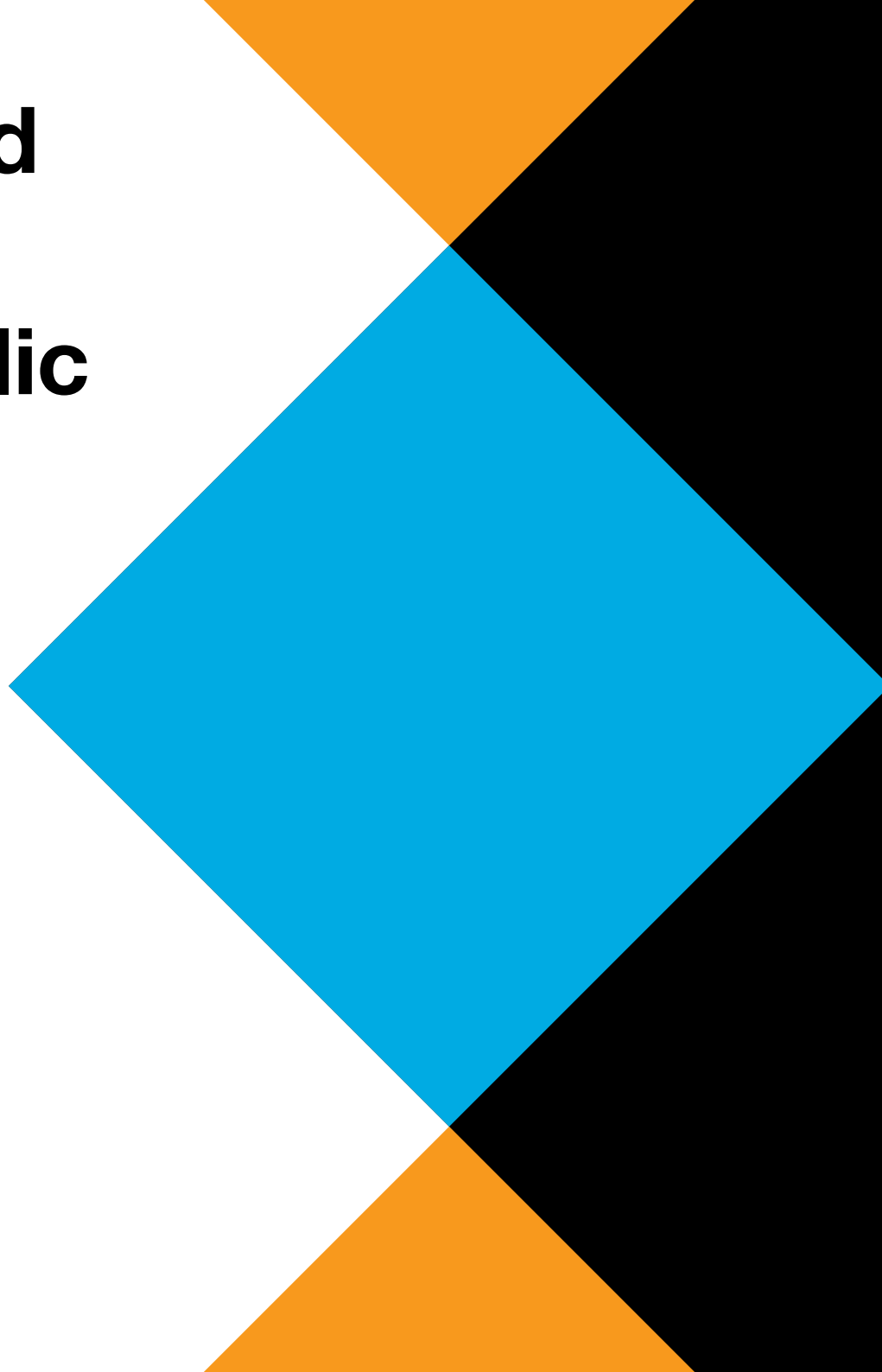
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# Why would a charity use a public relations agency?

*By Phil Hall, Chairman*



*What are the raw tools a charity needs to be an emphatic success? On the face of it, it's easy for a casual observer to run off a list of factors that demonstrate that an organisation is getting everything right.*

The ideal charity is a household name that enjoys exposure throughout the mainstream media, from broadcast to newspapers to magazines. Celebrities are falling over each other to endorse its work, and no wonder given the constant high-profile funding events it throws and eye-watering donations it commands. And best of all, the organisation is run by a founder whose renowned charisma has politicians preening, sports stars swooning and the darlings of culture crooning.

If this is starting to sound familiar, that's because it probably is. Who could forget the founder of Kids Company, Camila Batmanghelidjh, whose sheer magnetism had then-Prime Minister David Cameron utterly spellbound, and indulging her and Kids Company with substantial government grants? And as with Kids Company, while the good times are rolling at our perfect charity, it seems as though they will never end.

But eventually the first blip in this charity's illustrious history occurs, in the form of a scathing article in a national newspaper. The journalist responsible publishes damning evidence of malpractice that rocks the confidence of the public. And for all its pomp and bravado, the charity has no coherent communications strategy for just such an occurrence.

You can be forgiven if, at this point, that eerie feeling of déjà vu is creeping up on you again. For even as the storm clouds were gathering over her misuse of funds, Batmanghelidjh was inviting a film-maker into the organisation to see how it was run. This decision served only to shine a light upon the incompetence from top-to-bottom of Kids Company. And without an effective media strategy a blip becomes a tremor, a tremor becomes an earthquake and by the time the media savaging is over the charity is a husk of the towering institution it had once been. Its story is over.

The media can be a fickle customer, breaking the reputation of even the most respected and seemingly untouchable companies. But while it can feel fraught with danger, it can also catapult a campaign or a cause onto a plain it may never have dreamed of.

And so, while our ideal charity is rapidly disintegrating, a more low-key organisation is slowly but surely on the rise. Given how this organisation lacks the flamboyance of some of its more prestigious but failed compatriots, it is not necessarily easy to see how it will succeed where they could not.

Its budget is modest, its celebrity stable is a little bare and its public profile is decidedly smaller. But what it lacks in resource, it makes up for in strategy, nuance and expertise in navigating the choppy waters of the media.


It establishes its core media messaging, identifies and trains key spokespeople, seeks out important decision-makers in the media, and gradually it creeps into the public consciousness. Every year more people phone in to the charity, donations increase and before long it is appearing in key media spaces. But for all that its impact has grown, its story is just getting started.

Why would a charity use a Public Relations agency? In a sector where public confidence is shaky as a consequence of adverse publicity, employing PR experts to a charitable organisation may seem an unjustifiable luxury.

But dig just a little deeper and the benefits are manifold. The presence of a dedicated agency can add credibility to an organisation, bring impetus to its media campaigns and offer an invaluable safety net in case of unexpected and potentially damaging media fallout.

Your charity could be doing fantastic work under the radar, but if you don't know how to tell people about this then your chances of expanding further are slim. A charity needs to utilise every advantage it can when looking to raise its profile and subsequently raise additional funds.

Charities, businesses, individuals – all should place emphasis on promoting and protecting their reputation. Doing so is PR's bread and butter, and this is where we can make all the difference.

The background of the entire page is a grid of squares in three colors: black, orange, and blue. The squares are arranged in a pattern that is not strictly regular, with some squares missing or overlapping, creating a dynamic, geometric look. The colors are vibrant and high-contrast against each other.

# The challenges faced by charities

*By Milly Edgerley, Senior Content Marketing Manager*

**THE CHALLENGE**

We want to raise awareness for our cause but we don't know how to cut through the noise.

**SOUND LIKE YOU?**

A creative campaign can help you stand out from the crowd. The competition is fiercer than ever and there are plenty of pitfalls you might encounter if you're not prepared. Go to Chapter 1 to find out more.

**THE CHALLENGE**

We're struggling to meet our specific targets such as a certain level of donations, bringing in new members or targeting new audiences.

**SOUND LIKE YOU?**

Go to Chapter 2 to find out how PR can help you meet your targets from boosting your income to communicating your key messages succinctly. We even tell you how to overcome donation sceptics and highlight how important fundraising is to your goals.

**THE CHALLENGE**

We don't feel like we have the need (or perhaps the budget) for retained PR support year-round but we still need to maximise awareness. What can we do?

**SOUND LIKE YOU?**

It's a common misconception that Public Relations can only help with day to day press office activities. Sometimes working with agencies on specific projects can be extremely valuable whether you are a smaller charity or looking for extra support for your in house PR team.

**THE CHALLENGE**

We want to humanise our charity and make it stand out from the crowd but we're not sure where to start.

**SOUND LIKE YOU?**

Picking an ambassador for your charity can be an excellent way of putting a human face to your cause. Celebrity endorsement can be extremely effective however you need to make sure you've selected the right person for your organisation. The wrong choice can ultimately be disastrous. Head to chapter 5 where we talk about the benefits of celebrity endorsement and how to choose the right ambassador for your charity.

**THE CHALLENGE**

We've found ourselves in the middle of a crisis that is damaging our hard won reputation.

**SOUND LIKE YOU?**

Whether you're in the midst of a crisis or simply work within a charitable sector that finds itself open to scrutiny by the media a solid crisis strategy plan is of the utmost importance. Do you know what to do when crisis strikes? Go to Chapter 6 to find out more.

**THE CHALLENGE**

We want to seek a change in law, policy or decisions made at government level but we're struggling to make an impact.

**SOUND LIKE YOU?**

Having the ability to shape government policy can be invaluable to a charity. Winning support of politicians can help charities to achieve their objectives faster and on a larger scale. To find out how to navigate the political waters go to Chapter 7.

**THE  
CHALLENGE**

We're struggling with a lack of marketing and Comms knowledge within our charity. We don't have the budget to hire a marketing department. What can we do?

**SOUND LIKE  
YOU?**

If you haven't appointed a Trustee with a comms background, now might be the time to do so. When you're clamouring for attention in a crowded marketplace bolstering your communications skillset is indispensable. Head to Chapter 8 to find out more.

**THE  
CHALLENGE**

We're struggling to meet our specific targets such as a certain level of donations, bringing in new members or targeting new audiences.

**SOUND LIKE  
YOU?**

Go to Chapter 2 to find out how PR can help you meet your targets from boosting your income to communicating your key messages succinctly. We even tell you how to overcome donation sceptics and highlight how important fundraising is to your goals.

**THE  
CHALLENGE**

We're really proud of all the work we've done and we've got big plans for the year ahead. But our website doesn't tell our story and isn't up to date. How important is that?

**SOUND LIKE  
YOU?**

First impressions are extremely important and, in this digital age, your website is your shop window. You're fighting for the attention of a time poor, detail rich audience so your website needs to work harder than ever before. To find out how to maximise your charity website go to chapter 9.

*Perhaps there is a specific date in the calendar, such as an awareness day, that you want to make the most of? With the right PR strategy you can garner press coverage and huge brand awareness – go to **Chapter 3** to find out more.*

*Perhaps you have an event coming up and you'd like to shout about it? Or maybe you'd like to plan an event but don't know where to start? Head to **Chapter 4** to find out how to make the most of events to raise awareness for your charity.*

# How to implement a creative campaign for your charity

By Shelley Frosdick, PR Director



Competition within the charity sector is fierce, with organisations working harder than ever before to ensure that their cause is front of mind within the public consciousness. Keeping awareness levels high and driving donations is paramount.

To thrive in the current climate, charities need to be smart when it comes to PR strategy; planning and executing activity which is guaranteed to make an impact within a crowded market place.

## Take A Creative Approach

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This is imperative if you want your campaign to stand out from the crowd. The news agenda is jam packed with awareness days, weeks and months, key anniversaries and commemorative dates. Each one is hijacked by media savvy organisations using a series of PR tactics to steer the conversation towards their cause. For your campaign to be successful you need to cut through this noise, and speak directly to your target audience in a hard hitting, emotive and unique way. But how does this work in practice?

## Do Your Research

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It's important not to underestimate the value of planning and research. You only have one chance to create a buzz and dominate the news agenda so carefully crafting the structure of your campaign is essential. As a starting point, tools such as Foresight News can be beneficial to help minimise the risk of planning your big launch at the same time as another major event. This is by no means a failsafe option. The unpredictability of 'breaking news' means that the media agenda can change in an instant. However, by taking the precaution of planning in detail you will stand yourself in good stead.

## Keep An Eye On The Competition

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The last thing you want is to fall victim to media fatigue. It's important, therefore, to note of any big competitor campaigns. Launching your campaign shortly after, or at the same time as, another charity within the same sector can make it harder to ensure your campaign has an impact. It may not always be possible to obtain this information in advance however many big charities have well-established annual campaigns with high public awareness, which you would naturally want to avoid: e.g. the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal, Genetic Disorders UK's Jeans for Genes Day, or the Macmillan Coffee Morning.

Once you have pinpointed the ideal timings for your campaign, the next step is to plan the creative elements and work out which PR tactics to utilise to garner maximum attention.

## Make A Structured Plan

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Take the time to ask yourself:

- Who are you trying to reach through your campaign?
- What are your campaign objectives?

The answers to these questions should dictate your creative ideas, as different activity will appeal to different demographics. You could come up with the most creative 'out there' idea in the world but if it doesn't appeal to your target demographic, or address your main objectives, then the overall success of your campaign will be severely limited. We've outlined two examples from our work with SSAFA The Armed Forces Charity in which we had to target very different audiences to achieve their goals. These examples are a reminder that knowing your audience is of the utmost importance.

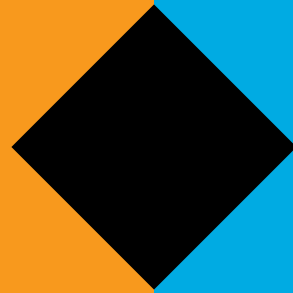
## Case in point:

### **Left Behind Campaign**

#### **SSAFA The Armed Forces Charity.**

This campaign was launched to mark the one year anniversary of British forces withdrawing from Afghanistan. Our campaign needed to appeal to bereaved families who had lost a loved one in military action, as well as existing/potential new donors whose contributions SSAFA rely upon to help fund their Bereaved Families Support Groups.

We knew our campaign activity needed to hit a predominantly ABC1 audience, with the Sunday Telegraph identified as our primary coverage target. We came up with a highly evocative, visually-led campaign plan, working with renowned war photographer Robert Wilson and four bereaved families, to create a series of unique images that would appeal to the Sunday Telegraph audience. As a result of this, we achieved a double page spread in the newspaper (in addition to 127 other pieces of coverage), hitting our key campaign target and opening SSAFA up to a wide audience of potential new donors and beneficiaries.



## Case in point:

### **Got your Back Campaign**

#### **SSAFA The Armed Forces Charity.**

This time our aim was to appeal to military 'squaddies' – encouraging them to come forward and ask for support. This campaign clearly had different requirements to The Left Behind campaign, and as such, the tactics we employed needed to reflect this. We understood that our ideas needed to appeal to a primarily C2DE audience, with tabloid titles and weekly consumer press the key targets.

Working within these specifications we developed a campaign based around a creative photoshoot and enlisted the support of 12 famous faces with wide appeal for our target demographic. The celebrities posed for esteemed celebrity photographer Nicky Johnston with a fake tattoo reading '#GotYourBack' emblazoned across their bare back, to visually show their support for the cause.

Due to the nature of the images, and the celebrities we enlisted for the campaign, coverage was achieved across our target media – including Daily Mail Online, The Sun online, Daily Express, Inside Soap, Soap Life, ITV Lorraine and Reveal magazine.

## Get Social

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A final factor to consider when planning a creative PR campaign is how to maximise your appeal across social media.

Consider the most popular creative campaigns of recent times – Movember, the #nomakeupselfie, and the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge - a common factor is the huge impact they all had/have online. Socially led campaigns allow charities and brands to be creative in a completely different way and, if executed well, can elevate your cause to the next level.

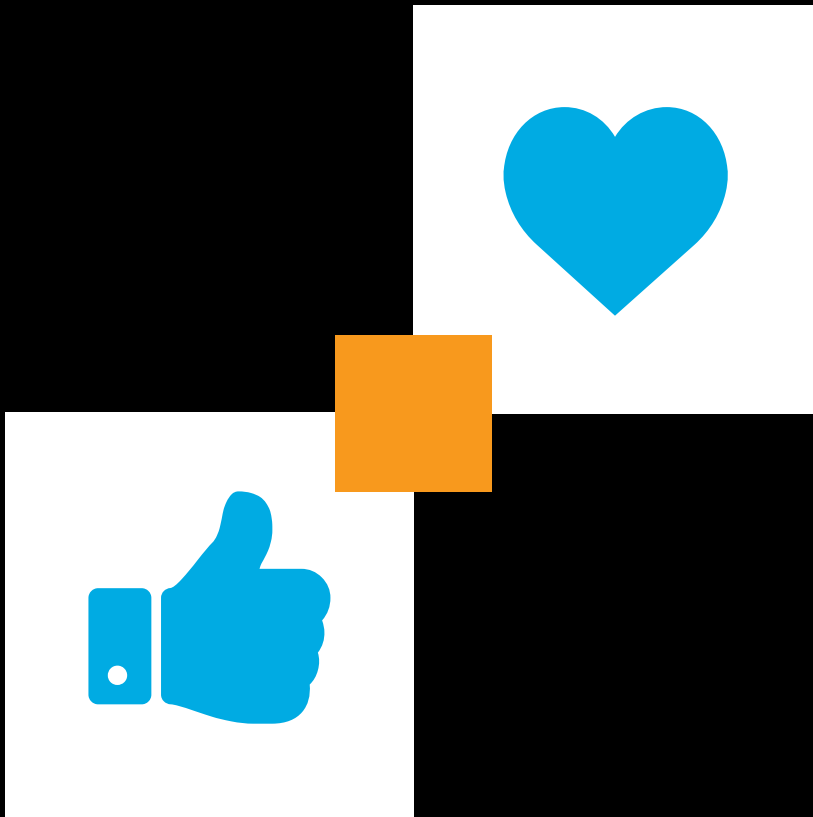
If you're looking to launch a campaign which has mass online appeal, the trick is to keep the 'ask' to the public simple, visual, and most importantly shareable! In today's social media obsessed society people love the opportunity to share a flattering selfie or a fun video of themselves partaking in a challenge for a good cause with their followers, and this should always be front of mind.

However, the real challenge now is for charities to keep reinventing this concept following the huge success of the previous efforts within this space. This makes planning a completely socially led campaign a risky strategy, as if your idea fails to take off then your campaign will be dead in the water.

Taking this into consideration, the ultimate goal should be to create an integrated campaign which combines elements of traditional PR with socially focussed activity. This '360 approach' allows your organisation to speak to as wide an audience as possible with all elements of activity complementing each other.

In the example of the SSAFA 'Left Behind' campaign, we built on our print media activity with highly emotive video content, featuring Coronation Street Actor and SSAFA Ambassador Antony Cotton. This content was seeded out across SSAFA's social media platforms to reinforce our key campaign messages, and we also enlisted the support of Antony and other celebrity supporters to share the video across their own channels too to further increase the reach and impact.

In summary, an increasingly crowded media space means charities have a challenge on their hands to ensure PR campaigns cut through the noise and have the desired impact. However, spending sufficient time planning your activity in detail, identifying your target audience, and ensuring that the creative ideas you come up with match your key objectives will set you on a good path and maximise your chance of success.





# Fundraising

How PR can help  
you meet your  
targets

*By Rebecca Younghusband, Account Manager*

Increasing or maintaining donations is a major objective for all charities.

## So, can PR help with this?

Whilst you should be wary of any agency that promises a specific or overly ambitious percentage increase, PR can be an extremely effective tool if used correctly. Whilst no PR campaign can force people to part with their money, the right strategy can target specific donor groups, highlight the need for funds and showcase the difference between your charity and others operating in the same space. All these things encourage donations and should be a vital part of your plan.

Here we have listed the fundamental ways PR can help you boost your charity's income:

- 1** Communicating key fundraising messages succinctly
- 2** Setting you apart from your competitors
- 3** Understanding who to target and how to engage them
- 4** Picking the right influencers for your charity
- 5** Keeping the need for donations clear
- 6** Overcoming donation sceptics

## 1. Communicating Key Fundraising Messages Succinctly

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In a time when thousands of charities ask for support from the public through the internet, magazines and newspapers and on the street, as well as friends and family members undertaking more and more challenges where they need to raise funds - the public are finding it increasingly difficult to know where, and if, to donate their hard-earned money.

It is even more crucial therefore for you to have a clear and succinct fundraising message. A good PR team will help you shape this, so the media and public can take away in one sentence what it is you fund, why you support the cause and why it is important.

Crucially, your fundraising message needs to be emotive and position your charity differently to others in a similar sector to you.

Once your this is formed, PR is the tool to propel this message into the public domain.

Through a number of tactics including feature placements, news agenda commentary and case study work, PR can raise awareness of you and your charity. It can get you in front of a large or niche audience, help your target donor group to learn more about you and the need for funds, and in doing so, encourage donations.

## 2. Setting You Apart From Your Competitors

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One of the many challenges charities face is the battle of securing donations in a crowded sector. We're more financially savvy than ever before so the challenge is to become the charity at the forefront of the public's consciousness.

This is where PR comes in.

A good PR team will work over a 12 month campaign to build your charity and raise its profile and awareness in the media and amongst the public. Its tactics will position your charity as a leader in its sector, showcase its experts and CEOs and provide the public with relatable and emotive content to encourage donations and support.

A PR team will also follow your key competitor's activity to ensure you are delivering campaigns that break over the noise and get you noticed.

## 3. Understanding Who To Target And How To Engage Them

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Many charities tell us that it can be challenging to know how to target their key donor group, beneficiaries and those that are likely to help raise funds for the organisation. This is something a good PR agency will be able to do effectively for you.

An experienced PR team will get to know you and your charity, including the demographic of where your donations typically come from and categorise them into two groups: donors and supporters.

Donors are those who will donate regularly to your charity or on more than one occasion, and supporters are individuals who undertake challenges to help raise funds or get involved with fundraising activities by your organisation. In some circumstances these two categories can be made up of very different demographics, so it is key for a PR team to understand your target audience for fundraising and know how to engage them.

Once your charity's donors and supporters have been identified, an effective PR team will understand what influences them and how they consume their information to help tailor an effective campaign. They will be able to use this information to promote your charity's fundraising messages to the right platforms, e.g. tabloid or broadsheet newspapers, A-list celebrities or reality stars, to highlight the importance of donations for your charity to an audience who are more likely to engage.

## 4. Picking The Right Influencers For Your Charity

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A recent study into charitable giving revealed that donors give roughly 1.4 per cent more money to charities who are associated with celebrities. For reasons such as this, most charities are keen to cultivate strong relationships with celebrities and influencers to help boost awareness of their cause and in turn encourage donations.

It is important however, to make sure the celebrities and influencers you want to work with are right for your brand and audience as well as invested in your cause. A PR team with good charity and celebrity experience will be able to source and advise the best celebrities to partner with, including those that the media will be responsive to.

In 2015 we recruited Coronation Street actor, Antony Cotton to become the official celebrity ambassador for our client, SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity. We secured Cotton because of his personal interest in the welfare of Armed Forces personnel and veterans and his broad fan base, including potential beneficiaries, soap fans, and morning TV viewers. Cotton has become an extremely powerful asset for SSAFA particularly for fundraising - any interview we have secured for Cotton to promote SSAFA's fundraising campaigns including This Morning, Lorraine and Good Morning Britain, have been extremely successful as his real passion for supporting the Armed Forces comes through. Following the interview, the broadcasters have expressed their eagerness to have Cotton back on when we launch our next campaign.

On the other side, charities and PRs who do not manage their celebrity influencer strategies appropriately, could find themselves in a tricky situation. In 2015 it was leaked that Barnardo's paid Made In Chelsea reality star, Binky Felstead, £3,000 to take part in a campaign to get more people to shop in its 500 plus UK stores. The campaign involved Binky posting a photograph of herself on Instagram, in which she held a hand-written sign asking her followers to follow Barnardo's. This revelation shocked many of Barnardo's donors and the charity was heavily criticised for using their donations in such a way. Whilst payment for celebrity involvement does occur across the charity sector, it could be argued that if Binky was invested in the charity and its cause, an Instagram post would have been published for free.

## 5. Keeping The Need For Donations Clear

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Larger scale charities run the risk of losing their 'position of need' which can negatively impact donations. The general public are growing savvier when it comes to the different cogs that work behind the scenes to run a machine like Cancer Research UK or UNICEF and for some it can make them disillusioned as to whether those organisations really

need their donations. Therefore, maintaining this 'position of need' is crucial.

An important and complex role for a PR team is to build your charity and position it as a leader in its sector to engrain its message in the public's mind, whilst continuing to promote its 'position of need' to keep encouraging donations.

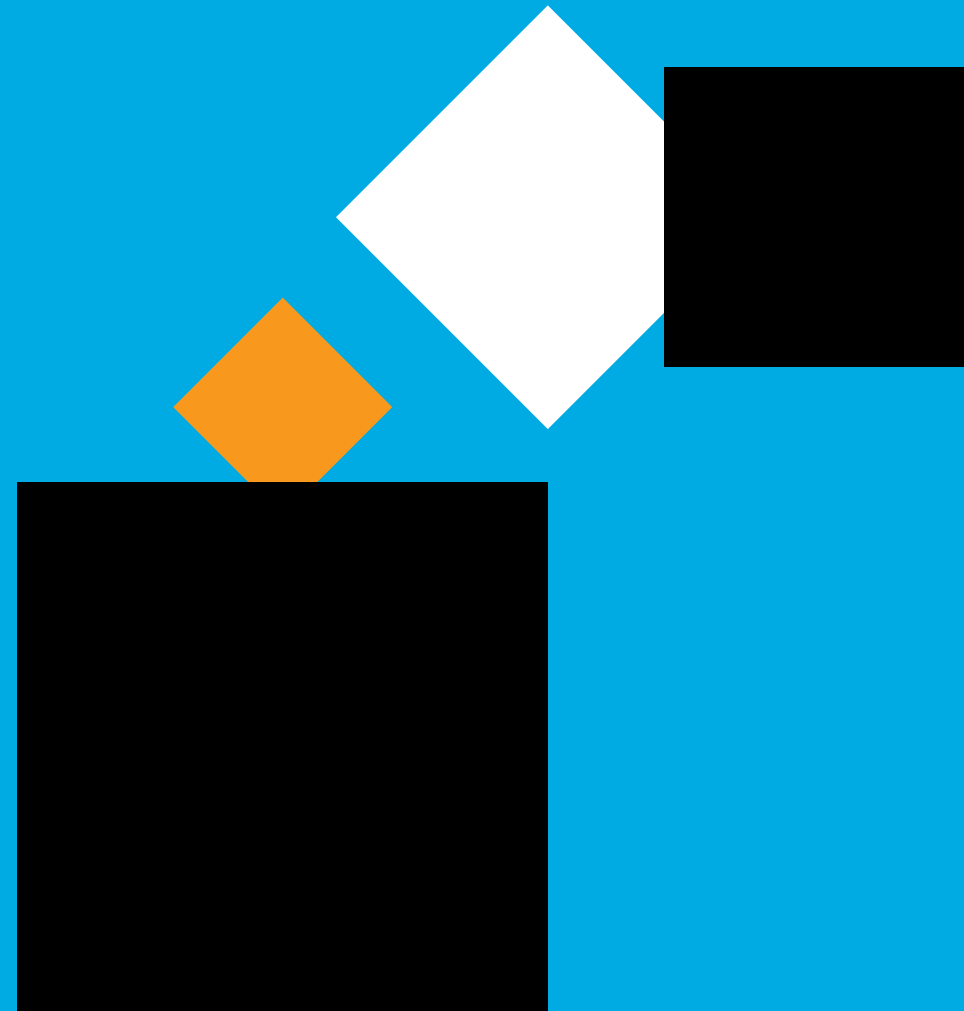
This dual approach can be achieved by humanising the charity and making it more relatable. For example, highlighting how their need is on-going, working with the charity's CEO or a member of the Senior Management team to give the fundraising call to action message in the media, to show that even the most senior member of the charity understands the importance of the public's donations.

## 6. Overcoming Donation Sceptics

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The public are growing savvier to the machine that exists behind the scenes at a charity and the different departments and personnel that are needed to keep larger scale organisations running. The realisation of big advertising spends and large office rents, has fed scepticism about how charities use the donations they are given.

PR is a great tool to help overcome this scepticism, and highlight where most of the donations go and how important they are. An effective way of doing this is to work with your beneficiaries and place in-depth features in the media on their story and how your charity has helped them for the better. Not only does this show the impact donations have on a particular cause, it also provides an emotive story which will encourage engagement and support.







# How to make the most of events to raise awareness for your charity

*By Suzanne Haysler, Account Manager*

*Nearly all charitable organisations have experience being involved in or running events, from small fundraising events such as village bake sales up to large scale mass participation events such as Red Nose Day. The main driving force behind events such as these is namely fundraising; however it is important to be aware that they can also have incredible valuable in a PR sense as well. There are a number of different ways in which a charity can utilise events within their communications, all of which can help to drive awareness through coverage across the media spectrum including print, online and broadcast press titles as well as social media.*

*Here we have compiled some useful examples of how this can be executed effectively with relevant case studies to highlight the successes that can be achieved when incorporating events into a PR campaign.*

## COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Mobilising a community to fundraise is a tried and tested method of driving donations for a charity. It can comprise of anything from raffles and car boot sales to sky diving and other personal challenges, all of which have the potential to create inspiring human interest stories. An effective PR campaign will utilise these events as case studies, sharing them with appropriate media titles to drive coverage opportunities for the associated charity. The coverage generated from campaigns such as these is usually within regional media titles, most likely to be local to where the fundraising event took place. Alongside traditional media, it is also important to utilise community fundraising stories across social media platforms. For the same reasons that they make excellent content for the press; stories such as these also provide brilliant social media content - raising awareness of the charity via shareable posts that amplify the campaigns reach.

We work alongside a number of organisations, such as global charity Smile Train which helps treat children across the developing world who are born with cleft lip and palate, by providing 100% free repair surgery. One of our core objectives is to utilise UK fundraising stories to generate coverage within the regional media, this is something we do on a month-by-month basis working closely with both the team at Smile Train and the individuals who have participated. For example, Smile Train worked with twelve year old Laurence Chandler who became one of the youngest people to cycle the 874 mile ride from John O'Groats to Land's End unaccompanied. This story was then shared with his local media to generate five pieces of coverage including a full page article in the Bristol Post. Alongside this, our team also assists with Smile Train's UK social media strategy where we are able to share stories like Laurence's to drive reach and engagement for the charity even further.

## SPORTING EVENTS

Working alongside sporting events such as the London marathon is another great way of calling upon the public to fundraise on behalf of your organisation. Collaborating with sporting events not only provides a unique platform to create fundraising opportunities for people but it can also increase your reach by introducing the charity to new audiences. As with other types of community fundraising, the inspiring stories of those taking part in sporting events for charity can be used to generate media coverage and social media content.

We have extensive experience working with high profile sporting events such as the Royal Parks Half Marathon who collaborate with various charities each year, helping to both raise money and brand awareness through media coverage and social media campaigns. Our team worked to drive sign-ups and to highlight the amount raised for good causes via the event. This resulted in over 40 journalists taking part in the race, from outlets including The Guardian Running Blog, The Independent, The Times, Mail Online, Sport magazine, Daily Mirror, Runners World and Men's Fitness. Broadcast coverage including Heart FM, Capital Radio, and ITV London; and images from the event appearing across the national press.

## MASS PARTICIPATION EVENTS

Most of the best-known charities utilise mass participation events to create a buzz around their organisation, drive donations and increase awareness. Some of the most successful UK examples include Red Nose Day, Children in Need and Sport Relief. Televised events such as these are successful year on year with a variety of celebrity ambassadors helping to raise awareness, generate media coverage and increase social media engagement for the charities. Clearly events such as these require a large investment; however it is still achievable to create mass participation events on a smaller budget to generate large scale exposure for a charity.

SSAFA's Big Brew Up initiative encourages people to take part in the nation's most cherished pastime, and enjoy a cup of tea and cake whilst raising money. We recognised that this event offered a strong opportunity to engage with a wider and younger audience, than their usual target demographic. This resulted 36 pieces of coverage that featured the call-to-action to sign up to the Big Brew Up and donate, including the Metro, Mail Online, Daily Express and Prima. Additionally, 27 celebrities took part in our inventive celebrity mug auction including David Gandy, Amanda Holden, Kelly Holmes and Phillip Schofield raising several thousand pounds for the charity.

## LAUNCH EVENTS

As well as making the most of events that are already taking place, when launching a specific campaign creating your own bespoke event is a great way to generate a buzz, drive awareness and raise funds. A launch event provides a platform to put your organisation directly in front of the media, celebrities and online influencers, creates photo opportunities and will also generate a significant engagement and reach on social media channels.

The potential results that can be achieved via a launch event were showcased particularly well with our campaign for Jeans for Genes Day. Our team executed the launch event for their annual fundraising day, using our knowledge of events and contacts to host the launch party within a well-known London venue – ChinaWhite. The party kicked off our PR campaign in the lead up to the official day, resulting in over 200 pieces of coverage achieved over the five month campaign, including spreads in the Daily Telegraph, Daily Mirror and Fabulous magazine as well as Vogue and Harper's Bazaar.

# How to make the most of a charity awareness day

*By Naomi Woodford, Account Manager*

Nowadays there seems to be an awareness day, week or month for everything. Often invented by savvy PRs and marketers, awareness days can be a great way to garner press coverage and social media mentions for brands, services and personalities. With competition in the charity sphere rife, having a well thought through PR campaign to leverage your charity awareness day is more crucial than ever.

Awareness days are often very successfully used year-on-year, to leverage messaging and kick start a period of increased awareness around a disorder, an issue or a cause. A testament to their success, we all know about the charity awareness campaigns such as 'Red Nose Day' – Comic Relief, 'Movember' – The Movember Foundation, 'Wear it Pink for Breast Cancer' – Breast Cancer Care and the 'Macmillan Coffee Morning' – Macmillan Cancer Support.

These well-established campaigns have been hugely successful year-on-year in raising awareness and engaging an audience of millions. However, a clear PR strategy from the outset is vital to reach your desired audiences and generate maximum interest around your awareness day.

# From Objectives to the Call To Action...

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Every good charity campaign starts with a clear objective and ends with a compelling call to action. Why should people listen to you and what are you trying to achieve? Equally, what is your campaign asking people to do?

Whether you are using your awareness day to drive funds, tap into new donors, reach potential beneficiaries or promote reform, your campaign messaging and call to action must be clear and engaging to garner maximum interest and traction with your desired audiences.

There is a reason heavyweight charity campaigns such as 'Movember' and 'Jeans For Genes' are successfully reignited year on year. Alongside an underlying message about what these organisations are trying to achieve – public support, raising funds, awareness raising – they also have a straightforward but meaningful call to action which encourages people to get involved and support the cause. For example, "wear jeans, save lives".

## Impactful Data

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Many awareness days are underpinned by hard-hitting charity research and data, which resonates with the general public and emphasises just why your awareness day is important. With the right angle, research can be a great way of generating and actively increasing understanding around what your organisation does/is seeking to do.

For instance, has your charity observed an increase in the need for support amongst its beneficiaries? Do you have statistics around the number of UK households affected by said issue and if so, can you break this down into smaller sub groups?

Pinpointing a tangible level of need, for example, can be a really powerful way of reinforcing your awareness day and humanising your charity campaign. It also adds a new layer of credibility to your campaign, which in a busy marketplace, cannot be underestimated.

## Public Engagement

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Depending on the nature of your charity campaign, coming up with fun and creative ideas to engage the masses, is a tried and tested way of effectively spreading the word around your charity awareness day.

Public events, activities and immersive social media campaigns are all great ways of enlisting public support and sharing your messaging far and wide, all in the name of a great cause...

## Social Media Campaigns

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Social media is an unrivalled way of reaching huge audiences and spreading campaign messaging around the globe.

Two of the most successful examples of charity social media campaigns in recent years, include Cancer Research's - #NoMakeUpSelfie, maximising on the nation's love of selfie taking, and the ALS #IceBucketChallenge which saw the public embarking on an extreme challenge. It is safe to say that both campaigns were simple but highly effective, in raising millions of pounds for each charity, attracting high-profile support and press attention, whilst raising awareness of very real and serious issues.

The #IceBucketChallenge also highlights the power of a viral idea – whereby a relatively poorly understood health condition was catapulted into the limelight via the snowball effect of social media. Since the campaign, the ALS Foundation have reported that money raised has funded a research breakthrough.

Although what constitutes a 'viral' idea is somewhat unpredictable, many charities regularly roll out immersive social media campaigns and when done strategically, these can provide a successful way to engage existing audiences and reach out to new ones.

## Activities

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From wearing jeans for Genetic Disorders UK or pink for Breast Cancer Care, sporting a 'Bad Hair Day' for Great Ormond Street Hospital, to baking cakes for Macmillan Cancer Care, experiential and immersive activities can be hugely successful when it comes to engaging the public. Whilst capturing a sense of togetherness, these activities give people a charitable reason to do something fun and at the same time, raise funds and awareness for a fantastic cause.

However, to be impactful, these activities must be carefully planned and executed. Aside from the mechanics, most importantly they must reinforce an important charity message which reminds people of why they are doing the activity in the first place.

## Events

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Public participation events around awareness days, weeks and months, have the ability to capture a sense of community and engage the public year on year.

The London marathon epitomises charity-based challenges, but many charities hold their own annual events on a smaller scale. These events are not only about testing yourself to raise funds, they are about uniting for a specific cause and raising awareness.

Cancer Research UK's 'Race For Life' and Crohns and Colitis UK's 'Walk It' events bring communities together for the greater good, whilst generating heightened awareness at a specific time of each year. These events also provide a great platform to place stories and images with regional newspapers and radio stations, which even in the context of a 'national campaign', are key for enlisting local support and engaging local communities.

## Case Study Placement

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Case studies are an invaluable way of humanising your campaign, showcasing the work your charity carries out and bringing your awareness day messaging to life.

Having a bank of powerful, real life testimonies ready for journalists is key and particularly, a range of individual stories that can be pitched to different areas of the press: TV, radio, women's magazines, national press etc.

When it comes to case study placement, it is important to consider the different lead-in times that publications work from. For example, some magazines will work up to 3-4 months in advance, so approaches will need to go out far in advance of your awareness day. Tailoring your case study outreach will also ensure you garner the most press interest, as a case study that might be right for a women's magazine may not be of interest to a national features writer.

## Campaign Spokespeople

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Throughout your campaign, having media-trained spokespeople from your organisation is paramount. These individuals will act as the face of your campaign and will be responsible for: getting your campaign messaging across, communicating charity data and highlighting the call to action.

Utilising celebrity ambassadors to speak on behalf of your organisation, particularly those with a strong personal link, may also help to leverage interest around your campaign. As with case studies, be strategic when pitching your spokespeople, anticipating which individuals are likely to be of most interest to the different areas of the media.

# The benefits of celebrity endorsement for your charity

*By Georgia Entrician, Account Manager*



If you're looking to raise awareness of your charity or cause, one of the most effective and quickest methods is through celebrity endorsement.

The celebrity endorsement theory is very simple. People idolise celebrities - so, when a celebrity is seen to be working with a charity, they are prompted to learn more about the charity and lend their support.

A celebrity can support a charity in a number of different ways, whether that's through sporadic social media support, acting as campaign Spokesperson, or taking an even more serious role by becoming an Ambassador or Board Member.

In either case, here we have outlined the numerous benefits that charities can reap as a result of celebrity endorsement.

## **RAISE YOUR PROFILE**

Whether you're a large non-for-profit organisation or a small start-up charity, enlisting support from a celebrity will open you up to a greater number of media opportunities, thus providing you with a platform to help raise awareness of your charity and its cause.

Before embarking on a celebrity-led campaign, it is therefore extremely important to ascertain which celebrities will be popular with the media, as well as your existing and potential donors, as this will have a direct link to the amount of reach and exposure that the celebrity will be able to generate for your cause.

## **REACH NEW AUDIENCES**

As well as reaching wider audiences, there is also the inevitable benefit that engaging with a celebrity will allow your charity to reach a new audience that might otherwise not be easy to access - giving you access to new potential donors and influencers.

When a well-known personality supports your cause, it automatically attracts a new target audience – the fans and followers of the celebrity. People who may not have heard of, or cared about, your cause will now be open to learning more about it because their favourite celebrity is endorsing it.

*We worked with the charity Genetic Disorders UK to elevate awareness of their annual fundraising day, Jeans for Genes Day, which encourages people to don denim for one day to raise money for a variety of initiatives that improve the quality of life of children affected by Genetic Disorders. As part of this campaign, we secured and positioned a variety of celebrity ambassadors, including Warwick Davis, Katie Price and Louise Thompson amongst others, who would encourage people to “Wear Jeans, Change Lives”. We organised a campaign launch party to officially mark the start of the campaign and co-managed media partnerships prior to the event. Using the range of celebrity supporters, we were able to leverage significant media coverage of the campaign and we delivered in excess of 200 pieces of coverage across a five-month period, in publications including The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, Daily Mirror, NOW, Vogue and Harper’s Bazaar to name a few. This media coverage generated awareness of the fundraising event to a range of audiences and encouraged people across the country to sign up to support Jeans for Genes Day.*

In today's increasingly digital society, it is advantageous for charities to look to work or partner with a celebrity who has a large social media following. The opportunity for people to engage with their favourite celebrity by hitting 'share', 'comment' or 'like' on a social media post about a charity campaign will help to spread the message further and quicker, thus resulting in a more successful campaign.

## ADD CREDIBILITY TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

Celebrities contribute to building awareness of a charity or campaign by taking their positive associations and transferring them to the promoted cause. Essentially, you are aligning two 'brands' together - so it's very important that the celebrity is credible and has a natural synergy with the campaign.

In 2014, for example, the United Nations launched the #HeForShe movement, which called on men and boys to help make gender equality a reality for all. In support of the campaign launch, A-List Actress and UN Woman Ambassador, Emma Watson, gave an eloquent and impassioned speech on gender equality at the UN Headquarters. The video of the speech quickly went viral, and people all over the globe joined in sharing the #HeForShe campaign hashtag. Within less than two weeks after the launch, there were 1.1 million

*Reality TV Star, Kylie Jenner, recently raised over \$500,000 for our long-standing charity client, Smile Train – an international charity which helps transform the lives of children who are living with cleft lips and palates in developing countries. The 19-year-old celebrity launched a special-edition lip kit called 'Smile' and promoted this across her social media feeds. Not only did this raise an incredible amount of money for the charity, but it also rose awareness of the cause to a younger demographic which Smile Train did not naturally attract.*

#HeForShe tweets, reaching 1.2 billion unique Twitter users, and the campaign has more than doubled its initial goal of gaining support from 100,000 boys and men via online pledges.

## AMPLIFY ACTION

As we've already established; when a celebrity is seen to be a supporter or a spokesperson for a charity, they use their fame to increase public awareness of an issue. Celebrities therefore have the power to add momentum to a cause in a way that ordinary people can't.

The infamous 'Ice Bucket Challenge' is a classic example of how celebrities can help to amplify a campaign movement and boost donations to a cause. The challenge, which encouraged people to dunk a bucket of iced water over their heads to encourage donations for the ALS Association, raised more than £76 million for Lou Gehrig's Disease sufferers in just one month.

How? The viral campaign exploded after high profile names such as Justin Timberlake, Kim Kardashian, Benedict Cumberbatch, Matt Damon, Victoria Beckham and so many more, filmed themselves being covered in an icy bucket of water, and shared this on their social media channels to raise money for the motor neurone disease. The quantity and quality of celebrities who lent their support helped the campaign to spread globally, and encouraged people all over the world to take part.

# When the media is not feeling charitable

Crisis and reputation management  
for good causes

*By Neil Mcleod, Head of Strategic Communications*



*“Perhaps the sector’s ongoing PR difficulties are exacerbated by a broad political conspiracy that sets out to undermine public confidence in charities – those that highlight the social impact of austerity in the UK, for example, or champion the government’s commitment to spend 0.7% of our GDP on international development. But I believe there is also a fundamental lack of self-awareness at play in the boardrooms and CEO offices of “big charity” in the UK, which will end up causing serious and perhaps lasting damage to the sector.”*

In a world where reputation is said to be all and everything, it could be argued that has been one corner where this idea resonates little.

Unfortunately, it is not because it has been untouched by scandal or attack, but it seems, a lack of willingness to acknowledge the big issues.

The ‘corner’ is the charity sector, where, in a recent poll which asked CEOs key concerns in 2017, not one chief executive, despite the turmoil which has besieged charities in recent years, listed what the public thought of them as being on their list.

Given the recent developments and reputation issues to hit the Third Sector, the head-in-the-sand response is cause for concern.

Writing in the Guardian, Toby Porter, Chief executive of Acorns Children’s Hospice Trust, posed a central point to ask why, three years after a bout of intense media scrutiny in 2013 over CEO charity pay, the same questions were being asked of charities.

In his piece, Mr Porter argues:

**“Perhaps the sector’s ongoing PR difficulties are exacerbated by a broad political conspiracy that sets out to undermine public confidence in charities – those that highlight the social impact of austerity in the UK, for example, or champion the government’s commitment to spend 0.7% of our GDP on international development. But I believe there is also a fundamental lack of self-awareness at play in the boardrooms and CEO offices of “big charity” in the UK, which will end up causing serious and perhaps lasting damage to the sector.**

Could it be that CEOs are correct not to be concerned with their reputations, or what the public (the main source of donations for most charities) think?

After all, why would a charity, which does fantastic, selfless work for others and conducts its business in the ‘right’ way, care about management of its reputation?

What could possibly bring the media to set its sights on a charity, when there are clearly bigger – and badder – targets to focus on?

Both questions are valid, of course.

But to ignore the answers to them would be perilous for any charity or non-for-profit organisation.

Since 2005, the Charities Commission has been measuring annually the level of public trust in charities.

In 2016, the Public Trust and Confidence in Charities report showed that trust in charities was at its lowest since the study began.

The media has long had a solid relationship with charity. Newspapers have backed various charities for years, TV has dedicated whole evenings or shows to helping selected causes.

But the media, an ever-hungry beast, always needs to feed on new stories. Charities accept donations from the public to do their good work and, as with many organisations, things can, and do, go wrong.

In recent years, there has been increased scrutiny amongst the media towards charities. Indeed the Charity Commission report showed that the biggest two reasons for the dip in confidence in charities was media stories about a charity (33%) and media stories about how donations are spent (32%).

The report says: **“News coverage of poor practice by some charities has led members of the public to question their own assumptions about how charity donations are spent across the whole**

**sector. Talk of high salaries, lavish expenses and poor cash management led the public to worry about the competence levels in charities and made them question how much of each donation actually makes it to the intended recipient.”**

To focus more sharply on this, there have been two major news events which have helped spark this.

The first is the deployment of “chuggers” trying to raise funds on the streets.

The second, again fund-raising focussed, was the death of Olive Cooke.

Front page news, Mrs Cooke’s death shocked the public. While much of the initial reporting was hard-hitting, the report by the Fundraising Standards Board following the subsequent investigation brought yet more damaging revelations of fund-raising practice gone wrong.

It was, without a doubt, the one major reputation-damaging incident towards charities as a sector in living memory.

It altered public perception of charities among the wider public – the very definition of a crisis. In the aftermath of Mrs Cooke’s death, the Telegraph reported how complaints to the regulator had spiked, with 400 being made about fundraising in the weeks after she passed away.

The detail on the focus was on the tick-box opt out process. However, the scope of the entire media interest was now on how charities conducted their work, and to what lengths they would go to find funds to continue their good work.

Media perception of charities seems to suggest that they are run increasingly like businesses. The Charity Commission report of last year showed the public are concerned over transparency.

Newspapers regularly focus on stories concerning CEO charity pay. This has appeared to intensify in recent years, and certainly after the financial crash of 2008. Increased calls for transparency has extended the gaze towards the Third Sector, it would seem.

Journalists have continued to criticize an apparent lack of willingness to address this.

To boot, the media has had various avenues of investigation made much more difficult by its own behaviours. Focussing on charities and those who run them, it would seem, is a far easier hit than many other investigations a journalist could launch.

The nub of the issue, therefore, is we have increased scrutiny and a more motivated-than-ever media.

In the middle of all of this, there is a perception that charities – fantastic at communicating messages – adopt a “head-in-the-sand” approach when it comes to protecting their reputations.

In PR terms, this is a nonsensical approach – it can take a hundred good stories to build a reputation but only one bad one to bring down the house.

So, the first step to helping protect a charity reputation is the one of realisation – the acknowledgement that a plan to deal with crises is needed. Of course, part of this plan should involve an open and honest policy of communicating throughout the year.

But while positive PR is carried out with transparency and good intention, another team should be working to put a crisis plan in place for times of trouble. This will cover who is called and when, and who is mobilised when the media come calling.

*“News coverage of poor practice by some charities has led members of the public to question their own assumptions about how charity donations are spent across the whole sector. Talk of high salaries, lavish expenses and poor cash management led the public to worry about the competence levels in charities and made them question how much of each donation actually makes it to the intended recipient.”*

*“There are some ugly anti-charity agendas out there. But at a time when the voluntary sector should be fiercely defending our sector and our missions, we continue to undermine ourselves.”*

Crises which can be fully planned for should be. You will already know what your Chief Executive is taking home in their pay packet, so a plan should be put in place for that particularly elephant in the room.

There is now increased scrutiny on how charities use and handle data, so a data breach crisis plan should also be drawn up and implemented. This is a new area of crisis many other sectors are also coming to terms with.

How you use your Trustees in crises is a key consideration. Many of them may have the type of crisis or private sector experience which can serve such situations well. Deploy them, ask their advice where necessary.

The media will view your chief executive like any other CEO – they are the leader of the organisation and should be prepared to be scrutinised.

For this reason, they should be fully media trained and prepared for the toughest questions.

Too many crisis plans perish with the nervous or under-prepared delivery of a chief executive who is not ready to deal with the media. A full plan will include crisis media training sessions for the chief executive who has the tools to restore public trust.

You must embrace what the public is thinking. Journalists argue that they are reporting what the public needs to know, or wants to know, or is reflecting public mood (it of course influences it as much). Do not be lured into a false sense of security by not acknowledging public concern – it could be taken as arrogance.

You should be prepared to act decisively in a crisis – the media will not give you leeway because you are a charity.

This may go against the grain with the workings of your organisation but do not let culture dictate what is needed to be done.

One of the biggest sins is to not be fully armed with the facts – ensure you are before any engagement.

Unless a charity has recruited someone with crisis experience, a crisis event may be uncharted territory for the organisation.

Crisis management experts are of course used to dealing with difficult situations, and good ones are not afraid to tell clients how it is once they see the depth of problems in an organisation. They should be able to bring with them not only expertise, but contacts and links to other third parties who can help.

Do not be afraid to call on outside assistance. It may be an uncomfortable thought at first, but it is one worth pursuing.

To not consider crisis, could be seen as a continuation of the sin of ignoring the view of the public.

As Toby Porter writes:

**“There are some ugly anti-charity agendas out there. But at a time when the voluntary sector should be fiercely defending our sector and our missions, we continue to undermine ourselves.”**

The underlying message in 2017 to charities is that if crisis planning is not part of the plan, then that is the first problem which needs to be addressed.

# Charity political campaigns and lobbying

*By Tim Snowball, Head of Political Strategy*

Having worked in politics for eight years, I've come across charities that know how to lobby, and others that really don't.

Those who do, have a strong presence at every level of politics, and regularly shape government policy. Those who don't, find their approaches (or sometimes glossy brochures) put straight in the bin.

On other occasions, I have known politicians stumble into some of the most amazing best practice, delivered by charities, that subsequently had a significant practical influence on major policy challenges of the day. On more than one occasion we wished we had known more about it earlier and can't understand why the charities concerned had hidden their light under the bushel for so long.

The reality is, charities of all shapes and sizes are at the cutting edge of the fields in which they operate; innovating to find new solutions or filling gaps in existing state service provision, often in a very cost effective manner. They also have immense expertise and often a connection with service users that is sometimes lacking in other sectors, especially the world of politics.

Engaging with and winning the support of politicians can help charities to achieve their objectives faster, more effectively or on a bigger scale. For example, while a smaller charity might be able to develop a new solution to a problem on a local level, it might need government funding or adoption to have an impact nationwide.

Equally, while a charity may have the expertise to comment on or criticise government policy in the media, building relationships with key decision makers or running a more sustained parliamentary focused campaign might be needed to alter or change it.

Public Affairs is the art of political influence. It involves staying abreast of developing policy, building relationships with relevant politicians and establishing champions. To achieve influence a charity will need to proactively engage with decision makers and communicate their perspective effectively (and relevantly). There are actually lots of opportunities to do this, if you know how to find them.

Political engagement isn't just a one way street. Politicians actually want to hear of your work, to learn from your expertise and to borrow from your best practice to develop policy. They also crave your approval.

Good public affairs should help you get recognised for what you do, A mention in parliament, select committee appearance or ministerial visit might just help secure media coverage, raise the profile of your work, and increase the interest to major donors.

If you think you have a story to tell our political leaders I would strongly encourage you to share it. You never know where it might lead you.

## Communicate Effectively With Politicians

## Influence National Policy

## Get Recognition For What You Do Well

## Make A Difference On A National Scale

# Rules Governing Charity Political Activity

Campaigning and political activity can be a valuable and legitimate part of the way a charity seeks to deliver on its charitable objectives, but this cannot be the sole purpose for the charity's existence.

It is entirely legitimate for a charity to seek a change in the law, policy or decisions, or to ensure that existing laws are observed, as part of furthering its charitable objectives.

In the political arena, a charity must stress its independence and ensure that any involvement it has with political parties is balanced. A charity must not give support or funding to a political party, nor to a candidate or politician. But a charity may give its support to specific policies advocated by political parties if they help achieve its charitable purposes.

A charity should never be used as a vehicle for the expression of the political views of any individual trustee or staff member's personal or party political views.

When campaigning, charity trustees must comply not only with charity law, but other civil and criminal laws that may apply. Where applicable they should also comply with the Code of the Advertising Standards Authority



# The role of trustees in charity comms and how they can add value

*By Sophie Wilson, Sales & Marketing Director*



*"I think that every charity in the UK should consider having a Trustee whose background is in communications or media. We live in an age dominated by technology with 24-hour news cycles and constant social media posts so I would argue this is now an essential skill set to have as part of any board."*

– Theodora Clarke, Director at Conservative Friends of International Development

Traditionally charities in the UK comprise a number of trustees in the roles of Chair, Treasurer, Company Secretary and generally an additional person with fundraising or specialist industry knowledge.

However, the digital shifts and increasing fluidity in business in recent years have led to a trend of appointing Trustees with a background in Marketing, PR and Comms. Almost all organisations on the UK Public Appointments list now boast this specific skillset.

If you are a charity and you haven't yet appointed a Trustee with a comms background, then it may be time to consider doing so. All charities, regardless of size, are clamouring for attention in a crowded marketplace. Communication is key to raising awareness of the cause and the important work your charity is doing. Members of the public will invariably first engage with you via your website, social media or the press and so bolstering your communications skillset is indispensable.

Amongst their other legal responsibilities, Trustees with a comms remit can be expected to develop, create or contribute to some of the following duties:

- Market position and branding to communicate your mission to a broad range of stakeholders
- Marketing/PR strategy that will allow you to reach key influencers
- Internal communications to other Trustees and staff with an emphasis on impact reporting, accuracy and transparency
- External communications to members and supporters
- Media spokesperson
- Reputation and crisis management

If your charity doesn't have a Trustee with this experience then it may be worth thinking about investing in specific training, such as media training, to bring others up to scratch.

## How Involved Should They Get?

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The involvement of the Trustee will depend on the size of the organization. In a large charity with an income over £40m/year, Trustees do not get involved in the day-to-day communication to members, supporters or staff, focusing their efforts on effective governance instead. However, they will be routinely quoted in the press and be expected to act as ambassadors, networking on behalf of the charity and promoting it at the highest possible levels of influence. These types of Trustees need to be 'media friendly' and have had training to deal with the questions that journalists will throw at them

Other charities may take a much more hands on approach to this role. Child Rescue Nepal, an anti-slavery charity of which I'm a Trustee uses me in a communications capacity that encompasses all aspects of marketing and PR.

Similarly, our client Music Venue Trust Trustee Simon Hilton worked closely with us on the ground during their #FIGHTBACK CAMPAIGN, feeding us content for their website and social media channels, including behind the scenes access, interviews, and vox pops from guests.

Having an experienced Trustee in place to secure media outreach, design and run campaigns and plan and execute your PR and social media strategy is invaluable. These activities will soon start showing a return.

## Managing A Crisis

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The death of veteran poppy-seller Olive Cooke triggered a charity fundraising crisis in 2015. Charities' fundraising methods were called into question and have since been placed increasingly under the media microscope. We are all painfully aware of Kidsco's high profile fall from grace, and now more so than ever, it is vital that charities are aware of their reputational risks.

In the rare occurrence that something goes wrong, it may fall to a Trustee to manage a media crisis storm. News travels fast, especially on social media, so if anything goes wrong then it is beneficial to have expertise in house to help advise other Trustees on how to approach and mitigate the situation.

The best solution to this is to already have a plan in place. Planning and identifying any potential risks with the other Trustees, and drafting a crisis comms plan that is action-ready, will transform your ability to deal with a difficult situation.

*"Charities really only have one asset: your reputation. It is trustees' responsibility to look after it"*

- Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair of the PACAC

*"Fundraising is the cornerstone upon which successful charities are built. Given, the competition for each pound, organisations are increasingly aligning traditional communications alongside their fundraising efforts, under one key banner of 'engagement'."*

- Ben Eydmann, Director, Transform Fundraising

## Embracing New Ways to Communicate

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We now live in a digitally saturated world of endless possibilities. Even ten years ago, jobs like a Social Media Manager did not exist. The rise of Google, Facebook, Twitter and other platforms have generated many new opportunities for charities to reach out to new audiences.

Whilst a valued section of your donor database may appreciate a letter in the post, this approach will just not cut it for millennials more au fait with Snapchat. With an abundance of platforms available and larger charities adopting technologies as advanced as virtual reality, there is no time to stand still.

From SEO to free Google ad credit, there are a multitude of opportunities out there for charities to engage with and captivate the imagination of untapped audiences. Trustees who have a knowledge of how to maximise such platforms can be a real asset to your cause, so consider looking outside the box to people who are conversant in many different platforms.

Charities need to adapt to the changing times we live in, and enlisting a comms-literate Trustee is a great way to open this dialogue. Trustees provide the necessary expertise to help the charities further promote and share their important work and also, in the rare instances that something goes wrong, to help advise their colleagues on approach and messaging.

# Charity websites

*by Ian Smalley, Head of Creative Strategy*

In the crowded online arena, every brand is fighting for attention of a time poor, detail rich audience. When it comes to charities, the fight to be heard, gain support and request donations amongst this noise can be especially challenging.

With the average dwell time of a website acknowledged as 2–4 minutes, the need to create that instant impression or hook is vital. Established recognised charity brands, with a large social following, often dominate search, adding additional pressures for new, mid-sized or less recognised charities to promote their message.

To help, the following aspects should be considered when either designing and developing a new website for your charity, or importantly, if your current website doesn't tick all of these boxes, you need to potentially look at refreshing it.

## Site Design & Build

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It is integral that your site is fully responsive and accessible across all platforms, mobile devices and tablets.

Google focuses on responsive sites from an SEO perspective. Also, if new or current users are pinching and zooming around your site, the chances are they will move on. Old, non responsive sites, ultimately create an impression of your brand too.

## Clarity Of Message

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The simplicity and clarity of your message is invaluable. Will a new user understand what you do and what your aims are instantly? If your message or call to action is too long or over complicated, you are less likely to engage. Think about what you are trying to say, and importantly how you are trying to say it. Emotive terminology can be used as a hook, but at the same time, you need to express what your core aims are.

## Visual Impression

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The visual impact of your site is of equal importance. Spend time to determine the correct look and feel for your site. It is vital to choose or source the correct imagery that relates and reflects your brand, your message and your aims.

Increasingly, users search via imagery as well as text. Don't just choose the first stock image that closely matches your keywords. Does the imagery help to portray you in the correct light? Does the imagery align with your messaging and aims? If not, look again.

## User Experience

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The entire user experience of the site needs to be planned around delivering your message efficiently, providing that top level impact, that encourages users to drill into the site to learn more and engage.

Think about the navigation structure, and how best you can link your heritage, your aims, causes and projects into a seamless narrative.

## Conclusion

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Along with being fully responsive, the ideal website should be an inviting, engaging and educational space with a clearly defined user experience, to meet the expectations of the modern, time poor user. Visual identity, optimised functionality and strong SEO will work cohesively to capture and maintain the attention of your audience. These are invaluable to any brand and must be considered in every element; from video content to the donations page. Like all channels of communication, a website should aim to sustain and nourish relationships with customers and new users alike, whilst providing clarity of your core aims and values.

## Content

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Support this narrative with well-planned, useful, engaging content throughout the site. Don't just write words for words sake. Does your supporting content help with your SEO?

Look at using different media formats. A short succinct video can quickly deliver the impact and message of an entire page of copy. And it can be used across your social channels to increase your brand or messaging awareness.

Keep your site content refreshed and updated, from case studies and projects, blogs and news. Build backlinks to enhance your SEO values.

## Donations

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A tricky subject, as almost all charities are aiming to receive donations. The entire donation process needs to be extremely clear, simple and accessible throughout the site. If the donation process is over complicated, multi-layered and frustrating, the chances are your would-be donors will become frustrated and move on elsewhere. If the process is seamless however, and the initial donation is made and related data is captured, the on-going communication via e-mail, phone, newsletters can provide that vital, ongoing relationship that will lead to continued financial support.

A decorative border of colored squares surrounds the central text. The grid consists of 5 rows and 8 columns of squares. The colors used are white, orange, and blue. The squares are arranged in a pattern that frames the central text. Row 1: White, Orange, Blue, White, Orange, Blue, White, Orange. Row 2: Blue, White, Orange, Blue, White, Orange, Blue, White. Row 3: White, Orange, Blue, Orange, Blue, White, Orange, Blue. Row 4: Blue, White, Orange, White, Orange, Blue, Orange, Blue. Row 5: Orange, Blue, White, Blue, White, Orange, Blue, White.

# Charity social media insight

*by Hayley Coleby, Social Media Director*

*Social Media is now an established member in any successful campaign. Its ability to maximise appeal, reaching the target demographic and beyond, has fostered huge growth for many Charities worldwide. The power of Social Media has been demonstrated endlessly, with viral campaigns such as the Ice Bucket Challenge, No Make-Up Selfie and Movember. The genius of these campaigns is the ability to execute them so successfully, with minimal budget. Charities big and small are facing the challenge of how to scale up their communications across channels, faced with lessening public trust and scarcer resource. Social Media can present the answer, but only if it is used properly. Our best practice guide examines the ins-and-outs of Social Media for Charities.*

## Features

One of the biggest selling points of Social Media, to both businesses and consumers, is the constantly evolving nature of its interface. These updates keep the platforms fresh, and consumers engaged. And as these features develop, so do the possibilities for application to your charity and its message. We now have geotagging, stories, gallery and carousel image displays at our fingertips. As much as it is important to keep on top of new trends, it is more crucial not to sacrifice the integrity of the brand. Not only is it often a wasted effort, but it can make a brand seem desperate and disengaged with its core audience.

However, these features can be and often are used to great success. Instagram stories allow a charity to present its beneficiaries, or those who still require help, in a very personal and emotive way. This is something Shelter did to great effect. By live-tweeting repossessions around the country they presented a hard-hitting approach to engage followers and increase awareness. The newest of these updates is Instagram's gallery display, which allows you to post multiple images at once. This has been well utilised by Smile Train UK, a charity specialising in cleft palate operations, to display the before and afters of the smiles they made happen. From personal stories to Twitter polls, charities have proven that making the most of their Social Media platform quickly gains traction, creates conversation and draws attention to the issues that need most focus.

## Frequency

It's all well and good for you to produce cinematic masterpieces for your stories, but if you fail to post regularly and with thematic consistency, nobody will see, let alone engage with your posts. For best practice, try to post between three times a week, to daily, to platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Google+. Twitter is the anomaly here, it's fast paced and news-based nature means it requires more like four posts a day, two proactive and two reactive tweets a day for best effect. Another popular recommendation is the 10:4:1 ratio for sharing content; this suggests 10 posts from 3rd party sources, 4 from your own services, campaigns or blogs and 1 with a direct ask of the consumer. Whichever method you choose to adopt, remember to continually check-in with analytics to see which frequencies and formats are working and tweak accordingly.



## Formatting

When it comes to the format of your posts, no detail is too small. You must consider everything, from the number and placement of hashtags, to image sizing and tagging other brands. The number of hashtags used, for example, is very much site specific. For Facebook and Twitter, one should use between 2-3 hashtags, and try to incorporate them within the copy. Doing this will ensure that they are relevant to the post and by extension the target demographic. Instagram however, allows you to use up to 30 hashtags, which for best practice should be 'concealed' in a comment below the picture. This allows the widest reach for your post, whilst maintaining the crisp and clean aesthetic that Instagram thrives on. But be careful not to over-tag and mislead the user with the tags you use, as you can be penalised accordingly by the individual platforms.

For all channels, it is key to remember to alter the tone and presentation of your copy. Emoji's work well in most instances, especially in character-tight formats such as Twitter. Another way to capture attention is through images, although refrain from overly branded images, especially on Instagram. Instead, use the #LinkInBio hashtag to re-direct users to your content via your Instagram bio.

In terms of tagging, many assume that tags will transfer across platforms, and work the same on each channel. Alas, they do not. Sharing any content directly between channels will result in unlinked text and missed opportunities. When posting, ensure you do it individually to each site to avoid any tags getting lost in translation and cutting your posts potential reach.

## Feeling

Tone of voice and visual identity are possibly the two most important factors to consider when establishing your charity's space in Social Media, and these should remain consistent across all platforms. As a charity on Social Media, don't be afraid to take it up a notch with your language to make an impact. Be emotive in your copy; Social Media is full of hyperbole and charities should not be afraid to grab attention, although do be careful not to over-inflate issues or promises.

Strong visual identity is vital to sustaining interest in your charities channels. You must consider what the consumer will understand from a 30 second glance at your various Social Media pages. In this time your page should ideally visually communicate who the charity benefits and how; image can be used here to provoke

an interest so people will engage further. This can and should be communicated through a variety of formats: images, GIFs, cinemagraphs and video.

Understandably, many charities face problems with imagery. If your cause is related to a medical condition or a sensitive subject, it can be hard to be emotive whilst maintaining sensitivity and avoiding shock tactics. Anonymised images, graphics, cartoons and illustrations can combat this, with the latter performing well on creative channels like Instagram or Pinterest. Alternatively, you can focus on the success stories and the result of the work done by the charity. Smile Train UK do this very well, they focus on the smiles they create and the #journeyofsmiles. Dogs Trust are another charity who have done this. They've engaged with a younger demographic through Instagram and the use of memes., like their most recent recreation of Beyoncé's pregnancy announcement picture with Clarence, a mix-breed from Salisbury.

## Other

Don't be afraid to be reactive! All the daily and weekly content in the world won't bring in the attention that one well-placed news hook can. Please don't abandon all your daily Social Media activities, but do consider what you can do to engage with consumers outside of your following. When it comes to being reactive, be brave and have faith in a creative idea.

Hijacking the news agenda can be hugely effective, as shown by women's equality charity, Fawcett. They established #FawcettflatsFriday in retaliation to a woman being sent home from work for not wearing heels. To get involved all people had to do was wear flats and a share a photograph with their hashtag.

Lastly, the algorithms on Social Media sites benefit paid posts so don't be afraid to put some money behind your most powerful campaigns and content. These are available on almost all channels and will hugely increase engagement, with many offering a predictor or guarantee of engagements per £.

Social Media can seem an overwhelming task at first, but its power to influence and inform makes it well worth the investment, especially in today's dynamic comms climate. With this as a guideline, you can carve out a unique space for your charity in Social Media. And remember, there are a huge number of services on hand these days to streamline the process and guarantee ROI.

**Want to talk about your  
communications strategy for  
you Charity?**

**Get in touch, we'd love to  
hear from you!**

