



How charities can boost their profile and fundraising efforts

How can charities boost their profile and fundraising efforts?

Like many organisations, charities have faced testing times since the onset of the financial crisis. As households see their finances come under pressure, they are finding it increasingly difficult to donate money to good causes.

Indeed, research by the New Philanthropy Capital¹ has found charities in the UK are being forced to cut back on the services they offer as a result of reduced funding. Two-thirds of the charities surveyed in England and Wales admitted front-line services have been lost as a result of a lack of donations, while one in ten think they may have to close within the next 12 months.

On top of this, a report by Charities Aid Foundation and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations² found donations to charity fell by 20 per cent in real terms in 2012 (a £1.7 billion drop in the amount donated).

In light of this, charities should examine what means they have available to increase their support base and / or elicit higher donations. This Blue Paper highlights five simple ways that many charities can use to boost their profile and fundraising efforts.

Chapter 1: Build a strong online presence

Charities will struggle to enjoy much success in today's digital age if they do not have a presence online. Most would-be donors are likely to go online in search of information and advice about a particular good cause or issue, which is why charities need to make sure their website is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also up-to-date.

Reason Digital a social enterprise that specialises in digital media offer the following tips³ for charities looking to boost their online presence:

- Create great content, so that the website has something interesting and useful to say to sustain visitors' attention

¹ Charities 'struggling' as central budgets shrink, BBC News, May 29th 2012, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18245690>>

² Charity donations down 20%, says UK Giving 2012 report, BBC News, November 12th 2012, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20304267>>

³ How to improve your charity's online presence, Reason Digital, April 24th 2012, <<http://www.reasondigital.com/blog/85/How-to-improve-your-charity-s-online-presence/>>



- Understand the target audience, a charity cannot be expected to have relevant information on their website if they do not have a clear indication of who their target audience is
- Understand Google, staff members responsible for the website should familiarise themselves with how Google operates in terms of ranking search pages. This will assist the websites rankings for highly relevant searches
- Set clear goals, a charity should set measurable goals to see how well the website performs, such as receiving x-number of visitors, or improving dwell time, which measures how long users stay on web pages



When staff were asked by Civil Society IT about their charity's website, only 46 per cent of respondents said they thought it was good.⁴ A further 15 per cent rated their portal as very good, while 28 per cent thought the design was average and 11 per cent labelled it as poor. This research demonstrates that there is considerable scope to improve website design in the third sector.

Even more shockingly, 59 per cent of respondents admitted their website does not accept charity donations. This means that charities could be missing out on a valuable revenue stream. Web visitors may be happy to donate there and then if the website is able to accept donations. However, if donors have to call into a shop or send a cheque in the post, their enthusiasm might be dampened.

Without a clear web strategy, charities will struggle to generate an acceptable return from their online activities. Charities should not be afraid to act like private sector businesses by promoting their services online and encouraging people to donate through their website. However, this invites the question, how can charities make sure their website attracts visitors and encourages donations?

Goss Interactive, a company that develops web strategies for a wide variety of organisations offers these tips for a great website:⁵

⁴ 85% of charity websites are not "very good", Goss Interactive, <<http://www.gossinteractive.com/blog/85-per-cent-of-charity-websites-are-not-very-good>>

⁵ Ibid

1. **User journeys and clear navigation** - Users need to be able to find what they are looking for, whether it is the donation page or information about how the money a charity receives is spent, in a quick and easy way
2. **Strong calls to action** - This will help to engage visitors and hopefully improve conversion rates as people are convinced of how vital their donation is
3. **Processes and functionality that works first time** - Would-be donors need to have faith in the charity's services, so making sure donation pages are always working is essential
4. **Social media** - Engaging through social media is a good way to boost your customer base and so Twitter and Facebook profiles should be easy to find from the main site
5. **Include user generated content** - Donor testimonials add authority to the charities mission, this type of content also brings fresh ideas, engagement and a community unity
6. **Analytics** - By keeping a record of website views, charities can tailor their strategies based on what people seem to like and dislike

Figures from JustGiving also highlight how effective mobile donations via text messaging can be, as the online giving group managed to collect £242 million through this channel in 2012.⁶ Anne-Marie Huby, JustGiving's co-founder and managing director, said the data is all the more impressive considering online giving "is still a small proportion of what people give in the UK", but she thinks there is plenty of room for improvement.

What is clear from the study by Civil Society IT is that charities should be investing in their online operations.

By setting time and resources aside - and finding out how the website can help them generate more donations - charities could hopefully then boost their revenue.



⁶ Charities use mobile technology to boost donations, the Independent, March 30th 2013, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/charities-use-mobile-technology-to-boost-donations-8554668.html>>

papers

Chapter 2: Social media

Social media is a great way to interact with potential donors and demonstrate loyalty to those who have given money in the past. The real-time nature of channels such as Facebook and Twitter means charities can interact and build up a conversation with a diverse range of people. According to Mashable⁷, there are five options open to charities looking to boost their social media profile.

1. Treat interactions as a conversation

The golden rule is that charities have to treat social media as a conversation. They will not get very far if they just constantly post information they think will be relevant, without bothering to engage with followers to see what they think of it - treating social media as a two-way channel is the best course of action. Charities shouldn't be afraid to share relevant statuses from other charities and / or companies and they should respond to all queries from potential donors.



2. Don't be passive

Activity needs to be at the heart of everything on the web. Charities cannot expect to stand still and be successful, so a dead Twitter account or inactive Facebook Fan Page represents a major no-no. Large charities may have the resources available to recruit a social media manager; smaller organisations could investigate whether they could take on an intern or volunteer to help manage their social media pages. If it's not possible to recruit, consider setting up a rota so that Twitter and Facebook accounts are regularly updated, while queries should be answered within 24 hours of being lodged.



3. Be real

Sometimes charities make the mistake of adopting a corporate tone, when they should instead be focusing on developing a community feel. People do not want to talk to a faceless brand, but rather want to feel like they are engaging with a real person. This ties back to the first point about treating social media as a two-way conversation, as this is the best way to establish relationships that will last a long time.

4. Share, share and share some more

One of the main reasons social media has been so popular is that it lets

⁷ 5 Essential Tips for Promoting Your Charity Using Social Media, Mashable, August 21st 2009, <<http://mashable.com/2009/08/21/charity-social-media/>>

people share content with each other. Whether it is a meme - which typically sees a funny phrase pasted over a picture - important news stories or just tips about a subject or topic, these channels give people the chance to interact in a way not previously thought possible.

Mashable⁸ indicates that the best way to encourage followers to share content is to “create an environment where sharing is valued”. This means charities have to be dedicated to putting out quality content and not be afraid to lead by example when it comes to sharing content from other sources.

5. Make social media a company-wide activity

Social media channels will be more effective if the company as a whole gets involved. If everyone at the charity makes a conscious effort to use social media on a daily basis, participation levels will improve drastically. Introducing a social media policy - which outlines the corporate guidelines or principles of communicating in the online world for employees - is also worthwhile, as it could prevent a charity being connected with any comments made by staff that would otherwise prove damaging.

In today's digital age, charities should not overlook the exposure that social media can offer them. By following these five tips, charities should attract more followers and in turn, generate more donations.

Chapter 3: Search out a charity partnership

Charity link-ups are a great way for charities to bring in additional cash. Links with local businesses can be a great source of donations for some charities, and in return, private sector organisations can promote their charitable links to raise their profile and generate good PR.

Research by C&E Advisory, a cross-sector 'Business & Society' consultancy has found almost three quarters of corporate respondents believe non-profit organisations are effective and view them as groups they can do business with.⁹ Both corporate partners and charities think these partnerships work well, as 90 per cent think they have not only met the initial objectives, but also delivered real



⁸ 5 Essential Tips for Promoting Your Charity Using Social Media, Mashable, August 21st 2009, <<http://mashable.com/2009/08/21/charity-social-media/>>

⁹ Companies recognise the value of charitable partnerships, report shows, the Guardian, November 15th 2012, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/voluntary-sector-network/2012/nov/15/charities-corporate-partnerships>>

value.

For charities, linking up with a business is usually a no-brainer. It offers them access to resources and expertise they would otherwise be unable to get, while it also brings in valuable funding. The C&E study shows that third sector groups are being savvier in their approach now too, as they target people and networks through link-ups.¹⁰ For example, working alongside various industry professionals could help them to come up with new ways of addressing old issues and complex challenges.

Case Study: A successful charity link-up

In November 2012, professional services firm KPMG announced it was linking up with two charities - Shelter and Action for Literacy - for the next two years.¹¹ It hopes to raise £1 million for the organisations and set out a number of different activities it will undertake. KPMG partnered these two charities as they address homelessness and literacy, two issues, according to KPMG, that need to be addressed in order to help build the UK's economy.

The support being offered by KPMG falls into four distinct areas:

1. **Fundraising** - KPMG has committed to collecting £1 million for the two charities. A series of fundraising events have been organised and offices from across the UK are being encouraged to take part. An example of this is the First Hour Appeal, which saw staff donate the first hour of their pay in 2013, which raised £123,770
2. **Volunteering** – KPMG staff have volunteered at Shelter and Action for Literacy premises and also provided guidance and support to the charities over matters such as VAT management and finance
3. **Lobbying** - Conversations with both charities have taken place in an effort to see what can be done to help them on a local and national level. Working parties have also been set up to support the policy work being developed by the charities
4. **Pro bono** - A diagnostic workshop with the charities was undertaken



¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Our national charities, KPMG, <<http://www.kpmg.com/uk/en/about/whatmakesusdifferent/ourapproachtocorporateresponsibility/kpmginthecommunity/national-charities/pages/default.aspx>>

to identify their needs. As a result of this, ten areas of potential engagement have been identified and further strategy workshops are already being planned

KPMG's efforts demonstrate that businesses have a lot to offer charities, both in terms of helping them to generate a higher profile and encouraging more funding. Best of all, it will cost charities relatively little money, as businesses will pay for the majority of the marketing and PR costs.

Chapter 4: Make the most of sponsored events

Charities typically host a series of events in order to build awareness and encourage donations. These can act as a great way to promote a good cause, especially when backed by well-known sponsors. For example, Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre (The NEC) was the headline sponsor for the 2013 edition of 'In the Rough' a charity golf day for the event industry¹². The NEC said it felt compelled to show its backing as it thinks it can help the event to grow in popularity through bringing together clients, event organisers and contractors.

According to the Royal Marsden Cancer Charity, there are a number of options open to charities looking to get sponsors or improve awareness¹³. First of all, the charity should contact their local newspaper, radio and TV stations to see if the cause can obtain any local or regional coverage. On top of this, press releases can also be an effective tool, as they represent an easy way to get media coverage. The charity has some top tips for preparing press releases:¹⁴

- Include the 5 Ws - who, what, where, why and when
- Keep it short and punchy, press releases shouldn't be longer than one A4 page
- Make sure the headline is interesting
- Put contact details at the bottom
- Include a description of the event

¹² The NEC to sponsor 2013 event industry charity golf day, Conference News, April 23rd 2013, <<http://www.conference-news.co.uk/news/2013/04/26/The-NEC-to-sponsor-2013-event-industry-charity-golf-day/5646>>

¹³ Promoting your event or challenge, the Royal Marsden Cancer Charity, <<http://www.royalmarsden.org/promoting-event-challenge>>

¹⁴ Ibid



- Include a photo, this gives the story a human element and increases the chances of getting media coverage if your event has a strong action shot

Charities need to make the most of these events, as they offer promotional opportunities that can attract sponsorship.¹⁵ These types of events represent the perfect opportunity for charities looking to recruit corporate sponsors, not only for specific events but also in terms of a long-term commitment.

In an ideal world, a charity will be able to attract enough sponsorship to cover the cost of the whole project, which frees up funds and resources to be spent elsewhere. When it comes to approaching potential sponsors, charities should have a clear plan of what they want from the sponsor and what they can provide the sponsor in return.

Enlisting the help of sponsors is a vital part of a charity's work, as this will help them to attract a much bigger audience, which in turn should bring in more donations.

Chapter 5: The power of payroll giving

Some charities struggle to raise funds from potential donors because of the complexity involved in making a donation (whether that's filling out a particular form or some other impediment). Payroll Giving provides a simple means for virtually all UK residents to make donations to charity. This flexible scheme allows anyone paying income tax in the UK to give regularly and on a tax free basis to the charities and good causes of their choice.¹⁶ Payroll Giving donations are deducted 'at source' before tax so for every £1 a person gives, it only costs 80p from their 'take home pay'.

The hassle-free nature of this scheme means once companies set it up, their staff do not have to worry about making monthly donations, as the money will automatically be deducted from their wages.

What are the advantages of Payroll Giving?¹⁷



¹⁵ How to organise an event to raise money / awareness for your organisation, KnowHow NonProfit, <<http://knowhownonprofit.org/funding/fundraising/fundraising-events-and-challenges/events>>

¹⁶ Payroll Giving - working for a good cause, Payroll Giving, <<http://www.payrollgiving.co.uk/>>

¹⁷ Payroll Giving: introduction for employers and pension providers, HMRC, <<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/businesses/giving/payroll-giving.htm>>

- It is simple to operate and manage within a business
- Can help businesses develop employee relations, shows they are willing to support good causes
- Charities aren't the only ones to benefit, employees get tax relief on the donations. For example, it would only cost an employee who pays tax at the higher rate of 40 per cent £6 to make a £10 donation

Charities' websites, social media accounts, charity link-ups and sponsored events offer the perfect opportunity to spread awareness of this facility. It will be attractive to businesses and employees because it offers them the chance to donate in a tax efficient manner and if harnessed correctly, can be very lucrative for charities.

Moving forward: The future

Since the onset of the financial crisis in 2007-08, charities up and down the country have found themselves receiving fewer donations and, as a result, many charities have scaled back their marketing activities. Despite lower marketing budgets, charities are striving to generate a similar or better return on investment. Charities need to use a variety of options if they are going to be successful. As has been outlined in this Blue Paper, social media, a web presence, charity link-ups and sponsored events are all effective tools when it comes to fundraising and promotion.

Charities have to realise that simply taking part in conversations on Twitter and Facebook is not enough, they need to lead these conversations. By doing this, charities can lead the debate and hopefully raise their profile and awareness of their cause.

By following a multi-faceted solution that makes the most of the web, print and face-to-face meetings, charities can spread the word about the good they are doing and their plan for the future. Moreover, if third sector groups convince individuals of the importance of the work they are involved with through these marketing activities, they should hopefully be able to look forward to a boost in those all-important donations.





4imprint Direct Limited is part of 4imprint Group plc that serves more than 100,000 businesses with its innovative promotional items and corporate gifts throughout the UK, Ireland, USA and Canada. Its promotional product offerings include personalised gifts, [promotional pens](#), [Post-it Notes](#), [personalised mugs](#), [printed Keyrings](#), [cotton bags](#), [mousemats](#), [printed drawstring bags](#), [sports bottles](#), [printed USBs](#), [diaries & calendars](#), [printed T-Shirts](#) and much more. 4imprint's 'no quibble' guarantees include the promise that if the personalised goods are not despatched on time they'll be free! For additional information, visit www.4imprint.co.uk