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Case Study

RSPCA — The IDM Business Performance Awards 2008: Highly recommended award winner. Campaign: 'Home for Life'

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Abstract

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has been a leading UK animal welfare charity since its foundation in 1824. It relies entirely on voluntary donations and legacies to meet its £82m annual running costs. This case reveals how the RSPCA reinvigorated its legacy fundraising strategy by using a profiling- and research-derived insight to reach and engage a new generation of legacy donors. The 'Home for Life' campaign overcame the traditional difficulties involved in legacy fundraising, using a combination of delicacy and directness in its creative approach across carefully selected multi-media. The campaign reinforced and enhanced the RSPCA brand and produced a return on investment (ROI) of 10:1. Identified legacy donation pledge value currently stands at £10m.

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Introduction

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) is the winner of the prestigious IDM Business Performance 'Diamond' Award. Entrants for the annual award are judged on multiple business and marketing criteria by three tiers of judges representing a cross-section of industry and marketing expertise.

Background

In 2006, legacies contributed 55 per cent of the RSPCA's total annual income, equating to £58m. The charity is heavily dependent on legacy income to fund its ongoing work, and had a pressing need to find a new generation of legacy donors. Above all, the RSPCA had to find

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a way to make cold legator recruitment cost effective in order for it to remain a sustainable source of charity fundraising. The *Home for Life* campaign was developed to fulfil this need.

The charity market has an in-depth understanding of legacy fundraising potential, built up over decades of donor recruitment. Like other major charities, the RSPCA has a finely tuned programme to develop current donor relationships and encourage loyal supporters to pledge a legacy to the RSPCA in their Will.

A sensitive approach

The relationship building process and its economics are well understood by the charity. However, the scope of legacy fundraising activity had largely been confined to the RSPCA's existing supporter base, as new legator recruitment had proved to be both expensive and challenging. The subject of Will-making and legacies requires a careful approach, as it inevitably broaches the subject of the recipient's own mortality. Death is bad for business, and fundraising response rates usually plummet at the mere mention of it.

The unpredictability of legacy income is another issue for the RSPCA. The charity is rarely informed at the moment a bequest is made, usually only learning of the gift after the donor's death. However, it is greatly to the charity's advantage if they receive immediate notification of a pledge. Knowledge about a future bequest allows the charity to reinforce the donor relationship through a bespoke marketing communications programme.

The RSPCA takes an integrated approach in its communications planning. Therefore, any cold legator recruitment activity needs to reinforce existing RSPCA brand attributes by demonstrating the additional value that the organisation delivers to its supporters.

Campaign objectives

New supporters

The primary *Home for Life* campaign objective was to persuade significant numbers of animal lovers, who were *not existing RSPCA supporters*, to leave money to the RSPCA in their Will.

It is also important that the RSPCA is informed of a bequest at the time it is made.

The secondary campaign objective was to demonstrate the value that the organisation brings to its supporters, and to the wider animal-loving community, to reinforce the RSPCA brand.

Targeting strategy

From their extensive experience of their own legacy donors, the RSPCA and their agencies already possessed in-depth knowledge about the target market that was most likely to respond to a legacy donor campaign.

Key target sub-segment

A combination of experience, profiling and research indicated that the most receptive campaign audience was likely to be found amongst a large group of ABC1 animal owners aged over 55 years. Research revealed that 10,000 elderly animal lovers die each year and leave an animal behind. Thus, elderly animal lovers were a key sub-segment within the broader targeting approach.

The targeting strategy identified two important secondary audiences whose opinions were likely to influence the primary target audience:

- Relatives and carers who might become responsible for pets if the pet owner dies.
- Solicitors and probate lawyers who offer trusted advice concerning Will-making and bequests.

A big unifying idea

Product and proposition strategy — ‘A Home for Life’

In order to meet the communication challenge, the RSPCA and their agencies, Mike Colling & Company and Whitewater, needed a fresh creative approach to deliver the necessary stand-out and engagement. The team began the campaign development process by reviewing customer and donor research and insights, seeking a ‘big’ unifying idea on which to base the campaign.

A significant percentage of the c 70,000 animals the RSPCA re-homes each year need a new home because their owner has died. This insight provided a crucial link between an issue of genuine concern to pet owners, an existing RSPCA service and the campaign objectives.

Donor insight-led proposition

The campaign proposition was developed directly from this donor insight: This insight led directly to the RSPCA’s existing re-homing service being re-framed to form a new unique product and proposition that was strong enough to appeal to a cold target audience, and in perfect harmony with the caring attributes of the RSPCA brand.

The proposition ‘If you die, who better than the RSPCA to look after your pet?’ and product ‘We will care for your pet if you die’ together formed an emotive and motivational message to strike a chord with elderly pet owners.

Crucially, the campaign offered pet owners the chance to be proactive about planning for their pet’s future by signing up to the pet re-homing service. Owners were offered this valuable service and peace of mind about their pet’s future, in exchange for signing a pledge to support the RSPCA. Pet owners were asked to leave their pets to the RSPCA in their Will, creating a ‘home for life’ for their pet(s) and giving themselves peace of mind. Legacy donors also had the option to place a copy of their Will with the RSPCA.

This approach introduced the idea of leaving a legacy to the RSPCA to potential donors in a novel and natural way.

Delivering value builds the brand

‘Who would you rather rely on to care for your pet?’ reinforced the RSPCA’s work with all animals. On a strategic level, *Home for Life* builds the RSPCA brand by delivering value to donors and differentiating the RSPCA from its competitors.

A further research-based insight concerning general donor attitudes was that a new generation of legators want something back from the charities they support, something that reflects the donors’ commitment and concern and is more meaningful than gizmos and promotional flummery.

In a market where simply requesting a legacy pledge is the normal approach, the campaign proposition is innovative and appealing. The approach evolves the charity/donor relationship from that of child/adult, a one-sided request for money, to adult/adult, demonstrating value in return for a gift.

Creative strategy

With such delicate subject matter it was felt that a straightforward approach would be most effective. The message had to optimise response from a limited audience, demonstrating the value the RSPCA is offering to the potential legator before 'the ask'.

Although the strength of the campaign's core idea would ensure that it stood out from the crowd, any communication on the subject of Will-making and death still poses a significant creative challenge. The campaign's tone of voice had to convey the proposition in an appealing way to harmonise with the RSPCA's brand.

A 'matter of fact' tone was selected to support the proposition that leaving the RSPCA a bequest is a natural step for owners to take for the sake of their pet and their own peace of mind (Figures 1–3):

'Ultimately, you don't want to think about it — but if it affects your pet, then you'll be glad that the RSPCA is thinking about it by providing this free service.'

The strength of the campaign's unifying idea allowed a tailored creative approach to be employed in each medium. The direct response television marketing (DRTV) ad conveyed the importance of an owner's emotional connection to their pets, using 'You've Been Framed'-style video footage featuring pets getting up to mischief to

A pragmatic approach to a tricky subject

Figure 1: *Home for Life* envelope
Source: RSPCA

Peace of mind

— a Home for Life from the RSPCA

"We're using Home for Life because we know we can rely on the RSPCA to treat our pets with kindness. Making a provision in our Wills for our pets has given us relief from the worry of what would happen to them on our deaths."

Mr and Mrs Frisby, Notts

A new love for Benji

When Benji's owner passed away, we took over his care until we could find him a new home. Miss Staff, visiting a friend who worked at the kennels where this delightful little dog was staying, took a shine to the little chap. A couple of visits convinced Miss Staff that she and Benji were perfect for each other so she offered to give him a permanent, loving home.

After going through the RSPCA's rehoming checks successfully she was able to take the little blonde Chihuahua to his new home, where he's lived happily now for two years. Of course he must have missed his previous owner, but he settled in well, and was soon getting on with her other pets, a dog and a cat. In fact, he's taken quite a shine to the cat – he follows her around everywhere! He's also learned to combat his fear of children and gets on with his new owner's nieces splendidly.

When Benji lost his owner, life must have seemed very bleak. But thanks to the RSPCA he's enjoying a new life, and the love of a new owner. A treat of a piece of cheese each evening, regular tummy tickles from his loving new owner... life is looking good for this happy little dog.

For more information call 0870 7540 239

We receive no government funding

Peace of Mind

with Home for Life from the RSPCA

Figure 2: Home for life

Adapting creative to each medium's strengths

Love and care for your pets

— and peace of mind for you

If you're worried about what will happen to your beloved pets after you pass away, you might be interested to know that your Will can safeguard their future too – with RSPCA's Home for Life.

With this service you can rest assured that the RSPCA will be there for your loving animal companions who have given you so much, after you pass on.

All it takes is a simple clause in your Will instructing that care of your pets is handed over to the RSPCA after your death. Take the suggested wording opposite with you when you talk to your solicitor about your wishes.

Knowing how much they mean to you, we'll do our best to look after your beloved pets, and do everything we can to find them loving new homes. All the animals in our care are given a health check, and for most domestic animals this includes vaccinations, neutering and micro-chipping as necessary.

No other animal charity finds more homes for more pets than us – last year we rehomed nearly 70,000. New owners are checked for suitability, and we often do follow-up checks too.

The RSPCA Home for Life service offers more than just a home for your pets

after your death it offers you peace of mind too, that you have made arrangements for their care.

If you're thinking of using Home for Life, perhaps you might also consider leaving a gift in your Will to the RSPCA or one of its branches. We receive no money at all from the government, and over half our income comes from people kind enough to remember the animals in their Wills. Opposite, you can also find wording for leaving a gift in your Will. Please pass it to your solicitor.

If you intend to use our Home for Life service it will be a great help to us if you could let us know of your intentions. Please complete and send the registration form enclosed, with a copy of your Will if you are able to, so that we have your details to hand. Just pop them in the post, in the addressed envelope enclosed, to: Joanna Curtis, Key Supporter Manager, RSPCA, Freepost SEA10503, Horsham BN13 9BB. Please feel assured that your details will be held securely in the strictest confidence.

If you are looking for information on making a Will, or making changes to your Will through a solicitor, just call Joanna Curtis, Key Supporter Manager, on 0870 7540 239 and she'll be happy to send you a free copy of our Will Guide or code it for you.

Philippa Jones, Animal Welfare Officer
RSPCA Horsham and the surrounding area. © Andrew Purnell & John Ballantyne

Here is suggested Home for Life wording for your solicitor to use in your Will: it passes care of your pets, after your death, to the RSPCA. You could take this leaflet when you visit your solicitor to discuss your wishes for your pets.

"In the event that any pet animal of mine survives me and I have made no other provision for its care I direct my Executors to notify the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Herts, SN15 9NS (registered charity number 290998) as soon as practicable after my death and to request the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to take over the responsibility for the animal and to endeavour to place it in a suitable home as soon as practicable the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals having absolute discretion to deal with the welfare of the animal as it considers fit and I direct also that the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals having accepted such a request the animal shall not form part of my residuary estate."

Here is suggested wording if you would like to remember the animals with a gift to the RSPCA in your Will.

"I give the sum of £_____ for (specify a share of residuary to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Herts, SN15 9NS (registered charity number 290998) for its general purposes and I declare that the receipt of the honorary treasurer or other proper officer of the said Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for the time being shall be a full and sufficient discharge for the said legacy"

RSPCA branches are specially registered charities. To leave a legacy to a branch please contact Joanna Curtis for the relevant information. Rehoming of animals will fall in line with RSPCA rehoming policies and practices, which are available on request.

Figure 3: Home for life

make viewers laugh. The actress delivering the message about the benefits of the service adopted the style of a trusted friend.

The press ads, inserts and door drops focused on a visual representation of the relationship between animal and human, and the reward that an animal's love brings. These media were used to demonstrate how pet owners can make a return for the pets' loyalty

and devotion, and enjoy peace of mind, by ensuring that their pets have a secure future.

Online communications concentrated on providing practical support, discussing both the benefits to the animals and the steps that the owner, or relative, must take.

Media strategy

The media schedule was informed by recognition of the fact that the decision to join *Home for Life* is both a rational and emotional one. The media schedule mirrored a typical customer journey, moving from emotional through rational decision-making to the moment of commitment, in this case, making a bequest.

There were a good many reasons for the campaign launch to take place in the broadcast media.

One of the principal reasons for beginning the campaign in the broadcast media was the charity's pressing need to find new legators. Another equally important point was that the delicacy of the subject matter meant that a personalised communication was not an appropriate choice as the initial contact method.

The media schedule reflected the media consumption of the target audience, and was refined using profiling and research information from existing donors.

A public media launch firmly established *Home for Life* as a unique service owned by the RSPCA, strongly differentiating it from its legacy-hunting competitors. Public media also reached the relatives and friends of the primary target audience, serving to reassure and inform them.

Finally, public media gives potential legators the opportunity to opt-in. It puts them firmly in the decision-making driving seat for this most intrusive and deeply personal of decisions.

Once someone had indicated either interest or commitment by responding to the public media messages, a personalised communication programme was designed to develop the ongoing relationship.

Campaign execution

Prior to the campaign launch, the proposition was tested by communicating it to the RSPCA's existing supporters through a newsletter and direct mail. The strength of the results confirmed the power of the proposition, providing the charity with important reassurance about the likely return on the substantial investment required for a cold campaign.

An integrated approach to the mixed-media schedule ensured that each medium was allowed to play to its strengths. For example, DRTV was used to convey the core emotional message, as a response generator, and also contributed to the media-multiplier effect in other media.

The public relations (PR) communications leveraged the existing relationship between the target audience, their families and key media,

Mirroring the customer journey

Differentiation from competitors

Testing the proposition

A fully integrated approach

using the editorial integrity of key publications to reinforce the credibility of the proposition. Press advertising was timed to coincide with PR activity in the national press to generate cost-effective responses by making the most of the uplift from PR.

Inserts were placed in niche and regional titles and at events, such as Crufts, to maximise responses from the finite core audience. In keeping with a fully integrated approach, inserts were distributed approximately 2 weeks after the DRTV advertising aired, to allow the emotional messages time to build before introducing a rational approach.

Online search was optimised to support all offline media.

Solicitors (Figure 4) and probate lawyers were targeted through press, direct mail and outbound telephone. This key influencer audience was given detailed information about *Home for Life* and asked to display leaflets.

Three response channels were provided to allow for all donor preferences: phone, coupon and online.

Bespoke relationship development programme

Once donors or potential donors had opted-in through the broadcast media, direct mail and telephone were used to develop the ongoing donor relationship.

Legacy donors who signed up immediately were entered into a bespoke legacy donor care programme. They receive four communications a year: two legacy donor newsletters, a Christmas mailing and an April appeal mailing.

The RSPCA encouraged donors to discuss their plans with their family to avoid surprises at the will reading. The donor welcome mailing also included a wallet card (a bit like an organ donor card) to tell friends and family to contact the RSPCA in the event of the donor's death.

Regular communication from the RSPCA reassures donors that the *Home for Life* service is professionally managed, engaging the donor with the process and reassuring them that their animal companion will be well cared for in the event of their death.

People who indicated an interest in *Home for Life* but who did not immediately sign up for the service were put in a donor development programme. This comprised a follow up mailing 6 months after their first response. In addition, selected individuals also received a telephone call.

Campaign results

This campaign was created around an entirely new product and proposition, so there were no targets to beat. However, so far, all industry norms for legacy fundraising are being outstripped:

- The £79 cost per response is well below market norms, and 87 per cent lower than the traditional cost per 'ask'.
- A total of 16,621 people responded, including general and legacy enquirers and those not interested in the *Home for Life* proposition.

Regular communications inform and reassure donors

Raising the bar

The RSPCA will be there to look after your clients' pets.

It just needs to be confirmed in their Will.

Home for Life is a free service offered by the RSPCA, ensuring the welfare of your clients' pets after their death. All that's required is the inclusion of the relevant clause in their Will, and a telephone call from your client to the RSPCA to register.

For details of the appropriate wording to use in a Will, or for more information about **Home for Life**, please call Joanna Curtis on:

0870 7540 239

or email jcurtis@rspca.org.uk

The RSPCA is a charity registered in England and Wales

We receive no government funding

**Home
for Life**

Registered charity no. 219099

Figure 4: *Home for Life* solicitor press ad
Source: RSPCA

This figure is 170 times more than for the previous legacy campaign.

- Overall, the campaign has produced an ROI of 10:1. Legacy donation value currently stands at a potential £10m in identified legacy pledges, accounting for 15 per cent of annual legacy income. This figure is an estimate, as the income has yet to be received. However, given the current average amount pledged, the RSPCA is confident that the campaign will generate this level of

income. These are still very early days for the total campaign result.

- *Home for Life* is a key brand exemplar, demonstrating the value the RSPCA brings to the animal-loving community.
- In the long term,
  - It is likely that the campaign will continue to generate legacy income. Registrations and updated Wills were still being received from the test work in 2006 and 2008. Response from 2007 matured and converted following the same pattern, raising the total ROI to the extent of potentially doubling or even tripling the current 10:1 estimate. Inevitably, any legacy campaign is a 'slow burner'.
  - Strategically, there is initial evidence that *Home for Life* activity is uplifting the results of other fundraising activity. This effect is being further investigated to fully understand how *Home for Life* can be integrated with all other RSPCA communications.

Lessons learned

From this campaign's conception to its execution, a fully integrated donor-led approach was adopted. As befits a leading UK charity, the communications planning showed great sensitivity to its audience, in terms of both proposition and creative development, and media selection.

The RSPCA and their agencies incorporated key insights from donor research into how donor attitudes are evolving in a mature charity marketplace. Offering donors a valuable service before asking them for money radically changed attitudes and response rates. Not surprisingly, the donors loved it and responded enthusiastically.

However, the principal lesson from this case is the imperative to find a genuine customer or donor insight-based idea to unify the campaign to give it real resonance with its target audience. The RSPCA and their agencies recognised that there was a genuine unanswered need among older animal lovers, and had the imagination to link this insight with an existing product and their own requirement for a new source of legacy income. The power of this approach is borne out by the impressive campaign results to date, and the promise of more to come in the future.