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Cancer Research UK campaign: 'All Clear'

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Introduction

This campaign, by WWAV for Cancer Research UK, won a coveted Diamond Award in the IDM's Business Performance Awards 2005. This case study is an excellent example of how innovative marketing can challenge the norms of a marketplace: in this case the charity sector.

The case shows how a well-conveyed 'consumer truth' can create a compelling and engaging communication programme, huge cut-through and dramatic results. The campaign set Cancer Research UK apart from the standard charity campaigns, putting it firmly on the agenda for the UK consumer.

This was an extremely courageous marketing approach at a time when the perceived charity-giving wisdom was that only by dramatising need could you motivate people to give. By really looking at people's underlying attitudes the 'All Clear' campaign proved that it is possible to overturn the attitude of hopelessness that has traditionally been a feature of this sector.

This case shows how the campaign achieved its objectives through the development of a genuine consumer insight that directly addressed one of the key barriers to donor giving; that cancer is seen as a death sentence. The campaign sought to emphasise a positive message of hope for a future where more people survive. Cancer Research UK became integral to the cancer experience and engaged new audiences by drawing them in and creating empathy for those touched by cancer.

This case study illustrates how a truly integrated communications campaign brought the new face of cancer into public consciousness. It provided the basis for a series of campaigns to create impact and generate increased revenue. This is a crucial balance to maintain and a necessary requirement for cost-efficient fundraising.

Background

In 2002 a new charity brand was created through the merger of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund (ICRF) and the Cancer Research Campaign (CRC). The new brand is Cancer Research UK.

This merger presented the largest UK cancer charity with an opportunity to redefine charity marketing by:

- divorcing itself from typical charity appeals
- carving out a unique position with the help of supporters and potential supporters
- clearly communicating a future-focused vision for the charity.

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Ensuring cost efficiency and differentiation

Replacing two such established brands in consumers' minds was not easy, especially when there are approximately 600 cancer charities in the UK, many with similar names. Brand advertising and letters to the existing donor base had communicated the new brand. A highly acclaimed advertising campaign, 'Mirrors', had succeeded in raising funds for the new charity, but there was still low awareness of who the charity was, what it did and what it stood for.

As a charity, Cancer Research UK was mindful of the need to be cost-effective in its marketing efforts. There was a feeling that it was not benefiting from the cost efficiencies created by the merger; individual campaigns with differing objectives failed to have the impact generated by employing a unifying theme.

Specifically, there was a need to ensure differentiation from other cancer charities so that legacy donations went to Cancer Research UK and not to just any cancer research charity. It was vital to ensure that Cancer Research UK stood apart from other cancer charities, as legacies being left to generic cancer research were being split between numerous charities (legacies fund £110m of research projects every year).

Having invested heavily in 2002 in a new brand creation programme and incurred costs rebranding all materials with the new insignia, Cancer Research UK simply could not afford the luxury of a huge brand awareness campaign that did not show a return on investment. Another issue that needed to be addressed was that donors were turning off from the standard charity DRTV spots (they had seen it all before) and recruitment was slowing.

Combating 'ask fatigue'

Research showed that tried and tested direct marketing tools for fundraising were starting to lose their lustre. Consumers were showing signs of 'ask fatigue', with too many charities trying to get their attention and with little to differentiate the charities from each other. The standard emotional tear-jerk or guilt-based approach no longer struck the same chord. More specifically for Cancer Research UK, research had identified a perception among consumers that cancer was seen as a death sentence, a hopeless cause. The research showed clearly that an intimate knowledge of the problems and heartache that cancer brings can engender a feeling of hopelessness that limits the desire to give.

The campaign objectives were:

- to make the public aware of the merger between the ICRF and the CRC, and establish Cancer Research UK as the leading cancer research charity
- to differentiate the charity from its competitors
- to demonstrate the need for donor support
- to ensure support was given specifically to Cancer Research UK.

Strategy

Meeting awareness and response objectives

The charity and its agency realised that a two-pronged strategy was needed to meet awareness and response objectives. The objective of the campaign was to generate funds for a 'new' charity brand and establish

Cancer Research UK as the leading cancer research charity. It was imperative to clearly differentiate Cancer Research UK within the crowded charity sector.

A strategy was developed to dramatise the fact that cancer research really does work, and that Cancer Research UK in particular had made a significant difference to cancer survival rates.

New potential donors needed to be engaged by breaking down their response barriers and motivating them to give. Potential donors would be appealed to by giving them hope. Essentially the strategy sought to bring the core idea that drives Cancer Research UK (curing cancer faster) alive in consumers' minds in a very real and refreshing way. Ultimately this contributed to a bigger strategy to reinforce Cancer Research UK's long-term aim that cancer stories of the future will be about living with cancer rather than about dying from it.

Creating a compelling idea

Creative strategy

To meet the challenge of response and awareness objectives a truly compelling idea was needed: an idea so powerful that it would cut through the charity market clutter, engage potential donors on a deep, emotional level and be capable of changing behaviour.

The agency's previous experience of appeals for this charity sector indicated that a balance needed to be struck. Too emotional a plea would engender a sense of helplessness and leave the audience too distraught to give. The starting insight was the realisation that many non-donors do not give because they feel cancer is a death sentence. If they give at all it is likely to be to the local hospice, because they can see the immediacy of what is done there, rather than to research, because it is hard to see where the money goes. This understanding led to the creation of an engaging proposition (Figure 1).

It was recognised that a message of hope about the future cancer treatment must be communicated to the audience. For the success of the campaign the audience also needed to feel involved and motivated to give. The creative sought a balance between the message of progress/hope and fear by demonstrating the situation surrounding the patient/doctor visit.

Resonating with the largest potential donor group

Targeting strategy

Cancer Research UK knew that it had to grow its donor base and needed to appeal to people it was not currently engaging. It needed an appeal beyond the typical 'charity giver' (the single/widowed elderly lady).

The facts are that currently one in three people get cancer at some point in their lives, and eight in ten are touched by cancer. Cancer Research UK does not receive donations from anything like this proportion of the population! The challenge was to find a way to resonate more effectively with all the people who had been touched by cancer. Research highlighted that those touched by cancer were indeed the best prospects, and that they could be engaged by showing empathy with the situation they faced, helping them feel more hopeful and thus more motivated to give whether they were sufferers or close to sufferers.

Figure 1: The creative strategy

The acquisition strategy focused on those touched by cancer but currently not engaged enough to give.

Integrated communication strategy

A targeted communication strategy was developed, working closely with a media agency, to help to ensure the maximum 'halo' effect between the media used. This allowed more responsive communications to leverage the impact created by the advertising messages.

By using traditionally unresponsive channels, eg tube cards, and ambient media, a broader and younger audience could be reached. In this way a strong and clearly delivered 'ask' could be employed to highlight that more donations were needed so that more people could hear the words 'All Clear'. This strategy was designed to cut through 'clutter' and stand out in the market by moving away from communications that focused on showing the devastation cancer causes to a message focused on offering more people and their families a positive outcome. In an environment where all other charities were focused on communicating the plight of victims, Cancer Research UK would stand out and would become intrinsically linked to helping people have a future.

It was imperative that the idea was both strong enough and flexible enough to translate and drive results across all forms of media: TV, press, outdoor, direct mail, radio, transvisions and other ambient media such as

**Avoiding
marketplace clutter
with a flexible
concept**

sandwich bags and in the Cancer Research UK shops. The combined impact of the media allowed the creation of enough 'noise' to deliver the hard sell required to drive response.

There were two other benefits from the strategy;

- It neatly created a connection between those who had suffered cancer and those who had been touched to a lesser extent.
- By using executions that showed the sufferers and their families in a medical environment Cancer Research UK was dramatically placed in a central role as part of the cancer experience.

This dramatic departure from traditional 'cancer charity sector' communications generated dramatic results.

Marketing research strategy

Before the campaign was launched some focus group research was conducted. Focus groups in London and Leeds were formed from people whose lives had been touched by cancer but who had yet to give to Cancer Research UK.

Focus group attendees were recruited against attitude typologies targeting those deemed to offer a significant opportunity, based on previous donor research. Cancer survivors and supporters of Cancer Research UK were also included in the research.

Campaign execution

The extremely positive response to the phrase 'All Clear' inspired the charity and its agency with the confidence to proceed with the campaign (Figures 2–4).

Testing

The impact of the 'live' campaign was maximised by testing different versions of the TV ad and the packs.

Monitoring and control

To measure brand awareness, a brand-tracking study was put in place to interview a core sample of respondents aged 35+, ABC1, on a weekly basis (115 interviews in home).

Results

This was a hugely successful initiative for Cancer Research UK, bringing the brand awareness up a staggering 2.6 times more than previous campaigns.

As the results show, such a cohesive integrated campaign enabled Cancer Research UK to make an impact far above its weight in spend, featuring in *Marketing* magazine's Adwatch above campaigns with significantly larger spend.¹

- Spontaneous awareness of the charity was up from 7 per cent to 17 per cent, a significant achievement considering the youth of the brand.

Recruiting against type

Figure 2: DRTV: 60-second adverts

Figure 3: Tube card: 'All clear'

Disproportionate brand awareness impact

- Spontaneous awareness of the TV ad was 26 per cent, higher than any level for the previous charities' advertising. More significantly, 47 per cent of those questioned now believed Cancer Research UK to be the leading cancer charity. This was a real boost for future activity and a very credible platform for future marketing activity.
- Fifty-two per cent saw Cancer Research UK as offering hope, and this was directly linked to the huge response rates to the activity. The campaign had demonstrated an ability to bring a whole new set of

Figure 4: Insert: 'All clear'

Message of hope received

- donors to Cancer Research UK, proving that it was possible for communications to encourage people to overcome their feelings of hopelessness and to give.
- 68,000 new donors had been attracted, with a projected five-year income (the typical expected lifetime of a donor) of £18.3m, delivering response rates 15 per cent in excess of already ambitious targets.
- Thirty per cent uplift had been achieved compared with the existing direct marketing control. Significantly, the integrated approach of brand and direct marketing communications produced a 'halo' effect, giving results of 18 per cent in press and 34 per cent in door drops.

The campaign truly made an impact in the public consciousness.

Lessons

The Cancer Research UK 'All Clear' campaign illustrates the following key points.

- How to reinvigorate a saturated market by employing an innovative, positive approach to fundraising.
- The importance of customer and prospect research for informing creative strategy.
- The value of creating a totally integrated, cost-effective campaign that builds brand while driving response.
- The opportunity offered by rebranding to revisit and redefine marketing strategy to appeal to a new target market.

- The power of a well-researched, well-targeted creative message to activate new donors by creating empathy.
- The ability of a cohesive integrated campaign to make an impact far above its weight in spend.

Reference

1. *Marketing* magazine.