

➤ Cause Marketing - Vodafone's partnership with The National Autistic Society

The partnership

Brand positioning involves creating an image that is understood by the wider public of what a brand stands for. Vodafone's brand positioning is: 'Vodafone helps people enjoy richer communication, anywhere, anytime. Always reliable, always easy, always great value ...passionately delivered'. The 3-year partnership programme with NAS fits neatly with this brand positioning.

A programme is a set of organisational activities that have clear objectives and timescales. A vision was created for the programme which was to: 'create a best in class partnership between Vodafone and the NAS that breaks down barriers and makes more things possible for people affected by autism'.

The programme covers a 3-year period. There are 3 main elements of the programme:

* Help! is an intensive programme for parents and carers whose child has been recently diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder. The programme explains what autism is, how to explain the condition to siblings, teachers and relevant professionals. It also covers practical advice including techniques for improving communication and behaviour, specialist information on education, rights, entitlements and local support services. Help! provides parents with an opportunity to meet other parents and discuss their thoughts and emotional concerns in an informal manner.

* PARIS (Public Autism Resource and Information Service) is an online, interactive database of services for people with autism, their parents and carers. The service can be accessed in a variety of ways including by computer and mobile phone. This is a very useful service for parents with autistic children. For example, the database identifies services such as local playgroups or schools with specialist support for autistic children or a more practical service such as a hairdresser or dentist who has been trained in understanding autism and is aware of how to provide a more specialised service.

* Awareness is a media campaign sponsored by Vodafone which is designed specifically to raise public awareness of autism and the work of NAS. The posters used promote both the NAS and Vodafone brands. Cause Marketing is not a form of corporate philanthropy, there are clear commercial objectives for both partners. However there is an element of raising money for the NAS, but utilising mechanisms which are embedded in Vodafone's 'business as usual' activities. Vodafone has made it possible for customers to donate money to the NAS via text messaging and over the web. Vodafone's handset recycling scheme, which is a key element of its CR programme, helps customers to recycle their unwanted handsets and ensures that all the money raised from the recycling process, almost £800,000, goes to the NAS.

The programme includes other ways for customers to engage with the charity such as sales of 'Thomas the Tank Engine' zip pulls and Christmas cards which are promoted through its retail stores.



Staff have also been very enthusiastic in taking part in voluntary activities and in raising funds for the NAS. At the start of the programme one of the goals was to engage and inspire staff to raise £50,000 over the 3-year life of the relationship.

During the first year, staff raised £106,000. One of the reasons that staff have been so engaged and supportive is because they were involved early on in helping to determine what sort of Cause Marketing programme there should be. Before starting the programme Vodafone set out a number of objectives which could be used to measure the success of the partnership. Typical examples of these were to:

- * make Help! available to 2,710 families
- * launch PARIS
- * increase awareness of autism to 60% of the population
- * raise £50,000 through staff fund raising activities
- * raise awareness of Vodafone's Charity work to 20% of the population
- * increase employee enjoyment of work by encouraging at least 5% of employees to get involved in the partnership.

Having clear objectives makes it possible to measure the success of a programme.