

Case Study: Christian Blind Mission



The Campaign

In the fall of 2006, Christian Blind Mission International (CBMI) launched an international campaign called 100,000 Miracles (www.cbmiusa.org/miracles). This campaign sought to give the miracle of sight to 100,000 people around the world by providing them with a 12 minute cataract operation that restores sight for a cost of \$35. The funds for the 100,000 miracles were to be raised in a mere 100 days.

Changing Our World, a philanthropy consulting firm, was already assisting CBMI with its international fundraising projects, and the 100,000 Miracles campaign was one component of the project. Changing Our World worked with CBMI to develop a strategy using special events, direct mail, public relations and the web to raise awareness and funds towards this campaign.

Changing Our World and CBMI approached Silas Partners to assist in the development of the Ephiphany components of the campaign. Silas Partners' expertise in the CBMI's eCRM platform and its skill in translating a ministry's vision into compelling online communications complemented other aspects of this large-scale fundraising campaign. Working in close cooperation, the three partners developed an online communication effort that multiplied the effectiveness of the 100,000 Miracles campaign.

The race was on. Silas Partners would help develop a fully-integrated campaign website to help CBMI raise 100,000 miracles in 100 days.

The Microsite

CBMI wanted to use the 100,000 Miracles campaign to further integrate its communication activities. Everything – from direct mail, to special events held around the country, to the website – would use consistent messaging. 100,000 Miracles also provided an opportunity to reach

new online audiences that might not typically engage the ministry.

Because of the focused nature of the 100,000 Miracles campaign, it made sense to create a microsite. This specialized web presence would act as a centralized location for supporters to get more information about the campaign after attending an event or receiving a direct mail piece. It would also allow CBMI to have more control over directing constituents' attention towards taking action, without being distracted by the other information available on the main CBMI website.



Microsite created focused campaign messaging

The primary focus of the microsite was to educate visitors to the needs of the blind and quickly convert that knowledge into action. Visitors who wanted more in-depth information on CBMI's work were encouraged to explore the main website, allowing the microsite to stay focused on the conversion of visitors into supporters. On the microsite, the majority of the navigation options were direct and action-oriented, using language like, "What You Can Do" or "Donate."

SUMMARY OF KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

The microsite allowed CBMI to focus users' attention on taking action

71% of first-time donors from the fourth quarter of 2006 came from the 100,000 Miracles campaign.

Videos on YouTube were watched more than 1,500 times

81% of all donors to the 100,000 Miracles campaign came from first-time donors

Bloggers and other websites could download ads to place on their sites to promote the campaign

Online and offline, over 168,000 miracles were raised, exceeding the campaign goal by 68.5%



The calls to action were reinforced by CBMI's action-oriented spokesmen for the campaign - Bishop Desmond Tutu and the blind marathoner Henry Wanyoike. Bishop Tutu visited one of CBMI's clinics and delivered an inspiring speech to kick-off the campaign. The value of this endorsement was multiplied by placing a video of the speech online, extending its reach far beyond the original audience and uniting the online and offline messages.



Viral videos increased campaign exposure

Another inspiring endorsement came from Henry Wanyoike, a blind marathon runner. Henry volunteered to run in the New York City marathon in support of CBMI. His goal was to be the first blind runner to cross the finish line, completing the race in 2 hours and 30 minutes. People were encouraged to cheer for Henry by signing an online form. This also served as a channel for CBMI to capture supporters' permission to email them with more updates about the campaign. As a result of these efforts, CBMI doubled the size of its email house file through the 100,000 Miracles campaign.

Email blasts were sent out to those cheering for Henry, to keep them updated on his progress as he prepared for the race. This kept supporters engaged and strengthened their involvement with the campaign. When Henry finished 134th in the New York City Marathon, the first blind runner to cross the finish line, supporters were urged to send Henry a letter of encouragement. From start to finish, users were able to maintain a connection with Henry and "participate" in their own way.

While "Cheering for Henry" was a popular aspect of the campaign, CBMI also engaged supporters through eCards and comical videos. A clever and light-hearted video-ad was filmed that had strong potential to be spread through word-of-mouth. CBMI needed to make it as easy as possible to email the video to friends. The perfect solution was YouTube. Promoting the video on this popular service allowed a made-for-TV spot to be watched over 662 times, without costing CBMI a penny in bandwidth charges.

Continuing to harness the power of word-of-mouth, website ads promoting the 100,000 Miracles campaign were designed and made available for download on the microsite. Bloggers and other organizations downloaded the ads to post on their own site, which drove traffic to the microsite.

Amidst these new Web 2.0 methods of advertising, one can't forget the more traditional methods of promoting a campaign like paid advertising spots on popular portal websites. Silas Partners built blog and website ads for both CBMI and Cheer for Henry, for placement on sites including the Salem Web Network, AllAfrica.com, Hungersite.com, Google, Yahoo and Beliefnet.com. Having a flexible collection of ads allowed CBMI to choose messaging and visuals on a site-by-site basis, maximizing the visibility and resonance with the target demographics.

The Results

Action - and lots of it! CBMI acquired new donors, increased traffic and newsletter signups, enlisted participation with special e-events, and exceeded the original funding objective of 100,000 Miracles by 59 percent! The entire 100,000 Miracles campaign was geared towards asking people to take action to prevent blindness. Whether telling their friends or funding cataract surgeries, CBMI's audience was engaged with the cause. As the campaign ended, all involved — CBMI, Silas Partners, and Changing Our World — were pleased with the results.

One of the most important results of the campaign was how the wide range of activities translated into new donors for CBMI. Of all online donations for the 100,000 Miracles campaign, 81% were first-time online donors. This suggests that the campaign activities were effective in reaching out to new audiences and translating their interest into a financial contribution.



Downloadable ads allowed bloggers to drive traffic to the microsite

These first-time online donors comprised a significant portion of CBMI's total new online donors for the fourth quarter of 2006. In fact, 71% of all first-time online donors from October to December 2006 came from the 100,000 Miracles campaign. And out of all fourth quarter online donations, 47% of the funds came through the 100,000 Miracles campaign.



“The end result was a homerun, and it is now being praised and emulated by my client’s international partners.”

Sara Lee, Changing Our World

By the end of the campaign, over \$5.8 million dollars, or 168,500 miracles, were raised around the world, exceeding the original goal. The success of the campaign as a whole illustrates what great results can be achieved when partners combine their strengths and work together. CBMI was able to maximize its investment by capitalizing on the unique strengths of Silas Partners and Changing Our World, and the good working relationship that had been established between the two organizations.

About Silas Partners

As online communication professionals, we believe the Internet is central to an organization’s communication strategy and to the overall mission of an organization, because it is one of the most effective ways to build relationships with constituents. We aren’t one employee trying to do it all, but an entire team of world class strategists, designers, software developers, production specialists, and project managers.

Our mission is to serve Christian ministries by helping them to better fulfill their missions through improving their communication and expanding their reach. Visit us at: www.silaspartners.com

Christian Blind Mission International

CBMI is the leading provider of eye care programs and services for people suffering from blindness and other disabilities around the world. Since 1908, this non-profit, Christian ministry has been rehabilitating and serving blind and disabled people in the world’s developing nations. Currently, CBMI supports more than 1000 projects in 133 countries—primarily in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. CBMI is committed to meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the world’s poorest populations—regardless of nationality, race, gender or religion. (www.cbmiusa.org)

Changing Our World, Inc.

is a national consulting firm that assists not-for-profit and corporate clients in achieving their goals in philanthropy. Headquartered in New York City, Changing Our World is the fastest-growing fundraising company in the world and served more than 100 clients last year. Changing Our World is a member of the Omnicom Group Diversified Agency Services Unit and its services include Fundraising, Corporate Philanthropy, Private Philanthropy, Strategic Planning, Ephilanthropy and Information Resources. (www.changingourworld.com)