

The Importance of Awareness

The value of public awareness for charities is enormous. As this guide has emphasised, people are inspired to give by an emotional reaction to a cause. The more exposed they are to this cause, the more they understand about it and the more it becomes a part of their lives, the more likely they are to support it with money and energy as well as inspire others to recognise its importance.

Beyond the immediate incentives for charities of increasing awareness of their brand, there are also broader reasons why spreading information about the problems they address and their work in tackling these is so constructive.

Firstly, success stories from a voluntary sector that is striving for a better future make people feel more positive about progress in our society. The media is full of negative stories and messages, yet everyday amazing things are being done by charities around the world. Awareness of this work helps dispel the myth that these issues are doomed to be our society's sore thumbs forever.

Secondly, supporting charity is only a part of what people can do to affect social problems. We make hundreds of decisions every day, from how much water we use to what we buy at the supermarket to where and how we work to how we interact with people, and every one of them is a potential contribution to the same issues that charities address with their resources. By being aware of the social problems and issues that lie at the heart of the voluntary sector,

people have a better understanding of their own role in social change. This applies to the work of almost every charity and there are also organisations and campaigns that exist solely to raise this kind of popular awareness and through this effect change.

➤ The Make Poverty History campaign does not aim to raise money but instead to raise awareness of the key issues affecting global poverty and, crucially, of the role that every individual has in changing them. By engaging millions of people around the world and prompting action, the campaign has not only inspired an understanding of issues such as trade justice and the debt burden, but also created a popular consensus around the need to address them.



A gathering of world leaders at the G8 Summit, 2005 (photo: Tony Adamson, Oxfam)

Your Potential to Raise Awareness

The contribution you will make to your charity through raising money is, without doubt, crucial. Every single pound counts. However, as an independent fundraiser your means are limited. No-one expects you to be able to raise infinite funds and transform your charity overnight; but when it comes to raising awareness and the impact that this has, your potential is limitless. If you raise £5,000 but also let 1000 people know why your cause is so important, then your contribution could ultimately spiral into hundreds of thousands of pounds and help instill far better general understanding of the central issue.



Work very closely with your charity for two important reasons. Firstly, they have the final say on everything and anything that affects their brand, their reputation and their work and the last thing you want to do is negatively affect the charity you are trying to help. Secondly, they have all the resources, experience, knowledge and possibly personnel to help you raise awareness through your challenge.

"Charity challenges are a great way of raising awareness. The London Marathon, for example, has 35,000 participants, a crowd of over 500,000 and a television audience of millions. This creates an ideal platform for drawing attention to our work which benefits greatly from wide public awareness of human rights abuses occurring around the world."

Amnesty International UK

Dedicated Awareness Challenges

A challenge project is such a good way of attracting attention to a cause that there is great potential in simply taking one with the sole aim of raising awareness. If you do not want to go through the fundraising process and are happy to cover all your own costs, then an awareness challenge is ideal.

How to make the most of dedicated awareness challenges:

- Consult your charity to find out exactly what will be the most beneficial and productive way of raising awareness for their work
- Be just as thorough in planning your campaign as you would be if you were aiming to hit a fundraising target
- Publicise the fact that you are covering all your costs yourself, that you are not asking for money and that you want people's attention in return for your efforts.

➤ Ludkan Baba, or the Rolling Baba as the western media call him is a sadhu, or Hindu ascetic who has rolled (yes rolled) thousands of miles to bring peace to the world. Baba finished his sixth yatra in 2004, rolling 800 miles from his home in India's central Madhya Pradesh state to the Pakistani city of Lahore, to meet President Pervez Musharraf and urge him to reach a lasting peace with India. Surrounded by his disciples, the Rolling Baba rolls down the middle of the road, wearing only a blue t-shirt, some shorts, wrist bands and some stretch bandages on his upper legs and forearms.