

SUE FIDLER LTD

e-consultancy for charities

Why not to do campaigning online

Third Sector 27/06/07

The biggest growth in the use of the web in the last year has been the growth of e-campaigns. The web makes it cheap, easy to set up and accessible by a wide audience. The sector is jumping on the bandwagon with a vengeance and campaigns are appearing with ever increasing regularity.

Unfortunately many of these campaigns are neither well thought out or executed, and even more unfortunately the internet frequently gets the blame.

The internet is a tool. It is a useful tool which allows us to do many things we couldn't afford by traditional means, and it allows us to do them faster and to more people.

But if the underlying idea is not thought through and the planning inadequate, the internet will highlight the failure rather than make up for it. Exactly as a poorly written marketing leaflet will fail to get donations, however glossy the production, so a poorly planned campaign will fail - despite gizmos on a website.

More than anything else campaigns need a very strong *raison d'être*. Running a campaign 'because you can' is the worst possible reason. Just because it is now cheap and easy to set one up and send it out into the world is NOT a reason to do it.

What is the burning issue, what is the key message, who is it targeted at, what are the aims and objectives - these questions are basic campaign planning. Any woolly thinking at this stage will be magnified by the materials, and when put on display via a website it will turn your audience off rather than fire them up.

Once the campaign strategy is outlined the most critical issue for the internet is what you want people to do and what you will achieve by it. Site visitors can only do one thing at a time. They can then do sequential actions, but only one by one. So deciding the main action "ask" is critical.

So before you join the lemmings, ask yourself what you hope to achieve and what the benefit will be. Think about the audience – who will care. And if you can answer these questions then think hard about what you want people to do and how you will measure success.

If we don't stop doing campaigns "because we can" we will lose impact and be complaining about public campaign fatigue in very short order.

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