How Fit is your E-mail Program?

Take the test: best practices revealed
Cover Story

28 How Fit Is Your E-mail Program?
Take the test: E-mail marketing best practices revealed

Features

37 Timing Is Everything
Identifying event triggers in your database

40 At Your Request
Strategies for developing customized fulfillment kits

Columns

19 Direct Mail Strategy
by Pat Friesen
Give 'em a Sneak Peek

23 Direct Selling
by Jock Schmid
Straight to the Source

25 E-commerce Link
by Reggie Brady
Easy-to-read E-mail

Departments

11 Editor's Notes
13 Nuts & Bolts
43 Hot Lists
46 Market Focus: Grandparents
48 Advertiser Information Center
49 Insert Media Connection
49 Fulfillment & Operations Connection
50 Supplier Search
57 List Mart
58 Famous Last Words
Social Marketing for a Cause

By Amy Syracuse

Challenge: Boost awareness of a cause largely overlooked in the developed world and reach new donors.
Solution: Leverage social marketing forums.
Results: More than 77,000 Web hits since the campaign began in January 2007.

The average user of Second Life, a Web-based virtual world in which residents (represented by animated “avatars”) interact with their surroundings and each other, is 33 years old, American or European, technologically savvy with a relatively high income. Not exactly the type of person you would expect to relate to the challenge of finding clean water. But, thanks to the work of the nonprofit Global Water Foundation (GWF) and communications specialists, French L. West I. Vaughan (FWV), that may be changing.

Through social marketing and media outreach, these organizations are putting a spotlight on the water issues that plague developing communities around the world. Their goal is to attract attention—not to mention, donations of time and dollars—from those best positioned to make a difference: young, dynamic consumers who are “interested in world issues and enthusiastic about becoming involved and active,” says Chris Shigas, FWV’s vice president.

The Global Water Foundation was founded last year by Johan Kriek, two-time Australian Open champion and defending Wimbledon senior doubles champion, and Minnie Hildebrand, a former water utility executive. Kriek was inspired to act after learning at the 2005 World Economic Forum in Africa how pollution and inadequate sanitation affect poor communities and, in particular, children.

Since 2006, the FWV has worked with the GWF; during which time they launched Global Water Foundation MySpace and Facebook pages with celebrity athlete “friends” and unique video content on YouTube.com. The centerpiece of their social marketing campaign, however, was the February 2007 opening of a “Virtual Education Center” on Second Life, a Web-based community boasting more than 6 million registered users.

The Virtual Education Center features streaming video and audio supporting the cause, as well as photographs showing GWF’s work. The latter can be viewed from outside the building through large windows to attract virtual pedestrians. Visitors can click on GWF’s Web site at www.globalwaterfoundation.org and pick up free virtual “GWF” t-shirts so their Second Life characters can spread the word about the cause.

To date, Second Life largely is a branding vehicle for GWF, though Second Lifers can make donations through the nonprofit’s Web site. But this is poised to change because GWF will take advantage of the burgeoning Second Life economy in which users can acquire and exchange a virtual currency called Linden Dollars. Linden Dollars can actually be cashed out and converted to U.S. dollars.

The Foundation aims to have a donation process in place by June 1, whereby Second Lifers can make donations in Linden Dollars. It will reward donors with virtual premiums, such as bracelets for Second Life characters and virtual pet dolphins.

Since its February opening, the GWF Virtual Education Center has attracted more than 5,000 Second Life visitors. The Foundation’s overall social marketing and media efforts have generated some 77,000 hits on its Web site since January and have allowed the group to capture more than 700 names and e-mail addresses for future communications. To date, the GWF has raised more than $1 million in pledges and donations, which have funded clean water projects in Uganda and Ecuador.

Amy Syracuse is a London-based freelance writer.