

Love to the Rescue at Shriners Hospitals for Children

MSLGROUP and Leo Burnett Business and Shriners Hospitals for Children, Jan 1,2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award Winner — Integrated Communications — Nonprofit Organizations.

Shriners Hospitals for Children (SHC) provides care for children with cleft lip/palate, spinal injuries, orthopedic conditions or burns regardless of a family's ability to pay. An endowment had made this possible, but as costs soared and the endowment shrunk, SHC needed donations and renewed enthusiasm to survive. MSLGROUP/Leo Burnett helped SHC launch the comprehensive "Love to the rescue" campaign to build brand awareness among the public, donors and employees. "Love to the rescue" generated tremendous media coverage and a renewed sense of pride. This helped drive millions of dollars in donations to provide world-class pediatric care..

Integrated communications includes any program that demonstrates leadership of public relations strategies and tactics in a creative and effective integrated campaign, along with other marketing or communications. The program must demonstrate the clear leadership of public relations, along with its integration with other disciplines. The nonprofit subcategory is specifically intended for health and welfare organizations, as well as educational and cultural institutions not included in other subcategories.

Full Text: BACKGROUND / SITUATION

Childhood should be the happiest time of our lives, but for children with cleft lip / palate, spinal injuries, orthopedic conditions or burns, it is often filled with pain and hopelessness. The 22 hospitals of Shriners Hospitals for Children (SHC) focus solely on these specialty areas, providing for the special needs of these children regardless of a family's ability to pay. A generous endowment had made this possible, but as health care costs soared and the endowment shrunk, SHC needed more donations to survive. The situation created uncertainty among employees, causing some to question the organization's future. SHC challenged MSLGROUP/Leo Burnett Business to raise the public's awareness of the hospital and its specialized care to inspire donations while building belief among employees in its ability to continue care well into the future.

RESEARCH

MSLGROUP/Leo Burnett Business analyzed other charitable campaigns in the same space, consulted with leading philanthropic advisors and audited brand engagement. But, to truly understand the brand inside and out, the team conducted interviews with 14 hospitals, arranged day-long, on-site immersion visits at eight additional SHC hospitals and had conversations with dozens of patients and their families.

Research showed:

- The network was highly regarded among those who were familiar with the hospitals.
- The public was far less aware of SHC than other similar charitable organizations.
- Mothers, when aware of the hospital's mission, were the most likely to donate.

- Employees believed firmly in the network’s mission but lacked confidence in its future.

Patients’ families repeatedly commented on the compassion and “love” they experienced at Shriners hospitals – more than at other hospitals. Therefore, this differentiator became the foundation and theme for a branding program, *Love to the rescue*.

PLANNING

Objectives:

- Increase brand awareness with existing and potential donors, especially women/mothers 25- to 54-years-old and high-net-worth individuals.
- Increase the volume of coverage in national and targeted regional publications by 15% in 6 months.
- Improve employee morale and build confidence in the organization’s future.

Audiences:

- Primary: Mothers, ages 25 – 50, who can relate to the mission of giving back childhoods.
- Secondary: Media, donors, employees, health care professionals.

Budget: Public relations budget of \$800,000 (Total budget of \$18M including ad spend)

Strategy:

- Emphasize “love” as the functional crux of care and the emotional connection necessary in the care of children as a way to engage donors, patients and health care providers.
- Position the hospitals as a unique place where love and clinical expertise come together to give children back their childhoods by pairing physicians with patients to tell the SHC story.
- Empower employees to become SHC’s strongest advocates and brand ambassadors.

EXECUTION

In June 2012, SHC launched *Love to the rescue*. Campaign components included:

- **Pairing Up to Talk About Love:** In national and regional media, health care providers and patients were paired to create emotional stories that highlighted both the clinical excellence of the hospitals and the unmatched compassion and love experienced by SHC patients.
- **Earning Social Buzz:** Celebrity interactions with patients were shared through Facebook, Twitter and other channels to raise awareness of and trust in the hospitals.
- **Employing Employees as Ambassadors:** Pre-launch meetings introduced the campaign to employees and provided them with tools to be the drivers of the donor development program in each of the hospital’s local communities.
- **Platform Building through National Advertising:** Broadcast and digital advertising was used to define the brand and build national awareness among potential donors.

EVALUATION

Love to the rescue has generated tremendous media coverage and instilled a renewed sense of pride among employees. This, along with advertising, has driven **millions of dollars in donations**, without which the hospital system would not be able to continue providing world-class care for children regardless of ability to pay.

Measurable Objective

Result

- Increase brand awareness with existing and potential donors, especially women 25- to 54-years-old and high-net-worth individuals.
- Increase the volume of coverage in national and targeted regional publications by 15% in 6 months.
- Improve employee morale and build confidence in the organization's future.
- A brand awareness study was conducted prior to the campaign launch (May) and will be conducted again next year; however, a 73% increase in donations over last year indicates awareness is significantly higher.
- 55.8% increase in earned media impressions (150 days = increase of 292MM impressions).
- 3+ billion paid media impressions.
- 103% increase in SHC website traffic.
- 67% of hospital leaders reported increased optimism among employees (first 90 days!).
- Within 6 months, 86% of hospitals had employees submit videos sharing how they brought *love to the rescue*.

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Product #: 6BW-1316118