



Case Study | April 2017

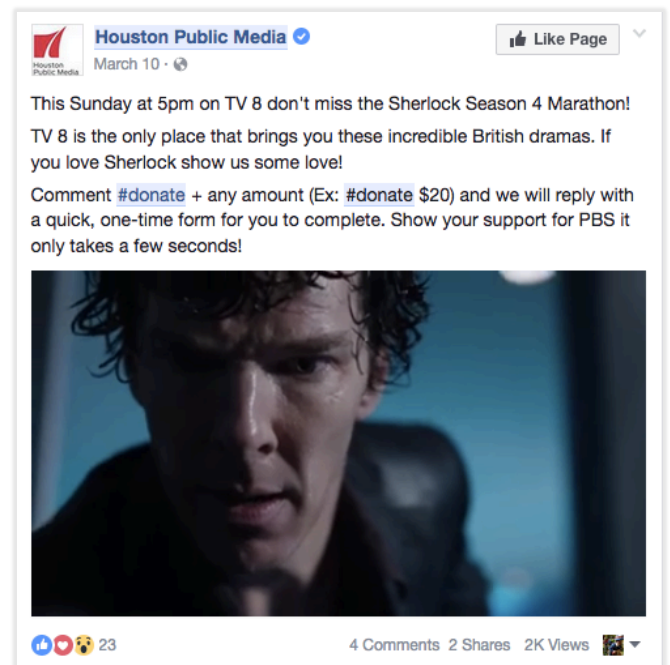
Stations Pilot Social Media Fundraising Technology to Support Pledge Drive

Twenty-Nine Stations Successfully Trained, Onboarded, and Prepared for Continued Testing & Learning

Overview

In March 2017, PBS Development Services and Goodworld partnered with 29 member stations¹ to pilot social media fundraising technology to support the spring pledge drive efforts. The goals were to (1) coordinate social media messaging and creative in support of the national fundraising period and programming, (2) deepen social engagement, (3) create a collaborative learning environment to identify best practices, and (4) acquire new donors.

The pilot ran March 2nd through March 20th, using Goodworld's #donate technology (e.g. #donate \$20), which enables social media audiences to give instantly to their local station on Facebook or Twitter. By the end of the campaign, stations overwhelmingly reported a positive experience, identified emerging best practices, and crafted their own messaging and creative, beyond the templates provided by PBS Development Services. Stations posted, on average, 28 fundraising-related messages on Facebook and Twitter with Victoria, Hamilton, and Ken Burns as the top fundraising content. At the close of the introductory campaign, 29 donors completed Facebook and Twitter donations for a total of \$613.



¹ Participating stations included PBS Hawai'i, Colorado Television, KCTS 9, Fiends of Montana PBS, PBS39 Fort Wayne, KSPS Public Television, Valley PBS, Community Idea Stations, Twin Cities PBS (TPT), Houston Public Media Foundation, Friends of LPB, WNIN, Basin PBS, WVIA Public Media, CET, Rocky Mountain PBS, WMHT, WLIW21, East Tennessee PBS, WVPT Public Media, WPBT2 South Florida PBS, KRWG Public Media, Milwaukee PBS, Vermont PBS, WGBH, KENW PBS New Mexico, PBS North Coast - KEET TV, WXXI, WCNY.

Situation Analysis

Pledge has been, and will continue to be—for the immediate future—the greatest source of revenue for stations. It is also the greatest investment the system makes year-over-year. As revenue and donors continue to decline², it is increasingly important stations leverage all fundraising channels in support of the national fundraising period. A multichannel campaign that supports a single fundraising message is critical to ensure donors can choose—on their terms—how best to support their local station.



To meet donors on their terms, a coordinated message is critical to overall success. However, most Development teams do not have social media expertise. These resources often sit with Marketing and Communications teams requiring a greater effort to collaborate. This makes social media an afterthought in cross-department requests for “tune-in” and/or donate URL promotion. The unfortunate result is that the fastest growing medium is left on the sideline of most fundraising campaigns, because the passive fundraising ask is difficult to measure. Source codes do allow for link tracking, but the investment of time to analyze social media data often outweighs the financial return.

Objective

The objective of the pilot was to introduce social media fundraising technology to stations in support of the spring national fundraising drive. The campaign ran from March 2nd through March 20th and the goals were to (1) coordinate social media messaging and creative in support of the national fundraising period and programming; (2) deepen social engagement of social media followers in anticipation to airing of select pledge programs; (3) share individual station experiences and identify best practices through a collaborative learning environment; and (4) convert social media followers to first-time station donors.



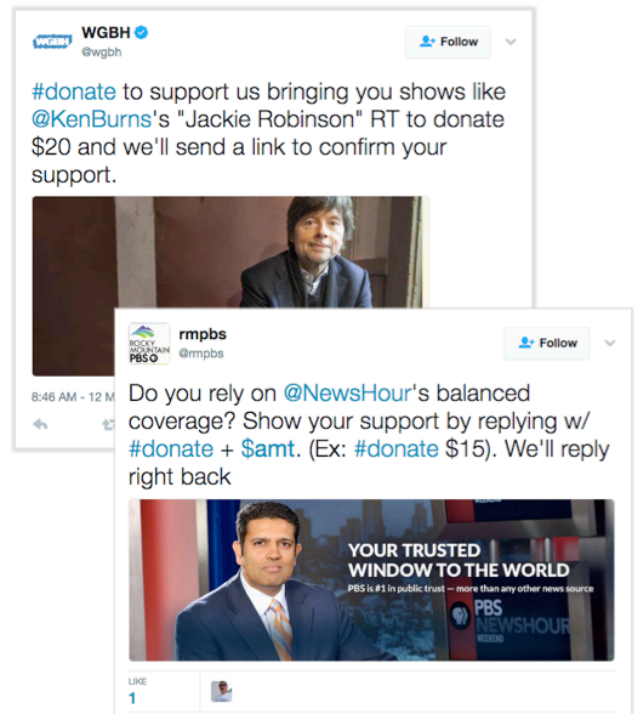
Strategy

The methodology applied to the social media fundraising pilot followed past cohort-based training and implementation initiatives by PBS Development Services. However, the strategy for the campaign differed from past pilots. Not only were stations asked to adopt the campaign calendar, messaging copy, creative, and overall strategy, but participating stations were required to create accounts and implement unfamiliar technologies. This includes: Stripe (a new payment gateway for most

² March 2017 over 2016 pledge (PFP) totals: 19% decline in dollars pledged and 13% drop in total number of pledges; March 2017 over 2015: 25% decline in dollars pledged and 26% drop in total number of pledges.

stations), Goodworld, and Goodworld's #donate (e.g. #donate \$20) technology.

The condensed timeline was comprised of four phases: (1) pilot recruitment of stations, (2) account set up and training, (3) campaign launch, and (4) reporting. During the campaign window, PBS Development Services hosted four webinars and weekly office hours. Following the initial introduction of the pilot and the technology partner, Goodworld, 29 stations were invited to participate in the campaign. The high volume of applications exceeded the goal of 10 stations, but it was determined a larger number of stations would better represent a diversity of markets, licensee types, station size, and social media resources. The larger cohort size was optimal to identifying emerging practices and reaffirming best practices, and also maximizing the collaborative learning environment for all participating stations.



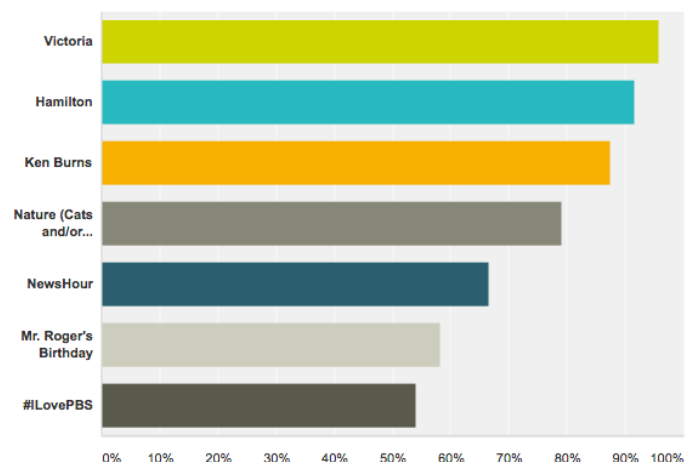
The campaign strategy focused on five national pledge shows for the March pledge drive, including: Victoria, Hamilton, Ken Burns, Nature, and NewHour. PBS Development Services provided 6-8 posts per show for Facebook and Twitter. Creative was pulled from existing outlets to make it easier for stations to assign an image to a post. However, once the campaign launched, PBS Development Services provided stations with additional social media messaging and creative for two timely campaigns that were being leveraged by the social media team at PBS: Mr. Roger's Birthday, and #ILovePBS. These two additional campaigns sought to reinforce a larger social media effort that encouraged stations and PBS to capitalize on an existing coordinated national message and campaign.

Results

Recognizing cultivation of donors takes time. Indeed, Goodworld reports an optimal period for measurement is reached at 12-months. This rate of conversion is comparable to organically acquired emails for a nonprofit's prospect list.

Albeit a shortened timeline, the campaign results were encouraging. In the two weeks prior to the launch, 100% of stations successfully created a Stripe account, a Goodworld account, and linked their Facebook and Twitter accounts to

Figure 1: Top fundraising titles selected by stations.

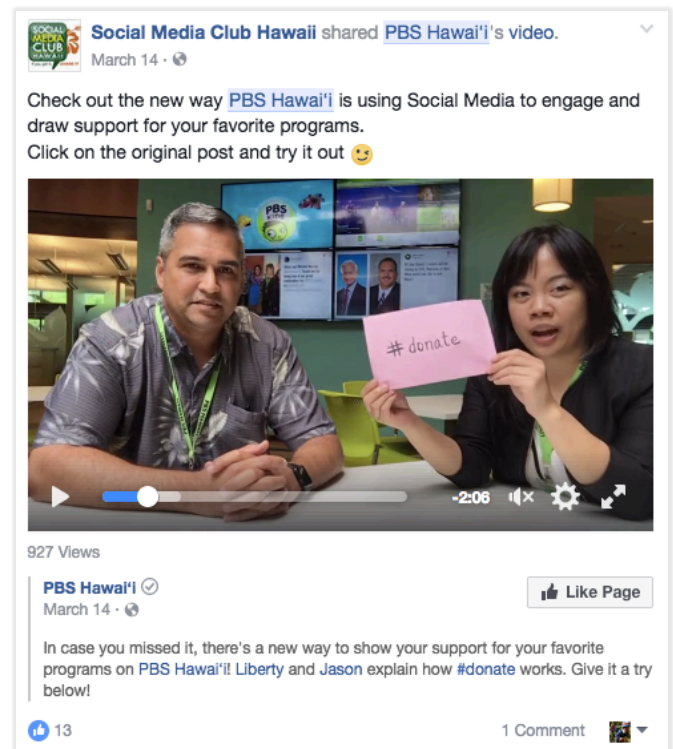


the Goodworld platform to begin promoting #donate (e.g. #donate \$20).

Revenue

The participating stations collectively received 29 donations for an overall contribution total \$613. This breaks down to 18 donations on Facebook for a total of \$433, and 11 donations on Twitter for a total of \$180. The average gift on Facebook was \$24 compared to \$16 for Twitter, below the \$33 average gift that Goodworld typically sees for their clients.

However, the incomplete gifts seem to tell the greatest story. There were 35 incomplete donations on Facebook representing \$535 in untapped revenue, and 132 incomplete donations on Twitter representing \$1,299 in untapped revenue. The number of incomplete donations is expected as fulfillment requires an account creation in the donation flow, but station practices can influence the overall conversion rate. Goodworld reports the complete/incomplete benchmark varies widely within the nonprofit sector. And though the small volume of donations during the pilot are negligible for the sake of comparison, Goodworld sees 63% conversion rate on Facebook and about 3% on Twitter. Given the small volume of donors and the directional guidance of the above benchmark, stations converted 34% of donors on Facebook and nearly 8% of donors on Twitter.



Practices

At the end of the campaign, PBS Development Services invited participating stations to share additional insight by completing a survey. The survey results were used to augment the campaign data to build a broader narrative about stations practices and experiences, and to identify potential ways PBS Development Services could better serve stations in future campaigns. In addition, two-thirds of the stations found the #donate (e.g. #donate \$20) technology “very easy” or “easy” to implement, and all stations adopted the campaign copy provided by PBS Development Services. Furthermore, more than two-thirds of stations went above and beyond the campaign basics—crafting their own messaging copy and creative in addition to what was provided by PBS.

A campaign goal was to increase engagement (e.g. more likes, retweets, comments, etc.) as well as to reinforce messaging from national pledge shows. Nearly a third of stations reported an increase in engagement while Victoria, Hamilton, and Ken Burns were the top titles selected by stations for fundraising-related posts (see Figure 1). On average, station posted 28

fundraising-related messages on Facebook and Twitter, but the range was significant. Practices appeared to vary greatly as the mean number of posts dropped to 18.

Conclusion

Social media fundraising is a piece of a larger digital effort to engage audiences through philanthropy. As attention spans are increasingly difficult to capture, fundraisers are posed with a unique challenge to meet donors at their level, on their time, and on their terms. The Ice Bucket Challenge, despite the immense success of the campaign, illustrates a subtle failure to adapt accordingly to this changing paradigm to convert viewers and participants, to donors. The model used, for example, was dated because there was so instantaneous gratification, failed to keep users on the site instead of 3rd party sites, and included too many field inputs and payment entries. This all made for a cumbersome user experience that was not easily sharable with friends and family. The easy diffusion of a donors' fundraising activity with their network, and ease of giving experience, is what makes fundraising successful online.

One way to try to solve this challenge is with the #donate (e.g. #donate \$20) technology. There may never be another Ice Bucket Challenge, but #donate (e.g. #donate \$20) does appear to give stations the opportunity to engage their audiences in a philanthropic manner, to create a greater, more shareable, giving experience. The donor's choice should always prevail over platform, marketing channel, and departmental divides.

The best practices identified during this campaign included: showing the impact of a donation, mechanics of a fundraising post, and strategies to best convert incomplete donations. That said, the overall impact is measured over time. For now, there are a few emerging themes that provide insight to the pilot experience and inform considerations for future efforts. These include:

- 1. Social media fundraising requires greater cross-departmental coordination.** Social media teams are often asked to help with specific, one-off tactical items, rather than being brought into the strategic planning with development professionals.
- 2. All fundraising is relational; followers must be engaged before they donate.** Unfortunately, there are no magic wands or silver bullets to grow the number of donors overnight. Cultivation of donors takes time, energy, and most importantly, testing...LOTS of testing!
- 3. Social media resources and experience at stations varied greatly.** Better coordination of tools and resources at PBS



is required to make future social media fundraising campaigns easier to implement. The barrier to entry needs to be reduced for stations with limited resources to participate.

- 4. PBS Development Services copy and creative was appreciated, but fell flat.** The messaging copy and creative provided for the pilot was ordinary—no better than what stations can do or access on their own. Though a helpful baseline for most, several stations were left underwhelmed.
- 5. 167 donors failed to complete Facebook & Twitter donations leaving \$1,844 in unrealized revenue.** Although many of the incomplete donations may have been tests, a successful donation on Facebook and Twitter requires constant monitoring, patience, and a lot of nurturing.

Please contact [Chas Offutt](#) and [Natasha Hilton](#) in PBS Development Services or [John Gossart](#) at Goodworld to learn more.
