



Case Study | August 2017

PBS & Twitch Host Marathon to Engage a New Audience, Test Fundraising Campaign

More Than Seven Million Views Generated and \$42,145 Raised for Member Stations in Span of Eighteen Days

Overview

PBS partnered with Twitch to engage a new audience and encourage financial support of viewers' local PBS stations. Largely focused on live gaming-related content, Twitch has a highly engaged audience but has recently begun experimenting with other content categories. Twitch expressed interest in leveraging the iconic Mister Rogers while testing fundraising capabilities directly from their platform to PBS member stations.

From May 15th to June 3rd, Twitch showcased all 886 episodes of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, www.twitch.tv/misterrogers. The special "marathon"

event was available to all audiences and featured a fundraising campaign. Previously, Twitch had run marathons with PBS content that featured Bob Ross' *The Joy of Painting* and Julia Child's *The French Chef*. Both marathons were successful from an overall audience engagement perspective, but the May/June *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* marathon was the first fundraising campaign.

At the conclusion of the campaign, more than 7 million views occurred (2.9 million unique views), totaling 90 million minutes watched. Digital engagement and fundraising results were also encouraging with more than 1.6 million comments, 2,000 contest entries, and 139 stations receiving a total of \$42,145 in unrestricted gifts.



Twitch is a live streaming video platform owned by Twitch Interactive, a subsidiary of Amazon.

Situation Analysis

On-air fundraising remains one of the largest sources of revenue for stations. It is also the largest expense the system makes year-over-year. However, as revenue and donors continue to decline¹, it is increasingly important for PBS and member stations to explore a broad range of partnership opportunities that support local financial sustainability. Additionally, audience diversification continues to grow as number of new technology platforms increase, e.g. Facebook Watch, Snapchat, Twitch, etc. Partnering at the national level remains an efficient approach to advocating for station branding on these new platforms. However, these companies are agile and move fast, so the challenge of processing real-time gifts directly to stations can be a significant obstacle to bringing these additional revenue streams to life for the system.

Currently, the method for PBS to facilitate donations is to provide a hyperlink to an individual station donation form. If a donation is completed, the transaction data is collected by the station and passed to PBS. These added steps create a disconnected donor experience, delay the reporting process, introduce variations in data, and have the potential to undercut a partner's marketing and campaign objectives. These partners require streamlined donation flows that are single-sourced for immediate reporting and measurement purposes. Therefore, in order to leverage national partnerships effectively, PBS must work to simplify the donation process with continued transparency to member stations.

Objective

As the Twitch community embraces content that goes beyond gaming, Twitch and PBS saw the opportunity to pilot a "marathon" model that would engage Twitch's audience around non-gaming, attract new viewers to PBS and Twitch, and test a station-centric fundraising campaign through a new platform. The pilot sought to gather learning and feedback to explore the possibility of additional local fundraising opportunities on Twitch and other platforms.



Strategy

Twitch has a highly engaged audience of viewers, gamers, and influencers (75% of Twitch users are male with 73% in the age between 18-49). While Twitch's main focus is on live gaming-related content, they have recently begun experimenting with other content categories and believe more iconic characters resonate with their user base. Having had successful engagement with icons Bob Ross and Julia Child, they licensed every episode of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and from May 15th to June 3rd showcased all 886 over 18 days.

Twitch adapted the user interface around the *Mister Rogers* channel to encourage donations by displaying a real-time tracker with an overall target of \$100,000 with \$10,000 incremental goals. When \$10,000 was raised, the real-time tracker goal was

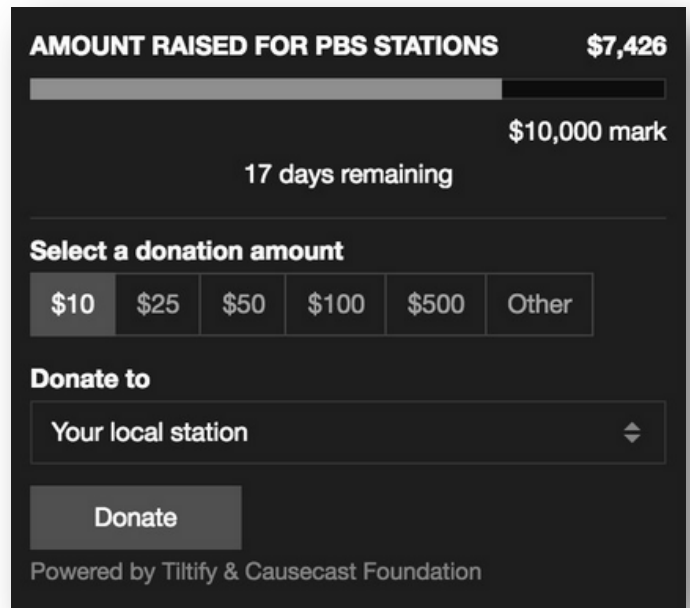
¹ March 2017 over 2016 pledge (PFP) totals: 19% decline in dollars pledged and 13% drop in total number of pledges; March 2017 over 2015: 25% decline in dollars pledged and 26% drop in total number of pledges.

re-established to \$20,000. These increments, considered a “gamification” tactic, helped make the goals more achievable to viewers.

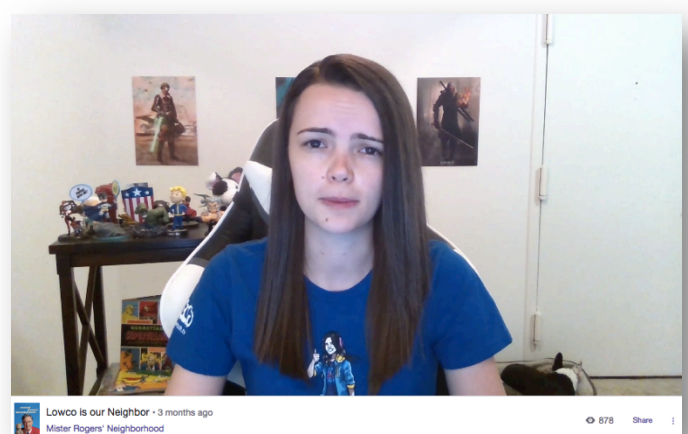
Twitch managed the donation flow, utilizing a third-party processor (Tiltify) and a donor-advised fund (Causecast Foundation) to distribute the funds directly to local stations. The goal was to create a standardized and seamless donation flow to maintain the expected Twitch user experience. All of the campaign donations – from viewers within the United States – went to local stations. Member stations were not required to enroll as PBS provided Twitch a list of all stations, as well as the localization API to automatically match a donor’s location to their station. Twitch viewers who supported their local PBS station selected a one-time dollar amount prior to completing the transaction. As a test, and to keep the number of variables to a minimum, Twitch offered a one-time only donation option to users. At the conclusion of the test, all of the donations collected on the platform were distributed to local stations.

As this was a preliminary test to learn more about how PBS and national partners can more effectively collaborate to support local stations, the transaction data (gift amounts, postal address, etc.) was not provided stations. However, if the donor agreed to share their email, Twitch provided it to stations via the PBS prospect portal. It was recommended by Twitch and PBS that the emails were treated as qualified prospects, which stations could begin to cultivate as local supporters.

Twitch promoted the marathon to its existing user base as well as on social media to attract new viewers. Twitch created a set of promotional spots that featured streamers that were well-known on Twitch who shared stories about the importance of PBS, local stations, and the impact of national programs. The spots ran on social media and were included as part of the marathon. Additional tactics included a Twitch Purple Cardigan contest and a hotline, 681-Hi-Fred0, for viewers to share what they love about Mister Rogers and PBS; many of these stories were featured in between episodes.



When the \$10,000 goal was reached, the real-time tracker was re-established to \$20,000.



“Lowco” was one of 17 Twitch partners who created a promotional spot to share their #IlovePBS message.

Results

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood debuted in 1968 and aired on PBS for decades. Each episode ended with the same positive message for his young audience: *because we are all unique, we make each day special by being ourselves, and people can like us just the way we are.* The *Mister Rogers* marathon was the right message at the right time. Given the series' iconic appeal and core values, the *Mister Rogers* marathon generated more earned media than anticipated with *Time*, *CBS*, *Fortune*, *Engadget*, *Gizmodo*, *TechCrunch*, and others all covering the May 15th launch.

When the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* marathon ended on June 3rd, nostalgia also worked well. Viewers loved the screen greying out over the first season where the episodes are all in black and white. It was this sentiment that created much of the buzz in the chat room – 1,612,840 total messages – and resulted in continued community activity even after the marathon was long over (the 'real-life' Betty Aberlin was an unexpected bonus and provided a great focus for chat).

By the end of the marathon, 7,007,401 views (2,942,700 unique users) accounted for 90,732,660 minutes watched. The level of engagement was also encouraging with 54,837 followers and 1,869 subscribers to the channel. Additionally, there were 23,200 visits to the *Twitch Purple Cardigan Contest* page with 2,047 total submissions.

As for fundraising, the marathon fell short of the internal goal of \$100,000. The donations raised over the 18-day period totaled \$42,145, with approximately 10% coming from a donor match by Bill Moorier, Twitch's CTO. The donations, however, were spread across the system with 139 total stations (88.5% of all stations) having received a donation during the marathon timeline.

Conclusion

The partnership with Twitch was very successful at paving the way for future collaborations with them and benchmarking the benefits and pitfalls of similar national partnerships and tactics of digital fundraising. The timing of the marathon was also well received, and the earned media generated at the launch was greater than expected. However, there was a persistent challenge to create a sense of fundraising urgency, one that typically drives the number of donations to a crest by the end

Twitch Purple Cardigan Contest

Want to win an exclusive Twitch Purple Cardigan?

We will be rewarding the **TOP 100 HOSTS** on the Mister Rogers channel with a purple cardigan!

STARTS
MAY 15TH
11:59AM PT

ENDS
JUNE 3RD
11:59PM PT

HERE'S HOW...

Host the Mister Rogers channel by typing `"/code> "/host misterrogers" into your channel page.`

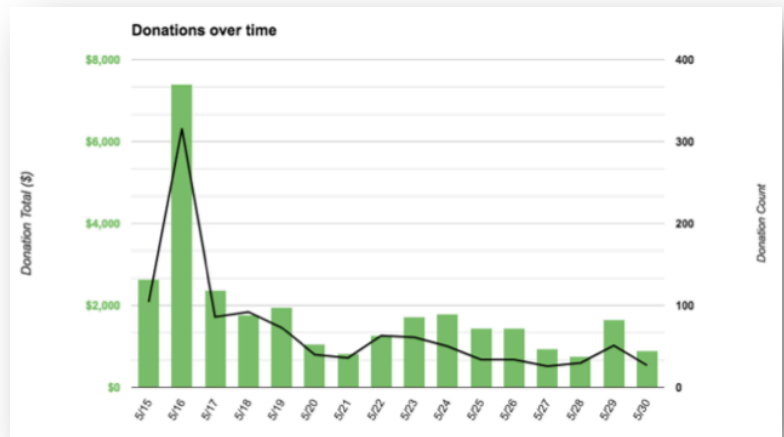
Create a post on your feed: "I'm hosting Mister Rogers for a chance to win the Twitch Purple Cardigan Contest."

Fill out the form below!

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Open to legal residents of the United States and the District of Columbia, 18+. Other restrictions apply. Begins at May 15th at 11:59AM Pacific, on 5/15/2020 and ends at June 3 at 11:59PM Pacific. Void where prohibited. Subject to Official Rules. Visit link.twitch.tv/PurpleCardiganContest for full rules and to submit. Sponsor: Twitch Interactive, Inc.

The Twitch Purple Cardigan Contest received 2,047 total submissions.

date. The largest number of donors and donations during the marathon was on the marathon's second day, May 16th, suggesting the media buzz at launch might have influenced the early spike in the fundraising activity. As the campaign proceeded, the fundraising "ask" appeared to have become secondary to the larger viewing marathon.



The number of donations to the Mister Rogers' Marathon peaked on the second day of the campaign.

To help build momentum throughout the campaign and get closer to the internal fundraising goal of \$100,000, a greater emphasis on deadlines or specific campaign phases that withheld content or awarded prizes could have boosted results. Additionally, engagement tools, such as on-screen alerts or an animation that is personalized with the donor's name could have impacted overall results. Tiltify calls these types of notifications to all users "hero moments." Perks also add an additional level of gamification for donors, an impactful tactic regardless of the platform. They can be physical, such as t-shirts, stickers, pins or even something like that purple cardigan, or they can be digital, such as special badges that is shared with all special achievements.

Lastly, one of the more critical lessons learned was the complexity involved in tracking live donations and multiple payouts to stations. Twitch did not wish to link off to individual station donation forms as it created a disconnected user experience and real-time data analysis wasn't feasible. Without real-time data, Twitch could not showcase a thermometer on the *Mister Rogers* marathon channel to relay campaign goals and further "gamify" the experience for users.



Eighty-eight percent of all stations received a check from the Twitch Mister Rogers' Marathon.

Twitch had also explored the option of building a single donation form using the PBS localization API, but was unable to implement it due to PCI compliance and donor receipting requirements. The resources required to set this up as well as the liability that would accompany this endeavor made this option unfeasible. The path of least resistance for Twitch was the most complicated for PBS. Twitch could have built a single donation form that leveraged the PBS Localization API utilizing the PBS Foundation payment gateway. Leveraging the PBS Foundation as the donor-advised fund, one in which PBS would issue

checks to stations, is not currently a workable solution. The best option was for Twitch to partner with Tiltify and the Causecast Foundation to process the gifts and distribute the checks to stations.

The challenges outlined above will remain until a complementary fundraising solution for stations is developed to leverage national partnerships. However, these complexities disappear when Stations work directly with Twitch to host their own fundraisers. These local partnerships with Twitch work in conjunction with live streaming or other content stations provide to Twitch. The live streaming can take any number of forms and the Twitch team can provide case studies and guidance on approaches to get started [Please note that stations cannot post PBS/NPS content on Twitch without involvement from PBS]. There are many ways to host a live stream on Twitch that simply involve a host and a set of activities.



KMOS is currently hosting a Bob Ross Chia Pet Marathon on Twitch, www.twitch.tv/kmos

For more information about the PBS and Twitch partnership, please reach out to Jeremy Teres, jateres@pbs.org, from PBS Business Development and Chas Offutt, ceoffutt@pbs.org, from PBS Development Services.