

## The new rules of branding online

Recently I read an interesting article in *Inc Magazine* (Jan 12, 2011) titled ‘*The New Rules of Branding Your Business Online*’ and discovered several useful tips that can be used by charities, as well as, businesses.

Here are some of the new rules that you might want to take into account as your charity connects with people online:

- **Interaction is the name of the game!** -. Apparently, gone are the days when it was enough to have a sleek website, a social media presence and good graphics. Online donors, or website visitors are looking to interact with the brand rather than passively consume it.
- **Be persistent in presenting and maintaining your niche.** Yes, even as a charity you have a niche, or a unique proposition/ solution for making a difference in the world. And, one of the best ways of finding the right kind of supporters is to emphasise that niche, what you are really good at, and truly stand out in a crowded marketplace.
- **Don't just start a conversation - make sure you can maintain it.** It's not enough to have a *facebook* page or a *twitter* account, you must participate in the conversation with your followers by posting regularly and replying to direct messages. I tested this recently with one of World Vision's posts on *facebook* and was really impressed with their swift reply.
- **Excel at telling your donors 'About Us.'** Who knew that an *About Us* page could be so important? Apparently, this is often the first page that new web visitors go to find out more about a business or a charity. In order to make the *About Us* page interesting you should, ‘*Avoid writing a soliloquy (too much text can be a turnoff) and focus on connecting with your site visitors.*’

Write about your staff team in a friendly manner, including not only their roles but also something about their lives and hobbies. Include email addresses, links to blogs etc, and ways for people to get in touch with your charity.

- **Fully integrate social media into your site.** That means going beyond using just the usual buttons. According to *Inc magazine*, all you need is a bit of elbow grease and a commitment to making your site a quality destination for visitors by adding *facebook Like* buttons, having a dynamic blog section, utilising SEO, etc.
- **Monitor your brand's reputation and be ready to respond.** In the new world of online communications leaving a complaint, or a question unanswered can scare away donors or make it harder for people to trust your brand.

Therefore setting up listening posts to find out what is being said about your charity online is a good place to start for monitoring your charity's brand reputation. There is an assortment of tools out there to set up your listening post, and many are free such as a *RSS and a reader*.

- **Showcase your best work.** You need great content on your website including heart-warming stories, interesting facts about your work, lots of photos or presentations so that people can experience what you do and how you make a difference.

Additionally some timelines, something about your charity's history and a few milestones of success can also be attention grabbing and appealing to online visitors and friends.

To read the full article visit: <http://www.inc.com/guides/2011/01/new-rules-of-branding-your-business-online.html>