

Case study: Driving Donations delivers increased Direct Debit sign-up and £150K charity donation

Raising funds for charity, plus increasing Direct Debit take-up were the two main drivers behind an integrated marketing campaign from Bacs, the not-for-profit organisation behind Direct Debit. And the results hit the mark, with £150K raised for Marie Curie Cancer Care as well as more than 200,000 new Direct Debits signed.

Campaign overview

Direct Debit has been around for four decades, and is the preferred payment choice for 64% of the nation's bill payers – the average household has seven Direct Debits in place. It's also the most cost-effective option for billing companies, costing less to process than paper-based alternatives, and Bacs already works with billing companies to promote the payment method on an individual basis.

However, 2011 saw Bacs take a different approach. The company wanted to create an engaging campaign bringing together multiple billers across the country, and to generate a response that would exceed the levels that can be achieved through activity from individual billing companies. They wanted to add a feel-good factor, and create positive CSR equity for the Direct Debit brand by raising money for a worthy cause. And with three in four people in the UK now affected by cancer at some stage during their lives, it was felt that Marie Curie Cancer Care would strike a chord with many consumers.

The campaign's objectives were to:

- Increase Direct Debit take-up for all participating billers
- Drive donations for its corporate charity, Marie Curie Cancer Care Daffodil Appeal
- Create CSR equity for Bacs
- Create positive media coverage for Direct Debit

Strategy and Implementation

Bacs devised a multi-stranded, incentive-led integrated marketing campaign flexible enough to be adapted according to the varying requirements of each biller. 'Driving Donations' launched in spring 2011 - the key Direct Debit sign-up period - and was supported with a centralised marketing communications plan.

Bacs worked closely with 27 supporters spanning insurance, local authorities, housing associations, water companies, payment bureaux and software suppliers to deliver the campaign which utilised PR, bespoke marketing collateral, social media and online advertisements, and even a quirky online game.

But the most visible element of the campaign was the sponsorship of rookie professional racing driver Josh Files in his first season in the Air Asia Renault Clio Cup Series – a move which brought the ‘Driving Donations’ message to life, with a highly branded race car covered in Marie Curie Cancer Care’s signature campaign daffodils. The series is covered by ITV4 and attracts a viewing audience of around half a million people, as well as the thousands who turn up to each race track. Bacs also provided corporate hospitality at several of the events, for companies supporting the campaign and for media, and Josh blogged regularly about his first season’s experience.

To reinforce the campaign’s Driving Donations strapline still further, Bacs gave supporting billers the opportunity to offer their customers entry into a free prize draw to win a £15,000 Renault Clio car. In addition, organisations each made their own commitment to donate to Bacs’ chosen charity, Marie Curie Cancer Care’s Great Daffodil Appeal as part of the promotion.

The flexible approach resulted in 17 organisations using the combined prize draw and charity donation incentive, with the remaining 10 opting to focus purely on the Marie Curie Cancer Care donation. Organisations were also free to choose how much they wanted to give to charity which meant some donated an amount upfront while others pledged a set sum per new Direct Debit Instruction.

Bacs launched the campaign to the media with a press release tailored for personal finance, corporate, local authority, water and insurance publications. Online banner advertisements on key target websites were used to support ongoing news generation and social media activity. The launch also included a media partnership with the Mirror – the paper’s money pages carried a double-page spread including a lengthy case study plus a competition to win £6,000 towards household bills.

In order to remain in the media eye, a survey examining the time people spend on their domestic admin and the lengths to which they go to keep on top of it provided a follow-up release, including multiple broadcast interviews for Bacs spokesperson Mike Hutchinson and a professional life coach.

The online racing game added some fun and provided another incentive for people to visit the campaign website - players collected Direct Debits and Marie Curie daffodils, and avoided red bills to generate a score which turned into a monetary donation for Marie Curie. A Twitter feed also provided a route into a younger audience, and was used to provide campaign updates as well as

regular news on Josh’s racing success in the campaign’s ‘daffodil car’, and links out to the blog and the Driving Donations website.

Results

Activity	Outcome
New Direct Debit instructions	More than 200,000 new instructions equating to more than 2 million transactions a year
Amount raised for Marie Curie	£150,000 (pays for 7,500 nursing hours); largest biller donation from Northumbrian Water, £25,000
Mailings	1.95 million customers mailed
Online game	Played 37,000 times
Car prize draw	1.5 million entries
Coverage	89 pieces of PR coverage with a total reach of more than 9 million; additional social media reach of more than 3 million
Mirror competition	More than 9,000 entries
Sponsorship of Josh Files	At least 4 million TV viewers and 0.25 million spectators over 8 race weekends
Combined efficiency savings for participating billers	£2.11m
Lifetime value of the campaign to billers	£10.55m
Highest campaign response rate for a biller	12.7%, Broadland District Council
Greatest uplift in response rate to a DD campaign	169%, Rochdale Borough Council

Client Testimonial

“Direct Debit provides customers with a safe, secure and convenient method of payment. Teaming up with Bacs was a great way for us to help encourage our customers to take up this efficient method of payment and to support the work of Marie Curie Cancer Care. We were thrilled with the uptake of Direct Debit and are positive that while many may have signed up for ease of payment, many more have signed up to help such a worthwhile charity.”

Helen Lumsdon, Northumbrian Water Ltd