

## **Why engaging consumers in corporate/NGO partnerships requires a simple approach**

Despite [strategic partnerships becoming more important](#) and thus investment in cross sector partnerships set to increase, cynicism still exists amongst consumers about whether these partnerships are truly for social good rather than just about big corporates making money.

Which is why, as a PR professional that does a lot of work in communicating the benefits of public/private partnerships, engaging UK consumers in the benefits of corporate partnerships is a real challenge. Particularly in CRM activity where the objective is to drive customers to purchase a product that contributes to social good. It's even harder when the donations are going towards funding a project that is tackling a serious global issue that is sensitive and not often talked about.

Step forward [UNICEF](#) who are renowned for delivering some of the most admired and successful corporate partnership campaigns.

The PRCA 'Green Room' group was privileged to welcome Jeremy Sprigge, Senior Media Officer and Mark Hopkinson, Head of Business Development at UNICEF UK to share with us their wealth of knowledge and experience in communicating corporate partnership campaigns.

One particular campaign that I was most wowed by and that used a really simple call to action to engage consumers in a serious social issue, was the [UNICEF partnership with M&S and its Plan A initiative](#). The aim of the partnership is for M&S to invest in UNICEF's work to tackle the issue of child labour, within a community in Bangladesh, which forms part of M&S's supply chain.

The way that the partnership engaged consumers in the campaign was really cleverly simple. It used M&S's recycling push on plastic hangers in store (which of course also contributed to the retailer's environmental targets). "Recycle hangers and save children". What a brilliant way to make consumers feel that they are playing a vital role in contributing to a wider social issue and that their one simple action really counts.

There are of course mutual benefits to a corporate/NGO partnership. Neither party would enter into the partnership otherwise! A partnership with UNICEF made good business sense for M&S for example, where they have been able to extend their global brand presence, particularly in Asia's emerging market.

Jeremy and Mark made it quite clear that by partnering with UNICEF, corporates can take advantage of the charity's global reach. UNICEF have a global brand awareness of 87% and presence in 190 countries across the world. Not least, corporates can also build their credibility and reputation (this is actually the primary reasons why corporates get involved in partnerships with NGO's and public organisations, according to the C&E report).

And the charities? Well, the primary reason is unsurprisingly for fundraising purposes but it is also to reach new audiences that charities normally struggle to reach, as well as gaining new skills and expertise from the private sector.

Take [UNICEF's partnership with Manchester United FC](#) as a prime example. As a communications person who has worked in a charity before, I know how hard it is to engage consumers in a serious international development issue. But by working in partnership with Manchester United FC, UNICEF did just that. The aim of the partnership was to raise awareness of the dangers of HIV amongst young men in Sierra Leone and inspire action to increase condom usage. By getting players to front the campaign and appeal to young men as the embodiment of health and vitality, the partnership achieved unprecedented results where condom usage increased by 20% and belief in the existence of HIV and AIDS rose by 24%.

Not only benefits for UNICEF, but the partnership increased brand equity for Manchester United FC also. According to UNICEF, 89% of companies involved in partnerships with the charity reported that their partnerships had aided brand awareness and made the general impression of the brand more positive.

So for me personally, the UNICEF breakfast briefing reinforced the importance of an honest and transparent approach to communications when talking about the benefits of corporate partnerships. This is something one of our unique approaches at salt centres around. [Marketing with a mission](#), is all about creating sustainable campaigns that openly and honestly promote business growth whilst providing wider social, environmental or economic benefits.