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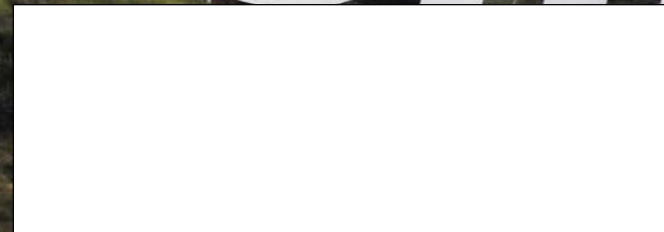
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Entertainment efforts get big boost with philanthropy

For sports and entertainment clients seeking an edge in their marketing and public relations efforts, a PR program that also gives back to a nonprofit or the community at large can be a great way to obtain new customers, drive loyalty amongst audiences and enhance corporate reputation. Done correctly, the right cause-related marketing program will achieve business objectives and set up future opportunities to partner with like-minded organizations.

By Sandra Fine

The first step is to find a nonprofit that makes sense to your targets — one that will drive them to choose your brand over another because of a shared commitment to that cause. Second, to make an impact in a saturated fundraising market, one has to shake things up.

That's exactly what rbb did when they partnered client Zumba Fitness with Susan G. Komen for the Cure to create a new fundraising craze — the Zumbathon. Zumba Fitness is the sexy, dance-based exercise program that in addition to being good for the body, offers a party-like atmosphere that's good for the soul. When Zumba's marketing team with rbb Public Relations learned breast cancer survivors were using Zumba classes as therapy, a cause-related program was envisioned that would shake up the world of fundraising — much like what Zumba has done to the world of fitness. rbb helped Zumba Fitness launch Party in Pink to generate sales for its online Zumbawear store and attract new clients for its primary audience of independent instructors, as well as draw new instructors.

The measurable objectives within three months were increasing class attendance by 20% (Zumba instructor training registrations by 10%), selling \$135,000 in Zumbawear (\$40,000 donation to Komen, 2.5 times guaranteed commitment) and securing 10 million media impressions.

The challenges for this campaign were plentiful. Zumba's financial guarantee to the charity was relatively small (\$16,000) so joint promotional opportunities were very limited. In addition, saturation in the media market during Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October) is significant, so cutting through the clutter and resonating with media presented a serious challenge. Zumba needed to mobilize thousands of instructors behind one coordinated effort, directing each to host and manage his or her own event in accor-

dance with the Zumba plan. Since many instructors had their own pet causes and ideas for strategy, keeping all on board and the Zumba brand fully intact was mission critical.

One of the keys to this campaign success was the intensity of the due diligence used to select the right fundraising strategy and philanthropic partner. A year of secondary research on Zumba's message boards showed that a large percentage of fans afflicted by breast cancer found Zumba to be their saving grace because the sexy dance moves helped them overcome emotional trauma while the group camaraderie served as a built-in support system. With uncertainty about whether it was possible to buck the already popular Race for the Cure events to make room for a novel idea, a test event was planned. Three months prior to the campaign launch, Zumba hosted an initial "Zumbathon" at Pittsburgh Pirates' PNC Park to benefit a local charity. More than 700 people turned out for the event, including numerous Zumba fans who were also breast cancer survivors, as well as a medical oncologist who credits Zumba for his patients' remissions. The overwhelming response on Zumba message boards and in media following the event validated the plan. rbb proceeded to sort through the many national breast cancer organizations to find the right fit. Komen was chosen because research showed it had the highest exposure during Breast Cancer Awareness Month (garnering 69% of media coverage); three out of four respondents recognized the Komen name and 80% associated it with having a leadership role in the fight against breast cancer. Komen also earned the highest rating possible from Charity Navigator, an independent evaluator of



Zumba Fitness teamed up with Susan G. Komen for the Cure to create the Zumbathon, a dance-based exercise program that's quickly becoming a fundraising craze.

charities.

Following the extensive research, rbb set forth three distinct strategies to create a plan of attack.

- Partner with nationally-respected Komen for the Cure to create a Zumba Fitness-branded fundraising and awareness program.
- Tap into Zumba's passionate instructors, empower them to host local events to support the partnership, and create a grassroots program that enhances brand awareness and draws participation around the nation.
- Attract new donors and inspire charity supporters to try a new, fresh way of giving — the Zumbathon.

To execute the first part of our strategy, rbb borrowed from Zumba's brand slogan "Ditch the Workout, Join the Party," to develop the Party in Pink as the umbrella campaign theme. A unique logo was created, as well as PartyinPink.com to communicate the program's offerings and details for all events, and to serve as a community for story sharing. Additionally, a key component of the fundraising effort was the design and sale of specialty Party in Pink workout tops and bracelets with 30% of the proceeds benefitting the charity. In addition to raising funds,

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Zumba leveraged the shirts to promote the program among instructors and fans who wore them to classes and Party in Pink events.

The second and third part of our firm's strategy was realized through the creation of Zumbathons. First, we initiated instructor-hosted hometown Zumbathons. Zumba and rbb saw the value in utilizing its thousands of U.S. instructors to make a grand impact. Giving instructors ownership of events in their own backyards more deeply connected them to the program and enhanced word-of-mouth exposure. Instructors were encouraged to use their local knowledge to set the right location, time and price for events with the caveat that they must give 75% of proceeds to Komen. Cognizant of the challenges to ensure brand uniformity for Zumba and Komen with hundreds of events taking place, the Zumba marketing team created customizable template marketing materials for instructors. The team also created a comprehensive web-based planning document to host all event details and automatically populate the Party in Pink website with listings of local events. A carefully crafted email with details on the program, tips for hosting a successful Zumbathon and terms and conditions was shared with all U.S. instructors. Upon event approval, hosts received a thank you email, marketing materials, an accounting form, donation receipts for attendees and a sign-in sheet so Zumba could gather email addresses for future communications. In week one, 182 events were scheduled. Within four weeks, the program grew to 560 events. By the end of the three-month program, 788 events were held in 50 states.

Focusing on the newest fundraising craze, rbb embarked on a media blitz that included "Party Packages" for target media outlets with Zumbathon posters depicting the trend's explosion, Party in Pink apparel and comprehensive press materials. rbb enlisted the help of the medical oncologist identified at the test event to become program spokesperson and add further credibility. To showcase the campaign's snowball effect, a special push was made to ensure there were events in all 50 states. During the last week of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, to culminate the media campaign, rbb arranged a guerilla marketing style "Party on the Plaza." A group of vibrant and enthusiastic Zumba instructors swarmed "The Today Show's" Plaza decked out in pink wigs, Party in Pink attire and branded signs. Their energy drew a shout-out from host Al Roker

who encouraged viewers to visit the program site and find a Zumba class near them to participate in the cause.

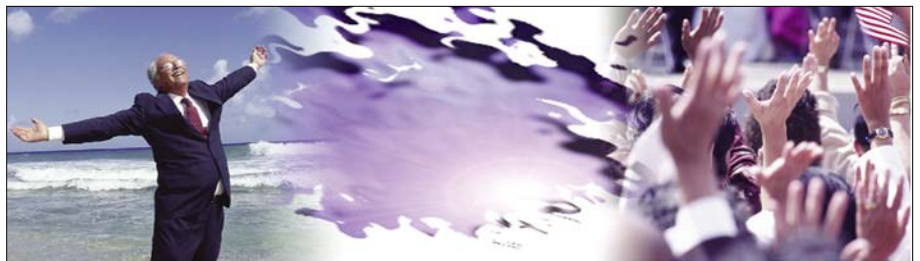
The results of this campaign far exceeded the planned objectives. While the goal was to increase class attendance by 20 percent and instructor workshops by 10 percent, this campaign actually increased regular class attendance by 61 percent and instructors signed up for 22 percent more training workshops over the three months prior. The 788 local Zumbathons helped instructors draw new students and improved retention, which encouraged them to obtain more training and spread the word to potential new instructors. We also set a goal of selling \$135,000 in Zumbawear with \$40,000 being donated to Susan G. Komen. In the best-selling period in company history with growth of 74%, Zumba sold \$280,000 in tank tops and bracelets and including Zumbathon donations, gave \$550,000 to Komen (36 times Zumba's initial commitment).

Our last main objective was to secure 10 million media impressions to ensure Zumba received exposure for its program. In three months, nearly 22 million media impressions were secured in top media outlets including "The Today Show," *Newsday*, *Washington Post*, "AOL That's Fit" and Shape.com.

The coverage represented more than \$300,000 in advertising equivalency. In addition to record-setting business and philanthropic contributions, the goodwill felt by breast cancer survivors toward Zumba was beyond measure. Five survivors came together to pen a book, currently awaiting publication, about how Zumba saved their lives and helped them beat cancer. The response to the Party in Pink program was so strong, not only are plans underway for a global campaign, but the company's first cause-related marketing program has set the stage for future campaigns to support its instructors and fans afflicted with other diseases. Based on the successful Party in Pink model, a partnership with the American Heart Association launched in 2011 and has already raised more than \$600,000.

Executed correctly with clear-cut objectives and measurable outcomes, cause-related marketing campaigns can reap huge rewards for branding, revenue and customer interaction. Nowhere is this more important than in the sports and entertainment industries where customers not only have more options than ever before, but are also increasingly budget focused.

Sandra Fine is Vice President of rbb Public Relations. ●



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