



## Cash-Register Cause: *Cause Promotions at Retail*

The economy is tough on us all, yet consumers still expect a lot from the companies with which they do business. In fact, two-thirds of consumers expect companies to maintain, if not *increase*, their support of social issues.\* Your company may not be fiscally or strategically ready for a long-term cause marketing investment, but you can be sure your consumers are ready. *Doing well by doing good* is a cost of doing business these days.

If the timing isn't right for a robust cause-marketing platform, a less-intensive alternative – and one that provides an easy introduction to the cause space – is to activate a cause *promotion* at retail. Besides offering tremendous social benefits, these programs can offer a great boost to both reputation (85 percent of consumers have a more positive image of a company when it supports a cause\*) and sales at local retail outlets. Fast-lube oil change chain Jiffy Lube<sup>†</sup> saw an increase in traffic and positive attitudes toward the company after introducing its *Maintenance Partners for Life* campaign with the American Heart Association. Cause promotions are also useful for driving trial of specific products tied to the cause. After launching the *Gillette Prostate Cancer Challenge* in 2006, Gillette<sup>‡</sup> saw an increase in brand favorability and intent to purchase among men, particularly among African American men.

Cause promotions, when done right, can be very beneficial to the brand. Below are some best practices to help you activate your cause at retail:

- 1. Choose an aligned and sustainable issue:** The issue you choose should fit your brand and align with the goals and values of your company. If you want the option of activating the program for multiple years, ensure your cause is sustainable and not tied to an uncommon or infrequent event.
- 2. Find an organization that aligns with your brand:** As your partner in a cause promotion, the nonprofit you choose to support should align not only with your cause, but with your company's goals and values, as well.
- 3. Have a simple offer:** You want your customers to be excited about your program and take part, so be sure your offer is clear and concise. Keep it simple; donate a percentage of the sales of certain products to a charity or offer consumers the opportunity to make a cash donation at the point of purchase. The fewer steps involved, the more successful your program will be.
- 4. Show the impact:** Three-quarters of consumers consider their impact on a cause to be an important factor when determining their support of companies' cause efforts.\* Your customers will be more inclined to support the cause if they know exactly how they are impacting the issue. For instance, how many more people will receive medical care, or how many people will get tutoring they otherwise could not afford.
- 5. Support the program with marketing and media relations:** Get the word out! Ninety-one percent of Americans believe companies should communicate the ways in which they are supporting causes.\* This is the perfect opportunity to get your name in front of your customers and drive participation in your campaign.

---

\* 2008 Cone Cause Evolution Study

† Cone client

‡ Former Cone client

- 6. Activate the promotion locally:** Your promotion may be national, but it needs to be activated locally to maximize impact. If you are a national company that operates in communities across the country, provide your stores or franchisees with activation guides and toolkits for the program. These should include local-market media outreach strategies and marketing collateral that can be tailored to individual locations.
- 7. Communicate the program to your employees:** Engage the people on the front lines – in other words, your employees. If your employees are unaware of the program, they can't help you promote and execute it. Create store-level incentives by offering rewards to locations that collect the most donations or sell the most products associated with your cause. This will not only help increase your charitable gift but may help drive sales. Employees are your ambassadors, and you need to rally them around the program and the cause to drive results.
- 8. Build in a traffic-driving element:** Get customers into your store with the cause promotion, but be sure to keep them coming back. For instance, offer coupons in return for donations made on your Web site or at point of purchase to help ensure a return visit and increase consumer loyalty.
- 9. Give customers enough time to take advantage of the promotion...but not too much time:** It may take a while before consumers learn about your cause promotion, so be sure you keep it going long enough for them to take advantage. Four to six weeks is ideal, but consider prolonging the promotion if your customers are not regularly in need of your products or services. However, be careful not to make it too long – both consumers and employees will start to lose focus.
- 10. Measure the impact:** You've created an impactful cause promotion at retail, and now you need to measure your success. Do this by developing pre- and post-campaign surveys or questionnaires for your customers; make an effort to track the "trackable" elements, such as coupon redemptions, Web site hits or same-store sales data; and finally, follow up with your nonprofit partner to see how your donation was used so you can determine your company's social impact.

#### ***About the Author:***

Marc Berliner is a director at Cone. He brings 14 years of experience in strategic marketing public relations counsel, creative program development and media relations delivery for consumer, consumer technology and high-technology brands. Marc manages Cone's Jiffy Lube International, Western Union Global Payment Services, Game Crazy and Movie Gallery/Hollywood Video accounts. He can be reached at 617.227.2111, or [mberliner@coneinc.com](mailto:mberliner@coneinc.com).

#### ***About Cone:***

Cone ([www.coneinc.com](http://www.coneinc.com)) is a strategy and communications agency engaged in building brand trust. Cone creates stakeholder loyalty and long-term relationships through the development and execution of Cause Branding<sup>SM</sup>, Brand Marketing, Corporate Responsibility and Crisis Prevention and Management initiatives. Cone is a part of the Omnicom Group (NYSE: OMC) ([www.omnicomgroup.com](http://www.omnicomgroup.com)).