



Attracting and keeping celebrity support

The value of celebrity

Celebrities can add unique value to your organisation. The positive benefits of celebrity endorsements include:

- Raising campaign awareness.
- Raising an organisation's profile and media coverage.
- Attracting new audiences.
- Demystifying campaign issues.
- Raising funds by encouraging sponsorship and contributions.
- Mobilising public opinion and involvement.
- Contributing to the repositioning an organisation in the public's perception.
- Reinvigorating a long running campaign.

Which celebrity?

Each celebrity you consider will present certain advantages and disadvantages. Before approaching celebrities, weigh up their motivations, how much effort you estimate maintaining their interest will require and how much you believe they will serve your cause.

- Target celebrities who will appeal to your charity's target audience.
- Investigate which celebrities are likely to be sympathetic to your cause. Your charity is more likely to develop long-term relationships with celebrities if they have a genuine interest or personal experience in the cause or field they will be promoting.
- Research potential celebrity endorsers to ensure that their histories will not come into conflict with your organisation or generate negative publicity.
- Celebrities should add value to your story. Think about how they will make a difference. Avoid seeking celebrity endorsements simply for the sake of having famous names tagged to your campaign.
- In some circumstances a pragmatic approach is most sensible. Many celebrities view charity work as essential to their self promotion thus not all those who accept your appeals for help will be altruistically motivated. However, this should not detract from the potential benefits that celebrity endorsements might offer your organisation. High profile celebrities wearing your charity's logo in magazine features, for example, will attract the kind of attention that both parties desire.
- If you intend to employ celebrities as ambassadors or spokespersons, roles that takes them beyond the remits of a promotional campaign, consider whom you approach. Certain celebrities are more adept at handling complex issues and will carry a story or promote a cause better than others.
- Be realistic about the size of your organisation, the issues you want celebrities to campaign for and the tasks you would like them to perform. 'A' list celebrities are unlikely to attend coffee mornings in aid of local charities, for example, whereas a 'C' or 'D' list celebrities might be much more likely to oblige.

Recruiting a celebrity

Celebrities and their agents receive requests for them to endorse charities and appear in advertising campaigns everyday. Your charity's approach should be subtle but persistent and your campaign well packaged if you are to encourage celebrities to respond.

- Reach celebrities through their websites, agents (see directories like Spotlight Artists' Records, Debretts and Equity) and your own personal contacts.
- Once you make contact, explain what your charity does and what is involved in your celebrity proposal.
- Tell celebrities what your organisation can offer them. Highlight the potential publicity benefits



available through involvement with your charity's campaign.

- Be specific about what you want celebrities to do for your charity. Will the celebrities simply be involved in one campaign or would you like to foster a relationship which sees them emerge as the face of your charity?
- Once you secure celebrity backing, ensure you make them feel that their contribution matters. Personalise the relationship and keep the celebrities informed about the campaigns in which they are involved. You should make celebrities aware that their input to your charity is valued and important. Follow up any celebrity activities with an appropriate acknowledgement and thank you.
- Consider making patrons of those celebrities that are especially involved in your charity's campaigns or have made a long-standing contribution to your organisation.
- If your organisation has the capacity, consider appointing a celebrity co-ordinator.
- Institute a policy on payment. In general, charities do not pay celebrities. You should, however, aim to cover expenses, including travel and accommodation.
- Use the media well to ensure that the celebrities, and in turn your organisation, gain maximum publicity.

What can celebrities do for your charity once they are on board?

- Feature in publicity and promotional campaigns.
- Attend events on behalf of the charity.
- Be photographed accepting and presenting cheques or awards on behalf of the charity.
- Speak at press conferences and interviews or as the main attraction at fundraising events.
- Participate in headline-grabbing activities that raise funds and awareness for your organisation.

Potential pitfalls

Although many charities enjoy successful relationships with their celebrity endorsers, some problems have been known to arise. Ensure that your organisation takes pre-emptive measures to evade such difficulties.

- Certain issues or campaigns do not lend themselves well to attracting celebrity endorsement and most celebrities are unlikely to support campaigns based around a taboo issue. Your charity may also find it hard to track down suitable celebrity role models and backers for certain issues. In such cases it is wise to approach discreetly celebrities you have researched and believe might, for reasons of personal interest or experience, be sympathetic to your campaign.
- Be wary of over-dependence on celebrity backers and ensure that fame and publicity do not overshadow your charity's central campaign message.
- Devise a contingency plan for those times when celebrities might attract unwanted and potentially damaging media attention. Be prepared to respond to the media and decide under which circumstances to support celebrities and when to distance your organisation from them.
- Prepare your approach for dealing with demanding celebrities. For high-profile and costly campaigns consider asking celebrity backers to sign contracts with the charity which set out the terms and conditions of their work.