

Direct Mail Case Study

RNLI: Mystery Packages



Sector & Brand: Charity and non-profit, RNLI
Country: United Kingdom
Campaign Date: 2008

Background:

Who is the advertiser?

The RNLI is an independent charity with a board of volunteer trustees. It is the charity that saves lives at sea. They provide a 24-hour lifeboat search and rescue service around the coasts of the UK and Ireland, as well as a seasonal lifeguard service on many of the busiest beaches in England and Wales.

What was the challenge?

The challenge was to turn RNLI from being the 'least known charity among the youth' to 'one of the most talked about online in summer 2008' by discovering a higher purpose than sea rescue: the contribution young people make to society as a whole. After all RNLI itself has 470 volunteers under the age of 25 who are willing to risk their own lives to save others at sea.

What were the objectives of the campaign?

Generate word-of-mouth and increase brand awareness for the RNLI

Who was the target group?

12 of Britain's most popular young bloggers.

The campaign in detail:

Which media were used?

The campaign was actually a direct mail only campaign; however given the selection of the target group, the intention was to spread message via several media, mainly via blogs and online videos.

What was the mailing approach?

Mystery direct mail packages were sent to the 12 bloggers: large padded brown envelopes with instructions on what to do.

What was the creative concept?

The package instructed the recipients to open it while filming them doing so. After reading and examining the contents, they were asked to challenge their main viewers to speak out about who they really are. Are young people really the lazy, cruel, useless generation the media portrays them to be, a generation without values, views or vision? Only after a fierce debate had been started did the RNLI reveal that they were the sender of the packages.

The results

- » The campaign really had a viral effect: the bloggers opened the direct mail packages live on video and then generated a huge response when the RNLI's role was revealed. The bloggers visited the RNLI headquarters, filmed it, wrote songs, rewrote headlines, made t-shirts etc.
- » Starting with just 12 direct mail packs, nearly one million views were generated with 8,000 texts sent, 150 videos made and uploaded.
- » One video was featured twice by YouTube editors and ranked 'Top 10 most-viewed this month' across seven countries.

