



HAMBLEDON CHURCH ROOF FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS – KEY LESSONS

Introduction

In 2001, a fundraising committee was established to raise £420,000 to repair and restore the roof of Hambledon Church, which dates back to 1050. Between 2001-2005, the funds were successfully raised and the repair work completed.

As part of the Diocese of Portsmouth and with a population of 940 in 438 households, Hambledon nestles in a small valley in the South Downs of Hampshire. The Church has 240 on its electoral roll, and an average of 120 coming to Sunday worship. Hambledon Church plays a pivotal role in the community, making this not just a Church problem, but the biggest fundraising challenge the village had ever faced.

This short report outlines the approach taken for marketing and communications and draws out lessons learnt, which we hope will help inform churches facing similar problems.

Approach

Sub committees were established from the main fundraising committee, covering: communications; trust applications; and events.

From the outset, we agreed the following four-phase approach to meet the combined objectives of raising the funds, and reaching out to the community in a positive way:

- i. Raise awareness of problem and build relationships prior to the appeal. In parallel, apply for grants and plan the detail of future phases.
- ii. Approach approximately 20 of the biggest potential donors to kick start campaign (in line with the fundraising theory of pyramid shaped giving with fewer larger donors at the top - we wanted to get to them in advance).
- iii. Public appeal, supported by events to gain community support in addition to raising funds (preferably a period of intensive activity of no more than 6 months).
- iv. Budget achieved, start of works.....followed by project completion.

The main audiences for the project were agreed as the:

- Villagers (further segmented by: committed church goers; occasional church-goers; potential big donors)
- Trusts/grant bodies – for pre-appeal approaches
- Local businesses – opportunity for affiliation with the campaign through events

There were also other audiences to which the campaign reached out, such as non-villagers with an affiliation to the church (eg. visitors, those married/baptised there, ex-



villagers, family connection). We decided not to pursue churches with the same patronage due to the limited return on effort.

Messages to the differing audiences were carefully planned and developed throughout the campaign through management by the communications sub-committee.

A *Stop the Rot* identity (see top of first page) was developed and used consistently to communicate the key attributes of 'urgency' and 'whole-village' nature of the problem.

The village bi-monthly magazine was used as the main vehicle for informing and updating villagers. This was supplemented through other means: normal church communications (sermon, weekly sheets, events). An important element of the campaign was to sustain regular updates. A church website was created and kept up-to-date by the appeal communications team (www.hambledonchurch.btinternet.co.uk).



Press activity was planned around key set piece stages of the project based on: campaign launch, major events; commencement and completion of work; celebration service. Contacts with local press were established and maintained, together with some specialist press.

Key lessons

1. *Resist the temptation to start fundraising too soon - establish the real extent of the problem and most appropriate solution.*

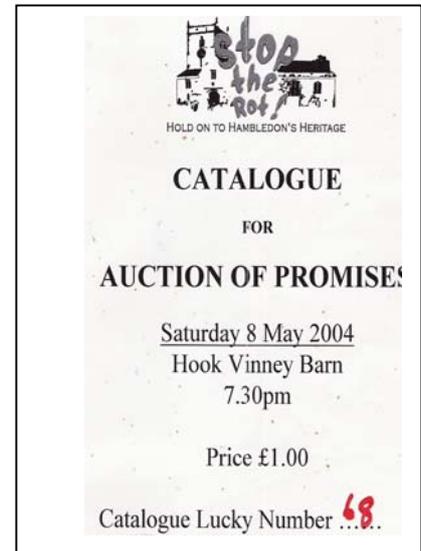
When the fundraising committee was formed, there was pressure from some to embark immediately on fundraising from the community with associated events. Key to the campaign's success, however, was to invest time and money up front to investigate fully the extent of the problem and the required solution – we did not want to go back to our audiences with a further appeal due to inadequate research up front. It was also important to keep to the principle of exploring all possible funding routes before asking villagers to contribute. During this period of detailed investigations, relevant grant awarding bodies were fully researched and approached where appropriate. Some trusts would only consider an approach once English Heritage had approved the project as suitable for funding, and had offered a significant grant of £156,000 (which included £20k for investigations). We delayed our public launch by one year to enable the above preparatory work. We did, however, develop some promotional materials during the warm-up phase, including calendars and T-shirts.

2. Leading from the front to approach the big hitters

Members of the church committees (PCC, fundraising) were asked to contribute prior to the public appeal to demonstrate a commitment and so that personal approaches could be made to some potential 'big hitters' with a message 'we've explored all funding routes and have raised x% or £y000. We are about to turn to the village for its support, but would like to give you the opportunity to contribute (as we have) before we do that.'" The combined committee/big hitter approaches proved extremely successful.

3. Professional promotional materials

A detailed pack was prepared for potential donors; a list of contents is included in appendix one. Gaining consensus on messages and pack contents and copy can be an issue; we consulted and fed back the views of the wider committee, but a smaller team comprising the fundraising committee chairman, communications lead and vicar agreed the detail. A professionally produced exhibition panel was produced to be displayed at fundraising events, funded by a business sponsor. Expert help on design and copywriting was provided from friends and contacts for no charge.



One important aspect of fundraising is that donors feel that their donations are going directly to fund the problem, and not being absorbed in administrative costs. It is for this reason that we established a committee of volunteers rather than paying a professional fundraiser (and we were fortunate to have a talented team of volunteers); it is also the reason that promotional materials were part funded by sponsorship. The counter argument is that raising almost £0.5million is a big job and needs professionalism, part of which is demonstrated by the quality of the communications. Encouraging donations through the 'Gift Aid' scheme helped the efficiency and professionalism arguments.

4. Proactive media relations

An important aspect of the communications approach was to get the local media on board. This involved invitations to events; well written press releases; timely provision of photography; and management of press on location including providing suitable interviewees and photo/filming opportunities. During the appeal, media coverage was achieved on both BBC and ITV local news, local radio, and all the main local newspapers in addition to diocesan and church media titles. This not only helped to spread the word, but also contributed to the sense of community and fun – and people naturally want to be associated with success.



Daniel Finch, seven, has a go at 'chucking the chorister' to raise cash

PICTURE: MICHAEL TORCUM (PHOTOS: GAZETTE)

Villagers will unite to save historic church

VILLAGERS determined to stop the rot hope to raise £100,000 to save their 1,000-year-old church. The roof of the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Hambledon has rotted away so much that it is in danger of collapsing. Scaffolding has been put up to prevent the decaying timbers falling down and the repair bill has been put at £420,000. Grants and donations totalling £326,000 have already been secured and

by Tim Edmonds The fund-raising team has now launched a Stop the Rot campaign to push for the remaining £94,000. Villagers have been urged to put their hands in their pockets to raise the sum – a tall order for a community of only 640 residents. The money will be used to repair the rain-damaged 14th and 15th century roof timbers which are being eaten away by death watch beetles.

Work on the grade one listed building, which dates back to 1050, is set to start in June and will take six months to complete, provided the funds are successfully raised. More than 300 people from the village turned out for the campaign launch. Fund-raising committee chairman Robert Solomon said: 'Our church is more than a building and we are pulling out all the stops to ensure it is restored to its former glory.'

5. Balance of events

Once we had decided on a timescale, a schedule of events was put together (attached at appendix 2). Events were divided into two broad categories: those

organised by our fundraising committee, and those organised by other community groups dedicated to our project. To start the public phase with the right tone, a launch was planned at the church which combined fun events for the family (eg. 'chucking the chorister'), a barbeque, and an unveiling of the 'fundraising scoreboard' (example of press coverage overleaf). Significantly, attendees were encouraged not to make a donation on that launch day, but to take away and digest the information in the pack, and to respond after that. We wanted to avoid the 'innoculation' feeling whereby donors would make a modest donation and not make subsequent donations – we encouraged a considered response from the villagers. The launch was one of the planned set-piece events, and achieved local TV coverage.



Some events proved more financially profitable (auction of promises, summer fayre) than others. The less profitable events did serve the important aim of reaching out to the community and uniting all members to help with our cause, which was an important aspect of the campaign. Groups and societies, including the village school, were encouraged to run events in aid of the project, and many did. Success in this area is indicated by the nomination for a local newspaper 'Best Neighbour' award for Hambleton's villagers for the vigour with which they tackled the church roof problem.

We did not, however, want to burn out our willing event organisers nor did we want to be accused of over saturation of events. This was overcome by the range and different target market of the events.

6. Broader observations

- Seek out good practice, and spend time up front planning the extent of the problem, and the structures (committees) and campaign to tackle it.
- Anticipate and respond to criticisms, and prompt decisions – often expressing something on paper moves the debate on, and stimulates strategic thinking.
- Teams with a mix of skills and broad experience work well, especially if people are freed up to get on with their specific roles.
- Once the campaign objectives and target audiences are agreed, focus on them.

And finally

I hope this short report is of some use. Inevitably, it can only capture a flavour of the enjoyable and rewarding hard work over four years. We would be happy to answer any queries – please use the contact email address below.

Rob Reynolds
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February 2006



Appendix 1 – ‘Stop the Rot’ fundraising pack list of contents.

The following were inserted loose-leaf in a *Stop the Rot* wallet:

Letter	Outline of project and financial challenge
Question and answers	Events timetable
Committee contacts	Ways of giving
Gift Aid form – single donation	Gift Aid form – regular giving
Banker’s Order	Return envelope
Postcard	‘Stop the rot’ stickers

Appendix 2 – Hambledon Church Roof Appeal – Events timetable

Date (2004)	Event
Saturday 8 May 7.30pm	Auction of Promises
Friday 21 May 8pm	Raise the Roof Concert Organist and trumpeter in Church
Sunday 6 June	Special service for those married at St Peter & St Paul
Saturday 19 June 11am – 4pm	Hambledon Country Fayre
Tuesday 29 June 1 st tee off 12 noon	Golf Day and Dinner
Saturday 24 July 10am	Children’s Sponsored Swim
Saturday 14 August 3 – 5.30pm	Children’s Swimming Party
Saturday 11 September All day	Hampshire & the Islands Historic Churches Trust Sponsored cycle/ride/walk
Wednesday 27 October 3 – 5pm	‘Tales of Old Hampshire’ talk and tea, Village Hall
Sunday 18 September (2005)	Celebration service to mark project completion