

ANNUAL MEETING HANDOUT

Social Media Case Study: Give Ten for Tigers

Learn how the Woodland Park Zoo raised \$149,000 in two weeks through an integrated social media and e-mail campaign, “Give Ten for Tigers,” for a new tiger and sloth bear exhibit. The campaign reached millions across the region and set a new level of engagement for our audience, with unexpected successes and failures yielding surprising insights.

Presenters

- » **Steve Sullivan**, Membership & New Ventures Manager, Woodland Park Zoo
- » **Rebecca Whitham**, Digital Communications Manager, Woodland Park Zoo

Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo

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This session handout is from the 2013 Annual Meeting in Baltimore.



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AAM Session Handout

2013

How trying to reach an impossible fundraising goal using social media and email turned into unexpected success and surprising insights: raising \$149,000 in two weeks, reaching millions across the region and engaging them in the zoo's story, and while our community may not always respond, they are listening.

In May of 2012 Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, Washington raised \$149,000 in two weeks in a broad appeal to the community through an integrated social media and email campaign, "Give Ten for Tigers." Designed to raise funds to construct a new exhibit for our endangered tigers and sloth bears, the campaign reached millions across the region and set a new level of engagement for our audience. As a case study, the campaign's unexpected successes and failures yielded surprising insights that make a great case study and discussion.

Give Ten for Tigers was remarkable in several ways;

- We didn't reach anywhere near our ambitious goal to get 10,000 across the region to give \$10 and tell 10 friends, and yet we not only reached our "impossible" goal of raising \$100,000 in four weeks, we raised nearly \$150,000 in just two weeks.
- While primarily run on Facebook and email, it was a truly multi-channel campaign, coordinating messaging and solicitations across email, mobile giving, the zoo's website and blog, a Give Ten microsite, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, print publications, The Seattle Foundation's GiveBIG regional philanthropy campaign and our media partner's social media properties.
- We kept an audience of over 50,600 people on social media and 70,000 on email engaged with our story for three weeks and potentially reached up to 10 million people every time we posted.
- We sent 70,000 emails weekly for 5 weeks and had only 600 people unsubscribe.
- We raised \$149,059 in two weeks via social media and email.

The reasons why the campaign unfolded as it did make it a great case study with many lessons learned;

- Should you set a realistic goal or "go big or go home" and risk failing publicly?
- Although our audience loved our content, why it wasn't "viral" enough to be shared.
- How a philosophy of going against conventional wisdom and embedding a fundraising call to action within compelling content our audience is interested in rather than always focusing on the "ask" helped activate a previously passive online community.
- Could incentivizing sharing have led to more success? Should the campaign have been a team competition?

- How email was our social media secret weapon: if social media provided the broad public awareness of this campaign, email brought home the money.
- How effective were celebrities (Betty White!) and influencers at spreading the word?
- The importance of a follow-up fundraising plan to capitalize on any awareness and buzz created.

Session presenters

Steve Sullivan is a fundraiser, direct marketer, and communicator who has raised money to protect the environment, provide affordable housing for low-income families, support sustainable agriculture, improve health care, and most recently, save wild animals and their habitats. At Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo he runs Membership, Annual Giving, and New Ventures, such as the Give Ten for Tigers social media campaign that beat an "impossible" goal, reached millions, and raised over \$149,000.

Rebecca Whitham works as Digital Communications Manager for the non-profit Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, Washington. Rebecca uses web, mobile, social media and email marketing tools to communicate the zoo's mission and activities to national and international audiences touched by the zoo's global work in animal welfare, wildlife conservation and science education. Rebecca holds a Master's degree in Museology from the University of Washington.

Give Ten for Tigers at-a-glance

The first phase of Give Ten for Tigers was a social media and email campaign in May of 2012 designed to get people across the Pacific Northwest region to donate \$10 or more ("Give Ten for Tigers") and tell ten friends to help fund the construction of the new Asian Tropical Forest experience at Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, Washington. The zoo has always enjoyed great public participation in building new exhibits, and this campaign was designed to build popular support for the biggest remodeling project at the zoo in decades.

"Ready to help?"

The campaign ran from May 1st to May 25th, starting with a kickoff that coincided with the Seattle Foundation's regional GiveBIG Day. With a looming deadline of the end of May to have enough money in-hand to move ahead with the start of exhibit construction, we asked the community to help raise the final \$200,000 needed. We used a generous challenge gift by The Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences to challenge the community to raise \$100,000 by midnight, Friday, May 25th, saying that if we reached that goal the Simonyi's would pitch in a matching \$100,000. Ending the campaign on the 25th gave us a week's cushion to extend the campaign to the end of the month if necessary.

"Impossible" goals

Internally, the goal of this campaign was less about fundraising and more about rallying community support around the exhibit initiative. An unprecedented \$21M private funding goal had created new challenges in recruiting significant philanthropic support for the exhibit.

Demonstrating popular community support would go a long way toward gaining the attention of the local philanthropic community and begin to create new fundraising momentum.

Our goal was to activate 10,000 people across the region to participate by making a \$10 gift and telling 10 of their friends about the campaign, thereby spreading the message to new people beyond our members, donors and existing online and social media audience. Sharing tools were built in to every channel and the call to action was always, “Give ten and tell ten.”

The idea that an organization that had only ever raised a few thousand dollars from a handful of people through previous social media fundraising campaigns would go public with the audacious, “impossible” goal of raising \$100,000 from 10,000 people was crazy, ill-advised and most important: noteworthy. This go big or go home attitude plays well online, and when undertaken by a trusted and respected community organization like the zoo on behalf of perhaps the most popular and touching story a fundraiser could hope for — plus a catchy tagline with the call to action build right in — we felt that we couldn’t lose. Or we’d lose really big in front of everyone.

Multi-channel strategy; content-driven philosophy

Our strategy was to use an ambitious (and fairly unique and sophisticated in the nonprofit world) integrated multi-channel campaign coordinated across email, mobile giving, the zoo’s website and blog, a Give Ten microsite, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, print publications, and The Seattle Foundation’s GiveBIG campaign. What most people saw was new content posted every few days on Facebook and a corresponding weekly email solicitation. There was also some coordination with our media partner KING5.com and their social media properties. In addition, we recruited a number of celebrity personalities and social media influencers to drive campaign momentum and exposure using messaging coordinated across all other channels.

As the first major attempt at a fundraising campaign with a social media community that had shown little interest in most of our previous attempts at fundraising or engagement, our social media strategy was built upon a philosophy of embedding our call to action within highly compelling and relevant content that we knew our audience responded to, rather than making the fundraising campaign the center of attention. Although this runs against conventional wisdom, this tactic really paid off and we were able to activate and rally our community in a way that we never had before.

What is success?

Ultimately the campaign was both more and less successful than we imagined. We didn’t reach anywhere near the 10,000 donors we’d wanted and yet we exceeded our \$100,000 fundraising goal a full week earlier than the deadline and ultimately reached \$149,059. The true successes are harder to see. Although we can measure the amount given, the growth in fan count and the astonishingly miniscule unsubscribe rate, the most important outcome was a surprising awareness and real buzz in the community despite the low numbers of actual participation.

Overall, we consider the campaign an extraordinary success that placed the organization and the campaign at a whole new level of visibility, prepping the philanthropic community for the second phase of fundraising for the Asian Tropical Forest experience. We kept an audience of over 50,600 people on social media and 70,000 on email engaged with our story for three weeks and reached up to 10 million people every time we sent something out. We had the potential to make 144 million impressions via our communications alone, not counting media and blog coverage. And we raised \$149,059 in two weeks via social media and email.

Join Woodland Park Zoo's campaign.to build the new Asian Tropical Forest Exhibit Complex

Our endangered tigers and sloth bears need a new home. That's why we're embarking on the largest remodeling project at the zoo since the 1990s. Three times the size of the outdated, 60-year-old exhibits that our tigers and sloth bears currently inhabit at



the zoo, the new, multidimensional space will be a state-of-the-art, naturalistic home that provides for the unique needs of these animals and other species that together represent the biodiversity of tropical Asian forests. The exhibit brings to life those places where the boundaries between human settlement and untamed nature collide, making the need to share the forest urgent, hopeful and clear.



The exemplary new 2-acre exhibit will inspire delight and discovery in visitors, using our award-winning exhibitry design to integrate inquiry-based activities and hands-on experience that make learning about science and conservation come alive. Immersing visitors intimately in a hidden forest world, the exhibit complex will feature up-close animal encounters, a hands-on conservation action center, a children's play area and one-on-one encounters with zookeepers. Much more than an exhibit, this living classroom will give the zoo's 1.2 million annual visitors the inspiration and tools needed to take conservation action now and help preserve the wonders of wildlife.

A world without tigers? Not if we can help it!

A century ago, 100,000 tigers roamed the forests of Asia. Today, scientists estimate only 3,200 tigers remain and as few as 500 Malayan tigers are left in the wild.

The continued loss and fragmentation of forests across tropical Asia and high levels of poaching threaten tigers and Asian bears with extinction. Scientists estimate that tigers may disappear completely from our world heritage within two decades. That's not all. We humans also will lose precious forest resources on which the health of our planet depends.

Don't take pity. Take action.

A recognized leader in innovative naturalistic exhibitry, Woodland Park Zoo will use innovative, hands-on education techniques in the new tiger and sloth bear exhibit complex to spread awareness of these conservation issues and engage millions of people in saving the wild animals and habitats we all love.

In addition, Woodland Park Zoo and Panthera are joining forces to save tigers in Malaysia. Panthera is a conservation organization that has brought together the world's leading wild cat experts to direct and implement effective conservation strategies for the world's largest and most endangered cats: tigers, lions, jaguars and snow leopards. Their approach to wild cat conservation is rooted in science and based upon decades of first hand field experience. Woodland Park Zoo and Panthera will be working together over the next decade in the mountains of the Central spine of Malaysia to help secure one of the key tiger landscapes in that beautiful country.

Give Ten for Tigers!

Here's how you can help, beginning May 1:

1. **Give \$10 for tigers.** Donations can be at <http://bit.ly/GiveTen>.
2. **Tell 10 friends.** Tell ten of your friends to join you in bringing this new exhibit to the zoo by starting at step 1!

Our endangered tigers and sloth bears really need a new home. Together we'll build an incredible, innovative new exhibit complex and help save endangered tigers in the wild. Want to do more? Go to morewonder.org to learn more about this innovative project and how the zoo you love is helping save wild tigers (and how you can too). Plus, find out how you can get your paws on our exhibit!