

The Multiple Sclerosis Society Uses Blackbaud's Text Messaging Service to Strengthen Supporter Relations.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society is the United Kingdom's largest charity for people affected by Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Its mission is to enable everyone affected by MS to live life to their full potential and secure the care and support they need until a cure is found. The Society funds MS research, runs respite care centres, and provides an MS Helpline, grants, education, and training on MS.

the challenge



photo provided by the MS Society

immediate manner.

In exploring and evaluating the various communication methods available, the MS Society realised that text messaging, also known as Short Messaging Service (SMS), had quickly become a widespread form of communication. Recent figures suggest that up to one billion texts are sent each week in the United Kingdom alone. With airlines, concert halls, and many other organisations now using SMS to manage relationships with their customers, the MS Society recognised that many of its supporters might now consider this level of engagement as standard.

In addition, the MS Society's events team had a particular interest in employing SMS to communicate with its event participants.

the solution

The MS Society implemented Blackbaud's Text Messaging Service, which integrates fully with their existing Blackbaud solution, The Raiser's Edge Enterprise. They first used the Text Messaging module to send a "good luck" message to their runners on the morning of the 2008 London Marathon.



Customer Summary

- The Multiple Sclerosis Society wanted to communicate with its supporters in a more personal and immediate manner.
- The MS Society selected Blackbaud's Text Messaging Service, which integrates fully with their existing Blackbaud solution, The Raiser's Edge® Enterprise.
- Its first use of the service was greeted favourably by supporters and saved MS Society the expense of sending direct mail pieces.

Blackbaud software and services used by the MS Society:

- The Raiser's Edge® Enterprise
- Blackbaud's Text Messaging Service
- Blackbaud® NetCommunity™

“The aim was to motivate our marathon runners immediately before the event, as well as to show our appreciation of their efforts,” explained Sam Brownlow, database administrator for the MS Society. “Rather than send out a direct mail piece that would arrive — at the absolute closest — the day before the event, SMS allowed us to communicate immediately with our supporters, demonstrating our appreciation at the relevant time.”

“We conducted a survey after the London Marathon asking our runners what they thought of the ‘good luck’ message, and out of 44 responses received, 41 said that they had liked receiving it,” Mr. Brownlow said.

the results

As well as using SMS to generate goodwill among supporters, the service will also bring significant cost savings for the MS Society. “We have an annual event called Cake Break, where supporters bake cakes to raise donations for our cause,” Mr. Brownlow said. “Each year, we generally send out a fundraising pack to everyone who participated in the previous year’s event, but this year we plan to text all previous participants to ask if they wish to receive a pack, saving costs and confirming commitment at the same time.”

The MS Society believes that the primary benefit of text messaging as a communication tool is its immediacy. “We can plan to send communications at a specific time, effectively targeting selected groups of people — as we did in texting our runners two hours before the Marathon,” Mr. Brownlow said. The personal nature of SMS communication is also a key benefit. “Direct mail, no matter how well-personalised, is still often perceived as just another mail merge by recipients.”

The MS Society plans to employ the “Text DONATE” tagline with five-digit shortcode in future advertising campaigns and believes that the immediacy of SMS will boost donations. “Text DONATE allows potential donors to make a quick decision whether to donate or not. They can send their message, knowing that someone will contact them for full details, rather than having to find a pen, fill in a form, and post it back,” Mr. Brownlow said. “SMS streamlines the donation process, saves us money, and aids us in establishing a more immediate, personal, and engaging channel of communication with our supporters.”

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— Sam Brownlow,
Database Administrator,
The Multiple Sclerosis Society

About Blackbaud Europe, Ltd.:

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