



Brand Awareness and Positioning



For a non-profit organization, brand is critical to its financial health and very survival. For some time, the MSPCA had expressed concern about the marketing tactics employed by Manhattan-based American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). The ASPCA's fund-raising programs were aggressive, with millions of dollars spent annually on television advertising, direct mail campaigns and an online presence that prompted sympathetic viewers to reach for their checkbooks.

The MSPCA needed a PR partner to design and implement a communications program that would:

- Clearly and succinctly communicate its vision and mission with compelling examples of how the institution provided care and protection to animals on a local level
- Demonstrate how the ASPCA's sophisticated fund raising and marketing initiatives confused donors and led to their donations being used in ways they may have not intended
- Reach the maximum number of potential donors with an easy-to-grasp story about a nuanced and complex situation as quickly as possible
- Issue a call to action so donors would continue to support their favorite humane societies while exercising their right to know exactly how their dollars are spent

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The Boston Globe

WCVB TV 5 abc
BOSTON

CAPE COD TIMES



With fund raising season in full swing and Massachusetts residents getting deluged by ASPCA appeals, Version 2.0 decided to enlist a local broadcaster to tell the initial story of the ASPCA's deceptive fund raising tactics. The Version 2.0 team quickly gathered and organized data from public tax returns, prepared key messages for spokesperson Carter Luke and got interest from WCVB consumer reporter Susan Wornick who had herself been targeted at home with multiple ASPCA mailings.

To underscore the local nature of the MSPCA's work, Version 2.0 persuaded Wornick to visit the organization's shelters and interview pet owners who had used and supported MSPCA's multiple services. Following Wornick's piece, subsequent stories designed to clear up any confusion ran in The Boston Globe, Cape Cod Times and several philanthropic trade publications.

As word of the MSPCA's initiative percolated through national humane circles, Version 2.0 learned that the State of California Humane Society intended to file a lawsuit against the ASPCA, accusing them of fraudulent fund raising practices.

The Version 2.0 team immediately sprang into action, recognizing that this news provided additional credibility for the MSPCA's position and an opportunity for rolling coverage for several weeks after the initial television broadcast aired.

As a result of this effort, Version 2.0 successfully established the MSPCA as the preferred organization to receive donations from supporters who want to help animals on a local level. In addition to the investigative report on WCVB and subsequent feature stories, the program was successful in raising awareness among current and potential donors that they had to read promotional materials and ask questions of soliciting organizations before opening their pocketbooks. In fact, the MSPCA received multiple queries from ASPCA donors who, upon seeing the stories placed by Version 2.0, felt misguided and opted to donate to the MSPCA instead.