

Making it count

How advertising for Barnardos contributed to changing the futures of children in Ireland

Publicis Dublin and Clear Blue Water

Introduction & Background

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.” - Albert Einstein

In 2010, some 30% of children in Ireland were in households experiencing deprivation – lacking basic items including food, clothing, heating, furniture and social participation¹. The sad reality behind this statistic is that while every parent wants nothing more than to give their children the best opportunities in life, there are many in our society that struggle to provide just the basics.

Barnardos is a children’s charity that provides quality care and education in the early years, focused on supporting children into education and creating a positive impact on children’s development. Their services work to support children and their families to overcome the long-term negative consequences of childhood disadvantage; these include educational achievement, health, and emotional and behavioural problems. It is well documented that improving children’s social and emotional development helps to break the cycle of disadvantage, and as the opening statistic shows, child welfare issues should demand our attention. Yet the big news stories confronting the public in 2010 were of bailouts, job losses and Ireland going from boom to bust.

2010 was a particularly difficult year in which Barnardos saw an increased demand for its services due to the tough economic climate. Like all charities, Barnardos was experiencing severe pressure across its funding streams in 2010 – from cuts in statutory funding to an increased attrition of the donor database and a marked tightening of the corporate market.

“The large corporate donations that once were the main stay of corporate charity support all but disappeared. Companies were no longer in a position to donate large sums of money from discretionary funds. We saw a move to a reduction in donations in terms of real numbers and the amounts of the donations.” – Ruth Guy, Director of Fundraising and Marketing for Barnardos

This is a case about how advertising was able to increase donations to Barnardos at a time when competition for both the public’s compassion and its purse were ever increasing. But what’s more, this is a story about how advertising has had a beneficial effect beyond increased donations and improving brand scores. What counted, in this case, was how advertising contributed to getting child welfare issues in the national debate and helped change the futures of children in Ireland.

¹Watson, D., Maitre, B. and Whelan, C. Understanding Childhood Deprivation in Ireland. ESRI and Social Inclusion Division of Department of Social Protection, 26 April 2012.

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Making it count

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Marketing Objectives

Barnardos provides essential services to children whose well-being is under threat. It is also a voice for those children and families. But in order to continue both the jobs of direct services and advocacy, Barnardos needed to reverse the outward flows of its revenue streams. Quite simply put, the Business Objective was to ensure that Barnardos could continue to deliver essential services to children and families. This objective has both short-term and long-term elements to it:

- ▶ In the short-term, this would mean bringing in cash income from one-off donations and recruiting regular donors to sustain the good work that Barnardos does
- ▶ In the long-term, we would need to create advocates out of our supporters and keep child welfare issues in the national conversation

And so, turning back to the Einstein quote, our Marketing Objectives were very much about what can be counted – increasing donations and recruiting new supporters – and what can't be counted – creating advocacy for child welfare issues.

Research prior to the campaign put knowledge of Barnardos as a charity that works with children at just 24% (Source: Irish Charity Engagement Monitor, March 2010), so our communications had a job to do in terms of raising the profile of Barnardos in Ireland. We needed people to understand the organisation that we were asking them to support and be advocates of, so our Communications Objective was to create a deeper understanding of Barnardos' work and why child welfare issues are important for society at large.

Our campaign needed to achieve 4 Objectives:

1. Increase Donations, both cash donations and direct debit donations. Barnardos determined reasonable targets based on previous campaign responses and taking the volatile economic situation into consideration
2. Create advocacy for child welfare issues, which we can demonstrate through responses from the public, such as Volunteer enquiries, Events participants and Corporate sponsors
3. Raise Awareness, which we can measure through pre- and post-campaign research
4. Enhance the Barnardos brand, which we can show through an increase in knowledge of Barnardos as a charity that works with children

Company Profile

Publicis Dublin

One of the largest and most awarded creative advertising agencies in Ireland, Publicis Dublin is an affiliated agency of Publicis, the world's third largest and fastest growing advertising network.

We want our Client's brands and business to prosper and creativity is our tool. At Publicis our definition of creativity extends beyond the winning of creative awards, to the development of new ideas, products, brands and business solutions.

We embrace the recession induced challenges our clients face and provide innovative solutions.

We have Irish Advertising's most creative culture so we attract Ireland's most creative minds to work on our client's brands. At Publicis we believe creativity and effectiveness go hand in hand.

Clear Blue Water

Clear Blue Water is a full service media agency specialising in media planning and buying that offers a strong return on investment for our clients. We plan across a range of clients reaching a multitude of audiences.

At Clear Blue Water we go beyond achieving communication goals such as coverage, frequency and discounts. We put great emphasis on the metrics that count: the cost you pay, cost per response, cost per acquisition. It's about achieving responses to advertising and ensuring a strong return on investment for our clients. We measure how well media performs and optimise campaigns so that a budget is used to its full utility ensuring that our client's investment helps secure the maximum potential return.

We specialise in Direct Response campaign analysis through our tool Clear Sight. This allows us to accurately apportion responses from response channels such as telephone, text, inserts, and web traffic to the advertising that caused that response.

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Making it count

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Publicis Dublin and Clear Blue Water

The Task

Barnardos needed to raise money at a time when people had little to give and numerous other worthy causes to donate to. This would prove difficult, considering:

- ▶ The recession caused consumers to reign in their spending, and charity donations were easy to eliminate: The number of people who said they donated to charity fell by 8% between 2008 and 2009 (from 83% in March 2008 to 75% in November 2009)²
- ▶ Charity is a crowded market: There are over 25,000 non-profit organizations registered in Ireland. Spontaneous awareness of Barnardos stood at just 8% amongst long-standing charities like Trócaire, Saint Vincent de Paul and the Irish Cancer Society (Source: Irish Charity Engagement Monitor, March 2010).
- ▶ There was a continuous Ask – many urgent: Among regular solicitations for charitable donations, there were two large scale international disasters in 2010: the earthquake in Haiti (January), which made an estimated 1 million people homeless; and the Pakistan floods (July), which affected about 20 million people. While Ireland is among the most charitable nations in the world (ranking 3rd in the 2010 World Giving Index), it was likely that our charitable impulse was tapped out between these two international emergencies.
- ▶ Child welfare is a slow-burning crisis: Barnardos' work is essential and does change children's lives, but it does not involve 'saving' lives. The children Barnardos works with are not ill, starving or dying. Their need is critical but not life threatening. As such, the cause is often perceived as less deserving.

Barnardos was also seeking compassion at a time when many people suffer from compassion fatigue – an immunity toward images of suffering that people have built up from overexposure to human tragedy and extremely emotional charity ads.

All charities talk about the problem of compassion fatigue, but Barnardos was facing wide-scale compassion depletion. It is hard to get people to care for others when their own survival is under threat, and so many people were facing their own financial crisis with the loss of jobs, pay cuts and the collapse of the property market. At a time when so many were struggling, Barnardos would need the public to expand their concern and think about the most vulnerable in our society.

² "Charity donations fall due to recession," The Irish Times, 3 March 2010.

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Making it count

How advertising for Barnardos contributed to changing the futures of children in Ireland

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The Task

Not only would we face difficulty in asking for donations and compassion, but the central issue of child welfare would be difficult to push when the national conversation tended to be about Ireland's options for recovery. So at a time when the media was focused on Ireland's economic future, Barnardos needed to draw attention to the social issue of the futures of children in Ireland.

Barnardos needed to ignite compassion in a way that would not only drive donations and support in the short-term, but longer-term would also put child welfare issues to the forefront of public debate.

The Strategy

We needed a completely fresh approach to get the public motivated to give Barnardos both their attention and their support.

From database profiling and previous campaigns, we knew the most valuable and likely supporters were women aged 35 and over in the middle and upper income brackets.

We started by exploring the psychology of giving, and were inspired when we learned that one of the influences on charitable donations is agency – our ability to affect a certain outcome. For Barnardos, this is children's emotional development and well-being, the implication being that making a difference in a child's life is a potentially motivating message. This certainly felt like a message that would resonate well with our target audience, as many of them are mothers themselves.

This really got us thinking: The Irish have always been known for our general benevolence and deep-rooted community support, and yet families in our neighbourhoods were being pushed to the edge and were struggling to keep up. Compassion fatigue alone wasn't enough to explain a lack of involvement with Barnardos' work; it just didn't seem right that we weren't looking after our own. Our moment of clarity came when we talked to potential donors and found that the issues that Barnardos deals in – protecting children from harm and ensuring their well-being – are social issues, and many people felt that social issues fall under the remit of the Government and the HSE. We had uncovered a key barrier:

Social affairs (like child issues) are the Government's responsibility, *not mine*.

Taken altogether, we concluded that our communications strategy should activate the

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The Strategy

innate Irish trait of looking after those around us and pitch children's issues as related to community care for each other.

We had the information we needed to get Creative and Media teams working on a solution:

- ▶ Our target audience were women aged 35 and over in the middle and upper income brackets
- ▶ Our understanding of the psychology concept of agency inspired us to frame the message in a positive light: making a difference in a child's life
- ▶ We knew we needed to make children's well-being less of an issue for Big Government and more of an issue for our community
- ▶ Armed with this, we needed to find a way to meet all of our objectives whilst making the issue personal to our prospects.

The Idea & Communication Activity

We needed to engage emotionally with our target audience while simultaneously deepening their understanding of the Barnardos organisation in a fresh, unexpected way. We wanted our target audience to *want* to help children in Ireland, but we also knew that dramatizing children's lives as horrific would not only make people tune us out, but would also alienate them from donating to Barnardos. It would also potentially stigmatise children who attend Barnardos' Project Centres. Instead of focusing on the problem, we needed to present the solution and engage people in what it feels like to help a child in Ireland.

Our creative breakthrough came when we talked to Project Centre staff and realised that their motivation came from watching how Barnardos' children developed over time: how even the smallest change makes a world of difference in that child's life. The resulting creative idea was to show the process of change rather than simply stating the need for change. And because Barnardos Project Centre staff were the source of our inspiration, we decided to use them giving first-hand accounts of how Barnardos can Change a Child's Life; this became the overall theme for the campaign.

In their own words, Barnardos staff told stories about working with children at the Barnardos Project Centre and how, over time, they see positive changes in that child. To create a deep emotional connection, we used a highly immersive production style in which we spent weeks in the Project Centres collecting material. We wanted to emulate the feeling of being in a Barnardos Centre and witnessing the positive outcomes

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How advertising for Barnardos contributed to changing the futures of children in Ireland

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The Idea & Communication Activity

of working with the children and families in Barnardos all over Ireland. Our TV work was awarded with an ICAD award for craft, proof that our fresh approach was getting noticed.

Our strategy and creative idea were fully integrated through to the media plan: In order to bring the Barnardos Project Centre experience to life and show the difference it can make to a child's life, longer length TV ads were required and so we opted for 90" and 180" as opposed to 30" which would be the industry standard. We also chose long copy direct response literature to truly engage the reader in the story of how Barnardos can change a child's life.

We launched in October to pre-empt the Christmas rush but also to establish Barnardos and child welfare issues in the public's mind so that when it came to giving at Christmas, Barnardos would be top of mind. Traditionally, the last quarter of the year is the busiest for charities with a large percentage of their income generated in the run up to Christmas. Whilst the market is busiest then, donors are more responsive.

The backbone of the media strategy was to use low cost TV airtime to deliver high frequency, however before this was implemented we needed to raise brand awareness. To do this, we launched with a peak spot in *The Late Late Show*, the top viewed weekly chat show on Friday nights on RTÉ.

Following the launch, we focused on eliciting steady and regular donations with a low cost, constant response strategy. This involved maximising the number of spots between 8am and 6pm and also ensuring an even spread throughout the day. Daytime programming tends to be low engagement and this is essential for direct response. We were asking the audience to undertake an action and they are much more likely to do this if they are not highly involved with the programme they are watching. In addition, because daytime airtime is secured at a lower cost, it enabled us to maintain the campaign over a longer period of time, thereby acting as a constant reminder and keeping the issue in the nation's consciousness.

TV activity was supported by inserts in *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Examiner* and *The Sunday Times* shortly after campaign launch date. We also had an online presence to help drive the campaign, and created a fully dedicated microsite to help convert donors. We used digital media and billboards to act as reminder mechanisms and further encourage potential donors to respond to our call to action – to donate €7 per month to help Change a Child's Life.

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The Result

We had set some pretty ambitious objectives for our advertising against a backdrop of financial pressure and uncertainty in the country. Our campaign sought to raise awareness and increase donations to bring in the income that would stop the outward flows of Barnardos' revenue streams. We also sought to enhance the Barnardos brand and create advocacy as part of a longer-term objective of keeping child welfare issues in the national agenda.

Note: Target and Actual Donation figures and amounts were supplied to the judging panel but have been removed in the interest of confidentiality

Objective 1: Increase donations

We secured Cash Donations amounting to nearly a 50% increase over our target number. We also received an average cash gift that was 39% higher than the amount asked.

We more than doubled the number of Direct Debit Donations, recruiting 127% more Direct Debit Donors than our target amount. The average donation for Direct Debit donors 83% higher than the amount asked.

Objective 2: Create Advocacy

We sought to raise child welfare issues in the nation's consciousness to create advocacy.

"The public response was a clear indication of the impact of the pieces. They donated, volunteered and became advocates for children. Following on from the campaign Barnardos ran an online petition and secured over 11,000 signatures in 3 weeks...the most ever! The fact that they understood the issues being faced allowed us to mobilise awareness and support in a very real and measurable way." Ruth Guy, Director of Fundraising and Marketing for Barnardos

According to Barnardos' Fundraising Department, event and volunteer participation saw an immediate uplift following the Change a Child's Life campaign: Volunteer enquiries increased by 35% and actual volunteers by 24%, and Events participants saw an increase of 34%. People were interested in actively campaigning on behalf of Barnardos, which indicates that the public cared enough about child welfare issues to get personally involved, and Barnardos was the organisation through which they chose to channel this desire to help.

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The Result

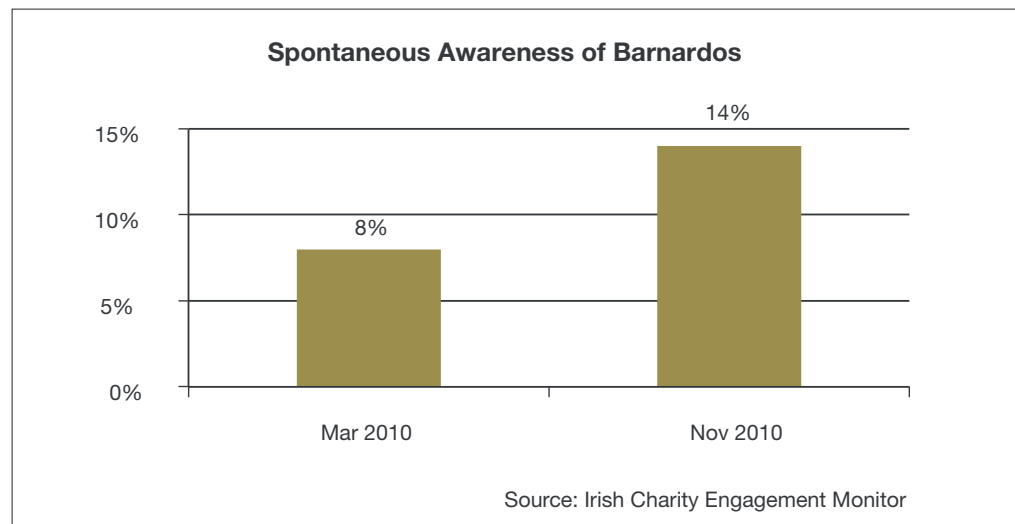
“Driven by the increased growth in brand awareness and understanding we have seen an increase in both Community Fundraising events and Corporate support for Barnardos.” – Orla Tighe, Fundraising Manager for Barnardos

Barnardos also saw an impact on Corporate support in 2011. According to the Fundraising Department, there was a 33% increase in the number of Corporate sponsors. In addition, big media partnerships have been developed, including nationally activated fundraising initiatives like the 2FM Dress Up for Barnardos event, which took place in October 2011.

“We were looking for a charity partnership and Barnardos was top of our list. We’ve admired their work for a number of years and it’s the kind of brand we’re proud to be associated with. We have no doubt that affection for Barnardos helped make this a successful event in its first year.” – Joe Hoban, Communications Manager for RTE 2FM

Objective 3: Raise Awareness

Following the launch of the Change a Child’s Life campaign in October 2010, spontaneous awareness of Barnardos rose to 14%, up from 8% earlier that year (March 2010).



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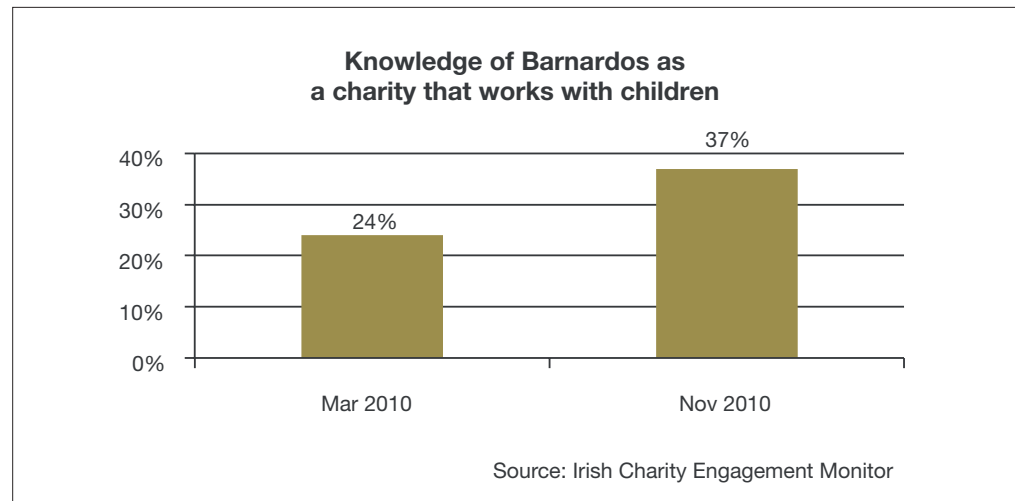
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Objective 4: Enhance the Barnardos brand

We can see from pre- and post-campaign research that knowledge of Barnardos as a charity that works with children jumped from 24% in March 2010 to 37% in November 2010 – a 13% increase over the course of just 8 months.



Impact on Behavioural Attitude & Payback

We have demonstrated the effectiveness of Barnardos' advertising through both hard metrics and softer implications. What remains is to show that the Change a Child's Life campaign was money well spent.

Return on Marketing Investment

We saw earlier that we increased the number of Cash Donations and Direct Debit Donations, and the gift amounts from each were also higher than our target amounts. This doubled our target income from Cash Donations and more than quadrupled our target income from Direct Debit Donations.

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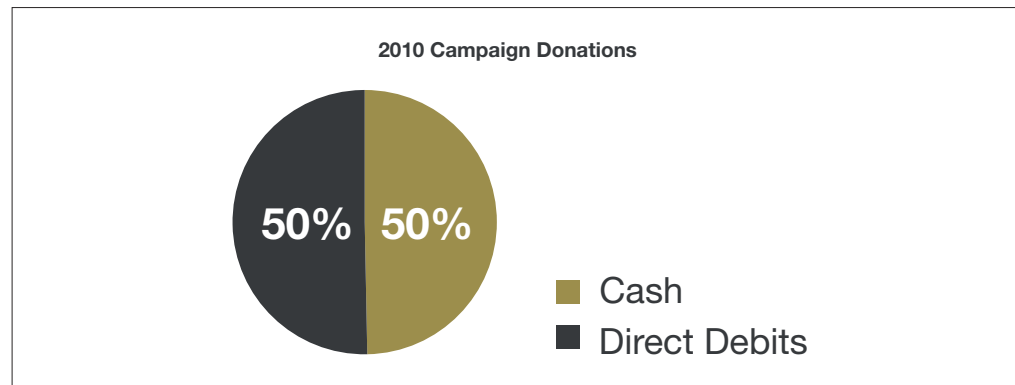
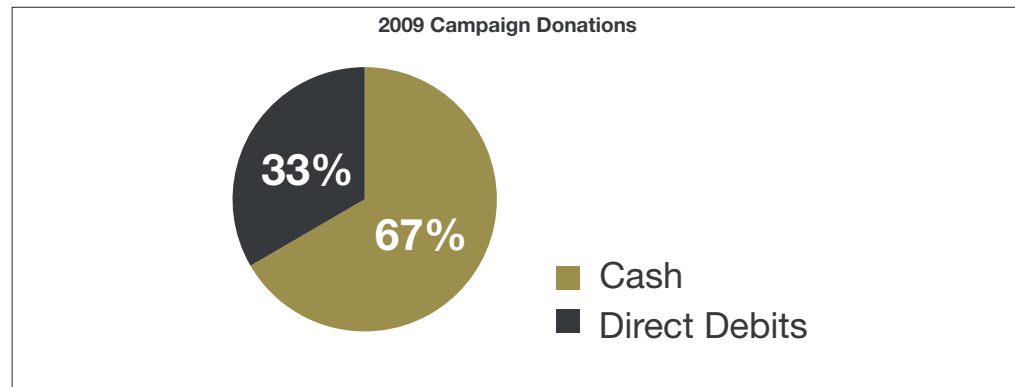
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Impact on Behavioural Attitude & Payback

Behavioural Change

Without over claiming its impact, we can show that the Change a Child's Life campaign for Barnardos saw a minor shift in behaviours with regards to charitable donations in Ireland. A recent assessment of philanthropy in Ireland conducted by McKinsey & Company noted that even though most Irish people give to charity, only about 12% do so in a planned, regular way (such as a direct debit donation)³. Compared to Barnardos' previous campaign, the 2010 Change a Child's Life campaign saw the number of Direct Debit Donors increase by 17% year on year.



³McKinsey & Company. Philanthropy in the Republic of Ireland, July 2009.

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Impact on behavioural activity and payback

It was a turbulent time to be asking for a regular financial commitment, what with the Live Register constantly growing, yet we were able to recruit new committed givers.

Longer Term Effects

What we set out to do at the start of this case was to also show the broader outcomes of this campaign; to paraphrase Albert Einstein – to look at the things that count but can't necessarily be counted. Beyond increasing donations and developing the Barnardos brand, we believe that the greater impact of our work is the long-term social benefit of helping children whose well-being is under threat.

A cost-benefit analysis of early care and education in Ireland suggests that the benefits of early intervention could be as much as €7 for every €1 invested⁴. Barnardos provides essential support and resources that children require to develop to their full potential and we are quite sure that consistent advertising activity has helped sustain the support systems that reduce the cycle of poverty and help improve the futures of children in Ireland.

Children's Rights advocates maintain that "attention to young children and their families contributes to the overall quality of human experience in both the short and the long terms. This leads to an overall enhancement in the quality of any individual society and thus, to enrichment of world society at large"⁵.

So while it is difficult to count, if we even partly contributed towards the betterment of children and our society at large, then we've been successful beyond securing donations and other things that can be counted.

⁴ Start Strong Foundation. The foundations of growth – investing in the next generation.

⁵ Bernard van Leer Foundation. Children Are Our Future. Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, July 2004.

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Making it count How advertising for Barnardos contributed to changing the futures of children in Ireland

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Summary

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.” - Albert Einstein

This is a case about how advertising for Barnardos paid back in the traditional sense, but also contributed to improving the lives of children in Ireland, which has a positive effect on society at large.

What can be counted are brand scores and donation figures, and this case proves that investment in advertising increased these and created a Return on Marketing Investment of over €4 for every €1 spent on the campaign – all at a time when competition for the public’s purse and their compassion were ever increasing.

But this wasn’t just a matter of raising money; this was about what can’t be counted. This case shows how advertising kept child welfare in the nation’s consciousness and, through a confluence of other factors such as volunteer enquiries and fundraising events, how this created an uplift in advocacy. This enables Barnardos to continue giving hope and opportunity to children and empowering them and their families to break the cycle of poverty. What counts, in this case, is the long-term social benefit of improving the futures of children whose well-being is under threat.

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