

# Everything you wanted to know about Christmas campaigns

Essential resources to plan  
your festive campaign

MONEY  
GIYING

The Virgin logo is a white circle containing the word "Virgin" in its signature red script font, positioned between the words "MONEY" and "GIYING".

# Why should I read this?



This Christmas promises to be unlike any we've known before. With the global pandemic still here and the prospect of further lockdowns looming, the charity sector faces a very different festive period.

For many, it's also a crucial Christmas. A recent survey by the Institute of Fundraising showed that Covid-19 has affected the finances of 77% of small charities, while increasing demand for charities' services (72% reported raised demand over 2020).

The season of goodwill is often a chance to raise much-needed funds. However, with restrictions limiting events and in-person fundraisers, the Christmas campaigns of 2020 will largely need to go digital. But how and where should smaller charities start?

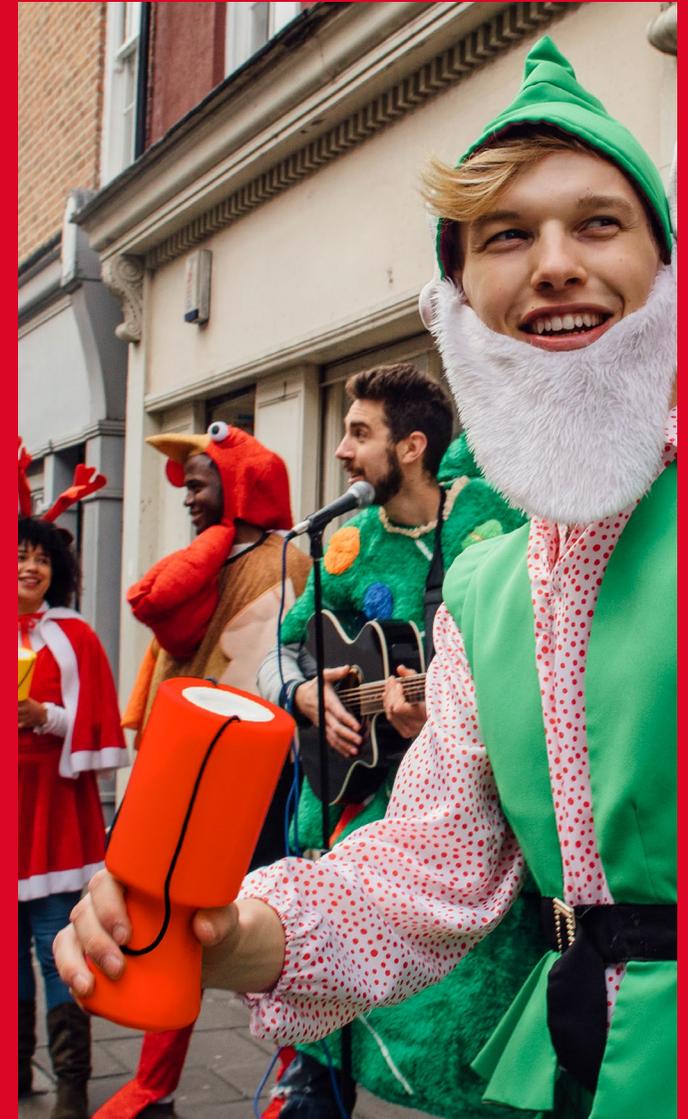
Since 2017, Virgin Money Giving's Charity Insider pages have been supporting charities with limited time, money or expertise with simple solutions and inspiring ideas.

By sharing the wisdom of charities big and small, who've been there and done it, we can help you reach more supporters and raise more money online.

In this special e-book, we've turned their knowledge into a handy guide for smaller charities. From how to generate ideas and gain media coverage via content creation, to campaign tools and social media tips, we've created a practical guide packed full of easy wins and tricks of the trade.

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# The five-step Christmas campaign



If you don't have time to read this guide in full today, we've included a quick summary below so you can get yourself up and running.

## STEP 1: Set up a campaign page on Virgin Money Giving

Campaign pages act as a focal point and give you a single link to share with the world – quite simply, they're the easiest way to start any sort of fundraising activity. You can use them to take direct donations, host fundraising pages for everyone collecting for your charity and encourage others to get involved. You can share the total you've raised – including all your individual fundraisers' efforts – and let people know how far you've got to go. For more details, check out [\*\*'Why should I set up a campaign on Virgin Money Giving?'\*\*](#)

## STEP 2: Decide on your Christmas campaign

We've got tips for generating game-changing ideas – see [\*\*'How do I brainstorm a good idea?'\*\*](#) – and a selection of great work from other charities (take a look at [\*\*'What are some of the best and most inspiring recent Christmas campaigns?'\*\*](#)). Reward donations with Christmas cards or ornaments, encourage your fundraisers to do sponsored runs in Santa hats or host a virtual Christmas quiz. Whatever you decide to do, it can be run through your campaign page.

## STEP 3: Tell people why it matters

We've seen a lot of successful campaigns on Virgin Money Giving and they all have a simple message at their heart – 'your money makes a difference'. By telling people about the good things you'll do with their money, they'll want to do and give even more. Hopefully your campaign page will reach hundreds, if not thousands, of people who are ready and raring to help. For more advice on messaging, check out [\*\*'How do the big charities do it?'\*\*](#)

## STEP 4: Get fundraisers

The beauty of campaign pages is that they make it easy for fundraisers to get involved. The global pandemic means lots of people have time on their hands and a desire to do something worthwhile. A simple click and they can be fundraising for your cause in no time. For more tips, see [\*\*'How do I inspire and motivate my fundraisers?'\*\*](#)

## STEP 5: Tell the world

This e-book includes sections on advertising ([\*\*'How do I get the most out of Facebook ads?'\*\*](#)), marketing ([\*\*'How do the experts run digital marketing campaigns?'\*\*](#)) and dealing with the press ([\*\*'How do I get media coverage?'\*\*](#)). Don't forget to tell your supporters first though. A newsletter or social media post showing your campaign's aims and how easy it is for people to donate or join your fundraisers is the best place to start.'

# How do I brainstorm a good idea?

**A ten-minute smartphone video uploaded to social media can raise more money than something that took a month to create and a million pounds to make. The important thing is that it's based on a compelling and relatable idea. If it is, it's worth investing time and energy in identifying a really brilliant concept for your Christmas campaign. Here are a few ideas of how best to approach that important first brainstorm, even if you're not able to get together in real life.**

## The Chainstorm

Send a group email to your team and ask them to 'reply all' with an idea for the campaign. Have them do so one by one in a set order – everyone has to take part, no-one can send more than one idea at a time and there's no feedback. This is just a way of gathering lots of suggestions and making sure everyone's voice is heard. Set a time limit of a day and chase up any stragglers – this one works best with quick-fire replies.

## The Other You

Ask your team to brainstorm solutions for your Christmas campaign and have them do it as someone else. This is a tried and tested – if a bit unusual – technique which involves you asking how a famous person might solve a problem – Oprah Winfrey, Kim Kardashian or even Batman, for example. It's a brilliant way to get people to relax and be comfortable airing their ideas without fear.

## The Starburst

This is a handy technique to interrogate ideas. Draw a six-pointed star and write a campaign concept in the centre of it, then show 'Who, what, where, when, how, why' on each of the points. The team then has to come up with – and answer – as many questions as possible in each section, until they're satisfied no angle has been overlooked. If you can't meet up in person to do this, you can use the whiteboard function on Zoom to collaborate in real time.

## The Outside Influence

Brainstorming at your desk isn't easy – to get your creative juices flowing, a change of scene can be the boost you need. If you're able to do a socially-distanced walk together, you'll be amazed at how the fresh air and lack of screens help kick your brains into gear. If you can't get together, suggest to each team member that they dial in to a video call from a new setting – the local park, their favourite corner of a cafe – to give your ideas session a fresh backdrop.

## The Mutual Benefit Society

Encouraging outside input can be incredibly valuable. Team up with two other charities in different sectors who are also working on Christmas campaigns and set up an online meeting. Each charity will then take it in turns to present what they're looking for from their campaign, before listening as the other charities brainstorm ideas and solutions to help them. Listening in from a different perspective can make all the difference.



# How do I find my target audience?

**Before you can really plan your creative or work out your marketing channels, you need to have a good idea of who you're targeting. One good technique is to think about three strong supporters of your charity who you know personally. Try to pick three very different sorts of people and then write down absolutely everything you know about them. This could be:**

- their age, gender, location and marital status.
- their job and work patterns.
- the newspapers and magazines they read.
- the technology they use (smartphone, iPad, Kindle etc).
- the social media they use and what they use it for.
- the subscriptions they have.
- the supermarkets they shop at.
- the sports and hobbies they enjoy.
- where they go on holiday and what they do at the weekend.
- their heroes.
- what motivates them to support your charity.

You may even want to call the supporters in question to get their input. Once you've got the lists, you'll find that you have a host of starting points for places you can reach people like them through inserts in particular publications. For example, through promotion swaps with the newsletters of particular sports teams. You'll also know the sorts of ideas that may inspire them in a Christmas campaign.

There are more automated ways of finding new audiences from your existing supporters. If you've got a newsletter group of contacts on Mailchimp, for example, you can use it to discover similar audiences to target with Facebook and Instagram advertising.



# Why should I set up a campaign on Virgin Money Giving?

Virgin Money Giving's campaign tool can act as a catalyst for charity fundraising. It's also one of the easiest ways to bring your fundraisers together for your Christmas campaign. Between January and September 2020, charities raised over £21m using the campaign tool.



**Emma Rose,** charity account manager at **Virgin Money Giving,** answers some of the most frequently asked questions to help get you started.

## What is a Virgin Money Giving campaign page?



A campaign page is a single place where you can ask for direct donations and bring all your individual fundraisers together. Campaign pages are now available to every charity that's signed up on Virgin Money Giving.

## How can I make campaign pages work for me?



Campaign pages are flexible – you can ask for them to be open for direct donations as well as for fundraising. There might be people that have money to spare and will happily donate directly. And then you may have others who don't have spare cash but want to do an activity and get sponsored. Your supporters can set up a fundraising page for exactly that; it will feed into your campaign page too.

## Do I need to be technically minded to set up a campaign page?



No – it's quick and easy to set up your campaign. It takes five minutes and you're guided through a series of questions. You can add videos and images to make it Christmassy or match your charity's brand if that's what you want. And you get a unique link as well, which allows you to promote the campaign on your website, social media, newsletters and in the local press. Even if you do the bare minimum, which will take minutes, you'll have something great that can be promoted to your supporter base.

## How easy is it for fundraisers to get involved?



Super easy. Once your campaign page is live, people just need to click on 'Start fundraising'. Then, the donations they get for their own fundraising activities – it could be a virtual Christmas quiz or a mince pie bake – will feed into the amount raised overall. Their pages can also be displayed on your campaign page, which will hopefully encourage others to give or start fundraising themselves.

## Can I have people donate through a Campaign page in return for things like Christmas cards or mugs?



Absolutely. You get all the information on who the donors are and you're also able to ask additional questions like 'what colour mug would you like?' Or 'would you like a gift label attached?' It's easy to run a campaign like this and we've found them to be very popular.

## How does it work with Gift Aid?



Gift Aid collection is completely integrated for fundraising and donations. But importantly, you can also turn Gift Aid off. It's only applicable if people are donating something with no reward for doing so. However, if your campaign involves giving something back, like sending Christmas cards, it's not eligible for Gift Aid. This is why being able to easily turn Gift Aid off is important. If you do, you won't be able to integrate fundraisers into that campaign page – you can always set up another one for them though!

## Sounds great – how do I start?

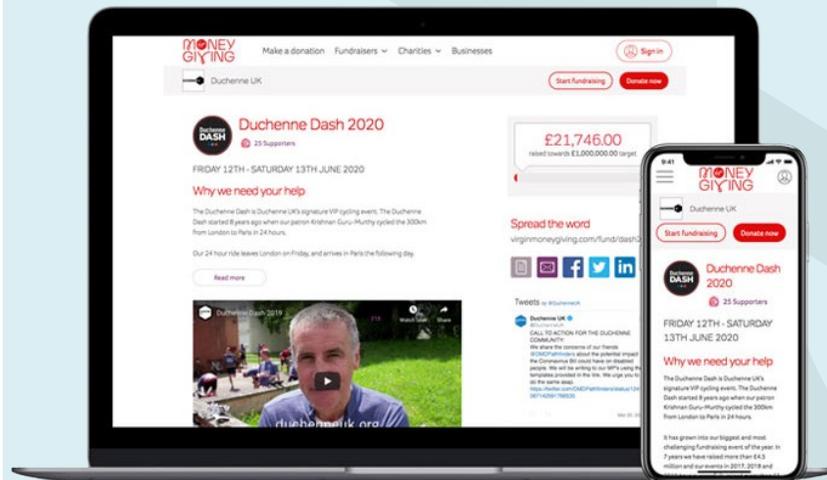


Head to our setup page – we'll guide you through the steps and Christmas can begin in earnest.

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Find out more about the campaign tool [here](#)

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# How do I create a beautiful campaign on a budget?

One of the advantages of the digital world is that even the smallest charity can reach a huge audience. But how can you make sure your campaign looks the part when you don't have the budget to hire a professional designer? Here are some websites, apps and programmes that can help you produce something gorgeous that doesn't cost the earth.

## YouTube

**Alongside cat videos and clips of children opening toys, YouTube is home to a wealth of information. From how to produce movie-quality footage on your mobile to how to make a flyer using PowerPoint, there's little it can't teach you. This includes how to use most of the tools below...**

## Unsplash

In the digital world, images are everything. While it's tempting to do a Google search for images and just download them for use, this risks breaking copyright law. Instead, head to Unsplash for some beautiful free photos, including lots of fantastic festive shots. You just need to remember to credit the photographer.

## Infogram

Infographics can be a great way of making your mark online, particularly on social media. Infogram allows you to create maps, charts and simple illustrations quickly and easily. The basic version is free and allows you to publish your infographics direct to your feeds. You can also take screenshots, which are good enough quality to use online.

## iMovie

If you are an Apple Mac user, then iMovie is a very powerful video-editing tool that comes installed for free on your device. With a drag and drop interface and handy title screen templates, it's intuitive enough for a beginner.

## Storyblocks

If you want to spruce up your Christmas video then a little bit of stock footage – even generic clips of present-opening or people laughing – can really help. We think Storyblocks offers the best value for small charities and with monthly plans available, you can cancel after Christmas.

## Affinity

If you are feeling confident enough to try something with a bit more power, Affinity produces good photo editing and design programmes. Some are free and others are available for a low, one-off fee. Armed with this software, some YouTube tutorials and a lot of patience, the world is your oyster.

## Giphy

GIFs (simple, low-resolution animations) can liven up timelines, websites and email newsletters. Create your own at Giphy – an online GIF maker that lets you upload videos, images and text to create your own eye candy.

# How do the experts run digital marketing campaigns?

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by digital marketing. But according to **Emma Elsdon** from **Virgin Money**, there's really nothing to be afraid of. "Marketing is mostly just common sense," she said. "There are no secrets to successful digital marketing, it's about being authentic."



Here's Emma's why, who, what, how and when of digital marketing for charities.

## Why?



The most important thing for a charity is to understand why they're running a digital marketing campaign. What's the purpose? If you can distil that and make sure the people you're trying to engage with quickly understand that too, your campaign can succeed.

## Who?



Who are you trying to reach? You can't reach everyone, so identify and understand your audience – this way, you'll know who you want to talk to and how to talk to them. You can do this by looking at your current supporters and trying to find others like them or targeting specific demographics. Get a good analytics package installed on your website to help you to understand who's engaging with it. You don't need to spend big – Google Analytics offers a free package and it will give you a huge amount of rich data.

## What?



Now that you know who your audience is, you can tailor relevant content for them. Will your audience respond to local references? Or slang? Again, analytics can help. It will tell you what content is attracting the most people or encouraging them to give. You'll then be able to produce more of it.

## How?



The 'how' is simply how are you going to attract people to your site or content? The most cost-effective way is to generate organic traffic – the way to do this is to have great content that's relevant to the searcher and that goes back to knowing your audience. Once you start to understand your customers, you can create content that's suited to them. Then, others like them will follow.

## When?



Digital is always on, but that doesn't mean your campaign has to be running all the time. Analytics can show you if people are likely to engage during their downtime – if so, schedule activity for evenings and weekends.

# What's the best software for project planning a campaign?

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There's a huge amount of project planning software out there, with more services launching all the time. Happily, most of them offer free versions so you can try them out with your team and see whether they work for you before committing any budget. Some key things to think about while evaluating are:

- the complexity of the campaigns you are creating.
  - the number of stakeholders who need to be able to contribute.
  - the extent to which they need to collaborate with one another.
  - the importance of reporting tools.
  - whether you need to integrate accounting software.
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## Here are four good options to start you off...

### Google Drive

Free with Gmail account

If your team is small and your projects straightforward, you may find you just need a free cloud-based document where you can store tasks, colour code them by team member and check them off when complete. Simply jump into Google Drive and create a Google Sheet (their version of Excel). You can leave comments for one another, instant message while updating the sheet together and add in links to other documents on your Drive. You can also set up shared Google Calendars to schedule events and meetings. If you're just putting a toe in the project management water, Google Drive could also be a good option to help you work out what you might need from a more advanced piece of software.

### Proofhub

14-day free trial, proofhub.com

A good option for medium-sized teams with a simple and intuitive interface and flat fee regardless of the number of users. It's easy to create new projects, add workflows, set individual deadlines and track progress. There's a dedicated app too, so your team can check in with their assignments on their smartphones.

### Asana

30-day free trial, asana.com

Beautiful interactive Kanban boards and Gantt charts, individual to-do lists and timed sprints. These are the tools that advanced project planners get excited about and Asana has all of these and more. Gamifying your colleagues' tasks help generate momentum around projects, while the workload tools make it easy to see who's overloaded and who could step in to pick up the slack. The basic product is free but paid-for versions do charge per user (starting at £9.49 per month) so costs can mount up swiftly.

### Monday.com

14-day free trial, monday.com

Monday.com promises to help your team "thrive while working remotely". Alongside the standard project management tools, it offers lots of functionality too. This includes charts showing who's working when (and what time zone they're in), integration with Zoom so people can catch up on meetings they've missed and tools designed to boost company culture and morale. You can build your own custom-made dashboard to track everything that's going on and even automate task flows. That way, when one component is finished, the job passes automatically to the next person in the chain. The basic version starts from £7 per user, per month.

# How can I make #GivingTuesday work for me?



On 1 December, there'll be a global day of giving. Started in 2012, **#GivingTuesday** was created as an antidote to the mass consumerism witnessed over the previous days of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Holding the world record for the most money donated online in 24 hours, **#GivingTuesday** offers charities a fantastic opportunity to give their Christmas campaigns a flying start. **Gráinne Mathews** of the **Charities Aid Foundation** explains how to make the most from the day.

## Say thanks

"A lot of charities use this day to say thanks to people who've supported them all year round, she said.

"Charities have told us that handwritten thank you notes work really well. People who receive notes are often so moved they actually send in their donations again, or increase their regular donations. Whatever the size of your charity, all supporters like to feel special and valued."

## Tell people what they're supporting

"It's easy for people to forget what charities actually do with their support. Having a case study of someone talking about the personal impact of a charity's work on #GivingTuesday is a great way to engage new supporters."

## Play to your strengths

"The best campaigns are the personal ones. Small charities aren't going to have the resources some larger charities have to create a national campaign. But they can use what makes them unique to engage current and new supporters. #GivingTuesday's high profile gives charities an opportunity to engage with new audiences that they maybe wouldn't get on any other day. We worked with a small Scottish organisation which helps disadvantaged communities learn media and digital skills. On a past #GivingTuesday they hosted a 24-hour radio marathon and this is a great example of a small charity using their unique set of skills to show the impact of their work."

## Ask for donations

"This may be a basic piece of advice but asking for donations works. People appreciate the chance to do some good in a period that's become about consumerism."

## Look into corporate partnerships

"Corporate partnerships are a great way for charities to reach more people on #GivingTuesday. A lot of corporates and businesses have CSR strategies and they want to give something back. So it's a case of finding the best fit. If you have a small organisation that needs to build brand awareness, contact a local marketing or PR company and ask if they could give your staff some pro bono training. That's then something they can talk about on #GivingTuesday as their way of giving back to the community and the charitable sector. It's a win-win."

# How do I get the most out of Facebook ads?

It's never too early to start planning your Facebook ad campaign for Christmas. We asked **Ben Matthews** of **Empower**, a digital marketing agency for charities, for his top tips on how to begin.



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*"I help charities better understand how Facebook ads can be an effective fundraising tool," he said.*

*"By starting small, learning what works best and then scaling up their campaigns, many charities we've worked with have benefitted greatly by investing carefully in Facebook ads."*

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## Start small

"When starting out with Facebook ads, it can be difficult to know what'll work and why. It's best to first test your campaign with a small budget (no more than £100). Once you know what's working for you, and why it's working for you, you can make a bigger investment."

## Test and learn

"With this initial outlay, you should experiment. Try different types of content, different approaches to your messaging and change any other variables that are relevant to your campaign. See which messages and content are getting the best responses and then put more funds behind these ads."

## Set up conversion tracking

"Pixel is a small piece of code that sits on your website and tracks which Facebook users are visiting your website. If a user makes a donation to your charity, Facebook will know this and you can target that person's connections on the site, as well as similar people. This means you can increasingly show ads to the kind of users who are more likely to donate."

## Create a custom audience

"One way to drive more donations through Facebook is to use the site's Custom Audience feature. After spending your initial £100 or so on generating awareness around a Christmas campaign, you can then use the data from these ads to build a Facebook Custom Audience. This consists of the people who engaged with your ads and are therefore more likely to be receptive to future ads."

## Convert email sign-ups to donors

"Email newsletters are great for encouraging subscribers to donate. They're especially important when you have recruited donors from a Christmas campaign and want to keep them engaged as you go into the New Year. Facebook ads can be used to grow your email subscriber list so you can then send messages with direct donation requests. This may well be cheaper than trying to get direct donations on Facebook."

# How do I turn unwanted items into donations?

With the help of tidying gurus such as Marie Kondo, there is a whole lot of decluttering going on, especially as people try to get their homes in order before the Christmas period. We've now got a way for your supporters to declutter their homes and raise money for your charity at the same time.

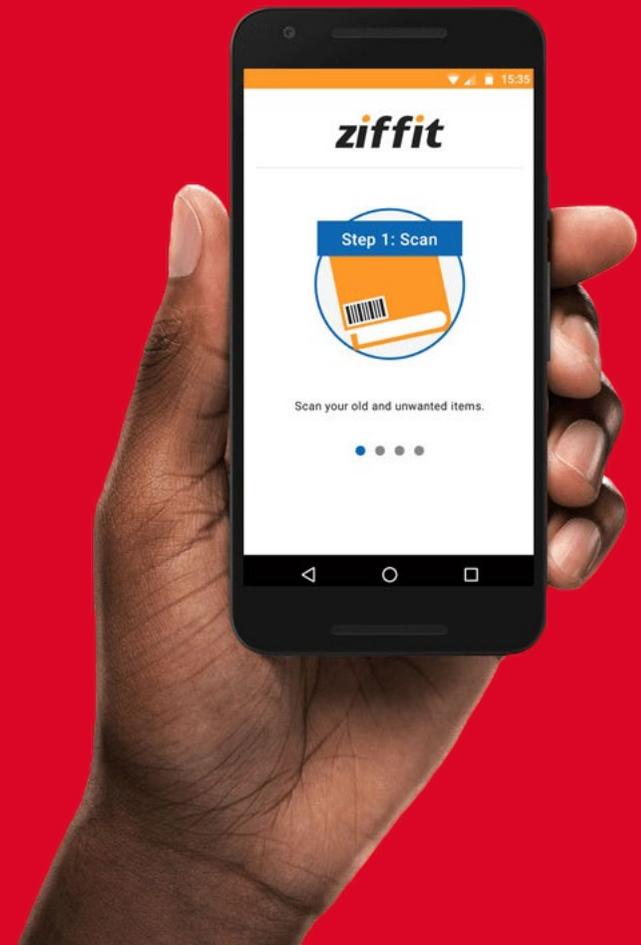
Virgin Money Giving has teamed up with Ziffit to help supporters of charities turn their unwanted items into donations. It's a website and app that makes raising money from your unwanted old CDs, DVDs, books and games incredibly simple. Using the scanner on the app, Ziffit instantly values your old stuff so you can fill a box full of items you no longer need, send it off free of charge and generate cash for your chosen cause.

Ziffit's partnership with Virgin Money Giving means that 100% of the money generated is turned into donations – charities registered with VMG appear on a list when the customer reaches the checkout. Charities can also put a link to Ziffit on their site encouraging fundraisers to #DeclutterAndDonate.

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Find out more about Ziffit

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# How do I inspire and motivate my fundraisers?

**Your charity couldn't exist without your supporters, so it's important to let them know how much you value everything they do for you. Your gratitude and guidance is especially important when your supporters are in the middle of a fundraising campaign for your cause. This is a journey you're taking together, working towards a shared goal. Letting them know you're with them every step of the way can help motivate them to achieve great things**

## Offer the personal touch

The more that charities communicate with their fundraisers, the more successful fundraisers will be. It's important to make them feel valued, so if you see someone create a fundraising page in your charity's name, it's a great idea to get in touch and start to build that relationship. If someone has committed to raise a lot of money for a charity, they might well be nervous about hitting that goal – having someone from the charity get in touch to offer advice and support can be quite a relief. Giving them a named contact is very beneficial if you have the resources to do this. Knowing that somebody is at the other end of a phone line or email can be hugely reassuring.

## Lend your voice

It is easy to underestimate the power of a repost or a retweet. A charity highlighting the good work a fundraiser is doing can really raise spirits, bring in new donations and spur that individual on. If you amplify your fundraiser's message through your own social media channels, it will reinforce the fact that you're all on the same team. But be judicious with your reposting and retweeting – your followers will lose interest if you overdo it.

## Share good ideas

Fundraisers are also always looking for inspiration. If charities can share great ideas online from across their virtual community – be it a pub quiz or a sponsored dog walk – it will really help those fundraisers to get out there.

## Send newsletters

A well-crafted newsletter will pay dividends, especially around Christmas. Share stories of those who've been there and done it, explaining why they did the fundraising, what it did for them and how it made the world a better place. There's no better way to motivate fundraisers than by sharing stories of fundraising heroes from the past. But do consider moving away from the one-size-fits-all approach to newsletters. Instead, take steps to personalise your messages by segmenting your audience based on engagement and behaviour.

## Remember to say thank you

A simple thank you goes a long way. Let your fundraisers know that you appreciate their efforts and they'll be more likely to raise funds for your charity in the future.



# How do I create a virtual event?

The Covid-19 outbreak has transformed our lives and social distancing measures will disrupt the campaigns of many fundraisers this Christmas. The good news is that technology is bringing people together in ways that would have been unimaginable a few years ago. Your charity can hold a wide variety of fundraising events online; here are some handy hints for getting your virtual event right on the night.

## Establish a good connection

Nothing spoils a virtual event quite like dodgy internet. To give yourself the best chance, ditch the wifi and plug your computer directly into the router. You just need an ethernet cable and, if your computer doesn't have a special port, an adaptor. If your computer's nowhere near the router, don't fear, affordable tech like the **TP Link powerline adaptor** can turn your home's electrical wiring into network cables. This means you'll be able to get a strong, steady signal anywhere.

## Get to know your software

It's worth making yourself familiar with all the functions of your virtual event platform to see whether it's got some useful but lesser-known gimmicks that could help. On Zoom, for example, there's a little-used 'breakout room' button that enables you to split attendees into small groups in individual chat rooms. This is perfect for creating teams for a virtual pub quiz.

## Don't start on the dot

Zoom and similar video conferencing options are all pretty fiddly and some attendees at your virtual event are likely to get a bit flustered trying to figure everything out. Wait a few minutes from the advertised start time to allow everyone to get settled.

## Change the background

On Zoom, you can choose your own background so it's worth looking for something that fits with the theme of your campaign. If you plan in advance, you can even create a background that features the link for donations and incorporate a QR code that takes attendees straight to your donations page. Be careful when choosing backgrounds though, it's easy to end up with something corny or ugly. It's best to keep it as simple and clear as possible.

## Get your timings straight

Guard against events ending too early or too late by having a full run-through with a stopwatch in advance. Give any speakers a five-minute warning that they need to wrap it up and prepare extra content to fill time if necessary.

## Make it easy to donate

As well as incorporating links and QR codes through your choice of backgrounds, you can share links with attendees in chat boxes. Don't be afraid to regularly remind people that you're here to raise money for charity. And make sure you finish the event by urging people to give and plugging the link for donations one more time.

## Mute yourself

Unless you're running an interactive session, you've got to hit the mute button on everyone who isn't speaking. This is vital to make sure there are no feedback loops with background noise being amplified from a dozen different laptops.

# How do I create a cost-effective and impactful video?

Video is a great way to tell compelling stories on social media, making it a fantastic tool for fundraising. But how can you do it on a limited budget?

## It doesn't need to be perfect

You don't need a big budget or even a medium-sized budget. You don't have to make a slick and professional video. You don't need to be a YouTube star. If you're honest, authentic and true to yourself, you can inspire people – a smartphone camera on selfie mode will comfortably do the job. As long as the video displays your charity's passion and the story that needs to be told, that's all you need.

## Get help from friends

You don't have to be very tech-savvy to make a video on your smartphone. But it does help if you have someone with a bit of experience – if you're at a smaller charity, there might not be many experts on hand. So rope in friends or family members who are a dab hand at social media. Younger people tend to be comfortable around technology and regularly use social media to communicate, so they can help you film, edit and publish your video. It'll also be exciting for them to play a role in your campaign.

## Stick to Facebook

Facebook is the biggest social media channel and that's where you'll find the most potential supporters. You can also post video on YouTube and Twitter but Facebook works best for video fundraising. Doing it on a single platform helps you focus your efforts too. The Facebook algorithm favours video and these posts tend to perform really well.

## Get it seen

This may sound like obvious advice but it's important to get this bit right. Make sure your Facebook video post is set to 'Public'. This means anybody can view it, not just your friends.

## Make more videos

Your supporters are emotionally invested in your campaign and will want to know how you progress so keep them updated by making more videos. You can also create a video after the campaign ends to tell your supporters about the difference their money will make.



# How do I get media coverage?

Spreading the word on a tight budget is a challenge at any time, but it's even tougher in the run up to Christmas. This is a time of year when lots of charities are trying to get media coverage at the same time.

## Tie your campaign strongly to Christmas

Look for obvious links between Christmas and your cause. For example, the homeless charity Crisis was born out of the season of goodwill and Christmas remains at the heart of their message. Journalists and editors love feel-good Christmas stories and your campaign is more likely to get coverage at this time of year if it possesses that festive spirit.

## Think pictures

It doesn't matter if you're dealing with Facebook, your local paper or The Times – a good picture makes all the difference. Make it easy for people to spread your message by having a variety of good quality, high resolution pictures ready to go in the media section of your website.

## Listen up

Radio remains one of the most powerful ways of getting your message across. There's a natural trust between presenters and their audience and local stations in particular are always looking for good stories. Take the time to discover who is producing your favourite talk shows and contact them with your ideas. Make your pitch short and sweet – just one or two really strong paragraphs about the story you want to tell.

## Know your audience

Understand who you want to hear your message and have a clear idea of the single action you want them to take. Do you want money? Are you raising awareness? Choose the media outlet that's most likely to speak to that audience. Don't send every media organisation the same press release; instead, tailor them according to their readers or listeners. Use language and a tone appropriate to the audience you're talking to.

## Tell human stories

It's impossible to ignore a story about one person beautifully told. Make people care by appealing to their emotions. Don't do it in a crass or prurient way. Don't be overly earnest. Be human and compassionate in your storytelling and let your passion for your charity pour out of every word.

## Turn on the charm

Know the name of the person you are sending your idea to (no 'To whom it may concern'). Flatter their work ('I loved your recent piece on...'). Don't send them something generic. Give them a unique angle that's right for them. Grab their attention. Keep it short. Offer all the access they need. Then follow up politely – don't pester, give it three emails before you call.

# How do the big charities do it?

In terms of resources, there's a world of difference between huge national charities and tiny local ones. But that doesn't mean that small charities have nothing to learn from their bigger counterparts when it comes to Christmas campaigns. We spoke to some fundraising experts at **Crisis**, a charity famed for its Christmas campaigning, to discover how to get it right at this critical time of year.

## Christmas is key

"Christmas is vital to Crisis. We welcome around 4,000 homeless people to our Christmas centres in the UK and over 10,000 people volunteer to make this happen. We raise a lot of awareness over this period and it's central to our fundraising. We raise almost half our income over Christmas and almost all our supporters first engage with us at this time of year."

## Keep Christmas at the heart of your campaign

"To succeed at Christmas, you need to be really clear about what you want from the festive season – your campaign or fundraising ask has to be relevant to Christmas. Before thinking about the mechanics, you should work really hard on your case for support. Try and make it tangible, with clear impact, and integrated into your overall purpose as an organisation – and present it through great storytelling."

## Pick your channel

"Facebook is a good tool for finding a specific audience on a limited budget. Build a base of supporters and encourage them via email, phone

and mail to engage in as many ways as possible – volunteering, campaigning, fundraising and attending events, for example. You don't have to post on social media several times a day like we do, you just have to make your posts count. Use moving images – GIFs or videos – and actual photographs rather than illustrations. Images from previous campaigns help inspire fundraisers. If you don't have any previous campaigns, it might be worth staging some photos. While social media offers the cheapest entry point, popping something in the post can be hugely influential at this time of year. It's not only about raising money, it's about raising awareness and a mail campaign can help you reach people you might miss online."

## Don't forget about the rest of the year

"It's not all about Christmas. If people have a great experience supporting you through the year, they will be much more likely to support the Christmas appeal next time round. Also, not every charity's message will fit with Christmas. If this is the case for you, rather than attempt to shoehorn your message in, try looking at other events such as #GivingTuesday."



# What are some of the best and most inspiring recent Christmas campaigns?

To help get your creative juices flowing, here's our pick of some standout Christmas campaigns from recent years.

## **'Christmas Jumpers'** for Grace Kelly Ladybird Trust

This campaign by a children's cancer charity combined two things everyone loves about Christmas – good intentions and looking silly. The idea is as simple as it gets, invite your supporters to don their most colourful Christmas jumpers and donate one of the suggested amounts to charity. It worked so well because people would go to work wearing ridiculous jumpers and colleagues would ask them why. This would then lead to a discussion about a cause close to their hearts.

## **'Christmas Advent Countdown'** for German Shepherd Rescue Elite

A fundraising advent calendar with a difference, this dog welfare charity posted a new picture of a gorgeous German shepherd on its social channels every day alongside a call for donations. The idea was perfectly formed for Facebook – shareable pictures, urgent wording and a festive message of canine commitment.

## **'Santa Dash'** for Great Ormond Street Hospital

The London children's hospital took a simple idea and executed it brilliantly. Fundraisers ran a 5 or 10k route in a Santa suit and mingled afterwards over mince pies. While the Covid-19 pandemic will rule out mass gatherings this winter, it's still possible to organise large-scale running events. Take the Virgin Money London Marathon as inspiration – this year the 26.2 miles could be run anywhere over a 24-hour period. Virtual fundraising events have their drawbacks (it's harder to mingle over mince pies, for example), but there's a lot to be said for an event that supporters can join wherever they are on the planet.

## **'Tree recycling'** for Dorothy House

For community-based organisations, offering your charity's services for the post-Christmas and New Year comedown can be a useful way to maintain your profile throughout the entirety of the festive period. With the help of local volunteers, Wiltshire-based hospice Dorothy House runs a popular Christmas-tree recycling service each year. The old trees are chipped and shredded and the chips recycled (which people offer a donation to use). A campaign like this keeps that all-important Christmas momentum going strong into the New Year.

## **'Crafternoons'** for Mind

Like mental health charity Mind and their Christmas wreath-making workshop, why not host a fabulously festive 'Crafternoon'? The concept is simple – encourage supporters to get creative with their friends and spend an afternoon making cards, decorations and other Christmassy things. The craft party's host collects donations on the charity's behalf and everyone's that little bit richer for the experience. This year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Mind is running virtual crafternoons – it's exactly the same concept, just through a video conferencing site.

## **#JustOneBook** for BookTrust

This is a simple, powerful and heart-warming campaign from the UK's largest children's reading charity. With each £10 donation, a vulnerable young person will get a hand-picked hardback kids book sent to them for Christmas. People love to know where their money is going and the opportunity to brighten up a child's Christmas is one that's hard to refuse.

If you need help to get started with your Christmas Campaign, or you just want to chat about your ideas, please get in touch with one of our team today.



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You can also get in touch with the team on live chat when you visit the Virgin Money Giving [Contact Us](#) page at [virginmoneygiving.com](http://virginmoneygiving.com)

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The Virgin logo, featuring the word "Virgin" in its signature script font inside a white circle, which is part of the "MONEY" text.