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## Using Twitter to Do Good

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**HIGHLIGHT:** How a nonprofit is leveraging social media to raise money

The Bob Woodruff Foundation, a nonprofit supporting wounded soldiers that had raised money and awareness mainly through an annual comedy event, has a new -- and ambitious -- goal: To raise \$1.65 million, or \$1 for every American soldier who has served in Afghanistan and Iraq since 9/11 through a Twitter campaign.

To do so, the foundation is joining an increasing number of brands -- including Target and Kraft -- which are using social media to raise money.

When the effort launched in early May, the plan was to focus on Twitter with a Memorial Day weekend initiative called "TweetToRemind." (The name is a play on the foundation's "ReMind" branding campaign that launched in November 2008 with pro-bono help from JWT's Atlanta office.) As the holiday approached, however, it became clear that other platforms would be needed--and the Memorial Day weekend deadline was extended to July 4.

Twitter "is an awesome way to get the impulsive donor and the repeat small donor," says Marian Salzman, partner and CMO of Porter Novelli, who was working at JWT when she introduced agency CEO Bob Jeffrey to Bob and Lee Woodruff. "It's also a terrific tool for education and message reinforcement. [But] we didn't get some of our folks on Twitter just because of demographics -- [they were] too young [teens] and too old [boomers]. ... We moved across platforms."

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Lee Woodruff, co-founder of the foundation with her husband Bob, the ABC anchor and journalist who suffered a near-fatal brain injury while covering the war in Iraq, says of the Twitter initiative, "[President] Obama [and his online campaign] ... changed the game. We thought, 'Why not bring that to fundraising ... make it also something younger folks can get their arms around?'" But while Twitter is "a hot medium," she adds, she found that many of the people she interacted with on her book tours and at foundation events were not Twitter users. "We still needed to use regular media, Facebook, YouTube, the Web site and e-mail. We needed to round it out," she says.

To help engage teens, two of the Woodruff's four children, Mack, 17, and Cathryn, 15, led a group of 525 teens

called the Tweet Team. Each member pledged \$5.25 and worked to raise \$100 over the weekend by recruiting 100 of their friends. They also sent at least one tweet each day to ensure that wounded veterans would remain in Americans' thoughts.

Over the holiday the organization raised more than \$75,000, with \$45,000 coming from the TweetToRemind site and \$30,000 from ReMind.org. Three days after Memorial Day, the donations reached over \$100,000.

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With two "Stand Up for Heroes" comedy fundraisers behind them, the foundation wanted to find a way to extend awareness beyond Veteran's Day, around the time when the yearly benefit is held.

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So the foundation and its communications team -- including JWT and Porter Novelli -- turned to social media. The "ReMind" branding campaign includes a web site, print ads, online videos and branded merchandise (such as the necklace pictured above).

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"Bob is a media celebrity and everyone knows his story, but we needed to transition into a broader, more relevant story for the common soldier," says JWT's Jeffrey. "It was important that we create the educational part of the foundation, ReMind.org."

The challenge in this public-awareness initiative, say the team members, is getting people to separate the war and its political baggage from the experience of the soldiers.

"It's hard to get people to believe they can actually make a difference for military families," says Salzman. "The idea is that it's not about the war, it's about the warrior."

For JWT, "It's not only a humanitarian effort, but a learning experience about how to use social media to get responses from consumers, especially the younger ones," says Jeffrey.

While the \$1.65 million -- if the goal is reached -- will go a long way towards helping veterans rehabilitate upon their return, the conversation and public awareness the campaign helps raise is also critical, say those involved in the effort.

Ren&#233; Bardorf, executive director of the Bob Woodruff Foundation, says while they "really hope we reach that goal," it's just as important to get the word out about the veterans. "We owe it to the service members and their families to talk about it," she says.

Speaking at holiday parade in Hague, N.Y., a town of about 1,000 residents, Woodruff says she realized "it's going to take everything," including good old-fashioned pass-the-bucket-style fundraising, to reach their goal. She says she walked away with \$90 in donations just from people who walked up to her with dollar bills.

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"One of the things we came out of Memorial Day realizing was the importance of parades in small-town America," she says, which is why the foundation plans to arm teens with buckets to pass around during parades. "It's up to every American to help our wounded heal, and we feel like we can do this community by community."

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