

REBELS WITH A CAUSE

Make a Difference with Cause Marketing

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Women's March, DC, public domain

With 4th of July fast approaching, now is the ideal time to talk about the role of cause-marketing in helping to ensure that all Americans continue to benefit from the rights and freedoms that millions of our citizens like Patrick Henry, [Francis Salvador](#), Fredrick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, Alice Paul, Dalton Trumbo, Martin Luther King, Jr, [Viola Gregg Luizzo](#) and [Michelle Vinson](#) labored and sacrificed so much for.

As I was listening to [WAMC's Roundtable](#) the other day while driving to meet with one of my clients, one of the station's listeners called in expressing great concern about our nation's new immigration policy that separates children and parents as they attempt to cross our borders. The listener said that while she had never really paid much attention to the illegal immigration debate, she started to cry at the cruelty and trauma of tearing children away from parents with no explanation and sending them to live with strangers alone in a strange country.

"It's deeply upsetting," the woman said to the radio panel. "Particularly because I don't know what to do about it."

Thankfully, one of the panelists jumped in immediately. "There's lots you can do. Firstly, we have primary elections coming up here in New York later this month and then the 2018 mid-terms in November. You can make sure you vote for candidates who will fight to change such policies. You can volunteer at one of the many groups here in the Hudson Valley dedicated to helping immigrant families. If you have the money, you can make a donation to groups who help immigrants or children of immigrants. And you can write letters to your local, state and federal lawmakers expressing your concern about the way these families are being handled."

Despite the seriousness of the subject, listening to the panelist talk so definitively about the many ways this caller could help, I immediately felt better, lighter. Not because the problem instantly had been solved, far from it, but because in a 30-second response, the panelist reminded us listeners of the power of cause-related marketing: anyone can make a difference if she is just willing to act.

The success of cause-related marketing relies primarily on two concepts: a passion to advance a cause, idea or activity you believe in and effectively educating and persuading others to join you in supporting that cause, be it protecting our civil rights, funding for the arts, combating climate change, working to eradicate mental illness, cancer or heart disease, stopping gun violence, improving public education, building more playgrounds and public swimming pools for disadvantaged youth or advocating for universal health care or thousands of other worthy causes.

Not everyone is comfortable writing letters or calling or emailing their Congress member. And most of us lack the resources to donate large amounts of money to one or more nonprofit organizations. But a well-run cause-related marketing campaign takes that into account by drawing on the individual skills and interests of your supporters, volunteers and staff to appeal to a variety of audiences using multiple communications and outreach techniques.

Perhaps that means recruiting people to drive senior citizens and others who don't have cars to the polls to vote today in New York's primary election; asking those who enjoy the outdoors to hand out flyers about your organization at the local Metro North Station or at public parks; if you have volunteers who love to exercise, ask if they would be willing to go door-to-door to educate neighbors about your organization's latest initiative, or participate in fun runs, triathlons or bungee jumps to raise money and/or call attention to your cause.

Others possess strong nurturing skills that they can use to help kids to learn, nurse or visit the sick or infirm, or help care for abandoned animals at a local pet shelter. Others who are natural leaders or possess great charisma can be trained as spokespersons, head committees or lead a delegation to Albany or Washington, DC to advocate for new or amended laws or government funding in support of your cause. Those with a gift for narrative can interview the people your organization benefits and write up stories for your website, newsletters or educational brochures to help potential supporters empathize with your cause or better understand what your organization does.

Just as America has always been a nation of immigrants, we also are a nation born of protest, standing up to protect ourselves from unfair British tax laws, such as the Stamps Act and the Tea Act. This quickly escalated when the British Army began commandeering our homes and our

food, took away our right to trial by jury, and in many parts of the country banned our right to simply to come together to talk to one another in a public setting. Our founding fathers (and mothers) recognized the inherent danger when such rights are taken away, which is why the U.S. Bill of Rights lead off with the First Amendment that guarantees freedom of speech, the press, religion, the right to assemble and to petition the government when we feel that local, state or federal government has caused us harm, for these are the fundamental building blocks of democracy.

Corporations and government agencies deploy PR and marketing communications initiatives to inform and influence their audiences all the time. Cause marketing allows nonprofits and individuals to do the same. It is yet another item in the PR toolbox to draw on when you want to make the case for what matters most.

Sandi Sonnenfeld is a published author, freelance content developer and corporate communications strategist. For more on my credentials, please visit my profile at www.linkedin.com/in/sandisonnenfeld.