

Award winning corporate partnerships: is there a formula?

When it comes to corporate and charity partnerships, the bar is set higher every year but what's the formula for an award-winning partnership? Emily Shelford, **Head of Partnership Management at Macmillan Cancer Support** explains what works well for them.

Last month, our partnerships with M&S and npower secured seven awards at the 2017 Corporate Engagement Awards. They were recognised for both raising a huge amount of money but also for utilising their organisations strengths. So how do partnerships enter that much-coveted award-winning space?

Create Change

Starting in 2004, our partnership with npower grew when Macmillan's support line fed back that fuel poverty was a real issue for people living with cancer; which led to the development of the npower Macmillan Fund in 2007 – a programme that caps energy bills and writes off debt for people living with cancer who are struggling with their energy costs. Twelve years on, npower has helped over 32,000 families, giving support worth £1,405,291 in 2016 – which demonstrates the change that this partnership has had on real lives.

Align Brands

Voted the No.1 charity brand by the Charity Brand Index for the last four years, Macmillan works with many businesses that share our values and what we stand for. With M&S, there is a clear link between our brands as we both strive to provide quality and consistency of service – something which has been vital when developing plans around World's Biggest Coffee Morning, as we both want to create the very best products and experience for everyone involved. Reinforcing what each organisation stands for is important for both partners as it gives employees, customer and service users alike a really defined understanding of what the partnership hopes to achieve.

Measuring success

Although hitting income targets is important, other measures of success can also be relevant when it comes to creating an award-winning partnership. For example, impact measurement — where there has been growth in service delivery or take up or being able to demonstrate where partnership PR has been able to raise awareness of a campaign.

Get Employee Support

A charity partnership is a great way for businesses to boost staff morale, and can also help companies recruit an enthusiastic work force. Last year, M&S staff raised an incredible £1 million during September as part of the company's commitment to Coffee Morning, demonstrating the huge income that can be driven through galvanising that staff support.

Partnerships aren't without their challenges, and while there is much time spent negotiating and exploring ways for both organisations to agree joint objectives, it's clear that by building those positive relationships, teaming up to tackle issues head on and creating an open, honest dialogue can lead to real positive outcomes for the charity and the corporate partner.