



Stanford eCorner

Awareness and Experience Fundraising

Scott Harrison, *charity: water*

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Scott Harrison, founder of charity: water, shares some of the innovative methods he and his partners have used to grow awareness of their cause and raise funds in the charity sector.



Transcript

Fundraising day number one. This is a little sad. But the only thing I knew how to do was to throw a party in the club. I am like let me see if I can redeem this lost decade. I threw my 31st birthday party in a night club. I got 700 people to come out. I gave them open bar for an hour and I charged them 20 bucks at the door. But the main difference was I did not pocket the \$15,000 this time and we took 100% of that money to refugee camp in Northern Uganda, a place called Bobi where 31,638 people are living and there was one water project. So we wished we could have done more but we did six, we rehabbed a bunch of wells and then we sent those photos and the GPS back to the 700 people that had attended the party. And they were like blown away.

Some of them didn't remember attending the party. They were like wow I guess I was generous. But in all seriousness they never expected to hear from the charity again. I mean they gave 20 bucks and here they are getting photos and GPS and proof and a video of what this night, what this gathering of people did for people across the world and we said this is very powerful. Let's continue to close the loop. Let's show people their impact and let's keep doing this until we solve the problem. Okay, I tried to come out with creative ways to get people to think differently about water. So I wanted to shoot rich people in New York City in the same situations as the people we were serving around the world. So these kids in the bottom right, they go to a \$35,000 a year private school. Imagine if they had to carry 40 pounds of water on the Upper East Side.

I mean their parents would never allow this. Imagine if your mom or your grandma had to drink water like that that had bone and hair in it, like the women on the left told me. Sent some of my banker friends out to Central Park lunch breaks and said go get water. We would never allow this. We started to try to partner creatively with brands. This was the biggest coup ever. We went to Saks Fifth Avenue and we said you guys have figured out how to sell \$5,000 handbags to women, that's amazing. We have \$5,000 water projects. We should totally partner. We're both in New York.

So I was not booted from the CEO's office and they liked this idea and they wound up shooting their catalogues in water for two seasons. They gave us the windows of the Fifth Avenue Store after Giorgio Armani took his windows down and we put up pictures and we built a well in the window. And they started their employees their customers, their vendors, the story. And they raised over \$700,000 to help 140 communities. Soon after that the MacCallan came to us and they said we make whiskey, lot of water in the making of whiskey and there is a lot of water in Scotland. That's what we said, we were like and. So their marketing team said well we have a 64-year-old whiskey. It's the finest we've ever made. What if we took it on a world tour and if you wanted to taste our whiskey you have to drop \$5000. And we were like who would pay \$5000 to taste your whiskey.

They rose \$605,000 check from the single bottle. It broke the Guinness world record three times over. We love social media. We were the first charity to reach a million followers on Twitter. We were not only the first charity to use Instagram, one

of the first three brands to use Instagram. We were early adopters. We were hiring young people and this is where we lived. It was a great way to get our story out. People need water. Here are the solutions, we'll prove them to you.

Great way to engage some of our supporters creatively around the world. We opened up the NASDAQ a couple of times by the way you could do this just by asking if you are a charity, sometimes somebody goes bust like the night before, so we're now the go to. They call us up and say can you be here at 9:00 in the morning. Same thing with the New York Stock Exchange. Exposure for free to \$100 million eye balls. Try to reinvent the gala: instead of those boring stuffy sit-down rubber chicken dinners. We invited a couple of thousand people to New York and we create experiences for them like the water walk. So they walk at a fashion catwalk, littered with death and disease and dying and statistics and if they carry these heavy jerry cans it unlocks donations from companies. So last year just by carrying the cans you earned \$500, for every person that walked.