



As the current Covid crisis continues to have a devastating effect on our community's mental health and well-being, The Olive Branch maintains a lifeline to those in need...

Case Study:

Big Give Christmas Challenge Awards 2020 Application

Introduction

The Olive Branch Counselling Service Ltd has been in operation since 1997, and is focused on offering talking therapies to the people of Winchester and the surrounding communities. Originally founded by a group of local churches who recognised the huge value of offering a counselling service to the community, we offer affordable short or long-term counselling to any adult in our community, especially people on low or zero income. The Olive Branch is a small charity with an annual turnover of nearly £80,000 entirely funded by public donations. We provide our service thanks to 45 volunteer counsellors and supervisors, 4 part time staff and a team of dedicated committee members and directors.

As the current Covid crisis continues to have a devastating effect on our community's mental health and wellbeing, The Olive Branch maintains a lifeline to those in need. We have remained open throughout the current pandemic, moving initially to online counselling, and recently ensuring the provision of face to face counselling to vulnerable people unable to access our remote services. At the same time, 2020 saw the cancellation of most of our face to face fundraising events, resulting in a significant drop in our fundraising revenue.

The Olive Branch is dedicated to increasing access to counselling and raising awareness of the importance of mental wellbeing. The introduction of remote counselling in 2020 has demonstrated the need for a new fully funded part time triage position, offering immediate emotional support and assessment to new enquiries, as well as an expanded office administration team.

Photo: Andrea Macquadio, Pexels



The Big Give

We began 2020 with the aim of introducing fundraising to our charity, recognising the need to raise additional funds of around £25,000 per annum in order to maintain our vital service. With the current





Photo: Jeremy Wong, Pexels



We're only too pleased to support The Olive Branch with their Big Give Challenge this Christmas. We recognise that the need for mental health and wellbeing support has become heightened during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we hope that our contribution will help The Olive Branch reach their overall fundraising target so that they can reach out to even more people.

*Nick Ekins,
Managing Director,
Gentian Partnerships Ltd.*

pandemic escalating this need, The Big Christmas Give Christmas Challenge 2020 gave us the opportunity to create the charity's first digital fundraising appeal.

The Big Give gave us the opportunity to establish and use a range of digital communication channels for the first time, strengthen relationships with donors and our community. We were thrilled to achieve over our fundraising target whilst also building our social media platforms, increasing traffic to our website, and building our email database. We also engaged with new businesses, GP surgeries, other agencies and local churches.

This case study outlines how we engaged with our supporters and the marketing activities we employed, all for the first time.

Strengthening relationships: Securing a pledger

This was the first time the charity had tried to approach donors to pledge matching funds for an appeal. Capitalising upon the opportunity to promote our charity on Giving Tuesday, we approached a handful of companies in Winchester by telephone and were delighted when one of the first called was able to help us, Gentian offered to pledge £2500, and were eager to be part of our promotional materials. In addition, we reached out to our volunteer network, encouraging our volunteers to approach to their contacts with a view to securing pledges or sharing our campaign.

Evolving our brand

With patient confidentiality being paramount, we have always been limited by the photography that we have available to bring our brand to life. We used The Big Give Campaign as an opportunity to move away from a more corporate look, focusing instead on the power of human interaction and connectivity.

With the help of a volunteer designer, we have evolved our brand, and specifically our logo, to create a more personalised and community feel.



Old logo



New logo



Photo: Pixabay, Pexels



Since the launch of the Big Give campaign, we have seen our social media following increase... We estimate at least 20% of our online donations were as a result of social media engagement...

Campaign Story

We asked our supporters to **"Give the Gift of Mental Wellbeing this Christmas"**, focusing the impact that Covid has had upon mental health within our community. We used our website, social media platforms and e-newsletters to showcase videos of our volunteers describing the impact of our work, as well as testimonies from former clients.



Setting up new digital communication channels: getting the basics in place

Social media

The Olive Branch is new to digital fundraising and we set up our first social media profiles, which are now managed by a part time volunteer. Since the launch of the Big Give campaign, we have seen our social media following increase: Facebook followers 12%, and Twitter profile visits by 64%. Our Instagram page was set up in January 2020, to coincide with the launch of fundraising and The Big Give, and we now have 307 followers, an increase of 2% over The Big Give campaign.



We used social media to actively engage with community groups, local businesses and other organisations helping our community.

We estimate at least 20% of our online donations were as a result of social media engagement.



As a result of the Big Give we also secured 15 new email subscribers and have planned a biannual email for supporters moving forward in 2021...

Email

In November we launched our first email marketing campaign, using Mailchimp as a platform. We segmented our existing mailing list into three groups, targeting each group with relevant content:

- Past donors/supporters from community events
- Local counsellors
- GPs, churches and other agencies

We designed and sent four campaign emails to our mailing lists, including a “save the date” launch day email announcing #giving Tuesday, a mid-campaign update email and final thank you and success emails. Our emails contained counsellor and client testimonials and were written to be flexible so we could adapt our messaging once we hit our target.

Thank you to **ALL** our amazing supporters for donating and helping us reach over our campaign target.

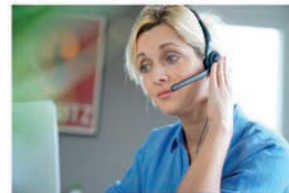
We are incredibly grateful to have received so many donations over this last week and have reached a total **£5135**.

THANK YOU!



Please help us continue our vital work in the community.
Thank you for your support

What the money means to The Olive Branch...



✓ **£5.00** = **£10.00** DOUBLED UP!

DOUBLE YOUR DONATION NOW

£5 keeps our telephone lines open



✓ **£20.00** = **£40.00** DOUBLED UP!

DOUBLE YOUR DONATION NOW

£20 provides a counselling session



✓ **£50.00** = **£100.00** DOUBLED UP!

DOUBLE YOUR DONATION NOW

£50 keeps our therapy rooms
Covid-clean and secure



✓ **£250.00** = **£500.00** DOUBLED UP!

DOUBLE YOUR DONATION NOW

£250 supports our office and
clinical team for a week

We engaged a volunteer Marketing and Communications officer to support us with our campaign.

Result: The average open rate for our four emails was 53%. We estimate at least 80% of our online donations were as a result of our emails. As a result of the Big Give we also secured 15 new email subscribers and have planned a biannual email for supporters moving forward in 2021.



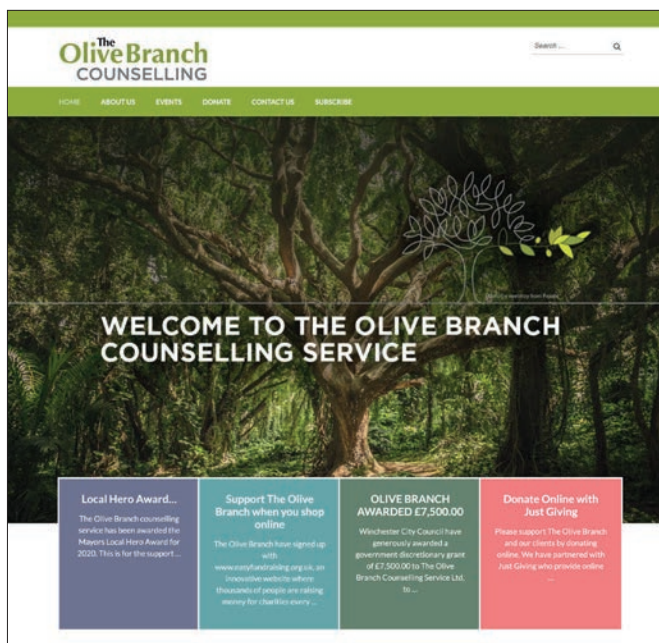
Photo: Andrew Neel, Pexels

Several local businesses supported our campaign, including Catkin and Pussywillow who sold wreaths to help us reach our fundraising target...

Website

To engage our audiences we added our campaign to the homepage of our website, including a link to two dedicated fundraising pages.

In addition, we included an option to subscribe to our e-newsletters so that interested parties could keep abreast of our campaign and find out when we had hit our fundraising target.



Engaging our community

Several local businesses supported our campaign, including Catkin and Pussywillow who sold wreaths to help us reach our fundraising target. We also received two donations offline as a result of our emails totalling £750 from new subscribers.



Partner promotion: extending our reach through others

As our own communications channels were new and fairly small, we worked to partner with other organisations to extend our reach:

- We liaised with other agencies to promote our campaign to their supporters.
- We approached local media about our campaign, securing news coverage on local radio station; WAVE105
- We reached out to churches who promoted our campaign to their congregations.
- We promoted ourselves to GP surgeries
- We distributed leaflets to local independent shops





As well as gaining our first income from a digital fundraising appeal and building our brand awareness, we gained valuable new skills in digital fundraising...

Overall results

- In total we raised £5,135 (not including Gift Aid). This included £2,500 in pledges and £2,631 raised online during the campaign week.
- Our initial online fundraising target was £5,000
- Raising these funds means we will be able to continue with our plans to employ a Triage counsellor this year, offering immediate emotional contact, and signposting.
- As well as gaining our first income from a digital fundraising appeal and building our brand awareness, as a charity we gained valuable new skills in digital fundraising.
- The Olive Branch will now be in a position to undertake future digital fundraising campaigns and we are already brainstorming new and innovative ideas for next time.

Thank you to the Big Give team for your support

