

case study

Interim Management In Action

World Vision UK



World Vision UK is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice through child sponsorship.

It receives financial support from the UK Government, the European Union, charitable trusts, corporate supporters and also more than 120,000 individuals, who sponsor children in poor communities overseas.

Globally, World Vision supporters currently sponsor 3.4 million children in almost 100 countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.



Challenge

Like many charities, World Vision UK has found income generation more of a challenge in the past year. They have turned this situation around through the implementation of a new strategy focusing on the long term retention of existing donors. They needed a strategic marketer with experience in customer relationship management (CRM) to support their existing marketing activities and CRM processes. Without these skills, they decided to recruit an experienced interim manager to define and implement the project. They wanted someone with an independent and commercial outlook to examine the business model, to advise on business improvements and to lead the implementation of the new strategy.

They approached Russam GMS and we recommended Alan Hughes, a senior interim marketing professional with over 11 years' interim experience working in the financial services, retail, leisure and not for profit sectors. Ian

Joseph, Head of Not for Profit and Charities at Russam GMS says, "One of our key strengths is to understand the commercial requirements and values of an organisation and to be able to introduce interims who have the right private sector experience but who also have the right underlying ethos and approach. Alan had a record of delivering high level CRM campaigns for clients including Comic Relief and Action for Children, where he was Interim Assistant Director of Fundraising and he was considered the ideal candidate for the role and duly appointed."

The project

Alan's role was to support and advise the retention team. He began the project by reviewing the existing marketing and CRM strategy. He was impressed immediately by the enthusiasm and commitment of the retention team.

Alan and the team then conducted an extensive review of the supporter database and relationship lifecycles to establish if there were critical points when sponsorship was typically lost or under threat. Historical data were carefully analysed to determine why sponsors had lapsed, together with existing data to look at potential risks.

Three main reasons were identified for sponsorships coming to an end: a project in a community reaching its natural conclusion; a child growing up; and changes in the sponsor's circumstance.

It was also important to understand the reasons why supporters continued their commitment to the sponsorship so the team could incorporate this into the new retention plan. Three points emerged from the data analysis and the supporter segmentation work: the more income someone has the less likely they are to leave; the more relationships they have with World Vision UK, for example, if they sponsor more than one child, the more committed they will be; then thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the level of emotional commitment donors have with their sponsored child.

Alan then worked with the Retention and Database Marketing teams to determine how 'emotional commitment' was expressed by supporters and how it could be measured. After a brainstorm session they decided that these might be the people that sent letters and Christmas cards to the child they sponsor in addition to their monthly financial donations. This idea was modelled against the database and it clearly showed

the theory was correct - supporters whose sponsorship had lapsed were more likely to be those who didn't send Christmas cards and letters, the ones with less emotional commitment.

He then implemented a new strategy for donor retention that includes a risk index to measure the relative likelihood of the supporters in each segment cancelling their sponsorship. The organisation is currently implementing it within a new communications strategy to improve supporter relationships.

Mathew Neville, Director of Marketing and Fundraising at World Vision said, "Like many charities in these difficult times, income was becoming more of a challenge. We have fantastic supporters and it was critical for us to analyse how to improve our relationships and communication with them to ensure their long term commitment to child sponsorship. Through Alan's work we understand our supporters better and we are implementing new business and communication processes that will achieve this goal. Already, we have seen signs within the organisation that retention levels are stabilising and we were so impressed with Alan's work we have recruited him to work on a new supporter recruitment project."

