

**#Felinethropy #GiveRightMeow Campaign
Plan Recap
EVMS • 2015**

Objectives

For a 24-hour period in May 2015, cats took over Eastern Virginia Medical School's digital media. But it wasn't the cat-tastrophe you might expect. In 2014, EVMS participated in the regional Give Local 757 online campaign with the goal of raising money for the school's annual fund.

Using typical social media posts and email for our 2014 participation, our efforts attracted only four gifts for a total of \$5,200. One of those gifts was for \$5,000 and, thus, somewhat anomalous. The remaining three gifts totaled \$200. The four Facebook posts employed in 2014 reached 1,495 people and garnered only 14 likes, comments or shares. Additionally, we noticed that each subsequent post garnered fewer viewers. Without the anomalous gift, this would have been unsuccessful. That meant we needed a new strategy for 2015 — one that sought to friend-raise as well as fundraise.

On top of the desire to attract philanthropic dollars, we wanted to increase awareness of EVMS. Over the past two years, while facing intensified budget pressures for the school overall, our advertising budget had been cut significantly. And, we had been advised to expect another similar cut in advertising for the coming fiscal year. As a result, we have increasingly been looking to public relations efforts to increase public awareness of our mission and community impact. While we cannot replace the sheer volume of impressions lost due to paid advertising cuts, any additional impressions would help offset that deficit.

Our goals for the 2015 Give Local 757 campaign were:

1. Increase the number of individual gifts made,
2. Increase the amount of money raised,
3. Increase the number of impressions and viewers for our messages, and
4. Increase the engagement with our social media posts.

For 2015, 151 local non-profit organizations participated in the Give Local 757 campaign. This meant there be considerable competition for contributions as there would be extensive overlap of donor support for these organizations.

Strategy

We decided to employ what we thought was the purr-fect strategy. Catvertising. It's a thing. Really. Just think: Grumpy Cat, LOLcats, or I Can Has Cheezburger? We

thought there might be a way to take our guilty pleasure and turn it into a bona fide strategy. After all, there even have been calls for looking at cat memes as a legitimate object of academic study (D.E. Wittkower, Assistant Professor at Old Dominion University, Jan. 2015, http://www.4sonline.org/blog/post/taking_care_of_business_cat).

The British mobile network Three commissioned research in Feb. 2014 that found more than 350,000 cat owners had created accounts for their pets on social media venues such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In fact, British internet users share more than four times as many cat photos, videos and memes than they do selfies. That's 3.8 million cat-related posts a day. (<http://blog.three.co.uk/2014/02/19/cats-vs-selfies/>).

And, while our target audience is in the United States, we had to believe there was a similar appetite capable of cat-a-pauling us to success. Indeed, the Pew Research Center noted in a Feb. 2015 online post that, "Animals — especially cats — are popular subjects of videos to post online, as are everyday people and events. Among internet users who posted an original video online in 2013, 45% uploaded their own video of a pet or animal." (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/02/12/5-facts-about-online-video-for-youtubes-10th-birthday/>)

We knew we'd be using not just cat images/memes, but also digital video. And we knew cats performed well in that medium. According to a Dec. 2012 Ad Age Digital Next post, cat videos are significantly more watched than dog videos online. Ad Age looked at 100 most-watched video clips for the time for both dogs and cats and found cat videos generated more than 1.6 billion views compared to the dog videos' 1 billion views. Cats outperformed dogs on a daily basis bringing in 1 billion views on average per day compared to 700,000 views per day for dogs. (<http://adage.com/article/digitalnext/ten-stats-change-video-2013/238915/>)

Thus, we decided to trade in traditional philanthropy for feline-thropy.

Tactics

We knew Facebook would be the core of our campaign. But we wanted to use all the digital tools at our disposal. Thus, we planned to write alternate versions of our messages that could be posted on Facebook and Twitter. Print and digital signage would be used across campus to direct viewers online. HTML emails would alert key off- and on-campus audiences to our efforts.

The visual element (either cat meme or video) was clearly important, but we believed the text posts would be as well. So, we took time to ensure that they employed a tone appropriate to our cat "overlords," were fun, followed cat meme tropes, and relied heavily on puns. We also developed custom hashtags

(#felinethropy, #GiveRightMeow, and #CincoDeMeowo) to use along with the #GiveLocal757 hashtag being employed by all regional participants.

Given its more professional ethos and audience, we used our LinkedIn presence to post meta-commentary on the campaign. These posts discussed what we were trying to accomplish and why catvertising made sense for this effort. We timed these posts to coincide with peak LinkedIn viewership.

Execution

We developed a timeline commencing the Friday before the Give Local 757 event outlining the steps to prepare for the campaign (such as creating a custom URL redirect and completing proofs of HTML emails, newsletters, cat memes, videos and posts/tweets) as well as detailing what items would be posted and when.

Print posters placed throughout our buildings as well as digital signage in 14 locations across campus pointed viewers online to see cat memes, cat videos and the campaign donation page. An advance email alerted key supporters (donors, vendors, and partners) to the impending cat takeover of the EVMS digital outlets and a fake newsletter announced the commencement of #felinethropy to on-campus audiences.

At 10 AM the day before the event, cat teaser images appeared on digital signage around campus. As the May 5th noon campaign start time approached, our web team changed carousel images on our home page to feature cat images and memes. They also replaced our President's welcome message with a cat video.

We then proceeded to tweet and post to Facebook 21 times during the 24-hour campaign. We posted in roughly hour intervals from noon to 10:30 PM on May 5 (including a retaliatory dog posting at 10:30 PM) and started again at 6 AM the following morning until the May 6 noon close of the campaign. During this time, we also disseminated 7 posts via our LinkedIn account outlining our efforts and our strategy behind #Felinethropy. By 12:15 PM on May 6, all traces of the cats had gone.

Our expenses to execute the campaign were minimal. All videos were produced in-house using staff pets, items we had on hand, and approximately \$10 worth of items purchased at the dollar store. Cat memes were produced by our videographer using a mix of staff pet photos along with stock images. Digital signage images were created by our on-staff Art Director. Because we have a stock image service subscription that allows 20 file downloads per day, there were no additional costs incurred for the stock cat photos. Two music tracks were purchased for use in the cat videos at a total cost of \$25. We boosted three Facebook posts briefly to see if we could broaden our reach at a cost of just over \$15. Overall, expenses totaled only about \$50.

Evaluation

We consider the #Felinethropy #GiveRightMeow campaign a success — especially given the low cost for producing it.

In terms of Goal 1 (Increase the number of individual gifts made), we increased from 4 gifts in 2014 to 21 gifts in 2015 — a 425 percent increase.

For Goal 2 (Increase the amount of money raised), we did not exceed the total funds raised in 2014. For 2015, we raised \$1,995. Setting aside the anomalous single gift of \$5,000 from 2014, we are pleased with these results. This is particularly true should any of these donors be new for our organization as it provides additional opportunities to cultivate them for future gifts.

In terms of Goal 3 (Increase the number of impressions and viewers for our messages), we wildly exceeded our expectations. We have 3,995 people who like our Facebook page. For this campaign, a total of 20,971 unique users saw our 21 posts combined. Of that total, 74 percent of that reach was organic (as opposed to paid via three boosted posts). That translated into a total of 37,219 total impressions combined for all the Facebook posts. Of that total, 85 percent was organic. Our six cat videos accrued a total of 3,916 views with 69 percent of that total being organic. The videos averaged 26 seconds in length and the average viewing time clocked in at 13.6 seconds. Our meta-commentary LinkedIn posts (seven total) resulted in an additional 2,984 impressions. Our LinkedIn page has 2,512 followers.

For Goal 4 (Increase the engagement with our social media posts) we also exceeded our expectations. Whereas our four posts in 2014 earned only 14 likes, shares or comments on Facebook. In 2015, we garnered 514 likes, shares and comments — a significant increase.

Note: Due to a problem with our social media monitoring application for Twitter, we were unable to track the full reach and engagement achieved via retweets. However, with 2,600 followers we know our 21 messages generated at least 54,600 impressions. This number is likely higher.

In addition to the metrics reported here, our content management system vendor, TemrinalFour, saw our campaign and liked it so much they wrote and shared a blog post praising the campaign (see included URL). Additionally, the sponsors of the Give Local 757 campaign liked the creativity of our approach and retweeted our Twitter posts as well.

Given the \$50 price tag for the campaign we consider this effort to have delivered a significant return on investment.