



THE TIMES 100

BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

Above-the-line promotion - UNISON

UNISON is Britain and Europe's largest public service union. UNISON exists to protect and promote public services as well as its members. Alongside its traditional role of negotiation UNISON also has a key communication function. This involves campaigning and lobbying on the many issues affecting their members and the public sector e.g. equal pay, employment rights, safety in the workplace, discrimination and harassment at work. The current government agenda has posed a number of challenges for public services. Spending cuts in the public sector have an impact on UNISON members, their families and the general public.



Promotion can be used for a number of reasons. For example, promotional activity can increase sales, raise awareness or concerns about particular issues, develop a brand image or alter public opinion. UNISON uses promotion to raise public awareness of issues and attract people to its membership. UNISON's A Million Voices for Public Services campaign was launched in July 2009 in light of proposed funding cuts to the public sector. The campaign calls for public interest to be put ahead of profit. It urges politicians and the public to realise the importance of public services and to add their voice to the campaign.

Above-the-line promotion uses mass media such as the press, radio, television, cinema or poster sites. This type of promotion is usually paid-for. Each of the possible media methods can be used to target audiences in different market segments. There are both strengths and drawbacks to these forms of media:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They reach a large audience quickly.• They may have an immediate impact.• They help to keep the story in the public eye through ongoing campaigns.• They help to make a campaign very visible to large audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These media are often expensive.• With these broad and often mass media it is sometimes difficult to target specific audiences.• It is sometimes harder to get immediate feedback from these forms of media to evaluate the effectiveness of a campaign.• They may be lost amongst other advertising

UNISON embarked on a wave of television, internet and newspaper adverts for the Million Voices campaign. They warned that the vital services provided by public sector workers could disappear if the funding cuts went ahead. The adverts featured a list of vital public service jobs fading out of sight and featured the tagline ~~Don't~~ wait until they're gone to defend them. A powerful campaign film was also released that illustrated how local communities would be affected by cuts. A version of this film aimed at recruiting members to UNISON was shown on television using DRTV (direct response television - a good value way of buying television space based on viewing numbers rather than programme status). The online and newspaper adverts linked back to the campaign website where people can register their support and add a comment. Since above-the-line promotion can reach such a huge audience, it was an ideal choice to generate a wider awareness of the plight of the public sector.

Questions

1. What is above-the-line promotion?

2. Describe the benefits of above-the-line promotion.

3. Explain why above-the-line methods were appropriate for the Million Voices campaign.

4. Analyse drawbacks of using above-the-line promotion for an organisation like UNISON

Task

In a pair or small group, choose a TV advert with which you are all familiar. If you want to watch it again, television commercials can usually be located on the internet. Analyse the effectiveness of the advert, considering both the benefits and drawbacks of your specific commercial. Feedback your findings to the rest of the group.

What have you learned?

Play hangman using different terms relating to above-the-line promotion