



## THE TIMES 100

### BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

#### Below-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 e.g. to 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.



**Below-the line** promotion involves promotional techniques which aim to reach consumers directly and which are within the organisation's control. It is usually less expensive than using above-the-line techniques. Below-the-line promotions include different and interesting ways of connecting with targeted groups. UNISON used a variety of different below-the-line promotions to develop its Million Voices campaign. These included:

- **Public relations** . PR helps to create a positive environment through various publicity activities. To get the attention of political parties, the union created melting ice-sculptures of a school crossing patrol and a hospital porter which were unveiled at Labour and Conservative party conferences. Press releases and news slots help UNISON to show that cuts in public services affect people in all walks of life.
- **Direct marketing** . This reaches individuals directly through, for example, direct mail or flyers. UNISON prepared a range of different leaflets and factsheets for different targeted audiences. For example, some of these were targeted at Members of Parliament, while others were directed towards union members working in specific sectors such as the NHS.
- **Internet** . This has become an increasingly important and measurable way of reaching different target groups of people. It also allows for elements of interactivity by providing an opportunity for users to express their views and provide support. For example, UNISON placed videos on YouTube and set up pages on the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. The UNISON website featured an interactive map which allowed users to click onto their postcode to see how cuts could affect them, and add their voice to a map of local voices.
- **Events** . In the business world, promotional events might include exhibitions and trade fairs. UNISON has undertaken a number of events in support of the Million Voices campaign. These include a march in London to protest against cuts. Local activity by UNISON branches included the Barnsley local government branch setting up a stall and gazebo in the town centre while it was busy with Christmas shoppers



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### Questions

1. What is below-the-line promotion?

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2. Give examples of below-the-line methods.

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3. Explain the advantages of using below-the-line promotional techniques.

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4. Analyse why public relations are particularly important for UNISON during the Million Voices campaign.

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### Task

*Scenario: A new road has been proposed in your local area. If the plan goes ahead, the road will be built close to a children's playground and through the habitats of a number of species of wildlife.*

Develop a campaign of below-the-line promotional activities that could be used to raise awareness of the new road and encourage locals to contact the local council and object to the proposal.

### What have you learned?

Write and record a 60-second audio clip explaining the key learning points about below-the-line promotion.