

# Creating Engagement for Donors

How the Canadian Red Cross reached out to donors with Telephone Town Halls

## The Client



## The Context

The Canadian Red Cross (CRC) wanted to boost awareness and engagement around the recent disaster in Mozambique, Africa in March 2019. Cyclone Idai was one of the worst tropical cyclones ever recorded to hit the Southern Hemisphere and the impact on Mozambique and neighbouring regions was catastrophic. The CRC sought to reach out to donors with the intention of increasing their participation and hopefully inspiring them to donate funds.

## The Challenge

Disaster relief campaigns by charitable organizations can be unpredictable and often require large amounts of effort and funds on short notice. It's a challenge to ramp up awareness and donations when a disaster hasn't been widely publicized, as was the case with Cyclone Idai.

Additionally, charitable organizations typically overlook engagement campaigns through Telephone Town Halls because they can't be used as a direct fundraising tool. In Canada, organizations are unable to elicit donations through automated broadcast messages.

## The Solution

Working with Stratcom, the CRC ran a Telephone Town Hall (TTH) on May 23, 2019 to increase the Cyclone Idai's profile, engage donors and stimulate fundraising efforts. The TTH was the second the CRC had ever hosted and they were interested to see how the results would compare to their first TTH around the Alberta wildfires in 2017, a natural disaster that hit home for many Canadians.

## The Result

The results were astounding. Close to 2000 participants tuned in with 86 people queuing in line to ask a question or make a comment. 10 participants went live on-air and 17 went on to leave a voicemail at the end of the event.

What truly stood out for this TTH event was the compelling, informative and at times, emotional conversations. The strong speaker and experienced host built rapport prior to the event and drew on that established chemistry to make the call sound smooth, engaging and completely natural. The TTH success was also due to a well-crafted script and high quality phone list that Stratcom looked up prior to the TTH.

Comparatively to the last CRC TTH in 2017 on the Alberta wildfires, this 2019 event for Cyclone Idai was on par. In fact, 2019 supporters averaged an additional five minutes of participation longer than the supporters on the 2017 call. These results exceeded Stratcom's own expectations based on cumulative data.

Overall, the event was a great success and revealed what is possible with TTH's for charitable organizations.

## The Canadian Red Cross - Creating Engagement for Donors

### Looking Forward

The results of the TTH on Cyclone Idai were informative for Stratcom and the CRC. Based on Stratcom's years of experience running hundreds of TTH's across various progressive sectors, we have developed a number of recommendations that could be implemented for the CRC and other charities to achieve enhanced engagement and success:

- **Host a TTH covering a broad range of topics:**

What was particularly revealing about the CRC was the broad reach of interests from participants. Many of those who queued to speak live had questions that spanned interests wider than the relief work specific to Cyclone Idai. Stratcom recommends hosting a general TTH offering an opportunity to speak to your donors on a wide range of topics that cover the spectrum of what you do as an organization.

- **Have a diversity of speakers and voices on the call**

To best engage your audience and maintain their interest, have a variety of perspectives, genders, and specializations in your speakers. Stratcom has learned this makes for a more engaging and dynamic TTH event. For example, Stratcom introduced the idea of hosting a CRC 'All-Stars' TTH that would feature experts and leaders from a variety of fields to share more broadly their experiences of how donors make a difference.

- **Promote through social media**

Though the CRC TTH was a success, the numbers for inbound calling and live streaming could be improved. By promoting the event through targeted social media outreach, piggy-backing off current fundraising campaigns and enhancing communication with donors, we can increase attendance for future events.

- **Turning a TTH into an annual event**

The results of the TTH tell us that donors are interested and engaged when speaking first-hand with the organization. By offering an annual event where donors can look forward to speaking with front-line staff, experts and generalists who can illustrate how their money is put to good use, a TTH can become a powerful tool of engagement. An annual event can also prime your donors for active participation for increased donation along with continued support. Your investment in education and outreach for your donors will lead to their investment in you.

"Thank you [Stratcom] for executing a flawless TTH, it was a big success and an effective engagement opportunity which was our number one goal. Thank you for making us look good!"

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