

Case Study

Green Mountain Coffee

Overview

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters is one of the fastest growing companies in North America. The company offers over 180 varieties of coffee, cocoa and tea which are sold in a wide variety of channels, including supermarkets, ExxonMobil convenience stores, McDonald's restaurants, and under the Tully's and Newman's Own Organics labels. The company is also the owner of the famous Keurig single-cup brewing system for office and home use.

In addition to being one of America's fastest growing companies, GMCR is known for its strong commitment to the environment and progressive social policy. This commitment includes operational initiatives, employee incentives to reduce carbon emissions, and the purchase of carbon offsets.

In late 2008, recognizing that the US government would not, in the short term, make any significant progress on carbon tax or cap-and-trade legislation, the company decided waiting any longer to address its own emissions conflicted with its values. GMCR executives decided that the best way forward, without the ability to predict government legislature, would be to build a coalition of non-profits and individuals that could help the company reduce its social and environmental footprint. The company created a \$800,000 grant program that would support four different nonprofit organizations working to change climate change, with specific focus on four areas: transportation-related emissions, threats to coffee-growing communities, building political will, and individual empowerment. The grants would be presented to four organizations – one for each of the four focus areas.

"Climate change is not a problem that can be solved by a single entity, whether it's government, business, civil society or individuals. We believe the long-term solution will come from the combined efforts of all. We don't need to wait for government direction to take steps to understand, reduce, and mitigate our share of greenhouse gas emissions."

Mike Dupee

VP Corporate Social Responsibility

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters

The Process

Step 1.) Organizations created a brief summary in less than 500 words discussing their proposal for the Changing Climate Change grant competition.

Step 2.) Organizations submitted a full proposal supporting their summary with references to GMCR. The Justmeans campaign module has the ability to contain both publicly and privately answered questions.

Step 3.) Once the proposal was submitted, organizations were asked to get their community to support their proposal through votes and comments. Using Justmeans, each applicant's entry was easily shared on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and through email.

Step 4.) After receiving over 100 full proposals, GMCR selected the top four vote getters in each category were chosen as finalists in the campaign and a second two week long round of voting was opened on Justmeans.

Step 5.) Using specific metrics, GMCR staff selected the top applicant in each of the four categories. The top applicants were not chosen solely on votes and comments, but on a robust metric that weighted the full proposal and organizational references, alongside the online community building efforts.

The Return on Investment of Social Media

The program built an online community: Through the campaign, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters was able to build a follower base on Justmeans of 31,000 fans and over 6,500 on Twitter. Beyond simply voting for an organization, many participants commented and shared ideas on the non-profit proposals. Over 5,000 comments were generated through the campaign.

Millions of people were reached, bolstering general brand awareness: The campaign generated over 2.1MM pages views on Justmeans alone, and an estimated 6 million impressions over the period beginning February 2009 and ending July 2009. The campaign generated over 1,250 Retweets on Twitter alone.

The campaign was covered in the media: The campaign generated media mentioned in over 50 news and blog articles, including the list at right.

GMCR emerged as a thought-leader: The Changing Climate Change campaign was viewed as a new best practice in building community and engaging online. Green Mountain Coffee Roasters was featured in webinars and events tied to other Justmeans corporate and organizational members including the Center for Corporate Citizenship and the Association of Corporate Contribution Professionals. Eight months following the campaign, the Changing Climate Change case study was shared on webinars with representatives from over 200 of the Fortune 500 companies.

Non-profit organizations increased awareness around their missions: Each non-profit organization that submitted an application had a full page dedicated to describing their proposal. Even those applicants that were not selected for the grant had the benefit of having their organizations and ideas exposed to millions of people.

Summary

Through social media, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters was able to "crowd-source" a philanthropic contest while at the same time building community, general awareness, and thought-leadership around its approach to changing climate change.

Media Coverage

News and blog coverage on the campaign included the following channels:

Wall Street Journal Environment
Netsquared
Vermont Daily News
Environmental Leader
NPCA
Gang Green
CSRwire
CSRS
Treevolution
Cleanergy
Treehugger
The Environment Site
Alternative Energy News
1Sky
Skoll Foundation
Fora.Tv
Care2
Sustainable Business Alliance
Seeking Alpha

"Our experience with the Justmeans team wildly exceeded our expectations with respect to building, and effectively communicating with, social networks interested in our social and environmental responsibility initiatives."

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