

Case Study

Situation

In 2013, the Global CEO of Interpublic Group's IPG Mediabrands aspired to revolutionize the advertising industry. At the time, IPG Mediabrands and its subsidiary agencies invested \$37B globally on behalf of their clients each year. The question arose: what if a percentage of those media dollars could be allocated to causes that were meaningful to clients and the global community? Further, what if Mediabrands could pilot and sustain a program that facilitated these socially impactful donations at no additional cost to the client? To answer these questions and shake up the media world, the Global CEO hired Alison as the Director of Social Impact Strategy. Her role was to build, manage and scale *mediaBrandsMatter*—a first-to-market program that used media as a catalyst for social change.

Approach

Immediately upon her hire, Alison partnered with consultants from Purpose—a social impact strategy consultancy and creative agency—to help bring *mediaBrandsMatter* to life. Internally, she worked with a cross-functional team of c-suite executives including CFOs, senior legal counsel, investment leads and agency presidents to formalize the program's infrastructure. She consulted with the company's Patents and Trademarks team to have the *mediaBrandsMatter* name and logo trademarked. She liaised with legal and finance to craft unique contract agreements for all clients, media partners and beneficiary organizations participating in the program. She worked closely with her supervisor, the SVP of Business Development, to craft pitch decks, marketing materials and additional collateral for launching and promoting the program. She collaborated with the global communications team to create a press kit and develop a public relations strategy.

Once the groundwork was laid, the program slowly began to gain traction. Alison's day-to-day job shifted from laying a foundation to growing a new line of business. Over time, *mediaBrandsMatter* attracted major brands, media publishers and nonprofit organizations to its mission. Powerhouses like MillerCoors, Six Flags, Newman's Own, iHeartMedia, AMC Networks, NBCUniversal, Acumen Fund, Kiva and DoSomething.org all joined in. Throughout the program's development, Alison planned and facilitated partner meetings, stewarded deals and media buys, tracked and measured progress, and managed the program budget.

Although IPG Mediabrands was ahead of the curve when it came to integrating corporate social responsibility (CSR) into its business strategy, there was still an area of opportunity for the company. Applying The Brock Method, Alison identified that *mediaBrandsMatter* lacked the natural *synergies* needed to help a program like this one thrive. Further, many Mediabrands employees were still unaware of the program's existence—a huge barrier for *mediaBrandsMatter* if it was to become a cornerstone of how the company did business moving forward—meaning the program message needed to be *socialized* among sales and account teams more heavily. To address these issues and accelerate the adoption rate of *mediaBrandsMatter*, Alison initiated two pilot programs in 2014.

Pro Bono Summer Resident Volunteer Day

In summer 2014, Alison piloted a skills-based volunteer initiative with the Mediabrands summer residents (interns). She reached out to a variety of nonprofits for their participation, and helped each organization create a targeted scope of work (SOW) that summer residents could tackle in a day-long consulting session. Then, she thoughtfully matched each summer resident with a project that drew upon his or her skills and interests. On volunteer day, the residents were divided into teams and consulted with four nonprofits—two local, two national—on social media marketing needs. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive from residents and nonprofits.

The following year, Alison and the global HR team expanded the pro bono volunteer day, doubling the number of participating residents and nonprofits served. At the conclusion of each session, nonprofits walked away with social media content calendars and marketing plans, infographics, and hosts of other advertising materials, as outlined in their respective SOWs. Afterwards, summer residents expressed a desire to engage in projects like these more frequently throughout the summer internship. Nonprofit partners offered favorable remarks about the residents' professionalism and extended heartfelt thanks for the media solutions provided. Organizations benefiting from Pro Bono Volunteer Day included DoSomething, Free the Children, Impact Network, Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, Uncommon Schools and Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls.

It was also during this time that Alison started to scale the summer resident pro bono volunteer program and began matching Mediabrands employees with mediaBrandsMatter beneficiary organizations for discreet pro bono projects. In one example, Kiva—a micro-lending platform for small business owners across the globe—needed advice on how to invest its limited media budget in the tri-state area. One senior media planner dedicated a number of consulting hours to Kiva, providing recommendations and expertise at no cost to the organization.

The Mediabrands Community

In early 2015, Alison applied a proven employee engagement technique and started The Mediabrands Community. This cross-functional, inter-agency team was created to help to steer the company in CSR-related issues, corporate volunteerism and strategic nonprofit partnerships. Modeled after the Corporate Responsibility Council at Turner Broadcasting, Inc. (Alison's former employer), the Mediabrands Community championed mediaBrandsMatter within teams, departments and agencies across the company. This collective also coordinated quarterly volunteer activities in an effort to build a company culture that mirrored the mediaBrandsMatter ethos.

Results

In Year 1, Alison oversaw \$1MM in media dollars flowing through mediaBrandsMatter. The clients that had opted into the program had earmarked their media dollars to not only meet business objectives, but to also affect social change. On top of that, select media partners made in-kind donations to mediaBrandsMatter beneficiary organizations, enabling these nonprofits to promote their causes on-air. After just twelve months, with six media partners, five clients and three beneficiaries on board, mediaBrandsMatter proudly facilitated \$1.3MM in cash and in-kind donations to its nonprofit partners. IPG Mediabrands employees and interns also contributed over 600 hours of pro bono service to ten nonprofits over a two-year span. In conclusion, while Alison was initially hired to launch and manage a new business strategy, she wound up leveraging The Brock Method to enhance mediaBrandsMatter and to develop a first-of-its-kind employee engagement program for IPG Mediabrands. Alison aligned the company's business strategy with its company culture, creating the synergies needed to make mediaBrandsMatter successful.

Appendix

How does mediaBrandsMatter work?

mediaBrandsMatter negotiates media buys in bulk, across all IPG Mediabrands agencies, to generate incremental value that is used for creating social impact. Clients are provided with the same media results at no additional cost. However, their media buys now have a societal contribution.

Under the agency's direction, mediaBrandsMatter reviews all media buys and, whenever possible, identifies inventory with participating media partners to facilitate social impact. Inventory is purchased from the media owner "care of" mediaBrandsMatter. Clients must sign an opt-in letter, agreeing to the program media buying terms. Beyond that, clients do not encounter any additional work, but are guaranteed the same return on investment.

There are three ways to engage with mediaBrandsMatter: funding, planning and activating.

How can clients participate in *funding*?

Through relationships with media owners, mediaBrandsMatter extends the value chain, creating funds to invest with non-profit partners. We are able to secure media inventory at leveraged rates and donate the proceeds from each deal to charity. Clients sign an opt-in letter to agree to this method of media buying. Thereafter, a portion of their media spend is used to help solve social problems, nationally and globally.

How can clients participate in *planning*?

Our agencies' enhanced media planning tools now do more than target audiences based on interests—they capitalize on shared values. Within the media planning process, agencies re-optimize the client's media mix, up-weighting the channels where clients can align with their audience based on issues that both groups care about. Our tools optimize around five key issue areas:

- Education
- Community
- Environment
- Science & Technology
- Health

How can clients participate in *activating*?

Once the funds are available, mediaBrandsMatter works in concert with Purpose to allocate resources to non-profit projects across the globe. mediaBrandsMatter ensures that all charitable contributions align with each clients' existing CSR objectives, and increase the brands' social capital in the marketplace. Thereafter, clients and media owners are able to participate in project execution, showcasing the good work being done through cause-related marketing.