

Give back to charity with your time online: Interview with Jon Seymour, co-founder of Red Dog Ads

Charities have been hit hard by COVID-19 and are finding new and innovative ways to fundraise. The usual events can obviously no longer take place and this is proving tricky for most. However, the important point to remember is that charities still need your help and to be blunt your cash. The work that they do is very important and literally changes lives. We simply cannot see charities suffer, especially in a time of crisis when they need help the most.

Jon Seymour and Lincoln Coutts decided to change this by creating Red Dog Ads: The new platform that allows you to help charities by giving two minutes a week watching advertisements and then donating the proceeds to charity. Even just £2 a week adds up for charities, especially from a volume perspective. Many people are finding themselves cash poor at present with a

lot less job security than we are all used to. However, the desire to help those less fortunate is still prevalent. This is a way for people to give back with their time and with the understanding that they can help make a difference.

Maddyness spoke to Jon Seymour, Co-founder of Red Dog Ads to learn a little bit more about what he wanted to achieve by setting up such a company.

[Maddyness] You have a background in advertising, can you tell me a little bit about your history of work and how the idea for Red Dog Ads came to you?

[Jon] My career is varied in the sense that I started off in sales promotion and then moved to lifestyle marketing focusing on motorsports. I then landed in advertising and marketing, which are essentially both sides of the same coin. Working for agencies FCB, LHC-Lintas, GSD&M and JWT. I was working with global clients and big brands such as Coca Cola, Shell, Pennzoil, Camel, Winston, Nokia. I then moved over to marketing as the Global Marketing Manager for HSBC before joining Shell to manage their global brand communication. Both HSBC and Shell had hundreds of million dollars at our disposal, so all of our efforts went into developing world class creative and strategic media planning and execution.

There was always this understanding and knowledge that consumers were moving targets and to reach them and keep them engaged was super hard. Although our campaigns were successful, personally I thought they were not very efficient. It was like being on a ferris wheel shooting at a balloon rising in the wind! Impossible! Plus, when you add in all the fragmented channels of digital media with the bots, click fraud, ad blockers, purchasing content without advertising and the opt out culture, it's impossible! It really makes the odds of reaching and engaging a consumer very difficult. I am not saying that traditional, current advertising is not working, but in my humble opinion it needs to be re-evaluated, and especially in this new world, it needs to be socially responsible. I believe that the model can be improved to provide better engagement, by allowing consumers directly to benefit financially.

This was really the starting point in the thought behind Red Dog Ads (RDA). We understand that the consumers time is valuable, and that there are a great many individuals who are passionate about supporting their chosen charity. For me personally, it went back to me trying to decide which charity to support and not liking that I had to make a choice. I had the idea to facilitate a platform that would help a multitude of charities and people, with minimum cost.

For those who are new to it, can you explain what is Red Dog Ads?

Essentially we pay consumers to view targeted video adverts of 30 seconds and then allow them to give that fee directly to charity. This allows people to donate to charities without taking money directly out of their pockets. We understand people's time is valuable and we wanted to give them the tools to do good and feel good every week. We are only talking about 2 minutes a week to support charities that need our help, something that is doable for everyone. We are aiming to reach our target of £1M donated to charity in 2021 and really make a difference. I think it is essential that we help as many charities as we can and in turn as many people as possible. Giving back has always been a priority.

Why is it so important that we have an outlet to give back to charity during COVID-19 and this pandemic? What are the struggles facing charities that you speak with?

We think there is a better way for advertisers to engage consumers that respects their time. We also think that given the right tools most people will give 2 minutes of their time to help a charity. This is a collective approach that if there are many people doing a little, together we can achieve a much bigger result.

Today it is more important than ever to have a platform like RDA. Donations to charities are decreasing and because of COVID-19, they are unable to hold many of their traditional fundraising activities. It is reported that 1 in 10 charities will close due to lack of funding. I think that this will be closer to 1 in 5 by the end of 2021.

We have partnered so far with 6 charities: Movember, Muscular Dystrophy UK, Support Dogs, KidsOut, Magic Breakfast, Alzheimer Scotland. They are all innovative driven teams that are adapting their fundraising programs to make it easy for their supporters to participate. They see us as an alternative revenue stream that is at no cost and little time of staff for the charity to participate. By using their existing communications channels like social media, charity website, emails and newsletters they can have their supporters participate and donate the money earned to the charity. We also hope to expand this list to

include more charities and give people more choice as to whom they donate to.

How can people get involved if they are a brand or a charity?

We actively want to support all UK registered charities. We are happy to explain our platform and work with charities so that they can take advantage of what RDA can offer. If it fits their fundraising strategy, they are welcome to participate.

As for advertisers, this is a great new tool to reach and engage with hard to reach consumers that are willing to give you their undivided attention for 30 seconds. Our platform only charges for completed views so for brands that have a campaign, RDA is a great cost-effective tool to add to their media mix. Really it's a win win scenario for all involved.

Jon, a more personal question now: What is your favourite book and why?

Becoming by Michelle Obama. I liked the warmth and reality of her upbringing in Chicago. I loved the values instilled in her from her parents. This was refreshing in this day and age. I also grew up not too far away in Ohio.

And lastly: What is your favourite quote and why?

"If you don't succeed try try again!" My mom and dad helped me to believe that we could do anything, we just needed to keep trying and we would get there in the end. This one thought has made lots of things possible in my life and I am very grateful to them for this.

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