

Playing for change The Red Cross's Traces of Hope

The British Red Cross has used an online, alternative reality game that combines storytelling and detective work in a treasure hunt-style digital experience for its latest awareness campaign.

Called Traces of Hope, the game was developed by digital agency Enable Interactive and is set in northern Uganda. Players communicate directly with a fictional child refugee called Joseph and must hunt across the internet for clues to reunite him with his mother.

The game went live in early October on a dedicated website and will remain active until mid-November. A database of those who have registered will be used to build further support in the future, including a request to donate funds to the Red Cross.

"The impact war has on civilians is a difficult topic to explain and encourage people to engage with," explains Dorothea Arndt, British Red Cross's new media manager, who coordinated the campaign. "This had to be about more than just an appeal to people's generosity."

The appeal of the online game lay in the potential to blur the boundaries between reality and fiction – an ideal approach to bring to life a story typically relegated to small snippets in national newspapers.



Hope: the Red Cross is using an alternative reality game to increase public engagement

Digital marketing and advertising – already an important part of British Red Cross's marketing mix because of its targeting potential, accountability, and value for money – is growing in importance as charities face both the combined effects of donor fatigue and the economy.

"The challenge is to build deeper relationships with supporters and also to engage with new, younger audiences," says Enable Interactive strategy director

Matt Connolly. "Traces of Hope will be backed up with a customer relationship management programme to encourage those whose interest has been sparked by the game to become supporters, donors and campaign ambassadors." **MC**

Weblinks

Enable Interactive: enableinteractive.co.uk
Traces of Hope: tracesofhope.com