

Taking American Red Cross Blood Donations off Life Support

Overview of Company and Communication Goals

Founded in 1881, the American Red Cross is one of the most recognizable humanitarian organizations globally. It is dedicated to helping people in need throughout the United States and throughout the world with an association of other Red Cross networks.

The American Red Cross is an independent charitable institution that is organized as a nonprofit under a charter granted by the United States Congress. This unique charter requires the Red Cross carry out responsibilities delegated by the federal government; however, the American Red Cross is not a federal agency and does not receive regular federal funding. They depend on volunteers to donate time, blood and money to support their programs and services. Most of the American Red Cross workforce, an estimated 90 percent, are volunteers. Most of the American Red Cross's financial support comes from public contributions, donors, and revenue from health products and safety training courses.

Today, the American Red Cross provides critical care and support for people affected by disasters in America and for military service members and their families across the globe. The Red Cross also collects, processes, and distributes blood, conducts health and safety training, and provides International relief.

The American Red Cross blood program started in 1940 and currently supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood supply. The Red Cross makes blood available to any patient who needs it, providing blood for patients in approximately 2,600 hospitals across the U.S.

All blood donations come from volunteers. The American Red Cross works with more than 58,000 blood drive sponsors each year that host more than 145,000 blood drives, providing convenient locations for people to give blood. A total of 80 percent of the Red Cross blood donations are collected at mobile blood drives hosted at community organizations, companies, high schools, colleges, places of worship or military installations. Only 20 percent of blood donations are collected at Red Cross centers.

Every two seconds someone in the U.S. needs blood. The Red Cross needs more blood donations to keep up with the constant high demand, especially blood platelet donors. Donated blood does not have a long shelf life. Most donated red blood cells must be used within 42 days of collection, some type of blood donations (platelets) have a must be used within 5 days of collection. Even though an estimated 38 percent of the U.S. population is eligible to donate blood at any given time, less than ten percent of eligible population does. According to The Red Cross, the two most common reasons people do not give blood are because there are not aware of the high need for blood donations throughout the year, or they don't like needles and avoid blood donations due to fear.

Most people tend to associate the American Red Cross with disaster relief, resulting in major blood donations during natural disasters and crisis. In fact, one of the biggest surge for blood donations in the American Red Cross history was directly after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. However, there is a constant need for blood donations due to everyday occurrences from car accidents victims, to cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, to new mothers after delivery.

In addition, blood donation is a time consuming process, taking about an hour and fifteen minutes from starting paperwork to finishing the actual blood draw. It is easier to give a charitable donation to the Red Cross during its annual holiday drive than to make an appointment, fill out paperwork, attend a mini physical exam, and sit for 10-12 minutes while giving blood. The qualification process to donate blood can be confusing since there are many ways in which a willing candidate can be disqualified from donating. There are many different types of blood donations with different rules and eligibility requirements.

Education is a crucial part of keeping the need for blood donations in the public eye when there are readily easier ways to support a cause or donate to charity. Supporting blood donations takes time and is a physical act. Donating blood is much more involved than hitting a Facebook like or donate button on a website. The American Red Cross needs to spread awareness, increase visibility of blood donations, generate emotion, and highlight the practical value in donating blood throughout the year in order to increase blood donations among 18 to 50 –year-olds across the United States.

Situation Analysis

Strengths

- American Red Cross is one of the most recognizable humanitarian organizations in the world.
- Retention rates are high. People who donate blood to the American Red Cross, often do so habitually. 24 percent donate occasionally, 50 percent are regular donors, and only 26 percent are first-time donors.

- American Red Cross is the biggest supplier of blood donations in the U.S., currently contributing about 40 percent of the nation's blood supply.
- American Red Cross mobile blood collections stations are visible, currently collecting 80 percent of all blood donations.
- American Red Cross uses multiple social media platforms to engage with its audience for disaster relief and could be used for blood donation awareness.
- American Red Cross has an active celebrity endorsement base for disaster relief that could be tapped for blood drive awareness.
- The American Red Cross already uses Radian6 software to monitor social media and respond to people in times of crises.
- Donating blood does not cost money. A healthy human body can easily replenish supply

Weaknesses

- The Red Cross is dependent on outside entities to boost blood donations. Most people, 80 percent of blood donation, only donate blood when it is encouraged by an outside community organization, school, or employer.
- Blood donations only surge in times of crisis or natural disasters. Blood donations are needed throughout the year and cannot depend on the chance occurrence of a disaster to boost participation.
- People are afraid of needles and are discouraged from donating blood because of it.
- The processes of donating blood is time consuming and confusing.

- American Red Cross web page and social media accounts mainly focus on disaster relief and do not necessarily promote blood donations across all platforms.
- It is not necessarily noticeable when people donate blood. Need to make it public so other can see and follow.

Opportunity

- The Red Cross already has a big charitable base that help produce 80 percent of blood donations- especially with companies that have active CSR campaigns. Red Cross needs to get people to start sharing their positive experiences with Red Cross blood donation.
- Independent studies show that donating blood is good for health.
- Females are more likely to donate than males. Opportunity to partner with other companies that target women health issues and get the word out about blood donations.
- After every blood donation, donor must wear a band aid or gauze of some sort.
Opportunity to have branded wearable item to make the private act of blood donation public.

Threats

- There are many different type of blood banks with different standards of collections and quality control.
- Charitable donors can often get discouraged from donating time, money, etc., if they cannot see where or who their donations are helping.

- Older potential donors may be leery of donating blood due to risk safety concerns, especially linked to the U.S. HIV epidemic of the 1980's, and other infectious diseases contraction.

Target Audiences

- Young, social-media savvy university students ages 18-26
- Professional men and women ages 27-45
- Red Cross Volunteers
- Recipients of blood donations
- Influencers
- Corporate Partners
- Shareholders in Johnson & Johnson and Band-Aid products

Even though women often are temporarily deferred from blood donation due to naturally occurring circumstance, such as pregnancy induced anemia, many studies suggest that women and men donate blood at a fairly even rate. More students and professionals in metropolitan or suburban areas are more likely to donate than anywhere else. The idea is to harness the potential of corporate partnerships, social media, and the experiences of volunteers and recipients of blood donations to encourage more people to donate blood because it is needed on a daily basis. Social influence or word of mouth are key to get any product or idea to catch on. To achieve the target levels of donations, there needs to be targeted campaigns designed to encourage a greater number of candidates to consider blood donation.

Communication Strategies

Guiding principles for American Red Cross

- American Red Cross should use an integrated print and digital campaign across current channels and use existing outreach targeted at disaster relief. Create branded content for multi-media and trans media use to quickly and easily explain the often confusing process of blood donation. Invest in branded wearables to promote the visibility and create triggers associated with American Red Cross and blood donations.
- American Red Cross should empathize the constant need for blood donations, outside of natural disasters. Red Cross should emphasize recipients of blood donations to emotionally and practically appeal to donors and the every-day need for more blood. American Red Cross should also emphasize the personal health benefits of donating blood.
- American Red Cross should partner with other corporate sponsors and capitalize on exposure during health awareness months, such as women's heart health month in February.

Communication Tactics – Grid

American Red Cross targeted media campaign wants to increase:

- Social Currency: make people look good by talking about American Red Cross blood donations.

- Triggers: Consider the context. create cues that can help make people think about American Red Cross blood donations. Help to grow the habit of blood donation and make it come to mind more often.
- Emotion: Focus on feelings. Make talking about blood donations generate emotion.
- Public: Make American Red Cross blood donations advertise itself. Make the private act of blood donations public. Create behavioral residue that sticks around even after people use it. Think branded medical gauze/tape.
- Practical Value: Make talking about American Red Cross help others. Highlight incredible value, packing Red Cross knowledge and expertise into useful information others will want to disseminate.
- Stories: embed American Red Cross blood donations in a broader narrative that people want to share. Creating valuable stories about health and wellbeing.

1. Media Channel: Tradigital Media Owned Website and Social Media channels. On Red Cross main website cross promote social media campaign on Facebook Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Flickr and Twitter, on Red Cross blood website, and Red Cross blog.

Target: Young, social-media savvy university students ages 18-26

Tactics/Messages: Practical Value / Making it Public

- On LinkedIn encourage people to post about donating blood with Red Cross under volunteer
- Be able to check in to mobile blood vans on existing social media channels to show others blood donation locations. – already have app and place on website where people can find a blood donation near them. Using social media can highlight the act of blood donation in real-time
- Who and how often people can donate blood, is often confusing. Make Short YouTube videos that can easily explain who can and cannot donate blood – how often they can donate blood, and the different kinds of blood donations
- Red Cross stories – documents real recipients of red cross help on Red Cross website – mainly disaster relief, can tailor this for blood donations.
- Encourage selfies while donating blood post it on social media – and American Red Cross may post image on website. Can make snap or Instagram story about donor giving blood or about what the blood donation means to the receiver and why they need it. Creates social currency. Recipients of awards (having pic on website) love boasting

about themselves). Will share website or link with others. Create hashtag on Twitter to cross promote on different social media platforms

- Alternatively, instead of taking a pic of someone giving blood – Red Cross could host a photo story contest where people take pictures surrounding a theme like “life” “heart” “giving” – post to social media or enter at website and the winners are chosen to be posted on their website as part of their campaign
- Listicle or infographic – unexpected benefits of donating blood

2. Media Channel: Traditional Media Outlets Broadcast/Print: CNN, MSNBC, FOX, CBS, ABC
NBC NY Times, LA Times, Wall Street Journal, and Washington Post

Target: Professional men and women ages 27-45 and Red Cross Volunteers

Tactics/Messages: Make the private, public

- Print campaign emphasizing the everyday need for blood – not just during the holiday and not just during disasters. Emphasize how often the average American needs a blood transfusion – focus on social information. Make the private public.
- Stage event where thousands of people give blood in mobile blood banks in major metropolitan areas across the country- media event to draw a lot of attention “day of giving.”

- Accentuate the health benefits of donating blood- pitch article. Detail the frequency the average American need a blood transfusion and why- highlight common reasons people may not know about - Health and education articles 30% more likely to be on the most emailed list NYT- on how to live longer, be happier – tie it to the Red Cross

3. Media Channel: Traditional and Tradigital Media Outlets bloggers and partnership campaigns

Target: Influencers, Corporate Partners, and Shareholders in Johnson & Johnson and Band-Aid products

Tactics/Messages: Focus on triggers, create stories, use emotion

- Women’s heart health month (February) Possible Partners:
 - Campbell’s healthy heart soup-wear red (fashion show)
 - CVS Pharmacy – accessible health care
 - Revlon love is on campaign – can target influential beauty bloggers
 - Wendy Nguyen – Wendy’s Look book- well known fashion blog. Is an advocate for juvenile justice system and women self-esteem campaigns. – can help be an advocate
 - Emily Weis – influential beauty blogger. CEO of Glossier – online makeup company- focus on lipstick –products are made to share on social media platform Instagram

- Create behavioral residue- After donating blood, get card of a person who has received life-saving blood. Emotion – sharable
- Create some sort of branded wearable
 - Stickers
 - Wristband
 - Button
 - When people donate blood their arm is wrapped in medical gauze. Why not invest in red cross branded gauze, that way people can see others donated blood thorough out the day. Use the gauze on everyone who donates
 - Create Social currency- People can talk about interesting facts about blood donations – Similar to Snapple and short interesting facts on bottom of caps. Partner with Band-Aid in creating all red band aids with simple real facts about blood donation on them. Red band aid used as trigger – See red band aid think of blood donation.

