Helping to make a difference for those most in need

BT’s operational support is enabling fundraising charities to generate £millions through donations from the public

All in a good cause

The UK has a long-standing tradition of charitable giving. And even despite the economic uncertainty of recent years, the UK general public continues to show its generosity in supporting a wide range of worthy causes.

According to the Charities Aid Foundation over half of all UK adults donated to charitable causes in 2008/2009. The total they gave was nearly £10 billion over the year¹ for a range of charities. The UK also has a magnificent record in fundraising for natural disasters such as the Asian tsunami, hurricane Katrina, and more recently the Haitian earthquake.

Here to help

Responsible behaviour and sustainable development matter to BT – the company aims to grow in a way that benefits customers and society, using communications technology to help tackle social and environmental challenges.

In the 2009 financial year the company donated £25 million – in time, cash, and in-kind contributions – to initiatives that support society. BT’s Volunteering Programme has seen BT volunteers contribute more than 20,000 days to local charities and communities. BT aims to invest at least one per cent of its pre-tax profits in community and environmental programmes; a commitment that it has held throughout the global economic downturn.

Today, telecommunications plays a vital role in fundraising, and BT is uniquely positioned to help. Charity telethons – fundraising events broadcast on live TV – are a case in point. Beth Courtier, Community Investment Manager at BT, explains: “The shows are live and our charity partners rely on the BT network, as well as our people manning the phones, to receive pledges of support.”

BBC Children in Need

The BBC Children in Need appeal helps children who have experienced disadvantage. BT has shown its support since its very first telethon in 1980 and continues to provide a wide range of support services that underpin the yearly campaign. These include the core telephony network, the call centre infrastructure, advanced call routing, and network management applications – as well as providing volunteers to answer the phone lines and the online donation platform and supporting employee fundraising.

During the 2009 appeal, hosted as always by veteran broadcaster Sir Terry Wogan, BT handled 210,242 calls from viewers across the country ringing in to pledge money. BT also helped BBC Children in Need collect over £9 million of donations using its eDonate online giving platform. Pete Coles, who helped manage the telephony network on the night, recalls: “More than 5,000 volunteers in 52 call centres across the UK manned the phone lines. At peak times, the BT network was handling more than 58 calls every second.”

¹ Source: Charities Aid Foundation: UK Giving 2009, published September 2009
“BT provide us with telephony, call centres, network management and BT staff give thousands of volunteer hours on the night of Sport Relief enabling us to take millions of pounds in donations. A special mention must go to all the BT people who rise to the challenge for every Sport Relief with fantastic fundraising activities throughout every part of the business.”

Michele Settle
Marketing Director
Sport Relief

The hub of the call centres was the BT Tower in London, which featured in the BBC One live transmission. BT also used the visual display at the top of the BT Tower to profile the appeal with an animation of Pudsey Bear – the charity’s mascot – as well as the telephone number for donations. The 2009 BBC Children in Need total has now exceeded £20 million.

**Comic Relief**

Since 1985 Comic Relief has inspired the nation to laugh together, while raising cash to change the lives of disadvantaged people and communities at home and abroad. BT has supported Comic Relief since 1985 – as well as the Sport Relief initiative since it started in 2002 – with a broad range of networked IT services, employee fundraising and volunteering. BT call centres are among those at the heart of Comic Relief, taking donations from hundreds of thousands of callers, and manned by thousands of BT people who generously give their time. BT’s eDonate platform provides a secure online back up for Comic Relief’s own website.

Following the success of the BT Red Nose Climb in aid of Comic Relief in 2009 – which contributed £318,000 to the record breaking £82.3 million raised for Red Nose Day 2009 – BT is supporting the lead fundraising challenge for Sport Relief 2010. The BT Sport Relief Million Pound Bike Ride sees a group of well-known celebrities undertaking a 1,000-mile cycle route from John O’Groats to Lands End to raise £1 million. BT has also committed to donate one penny for every call from a BT home phone line.

“BT is one of our longest standing partners so we’re really excited that they are the headline sponsor of The BT Sport Relief Million Pound Bike Ride this year,” comments Michele Settle, Marketing Director at Sport Relief. “BT provide us with telephony, call centres, network management and BT staff give thousands of volunteer hours on the night of Sport Relief enabling us to take millions of pounds in donations. A special mention must go to all the BT people who rise to the challenge for every Sport Relief with fantastic fundraising activities throughout every part of the business. We’re so grateful for all your support, BT, and we’re overjoyed to have you on board for another campaign.”

**The Disasters Emergency Committee**

Formed in 1963 the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) is an umbrella organisation comprising 13 UK humanitarian aid agencies. It responds to major disasters worldwide, with BT providing call centre services and BT employees volunteering their time to answer the phone lines that take telephone pledges. Again, the BT eDonate platform is used for online donations.

Recent activities supported by BT include the DEC Congo appeal – providing humanitarian aid to refugees in the strife-ridden Eastern province of the Democratic Republic of Congo – the DEC Gaza appeal, and the DEC Myanmar (Burma) cyclone appeal, which itself raised over £10 million. Most recently BT is supporting the DEC Haiti appeal in the aftermath of the devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake that hit the country’s densely populated capital of Port-au-Prince.

**Making the difference**

Beth Courtier sums up: “BT support for charity telethons is a key strand of our community support programme. BT is in a unique position to assist and we are proud to be using our technology and expertise to help those most in need around the world.”

BT makes no profit from its charitable fundraising activities – every penny generated goes to the charity concerned. In its 2009 financial year the appeals supported by BT raised an astonishing £130 million.

**About eDonate**

Since it was launched in 2002 the online giving platform, BT eDonate, has processed in excess of £130 million in charitable donations. The custom designed, secure online payment service captures donor details via BT Buynet and the funds are deposited directly to the relevant charity’s bank account. BT Buynet is a fast, flexible, and secure credit and debit card payment processing service.

The powerful eDonate platform can handle up to 500 transactions per second and 24,000 people can simultaneously input data. In 2009, as well as supporting direct online donations, call centre staff also used the eDonate platform to process telephone pledges made in support of BBC Children in Need. This enabled a reduction in administration and made the donation process more efficient.