How to Raise Money for Charity the Tech Savvy Way:

Top 5 Innovative Charity App Ideas

With over 1.2 billion smartphone owners worldwide, apps provide the perfect channel for charities and non-profits to directly engage a younger, tech savvy audience and inspire a new generation of advocates for their cause. However, for a charity app to really go viral and raise awareness of the cause to a global audience, charities have to think of how to engage, educate and inspire users instead of just providing facts or asking for donations. From games and graphic novels to micro-volunteering, here is my pick of the five most innovative ways for charities to engage their users through an app, and the apps that do this best:

1. Turn fun everyday activities into donations:
Charity Miles App

Through harnessing the people power behind charity runs and events, the genius Charity Miles app for Android and iPhone encourages users to raise money for charity everyday by walking, running or cycling as part of their usual exercise routine. Users choose from nine different charities and then the app tracks their distance and donates a certain amount of money from their corporate sponsors per mile, as long as the user shares their activity on Facebook or Twitter. This innovative, easy to use app benefits consumers, charities and corporations alike, motivating users to exercise more and offering corporations a truly unique way to connect with consumers. Download Charity Miles here: http://appp.li/PYi8Xu

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2. Partner with innovative content developers: The Flame App

Combining stunning backdrops shot on location in Ethiopia, an authentic Ethiopian theme and a 25% donation from every app sold, The Flame's unique graphic novel for the iPad effectively raises awareness and money for their partnering charity, Ethiopiaid. With an Olympic theme perfect for London 2012, The Flame's groundbreaking graphics and cinematic soundtrack immerse readers in the strong tradition, heritage and honour behind the country which the Ethiopiaid charity helps, telling the story of the small Ethiopian town that has spawned the world's greatest runners. Developed by E-Motion Publishing prior to partnering with Ethiopiaid, The Flame effectively shows how in some cases partnership opportunities can be just as fruitful for charities as developing their own app. Download The Flame here: http://appp.li/NLEYzf

3. Inspire your charity advocates to come to you:
Do Some Good App

Orange Mobile's revolutionary Do Some Good app encourages users to benefit their communities on the go through simple five minute 'micro-volunteering' tasks, rather than asking for donations or weekends spent volunteering. From snapping wildlife photos on their lunch break to filling out a charity survey on the way home, users are provided with a wide selection of charitable tasks which take no more than five minutes each to complete. Available across iPhone, Android, Blackberry and Nokia, this micro-volunteering concept reinvents the charity app category by putting charities and non-profits on a widely used platform where users can actively approach them to help promote their cause. Download link: http://appp.li/LrXwp2

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4. Make a thought provoking, interactive game:

iHobo App

Hard hitting and thoroughly original, the free iHobo iPhone game goes above and beyond the standard 'donate' application to truly engage users and raise awareness of the plight of homeless teenagers. Developed by Publicis London for the Depaul UK Charity, iHobo allows users to interact with and provide for a virtual homeless youth on their iPhone for three days, making important decision about food, shelter and support to keep him off drugs and stop him getting ill. The app sends alerts to the user's iPhone when their character needs attention and measures how long it takes the user to respond, instilling a need for users to check their app regularly. Donations to Depaul UK, which helps homeless, vulnerable and disadvantaged young people, can also be made directly through the app. Download iHobo here: appp.li/Mz9Y2t

5. Put your users in your victims' shoes:

My Life as a Refugee App

Developed by UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, this innovative iPhone and iPad app raises awareness of the plight of refugees worldwide by putting the user in the place of a displaced character and asking them 'What Would You Do?' Users choose a character to play as and then move through a series of timed life or death decisions based on real life situations, with their decisions affecting their character's fate. Set against an authentic graphic backdrop with questions that don't shy away from the truth of many refugees' situations, My Life as a Refugee successfully uses a unique, interactive concept to get their worthy message across. Download My Life as a Refugee here: http://appp.li/LUfZvU