



BUSINESS ATTITUDES TO TACKLING FAMILY VIOLENCE

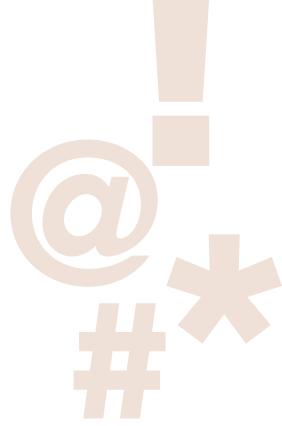
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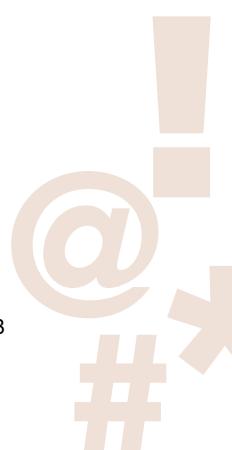


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CONTENTS



1. Introduction and background	4
2. Interview process.....	4
3. Main themes	5
4. Summary of key findings	5
5. Conclusion.....	10
6. Next steps.....	11
Appendix A	12
Appendix B	13



1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In September 2008, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) commissioned Senate to conduct interviews of 10 chief executives of large businesses operating in New Zealand to better understand business attitudes towards “community-based initiatives”, particularly family violence programmes.

The research project was important to help MSD (and other agencies) to:

- Identify the key drivers affecting businesses’ willingness (or not) for supporting anti-violence messages such as the “It’s not OK” campaign.
- Use the above knowledge to inform “the offer” to prospective business partners for MSD’s Many Voices campaign.

The research project followed a MSD and Families Commission workshop in August 2008 at which participants agreed that the main reasons for seeking partnerships with businesses were to:

- Tap into the credibility of businesses, and through their endorsement of the campaign, **gain greater reach and impact for our messages.**
- Work with companies that wish to be community leaders, to assist with their contributions to their communities and **improve the workplace environment for employees.**

This paper outlines the interview process, summarises key findings, and concludes with ideas and recommendations for future communications with prospective business partners for the Many Voices campaign.

2. INTERVIEW PROCESS

Senate approached 15 business leaders to participate in the survey. Four declined and one referred us to their Sponsorship & Events Manager.

Senate conducted a face-to-face interview with one Wellington-based chief executive, telephone interviews with nine chief executives and managing directors and a phone interview with one senior manager (from 21 November to 24 December 2008).

One chief executive expressed reservations about the usefulness of the project. Two asked for a specific assurance about confidentiality and anonymity, and that assurance was given.

The respondents were leaders of companies representing more than 31,000 employees across a wide range of sectors including banking, energy, information technology, building, manufacturing, transportation and the beverage sector. See table in Appendix A. A copy of the audit questionnaire is attached in Appendix B.

3. MAIN THEMES

- Most business leaders are aware of (and positive towards) the “It’s not OK” campaign but are unsure about its effectiveness in changing behaviour.
- Business leaders are positive towards supporting community-based initiatives, including family violence programmes.
- Business leaders are concerned about family violence in New Zealand and believe it is a very complex issue that requires a co-ordinated and interventionist approach by various agencies (and the news media).
- The key to successful partnerships between businesses and community-based organisations is “brand fit”.
- Business leaders were reluctant to say there were any barriers to supporting anti-violence initiatives, instead referring to some brand and reputation “risks”.
- The most important audiences for companies (in terms of external partnerships) are customers and staff.

4. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

MOST BUSINESS LEADERS ARE AWARE OF THE “IT’S NOT OK” CAMPAIGN BUT ARE UNSURE ABOUT ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Only one business leader out of 11 said they were not aware of the “It’s NOT OK” campaign. All of the other respondents said they were either well aware or “loosely” aware of the campaign and key slogan and were generally positive towards it.

Many respondents volunteered a comment about the campaign as reflected in the following:

- I’ve seen some of the above-the-line messaging, so that talks to awareness, which is good. I think it’s reasonable timely given the press we’ve had around domestic violence. Whether it’s a solution to the problem, I don’t know. – **Beverage company leader**
- Yes, I’ve seen the billboards and things. I suppose I’m a little sceptical about media advertising and whether it gets cut-through to the people who need to hear the message. – **Transport company leader**
- I think the message is fine. I’m not sure the people who really need to hear the message are in the audience. My sense is that family violence tends to be over-represented in dysfunctional families and lower socio-economic groups. It seems to be non-parental males doing lot of the damage and these people don’t care about things in newspapers or on TV. – **Energy company leader**
- I support the campaign. I think it’s very good. It’s the first step to creating the awareness but that’s probably as good as it gets. Creating awareness across the whole community, but not sure of what sort of effect it has. – **Building company leader**
- I think it’s very effective. It’s managed to get people using the catch phrase. – **Bank executive**

BUSINESS LEADERS ARE POSITIVE TOWARDS COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES

The respondents were unanimous in their positive attitude towards supporting community-based initiatives, with many saying their involvement in such initiatives was important to their company's success, and to strengthening New Zealand communities.

- Presence within local communities was an important driver for involvement, as was devolution of decision-making (to local managers) about small donations and corporate community involvement. We want to create a sense of community in New Zealand, rather than isolating ourselves in our homes away from other people. We try to make a difference to people's lives. It's about improving the world we live in. – **Automotive company leader**
- We're very positive towards this area because we are a community-based organisation. – **Transport company leader**
- Our future focus is on community-based initiatives and helping them do what they do better-capability building. – **Bank leader**
- We're comfortable with community-based initiatives and actually prefer them. – **Energy company leader**
- We exist right throughout the country. The engagement with communities is very important to us. – **Building company leader**

BUSINESS LEADERS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE AND WANT TO HELP

Almost all respondents expressed serious concerns about family violence and a willingness to help, but were unsure where to begin. This was coupled with comments about the complexity of family violence.

One respondent commented that single parent families (without a positive male role model) were susceptible to violence.

- New Zealand needs a co-ordinated approach to combating what is a very serious social problem, which affects all of us. Who is the right agency to lead this, I don't know. But we need to definitely take it seriously and find intervention points and stop the cycle. There's a mood for change. Every business grouping I've attended people are saying this is terrible. What can we do to help? – **Transport company leader**
- It's an extremely complex, extremely fraught area. Where do you start? – **Energy company leader**
- We all deplore what has happened to kids in New Zealand in the past 5 to 10 years. The question is what ...value can we add to the anti-violence scene? – **Automotive company leader**
- If we were going to expand the programmes we have, the key would be having the right tools to do it properly. – **Transport company leader**
- Communication alone doesn't seem to be an effective way of doing something about this. My solutions are socially unacceptable and more interventionist. – **Energy company leader**

BRAND FIT IS THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The majority of respondents (7) pointed to “brand fit” as the key to a successful partnership between a business and community-based organisation. Many said a true partnership was much more than simply money or time.

- You've got to be very clear about what benefits you bring to the brand owner or company. You must be specific and business-like in your approach. What are the numbers? What is the brand benefit? What is the demographic of the target audience? Where is your analysis? Where is your organisation headed? Try to bring a big idea that the target (company) can tap into and relate to. – **Beverage company leader**
- Understanding what brand / image we're trying to portray and make sure they're aligned to that. They need to recognise that we're into community-based sponsorships, so we're not likely to support nationwide initiatives. We're local. – **Energy company leader**
- It's primarily about brand reputation. We want to associate with someone who is doing good. – **Transport company leader**
- We're looking for alignment with our brand and the partnering organisation. We look at the leadership of the organisation and whether it's solid and will be able to deliver on the promises of the partnership. – **Transport company leader**
- The first benefit we look for is an alignment of values. Brand fit is very important for us. – **Bank leader**

BRAND AND REPUTATION RISKS APPEAR TO BE THE ONLY BARRIERS TO SUPPORTING ANTI-VIOLENCE INITIATIVES

Business leaders were reluctant to say there were any barriers to supporting anti-violence initiatives, instead referring to some brand and reputation “risks” because the issue was negative, rather than positive, which could turn off some people.

There was also some concern about the issue being politically charged, or having the potential to be politicised.

- There are no barriers, but it has to fit well within our brand profile, which means having something positive. Positivity is something we talk about on a daily basis. It has to be upbeat. If we looked at anti-violence, we'd have to find positives and good brand association to make it work. – **Beverage company leader**
- Something positive about parenting is something easier to stomach than something that's tagged with “anti” something. People want something positive to believe in. – **Automotive company leader**
- There's always an issue around brand and reputation risk, but it's not so much a barrier. – **IT company leader**
- No, but there are barriers for some people who are concerned that perhaps the issue is politically-driven or politically-charged. – **Transport company leader**
- The value of true community-based initiatives are that they either link your customers or staff to helping the community. I think anti-violence is hard on both counts to get engagement – leverage is not so easy. – **Bank leader**
- It's much harder to partner with a government organisation as there's other agendas built into the political sphere that you're not quite sure about. If Government believes in this, then why would it seek private business money? – **Bank leader**

CUSTOMERS AND STAFF ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT AUDIENCES

Customers and staff are the most important audiences for partnerships between businesses and community organisations, with other audiences also mentioned such as government, communities, peers and suppliers.

- We have 250 of our own staff and 1500 staff in dealerships. Everything we do, we try to make sure it makes sense to those people. – **Automotive company leader**
- Most of the programmes and engagement we have, we look for some level of employee volunteering. – **IT company leader**
- The government is well down on our list. We tend not to do things to influence NGOs. – **Energy company leader**
- We did some research recently that showed many Aucklanders and others thought of [us] as a Wellington company so we're trying to address that. Staff are also an important audience. – **Transport company leader**
- The target audience depends on the nature of the sponsorship or partnership. If it involves a NGO, then the target could be employees. If it's about a business or brand-related sponsorship, then the target will be our customers and potentially peers and suppliers and maybe employees. – **Bank leader**

BUSINESS LEADERS ARE FLOODED WITH REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT FROM MANY QUARTERS

Almost all of the respondents (8) said their organisation received very large numbers of requests for sponsorships, donations or other requests for support from external parties. Most respondents personally received such requests on a weekly basis and one person said they were contacted every day:

- It's hard to put a figure on this because there are so many touch points in our organisation. Some approaches may never reach a central point. – **Bank leader**
- A lot of approaches are random and opportunist. We're probably on a lot of databases of organisations that do fundraising on behalf of charities. – **Transport company leader**.
- External organisations approach us all the time. Quite a lot is from word of mouth – a supporter or someone who's influential will contact us. Our employees and suppliers also make approaches. The awareness raising and fund raising skills of most organisations has increased dramatically over the years. Fundraising is a profession now. – **Building company leader**.

CEOS ARE NOT NORMALLY DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN DECISIONS ABOUT EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Business leaders say they are seldom directly involved in their company's decisions about supporting or associating with an external organisation, with most (9) relying on a sponsorship or community involvement strategy and devolution of decision-making throughout the organisation:

- There are two main areas where these decisions are made: Local requests are dealt with by the local marketing team and national ones go to our national sales team. National charity requests are decided by our corporate affairs and public relations team.
— **Beverage company leader**
- Our decisions are guided by our sponsorship policy and implemented by our communications manager. We have delegation of authority which means smaller community sponsorships and donations are decided by our communications manager. On larger ones the communications manager makes a recommendation to the senior management team for a decision. Decisions are not made by the CEO. — **Energy company leader**

COMPANIES USE A WIDE VARIETY OF CRITERIA IN ASSESSING PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS

Companies use a wide variety of criteria in deciding whether to get involved in external partnerships such as community-based initiatives.

The most common criterion is alignment with the company's brand, followed by the opportunity to leverage the partnership.

Other common criteria include exclusivity, the credibility, competence and stability of the partner organisation, and location of the partner (e.g. Auckland or New Zealand-based).

- As a general principle, it's got to make sense for our organisation; there's got to be some kind of synergy. — **Transport company leader**
- Broadly, a proposal must be consistent with our brand attributes - competent, responsible, and reliable. It must be apolitical and community based. We like to see ourselves as part of the community. My involvement is at the policy level. — **Energy company leader**
- At the local level, our primary consideration is the commercial opportunity, e.g. courage rights at an event. It's easier for us where we have exclusivity. — **Beverage company leader**

OTHER FINDINGS

A passionate and motivated staff member (at local level) was an important success factor in terms of a company's involvement in a community-based initiative such as family violence. In many cases local managers were empowered to make decisions about their company's involvement in their local community and also had a budget for small donations, etc.

- About 98% of all the support we give to community programmes is decided within our business units. Generally we do everything at a local level in terms of community involvement and giving. — **Building company leader**
- It's largely our staff who decide where to put our money and our volunteer time.
— **IT company leader**

Some business leaders mentioned the need for appropriate tools and resources to be able to support anti-violence messages.

- If we were going to expand the programmes we have, the key would be having the right tools to do it properly. We could definitely support national and regional programmes with the right support tools. — **Transport company leader**

5. CONCLUSION

New Zealand's business leaders are concerned about family violence and are generally keen to help tackle the problem, but don't really know where to start. This potential fear of "getting it wrong" must be addressed by MSD as part of the development of its suite of "offers" to prospective business partners.

Business leaders say in order for their companies to be involved in family violence programmes, the programmes need to be aligned to their brand and should deliver a positive rather than a negative message.

The willingness of business leaders to support anti-violence partnerships would enable MSD to fulfil its goal to use companies to **gain greater reach and impact for anti-violence messages**.

Most business leaders are aware of the "It's not OK" campaign and generally regard it positively, but some leaders are unsure about its effectiveness in changing the behaviour of perpetrators of violence. This means MSD must prove that its approach to family violence has been effective and valuable so that business leaders know they're on the right track.

Business leaders say their customers and their staff are the most important audiences for partnerships between businesses and community organisations which fits well with MSD's goal to work with companies to **improve the workplace environment for employees**.

6. NEXT STEPS

The findings of this piece of research confirm MSD's previous thinking in regards to an effective approach to prospective business partners:

1. Develop a spectrum of "offers" ranging from the "dark side" it's not OK message through to proposals that focus on positive and affirmative messages about what is OK.
2. Approach those contacts who are already predisposed to supporting anti-violence campaigns, i.e. talk to local contacts who are passionate about the cause.
3. Use existing community partners and NGOs to make the approach to prospective partners at the local level.

Finally, a very important recommendation from the research is to ensure that MSD (and other agencies) study the existing sponsorship and community involvement strategies of each prospective business partner.

This is important for three reasons:

- It demonstrates that some thought has been put into the proposal;
- It enables MSD to give appropriate recognition to the existing work of a prospective business partner;
- It enables MSD to determine whether there is "brand fit" with its offer and the prospective partner's brand values and existing community involvement strategies.

We recommend that MSD's next step is to develop a suite of offers (including tools and resources) for prospective business partners, taking into account the findings of this research.

We recommend that MSD develop a list of existing contacts in the business community who are "hot" or "warm" in terms of their willingness to support anti-violence messages.

We recommend that MSD develop a list of local community partners and NGOs who could make a successful approach to prospective partners in their local communities (or who may already be working in partnership with local businesses).

When the above tasks are completed, the contacting process can begin in a strategic and planned manner, together with appropriate follow up (and resources, where required).

APPENDIX A

BUSINESS LEADERS INTERVIEWED FOR PROJECT

CATEGORY	# OF RESPONDENTS
CEO of bank	2 (SOE & private)
CEO of building company	1
CEO of postal services company	1
MD of courier company	1
MD of energy company	2 (petroleum & electricity)
MD of IT company	1
MD of beverages company	1
MD of automotive company	1
Senior Manager of bank	1
TOTAL	11

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How often are you approached by external parties/organisations either looking for support or some kind of association with your company?
2. Where do these approaches come from (e.g. staff, friends, peers, unknown parties)?
3. Who makes the decision(s) in your organisation about supporting or associating with an external organisation (e.g. sponsorship or similar)?
4. What criteria do you use to make decisions about supporting or associating with an external organisation or cause? (e.g. personal relationships, formal policies)
5. What types of benefits do you look for in supporting or associating with an organisation or a cause?
6. When thinking about your external partnerships / associations, who would you say are your most important audiences (e.g. employees, existing or prospective customers, peers, suppliers, government, regulators, NGOs)?
7. Is staff wellbeing and motivation a driving factor in the partnerships / associations your company supports? And how do you measure this?
8. What would you say about the effectiveness of your existing partnerships and associations? How do they enhance or detract from your company's reputation?
9. How do you feel about supporting community-based initiatives?
10. What are your views on supporting anti-violence initiatives, either within your organisation, or externally?
11. Are you aware of the "It's NOT OK" campaign? What are your thoughts on the campaign?
12. Is/are there any barrier(s) to becoming involved in community-based initiatives such as anti-violence? If so, can you please tell me about those barriers?
13. Would a proposal that does not seek any money and that offers tangible benefits, make any difference to your company's position on becoming involved in community-based initiatives such as anti-violence?
14. What advice would you give external organisations looking for a partnership or association with a company like yours?
15. Is there anything else you would like to say about partnerships, community-based initiatives, or anti-violence messages and campaigns?



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