



Title
International Volunteering Week 2017: Re-engaging our people with social & environmental action
Summary:
<p>At O2 we believe that doing good is good for business.</p> <p>Since 2010 this has meant actively supporting social & environmental causes with programmes like O2 Recycle (tech recycling), Go Think Big (youth work skills) & our O2 /NSPCC partnership (family online safety).</p> <p>These efforts have helped to deliver real environmental & social impact, while differentiating the brand and engaging our people.</p> <p>Actively engaging our employees with volunteering opportunities & fundraising has been essential to build company pride and at the same time making a tangible difference for our good causes.</p> <p>But by the mid part of 2017, we experienced a dip in staff engagement in our 'Reflect' survey on how positive people felt about O2 because of our sustainability efforts (-3% year on year). 527 employees had volunteered and we were at risk of failing to meet or exceed end of year employee volunteering targets (1,400).</p> <p>Our challenge was to create and plan an activation that would deliver mass participation in our range of good causes, creating buzz and restoring positive sentiment. That would mean delivering our biggest, broadest ranging social and environmental employee engagement campaign.</p> <p>To support our parent company's (Telefónica SA) International Volunteering Day, 2017 – we took over our key offices across the UK for a week in October 2017 with high impact events, talks, volunteering events, fundraising & other activations designed to raise awareness of our causes and get people behind them. All with a rallying internal campaign to create participation and buzz.</p> <p>The results; we met our objective by reversing & smashing the historic benchmark on the positivity measure by increasing +7% to 78%. International Volunteering Week also helped us to exceed our staff participation target of 1,400 achieving 1,883 individual efforts by year end (+35%)</p>
Word count = 291/300



Why sustainability at O2?

Our sustainability plan, the O2 Blueprint, was originally launched in 2010. Initially the focus was on people & planet with youth community projects (funding 8,000 projects to date) and leading the industry with environmental initiatives like 'Charger out of the box' (campaigning for universal chargers and removal from phone packaging) and 'Eco rating' (environmental & ethical rating to help consumers make an informed choice on products in store).

In 2012 the UK faced a youth unemployment crisis, which prompted us to launch Go Think Big – a platform that has to date delivered 40,000 work experiences and helped over a million young people with digital content. In 2016 we launched our partnership with the NSPCC to tackle the concerns with keeping kids safe online.

Why we do this? We couldn't have done all this if we didn't have an organisation & culture that genuinely cares about making a positive social impact in our community. But we also do it because we believe at the same time we can deliver brand & reputational impact but also to make our people proud of working at O2 and engaged in their jobs.

What was the problem we needed to solve? Employee insight

We monitor ongoing staff engagement every six months with a company-wide survey called Reflect. We poll our people on the extent to which 'O2's Blueprint for people & planet is making a positive impact on how I feel about O2' & historically our commitments in these areas have garnered strong responses from our people.

In 2016 our score was 74%. This coincided with the launch of the O2 NSPCC partnership with a high-profile brand campaign and an internal campaign designed to get people having conversations with their family, friends and networks under the banner of #O2smalltalks.

The first half of 2017 was a quiet start for the O2 Blueprint. The company had become accustomed to seeing high profile campaigns or initiatives in the public domain with associated internal activations, but in the first half of the year there was no major marketing or significant internal engagement activity to support our social & environmental programmes.

By the halfway mark in 2017, the number of employees supporting environment, online safety & youth staff activities was down with only 527 employees against an annual target of 1,400 based on historic norms. Critically we had seen a decline in our mid-year Reflect people survey score on our positive sentiment score from 74% to 71%.

We completed deep dive interviews across our nine company directorates at every level of the company including Board members. Feedback indicated that we had 'lost momentum and buzz' and our 'story had become unclear'.

But there was also a lack of understanding of the wider opportunities available to our people to get involved in community or environmental activities. This was backed up actual data that showed poorly distributed employee participation (86% Youth, 14% O2 NSPCC Partnership, 0% Environmental).

Challenge –

To re-engage our employee population with a campaign to drive awareness, buzz & participation in the breadth of our sustainability programmes

Solution -

Every year our parent company, Telefónica SA, hosts 'International Volunteering Day to encourage all employees in their operating companies to get involved in local activities. In 2016, 135 O2 employees got involved.



Knowing that we wanted to maximise the opportunity in 2017, we negotiated with Telefónica to extend the campaign for a week in the UK – giving us International Volunteering Week.

Our aim was to drive awareness, buzz and participation in our flagship Blueprint programmes: the O2 NSPCC Partnership, O2 Go Think Big and O2 Recycle. The first time we'd supported more than one programme in a single event.

We developed a campaign '*Hands up, who's in?*' with three activations: O2 NSPCC Partnership: the Gherkin Challenge, O2 Go Think Big: The Big Interview & O2 Recycle: Tech Amnesty.

The activities took place across our key sites: Preston Brook (Warrington), Leeds, and Slough. Stores promoted a tailored O2 Recycle Tech Amnesty as a focused way to get store staff involved.

There was a mix of activities to raise awareness & engage staff in our Blueprint, with a combination of actual volunteering, fundraising & recycling reflecting the ways our people can make a difference in Blueprint.

Activity communications included:

- "O2 Recycle – Tech Amnesty - Dust off your old personal devices, business use devices and those gadgety odds and ends piling up in your drawers. You hand in. We'll do the rest!"
- "O2 & NSPCC Partnership– Gherkin Challenge - To raise awareness and funds for our people who were climbing the London Gherkin later in October, step up and 'climb' a stage on cross trainers in our offices or getting involved in a team challenge. The more you climb the more we raise to help fund efforts to keep kids safe online with the NSPCC"
- "O2 Go Think Big – The Big Interview - We want your help to get young people interview ready – so we'll be asking for volunteers and your know-how to make this happen. Or add your interview tips in our video booth to make the cut for our film to go out to young people who visit gothinkbig.co.uk for help & inspiration"

How did we drive awareness, participation & buzz?

Internal Comms

We secured Board level support featuring several Directors in a spoof Rocky video laying down the gauntlet to the company to put their Hands up to take one of the challenges. This was supported with company-wide emails, intranet articles, blogs & building signage.

Advocacy

We trained our 40 O2 purpose ambassadors (a network of advocates championing efforts to live our new O2 company purpose launched in summer that year) in delivering an elevator pitch to sign up to events, using L&D agency 'Threshold' and then completed 2 days of grassroots campaigning & leaflet dropping on the floors across our offices.

Board members were signed up to captain their directorate teams in the Gherkin challenge to create a competitive edge that gets O2 people going and guaranteeing support. And all events were kicked off and hosted by our senior leadership team.

A social first at O2

We had a company first campaign with the use of Workplace (Facebook for work), which allowed us to promote the story – creating live updates as the events unfolded from one location to another & encouraging users to show us how they were putting their '#handsup' by capturing their volunteering efforts and reactions.



Engagement

All of the activities were designed to create an extra special impact on our people. Staff who recycled their old smart phones were incentivised with an extra £5 bonus on top of the cash back value of their device from O2 Recycle. The O2 NSPCC challenge featured a mass warm up with 300+ people in our office atriums hosted by actors posing as quirky PE teachers accompanied by pumping music (“not your usual day in the office”). And the Big Interview was kicked off with a panel talk to a packed Atrium full of local school children and staff- with our CEO interviewing beneficiaries of our Go Think Big programme which included Lewis Hinde – a remarkable teenager who had 7 brain surgeries and launched an app called ‘Friend finder’ with support from O2 which has resulted in him winning a BBC Teen hero award – really bringing to life our social impact in a hugely emotional way.

Successful internal communication of corporate values

Through our events and communication, we were able to effectively educate our people about our Blueprint commitments and engage them in our key programmes. We were able to bring to life our company purpose in action that had been launched in March 2017 ‘to make every day better through personal experiences that count’.

Results

Awareness: 84% were aware of International Volunteering week

Participation: 600+ volunteering ‘acts of support’ overall with 1,736 pieces of tech recycled, 46 young people supported at the Big Interview with 196 staff members putting their hand up for 1-1 support or submitting tips for a video distributed on Gothinkbig.co.uk that serves an average of 40,000 visitors a month. We also raised £10,000 to fund online safety community outreach projects for the O2 NSPCC partnership. The net result added up to a reverse in the dip in volunteering to exceed our annual target by +35% overall with 1883 staff members participating.

Buzz: 84% said that the activities were fun and engaging – with hundreds of posts on social and intranet including ‘The most rewarding thing I have done in a long time. I cannot wait for the next opportunity to be involved like this again’ **David Newson, O2 employee**. “It’s incredibly inspiring to hear how we’ve helped the young people who spoke today. I was moved by their stories - it feels great that O2 has been able to make a real difference to their lives.” **O2 purpose champion**. “This is O2 at its best with its purpose front and centre” **Ann Pickering, HR Director**

Critically we helped reverse the decline in feelings of positivity from av. 71% at mid-year view to 78% after the event

Total Word count = 1,970/2000