



MOOving and Growing

As of March 6th, a goodman will have a new location and new phone numbers:

a goodman

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My email address
(andy@agoodmanonline.com)
and website (www.agoodmanonline.com)
will remain the same.

I'm also delighted to report that Lori Matsumoto has joined the company. Lori spent "inadvisable amounts of time" (her words) working in the wilds of Silicon Valley as a project manager for such companies as Apple Computer and Sun Microsystems. She eventually fled to the world of arts and letters where she endured a brief but memorable stint as a magician's assistant, and spent three years as Administrative Director at The Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles. If you talk to her on the phone or correspond via email (lori@agoodmanonline.com), please join me in welcoming her aboard. ■



Lori Matsumoto



a goodman

GOOD IDEAS FOR GOOD CAUSES

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Free-range thinking™ is a monthly newsletter for public interest groups, foundations, and progressive businesses that want to reach more people more effectively. For a free subscription, send your request to: andy@agoodmanonline.com or call 323.464.3956. Back issues are available on the web at www.agoodmanonline.com.

Newsletter edited by Carolyn Ramsay.



A Tall Story About Building Awareness

When someone decides to support your organization – as a volunteer, donor, or partner – it's often difficult to know exactly what tipped the balance in your favor. Was it a particularly powerful ad or direct mail piece? Some positive word-of-mouth? Or was it an accumulation of exposures (an op-ed here, a newspaper mention there, an inspiring rally) that ultimately brought them in?

John Wanamaker, the retailing magnate, famously declared, "Half my advertising dollars are wasted. I just don't know which half." The same could be said of time and money spent on building awareness. When you put your organization's name out there primarily to stay "top of mind," you may be paving

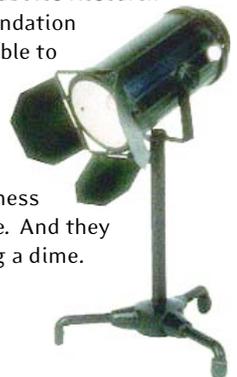
the way for future support...or you could be building a road to nowhere.

To avoid wasting resources that are already in short supply, ask yourself two questions before committing to any awareness-building activity: Will it reach

Or, "A Tall Building with a Story to Tell." Either way, the moral is the same: when you put your name out there, you can't always predict what will come back. And that's why you never stop trying.

a sufficiently large number of people in my target audience? And can I do it with a minimal outlay of time and money? When the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

was able to answer yes to both questions, the nonprofit successfully creased the consciousness of over 3 million people. And they did it without spending a dime.



► The Empire State Building is not only the tallest building in New York City, it is also the Big Apple's most prominent billboard. The multi-colored lights that have been illuminating its top floors since 1977 are regularly used to denote major holidays (red, white and blue for July 4th), celebrate local sports champions (blue and orange for a Mets' World Series victory), and to help promote good causes. The colors change so frequently that *Time Out New York*, a local magazine, runs a column entitled "The Light Stuff" just to let readers know what holiday, cause, or special event is being acknowledged each night.

In June 2004, Michael Mahle, JDRF's national manager of media relations, was flipping through *Time Out* when the column caught his eye and gave him an idea. What if the Empire State Building displayed his organization's colors (blue and white) in November to coincide with National Diabetes Awareness Month? A mention in *Time Out* was assured, but Mahle instantly saw an even better way to exploit this opportunity.

During the weather segment on local evening newscasts, Mahle says, the meteorologists usually show the Manhattan skyline as a backdrop. This puts the Empire State Building on camera for at least a few seconds almost every night. If Mahle could arrange to have the landmark's spire illuminated in blue and white, he would also be giving the weathermen a natural cue for mentioning his cause. And a few choice words from them could expose his organization to *millions*. Before getting too excited at this prospect, however, Mahle had to find Lydia Ruth.

Inside the Empire State Building, Ruth is the gatekeeper for the colored lights. She is also notoriously difficult to track down (undoubtedly due to the volume of requests her position must attract), and Mahle says he had to do some serious detective work just to find a working email address for her. When he did manage to reach Ruth in August, she offered to take the request to a board for approval. Two agonizing months later, Mahle had his answer: the skyscraper's top floors would be lit in blue and white on the evening of November 15th.

Now Mahle could turn his attention back to the weathermen. He drafted a concise email pitch to arrive on the morning of the 15th. "Tonight, the Empire State Building's lights will be blue and white to signify National Diabetes Awareness Month," it began. "The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation would like to ask your viewers to visit www.jdrf.org to recognize the symptoms and complications of type 1 (juvenile) diabetes." The email listed some of the warning signs (e.g., extreme thirst, labored breathing) so the weathermen could perform a quick public service while also plugging the special month.

He sent email alerts to the major TV network affiliates and cable news outlets. He also sent press releases to three daily newspapers, as well as the original source of inspiration, *Time Out New York*. Given the frequency with which the Empire State Building changes its lighting, Mahle was concerned that the November 15th display might not be considered particularly newsworthy. "It's probably going to be a wash," he remembers thinking to himself when the emails failed to generate a single reply.

On the night of the 15th, Mahle watched the WCBS-TV 6:00 pm newscast. When John Bolaris' weather forecast began, the Manhattan skyline appeared on cue. "The Empire State Building is blue and white for Juvenile Diabetes Awareness," said Bolaris as he launched into this report – not precisely the information Mahle had supplied, but close enough to plant the thought into the minds of nearly 600,000 viewers.

Bolaris repeated the plug on the 11:00 pm newscast, and there were similar mentions on the NBC and ABC affiliates. Add to this the items that appeared in the *Daily News* and *Time Out New York*, and Mahle estimates that 3.5 million people heard or read something about JDRF, juvenile diabetes, or National Diabetes Awareness Month through this one, no-cost effort.

Whether this led to more donations or interest in JDRF is impossible to determine, but on balance, the investment of a few phone calls, emails, and zero dollars appears well worth it. And there was one outcome that was both unexpected and impossible to miss. "It boosted the morale of the whole organization," Mahle says, recalling congratulatory emails and calls from colleagues around the country who wanted to know how the New York office had pulled off such a King Kong-sized stunt. What started as an external communications tactic may have paid its biggest dividends internally.

But that's how it goes with awareness building. You just never know. So you keep your eyes open for opportunities, ask yourself a couple of hard questions before diving in, and keep trying to get your cause up in lights. ■



On November 15, 2004, the Empire State Building was illuminated with JDRF's colors to help promote National Diabetes Awareness Month.