

BLOG: Long term charity partnership yields benefits for all

By Greg Sage, corporate affairs director, Greene King

In 2012 when Greene King embarked on its first ever national charity partnership, few in the organisation, or indeed within Macmillan Cancer Support, its charity partner, dreamt it would be as successful as it is today.

Nine and half years on and Greene King is now the number one employee led fundraising partner for Macmillan, topping £9m to date. Even in 2020, when pubs were forced to close or trade under restrictions, and our annual 'Macmillan May' fundraiser was moved to September, a staggering £1.1million was raised in under two months, beating all previous campaign records.

Pent up demand to support charities in the wake of the pandemic, combined with a new set of Greene King values giving team members the 'freedom to succeed' to 'take ownership' and to show 'we care', galvanised the business. The call to action to support our charity partner when donations were so affected by Covid, was heard loud and clear and teams more than stepped up. From coffee mornings and bake sales, to huge physical challenges and fundays, the friendly competition to beat previous targets and between divisions unleashed a sense of pride and commitment towards Macmillan.

Notwithstanding the fundraising achievement, the two organisations pulled together to embed new ideas and share resources. Macmillan, in need of additional volunteers, created a new telephone buddy scheme, enabling Greene King team members on furlough to support those living with cancer by offering friendly support at the end of a phone. The success of the volunteer scheme led to a second new one in Christmas 2020 in which team members wrote thank you cards from Macmillan to other partners and volunteers including teams from Boots and M&S.

This year, Macmillan May has once again moved to September with an exciting new pilot scheme Brave the Shave Live, launching. Taking place across 100 pubs the hope is to roll it out widely next year, building it into a successful long term fundraising brand that also brings community loyalty and footfall to Greene King pubs.

As we approach our 10-year anniversary, the passion for the partnership remains strong among team members; cut into the heart of our business and we'd not only be green for Greene King, we'd be green for Macmillan too. A commitment to work on joint inclusion and diversity initiatives as well as a celebration for ten years of partnership is in the offing for 2022.

I've given some thought to what has made it such a success over nearly a decade, and offer three pieces of advice to anyone looking to partner with a charity:

- 1) Get the right partnership fit for your business: we talked to a number of charities before choosing to work with Macmillan. It's not just about finding a cause that your teams and customers can get behind, you also need a team at the charity who will make the partnership work for both of you.
- 2) Empower teams to feel ownership of their fundraising: this is really important as every pub will know best what kind of fundraising is going to appeal to their customers. Make sure teams understand the charity's values at a broad level, but then let them come up with ideas. We're constantly amazed by our teams' creativity when it comes to fundraising.
- 3) Keep it fresh, with new ideas and concepts: we've regularly updated the way we support Macmillan, with new initiatives suggested by the teams in our pubs and at the charity. With frequent injections of creativity and enthusiasm, the partnership has gone from strength to strength.