



# Supercharging the Next Generation of Supporters

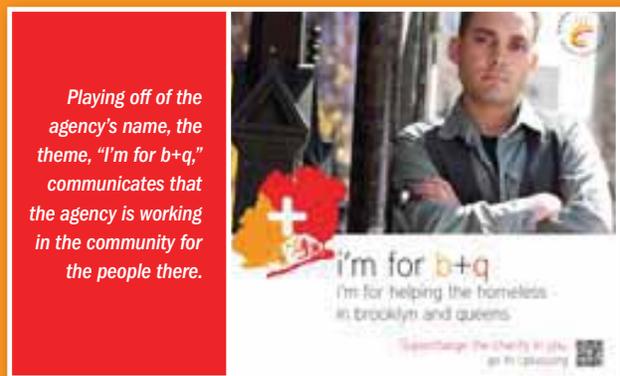
Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens Thinks Creatively to Engage Young People in Its Mission

Every Catholic Charities agency faces the challenge of engaging its community in its mission, but it's especially difficult to do that when not enough people know their local agency, what it does, and who it serves. It's been said before that Catholic Charities agencies are the best kept secret around, but when it comes to involving people in our mission, that's not really a good thing.

When the Board of Trustees and administration of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens identified community awareness as a key area to be strengthened to ensure the economic and social viability of the agency, the agency's development team, headed by Brian Gavin, got creative about boosting their profile in the community. They wanted people, especially younger people, to see CCBQ as an asset in their community, to care about its mission, and to get behind it.

## Connecting with the Community

To make their case to the community, the agency created an awareness campaign centered around the theme, "I'm for Brooklyn and Queens. I'm for B plus Q." Playing off of the agency's name, the theme communicates that the agency is working in the community for the people there. In the ads created for the campaign, the theme is coupled with examples of CCBQ's work in the community.



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"This helps local residents connect with us," said Gavin. "Most of them feel a deep connection and loyalty to their own neighborhood and borough."

The campaign, launched in 2011, also utilizes the slogan: "Supercharge the charity in you," once again drawing from the agency's name ("Charities") and encouraging community residents to get involved, either through donations or volunteer activities.

Campaign materials, which have been distributed throughout the community in a variety of ways—print, media, and electronic—encourage people to learn more about the agency at [www.bplusq.org](http://www.bplusq.org), a web landing page set up not only to direct site visitors to more information about the



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agency but to measure the effectiveness of the campaign. Gavin and his team have been excited to see the number of hits to the site—and donations to the agency— increase over time. The campaign is working!

### **Networking with a New Generation**

With the campaign, CCBQ wants especially to “supercharge” a new generation of supporters, not just for the purposes for bringing in donations, but of developing partnerships, building resources, and cultivating leadership. Understanding the importance of networking for working professionals, CCBQ piloted two kinds of networking events to introduce more people to its mission.

In 2011, the agency hosted the inaugural NYC Catholic Alumni Networking Reception at the New York Athletic Club, which brought together alumni of Catholic colleges and universities who live or work in the New York metropolitan area. Getting the word out was fairly easy. CCBQ simply asked 25 alumni associations to email its electronic invitation to their alumni in the area—more than 125,000 alums all together.

CCBQ’s goal for this professional and social networking cocktail reception was to cultivate support for CCBQ by building on a common Catholic identity and purpose. Throughout the evening, a looping slide show about CCBQ’s programs and services played in the background and various campaign print materials were available for perusal. Near the end of the two-hour event, Robert Seibel, executive director of CCBQ, took a few minutes, no more than five, to share why he has worked at CCBQ for so many years, what CCBQ’s mission has in common with attendees, and how people can join in the work of CCBQ.



CCBQ’s Professional Networking Event in October 2011. Below: Donors and attendees at the event, including CCUSA’s Maria Gonzalez (second from left), and CCBQ’s Jason Soto (center right) and Brian Gavin (far right).



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— Brian Gavin

"We know the average person gives to three causes, first, their congregation, second, their alma mater, and third, a cause that speaks to the individual," said Seibel. "CCBQ is here this evening to speak to that third cause. Join us in the work we do."

About 75 people attended the first networking reception, and the numbers have moved upwards since then. In March, CCBQ held its third alumni reception. It was "sold out" at 350 attendees.

"This event has been very successful in getting our message out to a successful, savvy, educated group of people who can be strong supporters" said Gavin. "They enjoy the event because we don't hit them over the head with all the things we do. We're upbeat and positive and share a few basic stats on what we do. They think it's pretty cool."

To reach out to younger working professionals, CCBQ also launched quarterly professional networking events for 18- to 45-year-olds. These events, promoted solely through social media, are held at local "hot spots." In ways similar to the alumni reception, these events introduce younger professionals to the mission of CCBQ. Here, CCBQ also brings in direct service staff—social workers, case managers, care providers—to talk with attendees and share more about their work.

The number of people attending the quarterly events has increased from 80 people to over 300. "The number grows each time," said Gavin. "We're now able to begin the next phase, which is getting people to join our Junior Board and developing partnerships with them and the corporations they work for."

### **Not a Secret Anymore**

The networking events have turned out to be great for raising awareness. "People are amazed when they learn about all the good work CCBQ does," said Gavin. "I hear people say, 'I had no idea Catholic Charities did that,' or 'More people need to know about this,' or 'How can I get involved?'"

That greater awareness is paying off with the community and with young people—and not just in donations. CCBQ has organized a service day for volunteers from the alumni group. They'll be building a tranquility garden at one of CCBQ's senior centers. And recently, people from the younger group organized an office fundraiser to benefit CCBQ.

Gavin is pretty passionate about "supercharging" a new generation of supporters. "It's what we need to be doing. They will sustain our future." ■



# Supercharging **the Charity** in **Your** Community

Through Catholic Charities USA's Development and Communications Section, you can connect with your development and communication colleagues in the Catholic Charities network and gain access to some of the best ideas our network has to offer about development, marketing, communications, and branding.

Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens' award-winning campaign materials—public service announcements, fundraising videos, banners, and print materials—are available through the Dev/Comm Section, and CCUSA can help you explore how you might customize them for your community. ■



30 second "Human Touch PSA/Human Touch Template Ads