

How Social Media Helps the Red Cross Help Others

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The Red Cross communicates with a large online community of donors, volunteers and followers. They listen to conversations on blog posts, tweets and comments on Facebook. They use that information to improve what they are doing.

"Social media is a great early warning system," said Claire Sale, Social Media Director for the Red Cross in 2009. "This is how we hear about our reputation first. The key is that there is really no such thing as a social media expert. We just respond to [online conversations](#) with real action. We know that people are saying things out there about the Red Cross and if the information is incorrect, we use it as an opportunity to share the truth. People don't just want an answer, they want change."

Claire Sale continued, "The internet is a narrative and we create a sense of community by sharing personal stories from our supporters and followers."

But the Red Cross took a passive approach with social media and although they created a sense of community, they didn't get involved in conversations on [social media sites](#) unless they were asked. Then the earthquake in Haiti struck.

Haiti Earthquake

On January 12th, life changed forever for millions of people in Haiti. Life changed for the Red Cross as well. They sprang into action and went to work. They raised millions of dollars through fundraisers, television and radio commercials - and some very effective social media marketing campaigns.

In just over a month, the American Red Cross raised \$284 million and spent or allocated \$80 million of that to meet the urgent needs of Haiti's survivors. They have already helped over 1.3 million people. 69 % of the funds spent or committed have been for food and water, 20 % has been for shelter and the rest is for health and family services.

Social Media

The Red Cross raised over \$21 million through their \$10 text message donation drive (text "Haiti" to 90999) which was backed by the United States State Department and is still in operation today.

They established a separate website and [blog for the Haiti earthquake effort](#). The blog lets Haitians communicate with lost family members and loved ones. The website has a live journal from Haiti that is also posted on YouTube.

They used Twitter and Facebook to give people real time information and updates regarding the disaster.

They also used Flickr to show the public and the media photos. These photos generated over 1 million page views in 24 hours.

The Red Cross promises to invest in Haiti until every last donated dollar is gone. They promise to continue giving resources, support and training to help Haiti recover and rebuild in the years to come. They have done a remarkable job so far but there is still over \$200 million left. Will they continue the excellent work and keep the promises they made? This is where social media comes into the picture again. You can be sure the Red Cross will be more active with their [social media strategy](#) now so that their good reputation remains intact.

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