

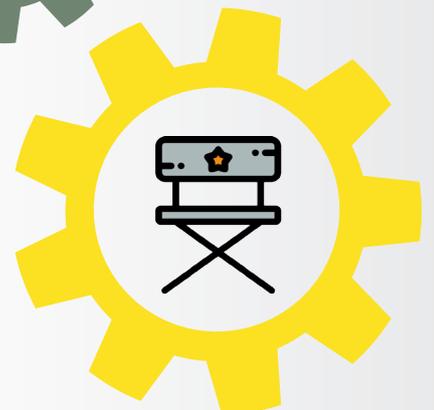
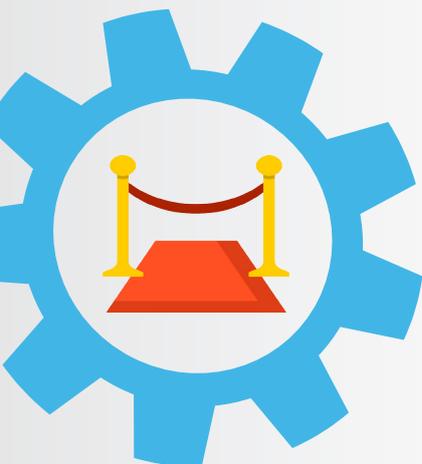


THE PR OFFICE **[PRO]**



HOW CHARITIES CAN WIN AND RETAIN CELEBRITY SUPPORT

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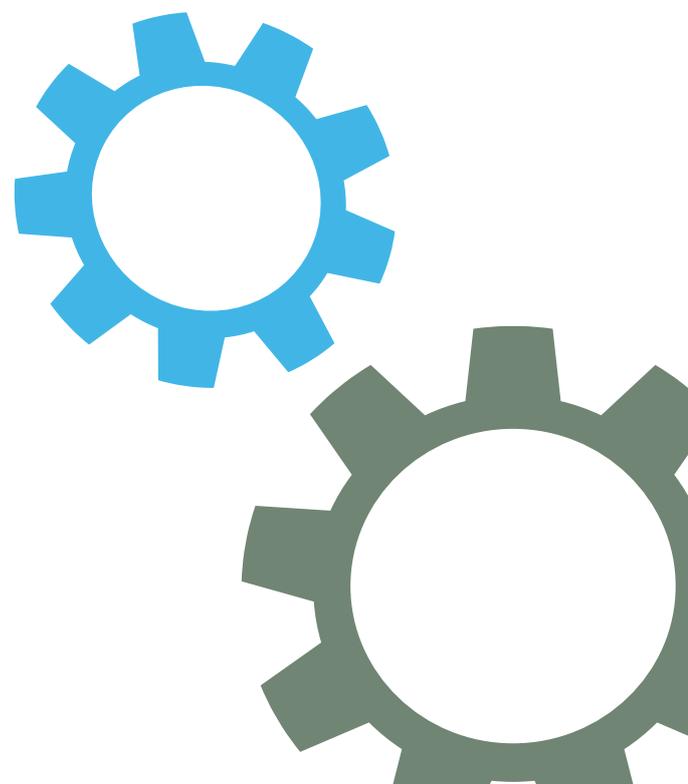


This article originally appeared on the Guardian Voluntary Sector Network, the resource hub for third sector professionals and volunteers www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network

Celebrity star power has enormous potential to widen the reach and appeal of an organisation's messages. The right person can help charities to raise their profile, boost funds and increase their influence – but only when the celebrity relationship is carefully planned, managed and sustained.

With hundreds of A, B and C list celebrities, not to mention an army of agents and representatives acting as their gatekeepers, it is not always easy to know where to start.

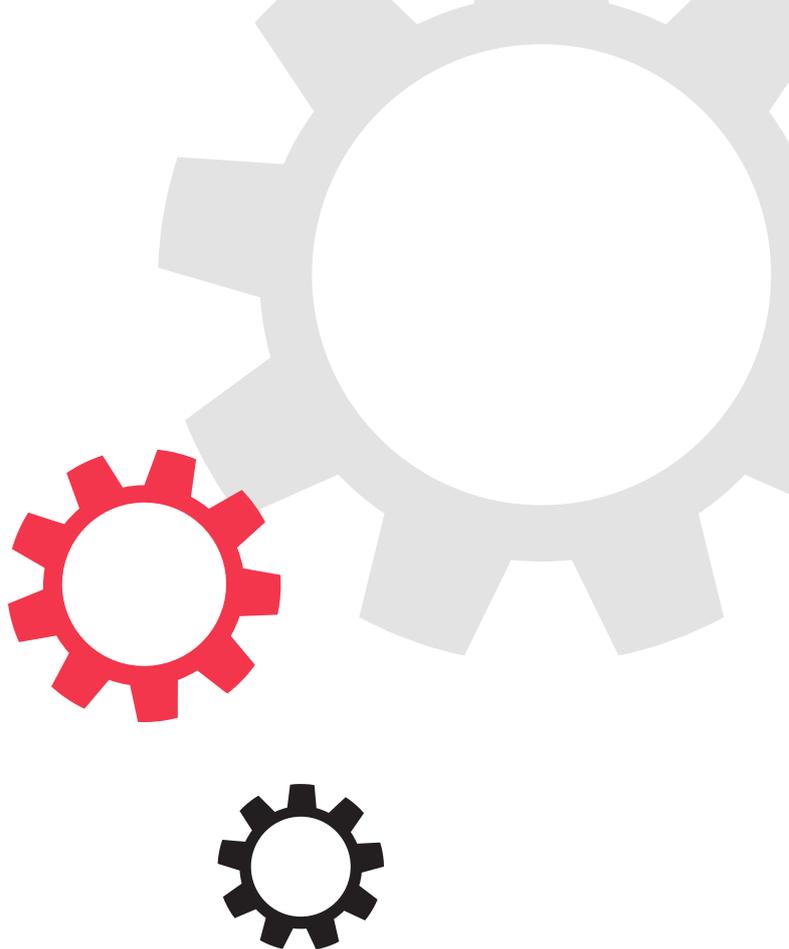
Here, then, are some top tips for approaching and working with celebrities to get the very best out of them for your charity.



BIGGEST IS NOT ALWAYS BEST

When choosing a celebrity, resist the temptation to go straight to the biggest, most well-known names. Instead, look for celebrities who have a link with or interest in your area of work – perhaps someone who has had experience of the issues your organisation is involved with, either directly or through a relative or friend.

Sometimes a less high-profile but dedicated supporter will take a greater interest and accomplish more for your charity than an A-list superstar. They might also have fewer gatekeepers, more flexibility to fulfill short-notice requests and a shorter advanced-booking time.



MAKING CONTACT

The most important ingredient of a successful approach is clarity; clarity about your organisation or campaign objectives, clarity about what you want the celebrity to do and clarity about the likely time commitment. Without this, a celebrity or their agent will find it difficult to decide if they are able to make a commitment.

Consider mapping out your wishlist over a year so that your expectations are clear, and be realistic about the amount of time the celebrity will be able to give.

Celebrities are normally approached in one of two ways – directly, particularly if a charity has a staff member, trustee or other contact who is able to make an introduction, or, more commonly, through an agent.

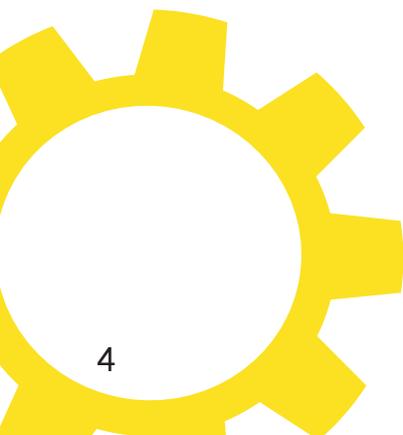
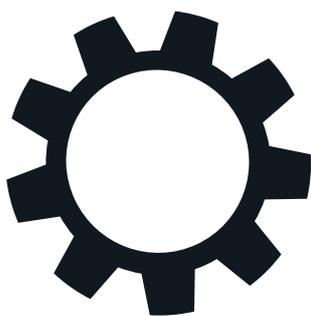
Try to see the latter as a help rather than a hindrance – working with him or her to understand the limitations on their client's time and the best way to work with them.

FINDING THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITIES

It can be useful to have several celebrity supporters from various walks of life who will appeal to a variety of media and audiences. Rather than using one celebrity as a go-to person for every activity, find specific opportunities that are suited to their background, interests and talent. A model may prefer a photocall; an actor a radio appeal and so on.

SUSTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Celebrity supporters need to be nurtured, not just used. They need to be looked after and on an organisation's agenda for regular discussion. Thoughtful gestures and regular communication can make all the difference – a newsletter with a personal note, a Christmas card and invitations to suitable events will all help to build and maintain a rapport.

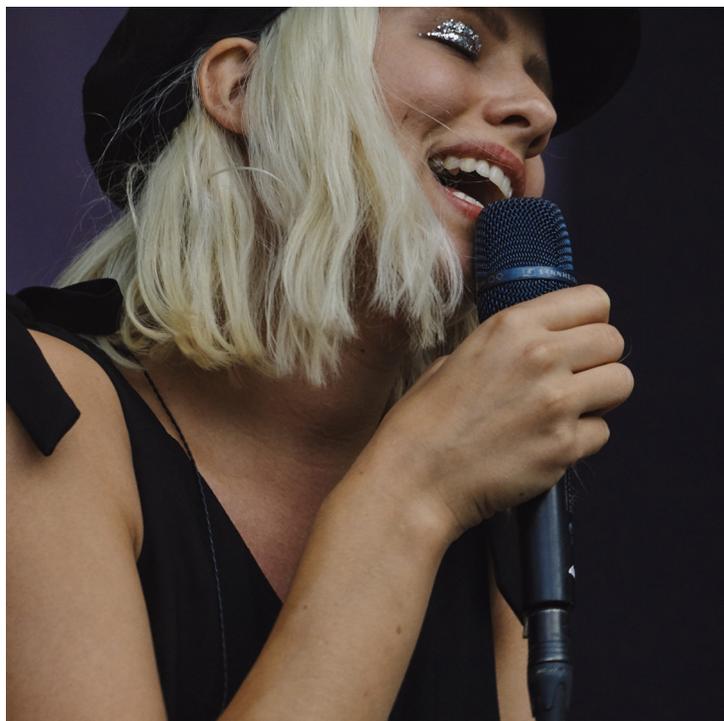


MANAGING THE RISKS

A celebrity relationship brings with it risks and well as rewards. Celebrities are, by their nature, in the public eye and there is always the chance that they may attract negative attention.

Charities can minimise the potential reputational risks by doing their due diligence and carefully researching their possible celebrity supporters to ensure that they are a good fit. Charities should also keep on top of developments and be prepared with responses for media, supporters and other important audiences at the first sign of any problems.

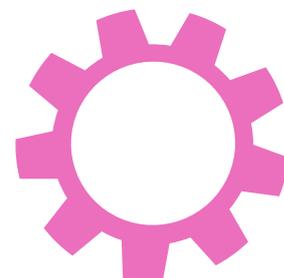
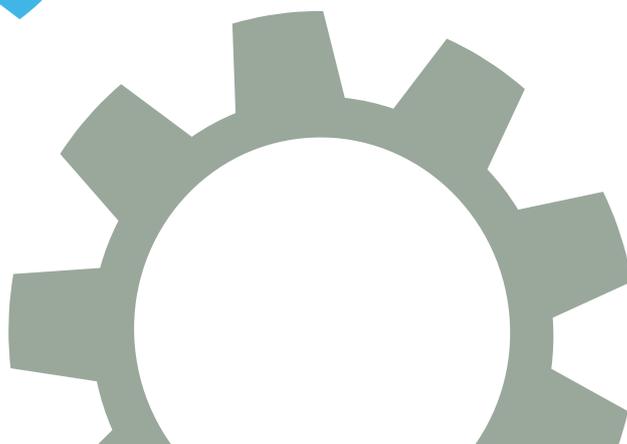
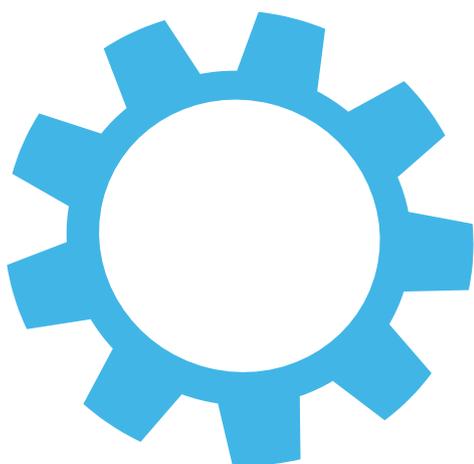
The above notwithstanding, keep a cool head and don't fixate on poor publicity that is here today and gone tomorrow. Even the most squeaky-clean celebrities will have their bad days – so don't be too quick to distance yourself if they run into difficulties.



MEASURING IMPACT

How you measure the impact of a celebrity's support will depend on the nature of their contribution – for example whether they have spoken at an event or agreed to mention you in interviews – as well as your own internal reporting processes and performance targets.

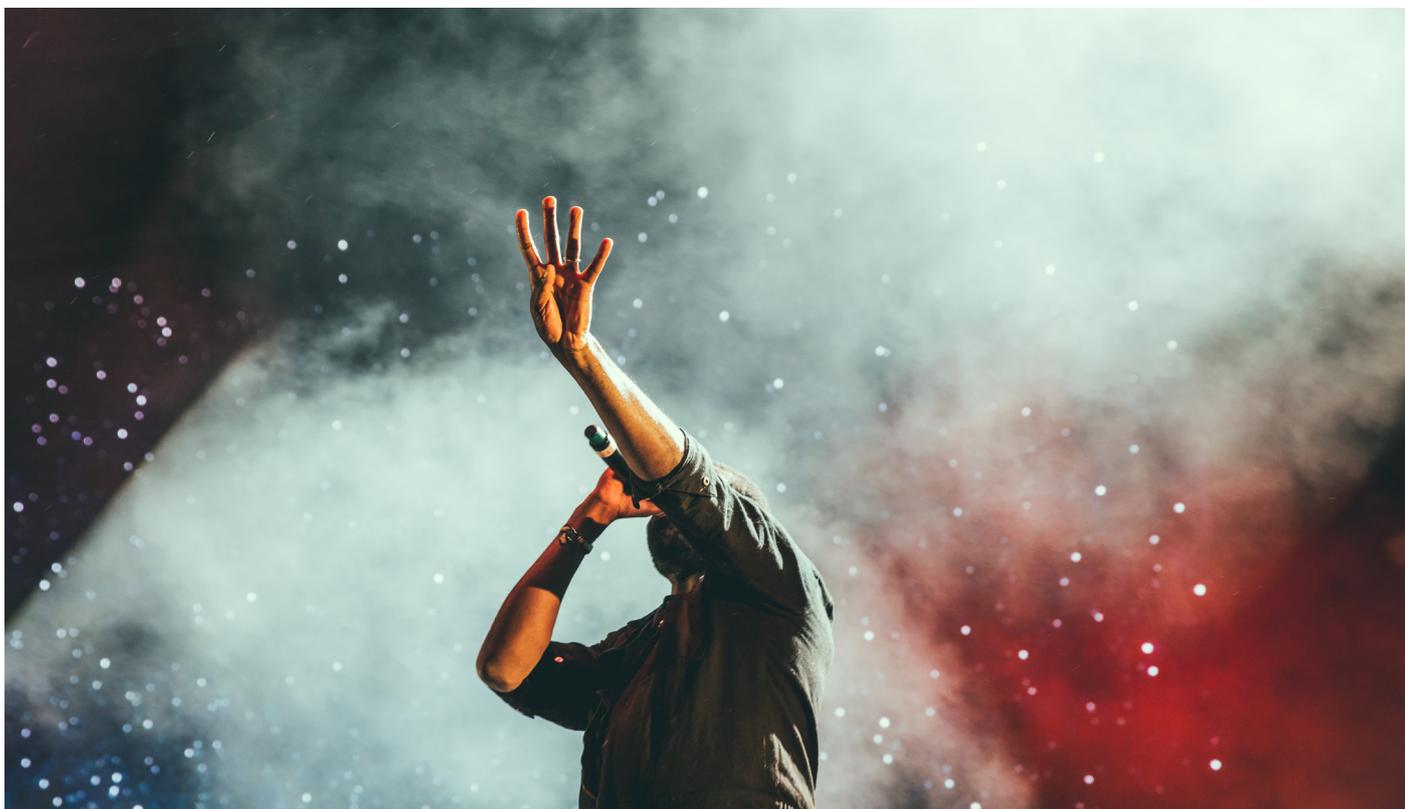
If a celebrity has helped to generate media coverage, then standard PR measurements such as reach and circulation can be used. Celebrity support can also be measured as a gift in kind, so that if, for example, a high-profile person normally charges for speaking at an event and is doing the same for you, free of charge, then you can value this donation at the same level.



STILL NOT SURE WHAT TO DO?

A sprinkle of stardust can help even the smallest charities by boosting awareness, recognition and support. If you need a bit of guidance to go in the right direction, or would just like to have an informal chat, I would be only too happy to hear from you.

Please drop me a note at agoldup@theproffice.com



ABOUT US

THE PR OFFICE ^{PRO}

From behaviour change campaigns and advocacy, to fundraising appeals and special awareness days, our dedicated community and not-for-profit team has experience of delivering a wide variety of communications projects and campaigns for charities and community organisations, large and small, local and national.

We're passionate about the not-for-profit sector. Several of our team has a background as charity trustees, others have worked in-house, and many volunteer their time at good causes of their choice. We understand its unique pressures and challenges, and have the contacts and expertise to get people talking about and supporting you.

Find out more at www.theproffice.com

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