

CASE STUDY: Cystic Fibrosis

Social Media Only Virtual Balloon Race Grosses £20,000 for Cystic Fibrosis Trust

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The Cystic Fibrosis Trust (CFT) is the only UK-wide charity making a daily difference to the lives of people with cystic fibrosis, and those who care for them.

Cystic fibrosis is a life-shortening inherited disease, affecting over 10,000 people in the UK. You can't catch or develop cystic fibrosis, it's something you're born with and most cases in the UK are now diagnosed soon after birth. If you or someone you know has been recently diagnosed with cystic fibrosis it can be overwhelming, but CFT can help with information and support.

The screenshot shows the Cystic Fibrosis Trust website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Forum', 'Helpline', and a search box. Below this is a large yellow banner with the text 'Cystic Fibrosis why we're here' and a photo of a young girl. A secondary navigation bar includes links for 'Home', 'About CF', 'Who we are', 'Research & Care', 'Get involved', 'In your area', 'News', and a prominent 'Donate' button with a right-pointing arrow. The main content area is divided into three sections. The left section is a large yellow-bordered box titled 'Big Balloon Bonanza!' with an illustration of a hot air balloon and several balloons. It contains the text: 'Enter our virtual balloon race for your chance to win some amazing prizes and help us raise £50,000.' and a 'Sign up' button. The right side of the page features three smaller yellow-bordered boxes. The top one is titled 'Call for research funding!' and mentions 'The new round of Strategic Research Centre grants is now open - apply now and help tackle vital questions in cystic fibrosis.' The middle one is titled 'Edinburgh Marathon Festival 2015' and states 'Saturday, May 30, 2015' and 'Edinburgh Marathon is the fastest marathon in the UK and with several other distances on offer, you have the Edinburgh Marathon Festival of Running.' The bottom one is titled 'Regional Supporters Meeting Belfast' and says 'Join us for on 25 March for an open meeting for parents and carers of those living with cystic fibrosis in Northern Ireland.' At the bottom left of the main content area, there are page numbers '1 2 3' and a 'pause' icon.

Like most other UK health related charities, the CFT supporter base is widely dispersed throughout Britain which makes raising badly needed operational funds both arduous and resource intensive. The unique Rentaballoonrace.com Internet-based system is therefore a major asset to the Income Generation Department at CFT because the web eliminates the need for expensive mailshots or face to face meetings between staff and supporters. Everything can be web-based, optimising costs to an absolute minimum.

Harry Lightfoot, a member of CFT's strategic partnerships team was profuse in his praise when he said "I found working with the RABR guys really easy and the results for us are fantastic"

Most significantly, CFT's latest virtual balloon race, which just finished on Saturday 29th March, was marketed entirely using social media only – no balloon cards or paper flyers were used at all. Twitter, email adverts and Facebook messages were the only sales channels used.

Cystic
Fibrosis a race we must win

Dear Jim

Only seven days till lift off

There are only seven days left to [enter our Big Balloon Bonanza](#) and be in with the chance to win some fantastic prizes including an iPad Air and a weekend break in London.

Enter as many balloons as you like, at £5 each, and help us hit our target of £50,000!

For some people with cystic fibrosis, even blowing up a balloon is too much of a struggle, so we want to fly 10,300 virtual balloons in our Bonanza, one for every person with cystic fibrosis in the UK. The money from each balloon will help to fund research into transformational treatments and change the lives of people with cystic fibrosis.

Please show your support and race your balloon [now!](#)

Good luck

Harry Lightfoot
Cystic Fibrosis Trust

The Trust has garnered over 60,000 likes on Facebook and 16,000 followers on Twitter, so by using their committed supporter base and asking everyone to challenge 5 people to sign up, they were able to reach sales of almost 4000 balloons and gross £20,000 within a short four week advertising window.

And to lightly supplement social media, the Trust issued press releases to targeted local newspapers throughout the UK to spread the word. Similarly, the Trust's long list of celebrity supporters were encouraged to re-tweet on their own personal Twitter accounts.

Disappointingly, the marketing team tried over the sales period to use Google Ads, only to find a massive click rate but no actual resultant sales from the money spent.