Communications

Sing Up 2007-2011
Programme Evaluation
Theme 1

sing up
Help kids find their voice

Sing Up 2007-2011
Programme Evaluation

Sing Up 2007-2011 was the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, led by Youth Music, with AMV-BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by Government. It aimed to raise the status of singing and increase opportunities for school children throughout the country to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives, and to support all primary schools to become 'singing schools'.

Sing Up commissioned the Centre for Use of Research & Evidence in Education (CUREE) to undertake an external evaluation of the whole programme. The evaluations are presented as follows:

- Synthesis Report including Executive Summary
- Probe & Case Study Report
- Themed Reports:
  1. Communications
  2. Health & Wellbeing
  3. Impact on Schools
  4. Learning Across the Curriculum
  5. Management of Change
  6. Musical Development
  7. Partnership
  8. Speech, Language and Communication
  9. Transition
  10. Workforce Development
  11. Youth Leadership

The full set of reports can be found on the Sing Up website: www.singup.org

Further information about CUREE can be found at: www.curee-paccts.com

Introduction

Sing Up 2007-11 was the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, led by Youth Music, with AMV-BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by the Government. It aimed to raise the status of singing and increase opportunities for school children throughout the country to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives, and to support all primary schools to become 'singing schools'.

Sing Up operated through four main strands of activity: a national PR and advertising **campaign** highlighting the benefits of singing; singing **resources**, through the twin vehicles of a website www.singup.org (including a 'Song Bank') and a free termly magazine with CD; a **workforce development** programme to build the confidence and expertise of primary school teachers, musicians and others in leading and supporting children's singing activities, with a supporting network of 30 Sing Up Area Leaders; **funded programmes**, supporting the development of singing activity around the country.

By March 2011 Sing Up had engaged with over 95% of state primary schools and over 90% of all schools with primary school-aged children in them.

Background

Communications have been central to Sing Up, in terms of the campaigning elements of the programme (e.g. Help kids find their voice) to drive engagement, and in terms of the offer to schools and individuals once they had engaged. Communications as defined in Sing Up's structure fall into three main categories:

- Campaign strand – awareness raising, communicating the value of singing and driving engagement. Mainly delivered through advertising and PR, specific project ideas to get people involved (e.g. Sing Up's School Trip Singalong) and overarching messaging;

- Marketing & Communications – strategy, print and PR support for existing Sing Up elements and workforce to connect with their markets (e.g. marketing the Sing Up Training Programme and Sing Up Awards); and

- Resources – materials and repertoire to develop singing once school leaders and practitioners got engaged with Sing Up, but also the platforms for it, i.e. website and magazine.

This report is based on Sing Up documentary evidence from across the programme, interviews with key personnel, research by AMV including brand tracking studies, website activity records and evaluations, AMV reports, and

supplementary evidence from Sing Up project[1] reports and associated documents including press coverage.

In the early days of Sing Up (2007) communications led by the Campaign strand were focused on awareness-raising: getting the Sing Up name and values out to a wide range of audiences. As this initial wave of activity has been completed and embedded it is very difficult to surface evidence of its impact. This may well be a sign of success. The more successful initial communications are, the more embedded and therefore invisible are the tools that made it so.

Subsequently Sing Up communications focused on the tools and messages which the Area Leaders could use on the ground – first to open doors and then to tailor resources and strategies for school contexts.

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As the programme developed, Sing Up communications aimed more directly at teachers, focusing on changing behaviour to increase the take up and spread of Sing Up. This had direct consequences for resource development and the website as the public face of Sing Up.

On one level, the success the awareness raising goals of Sing Up communications, and particularly the Campaign is evidenced in the near 100% of primary schools which have registered with Sing Up. However it is apparent from the data provided to the evaluation team that the broad communications strategy operated on a number of levels. It extended beyond brand and awareness-raising to its influence on the nature of the resources, the ways in which they were used in schools, links and partnerships with Sing Up partners (e.g. Faber) as well as third parties (e.g. music retailers) and the creation of a shared 'vision' amongst the many diverse Sing Up leaders, stakeholders and constituents through its use of PR and other stakeholder communications. This report attempts to highlight key outcomes and processes across all these spheres of influence through the lens of the way that communications were experienced by schools and by Sing Up colleagues.

Sing Up communications, comprising multiple activities led by the Campaign and Resources strands and the Marketing communications department, inevitably, rarely involved young participants directly. It is possible tentatively to infer impact on participants from cross-curricular resource development, take-up of resources in schools etc but there is no hard data for this.

Processes and Strategies

'By March 2011, 96 percent of English primary schools had at least one teacher registered with Sing Up.'

The range of documentation provided to the evaluation covers a great deal of activity. On one level there was a highly visible, strategically co-ordinated media campaign. Local and national press and radio were targeted through events, press releases, direct contact, performances and advertising. On another level, activities involved meticulous monitoring, website development, registration data and other less visible tasks such as brand tracking studies. More 'invisible' activities required considerable organisation and attention to detail. Populating the Song Bank, for example, entailed negotiating licences, making the best use of technology, avoiding treading on music publishers' toes. Monitoring, support services and trouble-shooting were also necessary. It is only possible here to provide a flavour of these activities but the overall picture is one of intensive organisation and painstaking attention to detail - coupled with the innovation and flair required to enlist the large-scale participation of schools across England.

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Although individual initiatives (radio, cinema) were used to target parents and children the focus for the most part, particularly after the first year, was on influencing and supporting teachers.

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Website

Web management, monitoring and development were essential ingredients in Sing Up's wider communications strategy.

The development of the Song Bank, which became (according to some of the user feedback) the most highly prized asset of the programme, involved commissioning over fifty different groups to record songs. These included school groups and community choirs as well as established choirs. It also involved complex licensing arrangements, developing specific backing tracks for SEN children and a large number of accompanying resources. The latter were aimed at ordinary teachers (as distinct from musical experts or experienced singing leaders) and designed for use across the curriculum. Informed by research on school and primary teachers' needs, the resources targeted different age groups and curriculum areas. A report on the Awards schools found that

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Customer support also grew as the number of users increased over the life of the programme. According to Sing Up this 'has proved to be invaluable to our relationships with users and schools, ensuring that we are constantly addressing issues and acting on how users are experiencing the site'. Emails attest to the value put on this process by web users. A 'Help and Support' section of the website, covers all aspects of the programme:

- Special articles about aspects of the site (e.g. Downloading, getting started with the Song Bank)
- Instructional videos
- Guides and tips – e.g. a handout with instructions on speeding up the Sing Up website on your computer

Sing Up monitors traffic on the website which averages around 8,000 users per day, plus around 4,000 at weekends. Many of these are young people who access the website at home. The Facebook fan page has also directly attracted young people.

New registrations were welcomed with a copy of the Sing Up magazine, which included ideas, tips, song suggestions and CDs.

Media

A characteristic feature of the approach adopted by Sing Up communications and the Campaign strand in particular was the use of short, clear messages. These highlighted the learning benefits of singing in different ways. The launch campaign, for example, and subsequent radio advertising, focused on singing as a means of remembering facts. Commissioned stories focused on musical learning, self-esteem, concentration, self confidence or wellbeing.

The overall aim of the media campaign was initially to change attitudes: to alert teachers and others to the benefits of singing. A focus on changing behaviour followed. Once registration reached high levels the Marketing & Communications and Resources functions took on the challenge of trying to deepen and extend the engagement of those who had already registered and support their work through providing materials aimed at introducing and embedding singing in a variety of settings.

Social media used by Sing Up communications included Facebook and YouTube. Usage was closely monitored and internal reports indicate that the way in which Sing Up's presence on both sites was developed was both strategic and responsive to user patterns and trends.

Individual projects also generated coverage for Sing Up. For example, Moving on Up – performances connected with Choir of the Year - garnered extensive press and radio coverage in and around Milton Keynes and in the home towns of the Youth Choirs and on BBC Radio 3.

Research

Communications functions adopted an evidence-based approach to all of their work. This is reflected across the documentation. For example, the approach to the use of Facebook was based on facts and figures about numbers and trends. The Campaign's approach to influencing and changing teacher behaviours was based on extensive commissioned research about teachers and the potential levers and barriers involved in changing behaviours. Working with teachers to elicit feedback and information was also used to inform and shape the development Sing Up communications.

A major research programme in 2009 (following on from similar research commissioned in 2008), involving both qualitative and quantitative research, triggered several changes in the programme, including a revamp of the website which some teachers had reported as being dull and undifferentiated for age and phase. The changes successfully addressed what feedback had described as 'a lack of 'contemporary-ness'' including 'a lack of modern and up-to-date song choice that taps in to pop culture e.g. High School Musical, chart music'.

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Recommendations included differentiating Sing Up from other 'singing' initiatives by communicating its key points of difference more clearly. These included getting more children singing more of the time – not just in set singing occasions, helping children learn new skills and retain information in other subject areas i.e. across the full curriculum and emphasising the accessibility and support for non music specialists.

Sing Up staff reported that

'...the learnings have triggered a re-evaluation of how the brand needs to talk and behave. Our main priority is to focus our brand firmly on teachers. For the next 7 terms (the rest of the Sing Up life span) we need to single-mindedly inspire and enable them to use singing as a teaching tool. We know from research that relevancy is an issue; a primary reason for Sing Up rejection is the sense that the offering is pitched too young for some pupils, and is therefore redundant for their teachers. Sing Up needs to feel like a fun, practical and empathetic resource for teachers'.

One of the key barriers to behaviour change identified by the research was routine. Teachers did not see the relevance of Sing Up, nor the need to make changes to the way they worked already. Time was also a big problem. These findings directly influenced the direction of the resources. The latter were segmented to different audiences and groups; they were designed to be incorporated into pre-existing lesson plans and they worked across a number of different curriculum areas – with careful signposting. The aim was to encourage teachers to use Sing Up to help them do what they were doing already – only better.

Partnerships

Most of the Sing Up projects involved some form of partnership, which has been the subject of a separate theme report. Evidence made available for this report suggests that the strands and departments within Sing Up also worked in partnership in order to achieve a shared vision across the programme and reach a wide reach and support a wide range of primary leaders and practitioners. For example, the Campaign's knowledge of the target market and audience segments was utilised in the development of the Sing Up resources, led by a separate strand of the Sing Up programme delivery.

Resource Marketing

Alongside developing the Online Store and the Participating Retailer Scheme, the programme also developed alternative ways to market its collection of print music

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resources. A database with details of all songs (those featured in the programme and in the contents of publications available in the Sing Up online store) to facilitate user searches was an example of such communications activity.

Targets (Recruitment)

From the start, the programme had a 100% (of English primary schools) recruitment target. This drive was shared by all the Sing Up strands and stakeholders. It effectively set a vision around which the entire programme could unite, providing a goal and setting direction. It also put teachers at the centre of the programme: across all the strands it was recognised that everything needed to be tailored to teachers' needs. By March 2009 more than half of all primary-age schools in England had registered with Sing Up; over 20,000 people had participated in training and CPD activity and the Song Bank had over 200 songs, warm-ups, games and other activities.

Showcasing/Events

Many individual projects involved performances, sometimes (e.g. Cheltenham Music Festival, Birmingham Symphony Hall) at high profile national events or venues. Sing Up communication activities also 'piggybacked' on major national music events such as Glastonbury as well as planning and organising own events. The first National Sing Up Day was held in February 2009 as a day of national celebration. A key aim was to raise awareness of the programme and increase engagement. The message was 'Spread a Little Singing'. Schools, funded programmes, community organisations, music services, area leaders etc were encouraged to set up their own singing events to demonstrate the benefits of singing to their own communities and introduce more people to Sing Up and its resources.

A microsite was created with a national map of activity containing details of all the events which users were able to upload themselves. Events ranged from school singing assemblies to large scale community performances, fun days, free singing workshops and training days for adults. Over two and a half thousand schools took part.

On a more modest level, a series of events were launched by Sing Up in partnership with its participant retailers. Known as Networking, Resource and Repertoire sessions, they invited local teachers to attend a repertoire-based singing session (either at the shop itself, or at a local venue) providing registrants with 'free, fun … [workshops] … exploring and showcasing the breadth of repertoire in Sing Up-featured publications beyond those songs in the Sing Up website. In turn, the sessions enable stores to establish new local contacts, to increase store footfall and to sell Sing Up-featured repertoire'.

Database management

Sing Up aimed for 100% registration of English primary schools and monitored its registrations carefully. Recruitment was central to Sing Up from the start. The registrations data was used to identify which types of school were slow to register for example, and to target their recruitment efforts accordingly.

Initially all school registrations had to be filtered so that only primary-aged

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schools in England could register. This was subsequently extended to Music Services, organisations and freelancers and parents. Secondary schools were able to register as organisations.

This system is the basis for user management by the support team, for staff and Area Leaders to find information and details of registered schools and for identifying statistics based on reach.

The registration statistics were eventually also used to influence schools to join Sing Up. Workforce Development created a Sing Up database which used the information on the Spirit database (containing details of all educational establishments in England) to show regionally based registrations. 'This allowed Area Leaders to work with schools not engaged with the programme and form relationships with registered school for advocacy purposes'. Training was offered to Area Leaders to help them use messaging more effectively and to engage more effectively with unregistered schools, this was based on profiling the data and splitting it into 4 profile groups.

Learning From Communications

A significant amount of the Sing Up communications data relates to lessons learned and changes made: including rebuilding the entire website paying close attention to user feedback. Feedback was a key ingredient in the iterative development of the programme as a whole. In many instances, feedback about communications was actively solicited in order to learn and improve. For example, after the new website was launched, the Resource team was aware that some users who might find using the more new and more high-tech website difficult. They conducted a telephone survey of Area Leaders 'intending to resolve any open queries, find out their thoughts and local feedback, and point them towards other sources of help available for the users or themselves'.

Timing and logistics were raised as a challenge for some of Sing Up communications activities. For example, school holidays and other timetabled commitments (such as school trips or exams) were the 'biggest challenge' for arranging recording sessions of the songs.

> 'It has been a challenge to ensure that the resource features as wide a range of singing styles as possible, whilst maintaining a high standard of quality in the groups we have used to record for us. Despite this, we managed to schedule a large number of recordings to date and involve hundreds of children and young people in the creation of the resource.'

The programme also faced the shifting priorities of the schools. The cluster report noted difficulties in achieving the active participation of all schools in a cluster.

> 'Some headteachers are focussed on particular priorities (e.g. improvement following a poor Ofsted inspection or in search of a better position in the league tables) and they do not see singing as important. Then there are the annual and regular pressures of SATs, GSCEs and

coursework. ...In the end the attitude and determination of the head is the single most significant factor in whether or not a school makes the most of Sing Up opportunities and develops a renewed interest in singing'

Findings and Outcomes

'how could the successes in raising awareness in primary schools be used to spearhead parallel developments in secondary schools? What do the detailed research findings and the intensive focus on using feedback for design suggest might be specific to primary schools and what might be generic? '

The impact of Sing Up on diverse participants and leaders is described elsewhere in the theme reports. Whilst communications were clearly integral to the whole programme, it is not possible to establish direct links between these activities and, for example, changes in student learning or teacher behaviours. The impact on projects and partnerships was captured by one project as follows:

'... the Partnership has felt a real sense of embedding both Sing Up as a concept and singing as a regular, normal activity for many more schools: the ongoing presence and profile of the national campaign has helped with this.' (Sing Up Flagship: North West Music Partnership)

Tangible benefits include the Song Bank which is consistently singled out for praise in user feedback across the strands. The materials are aimed at all those working with primary-aged children. Songs are included on diverse topics and curriculum areas, and "just for fun' group singing, rounds and part songs, singing games and playground songs, songs for all tastes, experiences and abilities'.

Examples of feedback include the following from the Awards schools:

'...the real plus was the website which gave lots of ideas and was used by all the staff. The link between songs and cross-curricular activity was particularly useful'.

'We are now making use of the Sing Up resources in lessons throughout the school with all age ranges and this is proving very successful and resulted in a Singing Playground – the children love it!'

User comments in the Song Bank also illustrate the diverse ways in which schools were adapting and using the resources in their own contexts.

In terms of numbers, Sing Up reported that 486, 924 audio track downloads (including songs and warm ups) were made between the start of 2008 when songs were first made available for download, to the end of September 2010. From 1 January 2010 to 30 September 2010, audio tracks were streamed from the Songs & Teaching Resources area of the website a total of 1,350,408 times.

In the longer term it may be that the communications work has generated learning which could be used as the basis for extending the initiative. For example, how could the successes in raising awareness in primary schools be used to spearhead parallel developments in secondary schools? What do the detailed research findings and the intensive focus on using feedback for design suggest might be specific to primary schools and what might be generic?

Methods

Ninety-nine project reports and related evidence, ranging between internal evaluations and external assessment, were selected by Sing Up as a basis for a number of synthesis evaluation reports. The documents were coded by a team of CUREE researchers as likely to yield evidence for each of the themed reports. The data were then extracted by the same team, using Nvivo software, for each of the themes identified by Sing Up. The data extraction framework, based on questions focused on both impact and processes for each of the themes, was agreed in advance with Sing Up. The resulting data was then analysed and synthesised so that the key messages for each theme could be reported.

The current report is based on the documents which were identified as containing data relevant to the theme of Communications. The evidence is based on 26 unique sites, ranging from source documents to internal evaluation reports, plus interviews with key personnel from Campaign, Resources and Marketing & Communications and other departments of Sing Up.

Glossary

Sing Up Awards
The Awards have helped schools to embed singing throughout their school life, encouraging them to celebrate their singing. There are three different levels of Award: Silver, Gold and Platinum. The Awards are specially designed to work across different types of school, including SEN settings.

Beyond the Mainstream (BTM)
The Beyond The Mainstream development programme intended to reach primary-aged children and young people who have had limited or no singing opportunities. It has supported the training and development of new and existing singing leaders working with these children.

Sing Up Clusters
Sing Up Clusters have helped secondary schools to lead innovative singing projects with their feeder primary schools. The programme aims to train and inspire singing leaders and enables schools to work positively with pupils' transition issues. Clusters work with 240 schools across the nation, introducing exciting singing opportunities to over 7,500 pupils.

Sing Up Flagships
Sing Up Flagships are leading singing advocate organisations that work to share and develop best practice through projects, performances and resources. Nine organisations have worked as Flagships, with most programmes typically lasting 2 years. Thousands of children, practitioners and singing leaders have benefited nationwide from their work.

Sing Up Communities
Sing Up Communities have been run by arts organisations and music services that work with primary-aged children. They aim to place singing at the heart of the community. Each project has run for two years and aims to reach over 2,000 primary-aged children. Work includes the development of young singing leaders and encouraging singing out of school hours.

Vocal Force
Vocal Force was originally a project based on the innovative Vocal Union programme devised by The Sage Gateshead, before becoming part of Sing Up in 2008. Vocal Force aimed to foster a peer support network for sharing learning and exploring ways of sustaining networks. It has created over 60 bespoke projects to increase the skills, confidence and repertoire of more than 3,000 singing leaders.