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February 23, 2009

**SMS streamlines non-profit calls for donations**

There is a growing trend in using SMS messaging to promoting charity work. The South African National Zakah Fund (SANZAF) is one such organisation that has adopted SMS as a key campaign tool to communicate directly with its donors.

SANZAF was founded in 1974 and is the largest Muslim non-profit welfare organisation in South Africa. SANZAF has 75 full-time employees working in over 32 offices nationally and in its last financial year raised R40 million.

It is an independent institution committed to the economic, educational, spiritual and social upliftment of the destitute and needy. The proceeds of SANZAF's fundraising programmes go towards relief efforts, feeding schemes, educational bursaries and building schools among other activities.

A targeted communications strategy was required

SANZAF needed to find an efficient and effective way to communicate with its donors within the Muslim community as well as coordinate communication internal staff and volunteers. In striving to collect funds in a proactive and cost effective way, SANZAF Gauteng had already identified SMS as a culturally appropriate way to communicate with its database of donors.

SANZAF then searched for a service provider that would offer them an easy and cost effective method of marketing to its large database of donors. A further requirement was to be able to provide delivery reports so that SANZAF could ensure that all communications were received by the intended contacts.

SANZAF identified BulkSMS.com's community messaging solution as meeting all these requirements. As a result SANZAF has been able to implement its communications strategy using the Community.BulkSMS solution. This SMS messaging solution has provided SANZAF with a low per SMS message cost as well as ease of use in the sending of SMS messages and reporting on delivery to contact lists.

Using SMS for charity work

Through SANZAF's use of SMS messaging, the organisation has facilitated the empowerment of needy families through the efficient collection and co-ordinated distribution of zakáh, a compulsory charity for the benefit of the poor that Muslims of means are expected to contribute to annually.

According to Mr Hoosen Essof, administrator of the Gauteng Chapter of SANZAF, "We are among the first Muslim welfare organisations in South Africa to use SMS communications as a marketing channel."

SMS invitations to donate at the appropriate times of the year are distributed by SANZAF. Each campaign runs over a week to ten days and up to three SMS's may be sent per donor. Contents of the SMS include an introduction to the project and who the beneficiaries are of the funding.

SANZAF has succeeded in gaining a quick and satisfactory response after sending an SMS out and has had very few donors on their database opt out from receiving mobile messages.

"SMS text messaging makes our work easier," said Mr Essof. "Donors now expect and look forward to their "thank you" SMS and even enquire when it is not sent. SMS has allowed us to cultivate long-term relationships within the Muslim community; our sole source of funding."

After each message sending, SANZAF downloads its delivery reports to check how many messages have been delivered and to ensure that all the essential members have been reached. This report is an important tool for SANZAF to ensure that its database contains current donor contact details.

Alongside these SMS campaigns, SANZAF also makes general appeals through its newsletter as well as email to solicit donations for various projects. SMS fundraising and donor engagement campaigns are usually accompanied by media releases as well as community radio and television promotions. A further means of building up its database of donors is gained by promoting the giving of zakáh at the mosques where SANZAF's newsletters are distributed.

Messaging to all stakeholders

In addition to donor communications, SANZAF sends out different SMS messages to various other contact groups. For example, messages are sent to donors requesting help with the packing and distribution of Eid-Fitra hampers. They regularly contact bursary students to remind them to send through their results and fees statements so that student fees can be processed for payment. Furthermore, SANZAF sends messages out to its volunteers, for instance, when people are required to help at a school.

SANZAF has mastered the art of stakeholder engagement through SMS messaging, especially when communicating with its donor community.

"SANZAF's deployment of SMS has ensured that our donors stay informed about our funding activities and therefore remain passionate about the causes they are supporting," concludes Mr Essof.

[735 words]

About BulkSMS.com

BulkSMS.com, a division of Celerity Systems (Pty) Ltd, has been in operation since 2000 and is headquartered in Cape Town, South Africa. BulkSMS is a leading wireless application service provider offering bulk SMS messaging solutions to large and small businesses, public benefit organisations, and individuals. BulkSMS.com has a global market presence, including Europe, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. To further an organisation's SMS communication needs, BulkSMS offers two-way bulk SMS messaging, premium rate solutions and supports mobile marketing campaigns. BulkSMS flagship messaging solution is the BulkSMS Text Messenger, a desktop application. BulkSMS is a member of the Wireless Application Service Provider Association (WASPA).

For more information on BulkSMS's commercial messaging services visit www.bulkSMS.co.za and for details on BulkSMS's messaging service offering discounted bulk SMS message prices for public benefit organisations (such as schools, NGOs and faith-based organisations) visit <http://community.bulkSMS.com>. For direct enquiries email sales@bulkSMS.com or contact BulkSMS telephonically on +27-21-552 6321.