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Why some ads for the new movie ‘Migration’ are promoting a nonprofit bird rescue

Ahead of the film’s December 22 release, NBCUniversal’s Creative Impact Lab partnered on a campaign with the International Bird Rescue.



[Photo: Illumination Entertainment & Universal Pictures]



BY **CHRIS MORRIS** 2 MINUTE READ

The marketing of a major motion picture, especially one aimed at younger audiences, usually follows a pretty well-known pattern. There are commercials flooding the airways, trailers on YouTube, perhaps a toy line . . . The plans generally don’t include ads for a nonprofit, though.

NBCUniversal is taking a slightly different approach as it moves closer to the premiere of *Migration*, however. As the film (about a family of ducks whose plans go awry and send them to New York City instead of Jamaica) nears release on December 22, the company’s Creative Impact Lab has produced a spot for International Bird Rescue, a nonprofit that rehabilitates injured aquatic birds, including those impacted by oil spills.

It’s all part of an internal program at NBCUniversal that connects ad agencies with nonprofits to produce ads, with the supervision of a creative executive from NBCU.



International Bird Rescue isn’t the first nonprofit to work with the Creative Impact Lab. The group has worked with a dozen different charities to date. But while NBCU has tied its film IP (such as *The Secret Life of Pets*) to these spots before, this is the first time the company has integrated it with an upcoming release.

The Creative Impact Lab partners with up-and-coming creative agencies in the nonprofit space, pairing them with an NBCU creative executive and a selected charity. The team then works together to build a PSA or marketing materials, giving needed exposure to the nonprofit and helping the agency build its portfolio.

NBCU is hardly the only company that’s working along nonprofits. A growing number of big corporations are tying their core capabilities with the missions of nonprofits as they look to address **their corporate social responsibility** (CSR) impact.

Tying that in with promotional efforts, though, is somewhat unique, says Wes Longhofer, associate professor of organization and management in Emory’s Goizueta Business School, in that it helps both parties.

“It helps advance the mission of NBCUniversal, to raise awareness about *Migration*, while also helping to spread awareness about the mission of International Bird Rescue, so there’s a lot of win-win’s here,” Longhofer tells *Fast Company*.

While there is likely to be some promotional benefits from the ad for the nonprofit, the chief advantage of programs like the Creative Impact Lab is they help NBCUniversal employees know the company is committed to social responsibility.

“Our goal is to create **CSR** programs that enable our employees to give back,” says Hilary Smith, executive vice president of Corporate Social Responsibility for NBCUniversal. “We know employees want to work for a company that shares their values and offers them a way to make a social impact. When we created the Creative Impact Lab, it was important to us that the initiative had an employee volunteer component. Having employees serve as mentors on each Lab project is the perfect way to involve them and give back to the next generation of creators.”

Longhofer says programs like the Creative Impact Lab are a “no brainer” when it comes to companies engaging their employees, **especially Generation Z**, which has shown the biggest interest in working for companies that do more than talk the talk when it comes to CSR.

“This is a very strategic way for NBC Universal to harness the talents of their employees and the passions of their employees in meaningful work,” he says.



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