

# NATIONAL BLOOD WEEK #MISSINGTYPE

## Executive summary

The number of new blood donors coming forward has plummeted 40% in the past decade.

NHS Blood and Transplant needed to recruit a new generation of donors to safeguard the supply for the future, particularly from the 17-24 year old age group.

To put blood donation back on the agenda, Engine launched 'Missing Type' where the letters of the blood groups A, O and B disappeared from society.

The activity combined to illustrate the problem, trigger a participatory social media movement and garner blanket national news coverage, all amplifying the call to action for new blood donors. Triggered by staged partner content it was a simple, affirmative and inclusive movement anyone could join in with – from individuals to the world's biggest brands.

It was a week that saw the 'o' disappear from Downing Street, the Daily Mirror change its masthead and the likes of Google, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Arsenal FC and Spotify rip up their logo guidelines to join the movement. The pervasiveness of the idea left no corner of the country untouched.

Proving to be a strong visceral reminder of how much society needs those simple letters, Missing Type became a catalyst for tens of thousands of people not just dropping their type, but registering to donate blood. Over 30,000 people registered as new blood donors in the first 10 days alone – **equivalent to 100,000 lives saved or improved.**

## The Brief

National Blood Week is a key week in NHS Blood and Transplant's calendar. In 2015 there was an urgent need to recruit new donors, in order to safeguard the blood supply for the future, as the number of donor registrations had plummeted 40% in the past decade.

A disruptive campaign was required to spark conversation and initiate behaviour change on a national level – creating new donor registrations, rather than simply raising awareness. Blood donation needed to be put back on the public agenda.

Media relations would be key in driving the campaign and shaping conversation across print, broadcast and online outlets. Social media would also be essential to engage with the primary target audience of young adults aged 17-24.

The previous National Blood Week in 2014 had generated a record 10,000 new blood donors which was the benchmark for success.

In February 2015 Engine was appointed by NHS Blood and Transplant to develop a new recruitment strategy with a view to beating the 2014 total.

## Strategy

The fall in blood donation, whilst a large issue, is an invisible issue. You can't actually see it. So we wanted to create something that immediately visualised the problem – something that would show the blood missing from circulation.

Missing Type was the creative solution: removing the As, Os and Bs – the letters of the main blood types – from names, places and brands that we engage with in everyday life.

Simplicity, affirmation and inclusivity were at the core of the campaign strategy. Our aim was to build an inclusive movement where anyone could drop the type from physical spaces, signs and social media profiles, allowing the message to be easily understood, imitated and shared.

The simplicity of the idea was reflected in the activation: minimal effort was required to create the desired disruption and message delivery.

The ambition was to create a domino effect that would encourage anyone and everyone to join in, and engage with the cause: individuals from any region, age group or ethnicity through to influential brands and media.

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News coverage and social media content would be critical to success as all partnerships with participating brands was earned on goodwill and a shared commitment to the cause rather than paid support.

## What could go wrong?

The idea was great on paper. There was, however, an element of risk because we were going into uncharted territory by asking brands to do something that is normally anathema to them: asking them to deface their logos for public consumption. In fact, a number of brands we hoped would come on board had never before changed their logos. Anyone working in marketing knows that this could, in theory, take months of meetings and negotiations to get just one to do it, but we needed a high-volume of household-name brands and we had a matter of weeks.

## How Engine used existing relationships to address this

In order to quickly win the support of influential brands and celebrities, Missing Type required a teaser phase in the days building up to National Blood Week. This would be supported by a massive burst of media coverage at launch to generate awareness of the donor issue and recruit brand partners.

To make that happen we approached brands where we held existing relationships; Odeon, Waterstones, O2, Santander and Green & Blacks. We persuaded them to be the triggers prior to launch and provoke public intrigue.

Leveraging the NHS Blood and Transplant relationship with the Department of Health we worked closely to negotiate with the Cabinet Office to change the Downing Street sign. With that hero image and our partner brands we had enough firepower for a series of staged activities to create disruption and provide news and social content.

One relationship that cannot be overstated was getting Campaign magazine on-board for the teaser phase by agreeing to drop the letters A from its masthead on the Thursday before launch. While Campaign may not have a negligible reach among the NHS target audience it is read by all the key decision makers in marketing and digital media of the UK's biggest brands. In short, we let Campaign break the story and the call to action without giving the game away to the general public.

Finally, the team also negotiated a partnership with the Daily Mirror that would see the print and online editions drop the A and O from its masthead, supported with case-study based features to appear on the launch day.

## Implementation

Three key phases were identified as part of the creative execution of the strategy;

### 1. Teaser phase (Wednesday 3rd June – Thursday 4th June)

A number of partner brands and organisations lost their type in the physical world to start the ball rolling: these included Odeon Leicester Square, Waterstones in Trafalgar Square and most importantly, the iconic street sign on Downing Street.

These images were captured by Engine and then seeded through the partners' social media channels and used as collateral for media coverage.

Additionally the team worked with Gemma Styles, sister of One Direction's Harry, to tease her followers with a number of tweets missing A, O and B. Gemma's 3.4 million Twitter following meant she had a bigger reach to 17-24 year olds than any national print newspaper.

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## 2. Reveal phase (Friday 5th June – Sunday 7th June)

A media relations blitz – using NHS spokespeople and patient case-study families – ensured coverage appeared across every major national print, broadcast and online source accompanied by the 40% fall in new donors' message.

Coverage included every major national print and online title with lead editorials in The Times, The Daily Mirror and a Polly Toynbee feature in The Guardian on how blood donation is good for the health of the nation.

Missing Type visuals and b-roll – such as those of Downing Street and Waterstones – generated features in the likes of BuzzFeed, Sky News, ITV London, Metro, The Independent, Shortlist.com, UniLad and Huffington Post with online articles creating huge volumes of social share.

Within hours #missingtype went viral and NHS Blood and Transplant reported a 1000% increase in web traffic over the weekend as people went online to register to donate.

## 3. Momentum phase – National Blood Week (Monday June 8th – Sunday June 14th)

On the Monday, The Daily Mirror issued a full run of 600,000 print copies with an amended masthead, with editorial about the Missing Type campaign, how to participate and how to register as a donor.

Traditional media now looks to the social conversation for what is 'news' so, as momentum built, further #missingtype coverage appeared on This Morning, Sky News and BBC Radio One where DJs gave repeated plugs to guide listeners on how to register to donate.

Meanwhile, the powerful reach and influence of brands helped to amplify the call to action and trigger the domino effect. What started with a handful quickly snowballed. When one brand released content, a bigger brand soon followed suit.

Missing Type created an unprecedented brand movement. O2 became 2 and Aviva simply 'viv'. Brands weren't just dropping letters from logos but producing creative content to stand out. When Spurs joined in, Arsenal raised the bar hours later with a picture of its training ground signage amended to its 5.8m followers. McDonald's UK contacted ENGINE directly to say they loved the idea and were designing bespoke visuals at its Chicago HQ for priority sign-off.

Over a thousand diverse brands and organisations participated across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram: Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Honda, Spotify, Nandos, Marmite, Cadbury, Transport for London, Starbucks, Wimbledon Tennis, Arsenal FC, Heathrow Airport. Even the Church of England and the WI came on board.

The cherry on the cake came on Sunday, World Blood Donor Day, when Google shared an image of its logo minus its Os.

A wise head may point out 'Brands can't give blood' and that's true, but ultimately their social reach and influence engaged and inspired those who could.

Over the course of the week tens of thousands of people joined the #missingtype movement, many of whom with their own user-generated content. These included hundreds of people who used Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to share images of them giving blood at donor centres, demystifying the process and making it a 'cool' thing to do.

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## Results

The proof point is the campaign did exactly what it set out to achieve. People weren't just sharing social content with #missingtype, they were registering to donate blood in record numbers:

- The campaign reached **2 billion people** through **600 pieces of news coverage** and social media activity
- **30k+ new donors registered** during National Blood Week
- ...that's **20,000 more** than the previous year's activity
- Estimated these will **save or improve over 100,000 lives**
- **18,114 17-24 year olds** registered during the campaign
- **101 pieces of earned national print and online coverage** including Daily Mail, Mail Online, The Sun, The Times, The Guardian, Daily Mirror
- **14 items on national TV** including BBC Breakfast, Good Morning Britain, This Morning and Sky News
- **29 items on national radio** including BBC Radio 1, Jeremy Vine on BBC Radio 2, The Today Programme and BBC Radio Five Live
- An earned **Buzzfeed** article brought in the third highest levels of social media traffic to Blood.co.uk after Facebook and Twitter
- The campaign garnered the support of over **60 influencers** – including **Jamie Oliver** and **Rachel Riley** – that have **10/10 authority** on Twitter and over **1,000 brands and organisations**
- There were **26,121 uses of #NationalBloodWeek and #MissingType** across Twitter. This is the highest number of mentions for an NHS Blood & Transplant social media campaign to date

"Quite simply this was the best campaign NHSBT has ever done. Missing Type was a simple idea, brilliantly activated by a passionate, determined team at ENGINE. It smashed all of our previous records for media coverage and social engagement but, most importantly, for new blood donor registrations – which is the only outcome that matters. It has become THE shining example among our partners around the globe on how to do a successful donor campaign."

**Jon Latham, Assistant Director for Donor Services and Marketing at NHS Blood and Transplant.**

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