



Actionable Audio Ads Driving Charitable Donations

White paper



Objective

The research objective was to create a body of evidence which proves the ROI of using a smart speaker skill to drive charity donations. We used digital radio targeted advertising to encourage commercial radio listeners to donate to charitable causes via their voice assistant during the ad break of their favourite shows.

Our hypothesis is that this mechanic delivers a higher ROI than other, more saturated, digital channels and the objective is to accelerate widespread adoption of this fundraising method across the charity sector.

Who We Are

We are Say it Now, the voice technology business that bought this project together using Innovate UK COVID response funding. We have close working relationships with Amazon, Google and programmatic audio advertising platforms. We were the 2019 UK and EU winners of The 'Alexa World Cup'. With our credentials and experience we are well placed to deliver this project at and deliver a new, sustainable solution to the charity sector.

Global is Europe's largest radio company. Global partnered with Say It Now from June 2020 to March 2021 to support us with the Innovate UK funded research project to investigate the efficacy of charity donations facilitated by voice assistants on smart speakers. Global implemented a highly targeted call to action during radio adverts served to people listening to digital radio via their smart speaker.

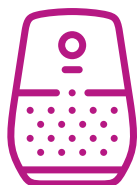
For the research project, we ran advertising campaigns between September 2020 and April 2021 with NSPCC, WWF and Comic Relief. We believe this is the largest dataset ever gathered on targeted radio adverts to drive to a transactional outcome using voice assistants.

The data gathered allows us to deliver end to end reporting of the efficacy of audio campaigns as we analyse data from the time the ad was aired, the number of customers that then spoke to the voice assistant via their smart speaker and finally the number of completed actions from hearing the audio ad.

This paper will discuss early benchmarking, challenges and opportunities presented with this nascent form of advertising.

Background

Reports in June 2020 estimated the charity sector was set to lose £4.2bn in funding due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The impetus for individuals to donate needed to be stimulated by developing easily accessible donation channels.



**43% of UK homes
have a smart speaker**



**12% Increase in
digital radio listening
on these devices**

The project objectives were to stimulate charitable donations via highly targeted audio adverts and enable the collection of donations using simple voice commands and existing payment methods.

Three recent developments which were instrumental factors in the success of this project are:

- 1. Listening on smart speakers reached critical mass**
- 2. Global created DAX, an innovative measurement tool that gives advertisers greater understanding of listening environments and behaviours**
- 3. The removal of the companion app verification for payment on smart speakers**

What We Did

The aim was to create a simple pathway for charities to drive donations by combining in-market technologies. This started with an advert played on smart speakers streaming digital radio that, in turn, invited the listener to say a few words to trigger a bespoke voice experience which eventually led to the listener making a donation.

Example:

"...For thousands of children in the UK, their homes aren't so happy or safe.

But you can help them now, by using your Alexa.

Ask NSPCC to make a donation and help them be there for children.

They still need us more than ever. Using your Alexa, ask NSPCC to make a donation now."



The listener was then guided into a rich and informative, voice led, experience that allowed them to find out how they could support the charity and make a donation using their existing Amazon Pay credentials.

We created specific templates to reduce the entry level cost of this approach, allowing many charities to avail themselves of this funding channel. Reporting capabilities meant we were able to identify the ROI of each campaign and making the funding channel equally as accountable as the more saturated digital channels.

Key insights

	Overall	Red Nose Day	Commentary
Average donation Users who donated	£8.68	£11.16	29% increase in donation value on RND
Donation Conversion Users who entered skill and donated	2%	1.1%	Non RND conversion of users entering the skill to purchase 5.5%
Average time per user Times spent in skill engaging with brand	21.8s	19s	More curious engagements on RND. Less qualified.

Summary of results

	Users to donate intent	Average Donation Size
NSPCC	38.85%	£7.20
Comic Relief	15.56%	£7.00
WWF	6.80%	£20.00
Average	22.03%	£7.30

(The WWF had some very high individual donations.)

Conclusion

The original project concept was to develop a new donation channel to support the recovery of the charity sector following the outbreak of COVID19. We did this by activating audio adverts for leading charity's via smart speakers to drive donations by voice command. We focused on Alexa for the first phase as they have an 80% market share in the UK and we have had great support from them since winning the 2019 UK&EU Alexa Cup.

The 3 standout achievements from this project are:

1. Launching transactional voice skills for NSPCC, WWF and Comic Relief
2. Running smart speaker targeted audio advertising campaigns for NSPCC, WWF and Comic Relief
3. Developing a reporting mechanism for greater insight into the donation channel

The 3 greatest challenges we faced during the project were:

1. Amazon Pay Compliance approving charities to take donations. This process continues to be challenging and ambiguous. This negatively impacted our media support as we were only able to run 10 weeks of digital radio campaigns rather than 10. We were unable to get Macmillan and Crisis skills live. We are hopeful that we will be able to get these live later in 2021. We started the process of onboarding both these charities in July 2020.
2. Google Assistant capabilities specifically related to **charitable** voice transactions. This functionality is not currently supported outside the US and is unlikely to be in the near term.
3. The attribution of email drivers from Amazon original project concept was to develop a new donation channel to support the recovery of the charity sector following the outbreak of COVID19. We did this by activating audio adverts for leading charity's via smart speakers to drive donations by voice command. We focused on Alexa for the first phase as they have an 80% market share in the UK and we have had great support from them since winning the 2019 UK&EU Alexa Cup. Our aspiration is to replicate the functionality in a Google environment for the project extension.