

# ***Abuse is Abuse* campaign evolves from CSI entry**

Originally conceived as an entry piece into the 2009 Vuka! Awards (an M-Net corporate social investment project aimed at providing exposure to worthy causes and charities), the 'Abuse is Abuse' campaign has since grown into something far bigger.



Steven Hall, MD of Free the Orange, has been working in close conjunction with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA), Childline and Sappi, and has set up a website that acts as a kind of portal providing information, advice and important contact numbers around various kinds of abuse.

"The campaign is really about raising the profile of the systemic nature of abuse, and redirecting people to the relevant organisations," explains Hall.

"From the beginning, the motivation to enter the Vuka! Awards stemmed from the fact that I felt that we have enough guts to tell hard messages and put forward powerful information about issues that really matter.

"Taking an issue, in this case a public service issue, and making it jump out at the audience is something we do very well, conceptually and creatively. It's part of our culture, as is to be edgy, extreme and even sometimes subversive whenever we get the opportunity."

## **Origami comes to life**

In the TV ad, first a barking origami dog appears on the screen, only to be crushed just seconds later. Then a happy childhood home and a peaceful revolving planet meet the same fate. This promotes the idea that all forms of abuse - be it animal, human or environmental - are related.



Hall and his team have been working on this advert for a few months now, even flying up an origami expert from Durban to make this conceptually strong concept work come to life on the screen. The dedication and drive required to launch a campaign of this nature is something in which Hall says his company excels.

## **Creating links**

"This concept made the link between all three forms of abuse, whereas the understanding of links to date has either been animals-humans or environment-wildlife," says Dave Thorpe, of the NSPCA New Media Business Development division.

"Using origami is a great idea, as the presentation stepped out of the box and challenged viewers to think about the message and what it meant. When viewers do grasp the concept their emotion might be anger - against cruelty, against domestic abuse, against environmental degradation - even a 'wow' moment with the realisation that all three are linked. With the emotion will hopefully come their personal commitment to be more aware and responsible global citizens."

## **Child abuse rife in SA**

Just as Thorpe highlights the need to go beyond 'simply putting band aids on wounds', Brett Will, executive consultant, strategy and marketing of Childline applauds the agency in its attempt to curb abuse and get to the source of the problem.

"The problem of abuse is very real in South Africa," says Will, stating that nine million of the country's 18.7 million children

are being abused.



"If one considers the animal abuse that could have led to this behaviour and how it could set off a vicious cycle of animal, human and environmental abuse in that child's future, it's clear that we can't sit back any longer and hope the problem goes away.

"We see this partnership as a strategic, deliberate and systemic approach not only highlighting issues of abuse, but also addressing some of the root causes. A journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step. This partnership is that first step."

## Animal abuse extends in later life

According to [petabuse.com](http://petabuse.com), many studies in psychology, sociology, and criminology throughout the last 25 years have demonstrated that violent offenders frequently have childhood and adolescent histories of serious and repeated animal cruelty. The FBI has recognised the connection since the 1970s, when its analysis of the lives of serial killers suggested that most had killed or tortured animals as children. Other research has shown consistent patterns of animal cruelty among perpetrators of more common forms of violence, including child abuse, spousal abuse, and the abuse of the elderly.



## Environmental irresponsibility

In addition, such people may also end up taking part in environmental abuse. For example, they see no harm in throwing "one, small" cigarette out of the car window and they don't see the damage of littering on the beach or driving there as "the ocean is so big and there are many other beaches which can be conserved." They also often think that there is no damage in their actions as someone else is being paid to clean up after them.

## Sappi adopts campaign

The *Abuse is Abuse* campaign is so strong and successful that Sappi made it the overall theme for its 2010 "Ideas That Matter" initiative. First launched in 1999, the concept behind the Ideas That Matter initiative stems from the firm's belief in the power of ideas to create positive change.

According to André Oberholzer, group head corporate affairs Sappi, the strength behind the campaign lies in the fact that it places all forms of abuse on platforms of equal importance.

"We tend to compartmentalise the different forms of abuse," he explains. "We even group them in our minds as 'serious', 'less serious' and 'petty'. But if you consider that all forms of abuse are inter-connected, and that the one can lead, and even aggravate another, it makes sense to take a stand against them all - from polluting the planet to kicking a dog or hurting a child."

## Viewing to be extended

The advert can only be viewed now on the StopAbuse website, but Hall is working with the three organisations to get the advert flighted on television and radio stations across the country.

"The motivation now is really around raising the profile of the campaign, because I think the campaign has the potential to become much bigger than one company," concludes Hall.

For more information go to [www.stopabuse.co.za](http://www.stopabuse.co.za).

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>