

#FoodFeed Initiative: Great Ideas Make Great Struggles

Particular problem the campaign aims to address

As a group assigned with a task of addressing the problems of economically disenfranchised people, we faced a significant challenge. Unlike other groups, dealing with i.a. women's rights, sexual and gender diverse people's rights or refugees, we had to first make a decision which social group in particular we want our action to help. Only having that determined could we start considering our campaign's potential target groups.

Individual suggestions varied from raising awareness on the situation of Roma people to addressing the needs of adult children leaving orphanages, or even working with local communities to be more accepting of facilities for the homeless being built in their neighbourhoods.

We had ruled out working with Roma community, as it was too difficult due to the language barrier and lack of substantial knowledge on our side. The idea to work with an orphanage proved to be too risky from the point of view of assumed efficiency of our action and risks concerning abusing children's trust. Similar problems occurred while considering addressing the needs of homeless people.

Eventually we agreed upon an area of focus: hungry and malnourished people in Poland. Although exact statistics regarding the number of Polish citizens living with food-insecurity or poverty-induced hunger can be difficult to gather, data from The World Bank details a shocking 17% of Polish people were living below the national poverty line in 2013 (World Bank 2013). Such families would have difficulty with basic expenses, food certainly among them. Thus, it is not surprising that according to a 2014 report released by the Polish Central Statistical Office, conditions for Polish children might be particularly difficult, with more than half a million Polish children suffering from hunger and malnutrition (Niemitz 2014).

Thankfully, there are many organizations in Poland dedicated to combatting this issue. We chose food banks as the best partner to collaborate with, given their experience, efficiency, and reliability. The Federation of Polish Food Banks is an organisation that was established almost 20 years ago and since then has served as an umbrella institution for over 30 regional and local food banks, comprising the most robust network of such organisations in Poland.

The next step was to come up with an idea for a campaign that would be visually attractive, socially engaging and that would address a specific, manageable problem.

1. Visual work and key campaign ideas

Firstly, we realised that internet users are either not interested in helping others or resort to "clicktivism" which is usually of purely symbolic value and does not bring about any actual change in the real world. Secondly, we had come to a conclusion that even those who actually respond to calls to donate food often do not meet food banks' needs for particular products, in terms of quantity, quality, or regularity of donations.

As a group of young, cutting-edge activists we had come to a conclusion that in order to

get people and companies involved in improving our social system, we have to use the very system to our advantage. What we expected to achieve with our campaign was to get internet users to actively participate in addressing food banks' everyday needs, at the same time using the most effortless and accessible means, preferably not requiring them to change their habits. Inspired by our lecturers' presentations, we knew we wanted our target group to be provided with immediate positive feedback that they could easily share online, thus passing the message across.

We specified our target group as 20+ and 30+, open-minded and educated urban professionals, fluent in social media and other internet tools and, what was crucial for our campaign to succeed, regularly shopping online. We decided to use the language of our target to show them that tools they use on an everyday basis may also serve them in fulfilling their values.

Our initial idea was to combine the fashion of 'sharing' food on Instagram (i.e. uploading pictures of meals, edited with the use of different filters and tagged with so-called hashtags in order to be easily found and categorized) with actual sharing of food with the needy.

The campaign was supposed to be launched as a teaser campaign, which would include memes connecting sharing food with 'sharing' food on Instagram. The memes were supposed to be photographs of children we had worked with during our community work at the Praga-based NGO Stowarzyszenie Mierz Wysoko (Aim High Association). We decided the photos would show children making an attempt to eat actual photos of internet food, as a humorous juxtaposition of two ways of sharing food. As an auxiliary means of reaching out, we planned to set up a Facebook fan page for our campaign.

Our next challenge was to invent a way to directly connect sharing pictures of food to making actual donations, so as to use our target's habits to the benefit the community and at the same time provide users with instant gratification. The idea was simple: every time a person shopped online, the store would offer him or her an option to buy an extra 'basket' of food that would go directly to the food bank.

The 'baskets' would differ in size and price (e.g. one for 20, one for 50 and one for 100 zł) yet each 'basket' would have been carefully prepared to respond to current needs of a local food bank. Then, after a customer had bought a 'basket' for a food bank, he or she would have an opportunity to share an image presenting so-called 'foodporn' (a meal depicted in a really appetizing and attractive fashion), prepared with the ingredients from that particular 'basket'. An image would have a default hashtag with the name of our initiative.

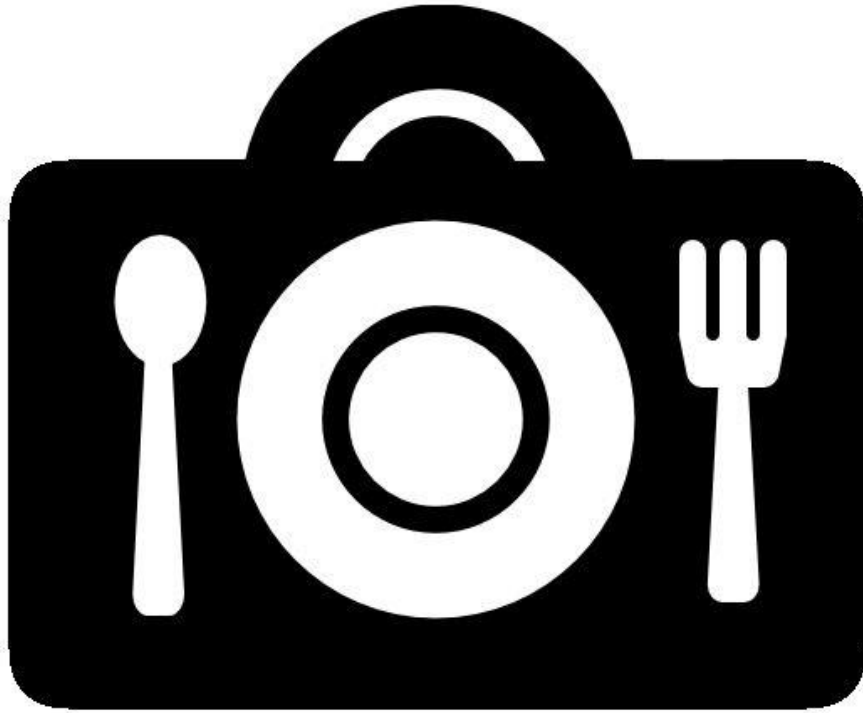
Eventually we decided that for the purpose of our project we would have to at least:

- a) come up with a name and a logo for our initiative (featured below),
- b) design and make both an infographic and a pitch for potential partners (featured below)

Logo design),

- c) shortlist and contact potential partners (including food banks and online grocery stores),
- d) prepare a video tutorial (viewable on YouTube),
- e) take and edit pictures with children from Aim High Association (featured below infographic),
- f) set up an Instagram account, an auxiliary Facebook fan page and manage them.

Visual Samples



To jest Staszek.



Staszek dużo pracuje i dobrze zarabia. Dzieli się swoim stylem życia ze znajomymi. Udostępnia zdjęcia jedzenia na Facebooku i Instagramie.

Żeby oszczędzić czas, Staszek robi zakupy przez internet.



Przechodząc do "kasy" ulubionego sklepu, Staszek dostrzega nową opcję.



Połączona bezpośrednio z Facebookiem ikona pozwala dokonać "dodatkowych" zakupów na z góry ustalone wcześniej kwoty (20, 50, 100 zł).

Każda z kwot odpowiada zdjęciom smakowitych posiłków, które dzięki wbudowanej na stronie opcji można natychmiast udostępnić na serwisie społecznościowym.



Staszek decyduje się na zakup.



Jedzenie nie trafi do Staszka. Jednak fotografia, która opublikuje podkreśli, że posiłek jest "prawdziwy" i poprzez Banki Żywności trafi do osób naprawdę potrzebujących.



Jedzenie trafia do Banku Żywności, skąd rozprowadzane jest do potrzebujących.



Sklep notuje wzrost sprzedaży.



Zdjęcie trafia bezpośrednio na Facebooka.



Staszek dzieli się stylem życia ze znajomymi i jedzeniem z potrzebującymi.



2. Implementation: assumptions versus reality

The first great obstacle that appeared on our way was a technological incapability of Instagram to work the way we had planned to use it. After considering doing significant alterations to the project, we agreed upon using Facebook as the only platform to launch our campaign.

On 13th of June we set up a fan page: <http://www.facebook.com/InicjatywaFoodFeed>, prepared a logo, a cover photo and started preparing the content. The latter proved to be especially difficult, given at that stage we had not had any agreements with partners yet. The same day we had agreed on the name of our initiative: #FoodFeed, which is a reference to a social media news feed.

Simultaneously, we made an attempt to schedule a meeting at the Federation of Polish Food Banks and to contact top online grocery stores we believed might be interested in our project: Piotr i Paweł, Frisco, Alma and BDSklep.pl. Then, using our experience in community work at Aim High Association, we asked the teachers to convince some parents to sign an official permission for us to take photos of their children, whom we had previously met. During the first evaluation session our plan got approved in all its entirety.

On 17th of June we prepared an infographic and met the representative of the Federation of Polish Food Banks. Although the reception of our idea was warm, we were also faced with a new challenge. Apparently, it is not the food the banks need the most; it is money to pay for utilities and employees' salaries. Hence the representative of the Federation suggested we ask online grocery stores to not just include the option to buy products for the needy but also donate a portion of what they would earn selling those products.

The same day the session with children at Aim High Association took place; it was really effective and our models proved to be very professional and willing to cooperate. The pictures were later edited so as to be used as memes and posted on our Facebook fanpage.

Unfortunately, the teaser campaign we launched on 14th of June proved to be less effective than predicted. Even though we have been making attempts to use EdgeRank to our benefit, posting content the algorithm 'finds' attractive 2-3 times a day, our reach-out has not met our expectations. On the moment of writing this report, the overall number of followers is 189, of whom the vast majority are our Facebook friends. Although as of January 2017 we opted to take a hiatus from posting through this page, at its peak influence, we were able to reach 1,043 social media users with a single post.

We believe that a week without further preparatory work is not enough to properly design and launch a social media campaign. The goal of 300 likes per page is not to be achieved without inviting all the group members' friends which might compromise the objective of the campaign in the future. In case of our fan page, the average user has already been much different from who we had assumed him/her to be before launching the campaign. Even though our campaign is targeted at a Polish audience only, some 40 followers are English-speaking. When it comes to the age groups we have reached out to, the goal we had set prior to the launch, has been achieved only partially: 49% of our followers are 25-34 years old, which had been our main target age group.

One of the reasons for that might have been lack of clear, specific message right from the beginning of the campaign. However, not having made any agreement with the key partner – an online grocery store, we could not include any details, as those are still to be negotiated with the grocer.

From the very beginning we have been aware of the fact that due to a number of practical reasons, e.g. the time-consuming decision-making procedures in retail, it would not be feasible to launch our campaign within a week or two. The work on our campaign will definitely continue after the 2016 Humanity In Action fellowship is over. Hence it is too soon to predict its further development. Much depends on whether any collaboration with third parties is possible in a longer run.

For now a short-term objective is to schedule a meeting with the grocers and the mid-term goal is to facilitate the negotiations between a store and the Federation of Polish Food Banks. Simultaneously, we will provide day-to-day management of our Facebook fan page, attempting to reach out to new fans. For that purpose we want to hire some influencers – famous Polish food bloggers (Jadłonomia, kotlet.tv, Food Emperor) to spread the word and use their fanbase to popularise the idea e.g. preparing meals using ingredients from our ‘baskets’.

Assuming the negotiations run according to the plan, the most probable date for the campaign to be fully implemented is at the turn of the year 2017. As we believe our campaign has potential to go global, we do not exclude a possibility of trying to launch similar campaigns in other countries with the use of the same format, given it proves successful in Poland.

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