Did Komen know much about its supporters?

Given the tremendous amount of negative press, critical comments and social media outrage regarding Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation's decision to stop funding Planned Parenthood,we may be able to conclude that there is a rather large disconnect between the foundation's leadership/decision makers and its donor/support base. In fact, the decision has been received so poorly that it points to a top down decision-making approach that seems wholly ignorant of what supporters want.

It is an axiom of marketing (and of fund-raising) that you should understand and know your target audience. How can you market (or raise funds from) people you don't know? This is why marketers often use focus groups, surveys and other methods to determine just who makes up the customer/client/donor base.

I participated in the Komen Race for the Cure for two years. I am not sure if I ever got a survey from Komen. I did get tons of emails selling me Komen merchandise, which is why I unsubscribed and stopped supporting the organization.

Of course hindsight is always 20/20 but I believe that if Komen had done more to understand who supports the foundation and why, it may have avoided taking this decision and the huge firestorm of bad publicity that has followed. Perhaps every time someone gives a donation or signs up for a race, Komen (or any other nonprofit), could send out a quick survey. In Komen's specific case it could have been as simple as a question asking:

Which of our programs do you feel has the most value? (along with a checklist).

Perhaps if Komen had been aware that many people think Planned Parenthood provides good services, it would not have been so quick to pull funding and so ignorant about the potential outcry.

There are multiple lessons to be learned from the Komen debacle (PR and crisis communications matter, for one), none the least of is: **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE** (customers, clients, donors, supporters)… and remember you work for them, and not the other way around.

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