

Upstart Succeeds in Same Marketing Arena as Pepsi, JPMorgan Chase, Amex-NBC



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Author: [Snack Alliance Inc.](#)

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When it comes to promoting not-for-profit causes and ideas that can change the world, not all companies have the mega marketing clout of the Pepsi Refresh Project, or the big-name recognition of the JPMorgan Chase \$5-Million Charity Giveaway or American-Express-NBC "Shine-A-Light" campaign.

But with its "Show Us Your Goodness" charity contest, a feisty upstart snack-food maker is proving it too can play just as nimble in the marketing arena as the big guys by effectively using crowd-sourcing and social media as its tactic to connect with a whole new audience for its riceworks® brand of gourmet brown rice crisps.

The company is Snack Alliance Inc., and in less than four months, the snack maker has found success with its philanthropic campaign that invites consumers to nominate, vote and then spread the word for their favorite charitable causes. More than 2600 entries were received during the nomination period and the winning semi-finalist charities now have a chance to share \$60,000 in prize money funding.

Forget the Dollar Amount, It's The Thought That Counts

Sixty thousand dollars may pale against the \$5 million handed out by JPMorgan Chase for its Charity Giveaway, and to the \$15.6 million that Pepsi Refresh is giving away. But, for a small niche player like Snack

Alliance, its philanthropic program is attracting positive consumer feedback that extends beyond the contest to the grocery shelf.

Tricia Ryan, Director of Marketing for riceworks® says her company has pretty much abandoned traditional media vehicles for marketing and replaced these with crowdsourcing tactics and social media avenues like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, which encourage users to virally promote an idea.

"We chose a charity-based program because it's integral to our corporate marketing DNA, and we already support fundraising requests with product samples," said Ms. Ryan. "Charities today are much more Internet-savvy, and I sense they saw participation in the program not much different than applying to a foundation for funding. With tight budgets, and under-funding for charities over the past year, the timing was right."

Charities Embrace This New Marketing Philosophy

There's another reason charities appear keen to embrace online charity contests like Show Us Your Goodness. It comes from the realization that a donor base can be solicited for support without the big ask for another dollar-request donation. The tough economy of the past year has been difficult for most charities, and asking for an online vote is an easy request.

Snack Alliance got traction and support not only from the charities that were nominated, but also from like-minded websites like BeFreeForMe.com, which shares a mutual love for gluten-free products. Riceworks® crisps are gluten-free, which is why the BeFreeForMe site promotes both the product and the contest to its followers.

For Ms. Ryan, the opportunity to dialogue with many of the nominated charities has been an enlightening experience for herself and her Company, which continues to support nonprofits as part of its marketing efforts. "Yes, we're a marketer selling healthy snack products, but we've also come to realize the benefits that come from creating communication programs that help the communities we serve. It makes the day-to-day humdrum of work into something magical."

About Snack Alliance Inc.

A privately owned U.S. company, Snack Alliance Inc. is a market-leading provider of branded and private label snack foods in North

America, with customers that include Wal-Mart, Albertson's and Kroger. The firm's signature product, riceworks® Gourmet Brown Rice Crisps, is a tasty and popular whole grain gluten-free snack that has won kudos from snack lovers in the United States, Canada and Great Britain. For more information about the product visit www.riceworks.com

Contact Details: Tricia Ryan
Snack Alliance Inc.
1030 Georgia St W #1801.
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V6E 2Y3.
Telephone: 604-654-8300
tricia@themarketingchefs.com
www.showusyourgoodness.com

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