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How to set up an empty shop



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What is an Empty Shop?

The 'Empty Shop' project originated in Brazil with the idea of individuals donating their 'unnecessary' clothing (not old clothing) in a bid to provide more quality clothing to homeless charities in the winter months. The concept was that instead of people going to a shop to buy clothing, they would go to an empty shop to donate clothing. The clothing was then displayed on mannequins or shelves in the shop so that by the end of the day the shop looked like a normal shop with lots of lovely goods on display. Then everything was removed – taken to a charity and the 'Empty Shop' started again the next day.

This video gives you a bit more an idea of how it worked and looked:

<https://youtu.be/FE5G5uOk8B4>

Why set up an Empty Shop?

- To get the attention of the public and encourage them to donate unwanted clothing.
- To collect clothing and hence raise money for charity.
- As a gimmick to get media attention to grow awareness of your charity.
- To help reduce unwanted clothing going to landfill.

Planning an Empty Shop

Where?

- The model in the video could be done almost anywhere as it's a stand-alone unit.
- Alternately a cheaper option is that you use an existing shop in a shopping centre or high street (there are often empty shops that the shopping centre is trying to fill)
- If you already have a high street presence, you could use your own space, but may have to work harder to make it stand out as people would be used to seeing your shop there

How?

See the links for images of what previous empty shops have looked like, but you may want;

- Mannequins to display some of the really special items you get donated
- Clothing rails and/or shelves to display other clothing on
- Storage space to put bags that need sorting or items you can't fit on the displays
- Signage to make it clear
 - what the shop is aiming to achieve
 - where the donated items are going to (what good cause it supports and how donations help the beneficiary and the environment)
 - who is organising the empty shop

- that you can't buy the items on display – you just want donations
- You could have an incentive. At our empty shop, the Shopping centre offered a £5 voucher for everyone donating items (see the case study for more information on this).
- Do lots of PR and have signs up about the event prior to the event so people can be prepared to bring their items.
- Make sure staff thank donors for their items, and then have somewhere to sort through the items behind the scenes to keep the shop looking smart.
- Empty the shop every night so it starts again as an 'empty shop' every morning.

Consider:

- Promoting your 'Empty Shop';
 - Celebrity donations – getting celebrities to donate clothing is a great way to get publicity and raise awareness
- Hold a photocall/opening ceremony and get the local media involved in promoting the event
- Put up posters in the area prior to the opening so people can start to get their donations ready
- Who will staff your shop?
- Your staff/volunteers
- Students from retail/fashion courses
- How long will your shop be open?
- Sometimes people see the shop, but don't have items on them to swap, but would like to come back, so consider opening for a week or more
- What charity will your items go to?
- How will you measure the success of the campaign?
 - Number of donations
 - Value of donations
 - Carbon savings
- PR coverage
- Promotion after the event
- Thank everyone for donations and tell them how much money was raised/carbon saved etc and who benefited from their donations. Tell people where they can send their donations in future.

Useful links

The original empty shop website is <http://mug9.com/portfolio/the-empty-project/>

This article talks about the launch of the first 'Empty shop' in the UK (in Manchester) including a video showcasing the idea; [Homeless benefit from UKs first concept empty shop](#)

Case Study – Zero Waste Scotland set up an ‘Empty shop’ as part of Pass it on week 2016

Zero Waste Scotland set up an ‘Empty shop’ as part of Pass it on Week 2016.

[Press release - The Empty Shop](#)

The shop was part of a wider event being held at the St Enoch Centre in Glasgow which was all about encouraging people to pass things on, in order to reduce waste.

The concept from Brazil was used, so their guidelines were followed.

The St Enoch Centre kindly provided the empty shop. They also provided £5 vouchers to spend at the St Enoch Centre to anyone donating items. Although some people were critical of this, suggesting that it encouraged people to buy new items, when the campaign was about re-use, it acted as an incentive for people to donate and also helped reduce any bad feeling from other stores in the centre who may have felt that the campaign could be construed as telling people not to buy from them. As such there was no animosity, and some stores even donated surplus stock/items from photo shoots to the ‘Empty shop’.

And Glasgow City College kindly provided students from their retail course to manage the shop for the week. This was good experience for them, and made the campaign more financial viable.

Celebrities were approached to donate items to the shop and a number of high-profile celebrities took part. This again was great for publicity, but was also used as an extra fund raising element to the campaign. The celebrity clothes were auctioned off on ebay to raise further funds.

Originally it was planned to open the shop just for one weekend, but the concept proved to be so popular that it stayed open for a week.

- Over 1,000 items were donated
- £15,000 was raised for charity
- The press loved the idea and it got great coverage – including one paper sending a reporter down for the afternoon to see the shop for herself.





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