MXit campaign for World Aids Day

Social networking platform MXit is putting its technology to work to help raise HIV/AIDS awareness this World Aids Day, Monday, 1 December 2008. The company has teamed up with South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) to launch a campaign that should simultaneously raise HIV/AIDS awareness amongst a key target group - the youth of South Africa - and raise money for future projects.

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MXit has a subscriber base of 10 million, mostly made up of 16 - 25 year old South Africans, thus representing a huge segment of the population.

Positive force in SA

CEO and founder Herman Heunis, says that the MXit platform can be a positive force in SA today and that this campaign is an example.

"The MXit brand stands for the evolution of technology and communication and we constantly try to push the envelope with what is possible using this platform. MXit is more than just games and chat - we support an entire lifestyle - and see ourselves very much in this role," explains Heunis.

The initiative, which kicked off on Friday 28 November, works in the same way as conventional advertising campaigns on MXit by inviting users to download special World AIDS Day 'skinz' (artwork/photos with which users can customise their MXit interface) onto their mobile handsets at a cost of R1 (100 moola) per download - around half the usual price of a skin download. All the profits will go to SANAC.

Call to action

Mike Carter, account manager at MXit, said Metropolis, SANAC's media agency, had booked five million splash ad impressions - which are viewed when a user launches MXit - to ensure the call to action is loud and clear.

"MXit is the largest youth portal in the country and with it we can get this message out to a crucial segment of the population. Given the massive mobile penetration rates here in SA, it makes sense to use the cellphone medium for mass communication for this campaign," he said.

MXit will also be sending a broadcast message to its entire active database from Sunday 30 November to supplement the five million splash ads.

As a further incentive to get involved, users who download the World AIDS Day skinz stand a chance of winning one of two Nokia 6210 Navigator phones, which have been donated by Nokia SA.

Mark Heywood, SANAC deputy chairperson, said that the organisation has planned an historic and unprecedented campaign for World AIDS Day 2008 and that the MXit initiative formed a crucial part of their strategy.

'Massive mission'

"Our mission this year is a massive one - we want to get every person in South Africa to think about HIV in relation to themselves and their communities this World AIDS Day and are using the MXit medium as well as radio, newspapers and civil society bodies like churches and trade unions to do this.

"In addition to the one minute of silence planned for noon on 1 December, we have also initiated 15 minutes of national dialogue, in which we hope work places will stop and encourage discussion around the HIV/AIDS challenge - this will be the first time this has been done," said Heywood.

SANAC is a body made up of 18 different civil society sectors, including religious bodies, trade unions and government, amongst others, and aims to be the leading force in the country's fight against HIV/AIDS.

Heunis said he was confident the initiative would meet with great success.

"Our user base is a fantastic group of people, and we want to acknowledge them and thank them for the role that they will play in this innovative campaign by downloading the World AIDS Day skinz - helping to raise awareness for AIDS and contributing their money to this fundraising drive.

"The campaign slogan developed by The Jupiter Drawing Room and Metropolitan Republic is 'Small acts. Many people. Big change. We shall overcome' and this, we believe, encapsulates the immense power that rests with the technology-enabled social networks of today," he said.