

# Faith for Fern – A Case Study

## **Introduction**

In 2003, Fern Kwantes contracted reflex sympathetic dystrophy, or RSD. The disease is a neurological disorder, which causes her to feel intense pain (similar to being set on fire) all the time.

Due, in part, to the fact that it took two years to diagnose Fern's condition, doctors failed to achieve any remission and eventually admitted defeat. Fern was told that her only hope was an experimental treatment, involving a ketamine coma trial, available in Mexico at a cost of approximately \$75,000 (including non-medical expenses, such as travel).

Fern's twin sister, Faith, took it upon herself to make sure Fern got this last chance at having her life back, and the Faith for Fern campaign was born.

## **Methodology**

Time was extremely limited, as the funds needed to be raised between the end of May and the end of September of the same year. A multi-media campaign was required.

The starting point of the campaign was a website, which told the story and provided all the information available in order to motivate potential donors.

This was followed up by a viral e-mail campaign and a strong presence on Facebook and Twitter. Ongoing media releases targeted TV, radio and newspapers in Alberta, where Faith is based, and B.C., where Fern lives. Some supporters also held fundraisers.

## **Outcome**

From June 4 to the end of September, the campaign raised almost \$50,000. This was from a standing start, and with zero awareness.

Funds continued to come in and, in early October, Fern traveled to Mexico, underwent the trial and woke up pain-free. She returned to B.C., where, at the time of writing, she is recovering, regaining her strength and enjoying her family.

## **Marketing Successes**

From a marketing perspective, the campaign achieved several things that went beyond our expectations:

- The website quickly became one of the top indexed sites about the Ketamine Coma Trial.

- The Facebook and Twitter pages became an extremely popular source of updates for Fern's supporters, attracting a loyal following.
- The Facebook and Twitter pages went viral and became a valuable source of donations as new people were directed there by loyal followers.

The campaign has become so well-known among other RSD sufferers, who wonder how so much was achieved in such a short time, that Faith is currently exploring the possibility of creating a foundation to support RSD research and to assist those seeking treatment themselves.

### **The Marketing Team**

There was a very active team consulting and advising in the above activities, but the primary team involved in creating the pieces mentioned were:

Wendy Zak  
Copywriter for website and viral e-mail campaign

Shayne Lawrence ([www.catchthis.ca](http://www.catchthis.ca))  
Website design

Kirsty Young ([www.tinypr.ca](http://www.tinypr.ca))  
PR, Facebook and Twitter

Anne Beaty  
Media relations