



**REBECCA  
GOLDBERG**

## ART + BUSINESS = MORE BIRTHDAYS

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Perhaps the most inspiring cross-roads between business and art in recent marketing history can be found at [www.morebirthdays.com](http://www.morebirthdays.com), the American Cancer Society's new cross-demographic brand awareness strategy with the optimistic message of Less Cancer = More Birthdays. The platform is the result of a prolific partnership between American Cancer Society (ACS) and The Martin Agency. Artists and musicians have donated their products and performances to the interactive site, which helps build awareness for resources and accomplishments of ACS as well as to lay the groundwork for ongoing, supportive relationships.

Andy Goldsmith, VP, Brand Strategy at ACS, says, “We need our brand strategy to promote knowledge, because the more people know about us, the more supportive behavior follows. We are the largest non-profit financial supporter of cancer research in the world, but we also help cancer patients find wigs, get rides to treatment, and get support in dozens of other ways. People should know that we do this because they might need our help someday. We also need a brand with a positive message, because no one wants to be part of the ‘cancer club.’ Our brand also needs to communicate that we’re making progress and we’re progressive. So how do you do that?”

The Martin Agency's Leah Muhlenfeld, Account Director and Lead Digital Strategist, has the answer. She says, “When ACS came to us, they were up against big challenges. People thought of them as a dinosaur organisation made up of old men in white lab coats. They didn't have the contemporary, socially relevant image that they needed to accomplish their goals. We chose celebrating birthdays as a theme because it cuts across demographics and socially imposed boundaries such as gender, nationality and age. The creative team did

a deep dive into brands that already exist in the cancer space – Lance Armstrong owns ‘fitness,’ Susan G. Komen owns ‘the color pink’ and St. Jude's owns ‘kids’ – and the golden thread they came back with was the unifying theme of birthdays.”

Art and music came into the project when Muhlenfeld and her team landed on another stroke of luck: licensed use of the Happy Birthday song. The US version of “Happy Birthday” is a heavily-protected, copyrighted song. Warner-Chappell, owners of the copyright, released it to ACS for a nominal fee. This allowed Martin to work with a wide variety of popular musicians and create videotaped performances of the Happy Birthday song to feature on the site.

The beauty of this particular marriage between art and business is not only the massive potential for positive humanitarian impact, but also the interactive nature of the website itself. Birthdays are something we all share, and so is the concept of the celebration of life. Viewers can send free e-cards with the donated musical performances, or purchase gift wrap (*Get it? Wrapping paper for your birthday?*) printed with their favorite visual artist's imagery. Muhlenfeld is particularly proud of the interactive Candle Gallery, where “you can add your candle and your message of what more birthdays means to you. Maybe it's more Mexican food with your sister, or more time with your grandchildren. It's significantly more than just an online store. It's a hugely scalable social conversation.”

Since the beginning, the music and art phase of their campaign in September 2010, nearly two-thirds of all US women recall the campaign, which is well above their previous high-water marks for advertising. They've also noted that time spent on [www.morebirthdays.com](http://www.morebirthdays.com) has doubled, with corresponding drops in the website's bounce rate. Perhaps most importantly, specific knowledge is starting to increase. Goldsmith says: “Knowledge is the key to each of our goals. It promotes relationships, dialogue, support, awareness, and prevention. We could not be more pleased with the social return of our investment in becoming the Official Sponsor of Birthdays.” **HP**