

World Vision Made a Bad Public Relations Move, Says Jewish PR Expert

When it comes to social policy, there are so many different viewpoints, both inside and outside of the religious world. When you take a stand on an issue—especially a divisive one—expect people to call you on it. The issue compounds when you are a larger organization that represents a lot of different people. And it compounds exponentially when you are a charity organization dependent on goodwill donations.

World Vision, a massive and popular international Christian charity, conducts economic development and emergency relief operations across the globe. They have an annual budget of nearly \$1 billion.

Founded by and still closely aligned with evangelical Christians, the group surprised—and in many cases enraged—their supporters by announcing that they would begin to openly hire individuals who were in same sex marriages, provided they were professing Christians.

This announcement caught many supporters completely off guard, as same-sex unions aren't exactly popular in the evangelical world. And you can bet World Vision heard about it when they announced their decision. After a two-day barrage of angry responses, according to the Associated Press as reported to *The Guardian*, the charity reversed its field.

An excerpt from a statement released by World Vision included the following: "We have listened to you and want to say thank you and to humbly ask for your forgiveness."

But you can't turn an aircraft carrier around so quickly—or avoid the ripple of consequences created by the wake of the

about-face.

Now everyone is upset. Supporters who oppose same-sex marriage may celebrate their victory, but they will likely never again look at World Vision the same way. If they do continue to donate, they will do so with less enthusiasm and with doubts about what the leadership “really” believes.

Folks who believe World Vision was finally aligning themselves with what they believe about how to treat people have been caught flat-footed, promised something that was immediately taken away. World Vision may not have even been on their radar. Now they connect the charity with negative feelings—and World Vision will need to do some real crisis PR for people on all sides of the debate.

By making this announcement without considering and planning for how to deal with the blowback, World Vision alienated its core constituents and aggravated folks who otherwise would not have cared one way or the other. If you are going to do something that will upset a lot of your supporters, you better really mean it.

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