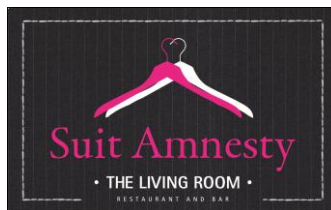


**Region:** Thames & Chiltern  
**Category:** 5. Community Relations  
**Entry title:** Suit Amnesty  
**Entrant organisation:** The Orchid Group  
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## SUIT AMNESTY – the campaign



The 'Suit Amnesty' was a brand new campaign for our The Living Room brand ([www.thelivingroom.co.uk](http://www.thelivingroom.co.uk)) - a restaurant and bar group with 14 sites nationwide.

It was specifically designed as a low-cost initiative that could be turned around quickly. The key element was to position The Living Room as a socially responsible company and to leverage awareness of the brand amongst the business community.

The concept was simple and effective - we asked people to donate their unwanted suits which we re-gifted to homeless and disadvantaged jobseekers, helping get them back into work.

Our research showed that not owning a suit is one of the biggest barriers for homeless or young people in applying for jobs. The Suit Amnesty directly addressed this issue and was ideally timed to fit the current news agenda with unemployment at an all-time high.

With charities and initiatives being hit hard for donations in recent times, the Suit Amnesty provided a way for people to help others by re-gifting something they no longer had a use for – and without having to give financially.

The Suit Amnesty ran from January 29<sup>th</sup> until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011 and generated high impact press coverage both locally and nationally whilst positioning the brand as being socially responsible. It also forged links with the business community, driving awareness and footfall.

## Objectives

- To position The Living Room as socially responsible
- To create a feel-good factor amongst customers and staff

- To give people a different way of helping others – by regifting instead of having to donate financially
- To help local charities obtain suits – feedback from the charities told us were of great value for their ‘back to work’ groups but something they struggled to obtain
- To increase awareness of The Living Room brand within the business community
- To drive footfall during the post-Christmas quiet period
- To create links with local businesses and drive corporate bookings
- To generate sustained and high impact press coverage

## Strategy and tactics

- Each Living Room site was given a branded Suit Amnesty clothes rack and point of sale materials.
- Launch PR – we issued a ‘Call to action’ press release featuring a PR shot of the General Manager with a rack of suits. A national release was also distributed.
- London Fashion Week – we issued a second release timed with LFW and endorsed by fashion designer Paul Costelloe. Paul donated 10 suits and lent his support resulting in coverage in Vogue, The Daily Express, The Sun and the Evening Standard.
- Sustained activity and photo-calls – we contacted high profile figures (MPs/Lord Mayors/Celebs) to donate their suits and create more PR opportunities.
- Suits were collected up and dry cleaned.
- Suits were distributed to charities.
- Final ‘thank you’ press release issued along with accompanying shots of the suits been donated.
- Follow-up PR opportunities.

Every person donating a suit received a 20% off food voucher to drive repeat visits. 850 of these were redeemed during Spring 2011.

## Results

- 2000 suits donated
- 22 charities benefited
- Celebrity endorsement - well known stars including Gary & Danielle Lineker donated their suits and endorsed the campaign.
- High profile association including MPs and public figures
- Links with local businesses
- ‘Interview Success’ workshop day helped 42 jobseekers
- Press coverage included the Sun, Daily Express, Vogue, GQ, Metro, Evening Standard and a host of regional titles
- Thousands of extra visitors to The Living Room venues.
- Increase in website users +14%

## Press coverage

The campaign was phenomenally successful in terms of press generated. Highlights included full page features, front page features and national coverage.

**Figures summary:**

Total circulation: 31,513,000  
Total audience: 62,631,000  
Equivalent advertising spend: £94,674.84  
PR value: £284,024.52

Total budget for the Suit Amnesty campaign = £2450  
Return on investment = £116 for every £1 spent.



**Supporting quotes**

**Ella Alexander, Vogue** "In the hundreds of news releases I receive every day, this really stood out. The Paul Costelloe and London Fashion Week element made it timely and newsworthy, but it was also the fact that this was about recycling something that people have and often don't know what to do with."

**Steve Potts, Events PA at The Living Room Heddon Street, London** "The Suit Amnesty brought return business evidenced by so many 20% discount vouchers being redeemed. It helped me build better relationships with other businesses and I'm now on first name terms with companies like Ted Baker, Accenture and PWC. The scheme had a feel-good factor which customers loved – it was great awareness for The Living Room."

**Actor Joe McGann** "Owning a good suit is something most of us take for granted, so to help young and homeless people get a step closer to getting on to the employment ladder is a great gift."

**Emily Howells, The Living Room Manchester** "The Suit Amnesty worked really well in terms of raising our visibility, getting our name out there and in the minds of the public and associating The Living Room with doing something positive for charity."

**Fashion Designer Paul Costelloe**, "I love the Suit Amnesty concept – it's clever, unique and really captivates the imagination."

**Hugh Bayley MP** "Like many people I have clothes in my wardrobe which I no longer wear. It's great to think a suit I have worn will bring someone luck in a job interview."

**Customer testimonial** - Sarah Newland emailed The Living Room from law firm Clarke Willmott "Just wanted to say what a great idea the Suit Amnesty is. Really nice to be able to help people by giving something that's not money for a change. Our whole office has been digging out their suits and our visits to The Living Room have been a great excuse for after work drinks!"