

# Using Social Media to Save Lives

**POWER of SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY**

By Robert Chatwarni

The Dragonfly Effect [aaker@gsb.stanford.edu](mailto:aaker@gsb.stanford.edu)

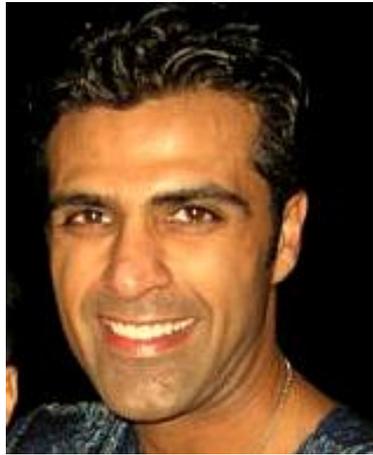
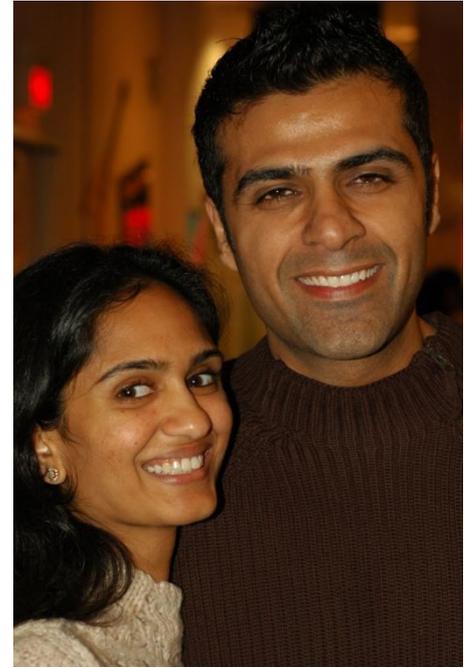
# Two friends, diagnosed with Leukemia



- **Sameer Bhatia, 32**
- **Grew up in Seattle**
- **My Co-Founder, prior roommate, best friend**
- **Married Reena in 2006**
- **Stanford undergrad, serial entrepreneur**
- **Diagnosed May 2007**



- **Vinay Chakravarthy, 28**
- **Grew up in Fremont, CA**
- **Married Rashmi in 2005**
- **Berkeley undergrad, MD from Boston University**
- **Diagnosed November 2006**



# Leukemia

**Cancer that starts in blood-forming tissue such as the bone marrow and causes large numbers of blood cells to be produced and enter the bloodstream.**

# US Estimates – 2008

**New cases: 44,270**

**Deaths: 21,710**

# Range of treatments

Oral drugs

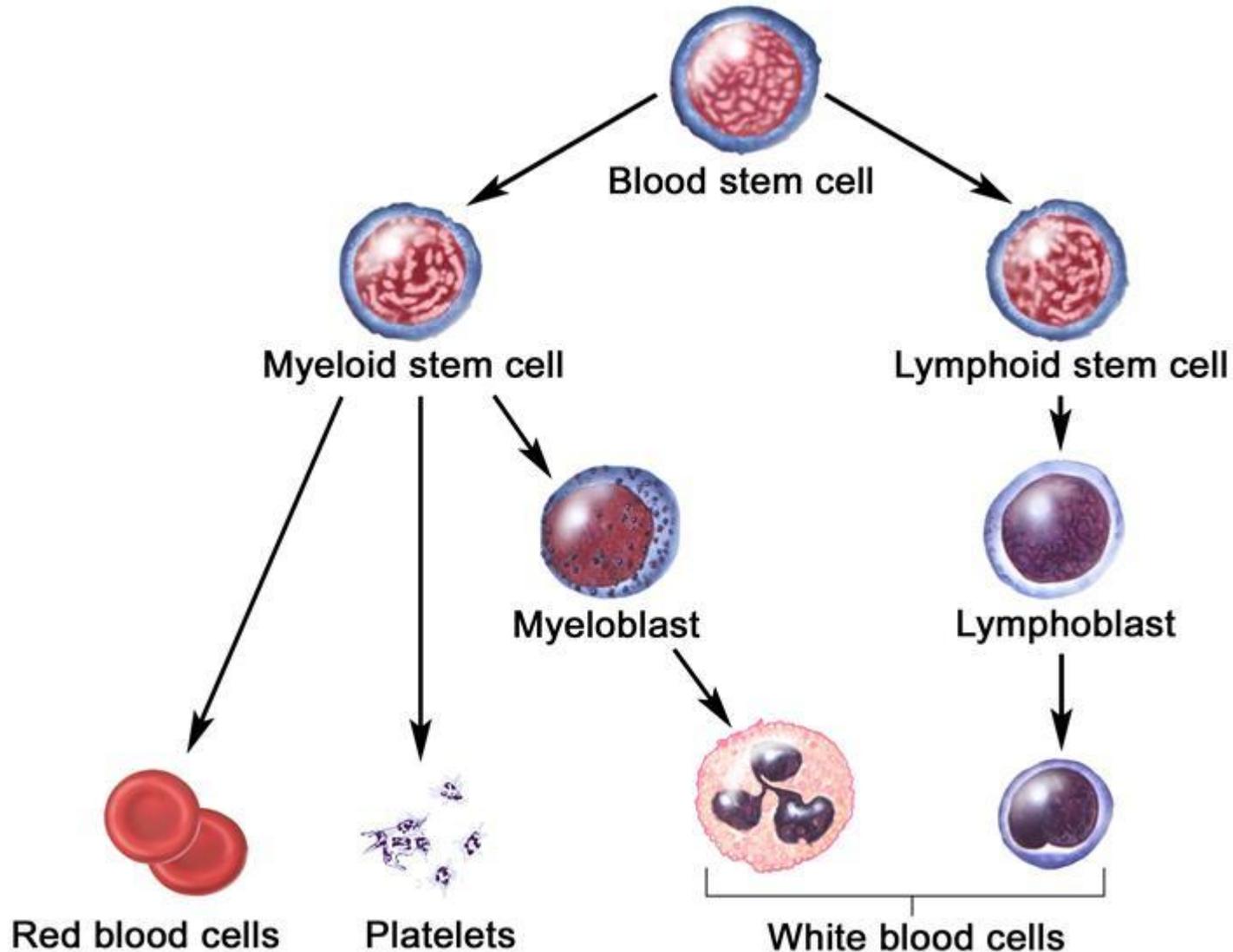
Cord blood transplant

Bone marrow transplant

Chemotherapy

Radiation

# Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)



# What is bone marrow?

**Spongy tissue found inside of bones.  
Marrow produces the body's white &  
red blood cells, and platelets.**

**For many leukemia patients, the only cure is a bone marrow transplant, with marrow that comes from a donor.**

# What is a marrow transplant?

**Transplantation of donor blood stem cells derived from the bone marrow or bloodstream (most common approach).**

# Finding a donor

**Marrow infused into the patient requires a genetic match that is as perfect as possible (10/10 match parameters).**

**Highest probability exists within the same ethnic pool.**

**NATIONAL  
MARROW  
DONOR  
PROGRAM®**

**Non-profit that  
operates a  
bone marrow  
registry of 6.8  
million  
individuals.**

**For Caucasians, there is an  
80% chance of finding a  
matched donor in the NMDP  
registry.**

**Of the 6.8 million registrants,**

**20%** are minorities.

**But only 1% are South Asian.**

**So if you are South Asian...**

**the odds of finding a  
match are low.**

# Very low.



**1 in 20,000**

**Sameer and Vinay did not find matches that they desperately needed in the registry.**

**To make matters worse...**

**...in India,**

**a country with more than  
1 billion people**

**There is no bone  
marrow registry.**



**What to do?**

**Friends got together.**

**All of us were quite shocked about the news that **two** of our friends were struck with cancer.**

**We all felt like we needed to  
do something. *Anything.***

**What were our options?**

**Do nothing.**

Do nothing.

**Do something.**

Do nothing.

Do something.

**Do something SEISMIC.**

**Our simple answer...**

If the odds were **1 in 20,000...**

**Then all we needed to do was...**

**hold bone marrow drives...**

**and register 20,000 South Asians.**

**And then we'll find a match.**

**Just 1 problem.**

**We had a matter of  
weeks to get this done.**

# The Challenge

**We needed to move fast**

**We needed scale**

**Failure was not an option**

**First, think small, stay  
focused.**

**One person**

**One goal**

# GET: Some structure to the chaos

## Grab attention

- Make our message bold, crisp, & human
- Use MANY channels

## Engage

- Funnel traffic to a single destination
- Be personally meaningful

## Take action

- Clear call to action in all communication (K.I.S.S.)
- Track metrics & collective impact

# Harness Social Media & Web 2.0

You can do today what was impossible  
just a few years ago



# What...exactly...is Social Media?

- Internet- and mobile-based tools for sharing information among human beings
- The interactions between people build shared-meaning
- Not finite: No set number of pages or hours
- Audience can participate by contributing content or even editing the stories themselves
- Effectiveness can be highly symbiotic with traditional media

# What did we do?

- 1. Got organized & formed teams**
- 2. Built the “brands”**
- 3. Created the architecture**
- 4. Recruited volunteers**
- 5. Executed like crazy**

# Got organized & formed teams

## Team Vinay

*bridges*

## Team Sameer

team lead



team lead

marketing



marketing

drive operations



drive operations

education



education

regional leads



regional leads

# Built the brands

**HelpSameer.org**

**HelpVinay.org**



**HelpSameerAndVinay.org**

# Built the brands

## HelpSameer.org

## HelpVinay.org

### Help Sameer

Attend an upcoming bone marrow drive and join the registry

Attend an upcoming drive

Home About Sameer Inspirations



#### About Sameer

Our friend, Sameer Bhatia, was just diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML), which is a cancer of the blood. He is in urgent need of a bone marrow transplant. Sameer is a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, is 31 years old and just got married in 2006. His diagnosis was confirmed just weeks ago and caught us all by surprise.

Another friend of ours, [Vinay](#), was also diagnosed with AML and also requires a transplant (many of you may already be familiar with Vinay's campaign). We have teamed up with Team Vinay in order to build greater awareness of how you can help.

#### Donor info

- [All upcoming drives](#)
- [Bone marrow donor FAQ](#)
- [How donation works](#)
- [Myths and facts](#)
- [Organize a drive at work](#)

#### Information

- [Help Vinay](#)
- [Sameer receives transplant](#)
- [Send Sameer support](#)

### Help Vinay!

URGENT! JOIN THE MARROW REGISTRY!!!

Home

Confirm Donor S

#### Need To Register?

- [All Upcoming Drives](#)
- [How to Register](#)
- [Donation \(FAQ\)](#)
- [View Videos on Donor Registration](#)
- [Pregnant Women](#)
- [Others In Need](#)
- [Useful Links](#)

#### Already Registered?

- [How You Can Help](#)
- [Cities Needed For Drives](#)
- [Confirm Donor Status](#)
- [DONOR HEROES](#)
- [How to Organize a Drive](#)
- [I-Believe Drives](#)

#### Information

[Home](#)

#### PBS Documentary on Vinay

Vinay is profiled in an upcoming documentary that will air on PBS on

The Truth About Cancer will feature three stories of Boston-based Ca challenges and navigating the healthcare system to try and obtain the Cancer Center and their vast amount of resources is also featured.

[Details on the program can be found here](#)



#### God Bless You

On May 3rd, 2008 Anonymous says:

Dear Vinay-

Please post your updated progress as we are all wondering how you

# Created the architecture – Web 2.0 Tools

## For the team

Google Docs

Conference bridge

Yahoo & Google Groups

Email DL's

Phone trees

Shared directories

## For registrants

Tell a friend feature

Marrow drive location list

Useful links

Donor videos

Pledges

FAQs

**Executed, like CRAZY.**

# Strategy

```
graph TD; Strategy[Strategy] --> InstantBrand[Instant Brand]; Strategy --> MassMicroMobilization[Mass Micro-Mobilization];
```

## Instant Brand

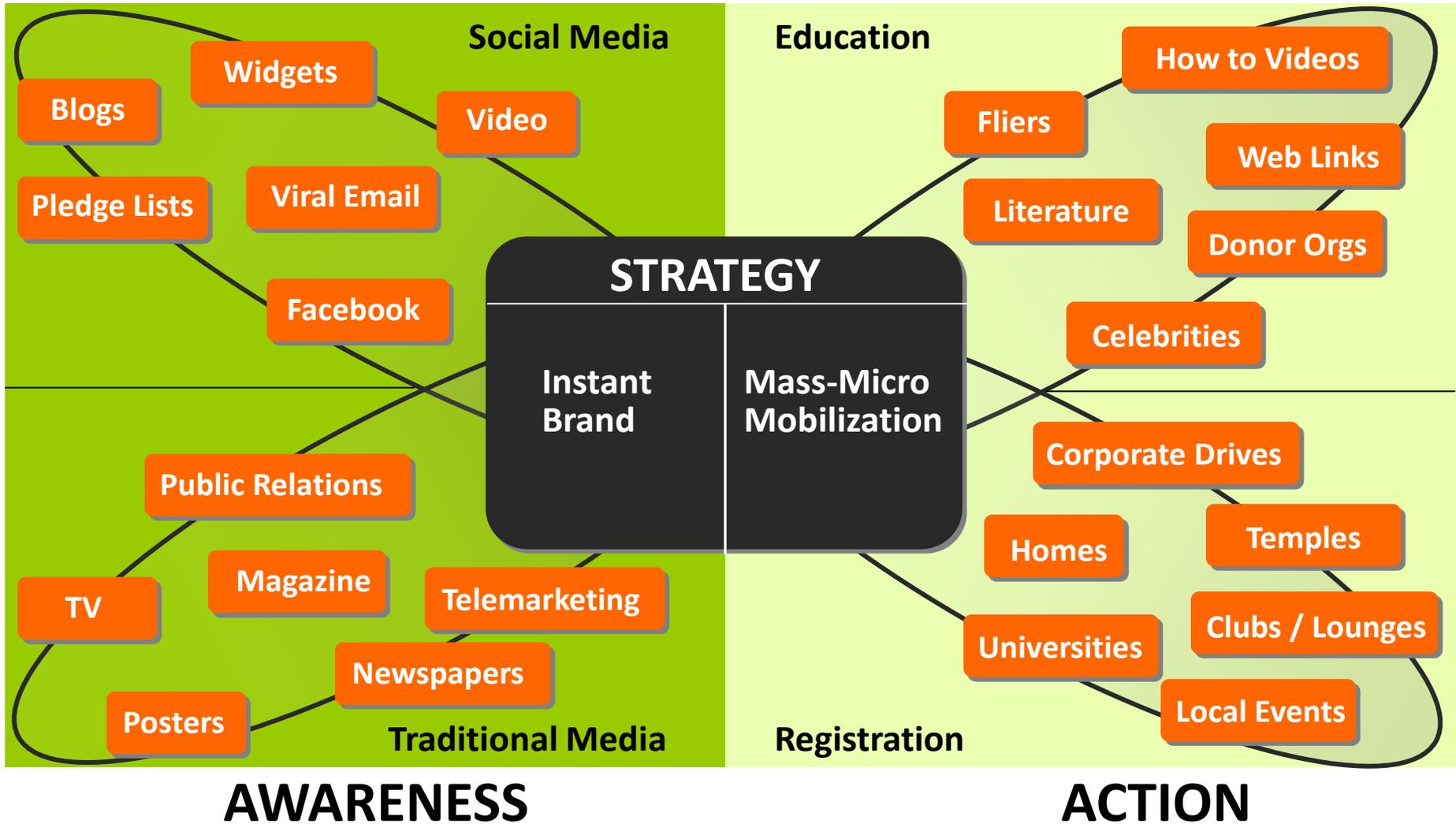
Quickly generate **awareness** of HelpVinay & HelpSameer

- Social Media
- Traditional Media

## Mass Micro-Mobilization

Drive **action** amongst as many South Asians as possible

- Education
- Registration



<http://www.helpsameer.org/strategy/>



## 10 Simple Steps – You Can Do It!

Let's find Sameer and Vinay a match! Hosting a bone marrow registration drive at work take some effort, but your drive can be a big success with the right planning and coordination. This playbook is designed to make it as easy as possible for you. Since each company is organized differently, think of this as a general guide. The various steps are laid out in sequence, and sample emails are included for you customize for your own use. **Replace the text in red** with your own text.

# VALLEYWAG

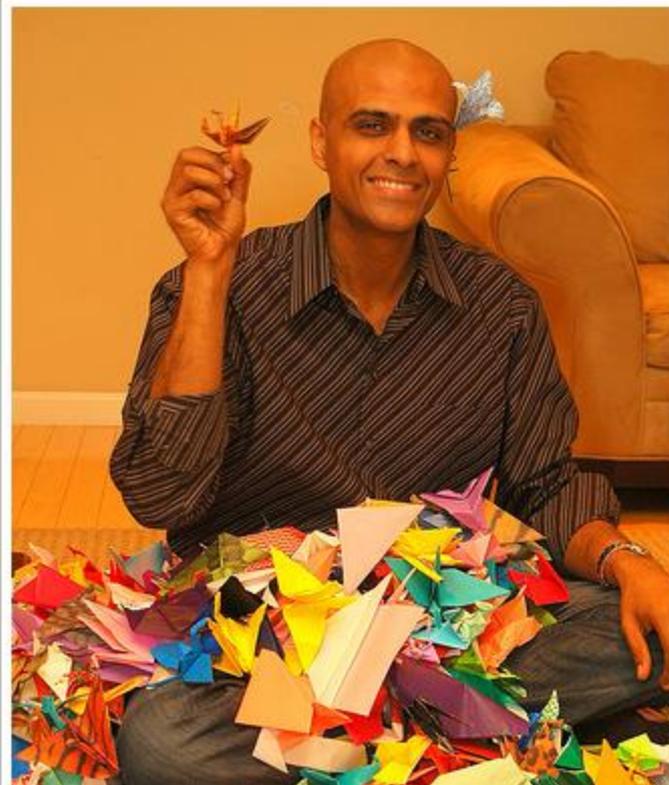
new user? help?

SILICON VALLEY'S TECH GOSSIP RAG

Why Sue Gardner hired a pedophilia supporter to run Wikipedia

**SAMEER BHATIA**

## An entrepreneur's drive



Sameer Bhatia, the founder of barter site MonkeyBin and mobile gaming company Octane Technologies, has a new challenge ahead of him. The 31-year-old Stanford grad has been diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia (AML), and is in need of a bone marrow transplant to survive. Friends of the entrepreneur have organized several bone marrow drives around

## Sameer & Vinay.



Brothers, husbands, sons,  
cousins, boys, ballers,  
doctors, businessmen,  
activists, jokers, peeps.

kind of like you  
(or your brother)

Getting tested is easy.  
And you will be a hero.

**You can save their lives.**  
And those of other  
**South Asians**  
suffering from leukemia.



**Now, Sameer needs to find a donor. You can help.**

If you're a match, the procedure is painless.

This is  
our friend  
**Sameer**



**A year ago,**  
he was **enjoying**  
**life** with his  
**wife & friends**  
and  
giving back  
to the  
**community.**



South Asians with  
leukemia have a

1 in 20,000

chance of finding  
a donor match



Vinay needs

**You**

to improve his  
chances

Help Vinay - Russell Peters



Revathy's Plea for Vinay



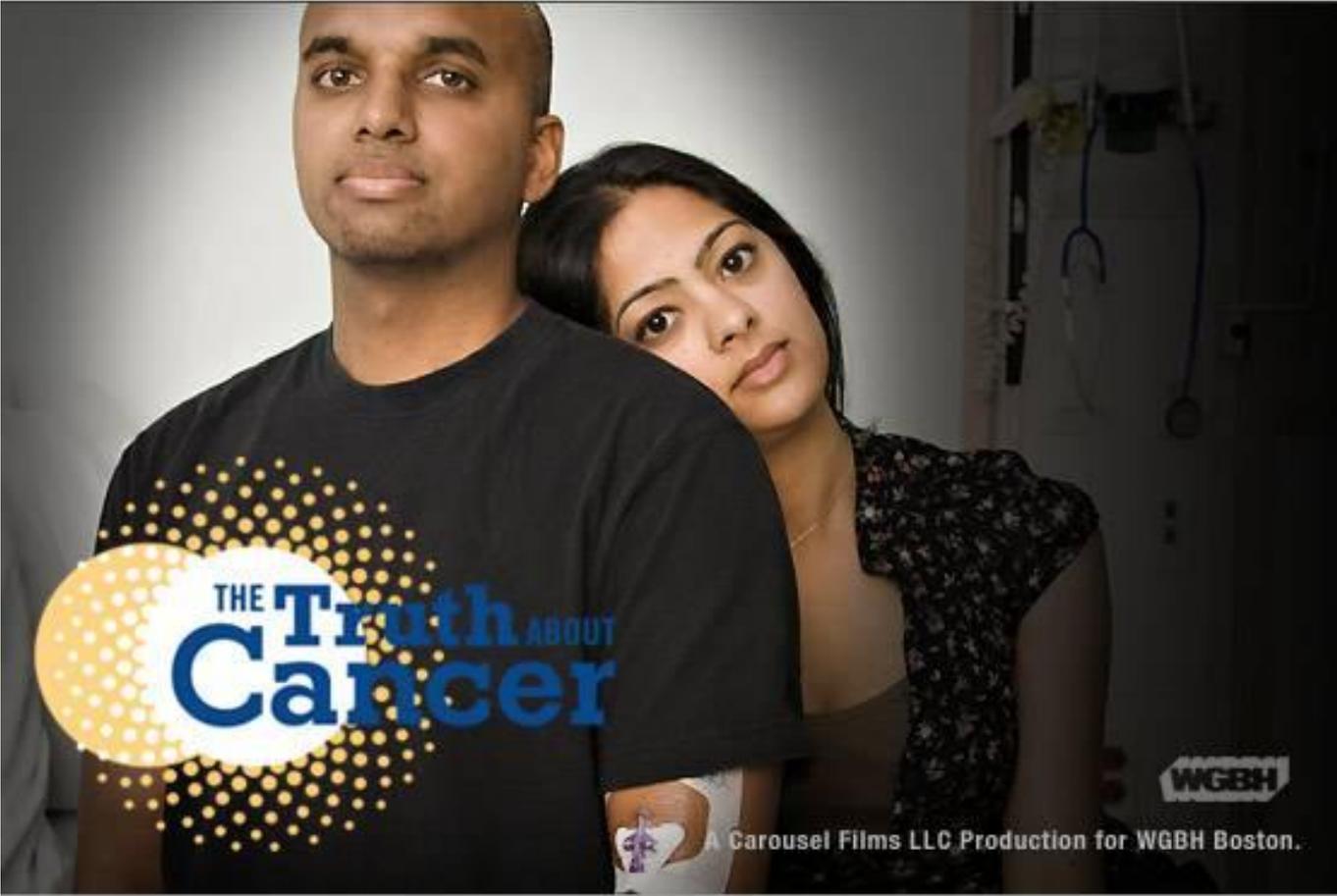
Sameer's new life -- part one



[www.helpsameer.org](http://www.helpsameer.org)



[Click Here](#)



THE Truth ABOUT  
Cancer

WGBH

A Carousel Films LLC Production for WGBH Boston.



BARACK OBAMA  
SUPPORTS VINAY ... DO YOU?



BARACK OBAMA  
ILLINOIS

COMMITTEES:  
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS

**United States Senate**

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

FOREIGN RELATIONS

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

June 27, 2007

Dear Friends:

Vinay Chakravarthy is 28 years old, a son, a husband, and an aspiring doctor. Vinay has been diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia, and we can save his life.

Vinay's cancer can be cured with a simple bone marrow transplant. As a South Asian, Vinay has only a 1 in 20,000 chance of finding a bone marrow match, which is his only chance to survive. We must encourage all of our friends and family inside and outside the South Asian community to register, commit to donating, and do so immediately, as Vinay needs this match by July 10.

I commend Team Vinay's effort to obtain 20,000 registered donors by July 10. To date they have reached 6,904 donors, so we have a lot of work to do. Together we can reach out to communities across the country and remind them that we—members of Vinay's family, community, and country—have a responsibility to help. We should all see ourselves in Vinay and realize that he deserves the same support we would wish for a member of our own family or even ourselves.

I support Team Vinay's continued good work and share my hope that we can come together to help Vinay.

Sincerely,

Barack Obama  
United States Senator

# The Results – 12 weeks

- **470** bone marrow drives
- **24,611** new people registered
- About **3,500** volunteers
- **1m+** media impressions
- **150,000+** site visitors

# Goal achieved.

- Sameer = 10/10 match.
- Vinay = 8/10 match.
- Transplants done Fall 2007.

**Sameer shared his story from the hospital.**



# Both Sameer and Vinay blogged prolifically.

## Live each day as if it were your first

Dear Friends and Loved Ones,

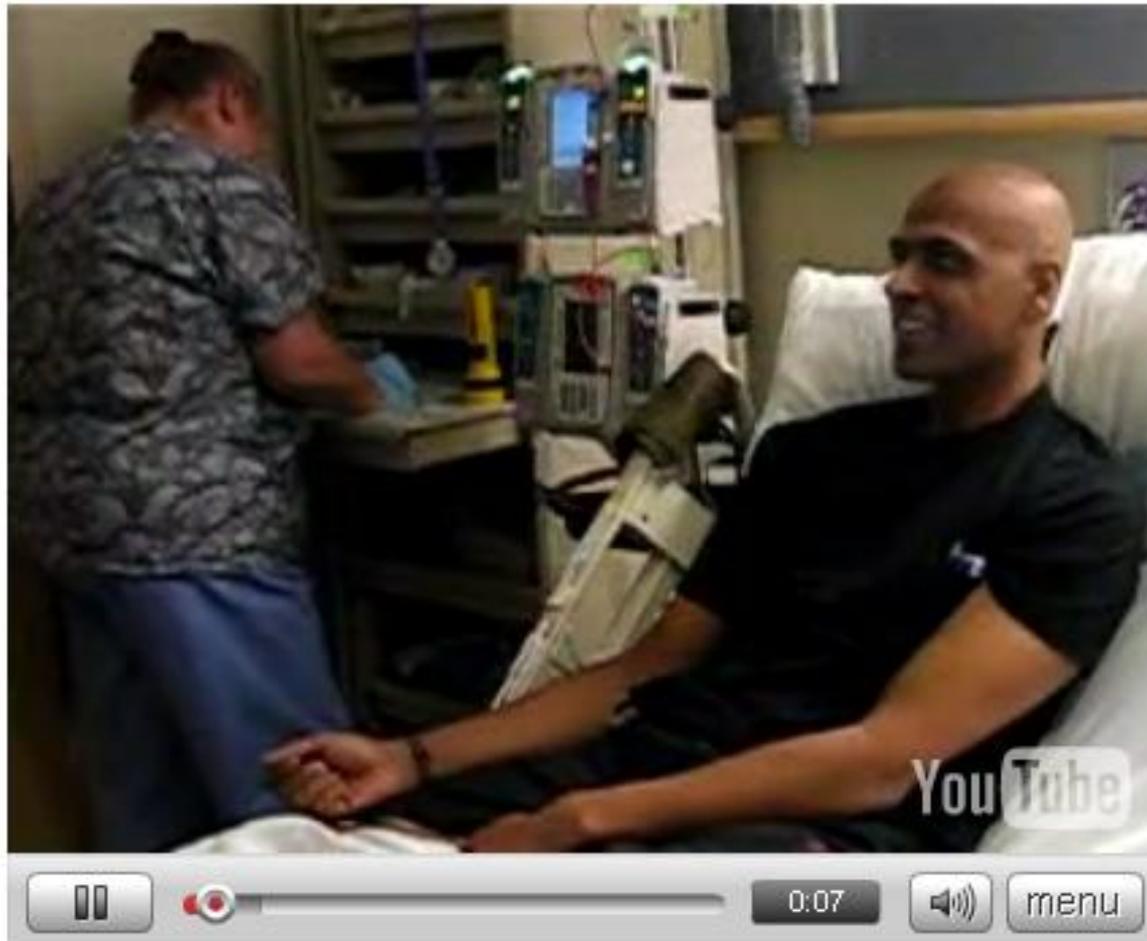
I can't stress to you how much I marvel at my blessed fortune every day, a fortune that all of you had a hand in creating.

If you look back at my earliest posts on this website, you'll recall a newly-diagnosed leukemia patient needing a transplant from a grossly underrepresented and traditionally apathetic community. Along with [Vinay](#), I challenged you all to step up and spread the word; to register and respond when called upon to save a life. I knew that this process was very unlikely to benefit me directly, but I had faith - and was convinced by Robert and others - that I had an opportunity to bring visibility to this issue to benefit future patients. This worked as hoped, and two other patients found matches through our drives. And the unimaginable happened: I also found a match through your efforts!

So who is to credit for this? Each and every one of you. It could have been *your* email that caused the donor to register. All of you stopped to think for a minute, "What if this was me or someone in my family?" and then did something as simple as sending an email to everyone you knew. This was *Awareness Building*, and was a crucial phase of your efforts. Others of you - many of whom I don't even know but hope to seek out to thank in person one day - vested yourselves even deeper by organizing drives. You did this at your companies, your colleges, in your local communities, and at your temples of worship. And one of you actually won the luck of the draw and got to be my donor.

# Sameer even posted a video of his transplant on YouTube.

Part Three



# GET: Examples of what we used

## Grab attention

- Celebrities
- Tons of media
- Bold messages:  
*YOU can be the one*

## Engage

- Videos & photos:
  - Newlywed
  - Family
  - Nonprofit work
  - Entrepreneur
  - Indian
- Powerful stories & blogging

## Take action

- (1) Register
- (2) Hold a drive
- (3) Spread the word
- Consistent message across all media
- Dummies Guide

# Keys to Effective Social Media Campaign

- The campaign **can be built upon**
- **No one should have to ask for your permission** to expand your campaign
- **Scales effectively**, with self-service and low barriers for engagement
- **Builds a community**, which should be nurtured
- Facilitates **unanticipated outcomes** – usually a good thing

**So, what lessons did we learn?**

**1. Develop a clear goal.**

**There is elegance in simplicity.**

## **2. Act, then think. (Reverse the rule)**

**Maintain a deep bias for action.  
Resist the temptation to have a  
master plan before taking the first  
step.**

### **3. Tell a good (truthful) story.**

**Tell stories to connect with human emotion. Develop the right voice, and strike a bond.**

## **4. Design an architecture for collaboration.**

**Enable others to contribute - allow the army to self-enroll, and let soldiers to choose their own weapons.**

## 5. Focus on *empowerment marketing*\*

**Empower people to market your organization and its cause.**

\* Sundeep Ahuja – <http://thesunrising.com/empowerment-marketing/>

## **6. Measure one, and only one metric.**

**Share the metric with the entire world – let everyone know how well you're succeeding, or failing.**

## **7. Try, fail, try, fail, try, succeed.**

**Don't love your ideas. If you try everything, something will work. Find the something and double-down.**

**8. Don't ask for help. Rather, tell people they need to help you.**

**Who do you want to help you –  
Hollywood actor? Nobel laureate?  
Presidential candidate?**

**No problem.**

# The 8 Lessons

- 1. Develop a clear goal.**
- 2. Tell your story.**
- 3. Act, then think (big).**
- 4. Design for collaboration.**
- 5. Empowerment marketing.**
- 6. Measure one metric.**
- 7. Try, fail, succeed.**
- 8. Don't ask for help. Require it.**

# Update on Sameer

- **Our best friend, Sameer, relapsed within 3 months of his transplant**
- **He fought hard – but sadly, passed away in March 2008**



**We celebrated his life by  
sharing his memorial service  
with the world.**

# Live Global Webcast

Sameer's Memorial Service Video



200+ live global viewers

6,000+ views in first 7 weeks

Sameer's Memorial Slideshow



6,000+ total views

# Vinay

- **Vinay had a successful transplant, but then relapsed**
- **Underwent alternative drug treatments**
- **Sadly, Vinay also passed away in June 2008**

# Purpose...revealed.

Of the **24,000** new registered donors for Sameer & Vinay, **7,500+** were registered in the Bay Area.

# Purpose...revealed.

From this **7,500+** the NMDP found **~ 80 new matches** for other leukemia patients.

**Legacy**...revealed.

Sameer & Vinay's cause has potentially led to **250 lives saved** in the past **year** alone.

# Final thoughts

**Most revolutions are  
sparked by the actions of a  
few ordinary people.**

**Your biggest asset is a clear  
mind and a very large idea.**

**Find the ignition point of a chain reaction, and go ignite it.**

# Using Social Media to Save Lives

**POWER of SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY**

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