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Terrorist attacks in the US trigger wave of concern and support at Bertelsmann

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Joint fund drive by Bertelsmann AG, Gruner + Jahr and RTL Group generates overwhelming response - Spontaneous gestures of solidarity throughout the company - BMG star Whitney Houston helps out with CD single

The terrorist attacks of September 11 triggered dismay and a wave of concern and support all over the world - including at Bertelsmann. From central management to the individual companies, Bertelsmann employees showed their solidarity with people in the US in a variety of ways. Artists got involved as well: the BMG label Arista Records and Whitney Houston spontaneously announced that they would re-release her renditions of "The Star Spangled Banner" and "America the Beautiful" on a CD single, the proceeds of which will go to the New York Police and Fire Departments relief funds.

Immediately after the attacks, Bertelsmann set up crisis management teams in Gütersloh and New York, to pool information and organize support. Chairman & CEO Thomas Middelhoff led the crisis squad from Germany, while in New York, BMG Chairman & CEO Rolf Schmidt-Holtz handled the measures during the dramatic first few hours and days after the attacks.

By the morning of September 12, Bertelsmann had already pledged one million USD each to the relief funds of the New York Fire and Police Departments, to provide swift financial relief to the families of the rescue workers killed. Shortly thereafter, Bertelsmann AG, the newspaper and magazine publisher Gruner + Jahr, and the TV and radio conglomerate RTL Group set up a joint solidarity and fund-raising initiative under the heading "For Freedom and Compassion - against Hate and Terrorism." A large-scale campaign of ads and TV spots encouraged readers and viewers to share their thoughts, opinions and feelings about the tragedy in the US on a dedicated website, and to communicate with other people. The campaign also called for donations. The response to the initiative, which was implemented in Germany and France, exceeded all expectations. In the first two days alone, more than 125,000 EUR were received to the donations account. By now, more than 500,000 EUR have been received. The money will be used to aid the children of victims of terrorism; among other things, a scholarship fund will be set up. In just three days, the ad broadcast on RTL Group TV channels reached more than 35 million viewers, while the ads in newspapers and magazines were read by a quarter of the population in Germany alone. After just a few days, the www.terroropfer-usa.de website had registered 8,000 contributions.

Inside Bertelsmann, attention was focused on the employees in New York. Thomas Middelhoff wrote several e-mails to all employees worldwide and specifically to colleagues in the U.S. In response, he received a great number of letters expressing solidarity, reporting on personal experiences, and offering to help. BMG employees in Chile offered blood, Random House employees in Canada spontaneously offered to help with the rescue operations in New York. Employees at the MOHN Media printing operations in Berlin donated money originally earmarked for a staff party to the fund drive. Over the past few days, employees all over the world have downloaded a form from Bertelsmann's intranet BeNet to donate part of their salaries. In New York, numerous employees participated in an organized blood drive. In Berlin, the Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben, an organization sponsored by Bertelsmann AG, joined the Atlantik-Brücke Association and the Bundesjugendorchester in a charity concert, the proceeds of which

will be donated to children orphaned by the terrorist attacks.

Thomas Middelhoff himself traveled to New York aboard one of the first aircraft allowed to cross the Atlantic, to find out about the situation first-hand and to see how employees were doing. "These atrocious events have sent a shock through our company," reported Middelhoff on Thursday at the company's annual news conference in Berlin. "There is an enormous amount of involvement and concern. Everyone I have spoken to during these dreadful days has expressed a new, heightened sense of solidarity."

Bertelsmann employs approximately 18,000 people in the US, including 9,000 in New York. Five thousand of them work in the company's building on Times Square. None of the employees came to physical harm; the company's buildings sustained no damage. A group of experts has been deployed to help traumatized employees cope with the disastrous events.

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