

Doing Special Events To Raise Funds For Your Nonprofit

Special events are one of the most effective ways to raise funds for your organization, increase your donor bases, and get valuable publicity for the work of your nonprofit organization. If done wrong, your special events won't provide the funds you seek, and will in fact hurt your organization because of the negative word-of-mouth advertising your organization will receive.

Therefore, in doing your special events, failure is a luxury your organization quite simply can't afford.

Here are some steps you can take to help insure that your special events are done right, so that your organization gets all the benefits that good special events offer.

1. Select a special event chairman for your event. This position should not be held by your principal officers.

Because, first these people already have other responsibilities, and second because in selecting your event chairman what you should want to do is to supplement your existing people resources not saddle them with more responsibilities.

2. Carefully plan your special event, and one of your key planning tools will be your Event Master Plan, which will cover the kind of event you'll have, when it will be held, and where it will be held.

Other important plans you will need are: A Budget Plan; A Funding Plan; A Publicity Plan; A Donor Recognition Plan; A Site Logistics Plan; and a Disaster Plan.

3. Develop an event's timeline to keep your special event on course. For smaller special events you need between 3 to 6 months lead time.

And for larger special events you will need between 6 to 9 months lead time, to do your special event right. So be sure you give yourself plenty of time.

4. Set up a special event's committee, as well as all the needed subcommittees. Such committees will include ticket sales committees, a gift solicitation committee, a publicity committee, and others.

Because, all fundraising is a people intensive activity and this is nowhere more so than in doing special events, and you will need lots of people to help make your special event a success.

5. Prepare as many of the documents you will need to do your special event successfully even before you need them, in the form of template documents so that to keep your special event on track.

Some of the many kinds of document you'll need are an event case statement; gift solicitation letters, publicity releases, volunteer's worker kits, event signs, and numerous other documents.

6. Hold a full dress rehearsal of your special event with all your key player involved, and walk through each step of your event. So that all directly involved know exactly what their respective role is, and just where they fit into the overall process.

Moreover, if your event involves some kind of talk presentations be sure to provide scripts to everyone who talks, and be sure to set a time limit on those who will be speaking so that you start and finish on time.

7. Do your special event being sure that if you accomplish nothing else that at least everyone has a good time. If they don't they won't speak well of your organization nor attend future special events.

Too try to earn a reasonable profit of at least 50% or better on your event after all cost are subtracted. On key to earning a reasonable profit is to get as many of the materials you need donated, and to obtain cash gifts from local businesses and others, which will be added to the overall revenue produced by your event.

Now to successfully do special events will require time and effort on your part, but the value of your special event and the benefits your organization will receive will far out weight the time and effort involved.

Because your event will allow you to raise funding, increase your donor bases, and provide valuable publicity for the work that you do. Thus special events should be regular part of your organizations fundraising efforts and revenue sources.

Car Wash Fundraiser

Car wash fundraisers are a proven money-maker in virtually every community. All you need are willing volunteers, a high-traffic location with good visibility, and some attention-getting signs.

You can put a car wash fundraiser together on short notice, but they work best with a little planning. Here's how to get started...

Getting Ready To Wash Cars

1. Line up a location with good main road frontage
2. Ensure it has suitable water access
3. Assemble supplies list – hoses, buckets, wash towels, dry towels, squeegees
4. Assign each volunteer an item from the supplies list
5. Make 8-10 poster board signs in high-contrast colors
6. Arrange your volunteers in 2-hour shifts
7. Get advance publicity, if possible

Car Washing Tips

1. Organize your group into teams - Promotion, Sales, Wash, Dry
2. Promotion team attracts new clients with signs
3. Sales team explains offer (use flyer for quick info) and up-sells clients with extra features or secondary offer
4. Wash team soaps, scrubs, and rinses each car
5. Dry team gets water residue off, vacuums, does tires, etc.
6. Use at least two lines and wash two or more cars at once
7. Wash cars for six to eight hours (Saturday 9:00 to 3:00 preferred)

Your fundraiser's success will depend on the weather. If you can wash 12 cars an hour (one every 10 minutes in each line), you can easily raise \$600- \$1000 in one day.

Remember to put together a quick flyer that includes the reason why you're raising funds and clearly states the price. You can even offer some extra services for an additional charge such as providing high-gloss tire treatment or vacuuming interiors.

Car Wash Fundraiser - Success Tips

1. Location, location, location!
2. Sell car wash fundraiser tickets in advance
3. Use a flyer that clearly explaining why you're raising funds
4. List all prices concisely in large, bold type
5. Up-sell to include additional services
6. Partner with another group if your head count is low
7. Increase revenue with an extra offering such as a [2-for-1 pizza savings card](#) or selling boxes of doughnuts.

Free car wash

Alternatively, you can advertise a free car wash and just ask for donations for your cause. Often, this can raise more cash than stating a specific price, because people will see a group of volunteers working hard and having a good time, and may actually donate more money than you would have charged.

Final Advice

Make sure to keep the event fun for all your participants and your customers. Play upbeat music. Provide soft drinks and snacks to keep the energy level up.

Keep safety in mind when trying to attract customers. Be sure to get volunteers to hold and wave signs toward passing traffic, not just volunteers to wash cars.

If you have time, increase your turnout by getting your car wash fundraiser some advance publicity coverage in the local newspaper, or by posting roadside signs a day or two ahead of time.

How to Promote Give Away Tickets

A lot of groups need help with promoting give-away tickets because there isn't much in the way of good ticket sales advice out there. So, here are some tips on how to promote give-away tickets that should double or triple your revenue.

Sales targets

These are your target markets:

- Family and friends
- Neighbors and co-workers
- General public

As you can see, the last group is by far the largest, so that's where you need to focus your sales efforts. Don't ignore the first two groups. They just need to be sold to face-to-face because it's harder to turn someone down when they're standing right in front of you.

Have the tickets in hand when you ask for their support. Hand them a flyer listing all the prizes, the ticket price, and the particulars about the prize drawing. It should also prominently state why you're raising funds.

Don't over talk it. Just ask for their help and assume they are giving it. Use the assumptive close: *"Need your help with our fundraiser. How many should I count you in for?"*

The key point is not to explain everything, let the flyer do that by putting it in their hand immediately. Your task is to make the sale quickly and you do that by assuming they have already said yes. They'll either acquiesce and buy tickets or toss out a defensive objection that you can quickly counter.

Ticket Sales To General Public

The best place to sell lots of tickets is at high-traffic locations such as shopping centers, grocery stores, drug stores, home improvement stores, Wal-Mart, etc.

Get permission from the store manager ahead of time to set up a sales table outside the entrance. Pick times when there's lots of shoppers and position your table so it's easily seen as people approach the store.

Place signs in front of and behind the table explaining the reason you are raising funds and clearly stating the ticket price. Example signage: "School Fundraiser - \$10,000 Grand Prize"; "Help Us Buy New Playground Equipment."

The purpose of the signs is to "pre-sell" people as they approach so they will be more receptive to your offer. Those who aren't interested will avoid eye contact and hurry by, the rest are your prime prospects that you want to approach and hand the flyer.

One more thing about selling tickets. It's all in how you present the opportunity. It's actually quite similar to any fundraising product sales pitch.

There are three main points:

- 1 - Explain why you are raising funds
- 2 - Ask for their help to meet your goal
- 3 - Use the word "because" with your call to action

So, let's look at an example ticket sales pitch for a school fundraiser.

We're doing a give-away to raise funds for new playground equipment for our school.

Can you help us meet our goal by buying a ticket because the prize is \$10,000?

You don't want to say too much about the give-away in your pitch. Groups always make that mistake.

You want to state a problem that you're solving (need for new playground equipment), ask them directly for their help, and use the word "because" as a psychological trigger to get a positive response.

When using a sales table at a shopping center, do the same thing with your signage. Create pairs of signs that work together to make those three points.

If they have questions, then you explain details about the prizes and how much fun the event will be. Remember, enthusiasm sells, so don't wear yourself out trying to explain everything to every prospect. That's why you use the signs and the sales pitch.

Give Away Tickets Summary

You can easily sell many more tickets by using the right approach. With friends, neighbors, and co-workers, it's the assumptive close that works best.

With the general public, it's all about leveraging high-traffic locations with sales tables, signage, and a two-sentence sales pitch. Use both of these sales strategies and you'll double or triple your ticket sales.