

Key Principles of Fundraising

Asking people for money can seem intimidating and overwhelming. However, it may not be as difficult as it seems. The fundraising process can be enjoyable and rewarding! The most important element of a successful fundraising effort is your own enthusiasm and commitment; the second most important element is having a clear game plan – knowing what needs to be done and moving quickly to start raising money. Fundraising takes time and careful planning, but this fundraising guide will help you.

Fundraising Preparation

You will find that fundraising is easy and efficient when you have a defined goal and plan. Think about a strategy before you begin.

- Set your fundraising goal. Aim high and motivate yourself and your donors.
- Create two lists: One of people to contact by email and one of people to contact in other ways. These lists should include everyone you can think of.

You have to ask

A piece of research commissioned by a major charity asked people who had not yet supported it what was their main reason for not giving. The answer was simple – *they had never been asked*. So to raise money, you have to ask for it. And there are plenty of opportunities available for doing this. Some fundraisers do not get around to asking those who might wish to give. Others ask, but do so ineffectually. The good fundraiser must ask clearly for exactly what they want, having regard to the donor's ability and willingness to give when deciding what to ask for. They may need to repeat the message in order to emphasize the point.

The call to action, the punch line which asks people to give, is the essential part of the message. And you must make it as easy as possible for the donor to respond.

The personal approach

The general rule is that the more personal you can make your approach, the more effective you will be. So:

1. Asking in person at a **face-to-face** meeting is better than . . .
2. Giving a **presentation** at a meeting to a group of people, which is better than . . .
3. **Telephoning** someone to ask for support, which is better than . . .
4. Writing a **personal letter** to someone, which is better than . . .
5. Sending an **email** to someone, which is better than . . .
6. Sending a **circular letter** to lots of people, which is better than . . .
7. **Mass emailing** all the addresses in your address book.

Rain Tree Foundation

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Thai Care e.V.

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Understanding the donor's viewpoint

When deciding to give, the donor may be motivated by a wide range of feelings and thoughts. It is important for the fundraiser to understand a donor's thought processes when deciding how to ask. The act of giving includes elements of faith, hope and charity:

- *Faith* that the fundraiser truly represents the cause and will act as an efficient conduit for the donor's money.
- *Hope* that the gift, however small, will make some difference.
- *Charity* because giving is an act of altruism, providing support without the expectation of any material return. It is also important for the fundraiser to understand that the donor might have some personal reason for wanting to give, and that it is useful to be able to build on that interest.

Fundraising is a people business

People do not give to organizations. They do not give to abstract concepts. They give to help other people or to do something positive to create a better world. Your job as a fundraiser is to show how you are helping do this. One way of showing this is by using case studies and illustrating your work with actual examples. In this way you can demonstrate to donors how their money can make a difference.

Donors don't know how much to give

One problem is that donors don't know how much they are expected to give. They may not want to give an enormous amount. On the other hand, they may not want to give too little, and so seem mean.

Ways of asking for a specific amount:

- Ask for a specific sum to cover an item of expenditure: for example, 80€ for one Bio Sand Filter.
- Provide a shopping list of different items at different prices: for example, for school stationary, you can list all the items you will need to purchase and ask a donor to contribute to one or more.
- Give examples of gifts already received. This will give people a good idea of how much to give, depending on their level of generosity and on whether they see themselves making a largish or a smaller gift.
- Break down the total into the numbers of gifts of different sizes that you will need to achieve if you are to reach your target.

Fundraising in Your Community

People are most likely to contribute to a cause that matters to them. Each individual supports causes that are important in their lives. As a member of a family, a group of friends and a community, you are already surrounded by people that support something in common: you. How can you best reach out to your family, friends and community beyond online resources? Follow these tips:

Send a personalized letter

Include your address, how to contribute to your fundraising goal, information about Rain Tree Foundation and any other information you find pertinent.

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Ask your company for support

Using your company's name and materials, send letters to clients or other business partners asking for their support, be sure to check with your management before doing so.

Approach local businesses

Start with a business that you think will donate. Remember that businesses that you frequent are more likely to give; the list includes hair salons, dry cleaners, your grocery store and more. Encourage the next business to join by mentioning the others who have already donated.

Make your request in person, but also have a copy of Rain Tree's printed material, brochure or hand-out to leave behind.

Ask for the person who will be making the decision, usually the store manager or owner rather than a clerk.

Tell the person who you are, where you live, who Rain Tree Foundation is and how they can help.

Be aware that some business will respond immediately and others will want to think it over before responding.

Don't be discouraged if businesses turn you down. They may get many requests or have specific donation policies.

Follow up with the business if you don't hear back from them within a week.

Invite the business to attend the event. Even if they don't donate, they may still be willing to post a poster or postcard materials to help promote the event.

Thank the business for taking the time to talk with you even if they don't donate.

Host a "dress down" party at work

Charge a "fee" to participate, for example, have employees pay 5€ to wear casual clothes or hats on a given day. Make sure you clear this with your HR department in advance.

Host a Karaoke event

Sell tickets for an evening of not-quite professional singing at a local bar, a community room or your home. Get people to donate money to stop their friends from singing or have a singing contest.

Have a business challenge

Find two similar businesses willing to be challenged to see who can raise the most money.

You could let your local newspaper know as they may print an article for the contest and spotlight the winner.

Make an announcement

Ask your local community group (town meeting, school event, church, etc.) if you can make a quick announcement about how you are raising funds for Rain Tree Foundation. You can pass out personalized pledge form cards.

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Host a wine and cheese party

Gather an assortment of wines and cheeses. Invite your friends and family over for a special party for 20€ per person (and you can try to get the wine and cheese donated, too, to save on costs.)

Host a garage sale

Not only will this provide a great excuse for you to get organized, but you can raise unlimited funds. Sell baked goods or lemonade to raise additional funds.

Have a car wash or offer other services

Let your neighbours and your community know that you will do tasks around town in exchange for a specified donation. Wash cars, mow lawns, clean, garden, babysit, drive neighbours' children after school, tutor, dog-sit or do anything else you can imagine. Make it clear that you are raising money to be donated. Your community may offer you more opportunities to support the cause.

Create a game tournament

Pick a favourite board game and invite friends and family to play in your tournament. Create teams and entry fees that will go towards your fundraising. Give a percentage of the entrance fees and a grand prize and an incentive to participate. Even try to organize this event for your entire community and ask businesses to provide the grand prize.

Host an auction

Ask friends, family, local businesses and your company to donate items to a silent auction. Perhaps a colleague has a time-share they will not use one week, or a family member has unique art from a foreign country that just doesn't match the rest of her décor. Assemble the donors and the rest of your friends, family, colleagues and community to bid on these items.

Research

The Internet is loaded with creative and easy ideas to fundraise—way more than could ever fit in one manual. Take a bit of time to research more innovative ways to raise funds. Ask others for their ideas as well. The more creative you can be, the more opportunities you have to reach and exceed your fundraising goal.

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Collections

Placing a collection box in a local shop or club can raise a lot of money over the months. Here are some tips to make it be successful:

DO

- Choose a place for the box where it can be seen by many people.
- Choose a place for the box where it is convenient for the people to stop and give money, for example a shop counter.
- Choose a place for the box where it is secure
- Choose a place where staff are keen to help by drawing attention to your box
- Keep a record of where every box is placed, with the name of a member of staff who is responsible for it and record the date you placed it there.
- Check that the money is collected regularly
- Check the box is well displayed and has not been put in a cupboard!
- Ask the staff to let you know when the box is full

DO NOT

- Choose a place where only wealthy people go, such as an expensive shop. They are less likely to donate into a box.
- Place the box where you have difficulty collecting the money. Try to place boxes in one area so that you can empty them or collect them without spending too much time or money travelling. Sometimes the staff might agree to empty the box themselves and send it to you. You must be able to trust them to do this correctly!
- Leave a box where it is not being looked after and does not collect much money.

Saying thank you

Saying thank you is extremely important. It recognizes and values the donor's generosity. Prepare a thank you note to send to donors. Be ready to thank people promptly so that they know their contribution mattered to you. Send them periodic follow ups as you prepare for and complete the event.

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