

Fundraising Special Event Structure & Planning

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Why?

Why Are You Having this Event?

- Need new way of funding
- Awareness

Will or does your event provide the best way to develop the giving potential of your donors?

Is there really an expectation that this event will actually raise money?

Or has your organization gotten into the entertainment event syndrome, where your mission is barely visible?

Important Support to Determine Prior to Planning an Event

Events take a lot of people-power and time.

Board Backing – 100%

- Make sure each Board member is in complete support of your event
- Sponsorships
- Donations
- Table Purchases
- Providing guests

Determine what your organizations major strengths are

- Connections/Resources
- Relationships
- Support

Committee Support

- Before planning – determine some volunteer leaders that can be major players in planning this event. Make sure you have at least 4-5 people in mind.
- Ask these leaders their thoughts prior to the planning to see if they will come on board.

The Event Goals

- Type of event
 - “A-thons” – Walks, Rides
 - Galas
 - Concerts/Performances
 - Key Note Speaker
 - Specialty
 - Golf
 - Festivals
- Whether revamping an event or adding an event – make sure your type of event is truly your organization’s strength to get support.

Budget – Goal

- First Question – Does your organization have the money upfront to cover expenses until sponsor dollars come in?
- What is the NET Goal for the event? Need an amount to plan for.
- Put together a realistic budget:
 - Projected Expenses
 - Venue
 - Printing & Publications
 - Food/Beverage
 - Mailings
 -
 - Actual Expenses
 - Give yourself a Contingency Fund – give yourself 20% of the budget

Expenses

- Fact - the average charity spends \$1.33 to raise \$1 in special events contributions
- Key to Expenses - Keeping your expenses down to nothing
- Don’t give away tickets – all your tickets to an event should be purchased – nothing is free!

Economy Trends (over the past 2 years)

- Larger number of sponsors at lesser amounts –
 - EX: Above \$5,000 are not coming in more at the \$2500 level
- Attendance - maintaining
- Auctions – still strong – donated items seen as a marketing opportunity and buyers see it as a way of purchasing something they want through a donation
 - **EX:** AlbuquerqueDonations.com

In-kind donations

- In-kind contributions are essential to a successful bottom-line.
- In-kind contributions are easier to get from a business without a prior relationship. But, it might be a foot in the door to other contributions
- Kinds of In-Kind Donations To Solicit
 - Beverages
 - Food
 - Venue
 - Entertainment
 - Printing
 - Giveaways
 - Audio Visual
 - Media Spots – EX: ask your sponsors for this – they can share their billboards, ad space, air time that they already have scheduled and in their budgets

Sponsorships

- Sponsorships are commonly used to increase the income and help cover costs.
- Corporate sponsorship partners see sponsorship as a business deal, not a donation.
- Create a list of companies/organizations to target:
 - Start with your organization's vendors -
 - Insurance Company
 - Health plan Carrier
 - Legal Representation
 - CPA
 - Real Estate
 - Bank
- Sponsors Benefits & Levels:
 - Determine sponsor levels & benefits
 - Various benefits such as publicity through the event, an ad in the program or a company logo displayed prominently, etc.
 - Benefits need to have a broad appeal.
 - Everything at your event can be sold – be careful though not to have your event look like Nascar – logos everywhere
- Get creative on how the sponsor can be recognized -
 - Ex: Photo booth – logo on photos

- Host Sponsors – have sponsors buy host tables/tickets/Teams for your special guests such as political figures, families or clients that are served by your non-profit.

Audience/Guest List

- Need to determine who your guest list is? Do you have one?
- Who are you going to target?
 - Organizations volunteers
 - Current donors and supporters
 - Individuals or groups that benefit from your organization
- No matter how elegant or fun your event is, if you don't get people to attend, your efforts are wasted.
- Attendance is not spurred so much by publicity as by selling tickets. You need a lot of boots on the ground selling tickets. Although this is the least glamorous task, it is essential. Recruit a lot of volunteers since, on average, most volunteer ticket sellers will sell about five tickets each.
- Make sure to invite political figures
 - Call and get it on their calendars

Planning the Event

First Step:

- Time of Year
- Date
- Conflict with other events around the city/state
 - Albuquerque Community Foundation Event Calendar
- Time of Day and Day of Week
 - Ex: Using restaurants – Thursdays & Sundays are better

Getting Organized:

- Write an Event plan
- Create a Timeline
- Tracking Your Event
 - Software programs
 - RSVP's, Sponsors, Etc.
 - Website Registrations
- Committee Structure – Volunteers & Employees
 - Volunteer leaders are crucial. Volunteers should lead the way when it comes to planning the event...not staff.*

Steering Committee & Sub Committees

- When planning a really large event, consider establishing several committees with specific tasks.
- Each committee should be led by a volunteer, and most of the committee members should be volunteers.
- A couple of staff people can be assigned to each committee to serve as consultants and to accomplish logistical tasks as needed.

Jobs & Job Descriptions – keeping your Committee engaged throughout the planning

- Create your steering committee & sub committee
 - Decorations
 - Sponsors
 - Entertainment

- Volunteers for Day of
- Marketing/Promotions
- Print & Publications
- Kick Off – Have a small reception type party to kick off the planning with your committee this also provides the opportunity to educate your committee members and get them on board.
- Planning committee meeting dates secure ahead of time
- Agenda, Action Items & Minutes

Pricing Your Event

- Sponsorship Levels - make sure they are reasonable and cover your costs
- Tickets -Try out different price points for your tickets. Have the majority of tickets priced for everyone, but offer higher priced tickets that provide an extra benefit.
- Save money don't print tickets and send them out to guests – send them an electronic confirmation
- Tax Deductible – print this everywhere

Venue

- Choose a venue that will best fit your event
 - Make sure it can cover everything you need
 - Staging
 - Volunteers
 - Entertainment
 - Parking
 - Security
 - That there are no hidden costs
- Look at venues that other events have been held
- Outdoor/Indoor
- Unique & New
- Booking the Venue for Next YEAR – make sure you lock in this year's prices

Themeing the Event

- Choose a theme that everyone can understand and get – that those not familiar with your organization can grasp.
- Have the theme connect to your organization's mission, goals, service....
- Consider creating a logo that fits to your event – something you can use over and over each year for recognition but conducive to theme change.
- Carry your theme & colors throughout –
 - Save The Dates
 - Invitations
 - Email Blasts
 - Signage
 - All printed materials
 - Décor
 - Video/Slideshows
 - Thank you's

Have fun with the theme – think of things that are different, fun, engaging!

Promoting Your Event

- Marketing Plan – this will help with your sponsorship recruitment, attendance and credibility for the event.
- Special events can generate a lot of publicity. There are a myriad of methods for getting the word out, from fliers to interviews with local media. Building visibility in the community is crucial to successful fundraising.
 - Event Calendars
 - PSA's
 - Press Releases
 - EX: Albuquerque Magazine
 - Interviews
 - Chamber Newsletters
- Media Sponsor – Pros & Cons
 - Limitations
 - Guarantee of publicity
- Media Blitz –
 - Deliver gift bags to Media two weeks prior
- Website/Facebook

Details - Making Your Event Different

- Think out of the Box
 - Photo booths
 - Giveaways
 - Hotel Rooms for your guests, sponsors – have gift bags
 - Variety of Entertainment
 - VIP Event in conjunction with the Main Event
- Research other events in town – see what is working, what is drawing the attendance, etc.
- If you can do something totally different than everyone else – it will become your signature event/recognition
 - **EX:** Chocolate Fantasy – Chocolate Sculptures
 - Girls Night Out – Ronald McDonald House
- Pay attention to even the smallest of details – this truly covers the entirety of the event
- Personalize your invitations – Mike Smith has invited you to.....small hand written note
- Effective and Efficient Check In & Check Out
 - Make it Welcoming, Friendly & Timely
 - Have your check in volunteers know who the key players are so they can acknowledge them –
 - **EX:** Hello Mr. Smith thank you for sponsoring....
 - No one likes a line
 - 150 people + need at least 10 people checking in
- Plan a detailed agenda for the event from beginning to end
- Incorporate a moment in your event that people in which people will know why they are there and what the \$\$\$ is raised for:
 - Sober Moment
 - Warm Fuzzy
 - Heartwrencher
- Honor Family or Corporation – this helps with attendance, draws the mission and purpose of your non-profit to the event.
- MC for your event – This needs to be a dynamic personality that is very familiar with your non-profit and can be a powerful representative for you.
 - Media Celebrity
 - Recognizable Name in the Community

Thank you's, Thank you's Thank you's:

Each and every entity of your event cannot be thanked enough

Make sure you thank people at the beginning, during the planning and after

Who to Thank:

Volunteers/Committee

Board

Sponsors/Donors

Attendees

Venue/Vendors

Media

Flexibility –

The success of every event – even with the best laid plans – is flexibility

Feedback/Surveys:

- Think of your event as a long-term commitment.
- Organize one that you can repeat at least once a year and perhaps more.
- Also, invest in reporting and analysis tools that will provide the feedback you need to improve the event each time
 - o **Ex:** SurveyMonkey.com

Just a reminder – make sure your mission is apparent throughout your event! Your guests need to know who they have are supporting!

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