

# The 10 Steps to a Successful Fundraising Event

by Joe Garecht

Fundraising events are a popular form of fundraising. While they can be great money makers for an organization, they can also be time consuming and expensive. The success of events depends on careful planning. (Yes, you should have a written event plan for every event you hold!)

To help you ensure that your fundraising event is a winner, here are ten major components that you must incorporate into your event plan:

## **1. Purpose:**

Before doing anything else, you must decide what the purpose of your event is. Is this truly a fundraising event? Or does it have other goals? Perhaps your organization may be hoping to raise money at the event, but the main function of the event is to gain publicity, or reach out to a new network. Many charitable events have more than one goal. Figuring out the details for your event will depend on knowing what goals you are trying to achieve.

## **2. Fundraising Goal:**

In conjunction with the event host committee, organization staff, and key fundraisers, you must decide what amount of money you plan to raise at the event. If this is truly a fundraising event, then everything in the event plan will be geared to raising this specific amount of money. The amount you choose should be what you hope to net, that is, the amount you plan to raise after expenses are deducted.

## **3. Budget:**

Every fundraising event plan should contain a complete budget listing all of the expenses that will be required to hold the event. Your budget should include staff, invitations, space rental, catering, entertainment, transportation, security, utilities, and anything else that will be required to make the event a success. Your budget should take into account your fundraising goal, ensuring that you raise that amount above and beyond all expenses. Be sure to leave a little extra room in your budget for unforeseen costs.

## **4. Leadership:**

As part of your fundraising efforts, your event will most likely have a “host committee” and one or more “host committee chairpersons.” These people are responsible for contributing substantial amounts to the event and encouraging others to do the same. The host committee is generally composed of wealthy donors, business leaders, or local celebrities. The host committee and chairpersons are not responsible for actually running the event, but are integral to ensuring that you reach your fundraising goals.

## **5. Target Audience:**

Who is the target audience for your event? Is this a general fundraiser where everyone will be invited? Or is this event geared towards a specific group like business people, parents, or young professionals? In short, you must decide whom you will invite to your event.

## **6. Set – Up:**

Your event staff should plan the event set-up well in advance. The set-up includes all of the particulars of the actual event: Where will it be? Will food be served? Will there be entertainment? What kind of dress will be required? What is the itinerary for the event?

## **7. Marketing:**

Just like a new product, your event needs to be aggressively marketed to your target audience. You need to convince your supporters that your organization and event are worthy of their time and money. Draw up an entire marketing plan for the event. Possible methods of “getting the word out” include: using your non-profit’s fundraising network, mailed invitations, direct mail, phone banks, word of mouth and the event host committee.

## **8. Sales:**

Once you market your event, there must be a procedure in place for making the actual ticket sales, or accepting donations for the event. You must decide whether there will be different contribution levels for the event (such as a flat ticket charge, an extra charge to be invited to a V.I.P. reception in addition to the event, etc.). You must decide who will sell the tickets, how they will be shipped or delivered, and who will be responsible for organizing the incoming information.

## **9. Practice:**

While you probably won’t need a full run-through of your event, it is essential that everyone who is working the event know, ahead of time, what their responsibilities are, where they should be during the event, and how the event is going to “flow.” If you are having a large or unusual event, the key event staff may want to have a practice run to make sure that your operation is running smoothly.

## **10. Thank – You:**

One of the most oft heard complaints from contributors to charitable fundraising events is, “They never even said ‘thank-you.’” Ditto for your event volunteers. Make sure that the organization takes the time to send thank-you notes to everyone who is involved in your event, including contributors, volunteers, staff and vendors. Keep your donors happy... you’re probably going to be asking them for another donation sometime down the road.