

# 6 Steps for a Successful Fundraising Event

Nonprofit fundraising events are a great way to cultivate support and attract new donors. Great events take planning, financial support and hard work. If you've determined a fundraising event is the best approach for your campaign, create a plan that will help you organize, market and stage your event.

As much fun as events can be, you want to have a clear idea of what the end result should be. **Who is our audience?** Are you trying to reach new donors? You should determine your target audience before you start planning the event itself. What do we want them to do? **Have a clear call to action for attendees.**

1. Set a goal that makes sense.

Set ONE goal and focus on that goal only. It needs to be a goal that is measurable and specific.

Also, you must have a budget and stick to that budget! Your budget needs to line up with your ticket price. If your event is a lavish affair, the ticket price needs to be higher. **Do you know how much your attendees are willing to pay?** Be sure they are willing to pay that much for a ticket before you decide.

2. Choose the right type of event. Your event should reflect:

Your audience or demographic

Our brand and mission

Your goal

Your budget

Your available time

Your expertise

Your staff and volunteers

Make sure you have a community of supporters already in place. A large event is not always the one to do first. You may need to do a few smaller events so people can get to know you before throwing that huge gala.

3. Secure corporate sponsors.

You need to define your value so you can clearly communicate why your event is a good fit. How does the mission align with that sponsor's goals? Do they have employees already supporting your cause? **Talk about the size and the demographics of the audience you'll reach.** Tell potential sponsors how they will be featured and promoted at the event.

Have different packages and sponsorship levels to attract small “mom and pop” type sponsors as well as the big brands. Securing a sponsor starts with creating a relationship. Do not limit yourself on what you can offer the sponsor in a package. **Ask them what is important to them and build a package around that.** They may want less than you think.

#### 4. Design a dynamic experience for your supporters

For a fundraising event that inspires donors, consider these tips:

Invite the right people. (Identify different segments of attendees)

Pay attention to your invitation. Make it compelling and relate it back to the cause. Create a sense of urgency with early bird pricing and exclusive benefits for early registrants.

Go green! Only send paper to those that need it and sell tickets online.

Solicit additional donations from both attendees and non-attendees. Give them the option to donate beyond the ticket price — many attendees will choose to give more if asked.

Encourage ticket buyers to spread the word – let them easily share the event with Facebook buttons or tweets.

Consider creating a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign to complement your event and help make the experience even more personal and interactive.

#### **Thank your supporters immediately.**

Do something a little different than the ordinary chicken dinner. Encourage “out of the box” ideas, but try to also educate your supporters also. Instead of your normal cocktail hour, create an “educational gallery” —showcase great photos and compelling stories about what we are doing.

#### 5. Promote the heck out of your event.

Establish a communications plan. Use the website, social media, email and print. Have corporate sponsors promote the event as well. Invite people to be champions for you. Find those supporters who are the most passionate about the cause and ask them to promote the event on their social media accounts.

#### 6. Assess your results and cultivate your relationships.

After the event, review whether you stuck to your budget. Did your promotions attract attendees? Did more people sign up online or offline? Did you receive new donors? Were your corporate sponsorships successful? Analyze the results of these questions and assess what worked and what didn't. After the event, make sure you thank your supporters and cultivate new donors and provide event attendees with additional opportunities to connect to and support the cause.