Fundraising Basics

How To Get All The Money You Need For Your Non-Profit

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Introduction

Today there are more non-profit groups than ever. On the one hand, this is a great development - it means that as a society we are becoming more aware of a need to give to others and are even taking the necessary steps to ensure that we help others. On the other hand, though, the presence of so many non-profits creates a unique problem - "giver burnout."

Giver burnout happens when individuals get so many appeals for help - from large cancer societies, small women's shelters, literacy organizations, and every possible non-profit group in-between that they feel overwhelmed and are less apt to contribute anything to anyone. Even those individuals who do want to contribute have had to cut back on who they contribute to - there are simply too many groups requesting money and only so much disposable income any one person has.

What all this means if you are a non-profit group is that you must work harder to get funding. Where in the past groups often did well just by asking for money or organizing one big event to fundraise each year, now fundraising is big business.

Most non-profit groups will find that they need to take a more organized and diversified approach to fundraising in order to raise the money they need. Most groups will need to rely on a number of efforts and money sources just to survive.

The increased competitiveness of fundraising has created a whole fundraising business. There are consulting firms and public relations firms that will help you fundraise more effectively - for a price, of course. There are also many companies that claim that their fundraising efforts or products will make money for your non-profit in exchange for a share in the profits.

Advertisers, computer programs, and even paid workshops have all been set up to help you learn how to fundraise. If you are a small non-profit group, however, all these services and products can quickly add up, and if you are looking for effective fundraising ideas, chances are you are looking to make money rather than looking to spend it.

Luckily, with "Fundraising Basics: How to Get All the Money You Need for Your Nonprofit" you will learn the effective strategies and techniques you need to start making real money for your group - all within your budget.

The good news is that if your non-profit group has:

•determination

•the willingness to work hard

•a real desire to success at fundraising

•perseverance

You already have the basic groundwork for success in fundraising. All you need now is some basic tools and ideas that can help you become more effective at raising money. That is exactly

what this book is all about. By the time you finish this book you will know:

•Where to turn for money

•How to tell great fundraising ideas from duds that will not make you money

•How to stay organized

•How to ensure that your group works together and follows through for fundraising success

•How to organize a fundraising team that will get real results

•How to use technology to make more money for your non-profit

•How to use the secrets of fundraising to raise more money with less hassle - each time

•How to communicate in a way that will ensure more fundraising money for your organization

Before you dive in and start learning the secrets of fundraising success, you need to make sure that you understand a few basic concepts:

What is a Non-Profit?

Many people who first begin fundraising do not always know what a non-profit is, and many groups assume that it does not matter whether their organization is a non-profit or not.

However, how much money you make and how you are able to use that money is determined largely by the way you are classified. A non-profit group is simply a group that is designed for a charitable purpose; no money that the group makes is used for the gain of individuals.

Rather, a non-profit uses its earnings to further its goals. Groups such as the United Way, as well as groups such as the Scouts, hospitals, and most universities are non-profit groups. There are also many smaller non-profits such as animal shelters, human rights organizations, and women's shelters. In most cases, these groups try to make the world a better place in some way.

If this general definition fits your group you must contact your local government and ask about the process of registering as a non-profit. In most areas, you cannot advertise or claim to be a non-profit unless you are officially registered as and declared as a non-profit or charitable organization.

The procedures and qualifications for becoming this sort of group legally vary from area to area, but generally you will need to fill out forms and prove to someone that your group exists not to make money but to better society. Often, you will have to file a mandate that explains clearly what your group intends to do.

It is hard to overstate how important this step is. If you have not yet officially registered as a

non-profit group, you need to phone your local city hall or mayor's office and start the procedure of doing so.

Even if your group is new or small or has modest plans for improving society, you need to be officially registered, as this will affect how you raise money. Groups which are officially non-profit groups are eligible for all kinds of money that other groups simply do not have access to. That is why you need to register your group before you begin fund-raising in earnest.

What is Fundraising?

Fundraising is just what it appears to be - the raising of funds or money. For a non-profit, fund raising is often the only way to get the money to pay for the facilities and programs that the group wishes to organize. Fundraising can take many forms, from sales to direct asking for money to organizing events or lotteries for which people will pay.

Why is Fundraising Important?

Since non-profit groups are by their definition groups that do not wish to profit many people wonder why they must raise money at all. In fact, fundraising is often the only way that non-profits have of gaining the money needed to rent the space and organize the programs needed to fulfill the group's mandate.

Fundraising can help raise awareness through newspapers or newsletters, it can help a group establish an Internet site, and it can help people that the group is hoping to help. For example, a women's shelter will need money for a shelter space, money for food and board for abused women, and money for programs such as education and job training for the women who visit the center.

The costs of even a small women's center can be enormous, and fundraising is the way to raise this money. All simple non-profit groups need some money in order to really do good, and this is where fundraising comes in.

Why do I need to learn about Fundraising?

Plenty of people assume that fundraising is as simple as holding bake sales or some other organizational activity until enough money is raised. If you only want to raise a small amount of money, this may be fine, but for many groups this approach is too uncertain and too limited to be very effective.

If your group will be around for a while, then you will want to raise money consistently in order to keep your group going. You will need to learn many things in order to keep enough money coming consistently:

•How to find enough money to keep your programs going and your group expanding

•How to find ever new sources of money in order to ensure that you have enough consistently

•How to continue to run the group's programs and fulfill the group's mandate even while taking the time to fundraise

•How to stay organized and keep group morale and interest high - even after many years of fundraising

You will learn these basics and much more as you keep reading...

Who Gives Money? Figuring Out Who You are Fundraising From

If you want to make money for your organization or charity, you need to know where you will be getting your money from. Of course, you will want to be able to appeal to a wide range of donors, but in fact you will get the most money by targeting donors.

You have seen this in action already in fundraising efforts you have likely observed: Cancer societies often appeal for donations from people who have lost someone to cancer; Girl Scouts target customers leaving grocery stores as these are likely candidates to buy a box of cookies. Targeting your audience and carefully planning where you will look for money will help ensure that all your resources all well-spent and that you get the best return on your time and effort investment.

So who gives money?

Plenty of people and groups are willing to give money to non-profit organizations that support a good cause. Some of the people and groups that offer money are:

•**Individual People or Donors:** Many non-profits, especially the smaller ones, get much of their money from concerned individuals. People are extremely generous about supporting causes that they believe in. Some will donate just small amounts of money - sometimes just a few dollars at a time - that can quickly add up.

More affluent philanthropists may offer you large sums of money. No matter what your fundraising goals in the long run, you should spend at least some of your fundraising efforts trying to reach individual donors. Not only are these donors likely to support your group if your group seems to offer a legitimate help to society, but educating individual donors about the importance of your cause will help spread the word about your group's mandate and programs.

The more individuals know about your group, the more your group is likely to thrive. Another benefit of individual donors, especially for the smaller non-profit, is that individuals are often quite community-minded. If you are a small group mostly interested in helping the local community, local donors are the ones most likely to be interested in - and supportive of - your group.

•**Companies:** Industry is actually a big supporter of non-profits. The profits made by companies in your area are pumped back into the community in many ways - including through employment, taxation, and through direct donations. Browse through your local papers and look for articles about corporate or company donations and sponsorship.

You will notice that some companies and industries in your area are especially adept at contributing to charities and non-profit groups. In some cases, companies contribute in order to be a part of a community or in order to bolster their image in a community. In many cases, companies and industry give to charities because an owner or shareholders believe strongly in a cause.

Many companies and larger industries have a large amount of money, and in some cases they may be willing to share a small amount with a worthwhile cause. Even if you cannot gain on-going support from a company or industry, these sources are often great for individual donations or support. For example, if you are organizing a fair or sale, a company may be willing to grant supplies, volunteers, or money in exchange for some free advertising, which can be as simple as a large banner at your event proclaiming "refreshments generously provided by Acme Bakery."

•**Governments:** Local, state, and federal governments are a huge source of money for non-profit groups. Through grants and programs, governments give away enormous sums each year to charities and non-profit groups, from the largest groups to the very smallest. Grants and government support are not sources of money you will want to ignore, especially as some grant money each year goes unclaimed - money that could help your non-profit group prosper.

•**Other Charitable Groups:** Non-profits often help each other. Larger organizations such as the Red Cross or United Way will often give support and even money support to local charities and groups doing similar work. Churches, schools, and local groups will often fundraise or gather donations for a group they believe in. There are also larger foundations and philanthropical groups, such as the famous Rockefeller Foundation, which exist solely to help other groups and individuals do charitable work. These groups can be a great resource, and, large and small, they should not be ignored.

Where to Find Donors

Now that you know what the sources of money are likely to be for your non-profit, you will want to figure out how to contact the largest amount of them most effectively. You will of course want to know where to find the donors that can help your group succeed. There are several ways to get in touch with the groups and people who can help you:

•**The library:** Well before you start your fundraising efforts, you will want to frequent your local library. Your local library, as part of your community and a great information resource, is indispensable for your non-profit. Your librarian can help you find directories of government grants and programs that can help you, and can show you business directories that can help you find companies who may be willing to sponsor your non-profit.

At the library, you can also read books about successful fundraising and browse through newspapers and magazines to learn how other groups have managed to fundraise. Most libraries even have free community bulletin boards where you can appeal to volunteers or advertise your latest fundraising efforts for free. Without a doubt, the local library is one resource that no non-profit should ignore.

•**Advertising**: Many non-profits will seek donors by advertising in newspapers, on radio, and on television. Larger non-profits such as the United Way will often advertise year-round in order to encourage donors to come forward. However, even smaller non-profits will advertise locally.

You may well have seen your local food bank or shelter advertising for food and cash donations around holiday time, for example. Advertising tends to reach lots of people for the cost of one ad, even though individual ads in newspapers and radio can be quite expensive on their own. However, some non-profits find that they can sometimes appeal to a radio or local television station or publication to advertise for free. Even though the media makes their money through advertising revenues, they are occasionally persuaded to offer free advertising as a charitable contribution to a non-profit.

•**Plugging into the Community:** Most small non-profits are very community oriented - most of their money and most of their charitable activities are centered on one local area. If this describes you, then you need to become a part of your community so that donors in your area will become aware of your group.

When people see that your group is offering something to the community, they may be more inclined to donate. Plugging into the community may mean showing up for local events with group advertisements, taking out ads in local media, or passing on the word through word of mouth. Whichever methods you choose, it is often very important for a small or starting non-profit to be seen as part of the community in order to secure donations.

•**Direct Appeals:** Direct appeals mean that you approach people individually. This can be done door-to-door, by standing in front of a store or establishment, or by phoning or mailing people individually. The idea is that direct appeals are harder to resist than general appeals, and so more people are likely to at least give some money rather than say "no" entirely. The problem is that so many companies use this route that some individuals feel that this method is too intrusive and refuse every direct appeal made.

•**Awareness Raising:** You will find some enthusiastic donors and some volunteers and resources by letting people know about the problem your group is trying to correct and by telling people about your non-profit group itself. Raising people's awareness about your group and your groups' work is a big job. You can raise awareness in many ways:

- Reports in the media (interviews, articles)
- Advertising

•Visiting groups such as schools to let people know about your group

•Setting up booths at fairs, volunteer workshops, and other community events

•Going door to door to tell people about your group

•Sending mail campaigns to raise awareness

•Setting up events that will raise awareness (and money, too)

•**Market Research:** Every successful non-profit needs to do exact market research in order to find out who the most likely donors are for their group. There are market research firms that can do this for a sum, but if you are a small or new non-profit, you can do your own market research by using newspapers and your own community knowledge to find out who will be most likely to support your group.

Targeting Donors

Of course, you want to reach all the donors you can. The more people you appeal to for money, the more "yes" responses you are likely to get. For most non-profits, and especially for small non-profits, though, the very logistics of trying to reach all possible donors are simply impossible. Advertising in every newspaper and on every television show and trying to visit everyone in a city in a direct appeal is simply a lot of work - and a huge expense. Most non-profits can only contact a limited number of people, so you will want to do one of the following:

1) Contact as many people as humanly possible using the budget you have.

2) Contact only those smaller amounts of people who are likely to support your non-profit.

In almost every case, option #2 will result in more "yes" answers on a smaller budget. To understand why this is, consider the way each fundraising campaign would work.

Let's say that two groups in the same community had a similar mandate and similar budgets. For the sake of argument, let's say that both are women's centers with a small $1000 budget each.

The first center decides to use all the money trying to reach all the donors it can. Volunteers go door to door at no charge, ads are taken out in newspaper and radio, and appeals made outside stores. The group talks to many thousands of people over the course of several months and spends their entire budget on the process. They raise plenty of awareness and plenty of money, but there are several drawbacks to this method:

•Lots of "no" responses. These are not essentially a problem except that each "no" response costs money or time (the time it took to appeal to the person and the expense taken to mail a letter or to contact someone). Plus, lots of "no" responses tend to reduce morale, as volunteers wonder whether their efforts are really doing any good. Every fundraising effort will

bring in plenty of "no" efforts, but by casting the net wide, the first group has all but ensured that they will have many such replies.

•Lots of unseen appeals. Advertising is great, but general untargeted awareness raising and direct and indirect appeals tend to have a high miss rate. If door to door volunteers are used, then there may be many people who do not open their doors or who are not at home. If newspaper ads are used, there may be many newspaper readers who do not look at advertisements and so miss the well-worded appeal. If booths are set up at community events, there may be many who walk by without a glance.

Of course, with any fundraising strategy, there will be some people who do not see an appeal, but indirect and unpersonalized approaches tend to increase the rates of this type of non-response.

•Fatigue syndrome. The volunteers of this first group are working very, very hard. While that may bring in plenty of good responses, it may also leave many volunteers too fatigued by the effort to keep making appeals. Remember: one of the secrets of fundraising is that it must be continual in order to ensure long-term success of the non-profit group. How many volunteers could keep up the dizzying pace that this group has set?

•Hit and miss, disorganized method. With no plan and no real idea of who this group is trying to appeal to, volunteers are relying on blind luck to find donors. Some people may be appealed to a few times by volunteers while others may not get the message about the group.

•Consumption of time. While these volunteers are certainly doing a commendable job getting the word out about the group, they have left little time and energy for the mandates of the group. Presumably, they are raising money in order to do some good, but have they the energy and volunteers left to actually implement the money in a positive way?

In contrast, let's think of the second group. They decided to appeal to a smaller amount of people - let's say 300, but they chose each person they decided to contact carefully.

They contacted corporations they knew were supportive of women's groups, contacted companies run by women, and campaigned aggressively at a local women's college. They also wrote for several government grants designed especially for groups that help women.

Certainly there are disadvantages to this method - they did not raise awareness about the group over such a wide segment of population as the first group, they still got plenty of "no" responses, and they had to spend lots of time before fundraising in order to determine who to appeal to.

Despite this, the second group is likely to have a higher ratio of "yes" answers in a much shorter period of time, because they are appealing to the very people - women - who are most likely to have the inclination and money to support a women's center. The advantages of this second strategy are:

•The people who were asked were more likely to say "yes." The donors that were appealed to already had some built-in reason for saying yes to supporting the women's center.

Less convincing was needed and less of a chance of a "no" helps keep volunteer morale high. Plus, donors who have a built-in reason to support a women's center are more likely to donate again (presumably, their reasons for donating will still be there) so this second group is already setting down the basis for on-going financial support.

•By using targeted appeals, the group was able to target people individually. Rather than having many people walk by a stand or pass over an ad, this group was able to meet face to face with the groups and people who were more likely to help them, reducing the chances of a "no" response.

•By targeting their donors, the second group already had a built in organizations structure. They knew who they had to contact and how to appeal to them. There is less risk of overlooking an important donor source or of asking the same people twice.

•Time and money were saved. Rather than spending lots of time and money on a huge campaign, the group was able to do some research for free at the library and then appeal directly to groups and people that were interested. Interviews with some groups could easily be set up for free, and government applications and a campus presence would also be inexpensive or free. Less time was wasted talking to those who have no interest in the project.

This is a fictitious example, but it sets out quite clearly why donor and market research is important before you start fundraising.

In this example, the market information was clear - women are likely to support a women's center as they understand the issues and problems women face.

In some cases, though, the donor target may be less clear. Who in your community would support an animal shelter or a literacy project?

There are a few basic ways to do some research. The first step is to visit your local library and look up groups similar to yours in your area and in other areas. Who supports them? The same groups of people may support your group. If your non-profit consists of a few volunteers, you can find out what sort of people your non-profit appeals to by asking your volunteers a few questions:

•What shows do your watch? What publications do you read? What radio station do you listen to?

•Where did you hear about our group?

•Where do you go for entertainment? What other groups do you belong to?

•What appealed to you about this non-profit?

Even in a small group, you will hear similar responses. These answers are important clues about what your donors are watching, where they are going, and what appeals to them. You can further

establish your target donors by considering where people who believe in a cause or idea would go or what they would see. Consider the following ideas:

•Pet shelters are likely to be supported by people who like animals. If they like animals, they may read about them, own them, or visit them. Advertising in pet journals, at pet kennels or grooming centers, appealing to owners outside of pet stores or zoos are likely places to find target donors or at least people who love animals enough to contribute some money to a cause that concerns them.

•Arts groups are likely to be supported by people who like the arts. Where are such people found? At universities, art galleries, theaters, art groups, book clubs, libraries, cafes that hold poetry readings, arts publications, bookstores, art stores, art classes, and other like places.
•Non-profits that have to do with children are likely to appeal to families. Where would such people be found? Parks, schools, PTA meetings, churches, playgrounds, fairs, toy stores, fairs, children's days at the zoo or art gallery, parenting publications, and other like places.

•Non-profits that have to do with community development may seem to be a varied bunch, both those who are worried about issues such as poverty or issues such as housing regulations would tend to congregate around town hall meetings, soup kitchens, or other like places, depending on their individual concerns.

•Non-profits that have to do with the environment attract people who are worried about the state of our planet and resources. Where are such people to be found? At natural health food stores, environmental protests, town hall meetings that have to do with preserving parks, environmental stores, "green" publications.

•Non-profits that have to do with International issues attract people who are worried about international policies and the state of the larger world today. These people may be considered about worldwide human rights, about international policies and other similar issues. These people may be found reading the 'world' section of the newspaper, attending protests to raise information about human rights, and other like events. People who either have family overseas or who are from overseas often have a built-in interest in International issues.

•Non-profits that have to do with education attract people who are worried about education and literacy. These people are to be found at literacy centers, the library, schools, PTA, meetings, and other like areas. If your education mandate has to do with children, then your target donors can be found in similar places as the target donors for non-profits that have to do with children.

You can probably see a pattern here. People who are concerned about an issue are likely to express their concern by spending time at specific places and time attending specific events or reading specific publications. People who are interested in a specific issue often like specific related things. If you want to target your audience of donors, you should be asking yourself where potential donors can be found and then target your fundraising to some of these areas.

As you target donors, keep asking yourself a few marketing questions:

•Where can I find people who are interested in the issue our non-profit is furthering?

•What do people interested in our issue read? Where do they go? What groups do they belong to?

•What sort of person is so likely to be interested in our groups' issue that they will be willing to help our non-profit financially?

•What companies in my area have contributed to similar non-profit groups in the past?

•What sort of fundraising effort would be most likely to draw the people who are most likely to be interested in out group's mandate?

•Are there government agencies or philanthropic agencies that tend to give money for causes that are similar to our group's mandate?

Targeting your donors at first may seem to be only a way of narrowing down your choices, as you are basically trying to attract only a smaller percentage of people to your cause. However, if your group only has limited resources (and this is true for many starting or small non-profits) then targeting your donors by choosing to ask those donors can help you get the best results possible in the shortest period of time.

Think of it as making educated guesses about who can help. The idea is not to ask only those who are most likely to help, but rather to focus on specific groups of people before expanding out to other donors.

Once you have targeted specific groups on donors, you may wish to expand and seek help and support from donors that seem less likely to be interested in your group's cause. In some cases, you may be pleasantly surprised to find unlikely donors who are willing to help you raise money.

For example, across North America, there are motorcycle enthusiasts who regularly take part in a "teddy bear" drive around Christmas in order to raise money for children who might not otherwise have a holiday. Many people are surprised to see gruff-looking biker enthusiasts carrying teddy bears on their Harley Davidson's for charity, but this is exactly what happens each year.

Your group needs to be careful not to overlook sources of donations and fundraising money simply because you have a preset notion of what people would or would not support your group. Sometimes, fundraising money comes from unlikely sources and it is often a good idea to contact some unlikely groups to see whether in fact they may be ardent supporters of your cause.

How much time and effort you spend trying to contact donors outside your targeted donor group will depend on many factors, including how much time and effort you have for such campaigns and it will depend on how much money you have been able to raise through more targeted fundraising. If you have been able to raise all the fundraising money you need through targeted donor hunting, you may simply not need to expand your list of donors too much and instead of

trying to find new sources for money you may want to direct your efforts to fulfilling your group's mission.

If, on the other hand, you find that you require more money and have had smaller success with targeted donors (because, for example, a group with a similar mandate has also been fundraising your area) then expanding your list of potential donors may be one way to get more money for your non-profit.

What Do Donors Want?

The psychology of fundraising will be more thoroughly covered in an upcoming chapter, but while we are thinking about donors and how to appeal to them, it makes sense to say a few words about what is going through the minds of those who are willing to give money for your non-profit.

Many non-profits assume that people give money for specific causes for "nothing," but this is rarely the case. Studies have shown that people who are likely to give money to non-profits generally do so because they feel they get some "value" from giving. People give to non-profits for a number of reasons:

•**To assuage a fear:** Many people give to non-profits because they fear the eventually of a specific event or situation. Some people, for example, are afraid that women are not treated well enough and that violence against women may affect their home. Others fear becoming homeless or losing their jobs and give to food banks to ensure that a social support system exists for those who have less money.

While you never want to prey upon people's fears or exaggerate their fears, knowing that people react in this way can help you target your fundraising efforts and can help you understand why some donors give generously.

•**To make a contribution:** Many people feel that by giving to a non-profit they are making a valuable addition to society. This is absolutely correct - non-profits do the work that many working people simply do not have the time or the resources to do themselves. Donors can contribute to this work through volunteering or through money donations. This is certainly a "giving value: you will want to stress in order to increase donations.

You may want to emphasize how donor money will be used to a make a real difference in people's lives, for example, and you will want to explain to your donors and contributors how their help of your non-profit is a contribution that the donors are making to society.

•**Tax deductions:** The fact that many gifts to non-profit companies are tax-deductible is often an extra bonus for many donors. No one likes to pay more taxes than they absolutely have to. For this reason, you will want to tell your donors when their gifts can be tax deductible and ensure that they get the receipts they need to make their tax deduction claims.

•**A chance to win:** Charitable lotteries and charity casinos are becoming more and more popular. These events draw not only donors who support a specific non-profit, but these fundraising efforts also draw people who simply wish to win a nice prize and also like the benefit of helping a charity while they get a chance to win. If you are running a lottery or raffle, you will want o emphasize to your donors their good chances of winning as well as the contributions they are making to society.

•**Emotional benefit:** If you look at most successful fundraising campaigns, they generally appeal to the emotions rather than just the rational mind. Non-profits that raise money for international relief, for example, often show emotionally charged pictures of people who do not have the basics of life. Animal shelters often show saddening pictures of pets that have been abandoned. The idea is not to manipulate your donors, but rather to make sure that their emotions as well as their intellect understand the importance of your group's cause. You likely developed or take part in your non-profit because you think that your group's cause is an important one. You need to communicate to your donors why the cause is important on an emotional level so that they feel the importance of your non-profit, not just understand it.

•**Immortality:** For a few people, donations are made in order to have a plaque or a statue dedicated to them. Some individuals like to be known as philanthropists. In many cases, these individuals are willing to offer larger sums of money in exchange for recognition of their gifts.

•**Products:** Some people take part in fundraising because they want whatever products or services a non-profit is offering through their fundraising efforts. If you hold a book sale to raise money, for example, you can expect book lovers to show up, whether they want to support your non-profit specifically or not. If you have useful goods or services you are offering as part of your fundraising, you will want to emphasize this to potential donors.

Now that you have a sense of who will be offering you money, and where to find these individuals, you can start tailoring ideas to suit your potential donors...

Fundraising Ideas: Finding the Best Ones for Your Non-Profit

On the surface, finding fundraising ideas is easy. Get together a group of co-workers or co-volunteers into a brainstorming session, and you will likely get a list of ideas ranging from jumble sales to door-to-door selling to a direct mail campaign. Type in "fundraising ideas" into any Internet search engine and you are likely to get thousands of hits, ranging from bake sale ideas to companies offering fundraising opportunities.

It is not simply a matter of picking an idea, any idea.

To be successful at fundraising, you carefully need to consider which ideas work well for your group. Choosing the wrong ideas is disastrous: you will waste time, money, and effort to get little or no financial return and the failure to raise funds may well ruin the morale and motivation

of your group. Getting out of the financial hole left by a bad fundraising campaign can also be quite difficult, especially for small non-profits.

There are a few things that separate a good fundraising idea from a bad one:

•Cost of getting going should be what you can afford to spend

•Good use of resources and talents

•You have enough people power - or can get enough for it

•It is a theme-appropriate idea for your group

•It is appropriate for the size of your group

•It does not require expensive resources you do not have

•It is likely to appeal to donors

•It gives added value to your donors - your donors will feel that they are getting something from the experience

•It will bring in the required money.

You will need to consider these requirements against every idea you consider making sure that you are choosing a fundraising idea with some legs.

However, to save time, you may want to find fundraising ideas by starting with this list rather than starting with brainstorming. On a piece of paper, note the following:

•The purpose of your organization

•How much money you are willing to invest into fundraising

•What resources you have that can help - even small resources such as someone's car can be a big help when fundraising for your group

•How much money you need - and when you need it by. Be sure to note whether you need money only for a specific project or whether you need to raise money on a consistent basis.

•How much time you are willing to expend on fundraising

•Who do you expect money from?

•What sort of time frame do you have for the fundraising? Is there a specific thing you need money for? Do you need a specific amount by a specific time?

•What is the money for?

Based on this simple inventory, you can start weeding out potentially bad ideas and can start focusing on the possibilities right away. This will get you actually fundraising sooner, and with less hassle. With your fundraising goals in mind (and these goals are what you are determining by answering the above questions), you can easily tell which ideas can contribute to your goals and which are unlikely to be a help.

It may be useful to consider the many ways that non-profits raise money for their programs and groups:

•Lotteries and raffles: Ticket sales for games of chance are quite high and many non-profits are finding that people are willing to pay large amounts of money for the chance to win a fabulous prize. Many larger non-profits routinely raise money in the millions of dollars by having companies donate prizes such as cars and homes and then having donors pay one hundred dollars or more per ticket.

Donors like the fact that these raffles and prizes often have good odds and great prizes. However, many areas have laws about lotteries and gambling, so before pursuing this idea be sure to check the laws in your area.

•Sales. Selling products is easy and inexpensive to set up. You can easily organize sales by asking people to donate things and then selling these at a profit. You will need a space to store donated items, volunteers to sort and sell items, and a place to sell the items.

Sales are a good way to generate fundraising money for a short-term project, although some groups have success in hosting regular sales that contribute plenty of money continuously. If you are able to find a location that will allow you to make sales regularly, you can often host sales each week. One advantage of sales is that there are many types that your group can organize:

> •Gardening Sales: If your group has a green thumb or a green theme, you can sell seedlings, seeds, bulbs, or other items for people's gardens at an outside sale. In many cases, volunteers can raise plants on their own or get plants donated from gardening centers or other people's gardens. This is a popular sale theme in spring and early summer, when many people are starting to work on their gardens and are looking for plants.
>
> •Craft sales: If members of your group like creating crafts - knitting, sewing, wood crafting, then creating a craft sale to sell small created items is often a good way to raise money. Craft sales tend to do especially well in tourist areas during the summer and in all locations before the holidays (when people are looking for items to buy others). Many small craft items can be made quite quickly, and it is often best to try to make lots of smaller items for such a sale along with a few larger items (such as quilts).

•Children's Sales: Selling items specifically for children - such as toys. Children's clothes, and children's books - can be a good way to draw people and donors for a children or family-related non-profit. These sales are often quite popular because many people like to buy things for their children without spending a lot of money. In many cases, items can be donated by stores or donated by volunteers. Volunteers will need to check carefully to make sure that all items are in good condition, however.

•Bake Sales: Bake sales are quick to organize and inexpensive to set up. All a group needs to run this type of sale is some people willing to bake some items and a small area to sell the items. It is important to choose a good place for a bake sale. This is the sort of sale your group will want to organize at some event (such as a picnic) since few people are willing to travel out of their way to buy baked goods.

A bake sale can bring in extra fundraising cash, though, if you set up your sale someplace where people already are. If you are organizing a bake sale, you will want to set up sign-up sheets so that your sale has several varieties of baked goods. In general, volunteers should be encouraged to make baked items that are finger food. Baked items that are very gooey or require a fork to eat are often too fussy for many bake sales.

•Book Sales: If you live in a town that has a college or several used bookstores, you generally have the buyer base to hold a book sale. Book sales can bring in plenty of fundraising money, because many book fans are enthusiastic about reading and will gladly buy books in larger quantities.

Plus, many people are attracted to book sales because the book prices are so much lower than the prices at book stores. You will need to find book donations by appealing to the public and will want to set prices fairly low in order to attract lots of buyers.

•Jumble Sales: Jumble sales are very popular, as there are plenty people who frequent yard sales in the summer - and jumble sales are just larger versions of the usual garage or yard sale. Jumble sales often take place during the summer, and are easy and inexpensive to organize.

You will need to collect donations of used goods, organize them, price them, store them, and then sell them at a large sale. To do this well, you will need a storage and selling space and plenty of volunteers.

•Flea Markets: There are many people who like hunting for lost "treasures" at flea markets, and these people can make a flea market fundraising idea very attractive. Flea markets usually charge an admission fee but have a similar range of items as jumble sales. At flea markets, however, it is possible to find "higher-end" items such as antiques as well as the usually assortment of used goods.

Flea markets often have several sellers and sometimes offer larger items and collectibles as well. Organizing a flea market is similar to organizing a jumble sale. However, many flea markets are successful year round. In fact, many non-profits benefit by hosting

regular flea markets on a weekly or monthly basis.

•Home or art sales: Sales that offer art works or items for the home (such as decor or furniture) often do well because people are always looking for these items. If your non-profit can create art or find used furniture and used art pieces to sell, this sort of sale can be quite profitable.

•Auctions: Auctions can take place alone or as part of a larger sale or fundraising campaign. If you can get someone to donate more valuable pieces (artworks or antiques) to your non-profit you can organize an auction yourself or have a local auction house sell the piece in exchange for part of the profit. Silent auctions (in which bidders write their bids on a paper instead of aloud) can be a great way to make more money on larger items at a fundraising sale or marathon.

•Marathons: Marathons involve getting people to volunteer to participate in an event. These volunteers then recruit other volunteers to sponsor them for money. For example, the most popular types of marathons usually involve walking or running.

Participants have friends and family sponsor them for a flat fee or for a specific sum for every mile jogged or walked. Once the marathon is done, the volunteers go to their sponsors and collect the money, which is then handed over to the non-profit. In order to organize a marathon, you will have to find a place for the marathon, ensure that advertising gets enough participants, and arrange ways to feed or refresh the participating volunteers.

The nice thing about marathons is that volunteers will often work themselves to find sources of money, which increases the amount of fundraising money that the non-profit can get through this method. Since marathons are also quite visible, many companies are often willing to help with expenses and supplies in exchange for some advertising at the event. Many non-profits successfully hold a once- a-year marathon in order to help with fundraising.

In many cases, you can get more volunteers to take part by offering prizes to participants who raise the most money. Besides that usual marathons that call for participants to jog or walk, there are other types of marathons:

•Dance-a-thons: In these events, participants have to dance to provided dance music for a specific amount of time. This type of event is good if you have a younger target donor list.

•Sew-a-thons: In these events, participants sew (or quilt or craft) for a pres-set period of time or until a specific amount of things have been created. As an added bonus, the things created this way can then be sold at a fair or sale. However, if you decide on this sort of marathon, you will need to make sure that you can find enough volunteers willing to sew or craft for an extended period of time!

•Exercise-a-thons: These were popular a number of years ago, but it is still possible to find this sort of marathon hosted by non-profits. Participants are encouraged to exercise for a specific period of time or are encouraged to take part in once type of activity (skiing, swimming, horseback riding, biking, boating, aerobics, skateboarding, in-line

skating, or some other activity). It is important to ensure that the marathon is not so long that people will be injured and it is important to provide some medical help at the marathon site to ensure that anyone who is injured or becomes ill can get the help they need.

•Clean-a-thons: This type of marathon is very popular among groups with a "green" theme. In exchange for the possibility of cash and prizes, participants agree to clean part of a city or highway, often agreeing to pick up specific amounts or garbage in order to get sponsor support.

This type of marathon is nice because it has several side advantages. The city or town area will usually be much nicer-looking after the event, which means that media or town politicians will often support such an event, ensuring more participants. Schools, neighborhood groups, churches, and other groups interested in the community are usually willing participants, ensuring that you have enough people taking part.

This type of marathon certainly makes everyone happy. It is also a snap to organize. You will need to provide refreshment, prizes, and garbage bags as well as thick gloves to protect participants. You will also need someone to take collected recyclables to be recycled. Additional volunteers will have to follow up with participants in order to get sponsor's contributions.

•Kiss-a-thons: As the name suggests, in this type of marathon calls for participants to kiss for a specific period of time. In many of these marathons, participants have also tried to get participants into the world book of records for the longest kiss.

•Fasts: Marathon fasts are becoming quite popular. Events such as the "24 hour famine" raise awareness about world hunger as well as the money that can change poverty. Participants need to be told about the dangers of long-term fasting before beginning.

•Cook-a-thons: In these events, which are often better for small towns where security issues are not as much of a concern, participants cook for a specific period of time. The food cooked can be sold to raise even more money or can be donated to a shelter or food bank. These marathons can be expensive to sponsor unless you can get a company to help you, as the cost of cooking supplies can be quite high.

•Eating contests: Part race and part marathon, these contests are often part of a fair or bazaar. Participants try to eat as much of an item (usually a pie) within a set period of time.

•Sit-ins: In the 1960s, sit-ins were used to protest certain conditions or institutions. Today, some non-profit groups are using the sit-in to raise money and awareness for specific issues. Participants spend a few days in a specific area, "camping out" creating a stir about an issue while also raising money through sponsors. This type of marathon requires lots of organizing and careful controls to keep everyone safe. Also, you will need to find someone willing to lend space for your event.

•Read-a-thon: In this type of marathon, participants read as many books as they can over a period of a few weeks. In exchange, sponsors give participants a specific sum of money for every book read. Since this activity takes place on participant's own time, there is no need to provide a space or refreshments.

Participants also provide their own books, making a read-a-thon one of the more inexpensive forms of marathon to organize. Schools and libraries are often willing to help advertise or support this type of event, as well, so you can be sure of getting help with this type of project.

In fact, any event or activity that can be organized to take place in a group for a few hours can generally be made into a successful marathon. For inspiration, try looking at the Guinness World Book of records and other similar reference works for activities that could be converted into a marathon.

•Fairs or bazaars: These events take a long time and much effort to organize but they inevitably draw large crowds of all ages. Fairs and bazaars are basically mixed events that may contain rides, auctions, fair booths (such as palm-reading stations, pie eating contests, dunking booths and others), rides, refreshments, and other attractions.

Often, you will need to rent some of the apparatus (such as the booths or rides) which means that this sort of fundraising event can become quite expensive in some cases. You will also need to organize plenty of volunteers in order to keep things running smoothly. There are many types of fair themes and styles, ranging from country fairs to haunted house or Halloween bazaars to family fairs.

•Dances and other entertainment events: These events usually charge for admission and the money raised through admission is used to support the non-profit group. Usually turn out at these events is quite good as the public gets entertained for an affordable rate. This type of fundraising event can also, in some cases, be inexpensive and fast to organize:

•Dances: Dances (especially themed dances such as retro sock hops, country square dances, or 80s pop dances) are always a big draw and are very easy to put together. You need a space for the dance, some decorations, and a good DJ. Admission fees and the sale of refreshments usually ensures a profit.

•Movie nights: Whether you decide to organize a drive-in or get your local movie theater to offer your group a night showing, movie nights are very popular, especially if you can offer inexpensive admission. In many cases, offering older movies for viewing will draw a bigger crowd and also prove less expensive to organize.

•Plays, variety shows, and comedy shows: Live shows and entertainments can be a great way to entertain and draw in money (again, through ticket sales and refreshment sales). They can take some time to organize and require lots of practice and work from volunteers, but start-up costs can be quite low if you can get someone to arrange an

inexpensive venue for the show to take place in.

•Bingo or casino nights: These offer exciting fun and the possibility of winning prizes and money. Proceeds (which can be quite high) go to your group. Just be aware that some communities have laws about who can hold such events, which are sometimes considered "gambling." Check local laws before trying this idea.

•Dinners: Turkey dinners, Sunday dinners, and singles dinners draw plenty of people who want to meet others and who do not want to dine alone. For a dinner event, you will want food and refreshment, a place for the dinner, some decoration and possibly some quieter entertainment that will still allow for talking among diners. Dinners are fast to organize and can be help frequently, if enough people seem interested in the event. Money is raised by having people pay at the door for the event.

•Holiday events: Whether it's a family Easter egg hunt, a Halloween haunted house, or a Christmas caroler concert, hosting events with a holiday theme always draws those who want to celebrate a special day. Charging admission is a good way to raise money at these sort of events, and other fundraising ideas - such as sales or raffles, can be added to the event to ensure greater fundraising success.

•Tours: Offering walking or driving tours of a city can be a great and inexpensive way to raise money for your non-profit, especially if you live in a city or town with a large tourist population. Tours can take place a few times a week during the summer or can be conducted year round.

They require little more than a few hours of volunteer time, a staff that knows about a city or area (or can learn about it by reading books) and some advertising. In addition to raising money by charging money for the tours, a non-profit can also hand out pamphlets about the organization during the tours, raising awareness as well as money.

•Hay rides and barn dances: These activities are quite popular during the fall and summer, as they offer family entertainment for city dwellers who want to "get away" for a few hours. You will need to find a farm that can accommodate donors.

Additional fundraising ideas - such as pony rides and a hay bale maze - can easily be added to raise even more money. Setting up the event may take money and time, but once it is set up, it can easily operate for an entire season, bringing in money regularly. A farmer offering a pick-your-own business may be willing to allow a non-profit to use a small parcel of land in exchange for drawing tourists and customers to the area, so it does not hurt to ask around.

•Drives: Drives are basically requests for things. Of course, all fundraising is basically a money drive, but sometimes asking for objects (especially for items that people may be getting rid of anyway) can help bring in a better response. Many people who will not donate money will be able to afford to donate something that they may want to be rid of anyway. If you are planning on having a sale, you may need to organize a drive first in order to ensure that you have the items you need to sell. Drives can also be used to gather items that can be used in a non-profit's programs. A homeless shelter, for example, may wish to hold a bedding drive in order to get the

beds and linens needed to house the homeless. Such a drive may get a better response than simply asking for money in order to buy the bedding. Some of the more common drives include:

•Blood drives: usually organized only by larger non-profits such as hospitals, clinics, larger shelters, and the Red Cross, blood drives ask people to donate blood so that those who need a transfusion can get the medical help they need. Blood drives are expensive and require trained medical personnel as well as plenty of equipment for taking, testing, and transporting blood to be stored.

•Food drives: These drives usually aim to raise non-perishable food for food banks, shelters, overseas programs and other non-profits.

•Toy and gift drives: Often held around the holidays, these drives aim to offer toys and gifts to children who might not otherwise get a holiday. In some cases, excess toys and gifts can be sold to second hand shops in order to raise money as well.

•Book drives: Non-profit groups having to do with literacy or education sometimes seek book donations in order to give books to students and others or in order to organize programs such as bookmobiles. Books can also be sold to raise money for non-profit programs.

•Housewares drives: Some non-profit groups ask for household items which can help those in need or which can be sold for fundraising purposes.

•Clothing drives: Some non-profits ask for donations of used clothing (sometimes specific items such as coats) in order to clothe those in need or in order to sell the clothes in order to make money for non-profit programs.

•Volunteer drives: Some drives ask for specific work or volunteers for projects. For example, Habitat for Humanity, a group working to create affordable housing, often asks for labor work (construction workers, plumbers) that can help in building houses.

Many people (and even companies) are willing to offer their help and labor even if they are more cautious about offering their money. This sort of drive can be invaluable as it can save enormous amounts of money on services. If you need to build or renovate an office space, for example, you can get contractors to offer some of their services. Then, you will only need to raise a smaller amount of money through other means in order to pay for utilities and other necessities.

•Fundraising Company Sales: There are businesses that exist solely to make money through fundraising. They get non-profit groups to sell products and then offer a part of the proceeds to the business. The fundraising sales company offers the products to be sold, the catalogues and in some cases sales training. The non-profit supplies the labor of selling and the footwork. Both parties get some of the money. The advantages of this type of fundraising are that the companies often provide most of what you need to fundraise. The products are often professionally made and so of a quality that may appeal to buyers.

On the down side, you do have to give some of the money you earn to the company in many cases. Sometimes, initial start up costs or the costs of paying for unsold items are quite high, as these businesses vary in quality and trustworthiness. If you decided to follow this route in advertising, be sure to carefully investigate any company you work with. There are many items that companies offer to you to sell, including:

- Chocolates, cookies, donuts, or other foods
- Paper products (stationary, wrapping paper)
- Gift items
- Crafts
- Pet supplies (leashes, bowls, sweaters)
- Art supplies
- Learning Tools (flash cards, etc.)
- Magnets
- Candles
- Books
- Posters
- Cosmetics
- T-shirts or other items of clothing
- Buttons or stickers
- Toys, games, or puzzles

•Door to door appeal: Some non-profits ask for donations through a door to door appeal for funds. The idea is that donors are less likely to say "no" when asked in person. If you decide to go this route, be aware that this method is time consuming and likely to result in plenty of "no" responses anyway - many people find that door to door sales people and requests are intrusive and some people will not even answer their doors if they see someone unfamiliar on their step.

In today's world, it is also important to keep your volunteers safe by having them travel in groups. This method of fundraising often works best in smaller communities and for groups trying to raise money for a very specific and very local cause (such as trying to save the local

park).

•Direct Mail: Many non-profits send direct mail campaigns asking for money. These are essentially letters that explain why money is needed and tell potential donors how they can contribute. In some cases, these letters are very fancy, offering free stickers or desk calendars to donors and offering photos and touching stories to convince donors of the importance of the cause.

The problem with direct mail is that it can be a costly fundraising venture. You will need to design the letter or have it designed by a marketing firm. Printers will need to replicate the letter and you will need to include self-addressed stamped envelopes in order to make it easier for donors to respond. The post office will give you a discount on mass mailings if you are a non-profit, but you may still have to pay a lot, only to find that many potential donors discard your mailings as "junk mail."

Direct mail can work, but it has to have a very compelling theme and contain a very well-written letter to elicit a large response. In general, larger non-profits with professional marketing services (Easter Seals, the SPCA, United Way) do well with direct mail. It is a rather ambitious for a smaller non-profit group.

•Donation boxes: Donation boxes can be set up at store counters. In most cases, these are clear plastic boxes with your non-profit group's name and mission printed on them. The idea is that store patrons can put extra change in the boxes if they like to. In most cases, these donation boxes fill up very slowly but they are also inexpensive to set up and as long as you can convince a few store owners to keep your box next to the cash you can make some small extra fundraising money each month. You can't really rely on these boxes for all your fundraising needs, but they can supplement the donations you get from others methods.

•Group cooperation: Many non-profits have found that they can get great fundraising results if they can cooperate with other groups. For example, if schools and churches are willing to fundraise on your behalf, you will be able to get more money through their efforts since these groups contain many people. Approaching other groups to help in fundraising efforts takes time and effort, but the results are often worth it.

•Services for hire: Rather than selling products, some non-profits find that they benefit by offering services. Usually all that is needed are some volunteers willing to work for free. Donors need to be approached in order to be asked whether they would like a shoeshine, or whatever your group is offering.

In general, the cost of the service should be free and you should note that the money is going for a non-profit cause. This type of fundraising is often effective for a shorter-term project rather than for regular funds. Among some of the services that your group can offer for a fee are the following:

•Shoeshine services

•Portrait sketching of passers by (tourists sometimes like to buy pictures of themselves in a particular spot)

•Car wash

•Dog walking services

•Grocery carrying services (you will need to ask for permission from a store to do this)

•Yard work or general handy work

•Boat rides or horse drawn carriage tours

•Grants: Every non-profit group should seek out government grants and grants from philanthropic organizations. Look in your local library to find directories of grants offered and write away for applications for the grants.

Applying is often time consuming (and you will want to be sure to take the time to do a good job on applications) but it is well worth the effort. In some cases, you will be able to get steady money for your group through grants, so be sure to apply for all the money sources from governments and agencies that you can.

•Telethons: These television events are broadcast for a few hours, during which time donors are encouraged to call in and make donations. Usually, larger non-profits use this method because you need the participation of a television station and a call center to do this (which can be expensive).

However, if you have these resources (as well as a celebrity who can help you host the telethon), telethons are a good way to raise larger sums of money.

•Telemarketing: Telemarketing means that you call people at their homes in order to ask them to donate money to your non-profit. In order to do this successfully, you need to be able to take credit card payments and you need to purchase a marketing list (a list from a marketing company that lists people who have donated to similar causes in the past).

You will either need volunteers to make the actual calls or rely on a call center to make the calls for you (at a price). Although telemarketing can be effective, many would-be donors find this method intrusive and will often have a negative response. In most cases, talented callers make the difference between a successful telemarketing campaign and a failed one.

•E-mail campaigns: Some groups have tried fundraising through e-mail. It is an appealing idea as email is very cheap and it is possible to send many emails making many appeals. However, this form of fundraising is still quite new and many people dislike unsolicited email (which is called “spam”) and never read it, especially as it is often carries computer viruses.

Some Final Tips in Choosing A Fundraising Idea

As you begin to figure out which ideas you want to adopt for your non-profit group, you will want to ask yourself some questions to make sure that you choose the fundraising ideas that are most likely to succeed for your group:

•**What Can go Wrong?** Of course you want to be optimistic and imagine all the things that can go right in fundraising, but you need to consider the possible problems that may arise with a problem. If the risks are things your group cannot manage, then you may want to choose another idea. If your fundraising method will get you into debt before you make any profit, you may want to reconsider. If your idea involves food, you will want to make sure that there is no risk of food poisoning that could result in a law suit.

•**Are there special requirements?** You may need a special license to host a lottery or bingo night. Even a movie night is ruled by copyright laws. Consult with a lawyer to ensure that you have all the legal requirements of a fundraising idea taken care of.

•**How Much are Total Costs?** Add up costs of supplies, services, rentals, and space. If the costs are too high, you may need to start with simpler and less expensive fundraising ideas and work your way up slowly.

•**How Much Time will we Need to Invest?** Consider not just the time of the event, but also all the preparatory work for fundraising, all the paperwork, all the organization, and the work that needs to be done after an event (including cleanup).

•**Do we need to hire special help or consultants?** Some projects are more complicated and may need to have a professional touch to appeal to people. This can be very expensive, although for groups that can raise a lot of money; this expense can be worth it.

•**Will this idea get us in trouble?** If your non-profit supports a controversial subject (gay rights, for example) you need to decide whether a particular fundraising effort will get you in trouble. Even non-profit groups with very neutral causes that are widely supported can get into trouble if a volunteer is injured or of someone gets hurt through a fundraising venture. Consider all the risks of every fundraising idea you consider.

•**What is the competition?** Most non-profits are trying to make the world a better place, and it is not great to consider them "competition," but competition they are. If the Girl Guides are selling their cookies and you are considering a fundraising idea that involves selling cookies, the competition may ensure that you get little money for your efforts. Choose an idea that no one else is currently trying and one that will not overlap too much with another group's own fundraising efforts.

•**Are we offering variety, quality, and something new?** This is the secret combination that will ensure higher fundraising earnings because it will ensure that customers or donors will want to contribute. Those who buy your products in fundraising or offer money through donations want a quality product or service. They want something new and varied - if many groups in your area are selling chocolates, donors are less likely to give to your campaign because they are

bored by the idea. Try to offer your donors a choice and offer them something that is not run-of-the-mill and they will reward you with donations.

•**Long term idea or one-shot deal?** Not every idea needs to raise money in the long run, but if all your fundraising ideas seem to offer short-term money in exchange for a lot of work, you need to consider how you are going to get the money to run your group on a day-to-day basis.
•What are the odds for corporate help? Ideas that at least have a chance of getting support form local businesses are more likely to bring in more money.

•**How much money do we hope to bring in?** You may not want to think about dollars and cents, but you need to. You need to know how much money you need to raise before you start you efforts. That way, you will know which fundraising ideas will not be adequate in bringing in the money you need.

•**Who will show up?** You need to decide whether your fundraising ideas will appeal to a wide enough range of people to be money-making ventures. If you live in a bedroom community full of seniors, a skate-board-a-thon may simply not draw as many people as a fair or a retro dance.

•**Is timing a consideration?** If your fundraising ideas are holiday-related, you need to start planning well ahead of the holiday.

•**What are some probable responses?** Anticipating the possible reactions your event will have (both the positive and negative reactions) will make it easier for you to handle the various reactions that fundraising efforts generally elicit.

•**What, exactly, needs to be done?** Make a large list of everything that needs to be done in order to make the fundraising a success. Are you able to do these things? If not, you may need to choose a more suitable idea or find ways to accomplish all the tasks on your list.

Developing a Fundraising Plan

Once you have a great fundraising idea, motivation will be high and everyone at your non-profit group will likely be eager to get started right away. However, you will certainly want to take the time to develop a plan. Fundraising plans do several things:

•They ensure that everyone has a job - and that their job corresponds to their abilities and resources

•That time-sensitive materials and events take place in an orderly manner

•That nothing is overlooked. You don't want to set up the world best fair - only to have no one show up because advertising and marketing were never considered.

•Things are not repeated over and over, wasting time

A fundraising plan does not have to be a complicated thing, but it does need to be thorough and you need to make sure that each person on your team has a copy of the plan. A fundraising plan can be a formal report that outlines what needs to be done, by whom, and when. It can consist of just a list or two of tasks. It can also be a listing of items in a calendar or planner. The important thing is that the plan works for you. Once you have decided on a fundraising plan or idea, you will need to develop a written plan to ensure that nothing is forgotten. No matter what form your plan takes, it needs to include the following items:

•Information about your group, including your mission statement, what your desired programs are, when you were registered as a non-profit group, who belongs to your group, and contact information for your group. This is information that grant applications will request and donors will also want to have this information before deciding whether to give money to your cause.

•Contact Information For Your Volunteers. That way, if anything occurs, volunteers can easily be contacted. You should also list the titles (treasurer, marketing) of each volunteer, so that it is clear who should be contacted about which fundraising issues.

•Information About Donors. Any information you have - donors who may be inclined to give for your cause, donors who have given in the past, donors who have asked to be removed from your list - needs to be included so that volunteers know who to contact. Careful mention must be made of who is to contact which donors and you need to be careful to remark which donors have already given or have made a response to your query. This will prevent you from annoying people with numerous requests.

•Services you need to arrange before you start fundraising. Do you need to arrange to take credit card donations (many donors today find this the most convenient way to give)? You will certainly need to arrange for some pamphlets, letters, or other media to communicate the basic facts about your non-profit. You will also need to formulate tax receipt slips that can be given to donors for their gifts. In addition to this, do your volunteers need to be trained? Do you need fundraising software because you are expecting a large volume of donors?

•Write down your fundraising goals and how far you still need to go to meet them.

•Are these questions that need to be answered before you start fundraising? If you have any questions - about legalities, zoning laws, marketing, recruiting, donors - list them. Beside each question, list a few resources that could have the answer. Then divide the list up among the group and have each person look up the answers to their questions. This way, you will have all the information you need before you begin.

•Your fundraising ideas, each described in full. Arrange fundraising plans that target grant-giving agencies, individual and group donors, and companies. Casting your net wide ensures that you will be able to find the money you need.

•A time line that shows what parts of the fundraising plan will be put into action - and when and by whom. List all the steps that need to be taken to make the fundraising a success, put a deadline on each item and assign it to someone. This is your action list.

•List any resources at all that you have that might be useful. Have a list of who has what resources. That way, if anything is needed, each member of your group will know who to contact.

•Describe what the big picture is. Yes, you want to raise money to help the environment, or to save a park, or to build an animal shelter. However, you need to write down the best possible scenario as well as the things you are committed to doing. Sometimes, as it happens with fundraising, you may not be able to raise the money for a specific purpose, but you may be able to find a way to accomplish a goal.

For example, you may want to raise money to build an animal shelter within two years' time. You may have a hard time fundraising, but while fundraising you may encounter people who are willing to donate work time or a building to the cause, which will help you reach your larger goal. Too many groups focus on the money sums of fundraising.

While these sums are important, if you keep your actual goals (what the money is supposed to do) in front of you at all times, you may find ways of accomplishing your real goals regardless of what happens to your money goals during recruiting.

With a fundraising plan, you need to work on paper, writing ideas and action items down. The idea here is to move from general ideas and goals to specific things and items. Try to create action items whenever possible, and assign a person and a deadline to each item. At the same time, though, stress the importance of the larger goals to the team.

The idea is to get as much of the action items done as possible, but if a team member finds a way to come closer to the larger goal, they should pursue that avenue of action as well. Such a plan is concrete enough to get your non-profit going, but is flexible enough to ensure that your real goals are always what you are moving closer to.

Recruiting a Fundraising Team

Fundraising is about teamwork. If you want to raise money for your non-profit, you will have to let go of any vestigial shyness you may have and start interacting with people. For a non-profit, people are often the most valuable resource. If you want to fundraise, then, you will have to build a team of volunteers, workers, and other personnel who will help you with your goals. In general, for a non-profit, you will want most of your staff to be volunteers, although you may need to hire some staff as well. Depending on the amount of work involved in your fundraising idea, you may need to recruit extra volunteers or group members just to volunteer.

Who Volunteers?

Volunteers come from all walks of life and from all age groups. In fact, in North America alone, volunteers annually contribute many billions of dollars of billable hours - for no money. There are many reasons why people choose to offer work time for no cost:

•Because they support a cause

•To make a difference or contribute to a community

•To right a wrong or a lack they see in society

•To gain work experience

•To interact with other people and meet others

•To do something they feel is important

Approaching Volunteers

There are many places you can find volunteers for your fundraising effort. You can advertise for them in the newspaper or through word of mouth. You can also advertise for volunteers at schools (college and high school students are often eager to volunteer in order to gain work experience and try out working positions). Many cities also have volunteer bureaus that match up those who want to volunteer with volunteer opportunities. This can be a great way for you to find people to help you with your fundraising project.

Once you have a few people interested in volunteering, you will want to speak with them about what they can expect from volunteering for your non-profit. You should mention your fundraising plans and note how you hope volunteers will be able to help you. Then you should sit back and listen to what your potential volunteers think. Volunteers should be able to follow through and should be enthusiastic about your group. Be sure to mention any benefits that your group can offer volunteers (a friendly work environment, for example, or a reference letter).

Training Volunteers

Once you have some volunteers willing to help you with your fundraising, you will need to explain to them what you expect from your group and your volunteers. Some volunteers have little or no work experience while others are professionals or even leaders in their field. In either case, you will have to let them know how you want things to be done at your non-profit group.

To train your volunteers, set aside some time to show your new recruits around the offices or workspace of your non-profit (if you have such a space). Tell them what the group does and

how the group got started. Allow your group to ask questions and be sure to give them your fundraising plan so that they can see how they fit into your group's effort. Also, show them any specific tasks that need to be done (operating a cash register, for example, or writing out a tax receipt properly) in order for them to do their volunteer work well.

Leveraging, Motivating, and Outsourcing

Your volunteers are your responsibility, which means that you will be the one who has to work hard to ensure that they are motivated and doing the work they volunteered to do. Often, volunteers who have a genuine desire to get job experience or volunteers who have a great interest in a specific cause are those will work the hardest and will do what needs to be done.

However, you can make all your volunteers more enthusiastic about helping your fundraising plan if you listen to what your volunteers want or need from their volunteer experience.

Providing a pleasant work environment, at least occasionally interesting work for them, and even motivating them through prizes or praise can make your volunteers feel better about working for your non-profit. Building a team atmosphere through occasional meetings can also help motivate your team.

You need to make sure that your volunteers have enough work to do so that they don't feel insignificant or overwhelmed. Generally, you should find out from each volunteer how much work feels right for them and then offer them that amount. If you notice that some volunteers seem to like or be very adept at specific work, try to offer that sort of work to those volunteers. Not only will things get done more effectively, but your volunteers will be happier.

If your volunteers are overworked, outsource some work to new volunteers. If you are overworked, try asking to see whether any volunteers would be interested in taking on a larger workload.

Dealing With Volunteers

Your volunteers are like your donors - they are people who offer their services to you at no charge. It is insensitive and often ineffective to treat them as employees. You should be happy that there are people willing to help you with no money as a reward. You should also try to give your volunteers some value for their experience - either by offering them work experience or a truly friendly atmosphere or some other perk. You should also periodically express your appreciation for your workers, much as you would express your appreciation for the money that donors give.

Remember: To many, time is more valuable than even money. Your volunteers are offering you a valuable resource by offering you their time. Do not squander this gift or take it for granted.

If you have trouble with volunteers - either because volunteers do not seem to be doing their work or seem to be creating drama, be sure that you continue to work with your volunteers rather than taking on an employer or disciplinary role. In many cases, conflict or idle time can be avoided by clearly telling volunteers what is to be done and by what time. Ask for volunteers for specific tasks, assign those fundraising tasks, and then set a deadline on those tasks. That way, each person will know what they are to do and by when.

Many conflicts among volunteers can also be avoided with a little planning. Try to match tasks with volunteer personalities. Outgoing volunteers will often do well interacting with donors, while quieter volunteers can be quite useful handling email or letter correspondence or doing market research. If you notice tensions among volunteers, offering to let volunteers work apart until things settle down can be effective. On a larger fundraising project, there is often enough room for every one.

Above all, keep lines of communication with your volunteers open. A team attitude can go a long way. If your workers feel comfortable talking to you, they will be happy to let you know what you need to know in order to organize your work force most efficiently.

Staying Organized While Fundraising

Fundraising involves a lot of paper work, a lot of ideas, a lot of action lists. You can easily become overwhelmed and lose track of the entire project if you allow yourself to become disorganized. This is why it is crucial to stay organized regularly.

The system of organization that is best depends on you. Financial software is ideal for some, while other prefer impeccable files. It does not matter which organizing method you choose. What does matter is that you use it faithfully and stay organized. Among the items you will need to keep organized during fundraising:

•Income tax receipts - Your donors will want to receive income tax slips to claim their gifts on their taxes. In some cases, they may write to you again during tax season for another slip. Also, you will need to keep good records of the money donated for your group's income tax and other assessments.

•Volunteer information - Contact information, emergency information, and any other items of interest will need to be stored so that you can contact your workers or help them in case of an emergency.

•Donor Information - You will need to file away information about those who have donated to your fundraising - not only will you want to take care not to contact those people again too soon, but you will want to contact the same donors again after some time as they are likely to contribute again. You will need a very good organizational system to keep track of who you

should be contacting when. For each donor, you will want to keep contact information, amounts donated, times when the donor donated money, the donor's preferred method of being contacted, and the time you should contact them again. It is important that you keep this information useable.

•Market Research - You need to file all the information you gather about potential donors and potential fundraising ideas. This information needs to be quickly accessible when you start fundraising in earnest.

•Research - You will want to keep information about other similar non-profits with successful fundraising ideas.

•Grant applications - In a visible place, you will want to keep grant application deadlines so that you will be able to apply for all the grants your group qualifies for. You will also want to keep copies of completed applications on file to help you with future applications.

•Letters - For your records, you will want to keep track of any letters you send and the responses you get. You will want to keep letters from donors and from companies who are willing to help your fundraising efforts, for example.

•Legal Issues - You will need to file deeds or leases for your group's space, licensing agreements, proof that your group is a registered non-profit organization, and other legal papers that might be crucial at a later date.

•Meeting Minutes - Keeping your group's records and ideas together will make it easier for you to see who needs to be doing what. You can also refer to earlier brainstorming sessions if you need to be reminded why a certain idea was turned down or why someone was scheduled for a specific task.

•The Operations of Your Non-Profit - Non-profit groups have lots of logistical paper work - utility bills, legal bills, notices from government about changing laws, and so on. You need to keep these records together so that any disputes can be resolved quickly.

•The Amount of Money being spent, and the amount of money coming in - Keeping track of money is crucial in proving that your business is fundraising in a fair way and in order to prove that your group really is non-profit. Some charitable groups think that their records cannot be seized or audited, but this is not true. Keep excellent financial records and check them twice - a non-profit accused to misusing donor funds often has a terrible time trying to fundraise again. Keep track of every penny you spend on your group to offset any such unpleasant problems.

•Time - For a non-profit, keeping track of time is as important as keeping track of money. Keeping track of volunteer time can help you write accurate reference letters for your workers, and keeping track of time and money can help you see whether you could be using your time more productively in order to help more people.

Obviously, there are many records and papers that need to be tracked. Medium-sized and larger

non-profits often find that they require the help of an accountant and one or more office assistants to keep track of paper. Even in smaller non-profits, having one secretary or office manager can be a big help. One person should interact with all the incoming papers and information each day and should either file papers or act on them. Money spent and donated needs to be recorded accurately each day. Workers should always return papers to the same files after each use. A once-weekly meeting during fundraising can help keep papers and idea organized.

If you cannot afford to have one person caring for your files and organization, deal with papers on a daily basis to prevent information overload. Get a fundraising software package (even a basic one) to help you keep track of donors, grant applications, and the other important details of non-profit fundraising.

Communicating with Donors: The Best Way to Raise Money

In simplest terms, fundraising is really about communicating. You will want to reach your donors and communicate why your non-profit group deserves money and why your purpose or efforts are worthwhile. The groups that do this successfully generally manage to make more money than the groups that do not.

If you want to raise money, you will have to work hard on communicating with your donors. There are several ways that you will be communicating with donors:

•Advertising: Through advertising, you will try to catch donor's attention and will try to explain why your non-profit is crucial enough to deserve donor money. In advertising, you will communicate through words and images and sounds (if you are advertising through radio or television). Non-profits can advertise fundraising plans through radio, television, Internet, posters, newspapers, and magazines.

•Letters: Every non-profit uses words to communicate with donors, grant providers, and others through letters. Letters need to be well-written and professional. Direct mail letters may require "extras" such as photos or images to really capture attention.

•Email/Internet: Today, you can expect to use the Internet or email to give information to donors. Use the same techniques and rules in email and Internet communication as you would in letters.

•Telephone: You will be using the telephone to call donors, follow up with workers, and to finalize details of fundraising efforts. You will need to use pleasant and professional phone manners to use the telephone effectively.

•Thank-you notes: You should never overlook these. Every person who helps you non-profit should be made to feel appreciated through a thank you.

•Person to person: You will need to speak to people in order to convince them of the importance of your non-profit.

•Grant proposals: Grant proposals are a very formal and precise way of communicating. Grant providers will tell you in their application exactly what they want to see from you in order to make a funding decision.

•Press Releases: Press releases are sent to the media and tell newspapers, radio, and other media the latest news about your non-profit and your fundraising efforts.

•Campaigning/Marketing/Public Relations: A more subtle form of advertising, marketing has to do with gaining exposure for your non-profit's fundraising through articles, radio spots, and interviews.

You may not use each technique each time you communicate, but you need to master all these forms of communication in order to get a steady source of fund for your group. Luckily, learning to master these areas is not hard. There are many books about communicating effectively at your library and you may in fact have someone in your group already who is good with words and who can communicate effectively.

Let's consider each area of fundraising communication separately:

Advertising

You may want to put advertisements in the newspaper in order to advertise your campaigning efforts. Whether your ad is a small ad in the local paper or a spot on the radio, you will want to make sure that you give the information and the emotional appeal you need to get your ideas across. If you are announcing a specific event (marathon, sale, or other event) be sure that you include the basic information such as time, place, day, and details of the actual event.

It is important that you place your advertising where your intended donors will see it. If your non-profit is a local children's charity, you will likely not be advertising in national adult magazines. Instead, you will want to advertise in the local paper on the "family" page. If you can afford it, get ads in weekly papers or in the Saturday or weekend edition of a daily (more people read the weekend edition of the daily local paper, in most cases). Radio and television ads are also great, but can be expensive.

You can try asking companies to offer advertising for free. A local advertising company, for example, may agree to design an ad for you. Newspapers or radios (especially local media outlets) may offer to let your non-profit advertise for free as a donation. To ask, write a letter and follow up with a phone call to the media's marketing director. Even if you have to pay for your advertising (many media outlets are reluctant to give away advertising as this is how they make money), it is important to advertise your fundraising efforts if you want donors to respond with donations.

You should not overlook inexpensive or free methods of advertising:

•Bulletin board advertisements in grocery stores, schools, and on telephone poles

•Announcements in schools and churches

•Posting information on online local forums (online forums designed for people in your town or city).

•Advertising in the local community calendar. Most towns and cities have free community event listing either online or in some publication. People frequently check here for upcoming events and news.

•Classified ads cost only a few dollars, but if your non-profit is holding a sale, classifieds are the perfect place to advertise as this is often a key place serious "flea marketers" will check when deciding which sales to go to.

•Walking Advertisements: Volunteers can hand out printed ads or carry ads on themselves in the form of printed t-shirts or printed boards.

Letters

No matter what your fundraising strategy, you will likely not be able to escape letters. Even if you have already decided on a specific event to raise money, you will likely need to write letters in order to request space or services, and you will want to write letters to the media or to others who can help promote your event.

Writing good letters is not a hard skill but it does take practice. Letter writing is a formal way of communication, meaning that there are certain rules you must follow. You need to include the contact information of yourself and the person you are writing to at the top of the letter. You must include a date, a salutation ("Dear Mr. Jones:") and the text of a letter. You need to include your signature at the bottom of a letter.

While those are the mechanics of a letter, many non-profits are still mystified about what to put in a letter when they are fundraising. What you write will depend on who you are writing to and why. If you are writing to a business for support (and this includes the media), then you will want to keep things professional and short. You will want to communicate who you are, what you are asking, what you expect and why your letter is important. Consider the following example of a letter asking for support:

J. Doe
Felicitations Child
134 Acme Ave.
London, ST USA
(555) 555-5555

James Do
Acme Company
14 USA Drive
Anyplace, USA

3 December 2005

Dear Mr. Do,

I represent Felicitations Child, a newly registered non-profit organization in London. We are aiming to provide children in our area with reading materials and the tools they need to become lifelong readers. To accomplish this, we are trying to have bookmobile set up to provide children in disadvantaged areas with the benefits of a library.

We are planning on hosting a book sale on Feb. in order to raise money for this project. We are hoping that your publishing company will be able to provide some unused or unsold books to donate for sale. We will be able to provide signs noting that the books are from your company and we will be glad to distribute your catalogue to book buyers as well, if you wish.

I will telephone you next week at 3:00 in order to discuss this project and your possible contribution. We are very excited about this project, as it would fix the problem of lack of libraries in London; a problem that you yourself noted in a recent interview is a "terrible shame."

I look forward to speaking with you and I hope we can count on your generous support.

Sincerely,

J. Doe

This letter, although not perfect, does several things:

•Explains clearly who is writing and why - people are busy today and appreciate not having their time taken up.

•Explains exactly what is expected (donations of books) by when (Feb.)

•Gives a follow-up possibility. By telling the owner of the company when she will call, J. Doe makes it clear that she will follow up. By the time she calls, the company owner will likely have decision made and they can discuss the project. If the owner has not looked at "J. Doe's" letter, even, she has an instant "in" to talk to the owner of Acme Company - "I am calling about the letter I sent to you a week ago concerning the Felicitations Child book project."

•Asks for something feasible - rather than asking for money, J. Doe asks for something that is more likely to be given - books that a publisher may have a surplus of anyway.

•Targets the donor. From what J. Doe says, the owner of Acme is a supporter or literacy (or at least someone who want to appear as a supporter in an interview). By reminding the owner of this, J. Doe suggests why Acme might want to support the project.

•Suggests value added. J. Doe mentions that donating books will provide Acme with some free publicity. The owner may like knowing that his company will be supported.

•Maintains a professional tone. The letter is friendly but not overly familiar. It reads like a business letter, which is the appropriate tone for this sort of letter.

In general, if you are writing to other groups, keep it professional. If writing to individual donors, you will want to add "extras."

For example, if you are putting together a direct mail appeal to donors, be sure to include anecdotes, pictures, and small cards or other items in the letter to show donors the importance of what you are doing. J. Doe from the above example may begin a letter to an individual donor by stating: "Have you ever wondered what books mean to a child? For six year old Annette in London, books are her best friend. The little girl loves to read, but unfortunately can only do so once a month, when her class visits the local library across town. You can help Annette read the books that make her world come alive. Felicitations Child is currently working to bring a bookmobile to the inner city where Annette lives..." This anecdote and the appeal to the "you" help make it clear to the donor why he or she should be donating. When writing to donors you will want to:

•Use anecdotes or tell in stories why the donor should donate to your cause.

•Include photos or pictures that capture the eye.

•Include a pre-addressed stamped envelope for donations (and provide several ways to make donations)

•Use a less formal tone than you would use in a business letter (you do not have to follow the business letter format covered above, either.

Do not overlook paper. Whether you are writing to a donor or a business or group, use a good quality paper that is white or cream in color. A heavy bond is best. Your letter or note should have plenty of white spaces, rather than being "cramped" onto the top of a sheet. Make sure that your envelope matches the paper of your letter and ensure that the envelope contains all the materials the person you are writing to needs. The easier you make it for someone to help your non-profit, the more likely your group is to get the support it needs.

Emails/Internet

Email and Internet communication is becoming more common. It is quite possible that donors and supporting companies and groups will contact your non-profit via email or other online means (such as Instant Messaging) in order to ask you questions about your fundraising efforts

and to find out more about your group.

In general, email and Internet communication is similar to letter writing. You will want to begin with a salutation, add a body of text, and close off with your name or a sign off of some sort. However, online communication tends to be more casual. It is perfectly ok to use a casual salutation such as "hello," Also, the body text of online notes and messages tends to be shorter. When writing online, use smaller sentences and paragraphs, as people often only skim online communications. The formal formatting and closing of a letter are also not necessary. A simple "thank you" or "best wishes," is often adequate to close.

One thing about email and online communication is that it is not completely safe. You do not quite know who you are speaking to online or who else may be monitoring your transmission. For this reason, you should not share personal information over online channels and never allow donors to pass on their credit card numbers, banking information, or other personal data in an email or instant message. It is best to keep online communication general. Offer the donor or person you are "chatting" with online some basic information and provide contact information (such as a telephone) for further contact.

Telephone

If you are telemarketing, you will need to worry about telephone communication a great deal, but even if you are not you should strive to make your telephone communication with others as effective as possible. Always identify yourself and your non-profit group when you answer the phone or call someone in regards to fundraising business.

Modulate your voice so that you are speaking neither too loud not too quiet. Also strive to speak at a good pace - one that is neither so fast as to be incomprehensive or so slow as to be annoying. Be polite on the phone and take care not to keep someone waiting on the line. If you are not sure how you sound on the phone, tape yourself and evaluate how pleasant your phone is. A little practice can help you alter your phone manners and phone voice enough to make a very good impression.

Thank-you notes

Few non-profits send tank-you notes to their donors, citing high costs. This is truly a shame. Thank you notes can make anyone feel appreciated, especially if they are handwritten. It does not cost much to have notes printed and then to take the time to sign each note. Donors will remember your non-profit with a smile.

If you want future fundraising to be effective, and if you can at all afford it, do send thank you notes. Even if this is not possible, do find some other way of thanking those who support you. At the very least, send handwritten thank you notes to the groups and companies who support you (and to your volunteers!) and find some other way to thank the many individual donors who help you fundraise.

“Thank you” is a word you need to say often while fundraising. You need to remind others that their efforts are a valuable gift and one that is well appreciated by your non-profit. When thanking donors and supporters, be sure to note your non-profit group’s name and purpose and offer a reminder of what programs or facilities generous support will be able to ensure. This will help make those people you are thinking rightfully proud of what they have contributed.

Person to person

Talking to another person is one of the most challenging forms of communication for most us, especially if we are naturally shy. However, if you are fundraising for your non-profit, this is a form you will have to master (especially if you are canvassing door to door!). You need to make sure that each person in your group who deals with the public (this includes sellers at the bazaar, door to door volunteers, and marathon organizers - anyone dealing with donors and potential supporters) has good personable manners. Attributes of good person to person contact include:

•Eye contact: Making occasional eye contact (not staring) lets people know that you see them and that you are listening to them. It makes the people you are talking to feel more comfortable.

•Manners: Being polite and kind helps put people at ease and allows them to focus on what you are saying.

•Good body language. Good body language means that your movements and posture (the way you use your body) is pleasant rather than jarring. Smooth movements and a minimal of hand movements put your listener at ease and allow him or her to focus in what you are saying. A hunched posture, shoulders raised nervously and jerky movements will make your listener uncomfortable and may cause him or her to try to avoid you - not exactly the reaction you want if you are fundraising!

•A smile. Smiling gives a listener the message that they are liked and accepted. It also makes you seem less threatening.

•Good distance. Standing too close or far away can put your listener on the defensive.

•Congruence. If your voice is pleasant and kind but you are scowling or your movements are agitated, you will not seem very trustworthy. Your movements, body language, voice, message, and appearance should match.

•Pleasant voice: A well-modulated voice that is easy to hear and understand will go a long way in making someone listen to you.

•Pleasant speaking style. If you are personable (making small comments or engaging with a listener in some way) will put your listener at ease and will help ensure that your request for fundraising is listened to. Simply listing your group’s mission and request for money will not inspire anyone. A lively speaking style, a joke, or even a comment on the weather will make you

seem less like an automaton and more like a person who should be listened to.

•Appearance. Although looks are obviously a personal issue, a clean-cut and pleasant appearance is still most likely to result in "yes" responses to fundraising. People simply do not trust people who look dangerous or frightening to them.

For some lucky people, these basics of talking to others are automatic - they seem to make friends wherever they go. For everyone else, person to person contact is a learned skill. You may not think it has much to do with fundraising. But if your style of communication is unappealing to people, you will not be able to make much headway in fundraising.

If you can appeal to people by communicating with them, you are more likely to succeed as a fundraiser.

It does not take much to acquire people skills that can help you fundraise. Practice talking, smiling, and making eye contact in the mirror (yes, it feels silly, but it really works). Better yet, video tape yourself and note what areas of personal communication you need to work on. There are toastmasters clubs that can help give you some tips and practice with oral communication, and these are well worth checking out if you want to become a master communicator who can convince donors to support your group.

Grant proposals

Grant proposals or applications will be an important part of your fundraising, as often you can get large sums of money for writing an effective grant application. Grant applications often have several components, which may include:

•Letters of reference

•A formal proposal of what you intend to do with the grant money

•A formal explication (with supporting evidence) of what your non-profit group is

•Plans for your programs or group's facilities

•A business plan for your group

•Information about resources you have and a list of resources you need

•Information about your workers/group members/volunteers

•Future plans and goals for your group

•Financial papers that show what your group needs

The grant application will tell you what material you need to submit. It is vital that you follow all directions for filling out the application to the letter. Many grant providers will automatically throw out or reject any applications that do not follow application instructions.

If you can, look at an example of a successful grant application to get a sense of what sorts of applications get a specific grant.

Grant providers want to make sure that the money from the grant is used as well as possible. That means that in your proposal you need to prove that your group is focus, organized and responsible enough to use grant money wisely. Grant providers also want to make sure that their grant money goes to a group that uses the money in a useful way.

In your application, stress how many people your group can help with the money and how the grant money will be used to create a better life for people in some way. The more compelling reasons you give grant providers that you will use the money carefully and effectively, the more likely you are to get the grant.

Press Releases

Press releases are essentially announcements to the media about an important even that is taking place. You should be able to write good press releases in order to cheaply advertise your non-profit's fundraising efforts. In general, you will want to write a press release to announce the start of your group, another press release to mark the opening of facilities for your group, and other press release to announce fundraising efforts such as marathons or fairs.

There is a specific way of writing press releases. Sometimes, the media will use actual quotes from the pres release in their articles or news items, so you need to make sure that your press release is written in an engaging style. Consider the following press release:

Media Release
Contact:
J. Doe
Director
Felicitations Child
134 Acme Ave.
London, ST USA
Phone: 555/ 555-5555
FAX: 555/555_5554
Email: j.doe@felicitaions
August 12, 2005
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Non-Profit Group Defends Childhood Reading from Development

(London, ST, USA) - Felicitations Child, a new non-profit organization established in London, has announced a fundraising effort to bring a Bookmobile into the inner areas of London. According to J. Doe, director of Felicitations Child, "This is a very exciting time for us. We have long noted that our city does not support many libraries, and children's literacy skills seem to be falling as a result." Recent reports on the state of education in the inner city have suggested that literacy among children is quite low and test scores in reading and writing are well below average.

J. Doe blames development, which three years ago claimed the old library building, which was torn down to make way for new condo complexes. Annie Law, a volunteer at Felicitations Child, notes that the newly developed organisations "have received many calls from worried educators and parents who feel that the children on inner city London are not reading enough. A library is badly needed, as many of the children in these areas come from families who simply cannot afford to buy books." According to Law, the bookmobile would travel to all the neighbourhoods between Upper Ninth and Upper West a few times a week in order to bring reading material to these areas. Although children's books would be plentiful, reading material for adults and non-fiction books would also be made available. In the future, Felicitations Child hopes to raise enough money to bring books to house-bound readers and to outlying areas of the city. As Law notes, "In the future, we imagine several book mobiles that will bring books to anyone who needs or wants them in our area."

Felicitations Child was founded by Doe three months ago after the director of the current non-profit group read about the falling rates of book reading in London. As Doe notes, "I grew up on Upper Ninth and we had an old library there. I can't believe it's gone, and I can't believe no one seems to have cared about the tearing down of the library." Incensed, Doe founded Felicitations Child to encourage literacy among school-aged children. Already, Felicitations Child has found some support in Acme Company, publisher of Children's books. Felicitations child will be holding a book sale on Feb 18 at the Old Town Hall and will also host a marathon on March 19 in the Old House Park.

This press release does several things that you will want your own press release to do:

•It provides full contact information for the non-profit so that the media can contact J. Doe with questions

•It provides a title that can be used "as is" as a newspaper or article headline

•It gives a date for the press release and notes that the release can be used at once. This means that the media can use this report at once.

•It immediately tells the reader what the press release is about.

•It provides quotes that media outlets can use in their reporting

•It is short enough to be readable but provides enough information for a short article or news report

•It lists the major fundraising efforts (including dates and locations) so that readers can take part in these.

Campaigning/Marketing/Public Relations

Marketing and public relations are similar to advertising but more subtle. Advertising is clearly identified as advertising. We all know what an ad looks like. Marketing, PR, branding, and other like ways of advertising something, though, are more subtle. Consider some of the more subtle ways to let people know about a non-profit or a fundraising venture:

•Have possible donors read about the group in an interview or newspaper article about new non-profit groups in the area.

•Have possible donors notice the group's logo and name on caps, t-shirt, water bottles, and other items

•Have possible donors overhear people talking about a group in the elevator or on the street

•Have possible donors notice art work or street chalk drawings of a group's logo and name

In most cases, this is a very sophisticated form of advertising used by large business corporations that have huge advertising budgets. On a smaller scale, though, you can do your own marketing. Consider the following ideas, which are possible even for a small non-profit:

•Appear on a local radio or even college radio show for an interview. This may take some setting up, but some stations will agree. During the interview, mention your group's name and upcoming event.
•If any member of your non-profit group has a DJ friend, have that friend mention your non-profit at a club, gig, or on air.

•Offer to write an article for the local paper, a local online site, or a local magazine. Refer briefly to the group and any fundraising efforts that are upcoming.

•Have caps or t-shirts with your non-profit's name and logo on them and distribute these to people who will wear them.

Fundraising and Technology: Can You Really Fundraise from a Computer?

Technology has come a long way in the last several years, and some non-profits have found that technology has made fundraising easier than ever in some respects. Other non-profits are

reluctant to use technology to help them fundraise, either because they are unfamiliar with the technology of today or because they have had a bad experience. Whether you decide to use a computer to fundraise or not, there are some technologies that you need to be aware of:

Fundraising Software

For many non-profits, this software helps them fundraise more effectively than ever before. Fundraising software basically manages all the components of non-profit fundraising, leaving you with more time and actually reminding you of things you need to be reminded of. This software is often custom-designed by a software developer, and is created specifically for the needs of your group. This software can do many things (depending on the actual program):

•Keep track of grant applications and remind you when to apply or start applying

•Keep track of your donor list (no matter how large or how small) and remind you when to contact specific donors. The software will even allow you to print out address labels for part or all of your donor list and the word processing software will allow you to send pre-written letters to donors you select from a database.

•Easily keep track of all donations, expenses, bills. Most software will even graphically represent money data so that you can see from a glance at a chart how you are doing with fundraising.

•Keep track of volunteers and workers and print off to do lists for all your volunteers.

•Keep track of your fundraising efforts and "remind" you (you program the software when you want to be reminded of certain things) when specific tasks must be done.

•Provide virtual files where you can keep your receipts, research, and other data.

•Provide full cross-over to other computer programs, so that you never have to retype information over and over again.

This type of software can be expensive, but if you are not great with keeping organized the user-friendly software can easily help keep you on track. If you can afford it, it can make a lot of sense for your non-profit, especially if your donor list is getting quite large (which it hopefully is).

If you decide to use fundraising software, shop around for a company who has created software for non-profits with needs similar to yours. Also make sure that the software has safety features that will keep your donor's personal information safe and secure.

If your software is breached by hackers and credit card numbers stolen from your database, your donors are unlikely to trust you with their money in the future. Also make sure that you have the time to learn to use the software well. At first, fundraising software can take some time to learn

because it has so many features. For many non-profits, though, this effort is well worth it.

The Internet

The Internet is a great initial resource for non-profits. You can research (and even try) fundraising software online, you can research other non-profits and their fundraising successes and failures, you can read about companies offering fundraising ideas, you can look for volunteers online.

The Internet can be accessed at any time and can be a quick way to get a grounding in specific fundraising issues. Just be aware that not all information online is completely accurate. Treat the information you find online in much the same way you would treat information offered to you by an acquaintance - simply use your own good judgment to decide what is credible and what needs to be checked.

Web Pages

If you are a non-profit, you should set up a web page. Web pages are quite inexpensive to set up, especially if someone in your group already knows how to design one. These online pages are also a great resource for potential donors, who will want to check the authenticity of your non-profit before donating money, in many cases. Your web site can also tell donors what they need to know about your group before deciding to donate. In general, your web page should contain:

•Full contact information

•Current and upcoming fundraising events

•Full details about the cause your group is working for - including pictures related to the cause, stories and anecdotes, and why the cause is important

•Visually appealing details (art that makes the site attractive to look at and easy on the eyes)

•Information about how to make a donation

•Any good press your group has gotten

•Any evidence you have that your group is legitimate

•Any celebrity endorsements your group has received

•Answers to questions that donors tend to ask frequently

•Details about your group - how it got started, what exact programs it runs

•Ways to support the group that do not include cash or money donations (i.e. information about letter writing campaigns or other things supporters can do)

•Information about your volunteers (no personal information)

Email

Some of your donors (especially those who contact you after looking at your site) will contact you by email. You need to make sure that your emails are informative, prompt, and short. Email tends to be a more informal style of communication, even though in some ways it is similar to letter-writing.

It is best to keep email short, as they are used to mostly give specific information. Be sure to respond to emails quickly, as it is expected that emails are acted upon faster than letters. You can set up your email program to automatically add a signature to your emails. This signature should contain your name, your non-profit's name, and full contact information. When using email during fundraising, avoid using special fonts (which cannot be read by all email programs) or graphics (which are large files and do not always load well). Simple, plain text email is often best.

Some non-profits are tempted to use email as an alternative to direct mail. Some email marketing companies will suggest that using email to solicit donations is effective. However, you need to be aware that unsolicited email is called "spam" and is generally hated by those who use email. Spam is considered intrusive and dangerous (as it can spread computer viruses) and it is often filtered out or deleted. Many people who get spam do not look at it. You should only use email donation soliciting after careful consideration and only with other fundraising methods that are sure to grant money.

No matter what forms of modern technology you use, you will need to work hard to keep your group safe online. Just as you would not leave the door of your office space wide open after hours when you are not present, you must take steps to ensure that your technology is not being used by people who may harm your computer or group.

The first step to keeping your technology safe is to install and regularly update antivirus and firewall programs on any computer in your non-profit's database. These programs will keep out hackers and viruses that can damage your computer and your computer's systems. You may also want to use passwords to ensure that no one can access your computer. After hours, lock up your computer so that thieves cannot steal your actual computer and extract donor information that way.

Even if you are very cautious, computers can fail. That's why it's very important that you have a paper backup of all your paperwork and important information. You do not want to lose your financial information and your donor lists because your computer broke down. Backing up data on a few different disks is also fine. However, keep a few copies, make frequent backups, and be sure to store the backups in a very safe place that no one can access.

Secrets of Successful Fundraising:
How to Raise More Money with Less Hassle

Anyone can raise some money, but if you are serious about really supporting your non-profit through your fundraising efforts, you will have to go further than the occasional sale or selling campaign. The costs of running a non-profit are quite high today, and you need to make sure that you get every dollar you can to keep your group afloat.

There are a few secrets to successful fundraising that are simply not covered in most books and resources about fundraising. However, these are the secrets that can mean the difference between a good fundraising campaign and a great one. These are the secrets that many fundraising consultants use, and here you can consider them without expensive consultation fees:

Psychology

There is an entire psychology of selling and of getting people to buy or spend money. Fundraising is very much about the emotional and psychological response that donors have. Often, the difference between a donation and a "no" response is nothing more than a few small psychological events that make a potential donor look with less favor on a non-profit. If you want to tap into the business of psychology, consider the following:

•The psychology of money: Most people are very emotional when it comes to cash. We see money not as a tool for something, but as a measurement of wealth. To part someone from their cash, you have to affect them emotionally, not intellectually. That means rather than focusing on all the practical reasons for giving money, paint someone a picture of the suffering lack of money is causing and then emotionally show how their donation can change that.

•The "me" syndrome: Donors (like any person) want to feel special. If you can make them feel that they are being approached especially or that they can make a huge impact, they are more likely to support your cause.

•Compelling reasons: Most of us look for something that pulls at us, that tugs at us in a personal or emotional way. If you can offer donors something special or compelling as an experience, they are more likely to support your cause. Consider the non-profit groups that raise money for world relief - they often stress the sheer number of people who suffer from hunger daily. The very fact that these numbers are so huge (much larger than most of us can comfortably imagine) causes many people to be compelled to give money for the cause. Compelling reasons to give create a sense of urgency, that money must be given now.

•Congruency: Humans are creatures of habit. Experts say that many of our reactions are based

on the "programming" our brains received when we were still undeveloped. For this reason, we tend to view people with suspicion or we tend to look for certain "clues" that subconsciously tell us how to react to a person. This is important to understand in fundraising, because this is the very process that potential donors are undergoing when they consider your non-profit.

If something seems out of place or "wrong" donors will walk away without offering support for your group. It will simply seem safer to do so. Congruency simply means that all the pieces fit into a congruent whole and look correct together. Congruency is also an important factor in getting any sort of support (including fundraising support).

Consider the politician who is denying participation in a scandal but seems nervous and unable to make eye contact. Are you likely to believe him or her? No, because the congruency is off. You can build congruency (and support) for your non-profit by putting forward the same and friendly presentation to the public. Do all you can to assure your donors that your group is "safe" to donate to.

•How Hard it is to Say No: Potential donors who do not want to part with their time and money will generally look for reasons to say no. If you can anticipate these reasons and counter them before the donor has time to think of them, you are more likely to get a donation. If you can eliminate all a donor's reasons for saying no, then you will have a donation. Some reasons that donors say "no" include:

- The belief that their money won't really make a difference
- The belief that a cause is too far away or not important enough
- The belief that charity is a waste of time
- The belief that non-profit groups do not use money responsibly
- The belief that the money will never get to those who really need it
- The belief that there is no urgency in giving money now - a contribution can be made "later"
- The belief that money can be raised elsewhere or from someone else

You and your group need to create compelling reasons why these false beliefs are not true when it comes to your fundraising campaign and your non-profit group. Then, include these reasons and ideas in your opening requests for support.

Multi-Fundraising

You will likely need more than one fundraising strategy. Unless your group is quite small or supported generously by a patron or government agency, you will need to try several methods of

fundraising in order to succeed.

This is especially important because people who will not respond to one type of fundraising will respond to another, so that you will get more donors as well as more fundraising revenue by trying several methods of fundraising. The person who will not donate money to a food bank may still donate canned goods. The food bank that offers this second fundraising option will therefore get this person's support. Since each fundraising venture costs money and takes effort, try to find ways to fundraise with less effort or fundraise in complementary ways. For example, you can combine a raffle or a sale with a marathon. You can (and should) combine grant applications with almost any other fundraising method.

Non-Stop Fundraising

Fundraising for the non-profit is not really an event that takes place when the group has a need for money. In order to be successful, fundraising has to take place all the time. The successful non-profit group today works regular fundraising into the daily operations of a group. Weekly meetings always include some mention of a fundraising effort underway, so that money is always coming in.

Larger groups may actually create small groups whose only job is to fundraise. Three volunteers from your group, for example, could be in charge of year-round fundraising while the rest of the group uses the raised money to implement programs and help people.

Advertising

It is not enough to develop a sound fundraising strategy, especially today when many non-profit groups are seeking money. You need to be able to convince donors that they should give money to your group - not to the many other groups and individuals who are asking for money.

Advertising can help make your donors are of you and can help convince them that they should be supporting your group. In many cases, failed fundraising events (such as fundraising sales where few people show up) are caused by lack of effective advertising, so don't be afraid to let the world know about your fundraising efforts!

Celebrity Power

Most people will gladly travel to see a favorite celebrity and many fans will gladly contribute to a charity that a celebrity endorses, especially if they get to see or hear the celebrity as well. Plus, celebrities routinely devote interview space to their favorite causes, often providing free advertising and even financial support for their favorite groups.

How do you find a celebrity endorsement or supporter? Often, the first step is to find out which celebrities support which organizations. You can find this out by reading interviews and news articles about celebrities - people in the news will often mention their favorite charities. Once

you have a list of celebrities that support the cause your non-profit is supporting, contact the celebrities or their agents (there are Hollywood directories at your library that will tell you how to contact who) and explain your non-profit group.

To get the best response, ask for a specific thing rather than for general support. Writing "I know that you are a generous supporter of childhood literacy - would you please offer a few kind words about the subject that we can place exclusively on our web site to help inform the public about this important issue..?" is more effective than simply asking for help. Do not overlook local celebrities such as radio station DJS and local bands. Local celebrities are often very generous with their time and support of non-profit groups and can be an excellent champion for your cause (especially if your non-profit group has a very local presence).

Sizing it Right

Fundraising and raising awareness about a cause you believe in can be very exciting, so it's easy to get carried away and start dreaming big. However, trying to organize something huge (a county fair, a country-wide food drive) is very expensive and time-consuming. Plus, when these plans do not work out or get overwhelming, you group will lose morale and may adopt a "what's the use?" or "failure" attitude.

Try to start small when it comes to fundraising goals, and build excitement in your group by dreaming big when it comes to results. For example, a goal such as "We are going to raise $800 this month to add air conditioner to our church, then we will start putting aside $20 a week so that we can found a school" is a good-sized goal because the money goal is modest while the real goal (the helping or cause goal) is large enough to inspire.

Timing

How well you time your fundraising will make a big difference as to success. Hosting a marathon in the dead heat of summer (or the depths of winter) is less than ideal timing. Hosting your book drive at the same time as the local school is hosting theirs could also be a problem. Even something as simple as approaching a donor during his or her dinner (or worse, waking him or her up in order to ask for a donation) is unlikely to produce a good response. You can't always predict what a good time for fundraising events is, but staying aware of your community and asking "what is the best time for this?" of every fundraising idea can be helpful.

Fundraising Mistakes that Could Get Your Non-Profit into Trouble

Mistakes happen, but some mistakes can cost you considerable fundraising money and can even land your group into trouble. Look out for the following mistakes to prevent your group's

fundraising efforts from becoming derailed:

Rudeness

It shouldn't even be an issue, but it is. Many volunteers who believe in the cause of their non-profit want only the best for the cause, but they need to be taught to never be rude to a potential donor. Unfortunately, non-profit groups who recruit through telemarketing especially have developed a reputation for rudeness. Sometimes, volunteers will accuse potential donors on the phone of wasting their time and will even be rude to someone who has said no to donating money. Even experienced callers will sometimes do this, believing that a "hard tack" approach will make someone feel guilty enough to donate.

It can't be said often enough - non-profit groups must work extra hard to keep their cool at all times. Being rude to any potential donor can have disastrous consequences, even if that donor is a faceless entity on the phone. That person could file a complaint with the Better Business Bureau or at least encourage friends and family not to donate to your cause. He or she may even write about the incident to a newspaper or magazine. In either case, one incident of rudeness could cost you your bottom line when it comes to fundraising.

Stress the importance of politeness to everybody in your group and discuss what each person should do if a donor is rude to them. Act out scenes of rude donors to decide what to do about these situations (the best response is to simply walk away or contact authorities of someone gets abusive or violent).

Confrontations

Disagreements between workers happen, but if this occurs in your group, act at once so that tensions don't sour the work you are doing. Tensions should be talked about at once and resolved as amicable as possible before things get out of hand.

Mixed-bag

One of the most ineffective ways to fundraise is to dabble. If your non-profit seems to be involved in every cause and seems to want to try every type of fundraising, your efforts will simply be too scattered. Focus on one cause and two or three fundraising efforts at a time for the best results. Specializing makes it easier to target potential donors and find sources of funding that are likely to be helpful. Most government grants, as well, are designed for groups that are very dedicated to one specific area or project.

The Prima Donna Syndrome

Many of us like to lead from time to time, but if someone in your group likes to hog all the

spotlight, then others are bound to feel overlooked. To counteract this, make a point of praising or rewarding everyone who is doing a good job. Those who are outgoing and like to lead often do well in interacting with potential donors. Giving such workers this sort of work can help make them feel important while making sure that their talents help rather than hurt your group.

Accusations of Dishonesty

A charge that your group is misusing funds, misleading anyone, or engaging in any sort of serious unethical activity is a very serious charge and needs to be handled immediately. If the charge is founded on fact and is caused by a mistake, you need to take steps to correct the problem. If the charge is false, you need to prove that it is so. Then, you need to explain in public what has happened and what steps have been taken to deal with the issue. This is not a situation that many non-profit wants to find themselves in, but if it happens to you, make sure that you have the proof and the loud media coverage that proves to potential donors that you are a legitimate and honest group.

Legal Problems

Law suits can be caused as a result of injury caused by an honest mistake or can be caused by bad feeling. In any case, make sure that you have a lawyer to turn to help you out of the mess. Also, you may need to hire public relations services in order to help your group deal with the press associated with legal troubles.

Not Enough Money Made at Fundraising

No matter how carefully you plan your ideas and no matter how good your ideas are, there may come a time when you simply make less money that you hoped to raise. If this happen, you can immediately turn to another (perhaps more modest) way of fundraising to make up the difference. You can also turn to your non-money non-profit goal and see whether your fundraising efforts can still be used to help accomplish that goal.

If your church did not raise enough money for pews, can you at least pay for the materials and arrange for volunteer labor to finish the project? Every fundraising effort brings you closer to some of your goals, even if you do not make as much of your money goals as you might like.

If you are making less than you would like through fundraising, evaluate your fundraising strategies. What have you not tried? What else can be done? Go back over this ebook and reapply these strategies again to your fundraising.

Conclusion

At this point, you have been given plenty to think about and you likely have several ideas about where to begin in your fundraising. You have all the necessary steps - from choosing a fundraising idea to developing a plan to dealing with common problems - to start you in fundraising.

Hopefully, you will be able to return to this ebook again and again as your non-profit group grows and as you fundraise more for many more exciting projects.

One thing you should do, if you have not already done so, is to go through this ebook, pen and paper in hand, and write out the answers to the questions posed throughout this book. What are your group's goals? Who are you potential donors? Working on paper will often help clarify ideas and will start you on your way to developing workable ideas.

One other thing you may want to do now that you have completed this ebook is start your own research into fundraising. One of the interesting things about fundraising is the ways in which trends influence money-raising methods.

Former ways of raising money for a non-profit - such as bake sales - may remain strong but are sometimes taken over by more trendy ways to make money for a non-profit. Reading the newspapers in search of other fundraising methods that have worked or failed can often give you a sense of what is working right now. This can help you in developing your own ideas about fundraising and formulating the ideas that will make your group the money it needs. Do not overlook the stories of failed fundraising attempts - often these can teach you more about fundraising than the successes.

Combined with your belief in your cause and the resources of you non-profit, this ebook can help you powerfully increase the money your group can fundraise. Now that you have all the tools you need....

Meet with your group and start fundraising for a better world and more productive non-profit!