



# 33 TOP TIPS

## for Building Donor Bonds



Here's how to create an unbreakable network of support.

**F**undraising is less about money than it is about relationships. Use these ideas to develop a loyal constituency of support for your organization:

**1. Give your supporters a chance to observe** your programs in action or to see a video that describes your programs.

**2. Through interviews, surveys, and informal polls,** find out all you can about your constituents, including their lifestyles, values, likes and dislikes.

**3. Enlist board and staff as fundraisers.** In bringing your organization's message to others, they will solidify their own commitment.

**4. Use a computer-based system** to keep accurate and up-to-date records and generate personalized letters to supporters.

**5. In all your messages,** focus not on what your organization needs but on how your organization meets people's needs.

**6. Send out a newsletter** or other regular publication to keep people informed of the good you're doing and how they can become involved.

**7. Create a clear statement** of your organization's mission and values. Highlight this statement on all your materials to draw in people with similar values.

**8. Create an on-line bulletin board** for your organization's supporters, where they can ask questions and receive answers.

**9. Treat your donors** as investors who will receive a values payoff. View them as partners in meeting community needs.

**10. At your board meetings,** have recipients of your organization's services describe how those services changed their lives.

**11. Invite potential donors** to serve on committees that match their interests. Notify them of upcoming events or activities that may interest them.

**12. Be sure board members** donate money to your organization, and encourage staff to do so as well. Giving is a transforming act, creating a sense of belonging and loyalty.

**13. Give donors as much say as possible** in how their money is spent, and provide feedback on the results of their contributions.

**14. Gather details** about how people would like to be involved in your organization. Include that information in your database.

**15. Ask donors** for their opinions and advice. Follow through on their ideas. Keep in touch about how those ideas are working. If you can't use their suggestions, explain why without discouraging their input.

**16. Every year,** be sure the executive director and board chair meet personally with each board member to ask them to give to the organization. Such face-to-face meetings are the best way to

## CREATIVE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

### Step Outside the Lines

Marathons, such as walk-a-thons and run-a-thons, are excellent ways to raise money. But consider stepping outside the lines of predictability. Examples: read-a-thons, with people reading books in a public area; dog walk-a-thons, in which participants bring their four-legged companions on the route; prayer-a-thons, especially with a specific cause to which to direct prayers; car-wash-a-thons, in which you wash cars for 24 hours straight (a great idea for young volunteers); weed-a-thons; or any other marathon theme that matches your mission.

### Host a Balloon Auction

Does your organization have donated items that don't fit well with your raffle? Use them for a balloon auction at your event.

Write names of these prizes on slips of paper, place them inside balloons, and then inflate the balloons. Auction off chances to pop a balloon and win a prize. For more creative fundraising ideas, see "Special Events Galore!", published monthly for \$79 per year by Stevenson, Inc., [www.stevensoninc.com](http://www.stevensoninc.com).

### Mix Class and Fun

Some 260 people attended the first-ever Black-Tie Bowling event held by Isaiah's Promise in Independence, Ohio, netting the adoption-services organization \$47,000. Women donned pearls and flowing dresses, and men came in tuxedos (from a rental shop that agreed to donate its rental fees to the cause). They bowled, danced to a jazz band, bid on silent auction items, and watched local celebrities compete for bowling honors such as Most Creative Form and Worst Score.

secure a commitment and will serve as models for board members when *they* go out to seek support for your organization.

**17. Share tapes of your board meetings** with your organization's supporters.

**18. For every time you ask people for money**, interact with them two times without asking for money.

**19. At your events and get-togethers**, mix current supporters with potential supporters. Your supporters can share their enthusiasm, and non-supporters can get their questions answered.

**20. Use focus groups** to find out what your supporters want. Based on the results, make appropriate changes in your programs.

**21. Have volunteers call donors** to thank them for their gifts. Such outreach gives volunteers the chance to interact with donors without asking for money.

**22. Always listen** more than you speak. Ask open-ended questions to find out about people so that you can fulfill their needs.

**23. Arrange for volunteers** to give talks about your organization at civic group luncheons and meetings. Not only will you increase

your base of support, but you'll renew the volunteers' excitement about your organization's work.

**24. When giving awards and recognition gifts**, think of ways you can involve people in your organization. Lunch with the board or a special tour of your facilities will be more meaningful than a mug or pin.

**25. Introduce your supporters** to your staff, board, and those who have benefitted from your organization's services.

**26. At all board and staff meetings**, ask everyone to write down the names of people they've met or heard about who may be interested in supporting the organization. Invite these people to become involved with your organization.

**27. Before asking people for money**, find out how they would like to be recognized for their gifts. Build your interactions around those desires.

**28. Consider every "no"** an opportunity to strengthen your relationship and turn the "no" into a "yes."

**29. Send thank-you's** promptly and often.

**30. View special events** as a chance to involve your supporters and attract new allies as well as to raise money.

**31. Whenever you come across**

**an article or idea** that relates to one of your supporters, send it on with a brief, friendly note.

**32. Several times a month**, call a few supporters to share what your organization is doing. Have staff and board members do the same.

**33. Ask people to commit** to doing something, no matter how small. The act of volunteering strengthens allegiance.

### Selected References

\*Brinckerhoff, Peter, "Using Surveys & Focus Groups to Gather Market Data," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 13, No. 3.

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Grace, Kay Sprinkel, *Beyond Fund Raising*, New York: John Wiley & Sons ([www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)).

\*Remley, Dirk, "Relationship Marketing: Guaranteeing the Future," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 14, No. 5.

\*Robinson, Andy, "Twelve Ways to Say Thank You," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 16, No. 6.

\*Starred references are available at [www.snpo.org/members](http://www.snpo.org/members). Also see Learning Institute programs on-line: Resource Development ([www.snpo.org/li](http://www.snpo.org/li)).