



Think Out of the Box for Fundraising Gains

Turn to creative fundraising ideas to weather tough times.

By Kevin Nemetz



While many traditional fundraising methods have buckled under the distressed economy, that doesn't mean you can't meet your fundraising goals. It simply means being willing to try new technologies and put creative spins on old fundraising staples. Here are some suggestions:

Raise Funds Online

Although most giving is down, online giving has increased during the past few years. Offering opportunities to give online is an especially effective strategy with millennials. At 79 million, this generation is larger than the baby boomer age group (78 million) and represents the future donor pool.

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Marketing events and selling tickets online are excellent ways to build more awareness, capture new supporters, and reduce expenses associated with traditional marketing. Using e-mail marketing and Web-based ticket sales not only saves money, it also boosts search engine optimization, driving more traffic to your Web site.

Using online videos is another effective way to direct people to your site. A recent study found that after watching an online video, 64% of

viewers took some action, such as visiting a Web site, donating money, making a purchase, completing a form, or engaging in word-of-mouth marketing.¹

Partner Up

Collaboration has always been an important strategy for successful nonprofits, and in these tough times it's a must. Partnering with other organizations can reduce your expenses, expand your reach, and increase your impact. You can share space and administrative resources with other nonprofits, create joint programming, and apply collaboratively for funding, which will increase your chances of success.²

Get in on a Daily Deal

With charitable group buying, organizations offer online daily deals to purchasers of their products and services, which generate contributions to nonprofits. For every purchase made through a Beliefnet Daily Deal, for example, 10% is given back to a nonprofit organization selected by the consumer. Other charitable group buying programs include Deals for Deeds, CauseOn, and Goodtwo. Living Social's "12 Days of Giving," which takes place during the 12 days before Christmas, has been especially successful in generating funds for nonprofits. During its last "12 Days" campaign, over \$130,000 was raised.

Be sure to let your supporters

Consider taking key staff out of the office for a brainstorming session.

know about these programs. It's an easy way for them to send money your way while buying things they would purchase anyway. Encourage them to designate your organization as the recipient when they make purchases through these programs.³

Market with High Profile Supporters

To raise funds to clear a \$770,000 debt from her presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton went to one of her best supporters—her husband, Bill. Taking a creative approach to fundraising, she sent a letter to her supporters under Bill Clinton's signature. It discussed her campaign's "few vestiges of debt that I know she would like to see paid in full," and conveyed how proud he was of "the work Hillary has done as Secretary of State..." and "how much your continued support means to her." The punch line: "Contribute \$5 or more today for your chance to join me for a day in New York City." While figures of how much she raised aren't available, the approach was highly successful.

Does your organization have one or more high profile supporters—athletes, entertainers, community leaders, or elected officials? Giving donors a chance to spend time with such a person is a great way to raise funds. For an added boost, ask the celebrity to create a public service announcement tied in to the "Chance to Meet with Me" campaign.

Go Green

"Green" fundraising campaigns can raise awareness for two good

Donations increase for nonprofits that embrace innovative strategies.

causes: yours and the environment. You can infuse “green” into your fundraising in many ways. You could work with nurseries to obtain tree saplings at below retail and then sell them in a “Plant a Tree—Help Save a Life and the Environment” campaign. Or consider holding an event with exhibits of green ideas. Ask local businesses to pay exhibitors’ fees to participate, and charge admission for consumers. If you can get the exhibit space for free, perhaps from a local municipality, and market the event cost-effectively (with online marketing, PSAs, and calendar announcements in local media), you could make a great deal of money from such an event.

Leverage the Latest Footwear Craze

Whether UGGs, Crocs, jeweled flip flops, or tone-up sneakers, fashionable footwear sells—and can also raise funds. The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation’s Sneaker Sale has been a fruitful fundraising program. Clerks in supermarkets and mass merchandise retailers ask customers at checkout if they want to make a \$1 donation to help support the foundation. If they do, a paper sneaker with their name on it is mounted in the store. People can also sell these \$1 paper sneakers to their contacts, with proceeds going to the foundation.

Footwear manufacturers and retailers see the value in teaming up with a nonprofit. Crocs, for example, launched a fundraising campaign to help a feline welfare program in Malaysia, the Malaysian Cats Care Project. Customers buying from the Crocs Hello Kitty collection, who made a certain donation, received a special Hello Kitty Jibbitz charm. The Walking Company, with its “UGGs 4 School” campaign, donated \$10 to their customers’ specified schools for every UGG boot purchase.

Work with footwear companies to create your own fundraising campaign. For instance, imagine a “Rainy Earth Day” promotion involving the sale of brightly-colored rain boots with a donation to your organization.

Take Advantage of Unused Tickets

Did you know that season ticket holders to sporting and entertainment events attend on average only about 40% of the events? What happens to the tickets? At least 15% are wasted, while the rest are often given to people who may not even appreciate the tickets. Tix4cause.com™ helps nonprofits benefit from corporate and individual donations of unused tickets to sporting, entertainment, and cultural events, as well as contributions of experiences such as hotel stays, dinners, cooking classes, and fitness activities

Philanthropic consumers can access www.tix4cause.com™ on a 365/24/7 basis and purchase a ticket or service knowing that 100% of the proceeds go directly to a specified nonprofit. Since its inception in 2010, tix4cause.com™ has signed on many national, regional,

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and local nonprofits, including Ronald McDonald Houses, Habitat for Humanity, and Autism Speaks.

Tix4cause.com™ provides the organizations with marketing, communications, and social media tools to help them optimize their gains from the program. Nonprofits can also sell tickets to their own events on the tix4cause.com™ site, eliminating merchant fees.

Find the Simple, Creative Idea

At just nine years old, an American boy, Austin Gutwein, came up with a way to raise funds for African children orphaned by HIV-AIDS—shooting hoops for dollars. His nonprofit, Hoops of Hope, has raised over \$2 million in international AIDS relief since it started six years ago.

This is just one example of how a simple idea can generate enormous results. It should inspire you to think creatively, even if that means taking key staff out of the office for a brainstorming session.

Creative ideas not only engage the

public, they interest the media and gain attention in a crowded field. Universally appealing ideas like shooting basketballs can be used on an ongoing basis, while other ideas may be linked to season or event (Dress a Snowman for a Soldier, for instance, or Build a Sandcastle for the Homeless). Data indicate that donations increase for nonprofits that embrace innovative strategies rather than remaining fixed on what has been done in the past. ■

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Footnotes

¹The joint study of 2,400 online users, age 18-54, was conducted by Google and AOL. It is estimated that over 14 billion online

videos are viewed monthly and that 78.5% of the total U.S. Internet audience views online video.

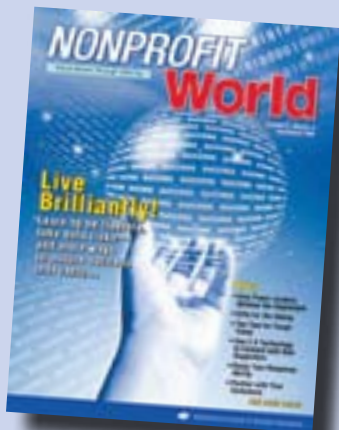
²See Bridgespan's "Succeeding in Tough Times Survey" at www.bridgespan.org/succeeding-through-tough-times.aspx.

³Take a look at www.beliefnet.com, www.dealsfordeeds.com, www.causeon.com, www.livingsocial.com, and www.goodtwo.com.

More Creative Fundraising Ideas

Also see these *Nonprofit World* articles at www.snpo.org/members:

- **Five Simple Ideas for Developing Fundraising Results** (Vol. 29, No. 3)
- **Raising Funds in an Uncertain Economy** (Vol. 27, No. 2)
- **How to Engage the Next Generation of Donors Now** (Vol. 29, No. 1)
- **Seven Fundraising-Event Strategies for Challenging Times** (Vol. 28, No. 1)
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