

The “M&M’s” of Fundraising: Matching Groups With Fundraisers and Maximizing Results

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Recently I was talking with several members of a veterans association about various fundraising ideas. One of the fundraisers we discussed was a honorary banquet. I explained how the concept for the event would be more formal than their current annual picnic style dinner, and would likely be hosted at a hotel or other similar banquet facility. They quickly commented that their audience really enjoys more casual events and a formal dinner would not be as popular.

Afterwards I started thinking about how positive it was that the group recognized what would and wouldn’t work well for them. They had demonstrated the first “M” of fundraising success: Matching.

Matching Your Organization with the Right Fundraiser

Creating a good match between your organization and an appropriate fundraiser will result in a higher return on your time and investment.

So how do you go about the process of matching? Primarily this is an information gathering and discussion oriented process that occurs during the initial planning stages. This should happen months or even a year or more ahead of the expected date of your fundraising event or program.

The 5 Matching Points:

1. Mission – Consider the mission and purpose of your organization. If you plan a fundraiser that fits well with the mission of the group, a consistent harmony will be created that not only raises money but also supports the cause that your group represents.

For Example:

Art museum: opening night party, art auction, craft show
School band: special concert
Humanitarian: Direct gift requests through mailings or collections

2. Style – Consider the personal preferences and interests of the members, donors or volunteers in your organization. What type of fundraiser would appeal most to your audience?

For Example:

Casual: picnic, [ice cream social](#)
Formal: gala, dinner
Socialites: gala events, fashion show
Competitive: contests, ticket sales challenges, [prizes](#)
Sporty: [walk-a-thon](#), sports tournament
Busy: [no-bake bake sale](#), [online sales](#), direct donation

3. Donation Capacity – One of the most important factors is your audience’s capacity and inclination toward giving. Would they be willing to donate at levels expected for a live auction, formal dinner, or other gala? What ticket price would be appropriate for your audience?

4. Planning Time – How much time will it take to plan the fundraiser? How many months in advance does planning need to begin? How many man hours, by staff and/or volunteers, will be required to plan the fundraiser? If it’s an event, how many volunteers will be needed on the actual day of the event? Evaluate whether your group has the capacity and willingness to devote the time needed for the fundraiser in question.

5. Return on Investment – Does the potential revenue justify the costs that would be incurred by the fundraising program? Will the fundraising event or program bring in much more than what it cost?

Perhaps you’re wondering what weight to give each of these five matching points. It all depends upon what will most benefit and appeal to your audience. Often it’s a combination of factors. The first time a fundraising program or event is used should also be viewed as a learning experience. You’ll likely discover ways to raise more and create an even better match the next year.

Maximizing Your Results for Any Fundraising Campaign

The second “M” in this fundraising strategy is maximizing your results for any fundraiser you conduct. Consider adding one or all of the following techniques to your upcoming fundraising efforts.

1. Incentive Programs – Create an incentive for donors or participants to help you raise funds:

Sales Contests – prizes for volunteers who sell the most raffle tickets, have the highest sales in a product fundraiser or otherwise raise the most money with your campaign. Prizes can be anything from a gift certificate, a plaque, free tickets to an event or a trip.

Thank you gifts for donors – Provide small thank you tokens depending on the level of giving. Books, DVDs or special invitation only events such as a cocktail party or concert make good thank you gifts.

2. Multiple Fundraisers – Event fundraisers should always have several ways to bring in revenue. Examples include silent auctions, raffles, advertising in programs, food, corporate sponsors, booth rental, entry fees or souvenirs.

3. Partnerships – Partnering with other organizations, businesses and individuals can help in your fundraising efforts. For example, a fundraising event may be easier to plan and have greater attendance when it is sponsored by two organizations. Creating a sponsorship or advertising program will help involve businesses and individuals and underwrite the costs of your fundraiser.

4. Donations – When planning a fundraising event get as much donated as possible, this includes food, facilities and supplies. Prizes for silent auctions, raffles, door prizes and incentives should always be donated.

5. Increase Publicity – Just like in the business world, people need to be exposed to an opportunity multiple times before “buying.” Fundraising events should increase publicity during the weeks leading up to an event using press releases, banners and other advertising. Letter campaigns are most effective with multiple contacts including follow up letters, postcards and/or telephone calls.

Matching & Maximizing in Action

Just last week I heard from Robert Telecky who used many of the strategies discussed above to raise \$10,000 for a Children’s Hospital:

I wanted to take the time to let you know how much your information has helped me this year with the annual fundraiser I host for our local children’s Hospital. The event is a stand-up comedy fundraiser called Comics For Kids, Laughter Is The Best Medicine.

We just hosted the show again this year on October third. With the information that I learned from your newsletters and [e-book](#), I sent out preliminary letters to sell ads to the show program to a list of big business companies in Cleveland.

I also sent out letters to ask for donations for silent auction items. Because I work in information technology I wanted a lot of the items to be electronic. Among other things we received a Microsoft-X box from Microsoft and a 27 inch flat screen LCD TV from another company called Blue Chip. We hired a video production crew that filmed the show and produced a DVD at a highly discounted rate.

We walked away that evening with ten thousand dollars in donations for the hospital!

Robert’s success story is so inspiring and instructive that I asked him to give us some more details and he graciously agreed. [Click here to find out more about the Comedy Show Fundraiser.](#)

About the Author: Sandra Sims has been fundraising for various charities for over 10 years and is dedicated to helping non profits raise more for their causes. She is the author of several informative resources for non profit organizations including [The 5 Keys to Successful Fundraising](#), [The Beginner’s Guide to Fundraising](#) and [Sample Fundraising Letters](#)

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