

Organizing Your Fundraising Team

Now that you've got a goal to work toward, how do you develop your human resources in the best manner to achieve your fundraising goals? You will need to set guidelines for volunteers or staff members, form committees, divide up responsibilities, and shift the workforce from one task to another whenever it is deemed necessary.

Finding Volunteers

It is estimated that over 60 percent of the population of the United States engaged in some type of volunteer work in the past year. Growing concerns for family, children, and the environment have spearheaded the burgeoning trend in volunteering.

Volunteers will get involved because they:

- Are passionate about the cause
- Want to give something of themselves
- Want to hone or use skills they may not get to use often
- Are looking for experience to add to their resume
- Want to do something worthwhile for other people
- Are looking to meet people and socialize while doing something constructive

How you can find good volunteers:

Know what-and who-you need. Identify the areas in which you want to enlist volunteer help. Have specifics, jobs, times, tasks, and relationships in mind. The more you plan these areas, the better your chance of finding-and keeping-just the right volunteers.

Plan where you want to look for volunteers. Where would you find good volunteers for your particular charitable organization? Looking in a vet's office for volunteers for an animal shelter is a good match. You may find willing participants for your literacy organization among schoolteachers.

Start with your board. Introduce the idea of building your volunteer group at a board meeting. Ask board members to suggest people they know who may be interested in serving on a committee or volunteering their time.

Review your volunteer list. Take a look at your existing list. Who else could be included on the list? Do you see patterns in the volunteers' other

activities? For example, do some volunteers belong to a gardening club that may be a good place to make a presentation for your organization? Do some belong to a fraternity? A civic group?

Families of volunteers. Often the families of volunteers are a good place to find not only volunteers, but also to find donors. Volunteerism among teens is growing and presents a great opportunity for progressive-minded charitable organizations.

People served by your organization. Have you considered your clients as a possible source of volunteers? If you work for a small business development center, it would be a logical step for someone who has learned valuable business techniques to be interested in passing them along. If your immunization program for preschoolers reaches neighborhood parents, you may find moms and dads who have benefited from your services to be receptive to helping others.

High schools and colleges. These are often a great place to find volunteers. Students are often looking for community service credits, or they may simply be interested in your cause but not sure how to start helping. Make it easy for them!

Selecting Leaders

For any fundraising project, you will need to select or elect a leader to oversee all aspects of the event. Once you have sold your troops on the idea of raising the funds, an effective leader makes the people he or she is leading feel good about themselves and enjoy the work they are doing. The success or failure of a fundraising project can be largely based on the enthusiasm of the workers involved, because they are the heart of the project.

Perhaps the most significant set of skills a leader can possess are people skills. After all, you can be an expert at setting the budget, following your calendar, and lining up the resources necessary to pull off your fundraiser; however if no one follows your lead, you are not a leader.

Important people skills include:

- Listening when others talk
- Doing your research so you're well versed on your fundraising cause
- Clearly delegating work to others
- Giving people latitude to utilize their skills (Don't micromanage!)
- Seeking out the opinions of others
- Monitoring people's work closely, but from afar
- Keeping others apprised of the progress of the fundraiser

- Remaining calm under pressure and getting along with various personalities
- Knowing when you need to ask for help
- Providing encouragement and showing appreciation

Whether dealing with volunteers or donors, a leader will need to be encouraging and show a degree of flexibility. He or she will need to be accessible to address concerns, answer questions, and solve conflicts. An effective leader should know as much as possible about the cause, the fundraising goal, and how to produce and promote the fundraising activity.

Volunteers as Fundraisers

Ways your team of volunteers can get involved in your fundraising project:

- Serving on a development committee
- Helping find sponsors for special events or publications
- Writing, printing, or addressing letters
- Working the phones
- Serving at a special event
- Being part of a donor list
- Hosting a donor luncheon

Setting Guidelines

You should always set up procedure to follow for fundraising activities. The level of formality of such guidelines, and the protocol you will follow, will depend on the size and structure of your organization, as well as the fundraising activity you have in mind.

Be Succinct and Clear. Guidelines should define how the fundraising plan is to be carried out in succinct and clear language. All primary activities should be included, such as promotion, programming, administrative duties, and so on. The responsibilities of individuals or committees should be outlined, with details included to avoid confusion. While you don't want to pigeonhole people, you do want to provide them with a job description to turn to as a guide when doing tasks.

Some common jobs may include:

Person in Charge:

Pitch the idea to the group and get them to approve it. Find volunteers. Make a time line starting six weeks before and up to one week after the event. Look over the descriptions of other assignments. Make sure you feel confident that each

volunteer is capable and willing to do his or her assignments. Regularly check to make sure assignments are being met. Check often. Team follow up is essential.

Location and Site Locator:

Find a visible high traffic location. Contact property owners. Get insurance for the event if property owners desire such. Discuss traffic flow with the property owner. One week before the event write a confirmation and thank you letter.

Publicity Coordinator:

Call all local publications that are applicable and submit information to the Community Calendar sections. Call the radio stations. Make sure they put the event on the Public Service Announcements (PSA's) schedule. Call local reporters and let them know of your event. Make signs. Make wrapped coffee cans for extra donations. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper two weeks before the event.

Supplies Needed Person:

Round up all supplies needed for your event. Collect signs from the publicity person before the event.

Shift Scheduler:

Make sure you have enough volunteers to come out on the day of the event. Have exact names and times and make sure the volunteers know when they are working. Have phone numbers for all your volunteers. Call and confirm with each person the week of the event.

More significantly than how each task should be done, the guidelines should set the tone for how transactions and interactions with other people, including donors, should be conducted. They are a matter of shaping the overall parameters of the fundraiser. For example, areas that need to be addressed might include:

- How to explain information about your goal to a prospective donor
- How specific concerns or complaints are to be addressed
- What the procedure for moving to a contingency plan is and who makes such a decision
- What to do if someone is injured or takes sick during your fundraising event
- Who is in charge of ordering from vendors and what procedures should be followed
- What does and does not need to be presented for board approval
- If the board is not involved, who makes decisions on each aspect of the project
- Who can call a meeting, and what the procedure is to take a vote

Having written guidelines for your team from the beginning can come in handy if anyone questions how you are handling certain procedures or if you are accused of being unfair to a certain volunteer or group of volunteers. It assures that everyone knows what the rules and how things are to be handled.

Showing Your Appreciation

The hard work and time commitment given by your team should always be acknowledged. Don't let those who are working hard for your cause feel that their efforts are going unnoticed. You may want to mention those individuals in your newsletters, send out thank-you cards, or take them out for coffee and dessert. Such gestures go a long way in lining up volunteers for next year.

No matter how you do it, it is important that volunteers know that their work is appreciated. Hearing thank you is part of the pay rate for volunteers, and it is an important part of the job.