

# Fundraising 101



Fundraising Made Easy.

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## fundraising [fuhnd-rey-zing] noun

an activity or event that is intended to generate money to support a non-profit or political organization.

Nearly every non-profit organization has a need to raise money to support its goals. Some activities just bring in money; some have both money coming in and money going out. Some of the things you do raise a lot of extra money; some barely break even.

Often we see Financial Reports that list every activity that has money coming in under "Fundraisers". We encourage you to challenge that idea and spend some time really thinking about the activities your group is involved in and the purpose behind them.

### **The place to start is purpose.**

Why are we selling candy bars? If we are a soccer club, does it help our kids play better? Or is it a social activity that everyone enjoys? Or are we really just doing it for the money – in other words, if we didn't make any money on it, we wouldn't dream of spending our time on it. Is this a fundraiser? Yes.

Let's compare that to a family pizza night at the school. We charge enough money for the pizza and pop to cover our costs, but not so much that it dissuades people from coming. This is a get together that gives parents an opportunity to meet and encourages interaction. We collect money for sure, but we may make a little on the night or we may lose a little on the night. Does it help our kids read better? No. But that's not what we are trying to accomplish. We are willing to risk losing a little money because we know it's good for school spirit. But if we get lucky and sell all the pizza and pop and come out ahead, does this mean it's a fundraiser? No.



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Now what about training or workshops that we provide for our membership (or chess club for the kids at school)? We charge a fee for registration that may or may not cover all our costs. The training is an important method for our members to acquire required knowledge or skills or certification. If we bring in more than we spend, does that make this event a fundraiser? No.

Fundraising is about making a bunch of extra money that you can then use for activities that your organization really wants to provide. It is how you get the money to help you achieve your core purpose.

We are big believers in having groups think about why they are in existence. What is our core purpose? Our mission? How are we going to make a difference in our community or in the world? What is it that we have to offer? This is not a trivial exercise. And it is something that we may lose sight of over time. We encourage your group to take the time to step back and question the things that you have been doing “forever” and see if they still meet your needs.

## Fundraising ideas that work

Fundraising is the lifeblood of every non-profit organization. It is important for non-profits to keep coming up with new and creative ideas to raise money that they can put toward the cause, to further their objective.

The drawback is that people aren't very keen on parting with their money, even if it is for a good cause. Non-profits are therefore faced with the unique challenge of raising money in a way that is fun and interesting.



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There are many different ways to raise funds, each requiring varying levels of resources and time. So what if you need to raise some funds for your non-profit in a bind? Whether you've procrastinated on this season's fundraiser or you've come into need for some money to aid a particular facet of your non-profit, here are some quick fundraising ideas we've had the experience of using successfully.

**Jog-A-Thons** have become one fundraising method that can be used by both public and private schools. During a Jog-A-Thon, participants jog as many laps as they can within a specified time period. The course that is jogged (or walked) can be designed in such a way as to take into account the grade level and the ability of the participants running during the specified time period, but everyone has fun. The goal for each Jog-A-Thon participant is to earn as much money as possible from as many sponsors as possible. A sponsor can pledge money based either upon number of laps completed by the participant or by a fixed dollar amount that is irrespective of number of completed laps.

**Table, Table, Table** Is there a farmers market or weekly concert in your area? Chances are these are put on by friendly non-profits that would be happy to lend you some space to display print material. Send a few chatty representatives to advertise your cause. Remember to include a sign-up sheet for names, addresses, emails and phone numbers!



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**Online** There are many online fundraising sites that are user-friendly and cost very little to operate. Kickstarter and Razoo are just a few. These are also excellent resources for fundraising ideas. Make your ask for donations concise and measurable (say \$50 will support one team member at soccer camp for one day), and make sure you have a beginning and end to the donation period. This could be a day, a weekend, a week or bi-weekly period. Remember that unending asks can lead to donor fatigue.

**Raffle** Do you know why raffles happen all the time? It's because they are popular and people like them. Also, they make lots of money! Often an individual who is unsure of donating to a cause or to buying a ticket to an event will tend to purchase a raffle ticket or two... or ten. Plus, it's easy to find compelling raffle items. Ask around to your family and friends. Luxury items with wide appeal are good, and jewelry, vacations, spa days or electronics will always be appealing to a potential raffle ticket buyer. Most people will be flattered by the solicitation for a donation item and happy to help in any way that they can.

**Business Donations** Think about which local business matches especially well with your cause. Smoothies? Coffee? Groceries? Put together a succinct approach that would demonstrate how them donating 5% every third Tuesday of the month would compel your supporters to frequent their business. It's a win-win for everyone. You get cash; the donor business gets more people purchasing their products. Some larger corporations like Whole Foods have established giving days and applications in their local stores.





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**Personal Gifts** This is becoming a major trend with birthdays, weddings, holidays and other occasions. Instead of asking for presents, ask for donations to your favorite cause. Let your family and friends know how meaningful this would be to you and your organization. It could be a monetary donation or a specific product like soccer balls or classroom supplies...something that potential donors would find fun to shop for.

**Crafternoon** Take a simple activity you enjoy doing with friends and make it a small fundraiser. Invite 20-40 friends and acquaintances to craft for a cause or coffee for a cause. Serve homemade bread or cookies and lemonade, and lead a simple craft, say card making. Request a \$10 donation at the door. You may find this to be the most fun and easy \$200 you ever made.



**Matching Gifts** Did you know that hundreds if not thousands of corporations match their employees' donations, usually dollar for dollar? A complete list of these can be found online. Many employees don't even know about this benefit, so educating them can be a good way to double your money. Another effective use of matching gifts is to find a larger donor for a specific cause. Say a local bank in town will pledge \$500 in matching funds and all money raised goes towards scholarships, in turn they can display a sign at your soccer games.

**Pay to Play** Have supporters pay to have a team coach, Executive Director, mascot or other popular (or unpopular) individual do something silly or embarrassing at a public event. It could be drinking Gatorade out of a soccer cleat, getting a pie in the face or singing a karaoke song.



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**Lemonade Stand** Lemonade stands are hot right now. They can be a one-time event or an accompaniment to a weekly game or farmers market. Let your thirsty customers know that all monies raised go to your cause or group and don't forget that tip jar! Find a high foot traffic area and some cute kiddo servers and don't forget that dogs get thirsty too! Have a water bowl ready.



**Sponsors** Brainstorm a targeted list of supplies that you need, with costs for each; then ask people to sponsor items. Request a wide range: iPads for the classroom or books or art supplies or teacher training. The campaign could last the summer followed by a fun party for donors in the fall. Announce what they've sponsored with little stickers on their name tags.





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**Collection at Your Local Grocer** Ask your local grocer if they'll allow you to set up shop out front for a few hours on a Saturday. Have a couple of collection buckets and plenty of information on hand for patrons wanting to know about your cause. Be sure to lament that any amount helps.

**Bake Sale** Going back to an oldie but goodie, bake sales are always a great way to help raise funds. The reason they've stuck around so long as a preferred method of raising funds is because cupcakes never go out of style. People always love buying homemade baked goods and the non-profit doesn't need to invest much when setting it up.



**Text Message Campaign** Mobile has come a long way since its early days and it has now become an extension to people lives. Since cell phones are constantly attached to their owners, text campaigns are a sure-fire way of reaching them. The best part of text campaigns is that they enable your non-profit to collect micro-donations and sometimes less is more. The only downside of the text campaign is that fees vary based on which service you use. Such companies include mGive, GiveByCell, TextToPledge, MobileCause, and Connect2Give.

**Sell your Merchandise** If you have official organization merchandise, then go ahead and sell it. While previously this was not a very profitable way of raising funds for the organization; the internet has made things much easier. Not only can these items be made at a lower cost,



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problems such as overproduction, unsold items and lesser sales have been rectified by online sales. Production can now be limited to the number of sales made. And if you don't refer to a particular school year, inventory can be sold for years to come.

**Calendar Sales** An annual calendar is not only a good way of raising money but also something that will keep your organization in the minds of your customers throughout the year. The calendar can have images that showcase the work that you do or the good that you've done so far.

## Summary

Fundraisers can be extremely tricky to pull off, but that doesn't mean that quick fundraising is always the best. Well thought out campaigns tend to do better. But if you're in a pinch, it's good to know that it's still possible to raise the money necessary to keep your organization afloat. Always make sure to keep your primary objective in mind and project it in all the efforts that you make. Believe in and convince others that their contributions are going toward a good cause, and you will succeed at fundraising every time.



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## Show your appreciation

Sending a donation “thank you” note not only shows your appreciation but reassures the giver that choosing your cause was a good decision.

Be sure to acknowledge the donation soon after it’s received – ideally within 48 hours. People are less likely to give again if they feel unappreciated.

### Here are some tips for writing your “thank you”:

- Make the note about the giver, not you or your cause. Be sure to give details about what services were made possible with the money.
- Keep a generic version on your computer that can be personalized quickly.
- Keep the tone personal.
- Very large donations deserve a phone call or a personal visit.
- Include a receipt.



# Sample Donation Thank You Letters

## Thanking Vendors

Dear Company,

Please accept my heartfelt appreciation for your donation. Our auction was a huge success, in part due to your help. Your beautiful gifts were highly sought items.

Thank you for your generosity and your quality products!

Sincerely,

## Thank You to Friends

Dear Kim and Frank,

I want to express my appreciation for your generosity in support of [name of cause here]. Your personal commitment was incredibly helpful and allowed us to reach our goal. Your assistance means so much to me but even more to [name of cause here]. Thank you from all of us.

Thanks again for your kindness,

## Donation for Raffle

Dear Mr. Pritchard,

We would like to thank you and your company for the generous gift to our fundraiser. Our raffle was a huge success, and would not have been possible without your help. The raffle funds will be used to [purpose], so you are truly making a difference in people's lives. Thank you on behalf of [name of cause].

Respectfully,



# Sample Donation Receipt

Date

Name of Cause  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip

We acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of [amount], which you have so generously contributed to [name of cause].

Donor: [name of donor]

Donation: [amount]

[Name of cause] is recognized as a nonprofit organization by the IRS.  
IRS Code: Section 501(c)(3)  
Tax Identification Number: [Tax ID number]



# Sample Donation Request Letter

Name of potential donor  
Title of potential donor  
Business name  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip

Date

Dear [name of potential donor],

I am writing to you on behalf of [Sunset Lane PTA](#). The [school PTA](#) is currently planning our [Christmas Fundraising Event –The Jinglebell Challenge](#) which takes place on [December 1st](#). This will consist of an afternoon of fun for the children and their families. Previous events have always proved very popular.

Money raised at the event will be used to refurbish our technology lab which currently houses outdated equipment from 2005.

We were hoping that [\[name of business\]](#) might be willing to supply us with a prize for our raffle. [\[Name of business\]](#) gift baskets are always popular but any suitable product you could donate to us would be much appreciated.

If you are able to help please send you donation direct to the school at the address above. If you require additional information please contact me at the school address or email [yourname@pta.com](mailto:yourname@pta.com)

Thank you in advance and best wishes from everyone at [Sunset Lane Elementary School](#).

Your sincerely

Your Name  
[Sunset Lane Elementary PTA](#)







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