

Guide to Hosting a Fundraising Event

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1. Imagine your event

Trying to envision the perfect event, but coming up blank? Use these tips to develop an experience that has excitement, style and fundraising power!

- Try establishing a committee for your new event, and gather a group of interested individuals to discuss your ideas. Then put your heads together and brainstorm – nothing's off the table at this point.

Quick tip: A philanthropic event is your best opportunity to raise awareness of your organization and the cause you represent. Try to think of a name for your event that incorporates both.

- Don't know where to start? Think about the events that you have attended in the past. How can you take these events and add your own "twist"?
- Think of events that will have a high level of participation. Avoid events that require a unique ability or talent. Concepts that include spectator roles or teams of people always boost your number of participants.
- Still stuck? Use this list of event ideas as a starting point for developing your own event concept:
 - Run/walk
 - Bowling, tennis, bingo, poker tournament (almost any sport or game)
 - Gala or Benefit dinner
 - Live/silent auction
 - Themed party (casino night, luau, etc.)
 - Rummage Sale
 - Talent show
 - Pancake breakfast
 - Coin drop

2. Fundraising tips and tactics

Who are you raising money for? About the Alzheimer's Association

You don't have to become an expert on Alzheimer's disease, but it is good to know the basics about the disease and the Alzheimer's Association. Be familiar with a few talking points so you have something to say about Alzheimer's disease and why you are raising money for this particular cause. Consult your toolkit's *Fact Sheet: Alzheimer's disease and the Alzheimer's Association* to get started. Another easy reference tool: alz.org, the Alzheimer's Association Web site.

Fundraising with confidence: How to raise money without feeling nervous, uncomfortable or awkward

Asking for money can be tough. Even the most experienced fundraisers can have a hard time making an “ask” for a donation. Use the tips below to put your best foot forward when you request a contribution to help fight Alzheimer’s disease.

- The most important thing to remember is that you’re not asking for money for yourself. You’re asking for money to help the 5 million people living with Alzheimer’s disease, and for all of the people who are affected by the devastating consequences of this disease.
- If you reviewed the fact sheet on the Alzheimer’s Association and Alzheimer’s disease, don’t be afraid to use those statistics! Potential donors will be impressed by your knowledge.
- What’s the worst thing that could happen? Someone might say no. But you’ll find that more often, people will say yes!
- Decide on a fundraising goal and publicize it. Let potential donors know how close you are to your goal, how much more you need and how you plan to reach it!
- Use different channels to ask different audiences. Ask for donations via e-mail, letter or face-to face contact, depending on your target. To get started, see the toolkit’s *Letter to an individual*.
- You can follow up and ask twice for a donation (in a polite manner). In many instances, your potential donors have simply forgotten to give or they’re very busy.

Securing sponsors in your community and beyond

Gaining event sponsorship is about knowing what you want and what you can give in return. Ask these important questions before selling sponsorship for your event.

- Do you want a financial donation? Or an “in-kind” sponsorship where a vendor might be able to offer you some of their product for free? (For example, a grocery store could donate bottled water; a local caterer could provide hors d’oeuvres).
- What can you offer in return? Will you add the vendor’s logo to your event program or promotional materials? Put a link to their Web site from your event site? Can you guarantee your event will have a certain number of participants (and consequently, a certain level of exposure for your sponsor’s product)?
- Do you have different levels of sponsorship that offer increasing levels of visibility?

Quick tip: Put together a package of materials about your event before visiting a sponsor. You want to appear professional and prepared when you ask for money or an in-kind donation! These packages are also a great leave-behind.

- What's your game plan? Will you send letters to vendors, asking for sponsorship, then follow up with a phone call? Or an in-person visit? To get started, use the *Letter to a business* in your toolkit.
- Is the vendor/business part of chain? Is there potential for larger sponsorship or support of your event outside of the immediate community?

Quick tip: Securing sponsorship can develop into a big job if it's done correctly. Consider organizing a sponsorship committee or nominating sponsorship co-chairs to spread the work evenly.

3. Building the buzz

Getting the word out is the key to hosting any successful event. The secret to building the buzz is to promote your event early and often using many different channels. Some opportunities to consider:

- Local newspapers (both advertisement and feature story)
- Local radio stations
- Local television stations (both advertisement and feature story)
- Hosting a booth at other community events
- Event flier/poster
- Chapter or national organization Web sites

Quick tip: Does one of your chapter or lodge members have a loved one living with Alzheimer's disease? Is she or he willing to share this experience? Personal stories can be incorporated into media coverage and are one of the most effective ways to reach your audience.

When promoting your event, you can decide to pay for promotion (advertising) or try to build a story around your event in order to get free media coverage (public relations). Depending on the funds you have available, it's important to try a combination of these tactics. Your toolkit has the following resources to help you get started:

- *Sample newspaper ad*
- *Press release*
- *Media alert*

4. Event logistics

Your event day team and other volunteers

To keep things running smoothly on the day of your event, enlist a team with specific responsibilities to help you with the legwork. This concept extends beyond the event day – you simply can't do this alone! Recruit for the following volunteer roles, knowing that

these individuals can create a committee to help them depending on the size of your event:

- Sponsorship chair
- Recruitment chair
- Promotions chair
- Fundraising chair
- Logistics chair

All of these volunteers should report up to an event chair or two co-chairs to ensure clear and consistent communication.

Event set up and execution

The big day is finally here! There may be a lot going on, but there's no need for panic or frustration. Depending on the size, scope and level of detail involved in your event, assign the following responsibilities to help things go exactly as planned.

- Set up (tents, tables, starting line, stage, chairs, etc.)
- Registration/check-in
- First aid
- Money collection
- Media hosts
- Photography
- Announcements

Quick tip: If your event is being held outdoors, always have a plan B to accommodate your participants if bad weather should arise. Will you publicize a rain date? Move the event indoors? How will participants know the event is canceled? Decide the answers to these questions well in advance of the event.

Engaging your community

Here are some ideas to get others in your community involved in your event:

- Offer up volunteer opportunities to the public. Someone might not want to participate, but would be happy to volunteer.
- Create opportunities for people to participate in groups and/or teams. There's safety in numbers!
- Personalize your request for involvement. If Alzheimer's has affected your life, consider speaking out about your experience. When Alzheimer's disease becomes "real" to others, they are more motivated to contribute to the fight. Sharing your experiences in a face-to-face or public setting is particularly powerful.

5. Keep them coming back for more

Getting participants and sponsors back next year

In order to recruit new participants and sponsors while keeping those that you have now, consider the following tips:

- Never underestimate the power of a thank-you note. Send handwritten notes to your sponsors, and send acknowledgment letters to your participants.
- Recognize them. At your event, thank your sponsors and participants publically. Your participants will feel great about themselves, and your sponsors will love how you promote their community awareness.
- Consider giving awards to some of the participants at your event for the most money raised, most enthusiastic team, etc. This is part of creating a fun and memorable event day experience.
- Try to get some post-event press. Send out a press release announcing how much money you raised for the Alzheimer's Association. Participants and sponsors will feel the event was a "big deal" and be more likely to return next year.

Quick tip: Try to have some kind of ongoing communication with your participants and sponsors. When you set an event date for the upcoming year, let them know your plans! A big part of creating a successful event is building on it year after year.