

Fundraising Tips I - Preparation

There are a whole host of different ways to raise money, but before you go any further, there are some standard points you will need to have thought through, no matter what type of fundraising method you use:

1. Gathering a Team

Raising money for a cause you care about is exhilarating and energising, but it can also be hard work, laborious and soul-destroying, especially if you pour hours of work into writing a trust application and it gets rejected, or into running an event that only raised £5. Try and gather a group together to share the workload and support each other through the highs and the lows. Plus, the contribution of more than one set of ideas is always welcome, whatever the task!

2. Case for Support

What is the reason that people should support your project? You and your team should be clear in what you are asking for, how much you need and the change that this project will bring about to the world. If you can make this sound unique, simple and inspiring so much the better! And if all your team talk about the same vision, no matter where they are or who they are in conversation with, that helps to build credibility, clarity and awareness of your cause.

3. Define the Need

How do you know that the project you are trying to raise funds for is actually needed? What is the difference you are trying to make, or the problem you are trying to solve? It's important that you are able to explain this – even if you think it seems obvious to you and those around you, to an outsider who has no idea of the context, they might not understand this at all. And if they don't understand what the problem is, why would they support your plans to fix it?

4. Target Audience

Think about the people who will be using your project when it is operational. What will they be like? Are they likely to be of a certain age group? What do they have in common? The answers to these questions will help you think about who might be interested in making a donation e.g. if your project is to support young families, then local toddler groups, schools, uniform groups etc might be particularly interested in getting involved. Of course you can still ask other groups, but you could make a start here.

5. Involving Future Project Users

Funders increasingly like to hear how you have involved the people that will be using your project in its instigation, particularly larger trusts like the Lottery. Think about holding an open meeting, producing a survey or running a series of focus groups to gather opinion, thoughts and feedback on what the people you are trying to help say they want. And remember to refer to this evidence when you are putting funding bids together or building your 'case for support'.

6. Evaluation

Fast-forward to a couple of year from now, you have secured all the money you need, and your project has been up and running for a year now – if not longer! How will you know that it has been a success? Setting some simple goals at the outset and thinking about how you are going to measure whether you have achieved them or not will really strengthen your fundraising case, and help you demonstrate clearly to others what the positive change is that you and your team have brought about. It's worth putting that work in at the start on this one.

Fundraising Tips II – Sources of Income

1. Trusts

Charitable trusts & foundations are registered charities that exist to give financial grants to support other charitable efforts, rather than running projects or front-line services themselves. Typically – although not always – an individual has bequeathed a sum of money which is managed by the trust and some or all of the interest is given away to not for profit organisations each year.

Charities write to the trust to apply for a grant, sometimes using a prescribed application form, other times just by writing a letter. The trust will have a pre-determined set of criteria drawn up – a grant giving policy – to help them decide what kind of projects they will award grants to.

This is a competitive process and there are always more charities seeking support than there are grants to go round! For every successful application, don't be surprised if you have written up to nine others that get rejected first. And usually, there is no clear reason why; its often that there just isn't enough money to go round.

Most trusts make it clear how they would like to receive information from you. You can find this information on the Charities Commission website (www.charitycommission.gov.uk than click on 'find a charity') or just by searching on the web. If you are unclear, most trusts have a phone number so you can ring them up to clarify how they prefer to be approached. You can pay thousands to register with a subscription-only database of all UK trusts, of which there are about 4,000. These databases have a search facility and are a useful starting point but the information isn't always 100% up-to-date and you can find most of the same details for free via Google!

Here are a five top tips to make your application stand out:

1. **Do your research beforehand** – there are thousands of trusts you can apply to, make sure your project matches the grant giving policy of the ones you choose
2. There are also often **geographical restrictions** on where the funding can be used. Make sure you adhere to these; if in doubt, check
3. **Use simple language** and avoid jargon or acronyms. Even if everyone you know understands what a particular set of capital letters stands for, don't assume the people reading your bid do
4. **Be concise** – the trustees you are writing to will sometimes have hundreds of bids to read through. There is a danger your fantastic story could get lost in the detail if you write too much. Some forms do have word limits – adhere to them!
5. **Proof-read your bid** to check for any spelling or grammar errors and if you are asked / or not asked to send attachments or further information, follow the advice on the application form. So many people don't and this is just frustrating for the trustees who have taken the time to write down exactly what information they need to consider your request.

2. Events

Fundraising events have the dual benefit of raising money for your project along with creating awareness of your cause. There are all sorts of ways to fundraise from coffee mornings to fun runs, and everything in between, however, any type of event needs careful planning to get the most out of it and make sure things run smoothly. Here are five top tips:

1. **Set a realistic goal** – Think about how you are going to generate income and the likely number of people you are going to attract. You are never going to raise hundreds of pounds selling cakes for 50p each in the church hall after a service to a congregation of 20! But you will raise some money, and small amounts build up, plus the awareness you generate may encourage others to get involved in other ways
2. **Spread the word** – Remember to promote your event well in advance so people have the chance to get involved (you can use your case for support to help encourage people to get involved). Use existing networks – the parish magazine, posters in local shops, GP surgery, village noticeboard and don't forget social media. Think about where the people you would like to come to your event spend their time as they go about their day-to-day lives
3. **Planning** - It is essential for everyone involved in the event to know their responsibilities, so have a plan in place for before, during and after the event. As well as making sure you know who will be handling pre-event activities such as ticket sales and promotion, its important to run step-by-step through the event itself, so you know who is doing what, when and where! Think about how to mitigate against risks (nut allergy, slips & trips, other potential hazards) and wet weather alternatives if your event is outside!
4. **Thank you** – Make sure everyone who attended on the day receives a thank you for their support somehow, and a follow up on how much was raised, what a difference it will make etc.
5. **Post-event** – Recover! And remember typically around 20% of donations come in after the event so make sure there is an opportunity for people to continue to support your work after the day itself

Event fundraising can feel like hard work for the amount of money raised sometimes, so it's really important to remember the power of profile-raising, which you are doing the whole time you are running your event at the same time as generating some much-needed cash!

3. Sponsored Activities

This is a great way of raising some money for your cause. Less time consuming than event fundraising, and guaranteed of generating at least some income (unlike trust fundraising), sponsored activities raise money by a willing individual (or group of individuals) setting themselves some kind of personal challenge, and then asking family & friends to donate money to their cause if they fulfil the challenge. Typical challenges might be completing a local walk or fun run or something more adventurous like sky-diving, abseiling or running the London Marathon. The sky literally is your limit!

Whatever challenge you choose, you will need a sponsor form to collect sponsors details (the ARC can provide one) and you can also set up one on-line through www.Justgiving.com (click on 'start fundraising' and select 'Arthur Rank Centre'). Use social media to promote your challenge; the more people that hear about your fundraising, the more £ you will raise!

4. Companies

Companies do sometimes support local causes, but not as many as you might assume, and they are generally approached fairly regularly by all sorts of different good causes seeking support. Whilst there is nothing to stop you writing to every organisation in your area, you might experience quite a few negative responses which can just feel hard work and disappointing. What works better is tapping into existing schemes that are already in place. For example, most of the supermarket chains run local community support programmes, where a group of charities are selected each month and shoppers vote on which one they want to receive a donation. Generally all selected charities will receive something, although it tends to be a fairly small amount (£50 - £250) depending on which supermarket you approach and how many shoppers choose your cause. Further details and instructions on how to apply are on each supermarket's website – search for local community support or similar.

Other organisations have a charitable foundation that they periodically give grants from, similar to a private trust (as mentioned earlier on). Again, the best place to start is the company's own website. If you can't find details just give them a ring; most organisations these days do have something in place, but it's not always easy to find the information.

5. Crowd Funding

For those who want to try a bit of '21st century fundraising' you could set up an on-line crowdfunding page. This is effectively a web page that you can use to raise money for the Arthur Rank Centre (or any other cause) by promoting the cause to your friends and family. The web page allows for secure collection of donations which will arrive straight into the charity's bank account.

Again, you can set up a crowdfunding page by visiting www.justgiving.com and selecting 'crowdfunding' from the drop down menu on the top left of the home screen. Once set up, you can drive traffic to your crowdfunding page by promoting it on Facebook or other social media.

There is also the facility within the crowdfunding set up options to launch a page attached to your own bank account if you wish to raise money for a community project not attached to a charity or community group not already registered with justgiving.