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Endurance Fundraising in 140 Characters or Less

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By Mandy O'Neill published July 25, 2013

In the spirit of Twitter's pithiness, we answered the top endurance fundraising questions our team receives in 140 characters or less.

1. What are some of the best Endurance Fundraising Programs you've seen for different sized organizations?

Large: www.livestrong.org medium: events.doctorswithoutborders.org or www.ccteamchallenge.org, small: <http://teampaws.org/>.

2. How do I pick the best events?

Align with mission first. Participants now gravitate to events with extra appeal: elite events, scenery, wine tours, mudders, events that sell out, seasonal/historical.

3. Do I set a minimum?

Yes. Industry data shows that minimum's increase event performance. Money = Mission. Don't be wishy-washy.

4. How do I start a new program from scratch?

Prove it works. Start a pilot. Television does pilots to get picked up; you do the same. Create a phased one-year pilot using agreed-upon metrics.

5. How do I grow a stalled program?

Start with a self-audit to make sure you've got the right events, a rewarding participant experience, good tie-into mission, and executive buy-in.

6. Do I need a case for support?

Yes. A case for support is the core dialogue that explains to both participants and supporters what you need money for and the impact donors will have.





7. How do I create a compelling case for support?

Two memorable sentences that clearly articulate the need: What you're trying to solve. What you've accomplished already that makes you credible, and what impact donors will have.

8. Without chapters, how do I recruit participants?

Start internally then fan out. Email/direct mail your housefile, volunteers, and interns. Promote via: display ads, social media, posters and flyers in gyms, grocery stores, and key vendors in your target area.

9. Why do people want to participate?

Affinity to sport, affinity to cause, affinity to the nonprofit, affinity to a third party group (corporate team), affinity to other participants. [Best explanation here.](#)

10. What happens if we don't recruit enough participants for the slots we've reserved?

You usually prepay for your event registration slots, so you're out of luck if you don't fill them.

140-character waiver: Events that sell out are the best for avoiding this situation, so consider those first. Have a solid marketing plan in place that includes direct mail, email, information meetings, and advertising to avoid coming up short.

11. Do we need an athletic coach?

Yep. Coaching enriches your participant experience. Small programs have contract coaches. Larger programs have coaches on staff.

12. If I use a contract coach, how do I know what to pay?

Ask for pricing proposals—and references. For contract, expect to pay in the vicinity of \$100 – \$150 per participant for virtual training, depending on the sport.

13. How do participants solicit donations?

Persistence absolutely wins the day. Ask early and ask often. Email and in-person asks work best.

140-character waiver: Create a list of everyone you know. Self-donate and set an example. Ask your email list through email. Email and personal asks are the most effective. On average participants will need to send five emails for every one donation. Ask social media network through frequent Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. Join a team for synergy and inspiration. Run a match campaign for 24 hours. Memorize the two or three most important ways donors will make an impact on your cause to easily talk about it. Create postcards you can hand out to start a conversation. Post flyers at your gym or office.

14. How can we give participants confidence that they can hit a fundraising goal?

“Anyone who is married has at least told one story that has converted one other person!” We can all tell stories. Give them tools. Create a supportive “community.”

15. What are the top five tips for effective fundraising?

Passion. Email. Personal story with “right ask.” Self-donate. Match campaigns with deadlines. Ask early. Making a second ask. Persistence.



America's Most Beautiful Bike Ride, Lake Tahoe



16. What is the “right ask.”

Don't fear simplicity. Sometimes the best ask is simple. If it hits your audiences where they live, it works.

17. How important are fundraising coaching emails to your program?

Email has gone up in user preference for receiving opt in marketing messages. People don't take a break from email. Good coaching emails bump revenue 4% – 7% or even higher.

18. Do I have to be on Facebook and Twitter?

Not required, but several programs receive 15% or more of their revenue from Facebook and Facebook mobile, so good social media presence boosts revenue.

19. What do I do after the athletic event?

Celebrate! Host a social gathering of your team captains & top fundraisers to celebrate in person. Engage in a year-round communication plan to stay top of mind.

20. Should I run a post-event survey?

Absolutely. Send to participants, sponsors, vendors. Ask how they heard about you. Rate experience factors. Ask open ended questions for best data.

21. How do I measure ROI?

ROI = (Fundraising and Sponsorship Revenue) minus (Total Investment—what you spent) divided by Total Investment—money spent multiplied by 100.

22. What should we expect for the cost per dollar raised?

This varies by organization, type of program, and especially maturity of program. Cost of a dollar raised can range anywhere from 25% to 62%.

23. What is the 80/20 rule and how does it affect me?

80% of your revenue will come from 20% of your participants. True dat. Time is better spent on the 20% than trying to convert the 80%.

24. How do I recruit sponsors?

Fill a need or gap for the company. Market exposure and employee retention are two big ones right now. Be flexible enough to customize to meet company needs.

25. What is the biggest reason why endurance fundraising initiatives fail?

Lack of executive buy-in or executive champion. Isn't that always the case?



26. What is a no-brainer issue that organizations overlook?

Mobile. Active fundraisers use their mobile phone. Make it easy to fundraise to fundraise from a mobile device. #srsly

27. How much staff do you need?

Can be full time, or even outsourced, in the early stages of development. Look for a people-persons Community Event Manager to make participants feel loved.

28. We're looking for online fundraising software for our program. What's out there?

Shop to see what works for you: www.artez.com www.stayclassy.com www.simplyraise.com
www.crowdrise.com www.firstgiving.com www.blackbaud.com www.fundly.com www.razoo.com,
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