



Funding Guides



FUNDING GUIDE 18 : Fundraising Events

Many churches run fundraising events very successfully. They aren't difficult to organise, and can produce some large sums of money. Here are some thoughts to guide you :

A. Six Hallmarks of a Successful Event

As you are considering what event to run, you might like to bear the following five criteria in mind. Alternatively, use them to review the success of previous events

1. **It makes money!** First and foremost, a fundraising needs to raise funds. This doesn't mean that all the events that churches put on must make a profit, but it does mean that we need to be clear about the purpose of the event. If it's a fundraising event, then try to maximise the money made from the event. It can sometimes be important to discourage events that will not raise much money, as they can clog up the diary and detract from the big money-raisers. E.g. one church asked that all events should aim to raise at least £500
2. **There's fun in fundraising.** It's no coincidence that the first three letters of fundraising spell fun! Running fundraising events can be hard work, but with a little careful thought, and a good team, there is no reason why they can't be great fun as well. If an event required volunteer work out of all proportion to the amount raised, the fun is likely to quickly disappear!
3. **Gain scale.** If you are doing a sponsored walk, it makes sense to gain as many sponsors as you can. If you are running a raffle, find ways to maximise the sale of tickets. Whatever you are doing, look for ways of increasing the impact. Good publicity can help with this. As you gain scale, it is likely that you will reach people far beyond those who normally support you, thus extending the reach of your fundraising campaign, and finding new people to share in reaching your target.
4. **Be innovative.** If your event is the same as lots of others in your area, or the same as it's been for the past ten years, it can be hard to drum up support. Think of a new approach, or a way of freshening up your previous approach.
5. **Stay legal!** If you are running a raffle, it will need to be licensed if it goes outside of a particular event. If you are running a bar you need a licensee to run it. If you are organising a street collection, you will need to get permission from the Council and the police. If you are seeking Gift Aid, make sure you comply with the rules on benefits received by the donor and so on (see FG19). Investing an hour upfront to ensure that your event complies with the law is time well spent.
☞ see www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/
6. **Values.** Debate early on what you are and are not prepared to use (e.g. gambling at a race night, collecting door-to-door, etc.) and make sure that everyone is clear on what is and is not allowed

B. Some Creative Ideas

In one sense, there is very little which is totally new. However, almost any idea can be given a creative twist, increasing its appeal to potential supporters, and to the media :

1. Walk/Talk/Sew/Run/Bike-a-Thon

Choose your sport or hobby and get going! You can turn almost any activity into a “thon” and use it as a fundraising event by getting pledges and local sponsorship. Express your target “distance” in terms of something interesting and it will increase appeal.

2. Auction

Selling off articles or promises, charity auctions can make a significant amount of money. If someone in your church is an expert on e-bay, you can run your charity auction on-line, involving people in other locations. Having a local celebrity to run the sale will boost the takings

3. Competition

If your church has among its membership business people, financiers or entrepreneurs why not challenge two or three of them to create teams around them and see which team can raise the most

4. Providing a Service Regularly

A car wash can be more than just good clean fun, it’s also a great way to raise funds! If it becomes known in your area that there is a hand car wash on the first Saturday of each month, then you can build up a steady clientele. Other activities could be a regular coffee morning, concert series, five-a-side football tournament and so on.

5. Fundraising Dinner, Games Evening, or other Event

Invite people for a special meal, stage a games evening, run a talent show, put on a concert or some other event. To be successful, you will need encourage people to give more than the price of the food. For Gift Aid, the price of the food cannot be Gift Aided, so you may want to have cheaper tickets, and ask people for a donation on top. This kind of event can be a great opportunity to make a presentation about your project.

6. Take an existing event, and make it ten times more successful!

Maybe you already have an event, - a flower festival, summer fete, coffee morning, or something similar. Set yourselves the challenge of making it two, five or even ten times more successful. What would you need to do differently? How might you attract the extra people that you would need, and what would encourage them to part with more cash when they visit? Very often small events take almost as much effort to organise as large ones, and concentrating your energy on running a few events well may well be beneficial.

7. What works elsewhere?

In the world of fundraising, as in many other places, there is little that is new under the sun! Adapting good ideas and events from other organisations can give your campaign a real boost. So spend a moment considering what fundraising events you have seen elsewhere that you thought were good? Could you adapt the idea to work as part of your campaign? How could you improve it? What would you need to lose in adapting it, and how might that affect it?

C. Supporting Publicity

As you run your event, think about how you can gain some publicity. Advertising can be expensive, but there are often lots of cheap or free ways of getting coverage in the media. Local radio stations and newspapers are always on the lookout for an interesting story; and again, if you have a creative twist to your fundraising event, it will help build coverage. Produce a simple one page press release for the event, with supporting materials tying the event into your funding campaign. The press release should stick to the main points, and include a quote or two. You should include contact details so that they can arrange to come and take pictures or do an interview.

D. Following Up

Whilst you need to be careful about respecting the privacy of your donors, do consider how you might be able to follow up people you encounter at your event. There is the prospect of inviting them to future events, keeping them updated with news of how your project is developing, and even the prospect of converting them to becoming a regular giver. Offer people the opportunity to sign up to keep in touch.

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These Funding Guides have been developed by a “Good Practice” group of the National Stewardship Committee of the Church of England and are intended to support your church’s fundraising. They are available on-line at www.parishresources.org.uk/funding or at www.churchcare.co.uk/funding.php