

Fundraising

A MONTHLY REPORT OF SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING IDEAS, STRATEGIES AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

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Gifts in Kind Can Lead to Cash Gifts

Keep this thought in mind: Sometimes it's smarter to ask a potential contributor for something other than money. Asking a prospect for a gift-in-kind that may not be perceived as costly is one way to begin to build a relationship with a donor — and a habit of giving — that will one day lead to cash gifts.

Review your list of non-donor businesses. Ask yourself what each business offers or manufactures or sells that you could use. A service? A product? Their employees' time? Specialized know-how? Then approach the business with a legitimate request for a gift of that service, product or knowhow to benefit your cause.

You will find that this approach tends to be less threatening to some businesses — and more affordable from their point of view. Plus, such gift-in-kind contributions will begin paving the way for cash contributions down the road.

Challenge Gift Ideas

Have a corporate CEO who is committed to your organization? Invite him/her to establish a challenge gift directed to all company employees. This could be a great way to expand your donor pool.

Use Membership as an Entry to Fundraising

By Kerry Nenn

"A membership program is a great way to get people involved in your organization. The more involved they are, the more likely they are to become donors," says Pat Rich, founding partner, EMD Consulting Group.

So how is this accomplished? Here Rich offers key strategies to make membership the gateway to fundraising:

1. **Integrate the membership program with development efforts.** "You have to see it as the base of your development," says Rich. "It will shape how you develop your giving levels. Start with a basic membership level and create higher levels, which become your donor clubs. The goal is to retain members and move them into donor clubs."
2. **Mine your data.** Look at members who have been around more than five years. These are good prospects for a giving program. If members have been at the same level for five years, ask them to increase their level. Rich notes, "For larger organizations, consider a wealth screening. Several companies, such as Wealth Engine, perform this service. They take your database and determine who has the capability of making a large gift."
3. **Don't be afraid to ask members for gifts.** Special projects, tributes or memorials are great opportunities for members to give during the year other than through membership dues.
4. **Create a strategic renewal program.** "This involves a lot of stewardship," explains Rich, "and your first-year renewal is especially important. This is when most membership losses occur, so make the most effort then." She suggests:
 - When people join, provide a new member packet. Include a card, a list of events, a newsletter and possibly a volunteer form.
 - In the third month, have a staff member or volunteer call and see if new members are enjoying their membership. See if they have used their perks, what they are interested in and why they decided to join. A few short survey questions provide valuable information and feedback.
 - In the seventh or eighth month, repeat this survey.
 - Ensure the new members are on your mailing list and receiving a mix of e-mail and snail mail. Make them feel they have become part of the organization.
 - Make these points of contact to ensure renewal time is not the first they have heard from you in the year.

"It costs far more to get a member than to renew them," reports Rich. "Make sure your first-year renewal rate is over 50 percent. If you're below this, you are likely spending more getting members than you are gaining."

For additional tips, see "Membership Marketing in the Digital Age," by Patricia Rich, Dana Hines and Rosie Siemer.

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MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY