STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING
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INTRODUCTION

Fundraising is a part of the overall process towards achieving a variety of goals. *Fundraising should not be the end in itself - money is a tool for the accomplishment of other goals.*

Nobody will give you money simply because you need money. Everyone needs money! People give you money because you are going to do something with that money which will make *the donor* feel good. To be successful, a fundraiser must convince the potential donors that there is a problem which concerns *them*, show them the plan to address that problem, and let them know that their involvement is critical to the success of that plan. This is true whether you are approaching an individual for ten dollars or a foundation for fifty thousand. Ultimately, the donor must derive some satisfaction from the successful outcome.

Any organization which tries to raise money first, with the intention of deciding later what can be done with it, is doomed to fail!

FUNDRAISING STEPS

To conduct a successful fundraising effort, the following steps must be included. The degree to which each step is developed and presented depends on the amount being sought from the potential donor, the complexity of the project to be funded, and the type of approach being used (i.e., personal request, letter, proposal, or general brochure). You must first create in the donor a feeling that they *need* for you to succeed, then give them the reasonable expectation that you will succeed if they support you financially. Consider the following points that might be made in a letter seeking general support for a hypothetical animal shelter or animal welfare organization with an educational program.

This is a simple recipe for success:

I - Problem Identification:
A problem, in this case, is a condition that needs to be changed or at least addressed. The problem needs to be relevant to the potential donor and should be supported with information and statistics if available.

Example:
"Government studies indicate that thousands of dogs and cats in our community die every year from neglect and accidental injuries received at the hands of humans." (This gives the magnitude of the problem, the causes, and the source of the information).

II - Problem Analysis:
The problems must be linked to the emotional or intellectual interests of the reader. No single approach is appropriate for all people. The successful fundraiser will research the interests of the "target" and will show how that interest will be advanced if they send money or other resources.

Example:
"Among the innocent victims of these preventable tragedies are beautiful and intelligent creatures that, with just a little love, could bring joy to the life of a child, or fill the empty days of an elderly person. There are just not enough loving homes for the numbers of animals born in our community each year.

That means that the homeless ones must wander the streets, just trying to survive in a world that doesn't seem to care about them.

"Sadly, this problem doesn't need to exist. This seemingly endless stream of suffering and unwanted animals could be stemmed if people would simple spay or neuter the pets that they do have, and thereby prevent wave after wave of unwanted and unloved puppies and kittens."

(This relates the problem to the reader emotionally, morally, and intellectually. You have also indicated that something can be done).

The Plan:

It is at this point that you describe what you do, or what you would like to do, in such a way that the reader equates your success with his or her own personal interests. You must propose a plan which is both feasible and which will actually produce results. You must be careful not to promise more than you can deliver nor claim more than the reader might expect you to be able to do.

Example:
"Our organization can help in two ways. First, we provide shelter, care and love for one thousand unwanted and homeless animals each year. Through our shelter adoption program, we help more than two hundred dogs and cats find new homes, where they will be safe and they will be loved.

"At the same time, we are trying to break the cycle of sorrow by providing low cost spay/neuter services for both dogs and cats. Thanks to our clinic, everyone in our community, rich or poor, can be a responsible pet owner and avoid contributing to the ranks of the unloved and unwanted, by preventing new litters of puppies and kittens that begin life without hope. We reach thousands of people with humane education programs, designed to inspire people to care about animals, and teach them to properly care for their pets."

Your Credibility:

You must provide evidence that you can produce the results that you predict. If possible, document your past accomplishments and relate the good things that others have said about you.

Example:
"During 2001, our organization cared for more than 2,000 homeless dogs and cats. More than 25 percent were returned to owners or adopted out to loving homes. We also received state and national awards for our education programs on the humane treatment of animals, including a special commendation from the Governor. But the greatest prize of all was a ten percent drop in the number of unwanted puppies and kittens born in our community last year."

What You Want From The Donor:

This tells the donors how you want them to respond. Too many groups leave this to the imagination of the donors - a bad move in most cases. Give the reader some suggestions.

Example:
"We need your help! Your contribution of $125.00 will enable us to conduct educational programs in one elementary school through which we will reach an average of 400 children. A $40.00 gift will cover

the average cost of spaying one fifty pound dog, or three cats. You $10.00 gift will feed a litter of kittens for a week, as they await adoption in our shelter. As you can see, even the minimum membership contribution of $25.00 will make a real difference. Please let us hear from you today!"

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Don't make the mistake of asking for too little from those with the capacity to give a lot, or of asking for more than you need to get the job done well.

- If you have volunteer help or donated services, mention it as matching contributions. ("For every dollar you give, we will match it with three dollars from other sources.")

- Don't overdo the "Gloom and Doom" or the cries of financial crisis. An organization that is always at the brink of collapse is doing something wrong. Not even rats swim out to a sinking ship!

- Never forget to thank donors for their gifts. Keep good records of the date and amount of donations. Send the donor a report of the success that their money brought.

- If you have not received subsequent contributions from an individual in a year, write to them and let them know that it has been a year since you heard from them, remind them of how much they sent before and the great works that you have done with their money. Then, ask them to help you continue the great work by sending more money.

- Always keep good financial records. It is better to write down too much rather than too little. A periodic audit, or at least an accounting statement by an independent accountant is a very good step, and critical when dealing with foundations.

- Be careful accepting contributions if you are not a qualified tax-exempt organization. They may be reportable as personal income.

- Above all, be honest in your financial matters. Don't be embarrassed to pay your staff a reasonable amount, or to be reimbursed for expenses. Nobody has the right to expect you to carry the burden alone. Also, remind the volunteers that certain expenses and mileage incurred on behalf of any deductible organization may qualify as an "in-kind" donation and may be claimed as a deduction on their tax returns. Laws vary from country to country.

REMEMBER: Fundraising is an *exchange* of value, not a one-way flow. The donor has the right to expect something in return, even if it is just a warm smile and a sincere "thank you!"