



Fundraising Events: What to take into account when considering a new fundraising event

Events can be truly valuable, though seldom for the superficial reasons that drive people to put them on. Here are 10 criteria to take into account:

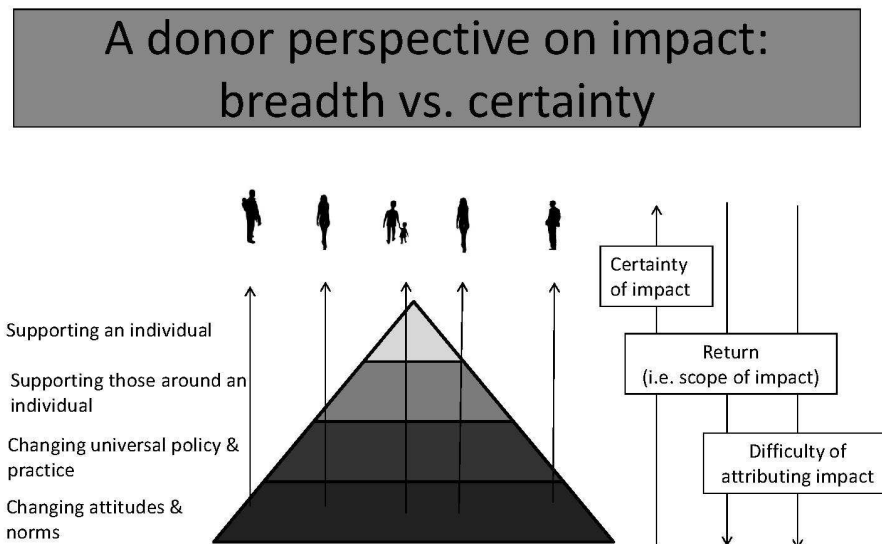
1. It has the potential to attract a different demographic from the donors currently typical of your organization's supporters. For example, it is very appealing to young donors whereas your current donor profile is considerably older.
2. It does not add yet another obligation to donors who already give to you in multiple ways, avoiding the risk of over-solicitation, which can make them stop giving entirely.
3. It does not run the risk of "downgrading" gifts from current donors. For example, if a donor attends your event for a ticket price of \$100, will he say he's already given when you approach him later in the year for a \$5000 gift which prospect research tells you he is capable of giving?
4. It genuinely affords volunteers an opportunity to be involved in a rewarding fundraising experience. By rewarding, I mean that it helps gel the group or builds their confidence which, in turn, makes them willing to get involved in more demanding ways, like opening doors with new donors or closing major gifts.
5. Whatever staff support is required to plan and run the event can be contracted out on a fee-for-service basis. The worst downside of events is that they co-opt the time of professional fundraisers, which should be devoted to more lucrative relationship building and major gifts asks.
6. The event has the potential for long-term sustainability. No event remains popular forever, but an event done once and never again is a waste of time, resources and volunteer goodwill.
7. The event is not weather-dependent or extraordinarily high risk in some other way. If it is weather-dependent, there is a Plan B that is not and which can be quickly moved into place.
8. The not-for-profit is not dependent upon the profit from this event the first time it is run. This requires a very strategic Board to take this into account. Usually the reason why an untried event is on the table for discussion is because there is an anticipated shortfall. A first-time event should have a budget and the Board should be willing to lose money in order to test the concept for its appeal and *future* ability to earn ever-increasing NET revenue.
9. A fundraising event that has the potential to convert event attendees or supporters to direct donors is also worth doing. Research shows that sponsors of participants in athletic-type events like run-a-thons have a greater interest in the mission of the not-for-profit than one might think.

And, a good proportion of them would be willing to give philanthropically (i.e. directly to the organization) if they were asked, and especially if the runner endorsed it. As donor acquisition through direct marketing appeals is becoming more and more difficult, an event targeting these sponsors might be more effective pathway to reach them

10. If you have no events, it is important to create one signature event that is aligned with your mission. Get buy-in from board members, develop a creative concept, test the concept in year one, ask feedback from participants, and gradually grow the event.

Adapted from Penelope Burke's blog

A donor perspective on impact



As a nonprofit you have to determine what type of work you do and where you belong on the above pyramid. Each type of service will be attractive to a different type of donor.

Level 1: A nonprofit supporting one beneficiary at a time, e.g. via equipment, housing, education.

Level 2: A nonprofit serving several beneficiaries, esp. those around an individual (e.g. families, colleagues, neighbors) training families of people suffering from depression

Level 3: A nonprofit serving potentially all in a category (e.g. all disabled people) by changing universal policy and practice.

Level 4: A nonprofit serving everybody, an entire society, by changing attitudes and norms.

Source: *It ain't what you give, it's the way that you give it*, Caroline Fiennes
– model originally developed by the UK-based thinktank New Philanthropy Capital

If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact me!