

The skills required in a fundraiser

This bite size resource is for organisations who wish to fundraise and are unsure of the best way to approach potential donors.

To be an effective fundraiser there are three key points to remember:

- Concentrate on your strengths
- Learn skills through training and experience
- Compensate on weakness by mobilising others

While attempting to follow these three key points there are useful techniques to help move forward.

Commitment is an essential trait for anyone fundraising on behalf of your organisation. If the person approaching funders is not enthusiastic about a cause, how do you expect the funder to feel enthusiasm to the cause?

Asking for support is a key duty; therefore, fundraisers need to have the ability to ask for funds. This may be in person, by grant application, letters to the mayor or approaching a business to support. Whatever the approach, this should be professional, while ensuring to portray the need for funds in your request.

Motivation or a trigger is useful to get people to give. To find a trigger have conversation to get things going. Find shared interests and it may be that someone philanthropic who is making a will or selling a business may decide to make charity a beneficiary.

Be persuasive, when you are asking people to part with their hard earned money there needs to be a really good reason. Your plea needs to therefore be compelling, exciting, interesting and enthusiastic to show your vision for the future and gain those all-important donations.

Practice what you preach. By being philanthropic yourself in supporting people in need then people who get back on their feet may want to give something back. This may be through a gift later in life through their will. Have a conversation with possible donors around if they wish to see their gift put to use – this could encourage an earlier donation.

Deal with rejection with a positive attitude. It is the nature of people to say no more times than to say yes when being asked to donate. Don't let this dishearten you and don't apologise based on rejection. If you start believing that you were wrong to ask for funds this will put a disheartened feel in your future requests. If a person perceives you are not confident in your request they will not feel confident their money is going to a worthwhile cause and be less inclined to give.

Persistence is sometimes fruitful in turning a no in to a yes. It is important not to badger people for support or they will definitely say no in the future. However, in some situations such as approaching a business who clearly operates on par with your cause, or a business that would like to raise its public relations then it may be that an initial no could be turned to a yes when showing just how a donation will also benefit their own cause.

Truthfulness is important. Ensure potential donors understand just what funds will be used towards. In your approach, if there are situations that could relate to personal circumstances such as having a family member who would benefit from the project, this could help the potential donor to feel empathy to your cause and wish to give.

Organisation of the fundraiser is important. Having enough time in place to raise the funds, a secure method of receiving, storing and utilising funds will all help towards meeting any deadlines. Also it is important to consider making the receipt of funds go the furthest e.g. are the gifts tax efficient, if eligible are you claiming gift aid?

Social skills are important for a fundraiser. The person should be confident in the approach they are using and show that they feel justified in asking for funds. If a person is nervous, apologetic or in any way seeming unsure about asking for donations then the potential funder will feel as though there is not a cause that strongly needs support behind the plea.

Creativity and imagination are ideal traits in a fundraiser. When a potential donor is approached with a plea that is to fund the tackling of the same old problem in a new way, or the act of donating would do something that benefits them also, then the potential donor may find this a more worthwhile cause and be more willing to give.

Contacts of a fundraiser that are already in place may or may not be ideal to approach when asking for funds. The fundraiser must use diligence in choosing who to approach and be able to make new contacts if required. The fundraiser ideally needs to be able to build rapport and maintain contacts by knowing who to approach and how with the given topic. Thinking about the potential donors own aims and objectives will strengthen that knowledge to consider appropriate reasons for contact.

Opportunism is very useful for fundraisers. It may be that a newspaper article is utilised to advertise a charitable project, it may be that events are publicised through mail outs etc. Any way that your team will approach the general public can be utilised to add a call to action for your project. This may be having a small footnote to show how people can donate to the above mentioned good cause. If you have a system in place for electronic bank transfer, then any electronic mail outs may even have a hyperlink to direct the audience to the website needed to make a donation while it is fresh in their mind.

With this all in mind consider the first three points:

- Concentrate on your strengths
- Learn skills through training and experience
- Compensate on weakness by mobilising others

The fundraiser should perform with the attributes they feel comfortable with. Old skills utilised in new environments will help a fundraiser to learn through experience which methods of plea to which audience work best. Where there are parts of fundraising that are a weakness for a fundraiser then there is strength in asking for capable support. The fundraising will be supported and by shadowing the techniques of others the fundraiser can learn new skills. E.g. a fundraiser may be very passionate, good with confidence and pitch to people in person, but may not have complex ICT skills to be able to make adverts for newspapers or electronic calls to action to receive funds. The fundraiser may seek support from an administrator who is ICT competent to help with these items and thus potentially pick up these types of skill for the future. There are also ways of being proactive; such as seeking external support such as a training event such as the bid writing courses that are made available by Voluntary Action Rotherham and SYCF.

Support is available to understand the fundraiser role

Rotherham Voluntary and Community Sector organisations may contact Voluntary Action Rotherham by email triage@varotherham.org.uk or by telephone 01709 829821.

If you are a community organisation based in Tyne & Wear, Northumberland, or across North East England you may visit the <http://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/> website for information.

