

## Section 3 — Fundraising

### Fundraising *continued...*

#### 12 tips for Successful Fundraising

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1. Give yourself and your team plenty of time to plan and execute your event. Make a schedule with clear “mile markers”, and stick to it. Adopt a campaign mentality and commit to win. Plan and announce the celebration lunch date for your committee at your first committee meeting and remind all of your volunteers about this as often as you can.
  2. Set a dollar target for your fundraiser, commit to it, announce it and plan every element of the fundraising campaign with this target in mind.
  3. Commit to raising funds, and avoid euphemisms like fun-raisers or friend-raisers. This is fund-raising. Euphemisms become alibis. Don't confuse motion with action, and don't allow your colleagues to dilly-dally either.
  4. Determine the target audience for your fundraiser by name. Be specific about who you want to attend. Put people on your target attendance list who have a history of caring about the programs. Send volunteers to sell them tickets and sponsorships in person.
  5. Articulate the importance of the cause in everything you say and do from a perspective that will move your target audience. Let your passion show. Show how past contributions have changed lives in your local community.
  6. Pick a unique and doable theme for your event. Tie in the Legion Family. But remember -- each fundraising event is unique. Whatever your theme is, it's important in this day and age to have some sort of visual theme that will appeal to your targeted market.
  7. Set up a realistic budget. Consider your budget when you are forming your steering committee - many goods and services can be donated, but manpower can't.
  8. Build a strong steering committee. Remember the power of gilt (as in gold) by association. Make sure your committee is listed as “in formation” — you can add new leaders as you find them. Pick some people who know and can help with the logistics.
  9. Package the event tickets, give a minimum number of tickets to each volunteer, and let them know you expect them to sell them (not just “get them out”.) Tickets don't sell tickets. People sell tickets.
  10. Use your most experienced members and committee leaders to sell sponsorships to businesses that “need to be associated with the event.” Ask them to pair up with a new member so they may gain experience. Set targets and have weekly follow-up meetings in person or by phone.
  11. If you pick an honoree, choose carefully. Choose someone with an established record of helping with children and Legion programs, someone with a Rolodex and no skeletons in their closet.
  12. Find sponsors who can be convinced that an association with our cause will bring goodwill and, eventually, business to them. Show them how their logos will be prominent in the event. Make heroes out of them. Give them a detailed report and a warm thank you after the event.
- Now, pick a theme and do your best, no matter how big or small your goal. Your effort will remind everyone you touch how important it is that we all work to support the Legion's programs.

#### Anonymous donors

Some donors ask that their gift remain anonymous, and are concerned that the nonprofit will sell their contact information to other nonprofits (which will increase the chance that they will be solicited by other nonprofits).

To address these concerns, the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) has developed a Donors' Bill of Rights that nonprofits are encouraged to adopt.

#### Acknowledging donations

Donors expect a ‘thank you’ note to acknowledge their charitable gifts. It is not only ethical to be transparent with donors about the receipt of their gifts, but it is also a legal requirement for certain gifts.

## **Ethical Fundraising**

Transparency inspires confidence. Beyond what the law requires, nonprofits can demonstrate their commitment to ethical practices by being entirely transparent with financial information and fundraising practices.

A fundamental transparency practice is to make it easy for visitors to a nonprofit's website to find financial information, as well as information about board composition, programs, outcomes/impact, staffing, and donors.

What are other ethical fundraising practices?

Practices that demonstrate accountability and respect for donors include:

- Sending timely gift acknowledgments
- Respecting restrictions on donors' gifts
- Providing timely reports to foundations, as applicable
- Listing donors on a nonprofits' website in the manner in which the donor would like to be acknowledged
- Honoring donors' requests to remain anonymous

## **How to Write a Donor-Centered Thank-You Letter**

Donors are by and large generous and caring people who unselfishly give money to support your cause. They usually ask for nothing in return, but when they receive a well-written thank-you letter, it reminds them why they gave in the first place and that can often help secure continual gifts from them in the future.

A well-expressed thank-you is an art form. Most of us think we don't have the time or the talent to play the artist. Perhaps, we put off writing because it's not a habit we've cultivated. Or we feel awkward

about finding the right words, or we don't have a convenient space to sit down and write.

As with so many other creative acts, the secret of writing a successful thank-you lies in finding the right tools, learning a few simple rules to get started, and then getting into the swing of it (i.e. practice, practice, practice) until it becomes natural... even fun.

Let's take a few minutes and review the sample thank-you letter on the next page. Afterwards, we'll go part by part to explain and highlight the important aspects of each section.

## **Sections of a Good Thank-You Letter**

First off, the letter starts out with a strong opening focusing on the donor. Because of YOU! The key here is to make it about them! Make them feel special.

Secondly, it tells a story and tells the reader exactly what you'll be doing with their donation. After all, most everyone who donates to a cause wants to know that their money was put to good use!

Third, the letter tells the reader when they can expect to hear from you and offers a phone number and a contact person. Again, it's written in a very personal way and it gives them an open invitation to reach out to you if they have any questions.

Fourth, the donor's loyalty is acknowledged. You could even take it one step further and note the exact number of years they've contributed. There's nothing more upsetting to a donor than getting a cookie-cutter letter that doesn't call this loyalty out.

Finally, someone from within the highest ranks of the organization signs the letter. Generic letters from your organization's administrator are no fun. Make your letter count with it being signed by the Commander.

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### **A Sample Donor Thank-You Letter**

*Your Letterhead cover page*

*[Date] [Mr./Mrs. First and Last Name  
of Donor or Name of Organization]  
[Address] [City, State, Zip]*

*Dear [Donor Name or Organization Name],*

*Thanks to you, our fundraiser surpassed our goal of \$XXXX. Your gift of \$XXX has helped start the event off to a healthy beginning.*

*We look forward to sharing the program's success with you in our quarterly newsletter. In the meantime, if you would like to schedule a visit to see, firsthand, the difference your gift is making, please contact Alberto Einstein at 555.555.5555.*

*Again, we'd like to offer our sincere thanks for all your support throughout the years.*

*Warmly,*

*[Sign your name here]*

*Johnny Q., Squadron Commander  
Sons of the American Legion Squadron 999*

*Type your address]*

*[City, State, Zip]*