

A couple of dozen... - Unique Fundraising Ideas

If your group, club or organization needs to raise money, you are probably looking for some unique fundraising ideas. Here is a list of some interesting ways to earn some cash.

- 1. Bagels and Coffee sale.** If there is a fresh hot bagel shop near you, there is a major chance that they will donate bagels for you to sell. Call them up and ask if you can have the bagels left over at the end of the day. You can make arrangements to stand outside school or a business with bagels and coffee or juice for sale. It's a quick breakfast and plenty of people drink coffee. If you have a way to toast the bagels, that's a major plus. Don't forget the cream cheese and butter.
- 2. Candy in a Container.** Buy a couple variety bags of wrapped candy. Put all the candy in a large, clear container. Get permission from school to hold a lunch time raffle for two weeks. Charge a dollar for a guess at how many pieces of candy are in the container. Make sure you advertise, and let them put in as many guesses as they want. Whoever guesses the closest to the actual amount of candy without going over gets to keep the candy.
- 3. Refreshing Springs.** Buy 24 packs of bottled water on sale or at a store that sells things in bulk. Set up a cooler at an athletics park or sports practice that doesn't already have water. Sell the water cold for \$1 per bottle. The more people around and the hotter the day, the better.
- 4. Holiday Banquets.** You can do this on Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, Labor Day or whatever holiday suits you. Serve breakfast, lunch, or dinner to a special group of people (you decide who is special). Advertise it in your town, school, or other public places (with permission of course). Charge a reasonable fee per person for a reservation at the meal. Cook a simple but decent meal as a group, and wait on the attendees. You can also offer entertainment, or just play nice music that is appropriate for the holiday.
- 5. Game night competition.** Have a game night party with all kinds of board games and video games. Charge \$2 per person to enter. The winner of the competition will have won the most games. They must win at more than one game and at least attempt all the games of the night. Offer a good prize.
- 6. Chinese auction and talent show.** Hold a talent show and charge an admission to see the show. Have special, choice, baked goods showcased in the lobby or the back of the room. Have bid cards at each displayed specialty dessert. Anyone can write a bid down at any time during the show. Whoever bids the highest for the dessert gets to purchase it and enjoy. The goodies up for bid should be practically gourmet quality or at least new and different. Set the minimum bid at the price it cost to make it (or buy it).

7. **Tickets to stay home.** This is basically a fundraising event that doesn't occur. Send a pretty invitation to as many people as you want for a wonderful and creative event that you would hold if you could. Use your imagination. Describe an interesting event that the person would be invited to if you were holding it. Outline your cause and the need for a donation, and invite them to stay home in honor of the cause. If they send you a donation, send them a nice thank you card for not attending your fundraising event that never happened anyway.

8. **Blind Auction.** Have an event in which people bring wrapped gifts to the auction. Each gift can contain any nice usable gift to be auctioned off. People can weight or examine the boxes to guess what the item might be before bidding. Big boxes may contain small presents and light gifts can be weighed down to make it harder to guess. Final bids are given and the items are sold before they are opened. Then, everyone opens what they won.

9. **DVD Night.** Show a DVD on a big screen television or a projector screen. There can be a theme to the night, a speaker and perhaps a discussion after the movie. Admission charge includes seating, popcorn (or a small bag of chips) and a drink (maybe about \$5 or \$6 per person for the show with a snack included). It's just a fun night, and depending on the subject, people really get into the discussion, too.

10. **Bakeless Bake Sale.** Invite people not to bake. Explain your cause and what the money of a donation would be used for. Tell them how much time they would save by not baking and just helping out with some funds. You can visit to ask or mail an invitation.

11. **Used music sale.** Demographics and management will be way different from a book sale.

12. **DVD swap** -- and the organizer gets \$2 for each disk swapped.

13. **Bingo night** – Many churches and fire companies have this equipment.

14. **"Make Them Fly Away"** - Buy about 10-15 plastic pink flamingos (those horridly tacky yard ornaments) and then have people pay to get someone's yard decorated overnight. Everyone involved seemed to have great fun. Of course, the you come out the morning after decorating someone's yard to remove the flamingos, only to park them on the next victim's front lawn!

15. **A Patriotic Flair** - Something that I've seen groups do for an annual fund raiser is to sell a 'Flag Service.' For a set amount, say \$15 per year, the group members come by on each Federal holiday and place a US Flag in your yard. After the holiday they remove it and store it for the next event. These are nice large flags mounted on PVC type poles. The group members pound a stake into the ground and slip the post on. The initial investment isn't too much and after the first year is hardly anything at all.

16. Rock-A-Thon. The kids take pledges for rocking in a rocking chair for a certain number of hours. They rock together for, say, 10 hours and become closer friends while making the money in an easy way. Do crazy things for the kids during the Rock-A-Thon like throwing around water balloons around 3 am. After rocking, they collect the pledge money.

17. "Free" Car Wash - Our youth group once raised funds by taking pledges on a car wash. Instead of charging to wash the cars, each member went to family and businesses and got pledges. For example, my grandma pledged 10 cents a car and a business pledged 25 cents. Each member was encouraged to get \$2 in pledges per car, but many received more. A local grocery store let us use their hose and donated soap. On the big day we washed way over 100 cars for FREE!!!

Extras - If customers are to remain around while you wash their car ensure that you have somewhere they can sit and wait. Don't miss an opportunity could you be offering / selling them some lovely home made refreshments! Certainly make sure that there is plenty of information around about your organization.

Don't want To Get Wet? - Work With Commercial Car Washes - Many commercial car wash companies have cottoned on to the fact that a charity car wash is a common fundraiser for many non profit organizations. Some will now offer a deal to local groups in their area and provide vouchers for your organization to promote there car wash for an agreed share of the takings when a customer you "provided" uses their facility.

18. Balloon Stomp - This is a great one for a school or sports fundraiser. It is not for the fainthearted however (remember latex allergies as well).

An area of a playing field is cordoned off or you could use a school hall or gym. Contestants pay a fee to have a balloon tied to each ankle. On a whistle all the contestants have to try to stomp on other people's balloons and pop them. if both of your balloons are popped you are out. The winner is the last one with a balloon on their leg.

19. Balloon Blast - This is best played in a hall or gym. A large number of balloons are inflated and placed on the floor of your venue. A few special balloons have a winning ticket placed inside them prior to being blown up. Contestants pay a fee to enter. On a whistle all the contestants try to pop the balloons (no pins allowed) as quickly as possible to find the winning tickets. The contest ends when all the balloons are burst.

20. Balloon Pop - This is really a less hectic version of Balloon Blast and is great for parties. Balloons are attached to a fence, wall or a ceiling. People then pay a fee to pop one balloon with a pin on a stick. If the balloon contains a winning ticket they get a prize. Alternatively you could have them throw darts at the balloons.

Tip 1 - You may wish to put a ticket in all the balloons although most will say "*Sorry Try Again*" or something similar

Tip 2 - If you put balloons on the ceiling put some small squares of tissue inside when blowing them up. When the balloon pops this comes down like confetti adding to the fun.

21. Balloon Release - This is a tried and tested fundraiser but it is popular, very visual and it works.

The basic idea is that people buy a helium filled balloon. Attached to the balloon is a card with their name and details of how to return the card if found. The balloons are released en masse and (hopefully) float off into the sky. The card that gets returned from the farthest distance by a certain date wins. Distances of several hundred miles are not uncommon.

To maximize take up of tickets you need to offer a good first prize. Many organizations will also use prizes for the person who sells the most tickets prior to the event etc. There are a large number of companies who will supply all you need for a balloon release. Shop around to get the best deal. Several companies can also now supply biodegradable balloons and cards - the **green option** for those that don't get returned.

22. A Charity Head Shave – It's head and shoulders above all other fundraisers!

The idea is very simple and a great attention grabber, guaranteed to attract publicity to your good cause. They are also easy to organize and if done properly can bring in considerable sums of money.

★ Before your charity head shave

Anyone can do this simple fundraiser and both men and women will find it to be a profitable fundraising idea if done correctly. The most successful however are those involving those "*larger than life*" individuals found in every community.

The big hairy biker going under the razor being a particularly popular option. Groups of friends (FOOTBALL TEAM?) "getting the chop" together is also common. Pre- publicity is vital to maximize revenue.

Candidates for the barber's chair should get themselves out and about as much as possible in advance. Galvanizing support and getting sponsors. Flaunting their locks one last time and letting everyone know what they are about to do. A common ploy is to set a clear target- "***If I can raise \$500 the hair comes off***". This gives a focus to the idea and makes it clear to everyone what is going on.

★ The charity head shave itself

Obviously you need to big this up as much as possible. Choose a venue where those sponsoring you can watch. In all cases a last minute run round with a bucket will add some extra cash to your fundraising total. Don't forget to have some other fundraisers such as raffles, auctions going on at the same time.

Don't forget too to have plenty of publicity materials for your good cause to hand. You are making a big commitment for something you believe in - let people know how great your charity is!

Most barbers or hairdressers can be prevailed upon to give their services for free - **OR GET A LOCAL CELEBRITY TO MAKE THE CUT!** Get them to make the most of it and play up to the cameras a bit. Bringing out a set of gardening shears etc always gets a good laugh. They can then get busy with scissors and clippers!

★After the hair is gone.

Cold isn't it! You may find that you can squeeze an extra bit of cash out of some of your supporters as they are now confronted with the new you! You can make extra money too out of your charity head shave by posting the video on the web - You Tube, Facebook, My Space etc with simple donation instructions.

23. Charity Pet Show

Holding a charity pet show is not difficult if you keep organized and get a good key team of helpers around you. They can be a lot of fun and make great fundraisers for all sorts of different non-profit organizations.

Find a venue

A good venue is important. You will need plenty of space and an outside area is best if you can count on good weather. Schools with access to a playing field are good choices. You will also most likely need good parking facilities for spectators and competitors.

Plan your Pet Show

You need to decide how serious your show will be. More serious shows use qualified and experienced judges. Fun pet shows are just that and taken less seriously by all concerned.

With either however you need to plan out a good show program with the right number of classes etc.

Make arrangements for pet to get water to be provided at a number of places and make adequate poop provision. Most people are fine about clearing up behind their pets these day but do ensure there is somewhere to put this.

Have plans in place for how you are going to advertise your fundraising event and attract competitors and spectators.

Deciding what classes to have

Again this depends on the nature of your show.

Most charity shows will have a combination of pedigree classes and those which are more for fun: (Dog Show Example)

Suggested Pedigree Classes

- Puppy - Any breed (6 - 12 months)
- Yearling - Any breed (12 - 24 months)
- Gundog - Any breed
- Hound and Terrier - Any breed
- Working or Pastoral - Any breed
- Toy and Utility - Any breed
- Any Variety - Open

Suggested Novelty Classes

- Best Veteran - Any breed (7 years and over)
- Best Crossbreed
- Best Rescue Dog - Any dog that has come from an animal shelter.
- Most Handsome Dog
- Prettiest Puppy
- Most Appealing Eyes
- Waggiest Tail
- Best Condition
- Best Brace - 2 dogs alike
- Best Irish Brace - 2 dogs of different types
- Best 6 legs - Dog and Owner
- Best Junior Handler
- Dog The Judge Would Most Like To Take Home

The important thing with planning your classes is to try to encourage owners to enter their dogs in as many categories as possible.

Judging and prizes

For prizes some pet food companies may be worth approaching directly and will sometimes offer little gift packs etc.. Smaller items may also be "cadged" out of local pet store or other local retailers. They don't have to be dog related.

Ribbons, not just for the winners, but for all those taking part are a great way of keeping everyone happy.

Judges can usually be found amongst local pet shops, breeders or vets. For the less serious classes a local character or dignitary will usually be fine.

Pet Shows are fun but you also want them to be great fundraisers, here's how:

Entry fees for competitors - You will make money mostly from entry fees into the different classes. A few pounds / dollars per class soon add up. To encourage take up of additional classes you may like to have a fee for the first class entered and then less for any subsequent class entered by the same dog.

Sponsorship and advertising - Try to find some local companies willing to sponsor classes and offer advertising space around your show and on your programmes / list of classes etc.

Refreshments - There is a lot of money to be made in refreshments and it is an easy way to turn events into great fundraisers. Keep it simple with teas, coffees and cold drinks. Home-made cakes, cookies and sweets will also prove to be winners.

Alternate pet ideas.... **Snail Races – Hermit Crab Races – other pet races...**

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24. Fun Quizzes For Charity Fundraisers – Knowledge Bowl

Holding fun quizzes is a simple, popular and profitable way for many organizations to raise funds. They work because they are:

- Straightforward to organize
- Require little equipment other than a venue
- Provide a great opportunity for a social event
- Can be easily scaled up or down to suit all sorts of gatherings
- Can be easily tailored to suit particular groups of people ie seniors, sports teams etc

Arranging fun quizzes for your organisation is pretty straightforward.

As with many fundraising activities good planning is key:

What type of quiz?

Decide what type of quiz you will be holding. Fun quizzes work for all sorts of different groups and organizations. But you need to make sure that your evening and quiz questions will match your participants.

The key is to match what you plan to your target audience. If not you could always turn your ideas into individual rounds or parts of a more general quiz.

Choose a venue and date

All sorts of places can be used for fun quizzes: School Gyms or Auditoriums make great venues. If you plan to serve drinks and food you need to take this into consideration.

When choosing a date beware other important events on the calendar such as sporting events, school holidays and rival local events.

The quizmaster

Finding the right quizmaster for your event is vital. You need someone who has a certain natural authority and presence. Someone who will be able to hold the room's attention. If you can also find someone who is a bit of a wit and can crack a few funnies so much the better.

It is vital that the quizmaster understand the questions they are asking. It is therefore often left to that person to come up with the questions.

Quiz night questions

- For an average quiz night you need around 40 good questions.
- It is usual to split these into particular rounds or sections.
- Most quizzes will have different topics for each round. Every team will have people in it with knowledge about different subjects.
- Having rounds that suit and include your audience is important. For instance someone might be useless at science but a whizz at soap opera trivia.

Suitable topics might include:

- General Knowledge
- Around the world (Geography)
- The past (History)
- SportS
- Film and TV
- Pop Trivia or Music

A good format is 2 rounds of 10 questions followed by a break for food followed by 2 more rounds.

An alternative would be 6 straight rounds of 8 questions with short breaks in between. There are lots of places you can look for your quiz night questions.

A good quiz question should be:

- The right level of difficulty for your audience
- Easy to understand and have one clear answer
- Be reasonably interesting - you want people to be interested in the answers

Teams

Nearly all charity fun quizzes involve teams of between 2 and 8 people. These can be arranged in advance or happen spontaneously on the evening. It is usual for the venue to be arranged so that each team can huddle around their own table.

Each team needs a good name. It seems to be a tradition at fun quizzes for these to be generally quite jokey and a good set of names adds to the fun.

Answer sheets and marking

Each team should have just one answer sheet. This should have on it all the named sections and clear numbered spaces for the answers.

Marking usually takes place after each round (or sometimes 2 rounds) while the questions are still fresh in people's minds. Marking this way also establishes who is in the lead and who is challenging. A bit of friendly rivalry is an important ingredient of a good quiz!

At some quizzes all the sheets are collected in and marked by the quizmaster and maybe a helper.

Prizes

As it is a fundraiser most people will be happy with a token prize. Its more about the "honor and the glory" and all the friendly banter and bragging rights that go with it. A mock serious presentation of a small trophy is another neat idea to crown your champions.

Making money at fun quizzes

You can make money at your event in several ways:

- **Entry fees** - Charge per person or per team
- **Sponsorship and Advertising** - You may be able to get a bit of fun advertising or sponsorship out of local businesses.
- **Sell food and drinks** - You can sell this individually or include it in the entry fee.
- **Raffles** - These are obvious extras for the evening.

There is something else however that fun quizzes should be about as well as money - They are a chance to have fun and interaction with other people.

It is also a way of building a community of people interested in you and what you are doing.

Building these relationships will always pay off in the long term, whatever your short term goals.