

'25 Tips for Fundraising in Tough Times'

Report prepared by The Ireland Funds

Six Fundamental Things to do Now

1. **Focus on mission**
2. **Develop a strategy**
3. **Cut costs and consider consolidation**
4. **Remember the fundraising facts of life**
5. **Lead your board and mine your database**
6. **Ask, ask, ask**

1. Focus on Mission

In all studies done throughout the world on why people give the number one reason invariably is belief in the mission of the organisation. Now is a good time to examine your mission and see if it is still relevant or if it needs to be tweaked or fundamentally changed. Compare it to other organisations and see how you stack up. In difficult times the mission becomes all important.

2. Develop a Strategy

This is the time your donors want to see you do two things:

- manage the crisis and
- work to a measurable plan.

The circumstances provide you with an opportunity to engage your leadership in long range planning. Strategic planning is a tool for transforming and revitalising your organisation. Set realistic goals, define action steps and responsibilities explicitly and get the views of many. The strategic plan is not a wish list, a report card or a marketing tool. Nor is it a magic bullet or quick cure for today's financial mess. What it can do is identify your organisation's strengths and weaknesses, spot new opportunities and ways to do things differently. It will provide an invaluable blueprint for growth and revitalisation enabling an organisation to take stock of where it is, determine where it wants to go and chart a course to get there. We, in The Ireland Funds, are currently engaging our leadership in Ireland and overseas in developing a 3 year strategy. One of our guiding principles is to "Do the same things only differently". It has allowed us to engage many people and ask for advice. The cliché is 'if you want money ask for advice'. We all have great resources of talent on our boards and among our supporters. Meet them, call them and ask them "If you were me what would you do?" People are always flattered when asked for advice.

3. Cut Costs and Consider Consolidation

The current crisis and downturn in giving will mean that many organisations will have to cut costs which will be painful. There is no easy way to do this but, in terms of staff, try to keep frontline 'askers' i.e. those people who interact with donors. Make sure all staff have job specs with precise and measurable goals and objectives which are reviewed regularly. There is a huge proliferation of non-profits which means there is duplication in the sector. This may be a time to consider merging with other organisations with similar missions. A good outcome from a bad situation could be the emergence of a stronger sector. We all know that money is attracted by strength not weakness. Philanthropic money goes to organisations that have the capacity to grow and carry out their mission.

4. Remember the 10 Fundraising 'Facts of Life'

1. Money is not given – it has to be raised.
2. It does not come in – it has to be gone after.
3. It is not offered – it has to be asked for.
4. Money is the oxygen of your organisation.

5. Money is not raised at your desks.
6. Asking is your greatest fundraising tool.
7. Money is attracted by strength, not weakness.
8. People like to support winners.
9. People need to be inspired by a vision.
10. If you're not asking your donors for money, somebody else is!

5. Lead your Boards and Mine Your Database

It is important to realise that no matter how talented your board members are in their respective fields they probably are not familiar with fundraising. Accordingly, the Board's effectiveness and engagement is directly related to your input and guidance i.e. we get the boards we deserve. Our challenge is to offer them a way to find their passion and pursue it to improve the lives of others. We have to lead this process. It won't happen without us. We are the professionals at work on this fulltime. They are part time volunteers with limited time, understanding and energy. We have to educate. It is a case of 'the Board as your boss - you as their leader'. They think fundraising is the same as asking (which they don't want to do) and thus take no part in the other 95% of the fundraising process. We have to show them that fundraising is a much more complicated process than just soliciting and show them easy ways to support fundraising that doesn't involve soliciting.

They have to be convinced that the conversation is not about the money - it's about the mission.

As with all sales the most likely person to give is somebody who has given before. Strangers don't give. Analyse your data base and build your prospect pool. Track and collect data on your supporters. Develop visit and call reports. Include follow up steps in call report summaries. Track 'moves' with prospects. Create individual strategies for individual donors. Design an individual plan for each of your top 50/100 donors. We all let prospects fall through the cracks. They may not want to give now for obvious reasons but that is not to say they won't be in a position to do so in the future. Work out what you do each month with each prospect.

6. Ask, ask, ask

The number one rule in fundraising - if you want to get, you have to ask. Nobody is going to ring you or call into your office to give you a cheque. Life just doesn't work like that. Before asking for money there are lots of things you can ask your supporters for, such as.

- advice
- involvement
- to sit on a committee
- feedback
- to thank others
- to host an outreach event
- to talk to the press
- to proofread a document
- to make an introduction
- to meet a grantee
- to meet a specialist
- to take people on tours of projects

This is an extract from a report called "25 tips for fundraising in tough times" prepared by Kingsley Aikins, President & CEO, The Ireland Funds

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