

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

TOP TEN TIPS
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TO-DO LIST

1. **Decide who your audience is.** Who will attend your event? Existing donors or folks new to your organization? Young or old? What would they like?
2. **Decide what kind of event to do.** There are thousands of different kinds of fundraising events. What would your audience be most interested in attending? What's most in line with your organization's culture?
3. **Give yourself six months to plan the event.** Yes, six months! These things take time. Think of all of the things you need to do. Working backwards from the event date, put all of these things on a calendar.
4. **Involve your board, staff and volunteers.** No one, not even a superhero, can successfully do all the work for an event. Figure out all of the various ways you can involve and engage staff, board and volunteers. Involve them in both planning and at the event.
5. **Pick the right location.** Pick a location that is easy for your audience to get to. Also, pick a venue that's going to be right for the event you're doing.
6. **Aim to raise at least as much as you spend.** While fundraising events accomplish other important things like raising your organization's profile in the community, you want to make sure you actually make some money. Ideally, you would gross twice your expenses.
7. **Keep the program short.** As in 45 minutes or less. Yes, people are there to hear about your organization, but they are also there to mingle with others. Make sure you have a tight agenda and that you've let everyone know how long (or short) they have to speak.
8. **Figure out the pitch beforehand.** At many events, an additional pitch for support is made. Figure out who will do this and when they will do it during the event. Have envelopes ready for people to put their checks or commitments in.
9. **Thank your attendees.** Thank them for coming when they arrive. Thank them again as they are leaving. Thank them again, if you can, with a letter afterwards.
10. **Be sure to evaluate afterwards.** Was it worth it? How much effort did it take? Could we do anything better next time? What would you do differently? Taking time to evaluate will help you with future events.

- Attend other fundraising events and take notes (see tip #10 for questions to ask)
- Decide the events you want to do over a year and calendar these so there is space in between.
- Find a champion on your Board who will help take the lead and engage other board members
- Decide all of the questions in the tips section – Audience? What kind of event? Location? Pitch? Program?
- Develop a detailed workplan: What tasks need to get done? Who is responsible for that task? When does it need to take place?
- Develop a detailed event budget and stick to it.
- Recruit volunteers to help with the event.
- Break volunteers into different committees to plan the event: Honorary committee, publicity, arrangement details, materials, invitation committee, sponsorship and clean-up.
- Print donation cards and envelopes before the event.

Ron Milam has over 14 years of experience facilitating meetings and developing leadership for over 50 organizations.

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