



UNIQUE FUNDRAISING IDEAS FOR SHOW CHOIRS

by Kari Metzger

Whether you are a dues-collecting show choir, or you are funded externally, one way or another money is probably on your mind.

SHOW ME THE MONEY!

Between the costs of risers, music, costumes, make-up, travel costs, and the other elements your particular group needs in order to survive and thrive, finding ways to obtain those green-backs is likely on your mind a lot! Before you start up the next bake sale, why not consider some more fun ways to fundraise your way to success? The fun part is coming up with new ideas to interact with community members and fans—here are a few ideas and tips to get you thinking outside the box:

Benefit Concerts

Teaming up with a nonprofit to raise awareness for a cause while also asking for support is a great way to make a difference in your community. Partnering with a worthy association and performing for a great cause will gather followers and allow them to see another side of your group. Not only will you feel good after such a performance, but your choir will have a much better understanding of how important community events are.

Gala Dinners

If you are in the event-planning mood, try your luck at a gala dinner. There are a lot of different types of functions that you can plan. For instance, the Houston Chronicle reported that even though the word "gala" is inherently 'fancy', they can be as formal or informal as you would like. How about a cabaret-style dinner and a show, where your show choir is the entertainment?

Social Media Campaigns

The world is social—no doubt about it. Take your raffles, contests, events and promote them online through as many social media networks as you participate in. Facebook events are great for inviting specific supporters to your group, and Twitter can help generate 'buzz' as you prepare for an event. You can promote your event on your blog and website as well, and have tickets available on the spot for your eager fans to purchase.

Merchandise Sales

Of course the first thing a choir thinks about when they think merchandise is often a CD. So what if you haven't recorded a CD or video yet? No problem! Think outside the box—are most of your fans also fans of singing or choir? How about some funny choir memorabilia they can purchase? Water bottles, coffee mugs, t-shirts, and other swag with funny sayings on them can be a great fundraiser. Online shops like cafepress.com allow you to create



merchandise on an as-needed basis, so you only pay for what is printed, while gaining a portion of the proceeds of each sale.

Singing Telegrams

As a show choir, you know how to sell the song—how about actually selling the song on Valentine's Day or someone's birthday? Many choirs these days break into smaller groups around Valentine's Day and offer a singing telegram experience for loved ones. It's also a great way to gain new audience members and potentially even new choir members!

Mystery Games

Wicker Park Choral Singers, a group in Chicago, created a fundraiser based on the popular television show "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?" and crafted a mystery. They wrote up clues that would help guests put a stop to Thomas Markasino's evil plot to ruin the art of choral music. The event was ticket-based, and the group also provided beverages to make the experience more fun and party-like. Those who solved the mystery had the chance to win prizes, as well. Your group can come up with your own take on the mystery dinner theater. Create an immersive event that guests will be sure to remember.

Raffle and a Dinner

Host a dinner or high tea and sell tickets for tables. Naturally, your group can provide the entertainment while guests are dining. Have visitors enter into a raffle where they can win various prizes. These events work best when you connect with local businesses and request that they donate some prizes for you. Restaurant gift certificates, spa getaways and other gifts work well for raffle prizes. Once again, you can use your own talents to your advantage. Why not raffle off a personal concert from your group? Going back to the first idea, certain raffle winners may be able to unleash your group on their unsuspecting friends in the form of a singing telegram.

The great thing about fundraising is that it can also double as a marketing opportunity. Think about it: Your show choir holds a gala

or a 5K race for donors and community members and the group performs, showing the audience the choir's personality and love for music. Attendees get excited and involved and listen to your hits. What better way to simultaneously get more people interested in your music while also raising funds for the group to do bigger and better things? It's a win for both you and the audience members, who now have great new music to enjoy.

Once your group hits upon an idea that works especially well for you and your unique personality, you can continue this fundraiser year after year. One of the keys to a successful fundraiser is to make it a big event that audience and community members look forward to. While events like these may take a lot of time and preparation, it can be worthwhile to have an annual event to fall back on.

HOSTING THE EVENT

Now, a perfect fundraiser doesn't just happen magically. These events take a lot of planning, preparation and strategic execution, meaning your choir has to be on top of its game. To get you off on the right foot, here are six important tips for show choir fundraising:

1. Think about what you are trying to accomplish

Yes, the main goal is to raise money, but are there other purposes to the event? As mentioned above, you can use this as a publicity



opportunity or to gain attention with a new audience. Either way, start planning with your purposes—even underlying ones—in mind and make decisions based on what else you want to gain from the event.

2. Set goals

Don't ever go into a fundraising event blindly. Instead, set a goal for



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how much money your choir wants to make, how many people and what type of audience you want to attend, and any other important metrics you may want to track. Setting these goals ahead of time will help you keep track of how it is progressing as well as give a better idea of how to plan the event.

3. Define the budget

This is an important part of the process because you will want to make the smartest decisions possible regarding your budget. You will have to invest some funds to raise more money, but how much? Think about the profit you will make, i.e. the funds left over after the event is paid for. Make sure your efforts weren't in vain and the event allows you to pursue whatever venture it is you had in mind for the money.

4. Who do you want to attend?

The attendee list is very important. Inviting donors depends on what you are trying to accomplish. For instance, if you are going for a

community gathering, ask local businesses and neighbors to get involved, put flyers up in coffee shops and get the word out locally. However, if you are aiming for a more formal gala, stick to influential people such as business owners and other musicians or important personalities in the music community.

5. Market the event

Your show choir marketing efforts need to be smart, strategic and creative. Use your website, social media accounts, blog and a variety of offline methods to get participants. Design flyers to post around town, or go with more formal invitation letters. It's also worthwhile to simply ask people face to face if they want to attend the event (and encourage your members and their families to do the same).

No matter what type of fundraiser you plan, make sure you prepare and make smart decisions. Once the event is over, always thank attendees and donors for their help and support for the choir. Now get out there and start raising some money! 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Kari Metzger has an extensive background in musical and administrative choir leadership and runs the business development team for Groupanizer, a company dedicated to helping choirs and choruses organize and manage their administrative, musical/repertoire, and marketing needs through its proprietary members-only and public-facing websites. For more information, visit groupanizer.com.

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