



UNIQUE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

FOR SHOW CHOIRS

by Kari Metzger





Between the costs of risers, music, costumes, make-up, travel costs, and the other elements each particular group needs in order to survive and thrive, finding ways to obtain those green-backs is likely a continual concern. Before starting up the next bake sale, supporters might consider some more fun ways to successfully fundraise. The fun part is coming up with new ideas to interact with community members and fans. This article offers a few ideas and tips for thinking outside of 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 the community. Partnering with a worthy association and performing for a great cause will gather followers and allow them to see another side of the group. Not only will performers, supporters, and audience members feel good after such a performance, but the choir will also have a much better understanding of how important community events are.

Gala Dinners

Supporters who are in the event-planning mood might try their luck at a gala dinner. Many different types of functions that can be planned. For instance, the Houston Chronicle reported that even though the word “gala” is inherently “fancy,” these events can be as formal or informal as planners would like. One possibility: a cabaret-style dinner and a show, where the show choir provides the entertainment.

Social Media Campaigns

The world is social, no doubt about it. Supporters can promote raffles, contests, and events online through as many social media networks as members of the group participate in. Facebook events are great for inviting specific supporters to the group, and Twitter can help generate buzz in preparation for an event. Events can be promoted on the choir’s blog and website as well, and tickets can be available on the spot for eager fans to purchase.

Merchandise Sales

Of course the first thing a choir thinks about when they think merchandise is often a CD. What merchandise might be sold if a choir hasn’t recorded a CD or video yet? Planners can think outside the box. Many fans are also fans of singing or choir generally, so supporters might order some funny choir memorabilia for fans to 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 users to create merchandise on an as-needed basis, so show-choir support groups only pay for what is printed while gaining a portion of the proceeds of each sale.

Singing Telegrams

Show choirs know how to sell the song, so they might consider 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. This fundraiser is 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 mystery fundraiser based on the popular television show “Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?” 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. Other groups can come up with their own take on the mystery dinner theater, creating an immersive event that guests will be sure to remember.

Raffle and a Dinner

Another idea is to host a dinner or high tea and sell tickets for tables. Naturally, the show choir can provide the entertainment while guests are dining. Visitors can enter a raffle to win various prizes; these events work best when they are connected with local businesses that donate prizes. Restaurant gift certificates, spa getaways, and other gifts work well for raffle prizes. Once again, the show choir’s talents can be part of the offerings, with a personal concert as part of the raffle. Drawing on a previous idea, certain raffle winners may be able to unleash show choir members on their unsuspecting friends in the form of a singing telegram.



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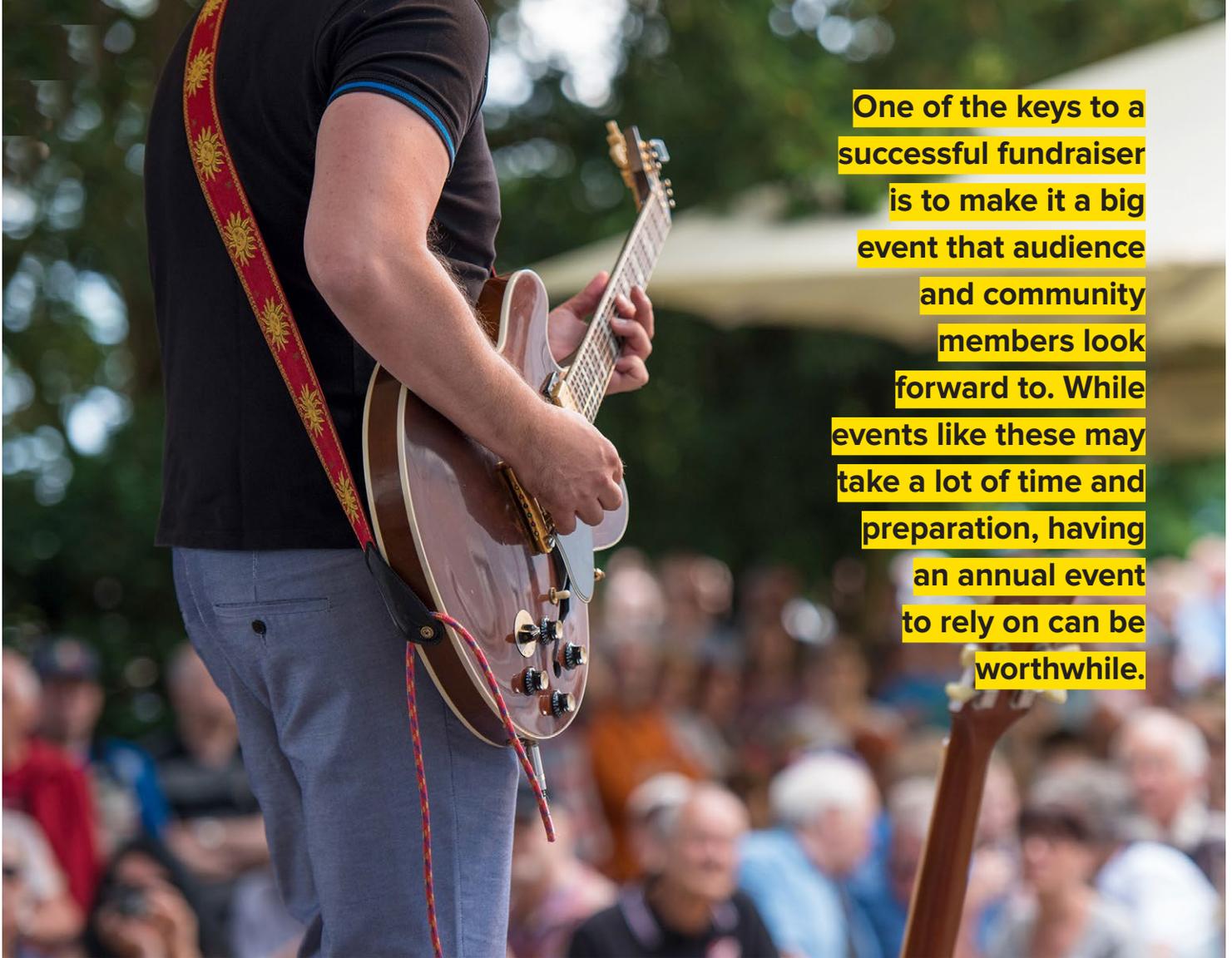
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One of the keys to a successful fundraiser is to make it a big event that audience and community members look forward to. While events like these may take a lot of time and preparation, having an annual event to rely on can be worthwhile.

The great thing about fundraising is that it can also double as a marketing opportunity. When a show choir performs at a gala or a 5K race for donors and community members, the audience experiences the choir's personality and love for music. Attendees get excited and involved listening to the hits. These events are excellent avenues to simultaneously get more people interested in the music while also raising funds for the group to do bigger and better things. Such opportunities are wins for both the choir and the audience members, who now have great new music to enjoy.

Once a group finds an idea that works especially well for its unique personality, it can continue the same 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, having an annual event to rely on can be worthwhile.

Hosting the Event

A perfect fundraiser doesn't just happen magically. These events take a lot of planning, preparation, and strategic execution,

meaning that the choir has to be on top of its game. To help kick off the process, here are six important tips for show choir fundraising:

1. Think about the Overall Goal

Yes, the main goal is to raise money, but are there other purposes to the event? As mentioned above, these events can be used as publicity opportunities or to gain attention from a new audience. Either way, supporters should start planning with the big purposes in mind, making decisions based on what else they want to gain from the event.

2. Set Incremental Goals

Show choir supporters should never go into a fundraising event blindly. Instead, they need to set a goal for how much money the choir wants to make, the target audience size and demographic, and any other important metrics the group may want to track. Setting these goals ahead of time will help planners keep tabs on how it is progressing as well as give a better idea of how to plan the event.

3. Define the Budget

This aspect is an important part of the process because show choir supporters will

want to make the smartest decisions possible regarding the budget. People will often have to invest some funds to raise more money, but how much? Planners need to think about the profit that will be made, i.e. the funds left over after the event is paid for. Supporters must plan so that fundraising efforts aren't made in vain and the event allows the choir to use the money to pursue the hoped-for opportunity.

4. Who Should Attend?

The attendee list is very important. Inviting donors depends on what the event is trying to accomplish. For instance, if the goal is to have a community gathering, planners should ask local businesses and neighbors to get involved, put flyers up in coffee shops, and get the word out locally. However, if the aim is a more formal gala, organizers should stick to influential people such as business owners and other musicians or important personalities in the music community.

5. Market the Event

Show choir marketing efforts need to be smart, strategic, and creative. Planners should use the show choir website, social

media accounts, blog, and a variety of offline methods to get participants. Organizers should 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 choir members and their families to do the same.

All fundraisers need careful preparation and smart decision-making. Once the event is over, organizers need to always thank attendees and donors for their help and support for the choir. These ideas should help show choir supporters to 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. Learn more at www.groupanizer.com.

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