





SOUND OF SALES

HOW THE BEST FUNDRAISERS KEEP SHOW CHOIRS IN TUNE (AND IN BUSINESS)

by Ed Bauer



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If you've ever stood at a booster meeting trying to explain to a group of well-meaning parents why sequins cost more than their first car, you already know the truth: show choir runs on rhythm, harmony, and cold hard cash. Those buses, hotels, meals, costumes, rights fees, and microphones don't pay for themselves, and the school budget rarely hums along to your tempo.

That's why fundraising isn't just a necessity—it's part of the show choir identity. Whether your students are hawking cookie dough, coffee, candles, or calendars, these fundraisers are more than dollar signs; they're lifelines. They keep the lights on, the music loud, and the magic alive. And if done right, they also build community, promote your program far beyond your school's four walls, and turn every sale into a

standing ovation for your choir.

Let's take a deep breath (from the diaphragm, of course) and explore how fundraising fuels your program's growth—and how to turn your sales season into a tradition people look forward to, year after year.

Part One: The Harmony Between Sales and Success

Keeping the Lights On (Literally)

A director once joked that her show choir's annual show was "powered by cookie dough." She wasn't far off. Between travel expenses, competition entry fees, and those gorgeous new risers, a single competition weekend can cost what it would take to fund an entire sports season.

Without strong fundraising, the hard truth is that opportunities shrink. Directors have to scale back the set list, pick simpler choreography, or skip the out-of-state competition that can be a life-changing experience for students. Fundraising keeps the program thriving, not just surviving.

But beyond keeping the van wheels turning, a strong sales campaign helps establish independence and pride. It shows administrators that your group can sustain itself and take initiative. And for students, it's a practical life lesson in ownership: they're earning their spot on stage.

Raising Funds, Raising Fans

Every box of chocolate bars or bag of coffee beans sold is a conversation starter—a moment where someone outside your school learns about your choir. “Oh, you’re in that group that won Nationals last year?” or “I saw your performance online—amazing costumes!” These small exchanges grow your audience and brand.

When you think of fundraising, don't just think of dollar signs. Think visibility. The best fundraisers make your choir recognizable in your community. Maybe it's the annual “Sing & Serve” pancake breakfast, or your signature cookie sale. Maybe it's a “Caroling for Cash” event in December where the group performs door-to-door for donations (bonus: free vocal warm-ups in the snow).

The point is: every sale tells the world your choir exists—and is worth supporting. Fundraisers plant seeds for new fans, future members, and maybe even sponsors who'll write bigger checks next season.

The Student Side of Sales

If the students roll their eyes at the word “fundraiser,” it's probably because they've only seen the cardboard box, not the bigger picture. Fundraisers

teach communication, confidence, and teamwork—skills that matter just as much as hitting that high F#.

Students learn to make a pitch, handle rejection, and follow through—skills that employers drool over later in life. Plus, they get the joy of seeing their

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efforts pay off directly: “We sold enough fudge to pay for new wireless mics!” That's tangible, and it's motivating.

Fundraising gives your students a chance to be proud ambassadors. They're not just kids selling snacks; they're performers funding their art. They're showing people what passion looks like—and you can't put a price tag on that kind of education.

Part Two: Building Your Own “Cookie Season” Tradition

Now, here's where it gets really fun. You can take a page out of the Girl Scouts' playbook and create a recurring fundraising season—something the community looks forward to as much as the performances themselves.

We're talking about turning your fundraiser into an event, a tradition,

even a brand. Done right, your choir's sale could become as anticipated as pumpkin-spice season (if you're into that; no judgments here).

Step 1: Pick the Right Product (and Stick with It)

Consistency is key. Girl Scouts sell cookies, and everyone knows it. People plan for it. They crave it. That's the kind of familiarity you want for your choir fundraiser.

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Pick a product that fits your choir's personality and your community's taste. A few examples that have proven crowd-pleasers:

- **Coffee or tea sales:** Perfect for early-morning parents and caffeine-loving supporters.
- **Popcorn or pretzel sales:** Great for movie nights and game days.
- **Holiday greens:** Perfect for a December drive—plus they smell amazing.
- **Show-choir branded merchandise:** T-shirts, tumblers, hoodies—bonus: free advertising when people wear them.
- **Sweet treats:** Cookie dough, fudge, or chocolate always win hearts (and wallets).

Once you find your signature item, make it annual. Brand it around your group: "Encore Chocolate Season," "Treble Treats," or "Harmony in a Bag." That's how you build recognition year over year.

Step 2: Set the Stage (Make It a Show!)

If anyone knows how to add flair, it's a show choir. So use that showmanship! Launch your fundraiser with a kickoff concert or pep rally. Have students perform snippets of their set list between sales pitches. Post teaser videos on social media: "The Sopranos are selling sweets! The Basses are baking up competition funds!"

You can even turn it into a competition within your group. Maybe the section that sells the most gets first dibs on pizza at rehearsal—or the losing section has to perform an interpretive dance at the next meeting (which will definitely go viral).

By turning your sales drive into a mini event, you build buzz and boost participation.

Step 3: Make It Easy for People to Buy (and Rebuy)

One reason the Girl Scouts succeed is because they make it ridiculously easy to buy. These days, people can Venmo a Scout from across the country.

Take that same approach:

- **Online stores:** Set up a digital order form linked to your choir's social media.
- **Delivery options:** Offer "student delivery" for local supporters and shipping for distant relatives.
- **Reminders:** Use email lists and social posts to remind your buyers each year when "Show Choir Sales Season" begins.

And don't forget the power of data.

Keep track of repeat buyers. Next year, reach out directly: “Hi Mr. Taylor, ready for your annual ‘Treble Blend’ coffee order?” People love being remembered—and it guarantees repeat sales.

Step 4: Tell the Story Behind the Sale

Every fundraiser is a chance to tell your story. Don’t just sell a candle—sell the dream it supports.

Your students aren’t funding a random field trip—they’re funding the chance to perform under the bright lights, to compete at Nationals, to represent their school with pride.

Give buyers a peek behind the curtain. Add photos of rehearsals, post “thank you” videos, and let your students share why show choir matters to them. When people see the impact of their purchase, they stop thinking “I’m buying coffee” and start thinking “I’m supporting excellence.”

That emotional connection turns one-time buyers into lifelong fans.

Step 5: Celebrate Like You Just Won Nationals

When the fundraiser wraps, don’t quietly deposit the checks and move on. Celebrate! Host a mini “Thank You” concert for the community or a social media shoutout series for top sellers and supporters.

Recognition not only motivates your students, but it also builds anticipation for next year’s sale. If people see how appreciated they are, they’ll be waiting with open wallets and hearts when the next season rolls around.

Judging the Sales Performance

Directors spend countless hours preparing for competition judges. The same principles apply here. If you want your fundraiser to score “Superior” ratings, think about the same criteria



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competitions use:

- **Vocal Performance** → Your pitch—literally! Train students to speak clearly and enthusiastically about the product and program.
- **Choreography** → Presentation & delivery. Create a fun, organized setup with eye-catching posters, clean uniforms, and cheerful energy.
- **Show Design** → Branding & packaging. Use a consistent logo, tagline, and visual style for your fundraiser each year.
- **Overall Effect** → Emotional connection. Share your story, express gratitude, and help buyers feel part of something meaningful.
- **Teamwork** → Group participation. Set clear goals, assign roles, and keep spirits high with friendly competition.

See? It's not so different from the stage. Fundraising is just another form of performance—one that happens in parking lots, coffee shops, and Instagram feeds.

Encore: The Long-Term Payoff

Once your choir builds a fundraising tradition, something magical happens: momentum.

Each year, participation grows. Your community starts asking when “Show Choir Season” begins—not just for the concerts, but for the sales. Businesses reach out to partner. Alumni come back to buy their favorite fudge or sponsor the next trip.

And your students? They learn what it means to sustain something beautiful through hard work. They see the direct connection between effort and opportunity. They understand that excellence isn't just practiced on the risers—it's earned, dollar by dollar, cookie by cookie, handshake by handshake.

Closing Notes (Cue the Standing Ovation)

At its heart, fundraising isn't about selling things—it's about building connections. Every transaction is a

bridge between your choir and your community, a shared belief that the arts matter, that music deserves support, and that those sparkling costumes are worth every penny.

So the next time someone groans about another fundraiser, remind them that they're not just selling coffee—they're fueling a dream. And if you do it right, your “Show Choir Cookie Season” will become as beloved and anticipated as your spring show itself.

Because in show choir, the sweetest notes aren't always sung—they're sometimes baked, brewed, or boxed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ed Bauer has been in publishing for over twenty years. He was introduced to Show Choir by his daughter and he is forever grateful to her for this wonderful gift.

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