

Fundraising Strategy

Introduction

If you are reading this article then you are almost certainly attempting to raise a considerable sum of money in support of a charity as well as to fund a particular adventure or activity, such as an Everest Trek. The figures can look quite daunting, several thousand pounds and only a few months to do it in. How on earth will you do it? Who will possibly give you £3-4000 just to go on a holiday!!!

In this introduction I want to give you confidence that it CAN be done, all you need is either a few rich and benevolent friends or a plan. Assuming you don't have the former, then a plan it will have to be!

In building this plan there are only two things you need to take into account:

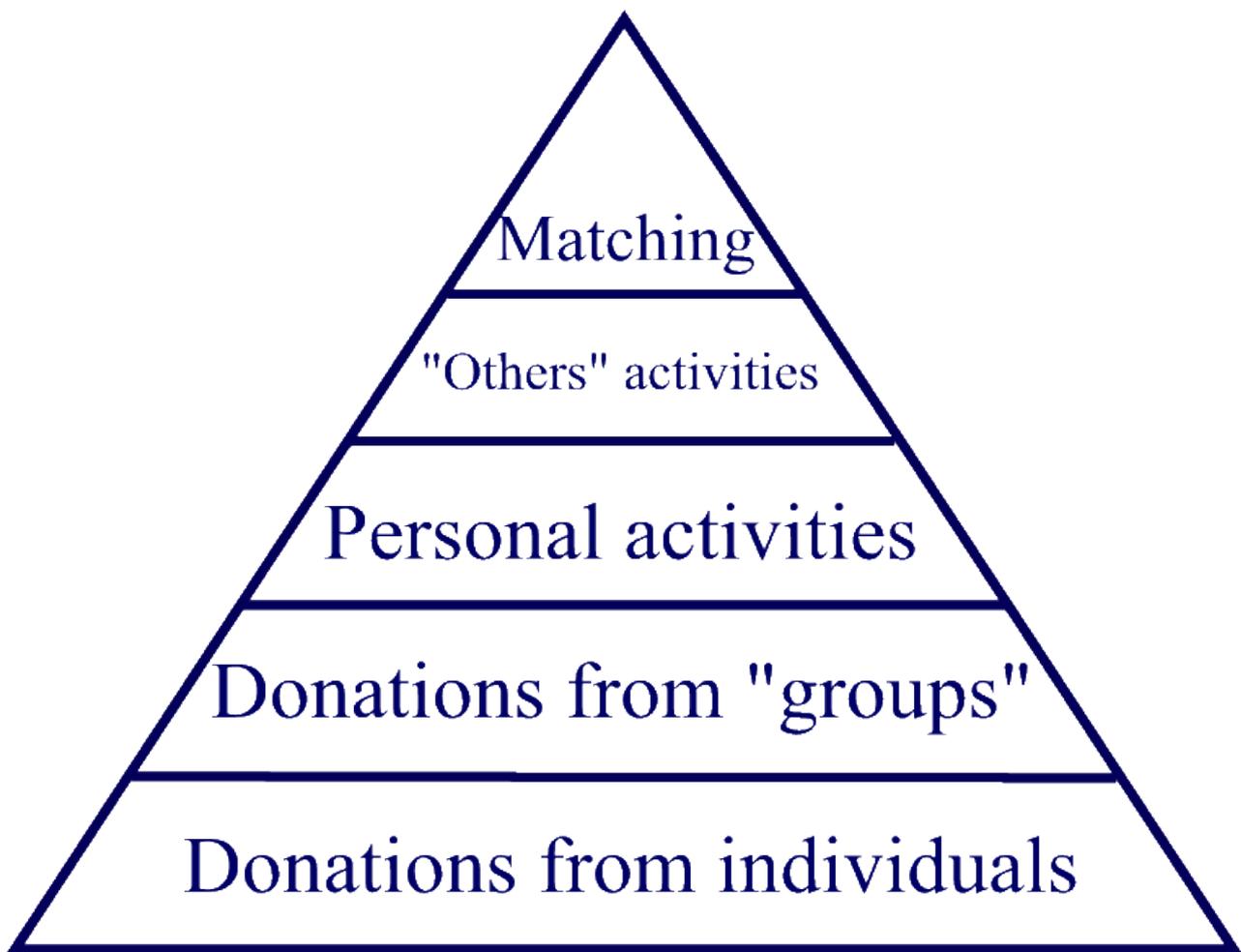
1. The understanding that you are more likely to succeed if you have an overall strategy with targetted activities
2. The understanding that fundraising is an emotional activity as well as a rational one.

The first of these, having an overall strategy, is essentially no different from any other type of project where you have a goal (£3200) with a deadline (July 1st) with resources to be used efficiently (yourself, your friends/relatives, your employer, associated groups) with specific activities to organise and manage (the five mini strategies in the diagram below). Surround this lot with a good dollop of energy, creativity and communication and you might just be in danger of succeeding!

Everything so far is the “rational” part of fundraising, but my second point above is about the emotional aspect. Some of this is obvious and relates to YOU and some of it relates to your DONORS and SUPPORTERS. So, let's state the obvious: If YOU identify strongly with the charity and it's objectives you are much more likely to be “driven” to support it in your quest. You will be highly energised because you WANT to do some good. The classic example of this are the people who lose someone close to them to cancer and embark on a manic fundraising programme for a whole variety of reasons. I can personally identify with this having lost my own son in this way 10 years ago and organising a campaign that raised £350,000 in 4 years. Likewise, as a qualified psychologist I am well aware of the emotional processes involved. Associated with this are your supporters/donors emotions. Can THEY identify with the charity? In our case we are supporting poor schoolchildren in Nepal. More specifically we are providing educational materials and schoolteachers to five of the poorest inner city schools in Kathmandu. The schools are crumbling shacks with no running water or toilets in most cases. We are very efficient in our operations in that last year 95% of the funds raised were spent directly on the children with only 5% in administrative expenses. These are examples of some of the emotional facts that can attract your supporters to make donations. Use them!

So now let's look at a broad strategy for fundraising. Rather like my articles on fitness this is NOT a prescriptive approach and you must look at the five strategic areas and build your own activities into them. Some of them you may be able to do easily, some with more difficulty, but you should use them all to achieve your goal. My final suggestion before I describe each of the five is to set a target within each one which will build into the whole.

The diagram below shows all five areas from the broad base of getting donations from individuals up to the possibility of some “matching” from your employer. Read on



1. Donations from individuals

The base of the pyramid and the obvious place to start your search for funds. Create a list, who do you know, how can you tell them about what you are doing, what materials can you use to support you. Some will be by letter, some by email and some face to face. In all cases though you should use a well created flyer to outline the basics of the charity and your effort. Eventually, it's time to approach them and you should drop a not-too-subtle hint about how much they could donate. Let's face it, if you're chasing £3200 that's an awful lot of fivers, so tell them how much you're trying to raise and how many people you're contacting. So, if you're contacting 100 people they can work it out that you'd appreciate 3200/100 from them! Also, give them a Gift Aid form so you can try to get an extra 28p tax back for every £1 someone donates. Stick at it, and go a step further by asking them if they know anyone else who might donate, if they do then add them to your list and contact them too.

2. Donations from "groups"

This is similar to the individual donation approach but involves you thinking about any group or organisation you know, associate with or belong to. The first thing to do is to put yourself in the shoes of "being a customer or client" which we all are in different guises. For example I am a customer to the dealership where I bought my car, a customer to the garage who do my/my wife's car servicing, a local bank, an insurance company, an investment company, the village shop, the local dental practice, the local opticians, the Rotary Club, the list goes on. And this isn't some pie in the sky list. If you are a customer to these types of organisation they WANT TO KEEP YOU AS A CUSTOMER! It's all about customer

loyalty working both ways and I wouldn't have put them on the list for you if I hadn't had donations from them! In some cases I got an immediate donation. In others I gave a slideshow/talk for them on my return from a trek or expedition in return for a donation. But in EVERY case I got something, so get cracking and create this list too.

3. Personal activities

This is my favourite way of raising sponsorship from people I know, or only know a little. The essence behind this mini strategy is “giving people something for their money” so you are not only asking for a donation. For example if it's the right time of the year, organise a barbecue, provide the food basics, tell everyone to bring a drink and to donate a sum to the charity. Or, gather together all the crap in your attic and garage and go to a car boot sale. Then, go around your neighbours asking THEM for stuff for a car boot sale and take their stuff to sell the next month too. Next, try and do something at your work, like sell chocolate cake on Fridays. Next, organise a quiz night at your local pub, club or work. Next, go to your local supermarket and ask if you can do customer packing of groceries and seek donations into your “bucket” across a day. Take a few friends to help you too. All you need here is energy, creativity and persistence to do at least one new thing each month.

4. “Other's” activities

This is my second favourite method of fundraising and is closely connected to the one above. For each of your activities in “personal activities” can you get a friend or relative to do one of them too. For example if a close relative who lives some distance away can't come to YOUR barbecue perhaps THEY would organise one of their own for their own local friends. Likewise, can you find 3-4 friends who will go to car boot sales themselves with stuff they would sell for you? What you are trying to do here is to get as many people as you can working for you but doing something they might enjoy and get something out of. Use THEIR creativity and energy to support you.

5. Matching

The icing on the cake at the top of the pyramid and, if you can pull it off, the one that can give you the biggest boost. Most companies have policies on supporting their employees in charitable or voluntary work, your job is to find out what it is, and quickly! Don't wait till the last minute, go and talk to the right person, tell them what you are doing, what you are trying to achieve and something about the charity. If they have a no cap full matching policy then your overall target has just been halved! Think about it, if you raise £1600 they might just give you the other £1600! Unlikely though this may seem it's not unheard of and I know a number of instances where it has happened. But, as I said above, ask early since they will only have a finite amount of money to give and if you don't tell them early enough in a financial year there may be nothing left in the pot for you. You are almost certain to get something.

Conclusion

Once again like my fitness articles I have tried NOT to be prescriptive. You may hate barbecues or car boot sales, but that's not the point. The point is that you will need to use all of these five mini strategies to help you reach your fundraising goal. Use each heading to think of what YOU can do under each one to ensure success. Try to get as many of your own ideas as you can at first, then do just a few you really want to and will get some fun out of. Yes, the f-word is allowed, in fact it's essential! Good luck.