FUNDRAISING FOR ALL OF US

It’s a Team Effort

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FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES FOR INCOMING EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS
Creating a Corporate Partnership Program
Transforming the Board of Advisors

Let the board lead and shape the program while limiting staff time.

Provide support and suggestions.

Be comfortable with their pace.

Set realistic, attainable goal.

Recognize the personalities and strengths of your volunteers.
1. The “Pay to Stay Home” Fundraiser Event: For a gift, the donor receives a package of pajamas, movie popcorn—to NOT attend the fundraiser.

2. The Giving Tree: During an event, hang tags from a small tree with cash dollar amounts on them. The donor takes a tag for whatever amount they want to donate. There is one cause that they are giving to that the museum picks (e.g. school field trips).
3. Date Night Auction Package: one experience for every month, packaged as one auction item.


5. Sponsor a Family Membership: Members are offered the option to buy an additional membership, for a family in need.
6. Progressive Party: Team up with the other nonprofits running fundraisers. Someone does drinks, someone dinner, someone dessert.

7. Invite a celebrity to your event.

8. Offer single free use of the museum as a way to entice corporate membership.
9. Auction a “feed the animals” type experience—something rare and exclusive.

10. Distinguish giving levels by interest, rather than just dollar amounts (e.g. Collectors, preservationists, etc.).
11. Get the Board Involved: Assign board members names of annual appeal donors to thank (3-5 works best). Try to pair them up with their friends and colleagues. A hand-written note goes a long way. For your fundraiser, give board members a few printed invitations and/or the digital invitation to “nudge” those already on the mailing list. Extra bonus points if they add new names.
12. Glitz in a Glass Raffle: Partner with a local jeweler to donate a diamond and cubic zirconia. Put them all in a small bag attached to the glass. Sell 30-50 tickets for $100. It creates excitement and is an easy way to add $3,000-$5,000 to your event revenue. This also works with a gift certificate from the jeweler instead if they don’t want to deal with the diamond and CZ.
13. Adopt an object/painting for the year: Create a menu of objects/paintings that donors can “buy” for the year. This would be in name only. Set a price for each item. The donor can be interviewed why they love the item. This can be added to social media outlets. The donor name could be added to a temporary label or sign. Proceeds could be either unrestricted or go toward an acquisitions fund.
14. Buy a Brick. Not a “fresh” idea per say but a tried and true fundraising campaign. This can bring in money but also revitalize a walkway if needed so donors are helping with preservation efforts. If popular, offer it once a year or every other year with a distinct cut-off date for orders. If they miss the deadline, put them on the list for the following year.

15. Raffle for the public: Find or create a highly requested item, unique to your site, and sell $1 raffle tickets during your busiest month. Have the item on display in your visitor center or museum store.
16. Membership Benefit: Partner with a local restaurant to create a dessert based on a recipe, specific to your museum. Museum members receive the dessert free or at a discount. They must show their member card to partake.

17. Murder Mystery Dinner Party: Create a murder mystery party based on the story of your museum/historic site. As people sign up, send them character dossiers with costume ideas. Make the ticket pricing high. Have the food and cocktails match the theme. People love to dress up and get in character especially if is specific to their beloved museum.
18. Giving Tuesday: Instead of asking for money, like everyone else, on Giving Tuesday, create a wish list on Amazon (or applicable online store) of needed supplies that donors can purchase for the museum. Give them a big shout out in your next print newsletter, blog, or social media.

19. Cultivation Event: At your next cultivation event, hosted by a board member or committee member, do a soft ask. This is controversial for many, but the attendees know why they are there and if an ask is not made, it is a missed opportunity.
20. Skip the big fundraiser and opt for small events (with higher ticket cost) to be held inside people’s homes; e.g. do a progressive party (people really want to look inside each other’s homes).

21. Is there a twist on the “long table outside in the early fall with a celebrity chef” idea? Maybe a beer garden partnering with a local brewery?

22. A twist on Diner en Blanc? Can you monetize an event like this?
23. Unique “Behind-the-scenes” experience for new donors (above a certain level)—collections space, or the really strange spaces like “Open All Our Closets Tour” or “Attic and Basement Tour” or “Explore our Cobwebs” or “Come Touch Our Stuff.” Perhaps it’s all in how you market it...

24. Double down on your planned giving group: Do you have strong volunteer leadership here? How are people recognized? Are you promoting it enough? This area will only get more important in the future.
25. Train your board: Have an annual party in mid-December where board members get together to make calls and write notes/emails. Provide snacks/drinks. Put people in teams. Award points for progress. Whatever it takes for your board to hunker down and help with the end of year asks.
26. Envelope at a Restaurant: Partner with a local restaurant to leave donation envelopes at their tables to get donors to leave a little extra change. This won’t garner a ton of donations, but it could still raise awareness for your cause (or for another fundraiser you’re running). Create a nice design for your envelope and a sign that clearly explains why you’re looking for donations, so that patrons will feel more inclined to support you.
27. Reverse Raffle: Instead of just selling tickets, make a party of it! In a reverse raffle, you set a fixed number of tickets to draw folks into a larger grand prize (for example, 200 tickets for $100 grosses a $10,000 prize and $10,000 for your org!) Then get some food, drink, music, and games and start drawing numbers. Instead of the FIRST number being the winner, the LAST number is! Watch the tensions rise as people's odds increase. But wait! Save out a special ticket and auction it off when there are just four numbers left...people might pay upwards of $500 to get that 1–5 chance of winning ten grand!
28. Scavenger Hunt: Social media can make scavenger hunts even easier. Have your participants take photos of the items on their lists and use a hashtag to track them. Be sure to plan the hunt route ahead of time so that it’s safe and fun for participants of all levels of ability. You’ll also want to establish whether participants can do it via car or on foot.

29. Friendraiser: have board members bring a friend new to the museum. It’s a take on the “interesting person” party idea.
30. Don’t underestimate “Giving in Honor of…” Remember the success of the “Name a Cockroach after your Ex” campaign from the Bronx Zoo.

31. Ask your colleagues to ask their friends what they think is cool / interesting / unique about their job and the museum. That will give you some ideas on what kind of event to hold / experience to market.
32. Give donors the chance to sponsor a work of art for a year BUT auction the works at a fundraising event. This allows people to fight to sponsor their favorites and drives up the gifts.
33. Host a holiday Festival of Wreaths where local businesses donate wreaths pre-decorated with items of value (e.g. a local theatre company donates a wreath with season tickets, swag, etc.) and visitors get to bid for the wreaths in a silent auction day-long event. Have music throughout the day and crafting tables. At the end of the day the highest written bid takes the wreath and the associated items of value.
34. Pin the Button on the Curator: Blindfolded donors stagger up to a curator cutout and stick a pin somewhere on the curator. The cutout is decorated with various codes which correspond to a predetermined list of gift values that are sealed in an envelope. Once the curator has been fully pincushioned you open the envelope and donors get to see what gift level they stabbed.
35. Beer Coaster Bingo: Work with a local beer distributor to print and distribute beer coasters at local partner establishments with your logo on the front and bingo numbers on the back. Patrons can then bring their coaster(s) to the museum and compare their number(s) with a chart hanging in the entrance. If they match three in a row, then they win something. If they’re current donors, then their prize gets augmented, so it’s beneficial to be a current donor/member.
36. Auction or raffle the chance to curate an exhibit. Be sure to save aside some tickets for those who can’t afford to buy one.

37. Auction or raffle the chance to select a limited number of objects from the collection that will be used as the nexus for a future exhibit. Bonus: publish the list of objects and then select a diverse list of people each of whom gets to contextualize the objects in his or her own way in future iterations of the exhibit series.
38. If you have sizeable grounds, hide a golden apple (or some other item of interest or relevance to your organization) on the grounds. Make it small and difficult to find. Visitors can search for the hidden gem during their visits, and whoever finds it gets a prize (a year’s membership, e.g.). Hide multiples to encourage repeat visitation which in turn encourages membership.

39. Have a Texas Hold ’em Poker Night. Charge a fee for entry (make it as high as possible). Top 5 finishers take a cut, the rest goes to the museum.
40. Corporate matching program.

41. Partner with a business for a percentage-of-sales promotion.

42. Business point-of-sale fundraising/sponsorships.

43. Corporate volunteer programs—in-kind hours for dollars.

44. Offer leadership training opportunities.
45. Reverse auction for business services.

46. Peer to peer appeal (letters or online).

47. Sponsor program: Set up a donation box for a specific object or conservation need; e.g. “Help us acquire this XXX,” or “Help us repair/care for this XXX.”

48. Raffle: of art, membership, service.
49. Reverse Raffle: last ticket pulled is the grand winner, with intermittent winners announced during the event.

50. Annual Calendar Raffle: Visitors/donors buy a calendar, then a winner is pulled monthly or periodically.

51. Adoption: Ask people to adopt an object or work of art at a cost of $25.00 monthly; put their name on the label.
52. Paint and sip.

53. Auction off a chance to eat dinner in an historic house. Limited number of seats drives up the price, then pull a bait and switch to allow more seats.

54. Local museum members offer a dinner at their home. Limited number of seats. Different tables each with a different regional or global type of food. Auction off seats.
55. Partner with your local ABC affiliate to do an annual telethon.

56. Escape the museum! Collaborate with a local gaming or escape room club/org to create an Escape the Museum event.
57. Art party! Host a seated dinner at your museum with 10-15 tables, and invite one local artist to sit at each table. Each artist brings a work of art for sale, based on a theme, and displays it in the museum. Artists speak about their presented works and how they relate to the event’s theme. Prior to the event, negotiate with the artists for a percentage of each sale to be donated to the museum.
MEMBER CULTIVATION
Membership is a tool for building relationships.
Ask people what they want to get for being a member.
Train your staff across all strata of the organization to know your mission and to understand how you plan to meet it.
Empower every member of your staff to engage with potential donors, and plan time to debrief after member events.
Be creative with the types of memberships you offer.