Creating Your Own Virtual Event or Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Campaign

Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Campaign (n.) - A fundraising campaign that empowers your supporters to set up their own fundraising pages and fundraise on your behalf.

You can create virtual or peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns through the Personal Fundraising module or the TeamRaiser module of your Luminate Online instance.

Many organizations encourage their ongoing peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns around honor or memorial tributes, fundraising through events not hosted by the organization, gifts in lieu of birthday, graduations, bar/bat mitzvah, wedding, holiday or anniversary presents, virtual giving to fund constituent ideas, needs, disasters or projects, or gifts supporting a specific cause or idea.

When planning your peer-to-peer campaign or virtual event you should focus on four key strategies. The following document outlines tactics to support each of these strategies.

1. Recruiting Fundraisers
2. Coaching Fundraisers
3. Creating a Sense of Community
4. Promoting Continued Participation

Recruiting Fundraisers

The first step in a successful peer-to-peer campaign is recruiting users to become personal fundraisers for your cause or event. If you've run your event previously, start your recruitment of past team captains, top fundraisers and past participants first because they typically account for the majority of funds raised.

Here are some helpful hints to drive recruitment:

Create "seed" pages

A "blank" peer-to-peer campaign, or campaign with no existing fundraising pages, may be intimidating to users. Be sure to recruit internal staff members, board members, passionate constituents and volunteers to create and customize their own pages for the campaign to get things rolling before you start a full promotion campaign.

Use Engagement Pathways

A constituent who is willing to fundraise is often more valuable than a constituent who is only willing to donate. Craft relationship pathways for your constituents and foster them through the process of learning about your organization, becoming a donor and becoming a champion and fundraiser. You can do this using email welcome series and conversion series, conditional website content and individual appeals. For more information on Engagement Pathways, see the Luminate Community.

Maintain a Low Barrier to Entry

Because you're asking users to sign up for something that primarily benefits you (i.e. the user doesn't get an event experience or product for their effort), ensure that it is easy and free for them to participate and advertise the low level of effort. While a registration fee or fundraising minimum may attract more dedicated volunteer fundraisers, you will likely miss out on recruiting new volunteers and converting them into strong supporters if you put up too many hurdles.

Integrate with Existing Programs

Find ways to integrate into existing online and offline honor/memorial or event programs. Are there food drives, office contests, volunteer challenges or small events that don't exist online yet? This may be the opportunity to expand their reach to those who can't participate in person.

Incentives

If you have the means, try rewarding your volunteer fundraiser with incentive prizes. Providing a t-shirt or bumper sticker for signing up will make them feel like they're really a part of the campaign. Creating an incentive structure to reward participants who achieve higher levels of fundraising can take your campaign to the next level.

Organizational Partnerships

A great way to get people involved in your campaign is to partner with organizations that can help garner support, participation and competition. Identify your corporate partners, schools, churches, or other community groups and ask them to get involved.

Coaching and Fundraising

Once your volunteer fundraisers have signed up they will look to you for instruction and motivation. In our benchmark studies we've seen that returning participants raise more money than first-time participants which is partially due to them being familiar and comfortable with their tools, strategies and ability to fundraise on your behalf. Help get them settled in quickly and feel confident that they know how to quickly succeed.

Get them Started

Signing up is just the start of their efforts. Walk participants through logging into their fundraising tool, how to use it to ask for donations and send messages, teach them what strategies work when being a peer fundraiser (send emails, personalize, ask often, use social media etc.), and encourage them along the way.

Some organizations have success hosting in-person meet-ups to get participants signed up, meet other passionate fundraisers and learn the tools and strategies to help them succeed.

Self-Donation

Because there is often no cost to the user to participate in a peer-to-peer campaign, it's important to provide and emphasize the opportunity for them to donate as part of their registration process. Ask them "would you like to kick-start your fundraising by making a donation now?" You can also provide them with donation levels to choose from during the registration process.

Personalize Their Fundraising Page

One of the most effective things a fundraiser can do is make their ask more personal. Customizing a participant's fundraising page gives them the opportunity to personalize their connection with your organization and cause. You can help them get started by providing example or default copy but encourage them to make the page their own through their own words, stories and photos. For many donors giving to a virtual or peer-to-peer campaign, the person raising the money appeals more than the organization itself so the fundraiser's personal touch makes a difference.

They can even create a personalized web address for their fund page to share on Facebook or Twitter.

Use Milestone Emails and Badges

With the TeamRaiser "Milestones" feature you can set up automated emails to send to participants when they reach certain levels of fundraising. Use milestone emails to congratulate fundraisers and coach them along to the next level. You can also add a milestone "badge" that will appear on their personal page when they achieve each level of fundraising.

Leverage Team Participation

One unique aspect of using TeamRaiser for a peer-to-peer campaign is that you can encourage team participation and competition. In our research we've seen that fundraisers that are on teams consistently out-perform individual fundraisers, even in virtual campaigns. Encourage users to build teams with challenges and competitions (i.e. the team with the most participants or highest fundraising dollars by a certain date wins a prize).

Fundraising Challenges and Giveaways

Similar to the team challenges, you can encourage your supporters to fundraise with challenges, contests and giveaways. Select a month and challenge your fundraisers to see who can raise the most within a given month – the top fundraiser gets a prize!

Impose a campaign end-date

Shelf-life can be a challenge with peer-to-peer campaigns – if you let your campaign exist in perpetuity, your fundraisers can get bored, lose interest, or hit the fundraising goal they set for themselves and decide that they're "done." One way to beat the staleness of a peer-to-peer campaign is to shut it down and re-launch it each year. Get on an annual cycle and be sure to communicate the schedule to your participants. See the "Promoting Continued Participation" section for more information.

Coaching Emails

Send periodic updates and reminders to your fundraisers to keep them engaged. Be sure to drive actions that are easily attainable: *Ask 10 friends for $10, send 5 e-mails today, add 3 new contacts this week.* Additionally, use personalization and conditional content to recognize the efforts your fundraisers have – or haven't – put forward.

Don't forget to teach fundraisers how to say "Thank You!" in addition to how to ask for the donation. You want regular participants, and odds are they will be asking the same network of people year over year so a little stewardship can go a long way.

Recognize top fundraisers

When your annual campaign is complete, be sure to acknowledge your top teams and fundraisers with awards, certificates, newsletter announcements, etc.

Keep Up the Promotion

Because virtual campaigns do not culminate in a physical event, it's important to make your volunteer fundraisers feel like they are a part of a community in order to keep them engaged and invested. To create a feeling of community, you can:

Create a Branded Campaign

The most successful virtual campaigns have their own website or microsites. Come up with a unique name and site design for your virtual campaign and use this brand throughout all elements of the campaign – stationery, eCards, donation forms, etc.

Leverage Video

Video is a great way to keep virtual participants engaged. On your website and in your campaign emails, include videos of the people, animals, or places you're helping with your campaign. You can also create "thank you" videos from staff members in your office to share with your volunteer fundraisers. And as always, celebrity endorsements are a plus!

Incorporate Social Networking

Social networking is a given for any virtual campaign. Set up a Facebook Page and Twitter hashtag for your campaign to give people a place to discuss their experiences. Enable social sharing as well so users can solicit donations on their social network of choice through Gigya (integrated with Luminate Online) or your own social sharing tools and widgets.

Encourage participants to share stories and photos through your social networks and use their content (with their permission) in your promotions and coaching materials.

Email Often

It can be difficult to keep the attention of virtual participants. Communicate with them often through multiple channels. If you have an end date for your campaign, try communicating to your fundraisers every two weeks for the last two months leading up to the final day. You can share stories about different teams and participants, introduce people/animals/places that will benefit from the campaign, and provide other interactive opportunities for engagement like quizzes and surveys.

Provide new and fun channels of engagement

In today's world, there is no end to the number of ways you can engage people online. Developers can create personalize-able videos, eCards, games, communities, avatars and more. Think about your audience and whether there are new tools you can provide to teach them about your mission and get them to engage online.

Promote Continued Participation

Once your campaign cycle comes to an end, you'll need to focus on re-recruiting volunteer fundraisers all over again. When your campaign ends:

Thank Participants and Share Tangible Results

Sending a "Thank You" email with information on how the money raised will be used and the impact they had on your mission. This is a great opportunity to use something creative like fun photography, video, animated GIF, or funny social media tie-in to show how touched your organization is by their efforts.

Analyze the Numbers

After the campaign concludes, analyze the numbers and learn who your new top fundraisers, team captains and past participants are and how well they did. Use that information to build your goals, strategies and coaching emails for the new event.

Re-launch the campaign each year

To help keep your file fresh, and renew the interest of existing participant, re-launch your campaign each year with a series of emails aimed at renewing last year's participants. Be sure to thank them again and include what they raised last year; underscore the need for their participation again this year. You can even provide incentives for returning participants depending on the number of years they have participated.

Re-launching each year will also ensure that you can enable any new product features that have been developed throughout the year.

Allow participants to reclaim their page

Using TeamRaiser you can link this year's "event" to last year's "event" and allow participants to reclaim their personal fundraising page and photo. Note that you should avoid adding years or dates in the personal page default text if you use the linking feature.

Have additional questions or want to connect with other Peer-to-Peer fundraisers?
Join the discussion in our Community!
http://community.convio.com/t5/TeamRaiser/ct-p/TeamRaiser_InfoCenter