

Keeping Your Fundraising Business Alive in COVID-19

We have created this document to help you as you plan for and begin to work in the fundraising space again. Our communities must be foremost in our thoughts and actions. How you respond now will be how you are remembered in the future; not only is this good advice for you, but also for your nonprofit clients. All sides are struggling financially, it's true, however, we must try to be the best stewards we can be.

Critical Strategic Planning

If you have been contacted by a Non-Profit Organization (NPO) to do a face-to-face (F2F) event you should take some time to think about the potential liability of that situation. These questions are not exhaustive but are designed to suggest potential issues that you may be faced with at an in-person event.

Questions

- What is your risk tolerance for you and/or your employees?
- Are you being the best steward for your client?
- How will you protect yourself and your clients?
 - Testing before and after each live event?
- If you do a F2F event, and a person gets sick, what are the ramifications for you, your brand, and the NPO?
 - Take any case of infection at a company...substitute your business name and your NPO. How did the public feel about the results?
- What happens in your business if you are infected and asymptomatic, yet still conducted a F2F event?
- After a F2F event?
 - What happens in your business if you test positive?
 - Who covers for you?
 - Or your team?

Lean Into Your Strengths

The traditional gathering of large groups for celebrations and fundraising is just not possible at this time in many locations. But to turn a phrase, the show must go on. Here are steps to help you keep your business afloat and moving forward in these challenging times. Simple steps like changing your language from being a *“fundraising auctioneer”* to being a *“fundraising partner/host/emcee”* is a start.

The new reality is that the only way you can survive is if you really embrace the consulting side of your business. NPO's need a voice of reason and calm as they navigate new waters. We as professionals know how to:

- Figure out what NPOs are lacking and work to help them on that
- Provide deep and insightful strategic fundraising consultation
- Help build a roadmap for a successful online fundraiser
- Build and keep the momentum during the online event
- Recognize people for their support during the event
- Keep to the timeline/run of the show

- Think on our feet when challenges arise during the event
- Keep the level of excitement high throughout the fundraising
- Use how giving psychology works to the client's advantage at the event
- Tell impactful stories

Stories

These skills are even more relevant now. It is not just a transition from stage to screen, it is keeping the fundraising mindset at the forefront of your work. This should be a key focus of your fees.

This new virtual format is built for stories

- We are the experts at using stories to help NPOs raise funds
- Lean into your depth of experience and fundraising best practices
- Most likely we are going to see fewer auction items, higher goals for the Fund-A-Need (FAN)
 - Until new platforms are released that can keep up with the auctioneer
- A shift from transactional relationships between NPOs and their donors to the philanthropic relationship
- As fundraising specialists, this is where we shine
- We work towards fundraising as the goal, not selling items
- Our focus is better in line with the NPOs than those that cannot "sell" the mission (live broadcasters, cold delivery, liquidators or "fast talkers" who are not storytellers)

Overdeliver

In this time of change, overdelivering to clients may be a good strategy. What do we mean by over-delivering?

Work with your NPOs to:

- Develop thank you campaigns
- Help the development team with calls/ scripting
 - For donations
 - For lead gifts
 - For getting people to attend
- Getting video for content for the stories they want to tell
- Need B, C, D plan moving forward
 - What's the plan if you can't get together in 2020? In 2021?
- Share/create connections to production companies
- Share/create connections to A/V companies
- Sample timelines for virtual galas
- Advisement on software engagement options
 - Streaming platforms
 - Funds acceptance platforms
- Communication plans for NPO
- Social media
- Tweaking all aspects of how they seek funds

Auctioneer

Going Virtual

If you and the NPO decide to go ahead with a virtual event, then here are some of the most important things to consider. Remind NPOs that virtual galas may be recorded and published online. They need to think critically about the person who will represent their mission on camera. That individual needs to be the best ambassador but also able to hold the viewers' attention without embarrassing or unpolished behavior. Mistakes made will be out there forever.

First and foremost

- Follow CDC/Local Government for Stay-at-Home Orders

Multiple Types of Virtual Galas

100% Remote

- All done by individual people in unique locations
- Done under stay-at-home orders
- Done via Home Studios
- Some aspect pre-recorded, some live

Production Facility Gala

- Minimal people in a location designed for creating content
- At TV stations, media spaces
- Higher production value
- Some aspects pre-recorded, some live

Small (micro) galas

- Under 50 people
- Best to be outside as that space is safer for all
- Event is then shared to others via a broadcast
- Have to work to engage both sides - (if part of plan)
 - Will need to deal with latency issues
 - Major fundraising will be done at primary location
- For top donors/ top volunteers
- Some aspects pre-recorded, some live

Hub & Spoke model

- Main site consists of speakers and host as well as leader of NPO
- Satellite location feeding back to one main site
 - House parties are an example of this
- Some aspects pre-recorded, some live
- Will need plan to deal with bidding or donors at spoke locations
- Will video feeds go both ways?
 - If so need a detailed plan on how this will operate
 - Again latency issues

Old School- With Virtual Component

- Back to a full-on event, but the foreseeable time frame for a gathering of over 250 is??
- Some aspects pre-recorded, some live
- Will you need to keep up virtual aspects for those that do not want to/ cannot attend
 - Open up the audience- expand the reach
 - More giving
 - Moving forward most events will need to have this as part of their plan, as most have begun to accept it as the norm
- Live streaming

Basics You Need For Any Type

These are the key resources you will need to cover to make sure the event is a success. Be sure to talk with your NPO on how they plan to handle these aspects.

- Platform to Stream
- Need AV Team
 - Run event
 - Multiple cameras/locations
 - Switching station
 - Queue up next portion of the show
- Need Livestream Team
 - Monitor Chat
 - Monitor Q&A
 - Tech Assistance
- Need Production Team
 - Clean up your content to work in a virtual situation
 - Create space to work in/ layout of content
- Need Studio Set-up
 - Backdrop
 - Microphone
 - Lighting

Pre-event Communication Will Be Key For Success

In order for the event to work, and work well, as it will most likely be the first time the NPO has gone this route, communicating to its attendees and donors will be even more important than ever. Some basic things they will need to share/broadcast include

- How to register
- What technology is being used
- What you will need to participate
- Tips on how to have the best experience

In Production

At the “event” you will need to flex some new muscles. Things that will be a slight shift from F2F events in the past include

- State at top of “show” what you are doing
 - “At the time of this broadcast, we are observing current social distancing protocols...”
- Be aware of where the camera is, **not where the screen is**
- Engage with attendees best you can
 - Be that via chat or feedback you get from livestream or AV team
- Have backup plan or script for killing time if tech issue arises (as they will)

Notes From Those That Have Happened

- If you are using them - thermometer tends to drive giving more so than at live events
 - Set it higher than anticipate to capture additional revenue
- Live tends to generate a bit less revenue than F2F events
- Silent tends to generate a bit more revenue than F2F events
- Special Appeals/FAN does well, very well at some events
 - If pitched well- this is the *key now more than F2F events*
- Event can have extended audience- consider having it posted up online for further viewings
 - Return viewing after the event for those that want to “see” some part again
 - Those that missed/could not get online
 - Randoms who may see it
 - Be aware if it is public or posted online, donors names may be seen by the public, NPO should consider how they feel about this
- Donations are still coming in days later
 - Keep links for bidding live for weeks/months
- Use event for future promotional purposes
- ANYONE can watch it, if public, so think about language and comments made by all

Remind NPOs that virtual galas may be recorded and published online, They need to think hard about the person on camera. That individual needs to be the best steward of their mission. Mistakes made will be out there- forever.

Alternatives If Virtual Is A No Go For NPO

If an NPO is afraid to ask for money right now, they risk losing fundraising momentum, and, subsequently, donors who opt to give their funds to other organizations who are asking - We don't expect those who stop raising money to make it through this crisis.

- Cancel and try again next year
- Email campaign/Year End campaigns - will you help?
- Direct communication with donors to ask for funds
- Peer to Peer (P2P) fundraising
- Annual Dog Walk, Virtual Walk/Run
- Online change to win/Sweepstakes/Raffle
- Fun Stay at Home package

- Packages can combine Gift Cards, Dining out or Order in Cards, Wine Delivery, Fruit and cheese delivery from Harry and David or other such gift sources
- Phantom Ball - No Show Event
- Virtual Wine Tasting Event
 - <https://www.charitablewine.com/wine-fundraiser/>
- Viral Challenge
 - Think Ice Bucket Challenge (HARD to make work)
- Online Summit
- Reach Out to Big Event Sponsors
- In Lieu of Gala
 - Sell Tickets to order in dinners. Pay for the dinners. Double the price to make a profit. Help local restaurants with the Crisis. Send some Branded Champagne and a tote bag of goodies
- Online Auction
- Share your Stories page linked to the donation page
- Man/Woman/Person of the year competition to see who can raise most funds for title
- Text to Give campaigns
- Social Media to give campaigns

Resources And Best Practices

Share these with your clients. Here are just a few ideas

Reopening Guide from The Event Safety Alliance

<https://www.eventsafetyalliance.org/esa-reopening-guide>

Event Operations

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TvEWITrRrhVe83bvipin2Th1gEnLUFvQsISRJKmDM8/edit?usp=sharing>

Coronavirus and Events: Outlook and Recovery Timeline- From Event MB, an online resource for Event Professionals

<https://www.eventmanagerblog.com/events-coronavirus>

From Nonprofit Quarterly- Outline how it's virtual or not for a long time

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/covid-19-creates-an-event-fundraising-choice-go-virtual-or-go-long/>

From Erin Bromage - Comparative Immunologist and Professor of Biology (specializing in Immunology) at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

<https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them>

Steps to consider if you want to go ahead or wait

<https://fortune.com/2020/04/09/coronavirus-events-postponed-canceled-fall/>