

✕ 18 Proven Ways to Turn Your Event Participants into Event Fundraisers

- 1. Listen.** Who knows the most about effectively coaching participants? Participants. Always create a highly visible way for participants to give you feedback, such as a quick survey on your event website or even during the registration process. And, remember to include a key question or two about coaching in your post-event survey. Use what you hear to shape your current and future years' strategies.
- 2. Find your 'key' segments.** What are the segments in your audience that really help you 'move the needle' in terms of your overall event results? Crunch the numbers and analyze last year's results to find out – and focus on growing these key segments for your current year's event to improve your overall fundraising.
- 3. Build your website with your strategic goals in mind.** For example, if self-pledgers are a key segment of your audience, make sure you're promoting self-pledge everywhere possible. During registration, after registration (thank you page, autoresponders, participant center) and in your coaching emails.
- 4. Tailor your communications to the key segments in your audience.** One message doesn't fit all: Walkers, runners, families, team captains should all receive messaging that speaks to their type of participation in the event – as well as their *reason* for participating.
- 5. Keep the Participant Center fresh and up to date.** Adding new tips and event information throughout your event season keeps your participants coming back and logging in – and then fundraising is just a couple of clicks away!
- 6. ...and dynamic!** If I've already updated my personal page, tell me to send emails. If I've already sent emails, tell me to do something else (even if it's just to send more emails). TeamRaiser conditionals make it easy to create a Participant Center whose content changes based on a participant's fundraising actions to date.
- 7. Have a robust 'engagement email' strategy.** Similar to a welcome series, engagement emails can focus on cultivating your participants from an online registrant to an active event fundraiser. Offer a mix of fundraising tips, event information, training info (if relevant), and mission facts to remind participants of why they joined the event. And don't forget to make them 'scannable'!
- 8. Keep your participants opted into email.** Many participants will opt-out of receiving your emails at sign-up. Take advantage of the Autoresponders (both registration, and follow up), which override opt-outs, to remind participants who opted out of what they're missing out on and give them a chance to opt back in to receiving your event emails. .
- 9. Facebook!** Applications like Boundless Fundraising give participants an easy way to fundraise to all of their networks of friends with just a couple of simple clicks. And even if they aren't using Boundless Fundraising, they can create a shortcut URL and post it in a status update (or tweet it).
- 10. Use your social media presences to create a 'buzz' about your event.** Keep a constant drip of information to keep participants coming back to visit you on Facebook, or following you on Twitter. Then use these channels as a new way to promote fundraising and generate excitement about your event.
- 11. Videos!** The American Cancer Society has used personalized videos to engage participants in fundraising and recruiting. YAI has used videos of specific people they serve as well as their spokesperson to provide a 'face' of their event. Young Survival Coalition uploaded new videos to their YouTube channel throughout their entire event season.
- 12. Make sure your participants understand how to use new tools you're offering.** Making Strides Against Breast Cancer offered a tutorial video to guide participants through using the new Participant Center this year, and promoted it in the Participant Center and in coaching emails.
- 13. Encourage competition by offering fundraising challenges.** Tell participants exactly how they can raise \$100 in a week. For example, tell them to ask 10 friends for \$10 each, by sharing a mission fact and their reason for fundraising, and using a specific channel such as Facebook or email.
- 14. ...and incentives!** YSC partnered with Global MINI to raffle off a Mini Cooper! Every donation of \$50 amounted to a 'raffle ticket' – and served as a way to make it easier (and more exciting) for participants to ask for donations.
- 15. Have a web site available year-round (or as close as possible!).** Even if you're not ready to go live immediately after your current year's event takes place (many events generate a significant amount of revenue in post-event fundraising), make sure that there is compelling content to either keep people fundraising or, if available, signing up to participate again next year.

16. Cross-promote all of the available channels where you can speak to participants. Make sure your emails and website promotes your presences on social media, and that your presences on social media link back to your website. Talk about online fundraising in calls to participants. You get the idea...

17. Plan ahead for your messaging and integration. If you are promoting a specific tactic as a fundraising tip on a certain week, make sure it's in your coaching emails, on your website, mentioned on Twitter and Facebook, and prominent in your Participant Center. Reinforce your messaging across all of your available channels – and keep it consistent.

18. Be ready to try something new! Be ready to try something new (often on the fly!) during your event season to improve results. Making Strides added a last-minute 'meme' strategy this year that ended up generating 9% of daily donations the day it was launched!

Case Study: YAI – Central Park Challenge

Raising awareness about the rights and needs of people with disabilities is central to the mission of the YAI Network. Annually, the organization hosts the YAI Central Park Challenge, which is a community walk, run, play event held in NYC to raise funds and awareness for people with disabilities.



What Worked

- Redesigned website streamlined registration and donation options, effectively promoted YAI's presence on various social networks, and used photos and videos to convey the event experience to both past participants and new prospects.
- Throughout the season, consistent messaging was used on the event website, in emails, and on social networking pages to communicate updates and information on fundraising challenges.
- The simple technique of storytelling proved to be a highly effective way to put a 'face' on the YAI's mission, boosting morale and response rates in the weeks leading up to the event.

Results

- Raised over \$1,500,000 — an increase of 7% over 2009
- Participants increased by 34% (3,600 new participants, 94% of whom registered online)
- Participants who came in through the recruiting email campaign raised 39% more per participant than they did last year
- Boundless Fundraising increased by 270%

Case Study: Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society Relay For Life is more than just a fundraiser. It is an opportunity to get together with family and friends and celebrate cancer survivors, remember loved ones lost to cancer, and fight back in the hope of finding a cure for this terrible disease.

What Worked

- The five-month campaign consisted of seven recruitment messages and 13 coaching messages sent on a predetermined schedule based on each event date
- The emails made strong use of eCRM tools – segmenting messages based on team status (i.e. captain vs. member), fundraising behavior, and even use of the Boundless Fundraising™ application for Facebook – and saw open rates reach as high as 45%

Results

- 4.54% of registrants were sourced from recruitment emails
- 7% of revenue was raised from recruitment email registrants
- Recruitment email registrants raised 50% more than the average online participant
- Won a 2009 Convio Innovator Award

