



Dialing for Dollars Event Tips

One of the oldest fundraising strategies is still relevant – spending time plugging in telephone numbers and calling prospective donors to make an appeal. One way to boost your success in this arena is to host a “Dialing for Dollars” event in which you recruit Board members or other volunteers to come together and make the calls all in one location during a set timeframe.

There are several reasons this is an effective strategy. First, it ensures that a large number of calls are placed in a short period of time. Second, it reduces the burden on staff. Third, Board members and other volunteers can be very effective and compelling fundraising messengers as their outreach can make an individual feel important and valued by the organization. Last but by no means least, a spirit of fun and healthy competition can really spark enthusiasm – and enthusiastic fundraisers raise more money!

Some ways to make your event most successful:

- There are two options for building your prospect list for the event. The first option is that the staff provides a list of individuals with contact information from their donor prospect or current donor database. The second option is that volunteers are asked to bring their own “rolodexes” and reach out to their contacts during the event. (This is ideal!) A third option is to do a combination of the two approaches.
- These fundraising events can be held either during the day or evening, and your decision will obviously be dependent upon the availability of your volunteers. However, it is also worth considering the types of telephone numbers you have on your list. If you happen to have daytime/work contact numbers for folks (which is typically the better way to reach people), you will certainly want to try to have your event during daytime/business hours. If you do your event during the daytime, it is recommended that you not start before 10:00a.m., that you avoid the lunchtime hour, and that you end by 4:00p.m.
- Scripts are very helpful in getting volunteers prepared – it makes them feel much more confident. The script should be very detailed and obviously conversational in tone. Volunteers should be urged not to read the script – this should be a conversation not a monologue – but having it all in front of them can be helpful. In addition to the call script, create a short voice mail message script.
- Volunteers should be encouraged to practice the script ahead of time. Send the scripts to volunteers at least a few days prior to the event so that they can read it, ask any

questions they may have, and get comfortable with the messaging. You should emphasize that the script is a guide for their conversations and that you would like everyone to stick to the general messaging, but that they should certainly feel free to make it their own, put it in their own language, etc.

- It is very helpful to start out the event by role modeling a fundraising call. You can make this fun, i.e. provide prizes or incentives for those willing to volunteer in front of the group and then have the group provide feedback. Or, you can keep it simple and have a more experienced staff member or volunteer make a call while others listen.
- As part of your event orientation, it is very important to ensure that volunteers are comfortable with making the fundraising ask. This should be practiced aloud and/or modeled for them and they should have an opportunity to ask questions and seek feedback. The fundraising ask needs to be clear, specific, and occur early on in the outreach call.
- When leaving voice mail messages, volunteers should be strongly encouraged to leave their own name and phone numbers as a call-back – rather than leaving a general office number or the name and number of a staff person.
- Volunteers/Board members should be sure to mention that they support the organization and, if they are comfortable, briefly explain why. It is most effective if they are able to explicitly say, “I am a donor”. For example, “I am a donor to the American Heart Association because I have a child with a serious heart defect, and I am calling to ask you to join me in supporting this important organization.”
- Provide snacks and beverages for your volunteers – it does not need to be a full meal, but you do want folks to have access to munchies, water, coffee, etc.
- Set up your room to be conducive to several private conversations happening at the same time. While volunteers can always step out of the room to make their calls, it is best for the spirit of competition and for the group enthusiasm to build by doing the calls all in one room. This means you need a room adequate in size that gives volunteers the ability to move around.
- Staff should circulate and check in with volunteers throughout the event. It is important that the atmosphere be comfortable but not so casual that folks start chatting and don’t get down to business! It is also important that staff members are available throughout the event in case there are questions that arise.
- Be sure to provide pens, paper, and feedback forms. Ask volunteers to make notes about each call they make on the feedback form and leave it with staff before the end of the event. Feedback forms should include the following information:
 - Name of volunteer
 - Name of the donor prospect called
 - Result of call:

- Was not able to reach the individual – left message
 - Yes, will make a donation
 - No, can't/won't make a donation
 - Not sure about making a donation
 - Comments:
 - Any additional information requested or any follow up that is required
- It is best for volunteers to use their own cell phones rather than an office number when making the fundraising calls. This is absolutely essential if they are calling their personal contacts – these individuals will be much more likely to answer a call if they recognize the incoming number. Even if they are calling individuals they don't know (i.e. the staff has provided a donor prospect list), it is better to have calls come from a personal number as it makes the appeal feel much more personal to the prospective donor, and it makes returning calls easier for the prospect. This obviously means that volunteers must make themselves available to answer any return phone calls.
- Each volunteer should be given donation cards to be completed. While prospective donors should always be given the option of mailing a check rather than giving a donation over the phone, donations given by credit card are larger than those given by check. And, it is ideal to secure commitments immediately rather than letting folks think about it – it's just too easy to forget to follow through!

Following your event, it is very important to thank your volunteers and inform them about how much money was raised. Prizes for most number of calls made, most number of donations secured, or the highest number of donations solicited can make the event fun as well. Most of all, it is essential that staff bring enthusiasm and comfort to the event AND also make their own fundraising calls during the event – your volunteers will feed off of your attitude and your example!

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