

FREE EBOOK

NONPROFIT EVENTS

Raise More, Stress Less
with Digital Tools That Work



INTRO

Fundraising events are critical to the success of nonprofits.

Many organizations hold one or two traditional annual events that make up a large portion of the donations they'll receive during a calendar year. We've put together some tips on how to make the most of the digital tools at your disposal to find more attendees, reach a wider audience and ultimately gain more donations at your events.



© 2022 Firespring. All rights reserved.

This work is the property of Firespring, and cannot be used, reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the written permission of the copyright holder except where permitted by law.

PLAN AHEAD FOR THE BIG DAY

Remember that panic attack feeling in college before an exam? That feeling was largely due to you being unprepared. Think of your nonprofit's fundraising event as a "test" of sorts and plan and prepare for it by locking in crucial details early.

The best nonprofit events are planned with one specific goal in mind. Is your event meant to raise funds? Educate the public about your mission? Recruit volunteers? What is the one thing that has to happen in order for you to call your event a success? Focus on achieving that and the rest is icing on the cake.



ASSEMBLE YOUR ARMY

In the weeks and months leading up to your event, gather volunteers, family, friends and community members. If they are ready to speak about your nonprofit, its mission and the upcoming event with gusto, then you've enlisted the right squad.

Give your team time to prepare, letting them know when and where you'll post online about the event so they can share information and get their own network excited and engaged. Provide them with materials like flyers and prewritten blurbs or content about the work you do and why people should care about the fundraising event you're hosting. Remind them to always link to your event registration page on your website so their network can easily commit to attending.





PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

An integrated marketing strategy is always a good idea. This means you're firing on all cylinders to raise awareness for your event and drive registrations. Use all your marketing tools and get them moving in the same direction so that, eventually, your intended audience is all moving in the right direction: straight to your event.

Capitalize on your event with email marketing.

The power of email marketing is undeniable. Did you know, according to Mailchimp, the average **open rate for nonprofit emails is nearly 26%**, compared to the universal email open rate of 6%? If used properly, email will be your best friend. But first, be sure you have an updated and accurate list of potential attendees and donors' email addresses in order to effectively communicate with the right audience, not one from 10 years ago.

Then, plan out your email communication. Keep the first email general—attendees should learn about the event and save the date on their calendar, but not get too overwhelmed with details. As the event approaches, continue to send out regular emails to your list to provide more details and generate excitement and interest. Keep them informed about new developments, news and interesting details about your upcoming event.

Most importantly, always drive email recipients **back to your website**. Include a call to action at the bottom of each email asking them to register, sign up, donate, volunteer, buy tickets—whatever relevant action you want them to take. But keep it to one: Too many calls to action lowers conversion.

Integrate printed pieces into your marketing strategy.

Nonprofits have used traditional advertising methods for generations, and they still remain effective today. These include direct mail postcards, print and sign advertisements, brochures, newsletters—anything you can see and touch in the real world.

Just be sure that when you're pushing out **printed promotions for your event**, you're driving your audience back to your online presence. For example, on a printed flyer or postcard, include a call to action at the bottom like, “*Help us continue the fight against breast cancer by visiting nonprofitsite.org/fight*” with a link to a landing page on your website. By encouraging different media to work hand in hand, you'll increase the effectiveness of each.

Don't forget about signage and promo items.

If your event needs **signage**, that's something you can take care of early on so you're not scrambling the week before. And if you plan on giving out **branded swag** at your event, be sure it fits the theme, look and feel of all the promotional assets you used to drive registrations. Keeping a cohesive design and consistent message is the best way to stay on people's minds, long after you've shut the doors on your event.



LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER YOUR EVENT

This is important: If your nonprofit organization does not already have a strong social media strategy, do not attempt to start one through this event. Building a solid social media presence correctly is a better option than attempting to start one, maintaining it for a few weeks and later letting it fall into disarray.

If your NPO already has a social media presence, this serves as a great (and free) way to promote your event, provided your audience is engaged and paying attention. Social media is excellent for revealing a little information at a time. This maintains a level of mystery and keeps attendees interested.

Develop a content calendar to avoid overwhelming constituents with too many posts or leaving them without information for long. Generate awareness with donor or volunteer stories, sponsor testimonials and event teaser reveals. A majority of event planners, about 52%, said that Facebook is the most effective social media channel for event promotion. Be sure to start there.

During the event, create buzz for the people who were interested but couldn't attend. Make them feel that little twinge of regret and get them to show up next year by posting photos of exciting parts of your event, using a unique hashtag or sending live updates via Instagram, Twitter or Facebook. Always assign at least one member of your team to be in charge of posting online during your event.

The digital work done after the event is potentially the most important since this is the part many nonprofits forget. Utilize the content you gathered during the event to keep excitement about your mission in the months to come. By sprinkling this content into the mix with your other regular posts, there's a better chance people will remember your organization and want to attend your next nonprofit event.

MOVE YOUR EVENT ONLINE

Galas, luncheons, cocktail receptions and other typical fundraising events have been canceled due to our the pandemic. Here are six tips for running a traditional offline event online.

1. Pivot your strategy to build connections and entertain.

According to [MIDIa Research](#), the average person spends at least 4.5 hours per day on digital entertainment. Your audience expects to connect with others and be entertained when they're online. So, it makes perfect sense to pivot the strategy for your fundraising event to fulfill your audience's expectations. A Facebook event is a great way to nurture communication and interaction with one another without bogging down someone's social feed.

2. Create a virtual team for your fundraising event.

Just as you would assemble a team to get your in-person event up and running, you'll need a virtual team for your fundraising event. Here are some roles you'll want to assign:



Data specialist



Production lead



Content generator/curator



Host



Communications lead

3. Leverage Facebook.

Think about how you can leverage Facebook events to really make your fundraiser a success. The beauty of a Facebook event is that it pulls everything into a format that doesn't bombard your followers in your feed—keeping everything organized and together. Facebook ads can draw awareness to your online fundraising event and what you're trying to achieve. With **Facebook grants**, you can apply to get your ads covered. The community reach within Facebook is a powerful component in getting people who are attending your event to share that information quickly and easily with their own friends.

4. Engage your fundraising event's sponsors.

Sponsors typically help cover costs of the room, rental equipment, food and anything else needed for an in-person event. Now that your fundraising event has adapted, how can they support you in an online space? Take a peek at a few ideas:



Match donations.



Provide entertainment value with stories about sponsors supporting your nonprofit organization.



Give them extra #love with shout-outs on social media before, during and after your event. This will keep them happy and willing to sponsor another event with you.

5. Move your auction online.

You don't need to cancel your live or silent auction just because your fundraising event is going digital. These can all be facilitated online. A big benefit of an online auction is that you can have it open for an entire week versus just for a few hours in the evening during an event. If you're still looking for an in-person experience in an online world, livestream your live auction!

6. Engage your community to maximize your fundraising event.

Lastly, focus on how you can engage your community. Think about how you can get your top donors to post about your fundraising event on your behalf. Encourage people after they've donated to share that they've supported your organization. Connect with influencers in your community and ask them if they'd help raise awareness for your nonprofit's mission. You know what they say, "it takes a village to raise a nonprofit." Don't be afraid to reach out for help. You might be surprised by the outpouring of support you'll receive.

GET STARTED ON YOUR NONPROFIT'S NEXT EVENT—NOW

The great news is, you don't have to do this all alone. Firespring is here to help. We have experts in multimedia marketing, advertising, digital promotions and managing events, both online and in person.

In fact, we've put together an integrated marketing package that's designed to get all your marketing channels working in sync. This will help you develop an affordable but effective online fundraising event strategy and get your next digital event up and running. Put our [Digital Fundraising marketing program](#) to work for your organization and make your next event a fundraising magnet.

