

Fifty-Five Ways to Raise \$500

By Kim Klein

All good fundraising plans have one thing in common: they show a diverse number of sources for their income. The board of directors plays a crucial role in the selection, implementation, and evaluation of fundraising strategies. In addition to other ways that board members may participate in fundraising, they individually commit to raising and giving a certain amount of money, or commit to working by themselves on specific strategies with no financial goal attached.

It is a good idea for board members doing fundraising on their own to write up their plans. This "contract" allows staff to know when they might be called on to help, ensures that events don't happen on the same day, or the same donors aren't solicited by several board members, and also helps to remind board members of their commitments.

In order for this method to work, the organization or the board fundraising committee should think of many specific ways board members could actually raise money by themselves. The fifty-five ways suggested below are by no means an exhaustive list, nor will they all work for every group. Few board members could use all fifty-five ways, but almost any board member should be able to use two or three of them.

All of these methods have been used by different volunteers in a wide variety of organizations. Some methods are much more popular than others. Some depend on access to certain resources.

Presenting board members with fifty-five ways that would work for your organization helps counter the excuse, "I would help but I just don't know what to do." Having each board member write out a plan, with goals and a timeline, also gives them a sense that if they do their best with this plan, they will have helped significantly. Many board members feel that fundraising is never ending, and that no amount of effort is enough. "Whatever I do, I could have done more, and probably should have," they say. This feeling of inadequacy leads to high turnover, burn-out, and resentment in boards. Specific fundraising contracts can help avoid that result.

1. Give it yourself. This is the easiest way for those who are able, although if you are able to give this much money you should be helping raise much more than \$500.
2. List all your friends who are interested in your organization, or similar organizations. Decide how much each one should give. Write to them on your own stationary, include a brochure from the organization and a return envelope. Phone those people who don't respond in two weeks. Some people will need 10 friends to give \$50, and some people need 50 friends to give \$10. Most people will need a combination such as: 2-3 @ \$50; 4-5 @ \$25; 15 @ \$10.
3. Give part of the \$500. Then ask your friends to join you in giving \$25, \$50, or whatever your gift is. This is most effective because you are not asking them to do anything you haven't done.
4. Set up a challenge campaign. Challenge gifts can be quite small. Tell people you'll give \$5 for every \$25 they give, or will match every \$10 gift up to ten gifts. For added suspense, make this challenge during a fundraising event. You or the host can

announce, "We now have the Dave Buckstretch Challenge. For the next five minutes, Dave will give \$5 for every new member that joins Worthy Cause."

5. If your organization has a diverse funding base with several grassroots fundraising strategies in place, use them all: Sell 100 raffle tickets = \$100 Give \$50 = \$ 50
Bring 10 people to an event that costs \$10 = \$100 Buy two gift memberships (@ \$15) = \$ 30 Get 15 friends to join (@ \$15) = \$225
6. Help with your organization's phone-a-thon. Bring the names of people you think would like to join and call until you have raised \$500. Or trade names with someone in the organization and call their friends until you have reached \$500. This is particularly effective for people who are shy about asking their own friends for money, but not afraid to ask people they don't know.
7. Acquire mailing lists for your organization. If you belong to another group, perhaps you can set up an exchange, or perhaps you have access to a list of members of some other group. You can ask all your friends to give you the names of 10 to 15 people they think would like to join. You would need to recruit about 25 members at an average gift of \$15. Depending on how "hot" your list is, you might need as few as 200 names (to do a bulk mailing) or as many as 1500-3000 (if you expect a 1-2% response.) You would have to have a greater response if you wanted the mailing to pay for itself and also generate \$500.
8. Give the organization something they need that is worth \$500, such as a fax machine, filing cabinets, couch, adding machine, computer program, etc.
9. Pledge \$20 a month, and get one other person to do likewise. Then sell \$20 worth of raffle tickets.
10. Teach a seminar on a topic you know: Fundraising; Knitting; Organic Gardening; Organizing; Proposal Writing; Environmental Impact Reports; Gourmet Cooking; Dog Grooming; Starting Your Own Business. Charge \$30-50 per person, with a goal of 20-30 people. Either absorb the cost of promotion, or have enough participants to cover it.
11. Give some or a lot of things to your organization's garage sale, making sure they are worth \$500, and then help to sell it all.
12. With 4 or 5 friends, have a spaghetti dinner at a church or union hall or other big room with a large kitchen. Charge \$10 per person and feed more than 50 people. You can charge extra for wine or garlic bread, or for dessert.
13. Have a fancy dinner at your home or a regular dinner at someone's fancy home. Serve unusual or gourmet food, or have special entertainment. Charge \$25 or more per person, and have 20 or more guests.
14. Get three friends to help you have a progressive dinner. Start at one person's home for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, progress to the next person's house for soup or salad, the next person's for the main course, and the last person for dessert. Either charge by course, or for the whole package. To make it extra special (and much more expensive), get a limousine for the evening that carries guests from house to house.

15. Host a wine and cheese party. Do not charge admission and invite as many people as you can. During the party, give a short talk about your organization, and ask everyone to consider a gift of \$25, \$50, \$100 or more (depending on the crowd). Either pass out envelopes and ask people to give then, or after the party contact everyone individually who came and ask for a major gift. Indicate that you have given, and if appropriate, how much you have given.
16. Get your gambling friends together. Charge a \$5 entrance fee, and have a poker evening, asking that every "pot" be split with the organization. Individuals win and so does the organization. You can charge extra for refreshments, or include one or two glasses of something with the price of admission. (Watch the laws in your community on this one. In some communities it is illegal to gamble, even in your own home.)
17. Do one fundraising event every other month that nets at least \$75. This might look like:
Poker Party \$100 Fancy dinner (8 people x \$25) \$200 Sell 50 raffle tickets @\$1
\$ 50 Book sale \$ 50 Recycle newspapers \$100
18. Solicit small businesses, churches, synagogues, or service clubs for \$500. If you are active in a church, or own your own business and are involved in business organizations or service clubs, this can be very effective. You can often raise \$200-\$500 with a simple proposal and oral presentation.
19. Take a part-time job in addition to your present work, and give everything you earn up to \$500.
20. Ask 5-10 people to save all their change for 3-5 months. You save yours. Count it at the end of the prescribed time and use one of the other methods to raise the rest. (You may not need to.)
21. Ask 2-5 friends to help with a bake sale, book sale, or garage sale. You and your friends bake the goodies, or get the books or the other stuff required for the sale, staff it, and help clean up afterwards. This is an excellent way to get people involved in fundraising without ever actually asking them for money.
22. For the fairly rich: Give your organization \$5,000 as an interest-free loan for a year. They invest it, earn 8-10%, and at the end of the year, they give you your \$5,000 back.
23. Sell your organization's materials, buttons, T-shirts, bumper stickers, or whatever else they have for sale. Also, help distribute these to bookstores or novelty shops.
24. The Farming Out Method: Entice 5 friends to sell 100 raffle tickets each, or to raise \$100 however they like. Share this list of suggestions with them. Give them a nice dinner at the successful end of their efforts (or a bottle of good wine, or a weekend away).
25. Get a famous or popular person to do a special event. Watch the costs on this, or you may lose money.
26. Invite people to your birthday party and ask that in lieu of gifts they give money to your organization.
27. Conduct a volunteer canvas. For one evening, you and a group of friends take literature to all the neighborhoods around you and ask for money at the door. Be sure to comply with city and county ordinances.

28. Lead or get someone to lead a nature walk, an architectural tour, a historic tour, a sailing trip, a rafting trip, or a horseback ride. Charge \$15-\$25 per person, or charge \$35 and provide lunch. Advertise the event in the newspaper to draw in people from outside your organization.
29. Start a pyramid dinner, or a chain dinner. Invite 12 people and charge \$12 each. Get two people of the twelve you invited to invite 12 people each at \$12, and two people from each of those two dinners to have 12 people at \$12, and so on. Here's the income:
Your dinner $\$12 \times 12 = \144 From your dinner $\$12 \times (12 + 12) = \288 From those dinners $\$12 \times (12 + 12 + 12 + 12) = \576
30. Twelve is used in this example because it worked very well for the Nuclear Freeze Campaign in California, which was Proposition 12. In many communities, most of the income for the campaign was generated by 12 x 12 dinners.
31. Collect cans for recycling. Ask all your friends to save their cans and bottles for you and turn them in to a buy-back recycling center.
32. Sell your frequent flyer miles to friends or donate them to the organization for a raffle. Watch the rules of the airline on this, but most airlines let you give away miles, and you may be able to sell your miles as long as you don't go through a mileage broker.
33. If you live in a nice house or own a getaway cottage in a beautiful place or an expensive city, rent it out for a week or a weekend two or three times during the year and give the proceeds to your organization. Or rent a room in your home for much less than the cost of a hotel room to people needing a place to stay while they are on business in a big city. You may even make a new friend in the process.
34. If you own a valuable dog and you breed it, donate the proceeds from one or two puppies. (I know some animal lovers will join me in feeling mixed about bringing more animals into the world when so many need homes; this suggestion is for people who were already planning to breed their dog. It is not intended as an incentive.)
35. Organize a service raffle. Get four people (one can be you) to donate a simple but valuable service that many people could use and sell raffle tickets for \$3-\$5 each. Keep the price a little high so you don't have to sell so many and so that the buyers have a higher chance of winning. Services can include childcare for a weekend or for any weekend night two weekends in a row; one day of housecleaning; yard work; house painting (interior or exterior), etc. Sell the tickets to neighbors, work mates, and to other board members. Encourage people to buy several by offering discounts for multiple purchases, such as one for \$5, 2 for \$10, but 3 for \$13, 4 for \$17, 5 for \$20. If you are really bold or live in a more affluent area, or have few friends, sell the tickets for \$20 each. A full day of housecleaning for \$20 is a real bargain, and buyers have a high chance of winning with fewer tickets sold.
36. Offer to do something your friends and family have been nagging you to do anyway, and attach a price to it. For example, quit smoking on the condition that your friends donate to your group, or get your friends to pay a certain amount for every day you don't smoke up to 30 days. Agree to match their gifts at the end of thirty days if you didn't smoke give them their money back if you did. (This method could be applied to other healthy behaviors, such as exercising or not eating sugar.)

37. If you belong to a church, research whether your church or others has a discretionary fund. Many churches have small pools of money available to groups through a women's fellowship or pastor's discretionary fund or various seldom-used endowments. Grants are often in the \$50-\$500 range and so go largely untouched by fundraisers. Sometimes simply writing a letter will free up this money and it tends to be renewable if someone is willing to ask the church yearly.
38. Research all the service clubs in town and see what their giving policies are. They often have formal giving guidelines for large grants of \$2,000 and up, but have smaller amounts of money available for specific small projects.
39. Find out what items your group needs and try to get them donated. This is good for people who really hate to ask for money but who don't mind asking for things that cost money. Items that one can sometimes get donated include computers, paper, office supplies, office furniture (second-hand from banks and corporations as they redecorate), typewriters, adding machines, food, even cars.
40. Ask someone to donate \$50 a month for a year. Ask four people to donate \$10 a month for a year. Ask nine people to donate \$5 a month for a year. Get the organization to send reminders to them or send the reminders yourself.
41. Find a few friends who have small savings accounts and pool them into one account. Invest the pool in a Treasury Bill or CD and when it comes due, give everyone what they would have made if they had invested only their little amount, and give the group the rest. For example, if four people invest \$2,500 each for a pool of \$10,000 in a CD that matures in a year, they may be able to earn 6% interest for a total of at least \$600 (actually more, depending on the compounding factor). If each person invests only \$2,500 for a year individually, they may not be able to earn more than 4%, for a total of \$100 each or \$400 for everyone. The \$200 difference can be given to the group while everyone gains the interest they would have made. Find more friends or invest for longer to make up the \$500.
42. Give it yourself. (This is so good I have to say it twice.)
43. Strategy with a long-deferred payoff (we hope): leave the group a bequest.
44. With similar hopes as above, get friends to include the group in their wills.
45. Ask friends who belong to service clubs, sororities, antique collecting groups, support groups, bridge clubs, etc. to discuss your organization in their group and pass the hat for donations. A once-a-year sweep of even small organizations can yield \$100 from each.
46. For the church-going: ask if your organization can be a "second collection." The church passes the plate for its own collection and then you or someone from your organization gives a brief talk (or sometimes the whole sermon) about your group and the plate is passed again; the proceeds go to your group.
47. A variation on the above is to organize a "second collection Sunday" and get as many churches as you can to take up a second collection for your organization. Someone from your group will need to be at each service and give a brief talk. Second collection

Sundays can be very lucrative, as witnessed by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, which collects \$8 million on one Sunday in all the participating Catholic churches in the United States.

48. If, as a child, you collected something avidly that you now store in a basement, consider selling it. Coins and stamps are particularly valuable and have usually increased in value over the years. But your collection of rocks, toy ships or rockets, arrowheads, or dolls can also be valuable. When you donate the income from the sale, you can deduct that amount from your taxes-an added bonus of this strategy, since you probably paid little or nothing for the items in the collection.
49. Have a sidewalk sale or garage sale for your whole neighborhood or building. Go around to your neighbors and tell them you will take their stuff outside and sit with it all day to sell it if they will donate half or all of the proceeds to your group. Since this is stuff people want to be rid of anyway, it is a good deal for them. In one apartment building with ten units participating in donating stuff, an organization netted \$3,000 in one day. Three people from the organization helped with the selling. With a few high-ticket items, such as a washer/dryer or some nice lamps, you can make good money.
50. If you have an artistic bent, offer to design greeting cards to specification for organizations or individuals for a fee. If you are good at calligraphy, sell your skills to schools for graduation announcements, friends for classy but low-cost wedding invitations, or just fun certificates such as "World's Greatest Dad" for Father's Day or "Outstanding Friend." Create unique Halloween costumes or masks. Donate the proceeds from your artistry.
51. Create a take-off on the "adopt-a-highway" technique by naming budget items of your group as available for adoption. You could develop a flyer that reads, "The following items have been found near death from negligence and abuse. Won't you help? \$25 per month will ensure that our computer is maintained. \$100 per month will release our photocopy machine from toiling with no toner and a dying motor. (We can lease a new one.)"
52. An idea for people who live in border towns: Get permission to place a large container in stores or even at the airports of towns near national borders. Have a sign that asks people (in several languages) to throw in any coins or paper money they have not exchanged. Many times people leaving Canada or Mexico don't have time to exchange all their money or cannot exchange their loose change. Multiply this times hundreds of shoppers or travelers and you can make a lot of money. UNICEF does this in many European airports.
53. Hold an "I'm Not Afraid" Auction. You do this with just a few friends or hundreds of people if you have enough items to auction. You survey a few people (and use your own common sense) about what things need to be done in their home or office that they are afraid of or would really rather not do. This is different from a service auction-there has to be an element of dread in the activity. For example, some people cannot wash their windows because their apartment is too high or the second story of their house is too high and they suffer from vertigo. If you are not afraid of heights, you can sell your window-washing service. This goes for drain cleaning, minor roof repairs, antenna fixing, etc. Of, if you are unafraid of cockroaches or waterbugs or spiders, you can offer to clean out that dark corner or garage or basement for a small fee. Snakes can be found

in gardens and woodsheds, but maybe that doesn't bother you. The problem doesn't need to be as serious as phobia. How about allergies to dust, pollen, weeds? If you don't have them, you can mow, sweep, clean for a fee. By marketing it as an "I'm Not Afraid" Auction, you also have the option for people to name something they need done to a group of volunteers, and then have a volunteer say, "I'm not afraid to do that." In that case, you will need a set fee for service.

54. Similar to the suggestion above is the "Details Auction." This is for all your friends whose desks are overflowing with papers or who can't get their receipts in order to give to the tax preparer or who complain they can never find anything. If you are well organized, offer to clean up their desk, get their rolodex in order, file their papers, etc. If you like to shop, sell that to people who don't and do all their holiday shopping for them, or buy birthday, baby shower or niece/nephew presents for them. Anything that people feel they cannot control is the organized person's fundraising dream come true.
55. Find out which of your friends (perhaps this is true for you also) work in corporations with matching gift programs. Then ask them to donate and get their gift matched, and ask them to ask their co-workers to donate and get their gift matched.
56. Get an "affinity" credit card. (This is for really large organizations or chapters of national organizations.) A firm, such as Working Assets, sets up a credit card with your logo on it, and a small percentage of each sale goes to your group. The Nature Conservancy, the Women's Building in San Francisco, and others are using this successfully. It requires a guarantee of volume of users.
57. For smaller groups than in #54, think of a store or service related to your organization or where a lot of your members shop. Ask the store to donate a percentage of profits for a certain day or week, or even forever. You can also explore this with mail-order firms. Then you advertise widely to friends, family and members that Joe's Florist will give 2% of each sale during Valentine's weekend to anyone identifying themselves with your group.

As you can see, almost all of these strategies involve asking for money and giving money yourself. These are the basic premises of fundraising-you must ask, you must give. Everything after that involves creativity, imagination and a sense of fun. I also listed two twice-give it yourself and ask someone for it. That's not because I didn't really have 55 ways-it is because those are the best, fastest and easiest ways to get money.

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