

Tips for Successful Fundraising

Top 3 things to do after establishing your fundraising page

1. *Make a donation to your own fundraising page.* Other people are more likely to donate to your page when they see that someone has already contributed. Donating some of your own money also demonstrates to potential supporters that you are serious about helping the cause.
2. *Personalize your fundraising page.* Add your own text, pictures, or video. Remember, your potential donors will be interested in the cause, but they are primarily interested in you. Make sure you tell them why you are getting involved and what your connection to the cause is (it doesn't have to be long).
3. *Send individual emails to your five closest contacts and ask them for donations first.* Getting your "inner circle" to donate to your page will help you build up some momentum. It's also good to start with the people you are most comfortable with!

Next Steps:

Form a list of potential donors

Put together a list of people who might support you. Think creatively here. It doesn't hurt to ask, so build the biggest list you can by including everyone you can think of!

- Friends
- Family
- Co-workers
- Workout buddies
- Neighbors
- Dentist/doctor
- Car maintenance shop
- Bank
- Any business establishment where you have a connection
- Your CPA
- Your bicycle shop

Reach out strategically

Think about your fundraising strategy like peeling an onion from the inside out. The best fundraisers start by asking their closest contacts first (the core) and progressively working outward to more distant contacts (the outer skin). *Why would you do that?*

- Your closest contacts are the ones most likely to donate.
- Studies show that as you make progress towards your fundraising goal people become more and more likely to donate to you (success breeds success!).

Thank your donors

Make sure to say thank you to everyone who supports you. It's a simple thing to do, but also one of the most powerful. Send emails, write personal notes and thank people in person. Do it every opportunity you get.

Ways to reach out and ask

There are different methods to approaching people and asking them for money, but the bottom line is that you need to be true to yourself and do what's most comfortable for you. The following section outlines some ideas for reaching out:

Sending hand written letters

- While email is today's go-to method of reaching people quickly for instant results, good old-fashioned hand written letters show a personal touch and stand out.
- Consider making your initial requests via hand written letter. Deliver it personally if possible!
- It is unlikely that your friends will throw out your hand written snail-mail letters before they open and read them, but even friends with the best intentions can easily lose or forget your email in an overcrowded "inbox."
- Use emails as a follow-up to those who don't respond to your letter.

Writing emails

There is no perfect formula for writing an email asking family and friends for donations, but there are some best practices to guide you:

Writing a general email

(Hint: Use the template at <https://www.treefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Fundraising-letter-template-2018.pdf>)

- Start by explaining your connection to the cause and why it's important to you. Describing how the cause has touched your life is probably the most important element of your message.
- In a sentence or two explain the good work the organization is doing to advance the cause. This helps potential supporters understand where their money would be going and what it would be used to accomplish.
- Be clear to potential supporters about what you are looking for; make a direct ask for financial support.
- Include a link to your fundraising page.
- Be clear that donations are tax deductible and all money goes to tree research and education; Tour expenses are covered by TREE Fund Partners.
- Thank your contacts for their time and support.

Writing to your closest contacts

- Send **personalized** emails – just write one or two as you have time and eventually you'll cover everyone.
- You know your closest contacts better than anyone does. Don't feel like you have to stick to a predefined formula. If a one line message is going to work, go ahead and do that. If a longer personal message will work best, do that.
- Just be yourself. If something feels forced or inauthentic, scrap it.
- Make sure you include a direct request for support and a link to your fundraising page at the end of your message.

Using social media

Start fundraising through social media after you've sent out your initial batch of emails.

- On **Facebook**, tag the people that have already donated to you and thank them for their donations. When you tag someone your post gets shared in your activity feed and the other person's activity feed too. This shows that people are already donating to your page (remember success breeds success!).
- Set internal goals (e.g. \$200 dollars by the end of week two, \$400 dollars by end of week four, etc.). Use your social media accounts to give updates of your progress towards each goal and ask for people to help you get over the next hurdle.
- Don't make every post an "ask." Share inspiring news stories or other positive anecdotes about the cause too!

- Consider offering your own gifts to friends and family who help you reach your goal. It doesn't have to be anything extravagant, just a token of your appreciation.

Fundraising in-person

- Make a point to ask the friends and family you see on a regular basis to support your campaign. Dinner parties, soccer games, church, family reunions, etc. are all great opportunities to make face-to-face asks. It's difficult for people to say "no" if you speak with them in person.
- Consider creating simple "fundraising cards" that have your personal fundraising page on them. That way when you see people in person you can hand them a card and ask them to make a donation online when they get home.
- Another idea is to have a few stamped envelopes addressed to TREE Fund on hand with you. If someone says they'd like to donate and write a check when they get home, hand them the envelope; it is hard for them to NOT follow through when they are given a stamped envelope.

How to follow up with people who don't respond initially

Regardless of which method you choose, don't be afraid to follow up with those who don't respond right away! Your close friends and family won't mind hearing from you a few times. By setting internal goals (e.g. \$200 dollars by end of week two, \$400 dollars by end of week four, etc.) you accomplish two things. First, you create more urgency when you ask friends and family for support. And second, you give yourself a built-in reason to follow up.

- Reach back out to non-responders when you're approaching one of your internal goals. If you set a few internal goals, you can plan on sending a couple follow up emails. Remember people can easily miss or skip over your initial outreach!
- Include progress updates in your follow up messages and consider including any inspiring stories or personal anecdotes you have about the cause.
- Remember to continue using social media! Social media is a softer medium for communicating with your contacts and it's more acceptable to frequently post updates in those channels.

Hint: TREE Fund will be running three fundraising promotions for the 2018 Tour where donors can qualify to win prizes by donating to your campaign during the specified time. These provide another opportunity for you to follow up with people who don't respond initially. Currently we are planning these promotions:

- Arbor Day Promotion April 23-29
- National Bike Month Promotion May 14-20
- Start of Summer Promotion June 18-24

Remember: People will donate because YOU are asking them to do so. It's as simple as that. They like you and respect that you're supporting a great cause. Good luck and happy fundraising!

This information is a compilation of advice from Beth Buchanan of Team Ohio and two fundraising blogs (<https://npengage.com/nonprofit-fundraising/10-simple-fundraising-tips-guaranteed-improve-effectiveness/> and <https://www.classy.org/fundraising-tips>)