

Best Practices for Building Loyal Supporters & Donors

Pre-Event

- Utilize as many different avenues to promote your event.
 - Social media, print (community newspapers, newsletters, postcards, invitations, posters/flyers, etc.) radio, community calendars, community members
- Include handwritten notes from your committee/board to their network of potential attendees.
- Timing is everything! Pick a date and time when the most amount of people can attend. Check other event calendars in the area to try to avoid conflict with another event. Try to stick with the same or similar date for an annual event so people plan around it.
- Offer a special feature at the event for long-time/current supporters or high-ticket holders
- Persistence pays off! Make sure to follow-up continuously with businesses for their support. Phone calls and in-person visits pay off (over email).
- Keep your volunteers aware & involved. Using a sharing platform like google doc allows the volunteers to sign-up for shifts and see who else will be volunteering.
- Review attendance list before event with your staff and board members. Establishing a VIP list may be helpful if there are certain participants you want to be sure to have a good experience.
- Ask event committee to (personally) invite people they know who would be interested in your mission who are not already involved.

At the Event

- Follow through with what was advertised in the promotion and invitations. If something has changed, be vocal about it and apologize.
- People don't like to wait. Think through where traffic jams may occur (parking, restrooms, bars, food, etc.) and have extra people on hand to help move people along. Offer a flute of champagne or speciality cocktail as guests arrive so that they feel welcomed and have something to drink. This alleviates the bar line and makes guests happy.
- Designate floater(s) to engage attendees. Utilize the members of your board!
- Give credit where credit is due! Name donors, business sponsors and supporters, in-kind donors where relevant.
- As the event manager, stay nimble! The best laid plans are just that... plans. Be willing to change your plan to please attendees.
- Do your research - greet guests by name, thank them for attending and supporting, try to connect on a personal level.

Post-Event

- *Thank You! Merci! Gracias!* Send thank you notes to your in-kind donors, attendees, sponsors, volunteers, etc. as soon as you can!
- "Thank You" packets for sponsors are a nice touch - you can include photos of the items they underwrote or the event itself, copies of ads they were listed in and event materials. Most sponsors want to know how much an item they donated garnered for the non-profit so that they know they made an impact.
- Share photos (website, social media, thank you press release) and make sure they're accessible to all!
- Hold a post-event debrief meeting for staff and board. (hold a thank you & debrief meeting for your volunteers- they were hearing and seeing things that you and the staff might not have; it's important to get their feedback and suggestions while also thanking them for their time). Find out who spoke to whom and what information did they learn about that donor. Make sure to document those touch points in your donor database. Then decide on next steps to cultivate that donor.

- Have some opinionated participants at your debrief meeting? Consider asking each person to write down three thoughts about the event and go around the room to share.
- Write a post-event assessment - What worked? What didn't work?
- Is your event recurring every year?
 - Consider sending a survey to event attendees and the event committee, just be sure you're ready to hear the negative feedback and change your event based on the suggestions.
 - While there's still hype over the event, have attendees save-the-date for next year by ensuring you have determined the date of next years event.