



## Chapter 10 Following Up After the Event

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Congratulations on a great charity event! You raised a lot of money and the event was overall an outstanding hit. Now it's time to sit back, relax and pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

**WRONG!!**

After any event, it is absolutely critical to follow up with all participants, staff, volunteers, attendees and donors. The sooner, the better as the event will still be fresh in everyone's minds.

There are a number of areas to cover with follow up. In addition to thanking everyone for their participation, you'll want to gather helpful feedback and ideas for your next charity event.

### **Debrief: What worked – what didn't work – how can we improve for the future**

One of the first things you will want to do is have a debriefing session with your staff. This is the perfect time to go over the entire process from conception and planning to execution while everything remains clear.

For your debriefing session, start on a positive note and give an overall summary of the event such as money raised, number of attendees etc. Overall, even if your event experienced some difficulties, you should be proud that your organisation had pulled it off. After this general overview, you will want each committee member to submit an evaluation of their specific area covering the following:

- *Aims and Objectives:* What were the aims and objectives of your area? Do you feel that you have achieved them? What are your recommendations for these objectives in the future?
- *Budget/Resources:* Did you feel you had the appropriate resources to accomplish your aims? Where were there shortcomings? Where were there inefficiencies? What are your recommendations for the future?
- *Communication/Support:* Did you find you had the support you needed from other areas and managers? Ideas on how this can be improved?
- *Overall impressions:* What were your overall impressions of the event? Was it successful/worthwhile? What went well? What didn't go well? Should we consider a similar event for the future?

Encourage participants to have an open discussion about their experience. Be supportive, make notes and develop some possible solutions for any criticisms and pitfalls. Review, reflect and revisit all comments and suggestions from the crew. Remember also to praise their efforts and congratulate them on a job well done!

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## Following up with guests, speakers and participants

Immediately following your debrief, your staff should start following up with the attendees and participants of the event. Again, the quicker you get moving on, the clearer the event remains in people's memories, so your correspondence will be that much more powerful.

When following up with attendees, you'll want to summarise the event, highlight its achievements and gauge any feedback/criticisms that participants have. You'll also want to give further information such as when the next event will be and how participants can continue their support. Again, you'll want to thank them for their attendance and support – and of course open the door for future contributions.

- **Newsletter:** a quick and easy way to follow up with a large number of attendees is to put together a newsletter and email or direct mail it to your database. However, if you're looking to gather more personal responses, this might not be the best way to get quality feedback.
- **Forms:** Consider sending a quick evaluation form to attendees. You can also distribute these immediately following the event as your guests are leaving. Make these forms easy to fill out, a multiple choice and rating format works best. Of course, leave room for individuals to make any additional comments and suggestions.
- **Gifts:** For special guests, celebrities, large donors and VIPs, you should consider sending along a small gift to show your appreciation. Be thoughtful and unique with your gifts; try to be more creative than just sending along a bottle of wine. You'll be looking for these individuals to continue to support your cause and you want to make a memorable statement.

## Following up with donors

Each individual contributor who did not specifically attend the charity event should also receive some form of follow up to their donation. It's important to regularly stay in touch with these donors to reiterate the value of the cause they are supporting. Follow up with email, direct mail or even a phone call for a more personal approach. Thank them for their support and don't be shy about kindly encouraging them to continue their support, perhaps by becoming a longer term sponsor and making ongoing contributions, such as with The Smith Family's sponsor a child program.

## ***Helpful Hints – Making an appeal - how to drive your message home***

Whether you are sending a monthly newsletter update or an introductory email or letter, the message you send is critical to making your appeal. You want your message to be emotive and urgent and appeal to the philanthropic side of the reader. Here are some ideas on how to make sure you drive your message home:

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- ✓ **Ownership:** have your message come from a person, a face to represent the organisation, whether it be the President, Director, CEO or chair. This ownership of a message gives the cause a face and makes your communications more personal.
  - ✓ **Engage:** capture the attention of your reader by relating your cause to their everyday concerns. Refer to history, statistics, current events – anything that will help the reader step into the shoes of your organisation's beneficiaries.
  - ✓ **Tell a story:** use anecdotes and stories to deliver a sense of personal urgency. It's not a faceless child that needs help, it's little Maria. It's not a just a flea bitten mongrel of a dog – it's the lovable mutt Echo. Names and faces help bring a sense of personal familiarity to your message that will speak more directly to your reader.
  - ✓ **Clear Instruction:** be specific about what you want the reader to do. Ask them to “sponsor a child” or “donate clothes” or “write a letter” to a politician. Readers and supporters who believe in your cause need clear direction on how they can help.
  - ✓ **Addresses:** Along with your instructions, make sure you give addresses, phone numbers and include any paperwork or forms for supporters to fill in. You want to make the process as streamlined and as simple as possible.

Every piece of communications you send should include some appeal or message – you need to make the most of every opportunity to gain support for your cause.