



# FUNDRAISING BASICS



Getting over fundraising anxiety, and figuring out where to start.

UNNAMED THEATRE PROJECT

## INTRO

This packet covers the beginning steps to start build donors relations. Specifically it goes over getting over the fear of fundraising, basic tools you might need, where to start finding donors, and how to start building a fundraising campaign.

The goal is to give you a foundation to cultivate and communicate with donors with confidence and give you tools to build a sustainable campaign.

## GETTING OVER THE GUILT OF FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is sometimes a necessary part of creating theatre, and while asking for financial support can be stressful and uncomfortable, it can be easier with preparation and practice.

First, remember that people want to support your project, and that people donate money to arts all the time. Asking them to donate money is not an embarrassing thing, they either will or they won't, but they definitely won't if you don't ask. And if they say no this time, they still might care about your project and they might say yes next time! You are asking for them to invest in your art, asking them to be apart of the process at the ground level, you are not doing anything wrong by asking for them to help.

You can also make it easy on yourself to collect more passive donations by making sure you have your donate link in all your emails, in the header of your website, and in your social media links.

*It takes practice!* Write out your ask, practice it out-loud, practice it to your team members, get comfortable saying it, and then use it to ask for donations!

## BUILDING A CASE STATEMENT

Before you start trying to cultivate donors, building a case statement gives you a foundation to build all your asks and content around. It also helps prepare you for questions that will come up.

The questions that tend to come up during a fundraising campaign look like:

- How do you help people?
- Who do you help?
- What services do you offer?
- What's your track record?
- What are your plans for the future?
- Why do you deserve their support?
- What is in it for the donor?

To answer these questions, this is the information you want to have in a case statement:

- Mission
- Programs and Services
- Problems solved and people affected
- Goals and Objectives
- Your qualifications
- How gift will be used
- Benefits to the donor

## TOOLS YOU WILL NEED

- A way to track donors - like a CRM system (Airtable, [Bloomerang](#))
- A way to collect donations (PayPal, Venmo. or CRM)
- A way to collect and send mass emails (MailChimp)
- Some sort of design program (Canva)
- Social Media handles (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, etc)

## HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU NEED TO RAISE?

You need to know how much money you need to raise, so you can figure out what a successful campaign looks like. This information comes from your budget! It also helps you to break down how much money you need to ask for from certain individuals.

For example, if you need to raise \$10,000 you can break it down to:

- 2 donors at \$1,000
- 4 donors at \$500
- 10 donors at \$100
- 40 donors at \$50
- 80 donors at \$25
- 200 donors at \$10

You can also offer incentives at different levels, as long as you keep track of them! Don't forget to incorporate the cost of any gifts into your fundraising campaign, and make sure that it is worth the amount of money they are sending you.

For example, if you send a \$10 donor a sticker that cost \$2 to print and \$3 to ship, you are then only raising \$5 from that \$10 donor. However if you sent that same sticker to a \$50 donor, you would still be making \$45 from that donor.

This also counts for things like free tickets, because you are getting the money now, but then you won't be able to make that ticket sale later. Keep that in mind if you are doing a limited run with a smaller amount of seats.

## FINDING DONORS

You don't need to put all the pressure on your immediate friends and family to donate to your campaign, you can get creative! Think of it as an audience engagement strategy, you want new individuals that have similar values to feel invested in your company or project.

First, look at who is already attending your shows! You probably already have their email address, and they already have shown up to support your work.

Then start to reach out to people who might have similar values but are in your broader community.

- alumni groups (high school, university, clubs or programs, etc)
- gym
- rotary club
- church
- book club
- networking groups that are not directly related to your industry
  - ex: don't go to a networking night of a bunch of theatre people, but maybe go to a networking night of a bunch of marketing people, or something else you have interest in. The goal is to meet new people!

Look at donor lists of other theatre companies or organizations similar to what you are doing.

Is there anyone on there you know that you might not have thought to ask? Can you look them up online and see if they like work similar to yours? This isn't about poaching or stealing donors, because a majority of the time these people donate to multiple places, and your organization could be one of them!

## CROWDFUNDING

Crowd funding is a great way to launch something as a new company, since you don't have a donor base yet. It helps build long term and engaged audiences before your project comes out. It does take a lot of planning, so make sure you have plenty of time before your project needs to be funded to get everything together.

The most successful way to communicate about crowdfunding is through emails, but social media helps too. When someone gives you their email address, it is more meaningful than them following you on social media, and turns into higher conversion rates for funding asks.

Before you start your crowdfunding campaign, you are going to want to build out your communications and content, this includes building out as many emails and social media posts as possible, and having templates ready for everything else. Being as prepared as possible with your communications before you start your campaign will make it feel less stressful.

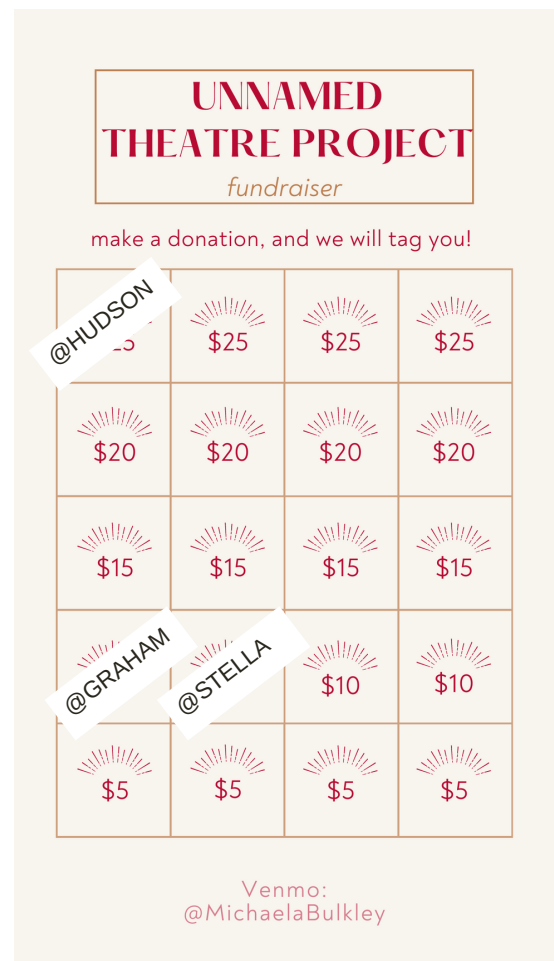
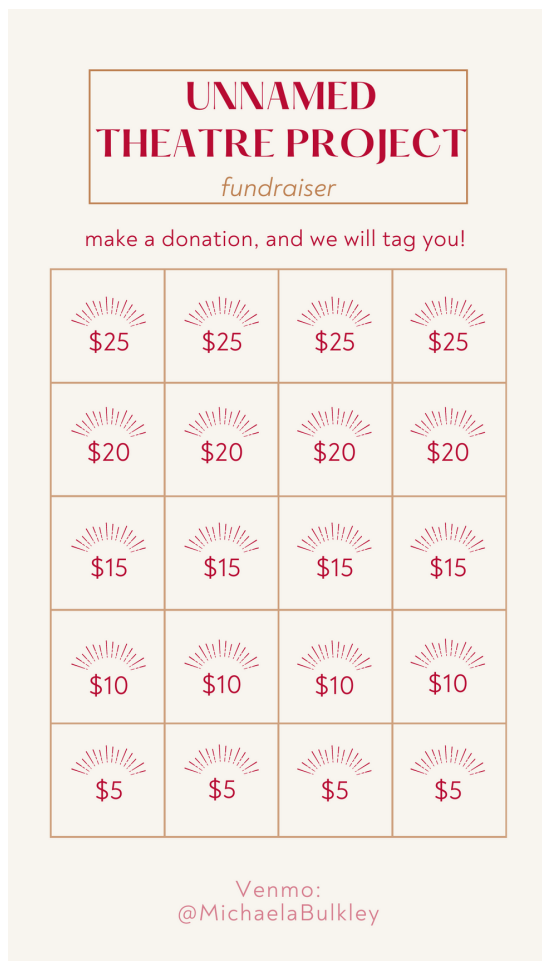
This content is a continuation of your story telling, and builds the story of your company. This content could be:

- Social Media posts to get people to join your mailing list
- Pre-Campaign content - Intro's to the company
- Campaign Announcement
- Campaign goal posts (25% to the goal, 50% to the goal, etc)
- Content about your project to keep people interested and building conversations
  - Introduce the team
  - This could also just be general things about your show's topic. Again, example - Punk Play, do fun facts about punk music.
- Thank you shout out templates for social media
- Turning some of these posts into email campaigns

## OTHER FUN IDEAS DURING A CAMPAIGN

Fun other ideas during a campaign:

- IG Story Bingo (example below)
  - You can create an Instagram story sized Bingo card in Canva, make sure it fits in with your branding!
  - When someone donates (either Venmo or Paypal) thank them by reposting the Bingo card with their name covering one of the spots equivalent to their donation. You can do this right in the Instagram app.



Other ideas:

- Live Streams (like Twitch, YouTube, or Facebook live)
- Matching Contributions (We have someone that will donate \$500 if we can get matching contributions!) \*make sure to plan this WITH that donor
- Short term incentives (donate in the next 24 hours to get a raffle ticket)

## TRACKING DONORS

There are a lot of things to keep track of when it comes to donors.

- Who do you plan on asking?
- How much do you plan on asking them for?
- Who specifically is going to ask them?
- When will they ask this person?
- When was the last time you communicated with them?
  - Was it in person?
  - Was it an email?
- When was the last time they saw a show of yours?

After the donation:

- Have you sent them a thank you note and receipt? (if you're a nonprofit include your Tax ID Number)
- Have you emailed them with the wins and progress of the project?
  - Keep them in the loop! They want to see that their money is helpful!

The goal of all of this tracking is to make sure you are building long term relationships with these donors before you ask them, and keep it going after you ask them (even if they say no the first time).

Building these relationships can also help you find other similar donors.

- How do they find out about events?
- Where do they get their news?
- How did they hear about you?
- What made them excited to contribute?
- Would they want to bring friends with them to your shows?
- What type of accounts do they follow?

This is not about making these relationships purely transactional, but I promise you will not be able to keep track of all your donors without a system in place.



## EVENTS

Events can be a fun way to not feel like your fundraising, but they also require more work and have a lower ROI. Try to keep your fundraising events inexpensive while still keeping them fun and on brand.

Asking people to buy tickets to a fundraising event feels less like asking people for money while building relationships with potential donors. You can also include other fundraising mechanisms like auctions or selling merchandise.

At an event, don't forget to ask people to donate! People are a little more willing to donate when you ask them in person, and if they are at your event you already know they care about your company. This is also a great time to publicly thank your current or past donors, because people love to be recognized!

## CONCLUSION

There are endless amounts of information on fundraising and the different tactics you can use to cultivate and communicate donors, hopefully this information makes getting started a little less intimidating or overwhelming.

Just remember the basic information

- You deserve to have your project funded.
- People want to support and help you.
- You have to make a specific ask.
  - Don't forget to practice your asks!
- Being rejected is not the end of the world, they won't hate you just because you asked.
- Just keep making adjustments and try again.

You've got this!