

the fundraising **EDGE**

A Resource on Product Fundraising Issues and Trends for Parents, Teachers, Principals and Non-Profit Group Volunteers

Principal Support

How the School Leader's Involvement Can Strengthen a Fundraiser

Like many acts of insanity, it starts out innocently enough. The fundraising committee suggests that students may need a little motivation to get excited about the fundraiser that begins next week. The principal agrees, and wonders what might motivate an eight-year-old more interested in recess and their I-Pod than homework and school fundraisers. Cue the pig (or goat, or snake ... or in at least one case, a yellow banana slug). Principals have been puckering up to animals for years, all in an effort to motivate students and add some excitement and fun to school fundraisers. Today, you have to be especially brave considering your smooch will probably live forever on YouTube.

Patti Verdin, principal of an elementary school in Clifton, Colorado, made good on her promise to kiss a pig if students met their fundraising goal of \$2,000 to buy a new laminator and instructional materials. Ms. Verdin's intimate moment ended up on the evening news after camera crew from a local TV station stopped by the school to record the action.

The pig kissing ploy played a key role in the school ultimately reaching its fundraising goal.

"We were about \$350 short, so I didn't think I [would have to kiss the pig] but then, we had some staff members and some teachers and a list minute donation that put us over the mark," Ms. Verdin told the TV station.



Principals Leading the Way

These days, almost all schools (94%) raise funds to pay for classroom equipment and supplies, along with important "extras," such as new playground equipment and field trips, according to a nationwide survey conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Most principals report they would rather not have to hold fundraisers, but 87% believe these programs provide valuable returns. Selling popular consumer items to raise money earns schools and other non-profits nearly \$2 billion each year, according to the non-profit Association of Fund-Raising Distributors and Suppliers.

Many principals would rather delegate fundraising responsibilities to others, including the school's parent-teacher organization. However, this hands-off approach could hamper a program's success, according to fundraising experts.

"If there is one direct correlation that affects a school's profit, it's principal and staff involvement after the initial kick-off," says Rick Anderson, a professional fundraiser in Minnesota. "This helps solidify participation from your supporters, which is more important than ever in a tough economy."

A principal's direct involvement in fundraising logistics, planning, and execution is also essential in a successful fundraising program.

"As new PTA officers come on board, they look to the principal for backing on specific programs and longstanding relationships with trusted fundraising companies," said Dr. Tom Davis, a retired elementary school principal in Cumming, Georgia. Dr. Davis credits open communication with parent group leaders, as well as a long-term relationship with a local fundraising company, for his school being able to purchase mobile computer labs, remodel the student news center and build an outdoor pavilion.

Georgia Barnwell, a retired middle school principal, says she met regularly with her school's PTA president and

Continued on page 3

Getting Buy-In from Busy Teachers

Teachers arguably have more on their plates today than ever before — and less time to get everything done. As budgets continue to tighten, a number of states and school districts have cut school days or imposed teacher furloughs in an effort to cut costs. As classroom time shrinks while curriculum requirements remain rigid, it's understandable that the school fundraiser is not top of mind for most teachers.

Jonathan Floyd, a former teacher and guidance counselor, says most teachers are skeptical of anything that will add to their workload. “Teachers are tired of intrusions,” according to Floyd’s book *How to be Your Own Santa Clause and Manage Your Elves: An Innovative Approach to Using School Fundraisers to Get What You Want*. “You are likely to meet opposition in your fundraising endeavors, particularly in regard to bringing fundraising activities into the classroom.”

To succeed, however, school-wide fundraising programs need the full support of the entire school community, including busy teachers. So how do you get those overworked educators on board when it’s time to kick-off the fundraiser?

“The key for parent-teacher organizations is to keep a strong relationship with teachers year-round,” said Tim Sullivan, publisher of *PTO Today* magazine. “Teachers can be enthusiastic about the fund-raiser and be part of the fun, or they can just hand out order forms. And it all depends on whether they think the PTO’s efforts are worthwhile. Parent groups need to make teachers realize we’re all in this together.”

Principals can also get teachers more involved by letting them be a part of the goal-setting process, according to Fred Brown, a former elementary school principal and associate director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

“I used to have a meeting with my faculty and share the building budget with them,” Brown said. “We’d figure out what we needed, and we’d create a ‘wish list’ of things we wanted. Then we’d set goals, and figure out a fundraising project to meet those goals.”

“If teachers are in on the plan from day one, it’s easier for them to see the big picture,” Brown said. “They’re more willing to get involved if they see the goal but don’t have to sacrifice a lot of classroom time.”

Floyd suggests engaging a group of stakeholders in a needs assessment as part of the goal-setting process.

“The needs assessment should involve input from faculty, student leaders, parents and community members,” he said. “Students and teachers will be the ones using the material and equipment the school buys. And parents and community members will be the ones approached in fundraising drives.”

Getting teacher buy-in even on a small level can be helpful, according to fundraising experts. “Most teachers are extremely busy and not be able to devote a lot of time to the fundraiser,” said Russ Colombo, a professional fundraiser in Houston, TX with more than 30 years of experience. “If you can convince teachers to mention the fundraiser to their students at least once during the day, it will make a positive difference.”

Here are some low- and no-cost ideas from experienced fundraisers to help develop faculty buy-in:

- Give all or a portion of the proceeds from your next fundraiser to the classrooms. Allow each classroom to keep what they earn. (Or distribute excess funds earned over and above the original goal to individual classrooms.)
- Offer a teacher and/or classroom incentive for any class that achieves 100% participation in a school-wide fundraising drive.
- Sponsor a contest among teachers who personally sell items to their family and friends. For example, three top-selling teachers might be allowed to “shop” off the fundraising brochure.
- Before launching your next fundraiser, brief teachers (no more than 15 minutes) in conjunction with a faculty meeting. Bring food and consider offering door prizes.
- Always promote — first and foremost — the goal of your fundraising drive. Parents and teachers respond better if they know how the money is going to be spent.

The key for parent-teacher organizations is to keep a strong relationship with teachers year-round.



Workplace Fundraising Do's & Don'ts

“Don’t feel obliged. But feel free (and don’t forget to leave \$1).” So read a sign put up in an office break room next to chocolate bars for sale by one mom hoping to help her saxophonist son raise money to pay for a field trip. This is just one idea for how to raise money without raising hackles in the workplace.

More and more parents are looking at their co-workers as potential fund-raising customers. Likewise, more and more businesses are placing limits on what they consider appropriate for fund-raising among co-workers. Here are some ideas for tasteful workplace fund-raising to pass on to your parent volunteers.

Target Your Sales

There are three kinds of fundraising customers: those who have shown an interest in your product/s; those who have purchased from you before; and those from whom you’ve purchased items. Be selective about who you approach and focus proactive efforts on those three potential customers. Make sure in-person appeals to co-workers are only made during work breaks. And be aware that the higher you are on the corporate ladder, the harder it is to prevent people who work for you from feeling pressure to buy something.

... And Let the Rest Come to You

Reserve office equipment for company business only — not fund-raising. Avoid sending broad announcements about your fundraising project via company e-mail. Instead, take advantage of high-traffic, central locations – office and break



room bulletin boards – to post fundraising flyers, sign-up sheets and self-serve product kits, after having requested permission, of course.

Merchandise Creatively

Display your fund-raising items in a festive basket or alongside themed props. Example: put candy bars in a festive basket with a baseball and glove alongside a photo of your child in the team uniform with a sign that says: “Buy this candy to support Matt’s dream to ‘play ball.’”

... And Don’t Forget to Say Thank You

Remember to thank supporters, particularly those without children whose generosity is seldom reciprocated. After the fund-raising drive, treat your supporters to donuts or bagels and let them know how much money your office contributed to your child’s school, little league or other organization. A hand-written thank you note from your child will only enhance the “aawwhh” quotient.

Continued from cover

officers – and in the spring, discussed plans for the upcoming year, including fundraising. She was often present when her parent group’s officers interviewed fundraising companies for the following year.

“I let the officers know positive and negative issues that had come up with previous fund-raising projects as reflected by students, teachers and parents,” she said. Ms. Barnwell sometimes steered her PTA away from fundraising projects that would require too much time commitment from volunteers and teachers.

Here are some fundraising tips collected from principals and fundraising professionals.

Chart Your Course

Select your fundraising program early to allow ample time for planning. Outline the entire plan on a calendar for all participants. Work with your PTA or PTO to establish a clear financial goal before researching and evaluating products or programs. Knowing how much you need at the start will help identify which program is the best fit for your needs.

Set Your Sights on the Big Finish

Identify a specific beginning and ending date for key fundraising activities and stick to it. Without a clear target date, the campaign will drag on often without direction.

Rely on Your Fundraising Professional

Rely on your fundraising company professional for suggestions and advice. They often know what other neighborhood schools and sports leagues are doing. You’ll find this will prove most helpful in avoiding competition with another school’s fundraiser.

Fundraising Advice from the Experts!

The award-winning *Fundraising Edge* newsletter is published by the Association of Fund-Raising Distributors & Suppliers (AFRDS), a non-profit organization dedicated to helping groups like yours reach their fundraising goals.

Here's a preview of what's inside this issue of the *Fundraising Edge*!



the
fundraising **EDGE**

**Association of Fund-Raising
Distributors and Suppliers**

1100 Johnson Ferry Road, NE
Suite 300

Atlanta, GA 30342

Phone: (404) 252-3663

Fax: (404) 252-0774

Email: afrds@kellencompany.com

Website: www.afrds.org

THE FUNDRAISING EDGE

is published by the Association of Fund-Raising Distributors and Suppliers, an international association of companies that provide products and services to non-profit organizations to assist them in their fundraising programs.

AFRDS and its members are dedicated to promoting professionalism and integrity in product fundraising.

Let us know if we can send you a list of AFRDS members in your state.

© 2010 by AFRDS. Permission to reprint from *The Fundraising EDGE* in whole or in part is granted, except where noted, and provided customary credit is given.



PRST FIRST CLASS
POSTAGE
PAID
ATLANTA, GA
PERMIT NO 2111