

Tools required to host an online fundraiser

While the idea of an online fundraiser may seem daunting, there are really only two tools that are necessary to make it work. You're going to need some way to broadcast your fundraiser and some way to collect the funds. Things can certainly get more complex but if you have those two ingredients you can make it work.

Broadcasting software

There are plenty of choices here. The first one that comes to mind of late is Zoom. However, you need to remember that the basic Zoom package is for meetings. You can't control people talking, shipping video, etc. Your fundraiser can be interrupted at any time by anyone in the event.

More appropriate would be a webinar package. Zoom offers a webinar product that's really solid. Panelists are the only ones that can ship audio and video so you're assured other attendees can't interrupt the event. Other potential candidates would be WebEx, GoToWebinar, and Demio. Some have a cost but it isn't exorbitant and I believe they all offer a month-to-month option. You can simply pay when you need it.

There are some nice-to-haves in the choice of platform. Some of these allow you to integrate your webinar into Facebook Live and/or YouTube Live. Obviously you can draw a much larger crowd when you integrate those tools.

Online Donation Platforms

When considering an online fundraiser you need to capture donations then and there. You can't put up an address and expect people to mail you a check. You need to make it as easy as possible for people give you a donation.

To that end, you need an online platform for accepting donations. There are plenty of options here as well. These all work in similar fashion. You create an account, prove that the organization is real, and link the donation account to your bank account. At certain intervals (daily, weekly, etc.) the donations received are deposited to your bank account less a processing fee.

That little bit at the end is where the rubber meets the road. Credit card processing is never cheap. Most platforms are going to charge a credit card fee of something around 4%. However, the platforms also charge a processing fee. Some charge an additional percentage that can get you to the point that the online platform is charging about 8% per transaction or more. Some will charge a flat processing fee.

We use Qgiv for our district foundation. We have also used it for some zone fundraisers. Qgiv charges 3.95% plus 30 cents per transaction. This keeps your expenses lower particularly as average donation amount goes up. Other platforms include @Pay, Fundly, and Razoo.

Other nice-to-have features are "thermometers" for goal setting and tracking in a fundraiser and text-to-give. Text-to-give functionality is not free and at basic levels simply returns to the texter a link to complete the donation. Text-to-give that bills the texter's cell phone account is quite expensive.

Seven Creative Virtual Fundraising Ideas You Can Use To Replace an In-Person Event

Live events and in-person fundraisers have long been a standard staple for charities. These events are fun, reliable, and practical ways to increase awareness for a cause, engage existing supporters, attract new donors, and raise much-needed funds to support your mission.

Don't worry! Virtual events can be just as successful and engaging!

Many of the virtual events below have some advantages to in-person events.

- You don't need to source the perfect venue
- You often have fewer costs
- There are opportunities for your supporters to raise awareness of your cause,
- In many cases, you open up the possibility of more supporters being able to participate.

Much like an in-person event, promotion is key! Use all of your digital channels to reach your supporters and for those who you don't yet have an email address for, send them some snail mail and make this the opportunity to get their email for future communications.

Here is a list of our best virtual fundraising ideas and some suggestions for how you can make them happen.

1. A “No-Gala (Virtual) Gala”

The “No-Gala Gala” is a trending topic these days. Your virtual attendees watch a live stream of your program from home. Your program could include a musical performance, a local comedian, or an office awards ceremony. Your attendees can dress up and upload photos or videos that you can share via livestream or they can simply watch from home in their pajamas! You can save money on an expensive venue while your attendees can participate from the comfort of their own home.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Sell tickets to your event or collect donations and share a link to the livestream with your attendees. Tools like Facebook Live, Instagram, and YouTube make it easy.
- Raise additional money with an online auction or by asking for gifts during the gala. Track your fundraising success thermometer throughout your event.
- Find ways to make it engaging by sharing touching stories of the impact you've made, sharing photos and videos, featuring program participants or dedicated volunteers, and more.
- Recognize your attendees by name or by sharing their photos and videos during your event.

ADDITIONAL IDEA: Offer a behind the scenes tour of a high-interest location, such as a museum, historic site or other popular location.

2. A Fundraising Challenge

Challenge your supporters to take part in raising money for your cause. Find something entertaining, challenging, or just plain fun. Not only will you create a stronger relationship with your supporters, but through their fundraising with their friends and family, it's an opportunity to raise your profile!

HOW TO DO IT:

- Set up a fundraiser using a peer-to-peer fundraising tool and invite supporters to join as individuals or teams via email and social media.
- Your participants promise to partake in the challenge and raise funds on behalf of your organization.
- Provide inspiring messages and images and fundraising tips to keep folks motivated.

SOME IDEAS TO GET STARTED:

- A Readathon or bookathon – where the participant asks their friends and family to support them by the book or by the minute;
- An all-day game challenge for charity, collect pledges, and play a video game or board game for 12 hours straight;
- A physical challenge: For every \$10 raised, they commit to climbing flights of stairs, doing a number of push-ups, planks, or some other physical feat;
- A “Dare” Fundraiser, for every specific amount raised, someone commits to doing something that friend dares them to do.

3. A Charity Live Stream

Make a simple, direct fundraising appeal at your home or office while streaming live for a predetermined period of time. This is reminiscent of a telethon and making a direct appeal to your base of supporters who are online.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Use Facebook Live, Instagram, or YouTube to live stream the event directly from your website.
- Set up a fundraising form that makes giving online easy and includes a fundraising progress bar.
- Go behind the scenes at your organization with a tour of your facilities, showcase projects, introduce program success stories, and feature dedicated volunteers.
- Engage with your donors by answering their questions, having them participate in online polls, and allowing them to tell you (and everyone watching) why they choose to support your organization.

4. A Virtual Charity Run

Can't run in groups outside? No problem! The idea here is for supporters to pledge to run or walk any number of KMs or a number of consecutive days, whether by themselves outdoors, with their family or their dog, or on a treadmill at home.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Set up a fundraiser using a peer-to-peer fundraising tool and invite runners and walkers to join as individuals or teams.
- Your participants fundraise in support of their individual miles goal and your organization.
- Don't forget to add inspiring messages and fundraising tips to help them be successful.
- Find ways to recognize your supporters, such as mailing a "race" t-shirt to those who meet your fundraising minimum.

BONUS TIP:

- You can substitute another activity in place of running or walking. Consider yoga, crafts, meditation, jump rope, or cycling, for example.

5. A Silent Auction

Launch an online auction, the concept is simple, the highest bid wins and the proceeds go to your charity! Prizes can include a variety of goods, services, and experiences. Some of the most popular items are things that can be hard to buy but a supporter might be willing to donate, such as concert and sporting event tickets (when the situation permits), a chance to meet a local celebrity, or autographed memorabilia, but supporters will bid on almost anything that interests them if it's for a good cause!

HOW TO DO IT:

- Promote the silent auction by email and social media.
- You can use silent auction software to take care of most of the work for you. It will accept bids, let supporters know when they've been outbid, and accept payment when the auction has closed.

6. An Online Voting Contest

Host a virtual contest where every dollar donated is a "vote" to select a winner. It's great if you can tie to your cause, for instance, "the cutest kitten" for a cat rescue, or "best nature photography" for a conservation charity. But you can feature your club members or supporters with ideas like "best dressed," "best joke," or "funniest dance move." or "best piece of art."

HOW TO DO IT:

- Pick a start and end date for the voting contest and reach out to your supporters to explain the event.
- Choose the prize the winner gets, such as being featured in your next DM or at your next event, or just bragging rights.
- Each item being voted on can be assigned a unique donation form so you can easily track the votes with a fundraising thermometer.
- Use social media and email to communicate progress throughout the campaign and encourage more votes.

7. A Birthday (or other celebrations) Fundraiser

When all else fails, simply ask your supporters to fundraise on your behalf! Your supporters ask their friends and families to donate in place of gifts for their birthday, wedding/anniversary, graduation, and another milestone. There may be some Rotary awareness days (or a Rotary Foundation celebration) that align more closely with your cause to consider as well!

HOW TO DO IT:

- Reach out to your supporters and tell them why you need their help fundraising, give them a campaign or project to focus on.
- Provide a fundraising goal (or several ideas) and explain the tangible impact it will have for your charity.
- Host individual or team signups with a peer-to-peer fundraising tool.
- Be sure to add social sharing and provide your supporters with tips, engage with your fundraisers throughout, encouraging them and thanking them for their hard work.



Three-Month Timeline and Event Checklist Foundation Month and World Polio Day

If your event is less than 3 months out, you will need to compress the steps for 3 months and 2 months.

3 Months Before

- Brainstorm and decide what kind of event you are organizing. Choose a theme if appropriate.
- Organize an event planning committee if needed.
- Draft your budget and set a fundraising goal that is attainable.
- Set a date.
- Check to see if your preferred venue(s) are available for this date.
- Secure the venue.
- Identify equipment needs and secure equipment.
- Decide on what suppliers you need to make your event successful. Consider entertainment, food, decor, audio visual, and printing.
- Decide on (and order if necessary) any food that is required.
- Solicit sponsors if required.
- Apply for a liquor license/lottery license if required.
- Choose and Invite speakers, if required

2 Months Before

- Decide if you need any volunteers on the day of your event. If so, how many? Recruit them now.
- Prepare promotional materials, such as flyers, posters and emails. Ask your Zone Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator team and your Regional Public Image Team for guidance on resources.
- Get a digital logo file from any sponsors.
- Send out invitations if required. Send your event information to all of your contacts.

1 Month Before

- Keep track of your event guests/participants, number of tickets sold, sponsors, etc.
- Submit event details to local events calendars and local media.
- Prepare any onsite materials about Rotary, The Rotary Foundation and polio eradication that are needed.
- Promote the event heavily on social media – ask members to like , comment on and share posts.

- Identify a photographer and social media volunteer for the event. Set up a time for them to meet and discuss how they will work together during the event.
- Ensure that your social media volunteer knows how to use the People of Action messages and overlays before the event. Contact your Zone Public Image team for assistance and resources.

2 Weeks Before

- Create a final list of volunteers and determine their day-of duties. Send out a reminder.
- Confirm event information with all vendors and suppliers.
- Contact local media to attend the event.

Day of Your Event

- Meet with your committee and volunteers before the event starts to make sure everyone knows their roles/duties.
- Set up for the event.
- Accept donations and identify potential Rotary Foundation donors.
- HAVE FUN!
- Take plenty of pictures.
- Post to social media channels in your community. Use [#Rotary](#), [#TheRotaryFoundation](#), [#PeopleofAction](#), [#EndPolioNow](#), and/or a hashtag for your club or district in social media posts..
- Thank everyone for coming.
- Thank everyone for their help.

After Your Event

- Tally your finances and determine the total raised.
- Identify any other measurable impact from your event.
- Send your photos and story to your district Public Image Chair.
- Post your story on your club or district website and social media pages.
- Evaluate the success of your event and document any changes you would make next year.
- Begin planning for your event for next year!



May 21, 2020

FUND-RAISING IDEAS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

East Coast Kitchen Party. In the Ontario, Canada portion of District 6330 18 Rotary clubs partnered on a COVID-19 re-engineered fund-raiser. The gala was live-streamed with entertainment and, in this case, with no charge although an option was given to make a donation. It became much like a telethon. Restaurants were encouraged to do themed take-out meals with a number selling-out. The budget included \$1,000 (Canadian) to buy gift certificates from local businesses used as “door prizes.” There was no active solicitation of sponsorships or auction items, although a small auction was held. Specific named charities were recipients. A third-party provided the ticket/donation platform and website. The event was transmitted via Zoom webinar and Facebook Live. With an estimated 1,600 viewers, they raised \$60,000.

The items below are obviously not all inclusive. They are meant to be ones that don't usually come to mind first.

Thanks to all the Rotary clubs, districts, The Rotarian, and best practices communications that contributed to this list.

Things to Remember

- * **What We're Talking about:** You raise funds by charging an entrance fee, getting sponsorships, getting donations, selling merchandise or services, etc.
- * **Net:** Don't forget to take into consideration the expenses of the fund-raisers. Net revenue is the key.

- * **Criteria for Going Forward:** Many fund-raisers have **PR** or membership benefits. Be sure to consider that when determining what you want to go forward with.
- * Consider partnering with an **Interact** or **Rotaract** club.

Here are some ideas that you may or may not have heard of.

Food

1. **Go Without I.** During this time, many clubs are cancelling fees for meals. Offer club members the opportunity to give all or a portion of these monies to the club for a specific charity, the club foundation, or the club's committee that decides on club donations.
2. **Go Without II.** Provide all club members with a small money box or container of some sort, asking them to give up one 'treat' item per week and contribute whatever that treat would cost to the moneybox for a specific purpose. Let members report on what they gave up on your website, Facebook page, etc. After a set period of time, send/hand in the money boxes. On some meaningful date open up the boxes and count the funds. Make the donation in some visible way. The whole process can become a media event.

Service

1. **The Match Game.** Designate some portion of club fund-raising that has been raised so far this year, e.g. 50/50, drawdown, happy dollars, fines, etc. to a pool that will match club donations for charities. You may want to allow club members to direct where the money will go. Engagement!
2. **Auction/Service.** Interact/Rotaract/Rotary club members are auctioned off for a half-day of yard work, washing cars, professional services, etc. Choose those kinds of skills to auction that keep within COVID-19 restrictions.
3. **Service above Self-a-thon.** Solicit donations for every hour of service a club member works. Again, choose those kinds of skills to auction that keep within COVID-19 restrictions.

4. **Facebook.** Post your service project on Facebook and ask for contributions.
5. **Shredding.** How do you get rid of sensitive documents? A number of Rotary clubs have created a shredding fund-raiser. As an extra incentive, clubs can recycle the paper. This can be done within COVID-19 restrictions.

Special Days

1. **Holiday Cards** denoting “A gift has been made on your behalf to” The Rotary Foundation, your club, etc. Create and sell cards that can be used for one special holiday or create cards that can be used throughout the year.
2. **Birthday.** Do a Facebook fund-raiser on your birthday. Have the club change the birthday celebrant throughout the year and have the celebrant share to all their friends.
3. **Calendar.** The Rotary Club of (RCO) Carpinteria Morning produces a yearly calendar. Twelve featured pictures are acquired each year by having a public photo contest. Many local businesses buy 100 or more of them each year and give them out for PR. The Club prints their business name on them etc. if they buy more than a 100.
4. **Flag Lease Project.** The RCO McKinney, TX, leases flags to families and businesses for Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Labor Day/Patriots Day, and Veteran’s Day. They partner with groups to deliver, set up, and pick-up the flags, and charge \$45 for the service.

The Arts

1. **Jazzy Jars.** (contact Wendy Taylor, RCO Decatur Daybreak, AL): Local individuals and group pay \$5/canning jars and decorate them with the jazz theme. They are auctioned off on-line. This can also be done without a jazz theme with stools, chairs, Christmas trees, etc.
2. **Sweaters.** Have an on-line contest for Ugly Sweaters. To enter you have to donate a sweater - not the ugly one - to a charity.

Gambling

1. **Reverse Raffle.** Do this in a virtual meeting format. Every ticket in the raffle pool is drawn and the winner of the raffle is the individual whose ticket number corresponds with the final ticket drawn from the pool. After each ticket is pulled, players can buy tickets from other players with half the price going to the pool.
2. **Bingo.** Sell cards for \$5 each. Send the cards out prior to the event. Use the proceeds for winnings. Done in a virtual meeting format.
3. **Pony Poop, Dog Poop, whatever.** The RCO of St. Thomas, Ontario, has a unique lottery. You may need a gambling/lottery license, depending on where you hold the event.

You find a pen in which to hold three horses. The pen is divided into imaginary squares, the size of the squares is dependent on how many tickets are sold. The first sold square that is pooped on wins \$1,000; the second square pooped on, \$500; the third square, \$250. Tickets sell for \$5.00 each. Net revenues go to the Children's Hospital. They usually sell between 1000 - 1200 tickets with squares about 1 X 1 foot.

This can be done within COVID-19 restrictions.

Other Rotary-related

1. **Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner with the Official/Celebrity.** Invite Government official(s) celebrity/author to be the focus of a fund-raiser. Get sponsors and charge for attendance. Talk about Rotary topics. All done in a virtual meeting format.
2. **Giving Circles.** Get a group of members to each contribute an equal amount to generate \$1,000. One of the donors is chosen by chance to receive a Paul Harris Fellowship.
3. **Website Sponsorship.** Seek sponsors for the club website giving a discount to members' companies.
4. **Direct Mail.** Do a direct mail solicitation to friends of club members for a service project. Have club members sign the letters personally.

5. **Celebrity Phone Greeting.** Get a local celebrity to agree to record a phone greeting for home phones for a donation.
6. **Rotary Jeopardy.** Celebrate The Rotary Foundation with Rotary Jeopardy. Have teams enter to answer questions about Rotary. Have entrance fees and sponsors. Challenge all the clubs in the District. This is done within a virtual meeting format.

Miscellaneous

1. **Cutest Dog Contest.** Plus, other awards, e.g. best costume. This can be done via email submissions with an entry fee. Get sponsors. Proceeds go to the local SPCA, Humane Society, etc.
2. **Online sales.** Online sales may be the right idea for small clubs as well as large clubs. Some clubs use Rotary-themed items. Partner with other clubs. Some clubs work with groups or businesses already on-line and get a percentage of sales coming from referrals. It's very easy to promote a (Club-supported) business and link, rather than having to receive, sort, and distribute stock. It's a matter of encouraging them to make it part of their routine.
3. **Percentage of Sales.** Work with a Rotarian's business and ask for a percentage of sales related to a special Rotary day, e.g. Paul Harris birthday, the anniversary of the club's founding, etc.
4. **Trivia Night.** A lot of fun and brings a community together. All done virtually. Sponsorships and entrance fees. Choose a non-profit to which the proceeds go.
5. **Boom.** The RCO Cadiz, Kentucky used the explosive demolition of a bridge as a fund-raising opportunity. They auctioned off the opportunity to push a plunger and set off the detonation.
6. **Go Fund Me.** Clubs have found success raising money through this on-line fund-raiser.

7. **Spelling Bee.** Many clubs have spelling bees to raise funds. Turn the spelling bee into a Zoom event. Have sponsors, entrance fees, betting on the winning team.

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The Rotary Foundation Team 2019-20

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