

Fundraising Strategies and Tips for Dance Organizations

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Looking to raise funds for your dance? This workshop will take a broad view on fundraising to support your dance series, support the hall where you dance, run special events or programming, purchase equipment, or support other causes and affiliated organizations. We will provide an overview of philanthropy and fundraising strategies at the macro level, and then share how one local organization raised more than \$60,000. Come prepared to share your successful fundraising strategies that are transferrable to other communities. Just as important, we'd love to hear some things that have *not* worked well, and why.

Introduction (Rima)

We will introduce two theoretical ideas, and then see how these play out in a real life scenario:

1. Constituency Model
2. LAI: linkage/ability/interest

Why fundraise?

- We all do this already. When we charge admission, we are fundraising. But if we do more we can build more opportunities.
- Even if your ongoing dance series is self-sustaining, it is worthwhile to engage in fundraising.
- Having a financial cushion allows dance organizations to survive leaner times, as well as to make choices that meet our artistic vision. We do not need to ask, "Can I afford this?" We can consider doing more to build up our communities, such as run special dances or workshops, or send someone to camp. Sometimes the community building effects of fundraising also build up the community.

Who are our donors (our constituency)? Why do people give money? (linkage/ability/interest)

People give because they identify with the cause (they are your "constituency"), *and* because they are asked. Having the right person asking makes a difference. Philanthropy is a relationship-based business.

- Think of constituency as a set of concentric circles. Build from the inside out, focusing the greatest attention and energy on your inner circle. The following list starts with those you are closest to, and spreads outward from there:
 - Those who make it happen: *Volunteers* often become donors for the same reason they became volunteers – because they have relationships with (they identify with) the group.
 - People who are involved (come regularly)
 - People who used to be involved, and whom you might re-attract
 - Those with similar interests
 - Those with similar values
- The concentric circles of show the degree of *linkage* to your organization. Donors also need both *ability* to give, and an *interest* in giving to dance/music/song. Do not ignore smaller

donors, who tend to give a greater percentage of their assets, and who represent your larger community)

- Larger donors might sponsor a dance, and admission can go to the organization instead of the evening's expenses.
- Donors deserve gratitude. Take care of those relationships; they are more important than any given amount of money.

Help people see the larger picture, and how we addressing their interests

- Dance organizations are arts organizations; we promote participatory arts
- We provide benefit to our communities, including health, joy, and connection

Competition

- Fundraising is not hard. It takes time and effort, but the tasks are straightforward.
- Individuals give the most money, not corporations.
- People (in general) give to many different things: participatory arts represent a very small piece of the overall philanthropic giving pie.
- Asking for support is not begging; our activities have great value, and it's fine to offer people the opportunity to support them.
- That said, no one is *obligated* to support your dance.

Other points that came up in discussion

- You don't have to be a non-profit organization to raise money, but it does allow your donors not to pay taxes on donations.
- Your organization might want to raise money for another organization – creating other sorts of linkage.
- Note that raffles are considered gambling (need a permit). Rules vary depending on state/province.
- Some people talked about having success with “anti-bake sales” (and anti-galas): “We'll just each throw in \$10/\$100 (or what have you), and we don't have to do the baking, buy the dress and meal, etc.”

Example: Friends of the Capital City Grange Hall (Nancy and Patty)

Capital City Grange is in Montpelier, Vermont. Several organizations interact around the Grange. One group manages the Grange, and there is a separate contra dance umbrella organization, as well as other dance organizations and a church that use the hall regularly. Nevertheless, the hall has been increasingly in need of some TLC. So, in 2012, the Friends of the Capital City Grange Hall was formed as a non-profit whose sole purpose was to raise money to maintain the hall as a center for dance and arts and as a community gathering place.

Since that time the Friends have raised \$87,000: \$22,000 from the dance community, and the rest from grants and sponsorships. The locally raised moneys are unrestricted, and therefore extremely useful, whereas grant money tends to be given for specific purposes.

The first and greatest need for the hall was that the dance floor was too thin and had to be replaced. The dance community had a big stake in this happening. The Friends were able to get all the money raised from the community matched by grants and corporate gifts. This allowed the floor to be replaced primarily with the matching funds, and original money could then be saved toward the next project (toilets – hooray!).

Started with the inner circle: The dance umbrella organization, anticipating the need for the floor, had religiously squirreled away \$35/dance evening for years into a dedicated fund for the project. This eventually added up to \$5000, which created a very healthy start to the process. Then the Friends ran various fundraisers to build upon that, including benefit dances, a techno contra, and a dinner/dance combo.

The largest annual fundraising event for the Grange is an annual “challenge fundraiser” run by the dance umbrella organization for the past six or seven years. This is used to provide the organization that runs the Grange approximately \$2,000/year to continue to operate (this pays for taxes, heat, snow-plowing, etc.). Between 8 and 10 “challenge donors” agree to give at least \$100 each, and this stimulates giving from smaller donors. In 2012, because of the floor project, the goal for the challenge fundraiser was doubled, and this happened again in 2014. The challenge fundraiser begins in August. Dancers contribute incentives, such as, plants people can take for \$10, or potluck desserts at some events to stimulate contributions. The process culminates in a big fundraising dance in September where a special band and caller are hired and they pack the hall. The caller has a script of things to say to keep fundraising awareness high without needing to interrupt the flow of the dance evening. A big display shows fundraising progress. In 2014 they were able to raise well over \$1,000 in a single night and met their goal of \$4,000 raised, double the goal from earlier years.

Writing grants can then build on and multiply all this local fundraising. The Friends are a registered non-profit, which allows them to apply for grants. CDSS can offer U.S. groups non-profit status through their group exemption. The Canadian Arts Council (Ontario Arts Council in Ontario) can help groups get charitable or non-profit status in Canada. This is essential if you wish to seek corporate grants, and larger individual donors also appreciate it, because they can then write donations off on their taxes.

The Friends have targeted local corporations that have giving programs, expanding the circle. They have also been awarded grants from their State-funded Arts Council and State-funded Recreational Fund, as well as a local Community Foundation, which wanted to fund community buildings (a perfect fit).

The Friends’ big annual fundraiser is a dine-and-dance event in March each year. There is a community dance in the afternoon, a meal prepared by the Friends, and an evening dance. Historically, talent has been donated and volunteers do all the preparation, so expenses are quite low, perhaps \$500-\$700. The pricing structure is \$5/child to dance, another \$5/child to eat, and double that for adults. This typically nets the Friends between \$1,800 and \$2,500.

The Friends committee is eight hard-working individuals: many ideas, many helpers, and new ideas continue to flow. This year, to make the March event bigger, they repackaged it as two dances, made it into a celebration of the Grange’s centennial year, and found several corporate sponsors, thereby greatly increasing the money raised.

Note that corporate funders appreciate publicity. Make sure to thank them publically and often. And be sure to thank your individual donors too!

Resources (attached): PowerPoint presentation and articles from Kim Klein