

Fundraising and Marketing Your Choir Program

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Thoughts on Marketing Your Choir

1. You are not simply the choir teacher – you are the artistic director for a community arts organization.
2. You are creating the vision for the organization and you need to communicate that vision to your community.
3. Involve the community in your program.
4. It's harder to cut a program that is well known in the community
5. If marketing improves, ticket sales improve, audiences grow.
6. Communication - Depending on which research you read it can take up to 20 times before someone remembers something.

Marketing Tools:

- Website (FYI your average 16 year old can now build a website and put it online, having a website is very obtainable!)
 - All schools have websites, in my opinion it is best for school choirs to have a section on their school website when possible rather than have a separate url. It cuts down on the number of urls people have to remember and you will get more traffic on your website.
 - Post as much information on your website as you can, the more info you have the more incentive people have to visit your site.
 - Choir bio, director bio, how to join the choir, performance schedule
- Facebook page
 - A Facebook page can take less than 30 min to set up and can have hundreds of followers in just days.
 - The main reason to have a Facebook page is to *advertise events* and have a tool for instant *community outreach*.
 - Be careful not to post too many things onto your Facebook page, people will “unlike” you! Try to keep it to event notices only and don't post too often.
 - Post basic information on your Facebook page, a contact email, director name, the community you serve, etc.
 - Have your choir logo (you should have one) as the profile picture for the page.
 - If you are able, get someone else to be the admin on the Facebook page.
- Email
 - Email is (believe it or not) becoming a less relevant form of communication for many young people.
 - Adults still use email! Compile a mailing list of email addresses at your concerts - a tear out page in your concert program that asks people to write their email and drop it in a box on their way out or a few music stands in the lobby where people can add their email to a list is a great thing.
 - Do NOT send long emails out to your community! Whenever possible send emails that are graphic advertisements, NOT text. Use a simplified version of your concert poster, make it into a JPG and drop it into the body of the email. Or at the very least use only the wording you would use on a poster and take some time making the font colorful, large and clear.
- Direct Mail
 - Postcards are very inexpensive to have printed in full color now, either at a local print shop (trade them a discount for advertising in your programs) or online, and postage is just \$0.29 and even less if you have a 501c3.
 - All present and former choir members, all donors, all local school choirs, all local church choir directors, all local community orchestras and bands, school board members and local businesses with relation to the choir should be on your mailing list.
- Community Postings
 - Sandwich boards, posters in business windows, banners, postings on community calendars, local parenting magazines and blogs, local senior centers, local retirement communities, etc.

- *Things to remember when you are marketing an EVENT*
 - Event's with THEMES always sound more interesting than those without.
 - We are a visually overstimulated society, advertising needs to be in FULL COLOR to really grab people's attention.
 - There should be a EVENT TITLE and GRAPHIC for each event that run throughout all your advertising efforts so that there is continuity and brand recognition.
 - Find someone that can do really great looking advertising materials for you if you are not comfortable with graphics software. (If you are a MAC person, Pages Layout, has dozens of templates that are great jumping off points.)

Sample Marketing Schedule:

- You have to create a plan ahead of time for marketing events and have people that are responsible for each step. Your marketing schedule should be front loaded so that as you get closer to the event there is less to do and more time to concentrate on the event.
- Months ahead: Create Event Theme and get Event Organizers in place
- 8 Weeks ahead:
 - Have all event advertising completed and printed. Postcards, small and large posters and banners.
 - Hang large banners, put posters up in your rehearsal space to get singers excited about the event. Post event info online.
 - Find out what you need to do to get postings on community calendars
 - Put tickets on sale online
 - Post a save the date on Facebook page
- 6 weeks ahead
 - Give posters or postcards to singers to give to friends and family
 - Get a team out downtown to get posters in local businesses
 - Post a save the date note on Facebook page
 - Email a save the date to your email list
 - Email your comp ticket holders (if you have any) and let them know how to request their tickets.
- 4 weeks ahead
 - Post a Facebook event, weekly Facebook posts - include video if possible.
 - Send direct mail out
 - If you are at a school begin periodic posts in the daily bulletin - ALWAYS include how/where to buy tickets.
- 3 weeks ahead
 - Continue Facebook posts every few days - with video if possible!
 - Email with instructions on how to buy tickets
- 2 weeks ahead
 - Continue Facebook posts every few days - with video if possible!
 - Send a Facebook message to everyone who has RSVPd for the event to invite friends
- 1 week ahead
 - Continue Facebook posts every few days - with video if possible!
 - Email a different email out, "last chance for tickets!"
 - Take a few minutes out of rehearsal for your singers to text message a specific message to friends that includes a link to tickets/website.
- Days ahead
 - Continue Facebook posts - with a tiny bit of dress rehearsal video if possible!
- The Monday after your event
 - Send short a thank you email out and include a picture or youtube video from the event.
 - Post a video or few pictures on your facebook page along with a thank you note to everyone.

Thoughts on Fundraising

1. The most successful fundraisers (in my experience) are performance based.
 2. Carefully balance out the time you put into a fundraiser with the profits of the fundraiser.
 3. Be concrete and specific about WHY you need to fundraise. Show & tell people where their money is going.
- **Sing-a-Long Musical** (Easy to do, small group of volunteers, profit margin varies)
 - Needs:
 - DVD, projection screen and projector, sound system, seating and concessions
 - www.movlic.com/k12 to get your one time or year long K-12 license to show movies legally.
 - Remember to get the “sing-along” version and get it set up properly.
 - Ticket sales: must be a “suggested donation” according to your license.
 - Show the movie to your singers to get them excited about it.
 - Benefits:
 - Family friendly event
 - Very little set up required
 - Can be done with a small core of volunteers
 - Can be a recruiting event for feeder schools/community
 - Possibilities:
 - Hairspray, Grease (you need to censor a few things!), Sound of Music, Mamma Mia, RENT (teens/adults only)
 - Costume contest
 - Allowing/encouraging dancing in the aisles (Grease and Hairspray really encourage dancing)
 - Themed concessions - Rootbeer floats for Grease, etc.
 - **Benefit Concert** (Major undertaking, large group of volunteers and performers, large profit margin)
 - Needs:
 - Performers...might I suggest a choir? Wait...you have one of those!
 - A fun & exciting concert theme.
 - Something special and different - different venue, hire a band, bring in a choreographer, etc
 - Elevated advertising materials, concessions, lighting, sound etc.
 - Raise ticket prices double or triple your regular ticket costs
 - Benefits:
 - Performers gain everything that they gain with any other concert.
 - A MUSICAL opportunity to do something unique and worthwhile.
 - Tickets are easier to sell than wrapping paper!
 - Profit margin can be very high.
 - Possibilities:
 - Pops Concerts work great as benefit concerts because they are “audience friendly”.
 - Combine forces with your school jazz band, if you are able.
 - Black tie optional event.
 - Silent auction as part of the event.
 - Themes I’ve used; “100 Years of Broadway”, “Hooray for Hollywood!” (music from the movies), “Crazy Little Thing Called Love” (love songs), “Pop Rocks” (all rock n roll), “NYC” (tribute to all things New York), “British Invasion” (British pop, mostly Beatles)
 - **Holiday CD Compilation**
 - Needs:
 - Concert recordings from the last 3-4 years
 - CD cover art
 - A way to sell CDs, via order forms or online
 - Benefits:
 - You already have the recordings, you just repackage and market them as a holiday CD
 - Relatively little work, one person can run the entire fundraiser

- Possibilities
 - Singers can design cover art
 - Each year the collection can be augmented by taking out the earliest recordings and bulking it up with last holiday's recordings.
 - Have the CDs tied with a ribbon and include a gift tag (Costco fancy ribbon, Costco fancy gift tags + printing costs us less than \$3 per CD, we sell them for \$15)
- **Cabaret Show** (Dessert Theater, Coffee House, Variety Show)
 - Needs:
 - Performers from your choir to do solos, duets and small group numbers.
 - Performance venue with appropriate sound and lighting
 - Accompaniment - jazz combo or (gasp!) karaoke tracks
 - Fun & exciting theme
 - Benefits:
 - Your singers get to do solos and small ensembles.
 - Different audience than concerts.
 - You don't have to spend rehearsal time preparing music because the singers do it themselves.
 - Possibilities:
 - Include beverages and/or desserts
 - Start small, these types of fundraising events tend to grow year to year
 - Themes I've used; "Sock Hop", "The War Years" (music of WWII), "An Evening of Jazz", "The Groovy Sixties", "Seventies Gold", "Awesome Eighties", "Hoe Down".

The "Easy" Way	The "Hard" Way (the way I do it)
<p>Find a performance venue, hire a pianist, have singers work with the pianist a day or two ahead of time, sell tickets at the door, put a program together.</p> <p>Ask alumni to perform.</p>	<p>Get event space, set tables of 8-10 people, run the event like a dinner theater or nightclub with full waitstaff, kitchen staff, etc (choir members are the waitstaff) dance floor, menus with event themed items, centerpieces, candle lit tables, full service beverages and desserts, elevated stage, band to back up the singer, emcees to do comedy routines between acts, all volunteers in themed costumes, decorations, tickets sold online, sound and lighting engineer, etc, etc etc!!</p>

- **Direct ask fundraising**
 - Be direct about what your needs are, if you are raising money for a piano tell people exactly how much it costs and what model it is. Show people Tangible needs are easier to reach and more people are willing to give when they know exactly what it will be used for.
 - Give people an example of how much it "costs" each year for each choir member. (Look at your operational budget, subtract tour costs that are paid for by singers - divide by the number of singers, that's what it costs each year per singer)
 - Suggest a donation amount that will offset the costs above. (I use a \$50 suggested donation)
 - Provide an incentive to donate at a higher level. \$100 or more gives you two free tickets to the December and May concerts, donate \$100 to be a "Patron" and be listed in the programs, etc.
 - Tie direct ask fundraising to support organization membership. Join Choir Boosters, \$25 membership fee.
 - Write personal thank you notes to large donors to build a personal relationship with them, then get them on your mailing list. 1 or 2 large donors can make a big difference, foster those relationships.