

Fund Raising For Oxford House 2011

Even though we pride ourselves on self-sufficiency and staying off the "dole," there are occasions when we can encourage the houses/chapters/ state associations to engage in fundraising activities. Such times would include raising money to come to the national convention, to put on state workshops if there is no other funding available, and to assist a house that has no resources left after a major theft or other catastrophe.

For times when it is necessary for houses/chapters/state associations to raise money, here are some suggestions and materials.

Let's get started with some fund raising tips. If you are going to be a part of, and hopefully a driving force in, fund raising, it is extremely important to keep your House, Chapter and Oxford, Inc. in mind any time you are spending money, giving or receiving a service. Most fund raising fails due to poor planning, not because the contributors are not out there. Developing potential contacts for fund raising is constant, not something done only at convention time or when you need something for a specific event or purpose.

Fund raising is give-and-take. Few people or organizations give without getting something in return. That's not as negative or as hard to overcome as it may sound. You establish a relationship with a company or organization through your support of their business. Your support is proven by the fact that you are doing business with them instead of their competitors. They cement that relationship by giving, to your organization. There is nothing wrong with tactfully indicating that you've come to them first because you do most of your buying from them, but if they cannot help you, you'll go to a competitor. *Not said* but obvious is the fact that if their competitor helps you, their competitor also has your future business. If you are soliciting donations from an individual, remember that an individual who contributes doesn't have to have monetary returns. There's little that beats the "feel good" feeling that comes from helping someone less fortunate than oneself.

Everyone is not an effective Oxford House fund-raiser but almost anyone can become one with just a little forethought, planning and on-the-job training. On the job training comes when you simply get out there and do it. You'll find out quickly what works for you and what does not. Everyone's technique is not the same, but the basics are pretty close. You can do it your way but eliminate mistakes by taking proven basics and developing the technique that best suits you.

Don't walk in blind, get on the phone and find out who makes the charitable contribution decisions. Go in asking for that manager by name. Timing and credentials are very important. To ensure the best timing, make appointments. If you're interrupted and the manager you're talking to is called away, it's probably over. You'll only get as far as you got at the time of the interruption. The managers who can authorize a contribution are busy doing whatever was on their plate before you arrived. Once distracted, their opinion will be made based upon what they've heard so far. When you call again, you'll hear something like: "I'm sorry, but I'm really busy right now. I have thought about what you said but we're not in a position to do anything this year. Why don't you check back with us next year?" It's a good bet that next year new decision makers will be in charge and you'll have to begin again. So, once in

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the door, make your pitch as quickly as possible.

Practice your presentation and no practiced presentation should take more than 15 minutes. Preparation includes preparing yourself to answer questions, the ones asked and the ones implied. Those most often asked of me are:

What is an Oxford House? When you've answered this, make sure the person asking knows it is NOT a rehab, de-tox, or half-way house. Focus on the fact that you are trying to help people who have proven their desire and willingness to help themselves.

How did you become involved? (Implied: Are you an addict or *alcoholic and if not, why* are you so interested?) A good *answer* to this if you don't want to give up your anonymity, is: Drugs and/or alcohol have taken its toll in your family and you're working to keep this pain from others. You don't have to tell them that the person in your family that you are referring to is you.

"Well, we already have charities we support..." Implied: Why should we support alcoholics and addicts? A good answer to that question is that you are aware that they are a community oriented business and although you're aware of the benefits provided by the charities they support, you've also heard they are committed to assisting families in their immediate community. Oxford House's contribution to bringing people in from the streets, assisting in the rebuilding of families, and providing emotional support for these individuals is a major part of Oxford House success stories.

Credentials: have with you printed information on Oxford Housing and whatever project your fund raising supports. A business card or letter of introduction from your Chapter or from Oxford Inc can be of tremendous value.

Be prepared: know and make a list of what you want.

Don't ask only for money. Ask for a "contribution". A check made out to your House, to your Chapter or to Oxford Inc is much easier to get, even from friends and family, than cash.

Even when asking for a "contribution" do not ask for a specific amount, instead ask for a monetary donation of "whatever you can give" adding "anything at all will help". Any contribution regardless of size or content should be reported to Oxford Inc so that thank you letters can be written to your contributors. This *acknowledgement proves that their contribution was used as you indicated* and makes them more likely to give more when asked again.

You can ask for something you can convert into money for a raffle or door prize or if you're collecting to make a house a home, ask for things that will help you improve the house.

- Things to convert into money by way of raffles: Tickets, Gift Certificates, Merchandise.

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- Things to improve your home or assist in opening a new house:
Paint/brushes, grass seed, display furniture, computer, telephone, etc.

Know and make a list of who might best be able to help you and if you are part of a committee, please make sure that the organizations are split up among you so that the same company is not approached by more than one person on your committee,

Know why you want what you want:

- "I'm trying to help open a new Oxford House. We're non-profit and every resident has to have a job but most have just recently reentered the work force. At the wages they are earning, they can hardly afford rent, food and transportation however the house really needs... They can paint it/fix it/ build it/ refinish it/install it/pick it up etc., they just need help with supplies/tools. Damaged display, opened stock or out-dated merchandise would be a great contribution."
- Fund-Raising for Convention – this is the one where you really must know, and be able to answer questions about Oxford Houses, Oxford Residents, Oxford Inc, and what the convention is all about. Paying for someone else to take a trip is usually not at the top of the list of priorities for most people or organizations! After all, who doesn't want to take an expense paid trip (including the person you're talking to)? The following are some questions asked of me and some answers that seem to work for me.

What happens at an Oxford House Convention?

- As many delegates as a state or county can afford to send come together to discuss Oxford Housing and how it can be improved or expanded to help more people in more ways. Those delegates attending bring information about what works back to their houses and chapters and can operate more effectively and efficiently based on what worked best somewhere else.

(Again) What is an Oxford House?

1. A structured home for recovering addicts & alcoholics who are working, both figuratively and literally, to become an asset to their families and communities.
2. A place that provides a recovering individual with an opportunity to grow strong in their recovery without having to justify what they used to be but instead focus on what they want to be.
3. Affordable housing - as rent is commonly lower than any comparable housing and most often allows the resident to begin getting their credit back in order.

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Note: All of the above and every answer given is what everyone needs to know about us and Oxford. Practice a presentation that is short and concise information.

- > What is an Oxford and what an Oxford House is not
- > What is the purpose of an Oxford House?

The purpose of an Oxford House is not:

- > Let them know that Oxford House does not attempt to justify, rationalize or try to erase memory and/or effects of the destruction residents have incurred or brought upon others through their addiction but does try to give an opportunity for recovering substance abusers to change and make amends.
- > An Oxford House in the community represents a home where there is no drinking and no drug use. Resident rules prohibiting this and other bad behavior are enforced thru contracts and/or expulsion.
- > People who are no longer on the streets using drugs and alcohol, committing crimes, living by proceeds from those crimes and using the system of welfare beyond the purposes intended.
- > Some of the best neighbors anyone could hope to have because use of any kind of alcohol or drugs is immediate expulsion. What other neighbor do you know who has so much to lose if they decide to have a drink when they come home from work?
- > Knowing that one drink can cause you to lose your home is an awfully big incentive to do what you're supposed to do.
- > Oxford House does not represent a threat to any community or the residents therein!

The above is not intended to be complete and can be changed in any way that is truthful and comfortable for the fund raiser. There may not be time for the person to whom you're talking to read right then, but they will read later and it will re-enforce what you've said.

Remember every business or person you come into contact with on a consistent basis is a potential contributor in one way or another. Keep in mind that it is not necessary to expose yourself (give up your anonymity) in order to do this. (I'll address this more fully later.)

Also keep in mind that although your primary purpose is to raise funds for Oxford or to help out a struggling or new house or to increase Chapter bank account, these organizations also profit from having helped you. Since Oxford House is non-profit, they can receive tax deductions for their contributions. Seldom will one ask for tax deductible information as they aren't usually going to give us enough to make a difference on their bottom line, but let them know this information is readily available from Oxford House Headquarters in

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Silver Spring, MD.

Great Sources for Certificated or Contributions which can make the difference in a Fund Raising Event are:

Grocery Stores: Most people have one or two stores where they do grocery shopping at least 4 or 5 times a month. Get to know management and the best way to do that is to compliment the management on their staff, organization, cleanliness, customer service, etc. Fill out the cards, write a letter or two, ask about specials and generate a rapport between you and them. Then when you need a gift certificate for a raffle, when you open a new house and want to start them off with cleaning supplies or a few groceries, you have a contact.

Department Stores: K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Target, etc: Same as above except when you decide to call on them you can ask for Gift Certificates, linen packages, cleaning supplies, damaged (usually scratched) display furniture & rugs, or raffle prizes. Remember, if it's smaller than you expected, that's Okay. This year use it for 3rd or 4th prize, next year maybe it will be larger! Offer to mention them on the raffle or mention them as the contributor of the gift certificate at your dance, cookout, etc.

Copy Centers: What you offer is your off-site house or chapter printing. Ask for information on volume discounts. Talk to the store managers and copy center managers. Staples and Copy Center Managers will give away business to get business. Not just to Oxford, but we do it for schools, churches, students, boys and girls clubs and the list goes on and on. If by contributing to the betterment of the communities in which we serve we can also gain your business- which is substantial – it is a win-win situation for all of us! This is the philosophy of most commercial establishments.

Restaurants: Deli's, Pizza places, etc. Gift Certificates for raffles, food for cookouts, start up food for new house, etc. Pizza places will donate pizzas and deliver them to functions.

Remember, someone can use almost anything donated. If you don't need it, accept it graciously and pass it on to another house, the Salvation Army (who help us), your place of worship (who also may help us), Good Will (who help us), etc. Make and cement your relationships!!!!

1. Family
2. Church
3. My Job
4. Community Businesses

Using all of the above, an example would be a previously put together raffle to help raise money to cover expenses for delegates from Chapters to attend a convention. One, \$1 Raffle, offered the following prizes:

1st prize: weekend stay in an up-scale hotel along with a \$75 gift certificate for dinner at a great restaurant.

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- > 2nd prize: a \$50 gift certificate at that same restaurant and
- > 3rd prize: a \$100 bath and body basket from Mary Kay.

There was well in excess of \$1,000 raised on just one \$1/ticket raffle and this was accomplished with absolutely no overhead!!!

One of the biggest deterrents to a successful fund-raising event seems to be:
Refusal of Oxford House residents to become involved and/or Anonymity

- > Refusal to become involved – I don't understand how any resident or past resident of Oxford could refuse to help but it happens. To overcome this issue, involve Chapter Presidents along with each House President at the Chapter Meeting. By enlisting their support, we gained "buy in" and volunteers almost doubled almost immediately. Every person doesn't have to be out knocking on doors. If someone has a truck, enlist their help in picking up and delivering as their contribution, if they are good on a computer have them "donate" by preparing leaflets to advertise your "events" or writing thank you letters to your contributors, someone is good on the phone, give them phone work and let them find out the names of the decision makers and set up appointments. Have cooks to cook for cookouts and those who cannot cook can volunteer to clean up afterwards! Involve as many people as are willing to become involved; mention their involvement by name at your Chapter Meetings so that the minutes sent out to the houses recognize their contributions. Let them know they are appreciated!
- > Anonymity: Some of us are unwilling to take a risk of exposure as addicts or alcoholics through association. This is a very real and very understandable. Unfortunately, this disease brings with it a need to disassociate from it when dealing with people who don't know about it or have no empathy or understanding of those who have succumbed to it. Other life-threatening diseases have ribbons and great organizational fundraisers for their victims who have beaten their disease. Ours is not like that. If you are not comfortable with personal exposure this problem can be overcome by planning your approach and practicing it Remember that people who raise money for the Cancer Fund don't necessarily have cancer, neither are all those who work for the American Heart Association afflicted with heart disease. I know Caucasians who work to raise funds for NAACP and the United Negro College Fund and some elderly people who raise money for the March of Dimes. You don't have to reveal your disease. You are working to support Oxford Housing because you know someone (who doesn't) who has been hurt by drugs and/or alcohol and Oxford was a means of support for them.

If you live in Oxford Housing, if you are alumni of Oxford Housing, if you know anyone who has been helped by Oxford Housing or if you're tired of the destruction that drugs and alcohol have brought and continues to bring to your communities, you should be actively supporting Oxford Housing. I think that covers almost everyone except the most dedicated of the active users! Form or join a fund raising committee and work it at every opportunity. In addition to giving back the good feeling that comes from doing something to help is awesome!