



Building a Budget for Your Fundraising Event

Dan Campbell

Welcome

Dan Campbell

Founder & President



Building a Budget for Your Next Event



It's more than JUST a PARTY



Creates Energy, Excitement,
Awareness

Donor Motivations, Values,
& Passions

Lasting Memories

New Relationships

Fuels the Mission



Defining Your Event's Purpose

What Type of Event Are You Planning?



- Mission-Focused
- Educational
- Awards Ceremony

- Needs-Focused
- Celebration
- Capital Campaign



Picking Your Dates

Relation to Internal Events

- Avoid overlapping with your own major initiatives
- Prevent donor fatigue by spacing out fundraising asks

Relation to External Events

- Check for competing galas in your area
- Be mindful of holidays and major events that could impact attendance

Logistics to Determine

- Day of the week (Consider audience availability)
- Start and end time (Align with guest expectations and venue constraints)

2025

Calendar

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
			5			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
				2	3	
				4		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
			5			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
				2		
				3		
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Scan for 100+ Gala Theme Ideas!



Build Your Platform

- Volunteers → Time
- Staff → ROI
- Vendors → Expertise

Committees



Getting the right
people in the room!



Donor/Guest
Experience



Media & PR



Sponsorships



Vision Casting



Registration &
Checkout



Auction Item
Procurement



Decorations



Entertainment

Guest Development

- Expected experience for guest
- Guest expectations
- Your expectations of guests
- Guest engagement strategies

Donor Development

Donor Types

- Attendee
- Advocate
- Ambassador
- Asker

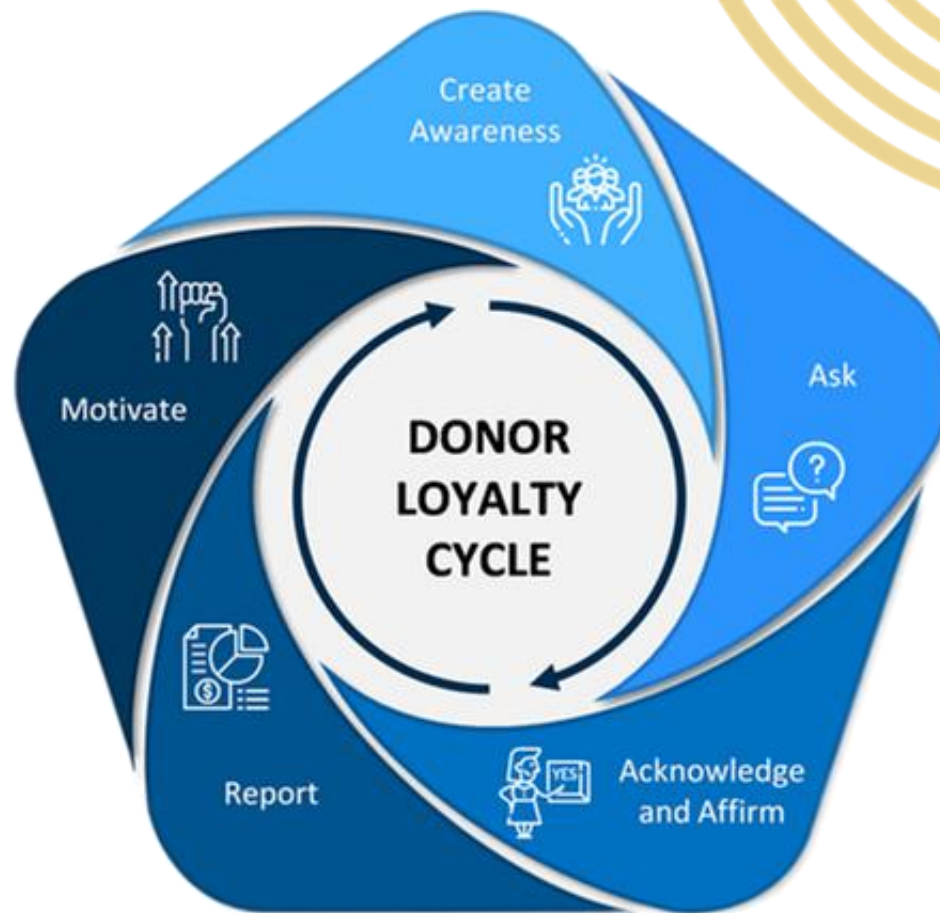
Giving mentality

- Generational
- Giving motions

Donor fatigue

Capacity to give

Propensity to give



Raise
2025

Generational Giving

	Baby Boomers:	Generation X:	Millennials:	Generation Z:
The Silent Generation: direct mail and phone calls	email, online donation forms and in person events	social media, volunteering, fundraising events and text messages	social media, crowdfunding, peer-to-peer fundraising and text messages	virtual fundraisers, text messages and social media



Overall Goal

Base/Aspire/Reach Goals

“In the room” Goal

Ticket Price & Sponsorships

Expenses

Building a
Smart Event
Budget



S



SPECIFIC

Be clear and specific so your goals are easier to achieve. This also helps you know how and where to get started!

M



MEASURABLE

Measurable goals can be tracked, allowing you to see your progress. They also tell you when a goal is complete.

A



ACTIONABLE

Are you able to take action to achieve the goal? Actionable goals ensure the steps to get there are within your control.

R



REALISTIC

Avoid overwhelm and unnecessary stress and frustration by making the goal realistic.

T



TIMEBOUND

A date helps us stay focused and motivated, inspiring us and providing something to work towards.

Benefit Auction Planning Worksheet

EXPENSES

Venue

\$

Event Planning

\$

Auctioneer/Emcee/Guest Speaker

\$

Registration & Bidding Software (check-in/check-out)

\$

Catering (F&B)

\$

Signage, Programs, Displays

\$

Decorations, Themes

\$

Sound/AV/Lighting

\$

Entertainment

\$

Other (valet, permits)

\$

Expense Estimate

\$

Which of these expenses
can be converted into
revenue streams?

Cost Per Quantity

REVENUES

Sponsorships/Underwriters	\$	X		# of sponsorships/underwriters	\$
Ticket Sales	\$	X		# of guests	\$
Raffles (Golden Ticket, Diamond, 50/50)					\$
Games (wine or bourbon pull, Heads & Tails)					
▪ Revenue enhancer 1	\$	X			\$
▪ Revenue enhancer 2	\$	X			\$
▪ Revenue enhancer 3	\$	X			\$
Silent Auction					\$
Vacation Station					\$
Paddle Raise - Fund the Need, Special Appeal, Mission Moment					\$
Raffles					\$
Other					\$
Gross Total					\$
Less Expenses					\$
Net Total					\$

Executing the Fundraising Plan



Example:

- \$300,000 Fundraising Goal
 - 70% from tickets and sponsorships = \$210,000
 - Tickets cover expenses at Break-Even
- 300 paid attendees = 150 giving units = \$2,000 per giving unit average
- 20% Ambassadors = 30 giving units - \$8,000 per giving unit give/get
- 80% guests = 130 giving units - \$500 per giving unit of giving (includes ticket cost)
- Adjust these amounts based on the demographics of your event and attendees





Ticket Sales

Live Auction



Paddle Raise



Silent Auction



Games & Raffles



Sponsorships

Examples – Revenue Breakdown

300 Person Event - \$300,000 Fundraising Goal

Ticket Sales –	75K
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Sponsorships –	135K
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Paddle Raise –	45K
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Live Auction –	25K
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Silent Auction –	10K
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Games/Raffles –	10K
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Total -	300K
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Ticket Pricing

- Ticket pricing is a statement of your commitment to your mission
- Break/Even is best practice...
- Who will be your guests?
 - Ambassadors = 20% of attendance, 80% of revenues
 - The other 80%
 - \$5K AF4
 - \$25K HNW
 - 3-4 causes
- Tiered Pricing - VIP - Regular - Early Bird - Volume - Donated



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EXPENSES – The Ticket Price

Ticket sales \$250 cost per person average - 300 guests x \$250 = \$75,000 revenues to cover expenses below:

Venue and catering - \$40,000

Event Planner - \$5,000

Registration software - \$2,500

AV/Sound - \$10,000

Marketing - \$3,000

Photo - \$3,000

Decorations - \$3,000

Auctioneer team - \$5,000

Entertainment - \$5,000

Total: \$76,500 Expenses (offset by selling 300 tickets at \$250 each)

NOTE: we are “in the black” before night of. Any additional sales or reduced sales need to be addressed elsewhere



Benefits	Emerald \$10,000	Sapphire \$7,000	Pearl \$5,000	Friend \$1,000
10 tickets to special invitation-only VIP champagne social prior to gala and VIP table seating for the gala	✓			
8 tickets to special invitation-only VIP champagne social prior to gala and VIP table seating for the gala		✓		
6 tickets to special invitation-only VIP champagne social prior to gala and VIP table seating for the gala			✓	
Recognition in opening remarks	✓	✓	✓	
Sponsor signage at event and scrolling on event screens	✓	✓	✓	✓

Tickets/ Sponsorships

- Break even goal
- How to handle:
 - Staff & volunteers
 - Honorees

Sponsorship Levels

- What's Included

In-Kind Sponsors

- Services
- Auction Items
- Matching gifts

Underwriting

- Vendor expenses
- Bar, decorations, entertainment

Announcing Our Annual Fall Gala

Kristin Chenoweth 
In Concert

SPONSOR LEVELS

\$7,500 - Diamond Sponsor

10 tickets to the show - plus Gala • Reserved high top table with your name on it for ten at the Gala • Two bottles of champagne • Mention on website
• Mention in press releases • Name on Gala sponsor board
• Name in playbill for the evening

\$5,000 - Platinum Sponsor

8 tickets to the show - plus Gala • Reserved high top table with your name on it for eight at the Gala • One bottle of champagne • Mention on website
• Mention in press releases • Name on Gala sponsor board
• Name in playbill for the evening

\$4,000 - Gold Sponsor

6 tickets to the show - plus Gala • Reserved high top table with your name on it for six at the Gala • Mention on website • Mention in press releases
• Name on Gala sponsor board • Name in playbill for the evening

\$3,000 - Silver Sponsor

4 tickets to the show - plus Gala • Reserved high top table with your name on it for four at the Gala • Mention on website • Mention in press releases
• Name on Gala sponsor board • Name in playbill for the evening

\$1,500 - Bronze Sponsor

2 tickets to the show - plus Gala • Reserved high top table with your name on it for two at the Gala • Mention on website • Mention in press releases
• Name on Gala sponsor board • Name in playbill for the evening

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 AT 5:30PM

For our example Sponsorship Goal – 135K

Platinum Sponsor – 25% of this goal – 1-2
Gross 30K

Gold Sponsor – 25% of this goal – 3-4
Gross 30K

Silver Sponsor – 25% of this goal – 4-6
Gross 30K

Bronze Sponsor – 20% of this goal – 6-8
Gross 16K

In Kind donors – sponsor vendors, services, etc
Gross 20K

Paddle Raise Levels

Expect 75 of 150 giving units to participate on average
(50% of GU's)

Example Goal for Paddle Raise is \$45K (of \$300K Goal)

Pre-commit: \$10,000 (match, fish, etc.)

Level 1 - $\$5,000 \times 1 = \$5,000$

Level 2 - $\$2,500 \times 3 = \$7,500$

Level 3 - $\$1,000 \times 8 = \$8,000$

Level 4 - $\$500 \times 16 = \$8,000$

Level 5 - $\$250 \times 22 = \$5,500$

Level 6 - $\$100 \times 25 = \$2,500$



Other Fundraising (\$45K of \$300K Goal)

Live Auction – \$25K

4-8 items is typical @ \$3,000 - \$6,000 each item average

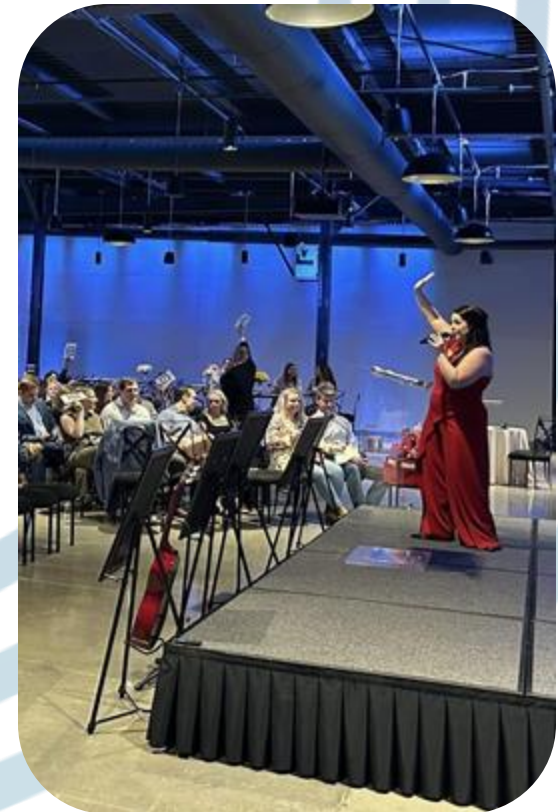
Silent Auction – \$10K

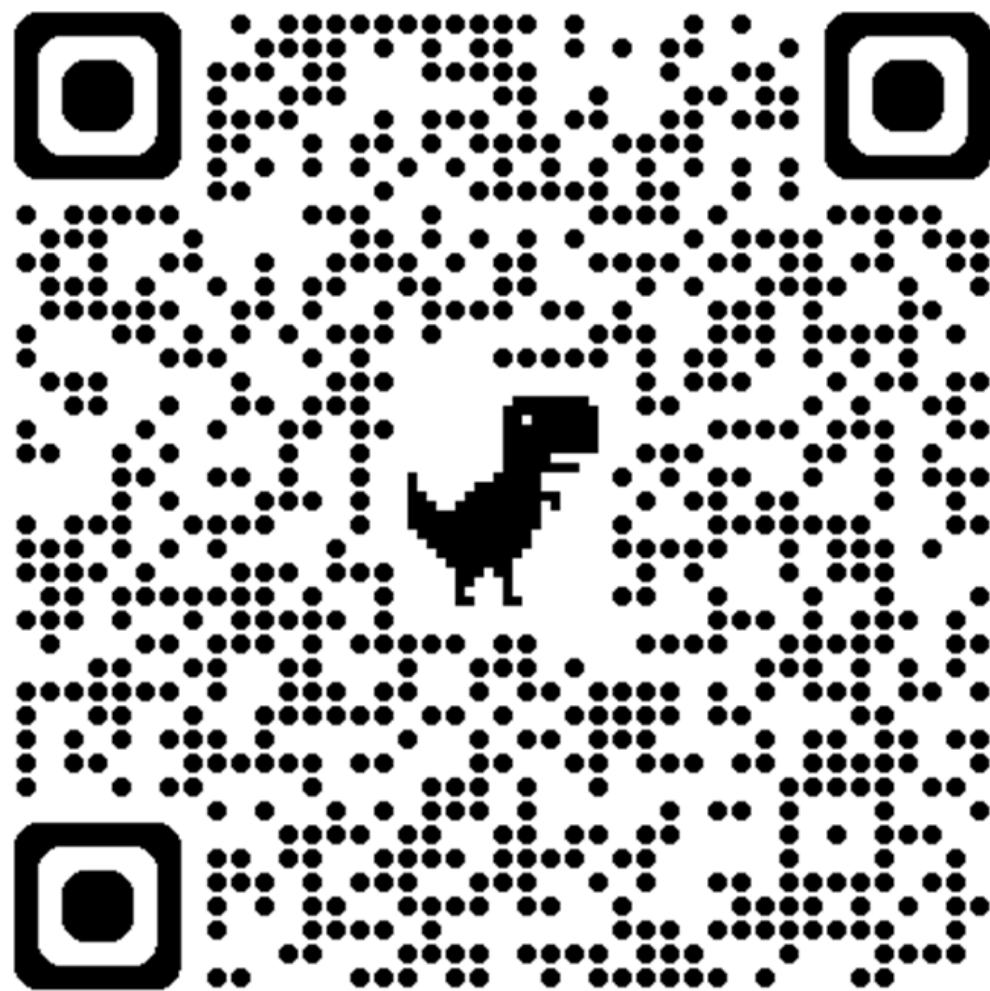
30-40 items is typical @ \$250 - \$350 each item average

Raffles/Games – \$10K

50-100 tickets x \$50 - \$100 is typical raffle

50 wine bottles X \$50 is a typical game





1 The suggestions below will match most events, but of course some events have unique
2

Revenue Goal

- 4 Set baseline goal based on past history
- 5 Set additional reach goal with board input
- 6 Set an aspirational goal is all things go perfect!
- 7 Know the value of a seat at your event, which is revenue goal divided by true giving units

Attendees

- 10 Getting the right people to attend is more important than getting a bigger crowd
- 11 80% of your revenue comes from 20% of your audience
- 12 Know your actual giving units - minus staff, recipients of service, students, etc
- 13 Assess the giving capacity of your attendees, which will influence revenue decisions

Ticket Sales

- 16 Ticket Sales should cover all expenses for gala
- 17 Create value for ticket sales to VIPs to increase revenue
- 18 Use Early Bird Ticket sales to accelerate action
- 19 Limit Pro Bono ticket sales to students, recipients of service, guest speakers, staff

Sponsorships

- 22 Goal is that 1st level is 10% of total revenue
- 23 Goal is that each level achieves similar revenue overall
- 24 Monetize any expense item you can via sponsorship
- 25 Limit tickets for sponsor levels to 2-4 (you can always offer more if asked for)

Raffles and Games

- Check your local and state laws for requirements
- Be wary of too many asks for giving, limit raffles and games to 2-3 options
- Some raffles can be passive and include non-attendees
- Some raffles can be instant moments, such as Last Hero or Paddle Drop
- Change it up from year to year to create new energy at your event
- Limiting ticket sales (eg Golden Ticket) can increase interest and participation

Silent Auction

- For every 8 attendees, 1 silent auction bundle is the sweet spot
- Silent items average 65% of retail, start bidding at 35% of retail
- Increments should account for 6 or so bids to get from 35% to 65% of retail - example: \$100 retail, start at \$35, \$5 increments will get you to \$65 in 6 bids
- Bundle items to reduce bidders ability to do the math and bargain shop - also helps reduce number of silent items
- Create bundles that land at different values, creating a level of giving that everyone can participate
- Close silent auction before live and paddle raise to avoid bidding conflicts - bidders hold onto \$\$ expecting to win silent, but may not win

Live Auction

- 6-8 items is typical for a live auction, which will take 20 or so minutes of program time
- Assess previous years' bidding data to help guide decisions on live auction
- Start with donated items as your base, augment with consignment as needed
- Start with mass appeal items, hard to find items, packages that have flexible terms, have a balance of items for variety in terms of price points, couples vs

Paddle Raise

- Should be at least 50% of your night of revenues after sponsorships and ticket sales
- First level should be at least 10% of paddle raise goal
- First 3 levels should achieve over 50% of your paddle raise goal
- Examples of tangibles per level are helpful to motivate giving
- Have pre-committed donors for 1st levels of giving
- Bid paddles perform significantly better than giving cards to fill out at table or Text2Give options
- A match for all or part of your paddle raise will compel others to give

The background is a blue-tinted photograph of a canal scene. On the left, a bridge with a decorative railing crosses the canal. A small boat is visible in the water. On the right, there is an outdoor seating area with several tables and large umbrellas. People are sitting at the tables. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Raise[®]

2025