

Top Ten Giving Day Best Practices

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Alexandria Harmonizers Randall Eliason, Executive Director

The following is a collection of methods used and lessons learned by the Alexandria Harmonizers while taking part for the past several years in two different community days of giving: Spring2ACTion in Alexandria, VA, and Giving Tuesday.

1. Have a theme - People are more likely to donate if you can identify a particular cause or event that their donation will be supporting. Try to pick one and organize your day of giving campaign around it- for example, supporting an outreach/education event with local youth, or supporting your chapter's program of singing in local hospitals.
2. Set a goal - Set a dollar amount that you hope to raise and advertise it within the chorus and the community. Start modestly to set yourself up for success - it takes time to grow these programs. If you hit your goal in the middle of the day, consider raising it to further motivate your donors.
3. Seek matching grants - Try to secure larger donations from board members, other chapter members who have the means, or supporters in the community, and pool those funds together to create a matching grant. This allows you to tell your donors that their gift will be doubled.
4. Set donation levels associated with specific goals - this has also been shown to increase giving. Instead of just asking for donations, set several suggested levels and explain what the money will help you do. For example, "\$25 will buy x copies of new holiday music that we can perform at local nursing homes," "\$50 will buy five t-shirts for students attending our Youth Harmony Festival," etc.
5. Offer prizes to donors - consider offering prizes/incentives for donations at certain levels. For example, "For any donation of \$200 or more, we will send you two free tickets to our upcoming show" or "For any donation of \$500 or more we will send a quartet to a person of your choice to perform a Singing Valentine or sing Happy Birthday." (Note: there may be tax implications for your donors if they receive something of value in exchange for their donation.)
6. Create an internal contest - motivate the members of your chapter by creating a friendly competition. Offer some kind of prize for those who can bring in the most donations. For the past few years, we have held a competition among the voice parts, to see which section can raise the most money. Appoint leaders within each team who are responsible for sending reminders and encouraging/motivating the members of their team.
7. Pair with a local business - find a local business that will support your day of giving effort. In exchange for a (hopefully large) donation, feature them as your sponsor in all of your social media and other advertising.
8. Spread the word - get the word out about your day of giving through regular social media posts, emails, and other communications efforts. Encourage your chapter members to email their friends and family to alert them that the day is coming. Start this well in advance with "Mark your calendar" posts, "Countdown" posts, etc. Consider hosting a "kickoff party" the day of the event to help generate interest.

9. Hold a party - have some kind of gathering for your chapter at the end of the day of giving, so you can get together to celebrate your success with food and drink and watch the final numbers roll in. If you've partnered with a local business and it's a bar or restaurant, hold your party there and ask them to donate the space.

10. Thank your donors - don't forget to send a thank-you email in the next day or so to those who donated. This is how you start cultivating a list of regular donors who will support you in future fundraisers. The greatest challenge: motivating your members to participate – Barbershoppers are not used to asking people for donations, and many are reluctant to do so. It takes time to change that mindset, and it's something we are still working on. Remind your members to look around at their local theater group or their local symphony, for example, and notice how those groups regularly ask for donations. Our choruses are just as worthy of support. The public is happy to support the arts and wants to be a part of that community support - we just have to ask.