

Chapter Eleven

Raising Funds

Putting together a viable team inevitably brings you face-to-face with the issue of funding. Whether

it is purchasing uniforms, funding a team trip to the national championships, or merely paying entry fees for your first local track meet, you will soon be faced with the question of how to raise the needed funds. Your first option is assistance from your own company. Many companies provide support for employee sports activities because they recognize the value to the organization in terms of both health and morale. If your company has a fitness or wellness program, check with its coordinator about funding assistance. Your second option is the team members themselves. For example, an annual membership fee at a level that all participants can afford is common practice. Between company sponsorship and team member assessments, you may be able to cover most of your funding needs. However, many teams find that they also need to raise extra funds beyond those two sources. This chapter describes how one team, UNUM Corporation, based in Portland, Maine, raises funds to get to the USCAA National Championships.

In 1985 UNUM's health promotion program, Wellpower, began a track program as part of an effort to promote health, fitness, and team spirit. That year the track team had twenty-four members, held ten practices, and competed in the New England Regionals, placing fourth.

Since 1985 the team has grown to more than seventy members! The team practices twice a week throughout the track season (April–July in Maine), competes in five local meets (sponsored by the Maine Corporate Track Association), the New England Regionals, and the USCAA National Championships, winning meets at all levels.

There are some unusual things about UNUM's team:

- Most of the team members live in Maine and are able to practice, fund-raise, and build team spirit throughout the year.

Prepared by the following UNUM team members:

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- UNUM's track team, while managed within the corporate health promotion program, functions with several committees: an Advisory Committee, a Fund-raising Committee, and a Workout Committee. These committees make decisions on how track will work and about philosophy, fundraising, and workouts. This has been an excellent way to bring quality and involvement to the track program.
- Track team members pay a fee (in 1991 it was \$45) to belong to the team. This fee helps subsidize about one-third of the cost of the regular track season, including a track coach. In addition, UNUM subsidizes more than 40% of the cost of going to the Nationals. Team members raise the rest through fund-raising events and individual contributions.
- The team has developed a philosophy that emphasizes (1) high participation, (2) excellent conditioning, and (3) having fun. This philosophy allows a focus on all members, not just the stars. They encourage all active members to go to the National Championships. This has meant a greater fund-raising need, but has also helped the team maintain its spirit and cohesiveness.

How UNUM Track does Fundraising

UNUM's track team began fundraising to get to the Nationals in 1988. The team formed a Fund-raising Committee of six to ten track team members who meet regularly throughout the year. This committee takes care of issues such as:

- methods of fund-raising
- selection of fund-raising opportunities to be supported by the team
- organization of fund-raising events.

The Fund-raising Committee considers several issues when assessing proposed activities. These include:

- the potential profit of the activity.

- the impact on coworker relationships (for example, selling candy)
- the image the activity portrays (is the image one that the team, or UNUM, wants?)
- the time commitment involved with the activity and its impact on members' home and work responsibilities.

All fund-raising events are reviewed by the Human Resource Division to be sure that the team is in compliance with UNUM's solicitation policy and that the event will not conflict with UNUM's image. UNUM's solicitation policy prohibits directly selling goods (raffle tickets, candy) during work time. The team can set up tables and sell raffle tickets, for instance, during lunch time. In addition, all track team fund-raising activities are sponsored by UNUM's employee association, which provides a variety of employee services (dry cleaning, trips, photo development ...) and is the only organization allowed to run raffles at UNUM. The association also allows the team to deposit all funds in its bank account.

Types of Fund-Raising Activities

Over the years, the team has sold T-shirts and food at track meets, held garage sales and raffles, sold tickets to plays, cleaned UNUM workstations after office moves, and dropped off incentives on employees' desks. Below is the list of the activities in 1991, the number of track members who participated, and the money raised.

Raffle

UNUM's Track raffle ran over a 2-month period, giving away prizes in three separate drawings. The Fund-raising Committee planned and organized the raffle; then volunteers sold tickets individually and at tables at lunch. The first drawing was for a shopping gift certificate, movie passes, and free raffle tickets. The second drawing was for a chauffeured night on the town with dinner for two, gift items, and free raffle tickets. The third, and final, drawing was for a trip for two valued at approximately \$800 (negotiated with a local travel agent).

Results: 37 people manned ticket sales tables, for a total of 60 hours. \$1,000 to implement, with a \$1,932 profit.

Candy

Each year the team buys fund-raising sized candy bars from a wholesaler and distributes the candy to volunteer sellers throughout the company. Candy is left out near a workstation during the day for help-yourself service. The candy is sold for \$1 a bar. One person on the Fund-raising Committee works with the wholesaler, several people act

as building/floor distributors to get the candy to individual sellers and to collect the money the sellers make. Results: 31 sellers, 5,000 bars sold. \$2,500 to implement, with a \$2,500 profit.

Workstation Cleaning

During the year, UNUM moves offices from one building to another, redesigns offices, or adds office space. Once a move is completed, the workstations need to be cleaned. UNUM hires the track team to clean the workstations/cubicles. This involves wiping down desk tops, drawers, walls, and furniture and vacuuming all floor space.

Results: 50 cleaners, 452 hours of work. No cost to implement, and a \$4,050 profit.

Desk Drops

UNUM has a program under way to familiarize employees with UNUM's customers. An example of this is the delivery of "gift bags" to employees with samples of products from companies that UNUM insures (e.g., Marvel Comics, greeting cards, and the like). UNUM's track team members (they're fast!) deliver these products to the desk of each employee.

Results: 47 delivery persons, six drops approximately 1 hour each. No cost to implement, with a \$2,350 profit.

Theater

This was a first-time experience for the team in 1991. The team rented a local community theater performance, the Pirates of Penzance, paying for one-third of the seats on a weeknight. Whatever seats the team sold beyond the one-third we purchased would be profit. Tickets were sold individually and at tables during the lunch hour.

Results: 39 people sold tickets. Of a possible 300 tickets, 152 were sold, with a profit of \$960.

Allocation of Track Team Monies

Over the years there have been a number of fund-raising challenges. These have included getting new track members to participate in fund-raising, recruiting new committee members, encouraging team members to volunteer as point people to organize an event, and getting team members to participate.

The way funds are allocated to members can either add to or help solve some of these problems. The system that has evolved at UNUM provides a useful framework for overcoming these issues. Here's how they do it:

UNUM track team members put hundreds of hours into fund-raising during the course of the year to lower the cost of traveling to the USCAA Nationals. Each year the Advisory Committee, the team's governing body, works closely with the Fund-raising Committee to establish an effective method of distributing fund-raising monies.

In 1988 and 1989, all team money was split evenly

among participants in the Nationals, regardless of participation in fund-raising events. This system provided little incentive to fund-raise and a core group of 10-15 individuals performed most of the fund-raising for the entire team.

In 1990 they moved to an **effort-based merit system** to distribute fund-raising money. Individuals earn points based on their participation in fund-raising activities. The points are based on the relative effort of each activity, not on the dollar worth of the activity. For example:

- Office cleaning effort is rewarded with one point for each hour worked because coming to the office on a Sunday night to scrub desks and drawers is considered the most difficult (and unpleasant) task.
- Candy sales are rewarded with one to three points depending on the amount sold. Points are capped at three because selling candy is a low-effort activity.
- Coordinators (point people) of activities (e.g., the candy distributors in each building) are given extra points for their work.
- Members of each team committee (Fund-raising, Advisory, and Workout) are assigned extra points by the Chairperson of the committees based on participation in the committee.

At season's end, the points are tallied, and the National team is sorted by fund-raising participation. The Advisory Committee divides this list into four or five groups based on points earned. Each group is assigned a dollar payout. UNUM's contribution is distributed evenly across all track team members competing in the Nationals. This amount, along with each individual's fundraising allocation, is used to offset the actual cost of going to the National Championships. In a recent year, the top group of fundraisers each paid a minimum amount of \$50, the

next group \$85, and the lowest group \$225. The average out-of-pocket expense was \$100. The groups are adjusted several times until they are comfortable with the result. The listing of points and names is not shown to the entire team to avoid creating unnecessary conflict over assumptions about the relative effort required by each fund-raising activity. Grouping members by general contribution level keeps the process simple and reasonable.

Results, since switching to a merit-based system, have been excellent. Participation has risen to more than 90% and funds raised have doubled. Also, members have few complaints about the allocation methodology. The top fund-raisers are recognized for their effort, but individuals on the low end of the scale are still being subsidized by their teammates.

A key ingredient in UNUM's track team fund-raising allocation is the setting of individual expectations. Everyone understands that the more they work the less they will have to pay. They also do not expect a dollar-for-dollar payback on their efforts, because UNUM must compensate coordinators and committee members. Furthermore, because members know they will be lumped into a large allocation group, arguments over minor discrepancies are avoided.

The team faces some new and some ongoing challenges:

- creating opportunities for track team members that are not based in Maine to fundraise
- continuing to add new members and new ideas to fundraising efforts each year
- continuing to maintain, and even increase, corporate financial support
- helping members balance the fund-raising effort against the payoff so that all members have a chance to participate in the National Championships without some team members burning out in the process.

