

Not-for-Profit Industry

Combining Fundraising Thermometers and Events to Take Donor Engagements to New Heights

You have seen fundraising thermometers before. Everyone uses them for elementary school fundraisers, church fundraisers, building funds, and other events. Today, nonprofits use them for peer-to-peer fundraising, capital campaigns, and lots of other places.

But it is when they combine event fundraising with fundraising thermometers that really exciting things happen.

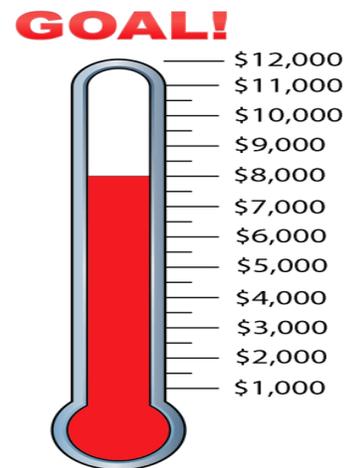
Because they are such a classic fundraising tool, it is easy for donors to overlook fundraising thermometers. Let's be honest—most donors do not care much about merely helping you reach your goal. What they care about is how filling the thermometer will help make a difference in the world. That is what makes it such a good fit for event fundraising! At a fundraising event, you have a unique opportunity to combine real-life interactions and digital tools to inspire and engage donors.

Here's how!

1. BUILD A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

So you are throwing a fundraising event. You immediately have an advantage you lack when you are fundraising online; you have a group of individuals who are physically present with you.

Online fundraising audiences are far from “captive.” You have to worry about page load time, site navigation, or donation form layout—all elements that can make or break your donor's decision to give.



In person, things are a little different. You need to keep your donors engaged, but it is easier to do so when they are interacting with you in person. Your captive audience—whether they are listening to a speaker, interacting with each other at a party, or touring your facility—is actively participating in your event with you. This is priceless!

The purpose of any fundraising event is to raise money so that you can fund your valuable work. Make sure you interact with your audience with this in mind.

2. TELL A COMPELLING STORY AND SHARE A COMPELLING GOAL

Take advantage of your captive audience by taking a few minutes to share your nonprofit's story, the purpose of the fundraising event, and what your fundraising goal will achieve.

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That last bit is the most important part. Remember, your donors are less concerned with reaching an arbitrary goal than they are in making a real, tangible difference in the world. Frame your fundraising goal in terms of what it will accomplish.

Pretend you are attending an event for a local charity that houses indigent families. Are you more inspired by the thought of giving money to help the organization reach its fundraising goal of \$100,000? Or are you more inspired by the thought of giving money to help build a home for a local mother and her children?

Your fundraising goal won't inspire your donors. What your fundraising goal helps you achieve does inspire donors. Think about what will appeal most to your audience, then tell your story and make your appeal that way.

3. INCORPORATE FUNDRAISING THERMOMETERS

If you have done everything right, you have got a captive audience that is inspired by your story and excited about donating to help achieve something amazing. You have set a fundraising goal and have set up a thermometer to help donors track your progress. Now you have got to make it easy for them to give. This is where digital tools come in!

First, make sure your fundraising thermometer is visible. Depending on the style of event you are promoting, this is most easily accomplished using an overhead projector in your event space. Display options are limited only by your imagination, but the key is making the thermometer visible! You have told your story well, so your audience now associates reaching the fundraising goal with achieving something amazing. They will be inspired to hit that goal because of what it represents, and using a thermometer to track that progress will help build momentum and excitement.

Offer donors different ways to give, but make sure you have a way to make your thermometer reflect their donations. The easiest way to have a few giving options available to donors. Consider offering:

- Mobile-friendly donation forms
- Text giving options (get the most out of this by making your keyword visible)
- In-person options, such as hand-held kiosks or volunteers with mobile point of sale terminals
- In-person options such as check or cash

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Making it easy for donors to give is key! Donors are emotionally connected and inspired by your story now, at the event. Don't make them wait to get home to make a gift.

As donations come in and donors begin to see your progress creep upward, enthusiasm will build. Donors' enthusiasm can be stoked by speakers, announcements, or additional sharing of stories. Let your donors have fun, make it easy to give, and show them real-time tracking toward the goal—it is a recipe for heightened donor engagement.

4. FOLLOW UP

You might have the most successful event in the history of fundraising, but your job is not over yet! You spent a whole event hyping your donors to achieve something amazing. They pulled together and raised the money you need. Now you need to make sure you keep them updated on the state of the project they funded.

Send a few follow-up letters or emails to your donors and make sure to include:

- A sincere thank-you
- An update on the project they funded
- An impact statement or story from someone who is benefitting from the project
- Updates on future events

Fundraising thermometers have been around forever—and for good reason. They give donors a way to visualize their progress toward a goal! Give a tried-and-true method an update by turning it into an interactive digital experience at your next fundraising event. It will help keep your audience engaged, inspired, and excited about your work.

The preceding is an article by Abby Jarvis at Qgiv, an online fundraising service provider. Click on the following link to learn more [Qgiv](#).

Contact Us

If you would like to discuss how Cole, Newton & Duran's not-for-profit team can help your organization with your accounting, tax, or consulting needs, please feel free to give me a call.

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