

CAUSE Connection

Making Your Fundraising Event More Impactful by
Connecting Your Audience to Your Mission

An Event Leadership Institute eBook



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Introduction

Not Your Father's Fundraiser

Somewhere along the way, a major disconnect arose between what a non-profit organization does, and what takes place at its major fundraising event. A charity could do wonderful things to help the homeless, for example, yet their gala might be held in a luxurious manor or estate.

Putting aside the irony in that juxtaposition of images, it's easy to see how this came to be. The biggest donors are rich people, so event organizers create events that they think rich people will feel comfortable attending. At some point in the evening someone makes a speech, which is often the sole link to the organization's mission.

Driving Engagement

This formula may yield a successful single event, but it often misses out on building longer term supporters out of the attendees. The fact is that only a small fraction of the people in the room are passionate about the non-profit's cause. They're there because someone invited them: a guest of an honoree, a friend of a committee member, or someone filling out a corporate table.

To be truly successful, today's smart planners need to design their fundraising events to reach into the hearts of those non-hard-core attendees and convert them into caring evangelists for the cause. And the best way to do that is to make sure the attendee really connects emotionally with what it is that you do. This is rarely done with numbers or statistics or speeches by the CEO. You've got to really put your thinking cap on and figure out how to truly 'hook' them, so they 'get' it.

About This eBook

The purpose of this eBook is to give you ideas on how to make your fundraising events more impactful. We're profiling a number of non-profit organizations that we believe have done a good job in connecting attendees to their causes at their events. We invite you to use these case studies to stimulate your thinking, to take a fresh look at your fundraising events and how you can make deeper emotional connections with your attendees, turning them into long-term, passionate supporters.



Thanks to Our Sponsor

Special thanks to [EventSpot](#) from [Constant Contact](#) for underwriting this eBook, enabling it to be available as a free download. We applaud their efforts to support thought leadership in this area, and their interest in sharing best practices within the events industry.

On Engagement



Engagement. Perhaps no single word is doing more to redefine the events industry. No longer is it acceptable to hold an event without clear goals or a concrete sense of how the event will advance your organization's objectives.

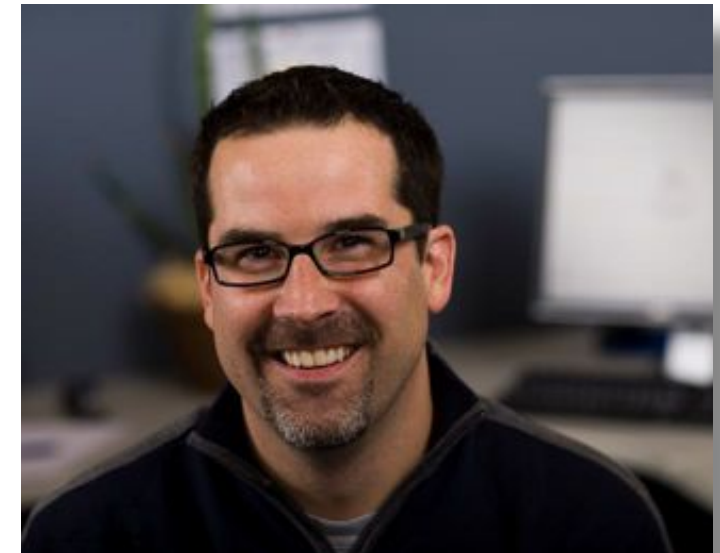
Special events are a vehicle used to accomplish something, just like advertising, direct mail or other marketing mediums. Yet, unlike most other mediums, events provide the greatest ability for high-touch interaction with attendees. You have them in one place for several hours, where you control every aspect of the experience including the environment, what they see, hear, eat, drink, touch, and take home, all of which should be focused on driving engagement with them. You want them walking out of your event fully energized about your brand.

This is of particular importance to nonprofit organizations, who are facing a landscape of donor fatigue and donors challenged by economic conditions. An effective fundraising event not only raises the most money possible for

the host, but also converts as many attendees into passionate long-term supporters and ambassadors of the organization.

Constant Contact has long been a proponent of using events to drive deeper engagement with your supporters and constituents. Our suite of products is built to leverage the power of live events before, during and afterwards. It is for this reason that we were eager to sponsor this eBook.

We can all benefit by sharing best practices in how to build stronger and smarter connections to our event attendees, and the ideas contained in here are a great place to start. We hope these event case studies are helpful in jump-starting the brainstorming process for building more engaging events, and Constant Contact stands ready to support you in those efforts.



Chris Litster
Vice President & General Manager | EventSpot

charity: water

The Waterwalk



Cause

Charity: water's mission is to bring clean, safe drinking water to people in developing countries. In Africa alone, people spend 40 billion hours every year just walking for water. Women and children usually bear the burden of water collection, walking miles to the nearest source. Time spent walking keep them from school, work and taking care of their families.

Connection Method

An average plastic water jug weighs 40 pounds when full. In an effort to help guests fully grasp the difficulty in water collection, they were given the opportunity to carry fully loaded water cans down a short runway. By enabling them to experience what it's like to carry heavy water cans even a short distance, Charity: water helped impress upon guests the importance of investing in clean wells.



"For me, charity is practical. It's sometimes easy, more often inconvenient, but always necessary. It's the ability to use one's position of influence, relative wealth and power to affect lives for the better. Charity is singular and achievable."

Scott Harrison
Founder | charity: water

Yorkville Common Pantry Bringing the Charity to the Event



Cause

Yorkville Common Pantry (YCP) is dedicated to reducing hunger while promoting dignity and self-sufficiency. YCP's Pantry Program is New York City's largest community-based food pantry and is designed to meet the needs of its 1600-1800 families by providing culturally-appropriate and nutritionally-balanced grocery packages.

Connection Method

YCP brought their pantry to the Spring Benefit, creating a miniature working version of what they do every day for guests to experience in person. With staff on hand to guide them, YCP put the gala guests to work in packing grocery bags for actual families. Since many higher end donors hadn't actually been to a food pantry, this gave them a first-hand opportunity to not only see what's involved, but to also roll up their sleeves and help out, connecting them to YCP's mission in a much deeper fashion.

Event Agency

Elizabeth Rose Consulting



"Once people go to the Pantry they really 'get' what it's about and become much more passionate supporters. Since we can't get everyone to the Pantry we decided to bring the Pantry to the Benefit."

Liz Glover Wilson
Founder and Lead Consultant | Elizabeth Rose Consulting

Cause

Every day 21,000 children die from preventable causes like malnutrition, unsafe drinking water and curable disease. UNICEF wants to bring this number down to zero. However it can be hard for event donors to really connect with such large statistics.

Connection Method

For the 2010 Snowflake Ball, HGTV's Vern Yip brought that large number down to eleven massive photos of children that represent the diverse ethnicities and countries UNICEF works with. Each of the long walls in the venue featured five 15' x 30' pictures, with one 30'x30' photo at the long end by the stage.

Once people could connect with the individual children's faces, Yip brought guests' attention to the ceiling treatment, constructed of 21,000 tiny lights, one for each child that dies every day from a preventable cause.

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Vern Yip



"I always try and get to the heart of the situation. What is the meaning of why we're here? What are we trying to accomplish? I do my homework ahead of time, instead of just taking the theme of snowflakes and doing whatever."

Vern Yip
Event Designer | UNICEF Ambassador

Operation Western Front Full Environmental Immersion



Cause

Philanthropists Warren M. Spitz and W. Brett Wilson co-chaired a fundraiser in support of True Patriot Love, a non-profit supporting the Canadian armed forces and their families. Titled *Operation Western Front*, the goal was to raise funds as well as awareness.

Connection Method

The Vancouver Convention Centre was converted into a Forward Operating Base, complete with combat zones, light armored vehicles, military ambulances, mess halls and camouflage. Guests used military cafeteria trays to access the buffet. Military personnel were on hand to explain some of the various functions they perform in active duty.

The result was to give guests a window into what life is like for members of the armed forces, the sacrifices they make, and the positive impact they have.

Event Agency

e=mc² events



"You've made supporting the armed forces cool. What a wonderful thing to do for your country."

Laureen Harper
Wife of the Canadian Prime Minister

Global Citizen

Pre-Event Engagement As the Ticket to Entry



Cause

Global Citizen seeks to raise awareness of and combat extreme poverty around the world, by building a global movement for change. A critical part of their strategy is to get their constituents individually involved, and encouraging them to take action. They accomplish this by awarding points for various activities, such as watching a video (1 point), or calling your Congressman (10 points). Points can be redeemed for awards.

Connection Method

For their Global Citizen Festival, a rock concert in New York's Central Park, hopeful attendees had to earn at least three points by tweeting, posting on Facebook and getting involved with Global Citizen's mission via other social means. Doing so entered them into a lottery, where 27,000 free tickets were given out. The result was to weave participants' into Global Citizen's mission before they even attended the event.



"If we did it through a regular ticketing scheme and just sold the tickets through Ticketmaster or something like that, that would be a relatively expensive ticket, and that would be the end of their engagement."

Hugh Evans
CEO | Global Poverty Project

Prep for Prep

Bringing Beneficiaries Center Stage



Cause

Prep for Prep develops leaders through access to superior education and life-changing opportunities. They identify New York City's most promising students of color and prepare them for placement at independent schools in the city and boarding schools throughout the Northeast. Once placed, Prep offers support and opportunities to ensure the academic accomplishment and personal growth of each one of our students.

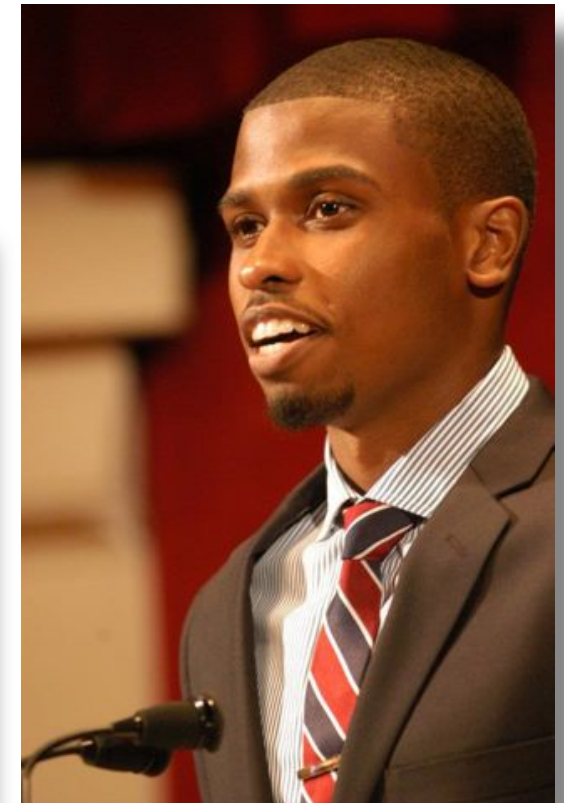
Connection Method

At the organization's annual Lilac Ball, Prep for Prep puts its money where its mouth is. Want to know how well they help develop student leaders? Sit back and watch them yourselves!

The students greet guests upon arrival and mingle with them during cocktails. They do table visits to meet guests during dinner. In some years the students are the ones who shot the video that's played. And, to truly drive the point home, the students host the entire stage program, serving as emcee and speakers. The only adult to speak is the honoree. Prep for Prep helps groom young leaders, then gets out of the way so they can shine.

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Susan Ulin Associates



"While celebrities and politicians can play an important role in an event, they can never be as compelling as the individuals who have directly benefitted from the work of our organization."

Ed Boland
Vice President for External Affairs | Prep For Prep

Be Bold Be Bald

Getting Others to Walk In Your Shoes

BE BOLD, BE BALD!

Cause

Boston advertising agency Small Army wanted to honor their co-founder, Mike Connell, who passed away after his third battle with cancer. They were inspired by the courage and strength that cancer survivors embody, and sought to show solidarity with the numerous cancer patients who lose their hair in the course of treatment.

Connection Method

In an incredibly simple, yet powerful, campaign, Be Bold Be Bald! invites people all over the country to wear a skull cap simulating a bald head on November 2nd. People then solicit fundraising pledges around their participation, and designate which of the 20 cancer charities will receive the funds. A series of print ads profiled individuals wearing the caps, and indicating who they were showing support for.

Event Agency

Small Army for A Cause



"It's not a physical challenge, it's vanity challenge – one that many cancer patients do not have a choice about. Participating in the event is an eye-opening experience that not only shows solidarity, but encourages important learning and conversations about the disease."

Jeff Freedman
CEO | Small Army for A Cause

Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research

Driving Conversation Topics Through Cue Cards



Cause

Though billions are spent globally on the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS, CANFAR believes the only sustainable answer to AIDS is to find a vaccine or a cure – and that answer will be found in research. Since the beginning of this crisis, CANFAR has led the way, funding HIV and AIDS research across Canada, and strives to keep the need for research as a top priority.

Connection Method

For their annual Bloor Street Entertains fundraiser, CANFAR arranged 18 dinner parties at retail stores for 700 guests, who then funneled into a larger reception for 2,000. While that concept may not be new, they took it one step further, by taking advantage of the intimate setting to drive conversation around their key talking points. Event organizers placed various cards with facts and statistics about H.I.V./AIDS at dinner tables in every venue, and event hosts used these cards to stimulate vibrant discussion. The result was guests walked away far more engaged in the issues than they would have been at a larger event.

Event Agency

Spinradius Events



"We tried to focus on getting key messages about the cause communicated throughout the night ... people need to celebrate and have a good time and remember why we're there."

Chris Bunting
President | CANFAR

Hudson Link

Turning Beneficiaries into 'Cause Ambassadors'



Cause

Hudson Link believes that transforming lives through education can help break the cycle of crime and poverty. To make that vision a reality, Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison provides college education, life skills and re-entry support to incarcerated men and women to help them make a positive impact on their own lives, their families and communities. The end result is lower rates of recidivism, incarceration and poverty.

Connection Method

Raising money to help convicted criminals is not easy; they're often perceived as an undeserving, if not intimidating lot. In order to help change those perceptions, Hudson Link brings 20 alumni, students who benefited from their educational programs in prison, to their annual spring gala, Reaching for New Tomorrows. These alumni, who present a much more thoughtful, polished, and appreciative image than guests are inclined to expect, mingle with guests during cocktails, and sit among them during dinner. In this way Hudson Link helps put a human face on their cause, and increases guests' understanding of the importance of their mission.



"Transformation is more than just the effect on an individual -- it's also the ripple effect on the prison community, the students' families and the communities they return to."

Sean Pica
Executive Director | Hudson Link

National Wildlife Federation

Building In A Gaming Layer



Cause

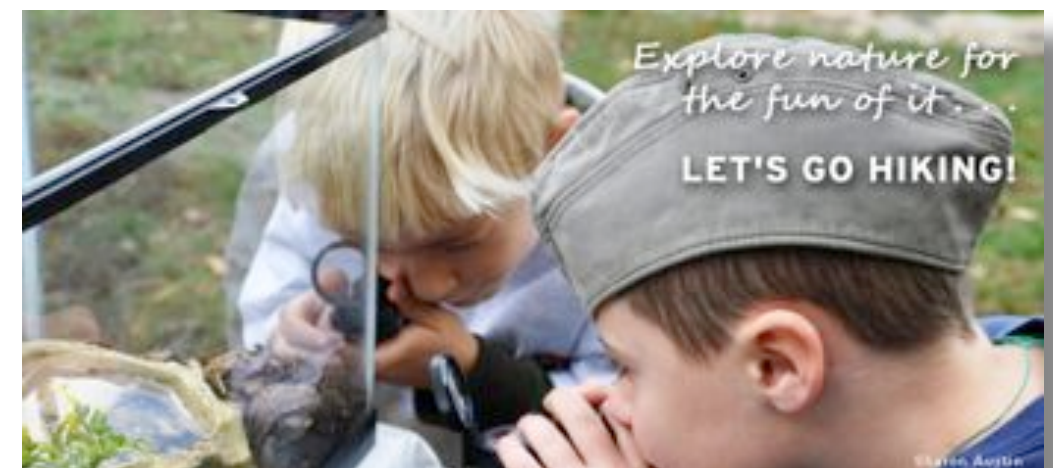
Be Out There is a National Wildlife Federation (NWF) campaign designed to return to the nation's children what they don't even know they've lost: their connection to the natural world. Kids today spend twice as much time indoors as their parents did, missing out on the simple pleasures and lasting mental and physical health benefits of daily outdoor time.

Connection Method

The National Wildlife Federation created Hike and Seek, a fundraising event now in six locations nationwide. It's a cross between a nature hike and a scavenger hunt that brings families and friends together in the great outdoors, but with a fun, educational component. Interactive learning stations are set up throughout the 1-2 mile courses, featuring live animals, naturalists and crafts. The income model is a flat, per person registration fee layered with a suggested fundraising ask, and participants can earn prizes based on levels of money raised. By integrating the fundraising activity directly into the outdoor activities NWF seeks to advocate, they drove engagement to a level that could never be replicated with an indoor event.

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Event360



"With so much emphasis on electronic media these days, the nature of childhood has changed and there's not much nature in it. Hike & Seek is an opportunity for parents to show their kids why it's called the great outdoors."

Meri-Margaret Deoudes
Vice President, Corporate Relations & Special Events | National Wildlife Federation

Global Green USA

Using Small Details to Create a Broad Stroke



Cause

Global Green is fostering a global value shift toward a sustainable and secure future and is working to solving the world's most pressing environmental challenges, merging innovative research, cutting-edge community based projects and targeted advocacy. They aim to inspire 'citizen entrepreneurs', people who don't just see themselves as consumers, but who take a more proactive approach in solving problems.

Connection Method

Global Green takes their mission of advancing sustainability into every feasible element of their annual Pre-Oscar Party. They hit the more common aspects, such as local and organic menu items, electronic instead of paper invitations and sustainable greens for decor. However they also took their mission into less traditional areas as well. Celebrities arrived in Chevy Bolt hybrid electric sedans, while other guests utilized Zimride to promote carpooling. The red carpet became a green carpet. Guests were urged to wear environmentally friendly clothing ranging from vintage/ reused and upcycled styles to newer items made from sustainable fabrics and non-toxic dyes. By "walking the walk" of a totally sustainable event, Global Green helped guests think more broadly about how to design a more sustainable lifestyle for themselves.



"I spend most of my time thinking of ways that we can help leverage change through ideas, projects, and people. That often means delivering impact through green community development and other channels not traditionally used by other environmental groups."

Matt Peterson
President | Global Green USA

About the Event Leadership Institute



The [Event Leadership Institute](http://www.EventLeadershipInstitute.com) is the nexus for the most progressive training, education and insights for the event planning industry. Our mission is to empower planners to create, plan and execute smarter, more cost-effective events and take their careers and businesses to the next level.

We accomplish this by cultivating and sharing best practices through video classes, webinars, interviews, white papers, roundtables, and live events.

We invite you to explore additional video classes and other resources on this topic, at www.EventLeadershipInstitute.com



About EventSpot



[EventSpot](#) from Constant Contact offers everything needed for online event management, from start to finish, all in one place. EventSpot is designed to help small business and nonprofit event planners automate and simplify many details associated with planning, promoting and managing an event, freeing them up to focus on providing attendees the best experience possible.

From setting a vibe through a customized event invitation or landing page, automating registration and online payment, offering seamless mobile check-in, and providing timely reporting tools, EventSpot allows planners to create a professional, consistent look while saving precious time on logistics.

Best of all, EventSpot offers Constant Contact's free, award-winning customer coaching and support that guides planners to event success.

The organizers of the [Winter Park Harvest Festival](#) in Winter Park, Florida, needed a better way to promote the festival to the community. They chose EventSpot and saw attendance skyrocket beyond their expectations.

To learn more about the festival and how [EventSpot](#) helped make it a success, [watch the video](#).



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