

BLACK BELT PROMOTIONS

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE OWNER AND INSTRUCTOR

Fundraising – Help a Great Cause and Promote Your School

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I chose martial arts training as a child because I was the victim of bullies. My purpose for participating in martial arts was to protect myself. My story is probably similar to yours and thousands of other children who chose martial arts. As I progressed, I realized that my personal goal of self-defense was a selfish pursuit. I knew I needed the confidence and inner strength that martial arts provides, but as I began to assist instructors, I recognized that my ultimate goal in martial arts was to help others and give something in return. Training my students and myself just to accomplish our martial arts and personal goals is never enough, at least for me. I also learned that there is no better feeling than giving your best to others when they are in need.

A husband and wife who are instructors at our facility have two sons. Recently, one of their sons was diagnosed with Batten's Disease, which is a rare degenerative genetic disease that eventually claims the lives of those who suffer from it.

I knew there was nothing I could do to improve their son's condition, but I did want to try to ease their financial burden. Their medical expenses will continue for many years,

as people afflicted with this disease often live into their 20s and 30s, bedridden, and eventually requiring constant medical attention. The other instructors and I decided to hold a fundraiser to reduce the family's financial concerns so the parents and siblings would be able to focus on what is important: the quality of life for their ill child.

With an initial goal of \$12,000 for a six-hour fundraiser, we organized teams of instructors, students and parents to contribute to our project. The result was donations, totaling more than \$32,000, raised in one day. The fundraiser exceeded everyone's expectations—a truly remarkable experience!

Acquiring new students with the fundraiser was never our intent, but there was a noticeable increase in inquiries and enrollments. Many new clients mentioned that they had heard about our fundraiser. Without a doubt, public relations, donations and charitable fundraisers promote good will and intent for a martial arts school. It also united those involved in a very special way.

The following five-point program includes helpful information and hints for developing, organizing and managing a successful fundraiser for your favorite cause.

A word of caution: Before you begin a fundraiser campaign to help an individual, as in my school's example above, you should contact a lawyer to learn how to manage and distribute legally and ethically the funds you raise. Many times, trusts or special funds are required so you or your school will not incur tax liabilities.

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Board breaking is a great fundraising event!

Five-Point Fundraising Program

1. **Find A Cause** – Choose a cause, need or organization that excites you! It's typically easier to select established organizations (for example, United Way, March of Dimes, etc.) because they have considerable experience working with groups and individuals that want to help raise funds for their causes. Fundraisers for individuals require much more work, but they often motivate the participants and gives more emotionally, especially if you or your fundraising team knows the individual.
2. **Develop an inspired "Core Team"** – Choose your team at least three months prior to the scheduled event date. You want team members who are committed to the event and each other. Team incompatibility is often the cause of poor results or failure. Your team will help you organize and coordinate the event. It is important that your team meets at least once a week to develop ideas, maintain your schedule and address and remove obstacles quickly.
3. **Select a fundraising method** – Many schools' fundraisers are events, such as a kickathon, which is a great start, but the more opportunities you provide for donors to participate, the more likely you'll have a successful fundraiser. Consider these additional events for your fundraiser or create your own. They will often help you attract more interest and generate more donations for your cause.
 - 50/50 raffles
 - Equipment raffles
 - Bake sale
 - Pizza by the slice and drink sales
 - Silent auctions
 - Caricatures drawn by local artists
 - Radio, newspaper or television contests
 - Pie throwing contests (at your instructor!)
4. **Set a monetary goal** – Establish a goal that is realistic. Reaching your goal is actually more important psychologically than how much money you raise.
5. **Designate core team members to develop organizational teams** – Select members of your core team to organize and direct the specific functions of organizational teams. These should be formed at least 10 weeks before the event. Constant communications between core team members and their organizational teams are critical to the smooth operations and coordination of your fundraising event. Organizational teams should meet regularly and members should communicate with each other two to three times a week. Assign each organizational team a specific component or function of the fundraiser for which it is responsible. These may include:
 - **Media exposure** – Generating interest through the media (newspaper, radio, television, etc.) is crucial to a successful fundraiser. You may find it is necessary to attract interest from a much larger audience than your student base, family members and friends. Media outlets are always seeking opportunities to be involved in community support activi-



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ties, such as fundraisers. Introduce yourself, your school and your fundraising campaign to the media in a brief, but professional looking presentation. It should include a letter of intent on your letterhead, a short description of the purpose and goal of your fundraising campaign, and a photo of your school (a class in action). Ask the various media to publish and/or broadcast the news of your event multiple times. Don't forget a follow-up story to tell the public about the results of your fundraiser.

- *Promotional materials* – Create and produce door hangers, flyers, coupons and similar promotional materials early in the process. Assign an organizational team to place and distribute these materials, as soon as you officially announce the fundraising campaign, throughout the residential neighborhoods in your community. Write a cover letter on your letterhead and include it with the flyer you distribute to local business owners. Also let them know that someone will be contacting them about a donation, raffle prize or gift.
- *Philanthropy* – Contact local clubs, corporations and institutions to solicit them for financial donations to your fundraising program. Your efforts to raise funds with this method should begin early, since these types of donations require management and/or board approvals, and may be subject to budget cycles. Your efforts are worthwhile, however, because these can be the most important and lucrative sources of donations. Those involved in philanthropic giving are members of a small universe, so anyone you contact should be able to help direct you to others who may support your cause. The ripple effect is often amazing! Be sure to give philanthropic individuals and organizations detailed and honest information about your fundraising program contained with an inspirational message to motivate them to assist you. Always provide them with multiple copies of your fundraising program information so they may distribute it to other philanthropists they know.
- *Solicitation of local businesses* – Local businesses are a separate, but equally important source, for financial, gift and raffle donations. Your business solicitation team should start contacting targeted businesses the day or the day after you've distributed flyers and information. Follow-up in person always produces better results, but follow-up phone calls may be a good first step, since decision makers may not be available when you visit without an appointment. Schedule meetings with business owners and/or decision makers and provide them with your package of fundraising program information. A brief presentation and easy-to-read and -understand information makes the process easier for business owners and increases the likelihood of their participation. Be prepared to provide them with tax-deductible receipts for merchandise and taxable services.
- *Event day volunteers* – Your volunteers are typically members of your core and organizational teams, since they have been most involved in the process and understand all the details. Be sure to schedule meetings with your volunteers two weeks, one week and the day before the event.
- *Event set-up and clean-up team* – To make sure your fundraiser proceeds smoothly and professionally, you'll want to designate a team of people to setup and cleanup. Your event day volunteers will most likely be too involved in various tasks to concern themselves with setup and cleanup, but those tasks are still very important. Meet with your set-up and clean-up team at least one week before your event to develop and review the details of these tasks. Assign a member of your Core or Organizational teams who understands all the arrangements to manage the setup and cleanup.

A fundraising program is certainly one of the most rewarding acts of kindness you're able to do for someone in need. It's also a rewarding experience for your school, instructors, students, parents, your community and yourself. Take the initiative to give to others, so everyone will benefit.