

FUNDRAISING ARTICLE

Consideration for Determining a Fund-Raiser

Source: NFHS Coaches Quarterly Fall 2004

By David Hoch, Athletic Directors, Loch Raven High School in Towson Maryland

In today's economic climate, very few school budgets are large enough to provide all of the essential needs of most athletic departments. It is often necessary for teams to raise additional monies, not for extras, but to merely maintain their existence.

There is, of course, a philosophical position by some in high school athletics that athletes should not be involved in fundraising. On the practical side of the issue, there are those who maintain that if you don't help provide the funds, your team will not have the necessary equipment to adequately field a team and compete. Only you can decide where you fit in this philosophical dilemma, but chances are you will be involved to some degree in fundraising.

Of course, you also need to be honest with yourself. Do you really need the desired items or are they frills for your program? Can you wait another year? Will your teams' performance suffer without these items? Is the need for additional money a short term, one-time event or will it be an ongoing concern? How do other programs and schools in your area handle the same problem or similar dilemma?

Assuming, therefore, that you sincerely need to supplement your budget allotment, the following are some practical, logical considerations to help determine what you may want to do as a fundraiser for your program. Ask yourself:

1. Is the possible fundraiser legal and ethical? For example, you never want to sell or advertise liquor, cigarettes or anything related to gambling. Being part of a program at an educational institution, this is something that cannot be considered.
2. How much money do you need? The answer to this question may in part help determine what fundraiser you hold or you may have to consider running multiple efforts. You may want to consider what will happen if you don't reach your desired goal. Will you wait until next year or do something additional this season to raise more money?
3. What product or event will produce the greatest return in the least amount of time? It is these two factors together – profit and time – that usually must be considered together and they are usually the highest priorities for most coaches.
4. Is the fundraiser something that can or will generate a continuous flow of revenue versus a one-time effort? A one-time effort may raise a larger amount of money initially, but an ongoing fundraiser could actually earn more with no or very little more effort.

5. Can you motivate your players or parents to sell or participate in the proposed fundraiser? If not, regardless of the promised profit margins, the ease of the campaign or other issues, it will not be successful. Fund-raisers which rely on selling a product need motivated, enthusiastic sellers.
6. Will your administration approve of your proposed fundraiser? Even though you and your team will be doing the work, it is always wise, or required in some schools, to have administrative approval. This is done so that you are in compliance with school district and state mandates. It may even be necessary to have your fundraiser approved and added to the school calendar before anything can be done.
7. How do you get the school or community to support your fundraiser? It is often helpful to have a specific, stated goal. This should be something visible and tangible as opposed to “support the team or athletic program.” Most people are more inclined to give, buy or support something concrete as opposed to something abstract.
8. Can the fundraiser that is being considered be done again in the future? It is important to determine if this attempt can become an annual effort and something that the community will associate with your team or will it simply be a one-time event? At the completion of the fundraiser, you will have a more complete picture of the profits and exactly how much time and effort it took. With this information, it should be easy to answer this question.
9. How often should you say “Thank you”? You can’t say it enough. This positive effort should be extended to the athletes or parents who might be doing the selling, the individuals who are purchasing the items, the administration for their understanding or anyone else involved in any manner. A simple thank you can get you continuing support and contributions beyond just money.
10. Can something other than raising money be accomplished by the fundraiser? For example, will it contribute to a team bonding effort or to developing team chemistry? Are there any community or public-service benefits that might be involved? These may be as important to consider as how much money may be raised.
11. What is the community’s history and philosophy concerning the proposed fundraising project or effort? Some parents may prefer to simply make a donation instead of having their children involved in fundraising. You will need to think through your expectations and team requirements that you place upon your athletes in order to accommodate this point of view. Also, are there any religious or moral issues surrounding a proposed fundraiser. Bikini-clad young ladies conducting a car wash, for example, may not be acceptable in some communities. Are you sure what the suitability may be in your area for any potential fundraiser?

12. Do you have a system prepared for advertising the fundraiser, the collection of the orders and money, the distribution of the product and record keeping of the profits and contributions by the athletes? All of these elements may not be obvious, but extremely vital to a successful fundraiser and they usually take much more time and effort than initially thought.

13. How do you choose a dependable vendor with all of the various products and possible fundraisers out there in the market? You will want the product to be delivered on time, the possibility of getting additional items if needed and the ability to return unopened, unsold products. A good way to determine all of this is to ask other teams and schools that might have used the same vendor and get straightforward answers.

Once you have considered these points, you are ready to start planning for your fundraising effort. Hopefully, with a little preparation, hard work and luck, your profits will roll in and you will meet your projected goals.