

Facebook Fundraising Fundamentals

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I: Introduction

Facebook is the most powerful networking tool in human history. Use it well and you will reap many fundraising rewards. But having a big friend list and a great message are only half the game. There are many ways to reach people on Facebook. Some will get you donations and some not so much. This guide will show you how to effectively reach your list of friends with your fundraising message...and the results may very well astonish you!

II: Reaching the Inbox

Getting into your friends' inbox is the single most important way you can reach people on Facebook. Users are pummeled every day with status updates, cause invitations, and posted links, all of which can easily be ignored. None of these communications reach the almighty inbox. The inbox is a safe haven where only your friends can reach you and only if it's really important. Users are compelled to check everything in their Facebook inbox immediately. This is where your message needs to be. Here is how you get into all your friends' inboxes:

You will need to set up ALL of your friends into lists. You can put any number of friends into a list, but you can only send a message to a list if it has 19 people or less. So you need to put every friend you have into a list of 19 people or less. Here's how:

1. Decide how to group up everyone you know. Think about the different areas of your life where you have friends from. It might be something like Family/High School/College/Childhood/Fundraising/Coworkers/Church/Miscellaneous/etc.
2. Get a blank piece of paper for each list, and write the name of the list on top.
3. Look up your "all friends" list by putting the mouse over "friends" in the top bar, then when the dropdown menu appears, click "all friends". Facebook will show your list alphabetically.
4. Start going through it one by one and write everyone's name down on the piece of paper of the list they're in.
5. When you're done with that, any list that has more than 19 people will need to be further broken down. You can just do this in the order you wrote them down. Say you have 55 high school friends. Count 19 names and draw a line, then count 19 more and draw another line etc. Now you have High School A, High School B, High School C, High School D, etc.
6. Now that you know who's in what list, you can start making lists. Still in the "friends" tab, there's a button on the left called "Make a New List". Click it and name the lists. Keep doing this until you have all of your lists set up.
7. Now you can populate the lists with their members. In the "add to list" box, you can type in people's name. Just type a few letters and they'll pop up. Click them. They're added.
8. Your lists are now all populated. Now you copy/paste the same message to each list and send. You can customize the message a little bit, "What's up college crew?" or "I'm sending this message to a few of my coworker friends" etc. Make sure that your message mentions that in addition to donating, people are welcome to forward the message to anyone who might be interested.

9. Kick back for the next three days and relax and let the internet work its magic. Watch the money roll in. You may want to get a bunch of cash and throw it on your bed and roll around in it to simulate what your page is feeling.

10. As you add more friends over time, make sure to immediately add them to the appropriate list. When a list reaches 19 people, start another list.

WHY THE INBOX METHOD WORKS:

1. Users are compelled to read the messages in their inbox more so than any other messages.
2. Users like seeing people they are familiar with copied on the same message.
3. If anyone replies to your message, it is an automatic reply-all. This creates another inbox message to everyone on that list, which will remind them that they were thinking about donating. Also, when someone replies, "I just donated!" and other people who like that person see this, it is a powerful motivator for them to donate.

III: Starting and Maintaining A Group

A Facebook group is a great way to give your friends a chance to get interactive by tracking your progress and sending public messages. Just make sure you're driving them to donate first and foremost! For an example of a great fundraising group, check out Nancy Dion's group for the 2009 Kona Half Marathon here: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=52600998455&ref=mf>

To start a group:

1. In the lower left where the icons are, find the icon for "groups" and click it.
2. In the top left area find the button called "+Create New Group". Follow the self-explanatory steps to get the group started. Name it something like, "Seth's Marathon To Cure IBD." In the "description" field, copy your fundraising page message or your first email message. Make sure it is open to everybody, no restrictions. And finally, make sure your fundraising page is in the "website" field!
3. Invite EVERYBODY!
4. Groups have built-in discussion boards. Group members can start new topics. You'll want to start two topics immediately: My Training and My Fundraising. Be sure to make weekly updates throughout your campaign.

IV: Status Square

Beneath your profile picture sits a permanent little status square. Put a simple message in here such as "Please support my marathon to find a cure for IBD!" and then include your fundraising page link. Leave this status square up throughout your campaign.

V: Posting A Link

On the bottom left, find the icon for "links", and click. Look for the text box where you can paste your link next above the "Post" button. Click post and your link will be broadcast to the front page of all of your friends. It will also live permanently in the part of your page where it shows your posted links.

VI: Methods That DON'T Work

1. Posting your status – You can post your link and a “please donate”-type message to your status. However, most people do not read status updates. Furthermore, most people’s pages are flooded with their friends’ status updates, which are displayed chronologically, so unless someone logs in within a matter of minutes or hours of you posting your status, it will be buried far down on their page.

2. Causes – Using the “Causes” module is not effective and can actually be counterproductive. “Causes” will take a big cut out of whatever you raise through it. You will lose a lot of money if a lot of people donate to you through “causes”. Furthermore, causes only transfers money quarterly, so you may not get the money in time to hit your goal. You can drive everyone you need directly to your fundraising page without using “causes”, so don’t use it.

VII: Conclusion

Facebook can and will deliver donations from people you never imagined. Even if you don’t have an account, start one today and if you were born after 1970, you should have no problem getting to 200 friends in one month; a powerful network indeed. Be sure to always thank everyone in advance and always encourage sharing at every opportunity. This is what Facebook is all about. Good luck and good fundraising!
-Seth