



Cupcakes and tombola: a DIY guide to fundraising

Ruth Bates, Foundation for Community Dance Development Manager, demystifies approaches to raising money for dance in the community

In September 2013 I happily accepted my new role as Development Manager for the Foundation for Community Dance, which focuses my time and skills on raising resources for the organisation. It comes on the back of 22 years of working in dance in a variety of admin and development roles. It was only when writing my application for the job that I realised I have been involved in raising resources for dance work to take place in a variety of contexts. And yet this is my first official role as a 'fundraiser'.

I could never have considered applying for this job if I hadn't looked back and reflected on the money I have managed to raise for various organisations and people over the years. To me it has never been a daunting prospect – probably largely because I have been able to secure funds through creativity, nurturing good relationships and not filling in too many forms! Most practitioners and artists I have worked with over the years are terrified of funding, not spending it (no problem with that) but finding it and applying for it. And so with this article I would like to take some of the fear out of fundraising, and encourage you to give it a go.

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Focusing on what is important

People

Spend some time getting to know the people who will benefit from your project – not just the participants but their friends, family and service providers. These people will all have an interest in the project taking place and are potential ‘investors’. Develop a contact matrix (or, for those of us who like it simplified, one of those spider diagrams) placing you and your project at the centre and listing all the people who might be interested in it. Who wants to see this project happen? Bear in mind not everyone on your list will have money to give you but some will most certainly help you open doors and offer advice on how to raise the money, if nothing else. If this project you are planning has a strong local connection and you know the community really well – you may also start to know what might work in terms of a fundraising event.

Competition

It always makes good sense to know who your competition is. So knowing you’ve done your research and there is a need for your project is key, and make sure you also know what is unique about it, as this will help you ‘sell’ the idea to your potential investors. Remember it’s not just the project people will be interested in supporting – it’s you as well.

Relationships

Make time to create a good relationship with the people you are trying to interest in your project. Often people who commit money to a project (be it a ‘fund’ they manage or their own money) are more likely to commit if they believe in you. So make time to make sure that your project and you are valued. Tea and cake is very important here.

Use the people you know best, the beneficiaries, and engage them in helping you to raise the money you

need – and by whatever means suits them. What’s to stop the after-school club you’ve been running for a term raise their own funding through a performance or ‘bring and buy’ sale? Find simple ways to raise a few extra pounds – sometimes it is the few extra pounds that can make a difference to the continuing success of a project or class.

Securing money and resources

Some of the websites I have listed at the end will give you some great ideas but remember the small stuff. There are some straightforward ways to raise the money you need, including: raffles, collections, bag packing, jumble sales, karaoke nights. And why not try contacting local businesses to see whether they can offer you support – like a donation for a raffle or some in-kind support, like space or transport. Please bear in mind there are rules regarding running a raffle. For really helpful and useful information go to <http://bit.ly/1loRQ09>.

Thank you

Once you’ve secured your funds make sure you take time to say thanks and let the people who gave you money know what you spent it on. Not only are they a potential audience for your work but they could be your future investors too. People like to be thanked and will remember you for it. They will in turn tell people about it, building your reputation within that community and beyond.

Ambitions

And what about those bigger projects that might lead you down the ‘funding application’ route? Don’t panic! There are plenty of guides to help you with this (see list at end) and some of the research and planning you will have experienced for much smaller projects

still applies. Especially the bit about knowing your audience, the benefit of the work and understanding the impact it will have.

Some bigger funders, like Awards for All and other lottery funders may also require you to be able to raise at least 10% of the amount of money you are asking them for from other sources – this is called match funding. So small amounts of money raised from local fundraising can be used in this way.

What I’ve come to believe is that it really is important to demonstrate the value your work has with the people it’s intended for. If they have had a hand in helping you raise money then even better as you can demonstrate that people care about your work and literally want to ‘buy into it’.

So don’t be afraid of the cupcake sale and the gifted tombola prizes. It’s not complicated and you don’t need a degree to be a fundraiser. Just some creativity, which you have, a bit of time (which we all have to find if we care about something) and the courage to give it a go – and some baking skills won’t go amiss either!

Useful websites:

National Council for Voluntary

Organisations: www.ncvo.org.uk

Fundraising Central:

www.fundingcentral.org.uk

Institute of Fundraising:

www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk

Directory of Social Change:

www.dsc.org.uk

UK Fundraising: www.fundraising.co.uk

Parent Teachers Association:

www.pta.co.uk

Youth Dance England: www.yde.org.uk

FCD: www.communitydance.org.uk/

[professional-practice/knowledge-bank/funding](http://www.communitydance.org.uk/professional-practice/knowledge-bank/funding)

Resources:

Fundraising Toolkit:

www.communitydance.org.uk/shop

Price: £20 (non members) £15 (members)

contact ruth@communitydance.org.uk