

# Fundrai\$ing on a Shoestring?

A step by step guide to virtually free campaigns



Faith Wood

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*A step-by-step guide to  
virtually free campaigns*

**Faith Wood**

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**F**or my sister who battles with RSD each and every day and reminds me that:

Courage does not always roar, sometimes it is simply the quiet voice in the middle of the night saying ‘we’ll start again tomorrow.’

--original quote by Mary Anne Radmacher

We hope and pray for a cure every day!



# **The Faith for Fern RSD Foundation**

Please visit [www.faithforfern.com](http://www.faithforfern.com) to continue to provide donations to the Faith for Fern RSD Foundation. Proceeds from the sale of this book will also go into that fund. With continued support, perhaps one day RSD will be a thing of the past.

Faith is available to speak about this project and offers workshops to help you and your team facilitate your own success. She encourages business owners to get involved with fundraisers to grow their businesses. Contact Faith by visiting [www.imind.ca](http://www.imind.ca) or by emailing [info@imind.ca](mailto:info@imind.ca) to find out more, and to book her to speak at your business events.

Thank you to everyone who helped us achieve our goal and to all those who poured out love and encouragement along the way!

We hope you and your team will achieve great success with your venture and we wish you all the very best. Our simplest advice: stay focused, remain calm, and be present!

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# Introduction

## A Roadmap to Successful Fundraising

If you're reading this book, you're probably thinking of undertaking a fundraising campaign, or exploring new ways to increase the effectiveness of your current fundraising activities. You've come to the right place! Through our own recent fundraising efforts, we've accumulated a wealth of first-hand expertise on running a successful, modern campaign. In this book, we've distilled our wisdom into a roadmap to help you achieve success in your own campaign.

Have you ever stopped to consider just how many great causes are competing for donors' hard-earned dollars? There are more than 161,000 registered charities in Canada alone.<sup>1</sup> Just think of the barrage of telephone solicitations you dodge over the dinner hour each day, and the heaps of promotional material in your mailbox that you toss without a second thought.

Given the sheer competition, it's no wonder fundraising initiatives face so many hurdles in achieving their goals. To be successful in your campaign, you first need clear project goals and objectives, and a vision for how you will attain them. What's more, achieving these objectives takes a lot of work, time, and effort. This means that identifying and recruiting a skilled and dedicated team of people who can help you carry the load is also essential to your future success.

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1 "How many charities and nonprofits are there in Canada and the provinces?," accessed October 2, 2010, [http://nonprofitscan.imaginecanada.ca/tir\\_how\\_many\\_charities](http://nonprofitscan.imaginecanada.ca/tir_how_many_charities).

Perhaps the most critical challenge is figuring out how to spread the word about your cause. In the old movie *Field of Dreams*, Kevin Costner says, “If you build it, they will come.” Unfortunately, this is not always true. However worthy your cause and compelling your story, if no one finds out about it, it’s virtually impossible to have them show up to support you. First you have to craft a memorable message that people can relate to, and then you have to get that message out there. Doing so takes commitment, a few key skill sets, and an emphasis on promotion.

And of course, the necessity of operating on a shoestring budget underlies all these other considerations. As the saying goes, it takes money to make money—but by definition, fundraising initiatives must somehow attract funds without a substantial cash outlay. Running a successful campaign is similar in many ways to running a successful business, but with greater constraints on financial and human resources, and often with pressing deadlines.

As a small group of business owners who, in 2009, managed to create an international wave of attention for a deeply personal cause, we want to help you navigate these challenges. There were no charity designations involved, no large PR companies on the payroll, and no deep pockets funding the project—just an innovative group, a deep level of compassion, and a compelling story.

In this book, we’ll tell you how we did it and what we learned along the way. We’ll also offer insights and tips from other individuals—expert fundraisers and people who have donated time or money.

Whether you're looking for a new and creative method of fundraising or simply looking to incorporate social media into your current campaign, we aim to inspire you to tackle a new means of promoting your cause. May this book inject new hope into your campaign as you use powerful (and cost-effective!) forms of conversation to create a giant ripple in your own community ... or even the world.

## **The Story Behind the Book**

Faith Wood, an Airdrie-based entrepreneur, has an identical twin sister, Fern, who suffers from a rare and debilitating disease known as reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD)<sup>2</sup>. Also known by other names (such as complex regional pain syndrome or CRPS), RSD is a syndrome with diverse symptoms characterized by constant pain—patients say it feels like being doused in gasoline and lit on fire, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Treatments for this disease are painful and often produce insufficient relief for sufferers.

Despite being treated for this disease since 2003, Fern was told in 2009 by her Canadian pain specialists that they could do little more to help her gain relief from this relentless disease. Her pain was not being well managed in spite of high levels of medication, and her long-term prognosis was considered extremely poor. Fern was wheelchair-bound, living on high doses of narcotics, and incapable of participating in any kind of healthy or active lifestyle.

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2 American RSD Hope, accessed October 2, 2010, [www.rsdhope.org](http://www.rsdhope.org).



As a result, Fern chose to proceed with a groundbreaking procedure in Mexico—an experimental ketamine coma treatment she researched on the Internet. The coma experiment was both risky and expensive, but it offered hope of putting the RSD into full remission. In order to participate in the trial, Fern would need substantial funds for travel and hospital care. Canadian Medicare would not provide insurable coverage for these procedures; because the procedures were experimental in nature, they had not been verified as a safe treatment alternative. Since the government wouldn't cover the costs, and Fern could not participate unless she had the capital to do so, Faith began to explore methods of raising the funds for her sister.

Faith approached her friends and colleagues and requested both their ideas and their assistance in finding a way to generate the desperately needed finances that would allow Fern to be considered for this treatment. A few glasses of wine later and a team of compassionate, ambitious, and skilled entrepreneurs assembled to launch the Faith for Fern project.

This book shares the framework of what we did to raise the capital and how we did it. We've also gone further, interviewing other fundraisers as well as those who donate to causes, to give you even more fundraising tips and secrets. (See "Contributors" at the back of this book for a list of those who helped on our project.)

## Chapter One:

# Planning and Prioritizing



**H**ow should you begin a fundraising campaign? At the outset of any large project, the decisions, challenges, and opportunities can be overwhelming—and in a situation where you must accomplish a great deal while making the most of limited resources, it's even more important to map out your path carefully. In this chapter, we'll help you focus on what's important by sharing the story of the Faith for Fern project kickoff.

## Setting Your Sights

Clear goals and objectives are the heart of any fundraising campaign, and they're essential to its success. When planning a campaign, you must have something powerful to say, not just say something powerfully.

Defining the purpose and intent of your project, with measurable timelines, is therefore a critical first step to launching any initiative. Our Faith for Fern project goals were relatively simple, but we still had to define them in terms of time, resources, activities, and team members. We especially needed to identify an ultimate target date and outcome.

Before you approach others with your ideas, it's important to establish the ultimate outcomes you want to achieve. Asked how to appeal successfully to the donor of today, Michael Drew, a book marketing and promotion specialist, advised that "today's consumer is focused on making a difference and is choosing to support activities which portray a measurable and definitive impact on the community."<sup>3</sup> Michael describes societal motivations as being in the "age of authenticity."<sup>4</sup> This means that "volunteerism is on the rise, and our youth are searching for opportunities to make socially conscious decisions."<sup>5</sup> If we are to be successful in our campaigns, we need to keep this in mind.

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3 "As the Pendulum Swings," Beneath the Cover, accessed October 2, 2010, <http://www.beneaththecover.com/2008/01/16/as-the-pendulum-swings/>.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

Your campaign focus should clearly articulate a benefit to others. It must be authentic and credible. Individuals have the ability to search out information on the Internet that can disprove or support your claim, so be careful to provide legitimizing data to back up your project. Talk has never been cheaper than it is today. Now, more than ever before, is the time to do something. No matter what industry you're in—and this includes fundraising—you need to show your customers that you deserve their business. You must prove yourself worthy if you're going to thrive.

## Answering the Five Ws and an H

You can get ready to present a focused pitch to potential donors and supporters by asking yourself a few key questions. In developing the story of your campaign think about the familiar five Ws and an H that lie at the core of any narrative: who, what, where, when, why, and how? Regardless of the type of campaign or project you undertake, making time to consider these questions early in the planning and initiation phases will make sure you don't find yourself at a loss for answers later.

### ***Who?***

This question has two angles. Who stands to benefit the most from your project efforts (either individuals or groups)? And who should be involved as strategic partners in the project?

In our case, Fern stood to benefit personally by participating in the ketamine coma trial. This was not a group result, but rather a very personal benefit.

The question of who should be involved on the project team was more complicated, as in most fundraising efforts. There are a number of factors to consider in sorting out what roles need to be filled and finding people who are qualified and willing to fill them. We'll examine these factors in detail in Chapter Two.

### ***What?***

What are the specific, measurable, and primary objectives of the project?

The goals of the Faith for Fern project were twofold:

1. Raise the necessary capital for Fern to participate in the ketamine coma study before the study ended. This meant raising approximately \$75,000 in 90 days—the equivalent of \$858 a day, or \$35 an hour.
2. Raise awareness and attention for Fern's disease, RSD.

Some objectives are relatively simple and need only be met once: raising a specific amount of money to install an elevator in a church or build a new community playground, for example. Others are harder to quantify, such as that of the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund (JPMF), which raises money to increase public awareness about workplace safety issues facing emergency responders. JPMF narrows its objectives by tackling one safety initiative at a time and raising the necessary funds for that project before moving on to another.

## *Where?*

Where should you direct the campaign, in terms of both geographic locations and potential groups of donors?

The answer to this question will depend on the specific nature of your cause, the scope of your project's objectives, and the extent and location of your available resources. For causes that are highly personal and primarily of interest to a particular community, or that have modest fundraising goals and limited resources, it makes sense to stay close to home. If your objective is broader and concerns a group rather than an individual, you'll likely want to spread awareness further.

Since ours was a personal cause, with Faith making the request on behalf of her sister, we started locally, in Faith's area. Thus, the Calgary region and the province of Alberta became the primary focus. We later expanded the focus to include Greater Victoria and Manitoba as we tapped into areas where direct family were able to speak to the cause.

When the Town of Nanton decided to raise money for a new community playground, it planned a number of small events in the community itself. Coordinator George Woof says that events such as a community garage sale, Friday family dinners, and a festival for kids got the entire community involved in and connected to the project.

In Chapter Three, we discuss our strategies for identifying the groups of donors who were likely to be supportive of our cause.

## *When?*

When should you start your project? When does it need to be done? When will major milestones be achieved along the way?

Sometimes the timing of a project is determined by circumstance. In our case, with the ketamine study moving into its final stages and Fern having already received an invitation for a preliminary review in August, we had 90 days to raise the capital. We later adjusted this initial 90-day goal to 120 days, to coincide with treatment dates.

If the timing of your project is flexible, however, you may want to consider how different timing may affect your success. Some times of the year may be more advantageous than others. For example, a Christmas campaign can catch people in a generous gift-giving (or tax-benefit) mindset: according to a 2009 eCampaigning Review study of two million donors to 50 non-profits around the world, 40% of online donors give in December, 40–60% of those in the last two days of the month.<sup>6</sup> Summer, on the other hand, can create delays due to hectic vacation schedules for both donors and volunteers.

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<sup>6</sup> “2009 eCampaigning Review,” Advocacy Online, accessed October 2, 2010, <http://www.advocacyonline.net/ecr09>

## *Why?*

Why the urgency? What happens if you don't make it?

The “why” behind your campaign will be unique to your cause. For the Faith for Fern project, the answer to this question was multifaceted.

First, Fern had an imminent appointment with Dr. Anthony Kirkpatrick<sup>7</sup>, the lead physician on the ketamine coma trial. If she succeeded in securing a spot in the trial, we had to make sure we had the financing already in place.

Second, the initial study was closing in Germany, and only Mexico remained as an option for trial participants. In order to have the chance to participate, Fern needed to be accepted before the Mexico study also achieved its quota.

Third, her health was deteriorating as time progressed.

Finally, we understood that once Fern was accepted into the study, she would have to be ready to head to Mexico within two weeks' time.

Lani Donaldson of the Lani Donaldson Literacy Foundation, a contributor to the Faith for Fern cause, states that knowing the *why* of a project is crucial before you begin. “The *how* will come as the group you assemble comes together,” she says.

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Anthony Kirkpatrick is an anaesthesiologist at the University of South Florida College of Medicine in Tampa. He has been studying the effects of ketamine treatment, including induced coma, in patients with RSD.



## ***How?***

How can you generate a compelling message or story that will have an emotional impact and secure buy-in from your target audience? How can you get that message out there and actually request support?

The answers here will depend largely on your answers to the five Ws above. In Faith for Fern, the “how” of the project was determined after Faith had put together a motivated team who could contribute an array of skills, ideas, and opinions to help create and communicate a compelling message. Together, we came up with a plan.

Early on, Faith recognized the need to run this campaign like a business venture, not like a well-established charitable organization. We needed to focus on building momentum through viral marketing, relationship building, and traditional press releases. Faith also knew that it was essential for everyone to believe that our lofty goals were achievable and never lose our focus when others told us that the goals were too ambitious or couldn’t be reached.

Our marketing professional, Brenda Mahoney, remembered a news story from several years earlier about a woman in the United States who wanted to go to dental school. This woman lacked the funds to cover the fees, and created a website to help her raise money to achieve her goal. Her web-based strategy was successful. We felt this innovative idea could potentially be duplicated. Unfortunately, the woman’s website had long been removed, and we were unable to contact her to find out how she did it. As a result, we would

be designing and implementing the idea without the benefit of someone else's first-hand knowledge. (We had exactly the problem we're trying to spare you by writing this book!)

As a result of the timing of Fern's appointment, we would be initiating the campaign in line with the busy summer holiday season, which could not be avoided. We had to find a method for keeping the momentum lively through this time frame. Because the project was voluntary, we also had to take our team members' work and family commitments into account and consider how to keep the team focused while still giving them space to honour these commitments.

We elected to run with an online fundraising campaign because we felt we lacked the opportunity and time needed for more traditional fundraising activities and events. It was therefore important to create and consistently participate in an online community. Today's web-savvy audiences demand relevant, up-to-date information, so timely communication was a big part of our marketing plan.

Because of the mixture of legitimate and illegitimate content on the Internet, consistent communication is also critical in making individuals feel safe to donate online. They need both assurance that the cause is legitimate and accountability for the dollars being collected. They want and need to know how their contributions are being dispensed.

We discuss strategies for building online communities and promoting your cause through a website in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, respectively.

There are countless ways to raise money. Maryanne Pope founded JPMF, which raises public awareness about workplace safety issues. Her organization has obtained funding through a variety of sources:

- Provincial government grants
- Lottery-funded grants
- Key stakeholders
- Individual donations
- Fundraising events (e.g., cookie dough and memorial pin sales, anniversary and project-launch parties, raffles and silent auctions)

JPMF also sells the safety educational tools it produces and uses the proceeds for subsequent projects. “That makes the most sense,” says Maryanne. “Raise money and awareness at the same time. Without money, we cannot achieve our work in the world.”

When determining how you will achieve your objectives, get creative. Paul Nahirney, a consultant whose company, Nahirney & Associates in Edmonton, helps organizations with various fundraising campaigns, suggests asking questions to fire up creativity:

- What would you do if you had no money, staff, or facility?
- What resources would you be left with, and how could you leverage those?
- Who owes you a favour?

What can you do with what you have in order to make things happen?

There are many grants available for projects of all types and sizes. These can be very helpful as you try to reach your target. The Town of Nanton secured a 50/50 grant with Let Them Be Kids ([ltbk.ca/kids](http://ltbk.ca/kids)) for its community playground. The grant, which gives your community a dollar to buy playground, skate park, or outdoor fitness park equipment for every 50 cents you raise, is available to communities across Canada.

## Applying for Charitable Status ... or Not

One important decision you will need to address early in your planning is whether or not to apply for charitable status. Organizations with charitable status have the advantage of being able to issue tax receipts for donations. However, the application process can be arduous, so depending on your timeline and the nature of your cause, doing so may not make sense.

Charitable organizations are required to follow strict guidelines, and you should familiarize yourself with these and keep them in mind whether or not you are designated as a charity. You may be called upon by the government to answer for the funds you collect. For a one-off event, donated monies are treated as gifts in kind to specific beneficiaries. If your project is longer-term or wider in scale, you will definitely want to get charitable status.

In order to obtain charitable status in Canada, it's also a good idea to register as a not-for-profit organization or foundation.

Because our immediate goal focused on a single beneficiary, and also because of our time constraints, we did not apply for charitable status or foundation status for the launch of the Faith for Fern project. We highlighted this fact in all our correspondence and speaking engagements, including our letters thanking donors. One of the reasons we elected to have a trust fund was to ensure that our collection of private donations was fully transparent.

For detailed and up-to-date information on becoming a registered charity, visit the Canada Revenue Agency website: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/charities/>.

## Launching a Campaign

When planning a successful campaign—or even an isolated fundraising event—you’ll find that things will go more smoothly if you follow these 10 tips:

1. **Start early.** If possible, allow yourself a few months to strategically plan and promote the campaign. If you have six months, use six months.
2. **Develop a committee mindset.** Depending on the size of the campaign, plan to engage five to ten committed individuals with defined skill sets or passion for the project (and preferably both!).
3. **Map it out.** Starting from your deadline, work backwards to develop a timeline of when things need to be accomplished. Surprises are an inevitable part of campaign planning, but can be kept to a minimum with strategic planning and benchmarks.
4. **Assign and define tasks.** It’s important to outline and define roles and responsibilities for every committee member early on. Each should clearly understand what is expected of him or her and when each project or task is due; such clarity promotes accountability and minimizes duplication. When tasks are not explicitly assigned, they often fall to one person, who then feels as though he or she is carrying the whole load.

5. **Honour the 80/20 rule.** Spend 80% of your time promoting the campaign and 20% of your time organizing it. Do not fall victim to the “build it and they will come” syndrome. People are busy, and they need to understand why they should choose to participate in supporting your cause.
6. **Build in fun.** Particularly when it comes to fundraising events, people are more inclined to take part if doing so gives them an experience they won’t have otherwise. At an event, food and drinks are not attractive enough enticements. Consider entertainment or activities that will encourage attendees to participate and give them wonderful memories to take away from the event (e.g., a hypnotist, dancing, or a live band). For more great ideas on how to incorporate fun, check out Rod Burylo’s book *Awesome Client Events*.<sup>8</sup>
7. **Seek sponsorship.** Consider creating a sponsorship package and start soliciting partners early. Think win-win when looking for a strategic alliance. Businesses will happily support an event that appeals to their target audience. Remember, however, that big companies are frequently hit up for support, so be sure that your presentation clearly explains how aligning with you will also be beneficial to them.

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8 “Awesome Client Events,” accessed October 2, 2010, [http://www.rodburylo.com/awesome\\_clients\\_events.html](http://www.rodburylo.com/awesome_clients_events.html).

- 8. Develop a bottom line.** No one likes to think about it, but we all have to keep the break-even points in mind. Create a budget at the beginning of the planning stages, and make sure you have a strategy for what to do if you don't meet the break-even point.
- 9. Set goals.** If you don't have a target, you can't hit it! Be realistic, but aim for the high end of what's achievable. With the right people in the mix, you can easily be extraordinary.
- 10. Express gratitude.** This is a critically important step. People need to be thanked—both for donating and for working tirelessly to bring in donations. Collect contact information for sponsors, donors, volunteers, and event attendees, and say thank you, preferably in writing. Thanking people is one of the most powerful things you can do, and will build a solid foundation for future initiatives. Failing to say thank you will make it that much harder to solicit support in subsequent years.



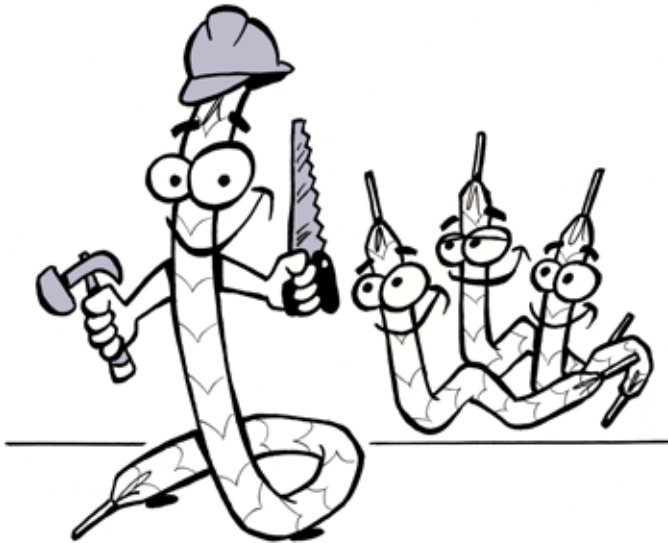
## Secrets of Success

Paul Nahirney, of Nahirney & Associates in Edmonton, shares these secrets of his fundraising success:

- **Great leadership.** The most important ingredient for a successful campaign is your leadership team. Choose wisely, as these are the people who will be take your message into the world.
- **Passion.** When people feel passionate about your cause, they'll help. Discover what connects others to your cause by asking people who are already involved. Use that passion in your message and conversations instead of focusing on getting money.
- **Creativity and innovation.** While there is a lot of money out there that is not currently dedicated to a cause, fundraisers have stiff competition. Do something different so you stand out.
- **Building on what you have.** Stop worrying about what you don't have and focus on the positives. You'll still have competition and problems will still arise, but those who ask what they can do rather than wish for an unrealistic solution are the ones who achieve their goals.

## Chapter Two:

### **Building and Working with a Team**



**I**t takes teamwork to make a dream work. In this chapter, we'll help you think through the team roles and skill sets that will be most helpful to your project, and introduce you to the Faith for Fern team. We'll also share some of the lessons others have learned about helping a team, and especially a team of volunteers, work together effectively.

## Drawing Up Your Dream Team

In the five Ws of Chapter One, we raised the question of who should be involved in your fundraising initiative. As a rule, no one person has enough expertise—or enough hands!—to tackle all the roles involved in a large project.

“Recruit some very dedicated and motivated individuals who possess the skill sets you will require to launch your project, and place them into key organizational positions,” says Lani Donaldson, a contributor to the Faith for Fern cause. “This move alone will be the key to your success.”

### *Project Team Roles and Responsibilities*

The ideal number of people on a project team is usually seven to nine. Too many players make the project team ineffective, and too few means a lot of work for everyone. While it may seem that a larger team would always be better, keeping the numbers down helps give consensus and actionable items a greater degree of success. Putting together too large a team can actually reduce that team’s overall effectiveness. If many people want to get involved, it may be a good idea to consider assigning individuals to smaller action groups. Each group can then assign a spokesperson to come back and report to the larger overseeing body.

Our Faith for Fern project team had six active members who met regularly to ensure the project was on track and to address issues as they arose. In addition, we secured several key members who did not attend meetings but who provided vital information and technical support as we moved through the project.

The following roles represent the typical key players in a project team. Some responsibilities may be divided among multiple people, and some team members may wear more than one hat.

### **The Chair or Spokesperson**

This person is typically the go-to person on the team. He or she initiates the project and provides consistency and momentum. This person's responsibilities can include:

- Ensuring that goals, objectives, and the project itself are aligned with the desired outcome
- Providing resources
- Making the team aware of constraints (factors that may interfere with things getting done on time, such as other projects, budgets, etc.)
- Helping to inspire and motivate the team

## **The Project Manager**

This person is the team leader, responsible for making sure the project is completed and the goals and objectives are achieved. He or she has some of the more hands-on responsibilities, including:

- Keeping an eye on the big picture to ensure progress is on track
- Motivating the project team and helping them grow
- Communicating with sponsors, stakeholders, and team members to ensure everyone is on the same page

## **Key Team Members**

A key team member has expertise in a particular area. He or she typically assists the project manager directly, contributing expertise when necessary. This person's responsibilities include:

- Helping to determine whether or not the project is feasible
- Helping to plan the project

## **Other Team Members**

These people are the workhorses of the team. Each focuses on one or more tasks, as assigned by the project manager. The team members may also act in a consulting capacity if specialized expertise is needed. Their major responsibilities include completing the tasks laid out in the project plan.

## ***External Contributors to the Product***

Apart from the core project team, other parties will be involved more peripherally with the project. In assembling the “people” component of your project plan, you should consider how and when you will seek their services or other input.

## **Suppliers**

Suppliers provide the resources for your project, such as services, materials, or products. These people are crucial to the success of the project. Their sole responsibility is to work with the project manager to deliver the promised items or services on time and at the agreed cost.

## **Customers**

Believe it or not, customers are a part of your project plan, too. These are the people internal or external who are, or will be, affected by the project. Although customers may not have a direct role on the project team, they should influence some decisions made by the project manager, including the objectives, how success is measured, and the direction for the project.

## Identifying Necessary Skill Sets

In order to find the right people to fill the roles on your project team, you need to identify the particular skills that will be vital to executing your campaign. This means going back to the “how” question we discussed in Chapter One. The people who are already on board with the project then have a choice between finding people with the necessary skills, or learning those skills themselves.

For the Faith for Fern project, we knew we wanted to focus on viral marketing and social media, as well as issue traditional press releases. Given the tight timeline, we didn’t have the luxury of time to learn, research, or proceed by trial and error. So we focused our efforts on pulling together a team that already possessed the skills and knowledge we’d need as we pushed toward our goal.

As the chairperson of the project, Faith herself had the professional public speaking skills necessary for spreading the word through networking activities. Her experience in seeking every possible opportunity to stand in front of large groups was a huge asset in getting Fern’s story out there.

Once the idea of an online campaign evolved, it was clear that professionals with specific web skills would be essential. The obvious players would be a web designer and web host. And in order to attract people to the site, we needed to ensure the story was personalized, compelling, and inspirational—so a copywriter was also vital in the website-assembly stage.

Next, we knew that driving traffic to the website would not be as simple as putting up the site, sitting back, and waiting for the crowds to come. Our solution: we had to get the word out through email, traditional media, and other venues. In these departments, we knew that a publicist and media relations expert would be invaluable.

As Faith prepared to speak at the first networking meeting, we realized that printed materials would also be important in disseminating information quickly. Although we could prepare these on our own printers, having a print specialist on board saved both time and energy and ensured an optimized, professional image. It's important that mass-produced printed materials not look as though you stayed up all night printing them yourself—or worse, like you pulled out the Crayolas! Professionalism is key. A print specialist can help you brand your look and align it with your message. We'll talk more about branding in Chapter Three.

As we proceeded with the project, other gaps in our skill set and resources came to light. Ultimately, the group of dedicated friends and colleagues who joined the Faith for Fern team included a copywriter, media personnel, a marketing strategist, a web and graphic designer, a lawyer, a printer, a PR specialist, and business connectors.



## Considering Personalities and Motivations

### *Personal Qualities of Strong Team Players*

When you're assembling a high-performing team, selecting players for personality can be almost as important as selecting for skill set. A restaurant owner, for example, needs to hire serving staff with a lively sense of humour and quick smile, as well as a good sense of balance and efficient manner. For a fundraising campaign, which makes rigorous demands on volunteers' time and energy, you must be sure the people who make up your core team have the personalities and level of motivation necessary to follow through.

### *Our Team's Personal Motivations*

Faith's motive for launching the Faith for Fern project was obvious: her twin sister needed her support. But what motivated Faith's friends and colleagues, many of whom had never even met the person they would be working so hard to help? What possessed them to put their businesses on hold and invest their time, energy, and talents in this project?

Below, the team members describe their personal motivations for participating:

Sometimes you just can't say no to your friends (especially if they feel like family). We wanted to help—it was not even a question.

When Faith told of us Fern's plight, we knew we needed to step to the plate and act quickly. Time was of the essence, and the clock was ticking. As family, we rallied together—as friends, we poured our collective energies into a passionate cause. We don't do it because it's easy; we do it because it matters and it's the right thing to do.

**Lani Donaldson and Yvonne Basten, business connectors and owners of Beacon Literacy Canada ([www.beaconliteracy.ca](http://www.beaconliteracy.ca))**

There were several reasons why I agreed to help Faith raise funds for her sister, Fern. The first, and most important, was that I was asked.

We all like to be asked for help, and I think anyone would have wanted to do something for someone in Fern's position. And, of course, Faith's determination to help her sister was contagious. I was just glad I had an area of expertise that could be so useful in getting the campaign moving.

On a less altruistic note, I had recently decided that I wanted to focus my direct response copywriting business on working with the fundraising and non-profit sectors. I had just completed the Association of Fundraising Professionals First Course in Fundraising, and this was a great project to launch my new specialty!

Still, like everyone Faith approached, I know that even if the stars had been less aligned, I would have jumped at the chance to help Faith and Fern in any way possible.

Wendy Zak, copywriter  
([www.wordsbywendy.ca](http://www.wordsbywendy.ca))

I was motivated to help a friend and was really interested in trying out my theory about Internet fundraising. I've been involved with doing fundraisers for 12 years, and it's always a traditional event which produces a smaller return on investment. Most effort goes into planning the event rather than promoting it, and I was tired of that formula. With a website, I was hoping that most of the effort went into promoting the fundraising.

I suggested something like a penny a day would be easy to get people to give. The key is to make it manageable and easy for people to donate.

**Brenda Mahoney, marketing strategist**  
([www.criticaledgemarketing.com](http://www.criticaledgemarketing.com))

Joining the Faith for Fern initiative was a very easy decision to make. A friend and colleague requested my help, and I saw it as an opportunity to use my public relations background to assist in any way I could.

Although I had little in common with Fern and thankfully had never experienced what her family was struggling with, I realized that we shared an important value—a supportive family.

My motivation was helping another in need.

**Kirsty Young, public relations specialist**

I wanted to be able to help a friend in some way. Although I knew virtually nothing about RSD and the ketamine coma research trial, I supported Faith in her efforts to raise the money needed for Fern.

I felt that my background in journalism and as a newspaper editor could be of some assistance in getting the story out. My skill in writing press releases is strengthened by my inside knowledge of how to get the media interested.

**Anne Beatty, press release specialist**

We committed our expertise to this project because the plea for help came from our good friend and fellow entrepreneur Faith. Having worked with her closely over the past few years, we were aware of Fern's deteriorating condition and the impact this was having on everyone in the family. From where we stood, the decision to jump on board was an obvious one. We knew Faith couldn't do this alone and that the effort to succeed would require a supportive team of dedicated individuals.

Professionally, we'd not previously been involved in a project of this magnitude, with such a clear and ambitious goal—we recognized the opportunity to make a difference and we welcomed the opportunity to be a part of the team of experts, already gathering, who were preparing to take massive action and make it happen!

**Shayne Lawrence and Sean Preuter, web developers**

([www.catchthis.ca](http://www.catchthis.ca))

Do I need to state the obvious? My sister needed help. My parents needed to keep their pensions to avoid moving in with me, and as a professional speaker, I had the opportunity to leverage the stage (not to mention the friends!).

My motivation was to keep everyone focused, on task, up to date, and energized. I was the liaison between the family and the working group. Having this defined role helped maintain open and immediate communication between all parties—a vital component for success.

**Faith Wood, sponsor and project manager**

([www.imind.ca](http://www.imind.ca))

**John Whitricks of [www.placititude.com](http://www.placititude.com)**—another friend and colleague who willingly jumped in to support our efforts—provided the server space and hosted our online campaign.

These statements of our team members' motivations show how important a cause can be to a diverse group of people. Today, people are hungry for reality and truth. They desperately want to put their energy and enthusiasm into a project that produces a tangible outcome they can feel good about. When you present a cause that allows people to feel they're making a real, definitive difference to a person, a family, or a community, they will pour their hearts and souls into the project.

Whatever you do, don't let their enthusiasm and efforts be wasted.

Once our Faith for Fern team was assembled, we went with project lists in hand to our friends, friends of friends, and business colleagues who had the skill sets we required, the optimism we needed, and the ultimate in “can do” attitudes. Not once did anyone in the core group question whether or not this was a doable task. It was clear to everyone who stepped up and took a seat at the table that this had to be done, and there was no doubt that it would be a success.

This was the value of pulling in not only people with the proper skills sets, but people with the right personalities and core values. Everyone was committed to the race to the finish.

## **Keeping the Team at the Top of Its Game**

### ***Focus***

When recruiting your team and implementing your fundraising activities, be specific in your requests and needs assessments, and identify the ultimate project goal early. In other words, you need to be certain that everyone on the team understands the answer to the question “Why are we doing this?” This is what we call a purpose statement, and it’s an important element in keeping everyone focused as the project flows.

A powerful team is synergistic. And synergy can be achieved not only by choosing people with similar intrinsic motivations, but also by actively promoting team cohesiveness. With all team members focused on the big goal and clear about how they can contribute to it, personality conflicts are less likely to occur.

Our team had a clear mission, and although many in the group had never met Fern, we were all focused on providing her with the opportunity to get the treatment she so desperately needed.

### ***Communication***

We cannot overemphasize the need to keep talking to everyone. Communication is essential within your core team, as well as with everyone involved in the project. Along every step of the journey, sharing successes and challenges can make the difference between motivated action and stalling. A great way to kill momentum is to stop talking. It is imperative that everyone be on the same page at all times, so keep the information flowing. Choose a go-to person for updates. Missing this step means running the risk of the wrong information being disseminated. This is why successful corporations always have a spokesperson.

Communication was key for Karmen Masson, founder of Suit Yourself in Edmonton, a not-for-profit organization that collects and distributes quality clothing and accessories to low-income women seeking employment or making a transition in the workforce. Karmen's idea of collecting high-quality business attire to distribute to women who couldn't afford to buy their own was a fresh and innovative idea. As a result, she needed to ensure that potential donors understood what they could do to add value and



contribute to the cause. Developing a communication plan helped Karmen hone her messages and direct people on how to donate appropriately.

Most people remember to share the message at the beginning and at the end of a project, but maintaining a constant and consistent flow of information throughout is just as important. Whether you are providing information online or in person, constant feedback about progress will help you develop loyalty among the team, customers, clients, and supporters. By maintaining loyalty, you keep efforts focused and inspired. People want to know what's happening even if there is nothing new to report. Never leave them wondering what's going on. If you fail to take the time to make these updates, individuals will lose their sense of passion and urgency, undermining all your hard work and efforts. Idle minds are like idle hands—not terribly productive!

When you're coordinating service professionals, provide as much information as possible. Talk about time and fixed costs up front. Also be sure to identify how timelines or deadlines will be handled. Talk about how much work is part of the commitment. Communicating up front about these subjects and others can save feelings of resentment down the road.

In our case, it was important to have not only the volunteers on board, but also their family members. A consistently positive message was critical to our success.

In the beginning, some of our volunteers' parents told extended family members that they "hoped" Faith's efforts would be successful. After they attended a fundraising event in Calgary in June where they experienced community generosity first hand, they switched to a more committed message of success. This subtle change in how they spread the message was essential to raising many more dollars through their neighbours, church congregation, and extended family.

### ***Huddles and Game Plans***

Project management requires strategic action plans. Making meetings work is an important element of those plans. Project meetings should not take a back seat or be viewed as unimportant. These meetings ensure consistent and constant communication and help to fuel momentum. They also ensure that any unanticipated challenges are addressed immediately and with the collaboration of the entire working team.

Projects that succeed focus on effective time management. Every meeting needs an agenda and a record keeper. Agendas should be clear, updates accurate, and task lists well defined, with deadlines. Agendas should always go out in advance of the meeting; that way, they double as reminders about appointed tasks.

### *Time Outs*

However important the cause and tight the deadlines, remember that team members need a chance to rest and recharge without feeling as though they're slowing the campaign's progress. Breaks should be built into the project plan, and team members should be ready to support and serve as backup for each other if someone becomes overwhelmed.

By adopting this team strategy on the Faith for Fern project, we were able to create breathing room for when one or more of the professionals on the team had to turn to other commitments, such as work or family vacations. As a result of planning for this downtime, our main players remained strong and positive team players.

## Chapter Three:

# Shouting Out the Message



Once you have a project plan and a team, you need to get your cause out into the world. In this chapter, we'll share our first-hand experiences with developing a message and brand, and spreading that message through personal networks, viral marketing, and traditional media. The best news for fundraising campaigns? Many of today's most effective shout-out tools are free!

## Devising Your Message

Regardless of the medium you choose for advertising your cause, you must first develop a compelling core message that is both informative and persuasive, appealing both to donors' minds and to their hearts. You can then adapt that message as necessary to whatever communication methods lend themselves best to your project.

In creating your message, consider the following components of an effective appeal.

### *Emotion*

In order to be memorable, your message should elicit an emotional response from potential donors. The particular emotions involved, of course, will depend on your cause. Sadness, anger, and admiration can all be effective motivators.

Lani Donaldson of the Lani Donaldson Literacy Foundation says the passion of the people behind the cause is the most important factor in determining whether she gets involved. A personal connection, established through emotion, is integral to obtaining support.

To engage people's emotions with the Faith for Fern project, we needed to paint a vivid picture of how Fern was suffering—to introduce a person, with a family, whom anyone could relate to and sympathize with.

## ***A Solution***

Donors won't see any point in supporting a lost cause; you must show them that there's a real, effective solution, and that they can be a part of that solution.

Despite the hell Fern was living through, there was real hope for her. It was important for supporters to understand that their donations could actually help give Fern her life back—and give her children their mother back.

## ***Facts and Information***

Especially if your cause is not well known, people may not be familiar with even the basic facts about it, and as we all know, ignorance is bliss. It's easy to ignore problems we aren't aware of or don't understand. The amount of information you supply in your message will depend partly on how you're conveying the appeal. If you're using a one-way medium, you'll generally want to supply more facts up front than if you're using a more interactive medium.

For example, a website is not a face-to-face medium. In developing our site, it was therefore vital to provide enough information to answer any questions readers might have. People who are confused or unconvinced will not donate, so we provided links to information on RSD, the ketamine coma trial, and exactly how the funds raised would be used.

## *Credibility*

When it comes to donating money, folks are pretty leery of supporting an initiative that could be a scam. This problem will only increase. There are so many scams around—and so much spam in the online universe—that your message must proactively address these concerns to establish your credibility.

We achieved that by highlighting Faith's position in the Alberta business community, and by emphasizing that all funds were to be held in trust by a reputable Calgary law firm. We also explicitly acknowledged the concern about legitimacy on our home page. To make sure that donors understood our status, we emphasized in all our publicity materials and speaking engagements that we were a family desperate to help a family member, *not* a registered charity, and that therefore we could not provide charity receipts. We tried to leave no doubt that the people involved in the campaign would be accountable for its authenticity.

## *A Sense of Urgency*

Unless you give donors a good reason to donate right away, they're likely to put it off ... and then forget. Some projects are more urgent than others, but it's always a good idea to emphasize the difference that someone can make by contributing sooner rather than later.

We were on a tight schedule, and the website made it clear that time was of the essence. We gave deadlines and timelines, because if potential donors think "Maybe I'll come back to it later," they won't!

### ***A Direct “Ask”***

When asking for money it's tempting to skirt around the issue and hope your readers will take the initiative to donate. As strange as it sounds, it's vital that you ask directly: “Please donate now.” Suggest a figure, give them more than one way to donate, and keep on asking.

## **Branding Your Message**

Branding goes hand in hand with messaging. Associating your message with a consistent, recognizable look and tone can help people become familiar with your cause. It also contributes to your campaign's sense of professionalism and legitimacy. A brand won't achieve all your goals for you, but it helps establish who you are and what you do.

Branding is not about generating more business or new business, but rather about influencing the way people think about you. In a sense, whether we're conscious of it or not, everything we do in a campaign is branding—from the clothes we wear to events, to the style of our websites, to the language we use to communicate our message. It's well worth your while to put some effort into consciously shaping your brand. As cynical as it may sound, there's some truth to the notion that visibility is at least as important as ability.



When you are launching your project branding, ask yourself these questions:

- Are you perceived the way you want to be?
- Do people know what you're doing and what your message is?
- Do people recognize your strengths?
- Are there other ways to increase your visibility?

For us, answering these questions was relatively easy. We wanted to be respected as a group that was putting 100% of all donations towards the cause. Because our message was clear and we had coordinated a team of volunteers with substantial strengths, we were able to assure donors that 100% of all donations—less banking fees, which could not be avoided—were going directly to the cause. (Since we didn't have enough time to apply for registered charity status, we were unable to provide tax receipts. When individuals became aware of the substantial donations being made by others in terms of time and money, they were also willing to forgo the tax receipt in order to support the cause.)

For our branded look, we selected warm colours and a photograph of Faith and Fern together. The message we wanted to convey with this brand was “sisters helping sisters.” Our target audience was families, and we wanted strangers to be able to feel a personal connection with the sisters' efforts.

We chose the key phrase “Give an hour of hope” and always included information about how to donate easily. We kept our goal front and centre: raise \$75,000 in 90 days to allow Fern to receive an experimental treatment that could arrest her RSD. Contributions were encouraged at \$35 per hour.

As a result of these brand decisions, postcards, letterhead, posters, and websites were all aligned with the same photograph and messages. The colours were maintained throughout every document that was sent out through a physical or electronic medium. The photograph was used consistently in all print and television mediums, as well as on all social networking sites. Our objective was instant recognition of the twin sisters in this campaign.

When individuals saw the photos and heard the girls were twins, yet saw the striking contrast in their faces, they felt motivated to take action. This memorable visual element made our personal appeal all the more personal.

Please give our family an hour of hope...

And help us raise \$75,000 for a medical miracle.

## FAITH FOR FERN - BUY AN HOUR OF HOPE



OUR TARGET IS \$75,000.  
THAT IS \$835 A DAY IN 90 DAYS  
OR \$35 AN HOUR. PLEASE HELP  
FERN BY BUYING AN HOUR OF HOPE.

(All donations are gratefully accepted.)

My sister FERN has been suffering from a rare debilitating disease called Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy or RSD since 2003. After exhausting all treatment with her pain specialists, the last remaining viable option for her is a ketamine coma trial in Mexico. With your help we can raise enough money for this life-saving treatment.

Cheques made payable to Stewart & McCullough in Trust.

Please send all donations to:

Faith Wood, 117 - 5th Avenue NW, Airdrie, T4B 1C9

[www.faithforfern.com](http://www.faithforfern.com)



## Targeting Your Audience

Once you have a sense of your message and brand, you need to decide on target audiences for your campaign: the specific people and groups of people with whom your message will resonate most. Think about both your existing networking groups and new audiences you might reach through online social networking and traditional media.

In targeting our appeals for the Faith for Fern project, for example, we sought out groups who held family as an important and stated value. We then made sure not only to make initial requests of the group, but to follow up after the initial contact with progress reports. This was important in helping contributors to feel like they were getting to know this family personally and were successfully helping us achieve the goal.

Along with shared values, specific shared experiences make people especially receptive to requests for support. A woman attending an eWomenNetwork event donated a staggering \$2,500 personal donation after learning of the plight. When asked what motivated her, she said that she had twins of her own and could not imagine what it would be like to have one suffer with such a debilitating disease.

It's also important to consider who on the project team is best suited to delivering the message to a particular audience. When it came to networking, we asked all members of the team, as well as family members, to go to their usual meeting places. For instance, Fern was a major contributor to her local church, so she and her

family were able to make requests that the team could never have.

When asked what factors motivate them to get involved in a fundraising project, the team at BizBOXTV.com identified a personal connection—either to the person who has asked for help, or to the cause the funds are being raised for—as the number one factor.

In planning to get the message out through traditional media, think about how coverage can be broken down into geographical areas to help gain maximum exposure. In our case, Fern lived in B.C., Faith lived in Alberta, and their parents lived back home in Manitoba. We used the fact that the family was spread out over Canada to our advantage by hitting each geographical media community. We adjusted our press releases to fit with the area we were targeting. For example, the Manitoba releases focused on the fact that Fern was born and raised there and that her parents were still very much part of the local community.

Create a list of print and broadcast media outlets in your area that may be sympathetic to the cause, and begin sending them press releases that highlight your efforts. Do you know of a radio station that has a related segment you can make use of? Do you know of a newspaper with a regular column that is linked to your project? It doesn't have to fit exactly; as long as you can find a link, a journalist will be willing to listen to what you have to say.

Take time to think about the focus of that publication or station, and tailor your pitch to show how it connects to that focus. Depending on the media outlet, some angles you might concentrate on include

health, the community, women's interests, men's interests, or education.

Remember that the media is not in business to help you fundraise, but they are in the business of promoting human interest stories—make yours compelling so it's easy for them to jump on board.

## **Personal Networking**

When the time comes to get your fundraising message out to a broad audience, the power of effective networking cannot be underestimated. Networking involves building mutually beneficial relationships with others who are in a position to support your efforts.

With the Faith for Fern project, having a team of small business entrepreneurs who were well connected to a variety of business networking clubs was a huge asset. Having a spokesperson who could speak professionally (and from the heart) to these groups was also a bonus. It's not essential to have a professional speaker spread your message, but it is essential to have somewhere to spread it.

The Plus Five Method of fundraising involves using personal networks to spread your message and obtain relatively small donations from a large number of people. The Town of Nanton recently used the Plus Five Method to help raise \$160,000 for a new community playground. Project coordinator George Woof explains that each committee member was encouraged to ask five contacts for a small donation of at least \$100. This was accomplished in

one day. Then each committee member asked another five people to donate. The goal was to get 200 people to donate. “This tactic worked unbelievably well,” says George. “It was incredible how the donations added up so quickly when we focused on this method.”

For some people, interacting with even slight acquaintances comes naturally. If you’re one of these people, then being a promoter is a good place to apply your natural skills. If, however, you don’t find socializing to be an easy task, know that it’s a skill that can be learned and fine-tuned.

### ***Likeability***

There are no rules when it comes to popularity. However, these six rules of likeability are pretty universally accepted. Just stop and think for a moment about how true these are in your own life.

We like people:

- Who like us
- Who are like us
- Who lift our spirits
- Who are approachable
- Who are genuine
- Whom we associate with positive feelings

The underlying principle of networking is that people prefer to do business with, to hire, or to buy from people they know, like, and trust. If you are attempting to raise funds, it's therefore important to develop a positive relationship with your audience before making the request. People want to feel that they are doing something worthwhile before they are prepared to step into an ambitious project.

Not only can networking help you get what you want; it can also add immeasurably to your polish and sophistication. Attending meetings of business organizations or community groups and getting to know new people gives you greater self-confidence, builds your people skills, and offers you opportunities to interact with successful businesspeople. Networking exposes you to new ideas and helps you keep current on what is going on around you.

It's important to flex your networking muscles as much as possible. Many people network only when they're looking for a job or when they first get into sales. The trick is to network constantly and to keep your contacts current, so they will be there for you whenever you need them.

Keep Wayne Dyer's words in mind: "Networking is concerned with developing relationships. Out of those relationships come the things you want in life. Networking means sending out into the system what we have and what we know, and having it return to reciprocate continually through the network. It means giving things away without expectations."



Business authority Marilyn Moats advises that “Networking is just another way of organizing your luck. Who you meet today may very well determine where you are tomorrow.”

### ***Basic Networking Tips***

As you set out to promote your cause through your network, keep the following points in mind:

- **Always behave like a professional.** Be fair, honest, and authentic in all your interactions.
- **Know your audience.** Make it easy for others to work with you. Appeal to people’s interests, and speak to groups where like-minded people gather.
- **Understand and access your spheres of influence.** These might include professional associations, religious groups, clubs, family connections, or neighbourhood acquaintances.
- **Build relationships.** Identify commonalities with others, build rapport through social events, and show your appreciation for the people in your life through thank you cards—or even just by making an effort to stay in touch.
- **Be alert to other people’s interests.** Identify and solve issues that might prevent them from getting involved with your cause. Maintain confidentiality, make reasonable requests, and keep the group informed of progress.

## Networking through Events

One of the benefits of getting the word out through local networking and face-to-face events is the willingness of others to step up and offer their support.

After defining the message for the online Faith for Fern campaign, the team agreed to test it at a business networking lunch to which many of us belonged. Although the online community had yet to launch, and many details still had to be ironed out, the time limitations and urgency of the request outweighed our inclination to wait for everything to be perfectly aligned. Rather than delay until all facets of the project were in place, the team focused on a fast-track methodology.

The networking lunch was the first time Faith publicly asked for help. Faith focused on telling the story of her twin sister and the journey their family had been on. It was an emotional appeal that produced a dramatic response. During this meeting, the members of the club stepped up to help by committing to multiple hours of hope and offering to run a fundraising event. It was clear that this group would become instrumental in getting the word out, and that other networking clubs would follow as a result.

One of the most significant results of this initial appeal was that Veralin Phillips-Michael, a member of the Calgary Probus Club, offered to host a fundraising event. This event was one of the only live events arranged during our project timeline. Veralin recruited people, organized a silent auction, and even rounded up a band who happily donated their time and talent (JC and Andy Plett from Room to Dance, [www.roomtodance.com](http://www.roomtodance.com)).

When we asked Veralin Phillips-Michael, an insurance specialist with CJ Campbell Insurance, why she was willing to go to such lengths to help, here's what she told us about her motivations and what she did to help our cause:

*The Faith for Fern fundraiser idea was born as I sat and listened to Fern's twin sister, Faith, with pain in her eyes, tell the members of our referral club how Fern suffered with RSD. All I could think about while she spoke was how I could possibly help Fern in her time of need. Immediately after Faith spoke at our meeting, I turned to the person next to me and said, "I have to do something for her." My heart was breaking for this wonderful, caring family who were going through this painful journey with their loved one.*

*My daughter is involved in the dance world, and having been a "dance mom" for the past 15 years, I knew I could call on enough talented dancers and performers to donate their time and help in providing one of the best talent shows possible. My feeling was that this soiree should be the biggest and best that could be put on in a short time. Of course, calling upon numerous people as my sounding boards helped me to formulate even more ideas. A fabulous addition to the talent show would be to have one of the top caterers in Calgary make a wonderful Italian buffet. Other brilliant ideas came from many people willing to help in any way they could. One, which came from a woman with a big heart, was to hold a silent auction the same evening.*

*With that, it was time to work. I contacted friends of mine who ran the Crossroads Community Hall, and they agreed to let us use the hall for a very low fee. In the end they agreed not to charge for the rental if we let some of their board members attend for free. This was a good trade,*

*because the board members also bid on items at the silent auction ... which helped to raise money. Other people got involved in advertising, posting ads on the Internet, collecting items for the silent auction, and numerous other things that needed to be done. What a glorious bunch of caring people!*

*The evening was a huge success. The talent was incredible, the food was fabulous, and the silent auction items brought in some much-needed money. Every dollar meant we were one step closer to helping Fern with her struggle. It was an evening filled with tears of both sadness and happiness. Sadness, when Faith showed a heart-wrenching video of Fern speaking about her ongoing pain, her family, and the hope that she had for the upcoming treatment. Happiness when the final tally was given. We had grossed approximately \$6,500, and through tears I thanked all of the people for their amazing work!*

*I like to think that I helped people realize that our trust in humanity should not be shaken. There are people who care about other people, whether they know them or not. I have never met Fern, but I feel a huge amount of love and respect for her.*

*If I were to do this all over again, which I would in a heartbeat, the one thing I would probably do a little better is delegate. I'm not great at delegating because my leadership personality makes it difficult for me to not do everything myself. I have to realize that there are other competent people to whom I could give more duties.*

*Mostly, I would not change how this function was organized. I was humbled by the people who all worked for the same cause, giving what they could. I am proud of what was accomplished and how I was so*

*fortunate to meet new, thoughtful, and caring people who gave of themselves no matter what was asked of them.*

*My initial feeling was that I did not want any recognition for planning the fundraiser. I don't believe in doing things for recognition or pats on the back. I would prefer to donate time and money anonymously and then watch from the sidelines to see how it helped. It took other businesspeople to convince me that the story had to be told, if not for my own recognition, then for recognition for the illness. Also I was reminded that it certainly couldn't hurt my business.*

*I would recommend that anyone in the same position who can offer to help someone in need just do it, and also stand up as a humanitarian and be recognized as leaders. Not only do such people live their personal lives this way, but they also live their business lives this way. There is nothing wrong with being recognized for the good you do, and in return it allows your clients to know you better and respect your abilities. I truly believe that giving is contagious and brings out the good in other people.*

*I have been asked numerous times why I put on the fundraiser and why I would consider doing something like this at all for someone I have never met. My answer has been, "Why would I not?" I believe we were all put here on earth to take care of each other. Life would be very sad indeed if all we thought about was ourselves.*

*There's only one thing that I would ask in return for my contribution with the fundraiser, and that is to meet Fern and to give her an enormous hug. After all, she is the one who did all the hard work to overcome her ordeal. Fern's strength in fighting the battle of the trauma*

*her body has endured, and her ongoing battle to be completely well, have earned my utmost respect for her. Fern has touched my heart and brought out the best in me. Thank you, Fern!*

## **Viral Marketing and the Virtual Message**

### ***A Definition of Viral Marketing***

What, you might ask, is viral marketing? It's not nearly as unpleasant as it sounds! Essentially, viral marketing is any strategy that encourages individuals to pass along messages or stories to others, promoting a service, product, business, or cause as a result. Viral marketing can happen through any medium, but it's most commonly associated with email and Internet applications.

Viral marketing can lead to exponential growth in awareness of the idea or thing being promoted, and that's why it's so powerful. If a person feels compelled to pass a message along to 10 other people, and each of those 10 tells 10 more, the message's influence grows rapidly. This is the power of a group voice—many voices together can accomplish much more than a single voice. The capacity to co-create is amazing.

Your website is the heart of your online presence (and we'll deal extensively with the topic of developing the website in Chapter Four), but a website is essentially static: people must come to it rather than vice versa. The purpose of viral marketing is to pull as many people to the site as possible.

To activate a viral marketing strategy, you share your message with the people you're connected to by email and in social networking communities like Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn. Obviously, the critical element here is to create a compelling message or story that people feel they, in turn, want to share.

Fortunately or unfortunately, viral marketing can occur with our without your permission. If you overstate your position and are found out, web-savvy individuals can simply punch a couple keystrokes and the blog on you is out. Your cause will be stricken with an illness so viral that there's no remedy. Look around you. Everybody's connected. Access to information is going up. Meanwhile, the economists tell us that access to money is going down.

Regardless of whether you're undertaking a fundraising project or a new business venture, consider how social media can be used to help you create a fan base or sympathetic followers.

### ***Our Decision to Go Viral***

Viral marketing ultimately became the foundation of the Faith for Fern project.

Because no one on the team had experience in running non-profits, and our key players were businesspeople, we treated the project like a new business opportunity. The marketing piece is the backbone of any successful business venture, and we decided that viral marketing through social media would be the fastest, most direct approach to solving this challenge. As a result, it became our first priority.

We had a compelling message (twin sister seeks compassion for critically ill sibling) combined with a tight timeline. Although the tight timeline was not deliberate, it did deliver a tactical bonus from a viral marketing standpoint: it instilled a sense of urgency in people who would and could help us spread the word.

A tight timeline is akin to the concept used by many advertisers when they ask customers to call within the next 20 minutes, or say that there are only so many spots left in a given event, so customers must register now. Urgency creates endorphins in the brain that encourage people to buy immediately. They act immediately because of the perceived time pressure, and the endorphins make them feel good about their decision. If they had time to weigh their options, they might not elect to purchase (or send money). Don't misunderstand this. We are not manipulating people into donating; we simply want to activate that part of the brain that helps them donate now rather than later!

Although we did not set out to assess the effectiveness of social marketing, a by-product of our efforts was to achieve just that. Could viral marketing work as the core of our campaign? Could it be done quickly and on the scale necessary to make our efforts fruitful? Because we were tracking the performance of both online donations and other fundraising initiatives, we were able to tell which activities were producing momentum and which were less successful. As a result, we could respond quickly by adapting or making adjustments to keep donations flowing. We concluded that viral marketing is indeed a critical strategy for business owners and fundraisers alike.



## ***Guidelines for Writing a Viral Email Campaign***

A viral email campaign provides the opportunity for busy people to not only donate but also assist in helping spread your message.

The first challenge with an email campaign is to make sure your email is opened. If you know your recipients well, pick a subject line that takes advantage of that personal connection. If you know your recipients less well, your subject line must be interesting enough to ensure they click in. You could go for an emotional appeal, or simple curiosity, but either way it's important to use a subject line that demonstrates that this is a personal appeal, not spam.

When writing an email of any kind, be concise and brief. Most readers will give you only a small window of time, so it's important to do the following in the first paragraph:

- Grab attention and make your email worth reading.
- Establish your credibility.
- Create a sense of urgency and importance.
- Make it personal, real, and compelling.

But there's one further step you need to take in order to take advantage of the viral potential of email: you must explicitly ask recipients to pass your message along. Better yet, request that colleagues and friends send out regular emails to their contacts and provide regular updates as well. Donors need to be kept up to date and engaged while their excitement at being involved is still fresh.

When people are thanked for their contributions and kept up to date on the project's progress, they feel more inclined to tell others and check often to see how your goals are being met. They may even be inspired to help you reach the goal if you start approaching the finish line somewhat short of that objective.

When we published our first email invitation, we targeted the subject line as “a personal request,” in order to take advantage of the fact that we were all sending this email to our own contact lists. In hindsight, we think that subject line could have been stronger, and it would even have been nice to test some alternatives. Still, despite that, the message did indeed get read and passed on, so it did its job.

In the body of the email, we appealed again to our personal relationships with the recipients by stressing that we were trying to help one of our own. We spoke about Faith as someone they may know or have heard of, in order to cement that personal connection. We also linked to our website, so people could get more information.

This is the email copy we used for Faith for Fern:

*Please help me give this family an hour of hope.*

*I need you to read this email, respond, and pass it on to as many people as you can (and no, it's not some fatuous viral spam thing—I'm trying to help make a very sick woman's life bearable again).*

*You may already know Faith Wood—she's a respected Calgary businesswoman. Well, Faith's identical twin sister, Fern, has a debilitating disease called RSD that causes her to be in intense pain (similar to being on fire) all the time.*

*No treatments have worked, and Fern's only chance for a recovery is an experimental procedure in Mexico.*

*Faith needs to raise \$75,000 in 90 days to help her sister.*

*There is a website, [www.faithforfern.com](http://www.faithforfern.com), where you can find lots of information, and where you can make a donation. Anything you can donate could help give Fern her life back.*

*But, I'm also asking you to do something just as important: please pass this on. If you could send this email to even five people, and they donate and pass it on to five more people, just imagine how quickly Faith's dream of sending her sister for this treatment could come true.*

*Please help make this a reality for Fern, Faith, and their family. It's such a simple thing, but I really believe we can make it happen.*

*Just visit [www.faithforfern.com](http://www.faithforfern.com) to donate, and then pass this on to as many people as you can.*

*Thanks, and best wishes.*

### ***Virtual Conversations: Online Social Communities***

If you're considering launching a campaign through social media, it's important to recognize that online chat rooms and social sites are all about creating communities, and that those communities are founded on conversation. That means that all the actions you take as part of your online campaign should be focused on starting a conversation, contributing to a conversation, or concluding a conversation.

It's also critically important to develop a message that others wish to participate in, and that message must be as personal as possible. People today are pretty web-savvy, and they have no tolerance for dishonesty or super-hype. They want honesty and authenticity. When delivering your message, make sure it's real, powerful, and meaningful.

For those who can tap into its potential, the Internet is a free platform that allows you to move your message among millions of people. Make use of it! Social media gives you the power to further enhance your exposure, as your message becomes part of conversations spread among a broad spectrum of people. At the point when dialogue begins to snowball, your message has become viral. It continues to communicate every minute of the day, with very little maintenance on the part of the fundraising administrator. However, those messages can get lost or dated quickly. *Update often!*

Also, give some thought to **strategic partnerships**. Many like-minded business owners will be happy to post a link to your project

from their own websites. Making it easy for individuals to support you in your efforts is an essential element to getting the word out. Since we are all busy people, providing a template for people to do so can earn people's appreciation and create greater compliance with your requests.

It's also a good idea to remind people to forward links and post updates to their friends. People forget and will appreciate the reminder. Some people might not know how to do things like join a fan page, post a link to your website, or agree online to attend a fundraising event, so providing step-by-step instructions when you send out requests is helpful.

Setting up and maintaining the Facebook fan page was an integral part of our campaign. It became a hub that allowed supporters to view updates on Fern's progress and the fundraising progress, and for them to share their thoughts and feelings on the cause.

We made sure that the person responsible for setting up and maintaining our Facebook page was willing to do updates regularly and consistently. Posting something daily can lose the "jolt" effect, so initially we offered some kind of activity update on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn every few days to keep information current and relevant, and encourage people to revisit and remember the message.

Later, it became essential to provide daily updates on financial contributions and status of Fern's medical care. With so many individuals checking in daily, we received anxious emails and calls when daily updates failed to show recent contributions. People

were able to check progress quickly and donate easily through our PayPal links.

With so many people checking in regularly to see how events were progressing, it was a bit like being involved in *Coronation Street* or *Survivor*!

### ***The Power of the Visual: Leveraging Video***

Consider using video clips to your advantage. Almost 80% of the population prefers to obtain their information through a visual mode. Video can lend an opportunity to your project to put a face to the cause. This helps build rapid rapport and allows you to make more emotional pleas. It is far easier for individuals to identify with someone they can see and relate to, so video images provide a potent call to action. For us, showing videos of Fern's medical decline was valuable in motivating visitors to act quickly in making their donations.

With the cost-effective introduction of professional video and web video into a marketing or fundraising campaign, you will witness:

- Increased awareness of your project or fundraiser
- Added search engine optimization for your website among the clutter of competition
- Value in having a tailored message that meets your needs in every avenue of your campaign strategy
- A way to provide a face to your personal story

Web video, in particular, continues to explode in popularity, and is becoming a central feature for web developers to include in website design. Consider these facts provided by [BizBOXTV.com](http://BizBOXTV.com) in Calgary:

- Video is the fastest-growing feature for businesses.
- A study by SellPoint, Inc., found a big increase in product sales after online shoppers watched a video. Video obtained 100–600% conversion rates.
- The number of online video viewers grew by 124% in 2009.
- Statistics Canada reports that 86% of people in Calgary are active online.
- comScore Canada reports that 88% of Canadians who have Internet access are watching an average of 100 videos each month online.
- More than half of viewers will act after watching a video.

In your online campaign, adopt a strategy of regular video updates. The video clips should be short 30-second videos that can be sent out every week or two, to maintain your project's prominence in the minds of those who have yet to get involved, or simply to promote follow-up initiatives. Beyond being informative, additional video will also help generate more funding dollars. Every time you post something as engaging as video, your message continues to spread

among the many open lines of communication offered online.

The Faith for Fern team realized early on that video would be an important element in our endeavours, particularly since our campaign was exclusively related to one individual and her family. For strangers to get personally involved, they needed to appreciate the seriousness of the illness, and we needed them to feel like they could relate to her struggle. Photos were effective, but could only go so far. We felt that video would support our efforts in ways that text could not. Through video, total strangers could be brought into Fern's life and be privy to the substantial pain she was living with. We thought the video would therefore allow others to relate more personally with her.

We invited the team at [BizBOXTV.com](http://BizBOXTV.com) in Calgary to help us with our quest. Our reasons for wanting them on board are obvious, but what motivated them to donate their time and energy? Here's what our video crew, Todd Gallant and Lisa Ostrihoff, had to say:

*As a producer, [BizBOXTV.com](http://BizBOXTV.com) became involved with the Faith for Fern fundraising effort through a simple, but sincere, desire to help someone in need. After first learning of Fern's battle with RSD through her sister Faith, we progressed naturally toward wanting to learn more about the condition and better understand how our company could help.*

*In business, many are provided an opportunity to aid and assist by practising their expertise in order to benefit others. It is not an obligation ... it is a choice. Upon making that choice, we were able to offer video as a way to positively power a fundraising effort, as it did for Faith for Fern.*



*As a minor participant in something so significant, we experienced great value in being part of a campaign driven by human compassion. After recognizing the difference our company could make in working with those in similar situations, [BizBOXTV.com](http://BizBOXTV.com) has made the corporate decision to continue to provide a portion of our services to those in need.*

Once the video crew agreed to help, finding a method to make it happen was the next hurdle. With Fern living in Victoria, British Columbia, and Faith and the video crew in Calgary, Alberta, geography was a problem to overcome.

Through the financial generosity of others involved with the fundraiser, the team travelled on Air Miles to produce this video on location in both Calgary and Victoria. This allowed us to demonstrate Fern's condition, the effect of RSD on her quality of life, and the overall effect of her illness on her family. Beyond spending time with Fern's family in Victoria, the team also had precious time with Fern's doctor. This offered credible medical insight into RSD and an unbiased endorsement of Fern's decision to choose the ketamine coma treatment.

That video, combined with the tireless efforts taking place in Calgary, provided a well-rounded and balanced view of Fern and the path ahead for the Faith for Fern fundraiser. The video was used online at [faithforfern.com](http://faithforfern.com), and was also delivered through social media to spread the word about Fern, RSD, and the fundraising campaign.

A second video, supplied by Dr. Kirkpatrick one month later, showed a stark decline in Fern's medical condition, which prompted even more donations to pour in. However, without the first video as a contrast, it may not have been as valuable.

## Old-School Advertising

### *Selecting Venues*

Appeals through new media can be extremely effective tools, but don't ignore traditional media outlets in your fundraising campaign. Media can play an important role in attracting attention to your cause. Karmen Masson of Suit Yourself was swamped with volunteer support and donations after appearing on a local morning show, something she was invited to do after her organization was written about in a local newspaper. After she received the Global TV Woman of Vision award in Edmonton, her organization received 25 new volunteer applications and was able to double volumes and triple service time.

Consider the array of venues available to carry your message beyond your personal and virtual networking communities: local and national newspapers (including free papers), radio stations (including online stations), local and national TV stations, and local or business newsletters can all be valuable allies in getting the word out.

Having a background in media and public relations is not absolutely necessary, but it certainly helps. Whether you are experienced or not, it's important that you not be afraid to ask for what you want when it comes to the media.

Remember, however, that traditional media outlets are not in the business of free promotion. They are in the business of sharing relevant and current information that their communities will find of interest. That said, when making the requests on behalf of a fundraising campaign, you do have a bit of an advantage as most media outlets are always on the watch for a great initiative to align themselves with.

When raising funds, focus on the human aspect of the campaign. Although it's important to make it clear that you are raising money, media outlets are more inclined to cover a personal story rather than simply announcing a fundraising campaign.

Do your research. You don't need to spend hours searching through papers, magazines, and websites (although it can help). Be smart with your time, and look up other fundraising organizations' projects; see where they got coverage. If you can alert a newspaper about a story you have that can be linked into a regular column, you have just made the writer's or editor's job a lot easier.

### ***Making Contact***

When you reach out to a traditional media outlet, don't be discouraged by a non-response. They receive hundreds, if not thousands, of media releases, requests for help, announcements,

complaints, and story ideas daily. It makes sense to contact them with an email and follow up with a phone call. Some journalists like receiving phone calls, and others don't. If you've already written an email explaining the initiative, when you call you can reference the email. Otherwise, it can be quite difficult to provide all the necessary details to a journalist in an initial phone call.

When you do call, get your main point across, offer to send another email to the person's direct email address, and agree to follow up once he or she has had a chance to go over the details. It's a great feeling when you talk to a journalist who sounds genuinely interested in what you have to say and is happy to discuss further. (Make sure in advance that you have a clear idea of what information you'll want to discuss in detail if given the opportunity.) And don't be offended if a journalist says, "That's not something we do. Goodbye!" or "Please send any news releases or story ideas to the main email address" or "What are you talking about? I don't understand what you want me to do with this." They are busy people, and they expect you to be a public relations person trying to sell a client.

A journalist database is a real advantage as you can view direct contact details, the ways different journalists prefer to be contacted, and what areas they cover. Databases can also hold editorial calendars, so you can target certain publications by the topic they intend to cover in a given month. These online resources can be very expensive; however, you can find pretty ample and up-to-date lists of journalists' contact detail for a few hundred dollars. It is still possible to get your message out there without this resource; it just takes a bit more research and persistence to get to the right person or department.

Most media outlets are now online and will have lists of contact details and a general email address for story idea submissions. Do not give up on the first attempt; as noted above, media outlets receive hundreds of emails. Getting the right person reading your email on the right day is not a sure thing. Don't be afraid to resubmit the next week, making sure all your information is up to date.

Persistence (short of measures that risk a restraining order) is considered acceptable. Publications have been known to receive a story idea and not use it until a year later. If you're fundraising, time is of the essence, so make sure you stress this fact. Persuading a particular outlet to carry your story may be an important part of you achieving your goal.

### ***Writing a Press Release or News Release***

Here are some things to keep in mind as you write your message to submit to traditional media outlets:

- **Think before you write a press release.** What critical information do you want to convey?
- **Make sure the information is relevant and newsworthy.** Everybody wants to be first to break real news, so make sure you have at least one juicy news bit to offer.
- **Tap into a current media focus to increase the odds of getting your story printed.** For example, when Tiger Woods was exposed to a lot of media attention in late 2009, Faith wrote an article on how to spot a liar that the

press picked up thanks in part to this headline: “Become a Human Lie Detector – How to Catch Your ‘Tiger Woods’ in a Fib.”

- **Increase your exposure by linking your fundraising to related causes and activists.** For example, if you promote a literacy fundraiser during International Literacy Week, you’ll have a better chance of getting press.
- **Always start with a brief description of the news first, and then tell who announced it.**
- **Always deal with facts, not assumptions.**
- **Be as brief as possible.** Just as nobody likes to listen to endless chatter, no one wants to read through it. Get to the point quickly.
- **Provide as much contact information as possible (e.g., emails, phone numbers, websites, and mailing addresses) for journalist follow-up.** When selecting a spokesperson for your group, be sure that person is prepared to respond in a timely and confident way to journalists’ inquiries.
- **Be sure to tell the receiver of the press release that the information is for him or her, and give that person a compelling reason to read it.**
- **Make it as easy as possible for the media representatives to spread the word for you.**

Below is a sample of one of the early Faith for Fern project press releases:

*PRESS RELEASE*

*JUNE 2009*

*FAMILY ASKS FOR ANOTHER HOUR OF HOPE*

*FAITH FOR FERN – \$75,000 in 90 days: that's \$858 a day or \$35 an hour—a family asks the public to donate an hour of hope for Fern.*

*Respected Albertan business coach and motivational speaker Faith Wood is desperately seeking funding to help her ailing identical twin sister, Fern, raise \$75,000 to receive her only hope now for recovery: a groundbreaking medical procedure in Mexico. Wood has created Faith for Fern, an initiative aimed at getting her sister the help she so desperately needs.*

*In 90 days, \$75,000 must be raised for Fern to progress on to the trial. That's \$858 a day or \$35 an hour. Every \$35 received from the public brings her one hour closer to getting her life back.*

*Since 2003, B.C. resident and mother of three Fern has been in chronic pain, suffering from a rare condition called reflex sympathetic dystrophy or RSD. A progressive disease of the autonomic nervous system, RSD is characterized by constant and extremely intense pain. Fern was told by doctors last year that they had exhausted all known treatment to help her. Her only chance for recovery now is a ketamine coma trial in Mexico.*

*With a definite goal of \$75,000 in mind, Wood has taken on the awe-inspiring task of raising the massive amount of money in 90 days—and she needs the public’s help. Wood said, “I think we can make this work, because of the power of people.”*

*A light breeze across Fern’s legs is enough to cause excruciating pain. The disease can result in complete loss of limb function; however, Fern battles this symptom daily by spending painful hours working her limbs to keep as much muscle mass as possible. Husband Theo, children Zach, 19, Elise, 16, and Harrison, 14, along with sister Wood, are not giving up without a fight.*

*Fern has been through years of painful treatments, one of which resulted in a disk in her back being torn, requiring surgical replacement. She has decided to attempt the experimental treatment as a last resort. The trial is extremely dangerous, as the patient is put into a five-day coma, to help “reboot” the nervous system. Although the trial is risky, the prognosis for those who successfully complete it is very encouraging.*

*Wood is asking people to contribute \$35, or whatever they can afford, to buy an hour of hope for her sister’s recovery from a life sentence of pain, distress, and sorrow.*

*This is truly Fern and her family’s last chance at a normal life. What else can a family do now but ask?*

*To donate to the Faith for Fern cause, please visit [www.faithforfern.com](http://www.faithforfern.com).*

*For more information or to arrange an interview, contact Faith Wood at 403-461-3498 or [faith@imind.ca](mailto:faith@imind.ca), or Kirsty Young at [kirsty.young@tinypr.ca](mailto:kirsty.young@tinypr.ca).*



### ***Creating a Public Service Announcement***

A public service announcement (PSA) or community service announcement (CSA) is a broadcast designed for public interest. These announcements inform or educate the public about specific issues or coming events.

Public service announcements are a great tool for announcing fundraising events or the launch of a new fundraising campaign. Many newspapers, TV stations, and radio stations have community pages that allow fundraisers to promote events. Although a PSA requires less information than a press release, the standard questions of who, what, where, when, and why still apply.

Many media outlets have guidelines for submitting a PSA, so do some research online before you approach them.

Here are some basic pointers for preparing and submitting a PSA:

- If you're submitting the PSA via email, put "PSA" in the subject box along with the date and purpose of your fundraiser in less than 10 words. The goal is to grab attention.
- Write "PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT" at the top centre of the PSA, followed by the date you would like the announcement to air or be released.

- The PSA should look as professional as possible. If you have a logo or image linked to the cause then put this as an attachment in your email or at the top of the page in an electronic or paper document.
- Next, provide the name, telephone, email, and fax of the contact person.
- Give the name of the event in bold letters, followed by a very short and concise paragraph with the information you wish to promote.
- Release the PSA for an event three to four weeks before the event.
- Conclude by putting “End” or “###” or “-30-” at the end of your PSA, as you would for a press release.
- Whenever possible, use group members’ connections with the media. Sending to a personal email box is always better than sending to a generic email. Just make sure the person you send it to handles PSAs or has influence over what goes out.
- If you do not have a direct contact, make a few calls to find the correct contact email or mail address. If you can’t track down a name, label your PSA “Community Calendar,” “Program Director,” or something that will make sure it reaches the right department.

Using these simple rules will increase your chances of getting your PSA read or posted and gaining interview interest for your cause or event.

## Chapter Four:

### Developing the Website



The primary goal of the shout-out techniques discussed in Chapter Three is to drive traffic to the epicentre of your campaign: your website. A carefully thought-out website is a critical component of an online campaign—and an enormous asset to any kind of fundraiser. In this chapter, we'll introduce a number of considerations to keep in mind as you design your website.

## Efficiency vs. Perfection

A Kellogg Foundation study found that up to 50% of donors are going to want to check you out before they give, whether they give online or not. A website that provides the information those people are looking for will therefore give you a significant leg up in your fundraising efforts. The site doesn't have to be fancy, and it's OK to make mistakes. Just keep it real: personal, sincere, and credible!

For the Faith for Fern website, the plan right from the start was to keep it as simple as possible while still being effective. With that in mind, we kept the size of the site small and manageable, four pages total.

Because of the critical nature of the situation, and the need to be ready in time for Fern's appointments with the doctor in Florida, we had to be decisive and quick. While Faith was working with the rest of the team in Calgary to bring together contacts and create the enormous amounts of copy that would be needed for the site and other materials, Catch This! Design was pulling together the design and getting right to work on building the website.

Under normal business conditions, we would have spent time branding the look of the site to match the business focus. For us, time didn't permit. Instead, we decided to focus more on messages rather than slow down the process with image branding. We wanted a colour that we thought Fern would identify with and that also helped to convey our message of hope. We decided that orange would fit the bill. Orange is thought to be a healing colour that promotes balance. In spiritual traditions such as Taoism and

Buddhism, orange is linked to the mental body in both its logical and conceptual form. It's also associated with increased immunity.

The site was launched within one week, which is pretty incredible.

Once the site was established, we had to keep it up to date in order to make it an effective tool. That meant updating elements like the fundraising thermometer on the home page, as well as adding new media items, like video, as they became available. Throughout the process, we had to roll with the punches—there was no time to worry about getting it perfect; the important thing was just getting it done. This was an important lesson for all of us.

## Credibility

If you're reading this book with the goal of tackling your own online fundraiser, then you need to read this section carefully.

When working in the online world, where authenticity can be questionable, you need to be mindful of making it easy and safe for individuals to donate. Contributors need to know that the cause is legitimate and that the keepers of the funds are accountable for the dollars being collected. Ensuring transparency and authenticity throughout every stage is an absolute must for online promotions. The web is often viewed as a playground for fraudsters, and if you don't take the appropriate steps to combat this perception, your potential donations could be seriously hampered.

If you can afford to enlist a lawyer to administer a trust fund for your cause, doing so can add credibility and security to the project,

removing potential roadblocks as you move forward. The Faith for Fern project had the enormous benefit of Mr. Brian McCullough's legal services.

However, not every cause has the luxury of this kind of legal support to lend it credibility. Without such support, it's even more important to ensure that your website convey the legitimacy of your cause. Like the copy for an email campaign (which we discussed in Chapter Four), your web copy should be personal in tone, should identify the people behind your campaign and convey enough information about them to establish their accountability and trustworthiness, and should explicitly acknowledge and address potential concerns about legitimacy.

## Style Guidelines for Web Writing

On the web, attention spans are short. For your site to be successful, it must be user-friendly, interactive, interesting, and efficient in conveying information.

Here are some important tips to keep in mind when you write your fundraising website:

- **Get straight to your main point.** You have about three seconds to grab your reader's attention, so make sure you have a powerful headline and a strong first paragraph. Ensure that the site represents you well. It should launch directly into your compelling story.

- **Write in a conversational tone.** Write your web copy in the same voice you would use if you were talking face-to-face with a friend. Try reading your copy aloud to test it out. Remember, your online communications should focus on starting a conversation, contributing to a conversation, or concluding a conversation. Try to create a personal connection that allows your reader to feel involved and develop a commitment to helping.
- **Be as brief as you can.** Don't use five words where one will do. A photo is a great way to create a favourable impression without adding another thousand words!

## Webpage Content Guidelines

- **Give all the information.** You need to tell your whole story and make sure each piece of information is easy to locate. Include stories, facts, and links. Some people will look for the personal “about us” information, while others will be more convinced by facts and figures.
- **Make the call to action apparent.** What is it you want your site's visitors to do? Tell them exactly what and how, and encourage them to do it right away.
- **Use separate pages, links, and text boxes to tell different parts of your story.** Chunking information out this way helps people find the pieces that interest them specifically.



- **Avoid long blocks of text.** If your message is complicated, make your text easy to scan by dividing it up: use short sentences; divide paragraphs with a blank line; use subheads to divide thoughts; use bullet points to highlight facts; and use colour, underlining, and bold fonts to highlight important phrases.
- **Show that your cause is legitimate.** Post your non-profit status number if you have one. List the names of board members who are accountable and stand behind what is being said. (We made sure people could find information on Faith and the legal counsel in charge of the trust fund.)
- **Provide security for any online donation buttons.** You want online donations to be easy, but they also need to be secure. Donors need to feel comfortable that encryption technology is protecting their financial contribution. Provide a clear mailing address for those who feel insecure about online donations.
- **Track donations to date.** Be sure to show visitors how your goals are progressing. Share stories of other contributions and milestones. Don't be afraid to shout out good news!

- **Make it easy for visitors to communicate with you.** Is there some method for interacting with your group included in the site? Donors want the ability to comment, discuss, and learn more. In our case, we linked all conversations back to our Facebook site and provided links for easy navigation. Although Facebook was our primary message board, we also provided important and valuable updates on the home page of the site.
- **Plan for consistent and regular feedback from your site.** You want to be able to express gratitude, advertise new events, and provide updates and financial tracking. A 2009 eCampaigning Review study that looked at two million donors to 50 non-profits around the world reported that “70% of non-profits didn’t send a follow-up email within one month and 37% did not send a thank you email. When first time online donors did not receive a follow-up or thank you email, they overwhelmingly chose to never donate again!”<sup>9</sup>
- **Do you make it easy for others to volunteer?** Often, an invitation to volunteer and information on how to do so is completely missing from websites, and ours was no exception. Although we certainly never turned anyone away, in hindsight, we should have made it easier for visitors to volunteer.

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9 Visit <http://www.advocacyonline.net/ecr09> to see the full results of the study.

## Illustration: The Faith for Fern Website

Below is a brief and simplified summary of how we set up the Faith for Fern website.

### *The Home Page*

The home page was divided into separate text boxes, each of which had a specific function:

- **The introduction or main body text.** This took the form of a personal letter from Fern's sister, Faith. She had a heart-rending story to tell, and we didn't want to dilute the emotion and urgency of her plea. But it was also important to keep it brief—full information was easily accessible elsewhere on the site.
- **Specific information on the goal and timelines.**
- **Please Help!** In this section, we made our specific request and provided two ways to donate (because some people prefer to donate immediately online, and some people prefer to mail a cheque).
- **Is This for Real?** It was very important to reassure readers of the authenticity of this appeal. We provided Faith's credentials as a well-known businesswoman and emphasized that the funds raised were being held in trust by a law firm.

- **Need to Know More?** This section provided links for people who wanted to learn more about RSD and the ketamine coma trial.
- **Links to media coverage, press releases, Facebook, and Twitter.**

### ***Meet Fern and Faith***

This section was written by Fern and Faith themselves, and told their stories in a very personal way. Here the reader could get to know them, start to feel their pain, and develop a personal connection.

### ***Question and Answer***

After brainstorming all the questions that people might ask, we tried to answer them all. By being forthright, informative, and honest, we built on the trust and commitment we had developed on the other pages, and dealt with any concerns or objections our readers might have.

Specifically, we answered these questions:

- What is Fern's prognosis if she receives this treatment?
- What is Fern's prognosis without the treatment?
- Will Fern definitely be able to receive the treatment?

- What is the timeline of events?
- What are the associated costs?
- What will happen to my donation if Fern does not receive treatment?
- What will happen if you raise more money than you need?
- How do I know my money will be used responsibly?
- Why Mexico? (With this question, we wanted to make sure that visitors to the site understood the methodology and did not worry that the fundraisers were being scammed themselves.)

A Q&A page is the ideal place to deal with details and information that would make the other pages wordy and hard to read, but that are nonetheless important to include.

## Other Website Development Considerations

### *Taking Advantage of Web 2.0*

In addition to offering compelling copy, you can enhance the effectiveness of your website by taking advantage of “web 2.0” tools that promote interaction and information sharing.

Here are some of the possibilities:

- **PayPal functionality and “Donate” buttons.** These tools make it quick and easy for people to donate, and their presence on the site also doubles as a call to action. If your project is temporary and you have an existing and current PayPal account, you can use that to avoid any difficulty with setup or implementation.
- **Visible links to your Facebook page and Twitter.** Just as these social media can drive traffic to your website, linking to them *from* the site can encourage more people to join your community and participate in different ways.
- **Use of embedded videos hosted on YouTube.** See Chapter Four for more details on using web video.

These tools are free to use once their technical implementation is in place, and they make it easy to connect with campaign followers on a number of levels. With our website acting as a central hub for the core message, the team was able to tackle the publicity efforts and drive traffic to one easy-to-use location that served many needs and directed supporters to a variety of places where they could share encouragement, donate, and stay connected.

## ***Understanding Search Engine Optimization (SEO)***

Location, location, location! This mantra is usually associated with real estate and brick-and-mortar stores, but don't underestimate the importance of being found online. You don't want to be the kid who sets up his lemonade stand in the back alley and then wonders why he hasn't sold any lemonade.

Much of your website traffic may come as a result of the connections you make personally and through print advertising. But a substantial portion of your website traffic can come from people who find you online through a search engine like Google or Yahoo!. Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of making it as easy as possible for them to do so.

In the most basic terms, having your site SEO'd allows you to tell search engines how you'd like your site to be indexed, rather than letting the search engines rank you strictly according to their generalized formulas. If you don't do so, automated search engine indexing will often bury your page among millions of others.

The best way to get solid SEO results is to do in-depth research on keywords people are likely to use, then tie those keywords into your page titles, descriptions, and copy. SEO can also involve "under the hood" internal components, like HTML tags, as well as external components, like the installation of trackers.

Good SEO is something you should consciously address in building your site. To be effective, SEO needs to be properly researched and implemented by someone who is knowledgeable and experienced in the field of search engine marketing. Note that SEO rarely becomes fully effective until one to three months after its implementation.



## Web Traffic Assessment

### *Three Types of Traffic*

In order to tailor the approach you take to your online campaign, it's a good idea to track data on when and how traffic arrives at your website. To assess our web traffic, we used Google Analytics, a free service that provides detailed statistics on website visits.

Visitors to any website arrive in three ways:

1. **Directly.** These visitors type the exact address of the website into their browser or use the bookmarked address.
2. **By referral.** These visitors arrive at the website by clicking a link listed on another website, in an email, or somewhere else.
3. **Through a search engine.** These visitors find the website by typing words or phrases into a search engine like Google or Yahoo!.

Most newly launched websites are heavy on direct traffic, lighter on referrals, and lightest on search engine traffic. Strong direct traffic is first and foremost a result of word of mouth and campaign elements such as posters, postcards, and other print materials that give the web address. Direct traffic may also include visitors who heard about the project through a radio interview or saw it on a news piece and visited the site as a result of that exposure.

As a website matures, the trends start to reverse, with search engine traffic usually taking the first or second spot and referrals taking

the second or third spot. Search engine results increase over time because as more people search for the site, it will appear higher on the list of search results. This means that more people will see the site when they do a similar search.

Referral links are usually used most when a website is new, because novelty gets attention. Referral traffic has the worst retention rate of the three types of traffic. Returning visitors or new visitors forwarded to the website are more likely to use the web address (direct traffic) or a search engine to come again.

In assessing your traffic data, it's important to notice the difference between the number of unique visitors, the number of visits, and the number of page views. Normally, the number of page views is the highest, followed by the number of visits, with the number of unique visitors being the smallest.

## **Analysis of Traffic at the Faith for Fern Website**

Between June 3 and October 18, there were a total of 2,724 unique visitors to the Faith for Fern website. This number is based on the number of unique computers used to access the site, so it's possible that more than one person visited the website from the same computer. There were a total of 5,800 visits, meaning roughly two visits per visitor, and 9,829 page views.

Of these visits, roughly 45% represented direct traffic, closely followed by search engine traffic at 44%, with referrals in the last spot at around 11%.

Faith for Fern started with and maintained strong direct traffic, while organic search overtook referral traffic in the course of the campaign.

**Direct Traffic**

It’s impossible to measure what percentages of our website’s direct traffic were due specifically to word of mouth, posters, postcards, and so forth. This is a shortcoming that all websites have to face to one degree or another, depending on the depth of their traffic-driving strategies. There are ways to pinpoint more accurately, but they require a longer timeline than we had for our project.

**Referral Traffic**

According to Google Analytics, for the period from June 3 to October 18, 141 sites referred traffic to the Faith for Fern site. This figure is not as impressive as it might look on first glance, because emails with links are counted as referral sites. These emails made up two-thirds of total numbers, and on average each email scored two clicks.

*Top Five Referral Sites for the Period of  
June 3 to October 18*

1. <a href="http://www.facebook.com">www.facebook.com</a>	816
2. <a href="http://www.airdrieecho.com">www.airdrieecho.com</a>	80
3. <a href="http://websearch.shaw.ca">websearch.shaw.ca</a>	65
4. <a href="http://www.twitter.com">www.twitter.com</a>	57
5. <a href="http://z9.invisionfree.com">z9.invisionfree.com</a>	40

As the previous table shows, the Facebook social networking site was the absolute winner in terms of referral traffic. This was to be expected, as Facebook is an online tool accessible to a large number of people. The statistics show that Facebook was a moderately effective promotion tool, but still, the average number of hits per day on Facebook was only around seven. The lesson here is not to lean too heavily on one source of referrals, but instead to spread your message around through a variety of mediums.

### **Search Engine Traffic**

Our search engine traffic was absolutely dominated by the Google search engine, with 1,292 visits, followed by Bing (69 visits) and Yahoo! (36 visits). Focusing on Google in our SEO efforts was a good move for us, and it's a strategy we'd recommend for other fundraising projects.

The search terms people used to find us can roughly be organized into three categories:

1. "Faith for Fern" and variations
2. "RSD fundraising" and variations
3. "Ketamine coma trial" and variations

Our efforts in promoting our project by name made “Faith for Fern” a brand (in a non-business sense), and its prominence as a search term shows that it was recognized as such. “RSD fundraising” and “ketamine coma trial” are more general terms that may have drawn people to our site who hadn’t already been contacted through our direct efforts.

SEO-fuelled search engine traffic showed measurable increases over time, so our attention to SEO did help to drive consistent online traffic to the site.

### **Traffic Peaks and Troughs**

For the purpose of this analysis, we will use the number of page visits to illustrate the changes in traffic. See Appendix A for a list of media items, along with the dates when they appeared, to see how these events correlate with increased traffic.

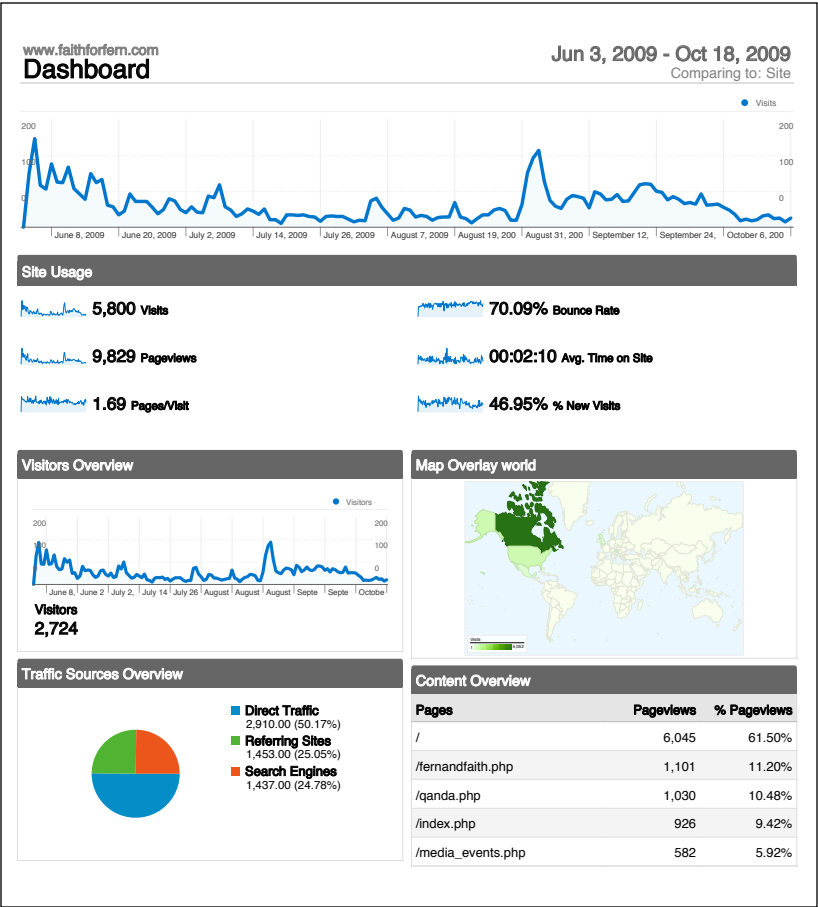
The average number of visits per day to our site was 42, with the lowest dip on July 19, which saw only 7 visits.

The highest peak in visits to the Faith for Fern site was on June 5, which saw 165 visits. This peak was a result of the preparatory work that had people anticipating the launch of the site, and the first fan-out of the site via the team members’ personal contacts. Once the site went live that first week in June, there was a rush to see it. The second highest peak occurred on Thursday, September 3, and it totalled 143 visits. There was a gradual increase leading up to this peak, with 129 visits on September 2 and 102 on September 1.

With the announcement of Fern’s safe return from the ketamine coma trial on October 6, the number of visits declined.

**Geographic Assessment**

Geographically speaking, the site's SEO was clearly aimed at Canadians, and it performed very well in its niche. There were some international visitors, and a slightly higher number of visitors from the U.S. and Mexico, but of the total 5,800 visitors, over 5,000 came from Canada. The success of the site showed that Canadians are willing to donate money online and follow the development of a project in the same way. While it's possible there is a worldwide interest in websites like Faith for Fern, we can't be sure of its magnitude.



Google Analytics Dashboard overview.

## Chapter Five:

### Finding Key Sponsors



**W**ithout key sponsors, we often find ourselves struggling with overhead expenses and the costs of running a fundraising event. Finding a key sponsor is one of the toughest prospects of any fundraising initiative. However, learning how to approach businesses and understanding what opportunities are in it for them can make this hurdle a lot easier to jump.



One of the biggest benefits for any company in supporting or getting involved with your project is relationship marketing.

The world is changing. Word of mouth now travels at lightning speed, thanks in no small part to the Internet and social media sites. Consumers have become a savvy bunch and are hesitant to trust paid advertisements as their source of information. As a result, the level to which other people like and recommend you is now far more critical to your business. In other words, developing relationship capital is crucial to your overall success and recognition in the community.

## **Relationship Marketing**

So what is relationship marketing? It's all about the weight attached to generating goodwill relationships and tapping into that word-of-mouth trust factor.

The goals of today's successful business are generally to find, attract, and win new clients; nurture and retain those the company already has; entice former clients back into the fold; and reduce the costs of marketing and client service. Connecting with like-minded partnerships in local and national fundraising projects that promote you within your target audience is a very good way of achieving those goals. Consumers want to know what you're doing to give back and how you're making a difference for others. Michael Drew, founder of Promote A Book ([www.promoteabook.com](http://www.promoteabook.com)), advises that today's consumers are not buying just a product or service; they are buying what you represent. Knowing this single bit of information can help you generate a mutually beneficial proposition for your request for support.

## Social Media

Social media sites like Twitter and Facebook are greatly amplifying the voice of people in the marketplace and are predicted to continue generating profound and far-reaching effects on the way companies manage their clients. People are using these social media sites to share opinions and experiences on companies, products, and services. Because social media isn't moderated or censored, individuals can say anything they want about a company or brand, whether pro or con. Increasingly, companies are looking to gain access to these conversations and take part in the dialogue. As organizers of events that use social media platforms, charitable organizations can offer a tremendous benefit to a company looking to elevate its image among its specific target audience.

Lani Donaldson explains the importance of social media: "There is no way around it, especially for a grassroots movement—social media will get you the distance you require to create critical mass."

## **Real-Life Donors' Tips for Motivating People to Give**

What motivates business owners and philanthropists to get involved in a project? Here's what some donors had to say:

### ***Customers Come First***

Beat Schmassmann, a corporate executive chef based in Calgary, Alberta, who is often the recipient of requests for donations, suggests that "to get something, you first have to give something." A business owner is more inclined to take your request seriously if you have been a regular and loyal customer in the past. Business owners prefer to support those who support them.

Sarah Deveau, previously the owner of Cater Tot Consignment, a children's second-hand store in Airdrie, Alberta, and author of *Money Smart Mom*, echoed that sentiment. She says she tosses out requests for donations from people who simply drop off a letter and indicate that they have never actually been in the store. But if they begin their request with a statement about how they love the place and how often they have shopped there or brought friends and family in, she is more likely to support them.

### ***Leverage Personal Relationships and Causes***

Never underestimate the value of relationship capital. Whether you're looking for straight donations or services in kind, tapping into a personal connection is far more likely to produce positive results.

Dawn Ross of All Tasks Services in Calgary, Alberta, identified with this idea. She becomes involved in causes that affect her personally. For example, she participated in the Weekend to End Breast Cancer after the death of a dear friend. She also helped the Alberta Children's Hospital Caring for Kids Radiothon after her boyfriend's daughter was seriously injured in a vehicle collision.

Gerald and Wendy F. are philanthropists who give generously to worthy causes. They prefer to contribute when there is a close family or personal connection to the specific need and encourage potential fundraisers to state the link up front.

Rae-ann Wood-Schatz of Personal Best Seminars in Alberta gets behind projects when she values the work the project is doing or because of the people who are making the request.

Karmen Masson of Suit Yourself admitted that her charity would not exist if not for generous donations from colleagues and friends at the outset of the project and the sweat equity of many family members in readying the space for business (which was initially donated by family as well). Her family's passion for her cause made the donation a mutually beneficial success.

### ***Do Your Homework and Make an Offer***

Approach only those businesses with similar mandates and demographics to yours. Business owners often feel insulted when fundraisers approach them randomly rather than take the time to ensure a viable fit with their published mandates.

Theatre Calgary offers a variety of innovative sponsorship opportunities giving businesses the option to attach their name to one of their productions, community initiatives, or special events. Joseph Bardsley, the special events marketing coordinator, offers this advice: “It is never OK to be random. It makes you appear unprofessional and disorganized.” He also says, “Remember that companies talk to each other about who has approached them, so be careful about how you spread the word. A bad feeling can spread like wildfire.”

In approaching a business, don’t just ask for money—make an offer. This simple adjustment to your approach often helps the business owner feel less obliged and more willing to embrace your request. How do you do this? Joseph Bardsley advises looking for something to leverage or a hook that clearly benefits both parties and pitching that first. Examples include enhancing the profile of the business and increasing its exposure.

The Calgary Oscars, Theatre Calgary’s annual gala event designed to fundraise for arts and theatre activities, has partnered with the Palliser Hotel and Astoria Properties in the past. Both companies focus on the demographic that is most likely to have an interest in theatre and the arts. By partnering, all three organizations were able to raise awareness, increase profiles, and market appropriately to their own specific target demographics.

By way of example, benefits that Theatre Calgary might offer to a business include:

- Excellent entertaining opportunities for guests, clients, or employees
- Recognition in Theatre Calgary advertising and promotion
- Special behind-the-scenes opportunities
- Recognition in the production or event programs
- Complimentary or discounted tickets

Rae-ann Wood-Schatz of Personal Best Seminars encourages applicants to be prepared to speak to the benefits of aligning with your event. How will your partners be acknowledged? Find the win-win wherever possible.

Approaching stakeholders who have a vested interest in seeing you achieve your goals is an excellent strategy. JPMF has obtained financial assistance from Work Safe Alberta, a Government of Alberta department. Work Safe Alberta is willing to help, says Maryanne Pope, “because our work directly supports their mandate of creating safer workplaces for Albertans.”

### What Can You Do?

**Behind the wheel:**

- Slow Down/Move Over when passing emergency services personnel working on the road – and give them room to work
- Yield the right-of-way to emergency vehicles
- Do not follow within 150 metres of any emergency vehicle that has its lights or sirens operating
- Check your rearview mirror regularly
- Pay attention and avoid distractions: talking on the cell phone, texting, excessively loud music, putting on makeup, etc

**At your workplace:**

- Install safety railings
- Do a hazard assessment
- Get a permit for renovations
- Clean up broken glass, spills and other debris
- Ensure safe storage of hazardous and flammable materials
- Ensure alarms are functioning properly
- Install motion sensor lighting
- Ensure open holes are covered
- Keep hallways and emergency exits clear of clutter
- Ensure safe storage of pallets and other stacked materials

**Make the Change, Save a Life.**

### Supporting the JPMF

The JPMF is a registered non-profit organization which gratefully accepts contributions to support our work. If you'd like to donate to the JPMF, there are several ways to make a difference.

**Online** - To donate through the website, please click on the "Make a Donation" button on the homepage of the site. Monthly giving options are also available at [www.jpmpf.ca](http://www.jpmpf.ca).

**By Mail** - You may send a cheque, paid out to the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund, to:

Suite 347, 440 - 10816 Macleod Tr. SE  
Calgary, AB T2J 5N8  
Canada

Please note, the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund is a non-profit society registered in Alberta, but not a nationally registered charitable organization. As such, we are not able to issue charitable tax receipts for donations received.

To discuss volunteer or partnership opportunities with the JPMF, please contact Managing Director Ian Wilson at 403-891-4269 or [ian@jpmpf.ca](mailto:ian@jpmpf.ca).



[www.jpmpf.ca](http://www.jpmpf.ca)



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## ***Be Timely and Flexible***

Joseph Bardsley advises fundraisers to approach potential sponsors as early as possible. Large organizations have boards and processes for approvals. If you are only just starting to make requests six months or less before your event day, you are probably not leaving enough time to jump all the hurdles. Large corporations have budget constraints, and dollars are often allocated to projects on an annual basis—usually the year before.

All is not lost if you have to make the request within tighter timeframes. You may just have to consider pitching a more innovative strategy. Even if the sponsorship dollars have been previously allocated, there may be some monies available in the organization's advertising, project development, staff recognition, or marketing budgets.

### ***Clearly Articulate Goals and Objectives***

Think like a business. If you are granted an audience with the decision maker, be clear and concise about the objectives your campaign is attempting to achieve.

Beat Schmassmann encourages fundraisers to be prepared to answer critical questions about the cause. For example:

- **How much of what you raise is going directly to the cause rather than to other expenses?**

Personally, Beat will not donate to disaster causes as he feels that too often the money simply does not reach the intended audience. He also will not donate to charities where 30% or more is going to administrative expenses. Beat prefers to support grassroots fundraisers where donations and volunteers are not as readily available.

The lesson to be learned from this is that you need to do your homework when approaching a business to find out what its preferences might be in this regard. If you don't know, never be afraid to simply ask directly.

- **What will you do with any surplus?**

Beat insists that all funds must go directly where the fundraisers said they were going, not to some other cause the donor knew nothing about.



- **What are the ethics and values of the organizers and the recipients? More importantly, how do they align with those of the company or group you are approaching?**
- **Do the organizers have a business plan or a strategy in place for following through and protecting or being accountable for the money?**

**“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”**

*- George Bernard Shaw*

### ***Keep People Informed***

The golden key to effective fundraising is your ability to manage relationships. Nothing undermines a relationship more than forgetting to stay in touch with those who stepped up to the plate and supported your efforts. Never neglect to keep your donors informed of the outcome of your event, the plans for next year's activities, and the disbursement of the funds raised, preferably through outcome reports. If you neglect this critical part of the equation, you are unlikely to see repeat support for your cause or efforts.

Faith tells a story about providing a hypnosis show for a family-run event to raise money for medical costs for a cousin suffering with a rare form of cancer. She happily donated her time, but when she contacted the organizers after the fact to find out if they had reached their goal, she was told that they had made a family decision not to disclose that information. This was like a slap in the face after all her effort providing the show and selling tickets to her friends on their behalf. Not being accountable to those who stepped up to the plate for you can be a bitter pill to swallow.

All good marketing strategists will tell you it is far easier to hang on to existing customers than to employ strategies to attract new ones. When it comes to attracting and holding on to your sponsors, the same rules apply. Remember, your current supporters can help save you money because they are often your major source of referrals and new donors. Once a supporter has done the work of recommending your group, you often have access to loyal fans—since the recommendation came from a trusted source, the potential donors already have a positive opinion of you.

Consider this: anyone can satisfy supporters, but when you continually delight them, they will keep coming back and continue to support you. Aim to exceed your supporters' expectations on every level and you will gain their support for the long term!

So when it comes to pitching your cause to the business community, follow the basic rules of relationship building if you wish to be successful. Those who jump on board need to be valued and appreciated for their time, money, and efforts. You would not neglect a friend; keep that in mind when it comes to your event.

## Chapter Six:

# Hosting a Successful Live Event



**A**lthough live events pose some logistical challenges, they offer some significant advantages over an online campaign and can funnel much-needed revenue into your fundraising effort. Kelly Gannon, a caricature artist and musician, has been involved in many fundraisers. “We’ve always found that hosting a dance event was the best strategy for raising money,” says Kelly. “A dance is fun, lively, and engaging for attendees and keeps everyone laughing and having a good time while they raise funds for a good cause.”

By combining a live event with your other strategies, you have the opportunity to do the following:

- Gather everyone who is passionate about your cause in one place.
- Garner local media attention (TV, radio, newspaper, etc.).
- Generate multiple fundraising opportunities and activities within the event itself (raffle, silent auction, live auction, etc.).
- Promote relevant research and information relating to your cause.
- Generate enthusiasm where none existed previously.

This chapter will focus on some of the logistical considerations to keep in mind in order to ensure your event is a resounding success.

## Expert Tips for Event Planning

In planning an event, there are a number of considerations to keep in mind that go beyond simply choosing a convenient location and date. The following tips are based on information from Joseph Bardsley of Theatre Calgary, Beat Schmassmann of Affinity Catering, and Karmen Masson of Suit Yourself.

### ***Keep Your Brand Consistent***

While you want to grow and keep ideas fresh, avoid the temptation to rebrand annually. Don't rename your annual event—stay true to what you represent. Steve Forbes has said, “Your brand is the single most important investment you can make in your business,” and this is just as true in your fundraising campaigns. Your event or campaign brand tells your story. Its design displays your style and your voice in the industry. Remember, too, that in today's multi-dimensional market, branding requires more than a logo. Be sure that your message is as clear as the images that represent your cause.

Return on investment in various marketing venues depends on your efforts to keep your message and style consistent and relevant to what you represent. If your fundraiser is going to become an annual event, keeping your look and feel consistent from year to year is an absolute must. When you change the look and feel of an event, you run the risk of losing your diehard attendees and having to find a way to attract them all over again.

Theatre Calgary runs its black-tie gala event, the Calgary Oscars, annually. The organization simply adjusts the activity within the event to match the latest theatre production. In other words, the play itself changes, but guests are still guaranteed their fancy plated dinner with high-end auction. The Zoo Gala, another staple in Calgary, is run annually and has consistent attendees. Guests have come to expect a themed fundraiser for a specific habitat enclosure, with lecturers who speak on that one area.

Also, be sure that when you hold an event it has a clear link to your organizational objectives. For example, when Theatre Calgary holds its annual road race, it includes the theatre cast as a way of clearly linking the event to the stated cause and objectives.

If you do well matching the event to your audience, getting attendees for the actual event will be much easier.

### ***Innovate***

Look for what might be missing in the event landscape of your geographical region and then offer an exclusive opportunity to be involved in a fresh new concept. Choose an event that your audience will truly enjoy and that will offer a new experience. Attendees need a compelling reason to want to participate other than “It’s for charity.” The social objective of most events is to be fun and entertaining. Consider the tastes of your audience: Are they more likely to enjoy something formal or casual? What events have worked with this group in the past?

Focus on creating an experience that is difficult to replicate without you. In other words, if you want to attract greater attention and attendance, make an effort to give attendees an experience they cannot go out and purchase on their own. For example, I may not want to purchase a portrait of a giraffe for your cause because I can purchase one on my own, but being able to touch, feed, or ride a giraffe is an experience I cannot replicate on my own.

Think about what might be the key theme for the event. Ideas include a race night, football match, night with the local orchestra, fashion show, or hypnosis show.

Leverage your internal resources wherever you can in this process. The Calgary Orchestra has an adopt-a-musician program in which sponsors get to tell people that they sponsor a specific performer—for example, the flute player. Sponsors are invited to participate in monthly e-chats with musicians, get backstage opportunities, and can take advantage of early ticket booking.

Simply hosting a great meal and an auction, or a gala, is often not enough anymore. You want your campaign to stand apart from the masses—to be unique—and thus attract greater attendance and media coverage.

Paul Nahirney, a consultant who focuses on capital campaigns, creating organizational excellence, and church and congregation development and renewal, advocates putting a twist on events to make them stand out. His ideas include holding a mystery theatre or dinner, linking a sporting event to your cause, and taking an old-fashioned type of event—perhaps something that might have



been held in the 1940s and 1950s—and reinventing it to make it feel new and fresh.

It helps to keep this question in the back of your mind: why would I pay inflated prices for something I can do myself? This will help you consider what you can give attendees that will make them feel special or recognized for attending and that will keep them talking about your event for months.

### ***Use Existing Resources***

Start researching by asking everyone you connect with what they find exciting about the event.

Do not be afraid to enlist public relations firms as they often have reduced pricing for non-profits. More importantly, they have considerable expertise your team may not have. This investment can be worth far more value than the dollars you spend on it.

You should also talk to key supporters to see if they are involved with any interest groups that would be enthusiastic about a certain type of event. If they would enjoy doing a lot of the planning, even better!

If you have a board of directors, make use of them. As a planner, you can only reach so far. Your board members have developed trusted relationships over the years, and they can often reach out to people and businesses you could never reach on your own.

### ***Time It Right***

Once you have decided on the type of event you wish to host, keep timing in mind. Consider hosting your event during off-peak times, such as summer or early fall. This will help you avoid competing for attendance.

Start planning as early as possible. It's always a good idea to start planning about a month after the last event. For example, the Calgary Oscars event happens in March, so October is too late to be effective in terms of planning next year's launch.

Leaving enough time is critical when sourcing out business sponsorship, as most businesses will need to approve expenditures a year in advance.

### ***Enlist Help***

An event is a huge undertaking and requires multiple volunteers to help you pull it all together.

Focus on enlisting several people to help you organize the actual event. These may include individuals on your organization's planning team or others who have not yet joined the team. Two heads are better than one! Even better, establish a committee of family and friends who'll take responsibility for specific tasks and who are committed to being available on event day.

People are often more willing to help than we give them credit for. The trick is discovering what they enjoy doing.

Define the tasks related to the event so you know everything that needs to get accomplished. For example, a dinner and auction will have several main areas of responsibility: food, decorations, auctions, publicity, etc.

Recruit lead volunteers for each area who can then be in charge of recruiting additional volunteers and planning that area. These will be people who have more time to commit for several weeks or months leading up to the event. Each of the areas can then be divided into tasks and blocks of time that other volunteers who don't have as much time can help with. For instance, someone who's very social and knows a lot of people who will be at the event might be willing to be a greeter or ticket taker for 30 minutes or an hour.

It is very motivating for volunteers when the event planner or lead staff person has confidence in them and empowers them to take charge of their area. On the flip side, if the event planner tries to control everything and be the "gatekeeper" for every minor decision, volunteers can quickly become demotivated.

If you feel you simply cannot recruit enough volunteers, there are groups who can help you find more, such as universities and local youth, community, and church groups. You may have to do your homework to source them out in advance.

Volunteers can make or break an event. It is important to choose volunteers who are contributing because they have a passion for your cause rather than because they think the event will be a whole lot of fun to attend for free.

Deciding how many volunteers you need can be an interesting exercise and will depend on the type of event you are hosting. For instance, Theatre Calgary's Calgary Oscars hosts 250 attendees and requires 17 volunteers, while its road race hosts 850 runners and requires 35 volunteers.

Whenever you are coordinating an event that has a variety of volunteers, provide a briefing on the event day to outline responsibilities and expectations. A briefing, however, will not guarantee that everything goes smoothly with your volunteers. It's best to choose your volunteers wisely and remember that, once the event is underway, there is little you can do to control the behaviour of others.

It is important to follow up with your volunteers after the event. They need to be appreciated for their contributions. Even small things matter. For example, you can give your volunteers shirts that define them as volunteers—part of an elite group. Any small token of appreciation and recognition is always a good idea.

### ***Plan Your Budget***

The most important aspect of a charity benefit is that it raises money! Plan the budget (projected costs and revenue) well in advance. This will help you know how much gross revenue (or ticket sales) you need in order to make a good profit—and sometimes just to break even. Sponsorships and donations by individuals and businesses help underwrite costs and can be a big revenue generator. But knowing the bottom-line number will help you decide whether or not the event should even go forward as planned.

Knowing your budget parameters can help you make effective decisions about ticket pricing and group discounts (if any). Decide on a ticket price that will cover everything you've booked, such as the venue, catering, and DJ, and will still allow you to make a profit.

You always want to make participation affordable and the event easy to attend. Be mindful of the cost of attendance. If you raise your fee each year, you need to demonstrate value or you risk losing attendance. Start by asking yourself this: who am I looking to attract and how much can they afford?

Keep an accurate record of how much you have spent on organizing the event and deduct this from the event's profit before sending the monies off to the charity or group recipients. You have to be able to account for any monies raised should you be asked to do so by a third party, such as Revenue Canada.

Remember, running your fundraiser like a business can help keep you out of hot water in the long haul. Bookkeeping is a critical element of this process.



Night at the Oscars



## Astoria on Tenth Sponsors "Night at the Oscars" & "Beauty & The Beast" Benefitting Theatre Calgary

MARCH 2008

Astoria on Tenth came out to celebrate the glamour of the Academy Awards in Calgary by headline sponsoring Theatre Calgary's 15th Annual "Night at the Oscars" at the Fairmont Palliser Hotel on February 24, 2008.

Hosted by CTV presenters Jocelyn Laidlaw and Kirk Heuser, with silent auctions and lively active bidding during the dinner and broadcast, the black-tie event helped raise over \$30,000 towards The Understudy and Youth Leadership Program which introduces under-privileged youth to theatre.

"As with so many things we undertake in the theatre it wouldn't be possible without the help of corporate sponsorship," says Theatre Calgary President Tom McCabe.

"As a developer encouraging downtown living, it's important that we help support and facilitate one of the big reasons people want to live downtown – proximity to arts, culture, and entertainment," explains Arcus Developments' Gerry Mendyk. "It's our mandate to help create dynamic, rich, exciting places to live."

It was also a night to treat guests and VIPs to a sneak preview of what was to come, including the first debut of Astoria's new brand, television commercial, lobby design, features trailer, and physical model of the building, which created a buzz.

"We are thrilled to be associated with an amazing project like Astoria on Tenth. Aside from the building's size, the design is truly beautiful and will be a welcome addition to the Calgary skyline. The amenities and concept seem to be such a step above similar projects, it will be a pleasure to live in," enthuses McCabe.

The evening was capped by a spirited live bidding war between Arcus Partners Gerry Mendyk and Johannes van Leenen for the "Big Gund Monkey" – which went to a victorious van Leenen.

"Beauty and The Beast" is Theatre Calgary's largest production ever and runs March 14 – April 27, with expectations the sold out run will be extended. Astoria on Tenth is proudly sponsoring the Live Orchestra.

*"The significant investment Astoria on Tenth had in our Oscar event, as well as in our upcoming production of "Beauty and The Beast" is a wonderful example of corporate philanthropy."*

Tom McCabe  
President, Theatre Calgary

The developer reserves the right to make modifications and changes to pricing, building design, specifications, features and floorplans. E&OE.

SUITE 110, 999 8TH STREET SW | CALGARY ALBERTA CANADA | TELEPHONE 403.246.9138 | ASTORIAONTENTH.COM



**What are the pledges for?**

The funds raised through **The 2010 Big Run** will support Theatre Calgary’s **Student Education Series**. The **Student Education Series** exposes youth to the wonders of live theatre and helps to enhance their knowledge of the performing arts through post-performance talkback sessions with theatre professionals. Nearly 12,000 students attended **Student Education Series** performances in 2008/09. Tickets for these performances are heavily subsidized. As a registered charity, we need your help to continue making the extraordinary productions on our stage accessible to students in southern Alberta. By collecting pledges, not only will you be rewarded with great incentives but you will be showing your support for this exceptional program.

**How do I raise pledges?**

Registered participants of **The Big Run** may use the Running Room website to collect pledges. Here’s how:

- 1) Go to [www.runningroom.com](http://www.runningroom.com)
- 2) Select Members (from top menu)
- 3) Select Athlete Dashboard (from left menu)
- 4) If you are a member, Login (Not a member – sign up, and then email [roadrace@theatrecalgary.com](mailto:roadrace@theatrecalgary.com) – Theatre Calgary will attach your race entry to your profile, so you can proceed to Step 5)
- 5) Once logged in you’ll see your dashboard – under Donations, select **Yes**
- 6) Select Solicit Sponsors from left menu
- 7) Add email addresses, and a message if you like
- 8) Hit send!

Alternatively, you can visit [www.theatrecalgary.com/events/bigrun](http://www.theatrecalgary.com/events/bigrun) and download a printable pledge form.

Collectors are asked to submit completed forms and payments to Theatre Calgary by May 31, 2010 to be eligible to receive an incentive.

Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$25 dollars or more. Complete donor information (full name, address, postal code, phone number) must be collected for a tax receipt to be issued.

**Pledge prizes**

Theatre Calgary will send you a gift card that corresponds to the amount of funds raised from your choice of these Theatre Calgary supporters:



Pledges raised	Incentive
\$100	\$20 Gift Card
\$200	\$40 Gift Card
\$300	\$60 Gift Card
\$400	\$80 Gift Card
\$500	\$100 Gift Card
\$750	\$150 Gift Card
\$1000+	\$250 Gift Card

**Contact information**

Theatre Calgary & The Big Run  
220 – 9 Avenue S.E.  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2G 5C4  
(403) 294-7440  
Email [roadrace@theatrecalgary.com](mailto:roadrace@theatrecalgary.com)

**Thank you from Theatre Calgary!**

As per Theatre Calgary’s Privacy Policy, the information collected will strictly be used by Theatre Calgary for the purpose of processing donations, issuing of tax receipts and all matters pertaining to you as a supporter of Theatre Calgary. The information collected will not be distributed to outside sources.

## *Choose the Right Venue*

Although the cost of a venue is an important consideration in your overall budgeting process and final projected revenues, there are other critical factors to consider prior to booking the space:

- **Is the location central?** Consider whether or not the venue is easily accessible (on a good bus route or where affordable parking is readily available).
- **How many people can the venue legally host?** This is essential to ticket sales.
- **Does the venue have tables and chairs?** Or do you need to beg or borrow from somewhere?
- **If you're having an auction, do you need staging or a podium?**
- **Are you having a bar?** If so, do you need to arrange a license? Remember, if you are serving alcohol, ensuring that the venue is serviced by public transport is essential!
- **What entertainment will there be?** If you're having a band, DJ, hypnotist, etc., book them now!
- **Do you need microphones? Lighting?** Check to see if the performer is providing these.



- **Are you having catering?** Decide now and book, if necessary, or ensure that the venue has the required facilities.

When booking a caterer, it helps to keep some basic rules of thumb in mind. For a low-cost event:

- The ticket price will likely be \$25 to \$75.
- The target food expense should represent about half of that budget.
- Do *not* expect the venue to provide serving staff.

For a high-cost event:

- Tickets are sold at about \$150/plate and up, and companies and groups are often encouraged to book a full table.
- Food expenses represent about 30% of the overall expenditures.
- Calculate an additional 5–10% for serving staff.

### ***Promote, Promote, Promote***

You need to do advertising and publicity to get attendees to the event. Remember that announcing the event once or twice is not enough. Marketing your event is never a task that should be overlooked or undervalued. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Use different advertising channels.** Promote the event to the most people possible so each person is reminded of it five to seven times. Use multiple media: email, mailed invitations, telephone calls, newsletters, newspaper articles, and free radio and TV spots. Contact the local newspapers and radio stations and ask them to publicize the event for you. Putting up posters on community boards and at the grocery store can also go a long way toward ensuring your event is well attended.
- **Give thanks.** Thank your sponsors by including their names in your programs and publicity.
- **Use several fundraising tactics.** Most events that I have been involved with hold multiple fundraisers during the event instead of just relying on the entry tickets. Silent auctions, live auctions, raffles, and sales of mementos are all great ways to raise funds.

- **Hold a raffle.** If you're having a raffle or an auction, contact local companies and shops and ask for donations and prizes (these are also great places to promote your event and ticket sales). A raffle may require licensing from the provincial gaming and liquor office; be sure to find out well in advance of creating your promotional pieces.
- **Invite in-kind donations.** Promotion is an area where you may be able to get in-kind donations of services. Often small printing firms will help with design or reduce print costs. If someone steps up to do this, be sure to promote them alongside your other sponsors.
- **Make yourself accessible.** Remember to include your phone number or email address for information.
- **Use testimonials.** If you have run this event previously, include comments or testimonials from previous attendees to attract individuals to this year's event. Be specific about what attendees can expect to experience, and then deliver on that experience.
- **Sell advance tickets.** Avoid asking people to just turn up at your event, because you won't know how many people to expect. Number the tickets and get the money up front. It's acceptable to have additional people paying at the door, but you need to know that you've got enough people for the event to go ahead.

- **Expand your pool of attendees.** Consider how you might be able to get new “bums in seats” or entice groups to attend together. You could offer a promotion where regulars or a company can purchase bulk tickets and receive a free ticket to share with a friend. This strategy brings new attendees whom you would not have had otherwise. Be careful, though—giving away too many free tickets can diminish their perceived value.

### *Compose a Winning Invitation*

Keep your invitation clear and simple—one page, not multiple pages! Include this information:

- “You are invited” (or “You are cordially invited”)
- Date, time, location (including specific room at the venue if needed)
- Dress code (e.g., black tie or jeans)
- Cost of the event (per ticket or per table)
- Reason for the event
- What is included in the price of the event (e.g., dinner, music, entertainment, silent auction)
- How to RSVP

In order to make it easy for people to RSVP, consider putting check boxes at the bottom of the invitation: “Yes I will attend” and “Regretfully, I cannot.” Never make a person feel bad about a prior commitment. You might ask readers to RSVP by phone or email with a credit card, or to mail a cheque to a specific address. And it never hurts to add a note about how to donate in lieu of attendance.

If your event is going to run annually, develop a spreadsheet for tracking contributors and attendees in the first year. You may consider door prizes, tear-off portions on the tickets, or another innovative idea. You will use this information throughout the year to keep communicating with your supporters. Remember, the laws in Canada require you to tell individuals that you are going to communicate with them and allow them to opt out at any stage along the way. Unrequested information is considered spam, and spam rarely produces good feelings in the recipient.



Theatre Calgary  
*presents*

**A NIGHT  
with the  
STARS**

Theatre Calgary's Oscar Night —  
an evening of glamour and prestige  
complemented with fabulous art, wine and gourmet fare  
in one of Calgary's most exclusive venues.

★  
Sunday, March 7th, 2010  
The Ranchmen's Club, 710 – 13th Ave S.W.  
5:30 pm: Prosecco Reception  
6 pm: Roving Feast and Oscar Broadcast

★  
Tickets: \$250 each, or ten for \$2250 GST inclusive.  
Charitable tax receipts are also available for  
a portion of each ticket sale.

★  
Call 403.294.7440, ext. 1061  
or visit theatrecalgary.com



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Your support and the support of these sponsors helps  
us continue to bring world-class theatre to our city.



Theatre Calgary  
*invites you to*

**A NIGHT  
with the  
STARS**





Theatre Calgary's

# A NIGHT with the STARS

is just around the corner! Scheduled for **March 7th 2010**, the event will feature fabulous food and wine in the warmth and opulence of the Ranchmen's Club - and, in addition, the opportunity to take in the annual Oscars telecast and one of Calgary's most exclusive silent auctions.

★ For 2010, we are pleased to officially announce our **SILENT AUCTION'S HEADLINE ITEM** ★

## SAIL HAIDA GWAI, WALK AMONG ANCIENT TOTEMS & VISIT NINSTINTS

- a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to explore Haida Gwaii and the ancient totems of the Ninstints Village as seen in our world premiere musical **BEYOND EDEN**

This package, valued at **\$10,000**, is not to be missed!

Selected as

### "One of the World's 50 Best Trips!"

by National Geographic Traveler Magazine

**HOW TO BID:**  
To guarantee your chance to cast the final bid, you must attend our annual Oscar Night fundraiser - **A Night With the Stars** - on March 7th at the Ranchmen's Club of Calgary. We will also be offering **BEYOND EDEN** audience members the opportunity to place bids on this package in advance of the event - simply visit our display table in the Max Bell Theatre lobby in order to place a sealed bid or learn more! All bids will be reviewed and assessed on March 7th, 2010, and the winner will be notified via phone immediately after the event.

**Walk among** the remaining ancient Haida totem poles in the village of Ninstints (Gang Gwaay) - experience your own "Beyond Eden". Join Bluewater Adventures on a learning adventure through Haida Gwaii / Queen Charlotte Islands this summer aboard the 70' sailing vessel Island Roamer. You will embark on an unforgettable journey through the Queen Charlotte Islands. We will also visit the old villages of Ts'manu and Skekani and speak with a Haida Watchman. Soak in natural hot springs, kayak in world famous intertidal zones, float among the whales and see Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve in a way few in the world get to experience.

Humpback whales, black bears, sea lions, orcas are among the many species we expect to see on this adventure. Wildlife in Haida Gwaii is among the most diverse in the world and there are species here you simply will not see anywhere else. This journey is limited to only 25 participants. We travel ashore several times daily. The onboard Naturalist will provide insights and extensive knowledge of the islands, their history, wildlife and culture. There are departure dates still available for spring and summer 2010, including some exciting itineraries with high-profile trip leaders.



**BEYOND EDEN** tells a story about these islands, and the story continues in Haida Gwaii today. Come sail with Bluewater and experience Ninstints a half century later.

Contact Bluewater Adventures: Phone: 604.980.3800 Toll Free: 1.888.877.1770  
Web: [www.bluewateradventures.ca](http://www.bluewateradventures.ca) Email: [explore@bluewateradventures.ca](mailto:explore@bluewateradventures.ca)

For more information on this opportunity - or to purchase tickets for the event - please contact us at [Oscars@theatrecalgary.com](mailto:Oscars@theatrecalgary.com)



## *Follow Up*

Send thank you letters to all who donated prizes, time, or anything else. Donors like to know whether or not you reached your goal, so be sure to mention this in your follow-up materials. Consider putting a thank you to all who attended in the local paper. You can also send photos and add them to your social sites and websites.

Don't delay doing a post-mortem—it will be an invaluable exercise in determining what worked and what didn't and will pay dividends in future years. Always host the event debriefing within two weeks of the actual event night. When you wait, thoughts are not as fresh and you may lose pertinent data.

Paul Nahirney advocates looking at your event with brutal honesty. One key point to remember, he says, is that if you and your team are not having a good time, you can rest assured that your donors aren't either. If you're holding a repeat event, take note of declines in attendance or donations and analyze whether it is worth your while to run the event again.



## Event Pitfalls to Avoid

Don't let the following risks hinder the success of your event:

- **Running out of time.** Maximize your planning time. Start early or risk falling short of your objectives.
- **Budgeting too little for marketing.** Marketing will always cost more than you think. So be frugal, but don't underestimate the value of this exercise. Getting the message and brand out to a broad audience requires a multifaceted approach that includes posters, postcards, and media. Always consider what you stand to make compared to what you plan to spend. (If you are able to keep costs to 25% of overall revenues, you are doing extremely well.)
- **Getting too greedy.** A \$25 ticket price increase can sometimes negatively affect overall perception.
- **Targeting audiences from other events.** Their clientele may be very different from yours and unable to see the value in your event. For example, those who attend the Theatre Calgary road race are not as likely to be interested in attending the Oscars.
- **Competing with others.** Target the lovers of your cause and leave the supporters of other events to continue that support.

- **Letting your event get stale.** Be aware that most events have a lifecycle of three to seven years. Look for ways to keep it fresh and consider something completely new to re-inspire your team and attendees.

## Effective Presentation

In 2005, Faith ran a first-time event on behalf of the Law Enforcement Torch Run supporting the Special Olympics. It should have produced amazing results. The event included 100 silent auction items, provided a unique experience for attendees through two dynamic hypnosis shows, and was sold to over capacity.

Although the event was a success, it failed to live up to the revenue projections. The post-mortem revealed the biggest challenge with the whole evening: because the event was oversold, auction items were so difficult to see and bid on that most attendees simply did not bother to peruse them. As a result, sales were sluggish when they could have been terrific.

How do you keep this from happening to you? We asked the experts for their advice and this is what they told us: pay attention to presentation. It matters!

Keep these points in mind when you plan your room layout:

- **Use the half-and-two-thirds rule.** If you plan to seat 400, book a room that seats 600 to 700.

- **When locating the silent auction tables, treat them like the head table at a wedding.** They should be promoted as a focal point and be kept away from the bathroom and kitchen.
- **If your event is through the dinner hour, attendees will expect to be fed.** Buffet-style is the cheapest. Whenever possible, allow a double serving line at the buffet that gives access to the food from both sides. Whether you're offering a buffet or table service, colourful presentation and consideration to texture, garnishes, and centerpieces help to create the positive feelings you want for your event.
- **Arrange table seating based on the cost of attendance.** For a low-cost event, consider using long, straight tables, or bar tables if people will be standing. Use round tables and sell tickets by the table for a high-cost event.
- **Elegant displays put attendees in a positive mood.** People will look for problems if you don't stimulate a positive mental attitude. They will also spend more money when they feel good and when you make it easy for them to socialize within the space. When laying out the silent auction tables, use risers and draping to create a tiered effect on the table. Hang pictures and paintings at the eye level of a 5'9"-tall individual, or place them on an easel.

## Chapter Seven:

# Assessing the Outcome



So how did it all turn out? An excellent question! In this final chapter, we'll share the outcomes of the Faith for Fern journey and summarize some of the key lessons we learned along the way.

It's important to remember that success is a relative term. You may not meet your financial goals but still meet other goals, such as increasing awareness. The first fundraiser held by the Lani Donaldson Literacy Foundation fell short of meeting its financial target, but Lani still felt it was successful because it brought attention, united people, and raised money for a worthy cause.

## Our Goals Revisited

Let's take another look at the objectives we set way back at the beginning of the Faith for Fern project:

1. First, we wanted to raise the necessary capital for Fern to participate in the ketamine coma study before the study ended. This meant raising approximately \$75,000 in 90 days—the equivalent of \$858 a day, or \$35 an hour.
3. Second, we aimed to raise awareness and attention for Fern's disease, RSD.

Let's address the second goal first, since the results were unequivocal and easy to summarize. Given the tremendous activity on the Faith for Fern site and the social media sites, we definitely count ourselves successful in raising awareness of RSD.

When we started spreading the word, others afflicted with RSD began to write about their own struggles and efforts to live with this painful disease. We started to post updates to the RSD research and

found that we were able to reach out to people in other countries and geographical locations. Our online networking community not only raised awareness among people who had never heard of the disease, but also began to help those afflicted feel a lot less isolated and substantially more hopeful. We can't imagine a more valuable by-product of our efforts!

The results with respect to our first goal were a little fuzzier. We did not, in fact, achieve our stated financial goal of \$75,000 in cash. At the end of the 90-day time frame, we had raised about \$55,000. By December 2009, that number rose marginally to \$58,300. However, if we take into account Air Miles donations and contributions to expenses made by B.C. Health, we probably did meet the goal.

But meeting or falling short of a specific dollar target does not, in itself, determine the success or failure of a project. In this case, we did meet the spirit, if not the letter, of our financial goal: we wanted to raise enough dollars to allow Fern to participate in the ketamine coma trial in Mexico. We were able to negotiate costs with the medical team in Mexico, and Fern was able to participate. She flew to Monterrey, Mexico, on September 13, 2009, and although she encountered a few complications, the experimental treatments appear to have been successful.

Unfortunately, Fern continues to struggle with our healthcare partners here in Canada to obtain the ketamine boosters in the required dosages. In early 2010, followers of the Faith for Fern project were once again asked to contribute to our cause, this time by assisting in a political advocacy writing campaign. We provided

a generic letter template that supporters could print off and mail to the Minister of Health. At the time of concluding this book, the matter remains unresolved. If you would like to support our efforts, please visit [www.faithforfern.com](http://www.faithforfern.com) and print out the letter, or visit our Facebook site for regular updates.

In the meantime, Fern continues to fly to Mexico each month in order to receive the necessary ketamine boosters to put this disease into some form of remission. As a result, we continue to welcome financial support.

## The Power of Asking for Help

Beyond looking at results in terms of our specific goals, we'd like to highlight the success of our project in terms of the amazing contributions it elicited from countless supporters. We hope that Faith for Fern will serve as an illustration for other fundraisers of the tremendous power of asking for help.

Despite the potentially great rewards of asking for help, many of us struggle with doing so. In fact, the need to ask for assistance may be the most stressful part of reaching for any dream or goal. Our fear of being judged unworthy affects our self-esteem and causes us to withdraw into silence or plunge ahead independently—often falling woefully short of our goals and dreams as a result.

Margaret Kenny, a researcher from the University of California in Los Angeles, discovered that the fear of being negatively evaluated, especially by someone of importance or interest to us, is the most important variable in stress disorders. The greatest cause of pressure

is not having too much to do, but rather the stigma we feel when we receive—or expect to receive—harsh criticism or judgment from others. This type of unconscious fear is rooted in the amygdala (the emotional part of the brain), which tunes more strongly into negative thoughts than positive stimuli. We then tend to amplify these negatives and use them to rationalize avoidance.

As fundraisers, we cannot afford to fall into this trap of negativity. The willingness to ask for help is too powerful a tool. As Karmen Masson explains, asking for help can feel like a struggle because we're not good at it and are afraid of the questions others might ask us. But practice makes the process easier. Over time, she says, the questions seem less difficult. If we are passionate and articulate when making requests, and look for opportunities to link with like minds, we can demonstrate value.

Faith knew from the start that she couldn't raise \$75,000 in 90 days by herself. She started out by mentioning the project to just a few close friends and colleagues, and then those friends' friends began spreading the word—because we asked them to. Throughout the project, people from all over offered their help, willingly, expediently, and without hesitation.

Consider just one story of the unwavering generosity we found in our community of supporters.

One weekend, the McCullough family noticed that their 16-year-old daughter, Robin, was rolling a large collection of coins in her bedroom. Thinking that she was finally going to purchase something special with the money, they left her to it. On Monday night, she



presented her mother with the rolled coins—all \$571 worth—and asked that they be donated to the Faith for Fern fundraising efforts. She was indeed doing something special with the money!

When asked if she was sure she wanted to spend all her money in this way, she replied, “If a 16-year-old girl can ante up, the business community better follow suit.”

Tom Mahoney was so touched by Robin’s generous actions that he came forward and donated 20 hours, or \$840, to the cause. As this story spread, many other groups also took on fundraising events in support of our efforts.

If you’re holding back on pursuing a goal because you’re afraid to ask for help, we hope hearing about our experience of people’s generosity will inspire you to start living the dream today! And think about it from the donors’ point of view: with so many people eager to feel that they have made a difference, how can you not share the opportunity for them to do so?

## **Lessons Learned**

We learned so much in the process we went through that it’s difficult to narrow that knowledge down to just a few elements. But here are some of the most important lessons we took away from the experience:

- Even strangers will help when you ask for what you need; people often care more than you think they do.

- Despite the power of online campaigning, hosting an event is still one of the most powerful methods for generating media coverage, funds, and awareness.
- Having a clearly defined goal, a team of hard-working individuals, distinct action steps, and consistent messages is critical to your project's success.
- Staying motivated through the duration of a project can be hard work.
- Even in the face of adversity, staying upbeat and positive can regenerate everyone. (Thanks to Fern's husband, Theo, for that lesson!)
- You must keep telling people what's happening, and you must never forget to say thank you for support and encouragement. Ongoing communication is critical even when you have nothing new to add.

## Lessons from Our Contributors

The people who offered their insights and advice for this book come from a variety of backgrounds. Some are or were involved in one-time campaigns with specific goals; others are involved in continuous fundraising to support ongoing projects or meet ongoing needs. One thing they have in common is the willingness to share what they've learned with all of us who are just beginning a fundraising adventure. Here's what some of them had to say:

### **Maryanne Pope, JPMF**

- Progress at a pace that is comfortable for your organization.
- Evaluate your fundraising strategy as time passes and adjust it as necessary.
- Be wary of putting too much of your own money and time into your organization or cause.
- Remember that, although you are running a non-profit organization, you still need money to carry out your mission and achieve your vision.

**Karmen Masson, Suit Yourself**

- Patience is a virtue. Good things will happen over time.
- Passion fuels enthusiasm and will keep you from losing interest or growing tired, so carry your dream in your heart and never give up on it.
- Look for inspiration in others and take time to connect with inspirational people.
- Don't take it personally when someone has to stop contributing. People have huge hearts but busy schedules.

**Rae-ann Wood-Schatz, Personal Best Seminars**

- Be willing to risk rejection.
- Celebrate your successes, even the small ones.
- Creating a team of people with great ideas, energy, and an interest in your project is vital.

**Paul Nahirney, Nahirney & Associates**

- It's better to have a strong, determined worker than someone who simply lends her name to the project but never shows up.
- Sometimes we have to break or bend old rules and mindsets. Always stay current and be creative, and be honest with yourself about what you're doing and your results.
- Remember that you cannot raise big money without talking to individuals. Approximately 87% of money raised is through individual contributions, not companies.
- Be frank but diplomatic when critiquing campaign ideas.

**BizBOXTV.com**

- Have a well-thought-out plan of action and show that you've put a lot of work into the execution of that plan.
- Use video to make an emotional connection to who you are and what you're trying to accomplish.
- Offer your sponsors something in return, such as PR.

## A Word from Fern

We'd like to conclude this book with a note from Fern in her own words, on the occasion of the 2010 New Year.

*Posted Jan 4, 2010, 4:56 p.m.*

*With the New Year usually brings resolutions. For 2009, I remember that my resolution was to just hang on a little longer and to try to be as good natured as possible. I had thought that would be doable and that trusting God to take care of my needs and to hopefully find something that would help with the pain was the best that I could work on. Who knew that the end of 2009 would bring such changes! Although I had been paying attention to the coma therapy, I did not feel that this would be something I could do. Thanks to my sister and her efforts, it became a possible task.*

*Thanks to Dr. Kirkpatrick who took one look at me and welcomed me into the study and to Dr. Cantu whose capable hands and great skill allowed me to enter into a world where I could even deign to hope that it may be pain free. Of course, my local doctors were instrumental in getting me out there, with forms to fill out, interviews willingly had, and the strong support from my family and church, of course! When they say it takes a village to raise a child, it really takes a world to take me through this! I received an outpouring of love, good wishes, and funding from as far away as Vietnam, England, and even Canada and the US. Amazing and very humbling indeed!*

*Now for 2010, I did not make a resolution. I am going to just keep putting one foot in front of the other, hope and pray for better days for*

*me and also for other coma patients, some of whom have a bigger battle than even I had.*

*Following a hasty Christmas trip back to Monterrey, Mexico, for additional ketamine boosters, I am happy to report it was successful in addressing the increased pain and has managed to even get me out of the wheelchair and walking again! With a cane, but walking nonetheless.*

*We knew that this was just an interim measure and that continued boosters will be necessary. How happy and thankful I am with Dr. Cantu for taking me in just before his holidays and for knowing what was necessary. When I arrived, he could not touch me. I flinched whenever anyone came near. When I left on Dec. 24, I could hug him goodbye. Amazing!*

*With this new year upon us, I want to take this opportunity to thank you, my supporters in so many ways, for all your prayers, comments, encouragement, and love. God has truly blessed me through all of this in that I have had an opportunity to see him work through all of you, to bless me and my family. I am hopeful that this year will only continue to increase the good work which has begun and that in the years to come, I might be able to return the kindnesses shown to me.*

*Have a truly blessed 2010!*



Photo taken in June 2010.

Back Row: Theo (Fern's husband), Fern, Elise (Fern's daughter)

Front Row: Zak (Fern's son) and Harrison (Fern's son)



## **Fall 2010 Update on Fern**

As this book goes to print, we are sorry to report that the ketamine protocol trial has been discontinued for Fern. Her overall response to the drug has diminished and it is no longer a viable treatment option. This is an unfortunate reality for many suffering with this debilitating disease

With courage and hope, Fern continues to walk in her faith and pray for a new solution to this painful condition. She has returned to a wheelchair and continues to battle the increasing pain and disability associated with this terrible disorder.

We will continue to gratefully receive donations to the Faith for Fern campaign in order to help assist her with ongoing medical expenses and support for her daily living needs. We had all hoped for a more positive outcome to this very experimental treatment. However, Fern's optimism continues and she has said: "I got 6 months of relief and time with my children that did not exist before all these efforts – for that, I am grateful."

She asks that we continue to pray for a miracle.



Photo taken in August, 2010.

Left to right: Elise (Fern's daughter), Zak (Fern's son), Harrison (Fern's son), Fern Kwantes



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Insights,  
Updates  
& More...

## Contributors

I would like to thank all the wonderful individuals who provided great insight and contributions to this book. These individuals bring a breadth of knowledge to the fundraising world that cannot be overlooked. Please take the time to visit their websites for additional information, or contact me directly.

In addition to the amazing expertise of the professionals who provided support to the Faith for Fern campaign listed in chapter 2, we would like to take the opportunity to thank and recognize additional contributors. These individuals provided fundraising content beyond the Faith for Fern campaign.

**Beat Schmassmann - A Splendid Affair, Affinity Catering**  
([asplendidaffair.com](http://asplendidaffair.com) or [affinitycatering.com](http://affinitycatering.com))



Beat Schmassmann is the owner and operator of A Splendid Affair and Affinity Catering in Calgary, Alberta. He has been in the catering industry for over 27 years. A Swiss-trained chef, Beat honed his talents in Toronto in the early 1970s, catering to the many celebrities touring through Eastern Canada. In addition to operating a successful catering business, Beat is also a professional cooking instructor at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary and a food service consultant to the Samson Cree Nation.

**Dawn Ross - All Tasks Services Ltd.**

[\(alltasks.ca\)](http://alltasks.ca)



Dawn Ross is the owner and operator of All Tasks Services in Calgary, Alberta. All Tasks Services provides small businesses with reliable, professional support services, such as bookkeeping and payroll.

**Lani Donaldson - the Lani Donaldson Literacy Foundation**  
**([literacycanada.com/wecare/literacy-foundation.html](http://literacycanada.com/wecare/literacy-foundation.html))**

Lani Donaldson is the founder of the Lani Donaldson Literacy Foundation, an innovative non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, funding, and delivering programs for both local and global literacy and educational initiatives.

Literacy and education are crucial to solving many of the world's difficulties in developed and developing countries. The foundation focuses on the education of women and children. If you educate a woman, you educate a village. If you educate a child, you educate the world.

**Joseph Bardsley - Theatre Calgary**

([theatreocalgary.com](http://theatreocalgary.com))

Joseph Bardsley is the development associate with Theatre Calgary, located in the downtown core of Calgary, Alberta. A not-for-profit charitable organization, Theatre Calgary is dedicated to ongoing arts outreach via excellence in live performance.

Ticket sales cover about half of what it costs to stage the average Theatre Calgary production, so support from the business community is essential to the organization's success. Theatre Calgary offers a variety of innovative sponsorship opportunities giving individuals and groups the option to attach their names to productions, community initiatives, or special events.

**Karmen Masson - Suit Yourself**

([suityourselfclothes.org](http://suityourselfclothes.org))



Karmen Masson, an Edmonton-based lawyer, is the founder of Suit Yourself in Edmonton, Alberta. Suit Yourself is a charitable organization that collects and distributes quality clothing and accessories, free of charge, to low-income women seeking employment or making a transition in the workforce.

Karmen conceived of this project in 2000 during a challenging time in her own life as a way to generate more positive energy in her life. Understanding the value of image to a woman's overall confidence, perceived professionalism, and respect in the workforce, she wanted to help women leverage the dress-for-success concept. How you dress matters when the eyes are on you.

**Rae-ann Wood-Schatz - Personal Best Seminars Alberta**  
([personalbestseminars.com](http://personalbestseminars.com))

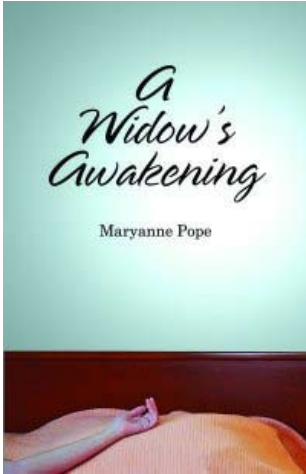


Rae-ann Wood-Schatz, from Edmonton, Alberta, is president of Personal Best Seminars Alberta, an organization that equips and empowers people for success. A gifted trainer, facilitator, and speaker, her education, passion, and life experience bring her clients, audiences, and readers a well-rounded perspective. Her compassion for helping people inspired Rae-ann to become one of the founders and executive director of Peer Support Services for Abused Women and today she volunteers on its board of directors. Rae-ann also consults for the HIV Peer Support and Living Positive Associations and enjoys writing for various publications.



## **Maryanne Pope - John Petropoulos Memorial Fund, Creating Partnerships for Safer Workplaces**

[\(jpmf.ca\)](http://jpmf.ca)



Maryanne Pope founded the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund (JPMF) after the accidental death of her husband, police officer John Petropoulos. Located in Calgary, Alberta, JPMF creates partnerships to eliminate preventable workplace fatalities and injuries to emergency services personnel.

In the spirit of John's dedication to helping make his community a safer place, the JPMF promotes the message that workplace safety for emergency services workers is a shared responsibility. When communities work together, risks to these workers can be minimized.

Donations can be made online at [jpmf.ca/involvement](http://jpmf.ca/involvement). Maryanne's book, *A Widow's Awakening*, can also be purchased online.

**Kelly Gannon, Owner of Kel Studios**

has been an editorial cartoonist and has travelled the world drawing caricatures for cruise lines Royal Caribbean and Celebrity cruise ships. Kelly developed his cartoon style while working in Disneyland California, drawing caricatures.

Contact info for Kel Studios:

[gannon4@telusplanet.net](mailto:gannon4@telusplanet.net)

## **Media Items**

### **Media Coverage, RSD Articles, and Forums**

The following list is to give you a sense of how many media campaigns were undertaken to make the Faith for Fern fundraiser a success.

To view these original documents, please visit [www.faithforfern.com](http://www.faithforfern.com)

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Snow, Stacie. "A Second Chance for Sister."

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"They're Keeping the Faith."

Airdrie City View, September 4, 2009.

<http://www.faithforfern.com/pdfs/AirdrieCityView02A05M.pdf>.

"Woman in Need Has Faith in Our Community."

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<http://www.mebrowneyedgirl.com/2009/06/spread-fatih.html>.

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"Darwell & District Agricultural Society Fundraising Gymkhana."

The Edmonton Journal, August 21, 2009.

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## **News Releases**

(August 30, 2009) - Victoria woman is approved for experimental RSD treatment: But fund-raising goal has yet to be reached

(July 2009) - Local Brandon Family Has Hope for the Future

(June 23, 2009) - Local Teenager Gives Jar Full Of Hope To Fundraising Cause

(June 2009) - Family Asks For Another Hour Of Hope

(N/A) - Victoria woman receives help from Alberta

## About the Author

### Meet Faith Wood



When Faith Wood, a Calgary-based entrepreneur, learned that her very ill twin sister, Fern, urgently needed to find money to access a risky, out-of-country (and last resort) treatment for her debilitating disease known as RSD (reflex sympathetic dystrophy), she rallied her colleagues (and her own expertise) and pulled together an online campaign

aimed at raising the necessary funds in under four months. Although, Faith had been involved in many live fundraising events previous to this, she had no experience and no guide for tapping into social media and online campaigning. With no time to spare in additional research, Faith and her team dove head-first into the campaign and successfully achieved their goal, becoming trendsetters in the process. Her book, *Fundraising on a Shoestring*, identifies the challenges they faced and how they overcame them.



A professional behaviourist, strategic coach and wellness facilitator, Faith is no stranger to problem-solving. She worked as a peace officer, negotiator and mediator for 15 years prior to taking her company, Inspiring Minds Consulting, full-time in 2007. Faith prides herself on offering a tactical results-oriented approach to solving interpersonal conflicts and communication issues – regularly providing speaking, training and coaching, which produces profound and timely results. With her extensive experience and expertise, she is also a much-sought-after international speaker, with messages that are both compelling and pragmatic.

Faith is the mother of four, a grandmother and a wife. Ambitious and strong-willed, there is very little that will slow her down.

Interested in booking Faith for an interview, a speaking engagement or training session or as a coach on this topic or any other?

Call: (403) 461-3498

Email: [info@imind.ca](mailto:info@imind.ca)

Web: [www.imind.ca](http://www.imind.ca)

**To learn more about the Faith for Fern campaign and how you can help, visit: [www.faithforfern.com](http://www.faithforfern.com).**

## A Note from Faith

**Do you know someone who could benefit from reading *Fundraising on a Shoestring*?**

Why not order a copy for them? I will ship the book to them, compliments of you! Visit my website at [www.imind.ca](http://www.imind.ca). Bulk book rates are available by contacting Double Your Faith Productions:

**Airdrie office:**

117-5<sup>th</sup> Ave NW  
Airdrie, Alberta  
T4B 1C9  
Phone: 403-461-3498

**Edmonton office:**

12427-103 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5N 0R4  
Phone: 780-433-2135

### Book Faith for your next event

I am available to speak on this topic and many others. Contact me at [info@imind.ca](mailto:info@imind.ca) or visit my website at [www.imind.ca](http://www.imind.ca).



**Volunteering, fundraising and community relations are hot topics at the moment. But how do we truly become successful at fundraising when we have little to NO experience or the skill set required to achieve fundraising goals set by ourselves and others?**

**In 2009, a small group of Calgary business owners managed to create an international wave of attention for a deeply personal cause. There was no charity designation involved, no large PR companies on the payroll, and no deep pockets funding the project; just an innovative group, a deep level of compassion, and a compelling story.**

Faith Wood, Owner of Inspiring Minds and the project team coordinator, collated the lessons learned throughout this project as well as tips and tricks from other project leaders and has created a step by step guide to 'fundraising on a shoestring' which will prove invaluable to those who are seeking new campaign ideas or simply a way to make their next fundraising goals achievable.



*"What can I say...you have authored a resource book that will become the "bible" for grassroots organizers, corporations and for that matter any group wanting to organize a fundraiser. The layout is so easy to follow and written in such a succinct manner. In my humble opinion you have out done yourself with the nuts and bolts while weaving the personalization of yours and Ferns story."*

*-Wendy Packer of New Rochelle, NY*

**To learn more about Faith Wood, visit [www.imind.ca](http://www.imind.ca)**

