

Mo' Money, Mo' Money, Mo' Money - Individual Giving

Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia's First Spark Event of 2006

January 9th @ Walnut Street Theatre Studio 5

***Remember the second Monday of every month is a new Spark event hosted by the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia. Individual & Organizational members attend free, all others are charged \$10 per person. (This money may be applied towards membership dues!)* **

Special Guests:

James Haskins - Executive Director, Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia (moderator)

James Lynes - Director of Development, Philadelphia Theatre Company

Rebekah Sassi - Director of Institutional Advancement, Walnut Street Theatre

Please note: The Theatre Alliance has sample individual giving campaign letters, please contact our office at info@theatrealliance.org or call us at 215-413-7150 to receive a copy. Hard copies only will be mailed out so please remember to give us your complete mailing address.

Future Spark Event and Theatre Alliance Announcements:

- **Monday, January 23rd, 6pm at Freedom Theatre!!!**
 - Our *First Annual Membership Meeting and Reception* - Must be a member, Individual or Organizational, in order to attend. Theatre companies are allowed up to three staff members due to space restrictions. RSVP for this event at RSVP@theatrealliance.org or call 215-413-7150!
- **Monday, February 13th, 7pm at Fergie's Pub - 2nd floor (12th & Sansom Street)**
 - *I've got Designs on You!* - Young directors can mix and mingle with new designers and stage managers in hopes of creating great new partnerships. Stay for Fergie's Open Mic night starting at 9pm. RSVP for this event at SPARKrsvp@theatrealliance.org or call 215-413-7150!
- **Monday, March 13th, 7pm at TBA location**
 - *The Art of Governance* - Editors, Jaan Whitehead and Nancy Roche, of the new book *The Art of Governance* will join us to discuss the ins and outs of board membership and how non-profits can communicate better with their board members. (Copies of the book will be on sale at the event.) We are not yet accepting RSVPs for this event.
- **PACDP - Pennsylvania Cultural Data Project** - Theatre Alliance will be contacting everyone about filling out the short form. The PACDP will help to collect accurate data about cultural organizations in our city.

Campaign Letters - Tricks of the trade

- Write letter about three months before your target ask date - for example, for an end of the calendar year letter, begin writing in October and have it out by November.
 - Talk about what just opened and how successful everything is going and the exciting anticipation of shows later in the season
 - Tell them about your mission - what is your company's vision? What will be your next step? How can your company expect to grow in the new year?
 - Have a campaign for a specific show. Ask them to become a part of this production's success - great way to gather data about your donors.
 - Find a company that will match a certain amount of money to challenge your donors to give more than usual.
 - I.e. If the theatre raises \$10,000, then Company XYZ will match it.
 - Only have letter campaigns 3 but no more than 5 times a year.
- Create a target goal for each campaign
 - How to get a first good target amount? Take the number of people you send letters and let's say everyone donates \$10. Take that amount and divided it in ½ three times. There is a great first target amount for your campaign!
 - Always give yourself attainable, achievable goals with realistic projections

- Incentives for Individual givers
 - #1 = tax deduction - only if your theatre has a 501 (c) 3 non profit status
 - Place your focus on this reason when doing your end of the calendar year ask
 - Other reasons - philanthropy and social reasons
- Tell them WHY they must give more than just the price of the ticket they purchase
 - How much of your budget comes from ticket sales? Foundations? And individual donations? (use a pie chart, bar graph, etc)
 - Educate! This is your opportunity to educate the donors about production costs. For every \$100, we can do this... For every \$1000, we can do this...
 - Use your educational programs which are extra initiatives outside of just producing shows and will need the extra funds
 - Find the emotional hook to something meaningful to your theatre's vision. A good letter will try to get the reader to think beyond themselves and look to the greater good.
- Include a remittance envelope or a tear off portion of your letter which the donors can mail back with their donation.
- Always cater your letter to a specific targeted group. i.e. \$50 ask letter should be different from your \$1000 ask letter.
 - OR figure out what would best suit your constituency - letters, cards, special events
 - Who is your constituency? Young versus older? Get to know this information.
 - Letters to those who gave in years past and have not yet given this year.
- Your giving letter is dead three months after you mailed it out. Consider that particular letter a lost cause.

Benefits

- Is possible to add little benefits to someone's donation: key chains, mugs, meet the director/cast events etc; HOWEVER, once you start a benefit you can NEVER take it away.
 - Better to just wait until you reach a higher level and give things to higher level donors.
- Main benefit to a donor must always be the value of your company and how you serve and contribute to the landscape of the community.
- Any material benefit you may give whose market value is \$25 or above, that portion of their gift is not tax deductible
 - PLEASE CONSULT WITH A TAX ATTORNEY ABOUT ANY TAX DEDUCTIBLE INFO. Contact Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts at <http://www.pvla.org> or 215-545-3385
- Benefit is what you do with the money.
 - With your contribution we will be able to pay our actors, build our set, etc.
- Easy Benefit - invite donors to opening night!
 - Use events you are already producing such as the opening night party
 - Greet your donors with a smile and perhaps give them their tickets so they won't have to wait in line.

The object is to raise money! - DON'T FORGET IT!

- Automatically add in a donation on subscription renewals
 - Obviously, make it so that the audience member can opt-out of the donation but if you automatically add in a \$10-\$15 donation to the form, they may just say "What the hell, why not!"
 - Always mention why you need their support beyond the ticket price - non profit company & donations keep the ticket prices reasonable
- Use your Board members to write letters
 - Send emails to their friends and clients
- Odd shapes and colors of envelopes to help your letter stand out in the mail
 - Make it more personal less business like
 - Hand written if you can
 - Use stamps not a postage meter

- Ask for odd amounts for specific reasons
 - I.e. We are trying to get this high school class to see our show and for every \$9 you donate we can get one child in for free!
- Think outside the box - Ask for small dollar amounts in your curtain speech and have the actors stand in the lobby with hats etc.

Tele-funding

- Don't underestimate the telephone call - personal contact.
 - Board of Trustees can call or the Board of Directors can call previous donors to see why they have not donated yet this season.
 - Follow up campaign letter with a phone call
- Use the phone to build relationships with your subscribers, "Did you like the show?" etc.
- Cold calls are very very difficult and it can be difficult to get over the repeated rejection and hang ups on the other line.
- Yes! Call businesses after you have sent them a letter soliciting for sponsorship!
- The Do Not Call Registry does not apply to a 501 (c) 3 non profit organization because there exists a previous relationship with those you are calling - single ticket buyers or subscribers etc.

Important Bits and Bytes

- All Pennsylvania 501 (c) 3 non profit organizations must register with the state.
 - You must also include the following information on any solicitation letter email etc. *"The official registration and financial information of the XXXXXX Theatre Company may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement."*
- Build a simple database in MS Access or MS Excel - remember, KEEP IT SIMPLE!
 - Create columns for |First| |Last| |Address| |City| |State| |Zip| |Phone| |E-mail| |Campaign 1| |Campaign 2| - track if they donated and how much - all in excel!
- Today's young audience are not subscribers. Create new data for the best way to reach them for donations.
 - Get to recognizing single ticket buyers in your database
- Use online / web-based giving!
 - Keep your emails as specific as your letters
 - Don't send emails too often to avoid being labeled as SPAM
 - Send to your friendster or evite lists.
- Only about 2% of direct mail solicitation gets a response. Keep this in mind when creating goals.
- About 30% of the Walnut Street Theatre's budget is individual giving and 15-20% of PTC's budget comes from individual giving. Most major support comes from foundations.
- Being a new/small/emerging theatre company allows you to be fun and adventurous in your donation letters. Enjoy it!
- Last but not least, always send a thank you note to any donor no matter how small. Thank you's should be about 48 hours after donation was received and at the very least sent in a timely fashion.

Notes prepared by Karen DiLossi, Director of Programs & Services for the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia.