

Keys to Your Show Choir RUNNING SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING PROJECTS

By Jeffrey Ellenberger

As a direct result of today's economic times, many show choirs, choirs, and musical theatre programs are relying on fundraising to bridge the gap (fill the holes!) in their budgets. Now more than ever, the importance of a successful fundraiser is critical. With several companies and multiple products and services from which to choose, here are some suggestions and recommendations to consider.



SELECTING A FUNDRAISER IS NOT AN EASY TASK.

The product you select to sell or service you intend to provide must be of interest and value to both your choir members and your community. First of all, no matter what product you decide to sell, choose a reputable fundraising company. Once you've made your decision, don't hesitate to call and ask for customer testimonials and/or referrals.

Additionally, be sure to check out the company's ratings with the Better Business Bureau, and ask how long the company has been in business. It is important that the fundraising company you've selected is reputable and stands behind its product. Like you'd expect from any other business, products that fail or arrive damaged should be replaced at no additional charge.

Just as importantly, check the bottom line and look for hidden costs. Make sure that all of the support materials you need to run your sale, such as brochures and order forms, are furnished free of charge. Remember, any add on costs, like shipping (shipping should be free!), detract from your profit.

Keep it simple! The volunteer in charge does not want to be saddled with complicated tally sheets and order forms. It should not take an MBA to calculate your profit. Work not only with products that are easy to sell, but also with a program that's easy to administrate. Customer service is also a key. Should questions arise, there should be a toll free number available so any questions you may have regarding the program, products, additional orders, tabulation, payment, etc. can be dealt with directly.

THE PRICE OF THE PRODUCT IS THE KEY TO YOUR SUCCESS.

Current conditions being what they are, any fundraiser with a product selling for \$10 or less has greater appeal than one offering more expensive items. Out of necessity, today's consumers are more budget conscious. Everyone is tightening their belts, so the higher the price the tougher the sell.

Going hand in hand with price is value. No matter what product you're selling, consumers want the product to perform and meet expectations. And, of course, the product should look exactly like the picture in the sales brochure on which they based their decision!

ONCE YOU'VE MADE YOUR DECISION, CREATE SOME EXCITEMENT!

It is important to select a highly motivated and organized individual as your fundraising chairman. Hold a kickoff meeting to generate enthusiasm, get organized, stress participation, and review the program. Do not assume everyone knows what they're supposed to do.

For a great warm-up, advise sellers to start with family, friends and close neighbors, while reminding them to always be courteous and polite. Set an attainable goal and communicate that to the sellers,

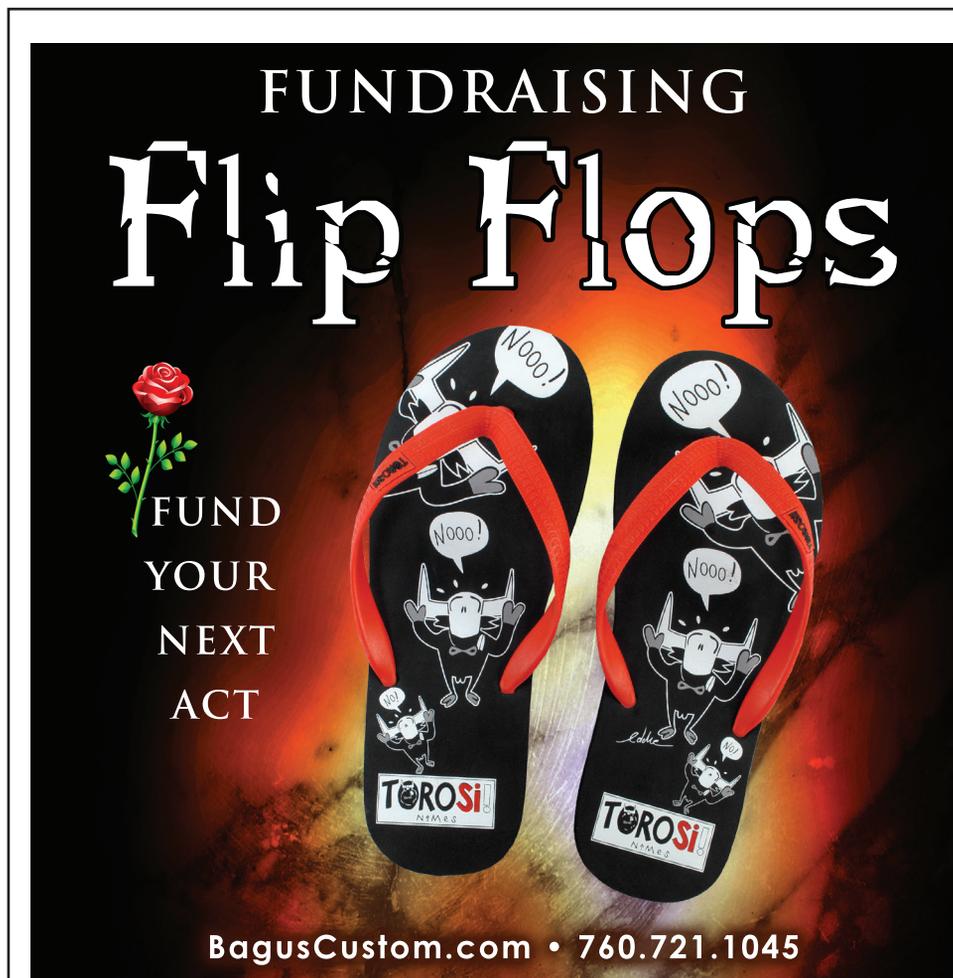
and then be sure you keep everyone on the same page for maximum results.

If at all possible, try to schedule your fundraiser to avoid competing with others in your community, and tap your local media outlets to help spread the word. Finally, set a clear end date (two to three weeks recommended). Upon completion, hold a wrap-up meeting to thank everyone and share results.

Happy fundraising! 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jeffrey Ellenberger is owner and president of Dutch Mill Bulbs, Inc. Since 1960 the company has helped thousands of groups exceed their fundraising goals with fall and spring fundraising-with-flower bulbs programs. For additional information, please go to www.dutchmillbulbs.com, or call 800-533-8824.



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