



Special events can raise funds, create awareness, motivate, promote team spirit and encourage friendly competition.

It is important that fundraising events be held *after* employees are canvassed—participants should not perceive that their financial contribution to special events replaces or reduces their personal pledges. Re-member—special events should **COMPLEMENT** your pledge campaign, not **REPLACE** it!

The saying, “Plan the work and work the plan” really applies to special events. Sound logistical planning is essential to the success of an event. In most cases, also have a contingency plan and be prepared for every possible situation.

Quality is more important than quantity. Select events with a proven track record that involve as many employees as possible and will be cost effective in terms of time and energy.

Planning Checklist

- What do you want to accomplish—raise awareness, boost employee morale, or raise money?
- How much time is needed?
- What are your resources?
- What is your budget?
- Who will organize the event?
- Do you require special approval, license, or permit?
- Did you inform your Loaned Representative or United Way staff partner of the event?

Cost

Special events can incur substantial costs. Add up your volunteer and staff time, costs for supplies, food and facilities. If you approach sponsors to donate supplies and services, make it clear that their contribution is in addition to their normal contribution to United Way. If sponsorship is not feasible, take a hard look at the amount of money you can reasonably expect to raise. Few things are as dis-heartening as a well-intentioned special event that fails to meet its financial objective.

It is also important that volunteers do not ‘burn out’ from working on a special event, which can also act as a barrier for building a strong Campaign Team. Make sure your volunteers have fun with the special events and that they see the measurable benefit of organizing any activity through dollars raised, the number of employees participating, team building, etc.

Resources

Liven up your special event with campaign videos, promotional banners, posters and balloons. You can request these items from the United Way office.

Guest speakers are available year-round to present on the many positive benefits of supporting United Way. Contact your Loaned Representative or United Way staff partner for additional information.

Ideas to get you started!

Here is a long list of event ideas to help you out with your workplace campaign. Any event that involves ticket sales must have a lottery license, which can be facilitated by our office (please give at least two weeks' notice so that we can get the lottery application ready and forwarded to Service NL for processing). For additional details on whether your event requires a license, please call our office and we would be happy to help you!

Remember, any of these ideas can be modified to best suit your workplace. You're only limited by your imagination!

United Way Speaker – Arrange for a United Way Speaker to attend a departmental meeting or coffee break. Most presentations take about 10 minutes.

A Dollar an Inch – Executives participate in an all-day competition to end the day with the shortest tie. Employees cut an inch off their favorite executive/direct manager's tie each time they give to the community. Give prizes for shortest tie/ugliest tie, etc.

Agency Fair – Invite United Way funded agencies to set up information booths in your office. Try a carnival theme – each booth has a game as well as valuable information. United Way staff and members from your Campaign Team each partner with an agency to run the activity. Include a hot dog/soda lunch. Remember to publicize - to announce the fair have a senior manager write a memo stressing the importance of attendance and learning about the important community work that is happening through United Way. This is a great way for people to have a better idea of what they're supporting when taking part in the United Way Campaign.

Auction (Services) – Auction off your employee's special talents as prizes. Guitar lessons, dance lessons, cook dinner, valet parking, or buying & delivering coffee every day for a week are some fun examples.

Auctions (Silent or Live) – Employees and/or departments can donate baskets or prizes to the auction. Employees write their bid on a bidding sheet (silent) or have a Guest Auctioneer and use paddles to bid (live).

Bake/Book Sale – Arrange for employees to donate. Advertise well in advance with posters, memos and bulletins. Have volunteers available to help set-up, man the tables, and clean-up. All proceeds donated to United Way.

Balloon Pop – Employees donate prizes for this event, which is a variation of a traditional raffle. Before filling a balloon with helium, put a note inside with the name of a prize. Employees pay a set fee to buy a balloon and pop it to receive their prize.

Battle of the Sexes – It's the men against the women in the company to see which one gets the highest pledge per-cent participation.

BBQ – Advertise well in advance of what you will be serving and have your tickets on sale a week ahead of time so you have an idea of how much food you'll need. Visit a wholesale distributor to negotiate a donation of supplies (plates, utensils, etc.) and request sponsorship from your local grocery store, outlining that proceeds from the event will be donated. Provide chefs with United Way aprons.

Be Seen in Jeans – Charge \$5 for employees to wear jeans all week, or free when they return their pledge form. Be Seen in Jeans stickers easily identify participants (We have "I'm dressed this way for United Way" stickers available at our office)

Bingo – Sell bingo cards for employees to purchase. Have management call bingo numbers either over the intercom at appointed time slots, or over email every 5-10 minutes. Get a local store to donate prizes for all winners.

Breakfast or Lunch – Serve breakfast or lunch to kick off your campaign. Use "Celebrity Chefs" to boost attendance.

Candygrams – This type of event is perfectly organized around a holiday such as Halloween or Valentine's Day. Encourage all staff to participate and start advertising the event early.

Carnival – Employees pay to play a variety of carnival games with proceeds to United Way.

Car Race/Horse Race – Build a large racetrack with cars or horses representing each department. Cars/horses will advance around the track as dollars and/or participation rates increase in each department.

Car Wash – Executives and volunteers wash cars in the company parking lots over the lunch hour to maximize employee participation. Charge a flat minimal fee.

Celebration – Hold a celebration at the end of your campaign to thank all your volunteers and donors and celebrate your success!

Children's Art Contest – Give employees 'official photographs' of one or two executives to take home for their children to draw. Or, ask children to draw what 'helping others' means to them. Contest is limited to children under 12 who are related to any employee. Employees vote for the best drawing by paying a set fee to vote – however, all children should win a little something for their submission. Display winning portraits as part of the organizations' permanent art collection.

Chili Cook-Off – Co-workers compete for bragging rights for best chili recipe. Invite employees to bring in a batch of their best chili and have co-workers judge each chili based on taste, texture, and fire value. Charge a small fee per bowl and include rolls for lunch. The Champ is the recipe that sells the most bowls.

Coffee Cart – Executives and/or Campaign Representatives hand out free coffee and/or donuts as they distribute pledge forms and brochures. This event is great for workplaces that employ shift workers or those who can't leave their desks for traditional events.

Comedy Hour – Ask a local comedian or improv troupe to donate their services over the lunch hour. Have employees buy tickets to attend.

Cookbook – Compile a cookbook of employee recipes and sell to raise money for United Way.

Crossword Puzzle – To create awareness, generate a crossword puzzle using clues and answers from United Way's website.

Dance Lessons – Talented employees offer to teach dance, yoga or aerobic lessons for a small fee with all proceeds to United Way.

Door Decoration—Employees vote on the most creative door decorations to win prizes. Organize this contest around a theme or holiday.

Dress Up Days – Wear red for United Way or dress according to a specific theme to build energy and excitement.

Dunk Tank – Employees pay a fee to dunk their favorite executive!

Eating Contest – A timed eating contest is always amazing and fascinating to watch. Choose from pies, hot dogs, ice cream, jalapeno peppers – you are only limited by your imagination. Charge an entry fee to contestants and award a prize to the winner. Have a concession stand selling food and drinks to the audience. A 50/50 draw during this event is always a popular addition to this event. Have paramedics on hand in case of emergency.

Elevator Toll – Charge a toll for anyone using the elevator on a particular day of the campaign – ensure you have management's approval to do so. Give each toll payer a United Way sticker to wear to avoid being charged on his/her return trip up or down.

Employee Raffle – Ask employees to contribute something special for a raffle prize – homemade pies, a weekend stay at a luxury cabin, tickets to a Rider game. Employees who turn in pledge forms early receive a 3 raffle tickets; employees who turn in pledge forms after the early bird date receive 1 raffle ticket.

Executive Chair/Tricycle Race – Set up a relay course for executives to go through sitting in chairs or riding tricycles. Observers can place bets on their favorite contestants with proceeds going to United Way.

Garage Sale – Organize a collection drive, donate used goods.

Harvest Festival – Employees bring their products (plants, fruits, vegetables, flours) from their home gardens to the office. Other employees purchase the goods with proceeds benefiting the campaign. You can also raffle off the goods by silent auction.

Head Shaving – Find colleagues willing to shave their head for your fundraiser. Have a public head shaving when your goal has been met. As an alternative, you could also do a beard or moustache shaving.

Ice Cream Social – Offer employees the opportunity to build their own sundae. Have a selection of ice cream available as well as different types of toppings. Make sure there are plenty of volunteers to supervise, assist and clean up. This is a great opportunity to bring in a United Way Speaker to present while employees are enjoying their sundaes.

Jail & Bail – Give employees the opportunity to send other staff members to “jail” during their lunch hour or coffee break (or both). Have someone on the Campaign Team act as warrant officer. The person having someone arrested will go to the warrant officer and purchase a warrant for the arrest of a co-worker at a predetermined fee. The warrant officer then advises the prisoner-to-be that there is a warrant for their arrest. The individual may then pay bail to avoid jail time (bail is typically double the arrest fee). If 3 people purchase a warrant for the same person, the prisoner will have to pay bail 3 times to stay out of jail. If the prisoner-to-be chooses not to pay bail, they will spend their lunch hour or coffee break making calls to raise bail from their co-workers and contacts.

Lunch & Learn – Leading up to your campaign, offer free information sessions during the lunch hour. Arrange for a United Way Speaker to present. Encourage employees to bring their own lunch.

Make Cents – Advertise a nickel collection competition between departments. Identify a drop location for rolled coins. Award prizes to those departments collecting the most nickels (per capita), then exchange nickels for bill and make a presentation to United Way.

Massage Clinic – Bring in students from the local massage schools to provide neck, upper back, and hand massages to your employees. Charge a flat fee with all proceeds going to United Way.

Mini Golf – Build a nine-hole course featuring ramps, water and sand around the office. The lowest score will take home a tacky prize. Participants should bring their own putter and pay an appropriate entry fee.

Minute to Win It – Inspired by the hit tv show, each team will have their team members split up in groups of 2. Each pair must complete a challenge in one minute or less. The team that completes the task in under a minute with the fastest time wins. Each team will tally up their times and the team with the lowest overall time wins the competition!

Office Pantry – People pay a lot of money for the convenience of vending machines. Vendors can easily charge a lot of money for a soda that only costs \$0.50 when purchased at a wholesale club. Why should you give all that profit to a vending company? This event is an on-going fundraiser and works best in smaller offices and offices where employee trust is not an issue. Pick a place in your office to designate as the pantry, and stock it with soda, bottled water, sports drinks, candy bars, chips – just about any kind of snack food you can find! Create a price list, design a way to collect the money and you are all set. Keep the pantry stocked and solicit suggestions for different varieties and the money should start flowing!

Office Olympics – Schedule noon hour events each day during your campaign to promote team spirit and encourage inter-departmental competition. Charge a flat fee per team and donate proceeds to United Way.

On a Clear Day – Company, executives and committee members wash every car window in the parking lot and attach a balloon with a flyer explaining that they want everyone to have a ‘clear’ picture of what United Way does for the community.

Pancake Breakfast – Create awareness of the breakfast within the community by distributing flyers to the neighboring houses and let the media know. Employees are asked to sell breakfast tickets to family members and friends. Negotiate with your cafeteria or a wholesale distributor for a donation of supplies or a discount. Approach the CEO and senior management to serve breakfast.

Parking Spots – Raffle the use of the CEO/President’s parking spot for a week. Alternately, hold a draw for employees who return pledge forms for the chance to win VIP parking for a month (12 draws total).

Picture Match Game – Invite employees to try their luck at matching baby or pet pictures to pictures of employees, Charge employees a fee to vote and award a fun prize to the participant with the most correct answers.

Pie Throwing Competition – Pay to throw a pie in your favorite executive's face!

Piggy Bank Challenge – Groups decorate piggy banks. Have a best dressed pig competition or fattest pig with the most dollars. Piggy banks are then used for employees to drop off their change during campaign. Alternately, have collection jars beside cash registers or at reception desks and collect donations all year long.

Pizza Night – Free pizza for the 2am shift. Arrange a United Way Speaker to raise awareness (yes, even at 2am!).

Popcorn Party – Plan an afternoon to sell popcorn. Employees pay a fee for each serving with all proceeds going to United Way.

Potluck Lunch – Promotes team spirit. Encourage employees to bring the recipe for their dish and include the recipe in the Cookbook (above).

Pumpkin Carving Contest – Plan a Halloween theme and hold a pumpkin carving contest. Find a local business willing to donate pumpkins for your organization to sell to your employees. Employees buy pumpkins for their families to use in the contest. Charge a flat fee to enter and \$1 per vote. Award prizes for various categories – best traditional, most creative, best effort, worst effort. Throw a party to end your campaign.

Rent-A-Boss – Employees bid on services provided by management or supervisors.

Scavenger Hunt – Schedule during the noon hour to promote team spirit and encourage inter-departmental competition. Charge a flat fee per team and donate proceeds to United Way.

Seeing is Believing Tour – The number one event to raise awareness is a Seeing is Believing Tour. They are one of the most effective and impactful things you can do in your workplace campaign. Employees see firsthand how their contributions are working and renew their enthusiasm for the upcoming campaign. If you are unable to schedule tours for your entire staff, we strongly encourage you and your Campaign Team to tour an agency.

Shoe Shine – Executives shine shoes in exchange for a donation.

Shoot the Suit – Protective wear is suggested for this game! Set up an obstacle course or 'gauntlet' that volunteer or 'selected' employees must run through while being targeted by water balloons, wet sponges, etc. Employees who participate in early bird pledges, general pledges and leadership pledges can get free shots.

Sock Hop – Invite employees to kick-off '50's Style'. Give prizes for most authentic dress.

Spelling Bee – Employees vs. Management. Use United Way words (messaging, agency names, etc.) to create awareness and promote team spirit.

Talent Show/Karaoke – Employees can conduct a Canadian Idol-type contest, where they make a donation to vote for the management singing group of their choice and the duo or group that attracts the most will sing a song of their choice in front of an audience.

Team Chia Pet – Employees divide into teams. Each team is given a Chia Pet to be cared for. The Chia's hair may be cut, primped and styled. Prizes awarded for fullest growth, longest single sprout, and most original.

Themed Events – Coincide your campaign and/or event with the current season or holiday (Back to School, Halloween etc.)

Ticket Giveaway – Give free tickets to movies, theatre productions, amusement centers and other local attractions for pledge incentives. Give movie passes to every employee who meets the challenge of pledging a certain dollar amount. Enter the names of all employees who turn in a completed pledge form during the first hour of your kick-off into a special draw.

Toonie Toss – Fill a small wading pool with water. Place a dinner plate in the center. The object of this game is to toss a Toonie onto the plate to win a prize.

Trivia – A United Way funded agency is featured each day for a week in a well-travelled area. With the display, a question about the agency is posted. Employees who turn in ballots with the correct answers are entered into a draw.

Ugly Sweater/Tie/Earrings Day – Employees can vote on the ugliest item. Use as a fun event.

Vacation Day – Employees “buy” a vacation day. When an employee chooses to participate, their wages from a day's work are deducted from their pay cheque. The organization may choose to match the amount deducted, with all proceeds donated to United Way. Win-win situation – the organization achieves high participation, the employees get a vacation day, and a difference is made in the community.

Video Game Tournament – Individuals or teams pay to play favorites like Guitar Hero, Rock Band and Wii Olympics. Teams can dress the part.

Volunteer Day – Employees who give at or above a certain level are rewarded with 8 hours they can use to volunteer at a United Way funded agency.

Walking Tacos – It's a portable taco bar! Set up taco toppings in a self-serve fashion. Give each person a bag of Doritos to crunch up, and then fill the bag with taco toppings. Perfect for employees on the go who don't have time for a traditional potluck luncheon.

Washer Toss Tournament – Set up an area to play washer toss, charging a nominal fee for team entry.

Whose Legs? – Line up co-workers for mug shots of their legs in Bermuda shorts, legs only. Encourage employees to pay a fee to guess whose legs belong to which co-workers.

Have an idea that you might need some help with? Reach out to us and we would love to work with you to help make your campaign events a success!