

Fundraising Strategies for the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra

Overview

This document serves as a comprehensive guide for board members and future fundraisers at the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra. It summarizes key discussions from a recent meeting with Daniel Escobar and outlines actionable steps to enhance our corporate sponsorship and fundraising efforts.

Key Themes and Quotes from Daniel Escobar

1. Understanding Corporate Sponsorship

- **Quote:** “Engaging with donors is a conversation. You have a valuable product that is essential to life in your community.”

Understanding corporate sponsorship is not just about securing funds; it’s about building relationships. When you approach potential sponsors, remember that you’re not just asking for money; you’re inviting them into a partnership that can elevate both their brand and the community’s cultural landscape. This mindset shift transforms the act of fundraising into a shared journey rather than a transactional encounter. By communicating the orchestra’s mission and its impact on the community, you highlight the value they can contribute. Take time to share stories about the orchestra’s transformative power, reminding sponsors that their support can create lasting legacies within the arts.

Action Items:

- Prepare a compelling narrative about the orchestra’s impact on the community.
 - Create a list of potential sponsors to target based on shared values.
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2. The Importance of Moves Management

- **Quote:** “The basic sort of game plan we operate out of is the moves management piece, which includes prospecting, cultivating, and soliciting donations.”

Moves management is a strategic approach that emphasizes the importance of relationship-building at every stage of the donor engagement process. This method involves three core components: prospecting, cultivating, and soliciting. First, identify potential donors who align with the orchestra’s values and mission. Next, cultivate these relationships by engaging them in meaningful conversations that showcase the orchestra’s impact on the community. Finally, when the time is right, make the ask—requesting support not just as a donation but as an investment in the arts. By treating fundraising as a

series of intentional interactions, you can foster a deeper connection with sponsors, making them feel valued and involved in the orchestra's mission.

Action Items:

- Develop a prospect list of potential donors, including individuals and corporations.
 - Schedule regular follow-up communications to nurture relationships with prospects.
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Addressing Board Members' Concerns

3. Overcoming Fear of Asking

- **Quote:** “Framing it in a way where you realize what they’ve done is key. We appreciate everything you’ve done, and we would love for you to consider giving us more.”

The fear of asking for donations often stems from anxiety about rejection or the perception of imposing on others. However, this mindset can be transformed by reframing the conversation. Approach potential donors with a sense of gratitude, acknowledging their past contributions and the value they bring to your organization. By positioning your request as a continuation of their support rather than a burden, you alleviate the pressure associated with fundraising. Emphasize the impact their contributions have made and express your desire for them to continue their journey with the orchestra. This shift not only reduces anxiety but also cultivates a more collaborative atmosphere where donors feel like partners in a shared mission.

Action Items:

- Draft a list of personalized thank-you notes to send to past donors, acknowledging their contributions.
 - Develop a script that includes appreciative language to use during fundraising conversations.
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4. Leveraging Existing Relationships

- **Quote:** “By virtue of being on this board, your stature in the professional field increases. Leverage that to open doors for the orchestra.”

Every board member brings a unique set of skills and connections that can be leveraged to enhance fundraising efforts. Recognizing the intrinsic value of these relationships is crucial; your board's network can be a powerful tool in reaching potential sponsors. Encourage board members to tap into their professional and personal connections, engaging them in conversations about the orchestra’s mission

and upcoming events. By taking the initiative to introduce potential sponsors to the orchestra, board members not only expand the orchestra's reach but also enhance their own visibility within the community. This collaborative approach empowers each member to become an ambassador for the orchestra, fostering a culture of collective responsibility for fundraising efforts.

Action Items:

- Create a networking map for board members to identify connections to potential sponsors.
 - Host a training session to help board members practice outreach conversations.
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Actionable Strategies

5. Utilizing Corporate Matching Programs

- **Quote:** "Have you looked at matching gift programs? They can significantly amplify donations."

Corporate matching gift programs are an often-overlooked avenue for amplifying donations, and they represent a straightforward way to maximize the impact of individual contributions. Many companies offer matching gift programs, where they match the donations made by their employees to eligible nonprofits, effectively doubling or even tripling the initial gift. Encourage board members and staff to inquire about these programs and communicate them to potential donors. Create a list of companies known for matching gifts to streamline the outreach process. By actively promoting matching programs, the orchestra can not only increase its funding but also engage employees in a meaningful way, enhancing their connection to the arts.

Action Items:

- Research and compile a list of companies with matching gift programs.
 - Develop informational materials about matching gifts to distribute to board members and staff.
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6. Engaging Potential Sponsors at Events

- **Quote:** "Inviting them to see where we operate and experience what we do firsthand can make a significant impact."

Inviting potential sponsors to experience the orchestra in action is one of the most effective strategies for building lasting relationships. When donors witness the vibrancy of live performances and the passion of the musicians firsthand, they gain a deeper appreciation for the value of their contributions.

This engagement fosters emotional connections that are difficult to achieve through traditional outreach methods. Craft unique experiences around concert invitations, offering backstage access or opportunities to meet the conductor and musicians. These interactions not only enhance their experience but also encourage them to envision themselves as part of the orchestra's community, making them more likely to invest in its future.

Action Items:

- Plan a VIP concert experience for potential sponsors, including backstage tours and meet-and-greets.
 - Create a follow-up survey to gather feedback from attendees about their experiences.
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Next Steps

7. Creating a Toolkit for Fundraising

- **Quote:** "I think it's essential to provide tools to make this happen."

Equipping board members and fundraisers with the right tools is essential for empowering them in their outreach efforts. A comprehensive fundraising toolkit can serve as a valuable resource, providing templates for communication, talking points about the orchestra, and tips for effective donor engagement. Here's what we ask you to consider as you create this toolkit:

- **Think about your "why":** Reflect on why you care about the orchestra, why you participate, and why you believe others should support us. This personal reflection will empower your conversations with potential donors and sponsors.
- **Leverage your network:** Encourage board members to reach out to friends, family, and acquaintances connected to businesses that could become sponsors. When a potential connection is found, introduce them to the executive director via email for a smooth transition into further discussions.
- **Use the tools provided:** Utilize the corporate sponsorship packet, available [here](#), which outlines sponsorship levels and initiatives to share during conversations.

Additionally, consider these quick reference points:

- **Ticket Distribution:** Highlight a 46% increase in ticket distribution this season.
- **Affordability:** Promote free entry for those 18 years and younger, ensuring no one is turned away at the door, with over 1,200 free and discounted tickets distributed.
- **Engagement:** Mention the "More Than Music" programming at each concert.
- **Accessibility:** Discuss the availability of braille programs at every concert and the multi-language website translation.

- **Philharmonia:** Share information about Denver’s first classical music open mic night, creating buzz and community interest.

Action Items:

- Develop a digital toolkit that includes templates and best practices for fundraising, incorporating the points mentioned above.
 - Schedule a workshop to introduce board members to the toolkit and its resources.
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8. Continuous Engagement and Learning

- **Quote:** “Building relationships takes time; it’s not one meeting or one phone call.”

The journey of fundraising is one that requires patience, persistence, and a commitment to building relationships over time. It’s essential to recognize that successful fundraising isn’t merely about securing immediate contributions; it’s about cultivating long-term partnerships that benefit both the orchestra and its supporters. Encourage board members to prioritize ongoing engagement with donors through regular updates, invitations to events, and expressions of gratitude for their support. This ongoing relationship-building fosters a sense of community and shared purpose, ultimately leading to increased donor loyalty and a stronger foundation for future fundraising efforts.

Action Items:

- Create a calendar of regular communication touchpoints for engaging with donors.
 - Implement a system for tracking interactions and follow-ups with potential sponsors.
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Conclusion

This document aims to empower board members and future fundraisers with the strategies and confidence needed to successfully engage with corporate sponsors. By implementing these actionable steps and embracing the orchestra’s mission, we can cultivate lasting relationships that benefit the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra and the community we serve.