

8 mistakes to avoid when organising a charity fundraising event

As a not-for-profit, by now you know the value fundraising events have for your organisation. They present the perfect opportunity to gather a group of people who care about your cause and want to support it. They also help to raise awareness of your organisation to a new audience. However, as with any event, when planning a charity fundraiser, there are some very simple steps which if forgotten, can quickly turn your fundraiser into a flop.

We highlight some of the worst mistakes you can make when organising a charity event, and what you can do to avoid them.

Mistake #1 Not complying with council requirements/alert external parties

Imagine successfully wrapping up an event having raised thousands of dollars only to then receive a heavy fine due to the event not complying with council requirements. Liaising with council should be done during the early stages of your event planning, but it's always worth keeping in constant contact with them in case you have any change of plans or activities – it is your responsibility when organising your event to proactively find out all the requirements and procedures you'll need to follow.

Don't forget to also alert emergency services of your event so they can be on standby in case you're required to call on them.

Mistake #2 Not having adequate insurance

In our opinion, this is also one of the most important parts of organising an event. In addition to taking out [Public Liability insurance](#) for your organisation, you'll also need to ensure any stallholders such as ride operators and food stalls have their own Public Liability insurance in place. And don't forget to take out [insurance to cover your volunteers](#) as well.

If you're unsure of the insurance you need for your event, [Aon's NFP Insurance puzzle solver](#) can help you decide. You can also speak to a member of Aon's not-for-profit team by calling 1800 123 266.

Mistake #3 Not briefing stallholders

If you have booked stallholders, they'll need to be made aware of all their requirements prior to your event, such as bump-in & bump-out times; and any council/municipality requirements. You should also have found out from them beforehand if they have any requirements such as minimum space; if they require access to water or a power point.

Also make sure they have their own Public Liability Insurance, and ask to cite proof of their insurance before booking them (see Mistake #2 above).

Mistake #4 Not having a wet-weather/cancellation plan

This is especially important if your event is outdoors, but even if your event is indoors, you'll need to have a contingency plan in place in case mother nature decides to make a donation of her own. Have a list of all suppliers who can assemble marquees or gazebos on short notice, as well as backup venue options which you know will be available. If you secure an alternative venue, make sure you communicate this to your attendees as soon as possible.

Mistake #5 Not having a run sheet and checklist

There is no such thing as too much preparation when organising any event, no matter how big or small. The traditional event run sheet is still one of the most tried and tested ways to ensure you're over-prepared in the best possible way. If possible, your run sheet should

account for every minute (only because planning by 10 second intervals might be a little unreasonable), especially if you plan on having any guest speakers. We also suggest using a checklist like our [Events Risk Management checklist for NFPs](#) as a final sense check to make sure you've covered all bases.

Mistake #6 Not preparing volunteers

They might not be donating money to your charity, but your volunteers are giving you something which can't be bought – their time. Volunteers take time out of their day to support your cause, so you'll want to make sure you're making it worth their while by giving them a meaningful experience. Having volunteers stand around loitering or unsure of what to do will cause frustrations with staff members, attendees and even volunteers themselves. To prevent this, assign a 'lead' to delegate tasks, and clearly assign roles and responsibilities among staff members and volunteers. This will help ensure you're getting the most out of the manpower you have.

Also make sure you have insurance to cover your volunteers - the last thing you want is for one of them to suffer an injury at your event (remember they may not be covered under your workers' compensation as they're not paid employees; you may need to take out [Voluntary Workers Personal Accident Insurance](#) to cover them).

Mistake #7 Not collecting donations

As crazy as this might sound, being explicit in asking for donations is something [many not-for-profits struggle with](#). If you've organised a charity event before, this won't come as a surprise, as you know how easy it is to become so deeply immersed in the finer details of planning, that you remove your eye from the main objective of collecting donations (in fact, a recent [Forbes report](#) found Event Management to be the 5th most stressful job in the world). A big part of collecting donations involves making it as easy as possible for people to donate at the event – whether that's through having a box for cash, or merchandise for sale.

Mistake #8 Not thanking your donors & sponsors

This is another fairly obvious one, but after the event, if you've captured the contact details of your attendees or donors, you should absolutely be sending them communications (with their consent) to thank them for their generosity whether that's in writing, through email or even a phone call. Other than being the courteous thing to do, this will also help build your relationship with donors and sponsors. It's also worth including your volunteers on your list of people to thank too.

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