



# MISSION ~~IMPOSSIBLE~~

## Fundraising for associations

THE INTERNET AS WE KNOW IT IS NOW TWENTY YEARS OLD AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB IN 1991, AN INVENTION OF BRITISH SCIENTIST TIM BERNERS-LEE. IT HAS HERALDED HUGE ADVANCES IN THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE AND SHARE INFORMATION AND ITS CONTINUING EVOLUTION IS BOTH A THREAT AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ASSOCIATIONS. ASSOCIATIONS THAT EMBRACE THE CHANGE AND DIVERSIFY THEIR INCOME WILL SURVIVE TO CELEBRATE THE INTERNET'S 30<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY.

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### CUTTING OUT THE MIDDLE MAN

The biggest impact of the internet for associations is arguably the disintermediation information. Or put more simply, associations, as the

traditional middle man in the supply chain, are being cut out as content producers and content devourers interact directly in the web 2.0 world. A trend that will arguably continue in the web 3.0 world just beginning to dawn, where your internet experi-

ence will be ever more personalised. The internet is one of many catalytic factors that have led to increasing threats to the traditional major income sources for associations; member dues and meetings. Increasingly members can get information direct and don't need the association as an intermediary. Exhibitors can build rich online product experiences, interactive communities with end users that offer budget decision makers a real alternative to attending your meeting.

The need for associations to diversify their income streams has never been greater and more and more associations are calling

for increased fundraising, often leaving busy association executives and volunteers wondering where to start... but fundraising needn't be a mission impossible.

The term 'fundraising' is misleading in many ways. Fundraisers are actually nothing of the sort; they don't earn money and give it away. They are actually conduits, facilitators or middle men, sitting between those who need the money (association members and their beneficiaries) and those who have money to invest (donors, sponsors and partners - the people who raise the funds). The first place to start in fundraising is to see your role as a facilitator, bringing

together the right people to make good things happen.

## PAINTING YOUR FRONT DOOR

Have you ever played the board game Monopoly? A little tip, the oranges will give you the best return on investment for your real estate. What's the reference to fundraising? Well in Monopoly the dice decide what real estate you can buy, but on the internet your website is your real estate and you can determine how much return on investment it can generate.

Now that spring has sprung, there is no better time for a spring clean of the front door to your association, your website. It might seem like a funny place to start and you might be screaming 'show me the money' but your website is just like the front door to your house. If you are selling your house you would always tidy up your front garden and paint the front door, estate agents call it kerb appeal.

## ACTIVE, FOCUSED AND EFFECTIVE

A potential donor will check out your website as a reference point. They are looking to see if your association is active, focused and effective. So look at your website with fresh eyes, make sure there is fresh content, news items, demonstrations of the impact you have. Use images, quotes and case studies.

If you don't have any material ask board members why they love their profession and what the association means to them. Ask members what the most satisfying accomplishment in their jobs has been. Get photos!

Often for professional associations it is not the fact that you've distributed a news-

letter, organised a meeting or established some guidelines that will enable you to demonstrate impact. You have to work out what the end impact is for the man on the street. Your members do amazing things, you just need to find out what they are and shout about it.

If there have been years of different editors adding information, but no-one removing it, check to see if your mission and passion come across clearly. If in doubt ask a child to look at your website

**This article will urge you to spring clean your website, help you build a case for support and finally go after the money. Fundraising is like an iceberg and 90% of the hard work goes unseen. Roll up your sleeves!**

and tell you what the organisation does. At the highest level page on your website it should be really clear that you are there to make a difference.

## SOCIAL MEDIA: THE NEXT BIG THING?

Maybe. But really social media is just another way of telling your story and your first task is to dust off your website. There is a lot of chatter about social media revolutionising fundraising and it has a great impact in the best case studies. But as your website is likely to be overly focused on communication to one group of people members and meeting attendees, the first task is to make it communicate to different audiences.

## YOUR WEBSITE'S CHECKLIST

- + Get a child's feedback on your website - do they know the answers to why, what and who?
- + Treat it like holiday packing - half of the content is probably old, outdated and unnecessary, put your holiday clothes on the bed and get rid of half of your outdated content
- + Demonstrate your impact with member stories, quotes and photos

At this stage you don't need to complicate things by trying to run Twitter and Facebook pages too. It is better to do one thing really well than lots of things badly. Just as prospective donors will check out your website, they will also check out your presence on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. If you have dormant accounts with sparse activity that's worse than no account at all.

[www.uia.org](http://www.uia.org)

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*This article has been contributed on behalf of the Union of International Associations (UIA) by Tom Eeles. Tom works as a Fundraising Consultant with the medical association clients of Kenes Associations Worldwide having previously raised funds for UK medical and health charities.*