



Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) Walled Towns Day Fundraising Advice

As support from state agencies declines community groups must look to private local sources of money to ensure festivals can continue. This may seem like a scary situation. However, if properly planned and executed, fundraising can actually strengthen the festival by deepening connections with the local economy and community. Indeed, the issues you will have to address when fundraising will more than likely improve the quality of activities and how the event is marketed. There are a number of ways to fundraise (e.g. merchandising, casual trading, friends' schemes, sponsorship, online revenue, events). The various methods are introduced below. Not all of them will be appropriate to your festival or the abilities of the organising committee. Despite the recession, there is still money out there. Nonetheless, it is hard to get and requires a strategic and professional approach to be taken. The information in this document will hopefully help. The IWTN and the IWTN Project Manager do not accept liability for any of the advice detailed below.

Merchandising

Merchandising can be a useful way to raise additional funds. It is also an excellent means of promoting the festival year-round. However, before any merchandising activities are carried out it is essential that all festival branding is both high quality and standardised. It is also crucial that you know who your target market is, what they want, and how to price your items appropriately.

Ideas

T-shirts (produce and sell outright or get a local draper to sell t-shirts with 25% of the money going to the committee).

Prints (get local artist to design unique festival poster and sell limited number of framed prints. The artist gets half the net profits).

Mugs Get local artist to provide design. A simple vibrant design with festival name clearly visible is best.

Post cards Get local artist to provide design. A simple vibrant design with festival name clearly visible is best.

Calendars Images of previous events or drawings of local medieval scenes by schoolchildren. Sell through local schools and businesses.

Check out the website below for some other merchandising ideas, or try a Google search:

<http://www.edfringe.com/shop/>

Casual Trading

Stalls can be a superb way of adding vibrancy to an event. Great food is a particularly good way of attracting people. Craft stalls can also significantly enhance the visual spectacle of a festival. In relation to fundraising, stalls can provide income via a pitching fee. Whatever you choose to do, it is absolutely essential that all stalls are of high quality. Do not fall into the trap of having lots of stalls selling shoddy goods simply to get the greatest number possible paying the fee. This will demean the festival brand, annoy people and ruin good will towards the festival. Quality not quantity!

Some new or emerging festivals may not feel confident in asking merchandisers to pay a pitching fee. In this case it may be best to wait until the festival is attracting a large crowd before asking for a payment. Make sure to ask local artisan food producers and crafts people to have a stall. This is a good way of getting neighbourhood businesses interested in the festival and in building up local good will.

A strategic approach must be taken by festival organisers when dealing with commercial pitches. You must decide who sells what and the number of pitches that will be available. It is also important to separate out stalls that are commercial from those that have little commercial value but add to the destination attractiveness of the event. Sometimes this can be difficult. For instance, a potter or basket maker demonstrating their craft may have products for sale but might not sell much. In this situation it is perhaps best to limit pitching fees to stalls that are obviously commercial. Usually this means food. Ultimately though, there is no hard and fast rule. Each festival is unique and needs a specific strategy that could change from year to year.

Before requesting that certain commercial stallholders pay a fee it is important to have conducted market research on both the numbers and type of person that have attended previous festivals. You also need to know what is an appropriate charge. According to the Association of Irish Festivals and Events roughly 10% of the expected day's takings should be the fee. This must be paid in advance. It is important to remember that you are not looking for charity. You are offering an attractive opportunity for someone to make money.

Friends' Scheme

Sixty percent of British mid-sized and large festivals have Friends' schemes. By contrast, in Ireland only 9% of festivals have Friends' schemes (Source: AOIFE, 2011). Such an initiative may help bring in additional funds and also broaden the number of people with an active interest in the festival. Many festivals that have existed for more than one year will have built up a good deal of local good will. While most people will not wish to be actively involved in the event's organisation, they may be disposed to helping out in other ways. A Friends' scheme provides this opportunity.

The monetary benefits can be substantial. A simple scheme with a conservative figure of 80 people contributing €25 will bring in €2,000. After a while it may be a good idea to offer several different Friends' packages. These gold, silver and bronze schemes would each offer varying benefits. A separate scheme could be available for local businesses. Friendship in kind should be available for companies that

cannot afford to give money. Instead, they may be able to provide staff or services free of charge to the festival.

A useful trick to add prestige to being a friend is to ask the “great and good” to be honorary presidents and patrons. An online payment system can be set-up on the festival website using PayPal. Physical payments should also be permitted. A Friends’ initiative needs to be driven by one dedicated individual and be well promoted. For the scheme to be financially beneficial it should not just depend on the goodness of people’s hearts. At the very least, a personal thank you letter should be sent. However, being a Friend should also offer something more substantial. This may include some of the following:

- Name on a special Friends of Festival banner
- Name on the festival website
- Special Friends window sticker
- Exclusive party for patrons
- Free festival poster
- Invitation to launch event
- Priority booking and seating for events that have a charge e.g. music recital. Free tickets for gold and corporate Friends.

Be careful! Unless the Friends’ scheme is properly planned there is the risk of it being more trouble than it’s worth!

Check out the website below for some ideas:

<http://www.junctionfestival.com/support-us?type=patron>

Sponsorship

Asking for sponsorship is not begging for money. Rather, it is about providing an investment opportunity that will benefit a company. Sponsorship is not a donation. If people want to donate get them to use the Friends’ scheme. According to AOIFE, anything less than €500 should not be accepted. Sponsorship offers companies the possibility to support an initiative that increases footfall and communicate directly with their target customers. Don’t be afraid in saying that your festival brings people into the town centre, is of direct benefit to their business, and that its continuance depends on local funding.

It may be more appropriate for small towns with a corresponding small business base to only have a friends or donations scheme. Sponsorship in kind from local businesses could also be considered.

When pitching to prospective sponsors don't bother telling them much about the event. They want to know about the audience. The proposal should be rigorously scripted. Prospective sponsors need to have confidence in both you and your event. This means:

1. Knowing your event
2. Developing and pricing the proposal
3. Pitching the proposal

Knowing your event

When developing a proposal you need to know what your festival can offer prospective sponsors. This includes both tangible items and intangible information about the event. Make a list of tangible assets that can either be individually sponsored or areas where main sponsors can display information. Assets could include:

- Banners
- Radio/TV/Print
- Posters/Flyers
- Roadside advertisements
- Festival marquee/stage
- Special events
- Mailing lists
- Website/Facebook
- Audio announcements
- Product display opportunities
- Participation in parade/prize giving

Sponsors also need to know about the profile of the event and those who attend it. Such information may include:

- Audience numbers
- Audience profile (Are they local? Is it mostly families or young couples? What socio-economic group are they from?). It is worth noting that most people who participate in heritage events are from higher socio-economic groups.
- The level of recognition of the festival name (a media scrapbook featuring all previous news articles about the festival is essential to show prospective sponsors the event's reach)
- Audience compatibility with sponsors needs (be targeted in who you approach)
- Is there category exclusivity (e.g. will they be the only insurance firm or supermarket advertised)
- Protection of their brand being lost in a logo soup

- Sales opportunities

Developing and pricing the proposal

After collecting the information you need to be strategic about how much you want to raise and what sponsorship can be sold. Do you want to have a title sponsor or partner? Are you going to have various grades of sponsorship? Are there packages available? All these questions should be answered before any businesses are approached. It may be useful to create a sponsorship inventory menu where the various options are detailed. Above all, sponsors want to know what they get for their money. This could include invites to a launch party, specific information on where their logo would be displayed and free tickets to special events. It is important to recognise that while you want to offer value for money you should not undervalue your festival.

Create a one page fact sheet (when the event is on, estimated numbers, audience profile). Leave this with the prospective sponsor at the end of a meeting. It is also very useful to have a media scrap book for the prospective sponsor to leaf through showing all the press coverage the festival has received in previous years.

Pitching the proposal

Conduct research to ensure that you know who may wish to sponsor your event. It is also important that they should be a good fit. A scatter gun approach will sap your energy as rejections inevitably pile up. Check out free newspapers to see who is conducting sponsorship activities. There may also be several larger companies in the locality that wish to simply improve their profile.

It is best that a specific person is charged with conducting all sponsorship activities. A lot of festival volunteers are understandably reluctant to go out and ask for money. In this situation a local businessperson should be recruited to act as a sponsorship champion. That individual should have connections with the local Chamber, Rotary Club, rugby and golf clubs, etc. Having someone who has pre-existing relationships with other businesspeople is incredibly useful in opening up doors to sponsorship. After the champion has canvassed possible sponsors a series of meetings should be scheduled. At the presentation do not use more than six slides. Be succinct. Stress the popularity of the event and the opportunity it offers. Make sure to write back both to those who agreed and did not agree to sponsor your event thanking them for seeing you.

After a sale has been made it is absolutely essential that the sponsor is firstly kept informed about what is going on, secondly, is invited to the event, and finally, is sent an event report providing information about the attendance numbers, press coverage, activities, etc. The report will drastically improve the chances of the sponsorship being renewed. Remember, it is a relationship you are trying to develop.

Check out the link below for a festival report:

http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Irish_Walled_Towns/2008_fETHAR_D_Report.pdf

Online Revenue

The online platform is an emerging area where money can be successfully raised. Beyond the fact that the website or social platform can itself be sponsored or offer a platform for event sponsors, there is the possibility through crowd source funding to raise significant sums. *Fund it* is an online Irish platform that allows people to attract funding from friends, fans, and followers from across the world <http://www.fundit.ie/browse>. Historically, *Fund it* has been used by the arts sector with little engagement from heritage circles. Nonetheless, it offers the possibility of accessing significant funds pledged by supporters. However, to be successful, a large and dynamic social media presence is required.

Fundraising Event Ideas

Fundraising events can be an excellent way of getting badly needed funds for your festival. If they take the form of a fun event in their own right they can drive people into the town centre and help enhance the festival's profile. This would also result in an improvement in the chances of obtaining sponsorship.

What events you decide to do are dependent on both the imagination and the capacity of the organising committee. You could have a raffle or a masked ball in a medieval tower house. The more imaginative and unique the idea, the better!

Enable Ireland have created a long list of fundraising ideas which you can see by clicking on the link below:

<http://www.enableireland.ie/support/fundraising/a-z-fundraising-ideas>

Another opportunity for fundraising is during the event itself. Politely asking for donations at the gate instead of charging admission can be a very effective way of collecting money and directly plugging into the good will of attendees. However, care must be made to ensure that patrons do not feel forced to give money. It is voluntary after all!

The organising committee could have a commercial stall at the event. This stall should not be in competition with any paying stall holder. Instead, it should focus on a popular unserved niche. This could include an oyster stall. For medieval people by the coast, oysters were the food of the masses. Another idea might be to have an onsite medieval tavern. This could serve small glasses of alcohol available in medieval Ireland (mead, real ale, wine from Northern France). Five euro for a sample of mead and real ale could prove very popular. Corporate packages in conjunction with local businesses could also be considered. For larger festivals the option of charging for car parking could be considered. People do dislike paying for parking. However, if you clearly display a notice telling people they are financing a community event, the reluctance to pay should be significantly reduced. Make sure to thank them when they pay.