



January/February 2010

- [Update Your Email Address](#)
- [Email Our Editor...](#)
- [Home Page](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Credits](#)



[Printer Friendly](#)

## ■ Charitable Success

### Planning an effective fundraising campaign

*By Cynthia E. Cattern, PCAM*

**Connecting with client associations, creating links to the outside community and fostering a vibrant workplace environment should be at the top of any management company's to-do list. Focusing on charitable giving and outreach helps management companies accomplish these goals.**

Charity efforts improve morale, pride, loyalty and teamwork for both your clients and employees, inspiring a more cohesive and engaged community and workforce. While it's challenging to raise funds or build enthusiasm in this economy, a carefully planned campaign can give any charitable effort the energy and structure needed to overcome even the biggest obstacles.

Professional Community Management (PCM), based in Lake Forest, Calif., organizes and participates in several charitable events and campaigns each year, including a canned- and boxed-goods drive for a local food bank during the holiday season. It also conducts an annual fundraising drive for United Way; in 2009, the company raised \$53,900.

"PCM has a 35-year tradition of contributing to organizations benefitting the less fortunate in the communities we service," said Donny Disbro, PCM chief executive officer. "As a company, we support local charitable organizations with both time and financial support. It is a key value in our corporate culture, and is supported with enthusiasm by our employees."

#### Call a committee

Management companies should provide opportunities to give throughout the year, but organizing a single, large campaign—like PCM's United Way fundraising drive—requires time and careful planning. PCM's charity committee typically begins planning three months prior to kickoff—to drive the cause, ensure accountability and help participants take ownership of the campaign.

The committee is responsible for appointing a campaign leader, defining job descriptions and assigning roles to participants. If it's an annual event, the committee should develop goals based on previous years' contributions. Goals serve as an important part of the campaign and need to factor in the current economy and the number of participants.

#### Planning points

- Find a charity or organization to support.
- Recruit volunteers to serve on a charity committee.
- Select a date—or dates if it's a larger campaign—that works for all participants.
- Assign jobs and see where volunteers fit in best at the event. Keep a detailed list of responsibilities; chances are likely someone will forget his or her role.
- Have a backup plan in case the event needs to be delayed, a volunteer can't attend or other things fall through.

The committee will also create a theme, slogan and logo, all of which helps build excitement.

**Involve leaders**

Before the official charity kickoff, conduct an information session for executive staff or association board members—if you choose to involve clients—to educate them about the campaign and gain their support. PCM, for example, began its 2009 United Way drive with a leadership luncheon to organize and educate its management about donating to the cause. Gaining leadership's support is crucial to building enthusiasm and will encourage others to contribute.

Invite a charity representative to the executive information session to speak about the group's impact in the community; an employee or community member who has benefited from the cause would be even better. Personal stories are powerful, add to the message and likely increase donations.

**Kick it off**

The company-wide kickoff is the most important part of the campaign. Similar to the leadership information session, invite a speaker who has benefitted from the charity to share his or her experience. Combine food and fun with communication on how participants can support the cause. Consider a prize drawing for those who contribute within the first 24 hours.

For the United Way drive, PCM offered employees the option of pledging cash amounts or taking advantage of payroll withholding to contribute.

Throughout the first week, the company built enthusiasm for the campaign with incentives, motivating employees with a paid day off, lunch with the CEO and other prizes.

**Maintain interest**

The longer the campaign, the more creative you'll have to be. If you provide an activity every day, the campaign generates momentum and keeps participants interested.

You can conduct a daily raffle or a silent auction on the company website, especially if the campaign extends to the surrounding community. Create simple and easy ways to give, such as online donations or payroll deductions for employees.

Consider partnering with vendors or local retailers to make the campaign community-wide; collect prizes and incentives or have them sponsor events. Challenging a local business to compete against your company in raising funds, for example, generates even more enthusiasm. Partner up for activities tied to the campaign, raising money through chair races in a parking lot or pie-eating contests; charge competitors an entry fee.

**Send thanks**

When the campaign ends, identify and thank all who donated by posting recognition announcements in numerous places, such as the company website, bulletin boards or on paychecks if your payroll system allows.

Plan a finale to thank all fundraisers or donors. Make certain to recognize all who worked on the campaign including committee members, leaders and vendors. PCM concluded its United Way campaign with a barbecue, costume contest and dunk tank, where Disbro was dunked more than 50 times for charity by employees, residents and local firemen.

*Cynthia E. Cattern is director of management services for Professional Community Management in Lake Forest, Calif.*

*©2010 Community Associations Institute. All rights reserved. Reproduction and redistribution prohibited.*

This article is reprinted with permission from the January/February 2010 issue of *CEO Insights*, a bimonthly e-newsletter published by Community Associations Institute (CAI). Working with its 59 chapters, CAI fosters successful, harmonious homeowner and condominium associations by providing education, tools and resources to the volunteer homeowners who govern communities and the professionals who support them. For more information, visit [www.caionline.org](http://www.caionline.org) or call (888) 224-4321 (M-F, 9-6:30 ET).