



From pennies in a tin to tens of thousands, you should think about how you are going to ask in advance

Asking properly

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- [Here are some basic rules:](#)
- [Asking at events](#)

OK so you decided what you want to do and who you are going to approach. But how you ask and who should make the 'ask' is very dependant on the situation and what you are asking for.

If you are going to do a lot of fundraising and have a big target, then you might want to read-up on 'asking', there are lots of fundraising books that give advice (see our directory of suppliers). Asking can be a two minute process or sometimes it takes months and months to get a potential donor excited enough about the cause to ask them for a significant donation.

For most volunteer fundraising activities your asking will take a few minutes. All the same, effective fundraisers have thought about and practised their 'ask' well in advance of having to actually ask someone. Try it out on a good friend or the bathroom mirror a couple of times before you go 'live'!

HERE ARE SOME BASIC RULES:

Find the right person to ask

The right person may well be you, but if you are trying to get someone to support the cause whom you don't have a direct relationship with, try to find someone who does and see if they will ask for you. We are much more likely to say "yes" to someone we know, whose judgment we trust and who we would like to impress.

Know as much as you can about the cause you are supporting

Knowledge is a powerful tool and is relevant to all of the points below. But at the same time don't be afraid to say, "that's an interesting question, I don't know the answer, but I'll find out". If you do find out and come back with the answer, it's a valid opportunity to ask someone to support the cause again!

The cause you are supporting should help you out. Ask them for a copy of their annual report and any other materials they have that will help you become an advocate.

Listen and get to know people

Ask people questions about what interests them. Take time to listen to what they have to say and use questions to encourage them to talk. You know you are doing well if your questions enable someone to see why they are interested in the cause too. Try to see the world from their perspective and present the cause in a way that is relevant to them, you may both be passionate about it but for very different reasons.

Be passionate

You need to share your passion for the cause, so that people want to give to it. In most instances people won't want to hear a long speech, so you might want to practise explaining the cause and making encouraging noises aimed at getting others to support it in advance. See if you can get your words of encouragement down to two or three sentences at the most. Then use your knowledge of the cause to give more detail if people ask you for it.

Most commercial advertisements only last 30 seconds!

Be honest and fair

No matter how wonderful the cause is and how much it deserves everyone's support, it is never reasonable to exaggerate the truth, or to shock people into giving. Be sensitive to the feelings of those you are asking to support the cause.

Set a precedent

Think about who is likely to make your largest donation and ask them for their support first. If you are successful you have now set the precedent for other donations. You can approach the next person, explaining how much the first donation was worth and though you may not receive quite as much again people will take their cue regarding how much to give from those who have donated before them.

Of course you need to be sensitive, it would be unkind to use this approach if you felt that was a large gap in the capacity to give between donors.

Check you most generous donor is happy to be named, BEFORE you use them to set the precedent.

Ask for the right amount

Often we are shy about asking for a large sum, but if you believe that someone can contribute a large sum and you believe the cause is worthwhile then

you may have the confidence to ask for more than you originally planned. Likewise, don't ask people for more than they are able to contribute, think carefully about what the right amount is BEFORE you approach someone. The government's Giving Campaign recommended that people should consider giving 2 percent of their annual income to charity.

Sometimes it is helpful to have a 'shopping list' of what a donation might achieve because people like to be able to visualise what they are doing. For example, £60 will send a child to school for a year, £5 will buy a vaccine and £1 will pay for a water purification table. Be clear these are only examples of what the money could do. If you imply that the donation will be used exclusively for this purpose it is known as a 'restricted donation'. You need permission from the cause you are fundraising for to raise restricted funds as it has important legal implications for them and they may not be able to accept a restricted donation without prior notification. The Charity Commission [gives good advice](#) on how to manage appeals like this so that they are successful.

Again ask the cause you are supporting to provide you with a 'shopping list' make sure that it covers the range of values of donations you are likely to ask for.

Ask

It sounds obvious, but for most people asking for money is unexpectedly difficult. When you think that someone is interested and can visualise how their support will make a difference in a way that is appealing to them, ask them to make a donation.

You may find it helpful to think of it as an invitation. You are inviting people to join you in supporting a wonderful cause, the money is not for you, it will make a difference to the life of someone who really needs their support (or it is an environmental project 'somewhere' that needs their support). When you have explained why you feel the cause is worthwhile, you may want to start your ask by saying:

"Please join me in supporting this cause by donating £?, which could, for example, enable them to ?????"

Or if you are asking for sponsorship

"Please join me in supporting this cause by sponsoring me for £? to ???"

[Top](#)

ASKING AT EVENTS

The time you spend running your fundraising activity is a fantastic opportunity to get people who are new to you passionate about the cause you are supporting. Think about how you might do this. Tell people about the cause and why you are passionate enough about to go to the trouble you have.

Try to make a space on your stall to have a few leaflets. Ask the charity to supply these and make sure that the leaflet has a donation form for people to fill in. If someone looks interested after you have spoken to them give them a leaflet.

Try to brief your fellow volunteers to do the same.

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The Institute of Fundraising Code of Best Practice for Major Donor Fundraising gives more extensive advice on asking.

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