



Simple Secrets of Successful Community Groups – Volume 2

Another 400 tips on running
a successful community group





Simple Secrets of Successful Community Groups – Volume 2

Published by Our Community Pty Ltd

Melbourne Victoria Australia

© Our Community Pty Ltd

This publication is copyright. Apart from any fair use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be produced by any process without permission from the publisher.

Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction should be addressed to:

Our Community Pty Ltd
PO Box 354
North Melbourne 3051
Victoria, Australia

Please note:

While all care has been taken in the preparation of this material, no responsibility is accepted by the author(s) or Our Community, or its staff, for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies. The material provided in this guide has been prepared to provide general information only. It is not intended to be relied upon or be a substitute for legal or other professional advice. No responsibility can be accepted by the author(s) or Our Community for any known or unknown consequences that may result from reliance on any information provided in this publication.

ISBN 1 876976209

First published February, 2008

Acknowledgements

Cover photo by Lynn Gail (www.spicefotography.com.au)
Cartoons by Mark Cornwall





Foreword

Six years ago when we first started a weekly column providing information to help community organisations run more effectively and efficiently, I didn't imagine it would still be going strong even now.

Or that we would be now producing this book, *Simple Secrets of Successful Community Groups – Volume II*, which – as the title suggests – is the second book featuring a compilation of those weekly columns.

One of our main aims behind producing these columns was to expand the number of people who held the key to the secrets of running successful groups. We wanted to ensure that the smaller or newer groups could learn from the experiences and the processes put in place by bigger and more established community groups. It was also about increasing the number of individuals within those groups that possessed the basic knowledge and confidence to get more involved in the running of their own organisations.

Many people fear they don't have the skills to be able to make a difference. With the help of practical, common-sense advice, many people have found that they do have those skills and can contribute to their local communities.

If it means groups or individuals are able to take the first step to improving their operations or raising more money or saving more money, then these columns have been successful.

Our mission statement at www.ourcommunity.com.au is "Building stronger communities through stronger community organisations". I hope that this collection of columns, containing hundreds of tips, can help to continue that important process.

I am constantly amazed at the capacity of community groups to come up with new and better ways to overcome every challenge – old and new – that they face each day, whether it's making a speech, setting up a bequests program, writing financial reports, evaluating your special events or turning an annual report into a marketing tool.

It is the collective wisdom of community groups, and the best practice examples and experiences gathered through 30 years of active





involvement in the community sector that I have featured in these pages.

Our community sector contains a wealth of great innovators and thinkers able to do so much with so little. And if their passion could be measured in gold, our community groups would have enough wealth to be able to make all their dreams come true.

I must pay tribute to the newspapers around the country that have supported their local community groups by running this column. Good local newspapers – like community groups – are the heart and soul of our local communities, and their continuing support for dissemination of information that can build their own towns and suburbs is fantastic.

At the end of the day, if groups can be better at the job they do, or can engage more people in that work, then their local communities are the ultimate beneficiaries.

I hope this book helps you and your group in planning for new activities or reviewing old ones.

Dr Rhonda Galbally AO
Chief Executive Officer





Contents

Introduction	5
Turning an annual report into a year-round marketing tool	6
Fundraising traps – and how to avoid them	7
The art of delegation – how to share the workload	9
Having the numbers at your fingertips – the first steps for a new treasurer	10
Undertaking a mid-year review	12
Keeping young at heart – tips on involving youth	13
Going in search of in-kind support for your group	15
Putting a dollar value on the work of volunteers	16
Going, Going, Gone! Maximising your auction night	18
A plan to grow by – Looking into your organisation's future	20
Listening and acting when the community speaks	21
Using word of mouth to make the big sell	23
Deciding whether to take the money or run – ethical fundraising	25
Cooperation and collaboration on community projects	26
Mobilising the community into action	28
Creating an online drawcard for your cause	29
Evaluating your success	31
The gentle art of negotiation	32
Finding the right words – tips to successful public speaking	33
Lifting the barriers to participation	36
Keeping the volunteer army happy	37
Calculating the hidden costs of special events	38
Taking the time to improve your funding application	40
Taking a business outlook at your activities	42
Becoming an agent of change in your community	43
Working out if you are getting the runs on the board	45





Finding a click way to raise money online	46
Selling the community vision	48
Keeping your group safe and sound	49
Finding the perfect partner	51
Customer service for community groups	52
Showing your creative side	54
Providing positive feedback	55
Setting and scoring goals in your organisation	57
Budgeting on a special event	58
Teaching new board members old tricks	60
The responsibilities of the board	62
Location, location, location – finding the perfect venue for your event	63
Building an effective media team	65
Communicating a clear message	67
When first impressions count	78
Increasing your network of influence	70
Asking people to leave a lasting legacy	72
A dollar saved is a dollar made for your group	73
Finding the next leader of the band	74
Building your people power	76
Planning for a successful leap into the New Year	78
Winning the race against time	79
How good financial reports can lead to greater financial understanding	80
Plan to turn fundraising words into action	82





Introduction

Each week since March 2001, Rhonda Galbally has written a newspaper column providing tips, advice, inspiration and motivation for community organisations across the country.

The column has tackled subjects from fundraising to friend-raising, board/committee selection to combating boredom on boards, media to marketing, and strategic planning to implementation.

Some six years later, the column is still going strong and is now distributed to more than 85 newspapers dotted around the country. Without the support of these local papers, the columns – and this book – would not have been possible.

In 2003, Our Community published *Finding the Simple Secrets of Successful Community Groups*, a compilation of 50 columns that contained more than 400 handy tips to assist groups in almost all areas of managing their group.

The success of that book, and the response of community groups who have used it, prompted this follow-up book, *Simple Secrets of Successful Community Groups – Volume II*.

This book – like the first one – is a collection of 50 columns that tackle many of the challenges facing community groups.

Use them as a prompt, rather than expecting them to cover the complete A-Z of a particular issue. The aim is to arm people with the basic knowledge of some of the best practice strategies or processes that other groups have used to good effect.

Some groups will look at these columns and say “That’s beyond us”, or “But that doesn’t apply to us”. No two groups are exactly the same, and the strategy used by a well-resourced national organisation will not work if applied directly to a small volunteer group. Look at each column and identify the main themes or elements and then see if your group could be improved if you implemented those elements, albeit in a manner that is appropriate to your group.

The idea is to look for the tips, ideas or strategies that you can “adopt and adapt” to your own organisations.

You don’t have to start from scratch or re-invent the wheel – you just have to make sure the wheel is the right size and model for your group. .





Turning an annual report into a year-round marketing tool

THE end of the financial year no sooner ends than the focus for many community groups turns to pulling together an annual report.

The role of the annual report has changed markedly over recent years. Where once it was a straight financial statement and a brief rundown of what your group was doing, it is now increasingly being used as a year-round marketing document.

Annual reports are also becoming more important because funding agencies, sponsors and donors are seeking more information and looking for evidence of sustainability, wide community support, and a track record of delivering projects.

Your annual report should provide readers with an immediate overview of your group and its effectiveness and show whether your goals match theirs.

As well as that, it is a document you can use to tell people who you are, what you do, what you have achieved, who your key personnel and supporters are, and the key challenges ahead, and also to demonstrate how highly you value your donors, sponsors, funders, and partners.

Some groups will look at this and say “We just don’t have the resources to do a flash, glossy brochure.” Well, it doesn’t have to be glossy, or expensive. Images and photos obviously help, but a good annual report can be produced cheaply using only the basic features of Microsoft Word. It’s important to remember that *information is the key* – the report has to sell your group’s message.

Elements you should include in your annual report include:

- A mission statement – providing a clear understanding of your organisation, what you are trying to achieve and how you are going about it.
- The required financial statements and audited accounts – showing the profit/loss for the year as well as a breakdown of revenue/ expenditure with analysis of actual results against budgeted results.
- A list of the past year’s achievements – What have you done well? How has your organisation made a realistic and demonstrable difference to your local community?
- Statistics or key performance indicators – reinforcing your achievements (and also – more importantly – case studies and photos depicting real-life examples).





- A page or pages thanking all your major donors, volunteers supporters, and sponsors – list all those who have helped make a difference to your organisation. The rule of thumb is that you can never thank people enough. Try to link them with the projects they supported.
- Details of your board members, key personnel and sub-committee members – so people know who is driving your group.
- The group's aspirations for the future – and what support you need to get there.
- Details of how people can help – If someone reads your report and wants to get involved, make sure you detail how they can do so.

For more information about marketing your group, visit the Marketing, Media and Post Centre at www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing.

Fundraising traps – and how to avoid them

FUNDRAISING is a tough proposition for any community organisation, and there's no doubt it's getting tougher every day as more groups compete for the discretionary dollars of supporters, members and the general public.

The good news is that fundraising is a skill that can be learned and improved. Every sausage sizzle, every trivia night, every grant application, every annual dinner, every donor campaign or appeal, every sponsorship deal, and every membership drive is an opportunity to learn something that can help to improve a group's fundraising effort.

The old saying goes that people who fail to learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. The same is true of fundraising. Groups can't afford to make the same mistakes twice or to miss any opportunities to improve their fundraising.

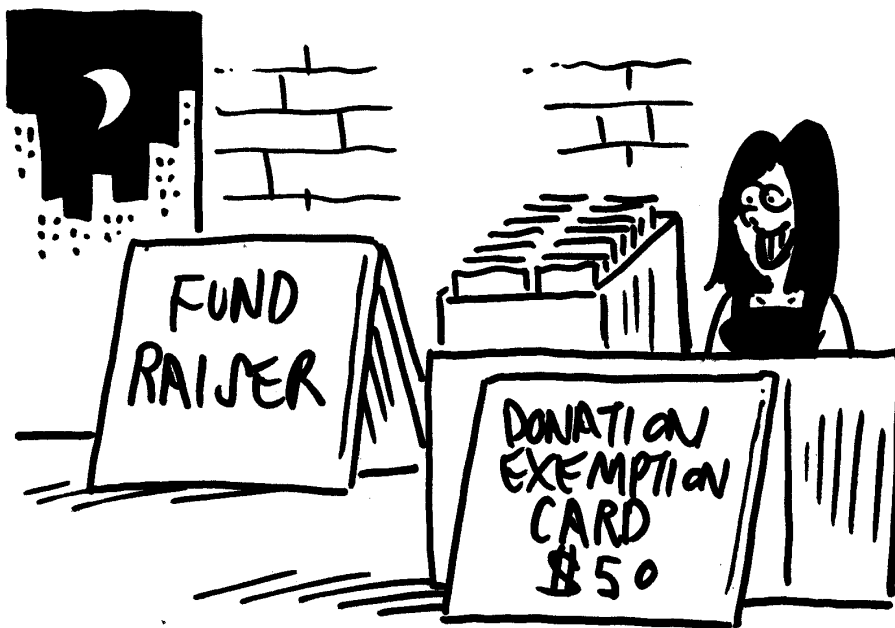
In the past I have concentrated on what fundraisers should do. Here are some tips to help avoid some of the traps fundraisers can fall into.

- Don't be afraid of popping the question – People fundraising for community groups need to quickly get over the embarrassment of asking for help. Tell your prospective donors what you would like them to give. And how.





- Don't neglect your planning – Maintain control by planning your fundraising. Set timelines to avoid crises, ensure everyone knows what you are doing and what they need to do. Planning helps avoid hiccups.
- Don't repeat yourself – Don't just do the same old fundraiser over and over again because that's what you've always done. Unless you improve it, tweak it, add, subtract and inject some new energy, your supporters and volunteers will get sick of it.
- Don't burn the workers out – Overworking your core volunteer group is a recipe for disaster. Good people who are willing to help your cause are hard to find. Spread the load, recruit new volunteers and make it easier by having manuals, job specifications, and clear reporting channels.
- Don't bank the cheques before you thank the donors – Get your priorities right. The job's not done till the paperwork's finished, and an important part of that is saying thanks.
- Don't ad lib if you can use scripts – Write down your best 30-second pitch for the organisation and for people to give. Polish it. Practice it. Then pass it on to all your fundraisers to rehearse.
- Don't let problems fester – Run your group much as you would a small business. You need to value your 'customers' and maintain a good reputation so they stay. Give a high priority to catching complaints early and fixing them.





- Don't put all your eggs in one basket – Diversify for sustainability. Even if you have a windfall, don't stop fundraising. Remember the basics: donations, grants, community-business partnerships, memberships/alumni, special events and earned income.
- Don't think the world owes your organisation a living – However wonderful your group is, however vital your cause, don't stop convincing people you have the most realistic and inspiring plan for action.

Try evaluating your fundraising using the free Fundraising Wizard at www.ourcommunity.com.au/funding.

The art of delegation – how to share the workload

IF YOU look at the boards or committees of most community organisations you'll usually find that a small core of committed people tend end up doing the vast majority of the work.

No-one can fault these hard-working and passionate types, but no matter how hard they work, they often still end the week with more tasks on the "to-do" list than when they began the week.

There are many reasons for this. Sometimes it comes down to a lack of available people, or a lack of available people with the necessary skills, time or desire. But sometimes, too, it can come down to the people at the top not feeling comfortable about delegating some of the tasks.

People talk about the "art of delegation" and it is an art – or at the very least a skill that takes quite some learning and even more practice. But if you get it right, it's a skill that can ensure more people take responsibility for decisions and actions within a group – and that is far more desirable than the alternative.

Delegation is about being effective with your time. There are only so many hours in the day, and if only one or two people are doing the work, there is only so much that can be achieved. If work is delegated in a planned and prepared manner then the group can get things done and move onto the next challenge or project.

Community leaders need to lead. They need to work out what they need to deal with personally, what can be dumped, and what can be delegated. Here are some steps to successful delegation.

