



The London Marathon is the world's biggest annual one-day fundraising event. Andy Etchells looks at how you can follow in the footsteps of the world's greatest fundraisers to get the donations rolling in

QUIDS IN

One of the founding principles set out by marathon visionaries Chris Brasher and John Disley when announcing the arrival of the London Marathon was to harness the power of runners to raise money for charity. As another 40,000-plus people prepare for the 35th running of this amazing event, they are, to borrow a phrase from Sir Isaac Newton, "standing on the shoulders of giants". For their predecessors have fulfilled that founding principle with a vengeance: to date, it's estimated that runners just like them have raised in excess of £716 million for good causes of every shape and size.

If previous years are anything to go by, runners in the 2015 race will add at least another £50 million to that total. The figures are mind-boggling – but so, too, is the effort involved. So here we will let you in on what professional fundraisers and ordinary

runners alike have learned over the last three decades about prising money out of friends and family (and even, sometimes, plain strangers) in good economic times and bad.

Of course, those three decades have seen extraordinary changes – not just in terms of the London Marathon's status (fewer than 7,000 finishers in 1981 compared to more than 30,000 now) – but in society as a whole; nowhere more so than in how the 21st century runner goes about his or her fundraising.

Back in 1981, the Brasher-Disley template was to turn a profit from the race, which would be covenanted to The London Marathon Charitable Trust (LMCT) – see page 114 – and then distributed to sporting and recreational causes in the London boroughs.

What The LMCT has achieved in the last 35 years is nothing short of spectacular – but, as it turned out, this

was only a small part of the fundraising avalanche the London Marathon triggered. For, armed with nothing more than dog-eared sponsor forms, sometimes home-made and often turned out on nasty, shiny photocopying paper, ordinary runners in the 1980s saw the London Marathon as the grown-up equivalent of the sponsored walks they remembered from their school days.

THEN AND NOW

Back then every act of sponsorship was almost as much effort as a long training run: get the form into the right hands; persuade owner of hands to fill in name and address; promise to get back to newly signed-up sponsor after the event; track down sponsor to show proof of finishing time and then get them to cough up coins, notes or a cheque; and finally gather all such monies together and take it to the charity. Phew! It was such a palaver that I recall advising the first team >>



Left: An elaborate fancy-dress costume can help to attract sponsors!

of runners I organised in the 1996 London Marathon that the really hard work started the day after the race. It's a point that is not lost on James Gamble (see page 113) who says, "I just can't imagine how fundraisers did this before social media".

Now, while not pretending that these days it's a walk in the park or effort-free, it is a completely different story: perhaps the motto of the modern fundraising marathoner should be "Have URL, will raise money". But as always, there's an art to maximising your returns, particularly

and only sign up if you are sure you can meet the pledge.

BE PASSIONATE

The best advice is to choose something you believe in or are connected with: would-be sponsors will react best to something you are passionate about and all the more so if you can tell them, in personal terms, what the charity means to you. I detect in my everyday contact with fundraisers a search for authenticity and rootedness: to unlock the keys to someone's heart (and wallet) it has to be something more than the humdrum and cursory

PAINT A PERSONAL PICTURE

It helps to convey as precisely as possible how your money will be put to good use. Who will benefit and how? Platitudes about "helping the disabled" or "saving babies' lives" will not engage as much interest as "£350 pays for a week's holiday for a child with a disability" or "£100 pays for an operation for a child in Africa".

BE THE STAR OF YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN

Use your e-giving page, Facebook or Twitter account, or blog to keep friends and colleagues up to date with

"THE BEST ADVICE IS TO CHOOSE SOMETHING YOU BELIEVE IN OR ARE CONNECTED WITH"



now that the average office-based person is assailed, according to one recent straw poll, at least once a week with a request for money for this trek, that skydive or the other swim.

First things first: the cause. As you are reading this in the 'commiserations' edition of *Marathon News*, you will be aware that there are still ways of getting a London Marathon place and that, as long as you are quick, there is no shortage of deserving causes within these pages. Do bear in mind that these places cost the charity money and you will be asked, usually by means of a pledge form, to commit in writing to raise a four-figure sum and it's only fair that you think through your sources of sponsorship

"I am doing x, so will you give me y?" and that's why, if you have the choice, a personal connection or a local angle is always a good thing. And thanks to e-giving and social media, you will have no shortage of opportunities to trumpet these connections and your passion – but more of that later.

So here's a rundown of the top proven tips that have worked for fundraisers over the years. Technologies may change, but some things stay the same...

START EARLY

They used to say of corrupt Chicago elections, "Vote early and vote often". Similarly, a good fundraiser starts early and keeps up the pressure.

your training progress – good and bad – as a way of keeping them involved. Throw in occasional reminders about the link to your e-giving page.

LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED

Sit down and make a list of all the people you have access to and work out the best way to reach them. It will probably be online, but sometimes face-to-face will be best.

THINK BIG

Don't just approach individuals but organisations and groups too: the organisation you work for; the organisations you come into contact with via work; your kids' schools including bodies like parents associations; your sports club or »

gym; your church or bridge club. Sometimes it's a question of reaching the individuals within these groups; at others it will be a corporate pitch. If you work for a reasonable-size company, the first thing to do is ask HR or payroll if they operate a Matched Giving scheme under which you get corporate support.

At its most generous Matched Giving can double what you raise, but most schemes have some sort of cap and some may only match donations made by your colleagues. But it's money that's there for the taking. If there is no Matched Giving scheme in place, ask them why not!

MIXED MEDIA

As we note elsewhere, more than nine out of 10 marathon runners have e-giving pages, but don't knock the old ways: sponsor forms can still do the business. In the latest survey of runners recruited for charities by the Charity Runners Clearing House (CRUNCH) 20 per cent of total income was offline, often via such forms. Sponsor forms (or collecting boxes if available from your charity) can tick along nicely on reception desks at work, counters in your local watering hole, and on noticeboards anywhere you may be known.

To avoid the palaver of collecting post-marathon, ask for money upfront, just as people are accustomed to doing when giving online; if someone wants to see you sweat first, ask for a cheque post-dated to April 27!

SHARE THE LOAD

Get others in your family and social network to bang the drum on your behalf if they are committed to you and your cause by replicating what you do on email and social media. In the days when sponsor forms were the only game in town, I always urged runners to circulate them far and wide (remembering, of course, to put name and address on them for safe return). Some runners appoint a family member to manage their campaign – be it on or offline – for them.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

As noted by Kieron Harrison (page 112) people can get tired of the naked pitch, but may get caught up in the excitement if there's something in it for them, even if it's just a sociable night out with friends. Frequently »



ILLUSTRATION: SHUTTERSTOCK

GET TO GRIPS WITH GIFT AID

Any sponsor (and this includes you, the runner, if you donate any of your own money) can claim Gift Aid on the money given to your cause if it comes from a UK taxpayer. Basically, this means that the Government adds to the donated sum the tax paid by the donor on the equivalent amount of income. So a donation of £10 becomes worth £12.50 (£10 plus 25 per cent) to the charity. Higher rate taxpayers can claim even more via their annual return but that's an issue between them and the taxman: only basic rate Gift Aid is paid automatically.

Strictly speaking, the Gift Aid process is not entirely automatic and it is not the donor who 'claims' the Gift Aid – it's the charity. But the donor has a vital role in making the claim possible – as follows:

If using e-giving, there are questions on the site that ascertain that the sponsor is a) a UK taxpayer and b) is making this payment from taxed income. The latter question is there because Gift Aid cannot be legally claimed if, for example, you are paying in money via your page that you have raised from a collection or an event. In that situation, the sole taxpayer cannot be identified and Gift Aid cannot be claimed. Charities can get into big trouble with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for inaccurate claims.

Yet another virtue of e-giving is that the e-giving company makes the claim and delivers it direct to the charity, in contrast to Gift Aid, which is generated via sponsor forms. Offline claims are made by the charity and will only be allowed if the donor has given their name and home address including postcode and ticked the 'I'm a UK taxpayer' box; a claim cannot be made if there is no

postcode or if your donor identifies himself via his company or workplace. This is why your charity will be at pains to stress the rules you need to get your sponsors to follow when filling in a form.

Whereas nearly 90 per cent of online donations come complete with Gift Aid, charities report that compliance issues with the rules on sponsor forms (for example, not supplying a home address or forgetting to include a postcode) reduce that figure to under 30 per cent – which leads to a lot of potential Government support for the cause going to waste.

There is sometimes some confusion about who qualifies for Gift Aid. Unless sponsors are corporate bodies, or foreign nationals, or for some other reason pay no UK tax (income or capital gains tax, but not other sorts such as council tax or VAT), pretty much everyone qualifies. In the £10 donation example above, as long as your sponsor pays at least £2.50 in tax in the current tax year – whether that be income or capital gains – then the donation qualifies for Gift Aid.

A very important final point about Gift Aid: if you have signed a pledge to raise an agreed amount for your charity as a result of being offered a Golden Bond place, you should be aware that the figure you have committed to excludes Gift Aid. Any Gift Aid collected – which will only be determined after application to HMRC – is regarded as icing on the cake, not the cake itself. Your pledge commits you to raising that amount, net, before additional Gift Aid. For this reason, when using e-giving, you should only ever count the net total on your page, not the total including Gift Aid.



KEY FINDINGS FROM VIRGIN MONEY GIVING'S ANNUAL SURVEY

Every year, Virgin Money Giving, official online giving partner of the Virgin Money London Marathon, produces a report summarising the numbers from the previous London Marathon and listing the lessons learned by the tens of thousands of runners using the VMG e-giving facility. Here are some of the key findings from the 2013 report:

- The number of donations made via Virgin Money Giving topped half a million for the first time.
- 94 per cent of all runners in the London Marathon used an online fundraising site.
- 79 per cent of runners using Virgin Money Giving also used Facebook or Twitter and more than two-thirds of those runners believed that mentioning their e-giving page on social media drove more people to sponsor them.
- The average donation (excluding Gift Aid) was £31.
- The average donation including Gift Aid (see p109) was £37.
- 87 per cent of donations were Gift Aided.
- 'Early birds' do better than late starters: people setting up a VMG page in December or earlier raised 12 per cent more than those starting in January or later.
- Despite this fact, more than a third of runners did not set up a page until January or later.
- In volume terms, March and April are the months when most donations are made so starting early is vital, but so is keeping the pressure on as Race Day approaches.
- Really late starters (those setting up pages in March or April) raised 39 per cent less than the early birds.
- Stating a target on your page encourages sponsors to be more generous: those with a visible target raised a whopping 73 per cent more than those without.
- On a per-hour basis, Virgin Money Giving recorded most donations – more than 3,000 – in the hour before the gun was fired at 10:00 on Race Day. So you might want to fire off a few texts to friends as you wait in the queue for the loos in Greenwich Park!

mentioned 'wheezes' in the CRunCH survey include...

ORGANISE A CURRY NIGHT

Invite your friends to your local Indian restaurant and charge an entrance fee on top of a negotiated deal for food with the management. If not curry, then coffee mornings, quiz nights, dances, village parties, tombolas: you name it, someone has used it to boost their London Marathon sponsorship pot. Make sure no one leaves without taking a card with your e-giving URL or filling out a sponsor form.

PIGGY-BACKING

If you don't have the time/resources/friends to organise a stand-alone event, ask someone else if you could ride on their coat-tails. This might be a pub landlord or an event such as a village fete where you get permission to set out your 'stall' when people are in giving mode.

PRIVATE SWEEPSTAKES

Organise a sweepstake for friends and family (and attendees at the curry night or coffee morning you arranged) around your predicted finishing time.

SELL YOUR BODY (OR VEST)

Carry an ad on Race Day for a local company (and get your picture wearing said vest in the local paper).

BAG PACKING

This was the top single earner one year for one enterprising runner who packed bags at a big-name supermarket. Again, prior permission is essential, as is manpower. It helped, therefore, that our man was in the Air Training Corps with a ready supply of air cadets at his beck and call – but he came away with virtually his entire pledge figure from one pre-Christmas evening stint by the tills.

BUCKET SHAKING

Unlike bag packing, this does not provide something in return, but some runners swear by it. However, this method of fundraising comes with a health warning: public street collections are beset with legal and bureaucratic difficulties. It has to be the charity that applies, not the individual, and it is illegal to ask for money without the right permits.

However in private areas such as out-of-town shopping centres or in the immediate entrance areas to big stores you can avoid the bureaucracy as long as you have the business owner's permission. But you need to plan ahead as such coveted shaking 'slots' are often rationed.

STAND UP AND SHOUT

Be prepared to go public by placing yourself in front of available groups and making a heartfelt pitch. Examples include: a Baptist minister from his pulpit; a singer hijacking a choir rehearsal; a teacher in a school assembly. (As with other events mentioned here, the follow-through is important: cards with your e-giving URL or sponsor forms by the door really are a must.) Finally, talking of schools...

DRESS-DOWN DAYS

Mufti days can raise phenomenal amounts if, say 1,000 pupils pay £1 for the privilege of wearing jeans for the day. Obviously, such events are most easily exploited by a teacher, but I know of runners who approached the school via their children's teachers and got the rights to a termly slot (plus attendant publicity on the school website and newsletter for the cause). And while we are talking of being creative, if it works in schools, why not elsewhere – like your office or workplace?

And the most-mentioned tactic for fundraising success? A simple one: making sure every email you send out has a sign-off at the bottom promoting your London Marathon adventure, your cause and, of course, your URL.

Below Running in a challenging outfit has always brought added value to raising money



HARNESS THE INTERNET

Which brings us back to the power of the internet and social media. It is now easier than ever to harness the technology to simplify the sponsorship process and to extend the reach of your campaign.

The simplicity comes from the near-universal accessibility of an e-giving website where payment can be made upfront in a matter of seconds, with the site even going to the trouble of collecting Gift Aid, where this has been assented to by the donor. It can even send a personalised thank-you message from you and/or your charity to the donor and presents an opportunity for the donor to engage further with the cause, if they so wish. As page-owner, you can add all kinds of bells and whistles: click on 'Help' for access to everything from letter templates to adding photos and creating web banners and buttons.

Virgin Money Giving is also adding spice to the process by running a series of promotions every month from September to March under the 'Make 2015 your Dream Marathon' banner. Every time you receive an online donation, you will be credited with an automatic entry into the monthly draw for the chance to win one of seven packages including Virgin Money London Marathon weekend accommodation and other extras. Visit www.virginmoneygiving.com/vmlm2015 for details.

So to sum up, make sure you include a footer at the bottom of every email you send out that takes people to your URL where they can see your regular training updates. If you have time, you could also send out daily tweets and re-tweets that draw the attention of an ever-wider audience to your cause. And don't forget to ask your friends, family and work colleagues to promote your various fundraising efforts too.

However you go about fundraising next time you run for charity, good luck and get started early! »

Andy Etchells founded and runs CRunCH – the Charity Runners Clearing House – which has been matching runners with good causes in the Virgin Money London Marathon for 20 years. Visit www.crunch.org.uk.

HOW WE RAN AND RAISED



KIERON HARRISON

TEACHER, 33
CHARITY: ECTOPIC PREGNANCY TRUST
PLEDGE: £1,500
RAISED: £2,021
TIME: 4:11:34



“MY WIFE LAURA SUFFERED AN ECTOPIC PREGNANCY IN THE SUMMER OF 2013 AND HAD TO HAVE SURGERY TO REMOVE A FALLOPIAN TUBE. THIS WAS A STRESSFUL TIME FOR US AND I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE CONDITION – AND THE TRAUMA AND LOSS THAT SOME PEOPLE ENDURE IN THE EARLY STAGES OF PREGNANCY.

“The idea of running the London Marathon took hold when a friend with whom I had run the Great North Run said he intended to apply and I then signed the EPT pledge for £1,500. I felt a bit unsure about hitting the target but my Virgin Money Giving page provided a steady income, especially after I linked it to my Facebook account.

“I did a weekly update on my training progress on Facebook and posted regular reminders to prod those who had not yet donated. I also arranged for a link on my school’s website, promoting ‘Mr Harrison’s charity run’. The school also has links with Stoke City FC and we were given a signed shirt to raffle for the cause.

“I began to feel confident about reaching and beating the target from January, when we held a curry evening in my local Indian restaurant, charging £15 – £10 paid for food and £5 was a direct donation. That generated around £200 and a further £300 was generated in sponsorship either through the cards we handed out, giving details of my e-giving page, or the sponsor forms we made available on the night. We also ran a ‘guess the finishing time’ raffle.

“A group of my music pupils said they wanted to do a busking session in the local town centre – that raised around £100 and in total I sent more than £900 in ‘offline’ money to the charity. That was the main lesson I learned along the way: e-giving is vital, but you should also have a plan B embracing events where people feel they are getting something for their money – not just donating.

“On the day, I really hit the wall at 23 miles, but it helped to know my sponsorship was all ‘in the bank’ and that my friends and family, including my newly pregnant wife, were waiting at the finish.”



FERGAL DOYLE

EQUITY FINANCE MANAGER, 40
CHARITY: CARDIAC RISK IN THE YOUNG
PLEDGE: £1,800
RAISED: £4,509
TIME: 4:24:52



“IN 2013 I RAN A HALF MARATHON FOR CRY, RAISING OVER £2,000. I HAD FOUND OUT ABOUT THE CHARITY THROUGH MY SON’S TEACHER, BARBARA GRIFFIN, WHO LOST HER SON OLIVER TO CARDIAC ARREST AND THEN BECAME INVOLVED WITH CRY. OLIVER, WHO WAS A KEEN RUNNER, WAS JUST 26 WHEN HE DIED. AFTER THE SUCCESS OF THE HALF MARATHON I DECIDED IT WAS TIME FOR ‘THE BIG ONE’.

“Knowing that every January people get an in-box full of emails asking for sponsorship, I decided I would beat the crowds and start a lot sooner. While the challenge of raising £1,800 seemed daunting at first, once the donations started coming in – and I reached £1,000 – I became a lot more relaxed and confident I would reach my pledge.

“I am really fortunate to have a great network of contacts and some of these were in a position to donate quite large individual sums. In addition, I work for a company that offers Matched Giving and this added £1,000 to my efforts. If your company offers a scheme like this it will go a long way in helping you to reach your goal.

“I knew the type of begging email people running races usually send out and I didn’t want to follow the norm and just ask people for money, or pressure them in any way. So I ensured my message had a little about the charity and why I was running, but also included a few jokes just to make it a bit light-hearted.

“I also only ever contacted people that I knew personally: I believe this went a long way to getting larger donations. Finally, I knew that people donating would look at other donations on my e-giving page so I made sure that whenever I contacted people the last few donations were of a good size – £30-40 – knowing that this would send a message that this was the benchmark figure!

“The marathon itself was one of the hardest days of my life, but knowing I had raised the money and gone way over my target made me feel great – and seeing the crowds and feeling the energy really pushed me on. I absolutely loved it and I am hoping to do it again.”



NAOMI FARLEY

VETERINARY INSURANCE CLAIMS ADMINISTRATOR, 40
CHARITY: RAINFOREST FOUNDATION
PLEDGE: £1,800
RAISED: £2,469
TIME: 4:59:37



“I CHOSE THE RAINFOREST FOUNDATION UK BECAUSE THE AMAZING WORK THEY DO WAS CLOSE TO MY HEART. I HAVE BEEN AN ANIMAL LOVER FROM AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, WHICH IN TURN LED ME INTO VETERINARY NURSING, WHERE HELPING AND CARING FOR THE ANIMALS BECAME AS MUCH OF A PASSION AS MY LOVE FOR THEM. I HAVE ALSO TRAVELLED AND WORKED IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE OUTBACK IN AUSTRALIA, AND MET SOME OF THE MOST INSPIRING PEOPLE – EXPERIENCING DIFFERENT CULTURES AND LIFESTYLES CHANGED MY OUTLOOK ON LIFE.

“When it came to running the London Marathon initially it was for the challenge; I thought running it would provide a massive sense of achievement. However, after failing to get a place in the ballot I started looking into running for a charity. It was then that I realised I

“I ALSO RAISED SOME MONEY BY MAKING UP LITTLE BAGS OF SWEETS AND SELLING THEM IN MY WORKPLACE”

||||| wanted to do this run not only for myself but for a good cause. I felt as a result that the challenge would have more meaning and this meant I had more focus and determination to complete it.

“Most of my fundraising was generated online: I used social media, emails, texts, and word of mouth to spread the news that I was running the London Marathon to raise money for The Rainforest Foundation UK. Donations came flooding in from family, friends and work colleagues. I also raised some money by making up little bags of sweets and selling them in my workplace, car boot sales and spring fairs. My top tip for getting donations would be: if you don’t ask, you don’t get!”



JAMES GAMBLE

SUPERMARKET MANAGER, 37
CHARITY: THE NEURO FOUNDATION
PLEDGE: £2,000
RAISED: £2,469
TIME: 5:10:03



“MY DAUGHTER LILY, NOW FOUR, WAS DIAGNOSED WITH NEUROFIBROMATOSIS A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO. PUT SIMPLY, THE CONDITION CONSISTS OF BENIGN TUMOURS, WHICH CAN AFFECT THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. WE IMMEDIATELY BENEFITED FROM THE NEURO FOUNDATION AS THEY FUND A NETWORK OF SPECIALIST NURSES. LILY HAS HAD VARIOUS TESTS ON HER EYES AND EARS AND IS DOING WELL.

“When you get a diagnosis like this in your family, there can be a sense of helplessness. I just wanted to be able to focus on something positive with my wife, Melanie. I had run a couple of half marathons and I had the idea of running the London Marathon, so I contacted the charity and signed up to their £2,000 pledge in September 2013.

“Melanie was my campaign manager, focusing on drumming up support via Facebook. From there, we had a link to my Virgin Money Giving page and most of my money came in through that route. Facebook was also central to the charity’s excellent efforts in supporting the team in the run-up to April.

“That said, there were other contributions. I run a mid-sized Co-operative store and was very touched by how many of my colleagues got involved and came up with ideas for in-store ventures such as cake sales, raffles and a second-hand book sale. The books effort alone raised around £200. The campaign also spread to other Co-op stores in our region; they also contributed significant sums.

“We passed the official pledge level around New Year and we decided to re-set the target to £2,800. We also did a press release and that generated a lovely incident: my sister was in a petrol station buying multiple copies of the local paper with my picture in it and an elderly lady in the queue who had heard the reason why insisted there and then on handing over all the spare change in her purse.

“Race Day itself was quite hard but with on-course support from family and the charity, I made it. I know I could have nailed a sub-4:15, so the London Marathon hasn’t seen the last of me!”