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# **Moving from Dialing for Dollars to Tweetups & Twestivals: How Social Media can Engage New Donors**

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# Moving from Dialing for Dollars to Tweetups & Twestivals: How Social Media can Engage New Donors

## Description

Can social media and traditional events be combined to create locally-hosted events that engage an expanded community of potential donors? Discover how one charity used Twitter to create 200+ local events around the world that generated \$250,000 in one day! Review current trends in Twestivals, Tweetups and other similar events, glean ideas from a new case "twestival" study, and learn 10 tips, techniques and lessons of Twitter-generated funding.

## DEFINITIONS

Social media represents a new platform for strategically driven online fund-raising.

This session focuses on case studies and lessons learned from three organizations that combined online (Twitter) strategies with off-line events to raise funds. Note that all three case studies represent locally-implemented national or international campaigns. To implement a locally-based event, you will want to consider some adjustments to these tips.

## BACKGROUND ABOUT THE THREE ORGANIZATIONS AND FUNDING EVENTS

### Twestival

On February 12, 2009, the first Twestival Global was held in 202 international cities to support **@charitywater**, who was doing incredible work to help the almost 1 billion or 1 in 6 people in the world that don't have access to clean and safe drinking water. Over 1,000 volunteers and 10,000 donors fundraised \$250,000, which resulted in more than 55 new water wells opened in Uganda, Ethiopia and India having a direct impact for over 17,000 people.

All of the local events were organized 100% by volunteers and 100% of all ticket sales and donations go directly to projects.

### Tweetsgiving

Stacy Monk co-founded Epic Change in 2007 after a trip to Africa during which she met Momma Lucky -- a woman who started a school in Tanzania for 100 children. After returning to the U.S., Stacy decided to start a nonprofit to help Momma Lucy's school. Epic Change was really created to fund people who are already doing something great but do not have the resources (capital or connections) to do it. Working similar to "micro finance," Epic Change provides "loans" to Momma Lucy; she earns money and repays the loan so EC can provide funds to other projects. With resources, Momma Lucy has been able to grow the school from 100 to 400 students.

Epic Change initiated Tweetsgiving with the idea of encouraging Tweets of gratitude around Thanksgiving 2008. They implemented the effort in less than six days. Somewhat to their surprise, Epic Change raised \$11,000 in 48 hours online. For 2009, they added offline events. The goal – in addition to tweets of gratitude – was to increase the visibility of Epic Change. They launched the 2009 campaign in September and generated more than \$36,000 during their Tweetsgiving events the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.

### TweetUp4Troops

The Christmas SPIRIT Foundation – the charitable branch of the National Christmas Tree Association – advances the spirit of Christmas for kids, families and the environment. In its first five years, the

Foundation's Trees for Troops cause marketing program has touched the lives of 66,733 military families by providing them a free farm-grown Christmas tree. FedEx and **DRAKE & COMPANY** are its corporate partners. The Foundation tweaks the campaign each year. In the third year, it added Trees for Troops Weekends during which customers of participating farms and retail lots were able to purchase a Christmas tree to donate to a military family. In 2009, the Foundation decided to experiment with using social media for fund-raising. Following the concept used for Twestivals, they organized TweetUp4Troops around Veterans Day (November 11) designed to honor military veterans, generate support for Trees for Troops and have fun. They announced the program via Twitter and Facebook in late September. While providing limited success, the TweetUp4Troops experiment provided valuable lessons for the Foundation's future efforts. These are shared in the lessons learned section. In its experimental year, the Foundation raised about \$2,500.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

Twestival has expanded from its initial launch. It held Twestival locals in September 2009 and is holding Twestival 2010 on March 25 with funds going to support Concern Worldwide's educational efforts for the world's poorest children.

### **What would you do differently? Tweetsgiving:**

- This year, the event would have been better if it was moved farther from the Thanksgiving holiday. Although Tweetsgiving will not be moved away from Thanksgiving, it was only a few days before the actual calendar holiday which made for a difficult situation in some places.
- Felt it focused too much on fundraising at expense of the messages of gratitude.
- Align values with volunteers.
- Figure out ways that you can make your values and mission align with volunteers and empower people to spread your message.
- Recognize that coordinating off-line events takes significant staff/volunteer time.
- Focus on event strategies:
  - If it is easy and heartfelt that is best.
  - Set yourself apart – everyone on Twitter is trying to get a vote or earn a buck so you have to resonate.

### **What would you do differently? TweetUp4Troops:**

- Start organization much earlier.
- Recognize that you need to recruit volunteers to host local events.
- Use existing Twitter handle (with its built-in followers) rather than creating a new Twitter handle for the TweetUps.

## **TIPS TO SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCH A SOCIAL MEDIA FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN**

We have gleaned ideas from **Twestival**, **Tweetsgiving** and **TweetUp4Troops**. And, now we are turning to **crowdsourcing** to determine which tips are most valuable in your use of Twitter as a fundraising tool.

### **Planning a Successful Twitter-Based Campaign:**

1. Start early (ideally six to nine months before "event")
2. Keep it simple: remember you have only 140 characters!
3. Make it easy and secure to donate and to retweet, etc.
4. Avoid the curse of knowledge (forgetting what it is like not to be on the "inside")
5. Select the social media platform that fits your organization

### **Growing the Campaign:**

1. Start by engaging your existing network/community and grow from there.

2. Build a strong database of participants to continue keeping in touch with after the event is over.
3. Pursue those who show interest beyond online conversation.
4. Illustrate where contributions go and what donations support (photos, videos, testimonials).
5. Be transparent (include any qualifications, share exact dollar (\$) amount that goes to the charity; include a "leader board" for fund-raising updates.
6. Make your Web presence strong and the site easy to navigate.
7. Use a variety of mediums to tell your story: video, photos, audio, etc.
8. Seek volunteers aligned with your cause in many regions of the country/globe.
9. "Manage" the volunteers and ensure they abide by your values, message, and purpose.
10. Provide a link to a place where people can make donations quickly and easily.

### **Using Twitter for Your Campaign:**

1. Do NOT ask for donations at the beginning; start by building/engaging a community around your cause.
2. Team up with other cause marketers or cause marketing programs already on Twitter.
3. Communicate personally with followers, especially those who find you. Go to their bio, read their blog, direct message them back with some bit of information that shows you took the time and effort to read about them.
4. Search for people who may be interested in your cause on Twitter – do a keyword search to find them.
5. Ask core volunteers to **retweet** for you.
6. Select a **hashtag** (#) that makes sense and is easy to remember/use. Start using it early.
7. Consider adding a **Twibbon** for all who are tweeting for your cause.
8. Remember to thank people on Twitter (or other social networks) for their support/donation. Also **retweet** when they post/tweet something nice about your organization.
9. Tweet the status of the fundraising campaign regularly.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

We will post the power point for this presentation no later than March 8, 2010, at [www.slideshare.net/drakeco](http://www.slideshare.net/drakeco).