

A group of four women are participating in a team-building exercise on a wooden structure. They are all wearing red helmets and harnesses. The woman in the foreground is smiling and holding the hand of another woman. The background shows a lush green forest.

BRAND-NAME PARTNERSHIPS

Leveraging national brands for marketing and fundraising

For most nonprofits, it's a challenge to stretch a limited budget across competing marketing opportunities like radio, TV, print, search engine marketing, social media or special events. One often-overlooked, relatively stress-free marketing tactic with an attractive ROI involves leveraging the power of national brands in the form of corporate fundraisers.

Photo courtesy of Tejas



From food sales to retail partnerships, partnering with a national brand is easier than you think. Here are a few ideas to help you on your way to raising money and increasing brand awareness and engagement through corporate partnerships. ►

Restaurant fundraising sites like www.groupraise.com can help you organize and advertise your event.

Restaurant Fundraiser Nights

Many national restaurant chains are happy to host restaurant fundraiser nights, as these events benefit all parties involved. For one, your supporters get to enjoy their favorite foods while supporting a cause they love. Your host restaurant enjoys increased business. And your ministry could earn anywhere from 10% to 25% (or more) of the event proceeds.

These fundraisers are great marketing opportunities, too. You'll get your organization out in front of future supporters for the first time. Venues like Panera are especially conducive to relaxed meet-and-greets with current and future champions. Some restaurants will allow you to set up a table with literature and opportunities to engage with your camp.

Chick-fil-A, Friendly's, Pizza Hut, California Pizza Kitchen and Red Robin are just a few of the restaurants you can choose from for your fundraiser. Some organizations offer you the opportunity to use their entire facility for your event. For example, Applebee's hosts a "Flapjack Fundraiser" where you can use their space during non-business hours to sell set breakfast plates. Most restaurants require that your organization be a 501c; however, some restaurants, like Chipotle, will not partner with religious organizations.

Start by choosing a restaurant with a big draw among your supporters. Think popular, well-known brands. Remember that for most national chains, the franchise owner or manager will be the one to decide if they'll host your event. Give the local franchise a call to pitch the event or to let them know you've applied. Restaurant fundraising sites like www.groupraise.com can help you organize and advertise your event. Most restaurants will even help you produce branded event flyers and other marketing materials. Be sure to give your event plenty of publicity via social media. Also, don't be afraid to approach a local, non-national hotspot to host your event. You'll strengthen community ties and build a lasting neighborhood partner in the process.

"Doughnut Day" Fundraisers

National brands like Krispy Kreme and Dunkin' Donuts offer you the opportunity to sell doughnuts by the dozen and coffee by the pound.

The broad appeal of coffee and doughnuts suggests a high ROI. Krispy Kreme claims you can make a 50% to 60% profit on select items. You can get creative with how, when and where you sell. For example, you might consider staging a booth during camper drop-off and pick-up, or consider other regularly scheduled, recurring camp events, such as open houses or annual fundraisers. Lastly, if your organization is located far away from a franchise, Krispy Kreme offers delivery options to you. This strengthens your draw by offering your supporters a hard-to-get treat.



Photo courtesy of River Forest Springs

Many national grocery store chains also offer opportunities for reloadable gift cards that give a percentage back to your organization.



Gift Cards, Certificates and Amazon.com

Another partnership option involves buying and reselling gift cards and certificates in bulk. Several of the brands we've already mentioned, like Krispy Kreme, offer BOGO (buy one get one free) cards, as well as gift certificates. For \$200, you might purchase 50 Krispy Kreme certificates, good for a dozen doughnuts each, and resell them for \$8 each — a profit of \$200.

Note that gift card and certificate opportunities aren't limited to restaurants or food providers. Some retail stores, like Kohl's, allow you to buy gift cards at a discounted rate for resale at face value. While there's no doubt your organization can benefit from retail partnerships, proceed with realistic expectations. The value of retail opportunities may lie less in their monetary return and more in the buzz and engagement they generate.

Many national grocery store chains also offer opportunities for reloadable gift cards that give a percentage back to your organization. It's an easy way for people to benefit your camp or conference center without spending any more money than they usually do. Research the grocery store chains in the areas where your constituents live, and find one that offers a giveback program with reloadable gift cards.

Don't forget about online retailers. Through its AmazonSmile program, Amazon will donate 0.5% of eligible purchases to charitable organizations. Register your organization with Amazon and direct supporters to visit smile.amazon.com to designate your organization as their charity of choice.



Ask anybody involved in marketing, advertising or fundraising for a few years, and they'll tell you there is no magic bullet for success. However, exploring creative options like these will create new opportunities to get your name in front of new people, engage your current audience and generate buzz without costing you much time or money. ■



Sean Kirnan, Ed.D., is proud to serve the Lord as the director of development at Camp IdRaHaJe in Bailey, Colorado. He and his wife, Kim, love pointing campers to Christ as they disciple three young children and serve their local church in music ministry.