

HOW TO RAISE MONEY FOR YOUR TENANT ASSOCIATION

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The first thing you have to “get over” is that you are essentially BEGGING! That’s right you are asking people to give you something for free. BUT....you have something to offer as well, and if you present it correctly this “something” is unspoken or only hinted at; Your tenants association represents a good number of people, and that translates into votes, sales, advertising.

Keep in mind that the people you approach are used to this and expect it. (Some are actually insulted that you haven’t asked sooner.)

OK lets start of with your target list:

- **Public Officials**

Obtain a list of all Elected officials in your district. This is your first target for asking for money to go to Washington (NAHT CONFERENCE) or another important event that they will want you to attend.

Don’t ask for money to throw a party or something...stick to important stuff i.e., money for a bus to go to Albany on a lobbying trip, or to the NAHT conference.

- **Any and All Political Parties**

For example, you’d hit both the Republican Party Headquarters AND Democrats AND Independents. You should ask them all if you ask one. (Stay away from controversial groups)

ONLY APPROACH ELECTEDS AND GROUPS IF THEY ARE IN YOUR AREA. Don’t knock yourself out traveling to another borough.

HOW TO LOBBY FOR MONEY

So now you have a target group for a specific event or conference. You may choose to send a letter explaining your situation. The best way to approach an elected official is to visit their office and *bring a letter with you*. Here are some tips when lobbying for money:

- ALWAYS mention the number of tenants in the complex and its location.

- Explain what you want the money for. (You should be careful about asking for a specific amount, they may have been prepared to give more).
- Tell them the price tag or the total amount you need to raise.
- "Can you help? Any amount you can contribute would be wonderful".
- Don't be afraid to SHAMELESSLY BEG. Get to the point and don't pussy foot around. Be direct and truthful.
- Be prepared to get turned down. So what? You've got a whole list.
- Tell them in the letter (if it's a public official) that you'll call next week...to see if they can help. Don't wait for a written response.
- ALWAYS send the official a letter of thanks and a brief overview of the conference—"I learned so much about blah blah blah...and without your help....blah blah".
- If you have a newsletter, always thank them in your newsletter and send a copy of that to the official.
- Another thing, they LOVE to be invited to speak at tenants association meetings. Invite them ESPECIALLY if they are up for election!! Ask them if there is an issue they would like you to mention at the next meeting. "Is there anything I can do to help the Senator? Is there something you'd like me to mention to our members?"
- And of course, be polite and respectful and have a sense of humor.

Keep in mind that you will probably be speaking to the legislative assistants most of the time. That's ok and common practice. Don't expect to speak directly to the Senator or Congressperson or Assemblymember. Once you have established a relationship with these assistants things go smoothly. Don't over use them and don't call them unless you have a pressing issue. When you get results on a specific issue, write a letter to the official (Senator or whomever) praising his staff. Send a copy to the staff member involved. They get very little praise in writing and believe me they don't forget it. It's also just a nice thing to do. Good karma.

HOW TO RAISE MONEY FOR OTHER EVENTS

Make your meetings fun!

That's right. I have started giving out 'door prizes' like free movie rentals, dinner at an area coffee shop, a bottle of wine from an area liquor store. Nothing too extravagant. A little surprise. Word gets out to the tenants. They show up to a meeting. They attend more money raising events once they feel this isn't all bitching sessions. Try to have a completely social event at least once a year.

- Rummage sales (charge very little for the tables and let the tenants keep the money they make for the first sale. Have treats to sell and a donation bucket at the door) The Second Sale you can raise prices for the sellers and charge at the door. First you get them to try it and have a good time. They'll come back the next time and not mind giving more money.
- Movie nights (serve free popcorn but have that donation bucket in plain sight)
- Pot Luck Dinners (charge at the door)
- Cocktails at an area pub...(I asked the owner to give one glass of wine or beer and to supply some chips and salsa) NO MEETING just a get together to "give back" to the tenants.
- Tupperware or Mary Kay parties

KEEP THESE EVENTS EASY TO PRODUCE. NOTHING TOO LABOR INTENSIVE FOR YOU OR YOUR BOARD. KEEP IT SIMPLE AND IMAGINATIVE. For the food you can go to a local business (especially if your tenants frequent the corner chicken place or coffee shop).

- Local businesses....Very important...you always tell them you will thank them in your next newsletter AND at the next meeting.
- Offer to put their business cards next to the food they donate. Some Associations have ads in their newsletters. I don't do it but I have nothing against it. I think it may hamper you from getting competitive businesses to give money or merchandise.
- My association has always tried not to "play favorites" with a particular business...as it could be perceived as unethical. So, I hit them ALL up for goods and services!! When you thank them at the meeting REALLY PUMP THEM UP. If you put a thank you in the newsletter send them a copy with a note.

ORGANIZATIONAL TIPS

- Be patient. This is tough and takes a long time.
- Some people always do the most work. Again, be patient.
- Delegate small tasks. Small EASY TASKS.
- I used the slogan "if we all do just a little we can accomplish a lot!"
- Tell people interested in serving that one hour a week is all it takes. (Of course, I ended up doing lots more but that goes with the territory).
- Set limits and don't try to do too much at once.
- Be shameless about approaching people for help and ASKING for help in the newsletter.

-Use humor to cajole them into help.

(note: ask me about how to get the "complainers" to help out.)

-Be specific—"We need help with distributing newsletters...can we get some volunteers to hand out flyers just on their floor?" or "We need some help making out membership cards...can we get a few of you to do 20 cards apiece?"

-THANK PEOPLE PROFUSELY IN PERSON AND IN THE NEWSLETTER. (another note: I always ask as a courtesy if I may put their name in the newsletter to thank them.)

-Do not let your meetings get side tracked.

(I use 'concerns cards'. Members with an issue they wish to bring up at the meeting must arrive early and fill out a card stating the issue BEFORE the meeting starts and bring it up to a Board member. The member MUST have gone through the appropriate process first (have they written to management or security about the problem? Did they get a response?) If it is appropriate it will be put on the agenda. This way you don't have to deal with "Ms. Smith" complaining about "Mrs. Costanza's" cooking smells for an hour.)