

Entry Document **Best Fund Raiser / Non-Profit Event**

Successful fundraisers are the key to survival for any not-for-profit organization. Critical decisions need to be made in order to throw a successful event. Budgets need to be tightly managed. You must analyze each expenditure to make sure it has a positive effect on the bottom line. In the process there are many obstacles along the way. For fundraisers it is important to provide perceived value to the attendees so they feel good about donating large sums of money. Providing value often requires taking financial risks in hopes that it will entice guests to buy tickets and make sizable donations.

Our company was hired by the FIDF (Federal Israeli Defense Federation) to produce their second annual gala. The mission of the FIDF is to help raise funds for Israeli soldiers for things like jackets and clothing and to provide educational funding for college after their service is complete. Early stage events are difficult because there is little historical data to rely on for forecasting. The event took place in Los Angeles. We were responsible for almost all aspects of the event, including venue selection, catering, entertainment, production and marketing consultation.

We flew from Chicago to Los Angeles for a site selection visit. We toured several event spaces, ultimately deciding on the MacArthur, a historic special event space. This venue gave the event a concert like feel but had many other functional spaces which would help with crowd control. The capacity was 1,500. This was important because it would allow us to charge a bit lower of a ticket price to encourage a higher volume of attendees. We were shooting for an age demographic of 25 – 45 which typically has a lower disposable income than most fundraisers which cater to the 40 – 70 year old crowd. For this venue we had to bring in all of our own production elements like house sound and lighting, causing us to closely monitor our overall budget.

The event revolved around booking multiple acts, featuring celebrity talent. The acts had to be interesting and relevant to our target demographic while still fitting into our budget. We began with thinking about our 35 – 45 year old demographic. We liked the music of the 80's and 90's but worried that Celebrity Artist's from that era were either too expensive or did not have the catalog to carry the night. We came up with the idea of hiring the national cover band Maggie Speaks and finding a celebrity artist to sit-in as a guest. This was challenging as most celebrities do not want to play with a band they have never worked with, potentially putting their reputation on the line. We spent a lot of time talking to different agencies, compiling a list of names that were comfortable with the concept. We settled on Steve Augeri, the former lead singer of Journey. Steve was perfect in that Journey has such an expansive catalog that is well known across many age demographics and is still relevant to the younger audience. "Don't Stop Believing" is still in iTunes 100 most downloaded tunes over 35 years later. Steve agreed to perform six Journey hits, backed by Maggie Speaks. The songs included "Separate Ways", "Lights", "Lovin' Touchin' Squeezin'", "Faithfully", "Anyway You Want It", and "Don't Stop Believing". The impact was perfect as the audience was not forced to sit through a full show and heard only the A List Journey material. They heard all the hits and nothing but, while Maggie Speaks rocked through covers of other favorites from Bruno Mars, Justin Timberlake and Beyoncé.

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Secondly, we booked hip hop artist Warren G to perform in the upstairs lounge. We made this area a higher ticket price in order to attract more revenue from guests who wanted exclusivity.

We staged Steve Augeri on the main stage, Warren G in the VIP / Night Club area and used a separate room where we served food. This provided a great flow to the event.

For catering, we knew we would need to provide great food to give value to our guests. We had a diverse offering of sushi, different meat satays, pastas and Asian selections.

For marketing, we were shooting for 1,500 people to attend at ticket prices ranging from \$150 -250. The goal was to raise \$325,000 from tickets sold, plus another \$350,000 through sponsorship. The breakdown was to cover the costs of entertainment from sponsorship and to cover the venue, food and marketing expenditures out of ticket sales in order to reach our target raise of \$500,000. We marketed mainly through social media, utilizing Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to geo-target our audience through boosted posts. Our event sold out and we reached our goal of raising \$500,000 for the event. The venue costs were \$30,000, food/beverage cost was \$60,000 and marketing was \$10,000. Our entertainment and production was \$75,000.

We made the decision not to do a live or silent auction as we wanted to focus on entertainment and keeping the room lively and energetic. We felt that an auction would be too much of an undertaking and would disrupt the flow of the evening, while not being a match for our clientele.

Our biggest challenge was selecting and locking in the correct talent to attract the right demographic for this second year event. Year one, which we also produced, raised \$200,000. To increase this to \$500,000, we took a risk by including celebrity talent in our budget to try and entice more people to attend the event at a higher ticket than we used in year one. Additionally, we felt the celebrity angle would help us attract more corporate and private sponsorship, which also proved true. The risk was well calculated and paid off.

Early stage fundraisers are challenging. Through our industry expertise, hard work and creativity, we were able to set and achieve ambitious, yet attainable goals for our client. The ultimate compliment was paid in that we were retained for future fundraising events in 2019.