

Thoughts on Successful Phone-a-thons

How to achieve \$10,000 to \$12,000 per night:

- Lots of callers (20 to 28 per night.) We use the YMCA's "L.A. method" with teams, captains, etc. Parents, alumni (past staff, past campers, etc.) board, committees, teens, summer & seasonal staff, etc.
- Callers bring their own cell phone, or use "Trakfones" purchased just for this purpose with your camp's name programmed in for caller ID.
- A major camp staff presence each night. (If we ask them to come, we should be there too.)
- Ask a camp family with a large house (that people would love to see!) host the evening.

- Start with a light meal... we usually have Subway or Pizza; sometimes the host family insists on providing the food (either home-made or catered.) That's a real treat and attracts callers!
 - 6:15 food
 - 6:30 training for newcomers (including the "case" and *practicing* the script)
 - 6:45 to the phones! (7 p.m. for first-timers after their training.)
 - 9:00 calling stops.

- Everyone we call has received our "case brochure" in the mail the week before.
- Pre-sort cards to give to each caller (packs of 30):
 - Their own pledge (if not done yet.)
 - At least 3 Blank cards for relatives & friends (must be checked against the master list.)
 - At least 3 "money cards" from previous years.
 - At least 3 "good prospect" cards; for instance current program participants.
 - A stack of "new prospects", camper parents that are new, haven't given before, etc.
- Minimum* ask-for amount is \$100. We seldom get less than \$50 as a result, and many \$100's
- Use a script placemat. Includes "to do" pile, "done" pile, "call back" pile, and the script.
 - Get them to use the script unless they are very good on the phone without it.
- Returning campaigners get their "yes" cards from last year.
 - That means if they've worked them up from \$50 to 100 to 250 over the years, they still keep it. (Unless I get their permission to give it to a Major Gifts team to work.)

- Each caller blows a bicycle horns each time they get a "yes." It's really encouraging to hear if you've just gotten a "no" or two, and creates a great conversation point on the phone!
 - Give out prizes throughout the night, post the results.
 - People who don't want to call (including kids) can be "runners" or the "teller."

- Monitor their progress: if they have a problem with getting "no's" ...
 - Make sure they are sticking to the script. Encourage them.
 - Have them shadow another caller to hear "what works".
 - Have a few "easy calls" held back to give as confidence builders to those in need.
 - Don't let a bad caller eat up good cards.
- Make each person feel like a success. If they earned only \$150, they provided daycare for a child that would have stayed home." If they earned \$500, they "brought a child to overnight camp."

- I don't discourage major gift team members from coming and doing their out-of-town calls from the phone-a-thon. They often come for the excitement of the evening, see friends, and build up the total. (And you can coach their calling style.)

- Send them home with a thank-you. We use bouquets of flowers to "give to the one you left at home tonight in order to be here with us." (Our florist gives us \$8 bouquets for \$4 each because we order in bulk ahead of time.)