On-air Fundraising from $0 to $60,000

CBI 2017
Ron Cass
WRUW-FM
Big River Online
WRUW-FM 91.1 Cleveland

• Case Western Reserve University
• On-air since 1967
• 15,000 Watts (2002)
• 120 staff members – 50% community

• Ron Cass – Development Director
  – 20 years running fundraisers
  – Started my own company to help

www.gobigriver.com
Telethon History

WRUW-FM Telethon Pledges in Dollars

In 2016...

- Raised $55,000
- From 750 donors
- $80 average donation
- Across 34 states (15% outside of OH)

- 93% Paid
- 80% Paid with Credit Card
- 39% Paid Online
- 20% Donated without requesting a gift
What and Why?

- Augment operating budget – 50% for WRUW
- Campaign
  - Beginning, end
  - Theme, purpose (not necessarily a single project)
  - Goal you can measure progress against (and motivate people to achieve)
  - People respond to a focused “ask”
  - Active, not passive (not a “Donate Now” button)
  - Easier on staff – gives them messaging they can repeat
- On-air appeals lead to phoned-in and online pledges and donations
# Plan on a 6-8 Month Effort for One Week On-Air

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>• Set the Date!</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>• Decide on Premiums</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>• Start Promotions</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>• Train Staff</td>
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<td>• Sign up volunteers</td>
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<td>• Set up phone bank</td>
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<td>• TELETHON!</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>• Post-Telethon Donations</td>
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<td>• Post-Telethon Promotion</td>
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<td>• Data processing</td>
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<td>• Order Premiums</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>• Harvesting!</td>
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<td>July</td>
<td>• Post-Mortem</td>
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<td>August</td>
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✔️ Email and press release content online!
And Lots of Help!

- Development Director
- Phone Operators
- Staff Trainers
- Data Entry People
- Premium Packers

- Recommended for every staff member to answer phones during another program
First 3 Months

• January 1
  – Schedule Telethon
• February
  – Set “The Big Idea” and Goal
  – Meet with College/University
  – Have GM schedule General Staff Meeting
• March
  – Inventory Existing Premiums
  – Solicit Premium Ideas from Staff
  – Produce promos, send press releases
  – Create any campaign logo designs
Setting the Date

• Spring Semester – avoids conflict with fall training program
• Start early! You should have all the data you will need on Jan 1. Get on the calendar before other station events are scheduled.
• Later in the semester is better! – for new programmers to have settled in
• Avoid conflicts with NPR/PBS, other colleges, cultural stations
• Avoid holidays and exam schedule
Example:
WRUW 2016 Telethon

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NPR/PBS/Alternatives
- WKSU: 3/17 - 3/26
- WCPN: 3/10 - 3/22
- WCLV: 2/8 - 2/17
- WVIZ: 2/27 - 3/20

Holidays
- Easter: 3/27
- Passover: 4/22-4/30
- CWRU Spring break: 3/7-11
- CWRU Reading days: 4/26-7
- Last Day of class: 4/25

PROPOSED
3/28 – 4/1 or 4/11 – 4/17

FINAL
4/11 – 4/17
Adminstration Relations

• Finance/IT Office
  – Payment Processing
• Advancement / Development Office
  – Gift Reporting
• They can shut you down if you don’t follow their rules!
• Keep your station advisor, student affairs, dean informed of plans
• Things change! Get back in touch every year
Finance/IT Requirements

• Payment Processing
  – You may have to take donations via the College/University’s existing website

• Compliance and Security
  – They will want to know what you are doing with any credit card data you collect
  – Have a plan to destroy it as soon as it is not needed

✓ Watch for a PCI-DSS video from Big River!
Advancement / Development

• They care about data and recognizing donors
• They want information...
  – Contact info
  – Donation amount, date, etc.
  – Premium value
• ... so they can comply with IRS requirements to send acknowledgement letters to donors
• In return... get ‘do not solicit’ assurance

✔ Sample report available online!
Promoting Your Fundraiser

- Standard media press releases 6 weeks before
- On-air and social media 2 weeks before
- Email past donors/mailing list on Day 1, 2 days before end and on last day
  - Making sure to exclude current donors from solicitations
- During fundraiser keep social media and other content focused on fundraiser
- After fundraiser push thanks (and reminders to still give) for up to 2 weeks

✔ Email and press release content online!
One Month to Go!

• 4-6 Weeks Before
  – Finalize premiums
  – Schedule staff training sessions

• 2-3 Weeks Before
  – Release on-air promotions
  – Launch social media campaign
  – General Staff Meeting
  – Phone Signup
  – Launch online donation website
  – Update website home page message with link to donation page
Payment Processing Options

• PayPal
  – Limited contact info, premium options
  – Need programming talent to make it work well for on-air fundraising
  – They can shut you down
• IndieGoGo
  – Project-based
  – Really expensive (up to 10%)
• Square
  – Cost-effective, but limited for on-air fundraising
• And you may be stuck with what your Administration wants you to use anyway

✓ (and this is what my company, Big River, does!)
Website Design

- Your subdomain
- Your branding
- Clear images and definitions of premiums
- Shopping cart experience leads to greater levels of giving
- Immediate payment

✓ See live example at https://telethon.wruw.org
eCommerce Lessons Applied to Fundraising

• Clicks are precious! - Reduce the number of pages to checkout
• If multiple pages, ask only what is necessary at each step
• Ask the user to register for an account after the transaction not before
• Communicate any fees up-front
• Display policies clearly
Social Sharing

• Save prompts to share until after you’ve got the gift
• Pre-defined social media content via metadata gets your preferred message out
• Create and use campaign-specific hashtag, year-over-year
Relevant Receipts

• Thank new donors
• Recognize returning donors
• Recognize major donors
• Make that receipt worth keeping!
Presents

- T-shirts
- Shot glasses
- Mugs
- Caps

Beer Not Included
Relevant Premium Selection Leads to Better Pitches

• Music
  – Relevant to program genres
  – Great use for Promotional items!
  – Solicit from labels, artists

• Wearables
  – New t-shirt logo each year
  – Change up styles, colors every couple years

• Non-wearables
  – Relevant to you listeners – driving, at-home, at-office, ...
  – Buy pre-packaged to take the load off volunteers

• Package/bundle items into more valuable groups
  – “A weekend’s worth of t-shirts!”

• Inventory takes up space and budget – buy only what you need after you know how much you need

✓ Vendor recommendations on request
Premium Pricing, etc.

• Rule of thumb – 5-6 times dollar value
• Know the value of all premiums
  – Advancement may deduct from the value of the donation
• Drawings – check your state laws
  – Most likely you have to accept any entrants, regardless of whether they make a pledge
• Throw-ins
  – Bumper stickers, pins, pens, keychains, etc.
  – This is an opportunity to promote the station!
Staff Training – What Every Staff Person Should Know

- Why you need money
- What you’re going to do with the money
- What you’ve done with the money
- What donor will get from a donation
- How to donate
Example: WRUW-FM Telethon 2016

• Why do we need money?
  – CWRU only provides basic necessities

• What do we do with the money?
  – Annual Summer Concert (Studio-A-Rama)
  – Live Festival Broadcasts
  – Live music in-studio

• What have we done with the money?
  – 15,000 watt upgrade
  – Web casting
  – Replace equipment (boring!)

• What don’t we do with the money
  – Pay programmers – everyone is a volunteer

• What’s in it for me?
  – This year’s logo t-shirts, new music

• Why is that important to a listener?
  – Better quality, non-commercial, freeform radio (hint – it’s why they’re listening)
7 Common Programmer Mistakes

- Not training before their first Telethon show
- Thinking they can wing it
- Not focusing on the listener’s interests
- Drowning the listener in data
- Assuming the listener cannot afford to give
- Getting the facts wrong
- Acting and sounding discouraged
You Get What You Ask For

- **Premiums**
  - $25 – pint glass
  - $40 CD
  - $50 t-shirt
  - $60 – 2 CDs, etc.
  - $100 hoodie/fleece
Don’t Get Discouraged Early - What to Expect

Dollars Pledged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Post</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Amount</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Pre: 0
- Monday: 3000
- Tuesday: 1000
- Wednesday: 6000
- Thursday: 8000
- Friday: 10000
- Saturday: 6000
- Sunday: 14000
- Post: 8000

Pre - Post Dollars Pledged

*Pre and Post are not part of the initial pledge period.*
## Structuring an Effective Pitch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Script</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce the Fundraiser (5-10 sec)</td>
<td>“This is a special day for WUW. It is the (x) the day of our annual on-air fundraiser…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell what you are doing and why (30 sec – 1 min)</td>
<td>“This is our once-a-year effort to raise money for…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add in a Personal Focus (30 sec – 1 min)</td>
<td>“Maybe you’re one of our listeners who likes (format, variety, local programming, non-commercial)…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give out the Phone Number, website (3 sec)</td>
<td>“So please call now at 369-2208”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about premiums (30 sec – 1 min)</td>
<td>“When you pledge $40, we can send you a great gift of (music, logo merchandise, show-specific) …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give out the Phone Number (3 sec)</td>
<td>“So please call now at 368-2208”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make an Extra Push (30 sec – 1 min)</td>
<td>“Thank people by name OR play a promo OR emphasize using a credit card (easy) OR make analogies (“if you put a quarter in your radio every day it’s less than $100…”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quickly Recap Focus (10 sec)</td>
<td>“So, if you like (what you talked about before)…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick Recap What/Why (10 sec)</td>
<td>“Remember why we are doing this (and be specific)…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give out the Phone Number (3 sec)</td>
<td>“Please call 368-2208 now”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 ✓ See more at http://howtobeg.org
One Week to Go!

• Week before
  – Train Staff
  – Solicit data entry people
  – Request any phone system changes
• Weekend before
  – Print forms
  – Build Studios
  – Set up staff dashboard
  – Send Final Staff Email
  – Release Telethon Week Promos
  – Email solicitation to past donors
• Final Staff Email
  – Phone answering tips
  – Final ideas on preparing for your show
  – Premium updates
  – Social media rules
Pledge Data Entry – Yes, Paper

- Donor, pledge, payment and premium info
- Make them easy to fill in (so someone else can read them)

✓ Sample forms available online!
Phone Bank Setup

- Phones
- Pledge forms
- Reminder cards
- Pens
- Post sample forms filled in
- Premium images and inventory
- Dropbox for checks/cash
- Last year’s totals
- Goal Thermometer
- Operator schedule
Training Phone Operators

- Once you’ve signed up, you own it!
- Be early!
- Check with programmer for their focus
- Answer on the first ring
- “Thank you for calling the … Telethon, how much would you like to pledge”
- WRITE LEGIBLY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Update the premium inventories
- Update the progress to goal

✓“How to answer the phones” workflow online!
Telethon Week

• During the Telethon
  – Enter Data ASAP
  – Update facebook, twitter
  – Email staff updates during the week
  – Update premium books as new premiums come in
Things to Stress for The Day of One’s Show

- Be early!
- Be prepared!
- Check for new information
- Prepare your phone operators
- Think about your listeners
- Be upbeat and keep it up!!
Motivating Staff

• Keep them up to date!
• Show them their own progress
• Show them everyone’s progress
• Encourage them during the week
• Remind them of when people will give
• Listen! Tell staff how they sound during the week
• Thank them when it’s over (and remind them it’s not really over)
Post Fundraiser

- Thank you email to staff
- Thank you promotions, on-air by staff
- Keep donation web site up for 4-6 weeks
- Send out reminder cards to phone pledges
- Order premiums as late as possible
Harvesting!

- Get those premiums out fast!
- Make the packing process easy on volunteers
- Be responsive to donor complaints about timeliness and mistakes

What you will need:
- Packing lists
- Return address labels/stamp
- Padded envelopes, boxes
- Packing tape
- Sharpies
- Throw-ins
- Snacks!!

✓ Checklist and packing tables online!
Some Telethon 201 Topics

• Air time premiums to reduce premium costs
• Music Exploration Packs to reduce premium costs
• Open House to reduce shipping costs
• Corporate Match to increase donations
• Asking donors to cover transaction and shipping fees
Resources

- Download Checklists, Templates, How-to’s and other materials
  - [www.gobigriver.com/telethon](http://www.gobigriver.com/telethon)

- Staff Training
  - [howtobeg.org](http://howtobeg.org)

- Ron Cass – WRUW-FM Telethon Director
  - telethon@wruw.org

- Ron Cass – Big River Online Fundraising
  - ron.cass@gobigriver.com

- And this PPT will be posted on the CBI portal