

Everyone plans golf outings, but do you plan a successful one? Is your attendance high? Do you make thousands of dollars profit? Now it's time to take your event to the next level. Ron Kittle, Founder of the Indiana Sports Charities, currently in its 16th year, shares strategies for producing a successful golf fundraising event year after year.

TAKING YOUR CHARITY GOLF EVENT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

By Ron Kittle

GETTING STARTED

I have been pretty lucky in life -- not at the beginning, but through most of my adult life, I might say. Signing a professional baseball contract right out of high school is a dream for millions, a journey cut short by a broken neck in my first baseball game. No one was to blame, it just happened.....and it's amazing what dreams shatter for an 18-year-old boy. My second chance did not come on the field; it came from seeing the less fortunate having to get by with their problems, health and well being.

I told myself one day I will TRY to make a difference in someone's life. In 1979, I was playing ball again and came across a young boy who had cancer -- and parents who did not care. A subject I have never spoke about until a few years ago. His parents were alcoholics and had no insurance at all. So instead of taking care of the young boy; they decided to try to end his life. He was taken under "my wing", so to speak, but I traveled and could not watch over him all the time.

One day upon returning from a road trip...minor leagues!!! I opened my rented garage and found him hanging with a note near him. The note said, "I wish you were my big brother or my dad." Here was someone who needed help and had no one to help him. I really do not look at it as a tragic ending, although I did at one time. Now, I look at it as the beginning of my mission of charity work for cancer research and education.

DEFINING THE PURPOSE

I founded the Indiana Sports Charities in 1989 during the time I was recuperating from career-ending back surgery while playing for the Chicago White Sox. I felt it was time to give back something that many have given me over the years -- SUPPORT! And I felt cancer was the field I would devote time and effort to, as my father James Kittle was suffering from it. I knew very little at the time about how many types of cancer there are -- but I knew many who needed help. In the past, I had helped out at other charity events, always noticing what they were doing and how it was being done. The late Marv Samuel, founder of *Chicago Baseball Cancer Charity*, took me under his wing at the time and explained what needed to be done and who would benefit from the charity. His advice to me was:

- A. *Pick a cause and believe in it.*
- B. *Get your friends involved who also believe in the cause.*
- C. *Create a format: golf, bowling, walks, runs, dinners, etc.*
- D. *Find a partner or program, i.e. a hospital, shelter, etc.*
- E. *Explore how they will use the funds raised.*
- F. *Hire an attorney, or bring one onboard, to create a 503-C "Not-For-Profit".*

We created our charity golf outing to raise funds for cancer research and development and donate our earnings to five area hospitals. We give to more than one hospital because we are supported by both Illinois and Indiana. We also recognize that when support is coming from multiple areas, it's important to look into which hospitals would qualify for the reason we are raising funds. And, the people who donate like seeing their money staying in their hometown or favorite hospital.

STAFFING YOUR EVENT

First share your idea with some friends. You would be surprised at how many want to do something to help others. Every family has dealt with some kind of illness throughout the years. Explain what your mission is and see if they are willing to spend time and money to help promote your cause. Also, look for those who have made contacts in the business world, i.e., bankers, insurance agents, lawyers, and local retail business people. Choose your committee: those who want to work and those who just want to volunteer their time. Also, consider those who will do the best job in their roles. Just because someone volunteers doesn't mean he or she is the right person for the position. Determine carefully: Who's responsible? Who's trustworthy? Who can you count on?

CHOOSING A FORMAT, COURSE, AND DATE

You've chosen a golf outing. Determine if it's a scramble, two best balls, or play your own ball, etc. You have to remember that you can't make everyone happy, so stick with what type of round you want.

Pick a local golf course and negotiate with a few courses to see what they offer and what the cost will be for the event. They do this for a living and they are great help in choosing the right golf course for you and your budget. Consider the following:

- A. *Price per golfer*
- B. *Cost of carts (Will extra carts need to be brought in?)*
- C. *Per person cost for breakfast, lunch, dinner*
- D. *Welcome gift (Shirt, jacket, golf balls, etc.)*
- E. *Beverages on course (Are they paid for or donated?)*

Pick a date to host the event, and hope you have very little competition on that day from others. Do you want a morning or afternoon golf event; do you have breakfast, lunch and dinner?

IT'S ALL STARTING TO COME TOGETHER -- NOW WHAT?

You have all your ideas and questions in a basket. Pull one out at a time and see what needs to be done. What about Sponsors? Look to the local area for interested parties, and remember the people on your committee who have those contacts in the business world. They should make the first contact about your intentions. All business owners have been asked before, so what makes yours better than the others? What are the extra perks for larger sponsors, i.e., program ads, banners, radio coverage, and newspaper ads? Free golfers are the easiest trade-offs. If you donate "X", I will give you 4 free golfers. Make them feel special, as they are the ones going out on the limb to make your event special.

What amount you are asking for depends on what expenses you will incur. We all know you want to have a golf event, so price per golfer is "X", breakfast and lunch are also "X", premium gift is "X" so this tells you $(X) \times (X) \times (X) = "E"$. So this figure sort of tells you what to charge for the event. Let's say \$85 is the total of "E". So this means if you charge \$125 per golfer for your event, you have a chance to make \$40 per person attending, before taxes. So say you make \$30 per golfer and you have 100 golfers; that gives you a profit of \$3,000 for charity.

Now the tricky part comes in. You have others who want to trade product for golf or advertising. Be open-minded, listen and keep the charity in mind on all decisions about the expenses and trade-offs. Most of the time when you trade off on something they will see what good work you are doing and they will eventually become bigger sponsors later on. The trade-off is a way to let them know “without cash out of pocket” you have a good cause.

Also understand that you are raising funds for charity, so pick your clients tastefully. You do not want some “fly by night” group coming to an event that might upset others. If you think it might be a risk, more than likely, it is.

EXTRA REVENUE

You can include so many ideas into fundraising: silent auctions, raffles, betting holes, 50/50 tickets, etc. Everyone likes to win something -- EVERYONE!!! So make it fun and when charity work becomes a job, it is time to let someone else take over. Be a leader of your group, and they will trust your judgment in all areas. Be prepared to answer even the littlest question from your board or paid golfers.

LETTERHEAD AND THANK-YOU NOTES

I believe if you want someone to follow the leader you must do things the right way. Treat everyone with respect and follow up on people who you asked even if they declined to help out the first year; because they might just be as cautious as you are. And you will be surprised; they might join in the following year. If someone gives you something, no matter how small, follow up with a “thank you”. It makes them feel like they gave you a huge amount.

PROMOTING AND RECRUITING FOR YOUR EVENT

It's awfully hard to sell something you do not have yet! No newspaper can sell your idea to raise funds for charity. You have to “beat the streets” and get others involved your first year. Prove to the public that you are a good charity doing good things. EVERYONE likes to ride with a winner; so if they decide to ride with you after the first event, let them join in. You can only build upon a good foundation, and if the leader lacks strong skills, you will struggle.

My example is: our first year we raised, after all of our expenses, about \$7,000 dollars for cancer research and development. Now, after 15 years of hard work, we raise close to \$140,000 each year. We have a great, hard-working committee, and over the years it has proven again and again that we are making great strides in our fundraising efforts and making sure the funds we raise are going to good programs and good hospitals.

AFTER THE EVENT -- THE BEST FEELING EVER!

In closing, I would have to say that other than my children being born, passing on a check for the work you did for a charity for some unexpected person, or to see a hospital use your funds to possibly find a cure for cancer one day is the greatest feeling in the world! But you have to remember, as soon as the first event gets over, it's time to start planning event number two!

For more information on Ron Kittle's Indiana Sports Charities Organization and his annual “Celebrity Golf Outing”, visit www.indianasportscharities.org.