

Incentives & Special Event Ideas – Making an Employee Campaign FUN!

*While your campaign goals should focus on traditional employee solicitation, it's also okay to have a little fun! Many companies incorporate extra events into their campaign to encourage participation and boost results. **Take advantage of the following ideas as incentives for employees to turn in pledge cards, ways to increase gifts and participation, or tools to educate and inform.***

Incentives

Campaign coordinators can use incentives to encourage the speedy return of pledge cards, increase participation and encourage payroll deduction or Leaders' Circle giving. Some popular incentives include:

- Sporting event tickets
- Concert tickets
- Gift certificates
- Movie passes
- Prime parking space
- Dinner for two at a popular restaurant
- Free meal or dessert from company
- CEO/President of the company delivers coffee each morning for a week
- Early dismissal on a Friday
- Vacation day
- T-shirts
- Jeans day

These are low or no cost examples of special events that can boost your campaign and increase participation:

- **Baby or Pet Picture Match Game** – Invite employees to try their luck matching baby and/or pet pictures to pictures of managers or other employees. Award the entry with the most right answers. Charge employees \$2 per ballot.
- **Backyard/Parking Lot Bar-B-Q** – Determine costs of set-up. Set a sale price for the bar-b-q. Pre-sell tickets to the event and donate all proceeds to United Way. The event may also be set up as a potluck picnic with everyone bringing a dish to share. Make sure you have plenty of meat and fixings, buns, drinks, paper products and of course a grill! You may also want to set up a volleyball net, Frisbee and some music to set the mood.
- **Bakery Cart or Bake Sale** – Wheel a cart of bagels, doughnuts, danishes and coffee and juice through the office in the morning, or a cart of brownies, cookies, cupcakes, pies and other sweet treats in the afternoon. People can contribute money to United Way in exchange for the goodies.
- **Boss Cooks for You** – Have a special breakfast/lunch at which top managers cook for all donors. Food is one of the best motivational tools to attract a big crowd. Tasty treats almost always bring smiles to those attending your event.
- **Brown Bag/Agency Lunch** – Invite several United Way Agency Partners for a “Lunch & Learn,” allowing them to speak about their initiatives and how employee donation dollars really make a difference in the community. Ask employees to make a donation afterwards, and raffle off a prize to all of those who participate.
- **Cookbook** – Collect and group recipes and helpful household hints into a customized cookbook. Employees' children create illustrations for the cookbook, including the cover. If possible, print and bind books at a local business, pro bono. This event is so popular that some organizations have not been able to fill all requested orders. Plan for an enthusiastic response! You set the price for each cookbook.

- **Car Wash** — Get a rubber hose, buckets, soap and everything else you'll need to host an old fashioned car wash. Ask a few employees (maybe even the boss in full suit & tie) to volunteer to scrub down and dry cars until they sparkle. Charge employees \$5 to take advantage of the special car wash with all proceeds going to United Way. You can also charge extra for special extras like cleaning the interior or polishing the rims. Charge for pictures of the employee and the boss washing the cars.
 - Mowing the winner's lawn
 - Changing the winner's motor oil
 - Babysitting the winner's children
 - Washing the winner's car
 - Washing the winner's windows
 - Taking the winner on a fishing trip
- **Casual Day** — Charge employees \$5 to wear whatever they're comfortable in: jeans, tennis shoes, flip flops, sweats, etc. Donate all money to United Way.
- **Children's Drawing Contest** — Give employees "official photographs" of one or two top executives to take home for their children to draw. Children can also draw what "helping others," "hope" or another theme means to them. There is a \$5 entry per child, and employees who vote for best drawing must pay \$1 for each vote. Give prizes to all young artists (perhaps you can work with local fast food eateries to donate a certificate for a free treat). Display winning portraits prominently in office building.
- **Chili Cook-Off** — Employees cook their favorite chili recipe and enter it into a cook-off contest. This activity can also add "spice" to a Community Fair. Charge employees a fee to try the chili. A panel of chili experts can select the Official Chili Champion — be sure to offer a prize to the winner.
- **Coin War** — Each department/floor/division has an empty water cooler bottle (you know, the big clear ones). Employees drop spare pennies, nickels and pennies into the bottles. These coins are counted as positive. Quarters and dollars count as negatives. Employees can "sabotage" another group's bottle by dropping a quarter into their bottle. At the end of the Campaign, all positive and negative monies are counted, and the group with the most \$\$\$ raised wins. All proceeds go to United Way.
- **Craft & Bake Sale** — Encourage employees to get in touch with their creative side! Perhaps someone loves to knit. Maybe another worker is great with woodworking. Hold a sale where interested employees can donate their spectacular creations and treats, each setting reasonable prices for their works. This is a great opportunity for some folks to show off their talents while others get some of their holiday shopping out of the way early!
- **Dollar-An-Inch Contest** — Executives participate in an all-day competition to end the day with the shortest tie. Employees cut an inch off their favorite executive's tie each time they give to United Way. Employees can donate \$1 per inch. Give prizes for the shortest tie, the ugliest tie, etc.
- **Employee Raffle** — Ask employees to contribute something special for a raffle prize:
 - Homemade pies
 - One-day vacation
 - Lunch with a co-worker
 - Prizes donated by vendors
 - Car wash
 - Tickets to a special event
 - Weekend stay at beach condo
- **Executive Fantasy Auction** — Executives at your office might have some hidden talents that could be offered up as a "fantasy" package. Offers can include gourmet meal preparation or a weekend offer to use someone's vacation property.
 - Cooking the winning bidder dinner
 - Singing at a wedding or party
- **Executive Prison** — Transform an office into a jail cell. Next, round up your prisoners (you know, the usual suspects). "Arrest" managers and executives and allow them to make telephone calls to their staff members to "bail" them out. All bail proceeds go to the United Way campaign.
- **Garage Sale** — Find a volunteer willing to loan a garage space or use your work site after hours. Two or three weeks before the sale, have employees bring in sale items which volunteers price and sell day of event. Advertise within the company and nearby neighborhoods.
- **Guess How Many** — Guess the number of jellybeans, M & Ms, Hershey Kisses or other treat in a jar. Buy chances to guess. Winner with closest guess receives the jar of treats.
- **Ice Cream Social**- Provide several flavors of ice cream and all the toppings needed to make a decadent sundae! Offer hot fudge, caramel, strawberry sauce, chopped nuts and whipped cream — don't forget the cherries! Charge employees a fee for their decadent creation, with all donations going to United Way.
- **Lunch Box Auction** — Have each participating employee pack a special, homemade lunch. Encourage them to get creative and make deluxe sandwiches or wraps. Include delicious treats like decadent brownies or monster chocolate chip cookies. Hold an auction before lunch time, allowing co-workers to bid on the fancy fixings.
- **Office Olympics** — Set up a relay course for executives to race through sitting in chairs or riding tricycles. Use a stopwatch to time contestants, with the fastest person winning a prize. Observers donate or wager \$1 on their favorite contestants.
- **Pizza Party** - The department with the best participation (most returned pledge cards) is rewarded with a pizza party, lunch with the CEO or other incentive.
- **Recycled Goods** — Turn recycled paper, cans, bottles, etc. and exchange them for money for United Way.
- **Scavenger Hunt** — Employees participate in a scavenger hunt that requires them to find unusual items from around the neighborhood or office building, as well as demonstrate community knowledge. You can place items at specific locations for the hunters. Teams of four pay a group entrance fee you set ahead of time. If each team member has a different job title, automatically award them 10 bonus points. Teams have a set time frame to accumulate as many points as possible. The entire team must be present at the end of the time period. If any member arrives late, assess a penalty of six points per minute, for example. Work with local businesses for gift certificates or other items as rewards for the winning team.
- **Silent Auction** — Gather gift items and create bid sheets, being certain to provide a minimum bid for each item.
- **Spaghetti Luncheon** — Host a spaghetti meal with all the fixings. Feed and charge for each bowl with all donations going to United Way.

- **Talent Show/Lip Sync/Karaoke Contest-** This has the potential for being a BIG fundraiser and a GREAT team builder! Participants pay \$2 to enter and are given a list of songs and a pledge sheet in advance. Participants ask employees to support them by pledging an amount of money. At the event, have a big box of funny hats, feather boas and other costume items available for participants to use. Pass the hat at the party to receive even more pledges. NOTE: A variation of this activity is "Executive Karaoke." Employees pay money for executives to get up and sing the song of their choice. Videotape the event and sell copies as well.
- **Tug-of-War** — Have an interdepartmental competition. Each team pays a fee for entry with the winning team winning a prize.
- **Wall of Fame** — Put pictures on wall recognizing employees who have been contributing to the United Way Campaign for the most consecutive years.
- **Wine Drawing** — Offer employees a chance to win an assortment of specially selected wines from a number of different wineries. Sell tickets for \$1 each or 6 for \$5. Display the wines in an employee common area to entice wine lovers. This is an opportunity to involve local merchants as United Way donors, too.

There are many creative ideas to help you accomplish your goal. Let your committee and employees come up with ideas that will make it fun. However, remember that these events should be a part of, but never replace your campaign and should encourage, educate and inform.