Make It Matter

Many nonprofit organizations recognize landmark anniversaries as an opportunity for publicity and public engagement. But anniversaries are like birthdays; everyone has one every single year.

To drive excitement, you need to show your audience why they should care about this milestone. The two most important questions to ask when considering an anniversary celebration are…

1. What accomplishments and progress are you celebrating?
2. What are our goals for this event or campaign?

Whether you want to engage existing donors, build brand awareness, or raise funds, your campaign should have concrete goals to guide your plans. You must harness the excitement and energy around your celebration to take the next steps in your mission.
9 Tips to Hit a Home Run with Your Fundraising House Party

A great way to raise funds for your organization is to hold a fundraising party in someone’s home. Read on for 9 tips to help ensure your next party is a home run.

1. **Set a Goal**

Knowing your fundraising goal is your first step to success. You will plan differently—and invite differently—if your goal is to raise $5,000 vs. $500. And if your house party is simply a “friend-raising” event, know this, too.

2. **Select a Great Host**

A good house party does not require a large or fancy home. It’s more important to have a host who is enthusiastic about your work and mission and is willing to roll up their sleeves when it comes to invitations and follow up. A good host is:
• Passionate about your mission
• Willing to open up their home to your guests
• Eager to invite their own friends and colleagues to the party
• Prepared to pay for food and drinks
• Willing to make calls before the party to confirm attendance
• Able to make all of the attendees feel welcome and comfortable
• Ready to make a donation of their own during the party
• Committed to writing thank-you notes after the event is over

3. Know That Not Everyone Will Say Yes

Not everyone you invite will come to your event! Even if they all wanted to, there will be conflicts that prevent them from doing so. Plan to invite three to four times as many people as you want to show up.

For example, if you’re aiming for 20 guests, invite 60-80 people. Also, about half of the invitees should be friends of the host and the other half friends of the organization (current donors, board members, friends of board members, etc.)

4. Not All Surprises are Good Surprises

Rather than surprise party guests with a request for donations, make clear on the invitation that this is a fundraising event. Language such as "donations gratefully accepted" or "please remember your checkbook!" will work for this purpose.

5. Make a Plan for the Evening

Your plan does not need to be long; it should contain just enough information to make everyone involved feels comfortable. At minimum, your plan should answer the following questions:

• Who is purchasing the food and drinks and when will this happen?
• What is the timeline for all activities, including time of event, time of presentation, time of the Ask?
• Who will make the Ask?
• Will there be donation envelopes? (Hint: Yes)
• Will there be a way to donate online? (Hint: Yes)

6. Assign Tasks

In addition to logistical tasks such as bringing organizational brochures (if you have them) and donation envelopes, here is a great opportunity to involve your board members in the event: Assign each board member 1-2 guests to seek out and greet at the event. Your guests will feel welcome and your board members will be glad to have something to do!

7. Share an Inspiring Presentation

The presentation should be succinct but compelling and engaging. You can share a slide show, short video, client stories, or any combination of these. Or you can feature a performance or testimonial by your students/clients/those served by your mission. The point is to convey the importance of your work in the community and the impact you are having.

8. Make a Compelling Ask

The “Ask” will follow the presentation. The Ask can be done by the host, or by someone who is introduced by the host (a board member can be a good choice). (Do not wait until the night of the event to decide who is asking!)

If you have set a fundraising goal for the evening, now is a great time to share this goal and let the guests know how much of a contribution it would take from each of them to be able to meet that goal.

9. Follow Up

Be sure to thank your guests as they are leaving and also send thank-you notes within a week or two. You may also want a follow-up plan for people who expressed interest in attending but had a conflict the night of your event.