

TENTMAKERS

FUND-RAISING: THE JOG-A-THON

by Gary North

I have never paid much attention to the continual streams of "jog-a-thons," "bike-a-thons," and similar "thons" over the years. I first saw them in the late 1960's, when various left-wing groups pioneered these events in order to raise money for nutty causes. They got businessmen to *donate a certain amount of money for young people who would then huff and puff in the cause of "social justice."* I never could understand why businessmen paid money for anything as useless as a bunch of kids running somewhere on a Saturday morning.

Not long ago, I was approached by the headmaster of our Christian day school. He wanted me to help raise money for a jog-a-thon. My first reaction was negative. I do not believe in the labor theory of value, and the jog-a-thon seemed to me to be a classic example of being paid to perform useless work.

But then I remembered the bake sales that the mothers had labored long and hard over. Bake sales produce profits only if you place zero price on the value of the cooks' time and the ingredients. They also produce very little money.

Door-to-door candy or cookie sales are best left to the Girl Scouts. They mix up charity and sales, too. People shouldn't be guilt-manipulated in order to get them to buy something that is fattening, which in turn produces more guilt.

Craft sales are worse than bake sales. They take too much time. Wives do most of the work, and wives are busy. Junk sales are all right, but they can only be held once in a while. There just isn't enough junk. Pretty soon, wives start selling their husbands' best ties.

Kids can wash cars, but that is generally the main income-producer of the local high school band. It beats selling candy, but only teenagers get involved. What if your church has no teenagers?

Direct fund appeals without services also have limitations. Who wants to support your church if he has his own church? Who wants to support your Christian school if he sends his kids to another Christian school or a public school? Fund appeals beyond the membership of the local organization are difficult.

So nothing looks good, except the tithe. But if everyone is tithing, what then? Also, if a school headmaster is trying to balance his budget with full-cost tuitions (in order to reduce conflicts in the church between parents and non-parents, church member parents and non-church member parents, and between parents and the headmaster), how can he raise needed capital?

Enter the jog-a-thon.

True Motivation

Find a person's true motivation, and arrange your appeal accordingly.

Why the jog-a-thon? It appeals to strangers because it makes the kids do something to get the money. People may or may not believe in the labor theory of value, but most

adults believe in the "moral training" that work provides in the lives of children. They don't think kids should be raised in terms of a philosophy of "something for nothing." This perception is based on an accurate understanding of fallen human nature. If a man refuses to work, neither shall he eat. *if he is asking for charity (II Thes. 3:10) Better useless "busy work" than no work. Useless work reduces the demands that charity-seekers make on charity-givers,* since there are limitations on the amount of work that people are willing and able to perform. Therefore **within the setting of charity, there is no such thing as useless work.**

So the young person who approaches a stranger by knocking at the door isn't making unlimited demands. When he asks the person to become his sponsor, he is promising to work for whatever he is paid. He will run laps to earn his keep.

Not only that, the sponsor is asked to contribute a fixed amount of money for each lap around a track. The runner knows that there is a predictable relationship between productivity (laps completed) and reward (money donated). It is not how hard he works that counts. It is not the effort or desire that he puts into it. It is the actual performance that determines the amount of money raised.

The potential sponsor is being asked to donate to a charity or cause. But he knows that the charity-seeker is also donating what he possesses, which is time (knocking at doors) and energy (the laps). The charity-seeker is therefore willing to offer his sacrifice to the cause. The potential sponsor knows that kids don't have much money, but they do have spare time and energy. So the donor understands that his contribution is complementary to the runner's. It will not cost the donor time or energy. It only costs money.

The appeal is greater the smaller the child. Also, the potential expense is smaller, since the small child will not run many laps. The idea that a kindergartner will do something hard for the cause appeals to an adult. But, of course, the kindergartner can't go around alone knocking at doors. But he can write a note to grandma. And grandma will fork over some money, I guarantee you. Two grandmas. And maybe even a couple of uncles.

How to Organize It

A jog-a-thon needn't be limited to kids. Anyone can get involved. All it takes is a sponsor who agrees to put up some money. But kids will be willing to go door to door asking for sponsors. They may only get a dime or a quarter per lap, but that can add up pretty fast. A hundred sponsors who give an average of 10 cents per lap over a one-hour period are giving the kid a total income of \$10 per lap (a quarter mile is reasonable). A kid may be able to run 20 laps in an hour. That's \$200. Amazing, isn't it?

If your members live all over town, that's an advantage. The kids won't be hitting up the same homes for a week. For maximum income, mark off a map of the whole town in grids. Then drive the kids across town in the afternoon and

let them loose. Give them assigned blocks to cover. Leave no stone unturned, no door unknocked.

Now, if you are smart, you will give each kid a cheap brochure to hand out. The brochure will mention the location of the track where the jog is to occur, along with the time and date. That lets the person know the whole deal is legitimate. This information can be on the front of the sheet. On the back you will put an advertisement for your church or school. The idea is to use the kids to perform two tasks: advertising and money-raising.

Kids may resist the idea of going out and handing out brochures for the church or school as such, but you are selling the kids on a contest. The kid who gets the most sponsors wins a prize. The kid who pulls in the most money per lap wins a prize. The kid who runs the most laps wins a prize. The kid who pulls in the most money (laps times donations) wins the grand prize. Kids will hustle to win a prize. Make the prizes good ones (\$10-\$30 ones, at least). Each age group should have its appropriate prizes; older kids who will pull in more money will require more expensive prizes as motivation. The laborer is worthy of his hire.

Thus, the jog-a-thon accomplishes several things. It gets the kids involved. It is an advertising device for the organization. It identifies people who are willing to give. Each kid takes down a written pledge on a little slip of paper (name, address, amount of donation per lap), which he then writes down on a master list at the end of the day. These names can be computerized, if you have a follow-up plan. Plus, it can raise a lot of money from people who are outside the organization and who normally would not give.

A Letter to Relatives

At day school or Sunday school, a teacher should put a brief fund-raising letter on the blackboard. Each kid will hand write it on a piece of paper. It should be a personal letter asking the relative to become a sponsor. There should be one letter for each prospective relative.

Then, if possible, there should be a computer-typed, one-page, single-spaced letter from the headmaster or organizational director. This letter will describe the benefits to the student (mentioned by name within the letter if your computer program allows it). Use the money for hardware or a special project, not salaries or operating expenses. Show what a wonderful thing this project or tool will be. Computers are a good item to buy; everyone knows about them, hardly anyone understands them; and so they all know that young people need to learn about them to stay ahead—all of which is true.

Then stress the benefits for the kid: a task all ages can do, the importance of rewards for performance, the denial of a "something for nothing" philosophy, etc. Keep paragraphs short.

Then enclose a one-page form which tells the date of the jog-a-thon and which tells the person how many laps kids can run in an hour (little kids, pre-teens, high schoolers). Don't surprise them with 50 lap performances if they are thinking in terms of five laps. Then list a selection of possible donations per lap, such as \$100 or \$50 (for a rich grandma who donates money in big chunks), \$25, \$10, \$5, and "other _____." You hope that the person will give at least one dollar per lap. Don't spell out the possibility of donating 50 cents or 25 cents. It can be done, but most close relatives who can conceivably afford it will probably put down a dollar figure rather than cents, if you just leave the space blank. Then leave a space for the donor's name and address. You might also enclose an envelope to send the form back in. Let them put on the stamp.

At school or Sunday school, have each kid insert in his personal note, the folded typed letter from the headmaster or pastor, the form, and the return envelope (preferably addressed by hand by the kid). Each kid should hand-address the outer mailing envelope. Put a stamp on it, not a Pitney-Bowes sticker. The addressee will open it. The younger the kid, the more likely the addressee will respond, though the donation is likely to be smaller. Grandma isn't stupid; she knows that a 16-year-old grandson will not be very impressed with a 25 cent per lap donation. The 5-year-old might be.

If one relative is likely to be hit with three requests (lots of grandkids in the church), then include all three letters, but only one form. Leave several spaces to identify who is getting sponsored. Assume that each kid will be given the same money per lap. Maybe you can leave a bracket at the end of each line after the kid's name for the amount to be donated per lap, but this might confuse donors.

It would be very smart to have the parent send to the relative a photo of the kid's jogging. This will soften the blow for next year's jog-a-thon. The cuter the picture, the better.

Bonus Prizes for Large Donations

This may not be possible, but people in the church may agree to donate something, either a service or product, for large donations (\$5 or more per lap). If this is impossible, then perhaps they can sell something at cost or wholesale to the organization, and the organization can offer it, on the assumption that there will be something left over after the total donation.

Here is what I offered to my church's school, Geneva Christian Academy. Perhaps a businessman in your church will do something comparable. A donor promises to donate \$5 per lap to an unknown jogger, adult or child, who is assigned a number. The donor selects a number between 1 and 50, not knowing if an adult church member or a 6-year-old will be attached to the number. In return, the donor will receive a year's subscription to my financial newsletter, *REMNANT REVIEW* (\$95/yr) and a copy of my book, *Government By Emergency* (\$20). (I will do this only for people who are not presently *REMNANT REVIEW* subscribers.) The church pays my company \$25 for this \$115 bonus.

Furthermore, I then offer the donor (including present *REMNANT REVIEW* subscribers who agree to donate \$5 per lap) the right for his designated tax-deductible charity to buy an unlimited number of *REMNANT REVIEW* subscriptions for use as fund-raising bonuses during the next 12 months. But he must identify the purpose of the charity in advance; if it is a cause the church's authorities don't believe in, they will reject the offer before the jog-a-thon is held. (\$10 per lap earns a donor the right to name two charities; \$15 gets three charities, etc.)

To top it off, I will allow his charitable organization to assign this same bonus subscription for one year to other charities selected by their donors, etc., etc. Everyone wins. **Because someone has helped my cause, I am willing to help his cause.**

(If you are interested in participating personally in this one-year deal, write to Walter Banek, Geneva Christian Academy, 708 Hamvasy, Tyler, Texas, 75701. Just pick a number between 1 and 50, and agree to pay \$5 or more per lap for all the quarter-mile laps that this runner can run in one hour. The jog-a-thon will be held on the last weekend in May, and you will be billed in June. **Donations are fully tax-deductible.** Please mention your selected charity or charities for the *REMNANT REVIEW* bonus exchange offer. Also, please include your phone number.)