



Getting the most out of
fundraising events

Foreword

Events are one of the most powerful ways a charity can connect people with its cause. From fun runs and sponsored walks to treks, swims and community challenges, they welcome new supporters, strengthen relationships with loyal ones, and generate vital income that can grow year after year.

Supporters take part for many reasons: to make a difference, but also to get fit, look after their wellbeing, take on a new challenge, and be part of a community. Charities that understand these motivations and make every step of their journey a positive one, have a real opportunity to grow their events fundraising and supporter loyalty.

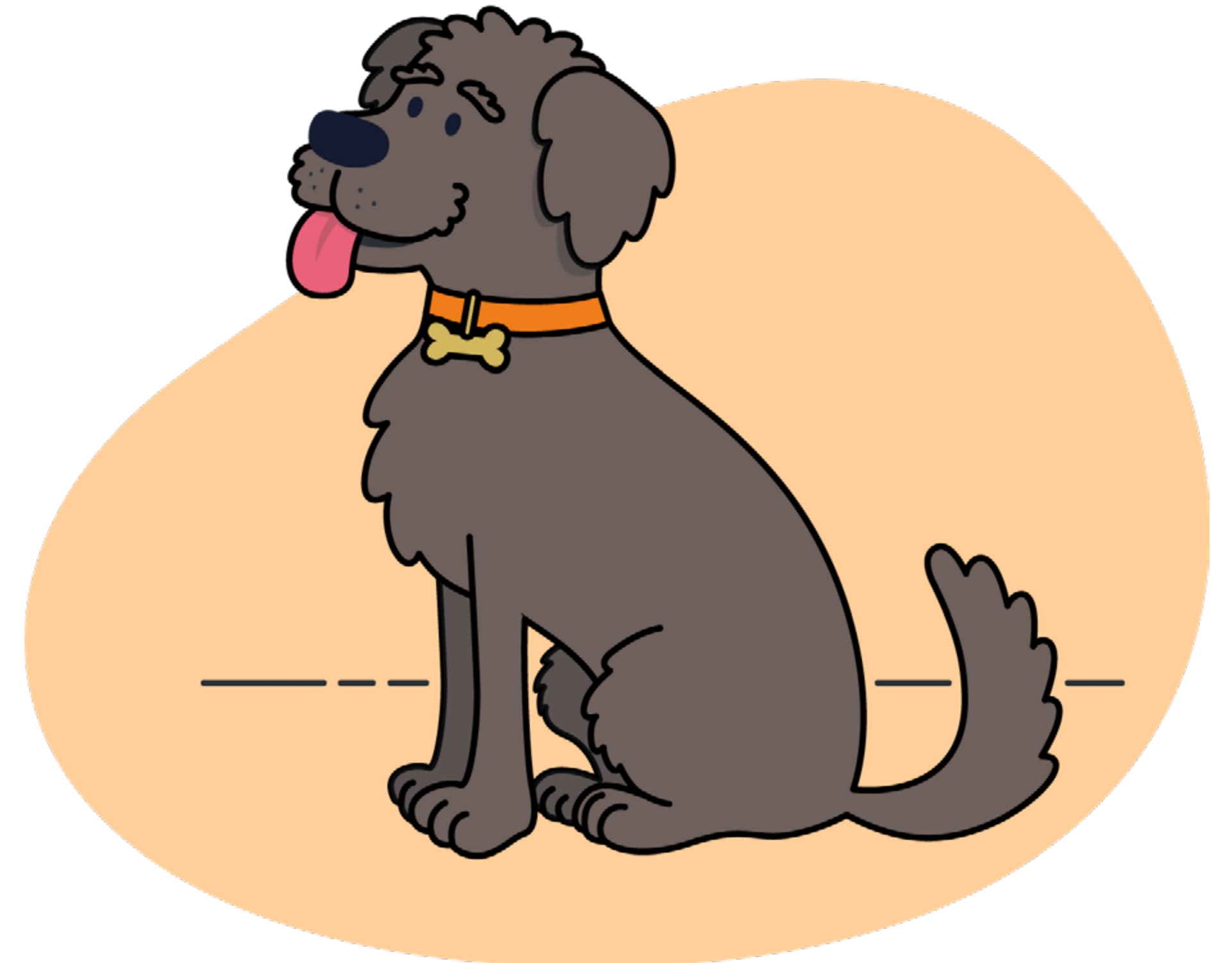
The charities seeing the strongest results are those that truly understand their supporters, make taking part easy, and steward their fundraisers from the moment they register to long after event day.

This playbook shares what we've learned working alongside charities of every size, and follows the full supporter journey:

- getting to know your supporters before you plan
- recruiting participants with messages that reflect why people take part
- stewarding fundraisers to their first donation and beyond
- thanking supporters and sharing your impact after the event
- reviewing what worked so every event builds on the last

It's designed to be practical. Each section has checklists, frameworks and templates your team can use straight away, whether you're launching a new event or growing an established one. Start from the beginning or go straight to the section that matters most to you right now.

We hope it helps you create even better supporter experiences, raise more for your cause and build events people return to year after year.



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Before you begin

Before getting started on the planning or promotion for an event, discuss these four questions with your team.

1. Is this a new event or a repeating event?

Repeating event:

- Gather your registration and fundraising data from previous events and analyse three aspects:

a) Headline trends

- Is participation growing, flat, or declining?
- Is average fundraising per participant increasing or falling?

If trends are negative over two or more years, diagnose before you plan the next event. A declining event often needs a structural refresh such as a new format, location, distance, date, or a new audience segment. Look for external factors too: a competing event in the same calendar window, or a change in your supporter base.

If trends are positive, your priority is retention and growth, and your returner segment may be your highest-converting cohort.

b) Participant demographics

Understanding your audience is crucial to successful acquisition - good recruitment begins with good insights - and you should aim to identify who your most valuable fundraisers are. This can be done by analysing previous participant data. To do this, you should use a combination of first-party data and behavioural signals.

First-party data relates to individuals who have had previous contact with your charity and should include past participants of this and other events, those who expressed interest but haven't joined an event, and lapsed supporters.

Behavioural data allows you to identify supporters' intentions and assess engagement depth. For example, looking at supporters who have joined previous events, and analysing their fundraising activity.

Break down your data by age, gender, and location. If you asked about connection to the cause or reason for participating, analyse these responses as well.

This approach will enable you to define who your ideal fundraisers are - please note there could be more than one type. You can then create 'look-a-like' audiences and select the advertising channels and messaging that are most likely to resonate with your most valuable fundraisers.

Building strong foundations:

- Define high-value audiences
- Build segmented, signal-led audiences
- Launch with audience- and channel-specific creative
- Optimise for specific audience events

Primary objectives:

- Improve targeting efficiency
- Lower cost per acquisition (CPA)
- Increase conversion rates
- Reduce wasted budget





c) Existing community you have built

If previous participants are active in a Facebook group, WhatsApp community, or similar, that is one of your strongest assets. It offers friendships, shared memories, and peer accountability, and you can use it to gather feedback and gauge interest in upcoming events. Use it proactively in your recruitment: seed the group with early registration announcements, ask returning participants to share their sign-up publicly, and make the community itself part of your value proposition.

For both new & repeating events:

2. Who is your audience, and do you already have access to them?

If your event will appeal primarily to your existing supporters: this is your warm audience. Your email list, your donor database, and your volunteer network are your launch pad for registrations. Focus your energy on making the registration journey low friction and the value proposition clear.

If you are using this event to reach a new, cold audience, this requires additional planning and resources. New audiences do not know you, and a mixture of cause- and value-based messaging will be needed to convert them. You will need to invest in paid advertising, community outreach, and possibly a referral or group mechanic that lets existing supporters bring in people from their own networks. See the Value Exchange framework in this guide, and bear in mind that personal value such as fitness, mental health, challenge and achievement are your strongest hooks.

3. What makes this event distinct, and what is the value to participants?

Before you launch, be able to answer in one sentence: why would someone participate in this event?

For a new event, the answer might be a combination of adventure, challenge, fun, wanting to have a positive impact, and an experience that connects participants to your cause. If you cannot answer this question clearly, your recruitment messaging and ensuing communications will not be effective.

For a repeating event, your answer should also include what previous participants shared about their experience. This could be friendships, connections, training partners, a sense of achievement, and more. If you don't know, send a short survey to previous participants and use their testimonials in your marketing.

Consider the full range of participant value your event offers across all four dimensions in the Value Exchange framework: emotional, personal, social, and practical. The answer to "what makes this distinct" should map to at least two of those four dimensions, and should be reflected in all your communications.

4. What does success look like for this event?

Define targets for metrics including:

- Total income raised, including registrations and fundraising
- Number of registrations
- Activation rate (% of fundraising pages with at least one donation)
- Average raised per participant
- Overall ROI and ROAS (return on ad spend)

1 Recruitment



Before launch, check through blocks 1 and 2.
If recruitment is below target, work through blocks 1 and 2 again to identify areas of improvement, e.g. social media promotion, and then move on to blocks 3 and 4.

Block 1: Is the event findable?

Is the event registration page clearly linked from the homepage and main events page?

Ensure prominent placement on both charity homepage and on events page. Call to Action (CTA) buttons should link to your event registration form.

If someone searches for your event on Google, will they find it?

Ask your web team to add your event name, location and date to the page title and description. This means people searching Google can find your event for free, and it gets easier to find over time.

Is the event announced on social media channels with a direct link?

Announce via all your charity's active social media channels, ensuring that the registration link is prominent. Channels could include: Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Block 2: Is the registration journey frictionless?

Is it possible to complete registration in under 3 minutes with no confusion?

Test out the registration flow and look for ambiguous options, or unnecessary fields. Use text boxes to add copy to provide guidance where necessary.

Is the value proposition clearly stated on the event registration landing page? I.e. what you get, what you are supporting, what it costs?

If not, update the landing page copy. Ensure that participant value is clearly articulated.

Are wave options, minimum fundraising requirements, etc. clearly explained?

If not, ambiguity creates drop-off and can lead to missed fundraising targets. State requirements clearly in the registration form.

1 Recruitment

Block 3: Is the right audience being reached?

Have past participants and donors been contacted with a personalised, segmented message?	This is often the highest-converting segment.
Are you using your existing participant data to target similar people with paid ads? Build lookalike campaigns based on the demographics of previous participants or existing supporters. If you asked why they were participating, include top motivations in your marketing.	Download the registration report from a previous event. If this is the first event of its kind, options include: • the list of people who have already registered for this event (age / gender / location) • the list of registrants from a previous similar event • the list of your charity's donors/ supporters.
Have you done community outreach: e.g. cycling clubs, running groups, local networks, local businesses, volunteers?	Make use of interest groups and warm audiences in the community such as local businesses and those who volunteer for your charity.

Block 4: Is the messaging effective?

Does your recruitment messaging convey participant value?	See the Value Exchange framework in Section 2. Map which of the four value dimensions each message covers.
Is there a three-stage email series: announcement, then cause and emotion, followed by participant value and a discount where appropriate?	See Section 2 for inspiration on building your email series.
Are you reviewing email open rates and click-through rates on a weekly basis?	Analyse these key metrics and do more of what is working.
Are you doing any A/B testing on subject lines or ads?	If not, even a two-variant test on a subject line can generate useful signals.

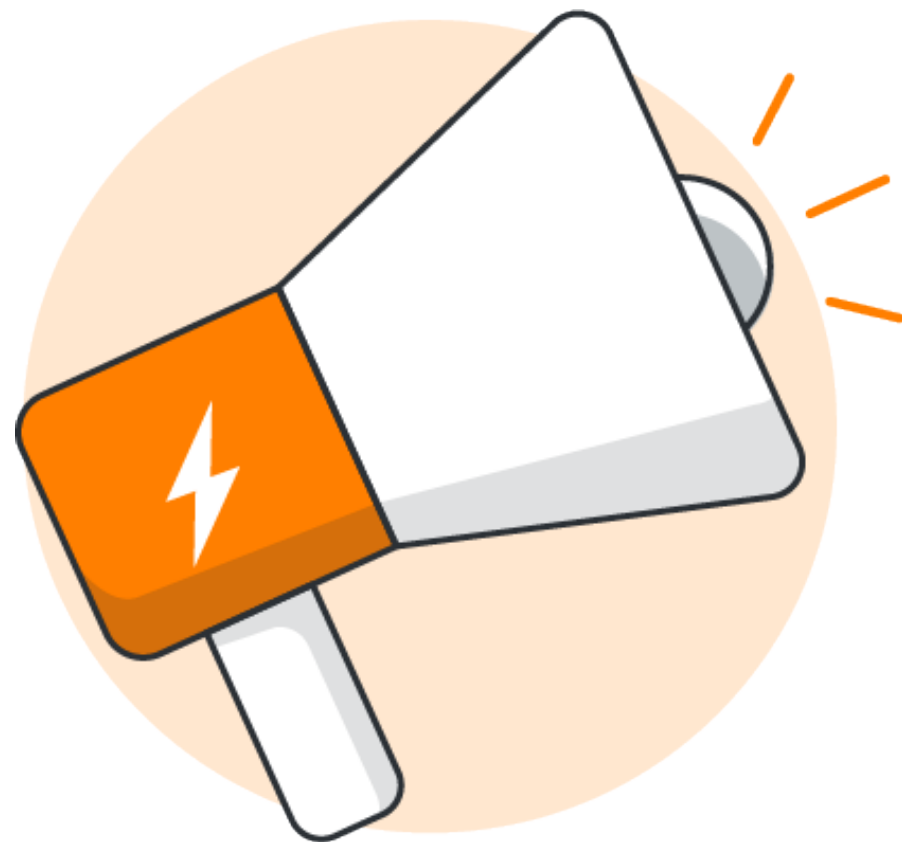
2 Messaging Framework

The Value Exchange: put value at the heart of your recruitment strategy

Charities that lead with cause messaging alone may miss other key factors that motivate people to register. Participants sign up because an event offers them something: fitness, community, achievement, purpose.

Research shared in [Enthuse's Mass Participation 2025/26 Report](#) shows that while fundraising for charity is the top motivator, personal goals are also important, with half of participants using charity owned events to improve their mental health, 47% to get fit, and 41% looking for a new challenge.

When building your recruitment campaign, ask which of these four value dimensions your messaging covers.



Emotional value	Personal value	Social value	Practical value
Meaning, Connection, Purpose	Fitness, Wellbeing, Skill, Achievement	Belonging, Visibility, Community	Content, Tools, Access, Convenience

- Personal value is often the strongest hook for cold audiences. Fitness, wellbeing, and a new challenge resonate with people who do not yet have a cause connection.
- Social value (belonging, community, visibility) is particularly powerful for retention and year-on-year re-registration. People come back for the community as much as the cause.
- Practical value is the most underused. Training plans, fundraising tools, event-day logistics, and exclusive access are often strong conversion drivers for the undecided registrant. Exclusive access means giving participants something they could not get as a regular supporter. Examples include:
 - Hospice and care charities: behind the scenes tour, meeting a nurse or care team member, or simply a visit to the hospice
 - Research charities: visit a lab or research facility, Q&A with a scientist or clinician

The goal is to ensure the cause sits alongside other motivators, not to remove or replace cause messaging.

Source: Value Exchange framework: [Edward Grant](#), Bluestep Solutions

Three-stage email series



The series below applies to the recruitment phase, with the goal of increasing the number of registrations. Each email should cover at least two of the four Value Exchange dimensions. Adapt the messaging for each audience segment.

Email 1
Announcement

Tone: excited and direct. Lead with personal and social value. Discounts for returning participants and/or early bird discounts.

- What is the event, when and where, and what will participants get out of it
- Personal value: fitness, challenge, achievement, wellbeing
- Social value: community, team experience, shared accomplishment
- One clear CTA: 'Register now'
- For returners: add a returner discount code and a "you achieved this last time, let's do it again" hook

Email 2
Cause and emotion

Tone: personal and story-led. Emotional and personal value together.

- A participant or beneficiary story with real names and real impact
- What the fundraising could enable for your charity
- What people will get out of it, and/or why they keep coming back: community, achievement, cause affinity
- Connect the personal achievement to something bigger than the individual
- CTA: Register and be part of it

Email 3
Value and urgency

Tone: practical and time-sensitive. Practical value front and centre. Final push to convert the undecided.

- Event experience highlights: what participants will experience and what makes it special
- Practical value: training support, fundraising tools, logistics, exclusive access
- Discount if available, framed as limited-time rather than permanent
- Genuine urgency: wave spaces, registration deadline, places remaining
- CTA: Spaces are limited, register now

Audience segmentation matrix



Segment	Lead value dimension	Key message angle	Offer or hook
Past participants	Social and personal	Community and achievement. You have done this, beat your record, see your people.	Returner discount. Referral code to share with their networks.
Existing donors and supporters	Emotional and personal	Build on your support by participating and joining the community in this event.	Cause-led storytelling. Show the direct link between the event and its impact.
Cold or new audience	Personal and practical	Here is what this event does for you, and why the cause matters.	Early bird discount. Social proof through videos of previous events and testimonials from previous participants.
Corporates or groups	Social and practical	Team challenge, CSR opportunity, shared experience with purpose.	Exclusive discount for the corporate or group.

Impact Messaging

Use real impact stats in your messaging, for example: "Together, last year's participants raised X, enough to fund Y." This makes the impact tangible, and creates a link between the event and your cause.

Copy principles

- Emails should be timely and relevant; carefully consider when your emails will be sent and the purpose behind sending the email.
- Short emails convert better than long ones. Remember that people will be reading emails on their mobile devices, and will stop reading if they need to scroll too much.
- Clarity is crucial. Make sure that your email is focused on what is relevant to the recipient. Avoid delivering multiple messages in one email.
- One CTA per email - this should be a button with the link to register for your event.
- Include participant stories - this social proof or user generated content can often be more persuasive than charity-authored content.

2 Stewardship

Stewardship starts the moment someone registers for your event. The goal is to achieve the first donation ('activation') as soon as possible, followed by consistent fundraising through to event day.

Key stats

Stat	What it means for your stewardship approach
85% of fundraisers who have a target meet or exceed it	Set a clear, pre-filled fundraising target at registration which is reflected on all fundraising pages that are automatically created. This is one of the strongest drivers of success.
73% of charities say getting participants fundraising early is crucial	Prompt fundraisers to take action immediately after sign-up: early momentum drives higher totals. This could start with self-donation to get the ball rolling.
73% of charities say providing fundraising tips helps participants raise more	Give fundraisers simple, practical guidance and share plenty of fundraising ideas. Provide structured support by breaking down the total into manageable chunks. Communicate clear fundraising milestones and offer incentives.



Sources: [Enthuse Mass Participation Report 2025/26](#), [Enthuse Charity Pulse Report 2025](#)

From registration to 8 weeks out
Monthly

Keep participants warm without overwhelming them.

- Thank you and receipt immediately on registration\
- Fundraising page prompt: add a photo & story to your page
- Make it easy for them to share: include link to personal fundraiser page in every email, provide templates to share via WhatsApp, email and socials
- Monthly: fundraising tips, participant stories, event updates, match funding prompt

8 to 4 weeks out
Fortnightly

Build urgency and reward momentum.

- Milestone reward campaigns: Raise X by this date and receive this reward
- Practical event prep: travel, kit, what to expect on the day
- Remind fundraisers to self-donate. In the 2026 TCS London Marathon, runners who self-donated raised 30% more.
- Shout out top fundraisers, share their pages, and share how they raised funds

Final 4 weeks
Weekly

Logistics, last push, and prize motivation.

- Final logistics: pack confirmation, parking, wave times
- Fundraising push: driven through impact messaging
- Share peer examples of what top fundraisers are doing

Enthuse

Use [custom reports](#) in Enthuse's email functionality to segment your participants and send targeted emails based on amount raised.



Fundraising segmentation model



Segment your participants by amount raised and send targeted messages. Review monthly starting three months before the event.

Example below is for an event with a fundraising target of £200 per participant.

Segment	Message	Additional ideas
Nothing raised	Get started by sharing your page with your network including friends, family and colleagues. • Remove the psychological barrier with a simple 'how to share' guide • Provide fundraising ideas to help them get started • Remind them that regular sharing on social media makes a real difference	Focus on activation, including through self-donation. Provide social media templates and a sample first message they can copy and send out via WhatsApp, etc.
£1 to 100	Well done for getting started, now push to your next milestone. Who have you not asked yet? E.g. workplace (check for match funding), neighbours. Which channels have you not used recently?	Milestone reward: a small charity-branded item for reaching £100 by X date. Keeps the goal near-term and achievable.
£101 - £199	You're getting close to the goal of £200! Here is what your fundraising is enabling for the charity.	Match funding check. Event-day perk if they hit the fundraising target.
At or above fundraising target of £200	Congratulations on smashing your £200 target! You are making a real difference. Here is the impact so far. • Encourage them to increase their target as this increases the chance of additional donations.	Prizes or a prize draw for top fundraisers. Public recognition across charity channels if consent has been given. Personal phone call to congratulate and request them to increase their target. Consider using your volunteers to make these phone calls.

Community and retention

A dedicated participant community is one of your most powerful stewardship tools. Used well, it builds peer accountability, drives fundraising, and creates the sense of belonging that brings participants back year after year. Charities with strong communities consistently report higher fundraising totals, lower workload for team members, and significantly better repeat participation.

Choose your platform: WhatsApp, Facebook, and Strava each serve different purposes and different audiences. You can use multiple platforms depending on your audience. These should be clearly signposted during registration so that participants can join immediately.

- WhatsApp is the most active channel for most events: it's informal, immediate, and most participants already use it. For larger events, consider setting up a WhatsApp Community with dedicated channels for announcements, training, fundraising tips, and local meetups, rather than a single group chat that becomes noisy. For smaller events, a single group works well.
- Facebook groups work well for year-round community management and for older participants who use this platform regularly so you're meeting them where they are.

Strava clubs work particularly well for running and cycling events. Anthony Nolan and Brain Research UK both use Strava to let participants share their training runs, celebrate achievements, and encourage each other, all requiring minimal charity resources.

- If in doubt, ask your participants which platform they prefer.

Setting up your community

Create the group as soon as registration opens and invite participants to join in your registration confirmation email. Make joining feel like part of the event experience. Set clear ground rules at the outset: charities have found that a well-set-up group becomes largely self-moderating, with participants answering each other's questions and reducing the charity workload significantly.

Decide upfront whether you want active moderation or a self-managing group with seeded content. Either approach can work, but ensure that someone is responsible for it. A group that goes quiet can be detrimental to momentum and engagement.

What to post and when

Use the group(s) to reinforce your email stewardship; repetition is a good thing!

- Registration to 8 weeks out: welcome new participants, share training tips, post fundraising ideas, and seed early conversations. Ask questions that prompt responses: "What's your training looking like?" or "Who's done this route before?" Ask participants to share their creative fundraising ideas.
- 8 to 4 weeks out: post fundraising milestones and shout out top fundraisers publicly, with their consent. Encourage top-performing participants to share their fundraising pages. Use the groups to remind participants of fundraising milestones and incentives
- Final 4 weeks: focus on event-day logistics, fundraising pushes, and build excitement.
- Post-event: keep the group open. Share the headline fundraising total, impact messaging, and event-day photos. Launch next year's event in the group before anywhere else - members should feel like insiders.

For repeating events

- An established community is an asset. Keep it active year-round by sharing charity news, impact stories and other events or opportunities to volunteer. Brain Research UK's WhatsApp community led to runners from different countries arranging training runs together and planning future events. This level of organic engagement is only possible if the group stays warm between events. When registration opens, seed the group with an early announcement and discount code, and ask returning members to recruit from their own networks.

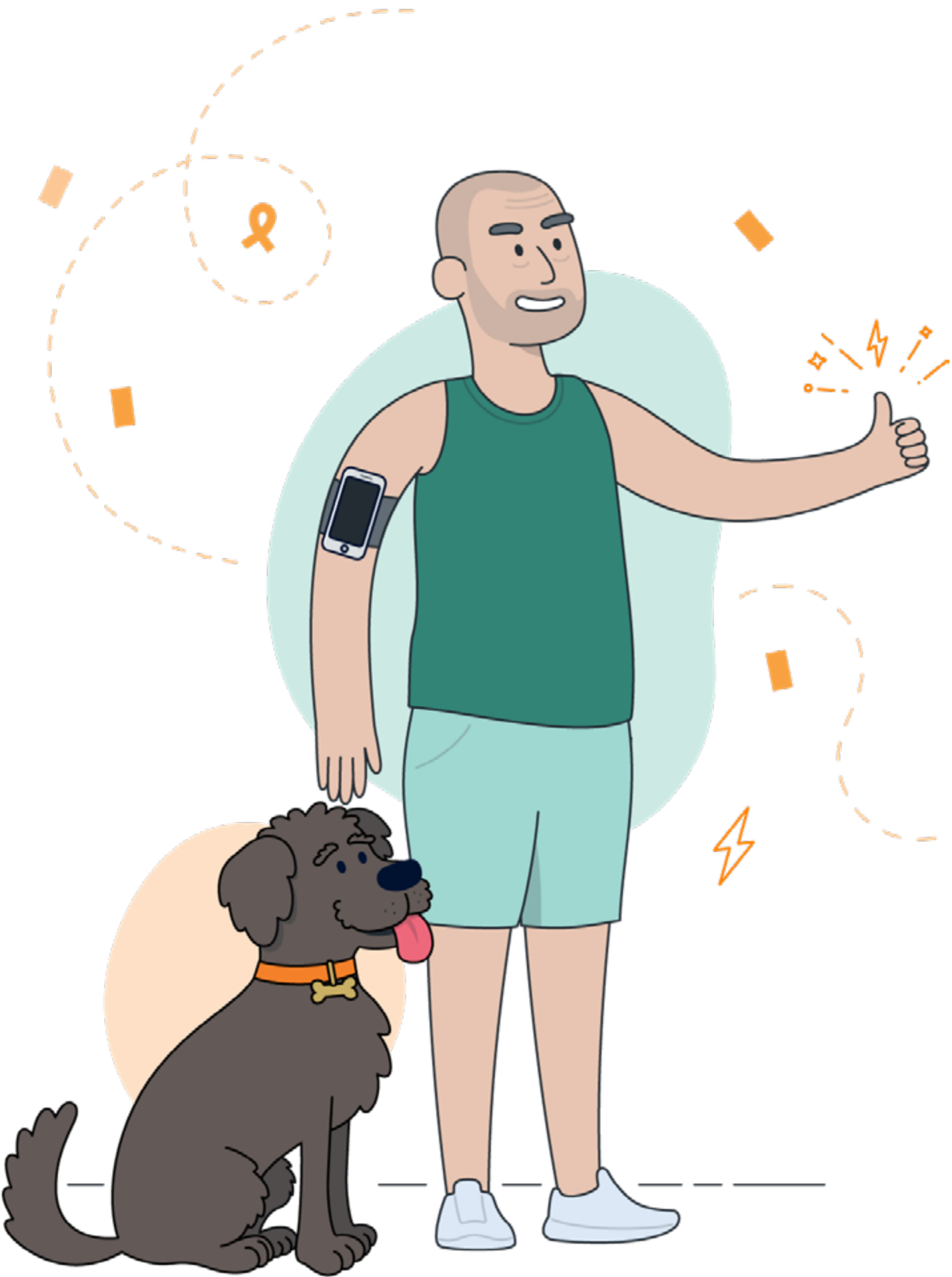


4 Post Event

Up to 20% of donations come in after an event, making post-event comms an important opportunity. The post-event window is also your strongest moment for retention, re-registration, and for maximising lifetime value.

Key stats

Stat	What it means
20% of donations arrive after event day	Keep fundraising pages open and comms active for at least 2 to 3 weeks post event.
89% of fundraisers rate personalised support as excellent	A personalised thank-you is greatly appreciated and influences whether someone comes back next year. Video thank yous are also powerful and can be used to share the impact of the fundraising, or a simple thank you message. They can be delivered by a team member in your charity or a brand ambassador.
4x more likely to give again	Donors who receive a personal thank-you call within 2 days of giving are four times more likely to donate again.



Days 1 to 3: Celebrate and final push

Celebrate and thank

Recognised fundraisers are more likely to stay engaged and keep raising money.

- Send personalised congratulations. 89% of fundraisers rate this as excellent.
- Post thank-you messages on social media, your website and email
- Highlight fundraisers' journeys and the difference they have made. Use race-day photos and personal stories.
- Tag and engage on social. Shoutouts inspire last-minute donations from supporters who have not yet given.
- For top fundraisers: consider a personal phone call within 48 hours. St Oswald's Hospice used its volunteers to do a 'thankathon' calling campaign to drive post-race donations and ongoing engagement with the hospice
- Launch next year's event on the day of this year's event. The endorphin moment is your highest-converting recruitment window.

Final fundraising push

It is not too late to donate. Remind participants and create urgency.

- Remind fundraisers who haven't yet achieved their target to ask their supporters for one final push.
- Set a specific deadline and target: help us raise X by Friday
- Show impact of extra donations: £15 provides X meals, or £55 funds X hours of vital research
- Keep fundraising pages open for at least 2 to 3 weeks post-event



Week 1 to 2: Impact and Re-registration

Impact messaging

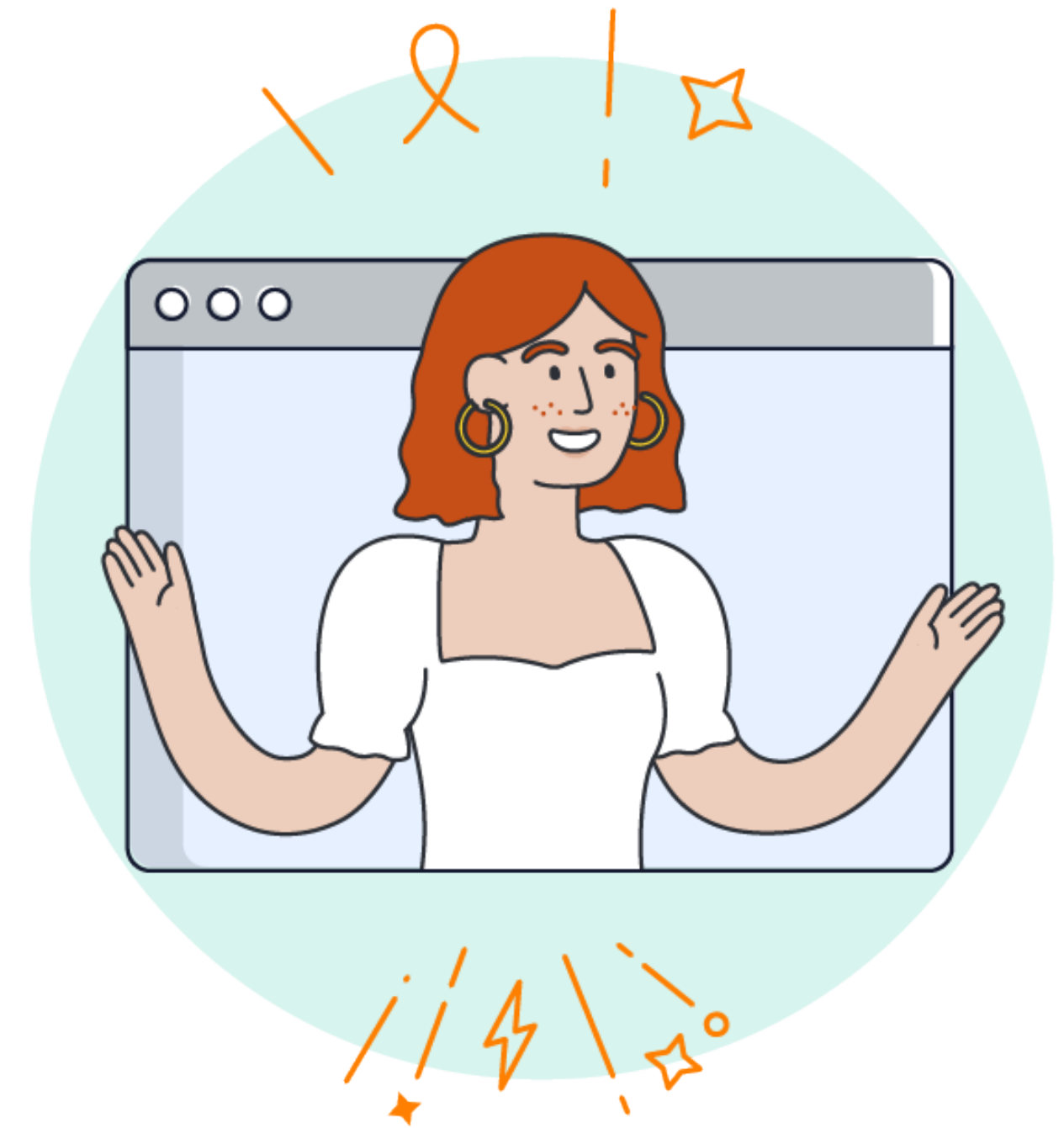
Share what was achieved. This validates effort and builds trust for future giving.

- Announce the headline fundraising total. It validates participants' effort and creates shareable content.
- Translate the total into concrete impact: together you funded X, not just a number
- Share participant stories and event-day memorable moments across all channels
- Send a post-event impact email covering what was achieved, what it means, and how people can stay involved

Re-registration and retention

Convert the post-event high into next year's pipeline.

- If you have not already launched next year's event, do it now. Motivation peaks immediately post-event.
- Ask participants to opt in to future charity communications
- Capture feedback: what worked, what would they change, would they recommend the event? See Section 5 for suggested questions
- Identify your top fundraisers and steward them separately. These are your future champions.



5 Measurement and Review

Review recruitment and stewardship KPIs on a monthly basis. The earlier you spot a downward trend, the more levers are still available to your charity. Post-event analysis and participant feedback should be reviewed within 2 weeks after the event has taken place.

Stewardship KPIs

- Page activation rate (percentage of registrants whose fundraising page has received at least one donation)
- Percentage of participants at zero raised
- Percentage of participants hitting minimum fundraising requirement
- Average fundraising per participant
- Cancellation rate

Post-event analysis

- Which channels drove the most registrations at the lowest cost?
- Which channels drove the fundraisers who raised the most?
- Which emails in the series had the highest open rate and click-through rate?
- What was the final activation rate and average fundraising value, and how did both compare to target?
- What was the cancellation rate? Was it higher in a particular segment?

- How much was raised post-event?
- What would you do differently next year?

Participant feedback

Send a short survey to all participants within one week of the event, while the experience is fresh. Keep it to four questions; response rates drop sharply beyond this.

Suggested questions - we recommend picking the 4 that matter most to your charity:

- How did you hear about this event?
- How likely are you to participate again next year? (1-10)
- How likely are you to recommend this event? (1-10)
- What was the best part of your experience?
- How can we make the event better?
- How would you like to stay in touch with us? (Email / WhatsApp community / Facebook group / SMS / Post / I'd prefer not to)

Use the responses to:

- Identify your promoters (scores of 9-10), ask them for testimonials, and contact them personally about future events
- Identify opportunities for improvements for future events
- Invite respondents directly into the relevant channel based on their preference — WhatsApp group, email list, or Facebook group
- Inform your answer to *'why would someone participate in this event?'*



Bringing this playbook to life with Enthuse



Every charity event is different, but the foundations of success are the same: a welcoming supporter experience that feels part of your cause; fundraisers who get started early; and stewardship that keeps them giving and coming back. Enthuse's Fundraising and Events solution empowers charities to create giving experiences that do exactly that.

Our technology brings event registration and fundraising together under your charity's own brand, so your team spends less time on admin and more time supporting your fundraisers, allowing your charity to:

- Know your supporters. Registration and fundraising data sit together and connect to your CRM, so you can see who takes part, who raises most and who returns.
- Welcome new participants. A simple, charity-branded sign-up for individuals and teams that captures everything you need first time.
- Get fundraisers started. Every participant receives a fundraising page as soon as they register, supported by branded stewardship emails, milestones, leaderboards and Strava integration.
- Thank, report and retain. Real-time reporting helps you recognise top fundraisers, share your impact and plan next year's event with confidence.

Let's talk about your next event

Whether you're launching a new event or growing an established one, our team would love to hear about your plans and share how we can help you raise more for your cause.

[Book a call](#)





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