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THE DOs AND DON'Ts OF DISCOUNT CARD FUNDRAISING

DO get started in the summer for your fall fundraisers. Businesses can only participate on so many cards per year, so if you want a great fundraising discount card, make sure you get a head start on other groups and sign them up early.

DON'T wait until the last minute to order your discount card fundraisers. A fundraising card with the best discounts takes a couple of weeks to put together and print, so give yourself and the fundraising card company working on your card plenty of time before the start of your fundraiser.

DO make sure you're getting the businesses you want on the card. A lot of companies might have cards already put together for your city, but many will put together a card especially for you. The best way to make sure your cards sell is to get businesses your friends and family frequent.

DON'T buy more than you can sell, but make sure you buy as many as you think you can sell. A lot of discount card fundraising companies offer free cards with your orders, so the more you can sell, the more profit you can make for your group. Most groups can sell about 10-15 card per supporter, but an enterprising and imaginative group can exceed that by leaps and bounds.

DO be creative in how you sell your discount fundraising cards. Talk to the manager of your local grocery store or Wal-Mart and see if they'll let you set up a table outside or in the foyer for a couple of hours on a Saturday morning. Everyone loves getting a good deal, especially in this economy, so selling the fundraising cards should be easy as pie.

DO as much research as possible into all your fundraising card options. There are so many other options out there besides the standard candy, popcorn, and cookie dough fundraisers, and a good fundraising discount card should get you 70%-100% in profit!

DON'T hand out your fundraising product and just expect your sellers to be effective without any sort of oversight or communication. A team can't be effective if it doesn't communicate. Keep in touch with your sellers and make sure they're out there collecting donations.

DO plan ahead! The difference between an effective fundraiser and a failed fundraiser is planning. You must have a game plan before you start fundraising. Schedule a "Fundraising Kick-Off" to get the fundraiser going and to get those involved excited and motivated. Have a strategy in place for your fundraiser. Set a reasonable goal that is

realistically achievable and stay focused on meeting that goal. Set a deadline to work toward, but remain flexible; two to three weeks is generally a good amount of time for a discount card fundraiser. Remain positive and faithful that your fundraiser will be effective.

DON'T lose sight of your ultimate goal. Discount card fundraising can involve some time and effort. Often times, people get mired down in the task of fundraising and they forget what they're raising the funds for. You're raising money for a worthy cause, so keep that in mind. Stay motivated!

DO consider offering incentives to those involved in your fundraiser. Having a restaurant gift certificate or a prize for the person who raises the most money is a great way to make sure everyone gets involved. Talk to the company you buy your discount fundraising cards from and see if they can offer any help in securing incentives for you. A lot of companies will keep track of who offers gift certificates for your group, saving you the work of doing it yourself.

DON'T let a fundraising card company force feed you a card. Always make sure that your group has the opportunity to approve the card and its discounts before the card is sent to the printer.

DO make sure that you're earning at least 70% profit on your discount card fundraiser. Some fundraising card companies even offer free card programs that enable groups to earn upwards of 95-100% profit.