Integrating SDGs in Fundraising Events

By

*“The Social Energy Collectors”*

Using the SDGs as a force of positive change for fundraising events

Content

[Executive Summary 3](#_Toc34903689)

[1. Introduction 4](#_Toc34903690)

[2. Methodology 5](#_Toc34903691)

[3. Literature Review 6](#_Toc34903692)

[3.1 Fundraising Events 6](#_Toc34903693)

[3.2 Low return on investment 6](#_Toc34903694)

[3.3 Raising awareness 6](#_Toc34903695)

[3.4 Ethics 6](#_Toc34903696)

[3.5 Volunteering energy 7](#_Toc34903697)

[3.6 Literature review conclusion 7](#_Toc34903698)

[4. Case Studies 8](#_Toc34903699)

[4.1 Health fundraising 8](#_Toc34903700)

[4.1.1 Alpes d’HuZes 8](#_Toc34903701)

[4.1.2 Roparun 8](#_Toc34903702)

[4.2 Green Fundraising 9](#_Toc34903703)

[4.2.1 Climate Marches 9](#_Toc34903704)

[4.2.2 Natuurmonumenten: planting trees as fundraising event 10](#_Toc34903705)

[4.3 Social Fundraising 10](#_Toc34903706)

[4.3.1 Nacht van de Vluchteling 10](#_Toc34903707)

[4.3.2 Serious Request 11](#_Toc34903708)

[5. SWOT ANALYSIS 12](#_Toc34903709)

[6. Guidelines 14](#_Toc34903710)

[6.1 Understand the event by taking a holistic approach 14](#_Toc34903711)

[6.1.1 Answer the five W’s and how 14](#_Toc34903712)

[6.1.2 Use system’s thinking as a mapping tool 15](#_Toc34903713)

[6.1.3 Benchmark the event to the SDGs 15](#_Toc34903714)

[6.2 Creative business models 16](#_Toc34903715)

[6.2.1 Maximize the available money for the cause 16](#_Toc34903716)

[6.2.2 Assess success of the event on impact 17](#_Toc34903717)

[6.3 Effective communication 17](#_Toc34903718)

[6.3.1 Use your message to generate positive and inspiring energy 17](#_Toc34903719)

[6.3.2 Use social media in an intelligent way 17](#_Toc34903720)

[6.4 Pro-actively involve stakeholders 18](#_Toc34903721)

[*6.4.1* Creatively seek *activities to involve volunteering energy* 18](#_Toc34903722)

[*6.4.2* Involve benefici*aries* 19](#_Toc34903723)

[*6.4.3* Corpor*ate volunteering collaborations* 20](#_Toc34903724)

[6.4.4 Establish cross-sector partnerships 20](#_Toc34903725)

[6.4.5 Encourage long-term engagement 20](#_Toc34903726)

[6.5 Continuously improve positive impact by encouraging creativity and innovation 21](#_Toc34903727)

[6.5.1 Continuously monitor impact and internal process 21](#_Toc34903728)

[6.5.2 Encourage creativity to find new solutions 21](#_Toc34903729)

[6. Applied illustrative example 22](#_Toc34903730)

[6.1 Understand the event by taking a holistic approach: Inspiration from SDGs 22](#_Toc34903731)

[6.2 Creative Business Model: From idea to plan 22](#_Toc34903732)

[6.3 Communicate effectively: using social media as a force of positive change 23](#_Toc34903733)

[6.4 Pro-actively involve stakeholders: involving NGO’s and businesses 24](#_Toc34903734)

[6.5 Continuously improve positive impact by encouraging creativity: Tiny Forests 24](#_Toc34903735)

[7. Conclusion 25](#_Toc34903736)

[References 26](#_Toc34903737)

[Appendix 29](#_Toc34903738)

[Interview Marc Wortmann, 25 February 2020 29](#_Toc34903739)

# Executive Summary

*“Let’s be good instead of just less bad.” – Michael Braungart (2019)*

What is the role of a fundraising event? Many fundraisers have been organised these past years, under many different forms, but what were their contribution to their initial mission? Should those events only focus on raising money for the functioning of a charity or can their scope be broadened to include different impacts? This paper proposes a reflection upon dedicated events in order to inspire managers of NGOs that are interested in improving their fundraising events by connecting them to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The sector is in crucial need to improve their fundraising practices as many flaws and efficiency were detected, which may harm the initial mission of the organisation. As a result, this paper is a call for managers to rethink the planning of their events by aligning it with the sustainability agenda. The SDGs are created to inspire, since sustainability is not just about individualistically reducing carbon footprint, but rather about increasing our positive footprint by working together.

Furthermore, this paper makes several recommendations in the form of a guideline for the planning of fundraising events. Probably the central point of improvement is to rethink the role of the attendees. As people stand idle to assist to a specific event, they are not helping in any way the initial cause that motivated their presence at event. Therefore, this paper encourages the creative use of the volunteering energy that available. In fact, this paper identifies fundraising event as ephemeral stocks of volunteering energy, making room for the possibility of enabling episodic volunteering.

The guideline proposed in this paper should be used by fundraising events organisers as a tool to ensure the effectiveness and integrity of a fundraiser. It is not just about cutting cost and becoming as efficient as possible, but rather it is about creatively improving the impact of these event by connecting to the SDGs, effectively making use of the volunteering energy available and go the extra mile to create an environment of positivity and effectiveness. As fundraising events have the potential to create even more positive impact, this paper aims to provide fundraisers an inspirational start to achieve this positive change.

*“What we have to do the next forty years is much more exciting than what brought us in this situation.” (Johan Rockström, 2010)*

# **Introduction**

One of the main challenges of the non-profit sector relies on the funding of their service provision. As their business models do not typically include the creation of fiduciary revenue, NGOs must become creative in their quest of capital. In fact, non-profits often depend greatly on the generosity of others to solve their primary cause. As a result, non-profits are depending highly on private philanthropy to subside their operating and administrative costs. NGOs invented several ways to raise awareness and attract new investment to fulfil their purpose. A very popular way to do so, is by organizing dedicated events that are enlarging the organisation’s visibility and encouraging people to donate. Fundraising events are commonly associated with sport events, such as the Roparun a relay race stretching from Rotterdam to Paris with the goal to raise money for cancer, but they can also take many different forms such as a charity dinner, an auction, a TV show, and so on. Each with a specific objective to solve a societal challenge.

Usually, fundraising events are perceived positively, as charities are typically aiming to solve issues that can be linked to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Whether the focus is on health, the environment, or social problems, organisations hosting fundraising events wish to stimulate impact investment. In other words, the purpose of fundraising events is inherently pure. Nonetheless, those events may not always be as good as they seem. In extreme cases, it may be obvious why a fundraiser is questionable because the purpose or the organisation is perceived as morally debatable. For example, when the National Rifle Association is hosting several gun auctions to defend gun rights or when the Suidlanders, a South-African racist group, organises a tour to collect funds for their cause, it is clear to understand why those events may be more harmful than anything. However, other events perceived as positive may also hide important drawbacks and flaws that are contradictory to their initial mission. For example, a fundraiser may involve the organisation of massive events with thousands of attendees. Those “mega-events” are notorious for having harmful environmental and sometimes social consequences (Hall, 2012). Occasions like a marathon implies that hundreds of runners and thousands of supporters will gather around the event, leaving a significant carbon footprint. The 2014 World Cup in Brazil highlighted the negligence of the indigenous tribes (Freeman, 2014). Furthermore, fundraising events may also be sponsored by inappropriate companies. For example, both fast food rivals McDonalds and Burger King have a history of sponsoring various charity sporting events. This raises the ethical question whether it is right to link unhealthy companies to your charity event.

However, there are opportunities to make these events more sustainable. The aim of this paper is to promote a more efficient and ethical planning of fundraising events, by being more cautious of the consequences of the organisation of such events. Furthermore, this paper reflects on the possibility to reconcile charity fundraisers with the initial mission of the non-profit by making the event an action to solve the SDGs. The central reasoning of this work gravitates around the concept of wasted available volunteering energy.

# Methodology

The goal of this policy paper is to provide a guideline for fundraising events organisers to think further than the initial fiduciary objective and try to make the event as efficient and impactful as possible. In order to achieve this purpose, a scanning of the available literature has been effectuated with the use of online search engines such as Google Scholar and the Web of Science to select the appropriate academic works concerning fundraising events. From the theoretical background three areas of improvement have been identified: the low return on investment of fundraisers, their unsustainability, and the loss of voluntary energy.

Moreover, to complement the available literature, multiple case studies have been conducted. The cases analysed have been chosen based on their field of engagement. This paper assumed that there are three areas for voluntary fundraising events: health, social, and environmental. for each type of fundraising event, two examples have been described and analysed. The paper acknowledges that, in practice, fundraising events are very diverse, and the sample may not include some particularities proper to other events. However, the sample constitute already a good basis to dive into the flaws and opportunities to improve fundraisers.

Eventually, from the literature and the case studies, a SWOT analysis of fundraising events has been conducted. The SWOT is useful to visually represent the internal and external factors that will influence the success of an event. The SWOT analysis will constitute the basis of the elaboration of the policy guidelines for the organisation of a fundraising event. Additionally, based on the guidelines, a best practice example was constructed to illustrate the recommendations.

# **Literature Review**

## Fundraising Events

As aforementioned, fundraising events are a very popular means to raise money for a specific cause or organisation. The concept has taken many forms, often under sport competitions with marathons and bike-a-thon as frontrunners, but it can also be a TV show (e.g. Make A Wish, Telethon), a charity dinner, corporate volunteering, … A fundraising event may be big or small, and must not happen in a specific place, especially since the appearance of social media. The very definition of fundraising event has been built around the belief “that anyone attending a fundraising event receives some private benefit (something in return), for example a meal or entertainment, in contrast to more philanthropic means of supporting a charity such as committed giving plans or sending a donation in the post” (Webber, 2004, p.122). Therefore, special events are usually focusing on providing a fun experience to the attendees, ensuring high participation and retention rate (Higgins, & Hodgins, 2008).To be able to improve the functioning of fundraising events, first, it is important to fully understand how they work. They consist of dedicated events or campaigns that have the objective to collect donations for a specified cause, from or with the help of the attendees. Webber (2004) highlighted that the reasons to participate in such events can come from philanthropic or private motives. For instance, socialisation is identified as being an attractive reason to participate in fundraising events (Rundio, Heere, & Newland, 2014). People may also be motivated to partake because they have a close connection with the charity, the cause, or the event itself (Cooper, 2019), or simply because of peer-pressure (Webber, 2004). Others may be looking for a sense of achievement (Taylor, & Shanka, 2008). For example, a runner is more likely to participate in a marathon because he has an interest in the sport. Some events may also be a way to sustain a social status because taking part in them provides some prestige (Webber, 2004).

## Low return on investment

As stated by Webber (2004), fundraising events are one of the most inefficient ways of raising money. In fact, some charities undergo large expenses that they cannot cover the costs of the event with the money collected (CBC, 2010). In this context, the term efficiency is the short-term return on a fundraising investment or the direct return from one event. It is suggested that the more is spent per person on an event, the lower the return will be (Webber, 2004). This could mean that the events include a lot of unnecessary extravagant costs, or that lower cost events generate more generous donations. To measure the performance of fundraisers, cost ratios are often used; the higher the ratio of gross income to costs, the higher the efficiency of an event (Webber, 2004). Nonetheless, this report warns against relying only on such ratios, because these are not fully representing the effectiveness of an event towards the initial cause, as all the impacts are not always easily quantifiable in currency.

## Raising awareness

The objectives of a fundraiser should not solely focus on collecting money. Most fundraising events are focused on getting a big amount of money, while awareness is just a by-product (Webber, 2004). Dedicated events are also great opportunities to directly educate the people about an issue. Donors need to first access the information about a certain problem to feel the need to donate (Bekkers, & Wiepking, 2011). Additionally, the organisation can also shape its branding and positioning strategies through fundraising events (Webber, 2004). As a result, fundraisers may have much more impacts than the resulting fiduciary revenue that need to be taken into consideration. The quality performance and satisfaction should, therefore, be broadened to include all the attributes the organiser has a power on (Baker, & Crompton, 2000).

## Ethics

NGOs must be considerate of an appropriate event design and planning to fit the organisational culture. Fundraising events are struggling with the question of whether their organised actions and events are in line with the goal and purpose of the organisation. Inappropriate communication or flaweddesign may have counterproductive effects (Ivancic, 2017). Some fundraisers have forgotten what these kinds of events are really for, plus, attendees may not be very concerned with the fundamental problem for which the money is being raised. A powerful example of this are expensive and over-the-top bidding events for charities where rich people are attempting to gain a luxury yacht excursion, a lunch with a public figure, or a helicopter ride for their loved ones (Hackney & Mittendorf, 2017). Extraordinary decoration, food, drinks, acts, workers, … cost a fortune, while all this money could have been donated to the charity in the first place. The same goes for fundraising dinner events where the money is collected for people lacking food security by rich people who are spoiling themselves with delicious and expensive food. The money raised will help to feed and support the beneficiaries, but it is unlikely that it will design structural changes but instead promote inequality (Ivancic, 2017). These events are conflicting with their initial purpose. The potential of these events should lie in the opportunity to inspire attendees to take action on the final goal (Jones, 2017). The trust in the non-profit status has deteriorated over the years because of an accumulation of public scandals (Gibelman, & Gelman, 2001). A cultural misfit between the fundraising event and the organisation is likely to cause the same consequences and harm the legitimacy of an NGO.

## Volunteering energy

One could consider the attendees as volunteers that are participating in solving the underlying issue. The costs of attending a fundraising event may be translated into the personal efforts they have to invest in order to participate. Taking part in a fundraising requires the attendees to invest time and money as well as physical and psychological efforts (Higgins, & Hodgins, 2008; Bunds, Brandon-Lai, & Armstrong, 2016). In the context of fundraising events, it would make sense to apply the theory of volunteer management. Brudney and Meijs (2009) described volunteerism as a natural resource, in the form of energy flows that can be recycled and grown. This perception of volunteering energy may be compared to the human made renewable energies for which organisation have the capacity to control the flux of energy flowing into the system. Therefore, NGOs must make the opportunities to volunteer available and easy to reach. Episodic volunteering may be a solution to utilise this energy. This paper identifies fundraising events to be an opportunity to stimulate volunteer participation. In fact, as attendees already undergo the opportunity cost to join the event and are likely to be favourable to the NGO’s mission, they represent individuals that will potentially agree to help at the event. In fact, the design of an event could include the volunteer inputs to make the event already impactful. A positive and constructive event will optimize the utilization of volunteering energy to solve the cause but could also improve the organisation’s support base and reputation.

## Literature review conclusion

From the literature, this paper has identified three areas for policy improvement in the organisation of effective and successful fundraising events. The first concerns, the low return on investment associated with the fundraisers. In the planning of such an event, the organisers must ensure that the money is spent on reasonable grounds to fulfil the initial objectives of creating a revenue stream and raising awareness. An unsuccessful event would become a sunk cost for the NGO and may burden the organisation’s tangible and intangible assets. Therefore, the design of the event must present an efficient costs structure, while maximizing the overall impact, not just monetary value. Second, it seems that the organisations do not always take into consideration the negative impacts of their events. Unforeseen damages may harm the legitimacy of the event and of the NGO. By organizing SDG-proof events the organisation could enhance its reputation and reduce transaction costs with the different stakeholders. Therefore, the focus should also be to create events that already make an impact by solving a sustainability challenge. Eventually, the third area of policy improvement concerns the unused potential of volunteer energy. As those events often imply a large concentration of supporters, the organizers should also focus on stimulating the participation of attendees through episodic volunteering and/or by involving the private sector with partnerships and corporate volunteering.

# Case Studies

This section will describe six case studies from popular fundraising events. The cases have been picked based on their field of action and two cases have been examined per area. The paper identified three fields of fundraising causes: Health, Green, and Social. Therefore, the three fields are represented by the six case studies.

## Health fundraising

Health fundraising involves raising money or awareness for health issues. The most common health issue used for fundraising events is cancer, in particular for NGOs as KWF and Kika. From the top 20 most successful fundraising events (in terms of money), most of them were focusing on health issues, especially cancer (Peerworks Consulting, 2019). The two most successful fundraising events of 2019 were chosen as case studies: Alpe d’HuZes and Roparun.

### Alpes d’HuZes

Every year on the first Thursday of June, Alpes d’HuZes is taking place. It is a sports event that raises money for cancer research and improving the lives of people attained by the disease. This is done by letting 5000 participants bike, run, or walk the Alpe d’Huez in France a maximum amount of six times, explaining the Dutch word ‘zes’ in the event’s name (wat is Alpe d’HuZes, n.d.).

As for the return on investment for this event, even as the goal attainment, Alpe d’HuZes is a clear example of a successful fundraiser. Since 2007, more than 173 million euros have been raised and used for high quality and ground-breaking research (wat is Alpe d’HuZes, n.d.). Alpe d’Huzes solely depends on sponsors and volunteers and has no overhead costs or office expenses. This way, the participation fee covers all the organisational expenses, which makes it possible to spend all the donations directly on the cause: creating awareness, raising money and together with all the involved people contribute to research being done to cure cancer (wat is Alpe d’HuZes, n.d.).

Taking only the goal of the organisation into consideration, it could be said that SDG wise this event is doing very well. This event directly contributes to good health and wellbeing, which is SDG number three. Taking a closer look at the event itself, not all factors work in favour of the SDGs. Unfortunately, as Alpe d’HuZes is a big event with a lot of people consuming at a centralized point, the event is also generating waste. From within actions are being taken to minimize waste generation and pollution. Examples of these actions include promoting the use of biological paint, offering vegetarian meal options and the use of bio cups (Eten en drinken Alpe d’Huzes, 2018). Even though this holistic approach of minimizing externalities is a great initiative, there are definitely some opportunities to be explored regarding maximizing positive externalities. For example, the main externality related to the event is the transportation of thousands of Dutch people traveling to the French Alps. This imply the emission of a significant environmental footprint if those people are traveling by car or plane. Perhaps the organisation could explore a partnership with the relevant transportation companies to offer reduced bus or train fares.

### Roparun

Roparun started in 1992, when two friends named Sjaak Bril and Peter van der Noord, had a bet together to run from Rotterdam to Paris – because the marathon of Rotterdam alone was not though enough according to them. Sponsors and money were easily collected to go on this journey and afterwards when they came back it turned out they still had 100.000 guilders (currency before the euro) left after subtraction of the total costs (“Geschiedenis van de Roparun”, n.d). The residual money was donated to a hospital in Rotterdam to provide care for people with cancer. The increasing popularity of the event led to the decision to reverse the route from Paris to Rotterdam in 2004. Moreover, in 2012 an extra route was added from Hamburg to Rotterdam.

The board of the Roparun Foundation is committed to support and connect within palliative care for people with cancer. Since the expansion of the organisation, several important administrative bodies have been appointed to ensure that everything runs fairly. The supervisory board and advisory board are indicated to control the foundation's board and are co-responsible for their actions. The foundation is a full shareholder of Ropament B.V., the organisation responsible for the Roparun event. Ropament B.V. has no profit motive and aims to provide the Roparun Foundation with as much money as possible.

Teams that are joining the Roparun consist of a maximum of eight runners, each running an average of 65 kilometers. The costs for registration are € 3130 per team, for the half Roparun this is € 1965. This amount is used to organize the event for all participants, think of locations, plumbing, traffic, permits, security, communication and more. However, this amount is far greater than, for example, the Alpe d’Huzes, leaving a higher threshold for potential participants to take part in this event. The event may, therefore, become too exclusive as not everybody can afford this amount of money. Furthermore, Europarun has little policy regarding the negative effects on the environment. Regulations are mainly focused on forbidding attendees to leave waste on other places than the designated places and on preventing cars from entering special environmental zones (Roparun, 2019). There are no guidelines concentrated on sustainable transport, waste management, or circular material and food management.

## Green Fundraising

Green fundraising events involve raising awareness and money to restore and sustain the world’s ecosystems. These events can include climate action, animal rights activism, planting trees, water protection, ... Their main purpose is to highlight the importance of the ecosystem services. The paper selected the recent climate marches and the Natuurmonumenten fundraisers as case studies. One may argue that the climate marches do not represent a fundraiser event per se, but rather a form of political manifestation or activism without the objective to raise money. However, this case study is relevant in the sense that those events were organised in the purpose to raise awareness about the climate emergency.

### Climate Marches

In 2018, climate activist Greta Thunberg started her ‘Skolstrejk för Klimatet’ by sitting with her classmates in front of the Swedish parliament. The schoolgirl became viral on social media which launched the Fridays For Future movement that resulted in numerous marches around the world (Francescato, 2019). The infatuation around Greta Thunberg, led to the biggest environment manifestations to set pressure on the governments and to take more drastic climate actions. The movement achieved to set forward the elaboration of some green policies, but most of all it has managed to get global media attention and raise awareness about climate emergency (Francescato, 2019). The campaign was very successful in mobilizing students to take the matter in their own hands, instead of waiting for a change; for example, thousands of youngsters were walking down the streets of Brussels every Thursday (Meinders, 2019). Furthermore, she has also supported the Extinction Rebellion, a grassroot movement that is not afraid to take radical actions to demand climate justice (Francescato, 2019).

However, the whole campaign of Greta Thunberg roused many criticisms. Concerning the climate marches, many people have pointed out the environmental costs of such demonstrations. As thousands of people gather in cities, this involves the emission of travel externalities, traffic perturbations, waste, and the deterioration of green spaces (Moyer, & Lang, 2019; BBC, 2020). As mentioned, the movement has been very successful in mobilizing crowds through social media, but the crowd is not really stimulated to participate in making an impact or to change their consumption behaviour. Additionally, the volunteer energy available is tremendous but is not being used properly. Many detractors have pointed out the hypocrisy of participants rooting for sustainable development but without adopting the principles they are advocating (DeCillia, 2019). Furthermore, in some cases, the communication of the climate movement is defaulting, as they are frustrating the population more than sensitizing the individuals, which means that the movement is losing supporters who perceive it negatively. The Extinction Rebellion uses a lot of apocalyptic imagery, which is in line with the climate emergency (La Frenais, 2019), but doomsday scenarios can create a sentiment of despair and refrain people to take further actions (Matter, 2008).

### Natuurmonumenten: planting trees as fundraising event

An interesting example to set against the ongoing climate campaign are the fundraising initiatives of Natuurmonumenten, a very active NGO in the Netherlands committed to wildlife protection and land restoration. Their vision is to stimulate people to spend time outdoors and appreciate the benefits of a natural environment. In 2018, the organisation raised over €32 million in donations from the civil society (Natuurmonumenten, 2018). The organisation is engaged in the purchasing of natural reserves and the organisation of outdoor activities to sensitise people about the ecosystem services.

In 2015, Natuurmonumenten launched a successful fundraising event near Utrecht. Through a national TV campaign, the organisation invited people to gather in De Haar forest to plant trees. The advertisement invited everyone to bring and plant their own tree. It has led to 15.000 people reforesting the De Haar forest in the Leidsche Rijn district ("15.000 mensen plantten een boom in Utrecht", 2015). The event is a good example of a constructive fundraising event. The organisation had seen the opportunity to make the event having an impact in solving the relevant SDGs while also raising funds and awareness. Furthermore, the cost structure of the event is also very interesting, as Natuurmonumenten made the attendees pay for their trees, they covered the organisation costs of the fundraiser. Meaning that all benefits resulting from the fundraising initiative is a direct benefit for the organisation. Furthermore, the fact that the people were the owners of their trees implies that they are directly invested in the cause. The symbolic gesture of owning a tree provides that the attendees are directly connected to the mission by stimulating their emotions and their sense of achievement.

## Social Fundraising

This type of fundraising involves raising money and awareness for societal issues like the rising inequalities, discrimination, or the refugee crisis. The chosen cases studies are ‘Nacht van de Vluchteling’ and Serious Request, which have been quite successful to reach a large amount of people in their respective manner.

### Nacht van de Vluchteling

‘Nacht van de Vluchteling’, literally translates as the night of the refugee; is a social fundraising event that raises money for refugees. It is the most successful social fundraising event of the Netherlands as it ranks 7th in the top 20 (Peerworks Consulting, 2019), mainly because it organizes a unique sports challenge: walking 40 kilometres during the night. The activity connects very well to the goal, since it strongly represents how it is to be a refugee for a night. The event was set up in 2010 by Stichting Vluchteling (a refugee foundation) who supports refugees fleeing their country due to conflict, war and oppression. During acute situations, they provide life-saving emergency aid by providing shelter, medical care, food and fresh drinking water. They also provide aid during long-term humanitarian crises in the form of education and psychological support for processing traumatic experiences. In 2019, the event raised over 1.6 million euros by the sponsoring of all 5600 participants.

The event is well organized and not much infrastructure is needed, since it is a humble activity that takes place during the night and the participants are spread across routes and. Since all participants walk on the same night in different cities, the event does not need as much organisation as for example a city marathon. The event is therefore able to keep their costs low. It also makes good use of social media and its website, since participants can share their stories of their reasons to participate, there is a ranking of which participants received the most donations, and people are able to donate online. They also provide the option to walk with your company or walk in teams, which encourages more donations. Besides that, they make good use of involving celebrities as promotion of the event, since they serve as good brand ambassadors that increase publicity. For instance, a Dutch actor, Waldemar Torenstra, famous for his roles in popular Dutch TV-shows attracts a mature audience which suits well with the event.

The environmental effects of the event are little because it does not need many resources. They do provide food and drinks during the event, which creates (plastic) waste. Besides environmental effects, the event could be more effectively used for other problems and activities, more than just raising funds. The volunteering energy that is available during the event is not fully used. A waste of potential. For instance, the event is now only focused on raising funds, but it could also be an activity itself to include refugees who are currently living in the Netherlands. As the participants of the event are already willing to walk 40 kilometres for refugees in acute emergency, they are also most likely willing to help refugees in the Netherlands. Activities to do so only have to be provided. The fundraising event could be, for instance, the start of many other activities to include refugees and help them to adapt to the Dutch culture.

### Serious Request

Every year, the Dutch radio station 3FM hosts the Serious Request series in partnership with the Red Cross in order to raise funds and awareness about silent humanitarian crises. Each year, a cause that is widely ignored from the broader audience is chosen for the fundraiser. For example, this year’s edition was focused on helping the victims of human trafficking. In the period before Christmas, three DJs from 3FM were committed to animating a live radio show 24/7 for six days. The event collected over €1.4 million by hiking the show across the Netherlands (Pieters, 2019a). The show would host celebrities and present reports and animate activities around the central theme.

Furthermore, the main strength of Serious Request are its creative ways of raising money ensuring participation as well as a steady revenue. The principal concept of the show is that the audience can pay for song requests that they wish to listen to. But the show also offers the possibility for individuals to send their personalised messages to be broadcasted all day. Additionally, the media company makes good use of its network by involving several public figures visiting the radio show. Moreover, Serious Request enables the auctioning of atypical objects, such as VIP and behind-the-scene passes for sports and cultural events, meet-and-greets with politicians, or lunch with a football team (Pieters, 2019b). Eventually, Serious Request is a good example in practice of the private sector leveraging its capabilities for the common good.

# SWOT ANALYSIS

From the analysis of the literature and the case studies, this paper has established a SWOT analysis of fundraising events (see **Figure 1**). A SWOT analysis is a useful tool to grasp the internal capacities of an event, as well as the external threats and opportunities. It is a powerful tool to determine the chances of success of a fundraising event. The analysis has revealed several strengths that fundraisers may present. In general, they consist of fun or appealing activities with a high capacity of attracting crowds. This enables the organisation to ensure stable retention rates and diminish the threat of low attendance. For example, a Marathon is likely to always attract people that already have an interest in the sport.  Furthermore, the case studies have shown that a strong advertising strategy with social media presence can increase the attendance and support of the crowds. Alpe D’HuZes has developed an interesting storytelling to motivate donations by inviting participants to explain their affiliation to the cause. It is an interesting way to stimulate emotional reaction from the public by including people that have been impacted by cancer. Moreover, those fundraising events have a high capacity in mobilizing people to gather and advocate for a cause. Nacht van de Vluchteling has been successful in using a public figure to reach for broader support. Nonetheless, the climate campaign has proven that one should be attentive to the communication design and the signals of an event. In fact, an event comports strong explicit and implicit messages that an organisation should be considerate of how they reflect to the public.  Therefore, this should be accounted for in the event design. Moreover, the cases observed revealed in some cases that the organizers managed to leverage the event to raise a substantial amount of funds. The successful events seem to have something in common: a creative and efficient structure. In fact, those events are usually based on the participation of volunteers, which brings the operating costs closer to zero. However, Salamon (1987) described philanthropic amateurism as one of the voluntary failures arising when NGOs rely on staffs that do not have the appropriate training. Therefore, when relying on volunteers, the organisation should take additional steps to enable the volunteers to perform effectively for the event’s organisation. Additionally, profitable events often bank on creative means to cover the event organisation expenses. Both Alpes d’HuZes and Roparun require their participants to pay a registration fee in order to take part in the event. Natuurmonumenten implemented a similar fee by selling the trees to be planted to the participant. In some ways, the participant is paying to be able to volunteer. The idea of making someone pay to work seems intuitively paradoxical but if appropriately implemented could generate interesting benefits.

Nonetheless, fundraising events are also presenting some weaknesses. One of the main weakness underlined in the literature were the extravagant costs and profit inefficiency of those events. However, our case studies showed that fundraising event could still be leveraged to raise a substantial amount of donation. Plus, the aim of this policy paper is also to underline the benefits of those events besides the donation revenue. A perhaps more compelling weakness are the communication failures of fundraisers when the message resulting from the event conflicts with the overarching mission. The example of a fancy charity dinner for poverty is a good example of a right initiative sending contradictory signals. The case is also observed in the Climate Protests. One could argue that the externalities of an event are also part of what the organisation is communicating to the public, as it may impact the way the stakeholders perceive the event. Eventually, very few organisations seek extensive feedbacks or implement follow-ups on their event to engage the attendees on a longer term.

Additionally, fundraising events are highly dependent on the opinion of the stakeholders for their success. In general, the loss of legitimacy is a constant threat for NGOs as they rely on the private sector and the civil society for their funding. A damage of reputation and loss in legitimacy are of primary concern for the fundraising events. As a result, dedicated events must be very careful in their planning to not harm the public’s opinion. Popularity is an important matter for organizers as it may influence the survival of the event (Gupta, Gao, Zhai, & Han, 2012). Therefore, attaining satisfactory attendance and retention rates are also of prime concern of such events. Furthermore, events are also depending on several partners whom may in a way or in another influence the outcome of the event. Eventually, fundraising events also have some other threats such as weather conditions, the political environment, and the Legal environment that are beyond the scope of this report.

Concerning the opportunity to improve fundraising events, these are numerous. This paper identifies the engagement of stakeholders as a critical point in the implementation of more effective fundraisers. For example, corporate volunteering could enable the leverage of the capacities from the private sector. The private sector may also participate through partnerships and sponsorships. Furthermore, it may be interesting to include the beneficiaries to the event itself. For instance, if the refugees currently residing in the Netherlands were also motivated to join the night walks, it would be an opportunity for them to meet and create bonds with the local residents. This paper also identifies the concentration of participants as an opportunity to stimulate engagement. Instead of being just observers, attendees could be invited to take arts in various activities surrounding the fundraising event. The voluntary energy available could then be leveraged to make the fundraiser already impactful. Eventually, the analysis also highlights the importance of the use of traditional and social medias to reach out the public given their network effects. Eventually, the use of public figures may also help to gain an existing fan base to endorse a cause, given the influential power of such figures.

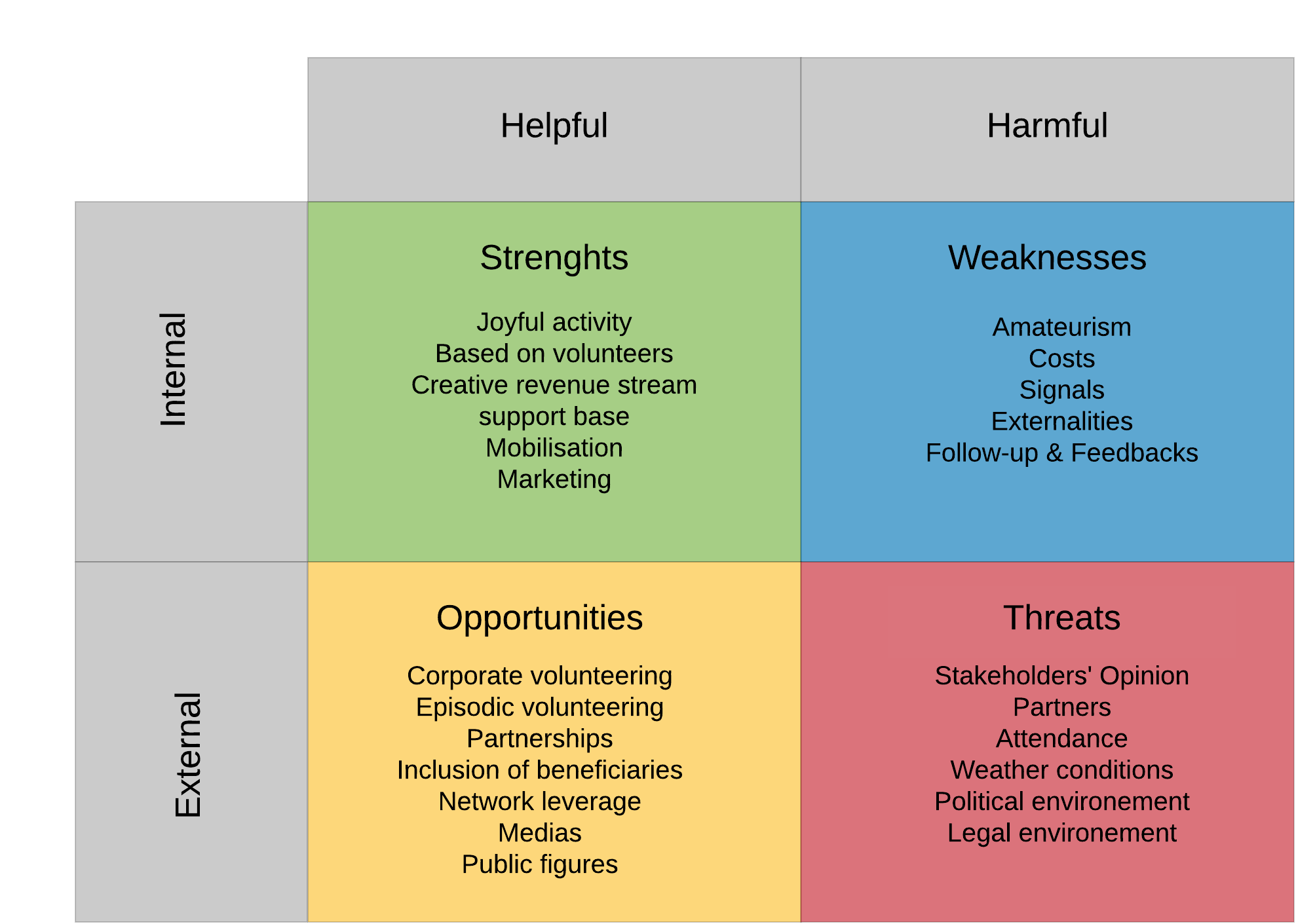


Figure 1: Fundraising events SWOT-analysis

# **Guidelines**

In this section, the guidelines based on the case study and literature analysis are presented. The guidelines consist of five propositions: understand the event by taking a holistic approach, make use of a creative cost structure, effectively communicate, pro-actively involve stakeholders, and continuously improve and encourage creativity.

## Understand the event by taking a holistic approach

Taking a holistic approach means looking beyond the event itself. It involves changing from seeing the event in isolation of other systems towards acknowledging the other systems in which the event is embedded.

### Answer the five W’s and how

Organizing a successful fundraising event starts with developing a cohesive, detailed and deliberate strategy, which serves as a solid foundation throughout the process of planning, execution and evaluation of the event. But it is crucial to, first, fully grasp the nature of an event before implementing a strategy. Wolf, Wolf, & Levine, D. (2005) proposed the use of the traditional journalism framework of the five Ws and how to better understand an event. This paper broadens their concept to include a broader perspective:

* *Who are your stakeholders?*

Wolf et al. (2005) stated that the first step to event management should to understand who your guests are. Indeed, knowing your audience will help to determine what kind of entertainment will be appropriate. Event planning require to know the expected number of attendees and their expectations. This report argues that it is also crucial to understand who the other stakeholders are, especially in the context of fundraising. For instance, for a fundraiser it is important to understand who the beneficiaries will be, who are the partners and sponsors, or what are the expectations of the public sector. Good stakeholder management would enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of a fundraising event.

* *What is your event?*

This step requires the organizer to reflect upon the activity of the event. The event will require different considerations depending on its central activity. In fact, the activity will define the components of your event such as the decorations, sponsors, location, … Understanding the nature of the event would help to verify if the agency of all the constituents are making sense. Is it acceptable that a fast food chain is present in a sports event? Or is it normal that in community and social events only one social class is represented?

Furthermore, this report claims that organizers should also check if the event fits with the culture of the NGO. Managers should acknowledge that a fundraising event is part of the organisational activity’s portfolio and, therefore, should ensure that the event is adequate when considering the values and mission the NGO is built on.

* *When is you event?*

The timing of the year will obviously determine the type of activities and entertainments that will be offered at the event. The schedule of the event must take into reflection the moment of its happening. The agenda will determine whether stakeholders will be available to be present on the day. Furthermore, the year is composed of specific days and events that may also be worth to take into consideration. For example, an event coinciding with the international women’s day or with the pride week, could try to include relevant initiatives at the event.

* *Where is the event happening?*

The place is as important as the timing of the event. Every location has its own properties and is embedded in a specific socio-ecological context. The place will shape the occurrences and the activities. Therefore, organizers must ensure that the event is in line with the local values and is not harmful for its environment. Furthermore, the location will also determine whether the attendees must travel long distances. For example, Alpes d’HuZes involve that a lot of Dutch people must travel to the Alps. The place will also impact the accessibility of the event. It may be challenging for individuals with reduced mobility to participate in an event in the nature or long travels may deter poor people that cannot afford to pay for the travel expenses. As a result, the organisation must consider all the corollaries accompanying a chosen location.

* *Why is this event happening?*

Before designing an event, the organisation should understand why this event is happening in the first place. It is important to keep in mind the underlying mission of a fundraising event. It may seem an obvious but necessary step. By constantly reflecting upon what the event is trying to achieve, it would ensure that the organizers are not deviating from the goals and pursuing another agenda.

* *How much efforts are required for the organisation of the event?*

Eventually, the planning phase should also include the amount of resources the event will require for its implementation. Organisers should estimate the costs and feasibility of the event. But besides money, the planning must also include the number of workers the event will need and how much of those workers will be paid.

### Use system’s thinking as a mapping tool

Kim (1999, p.2) defined a system as “any group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent parts that form a complex and unified whole that has a specific purpose.” In this sense an organisation or a fundraising event may be considered as a system. The use of system thinking could be used in event management in order to represent the position of the event in the larger socio-ecological system, which would enable the assessment and reengineering of the organisational processes (Williams, Whiteman, & Kennedy, 2019). In fact, when considering the event as a system, it enables to map out the different components, processes, the dependencies, and the interrelation composing an event (Kim, 1999). A system would indicate the flows of resources and information within an organisation. This could be a useful tool to map the externalities and identify the inefficiencies of an event. For instance, as system thinking enables the mapping of material flows, it can also enable the implementation of circular initiatives.

*DGTL Festival*

DGTL Amsterdam is a festival that is organised every year during the Easter weekend. In terms of sustainability, the festival presents the challenging goal of becoming the first circular festival. To achieve this, the festival thoroughly analyses the system of the event. A Material Flow Analysis is conducted in order to assess the inflows and outflows of material, providing a snapshot of the event’s metabolism. This enables the organisation to appropriately evaluate the environmental impact of the festival.

### Benchmark the event to the SDGs

It all starts by acknowledging the need for sustainable development and collective action to solve complex problems. The SDGs have been elaborated in order to guarantee the prosperity of human society in symbiose with its socio-environmental ecosystem. Sustainable development can only happen if organisations accept to undergo transformational changes. In this regard, the SDG framework can be a useful tool for managers in order to situate the organisation’s activities compared to the indicators presented in the SDG agenda.

## Creative business models

The design of the event must present an efficient cost structure, while maximizing the overall impact, not just monetary value.

### Maximize the available money for the cause

There are multiple ways of maximizing the profit of an event. The following tactics are worth taking into consideration.

* *Use a participation fee to cover expenses*

Applying this method makes it possible to divert all the other income streams directly to the cause. The case studies have presented different ways to implement a participation fee to cover the overheads.

* *Use volunteers to limit salaries*

From small to more important tasks, many activities can be performed by volunteers. Not only it reduces the cost of the event significantly, it also gives the chance to people to get properly involved in solving an issue. Nonetheless, relying on volunteers require appropriate training, as they are not necessarily professionals used to this kind of work.

* *Use your network*

An NGO should rely on the capacity of its network to get good price reductions, entertainment, free items for the auctions or lottery, or interesting guest speakers offers opportunities to keep the organisational costs low.

* *Keep the learning curve in mind*

Do not assume your event is not going to be successful too quickly. When organizing an event for the first time, not achieving the goal you hoped for is not a reason to stop doing it. It is when you start doing the same thing multiple times, that you start learning from your mistakes and experience a learning curve that will make your event more efficient and effective.

**Expert Opinion: Marc Wortmann, former Executive Director of Alzheimer Disease International** (personal communication, February 25, 2020).

*“When organizing a fundraising event, try to estimate what the ultimate revenue will be in comparison with the incurred costs. If you are looking at a 50 per cent of the total revenue as costs, you should reconsider if having an event would be the best way of raising money for your cause. As a rule of thumb, 25 per cent is used a limit when assessing if the event would be worth the effort.”*

*Stichting Alzheimer Nederland*

The first two years the Alzheimer foundation started with door-to-door collection of money; they did not reach their goals. The years after that, they easily managed to get the 25 per cent costs from total revenue criterion and this way of fundraising turned out to be one of the most successful ways of raising money for the cause. The years after that, they easily managed to get the 25 per cent costs from total revenue criterion and this way of fundraising turned out to be one of the most successful ways of raising money for the cause (M. Wortmann, personal communication, February 25, 2020).

### Assess success of the event on impact

As raising money remains the main goal for most fundraisers, it does not mean that it should be the only success requirement. For instance, awareness, direct impact, and other positive externalities of the event may have occurred as well. A fundraiser may or may not achieve its donation objective, but are the other relevant criteria adding up as well? An organisation should account for the full range of costs and benefits to assess the true outcome of a fundraising event.

Furthermore, an organisation should be prepared for the case of under or overperformance. As fundraisers rely on the mobilisation of people, attendance is hard to estimate. Therefore, it is not guaranteed that the event will reach its expectations; but it can also happen that it is more successful than expected.

*ALS Ice Bucket Challenge*

The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, organized in 2014 in order to raise awareness and donations for ALS disease, was a huge internet hype and therefore raised more money than expected by anyone. The total raised amount of 115 million dollars was more than four times as much as their previous annual income (Wolfmann, 2015). The organisation was not prepared for this infrastructure wise, which resulted in a shortage of involved researchers and difficulties with spending the money well (M. Wortmann, personal communication, February 25, 2020).

## Effective communication

Effective communication is key for the short and long-term success of any fundraiser. A fitting communication strategy, based on your mission, can be of great influence in adding extra value to an event to distinguishing itself from others.

### Use your message to generate positive and inspiring energy

The message you want to spread to your stakeholders is extremely important. In order to increase the impact to participants, suppliers and donors, it is important to convey an inspirational message in a creative way. Motivational communication can touch people emotionally, which means the message and awareness will live on after the event.

### Use social media in an intelligent way

In the modern age we live now, social media is a vital factor for fundraising success to create awareness. In fact, they enable the spread of messages to a large audience at a very low cost. The amount of issues going viral is tremendous and fundraisers must use these to create challenges or activities. Moreover, social media can be a mean to seek engagement and organise episodic volunteering; by using this short-term energy and convert this into long term engagement, organisations can ensure that their mission is pursued continuously and not only during the campaign.

*#Trashtag campaign*

In 2019 the hashtag ‘#trashtag’ went viral on social medias and was used to trigger people around the world to pick up waste in nearby areas (Nace, 2019). By making intelligent use of before and after pictures of these areas, a snowball effect on social media resulted in a higher awareness rate.

This example has proven the capacity of social networks in stimulating episodic volunteering and engagement.

* *Enable sharing through storytelling*

*Alpe d’Huzes*

The success of Aple d’Huzes is based on the storytelling platform that they have created on their website, where people can donate to participants and follow their stories why they are joining this challenge and event (Alpe d’Huzes, 2020). In this way, a massive event is brought back to individual goals, motivations and dreams to collectively defeat cancer.

Stories of participants on social media, websites and advertisements can add a personal impression to the organisation and the event. These stories again influence people's emotions, making them more tempted to donate or participate. In addition, participants who are sharing their stories feel special and heard, which can result in positive word-of-mouth communication of the event to their personal surroundings.

*Stichting Vluchteling*

Art Rooijakkers is a famous Dutch television host, who is affiliated with producing television programs in foreign countries such as ‘Helden van de Wildernis’ and ‘High Hopes in South Africa’. He is portraited as an open-minded family man, who fits well with the target group of Stichting Vluchteling, focusing on donations from families in the Netherlands (Stichting Vluchteling, 2019).

* *Make good use of brand ambassadors*

Ambassadors can help organisations to increase brand awareness and to get more recognition on the problem the foundation tries to solve. The celebrities who are volunteering for this should be carefully considered, as they must fit in with the organisation's mission, reputation and target group. If these factors are a good match with a celebrity, their collaboration can have a positive effect on the familiarity and reliability of the foundation.

* *Communicate a follow-up to participants*

To keep the attendees and volunteers engaged with the organisation, it is important to let them know what resulted from their invested time and money. Social media can play an important role in this process. Through interacting, not just providing one message for all, fundraisers are able to build, maintain and improve relationships with their donors. Other ways of providing follow-up could be sharing a (monthly) newsletter or sharing big accomplishments (e.g. the opening of a new care home as a result from donations).

## Pro-actively involve stakeholders

Involving stakeholders is key for fundraisers who want to become more effective. To do so, fundraisers have to pro-actively seek for opportunities to make more effectively use of volunteers, to involve the beneficiaries, to create (cross-sector) partnerships, use corporate volunteering by converting short term attention to long-term engagement.

### Creatively seek activities to involve volunteering energy

Volunteering energy during big events is not always optimally used. Visitors and participants of these big events are willing to help during or after the event, however, they usually do not participate in any other volunteering activity because the activities are just not there. It is a waste of potential, which can be solved by organizing activities where visitors can easily engage while creating impact.

* *Organize a remarkable activity*

Fundraisers must become creative with their ideas in order to attract people’s awareness on these events. An outstanding activity can inspire people and involve attendees of events to think about possible solutions, even when the activity itself has already ended.

* *Use energy to create short, visible and direct impact*

As the visitors of the event cannot be distracted for too long that they will miss the event itself, it is important that people can still contribute by doing something within a short time span. Therefore, the activity must be relatively easy to do. Attendees should have a direct and visible impact to ensure that the energy is effectively used. Creating visible activities increases the participant’s reputation and therefore making it more likely that people will engage (Bekker & Wiepking, 2010).

*Marathons*

Big events like a marathon attracts many visitors who probably have engaged in sponsoring activities already and are therefore in a good “volunteering” mood. However, this mood or energy is not used. Instead, visitors are just waiting for the runners to pass by. What if instead of waiting, they could engage in a short activity that directly serves a good cause? The idea is that visitors ride on bikes which are generating energy. This is ideal, especially when visitors are waiting for their friends to pass, since they can still see the road where the runners pass. Even to make the activity more engaging, a challenge and competition can be organized to reach a certain ‘energy goal’. To participate, a team must put in a fee to donate the money to the development of renewable energy. This designs a win-win for everybody, as visitors are not bored anymore by participating in an interactive game, while they are also generating clean energy and donations.

### Involve beneficiaries

*Stichting Wiesje*

Stichting Wiesje wants to develop a new standard approach and care for people with dementia by supporting and educating professionals and families on this topic. At fundraising event days of Stichting Wiesje, there are sponsored chairs for people with dementia who can attend the event for free in order to get them included (M. Wortmann, personal communication, February 25, 2020).

Once people are participating in fundraising events or even volunteering activities, involving beneficiaries in the activity or event can lead to more engagement as the goal and mission of the fundraising is more connected to why it is organized. People can relate better to the cause if they are in direct contact with the beneficiaries and then become more active in volunteering activities. The donors who did not completely realise how the beneficiaries feel can become more engaged with the cause and start to gain interest in volunteering options.

**Real-life case improvement Nacht van de Vluchteling: Involve Beneficiaries**

The fundraising event Nacht van de vluchteling could be improved by including former refugees who are living in the Netherlands right now. A buddy system could be introduced where every participant walks together with a former refugee. This encourages friendships to be made between the participants and refugees, which can serve as a starting point for other weekly activities between participants and refugees like dinners, language classes and sports activities.

### Corporate volunteering collaborations

Fundraisers can try to involve corporates to volunteer, in order to increase the number of participants and reduce the costs of the event. Moreover, corporate volunteers can be used to transfer new knowledge and expertise to the existing non-profit volunteers (Samuel, Wolf, & Schilling, 2013). On the other hand, businesses can benefit from it as well by receiving positive public attention and using the activity as teambuilding for their employees. Eventually, values and experiences can be shared between different groups of volunteers to influence, inspire and encourage individuals to take action on the mission of the event.

*Deloitte*

Deloitte employees, alumni, partners, and friends all can take part in the volunteering activities related to the company. The volunteers can choose whether to sign up to help cleaning in child oncology clinics, spend time with lonely old people or spend time with patients at a hospice (volunteering with Deloitte, 2020).

### Establish cross-sector partnerships

For fundraising events there lies a big opportunity in entering strategic and cross-sector partnerships with other organisations, businesses and NGOs to coordinate the activity and event. Collaborations can be established between multiple partners in order to share specialized knowledge and create synergies where both parties can benefit from in the end. This will broaden the possibilities of activities on fundraising activities, allowing events to be more creative, innovative and sustainable (Jones, 2017).

**Real-life case improvement Alpe d’HuZes & Roparun: Establish cross-sectional Partnerships**

Alpe d’HuZes and Roparun should take a more holistic approach to map their negative impacts on the environment. For instance, both events have their starting points in France, where participants and visitors must travel to by themselves. By entering a partnership with companies such as Flixbus and Thalys, a ‘greener’ way of transportation can be actively offered to attendees, as people are unincentivized to take the plane.

### Encourage long-term engagement

Fundraisers are facing the problem that attention in media fades quickly on certain topics and problems in the world. Related to this is called ‘slacktivism’, where an increasing number of people only donate money while not participating in actual volunteering activities. Donors tend to lack engagement, causing an uncertain future income stream for fundraisers. To tackle this problem, fundraisers should try to convert short-term attention into organizing engaging long-term projects that solve the issue at the same time. Hereby it is important for fundraisers to seek for opportunities that make donors become volunteers.

*New Dutch Connections*

New Dutch Connections is a refugee foundation which is based in the Netherlands. They are focused on organizing volunteering projects in collaboration with businesses, in order to create long-term volunteer engagement between employees and refugees. In these projects, refugees are learning about the company, culture and working life in the Netherlands. They are supported by a coach and buddy provided by the company and New Dutch Connections (New Dutch Connections, 2019).

## Continuously improve positive impact by encouraging creativity and innovation

Our last proposition is to continuously keep improving and seek for opportunities to increase positive impact. By stimulating creativity, fundraising events adapt to new opportunities, which is necessary to make steps forward concerning the SDGs.

### 6.5.1 Continuously monitor impact and internal process

Before, during and after the event it is important to have the SDGs and other goals of the event in mind. We think it is important to continuously assess the media attention the event is getting, how the donated money is being spend and what results from that. Is the way we are organizing the event now the best way, or do we have room for improvement? Evaluation and continuous feedback throughout the process will make it possible to identify improvement regarding the SDGs and the mission of the organisation. Questions to ask yourself are:

* Is the event in line with the mission of the organisation?
* Are the goals of the event reached?
* From what mistakes (external, previous years) can we learn?
* Are there more SDGs that could be involved in the event?

It is important to carry out a structured feedback and evaluation plan to make sure all aspects of the event and all perspectives are taken into consideration. NGOs should involve volunteers, the board, attendees and other involved stakeholders and ask their perspective on the current way of operating. Evaluation can be done by comparing to previous years or setting targets.

### 6.5.2 Encourage creativity to find new solutions

When thinking of ways of improvement, try to think out of the box and be creative. Just because something is done the same for years in a row, does not mean this is the best way of doing so. Just as sports related fundraising events gained popularity over the past couple of years, something else could be the next big thing. Brainstorms could be organized to come up with new ideas. Even taking a moment to see what is happening around you could inspire you to come up with innovative ways of fundraising.

*DGTL festival*

Even though DGTL is not a fundraising event, it shows a good example of continuous improvement and taking into account the SDGs. By mapping the festival’s metabolism, insights were provided on where to focus its sustainability efforts. Based on the previous year, fundamental changes to the set-up and operation of the festival were implemented and these had significant impact on the current performance (Galle, 2018). Every year, things that went well (e.g. produced enough struvite to grow 157,000 branches of mint) and impact hotspots (e.g. high CO2 emissions due to aluminium smelting) are listed in order to identify focus points for coming years (Galle, 2018).

# **6. Applied illustrative example**

To give a more comprehensive overview of the proposed approach, an illustrative example will be given that apply the guidelines to a green fundraising event. As health and social fundraising events already receive the most donations and attention, a green fundraising event is chosen. However, this does not mean that it can be seen in isolation from other events since it is set up as an activity that uses the volunteering energy available during big social or health fundraising events. As already mentioned before, the biggest opportunities for events to improve is to connect them to the SDGs, adapt an effective business model and use the volunteering energy available on these big events. The SDGs were used as a starting point to get inspiration. This inspiration was then turned into a creative activity to make use of the volunteering energy available during big events.

## *6.1 Understand the event by taking a holistic approach: Inspiration from SDGs*

As big fundraising events, like marathons or the climate marches, have the greatest opportunities to use the available volunteering energy, these events were chosen as a starting point. The SDGs that apply to the setting of these populated events were then taken into account. SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) in particular, since they usually take place in cities. The underlying problem of SDG 11 is that the world is becoming more and more densely urbanized. Cities worldwide are responsible for more than 70 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions (FAO, 2018). Currently more than half of humanity live in cities and it is expected to rise to more than two-third by 2050 (UN, 2020). Due to this rise, cities keep expanding into fertile land and therefore increasingly occupying natural resources without replacing them (FAO, 2018).

**“Inspiration from SDGs: Get ecosystems back in the cities by creative solutions”**

We are currently taking more than we give back. It is time for cities to return natural resources, not just by replanting forests outside the city but rather get ecosystems back in the cities. Given that there is not much space available, as it is used for roads and buildings, cities must take the opportunity to creatively exploit the available space. A green roof is an example of this, which is growing plants on rooftops, therefore regenerating the “footprint” that was lost when the building was constructed (Getter & Rowe, 2006). To turn the planting green roofs into a volunteering activity is a hard task, since people need skills and training to safely operate on rooftops. So how could you make a volunteering activity that re-greens the city? Not by growing plants on rooftops but by growing plants vertically on walls, known as vertical gardens. A vertical garden, also called a green wall, is basically a wall that is planted with vegetation. The plants can be put in planters which are connected to a frame. An example can be seen in the figure below.

## *6.2 Creative Business Model: From idea to plan*

In this phase, the idea has to converted into a suitable plan. Here, a business model approach is used to create the structure. To start with the project, available walls must be identified, and permission has to be given to grow a vertical garden on these walls. The structure of the vertical garden and the plants must be bought beforehand, ideally with support of the government and private donors. The plants will be carefully chosen, and the structure include an irrigation system to ensure survival of the plants, for which the cost should also be accounted for.

Once a suitable wall (could also be more depending on the resources) is chosen and the vertical garden structure is constructed on the wall, people can fill the wall with plants during the event. The activity is set up as follows: the participants have to pay €5 for the plant and place on the wall and can then donate an extra amount of money. In return you can plant one of the plants on the wall. Donors can also write their names on the wall and in front of it so that people can see who has donated, which provides the donor with some individual satisfaction. The following business model is constructed:

Table 1: Business Model of the Green Wall Challenge

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Value Proposition | Value creation | Cost structure |
| - Provide vertical garden **structure and plants**   - Provide an **opportunity** for people to donate and do something with their own hands  - Provide the option to write **names** of donors on the wall and in front of it  - Provide the option to take a **picture** that can be shared **online**  - “Fixing the wall Challenge” | **- Social reputation**  People can see that you have planted a plant on the wall (your name is on the wall, people that are around will see the donor, and it will be shared on online media), this increases the donor’s reputation. Which is one of the reasons why people donate. (Bekker & Wiepking, 2010)  **- ‘Feel good’ feeling**  People like to donate as it increases their self-reputation (Bekker & Wiepking, 2010).  **- Feeling that donor directly had an impact**  By letting the donor plant the plants, the donor did something tangible which has a direct impact on the cause: regreening the city  **- Green wall** The green wall that is created has beneficial effects on climate, people’s health and aesthetics for the city. | *Revenue:*  Planting fee +  Donations   *Costs:*  - Vertical garden structure  - Plants  - Time of volunteers |

Just planting walls on events is not going to be enough to have a significant impact on the SDGs. Therefore, the planting of these walls is only the start of more impactful positive change. This is where effective communication and involving stakeholders play an important role in.

## 6.3 Communicate effectively: using social media as a force of positive change

To have a meaningful impact on the SDGs, the communication strategy must be effective to create as much awareness and thereby letting people from all parts of society participate. By learning from best practices of successful communication strategies from the Nacht van de Vluchteling and the trashtag, the greening of walls will be communicated as a challenge and ill involve brand ambassadors as agents of change.

**“THE GREEN WALL CHALLENGE” (THASHTAG 2.0)**

After, hopefully, some successful events where several green walls were created, the success must be spread now. Using the success of the Trashtag, greening walls can also be converted into a challenge. The before and after principle can also be applied to greening walls: showing a picture before and after the wall has been planted. A social media post for example could be:



*(Picture retrieved from:* [*https://land8.com/5-amazing-facts-about-green-walls-that-you-didnt-know/*](https://land8.com/5-amazing-facts-about-green-walls-that-you-didnt-know/)*)*

By then involving celebrities to participate and promote the challenge, it has the potential to go “viral” and reach a tremendous number of people. Not only does it raise attention, but it encourages people to do something and directly have an impact. As green walls develop over time, the short-term attention can be retained and follow up events can be easily implemented. It needs a long-term approach as green walls do not have an end state and will always need to be taken care of. To assure this care, partnerships with other NGO’s, businesses and government must be made.

## 6.4 Pro-actively involve stakeholders: involving NGO’s and businesses

Given that the idea of greening walls gained an increasing media attention by its successful communication strategy, other organisations are more inclined to participate as well. This “energy” should be used, and innovative ideas will have to generated to effectively involve other organisations. As already mentioned, current climate marches gain negative reactions. What if instead of using their current marches that cause mainly negative reaction, they create green walls and use it as activism that inspires people to do good. By successfully planting green walls combined with positive activism, they could gain positive attention and respect from other stakeholders.

Besides involving climate marching, the event should include businesses as most walls are owned by businesses. This could be done by using a green wall as a marketing tool or positive CSR attention. Especially businesses that are willing to become more sustainable, greening walls could be a great means to create more impact and inspire their customers. A competition could even be started where people vote the most beautiful green wall, encouraging more participation and even more creativity. Not only can it be used to create reputation, it could also be used as corporate volunteering, where employers get the chance to help in creating the green walls.

## 6.5 Continuously improve positive impact by encouraging creativity: Tiny Forests

Green walls currently are not well developed and therefore many errors will be made at first. It is important to learn from these mistakes and share them with others to continually improve the sector. As building green walls is only one part of how to create more sustainable cities, the event could be expanded to collectively planting forests and parks. Another initiative that could also be included is the making of “Tiny Forests”, which are small forests designed to become bio-diversity hotspot by using only native plant species and using a dense structure (planting as much plants and trees as possible within a certain space) (Sharma, 2014). Instead of walls, companies or other organisations can for example dedicate a small part of their ground to such Tiny Forests and create an even greener working space. Involving new initiatives

In the end, creating progress towards the SDGs should be the goal of every fundraising event. Given the complexity and interdisciplinary aspects of the SDGs, fundraising events should always try to creatively find new ways to create more positive impact and continuously improve their processes and partnerships.

# **7. Conclusion**

The guidelines presented in this report aim to contribute in the elaboration of impactful fundraising events. This paper has identified several flaws in the planning of fundraisers. The first concerned their inefficiency in raising money. In comparison with other ways to raise funds, the direct return on these events are low. Nonetheless, this policy paper recommends to also consider, beyond the monetary revenue, the other forms of benefits and impacts resulting from the event. The planning of events should broaden its accountability to also include all forms of externalities. Fundraisers may be a good way to raise awareness or to have a direct impact on the initial mission. Second, the reports highlighted the fact that fundraising events do not optimize the full potential energy of volunteers. Although, many of them rely on volunteers for the organisation of the event, they usually fail to see the opportunity in involving other relevant stakeholders. Eventually, this paper is also a call for NGOs to integrate the SDGs as indicators in the planning phase of fundraising event. Managers must understand the interconnection between the grand challenges and see the need to solve the SDGs. In this regard, fundraisers could also use this guideline to broaden the scope of the event and include other gestures and activities to solve other SDGs. The world needs collective action and the voluntary can make a first step in aligning their operations.

# References

BBC. (2020). Greta Thunberg Bristol strike: Row over College Green damage. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-51696203?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cwmrxq94v1jt/greta-thunberg&link_location=live-reporting-story>

Baker, D. A., & Crompton, J. L. (2000). Quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions. *Annals of tourism research*, *27*(3), 785-804.

Bekkers, R., & Wiepking, P. (2011). A literature review of empirical studies of philanthropy: Eight mechanisms that drive charitable giving. *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, *40*(5), 924-973.

Bunds, K. S., Brandon-Lai, S., & Armstrong, C. (2016). An inductive investigation of participants’ attachment to charity sports events: the case of team water charity. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, *16*(3), 364-383.

Braungart, M. (2019). Cradle to Cradle: Beyond Sustainability and Circular Economy, week 3, session 1 [Powerpoint slides]. Retrieved from https://canvas.eur.nl/courses/29650

Brudney, J. L., & Meijs, L. C. (2009). It ain't natural: Toward a new (natural) resource conceptualization for volunteer management. *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, *38*(4), 564-581.

CBC. (2010). Charities paid $762M to private fundraisers. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/charities-paid-762m-to-private-fundraisers-1.916829>

DeCillia, B. (2019). In defence of climate change 'hypocrisy'. *CBC*. Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/climate-change-hypocrisy-brooks-decillia-1.5349113

‘DGTL Sustainability’ (2020). Retrieved from: <https://dgtl.nl/sustainability>

‘Eten en drinken Alpe d’HuZes’ (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.opgevenisgeenoptie.nl/blog/eten-en-drinken-app>

FAO (2018). Forests and sustainable cities. Retreived from <http://www.fao.org/3/I8838EN/i8838en.pdf>

Freeman, H. (2014). How Brazil’s World Cup has sold its people short in the Amazon. *The Guardian*.

‘15.000 mensen plantten een boom in Utrecht’. (2015). Retrieved 11 March 2020, from https://www.natuurmonumenten.nl/pers/15000-mensen-plantten-een-boom-in-utrecht

Francescato, D. (2019). “With Greta with Greta let’s save the planet”: A multi-faced rebellion to get action on climate change. *La camera blu. Rivista di studi di genere*, (20).

Galle, M. (2018). Staging a revolution: Why DGTL continues to dominate festival sustainability. Retrieved from <https://www.metabolic.nl/news/staging-a-revolution-why-dgtl-continues-to-dominate-festival-sustainability/>

Geschiedenis van de Roparun. (n.d). Retrieved 12 March 2020, from <https://www.roparun.nl/nl/over-roparun/geschiedenis-roparun/>

Getter, K. L., & Rowe, D. B. (2006). The role of extensive green roofs in sustainable development. HortScience, 41(5), 1276-1285.

Gibelman, M., & Gelman, S. R. (2001). Very public scandals: Nongovernmental organisations in trouble. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations*, *12*(1), 49-66.

‘Green Deal’ (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.amsterdam-dance-event.nl/en/news/launch-of-initiative-circular-festivals-at-ade-green/60645/>

Gupta, M., Gao, J., Zhai, C., & Han, J. (2012). Predicting future popularity trend of events in microblogging platforms. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 49(1), 1-10.

Hackney, P., & Mittendorf, B. (2017). Let them eat caviar: When charity galas waste money. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/let-them-eat-caviar-when-charity-galas-waste-money-82961>

Hall, C. M. (2012). Sustainable mega-events: Beyond the myth of balanced approaches to mega-event sustainability. *Event Management*, *16*(2), 119-131.

Higgins, J. W., & Hodgins, A. (2008). The grape escape–a FUNdraising bike tour for the multiple sclerosis society. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, *19*(2), 49-67.

Ivancic, S. R. (2017). Gluttony for a cause or feeding the food insecure? Contradictions in combating food insecurity through private philanthropy. *Health communication*, *32*(11), 1441-1444.

Jones, M. (2017) Sustainable Event Management: A Practical Guide. London, [Taylor & Francis Ltd](https://www.bookdepository.com/publishers/Taylor-Francis-Ltd), 3rd

Kim, D. H. (1999). Introduction to systems thinking (Vol. 16). Waltham, MA: Pegasus Communications.

La Frenais, R. (2019). Extinction Rebellion. Art Monthly, (427), 44-44.

Matter, W. E. (2008). Learning From Commercials–Communicating Sustainability Issues to New Audiences. *Refereed Sessions III-IV Tuesday 11 March*, 353.

Meinders, K. (2019). Climate Action Now!.

Moyer, J., & Lang, M. (2019). ‘Shut Down DC’ climate protesters return to D.C. streets Friday morning. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/shut-down-dc-climate-protesters-plan-return-to-dc-streets-friday-morning/2019/09/26/813b5954-e09c-11e9-b199-f638bf2c340f_story.html>

Nace, T. (2019) #TrashTag Challenge Goes Viral As People Share Before/After Photos Of Their Cleanup. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/trevornace/2019/03/12/trashtag-challenge-goes-viral-as-people-share-beforeafter-photos-of-their-cleanup/#54a1474695e8>

Natuurmonumenten. (2018). *Op naar een groene toekomst*. Retrieved from https://res.cloudinary.com/natuurmonumenten/raw/upload/v1558342716/2019-05/NM190106%20JV%202018\_V8.pdf

New Dutch Connections (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.newdutchconnections.nl/>

Peerworks Consulting. (2019). *Top 20 Peer-To-Peer Fundraising Events 2019*.

Pieters, J. (2019a). Serious Request raises €1.4 million for human trafficking victims. *NL Times*. Retrieved from <https://nltimes.nl/2019/12/25/serious-request-raises-eu14-million-human-trafficking-victims>

Pieters, J. (2019b). 3FM Serious Request focused on human trafficking this year. *NL Times*. Retrieved from <https://nltimes.nl/2019/12/19/3fm-serious-request-focused-human-trafficking-year>

Roparun (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.roparun.nl/>

Rockström, J. (2010). Let the environment guide our development. Video available at <https://www.ted.com/talks/johan_rockstrom_let_the_environment_guide_our_development>

Roparun. (2019). *Roparun Reglement 2019*. Roparun. Retrieved from <https://www.roparun.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Reglement-Roparun-2019-1.pdf>

Rundio, A., Heere, B., & Newland, B. (2014). Cause-related versus non-cause-related sport events: Differentiating endurance events through a comparison of athletes’ motives. *Sport marketing quarterly*, *23*(1), 17-26.

Samuel, O., Wolf, P., & Schilling, A. (2013). Corporate volunteering: Benefits and challenges for nonprofits. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, *24*(2), 163-179.

Salamon, L. M. (1987). Of market failure, voluntary failure, and third-party government: Toward a theory of government-nonprofit relations in the modern welfare state. *Journal of voluntary action research*, *16*(1-2), 29-49.

Sharma, S. 2014. How to grow a tiny forest anywhere (TED). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BgPFIKCaOQ&feature=emb_title>

Stichting vluchteling ‘Noodhulp voor vluchtelingen meer dan ooit nodig (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.vluchteling.nl/nieuws/2019/5/art-rooijakkers%3A-%27noodhulp-voor-vluchtelingen-meer-dan-ooit-nodig%27>

Taylor, R., & Shanka, T. (2008). Cause for event: not-for-profit marketing through participant sports events. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *24*(9-10), 945-958.

UN (2020). Sustainable Development Goal 11. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg11>

‘Volunteering with Deloitte’ (2020). Retrieved from <https://www2.deloitte.com/ru/en/pages/corporate-responsibility/solution/volunteering-withdeloitte.html>

‘Wat is Alpe d’HuZes’ (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.opgevenisgeenoptie.nl/wat-is-alpedhuzes?gclid=Cj0KCQjw9ZzzBRCKARIsANwXaeJTRDIKKfjuShVUT_dSO4os23rdu-cWYlmZ7lfujyiV9wX7TktUyiEaAgrgEALw_wcB>

Webber, D. (2004). Understanding charity fundraising events. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, *9*(2), 122-134.

Williams, A. N., Whiteman, G. M., & Kennedy, S. P. (2019). Cross-Scale Systemic Resilience: Implications for Organisation Studies. *Business & Society: a journal of interdisciplinary exploration*.

Wolfmann, E. (2015). Remember the Ice Bucket Challenge? Here's What Happened to the Money. Retrieved from<https://money.com/ice-bucket-challenge-money-donations/>

Wolf, P., Wolf, J., & Levine, D. (2005). Event planning made easy. *New York: McGraw-Hill. Liite*, *1*(1), 3.

# Appendix

## Interview Marc Wortmann, 25 February 2020

1. **What fundraising events have you organized? What does a typical event look like?**

*Ik heb een gala voor Alzheimer georganiseerd. De kosten hiervoor waren 50 procent van de opbrengst. De totale opbrengst was 400.000. Ook heb ik geholpen met een fundraiser voor Stichting Wiesje.Door middel van tafelverkoop en veilingen en een loterij werd er geld opgehaald. De prijzen waren geschonken, door kunstenaars bijvoorbeeld of hotels geven overnachtingen weg. Suriname airways geeft altijd een ticket naar Paramaribo. Er worden particulieren of bedrijven gevraagd die paar duizend voor een tafel betalen. Deze mensen worden gevonden door middel van netwerken en iedereen zoekt en vraagt rond.*

1. **What are the biggest challenges you have experienced, organizing a fundraising event?**

*Je hebt een vrij grote bijdrage nodig, mocht het efficiënt zijn. Daardoor is de kring van mensen die je kan vragen, erg klein. Een stoel bij een evenement is al snel 200 euro een tafel 2000 euro. Dit is een barrière. Mocht je het goedkoper maken, moet je meer mensen trekken. Dat is ook weer lastig. Bij wiesje werkt het wel efficiënt, doordat het door vrijwilligers wordt gedaan. Twaalf mensen doen de voorbereiding, vijftien extra op de dag zelf. Door hen wordt de loterij, veiling, promotie, catering, tafelverkoop verzorgd. Als je iets jaarlijks doet, wordt het efficiënter omdat je weet hoe het moet en je makkelijker mensen krijgt als ze elk jaar terug komen. Bij een event voor sint-maarten,  hebben we het eerste jaar alleen quitte gedraaid. Omdat het nu elk jaar gebeurd, levert het wel wat op. Nog een challenge is de neiging om artiesten te vragen voor niks. Voor artiesten is dit lastig, is het ethisch verantwoord? Artiesten moeten ook leven. Subsidie voor evenementen vanuit gemeenten wordt nu vaak alleen verleend als je mensen goed betaalt. Voor vrijwilligers heeft een event ook veel waarde. Het creëert energie en betrokkenheid.*

1. **How is the profit/revenue statement structured of fundraising event?**

*Gerda Havertong voorzitster van stichting Wiesje kent veel artiesten en maakt daardoor weinig kosten voor haar fundraising event. Er wordt vaak 10.000-15.000 geïnvesteerd en 45.000 opbrengst. Veel evenementen halen dit niet.  Je zou eigenlijk naar de Tedtalk van Dan Palotta moeten kijken. Hij vertelt over hoe de goede doelen sector zichzelf tekortdoet door te zeuren over de kosten van fondsenwerving. De kosten mogen niet meer dan 25% zijn, dit is een vuistregel. Stel een event kost 100.000 en er wordt 400.000 opgehaald. Of 1 miljoen versus 2 miljoen opbrengst, dat is dan 50%. Wat is beter? Hij zegt dat het niet terecht is om die eerste beter te vinden. Het gaat om het te behalen doel. Zelf vind ik: boven de 50% kosten ben je niet goed bezig. Maar hou rekening met de opstart. Bijvoorbeeld de collecte voor Alzheimer: De eerste twee jaar hebben we onvoldoende winst behaald, daarna de maatstaf 25% kosten/opbrengsten makkelijk gehaald. Jaarlijks brengt het nu twee miljoen op.*

1. **Do you connect the *mission* and *execution* of fundraisings event to SDGs?**

*Ik heb zelf vooral evenementen georganiseerd voordat de SDGs er waren, toen was dat niet zo. Maar vanuit de organisatie valt het erg onder SDG3: basisgezondheidszorg, voor iedere wereldburger. Er wordt ook gekeken naar gebruik van plastic, of voorkomen van weggooien van eten. Dames willen graag goodiebags meegeven, die zouden ze nu hergebruiken als ze over blijven. Een paar jaar geleden was dat minder.*

1. **How do you involve donors *during* and *after* the event? How do you use the energy of people joining?**

*Ze worden bedankt achteraf, tijdens de dag soms aanleiding voor aanwezigen om leads te geven of inhoudelijk te helpen.  Zou beter kunnen, door middel van een nieuwsbrief bijvoorbeeld. Bij Wiesje wordt wel een terugkoppeling gegeven van wat er gebeurt met het geld. Nu er een nieuw stuk van de zorginstelling open is, wordt iedereen gemaild met fotos een extra bedankje.*

1. **Would you include your beneficiaries when organizing a fundraising event for them? Is this efficient do you think?**

*In toenemende mate. Bij Wiesje zijn er gesponsorde stoelen voor mensen met dementie, die hoeven niet te betalen. Over voorbeelden in de praktijk gesproken. De Alpe D’Huzes, daar wordt zo veel geld voor opgehaald dat ze het niet konden uitgeven, dit wordt niet vaak toegegeven. Dit is vaker zo bij organisaties die zich inzetten voor kanker. En zo ook bijvoorbeeld de  Ice Bucket Challenge. Er was weinig infrastructuur in de organisatie en weinig betrokken onderzoekers, Hierdoor zo veel geld dat ze het niet kwijt konden.*