



Alpha Rho Chi

National Professional Fraternity
Architecture and the Allied Arts



HOW TO

Organize a Food Sales Fundraiser

by Zee Metheny, Cossutius Alumnus

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School Support

During the colonization of the Cossutius Chapter we were faced with many challenges and tried to find solutions to accomplish all of them. One of the most difficult and personal demands was the financial cost associated with starting a new Chapter of Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity. We were lucky, in many respects, because we were the only group of our type at the school. Further research reveals that there was a Greek Organization at the school during sometime in our 100-year past, but it was so many decades ago that all information on this is lost, possibly existing in the 1910s-1920s when fraternal group interest spiked.

Either way, the school did not have policy in place for a Greek system at our school, so we were able to write most of it. In addition to this, the Architecture department was going through their NAAB re-accreditation at the time. They saw our colony as a positive student club and felt that it made the school look better. They offered to fund most of our professional events and even many of our social programs. This school funding was our first fund-raising event and continues today. We actually worked the school system to receive money from the Architecture Department (for our professional programs) and more money from the Student Affairs Department (for our social programs). Since these two departments have separate budgets, we were able to increase our income from school donations.

Bake Sales

Our most successful Bake Sales occurred around holidays, Halloween, Valentine's Day, etc. Themes helped with bake sales, and specific dates made it easier for students and staff to remember the event. Each of the Actives literally brought something to the table. This did several things at once:

1. Each person was able to set his or her financial contribution to the event. Some members were unable to spend much personal money and opted to bake cookies from scratch. Other members could afford to spend more money and less time by purchasing pre-made foods (some of the more regular: cookies cakes, pies, donuts, and even pizza). But everyone contributed something.
2. The few people who were unable to contribute food to the event worked the table. They set up the event, sold the items that others brought, and cleaned up afterwards. This was an imperfect system and the results were different each time, but the end result is that fund raising occurred and only cost us a few hours and some printing fees for signage.
3. The most popular bake sale was the Halloween event. Every year the items got more creative consisting of severed finger cookies, bloody brownies, and other gross snacks. This competitive challenge inspired the members to outdo each other, and made the event more fun and more creative.

Dog Days

This regular occurrence is by far the most successful fundraising event that we have ever done. It put the name of Alpha Rho Chi and Cossutius on the lips of every student at our school, and even the local community.

The beginning of this event was originally going to be a singly occurring bake-sale-type event. In fact, the idea was brought up as one member's option to cook hotdogs instead of bake cookies. The first official Dog Day was on a table in our school's atrium. We split the purchasing among all of the members and each bought hotdogs or buns or plates. Our treasurer brought a shoebox for the money and his old hibachi grill. It was so disorganized that we had to leave and go to Safeway to purchase things we forgot several times that day. Also, local restaurants loaned us a knife (we couldn't even open the hotdog bag) and an apron, we "borrowed" condiment packets from local fast food restaurants, and our little grill filled the atrium with smoke due to our lack of experience in grilling.

The second Dog Days went a lot smoother. We used half of the profits from the first dog days to purchase stock for the next. The other half of the profits was added to our treasury as fund raising income. The school kicked us out of the atrium and made us set-up on the sidewalk. Getting in the way of the students going to and from class actually increased our branding and several people, even those not wanting food, stopped just to ask who we were and what was Alpha Rho Chi. Funny, it was at this time that an alumni from another chapter wrote on the fraternity website that they didn't know there was a Chapter at our school. There wasn't, we weren't even a colony at that time, just a group of interested students. The second Dog Days only lasted about an hour; we sold out of product. This was probably due to the fact that we bought all the condiments this time and not enough hotdogs. But this posed a new problem: the condiments needed refrigeration. The school allowed us to use a corner of their refrigerator in the student lounge area, but it wasn't nearly large enough, so we got permission to put mini fridges under our studio desks, the only students allowed to at that time.

This was an interesting turning point in the Dog Days phenomenon. Students came by our desks, remembering us from outside, asking when the next event was. Also, we had refrigerators, so we sold sodas from them for profit so that students didn't have to go all the way down to the student commons for a drink (no, we did not sell beer, although it did cross our minds). We decided to make the event a weekly event, settling on Fridays for a while later moving it to Wednesdays because many students took Fridays off. We continued to work 50% of the profits back into the production and slowly increased the income. We grew out of the hibachi soon after, and added a small gas table-top grill (bad idea, but it was free). We sent out sales people to the faculty and staff offices, taking orders. Soon the small hibachi and broken gas grill couldn't keep up with the demand, so a member of our newly reestablished colony brought his large Coleman charcoal grill. By the time we were installed as a Chapter a large percentage of our overall costs to Charter were paid for in hot dogs.

The Alpha Pledge Class was almost immediately pinned in, some of them were waiting for a year or more, and all were regular visitors of our Dog Day booth. The original training program for the pledges included requirements for them to hold a social event, a professional event, and a community service event. I suggested that they might benefit from holding a fundraising event as well, similar to how we paid for our expenses while pledging. We ultimately decided, rather than sacrificing our main source of income, that we would challenge the Alphas to a head-to-head Dog Days competition. We set the date and times, placed a table on either side of the school's main entrance, and the selling began. We didn't stand a chance. The Alphas dominated in menu (they added polish sausage, bratwurst, and Italian sausage), condiments (they added chili, cheese sauce, and sauerkraut), signage (they added a large banner and a person walking with a hot dog shaped menu), and all other aspects of the competition. We decided to concede and donated all of our profits to their pledge class as well.

This model became the norm for all pledge classes. The challenge between Actives and Pledges, held as the first event following pinning in, became the passing of the torch to the next pledge class. The profits from the Dog Days are able to pay for all fees associated with pledging, as well as their letters, and hundreds of dollars to add to the Chapter's funds when they initiate. The Chapter has since installed a system of points. This allows a pledge, who normally would not be able to afford to pledge, to work off their dues. This also allows people who would rather pay for the costs associated with pledging rather than work; they are required to work in the original fundraising Event challenge.

This event has taken off unexpectedly and has maintained steam. This may be due to the type of school we are at. Or the fact that our San Francisco campus has one main building. The fact that we have no meal plan is surely a factor. Whatever the reason for our success, the main point of this is that we grew our business as a business. We set a system of expectations with our Actives, pledges, and fellow students. And we represented Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity well. If you are in San Francisco on a Thursday, between the hours of 10am and 3pm, go to California College of the Arts in Potrero Hill, 1111 Eighth Street. Don't forget to bring cash.

Step-By-Step Start

General: The beginnings of a fund raising project are very important and vital to its success. But don't let this delay the beginnings of a simple project. Time is money in this respect, and loss of advertisement and Chapter marketing. Every event that is open to the public is an opportunity to "sell" the Chapter or to give it a black-eye. Keep this big picture mentality when you are brainstorming ideas for events, when you are working the event and interacting with students, staff and faculty. And, yes, it is important.

1. Create a fundraising Committee/Group/Clan/Posse: If you don't already have a body of members who coordinate fund-raising events, make one. Volunteers ensure that a body of like-minded and positive people is working on the projects. But how you create this group is up to you. Follow your Chapter Bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order to ensure that you create this group properly. It's best to have a leader head this group. A member who can communicate to the Executive Board (Board of Directors) and the Chapter progress reports and status of events.
2. The Chapter and/or the Executive Board should set expectations of the Committee: How many events, total fund-raising needs, committee description, etc. Within these parameters is where the Committee can work and make decisions. Let's assume for the discussion of this scenario that the Executive Board set at the Annual Meeting an expectation of a Hamburger Sale Event, similar to that of the Dog Days above.
3. Do your homework: Find a location for your booth and clear it with the school or local government if off campus. Map the area. What is the foot-traffic like, and are they hungry? What times are the highest levels of traffic? People gravitate to consistency, so make sure that you are authorized to set up your booth in the same location, or near it, for future events.
4. Get Donations: Anytime you can get free stuff, it's a good thing. Borrow everything that you can in the beginning. You may need to buy some items for the event. Keep all of the receipts for the purchased items. Ask your Alumni to pay the seed money as a donation. The Fund-Raising Committee should never be indebted to any member or non-member at any time. All material loans should be clearly defined as when the item needs to be returned, if at all (donated). This time limit will drive your profit allocation. All monetary

loans should be understood as donations and should be clearly defined as such to the lender. If this limits the amount of seed money, then you start off smaller.

5. What you will need:

- A grill. Anything that is donated will work. Some areas require certain types of grills, and won't accept others. Make sure the grill that you choose to use doesn't cause you to lose your approval.
- Grill fuel. Just having a grill, does not make it hot. Grill fuel will not go bad, so the more you can get the better off you will be. But this will need to be stored in a proper place.
- Table. The school may have one that you can borrow.
- Cash Drawer. A simple shoebox will work in the beginning. Use some of the donated seed money to keep change in the till/box. Don't leave too much money in any vessel at any time. Depending on the profitability, you may need to make a deposit run during the event.
- Food. Meat, buns, onions, lettuce, tomatoes, condiments, etc. The committee should clearly define the extent of this list, and it should correspond to your seed money/donations. If you need to start off smaller, make simple burgers, or hot dogs first, bring condiments from home, etc. Keep in mind these items need to be kept cool. A simple cooler with ice will do.
- Plates, napkins, serve ware.
- Signage. Signs, bulletins, fliers, posts, etc. Anything that gets the word out. Make sure to use the proper channels, to ensure that you don't jeopardize future events. Get school approval for postings. Get the word out, tell everyone to tell all their friends. Word of mouth is more vital than any flier.
- Set a date and time: Based on your mapping exercise and the schools approval, set a regular time that the events will take place. In order for this to be truly profitable it must reoccur. The profits from the first week or so will probably be lost in building the business. People relate to consistency, and are creatures of habit. If you decide to make it a monthly event, consider the First Friday or Third Tuesday of each month. Something that is memorable. Or weekly, every Thursday, "Mondays in the Quad", or "Hump Day Hamburgers". It may not be noticeable in the beginning, but soon people will actually look for you, and miss you if you are not there at the expected time.
- Start small: set up for an hour or so with a few people from the committee. Nothing fancy. You will have time to build the business later, but now you are just trying to get the word out and not lose money. This will also give you an idea of the student's expectations. Don't worry, they'll let you know. Write down all of their comments, complaints, and compliments and discuss these at the next Committee Meeting or Chapter Regular Meeting. Remember that you are not selling to yourselves, entirely.
- Build the business: The profits from the event should both fund the purpose of the event and build the business. In the beginning this ratio should look to be about 50/50. You may need to make it 30/60 to build the business faster, but this will limit the amount of

funds that can be given to the Chapter, possible not reaching the set goals of the Executive Board. The part of the profit brought back into the business will most likely be put back into purchasing more products for next time, but some part of this should also be put toward better equipment. Remember Equipment wears down. Maintaining the equipment and purchasing new equipment will ensure that a breakdown doesn't remove all profits for the future. Lastly, make sure that your price-point is in line with local businesses and ensures that you receive the most profit. For example: if you purchase a pound of beef for \$2, it does not mean that you break even selling ½ pound burgers for 50 cents. Everything costs money including the fuel, the buns, the condiments, the plates, etc. Even if they were donated, they are a "Cost of Goods Sold" and should be reflected in the cost of the item. Easy money? Sodas. Buy them in bulk and sell them as a couple with the burger.

- Last Notes: Remember and remind everyone who works the event that their actions reflect the Chapter and Fraternity. Your fund raising event is not more important than that. Act in a manner best befitting a Brother of Alpha Rho Chi. Furthermore, friends and pledges who may help out will be representing the Chapter and Fraternity as well. These events will become one of your best recruiting tools, could spark community service events, you will learn professional skills, and are an excellent way to build Brotherhood working together. It is not just a fund raising event.

Have questions or want more information about how you can conduct a food sales fundraiser? Contact Cossutius Brother Zee Metheny.