

My GX Fundraising Journey

Hi! My name is Ceri and I am a 21, originally from Dorset but have spent the last 3 years in London studying Journalism at the London College of Communication. I am aiming for a career in Global Poverty and so Global Xchange was appealing to me because of the chance it would provide to gain international development experience - an essential requirement for the top post-grad courses and a necessary career step. Furthermore, I chose GX because of my passion for sustainable development and my belief that we might learn important lessons from non-western cultures coupled with an insatiable wanderlust.

I raised a total of £2000 for the International Citizen Service by combining perseverance with some well-trodden fundraising methods and importantly co-opting all willing family members as assistants.

I was daunted by the task of fundraising as it is uncomfortable asking people to reach into their pockets especially in a worsening economic climate and I had no experience of such a challenge. However each day was brightened by how much people gave. I received cards of encouragement filled with words of praise, which spurred me on. Finishing university is a difficult time of adjustment but thankfully fundraising filled my days. I attacked the target as a full time job and put all my effort into letting people know what I was doing. Fundraising has built my confidence further; I have acquired transferable skills, which will improve my employability. Most importantly, it made me see that even in my small town, where prejudices are rife people are interested in global issues and want to learn, but may not necessarily have had the opportunity. This encouraged me to talk to more people. Every trip I made out I met someone new who was interesting and inquisitive - a great encouragement.

Sponsored events

First, I did a sponsored event – no food and no voice for 48hours! Donations came from distant family, neighbours, local businesses, old school teachers and even old boyfriends. I contacted everyone that I had ever come into contact with. Personal messages are critical: it is much harder for people to pass over a direct plea.

As well as funds I really wanted to raise awareness of the work I was going to be doing for the International Citizen Service and also specifically, the day which I had planned the event to begin, World Population Day. I wrote to all the local clubs, such as Rotary, Lions club, Women's Institute, my old school and our local MP Annette Brook. I offered to deliver a presentation but due to lack of time, these have all been arranged for when I return. However, through this method of communication I raised £200, awarded from a fund called the Gould Trust, administered by my local Rotary Club, Poole Bay. These trusts are difficult to locate and so spending time writing to anyone, or group with a commitment to social responsibility or altruistic motivations, can be a fruitful pursuit.

Social Media

I cannot stress enough, how useful it is to deploy social media tools to make people aware of your sponsored event. The message not only reaches friends but complete strangers. My dad has a photography group on Facebook with a lot of followers and by posting the link to my Justgiving page, a number of kind people donated.

I also organised a car boot sale and cake sale. Firstly, check the weather forecast if you are going to be selling finely decorated iced cakes hope for a cloudy day; otherwise you could have a melting chocolate fudge cake to sell. For the car boot sale take everything; a piece of junk that you look at with distaste will be someone else's happy bargain. Decorate your selling table and car with VSO posters, leaflets and also wear a GX t-shirt. I found people were less likely to haggle when supporting a good cause. Furthermore, if you are having a raffle, sell your tickets there and have leaflets explaining all that you are doing. I had a prize donated by someone who bought my old scooter!

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Raffle

The cost of hosting a raffle is the price of the raffle book and if the prizes are worth it the tickets will sell. Much like the sponsored event contact everyone you know asking for prize donations. The most important thing to highlight is that it offers them invaluable marketing and networking opportunities, which for new or struggling businesses is a must. Some of the prizes I offered included a day's photography workshop, fair-trade hamper and fish pedicure, all of which can appeal to many people.

If I was given the chance again I would aim for a higher target, a more challenging sponsored event and would really go out and shout about the International Citizen Service, which has already opened so many doors.

Ceri Williams**July 2011**

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