

MAN BITES DOG!

**A Radical Approach to
Raising a Lot of Money
for Charity**

By: Ethan Maurice

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Ethan Maurice

**To the family, firemen, nurses, and doctors
who saved the life of an unconscious
sixteen-year-old on August 18th, 2008.**

“If a dog bites a man, that’s not news. If a man bites a dog, that’s news.” - Lord Northcliffe

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Before We Begin

Introduction

As the common approach yields common results, it follows that the radical approach yields radical results. But that's not necessarily true. The radical approach merely *expands* the range of possible results. Yet, if radical results are your desire, radical is the only approach to take.

Today, when someone sets out to raise money for charity, the common thing to do is join a crowd of people all doing the same thing. This yields common results: a couple hundred to a couple thousand dollars raised.

To raise a radical amount of money for a cause one can try to stand out from within a crowd, but it's far easier to just avoid the crowd altogether.

This I call the radical approach.

What you have here is a guide to the radical approach of raising money for charity—a blueprint for building a fundraiser that doesn't have to strive to stand out from the crowd, because it avoids the crowd altogether.

Who Am I?

Hey! I'm Ethan. Five years ago, I pedaled a bicycle 4,450 miles across the United States to raise money for the children's hospital that saved my life. After nine months of preparation, my brother and I dipped our wheels in the Atlantic and pedaled until we reached the Pacific 76 days later. My story of survival at that hospital, combined with such an audacious undertaking, attracted a lot of attention—we raised over \$96,000 for Phoenix Children's Hospital.



Photo courtesy of Rob Schumacher/Arizona Republic

The following summer, I backpacked 221 miles through the Sierra Nevadas with my sister to raise money for type 1 diabetes research. Initially, it turned out nothing like we had hoped. We raised a mere \$8,400 of our ambitious \$221,000 goal. A couple of months passed, and my sister was asked to give [a speech about our endeavor](#), her words spurring well-off supporters to donate \$276,000 for type 1 diabetes research.

I've also served as a fundraising coach for Miracle Challenge, a national fundraising effort of the Children's Miracle Network of Hospitals. I've appeared on television, radio, and in newspapers a couple dozen times promoting fundraisers. I've dealt with a variety of non-profits, on local and national levels, in a variety of roles.

Over the past couple of years, many people have approached me for advice hoping to raise a radical amount of money for their cause. After answering so many questions, I realized there is a need for some sort of blueprint for the radical fundraiser, for those wanting to do more than a typical walk, run, or ride for charity.

What follows is a blueprint, drawn from my own experiences and

discussions with architects of other successful fundraising endeavors, in the hopes that it will help you in your attempt to raise a radical amount of money for your cause.

First, Why?

Before we begin on the subject of *how* to raise money a lot of money for a cause, we must first begin with another question: why do it in the first place?

Why do you want to raise money for this organization?

You need a compelling answer. If you don't have one, it's probably best to join in the crowds of others already doing a walk, run, or ride for your cause instead. If you don't have a compelling why to help your organization, you will not have a strong enough reason to stray from the pack and put yourself out there in such radical fashion.

Nietzsche famously said, “He who has a *why* to live can bear almost any *how*.” In our fundraisers, we are going to create and accomplish remarkable *hows* in order to leverage attention into funds for an organization. To accomplish such audacious endeavors, we need strong *whys* to keep going when we feel like giving up or backing down.

I spent over a year working on Pedaling With Purpose, my cross-country bicycle ride for the hospital that saved my life. Pedaling a bicycle across the United States was incredibly demanding, but that was only 76 days of a year-long endeavor which also included intensive planning, preparing, learning, training, meetings, emails, photography, video production, networking, writing, interviews, and dozens of other tasks that collectively added up to more work than pedaling across an entire continent on a bicycle.

Because we had a strong purpose—a *why*—quitting never crossed our minds.

You have to believe in something bigger than yourself to be willing to sacrifice your own interests for it.

So, think about it.

Why do you want to raise money for this cause? How far are you willing to go to do so?

Adventure in Itself is Enough

With fundraising of the adventurous sort, sometimes people who lack a compelling reason to support an organization will do so anyway because they feel a need to legitimize an adventure—their *why* more a concern for their resume.

I know this because my first fundraiser, Pedaling with Purpose, was birthed in a more selfish way than I'd care to admit. For months, I was overcome with this crazy desire to pedal a bicycle across the United States. I was obsessed. However, I couldn't let myself go because it was a critical, resume-building summer if I was going to apply for medical school. I had to find a way to justify choosing adventure over “direct patient-care experience.” One day, it clicked that I could raise money for the hospital that saved my life, which held deep personal meaning and gave such a strong “why” to the endeavor. But on a much shallower level, it was the permission I felt I required to answer the call of adventure.

Pedaling from coast to coast, I gained an understanding that changed everything: I didn't want to go to medical school. I had been denying this experience I was deeply drawn to because I was afraid it would not help me go in a direction I did not actually want to go.

If you have an adventure in mind but think you need to do a fundraiser to earn the permission to go, just go. Adventure is enough in itself. There's no need for a half-hearted attempt at a fundraiser to justify it. Rather, give yourself fully to the experience, and maybe you'll be as lucky as I was and figure out what your attraction towards the experience really means.

A Rational Approach to Choosing An Organization

Say you're buying a new cell phone. Would you go out and blindly buy the first phone offered to you? No. You'd take the time to compare phones, weigh their features and prices, and buy the phone you want at the best price.

When it comes to charitable giving, we rarely do this. We often give without any thought about the value of our donation. Someone asks us to donate—we're more concerned with whether or not to give—and, if so, how much?

Those we ask to support our fundraisers won't take the time to research their options either. It's our responsibility to research and make an educated decision in supporting a cause or organization.

There's a rising movement called effective altruism, which advocates for a more rational approach to giving. It's undoubtedly worthy of examination before moving forward in this guide. I encourage you to listen to [philosopher Peter Singer's TED Talk on Effective Altruism](#) before choosing where to direct your efforts.

Here are a few more worthwhile resources to help you with this monumentally important decision:

- [The Effective Altruism Handbook](#), a free, downloadable ebook written by leaders of the effective altruism movement and non-

profit sector.

- [Will MacAskill's Interview on the Tim Ferriss Show](#), an enlightening interview with the author of *Doing Good Better* and co-founder of two effective altruism organizations.
- [Dan Pallotta's TED Talk: The Way We Think About Charity is All Wrong](#), a compelling argument against confusing frugality with effectiveness when evaluating non-profits.

I won't pose any arguments here as to where you should direct your efforts. I merely seek to provide you with resources to develop your own understanding. And while it is true that raising \$3,600 for The Against Malaria Foundation statistically *guarantees* that you will save someone's life, our own unique values ultimately determine where our efforts are best directed.

This first step defines the entire journey. Do actively think before directing the funds of others.



Visualization

Be Different

“If a dog bites a man, that’s not news. If a man bites a dog, that’s news.”
- Lord Northcliffe

If you want your fundraiser to stand out, you have to do something different than what everyone else is doing.

Nearly everyone raising money for charity joins a walk, run, ride, or other event where hundreds or thousands of others do the exact *same* thing they're doing. *Same* severely limits your fundraiser's potential.

Same does not spread by word of mouth.

Same does not stick in people's heads.

Same will reach a fraction of the people that the *something different* could.

The easiest way to stand out from the crowd is to avoid the crowd altogether.

This is vital and not something to gloss over. How can you make your fundraiser not just more eye-catching than other fundraisers, but everything else that's competing for everyone's attention?



Me sporting the world's weirdest tan lines (see that sweet helmet strap one running down my face?) over 4,000 miles into a bicycle ride.

How are you going to be “the man biting the dog?”

The Crazier the Better

Your fundraiser should not just be different. It should also be a bit crazy, because crazy can't be ignored. One can only will their attention away from crazy. Like the two old men in a shouting match about Donald Trump's Presidency I saw at a sushi bar last week, it's almost hopeless to try to ignore them. The conversation at our table was lost. We couldn't help but watch.

If your fundraiser is radically different and outlandish enough, it will have this sort of unexpected, shocking effect and garner attention by default.

An example:

In researching for this guide, I found an article about a woman who promised to swim from Alcatraz to San Francisco if her \$29,000 fundraising goal for [charity: water](#) was met.

An impressive feat? Sure! I'd probably drown if I tried. But gossip-worthy? Will it stick in people heads and naturally spread?

Not really.

However, I'm leaving out one perfectly crazy detail that made her fundraiser gossip-worthy—the key ingredient to her success: **She promised to swim from Alcatraz to San Francisco naked.**

That is something that will spread. Imagine someone approaching you on a street-corner to ask for a donation, explaining they're going to swim naked from Alcatraz to San Francisco for charity. Not only would that catch you off guard, it might be the most interesting thing to happen to you all day? Wouldn't that be gossip-worthy?

That's the perfect “taking it up a notch.” While her fundraiser may not have ended up on the five o'clock news, word of her fundraiser spread like a Santa Ana wildfire among everyone she knew. The result: [she raised over \\$33,000 for charity: water and swam naked from Alcatraz to San Francisco.](#)

Different is not enough. Be crazy too.

“Make Them Cry.”

Emotion and feeling—not logic—are the underlying drives for us as human beings.

While different and crazy will get your fundraiser attention, emotion is the driving force behind donations.

While building my first fundraiser, Pedaling With Purpose, I was lucky enough to encounter a guy who'd pedaled across the U.S. the summer before to raise money for a cancer foundation in honor of his mother, who had recently passed. We exchanged emails every couple of weeks throughout the process, and his advice was invaluable.

One day I wrote him a long-winded email asking what the most effective way to spur donations was.

He responded with three words: “Make them cry.”

Effectiveness In the Internet Age

Here's a good barometer for how 'man bites dog' your fundraiser truly is: if a stranger encountered an article about your fundraiser on the internet, would they share it?

Admittedly, this is a high bar to leap. The vast majority of those who encountered articles or news clips of my cross-country bicycle ride for the hospital that saved my life *did not* share that content. Yet, we still managed to raise over \$96,000.

What I'm saying is: we could have created something even better. Perhaps we could have stopped at various Children's Miracle Network Hospitals across the country and visited sick children to be a living, breathing example that things can get better. Or invited other ex-patients to ride with us and share their remarkable stories of recovery. Or something else completely different? Something exponentially more outrageous?

In the age of the internet, if you hit it right, it's possible anything to 'go viral' and spread globally in the matter of a couple days. Nick Le Souef, an Australian man who decided to spend [22 days with 300 poisonous spiders in his shop window to raise money for a charity called Variety](#), did just that. In researching his stunt, I found dozens of articles in news publications around the globe that came out within a five days of the beginning of his endeavor, every one pointing to his fundraiser's donation page.

Perhaps the best example of 'man bites doggedness' I encountered in all my research for this guide was a German political artist/activist group called [The Center for Political Beauty](#). Masters of stirring controversy through shocking art installations and elaborate fake online campaigns, their site is worth hefty examination as you work to open your mind to the most radical of ideas while envisioning your own fundraising campaign.

This is the Most Important Part of Your Fundraiser

This stage of envisioning an eye-catching, radical fundraiser riddled with 'man bites doggedness' is the most important stage of the entire process.

The more creative, the more attention-grabbing of a concept you can come up with, the less you'll have to work to spread the word later on. Hit it right, and word just might spread on its own.

Other Creativity Sparking Links

[100 Greatest Publicity Stunts of All-Time](#)

[The Greatest Campaigns Ever?](#)

[10 of the Most Impressive Fundraising Stunts](#)

[5 Craziest Charity Endeavors](#)

[9 Fundraising Lessons from the World's Weirdest Charity Stunts](#)

[4 Tips for Starting a Nonprofit \(from the Man Who Caught Red Bull's Eye\)](#)

[The 777 Project: 7 Ultra Marathons on 7 Continents to Build 7 Schools](#)



Building Your Fundraiser

Reach Out to the Organization

Once you have an idea of how you're going to raise funds and the organization you want to support, reach out to the organization. Offer up your fundraising idea, but not with the complete confidence that you're going to do it.

Let them know you are thinking about fundraising for them and would like to discuss how they can help you.

Help from an organization can make a monumental difference. Most organizations have networks that are dozens, hundreds, maybe even thousands of times larger than we do as individuals. Their reach, audience, and connections will dwarf all of yours—you could really use their help with spreading the word of your fundraiser.

Before committing to raise funds for an organization, find out how they can help you help them. For reference, here are some ways Phoenix Children's Hospital (PCH) and JDRF have helped us in the past:

- Included our fundraiser in organization's newsletter
- Promoted our fundraiser on social media
- Sent press releases to connect us with local media
- Hosted a pre-ride event for supporters and media
- Asked organization supporting celebrities to share our fundraiser
- Reached out to related blogs and podcasts with our info
- Sent direct-mail campaign with a letter from me asking for donations

For both Pedaling with Purpose and Summit Diabetes, the organizations we supported extended our reach exponentially farther than we could have ourselves.

This is why it's vital to have an out-of-the-ordinary fundraiser: a story that

sells itself. Pedaling a bicycle across the entire United States for the hospital that saved my life was crazy, and my recovery story had emotional appeal, the perfect recipe for getting attention and driving donations for the hospital.

Your goal is to build a story, an event, a fundraiser the organization you're supporting can use. Build a PR Team's dream. Think of your fundraiser as the product and the organization as the distributor.

Reach out to the organization with a fundraiser they can sell, and find out if they're willing to distribute.

To Be or Not To Be (Professional)



My sister Haley with 14,505ft Mount Whitney in the background, where we were caught by a freak August snowstorm two days before.

With both of my fundraisers, we tried to look as professional as possible. We named the fundraiser, designed logos, printed custom T-shirts and business cards, built social media pages etc. One of them even had its own website. In looking professional, we hoped to entice large corporate donors, gear donations, and hoped everyone would take us more seriously.

I think this worked. We never landed large corporate donations, but did receive some gear donations, and everyone took our efforts seriously. However, there was a slight sense of cheesiness that came along with the effort to look professional. Instead of calling our cross-country bike ride “Pedaling with Purpose” it could have been “Ethan and his brother Reid pedaling across an entire continent for the children's hospital that saved his life.” Without clean, professional framing, it might have felt more raw, more human. I'm unsure how that would have impacted our ultimate results.

This is a decision that should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. What's your vibe? What's the message you're trying to send? How do you want this to be perceived? What will be most effective in raising money for your cause?

Think about it.

If you want to get professional, continue on with this section. If not, skip ahead to the next.

Name Your Fundraiser:

If you are going to name your fundraiser, be deliberate. You probably want to convey the action and/or purpose of your fundraiser. You want a name that “sticks.” Grab a pen, paper, and a couple pals. Write down everything that comes to mind and let it sit for a while. When you return to it, see what jumps off the page.

My first fundraiser was called Pedaling with Purpose. It conveyed what we were doing well, but people often recalled it as “*Pedal* with Purpose,” “Pedaling *for* Purpose” or forgot it altogether. Both the *-ing* on Pedaling and the word “with” were easily misremembered.

Summit Diabetes was a great name. My sister (who has type-1-diabetes) and I were hiking 220 miles through the mountains to reach and climb Mt. Whitney, the highest mountain in the continental United States to raise

money for JDRF. “Summit Diabetes” conveyed what and why in a mere two words. Nobody forgot it.

Design a Logo:

You don't need a logo, but if you have an artistic friend who's willing to help, it's a nice touch. As with a name, the aim should be to convey what your fundraiser is about. A great friend of mine handmade our logo for Pedaling with Purpose, bicycle tire bent in the shape of a heart:



For Summit Diabetes, we just picked a font we really liked in this free online graphic design program called [Canva](#). I can't recommend it enough —Canva's so easy to use. Much of this guide was designed with it.

SUMMIT DIABETES

Print Custom Shirts:

We printed our logo or the name of our fundraiser on the front. The back of my shirts for Pedaling With Purpose read, “Pedaling the U.S. for Phoenix Children's Hospital” while my brother's read, “To donate \$10 text PEDAL to 50555.” This was the brilliant idea of a staff member of the hospital's foundation, as cars were always passing us on the side of the road. However, people were wary of the text-to-donate process. Still, many people stopped ahead to donate, offer dinner, or even a place to crash for the night because of those words on our backs.



Another idea: over a decade ago, my sister built one of the biggest annual JDRF walk teams in Arizona. She would get local business sponsors each year by offering to print their logo on the back of her walk team's shirts, and give them a shirt in return.

Web Presence

Your fundraiser needs to be on the internet. At the very least, build an online donation page. At the very most, your fundraiser could have its own website, blog, email list, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and half a dozen other social media tools to spread the word of your fundraiser. You have to decide what's worth doing and what's not.

We tend to overestimate what we can accomplish in a day. Shoot for quality rather than quantity in regard to distribution channels. It's better to do a couple things well than spread yourself too thin and hinder the quality of all of them.

Below is a list of web-based options for consideration. Pick what's best for your fundraiser, and forget the rest.

- **Donation Page.** A page on the web where people can *easily*

donate is essential. Many non-profit organizations can host such pages on their servers. If not, websites like [Crowdrise](#), [GoFundMe](#), and [Kickstarter](#) can host your donation page and securely process donations (but will take a small percentage).

- **Email List.** Since your fundraiser is so out-of-the-ordinary, your family, friends, and acquaintances will be far from bothered by hearing about it. Lump any and all email contacts that seem mildly appropriate together and send a mass email out when you launch your fundraiser (rather than “TO:” put email addresses in the “BCC:” section). You can also use programs like [MailChimp](#) (free up to 2,000 subscribers) to build high quality, formatted emails and collect additional email addresses to add to your email list. Email is my favorite way to spread the word of a fundraiser. It feels official and, in my experience, provokes the most donations.
- **Website.** It's not necessary to build a website, but websites do add a professional air to a fundraiser. Websites can also act as a central hub and send people to your donation page, social accounts, and all other things that have to do with your fundraiser.

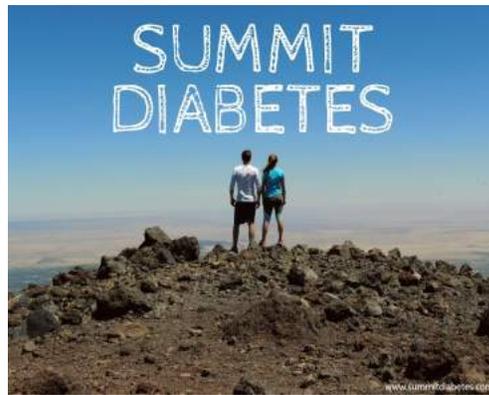
With [WordPress](#) and [Squarespace](#), you don't need to know anything about code, just the basics of using the internet. [My website](#) is built with and hosted by Squarespace, I highly recommend it.

- **Blog.** First off, a warning: blogs can consume a large amount of time. Keeping up with [my daily blog for Pedaling With Purpose](#) was very difficult (I fell far behind and finished three months after our ride was over). However, it was also extraordinarily fruitful, winning featured blog of the week on [CrazyGuyOnABike.com](#) and providing photos and quotes for a full-page article about our trip in Arizona's largest newspaper.
- **Social Media.** The beauty of social media is that everyone is already there. I'm a big fan of Facebook as people often engage with posts. Twitter is good for connecting with others. Instagram is a photo-heavy way to keep people updated (though people follow links to other pages less frequently). Snapchat is hugely popular as well.

Do not use them all! Through what combination of text, photo, and

video do you want to share your fundraiser? Make a decision based on the mediums you're best with, have the time for, or will best keep you connected with supporters.

- **High-Quality Photos.** Get a few high-quality photographs of you in action, doing whatever you plan to do in your fundraiser. Such photos can be used for profile pictures, cover photos, and be offered to blogs and news organizations to tempt them with a strong visual appeal to report on your fundraiser.



- **One Quality, Sharable Piece.** When you launch your fundraiser, have one quality, shareable piece explaining your fundraiser and urging people to donate. That could be a video, website, or just well-designed donation page. Try to *WOW* people and elicit an emotional response that provokes donations and the sharing of your fundraiser.

Here are links to a couple fundraising videos we made:

- [Pedaling with Purpose: A Coast to Coast Bike Ride Benefiting Phoenix Children's Hospital](#)
- [Summit Diabetes: Why Summit?](#)
- [Summit Diabetes: A 221 Mile Trek For a Cure \(In 2 Minutes\)](#)

Build A Small Army

“It is true that I grew up in Austria without plumbing. It is true that I moved to America alone with just a gym bag. And it is true that I worked as a bricklayer and invested in real estate to become a millionaire before I ever swung the sword in Conan the Barbarian.

But it is not true that I am self-made. Like everyone, to get to where I am, I stood on the shoulders of giants. My life was built on a foundation of parents, coaches, and teachers; of kind souls who lent couches or gym back rooms where I could sleep; of mentors who shared wisdom and advice; of idols who motivated me from the pages of magazines (and, as my life grew, from personal interaction).

I had a big vision, and I had fire in my belly. But I would never have gotten anywhere without my mother helping me with my homework (and smacking me when I wasn't ready to study), without my father telling me to “be useful,” without teachers who explained how to sell, or without coaches who taught me the fundamentals of weight lifting.”

- Arnold Schwarzenegger

Your fundraiser is outlandish, awesome, and for a great cause—people want to be a part of something like that. Think about ways others can get involved in your fundraiser. Not only will they be happy to help, they'll feel part of the effort once they do and will spread the word and work to see your fundraiser succeed in ways you'd never expect.

For anyone who offers help, ask yourself how they could best offer value to the fundraiser. Could your photographer friend donate a photoshoot? An artistic acquaintance draw a logo? Your buddy with a marketing degree look over your donation page? By having played a role in your fundraiser, people naturally become part of your team.

Some Advice About Donations

The following points are very important. Collectively, they can astronomically affect the amount you raise. Carefully consider each the following:

- **All donations should go directly to your cause.** It's not uncommon for people to finance their fundraising endeavor with donations and donate the remainder of the funds to their cause. I once incredulously listened to a man complain that he couldn't get together the tens of thousands of dollars necessary to sail across the Atlantic so he could give the remainder to charity. *I stand firmly against this.* Every dollar donated should go directly to the organization you're supporting. If you're not okay with this, what are your intentions for undertaking this fundraiser?
- **Set your fundraising goal higher than you think you can reach.** In my experience, this leads to larger donations and makes everyone take your fundraiser more seriously.

When prompted to enter the fundraising goal for my first-ever fundraiser, Pedaling With Purpose, I remember staring at the computer screen for a long while, hunched in concentration, a battle between possibility and “being realistic” waging in my head. Finally, I made one of the boldest moves of my life: typing \$42,330 (\$10 per mile) as our goal (as opposed to \$5,000 or \$10,000). I closed my laptop and was immediately overcome with self-doubt. However, I figured the larger our ambitions the more seriously everyone would take our fundraiser. We stuck with \$42,330 and somehow more than doubled this “moonshot” fundraising goal.

- **The act of donating should be as easy as possible.** Make all links to your donation page obvious. The fewer clicks it takes to donate, the better. The web address of your page should be short and memorable. Effortless is the goal.

- **Offer something in return.** You can also offer incentives to donate. Incentives could be anything from fundraiser swag to cooking dinner at a supporter's house. I haven't tried this myself, but many successful fundraisers and Kickstarter campaigns have done so.
- **Are donations tax deductible?** This is vital to note whenever asking for donations. Ask the organization you're supporting—the answer has usually been memorized by whoever you've asked as they're asked so often. It's good to have a written form with all the details on hand as well.



Launching Your Fundraiser

Okay. Everything's in place. Your donation page is live. Your fundraiser's social media accounts are built and ready. You have at least one quality, shareable piece that's emotionally charged and ready to WOW people into talking about and spreading your fundraiser.

The system is built—ready to go—it's time to launch your fundraiser.

When to Launch?

The best time to launch is close enough to the start that your fundraiser won't lose momentum and far enough away that you have time to promote it to the greatest degree possible. In my experience, I'd say the launch date should be 1 to 3 months before you start the actual event. For Pedaling With Purpose, we launched two and a half months in advance, providing plenty of time for multiple donation-asks of friends and family, inquiring about equipment donations, and raising a significant amount of money before pitching our fundraiser to the media.

However, if your fundraiser is more a PR stunt than physical endeavor, the element of surprise might be important. In that case, launch and endeavor might best occur simultaneously.

Also, from releasing one hundred articles on my blog over the past three years, I've found that early-morning on Tuesdays and Wednesdays seems to get the largest response. I recommend launching and sending out your most important communications then (definitely avoid weekends).

Set the Reaction Beforehand

We humans are always mirroring each other. We can use this mimicry to our advantage on launch day by asking our closest friends and family

beforehand to react a certain way to our launch. Should they act fast, in a specific way, everyone else tends to follow suit.

Before launching both of my two major fundraisers, I explained this concept and asked a dozen of my closest family and friends to re-share my one quality, shareable piece on launch day with a little comment about it on Facebook.

A couple hours into the launch, everyone I'd asked had re-shared that emotionally-charged piece with a heartfelt comment about it. I couldn't believe how many people followed suit, sharing [our ride promo video](#) with a heartfelt comment. The first day of our campaign, anyone loosely associated with me on social media knew about Pedaling with Purpose, and with such a strong reaction, it was perceived as an abnormally big deal.

3... 2... 1... Launch!

Light all the fireworks at the same time: Send out an email to everyone you know. Post to all of your social media accounts. Tell everyone in person throughout the day. Be stoked! It's important to start with a “bang.” Make sure everyone knows.

One big mistake to avoid: As previously mentioned, when sending out a mass email, put all email addresses in the “BCC” section, not the “TO” section of the email. BCC stands for Blind Carbon Copy, meaning that nobody included in the message can see anyone else's email address. Many people are protective of their email address and don't want it shared publicly (I learned this the hard way when launching Pedaling with Purpose).



Raising the Money

You've launched your fundraiser. You're now in that exciting, fruitful period before you begin the actual event where your actions can finally receive a response. This is the time to work hard: to send out asks, to host events, to trumpet news of your fundraiser far and wide.

*If you're doing more of a PR stunt and utilizing the element of surprise, this space between launch and endeavor won't exist—you're welcome to skip ahead to the next section.

It's All About the Ask

The post-launch time period is all about *asking*. You ask, ask, and ask some more. Your asks might be aimed at friends, family, businesses, random people on the street..You might be asking for donations to your cause, a place to host an event, equipment donations, media coverage, or a host of other things.

What inevitably comes with all these asks is rejection. Many of your asks will be met with silence or begin with the word “sorry.” Rejection stings, especially at the beginning, but you have to keep moving forward. Keep asking!

The thing you need to know about rejection is that the more rejections you receive, the greater your immunity to the negative feelings associated with rejection will grow. *You will begin to realize that the only thing that can come from an ask is a positive.* If someone says no, you are no worse off than before. Thus, rejection is not a negative, but of no impact at all.

Here's a game plan for overcoming the fear and negative feelings associated with rejection:

Pick a dozen restaurants to drop by and ask for a donation. Do this on a weekday, preferably starting around 2:30 or 3pm, when business is slow. Go in, ask to speak with the manager, pitch your fundraiser, and ask if they'd be willing to support your cause. Bring some proof that you're

actually doing a fundraiser too, in case they ask for it.

If your first attempt is anything like mine, as you pull into the first restaurant's parking lot your heart's pace will begin to increase, a slight nervousness setting in. You'll enter the restaurant and, forgetting to smile or say hello, abruptly ask the hostess if the manager is around. As you wait for him or her to appear, your mouth will go dry, your body re-allocating its resources to the sweaty palms of your hands.

The manager finally appears. In an almost out-of-body experience, all you can do is look on as your mouth somehow manages to convey words about your fundraiser that lack any sort of direction from your conscious mind. This goes on for what feels like an eternity. Eventually, you decide it's time to wrap your babbling up, and though you're unsure if what you said made any semblance of sense, you ask if Red Lobster, or whatever the name of the restaurant is, will support you, even though the question seems absolutely ludicrous at this point and you have a strong suspicion that all the other employees are probably honking with laughter in the back at you and your nervous diatribe.

To your complete surprise, the manager will probably either answer with, "Absolutely, let me go see what I can pull together in the back." or "Well, we'd love to help you out, but we've already given our allotted donation funds for the month. What you're doing is great, and I wish you the best."

And with a wet, warm shake of a hand, you turn and leave. Somewhere on the walk across the parking lot, conscious thought begins to kick back in. Euphoria rushes over you. You survived! You might even have a donation or a \$75 Red Lobster gift card in hand, but, even if you got rejected, you don't care.

You climb into your car and turn the ignition to see the clock and discover that what felt to like an arduous forty minutes was only four. You just sit there in the euphoric comedown from the gallon of adrenaline your body has poured into your bloodstream because you decided to make it ask for a donation.

Then, it hits you:

"Wait... Why should this bother me at all? All I'm doing is asking someone a question?"

You drive twenty yards to the Oregano's next door. This second ask isn't half as bad. You're not that attached to the outcome. You head to the 5 & Diner next door. You're almost relaxed now and give one helluva pitch. The manager snarls, "Nothing in this world is free." This doesn't even phase you as you're so enthralled by your newfound ability to ask another human being a question without eliciting the fight-or-flight response. You smile, thank him for his time, and walk out the door.

At 4:15pm, you're driving home with \$275 in restaurant gift cards (you can auction these off or use them as prizes at a fundraising event) and a \$100 check made out to your cause after stopping at a mere dozen restaurants. You no longer fear the ask, or the possibility of rejection, and, in fact, you feel like you could do just about anything.

Now, you're ready. It's time to bait and cast for bigger fish.

Ask Businesses

In my experience, businesses tend to donate larger amounts than individuals. A great way to entice business donations is to offer varying levels of sponsorship: the larger the donation the more you'll do in return. With creativity and drive, I'm sure it's possible to entice some huge donations. However, I recommend striving for a larger quantity of donations rather than larger size-of-business donations.

A good sponsorship-level scheme might be something like \$250, \$500, \$1,000. You can name each level something like Bronze, Silver, and Gold (but be more original than that). Maybe offer one Platinum sponsor level for \$2,500.

Try to make these donations at least somewhat worth it for a business. A couple of ideas to get you started:

- Add the business's logo to the back of your fundraising shirts
- Give a giant check presentation at the business and share photos on social media
- Offer to cook and share a meal with everyone in their office

Once you set sponsorship levels, write, format, and print them out on

quality cardstock paper. Then, go make your asks in person. You can email or call significantly more businesses in the amount of time it takes to appear in person, but there's usually little interest without you making a personal appearance.

From car dealerships to restaurants to hairdressers to doctor's groups, there are an inexhaustible number of businesses to ask. Look for businesses that are small enough that you can get a word with the owner or manager and large enough that they'll have the budget to spare. With large corporations, it's often difficult to connect with someone who actually has the authority to donate. I've had more success with locally owned and operated businesses.

Ask People

With your donation page live, and talk of your eye-catching fundraiser abuzz among friends, family, and your social media circle, donations should be rolling in, right?!?

Well... not really. Even if everyone's aghast with what you're going to do, few people actually donate in the beginning.

You have to remind them. Not on a daily basis (which might be super annoying). But perhaps weekly, or biweekly, after your launch. You don't want to repetitively ask people to donate either (which can feel like nagging).

Rather than ask, update. Send out an update on your progress via email every couple weeks with a prominent link to your donation page. More frequently, update everyone on the work and progress of your fundraiser through social media. Updates act as interesting, friendly reminders to donate. Through keeping everyone in the know, donations will gradually flow in.

Host Events

This is also the time to host fundraising events. Events work on multiple levels. In an obvious way, raising money then and there. And in a less obvious way, helping all who attend feel connected to your fundraiser, and thus, more likely to spread the word of it, which can lead to, well, anything.

There are an endless number of potential event ideas. Let me tell you about a few of my favorites:

- **Party With Purpose:** Throw a party with a donation jar at the door. You provide the food, drinks, and entertainment and ask for everyone to bring a monetary donation for your cause. Depending on what you and your people like to do, this might be a formal, catered gathering or a double-kegger with a DJ.
- **Partner with a Business:** Many restaurants, bars, and other sites of social gatherings will gladly split their revenue if you invite everyone out in the name of your cause. In college, I approached a craft brew taproom and convinced them to do their first ever fundraising night for Pedaling With Purpose, donating 20% of the total revenue to our fundraiser. Chipotle offers a whopping 50% of their revenue for fundraisers.
- **Community Garage Sale:** My sister has raised money for type-1-diabetes research through JDRF every year for ten years. One of her best ideas was to ask a shipping container rental agency to donate a container for a month, to be placed in our driveway. She then spread the word by flier around our neighborhood and social media that she was hosting this big garage sale for JDRF, asking everyone to drop off any unwanted stuff. A major success, it became an annual event, neighbors and friends using it as an opportunity for yearly downsizing, with sales reaching over \$1000 in a single day.

A Donor to Match Other's Donations

If a potential donor can double their impact through donation matching, they're much more likely to donate. Should a person or business express interest in donating a large sum of money, ask if they'd be willing to encourage others to donate by matching donations up to that amount. Not only is this good advertising for them, it theoretically doubles their impact as well. Rarely will anyone turn down such an offer.

Equipment Donations

I firmly believe that all money raised should go directly to your cause and not a cent put towards your trip. That said, there's nothing wrong asking companies who make the tools you need to pull off a successful fundraiser for donations of those tools. I reached out to a dozen or so companies after launching Pedaling With Purpose with equipment donation asks. Many generously obliged.

Here's a list of some of those wonderful companies and what they donated:

- GoPro donated a camera
- LL Bean donated two high-quality rain jackets (my brother won an essay contest for these)
- Stick Mule donated \$75 worth of custom sticker printing
- Zazzle donated custom printed Pedaling With Purpose shirts
- Impact Printing donated 1000 custom printed business cards
- Bruce Brown Catering (My brother bought his bicycle off Craigslist)

from Bruce), in an act of radical generosity, catered our return party with enough food for 200 people

An example donation ask:

Ethan

MAR 04, 2013 | 11:20AM EST

[Original message](#)

Hi,

I'm in need of printing up some stickers for my fundraiser for Phoenix Children's Hospital this summer. My brother and I will be pedaling our bikes across the United States this summer from Pacific to Atlantic in an effort to raise money for this non-profit hospital which saved my life a few years back. I'll spare you the details for now, but if you'd like to look into it more, we have quite a story you could read a bit more about on our donation page:

<http://action.phoenixchildrens.com/goto/pedaling>

We're wondering if **Sticker Mule** would be interested in donating a hundred stickers to our cause? I'm a college student now and don't have much extra money for promotion of our cause, you would be seriously doing us and Phoenix Children's Hospital a favor and could be helping us bring in thousands more of donations. In return we would gladly mention your extraordinary generosity on our twitter page and in our ride blog. We would also be happy with displaying your website or logo in the bottom or top of the **sticker** if you wanted to advertise that way too.

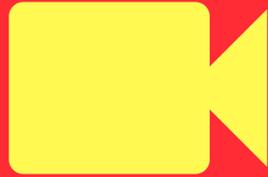
Let me know how you guys feel about helping our cause! Times are tough, if a donation just isn't in the cards right now, we completely understand.

Thanks for your time,

Ethan

You're a Catalyst

It's vital to remember that while you are working to raise money for an organization, all that money was earned by the hard work of others and given through their generosity. You are not creating this money, but acting as a catalyst for the donations of others. This is not an endeavor of *I*; this is an endeavor of *we*. Earnestly thank everyone who donates and let them know they're a member of your team, because donors play the most important role of all: *supporting the cause*.



Media Coverage

Reaching Beyond Your Audience



If the element of surprise isn't part of your game plan, three to four weeks before the start of your event is the ideal time to reach out to the people with the largest reach of all—the media. Locally, this could be newspapers, magazines, radio stations, or television news stations. The internet allows people to congregate around all kinds of interests. Consider reaching out to websites, blogs, and podcasts as well.

Once again, this is where straying from the crowd and doing something crazy enough to demand attention creates huge value. If your fundraiser is out-of-the-ordinary enough, you can earn a couple minutes on your local news station, get an article in the newspaper, or an interview on the radio, pitching your fundraiser to tens or even hundreds of thousands of people.

Pedaling with Purpose appeared on every major news station in Phoenix, had multiple articles in Arizona's biggest newspaper (including a full page

in the Sunday paper upon the completion of our cross-country ride), and landed us twice on Arizona's biggest talk radio station. We also had celebrities from Brett Michaels to Larry Fitzgerald to a Disney channel star I can't recall the name of share news of our ride through their social media accounts.



With Summit Diabetes, we didn't get featured in the newspaper but managed to get multiple television interviews before and after our trek, an interview with Arizona's biggest talk radio station, and shared our story through many diabetes blogs, adventure blogs, and a podcast.

Reach Out

Today, you can find the email address or social media account of just about anyone, especially reporters, news anchors, and other faces of journalism. These people are *looking* for great stories. Provide them with one.

If possible, I try to reach out to these people via email first. Something about email feels more official than social media. Don't blast out an announcement to everyone at a news organization either. If you're trying to get an interview on your local CBS station, don't simultaneously email every reporter. Do a bit of research and write the reporter you would like to cover your story. Compliment them on a recent piece, pitch them your story, and tell them why they're the person to tell it. If you don't hear back in two or three days, reach out by other means, or to someone else.

Can The Organization Reach Out for You?

While I personally garnered newspaper coverage and a couple of interviews for both Pedaling with Purpose and Summit Diabetes, much of our coverage came from the press relations teams hired by the organization for which we were fundraising.

Does the organization your supporting have a PR team? Are they willing to reach out for you? As it's a PR team's job to cultivate relationships with members of the media, they often have a better chance of getting coverage for a fundraiser than you do.

The Most Important Thing About Media Coverage

What's the point of getting all this coverage in the first place?

One word: donations.

The single most important thing about media coverage is that the audience knows how to donate to your cause. Nothing is more important. What's the point of telling your story and pitching your fundraiser to 100,000 people if they don't know how to help?

Going into an interview, your goal should be to ask people to donate and explain how. Multiple times. If necessary, be a politician and answer their first question with, "I'll get to your question in one second, [interviewer's name], but first I need to let everyone know (something about how incredible this charity is) and that they can donate at (your website url)." Then double back to answering their question.

Most people won't remember your web address if you only mention it once. Shoot for at least two, possibly three mentions of how to donate throughout the interview.. Interjecting, "And once again, that website is [www.yourwebaddress.com]. Please help us support this great cause," into a couple of your responses is easier once you've already told everyone why and how to donate once.

I learned this the hard way. In many of our televised interviews, we failed to mention our web address and received remarkably few donations.

Newscasters often concluded our interviews by thanking us and stating that a link to our donation page would be available on their website (which it usually was, but took even us multiple minutes to find, surely deterring anyone who went out of their way to look for our link in the first place).

Make it crystal clear how to help! If you don't, nobody will.



When THE Day Arrives

The Day is Here

Eventually, the days will dwindle until, one morning, you'll wake up and realize *the day* is here. It's time to undertake your undertaking! This is the day you've anticipated, built up, and worked towards for so long—it's a big deal. Jetting off in a plane from Arizona to Virginia to begin our cross-country bicycle ride for Pedaling with Purpose...the excitement, nerves, and anticipation were palpable.

Though this is the big event, the very thing you've spent all that time preparing, hyping up, and fundraising for, this section of the guide is quite short. That's because your event is a specific situation. I could tell you about the 76 days it took to ride a bicycle across the United States or the decision process of turning around half a mile from the top of the highest mountain in the continental United States when an unprecedented August snowstorm caught us in shorts and light rain jackets, but it's quite unlikely that these things are going to be relevant to your event.

Instead, I leave you with two important, universally applicable pieces of advice for your main event:

1. Update everyone often throughout. Whether your undertaking lasts an hour or a year, update everyone *often* throughout the process. Send out an email to let them know the day has arrived, announce it out through all your social media channels, go live on Facebook. If there was ever a time to make noise, it is now! Keep the updates flowing, they're the most welcomed and interesting reminders to donate.

2. Document it well. However you document your event, do it well. This means testing camera equipment beforehand, ensuring photo and/or video file formats are set correctly all the way through the production process to make sure everything works. During Pedaling with Purpose, we discovered our GoPro camera was defective on the first day of our cross country ride. It took three weeks to get a replacement. Recording video on multiple devices, we also discovered they all recorded in different aspect ratios AND different file types, making the editing process remarkably complicated afterward. Really, test this stuff out beforehand—you'll be glad you did.



Because I took high-quality photos and poured my heart, soul, and most of my downtime into a daily blog of my cross-country bike ride, we received a lot of publicity upon our return to Phoenix as we had so much quality material to share. Our photos and videos earned us prime coverage on multiple news stations, while the best of my writing was sampled by the Arizona Republic.

The footage I shot on our trek through the Sierra Nevadas for Summit Diabetes also heavily composed the visual aspect of our post-hike television interviews. If you have quality content to offer media outlets, they're much more likely to share your story.



Wringing and Wrapping Up Your Fundraiser

Your event is over. Whether you walked backward across your home state, lived in a pit of poisonous insects for a month, or whatever else you set out to attempt, I hope it went better than you could have imagined. Your event has come to an end, but your fundraiser still hasn't.

Let Everyone Know How It Went

As soon as you've finished your event, let everyone know, along with a big, persuasive donation ask. This is an announcement with the potential to spark more donations than any other announcement. Don't just dash a note off to everyone—quality is especially important right now.

Reach Out Again for Media Coverage

Reach out to your local media immediately after completing the event (or just before its completion, especially if you're within reasonable distance for them to send a reporter).

If a media outlet shared your story before the event, they're likely to want to follow up afterwards. And even if a media outlet ignored your proposal

before the event, it's worth following up again with a full story to share.

Once again, if you get coverage, remember it is *vital* that there is no confusion about how to donate.

Keep Your Eyes Wide for Unanticipated Opportunities

Life rarely plays out the way we envision it, and the same can be said for a fundraiser. Keep your eyes wide open for unexpected opportunities. I mention this at the end of this guide because both Pedaling with Purpose and Summit Diabetes raised a majority of their funds in unexpected ways after each undertaking.



After our ride, the Phoenix Children's Hospital Foundation offered to send a direct-mail piece out to 50,000 people in Phoenix with photos and a letter from me asking for donations. That direct-mail piece was responsible for \$72,000 of our \$96,000 in donations. As you can imagine, we were shocked by this number—the hospital was too.

A couple months after completing our Summit Diabetes trek, my sister was asked to give [the Fund-A-Cure speech](#) at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's yearly Gala, urging wealthy supporters to donate some serious funding for type 1 diabetes research. It was met with \$276,000 in donations.



When All is Said and Done

When all is said and done, send out one last message through all your communication channels and thank everyone. Remember, you were merely the catalyst for everyone else's donations. Let them know how much it means to have their support, and express your heartfelt thanks.



Before We Part

Before We Part

There you have it: *Man Bites Dog!* a blueprint for breaking from the crowd and building a radical, attention-demanding fundraiser. I've tried to illustrate this undertaking as both time-consuming and one of the most fulfilling ways to spend time—I hope it's come across that way. If you're in it for the right reasons, there are few things more satisfying than a righteous, creative endeavor—one of the few aspects of modern life where we can confidently feel our actions have a positive impact on the world.



I'll leave you with a paragraph from the last blog entry of my cross-country bike ride—words that convey the attitude and way in which I hope you too approach your fundraiser:

*“I miss the simplicity of the road, the openness of the country, the scorching hot days in the rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains where not a single square foot of shade could be found, the headwinds we fought, the tailwinds that propelled us, the days we rode over 100 miles, the meditative state of riding down an empty road with complete disconnect from the internet, **but most of all I miss the sense of purpose. I worked so hard on Pedaling With Purpose and loved every***

second of it. Whether it was asking a website to donate stickers to our cause, speaking into a camera, or losing 5,000 ft in elevation coming off the Cascades, I was so happy. It was my dream I was working towards and as long as I was working on making it a reality, nothing could bring me down.”

It's that spirit, that feeling of working on your own slice of good, that I hope you experience with your fundraiser. May it be fruitful and endlessly fulfilling.

The End

Thanks for reading! The internet is a crowded place. I thank you for your time and attention and hope you found this guide more than pertinent to your fundraising purposes.

As a little fish in the big pond of the internet, if you feel I've earned the endorsement, I'd appreciate it if you shared this guide with someone else who could make use of it. [Right click here](#) to copy a social-friendly url where anyone can download *Man Bites Dog!* free of charge.

Lastly, I'd like to invite you to join me at ethanmaurice.com for more inspiring and useful stuff from [how to find a free rental car for your next road trip](#) to [feeling more alive and less numb](#) to [a forgotten practice of many of history's greatest thinkers](#) that I think you should really know about.

[I also write a heartfelt letter to my fellow human beings each month that you can subscribe to here.](#)

With love & stoke,

Ethan

Also By Ethan Maurice:

[GO. A Ridiculously Useful Guide to Cheap Unconventional Travel](#)