

10 Ways to Be a Great Ambassador for your Non-Profit Organization

By Dr. Donna L. Goldstein

1. Wear something such as a pin, scarf or tie tack that will encourage others to speak to you and give you an opportunity to put in a "plug" about your cause. Habitat for Humanity and the Literacy Coalition both sell attractive and colorful pins with designs that speak to their mission. Nearly everyone now knows the red ribbons for AIDS and pink ribbons for breast cancer.
2. Arrange to have your Executive Director or Development Director as a guest speaker at your civic and professional associations. Let them speak on a topic of interest and relevance to your group and ways your non-profit is making a difference. If you enjoy speaking, volunteer to serve on or start a Speakers Bureau for your organization.
3. Get to know the press in your local area, from all the local papers. Call them when you have a good human interest story. The Gold Coast Jazz Society's recent Jazz Jam at the Broward Outreach (homeless) Center attracted a good bit of local press, including nearly a full page in the Sun-Sentinel with a large color photo of one of the residents (a professional musician for over 40 years) happily playing a conga.
4. Keep invitations handy for upcoming fund raisers, showcases, parties, golf/tennis tournaments and other sponsored events. Share these with interested friends, co-workers, colleagues and family members.
5. Keep up to date on the services your organization provides. The Young at Art Children's Museum recently announced that one million kids had been through their museum — very impressive, eh? How many kids attend your summer reading program? How many hot meals have you provided for low-income seniors this year? How many pets have you placed in loving homes?
6. Be on the lookout for other organizations in both the public and private sectors that might make good partners. This will make for a stronger case when you apply grant funding as well. A play I recently produced, "The African-American Portrait Gallery: Discovering Timeless Heroes," had initial sponsors in the non-profit, governmental and private sectors and has been seen by over 3,000 children and adults in schools, arts and community centers, homeless centers and more.
7. Practice your "elevator speech." Imagine that you have 30 seconds in an elevator or airport with a major prospective funder. Would your "pitch" about your organizations mission, goals or accomplishments be succinct and compelling enough to make them interested in meeting with you and making a contribution at a later date?
8. Keep a portfolio handy with recent newspaper clippings, programs, annual reports and other documentation of the good and important work your organization is doing. Update this frequently.
9. Always be on the lookout for prospective Board and Committee Members. Do not however, as I observed recently, walk up to a stranger and invite them to serve on your Board just because they work for a major organization. Get to know them first, and insure that they have shown an interest in and commitment to your organization and its mission. The Mosaic Theatre, for example, recently invited a gentlemen, who had been a season subscriber and major contributor to their fund raiser, to be a board member.
10. Always speak well of your organization to outsiders. At some point, nearly every non-profit organization has some internal challenges with their Boards or staff. Keep this and any "drama" to yourself or between you and the appropriate Board or staff members. As an Ambassador spread the good word — or none at all!



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