A good way to increase your income from a special event, raise money from local community businesses, mark an important anniversary, and/or promote your organization’s work is through the production of an ad journal. An ad journal is a pamphlet or booklet that is essentially a PR piece for your organization produced for a specific occasion. Although it contains information about your organization, it is made up primarily of advertisements that you have sold. The goal is to raise more money through ad sales than it costs to produce, print, and distribute the ad journal.

BENEFITS OF AD JOURNALS

There are both tangible and intangible benefits to producing an ad journal. On the tangible side are increased financial contributions; on the intangible side are increased involvement from businesses and volunteers.

- Ad journals can be very profitable, since they need not cost a lot to produce. A page of ads is typically sold at a rate that is five to ten times more than the cost to produce it, depending on a number of factors, including total number of pages of the ad journal, quality of paper, and costs of design, production, and printing.
- Small business owners will sometimes spend more money for an ad than they would for a contribution because it is a way to promote their business to a very targeted audience. Businesses have advertising budgets from which to purchase ad space in your journal even if they do not allocate money for charitable contributions.
- Ad journals can generate support from individuals and businesses that might not be as likely to respond to a request for a direct contribution. Those who do not yet have a strong connection to your cause can be sold on the idea of the exposure that advertising will give them.
- Members of your organization who are still reluctant to ask for money often find it easier to sell ads. This experience may be the first step in people being willing to ask for individual contributions.

As is true with special events, the first time you produce an ad journal is the hardest. By doing the journal on an annual basis, however, you will develop a body of advertisers that are likely to renew their ads, so your job gets easier each year. For the same amount of time spent, or less, your journal will make more and more money as you increase the number of advertisers and get better at the mechanics of production.

Including copy in the journal that is interesting and appealing to your constituency will make it easier to sell ads. Non-ad copy in the journal depends on the occasion for which you are producing it. The Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation, for example, produces an ad journal for their annual Lesbian Writers’ Fund Gala. In addition to ads, their journal includes poetry and short fiction by writers who are receiving an award at the gala, a list of individuals and businesses that are sponsors of the event, statements from the executive director and board chair, photographs of people involved in the writers’ fund, and information about the Astraea Foundation.

Having an occasion at which to distribute the ad journal also ensures a specific audience who will see — and, we hope, look through — the publication, something advertisers will care about.

PITCHING THE ADS

Selling ad space can be a challenge, however, particularly if your organization is not well known in your community. Advertisers generally know that they will not get the kind of exposure through your journal that they would in a local newspaper. Do not be surprised if prospective advertisers complain that they never get any business from ads they place in nonprofit organizations’
There are several things you can say to counter this complaint:

- Their ad lets the reader know that this business cares about your issues and is willing to support you. In many communities, people like to support businesses that they perceive as being responsive to them. Environmentalists will be more likely to do business with someone who supports an environmental organization. Women may prefer to do business with women-owned companies. Even if customers don’t specifically tie their patronage to the ad, chances are it is drawing some business.

- Advertisers will be reaching a potentially new constituency for a reasonable cost.

- It is a commonly accepted advertising principle that people need to see the name of a product at least three times before they purchase it. This makes it difficult to measure response to any single advertisement. (You can point out one way to measure response is to include a coupon in the ad offering readers a discount for the product or services.) Although the readers of your journal may not go out the next day and call the accountant who advertised there, the next time they are looking for someone to do their taxes, they may remember his or her name when they see it in the yellow pages.

Most important in your pitch, however, is to sell your cause to a group of prospects you have good reason to think might support you. This goal is the same as for a solicitation for a gift of any kind. And, like most successful campaigns, most of the ads you sell will be to people known to someone in the organization or to local businesses that know the important work your organization does in the community.

**SHOULD YOU DO AN AD JOURNAL?**

In considering whether or not to produce an ad journal, think about the following issues:

- **Do you have enough volunteers to work on it?** Producing an ad journal is labor intensive and requires an enormous amount of follow-up and attention to detail. If you are producing an ad journal as part of a special event, you should create a separate committee of at least three volunteers who work exclusively on the ad journal.

- **Do you have enough lead time to produce the journal?** Ideally you need four months, particularly if you are doing it for the first time, to put your ad journal together, including selling ads and completing the design and production work. Although this will vary greatly with the size and fundraising goals of your ad journal, your committee should plan to spend a total of 6 to 10 hours a week for the first month, and up to 15 or 20 hours a week after that.

- **Have you defined the audience or constituency for the journal?** Prospective advertisers will want to know who will see their ads. A special event gives you a specific time, place, and audience. Otherwise you need to be prepared to let advertisers know who they can expect will see their ads.

- **Do you know who your potential advertisers are?** See below for ideas on developing a fundraising goal that will determine how many prospects you need, developing a good prospects list, and determining if you have enough prospects to reach your goal. Assuming that for first-time requests made either in person or by letter with a follow-up phone call, 20% – 30% will say yes. You will need at least 100 prospects to sell 30 ads.

**STEPS IN PRODUCING AN AD JOURNAL**

Once you’ve decided to go forward with an ad journal, here are the steps to follow for the greatest success.

1. **Determine Your Fundraising Goal**

   How much money do you want to make from the ad journal? If you have produced a journal for your organization in the past, use that experience as a starting point for estimating an achievable goal. Assuming that factors such as the state of the economy in your community, public awareness of your organization, and competition from other nonprofits haven’t changed dramatically since your last ad journal, you can assume that for the same amount of effort and time, you will raise more and more money every year.

   If this is your first ad journal, your fundraising goal will be made based on the lists of potential advertisers you can generate: Are they strong prospects? That is, do they know about your organization? Do they support similar kinds of organizations? Assume that with a strong prospect list you can expect to sell one ad for every three names on your list.

2. **Develop a Budget**

   Complete a detailed income and expense projection for the project. Expenses will include

   **DESIGN AND PRODUCTION**

   Have a designer create a template for the journal, including pages for ad and non-ad copy. Keep in mind that it is most cost effective to print pages that are a standard size — either 8.5” × 11” or 5.5” × 8.5”. You may find a
volunteer within your organization who knows how to use a desktop publishing program such as PageMaker or QuarkXPress, but you may need to hire a graphic designer to do this part of the job.

**PRINTING**

There are two types of materials to be printed:

- **Materials used to solicit ads**, such as a letter, sample page layout, reply form, and other information about your organization. (Unless you're sending a large quantity of solicitation materials, these are usually photocopied in-house.)

- **The journal itself**. Printing costs will depend on the total number of pages of the journal, the quality of the paper you use, and whether or not you are using photographs. Printing can be as much as 60–70% of the entire cost of producing the journal.

**Postage**. Include the costs of sending out the journal to your advertisers when it is completed, as well as the cost of sending solicitation letters.

**Telephone**. Be sure to figure in this expense if solicitations are to be made to businesses outside of your local calling area.

**Staff time**. This is a separate area from the people you hire for the technical aspects of producing the journal and includes any staff time used for getting materials together, soliciting ads, and working with volunteer ad salespeople, the designer, and the printer. Because the cost of salaried staff’s time is not an out-of-pocket expense, many organizations choose not to include it in their budget. However, you will have a much clearer picture of the resources it takes to produce the journal if you track the amount of time staff spends.

Income will come, of course, from ad sales. In order to do a projection of income, you need to set prices for the ads and decide on the number of pages your ad journal will have. If this is your first journal, see if you can find out what other organizations in your community charge for ads. An example of a price range used by a midsized nonprofit organization in New York City in 1994 for an ad journal with pages measuring 8.5" x 11" was the following:

- One-line greeting (or listing of name): $50
- Eighth-page (or business-card size): $100
- Quarter-page: $175
- Half-page: $325
- Full page: $600
- Inside front and back covers: $700

The prices for ads should be set so as to give an incentive to place larger ads. For example, a half-page should cost less than twice the amount of a quarter-page ad.

### 3. Develop prospect lists

Like any fundraising strategy, your best prospects are people you and the folks in your organization already know. Here's a place to start:

- Vendors that your organization does business with or has relationships with, e.g., office supply store, printers, landlord, neighborhood deli.
- Businesses that your members use or work for.
- People who want to be known to your community, including self-employed individuals, such as therapists, chiropractors, real estate agents, and accountants who serve the community in which you operate; businesses that have advertised in ad journals of similar organizations in your community; and nonprofit organizations that you work closely with.

As in any kind of fundraising strategy, you will first want to approach people who are most likely to say yes and later solicit less likely prospects. When you then begin to ask prospects who are not as close to the organization, you can indicate that a number of ads have already been sold so that they know they are part of a larger group of people who support your work.

As part of the process of developing a prospect list for selling ads, ask your members to make up a list of all the businesses they come into contact with, using the following checklist to generate ideas:

Where you shop for groceries
Your local dry cleaner
Your hairdresser/barber
Companies you or your friends and family members work for
Restaurants you go to
Your dentist, doctor, chiropractor, therapist, or other health care practitioner

In addition to your members' contacts, some have found it useful to look through the ad journals of similar kinds of organizations in your community. The Astraea Foundation developed part of their prospect list from the ad journals of several lesbian and gay organizations in New York City. Because they knew that advertisers in these journals were lesbian- or gay-owned businesses or at least lesbian/gay friendly, there was good reason to think they would at least consider placing an ad in Astraea's ad journal.

Compile the lists from your members into a master list of prospects that can be assigned to the volunteers working on the ad journal. If members are willing, it's preferable to have them solicit ads from their own prospects.
4. Develop a Packet and Send to Prospects
A packet should include the following:

- A solicitation letter explaining the purpose of the ad journal, what the money is being raised for, the audience or market for the ads (who will receive the journal), the good publicity it will give the businesses that support your work, and what non-ad copy will be part of the publication.

- An ad-rate sheet that explains the prices for different sizes of ads, deadlines for submitting ad copy, and a tear-off to send back an agreement to place the ad.

- A diagram or sample page showing ad sizes, proportions, and layout possibilities. This visual aid is particularly useful to people who are not accustomed to placing display advertising.

- Clear instructions about the format ads should be in. Increasingly, designers prefer electronic files, rather than hard copy for ads. Such files can be e-mailed to your designer. Electronic files of ads that have photographs or logos may need to come in special format, such as TIFF or EPS; your designer should make these specifications clear in the instructions.

Send the packets out to your prospect list at least one month before ad copy is due. This gives businesses or individuals the time to put together an ad if they don’t have one available.

At this point, you need to decide whether you’re willing to design ads for people who don’t have easy access to design resources — or who won’t take the time to design their own. For these people, add a design fee to the cost of placing an ad in your journal and set the deadline for getting that ad copy in a couple of weeks earlier than the deadline for designed ads.

5. Make Follow-up Calls
This is the most critical step in the entire process. A committee of volunteers should make follow-up calls to those who received the solicitation package. The purpose of the calls is to obtain commitments from people and then actually get the ad copy in. Those who have contacts with the businesses and individuals being solicited should as much as possible be enlisted to make the follow-up calls.

Often the most time-consuming part of this process is getting the ad copy in hand after someone has agreed to place an ad in your journal.

Here is a scenario that can happen with any number of potential advertisers:

March 1 — You send a solicitation packet to the attention of Rochelle, your sales rep at Office Helper, the local office supply store with which you do a lot of business.

March 10 — You follow up with a phone call to Rochelle. She isn’t available, so you leave a message.

March 13 — You call again. Rochelle doesn’t remember receiving the packet, so you explain that your organization is putting together an ad journal and would like Office Helper to place an ad. She asks you to send another copy of the materials and says she’ll have to talk to the store manager. You send another packet out that day, indicating that you’ll call back again in a couple of days.

March 16 — You call back and Rochelle says that she showed the letter to her manager who is now thinking about it and will let you know within the week.

March 23 — You haven’t heard anything from Rochelle, so you call again. She’s gone on vacation for the week and the manager is not available to speak to you.

March 30 — Rochelle calls you and says the store will take out a half-page ad and will get the copy to you by the following week (which happens to be the deadline, fortunately).

April 8 — Ad copy from Office Helper has not arrived, so you call Rochelle to find out what happened. She said their ad designer was out sick and they need another couple of days. She also tells you that they realized they had overspent their advertising and contributions budget this year, so will have to take out a smaller, one-quarter page ad.

April 15 — You go to Office Helper personally to pick up the ad so that your designer can get the ad in time for it to appear in the ad journal.

This is not a particularly unusual scenario, and many other things can happen, such as the ad copy arrives in a program your designer can’t open, or the ad copy needs to be designed even though camera-ready copy had been promised.

Like special events, there is no way to anticipate all the
glitches, setbacks, and delays that can happen in producing an ad journal. It is therefore very important to give yourself plenty of time to deal with them and to try to hold people to deadlines as much as you possibly can.

6. Produce the Journal

Production of the ad journal involves making design decisions (such as the typeface for non-ad copy, the look of borders around pages or ads) and production decisions, including the order in which the pages will appear in the finished booklet and the total number of pages the journal will consist of.

Keep in mind that it is much easier for your designer if he or she gets all of the copy at once. Giving her ads and other copy as they trickle in will cause delays and frustration on all sides.

It’s most cost effective for printing if your journal is a standard size, such as 8.5" × 11" or 5.5" × 8.5". Remember, too, that the total number of pages must be a multiple of four, because a book or pamphlet is printed on both sides of a piece of paper that is then folded in half or in quarters. Thus the total number of pages will be 4, 8, 12, 16, etc.

Allow plenty of time for the production phase, and even more if a volunteer is producing the journal. Plan for at least two weeks for the design phase and two more weeks for printing.

SPECIAL TERMS

For people new to producing publications of this kind, it may be useful to know a few of the technical terms that designers and printers may use as though they were part of your everyday vocabulary. Your best resource, however, is your printer. Check with them about any technical issues that arise.

Halftones are photographs converted by the printer into a series of dots using a screening process. They may be made by the printer from original black-and-white glossy photos or from images scanned into an electronic file according to your designer’s instructions.

Screen tint is a way of setting off or calling attention to a section of a page by creating a block of gray (or if using color, a paler density of the color) “behind” the type.

Line Screen tells you the number of lines (or dots) per inch at which the screens used for halftones and tints will be printed. The higher the number, the crisper the quality.

Linotronic or lino print is a higher quality print than a laser printer can produce. A laser printer produces 300 (or 600) dots per inch (dpi) for text, compared to linotronic output, which ranges from 1,200 to 2,400 dpi. If any of your advertisers are unable to submit their ad electronically, they can have a lino produced at a special photo lab. These high-quality prints can be expensive — $10 or more per page.

You may not need to know these terms at all to handle the production of your ad journal. However, I once had the experience of being asked by a potential advertiser what line screen we were using. Not knowing what that meant, I called our designer, who told me that the line screen was 53. I called the advertiser back and she said “53! That’s strange.” I still didn’t understand what the problem was and wished I knew more of the technical language of the printing business.

TIMELINE FOR PRODUCING AN AD JOURNAL

Here is a typical timeline for a four-month schedule for producing an ad journal from start to finish.

Weeks 1–3: Planning phase: Determine size of the ad journal, ad rates, prospect lists, recruit committee of volunteer solicitors, write solicitation letter, meet with designer, making sure that you and she agree on what the final product should look like.

Week 4: Send solicitation packet to prospects.

Weeks 5–7: Conduct follow-up calls.

Week 7: Published deadline for ads, including copy for ads you will be designing

Week 9: Deadline for all non-ad copy

Week 10: Real deadline: The time by which you absolutely have to have all the ad copy in hand. Do not let people know that you are working with this deadline. It is only meant to give you time to track down ads from people who can’t meet the stated deadline.

Weeks 11: Designer delivers first draft to you.

Week 12: Two people proofread journal. Don’t leave out this critical step!

Week 13: Journal is back with designer for corrections and comes back to you for final proofreading.

Week 14: Journal goes to printer.

Week 16: Journal is delivered from printer.

If you begin to incorporate ad journals as an annual fundraising activity, you will develop systems, prospects, and a timeline that work best for you and may speed up the process by a week or two. However, always give yourself an extra week for each deadline that you set to accommodate crises and unforeseen delays. You will be much less stressed and have a better product as a result.

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