



***Official
Guide to
House Party
Fundraising***

Getting Started

Slow and steady wins the race.

Setting up a house party does not have to be difficult. Getting started is difficult only if you don't know where to start. This small handbook is designed to give you the tools to plan and execute a great fundraising house party. And the first thing you need is a checklist.

The checklist not only allows you to make sure you've covered all your bases, but it also allows you to **relax** in the knowledge that everything is on time and on track. Even the most experienced professional event planners use checklists. In fact, the most experienced professional event planners wouldn't dream of putting on an event without one. So, the best and easiest way to get started is to grab hold of your checklist, and start crossing off items.

In order to get the event off to a great start, here are some of the key items you'll need to cover in more detail....

1. Set a date, time, and location.

- a. Set the **date** and **time** your candidate or organization is free to do a house party.
- b. Select a host or hosts who will do a lion's share of the work. The host must be willing to arrange for location, coordinate food, help secure other hosts, and add people to the general invitation list.
- c. Basic guidelines to keep in mind:

Holding events at a private homes work best.

If this is not possible, events can be held at public locations. The best house party will have the host pick up the tab for food and event location if needed. This ensures that more of the money you raise is put directly toward electing your candidate or supporting your cause.

Events generally last 1½ - 2 hours.

Most often, they take place after business hours on weekdays (beginning at 5:30 p.m. or later) or during the afternoon or evening on weekends. We do not recommend brunch or morning events on the weekends. Business-focused groups can meet for breakfast or lunch, if they wish.



Pick a date that is at least six weeks in the future.

This ensures you will have enough time to make phone calls and send invitations.

2. Set a specific fundraising goal.

- a. **Choose a fundraising goal that is high, but reasonable.** When available, use past experience to set an overall fundraising goal for the event. With active participation from your primary host, fundraising events can be extremely successful. House parties should raise anywhere from \$3,000 to \$50,000 for a campaign or organization.
- b. **Set contribution request levels both for the host committee and for regular attendees.** The requested host* contribution is usually higher than the per person attendance. Hosts are also listed on the invitation. Host contribution levels are typically set between \$125 - \$1000 for a typical house party. Many list as \$125, \$250, \$500 or \$1000. You can give names to each level so that people can be recognized not for their specific donation but for the level at which they gave. Per person attendance is often set between \$25 and \$50.

***Important note: Most of the money raised from your event will be through the host committee!**

When you set the requested contribution amounts, calculate how many hosts are needed to reach the fundraising goal to ensure this seems realistic. This will be your target number of hosts. You should assume that 80% of your total income will flow from the hosts so if you want to raise \$10,000, you will need \$8,000 in host contributions.

For instance, if your overall goal was \$10,000, you would need 32 hosts at \$250, or 16 hosts at \$500. Or you could strive for 10 at \$500 and another 12 at \$250. Does that sound do-able to you? If not, then you need to rethink goals until you reach a reasonable scenario.

3. Review and confirm timeline and checklist with all individuals working on the event.

- a. Place one person in charge who can coordinate all efforts. This ensures that nothing gets left out. Finding out that no one called a caterer the night before an event can be terrifying. And yes, that has happened!



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Host Do's and Don'ts for a Great Event

Do

1. **Recruit a host committee.** Take an active role in calling to recruit individuals and couples for the host committee. This is where most of the money is raised and will be a majority of the individuals who attend your event.
2. **Get help recruiting even *more* hosts.** Ask your friends to help you recruit additional members for the host committee and add names to the invitation list. Your friends may know additional people who would be willing to participate. More hosts mean more money for your candidate or organization.
3. **Go through lists for ideas.** Look through your Rolodex or Christmas card list, industry or professional association directory, Rotary or service club directory, church directory, or even your phone book to add names to the mailing list. The invitations are only as good as the people to whom they are sent.
4. **Call friends and colleagues.** Make personal calls to your friends who do not RSVP. Many people do not feel comfortable or welcome in another person's home unless they are *personally* invited.

Don't

1. **Assume people will come.** Don't assume that most of the people you invite will attend. If they haven't responded, chances are they are not coming.
2. **Do it all yourself.** Don't try to be a "Superman" or "Superwoman." It's a tremendous effort to put together a fundraising event. In addition to making phone calls and helping with the invitation list, you'll be preparing both your home and refreshments for guests. Remember: People aren't coming to your home for the food, but to meet the candidate or your organization's special guest. Simple, classic hors d'oeuvres like vegetables and dip or a great cheese tray are just fine.
3. **Leave it all to others.** Don't leave all of the phone calling and mailing lists to the campaign or organization. Their lists are NOT comprehensive and a call from a staff member isn't nearly as effective as a call from you.
4. **Wait till the last minute.** Don't wait until the last minute to make your host calls, put together your invitation list, or make your food and beverage arrangements. You may not reach your potential hosts on the first try. Leaving messages and waiting for them to call you back takes time. Needless to say, waiting for crunch time to reach out to potential hosts is a recipe for disaster.



Event Timeline and Checklist

Date Due	Time prior to event	By whom	Check when done	Description of task
	Six weeks +	Host/ Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Set date, time, and location
	Six weeks +	Host/ Staff		Set fundraising goals. Determine host and guest contribution amounts. Determine number of host committee members.
	Five weeks	Host		Determine if you will put together a steering committee of friends who will help you recruit the host committee. Make calls to get them on board to help with this task.
	Five weeks	Host		Put together a list of people you will call to be on the host committee and begin making calls.
	Five Weeks	Staff		Notify local leadership of your event. If this is a campaign event notify the locally elected officials.
	Five Weeks	Staff		Put together list of past campaign donors in the area and other targeted lists (based on industry, donations to other candidates) to call for hosts; begin making calls.
	Five Weeks	Staff		The campaign or organization can provide a list to you of potential individuals to invite to your event from their files including the following: donor list, mailing lists, etc.
	Four weeks	Host/ Staff		Continue making calls to recruit hosts.
	Four weeks	Host		Check in with other people making host recruitment calls.
	Four weeks	Host		Look through lists provided by campaign to determine whom you would like to invite. Feel free to add names not already on the list. Return lists to the campaign or organization to begin addressing envelopes.
	Four weeks	Host		Provide directions to your home to be listed in the invitation.
	Three weeks	Host/ Staff		Deadline for hosts to be listed on the invitation
	Three weeks	Staff		Print and send invitations both via mail and email.
	Two weeks	Staff		Keep and provide list of attendees and contributions to event host as they are received. This should be done right up until the last day.
	Two weeks	Host		Make arrangements for food and beverages.
	One week	Staff		Make phone calls to everyone who received an invitation who has not responded.
	One week	Host		Make phone calls to targeted individuals who received an invitation and have not responded (as many as you think you can do).
	Week of	Staff		Provide an estimated final count of attendance.
	Week of	Host		Make final arrangements for food and beverages.
	Day of event	Staff		Send a final list of attendance and contributions. Prepare a 8 1/2 X 11 framed list of all hosts to be displayed at the event.
	Day of event	Staff		Provide a person to greet people at the door, accept contributions, write nametags, and offer campaign literature.
	Day of event	Host		Gather guests at a common area of the home to introduce him or her before candidate or special guest makes brief remarks and does Q&A. Host should introduce the candidate or special guest.
	After the event	Staff		Provide a list of actual attendees and contributions received. If contributions are not received after one week, send reminder letters.



Good events

... and not so good events.

As you've seen on the checklist included in this packet, there are many items on this list that someone may be taking care of for you: printing your invitations, stuffing envelopes, and making followup calls. On the other hand, calling your friends is something only you can do.

Here are some examples (based on our actual experience on the campaign trail...) of how this partnership can work, and how it doesn't work. Names have been changed to protect the innocent.

"Last Minute Jim" chose the date for his event six weeks in advance. The campaign sent him their lists for review. He left town for two weeks and didn't make any calls for the host committee. When he was called to see if he needed help making some calls for the host committee on his behalf, he assured staff and was confident he could make the calls himself. Another week passed with no action. He decided that instead of having a host committee to ensure the event is well attended and reaches his fundraising goal, he would send a letter to a few of his friends for a "small get together." His administrative assistant was sent a sample letter. Another week passed and he had not yet sent out the letter. It was suggested that if he would send his list someone else would fax out the letters for him. When the list was received just seven days before the event, there were only twelve names. The event needed to be cancelled and instead of reaching his goal of \$6,000. "Last Minute Jim" raised a grand total of \$0.

"Pro-active Sally" also set the date for her event six weeks in advance. She was sent lists and she started highlighting the people she wanted to ask to be on the host committee. She decided she would have host contributions at two levels to encourage more participation and maximize the amount of money she could request from some friends with more substantial means. She looked through her holiday card list, her church directory, and her Rotary club directory. She called 34 people ... 23 of whom agreed to contribute at one of the two suggestion host donation levels. She then added names of her friends, family, political activists and donors in town, and the names of people she knew from the lists that were sent to her. She came up with a total of 140 names, which were typed into a spreadsheet. The invitations were printed, stuffed and sent. The week before the event, everyone who had not replied was called. Sally was given regular reports on who had contributed and who was attending. She periodically added new people to invite. Sally met her fundraising goal of \$8,000 and had at least 50 people come through the doors of her home. Several months later, people still tell her what a great time they had at her home.



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That's it! Nothing fancy. Nothing splashy. Just a lot of good planning, attention to detail, and great follow through.

Follow this plan and your house party will not be the house party from the dark side, but rather an enjoyable evening spent with good friends raising money for a great cause!

And then, when you are done raising money and are ready to identify and turnout your voters, remember CampaignHQ for your Voter ID, GOTV, and robocall needs.

You can reach us at 888-722-4704 or go to our website at www.campaign-headquarters.com where you can request a quote online.

Have a great time at the PARTY!



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