

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL RAFFLE PROGRAMS
Compiled by Lois Smith, DTM
for District One Toastmasters

Step by Step

1. If you're too busy to do this yourself, get a helper. This will take only about 3-4 hours in all and will be very much worth the effort!
2. Review the Toastmasters International guidelines about donations for fundraising activities at <http://www.toastmasters.org/pdfs/fundraise.pdf>.
3. Start working on your donation campaign right away, as some organizations require 4-6 weeks to consider donation requests.
4. Think about the kinds of raffle prizes that would motivate YOU to buy lots of raffle tickets.
5. Think about the stores and businesses that are in your local area that offer products or services you'd like to win.
6. Target a small list of those stores or businesses - say, five.
7. Go on the Internet or make some phone calls to see if the targeted companies make donations and if there are any guidelines or requirements for submitting a request.
8. Get the name and address of the person who should receive your request, and write a personal request letter. A sample is shown below. Be sure to include the IRS letter confirming that Toastmasters International is a tax-exempt organization. Many companies and businesses will need it when they prepare their taxes. If you have an event flyer, include that with your letter as well.
9. Send your request letter by postal mail, unless the company asks for a request by e-mail. Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope, whether or not that is required. That SASE is often the key factor in a company's decision to donate.
10. If it's a local business, try to arrange to go in person to pick up the gift. At the same time, you can hand-deliver a thank-you note.
11. When you get the donated prize, SEND A THANK-YOU LETTER. A sample letter is shown below.
12. Inform the raffle chair what the prize is and who donated it. This information will be printed in the event materials to stimulate raffle ticket sales and to acknowledge the donors.

Value and Types of Gifts

Please try to obtain a gift with a retail value of AT LEAST \$25. Gifts should be "unisex" - that is, they should be appealing to both men and women, or to families. Gift certificates are usually the best because the winner can select an item of his/her choice and are easiest to obtain from donors because they can be mailed to you.

What really makes a raffle zing is a large gift valued at over \$100. If you have any personal connections, or have your own company or business that can afford a high-value donation, the BIG gift will probably result in higher-than-anticipated ticket sales.

Here are some types of businesses that might be willing to donate goods, services, or gift certificates. Although you can target large company stores, don't forget about small, local stores too.

- Bookstores
- Coffeeshouses (Coffee Bean, Peets, Starbucks, etc.)
- Department stores
- Fitness centers or YMCAs (free visitor or guest passes)
- Grocery stores and specialty food stores (Trader Joes, etc.)
- Home and garden centers (Home Depot, Armstrong, etc.)
- Personal care providers (spas, beauty shops)
- Restaurants
- Sporting goods stores

If you yourself offer professional services and are able to donate some time, things like tax preparation or legal services are likely to be very popular in a raffle.

District Conference Raffles

The District Conference raffle chair will contact the following organizations for donations for the spring and fall conferences. If you are helping to solicit donations for the spring or fall conference, please do not contact them unless the raffle chair asks you to do so:

- Autry Museum
- Disneyland
- Knott's Berry Farm
- Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific
- Los Angeles Zoo
- Regal Entertainment Group (movie theaters)
- San Diego Zoo
- San Diego Wild Animal Park
- SeaWorld
- Universal Studios

Personal Connections with Potential Donors

If you yourself have, or know someone with connections at businesses, companies, or organizations, please contact the District One governor so the information can be passed along to the event raffle chair.

The Donation Letter and Supporting Materials

Below is a sample donation request letter. Fill in the blanks [inside brackets] and feel free to embellish with as many compelling details as possible.

Attachments to the Letter

1. Toastmasters International proof of nonprofit status. This can be downloaded from the TI Web site at <http://www.toastmasters.org/pdfs/irsltr.pdf>.
2. Event flyer

Date

Name of recipient
Company/organization name
Street address
City, state, zip

Dear [name of recipient]:

On [date of event], Toastmasters International will host the [name of event], which will be held at the [event location]. The event will include [activities, such as educational presentations, contests]. About [number of attendees] Toastmasters members from throughout the Los Angeles area will attend.

On behalf of Toastmasters International, I'm writing to ask if you would consider donating [say exactly what you're seeking, such as two or more complimentary tickets, or a prize valued at a minimum of \$25]. This tax-deductible donation to Toastmasters International, which is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization (tax ID 95-1300076), will help us raise funds to ensure that we break even on the event. We will include a list of all the raffle prizes with each registrant's package to acknowledge your donation and participation. We will also display any promotional brochures or materials you wish to provide to further your exposure to those in attendance at the conference.

With more than 200,000 members in 9,300 clubs worldwide and in approximately 80 countries, Toastmasters is the largest nonprofit organization in the world devoted to improving the quality of people's lives through the development of communication and leadership skills.

We would be very grateful for your donation. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at the number below. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your name
Your mailing address

Your daytime phone number
Your e-mail address

Enclosures: Event flyer, IRS tax-exempt letter

The Thank-You Letter

This is not just a nice thing to do, it's absolutely critical, because someday you may wish to contact these people again, and you want to leave them with a good impression of Toastmasters and of you.

Date

Name of recipient
Company/organization name
Street address
City, state, zip

Dear [name of recipient]:

The [event name] held on [date] was a huge success! All those who attended benefited greatly from the [activities]. All in all, it was a great day!

Our raffle was especially successful and in large part, because of the many donations we received. The money earned in raffle sales helped tremendously toward the cost of hosting such an event. Our only means of covering the costs for the conference are through registration and raffle ticket sales. Because of your generosity, we were able to muster a great deal of participation from our conference guests. We received many compliments regarding the variety and quality of our raffle prizes. There was certainly a lot of excitement during the entire day!

Thank you for your generous donation and for helping to make such a huge difference at our event. More important, thank you for supporting our Toastmasters organization whose focus is to help develop and foster communication and leadership skills within our members AND for the betterment of our communities and our world. Your donation means a great deal to us and to our organization. We truly appreciate your thoughtfulness and participation.

Sincerely,

Your name
Your mailing address
Your daytime phone number
Your e-mail address

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Donna Oja, Bernie Steenson, and others who have shared their wisdom and materials for soliciting donations for District One raffles. If you have information that could be added to this document, please send them to Lois Smith (litservices@social.rr.com).