

## **Image building in your communities – blowing your own horn.**

How the general public views your Lions Club can translate into lots of support and dollars or not. Wise and successful service organizations spend time creating an image and keeping it polished ... it's called branding or marketing. You are facing increased competition for charitable dollars ... so you have to continue working on your image with the public.

Maybe your organization needs to create it's own public identity or image. It is the public, the community that sustains you. They play your bingos, attend your breakfasts, buy your 50/50 tickets, rent your hall, supports your lotteries and buys your fruit cakes. Be as transparent as you can be by showing the public where your fundraised dollars are going. This information can be conveyed in several forms. IE: An annual report which could go out to your partners and major donors; on your website; in the form of a newsletter. And remember, it's not just about financial figures. Sure, it's nice to indicate the amounts of money you've given back to various organizations and causes, but more importantly what kind of impact has it had on the community. For example, 300 families now have access to a subsidized daycare because of our contribution or 100 underprivileged kids went to camp last summer at no charge because our club provided the funding.

And don't forget to promptly thank those who have partnered with you on projects.

Example: The Amherst Lions Club invites the organizations it supports financially to its Charter Night every year and does cheque presentations to each group. Its great publicity for the club and a very tangible example of what I mean by image building. This is blowing your own horn in a positive way.

## **Creating Lasting Partnerships**

I mentioned partnerships earlier. This is more important than ever in today's competition for the charitable dollar. Not only do not-for-profits and service clubs have to come up with new and innovative ways to raise money to fund programs and projects, but they can no longer do it alone.

Many groups have found success in pooling their resources and volunteers for projects. We have an example here in Amherst where the Lions and Lionesses have joined with a number of other community organizations in staging the annual Highland Fling in support of the Cumberland Health Care Foundation. The Lions also partner with the local community radio station CFTA 107.9 FM and Eastlink Television for their highly successful Wednesday evening radio/TV Bingo. Partnering can prove to be a win/win situation which raises dollars that go back into the community while benefitting the clubs and not-for-profits.

### **Final Thoughts and Suggestions**

1. Your individual members bring a variety of strengths and skills from their career and employment backgrounds. If that includes strengths in writing, public speaking, dealing with the media, photography, videography or information technology, they can be a tremendous resource for your public relations/media relations committee. Remember, its not a one man or one woman job within your club ...it needs a committee.
2. Embrace social networking like Facebook and Twitter. Don't underestimate the power of the internet. You may have heard and seen plenty of negatives about Facebook, but using it in positive way can really help you grow your image and get your message out to a much larger audience. Just ask the folks at the ALS Society and their Ice Bucket Challenge ...that success story was generated by social media.
3. If your club doesn't have a Communications Strategy or Plan ... this might be the time to seriously consider it..

**Your success stories ....**

**Thank You!**