

# DON'T LET YOUR DONORS DISAPPEAR.

A planning guide for charity event organisers who want to build events sustainably.

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## WHAT YOU'LL WALK AWAY WITH

- The three questions to answer before you finalise any event logistics
- A practical data capture approach for gala, community, and P2P events
- A 30-day post-event action sequence your team can actually complete
- A clearer way to measure whether your event grew your organisation

Most event guides focus on the night itself — the venue, the run sheet, the raffle. This one focuses on what most guides skip: what to do before, during, and after your event so the people who showed up actually hear from you again.

Whether you are running your tenth gala or trying to do the next one better, the same gap tends to open up. The event finishes, everyone exhales, and the donors quietly disappear from your radar.

**A fundraising event that leaves no trace in your database is not really a fundraising event. It is a very expensive, very moving, very well-attended one-night stand.**

## 01 BEFORE THE EVENT: THREE QUESTIONS THAT CHANGE EVERYTHING

Before you finalise any logistics, answer these three questions. Your answers will shape every decision that follows.

### **How will people find out about this event, and what will we ask for when they do?**

#### QUESTION 1

If someone registers or buys a ticket, you have their name and email. If they just turn up on the day, you have nothing. Decide now — and if it's the latter, plan your on-the-day capture mechanism before you commit to the format.

### **What is our mechanism for capturing supporter details on the day?**

#### QUESTION 2

A QR code linking to “get our final result emailed to you.” A sign-in sheet at the door. A photo opt-in. Pick one, make it feel like a benefit to the attendee rather than a favour to you, and assign one person to own it entirely. This cannot be a task that falls to whoever is free.

### **What are we going to do with that data in the 30 days after?**

#### QUESTION 3

If you cannot answer this before the event, you are not ready to collect the data. Decide the follow-up sequence now. A list with no plan attached to it is just admin.

## 02 ON THE DAY: DATA CAPTURE BY EVENT FORMAT

You will be busy on the day. The mechanism needs to be simple enough to run itself. Different formats require different approaches.

### Gala and seated events

Confirm at planning stage: who is the table booker, and are you collecting individual guest details or just the primary contact? If there's a silent auction or raffle, how are bids being recorded? Assign one volunteer to nothing except data collection — legibility and completeness, nothing else.

### Community and participation events

Registration is not always possible, and forcing it can kill turnout. Offer something worth opting in for: the final result, a team photo, a thank you from the cause. A QR code on event signage linking to a simple two-field form works well. Name and email only. Keep the ask minimal.

### Peer-to-peer fundraisers

Individual donors behind your champions are often invisible to you. Check your platform settings — some allow donor data to flow to the organisation with consent. If not, brief your champions before the event: ask them to direct their donors to your organisation's page for future updates.

## 03 THE 30-DAY FOLLOW-UP PLAN

This is where most organisations lose the donors they just spent months attracting. Here is a sequence that works even with a small team.

### Within 48 hours

#### **Send a personal thank you to every sponsor and major donor.**

*Not automated. Signed by a human. Two sentences is enough.*

#### **Email everyone whose details you captured.**

*"Here's what you helped make happen." Warm, brief, no ask.*

#### **Post your result publicly.**

*Do it with a story, not just a number.*

### Days 3 to 7

**Segment your new contacts.**

*Who gave? Who attended but didn't give? Who was returning vs new?*

**Send a follow-up to non-donors who attended.**

*A story from the cause. Not another ask — not yet.*

**Upload all new contacts to your database.**

*Now. This will not happen later.*

### Days 8 to 30

**Make one personal call or send one personal note to your top five new donors.**

*This is the step most organisations skip. It is the most important one.*

**Send an impact update to your full list.**

*What did the money go toward? Be specific. Specificity builds trust.*

**Invite your new contacts to stay connected.**

*Newsletter, next event, volunteer opportunity. Give them a next step.*

**Review your numbers and write them down.**

*New donors acquired. Retention from last year. Share of wallet. These are the metrics that tell you whether the event grew your organisation.*

**04****MEASURING WHETHER YOUR EVENT ACTUALLY WORKED**

Total funds raised is useful. It is not sufficient. If you raised \$80,000 from the same forty donors as last year and still have forty donors, did the event succeed? You covered costs and posted a number. You didn't grow.

**New donor acquisition rate**

What percentage of event attendees became new donors? This tells you whether your event is growing your base or drawing from it.

**Donor retention rate year on year**

Are your supporters from last year coming back? If this number is falling, the post-event follow-up is the first place to look.

**Share of wallet from existing supporters**

Are your loyal donors giving more over time, or have you plateaued? This is the marketing question most charity boards have never been asked.

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**About this guide**

This guide was put together by The Melbourne Event Company, a boutique events agency working with charities, NFPs, and corporates across Australia. We produced it because we have seen too many excellent fundraising events finish without a plan for what comes next. If you'd like to build the follow-up framework into your event planning from the start, we're easy to find.



## GET IN TOUCH

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