



Fundraising Resources

Sample Fundraising Project

Scenario: A very active and involved volunteer in your section has passed away unexpectedly. He was much respected and revered by many friends and colleagues in the engineering community. There has been great interest in establishing some sort of memorial to him. You will need to form a committee to help you reach your goal.

Goal: To fund a scholarship in the name of this volunteer.

Specifics: You have decided that this will be a one-time \$10,000 scholarship for a student engineer who is studying in the same field. You intend to raise the money and set up the scholarship fund. You can do this within your own sector, or you can work with The ASME Foundation. In that case, you negotiate with the Foundation accept contributions from donors and set up the fund for the scholarship. Other negotiations regarding publicity, qualifications, selection of winner, etc. will be negotiated with the University and with the Foundation. (To endow the scholarship so that it is awarded in perpetuity, the required minimum amount is \$40,000. In this case, smaller scholarships are funded with a percentage of the balance based on fund performance.)

Donor prospects: Your target audience will be colleagues of the engineer being honored, specifically, workplace colleagues, former students, and those connected through professional and/or academic contact. You form the committee and recruit a chair who is well known within your division and within the mechanical engineering community.

Action: Create a mailing list based on input from committee members and the family of the honoree. Everyone on the list will receive a mailing asking them if they would help you honor the memory of the man who has died, and in the process help a young engineer with his studies. A sample letter is given below. Some things to remember about a fundraising appeal letter:

- Address your reader by name, not "Dear Friend"
- State your case up front
- Have a compelling story to relate about the person you are honoring and the impact he has had on students and on the field of mechanical engineering
- Give your reader good reason to support your cause, in this case honoring the legacy that the deceased left behind
- Ask for a gift in clear language and give a suggested specific amount
- Remind reader that gift is tax deductible
- Enclose a response card and self addressed envelope

Follow-up: You will greatly enhance your success in raising money with personal contacts. Phone calls are one method, but face-to-face asks are always the most effective. Ask your committee members to contact individuals known to them, and to indicate to you which names they will contact. The remaining names are divided up between committee members for follow-up calls. This personal follow-up is very important. It is much more difficult for a prospect to say no to a personal ask than to just discard a letter. Provide your volunteers with a written script to make it as easy as possible for them. For those individuals who may not have given when asked in person, follow up with a letter. Create some urgency around the ask. Perhaps you want to make the scholarship available for the coming academic year.

Sample solicitation letter

Date

Name

Address

City/State

Dear John,

As you know, our colleague Don Sample, passed away quite suddenly in October. Everyone who knew Don is saddened by the passing of a giant in the field of _____. Don was so committed to _____, and his record of accomplishment during his career was stellar.

You may also know that Don was very interested in helping student and early career engineers move forward in their studies. He served as a mentor to countless students at his alma mater, as well as those who lived in close proximity to his home. He was a tireless volunteer in many other arenas as well, with projects ranging from robotics contests for the very youngest engineering wannabes, to presenting at career day programs at the local university.

We want to honor Don's commitment to our profession and to the education of aspiring engineers. Our plan is to create a one-time scholarship, the Don Sample Memorial Scholarship, in the amount of \$10,000.

The ASME Foundation has agreed to facilitate this scholarship. You may remit your check directly to them (address below) or you may use their secure online donation form at www.foundation.asme.org. All gifts are tax deductible.

The Foundation will publicize the scholarship along with other ASME scholarships on their webpage, accept applications, select the winner, and present him/her with the check.

We know that Don would be pleased with the opportunity to help a student complete their studies and make their own important contributions toward making our world a better place for all. We hope that you will join us in honoring Don in a way that would be so gratifying to him.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. Thank you for your generosity in helping make the Don Sample Memorial Scholarship a reality.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Sample “Elevator Speech”

An “elevator speech” is a brief spiel about what your project is and why you are promoting it. It is called “elevator speech” because of its brevity, just enough to tell in, for example, twelve floors as the elevator rises or descends. It’s a good idea to develop such a statement for you and your volunteers to use whenever practical. It can also form the basis of the script you will prepare for your volunteers to use as either an initial or a follow-up conversation.

Here’s a sample of what you might say about this fundraising effort.

“I’m sure you have heard that Don Sample passed away suddenly a few months ago. All of us who had such respect for him were saddened. He was such a giant in the engineering field, so passionate about ASME. His contributions were many, and he was always ready to lend a helping hand, especially where students and young engineers were concerned. So we are setting up a memorial scholarship in his name at The ASME Foundation. I’ll give you a call and tell you more in a day or two.”

Sample script for asking

Hello _____ this is _____. How are things going? I wanted to talk to you for just a moment about a memorial we are setting up to honor Don Sample and all his contributions to the field of mechanical engineering.

As you probably know, Don passed away quite suddenly a few months ago. Everyone was shocked by his death. He was such a generous guy, and so giving of his time whether it be in mentoring young engineers or volunteering to help kids with robotics.

Our intent is to raise \$10,000 to establish a one-time scholarship in Don’s name to be facilitated by The ASME Foundation. We’d like to give you the opportunity to remember Don by contributing toward this fund. Could you help us set up this memorial with a contribution of \$100? Since this is going through the Foundation, your gift is tax deductible.

Wait for a response.....even if it seems like a long time, wait. You may find that you have to negotiate a smaller gift or perhaps you have asked for an even larger gift. Adapt the script to your specific conversation.

That’s just great! We really appreciate your help. We know that Don would be so gratified with the response we are getting, and we are happy that you can be a part of it. Of course, we will let his family know that you are one of the donors to Don’s memorial.

You can remit your check directly to The ASME Foundation; I will email you a confirmation note and an envelope to use to send in your gift. Let me just make sure I have your correct email address.

Thanks again for your generosity!

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NOTE: These examples are based on establishing a scholarship through The ASME Foundation, and are meant as a sample exercise. You can direct contributions to your own section as well. If you are setting up a scholarship fund as suggested here, you will then want to create a scholarship committee of individuals qualified to select the appropriate candidate.