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## Case Study - Fundraising Event

Our foundation client, a 501(c)(3), depends solely on individual donations and the generosity of private donors and needed assistance with a fundraising event and gala that would allow them to continue their goal of providing Grief Recovery Retreats to those who have experienced loss. These events are intended to help loved ones see that, while life can never be the same after loss, it can be rich and fulfilling.

Because these retreats are given as a gift to anyone who wants to attend, a fee is not charged. They begin on Thursday at 6:30 p.m. and conclude on Sunday around 2:30 p.m. Individuals who attend receive sleeping room accommodations, meals, personalized gift baskets and most importantly, solid methodologies and tools to help them once they leave the retreat.

Since the first retreat in 2010, there have been over 30 held across the United States. To date, the foundation neither runs in the black nor in the red, but simply breaks even. To support additional retreats and raise money, the foundation needed assistance with its third major fundraising event and the first outside the Midwest.

## Services

After meeting with us to engage only our event planning services, they saw how much more we could do to contribute to the success of their fundraising gala.

- Event planning and logistics
- Sponsorship sales
- Event marketing
- Securing and managing speakers
- Event production

## Challenges

### 1. Limited resources:

The biggest challenge with foundations and non-profits is limited resources and budget. However, because their mission and goals are so critical to the people they choose to serve, fundraisers are essential to their survival and purpose. With a very limited budget, the foundation entrusted us to be creative in developing all aspects of the evening's events.

### 2. Create an experience that fits the occasion:

The gala dinner and auction would also incorporate a keynote speaker and awards ceremony. It was important to the organization that the evening honor individuals and their loved ones, but to do so in a way that also celebrated life.

### 3. Design a marketing campaign:

We needed to develop a compelling marketing campaign that would promote the foundation's purpose without giving the impression that the evening would be somber, life affirming.

## Solutions

### 1. Secure temporary, affordable help:

Local universities and colleges provide an excellent temporary staffing solution—seniors majoring in hospitality tourism and marketing. Our interns were able to work with our seasoned staff as a cohesive team with a detailed action plan.

With a strong team in place, we were able to work within their budget constraints to achieve:

- Innovative décor and theme development for less than \$500 due to creative solutions and sponsorship opportunities
- Confirm a well-known keynote speaker at no charge whose own story of loss would resonate with the audience
- Drive corporate sponsorships, donations and attendance beyond the foundation's expectations
- Create additional revenue with the development of an interactive individual table competition
- Increase awareness of the foundation and its mission with post-event outreach which included invitations to a retreat for those in need, or requests for additional support

## Result

It would normally be enough to state that we raised three times the goals we set for ourselves. But, the reward for us and for our client was far beyond the financial implications that allow them to continue their good work.

### Comments from guests include:

It was wonderful...elegant, inspiring, touching, engaging.