

Campaign Themes, Special Events and More!

Choosing a creative theme for your United Way campaign helps generate interest and enthusiasm—two key factors in facilitating a successful workplace giving campaign. Below are a few suggestions to get your creative juices flowing—but feel free to come up with ideas of your own!

Campaign Themes

Themes and special events are your opportunity to add a little something extra to the campaign. Not only do special events raise extra funding for United Way, but they can also be instrumental in team development and great for company spirit. Use these options as opportunities to further educate your employees about United Way and most importantly, have FUN!! And remember, when planning special events, it is important to remind employees that their support of the special event is above and beyond their individual campaign pledge. Be sure to thank them for this additional support!

Tips for selecting themes and special events:

- Be creative and have fun!
- Events should be strategically scheduled throughout the campaign to be most successful
- Make it easy for employees to participate
- Think about what would work best in your company culture
- Some special events can be more about fun and participation, not about collecting donations

Sample Themes, Events and Contests

American Idol Contest

Employees can hold a contest based on the hit TV show American Idol. Employees make a donation to vote for the management singing group of their choice. The duo or group that receives the most votes will sing a song of their choice in front of the audience.

Baby Photo Contest

Employees bring in a favorite baby picture, writing their name on the backside. Pictures are numbered and posted on a bulletin board. Employees purchase a chance to match co-workers with baby pictures. When purchasing a chance, give purchaser a numbered sheet with blanks to write their guesses. Have them put their own name at the top and turn in. Employee with the greatest number correct wins a prize!

Bake Sale

Homemade or store bought items are brought in such as: cookies, pies, muffins, bars, cupcakes, fudge, and candy. Arrange baked items on a table to be seen throughout the day. This is a single-day event; chance ticket sales (\$0.25 a piece) begin that morning. Chances may be sold at the reception desk, in the lunchroom, and during lunch. Committee members draw names of winners at the end of the day and deliver items to the winners.

Battle of the Sexes

It's the company men against the company women—who will get the highest participation rate? At the kickoff meeting, have a short game show in which two men and two women “volunteer” to be contestants. Women have to answer questions about topics men typically know a lot about, and vice versa.



For example: A man can be asked the name of a process used to slough dead skin cells off the face (exfoliation) and a woman could be asked what “the house of Ruth” was (Yankee Stadium, made famous by Babe Ruth).

Be a Lifesaver

Have some fun—beach style! Sand, sunglasses, beach balls and The Beach Boys music make your office feel like it’s on the beach. Employees who donate are awarded life preservers to wear at the next meeting and Lifesavers candy for their office.

Book, Music, and Movie Sale

Have employees donate old books, CDs and videos/DVDs for a department or company-wide sale with proceeds earmarked for United Way.

Bowl-a-Thon or Miniature Golf

Employees pay a fee to participate in the event. Hold challenges among departments.

Carnival and Talent Show

Hold a carnival and talent show to kickoff your United Way campaign. As a part of the program, have a group of executives perform songs, with lyrics written to fit United Way’s work in the community. An executive dunking booth as part of the carnival gives employees the chance to dunk their favorite executive.

Chili Cook-off

Employees bring in a pot of their favorite chili on the day of the contest. Employees pay a fee to taste the varieties of chili. They vote for the best chili and the winner is proclaimed the “Chili King or Queen” and proceeds go to United Way.

Departmental Competition - The department with the best participation (most pledge cards returned) is rewarded with a pizza party, car wash by executives or lunch with the CEO.

Department Penny Jar

Each department is designated a jar. Employees are encouraged to fill their own department’s jar with pennies, each equaling one point. Opposing departments may then add other coins to their jars that are equal to their value only negative (ex: A dime is minus 10 points). The department with the most positive points at the end of the week is awarded a prize.

Dress-up the Boss

Boss wears a costume voted on by all employees if the campaign goal is reached. Examples: tutu, animal costume, devil costume, etc.

Employee Car Wash

Recruit a team of car-washers (consider involving managers) and determine shifts. Team members bring sponges, rags, soap, buckets, hoses, radio, etc. on day of event. Set up wash site in employee parking lot. Wash tickets may be purchased in advance (\$3-\$5) or simply recruit cars on wash day. Car washers get keys from co-workers, pick up vehicle and bring to the wash site to be cleaned. Return washed cars to parking places. Workers never have to leave the office! Another option is to set aside a reserved parking area for employees to park in the morning.

Guess How Many

Guess the number of jellybeans, M&Ms, pennies or other items in a jar. Buy chances to guess. Closest guess receives a prize.



Indoor Mini Golf

To make the event a contest, have each department design a creative hole using only materials already in their department. Examples include: wastebaskets, letter trays, reams of paper, machine parts, etc. The employee committee rounds up some clubs and staffs the course during the lunch hour for the week of the campaign. Employees play the course as often as they like for a small fee. The CEO serves as the pro, challenging the employee with the winning score to a sudden death playoff on the final day of mini golf. Prizes are awarded to the department with the most creative hole and to the best mini golfers.

International Olympics

Celebrate diversity by transforming departments into various countries with décor and dress to match. Organize an international potluck luncheon where employees bring their favorite ethnic dishes. Host a mini-Olympics tournament. Showcase music from around the world. Events could include a hula-hoop relay, tricycle race, basketball dribble, tug-of-war, 100-yard dash, mile relay, and sack race. Charge an entry fee for teams, offering prizes for the winning team along with souvenir gold medals. Conclude the Olympic campaign with an awards ceremony, awarding Olympic winners as well as all employees for their campaign efforts.

Jail And Bail

Hold in correlation with an employee picnic or carnival. Have a “Catch and Cuff ‘Em” Jail booth where employees pay to have co-workers, supervisors, managers or executives incarcerated for short periods during the event.

Let’s Make A Deal

Go around the office and ask random United Way-related questions to employees. If they get the answer right, give them a prize on the spot. (Works well if you can get a Senior Executive to go along with you to hand out the prize.)

Look-A-Like Contest

Employees are encouraged to dress up like famous personalities. Co-workers then pay to vote on the best costume with the contestant receiving the most votes winning a prize.

Movie Trivia Quiz

This quiz can be completed at workstations & returned to an appointed person to tally the scores. You can match the actor/actress with the movie, match the quote with the movie, or combine. The highest score wins a prize. In case of a tie, a drawing will be held. Winners can be announced at a group lunch at the close of the campaign.

Potpourri Luncheon

Participating employees bring a hot-dish, appetizer, salad, side, dessert, etc. to be shared. Paper products are also needed for this event. There is no sign-up for this event. Items brought in are completely random. Employees pay \$5 to fill their plate and sample everything in the room. If your company has their own cookbook, the theme could be A Potpourri of Company Recipes. Participants must make a dish out of the employee cookbook.

Puppy Love

Ever hear that a lot of pets look like their owners and vice versa? Test this theory by having employees pay for a chance to try their luck at matching a pet picture to its correct owner. Award a prize to the contestant with the most correct answers and maybe provide gift certificates to a pet store for the owners who look the most like their pets!



Sumo Mania

Call a local entertainment company to rent the sumo wrestling package. Have teams pay to play.

Tourney Time

Hold a broomball, softball, tee-ball, kickball, racquetball, tennis, walleyball or ping-pong tournament.

Tricycle Races

Create teams each with of three to four riders. Teams are named and publicized in advance, allowing employees to make pledges or bets on the winning team; team members ride large tricycles (rent or arrange to borrow from a cooperating store) through a predetermined course in the office. Design the course through hallways, lunch/break rooms, around cubicles, chairs, and in and out of offices. Have course marked with signs or tape on the floor. Fans are able to watch and cheer from different areas around the office.

The race is designed as a relay. Team members may pass off a flag, pinwheel, teddy bear or similar item to their succeeding team member. Remember to take pictures for the company bulletin board or newsletter!

Trivial Pursuit / Chess / Scrabble Contest

Recruit employees to play a chosen board game. Create a pool around the winning team or allow employees to move/acquire a game piece for every returned pledge card.

United Way Goes Hollywood

Use a series of colorful, creative and humorous posters to publicize the campaign. Hold a bake sale with slogans like "The Pies of Laura Mars" and "Romancing the Scones." Hold a bowling party with slogans like "Bowl Durham" or "Honey, I Struck the Pins."

Vacation Day

This is probably one of the most effective and appreciated event. Have employees "buy" a vacation day by contributing to United Way. Employees also have the option to donate unused vacation days to the campaign.

Waffle / Pancake Breakfast

Sell tickets and have people sign up for their choice of pancakes or waffles. Cook breakfast in your company cafeteria/lunchroom. Don't forget bacon, sausage, butter, as well as vegetarian options. Each department can donate an item. The proceeds benefit United Way.

Whose Elbows are Those?

Line up coworkers for mug shots of their arms, elbows only. Encourage employees to pay a small fee (\$1) to guess which elbow belongs to which coworker.

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire

From the list of donors, draw out names randomly to be the contestants. Ask them to name United Way's three focus areas. Whoever writes them down the fastest and raises the paper in the air gets to play first. Using the United Way brochure or website, put together some questions for the contestant. Use play money for prizes.



Auction Ideas

Auction Hotline

Set up a special voice mailbox or Web page with weekly messages announcing auction items. Outline the items, including their face value, in a flyer. Employees can call the hotline or go online to record their bids. Update the recorded message daily, announcing the highest bids received to date. Each Friday announce auction results for the week.

Auctions (Silent, Live, or Online)

Ideas for Auction items include:

- Around-the-world (gift certificates for restaurants of different cultures)
- Autographed memorabilia
- Be executive for a day / job shadow / lunch with management
- Carpentry, electric work, lawn work, etc. for house
- Cell phone
- Classes: wine, cooking, language, art, etc.
- Company mugs, hats, shirts, etc.
- Electronics (DVD player, iPod, etc.)
- Family portrait
- Free baby-sitting
- Free soda/snacks from vending machine in break room
- Gift baskets (Bath & Body Works, movie night, etc.)
- Instant wine cellar (selection of wines; 10-25 bottles donated by a group)
- Paid time off / vacation day / parking spot / go home early / casual day
- Pizza party
- Tickets: movie / theater / orchestra / sports / airline

Incentives

Offering incentives is just one way of showing people you appreciate their support.

1. Parking Place
2. Afternoon off from work
3. Lunch with the boss (out of office and the boss pays)
4. Movie/game/play tickets
5. Snooze day (allowed to come in to work late)
6. Golf with the boss
7. Car washed by boss or co-worker
8. Leave 1-hour early/come in 1 hour late
9. Office redecorated or cleaned — Trading Spaces
10. Gas and car wash gift certificates
11. Jeans on Fridays
12. Company promotional items