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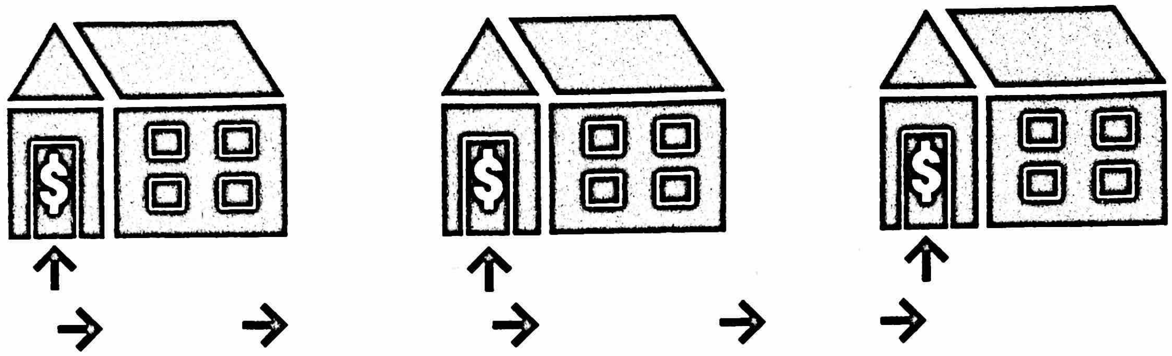


SETTING UP A CANVASS

by Beverly Cherner

Introduction

In Part One, we looked at how your organization should decide whether to set up a door-to-door fundraising canvass. Once you have decided that a canvass is right for your organization, following certain steps will maximize its success. There's lots of work to be done before your first canvasser starts out to knock on the first door. Inadequate preparation could doom your canvass to failure and cost you a great deal of money.

In this article we discuss the preparation needed for a successful canvass: 1) hiring a canvass director; 2) taking care of various administrative tasks, such as preparing for staff, purchasing materials and arranging transportation; and 3) targeting areas you want to canvass. After these steps have been accomplished, you can finally begin your canvass.

Hiring a Canvass Director

Of the three steps mentioned above, hiring the right person to be canvass director is the most important. No matter how well you take care of the other aspects of beginning a new canvass, if you have the wrong canvass director your efforts will fail.

Before you hire anyone, you and your staff need to decide who in your organization will oversee the canvass director. While a good canvass director is a self-starter who requires little or no supervision on a day-to-day basis, someone in your office should be in charge of overall management. This should be a staff member who is committed to the long-range welfare of the organization, not just to current projects, and who does not view the canvass only as a money-making operation. That person may alienate the canvass staff early on, causing turmoil within your organization.

When considering candidates for canvass director, carefully review their previous canvassing experience. You shouldn't hire anyone with less than two years experience with a canvass operation, at least half of that time as canvass director. Check references and find out as many details about applicants' responsibilities as possible. Try to talk to people who have worked directly with them on the same canvass staff.

The most important characteristics to look for in a canvass director are leadership and the ability to relate well to people. As stated in Part One of this article, good morale among the canvass staff is essential to their success. Canvassing is physically and emotionally draining work for low pay, and your canvass director needs to have a sociable, supportive, yet firm personality. Most canvassers stay on the job despite its frustrations because they feel a part of a unique group of workers who are also their friends. Your director should care about canvassers as individuals and respect them beyond their role as fundraisers. She or he should be equally willing and able to encourage a new canvasser who is depressed and frustrated as to compliment an experienced canvasser who consistently does well or to fire someone, if necessary. She or he should appreciate canvassers' work and enjoy the role of maintaining good morale, rather than seeing it as an obligation. You want a director who has high standards and inspires others to live up to them by doing so personally.

To be an effective manager, your canvass director should view the position as part of a team effort, interacting with canvassers both when they depart from the office to canvass and when they return from the field each night. Splitting the job between two people usually causes fragmentation in canvassers' relationship to their supervisor. At one established canvassing organization where two people shared the position, neither director had enough consistent interaction with the canvass staff. Canvassers began to feel removed from decisions which affected them and to resent what they saw as indifference. As a result, some people quit and others worked reluctantly. When one person took over direction of the canvass, meeting the crews when they returned each night, detachment was soon replaced by trust.

While there are a number of administrative duties involved in running a canvass operation, such as obtaining permits from communities you plan to canvass, these are secondary to the interpersonal aspect. Someone who is very good with people but lacks administrative skills may still be an excellent canvass director, provided she or he is organized enough on a day-to-day basis and administrative support can be provided. In such an instance, you may be able to find someone within your organization who can help with the paperwork.

You should make it clear to applicants that the hours will generally be 11-5 p.m. and 9-11 p.m., with additional hours required in the beginning. These hours are particularly difficult for people with partners or children; you should make a special effort to get a commitment from your canvass director to be satisfied with the hours. Sometimes there will be so much work they will have to put in extra hours, as is often the case with public interest work.

Ideally, you should ask for a two-year commitment, compromising on a shorter time period if necessary to encourage a promising candidate. Since turnover on a canvass staff is frequently high, you need a director who will stay in the position and provide continuity as long as possible. Your canvass director should attract long-term people who can be trained for their positions, especially as a future canvass director. It is likely that a good director who feels satisfied with the job will stay for two years even if originally committed to a shorter period of time.

Inadequate preparation could doom your canvass to failure and cost you a great deal of money.

If you have advertised everywhere you can think of and you still haven't found a qualified applicant, *don't* hire someone you aren't satisfied with just to fill the job. The only exception might be if a consultant is willing to step in as an interim canvass director.

Beginning a new canvass is a lot harder than maintaining an ongoing one, when a staff of experienced people can hold things together. It is essential that you begin with the right director, who will set the tone of your entire canvass staff, even if it means delaying until you find the right person. An incompetent director could hurt your organization by damaging your reputation with the community, costing you income, and souring your office staff on the entire idea of a canvass.

Administration

Once you have hired a canvass director, you can address the administrative needs of the canvass.

☐ Office space: You need a minimum of 200-300 square feet of space for the exclusive use of the canvass. Although canvassers spend most of their time working in the field, they need a space to keep their materials, to meet with members of your program staff for program updates, and to do their paperwork at the end of the night. This space shouldn't be occupied by your office staff, as the comings and goings of canvassers would be disruptive, but it could serve as a conference room during non-canvass hours. Your canvass director also needs a private space to conduct interviews.

☐ Materials: These include clipboards, identification cards issued by the city or county, receipts, brochures, signatures sheets and publications. Anything else canvassers can show to people at the door which demonstrates your organization's effectiveness is helpful, such as copies of any press you've received. Prepare materials assuming that every person a canvasser talks to has heard nothing at all about your organization.

☐ Transportation: Your most cost-effective way to get canvassers to and from the field is to reimburse a canvasser who owns a car. If no one has a car, you can rent or lease one for the short term. Consider buying a roomy van, which is generally more cost-effective in the long run for non-profit groups than renting or leasing.

☐ Payroll and accounting: The number of canvassers on your staff will probably more than double your total staff. This will increase the cost and time for financial accounting, including payroll costs, which will increase significantly. Canvassers generally are paid according to how much they raise. This varies from week to week. Since canvassing is usually a low-paying job, it helps recruitment to pay weekly.

Due to the variability of weekly canvasser salaries and the accompanying complicated tax deductions, many organizations prefer to use a payroll company. If you have a computer and the appropriate software, you can keep costs down by doing payroll yourself. Otherwise you may find it too time-consuming.

Make sure your bookkeeper has hours added to handle the extra workload the canvass creates. In canvassing organizations, about 80% of bookkeeping is related to the canvass.

☐ Guidelines: Before you hire your first canvasser, you should have a written job description detailing the terms of employment. Make sure canvassers agree to these terms when they are hired. You also need to prepare guidelines for other canvass-related positions, such as training, driving and supervising crews in the field. Drivers should be informed of the organization's policy on liability for auto insurance, citations and other related expenses.

☐ Legalities: Before you begin, check with an attorney about limitations your tax status may impose on your canvass. For example, if you want to have your canvassers advocate support for a particular piece of legislation or candidate, you may be restricted from such lobbying by the terms of your tax status. Some canvassing organizations have formed two branches, one that can lobby and one that cannot.

Nearly all communities have rules about door-to-door soliciting. Find out what procedure you need to go through before beginning your canvass. Most cities waive fees for non-profit organizations. Some may have ordinances which interfere with your canvassing hours of 4-9 p.m. A number of court precedents in various parts of the country have invalidated such ordinances as violations of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment. You may need an attorney to go to bat for you. The local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union may be helpful. Sometimes you can persuade local officials to reinterpret their ordinance in a favorable way just by talking with the police chief.

Most cities will issue a written permission for your canvass. Your canvassers can avoid difficulties in the field if they carry copies of an official document in their clipboards.

Allow several weeks to several months from the time you first contact local officials to the time you are cleared to begin your canvass.

☐ Advertising: Your best source for recruiting canvassers in a metropolitan area is a classified advertisement in the "Help Wanted" section of the local newspapers. If your organization has a large group of volunteers, you may be able to recruit from among current volunteers. You can augment newspaper ads with any other publicity you can think of, such as flyers, a blurb in your organization's newsletter, and word of mouth through your organizational contacts.

☐ Timing: Begin your canvass at the time of year when you are likely to recruit the most people; in most cases this is at the beginning of the summer, May through July. Many college students are looking for summer jobs at this time, and others who have graduated are looking for a position. Your canvass will have a much better chance of success if it begins operating this time of year. In fact, organizatins with a year-round canvass rely on their summer season for the biggest chunk of their annual gross income.

If you are unable to begin your canvass during the summer, other peak periods are January-February and September-November. These are times when people relocate or look to change jobs, although you won't hire as many people as you could during the summer. You should also take the local climate into account; you'd be hard pressed to recruit anyone in January if the average temperature is sub-freezing, although once your canvass is well-established, long-term people will work through the winter despite the cold temperatures.

Targetting Turf

Before beginning your canvass, discuss coordination of schedules with other canvassing organizations in the area that you are planning to cover. By starting out on a friendly basis, you can avoid resentment and overlap in the field. When canvassers from different organizations meet on someone's doorstep it is guaranteed to cost both organizations money and perhaps the canvassers themselves.

To maximize your recruiting, begin canvassing in neighborhoods where you are most likely to be supported. Check with the directors of other established canvasses in the area to identify the most responsive areas. People with these organizations are a valuable resource.

If there are no other canvasses in your area that you can consult, check the federal census for demographic information. Look for areas populated by people with college educations and liberal communities, frequently located near universities, open to alternative and innovative lifestyles. If you and your canvass director are not personally well-acquainted with your local communities, ask people who are.

Once you get your maps, don't send a canvasser in and just cross your fingers hoping that the area is canvassable. That's a good way to ensure someone will quit if you guessed wrong about the neighborhood and it had nothing in it but warehouses. If you don't know the area, have a driver explore it first. Do test canvassing before hiring your staff.

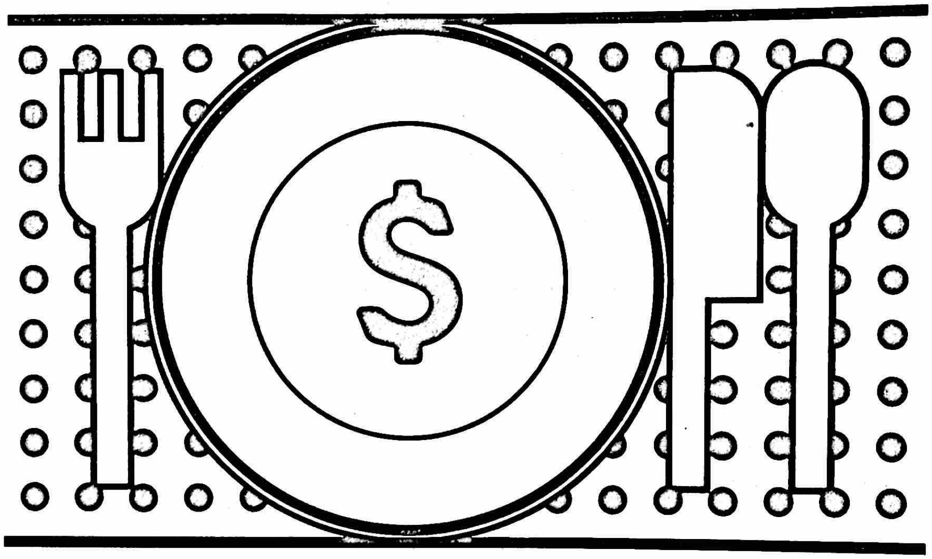
Conclusion

A new canvass operation will have a dynamic and sometimes chaotic affect on your organization. It requires a lot of hard work. Preparation and the right people are the keys to success.

Beverly Cherner is Canvass Director of the San Francisco Office of Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE), and oversees two other canvasses in Northern California. Under her leadership, CBE's annual income has grown from $112,000 in 1978 to $380,000 in 1983.

Food for Thought

Part One



FUNDRAISING LUNCHEONS

"Rubber chicken fundraisers"—detested by most donors but often very lucrative for the sponsoring organization, are on the rise as a popular way to raise funds to replace those dwindling foundation and government grants. A fundraising luncheon or dinner can be either a small, relatively easy event to put together or a major production requiring months of preparation and a significant investment up front. What is described in the following article is a tribute luncheon—a special form of fundraising luncheon at which individuals are honored by the organization for their work or activities in a particular field. These events are usually held in hotel banquet rooms or large restaurants. They are a means by which organizations can solicit large contributions from individuals and businesses. They have the potential to raise up to $50,000 for an organization after expenses, but usually raise between $5,000 and $20,000. There is a formula that is used for these kinds of luncheons, and it is that formula which is described in the following article.

The article is the first in a series of articles on food and drink related fundraising events. Future articles will discuss examples of specific luncheons and dinners which organizations have produced, some of which were financial successes and others which were failures; budgeting for these kinds of events; and ways in which the formula described below can be applied to cocktail parties, coffee klatches, and other eating and drinking occasions.

Step One: Defining Goals

The first step in planning a fundraising luncheon is to define your organization's goals. There are a variety of goals that can be achieved through these kinds of events, and one does not necessarily exclude another. What is most important is to prioritize—a process which will make decision-making later on infinitely easier.

Usually, in producing events, organizations have two major goals in mind—fundraising and outreach or public education. The reason for needing to decide which of these is more important becomes most apparent when determining the ticket price for the luncheon. If the most important goal is outreach, then an admission price should be set low enough to make the event affordable to the largest number of people. If, however, fundraising is more important, then outreach will be focused on communities with access to more money, and the ticket price should be set fairly high, so as to generate as much revenue as possible.

For the purposes of this article, it will be assumed that the primary goal is to raise as much money as possible. This means that tickets are relatively expensive, and that the targeted audience is individuals and businesses which can afford to make large donations.

Choosing between fundraising and outreach as goals for events tends to raise a number of political questions for social change organizations. Obviously, in setting ticket prices high, organizations are making their event inaccessible to low-income communities. Some organizations try to deal with this problem by offering a small number of reduced rate tickets, or a sliding scale for individual ticket buyers. This solution tends to create more problems than it solves. Other organizations resolve this problem by deciding that because the primary goal is to raise money, it is important to charge a high price for admission.

The location for holding a fundraising tribute luncheon can present similar political problems for some organizations. Organizations concerned about the economic inequities in this society are generally going to have a hard time sponsoring a high priced event in a fancy hotel with chandeliers.

These kinds of conflicts are numerous and important, and cannot all be addressed and resolved in this article. Every organization choosing to produce a fundraising tribute luncheon should be aware that they exist, and that they will need to be resolved in whatever way each organization is comfortable. Clarify goals for the event is an important first step that will help in this process. (For more discussion on goalsetting for events, see GRFJ Vo. 1 No. 2: Fundraising Events, Part One)

It is the sale of specially priced tickets that generates the profit in tribute luncheons.

Ticket Prices

The key to a lucrative tribute luncheon is to offer a variety of ways in which attendees can buy tickets. Generally, regular admission ranges from $30-$50 and is sufficient to just about cover the cost of the meal and overhead involved in the event's production. However, it is important to recognize that the bulk of the profit realized through a tribute luncheon is not the result of individual ticket sales at this low range.

It is the sale of specially priced tickets that generates the profit in tribute luncheons. There are usually two or three admission prices that are set to allow individuals and businesses to publicly support either the sponsoring organization or the honorees. Each of the high ticket prices are given a name, such as "Sponsor", "Benefactor" and "Patron". Some organizations try to be creative with these titles, but the purpose remains the same. Sponsors are individuals willing to pay a higher price than the regular admission to indicate their support for the event. In recognition of this special contribution, the sponsor's name is usually listed in the luncheon program. A standard sponsor's contribution is $100.

Patrons and Benefactors are individuals or businesses who are willing to buy an entire table at the event. Patrons and Benefactors are also listed in the program, and often their tables are labeled so that all those in attendance are aware of the individual's or businesses' contribution. The only difference between the Patrons and Benefactors is the title they are given and the amount they have contributed. Patrons generally make a middle-range contribution, such as $500. Benefactors' contributions are usually $1000. Organizations who have greater access to connections to businesses and major donors are able to set Patron and Benefactor contributions at a higher level, such as $2500 for Patrons and $5000 for Benefactors.

In setting Patron and Benefactor table prices, it is important to be realistic about what kind of access your organization has to businesses and individuals who might buy these tables. Many organizations choose to set these table prices low at first, and after several years of producing a luncheon, start to raise the price. If you don't know what is appropriate for your organization, get the advice of a consultant or other organizations which have produced similar events.

How to attract sponsors, patrons and benefactors

The way to attract supporters to any event is through a "draw." In a benefit concert, the draw is the performing artist(s). In tribute luncheons, there can be as many as three categories of "draws": the honorees, the committee chairs and members, and the speaker.

The Honorees

A tribute luncheon is an event is which one or more individuals are honored by an organization. The criteria for selecting an honoree can vary tremendously. At least superficially, an honoree should be selected because of his or her achievements, contributions or activities that reflect or promote the goals of the organization doing the honoring. However, the key to a successful and lucrative tribute luncheon is to select people who a large number of individuals and businesses will want to honor publicly by coming to the event and becoming sponsors, patrons or benefactors.

In selecting honorees, it is important to determine what is the community that will be interested in and able to become sponsors, patrons and benefactors. If it is the business community, an honoree may have to be selected because of his or her ties to that community. If it is the legal community that your organization thinks is a likely target, well-known high ranking attorneys in your community should be considered as potential honorees. It may be both.

Often the individuals who have the ties to money or business are not the individuals who organizations would initially select as honorees. Many organizations resolve this problem by choosing to honor more than one individual and by agreeing that one or more of the honorees will be selected based primarily on their ability to attract sponsors, patrons and benefactors and one or more of the honorees will be selected only because they are deserving

Choosing between fundraising and outreach as goals for events tends to raise a number of political questions for social change organizations.

of honor. This does not mean that the honorees selected for their "connections" are not deserving of honor; only that this is not the only criteria by which they have been selected.

Most organizations honor three or four individuals at their tribute luncheons. This provides the organizations with an opportunity to attract a diverse group of supporters. Some organizations have honored a business rather than an individual. Honorees should be selected carefully. Sufficient time should be allowed to consult people throughout an organization's community to develop a list of prospective honorees, prioritize that list, and approach the finalists. Not all those approached will agree to being honored, so several alternative honorees should be on your list.

The first step in planning a fundraising luncheon is to define your organization's goals.

The Luncheon Committee

The luncheon committee is a means by which large numbers of individuals are given the opportunity to endorse the event and assist in making it a success. Typical luncheon committees can have as many as 300 members.

Usually the committee has one or more "committee chairs" who provide leadership, if only in name. As with honorees, the committee chairs should be selected because their involvement will attract the support of others. Some organizations have only one committee chair; others have as many as three or four. Like with having several honorees, the purpose of having more than one committee chair is to include individuals who have ties to different communities, thereby attracting as diverse a group of supporters as possible.

After the honorees and committee chairs have been selected, a letter should be sent to a large number of people telling them about the event and asking them if they would like to be members of the luncheon committee. In joining the committee, they are agreeing to allow their names to be listed on the luncheon invitation and, if willing, to be the signer of letters to potential sponsors, patrons and benefactors. The letter to potential luncheon committee members should be signed by the committee chairs.

The number of people asked to join the committee can vary greatly, depending on the desired size of the luncheon and the number of lists to which the organization can gain access. Perhaps most important is to send invitations to individuals in the communities in which the honorees and committee chairs are known. If an honoree is active in the arts, then arts patrons will probably be willing to lend their names as members of the committee honoring that individual. If an honoree is a well known banker, executives of all of the other banks in the community should be asked to join the committee.

The letter inviting people to be on the luncheon committee must go out well in advance of the luncheon itself to allow time for the committee to be used in the following ways. First, the committee chairs and members should be listed on the luncheon invitation that is sent to even larger and more diverse lists of people. Second, the committee chairs and members should be asked to send letters to their colleagues and friends asking them to become sponsors, patrons and benefactors of the luncheon.

It is important to note that the less that is asked of the committee members, the more likely it is that large numbers of individuals will be willing to join the committee. It should be expected that some committee members will only lend their name for use on the invitation and will not even buy a ticket to the event. Others will agree to buy a patron's table, and will send letters to many of their colleagues urging them to do the same. The sponsoring organization should be prepared to play a very active role in facilitating the work of the committee. It should provide the committee members with lists of potential sponsors, patrons and benefactors for the members to indicate which prospects they can write to, as well as prepare the letters for the committee members' signatures and make all follow-up calls. The support that the sponsoring organization must provide to the committee members is very time consuming and requires a substantial amount of secretarial help, and in most cases, access to word processing equipment.

The Speaker

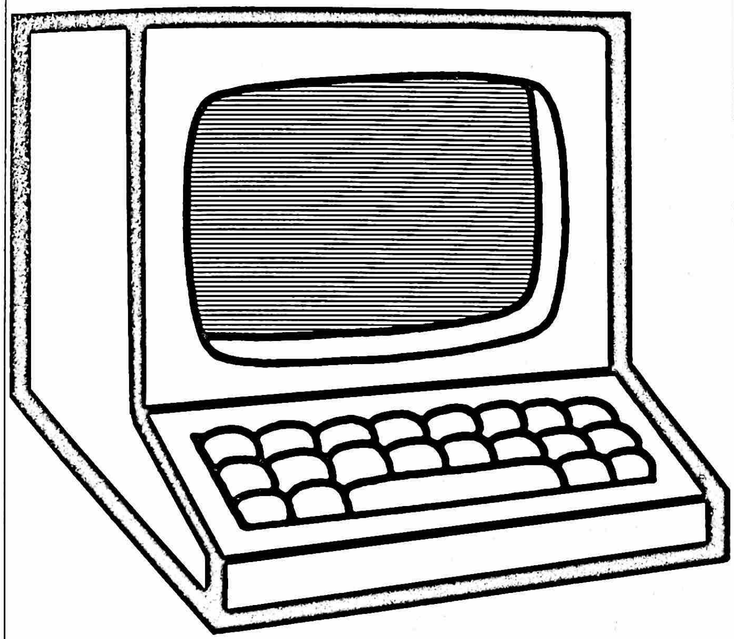
Tribute luncheons are brief, usually running from noon to 2 pm. During that time, lunches must be eaten, honorees introduced and presented with plaques commemorating the occasion, people playing a significant role in the event's success introduced, and brief word must be said about the organization and its work. Because people come to tribute luncheons because of who is being honored or who is the committee chair, rather than because they support the organization, the event provides an important public education opportunity. A representative of the organization should use the opportunity to speak briefly about the history and purpose of the organization. Many organizations also invite a guest speaker to address issues related to the work of the group. In the ideal situation, the speaker is a well-known individual, and actually serves the purpose of drawing some people to the event simply to hear him or her speak. It is very important that the speaker be eloquent, entertaining and inspiring for the audience so that people leave feeling that the sponsoring organization is one in which they would like to be involved in some way.

Conclusion

These are the components that go into a successful tribute luncheon. Obviously, there are variations on this formula, and organizations are encouraged to be creative so that their event is not just another "rubber chicken luncheon." In the next issue of the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal,* Part Two of this series will discuss the timeline for producing fundraising luncheons, and the development of the many written materials that are used in their production. LH

Computers for Non-Profits?

Part Two



HARDWARE & SOFTWARE PANIC OR PANACEA

by Marc Rotenberg & Iris Rothman

The following article is reprinted with permission from Community Jobs. *Due to space limitations, the* Grassroots Fundraising Journal *is publishing this important article on computer hardware and software in two parts. The first part, appearing in this issue, provides an introduction to the various components and qualities to be looked for in hardware and software, and how to ask the right questions when purchasing computer equipment. The second part, which will appear in the August issue of the* Journal, *will discuss where to buy a computer, what guarantees you will want from the seller, how consultants can be helpful in this process, and alternatives to actually purchasing your own equipment.*

This article is the third in a four part series designed to help community groups make informed decisions about whether to buy a small computer. The first installment briefly explains the development of micro-computers, defines basic terms and provides examples of how community groups around the country are using small computers. The second encourages community groups to carefully assess why they want a computer, how they will use it and how it will affect their organization. Also in the second installment is a description of the computer applications most commonly used by community groups. Scheduled to appear in the June issue of Community Jobs, *the fourth installment will focus on problem solving: how, once you have installed the machine in your office, to cope with inevitable glitches and where to go for help.*

Each installment in available for $3.00; the entire series for $10.00. Community Jobs *is also planning to reprint the series in booklet form in the fall.*

Community Jobs *is a monthly journal that publishes job and internship openings with community groups nationwide. Sample issues are $3.00. Yearly subscriptions are $12 for individuals, $15 for community organizations and $20 for institutions. For more information, contact* Community Jobs, *1520 Sixteenth St., N.W.; Washington DC 20036.*

Nonprofit organizations, already aware of two of the Famous Great Lies: "The check is in the mail," and "I'm from The Government and I'm here to help you," are becoming acquainted, to their sorrow, with a third: "This is the perfect small computer for all your needs"—and its corollaries: "This program will work with your machine," "All the software you'll ever need is available for this computer," and "Anytime you need help, just give me a call."

Groups that believed the above have found themselves seduced and abandoned. A national environmental group bought an elaborate computer because the seller promised to develop a mailing list program tailored to its needs. He then moved to Silicon Valley.

A network of peace groups bought a computer system, planning to exchange information with other peace groups. Some groups, however, bought their communications software separately. One liked the sound of Lync, another Crosstalk, still others preferred Apple Express. Too late the groups discovered that none of their programs will "talk" to each other.

A political action group planned to shift its mailing list from a service bureau to its microcomputer. Then they found out that the list was not in a format their software could use. Work on the issue stopped. All staff were detailed to typing full time: 6,000 names and addresses had to be put into the only format the software would accept.

Where did these groups go wrong? They had carefully thought through whether they needed a computer, what they would use it for and how it would affect their organization. They slipped up when they had to decide exactly what hardware and software to buy.

Such slip-ups are understandable given the current state of the computer industry. Nonprofit groups face a bewildering array of choices. There are about 400 popular microcomputer hardware systems and 20,000 to 30,000 software programs available. Each piece of equipment, each program, might do something well, but may not be able to perform other tasks as well or as cost-effectively. Groups run into problems because they suffer from a lack of knowledge about these limitations—coupled with unrealistic expectations.

Related to the vast number of choices is the phenomenal rate of change in the industry. Computer technology that's on the cutting edge today is obsolete tomorrow. Companies go in and out of business. To make things even more difficult, there aren't yet any industry-wide standards, so machines and software aren't "compatible" with each other.

Nor can nonprofit groups count on computer salespeople to guide them through this confusing terrain. Chances are today's computer salesman was yesterday's vacuum cleaner man, promoted for his gift of gab, not his grasp of computer technology.

No wonder many nonprofit groups look longingly at IBM, even though its machines are very expensive. Buying from IBM at least gives you the secure feeling that the manufacturer, store, training staff and repair service will still be in business tomorrow.

There are alternatives, however, to buying the most expensive microcomputer in the blind faith that it will be the best. But, just as when buying any major piece of equipment, you need to know the right questions to ask and how to evaluate the answers you get. In this article we will try to give you an idea of what qualities to look for, what pitfalls to guard against and how to evaluate what you find to see if it will fit your group's particular needs.

First, you have to decide what you want your computer to do, and in what order of importance; word processing versus list management, for example. Second, you need to decide how much you can afford to spend (a decision that will significantly narrow your choices). Remember, you need to budget not only for hardware and software but for supplies, maintenace, training, insurance, personnel—and perhaps a computer consultant to help you make your initial buying decision.

Next, you need to consider not only the features of the machinery ("hardware"), but also the quality, quantity and variety of "software" programs available for that machine: the quality of the manuals that come with it; how much training and service is likely to be available *after* you purchase; and the track record of the manufacturer and vendor. How likely are they to survive in the computer jungle?

Hardware

You need hardware that both has the ability to do what you want it to and that you are physically comfortable working with. A computer's abilities are determined by its power, memory and storage capability, expandability and by the software available for that machine.

A computer's *power*, measured in "bits," determines what tasks the computer can do and how fast it can do them. Eight-bit machines, such as the Apple II, Radio Shack Model III and Kaypro, are all fine for word processing and list management. The 16-bit machines, such as IBM and its clones, will whiz through word processing but really shine with graphics and number-crunching. And Apple's new MacIntosh is a 32-bit computer!

Computer *memory* is how much information the machine can hold at one time. For a price, you can *expand* some computers' power—for example, you can buy accessories that let you type 40 pages at a time instead of four, or let you print out copy while you're typing in something else. The *software* available is probably the most crucial factor in determining what you can do with your new machine and how satisfied you will be with it.

The machinery itself comes in several separate parts, which you can buy together in a package deal or separately priced. A package can be put together by a manufacturer, a computer store or you and your consultant.

The main components of a small computer system are the *central processing unit* (CPU) and its *memory*. Like the human brain, the CPU can't do anything useful until it receives some information; in this case, a software program. To run a program, you have to type directions into the computer, using a *keyboard*. The program, which is on a disk, is inserted into a *disk drive*. To see what the machine is up to, you need a screen or *monitor*. And to see your work on paper, you need a *printer*. The CPU, keyboard, disk drive, monitor and printer make up the basic system.

You *must* have all these parts. The prices you see advertised will vary according to how many of these essential parts are included in the package. An Apple computer for $1,000 may sound like a terrific bargain—until you find out that your $1,000 system lacks a monitor and a disk drive. Those are sold separately.

Computer Memory

Ram (Random-Access Memory) is the amount of *temporary* workspace available in a computer to run software programs. As the amount of RAM increases, so does the speed of the machine and the complexity of the problems it can handle.

Space (or memory) is measured in kilobytes. One kilobyte (K) represents 1,024 characters (letters or numbers). Say you want to write a report, and your computer has 16K of RAM. The instructions for the simple word-processing program you bought use up 10K. That leaves 6K–6,000 characters or the equivalent of about four double-spaced typewritten pages. If you want to write a longer report you will have to take the first four pages out of the memory and store them elsewhere. Having done that, you cannot edit or reread those first four pages until you've typed in the rest of the report, taken it out, stored it and put the first part back in the computer's memory.

We recommend 64K as the minimum memory required to run the software programs most nonprofit organizations will want to use. In some machines, RAM can be expanded—with an additional purchase, of course—but 64K is a good starting point for small organizations.

Keyboard

Most computer keyboards look like typewriter keyboards. Most are detachable, but they vary in feel and in the number and usefulness of their keys. The number of "special function" keys varies. These keys are especially helpful in word processing: for instance, they make the difference between whether you have to hit one key or four to delete, enter or get HELP. More expensive computers feature numeric keyboards in addition to their regular keyboards: highly recommended if your group works with a lot of statistics, budgeting, etc. In general, the more keys the better.

A poorly designed keyboard can be a major irritant. The easiest ones to use are those that look and feel the most like a regular typewriter.

Storage

Everything you type into RAM will disappear as soon as you turn the machine off. So you must have a way to store your information.

Although some microcomputers can store information on tape cassettes, most systems used by organizations will require the greater storage capability of "disks."

Disks are "hard" or "floppy." Floppy disks, which look like 45s, can store between 50 and 200 pages of typewritten text or 500 to 2,000 membership records. Hard disks can store much more. Their capacity starts at 3,000 pages or a 40,000-name mailing list. They are also much faster—and far more expensive—than floppy disks. Most small nonprofit groups won't need that much speed or power, unless they are using large mailing lists. If you think you might need a hard disk in the future, consider buying a computer system which comes with one, or a system you can add on to later.

To play your floppy disks you need a disk drive (hard disks include a disk drive). Many users get by with one, but it's easier if you have two disk drives; one for the program being played and one to store the information you've just entered. Word processing, for example, is more convenient when you can insert a disk with a program in one drive and a blank disk for storage in the other.

Dual disk drives are also handy when you're copying programs and making back-up files—which, by the way, you should always do. The most scarifying computer stories come from those who neglected to do so. For instance, the day the floppy disks were left on the front seat of the closed-up car in August, and the floppy became the droopy.

Monitors and Printers

To see what you're doing, you need a monitor. To make a paper copy of your work, you need a printer.

Monitors vary in the size of the screen, how many characters across and rows down they can display at one time, their ability to display graphics and their comfort factors. At a minimum, you want a nine-inch screen. An ideal screen is one that can display 25 lines, each 80 characters long. (The more text you can see at one time, the better.)

Monitors also differ significantly in how easy it is to read what you. Look for sharp letters, anti-glare screens and tiltability (rare but wonderful for glare and for making tall and short people equally comfortable while they work). How easy the screen is to read will greatly affect the happiness and productivity of the people who will be using the machine. [Note: Correct placement of the terminal in your office will also help reduce glare. Keep the monitor away from bright lights and windows.]

Although a printer is considered a "peripheral" by people who make and sell computer systems—meaning you have to buy it separately—any nonprofit group will find it a necessity. Printers vary in cost, speed and look of the product. Dot-matrix printers are relatively cheap and fast but your letters will look as though a computer wrote them. (Some manufacturers are making dot-matrix printers whose print, they maintain, is nearly comparable to that produced by letter-quality printers. There is a higher price tag attached, of course.) Letter-quality printers produce handsomer print but at a higher cost and slower speed. (A good letter-quality printer can be the most expensive part of your system.) You need to decide what's more important—the look of your finished product or how fast you get it.

You could buy both: a dot-matrix printer for drafts and a painfully slow (and thus less expensive) letter-quality printer for final versions.

Before you buy any printer, make sure the store checks to see that it's compatible with the rest of your system (hardware and software). Buy your printer(s) last.

Compatibility

You can't mix and match when buying a computer system, the way you can with a stereo system. Computer manufacturers haven't even standardized their cables and jacks, much less their software. Different brand name parts may not work together. Software programs written for one machine may not work on another.

Many people wind up at a store like Radio Shack, where they can walk in with a list of their needs and walk out with a big stack of boxes, fairly confident that everything in those boxes will work together (though not necessarily work correctly). Other more adventurous souls, longing for the latest technological advance or the best price, will assemble equipment from eight different companies, five salespeople, three stores. It depends on what your nerves can stand—and on what kind of resources, human and financial, your organization is willing to expend to get an elaborate system working well.

We strongly advise community groups to avoid systems on the so-called leading edge. Instead, look for machinery that is inexpensive, widely sold and used, and that comes in a store- or manufacturer-assembled package, the parts of which are *guaranteed* to work together.

Peripherals

The one peripheral (other than a printer, which we consider a necessity) deserving serious consideration is a modem. A modem lets one computer retrieve information from another computer on the telephone. Using a modem, your group can hook up to special data banks, such as the New York Times Information Bank or SpecialNet. A modem also allows you to exchange information with another computer. You could, for example, instantly send the proposal you wrote in your Atlanta office to your Chicago office for editing, or to a local print shop for printing.

Software

The software available should govern your choices about hardware. Software is to hardware as records are to record-players. Without programs your machine is only capable of gathering dust. But, unlike records, a program made for one brand of machine may not play on another brand. So once you've decided what you want to use a computer for, you must find out what software performs those tasks best—which word-processing, list management, accounting or communications program—and then find the hardware that will run it.

Software programs—the instructions for performing tasks like word processing—come on disks. To run those programs a computer needs a disk drive. But it also needs a group of operating instructions called the Disk Operating System (DOS). DOS's are not easy to explain—entire books have been written in the attempt. So we aren't even going to try. What is most important for you to know about DOS's is that a software program written for one will not work on another. A program written for the Radio Shack DOS, for instance, will not run on an Apple, because Apple uses a different DOS.

The first operating system developed for personal computers, CP/M used to be the de facto standard. Since it is the operating system for a great many computers intended for business use, several thousand business-oriented programs (as opposed to, say, Donkey Kong) have been written for it.

There are probably the greatest *total* number of programs available for Apple's DOS 3.3, but they tend to be mostly for home entertainment use. Radio Shack's TRS DOS is the easiest operating system to learn and use. When you're stuck you can just push a button marked "HELP" and screens of prompts and definitions appear.

MS-DOS was IBM's choice and IBM's choice has a leg up on becoming the industry standard. IBM modified MS-DOS slightly and renamed it PC-DOS. (These slight modifications mean that a software program written for an IBM personal computer may not work on a machine that uses MS-DOS, and vice versa.) While there aren't as many programs available now for PC-DOS as for the other operating systems, there are probably just as many *good* ones, and the number is likely to grow geometrically. Since independent software program writers want to write their programs for the DOS that will guarantee the largest sales, IBM is very likely to have the most programs available in the future.

The big choice for many nonprofit groups that aren't buying IBM is whether to get a machine that is "IBM-compatible," i.e., that can use the software designed for IBM. Keep in mind that no matter what the salesperson tells you, *no* other computer is likely to be completely compatible with IBM. The fact that it may be "90-percent compatible" still does not guarantee it will run your favorite program.

You decide on a DOS in large part based on the software programs available for it (now and in the future). How do you choose the specific programs you want? In general, you want programs that are easy to learn and use, widely available and can do what you need done. As to what brand to buy, your safest bet is to go with programs that work well for other nonprofit groups. Ask them what programs they use, how they like them, and how much work it took to get the programs to do what the groups wanted done. You want to find programs that require a minimum of fine tuning or "customization." The less customization, the less heartache.

20,000 - 30,000 programs for personal computers now exist, enough to fill the SuperDome. A great many of them are variants of, and often improvements on, the Big Three: WordStar, dBase II and Visicalc.

The best-selling program of all is WordStar, used for word processing. *Consumer Reports* rated word processing programs on 46 features, and WordStar had all but two (recall deletion and cursor movement by paragraph). WordStar has so many other features that *Consumer Reports* could not include all of them in its table. For all its features, however, WordStar is difficult to learn and not easy to use. Several books have been written just to explain its instruction manual. Decide if you need all those features. And make sure whomever you buy WordStar from agrees to help you learn how to use it.

Consumer Reports recommends WordStar only to groups with "extensive word processing applications—and to those users we recommend it highly."

In evaluating a word-processing program—or any other kind of software—you should be just as concerned with how easy it is to learn and use as with sheer number of features. You shouldn't have to stop and ask for "HELP" every two minutes or constantly consult a manual. Ease of learning is particularly important if your group has a lot of staff turnover or relies heavily on volunteers.

dBase II is the most popular list management program for microcomputers. It can handle a great deal of complicated information very quickly. But like WordStar, dBase II may be more program than you need. People who plan to use dBase II should anticipate reading several instruction books—and it is neither easy to learn nor to use.

Electronic spreadsheets are useful if you want to know how your whole budget will be affected if you change any number in it. Of the spread sheet programs available, VisiCalc is the most popular.

But nonprofit groups generally don't need electronic spreadsheet programs (except those that do a lot of budgeting or research). Most will find it more cost effective to do their budgets by hand and type them into a word processor. And contrary to popular belief, spreadsheet programs are not very good for financial recordkeeping.

In addition to writing, calculating numbers and filing, you can also use your computer to get information from or exchange it with other computers. Popular communications programs include CrossTalk, Modem 7 (a standard among hobbyists and bulletin-board users), Lync (a straightforward communications package that's easy to install and provides remote control so you can operate the computer from a different location), MITE and Ascom (among the most powerful of the communication programs).

First you have to decide what you want your computer to do, and in what order of importance.

Iris Rothman, *a Washington, D.C., writer and editor, is increasingly grateful that she inherited some stock in IBM.* Marc Rotenberg *is the founder and director of the Public Interest Computer Association in Washington, D.C. Credit is also due Shannon Ferguson and David Tobin for their advice, and the September and October 1983 issues of* Consumer Reports.

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Dear Joan...

The answer to the following question appeared in the last issue of the Journal *with several paragraphs missing. We are reprinting it here in its entirity.*

The Publishers

Dear Joan,
How can we get someone off our Board who never does anything?
Resentful in Reno

Dear Resentful,
Very Carefully.

Before you do anything, make sure that you have made every effort to find the right job for the problem Board person. What does this person do best? How can she use those skills to help your group? If she can't or won't raise money, can she keep the books or sit with the kids while other board members ask for money. Never reject a board member unless you have given him or her at least three different jobs to try.

Are you sure the board member has a clear understanding of the organization and her responsibilities? Can you assign a veteran board leader to work with the problem person for a few months?

Is there any conflict in her life right now? If she is having problems at work or at home she may not be able to give you time right now, but will be active next year. Then it is worth your while to keep her on the board until her other problems are solved.

Only after you have made several tries at motivating your Board member should you even consider asking her to leave the Board. If you feel that she will not be able to make a contribution at this time, and if you have another person who is eager to fill out her term of office on the Board, the best solution is for the president to have a heart to heart talk with the problem Board member. Explain that you have another volunteer who wants to serve on the Board now and you have observed that Ms. Smith does not seem enthusiastic about serving on the Board at this time. Ask if she would resign to make a space for the new person. If she says yes, accept the resignation at the next board meeting and elect the new person to complete her term of office.

If Ms. Smith says she does not want to resign, chalk it up to experience and dedicate yourself to strengthening the rest of the Board. Be sure that there are terms of office for Board members and that your best people serve on the nominating committee this year. In the long run, you are better off doing the work to find the winners for your Board than to use your energy fretting about one or two lemons.

Dear Joan,
Last month you answered a question from someone trying to start a repertory theatre in a small town. Well, we are trying to do the same thing. But the question we keep getting is: How could your theatre be any good in this small town. Good actors will go to New York so you'll never get anyone any good." What can we say?
New Producer

Dear Producer

Say "Come to our next show." Let them see for themselves how good you are.

Of course you're not Broadway. There is no reason why you should want to be. You can showcase local talent and produce premiers of new plays by local playwrights that can be big hits in your town.

There are thousands of successful nonprofit theatres thriving in North America. The oldest in the United States is the Thalian Association in Wilmington, North Carolina. It was founded as an amateur theatre society in 1788 and it's still going strong. You can too!

For more advice on promoting your theatre get Danny Newman's very readable book "Subscribe Now!" for $8.95 prepaid from the Theatre Communications Group, 355 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017. Also ask for their current list of excellent publications on fundraising and marketing for dance, opera, orchestral, and theatre companies.

Joan Flanagan is the author of the new *Grass Roots Fundraising Book* (1982) and *The Successful Volunteer Organization* (1981), both from Contemporary Books and available through your bookstore.

Questions for the column should be sent to the ***Grassroots Fundraising Journal*** marked "Attention: Joan Flanagan." Ms. Flanagan regrets that she cannot answer each question individually.

The views expressed in this column are not necessarily the views of the publishers or other contributors to the ***Grassroots Fundraising Journal***.

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