

## What Are The Different Types of Events?

Excerpted from  
Department of Canadian Heritage  
“Guide to Special Events Fundraising”

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There are so many kinds of events that it's hard to select the right one. Here are some rough categories to simplify the choices. You can use the list to spark some ideas:

### § 1 Extravaganzas

Examples include gala dinner-dances, benefit concerts, cruises, and major sporting events.

The same ideas can also produce low-cost variations, with lower ticket prices. Examples include community beer-halls, religious celebrations, or ethnic picnics.

People come to these events for a good time as well as to support your cause. They also come to see and be seen with the right crowd. Incidentally, "The Right Crowd" is not always the richest or most fashionable. People may want to attend to spend the evening with a crowd that is the most political, or the most fun, or the friendliest.

This category includes events that can justify high admission prices and/or attract large numbers of people. There is also a high degree of risk, and some organizations have lost fortunes.

Until recently, the Canadian record for ticket prices was \$1,000 per person. Mila Mulrone and Peter Pocklington organized one such event. It included an exhibition game between the Edmonton Oilers and the Montreal Canadiens, and dinner at the Prime Minister's residence. That raised \$1.5 million for Cystic Fibrosis research. The Toronto Symphony also charged \$1,000 per plate for a dinner honouring Walter Hamburger.

The new record is now \$1,500 per person, \$3,000 per couple. The occasion was a birthday party for real estate developer Elvio Del Zotto. The beneficiary was the federal Liberal Party. Mr. Del Zotto is the president of the Ontario wing. Interestingly, at about the same time a fundraising dinner with Liberal leader John Turner as the guest of honour was only \$300. One with Prime Minister Brian Mulrone was only \$400. Equally interesting, the guest list included several prominent Conservatives. Perhaps they were all attracted by the unusual opportunity to see his spectacular home.

In the US, tickets have gone as high as \$10,000 per person.

Often the sponsors go to a great deal of trouble to create a memorable evening. That's not always necessary.

Instead, why not let someone else put on the show? Devote the group's energy to the most important part selling the tickets!

Examples include premieres of new movies, theatre nights, or ball games.

Many theatre groups and sports teams are happy to sell tickets at a discount. The charity makes money by charging more than it paid for the tickets. Mark-ups of 20% to 40% are common.

Where no discount is available, the charity may buy full-price seats and create a value-added package. By combining the tickets with a reception or dinner, or perhaps transportation by chartered bus, a special combination can justify premium pricing.

Unsold tickets can usually be returned for credit, given enough lead time. If not, careful planning is required to be sure the non-profit group does not get stuck with expensive unsold seats.

## **§ 2 Bargain Hunters and Gamblers**

Examples include bingos, raffles, casino nights, garage sales, rummage sales, auctions, flea markets, and bake sales.

People come for a good deal. Those attending may not even know which organization is hosting the event.

These can be modest events for small groups. They can be on a grand scale.

Symphonies and society groups have thrown dream auctions with over a thousand items promoted in special supplements to the daily paper.

Prizes for draws have included a round-the-world vacation, a house or a Rolls-Royce. The runner-up may win a pair of matching Porsches.

One hospital closed its 11-storey parking garage for a day to hold the world's largest garage sale.

The most successful have the prizes or merchandise donated. Raffle tickets maybe as low as fifty cents or as high as \$250 each.

## **§ 3 Educational events**

Examples range from bringing in a major speaker with a world-wide reputation, to putting on a slide show in a community centre basement.

People come to learn, or to be reinvigorated and reassured.

Non-profit groups are constantly trying to tell people about their work. Usually they pass the hat for donations afterwards. The results can be dismal.

Some groups have discovered that people will pay to attend an educational session, if it's done right. They may make a profit on the admission fee. They may also attract people they can win over as donors.

Authors who have recently published a new book are particularly promising. The publisher may pay part or all of their travel costs. They also generate media interviews, which promote interest in the event.

A free seminar on ethical investing might draw community minded people capable of making larger donations. A session on estate planning could attract people who might leave money in their wills to the group.

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