Get more cash for what you care about

The first step in supporting a charity, helping your community, or launching a business is to—gulp—ask for money. Hey, it's not as hard as it sounds! Nicole Lapin shares her simple tips to help you meet your goal.



ON MY SHOW *HATCHED* I meet so many women who want to start a business. What they all have in common: They need money. So do all those ladies I know who are running a race for a charity or helping their kid's class go on a field trip. Believe me: There's a right way to raise it, and it starts with saying the right things. While planning my book tour, the clearer I was about what I needed my friends to do (like "host a book party"), the more willing they were to help out. Make it as easy as possible for everyone to join your cause, and they will! Here's how.

EXPLAIN YOUR MISSION

Before anyone is going to pull out their checkbook for you, you'll need to tell them what you're raising money for, why it's important to you, and how their contribution will help. Put together a simple, one-sentence elevator pitch to explain your mission or business plan. (For instance, I promote myself by saying I'm the only financial expert you don't need a dictionary to understand.) Be sure to *love* what you come up with—it will become your daily mantra. Then provide a specific timeline, and be transparent about what you need: "I want to raise $500 by June 15 to help pay for three local girls to go to summer camp in the country for one week." And don't be afraid to follow up! I've found that even my BFFs need multiple reminders to donate.

START CLOSE TO HOME

Your community—friends, family, colleagues—are the first ones you should share your fund-raising plans with. When you reach out, make sure you're being personal. I can't stand when I get an email that was clearly sent to hundreds of people at once. Tailor your ask for each person so it's in line with her skill set (how she can help) or her budget (how much you ask that she give). This is scary, but these are your friends—show enthusiasm for your cause and let them know why their support matters to you. Be gracious, but don't apologize. There is no need to start an ask with "I know you're busy, but..." or "I know it's a lot to ask, but..." Be assertive about what you need, and thankful that they'd consider helping (and extra grateful if they come through!).

EXPAND YOUR OUTREACH

You may need to look beyond your network to make it to your goal. When asking strangers for donations, effective fund-raisers offer incentives. Here's an idea: Host a fun event and "charge" a suggested donation as the ticket price. Local businesses and brands might donate food and alcohol in order to get their brand in front of your audience. If you're trying to amass national support, post your mission on fundrazr.com, which helps you share campaigns with like-minded peers. To push your business into full-on start-up mode, try AngelList (angel.co) to connect with investors. The money won't raise itself, but I'm confident *you* can do it.

Nicole Lapin is the author of *Boss Bitch: A Simple 12-Step Plan to Take Charge of Your Career* and one of the stars of the CW show *Hatched*.

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