



CASE STUDY 3

SPECIAL EVENT FUNDRAISING



Steve Maggio worked with Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSK) for thirteen years during his tenure at two different direct marketing agencies.

Steve helped MSK create a Special Event Fundraising initiative called Fred's Team. The program was named for the late Fred Lebow, the founder and director of the NYC Marathon and a former patient at MSK.

Our direct marketing idea was to use the New York City Marathon as a special event fundraising vehicle — by asking marathon runners to get friends, family and co-workers to sponsor them at \$1 — \$2 — \$5 — or more — per mile, for every mile of the 26.2-mile race. Runners were motivated by the spirit of supporting a life saving cause, as well as prizes and recognition benefits which were offered at different price points ranging from \$500 to \$3,000.

In 2003, we mailed a three-part mail campaign to more than 25,000 U.S. runners registered in the New York City Marathon. This was essentially a donor acquisition campaign, since the list of registered runners provides a new group of prospects each year.

Many of the runners had been touched by cancer themselves through a friend or relative who had — or was fighting — the disease. We gave runners “shirt tags” that said “I am running for: _____” so that runners could fill in the name of the loved one for whom they had dedicated their race.

Although the NYC Marathon is the “flagship” of this campaign, we made a strategic decision to create more opportunities for runners to participate in foreign marathons and raise funds in exchange for free airfare and other “members-only” benefits. We promoted the foreign “Fred's Team” marathons vigorously by beefing up the marketing mix with space advertising, and a presence on the web sites of MSK and the NY Road Runners Club.

In Steve's final year on this program, this direct mail campaign raised more than \$1.7 million. The response rate was 2.2% with an average donation per runner of \$3,508.77. The space ad campaign generated an additional \$700,000.

The grand total for this multi-media campaign was \$2.4 million — a 17.9% lift over the prior total of \$1.95 million. This was the most revenue ever raised in the history of the campaign. Steve Maggio helped MSK build this campaign from \$653,000 in 1991, to \$2.4 million in gross revenue.