

DOJIGGY COOL TOOLS FOR NON-PROFITS



How to Plan a Successful Dog Walk-a-thon:
Tips for Working with Furry Friends

Provided by

DOJIGGY COOL TOOLS FOR NON-PROFITS

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Introduction

More and more, organizations opt to put a furry spin on their annual walk-a-thon by expanding its participant audience to our favorite four-legged friends. Planning a dog walk-a-thon follows many of the same familiar steps of a regular walk-a-thon. However, specific needs exist for accommodating both your human and canine friends. The following is designed to serve as an addendum to DoJiggy's *How to Run a Successful Walk-A-Thon: A Compete Guide to Managing your Fundraising Walk*.

Logistics

Logistics always make for a large piece of the planning for any walk-a-thon. Throwing animals in the mix only adds to this responsibility. One of the first and most essential steps in planning a dog walk-a-thon is to learn what permit or licensing needs exist from your local government.

Choose a location that not only permits animals, but includes ample space. Dogs are pack animals, and generally get along. However, a location that offers lots of options for separating is essential in the event that an animal shows aggression. If managing a large event, consider organizing your participants in flights. By keeping the number of dogs in one area at a manageable level, you reduce the chances that the environment will become overwhelming for the animals, owners and volunteers. Flights may be organized by animal size, animal age, or by allowing the participants to choose a time that works for them.

In addition, take time to consider the features of the course you select. It is best to keep the course relatively short. Typical distances range from 2 to 2 ½ miles. With this distance, the course can easily be designed as a loop with the same start and finish line, or as a linear course with different start and end points, and parking along a midpoint in between. With a loop course, all participants are required to complete the full distance, where as a linear course provides options for walkers to exit the course earlier. When using a circular course, we recommend pacing your walk in such a way that all dogs have left the starting area before the first wave returns.

Safety

First Aid and emergency resources are essential for ensuring the health and safety of your two and four-legged walkers. In addition to traditional first aid items, make sure to keep a supply of emergency items for pets. You may want to consult a local veterinarian for suggestions. In addition, bring a supply of extra collars, leashes, and make sure that food and water are accessible in a pinch.

Event Optimization

Pet-centered events often work well for pet-centered causes, such as animal shelters. If your organization does not fall into this category, it is often helpful to pair your fundraiser with other pet friendly needs, such as adoption drives, or health awareness issues. For example, many times, pets and humans can suffer from the same diseases. Healing and/or coping with a disease can often be helped through the presence of a pet. Tying the interests of the pet and the interests of the human together will make a more meaningful and memorable event.

Consider ways to reach out to non-pet owners, as well, to optimize participation. Some organizations hold adoption drives concurrently with their walks. This invites non-owners to attend the event, and enjoy it with their newly adopted friend. Perhaps there are members of your community that cannot walk their animal, but would like to allow their animal to participate by walking with a community member that does not have their own pet to walk with. Be creative! This type of event holds ample possibilities for making new and important connections.

In addition, pet-centered events make natural inroads with pet-centered companies for sponsorship. Consider partnering with local veterinarians, doggie day care centers, pet supply stores, or other retailers for goody bag items, or expo booths.

Pet-Centered Prizes & Give-Aways

Perhaps the greatest joy of participating in any fundraising walk, other than raising money for a great cause, is found in the prizes and give-aways, and in the opportunity to socialize with community members with common interests. Be strategic in the items that you provide in your goody bags. Include both things that your participants will enjoy and use, but also items that will help facilitate a great event. It is also helpful to include one item that can be recreated annually as a collectible. Often, with dog walk-a-thons, organizers select a bandana with the organization logo for this purpose. Consider putting items your participants will use while walking in the bag, such as sunscreen and pooper-scooper type supplies.

Consider having a photographer on-site to take pet and owner pictures. Pictures may be sold to raise additional funds for your charity. Additionally, create contests and awards that can be won by participants. Lots of potential for awards exist. For example, awards may be given for best course completion time, good citizenship or sportsmanship, dog costumes or grooming, personality, and/or showmanship. Your participants will love the opportunity to compete!

Celebration & Recognition

A lunch or social hour following your event is a wonderful way to extend your walk and allow for community engagement and networking. Consider selecting a location that can easily support a hot dog lunch or ice cream social following your walk. Not only does this build connection among your supporters, it offers a nice and memorable way to end the day. Awards can also be presented at this time.

Be sure to give recognition to your fundraisers. This can be done on your DoJiggy website, in your organization's newsletter, or at a special event. You want them to know that they are appreciated and that you would love to see them again for next year's event.

DoJiggy has provided this document to get you started on the road to a successful Dog Walk. This addendum is meant to supplement the document: *How to Run a Successful Walk-a-thon: A Complete Guide to Managing Your Fundraising Walk*, also available from the DoJiggy Resource Center.

When it comes to walk-a-thon software, DoJiggy can help! With DoJiggy Pledge, every facet of your event can be managed easily and with efficiency. DoJiggy software provides tools for streamlined registration, event tracking, and report building. Upon registration, each of your walk-a-thon participants will create a personal pledge page with their picture, personal statement and a thermometer that goes up as they reach their fundraising goal.

Please visit our website at <http://www.dojiggy.com> or contact us today at (888) 436-1999, for more information on DoJiggy Pledge.