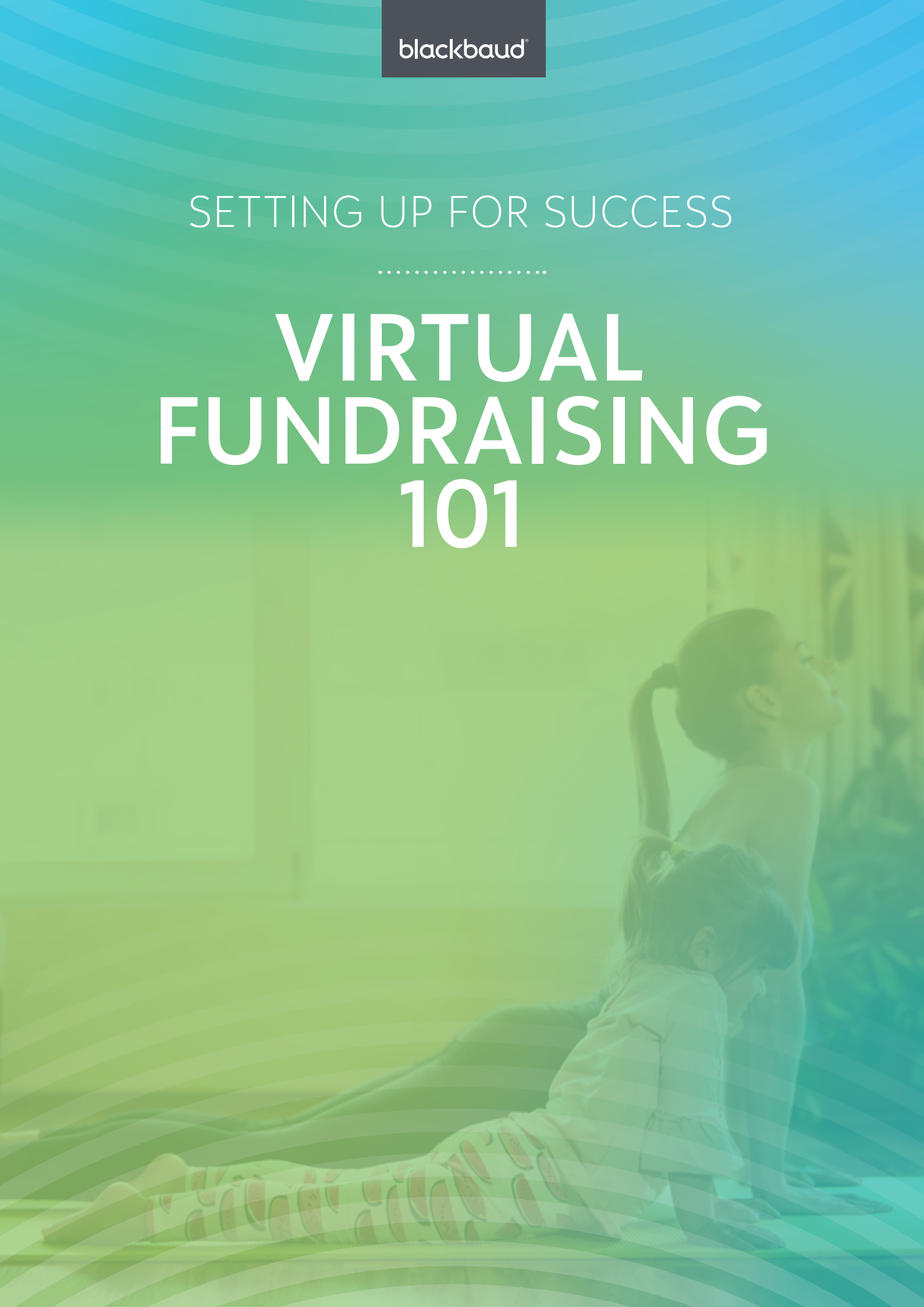


SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS

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# VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING 101



## Introduction

We are living through an unprecedented situation, where due to a global pandemic, the whole country has been advised to socially distance or self-isolate, and all large gatherings are banned. This is a challenging time and many things in our lives have changed, and it goes without saying that most fundraising events will be cancelled for the foreseeable future.

But life goes on, and non-profit organisations like yours still need to raise funds for your mission – so what can you do to fill this gap and how can you replace your usual events schedule?

This is where virtual fundraising comes in...

Not to be confused with a high-tech, virtual reality head gear wearing game (although it could involve that if you wanted!) – virtual fundraising simply allows supporters to participate in a chosen activity wherever they are, whenever they can, and share their activity online to get donations.

Many of you will be aware of virtual fundraising or will be starting to see the term appear in conversation as people begin discussing alternative solutions for moving forward with fundraising. We hope this eBook will answer some of the questions you may have about getting started – what the positives are, ideas and suggestions for your own event, and tips from some organisations that have already had success in this area.

If at any point you decide you want more information, we're here to personally give advice too – please get in touch at [solutions@blackbaud.co.uk](mailto:solutions@blackbaud.co.uk)

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# GLOSSARY

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**Virtual fundraising:** The process of sharing real activities and events online to encourage donations, rather than people gathering in one place.

**Virtual event:** A specific event that participants can take part in at whenever and wherever they are. All activity will be logged and displayed online.

**Community fundraising:** Mobilising members of your community to raise money for your non-profit organisation. In this instance, encouraging them to incorporate fundraising in their virtual activities.

**Gaming for Social Good:** Livestreaming of computer gaming to raise money for your charity.

**Strava:** A fitness app primarily used to track cycling and running exercises, using GPS data. This can be integrated to your JustGiving page to automatically track your activity and encourage donations.

**Livestreaming:** The broadcasting of live video to an audience over the internet.

**Twitch:** A livestreaming platform for gamers.

**Facebook Live:** A feature of the Facebook social network that uses the camera on a computer or mobile device to broadcast real-time video to Facebook.

**YouTube:** A video sharing service where users can watch, like, share, comment and upload their own videos.

**Zoom:** A video conferencing service you can use to virtually meet with others – either by video or audio-only or both, all while conducting live chats – and it lets you record those sessions to view later.

**Landing page:** A single webpage that can standalone and contain information about your event or campaign, but can also be linked to your website.

**Microsite:** A microsite is a website separate from the organisation's main homepage or URL (web address) that contains branded content. A Microsite usually has its own URL that is completely independent of the main website's URL.



# SECTION 1: WHAT IS VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING?

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Virtual fundraising can be best described as undertaking fundraising events that happen online rather than in the real-world. If you've ever attended one of our webinars, for example, these are a form of virtual event. It means people can attend our training sessions no matter where they're based!

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Some types of virtual event can be just like your traditional running or cycling event, but anyone wishing to take part just needs to be able to access a fitness tracking app or website where they can take part and log their progress.

Another kind of virtual fundraising can be done via a livestreaming platform, such as YouTube or Twitch – it could be fitness related, for example, a live yoga tutorial – but it can also be something completely different, such as a story time for children or a song performance.

Essentially, all virtual fundraising means that logistics are no longer an issue when organising events and participants are brought together virtually.



## Virtual Events

Imagine a traditional run event – hundreds or thousands of people come together in one location to run the same route at the same time. This is a well-tested method of raising money for charity and the kind of event that continues to be popular with participants and supporters.

However, we find ourselves in circumstances that mean that all large gatherings have been banned for the foreseeable future, and so the big running events for the year have been cancelled.

An alternative to this is to create a virtual running event. In this instance, participants would be encouraged to run or walk a specified distance in a place convenient for them and at their own pace. Every time they complete another leg, they can log it on the event website and supporters will see how far they've gone. A leaderboard of participants can be created to encourage motivation, and donations to the cause can be collected and displayed online.

How the task is completed could be left up to the participants to decide – they could perhaps run a 10k by doing daily laps of their garden, or by going out for a walk every day. Or perhaps the activity is more organised than that – the challenge could be to complete 100 star jumps in an hour in your living room.

## Integrating Fitness Apps

One fantastic way to build motivation and create competition for your virtual event participants is to integrate a fitness app into your event platform. This will allow participants to automatically log and track their achievements to show their activity and fundraise.

Research from JustGiving has shown that fundraisers who share fitness activities tend to raise more money than those who don't – 40% more on average in fact. Statistics also show that participants that post fitness updates are more likely to 'activate' their fundraising page, ie. to get at least one donation.

JustGiving user research shows that people can often feel self-conscious about posting too much on social media to ask for donations. Sharing fitness activity updates gives your supporters more opportunities to talk about their fundraising, and those who post training updates between 11 and 50 times have the highest activation rates, indicating that those individuals have the greatest commitment levels.

Another excellent benefit of adding a fitness app is that it taps into consumer behaviour that is already happening and growing. Strava, the top-rated app for runners and cyclists, already has 42 million users and adds one million more each month.

JustGiving now has an easy-to-use integration with Strava. Supporters get all the same benefits of fundraising on JustGiving – simple set-up, expert advice and 0% platform fee – plus everything they need take to make their workouts feel even more rewarding. Connecting Strava to JustGiving means your supporters can share their training pics, maps and miles to show how committed they are to their fundraising.

It's easy to set-up – with one click your supporters can connect their Strava to JustGiving, and their workouts will get automatically posted to their fundraising page.

To find out more, take a look at the JustGiving blog [here](#).

“JustGiving integration with Strava is now live! ”



## Community Fundraising

If your organisation wants to get involved in the world of virtual fundraising but the feasibility of running a full event seems low at the moment, you could always consider going down the route of encouraging your supporters to undertake their own virtual fundraising.

In the last few weeks, we have seen more people than ever before embrace online communication – from Joe ‘The Body Coach’ Wicks becoming the nation’s PE teacher with his daily livestreamed workouts, to popstars such as Gary Barlow and Coldplay hosting performances from their living rooms, to live comedy shows online. On a smaller scale, we have seen families keeping in touch via apps such as Houseparty or FaceTime, yoga teachers running their weekly classes on Zoom, and local toddler groups holding music classes for kids on Facebook Live.

So why not make the most of these new skills and encourage supporters – who are already using this technology – to add a further dimension and fundraise for you?

## Gaming for Social Good

Another avenue to explore is ‘Gaming for Social Good’ – livestreams of computer gaming to raise money for your charity. This usually involves an individual broadcasting their gameplay live through a streaming platform such as Twitch. This behaviour is already ingrained in the gaming community, as supporters are used to donating to streams they follow to make sure they can keep broadcasting.

Most gamers use livestreaming as a way of getting closer and more interactive with their supporters. Livestreaming platforms are sites specifically designed to facilitate live broadcasting, they are easy to use and provide open methods of communication for users to be able to live-chat to their supporters at the same time.

For more information about Gaming for Social Good, visit <https://gaming.justgiving.com/about>.



## SECTION 2: CHOOSING THE RIGHT OPTION FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

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There are a few ways to get involved with virtual fundraising – some more complicated than others. Each method will differ in terms of resource requirements and cost, and you should also consider your organisation's appetite and capacity for innovation. Do you want to jump on actions that your supporters are already taking, and offer them an easy way to include fundraising? Or do you have more elaborate idea in mind that will take a little more work with a branded and personalised hub?

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Take a look at some options that are available:



### **Livestream with a link to JustGiving**

This is a really simple way to get started with virtual fundraising. Your supporters can set up a JustGiving Fundraising Page with information about when they are going to go live with their event and why they are fundraising, plus an ask for a donation. The event could be hosted on a free to use platform such as [YouTube](#). Once they have chosen their platform they can copy and paste their platform ID or username into their [JustGiving](#) account. Their livestream will then appear on their JustGiving page when they go live.



### **Invitation-only livestream event given in thank you message for a donation**

In order to guarantee a donation, the link to the livestream event can only be shared via the thank you message after the payment has been made. For example, you can invite people to a free [Zoom](#) event but specify that they will only be sent the link they need to access the event in the email they receive confirming they have made a donation.





### **Twitch with JustGiving integration**

**Twitch** is a great livestreaming platform, already popular with gamers. It's possible to completely integrate your JustGiving page with a Twitch account allowing supporters to fundraise as they game—take a look [here](#) for more details. Supporters can also use their Twitch ID to connect a livestream directly onto their JustGiving page.



### **Branded landing page for your event**

If you're planning a virtual event, a more coordinated but yet still simple approach is to create a landing page dedicated to the event that can be attached to your organisation's website and presented in your own branding. You can include a single call to action for donations, plus all the information required about the event.



### **Branded microsite**

This is one step further than a landing page – you can build a branded microsite dedicated wholly to your event. You can display your fundraising and fitness app integration and the site will have its own domain name. This is a great option if you want to establish a big event and build its own brand.





# SECTION 3: GETTING STARTED

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Now you know what virtual fundraising is, how do you actually get the process underway for your organisation? Here are our five simple steps to getting started...

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1

## **Come up with a great idea**

What kind of event will resonate with your supporters? You know your audience well – think about events that have been successful in the past, and how you could translate that into a digital offering. Take a look at Section 4 in this eBook for some more inspiration on event types.

If you are going down the community fundraising route – take a look at what your supporters are already doing – they may already be taking part in virtual activities that you can encourage them to fundraise with.

2

## **Set targets and goals**

How many participants are you aiming to get involved? Obviously, you don't have to consider venue capacity as you would have done with a physical event, but it's worth thinking about what time and resources you will have to steward your supporters and get the most out of them.

It's also important to set your fundraising goals, so you are aware of what the overall objective is, plus it's vital messaging to communicate with fundraisers so they can aim high and share this with donors.

3

## **Create a marketing plan**

This is such an important step, but one that is easy to miss if you're not thinking about the whole picture. Just like you would if you were putting together a physical event or campaign, you need to consider how to drive traffic and mobilise support. Don't forget to contact your usual mailing list to let them know about the event, plus consider paid for social advertising, organic social traffic, and your usual marketing campaigns for publicising it – both to entice participants and then to encourage donations.

4

## **Create your hub/website/livestream page**

Just like a standard fundraising event, your audience needs a centralised place to visit to find out how to get involved, read the FAQs, access fundraising resources and so on. Depending on what option you choose to follow (see Section 2), this may involve minimal work, or there might be more involved.

5

## **Go live!**

With everything set up, you're now ready to go and watch the virtual event happen as each participant gets involved and logs their activity.

# SECTION 4:

## IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

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So, your usual event schedule and community fundraising ideas are now out of the window, but here are some suggestions for virtual fundraising that could boost your income during this challenging time. These activities could be part of a campaign run centrally by your charity and you ask participants to all do the same activity. Or these could be a menu of virtual fundraising ideas that you share to refresh and re-invigorate your community fundraising:

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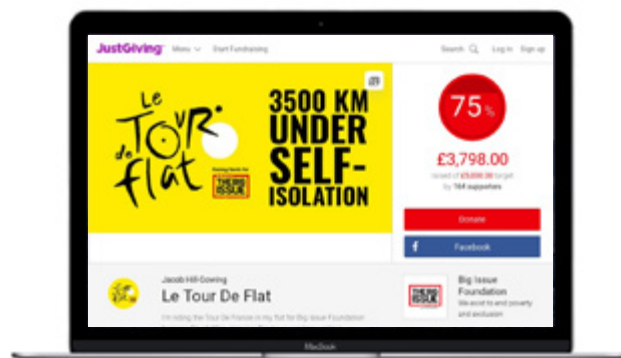
- 10k walk in your garden
- Workout in your living room to replace your usual commute
- Yoga marathon
- Virtual coffee morning
- Climb the equivalent of a mountain on your stairs
- Cycle a famous route on your indoor bike
- Karaoke-athon
- Virtual pub quiz
- Silent disco
- A push-up challenge
- Virtual bingo
- Bake a cake-athon



Here are some examples of virtual fundraising we've seen on JustGiving since the COVID-19 crisis began:

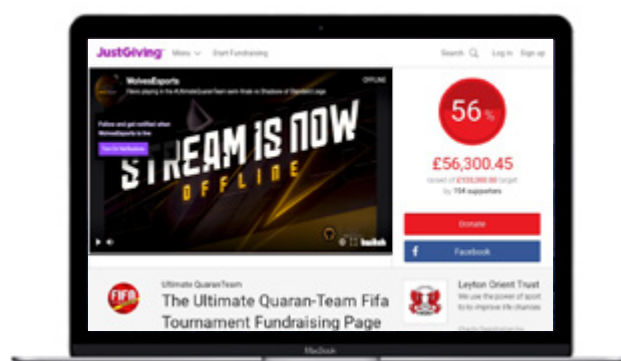
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/le-tour-de-flat>

This fundraising page has been set up to raise money for the Big Issue Foundation. The supporter is cycling the equivalent of the Tour de France on an exercise bike in his flat! The innovative effort has gained a lot of attention in the press and at the time of writing has almost reached the fundraising target. The page is linked to the fundraiser's Twitch account so supporters can watch his progress live.



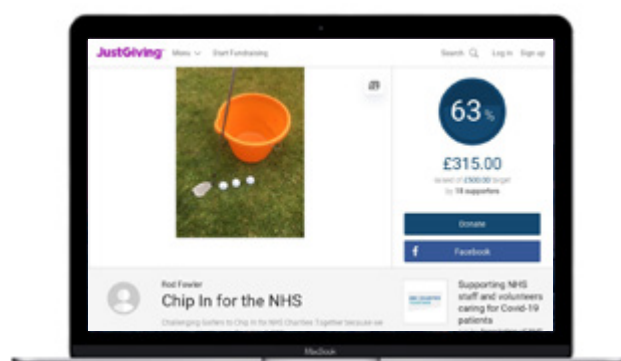
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ultimatequaranteam>

This fundraising page has been set-up to support a virtual football tournament called #UltimateQuaranTeam devised by Leyton Orient FC, who were originally looking to raise £50,000 for charity. Thanks to an overwhelming response, that figure has been beaten! 128 teams from around the world have been battling it out in a knockout competition on FIFA 20, which is an online video game, and livestreamed on Twitch. Find out more at [www.leytonorient.com](http://www.leytonorient.com)



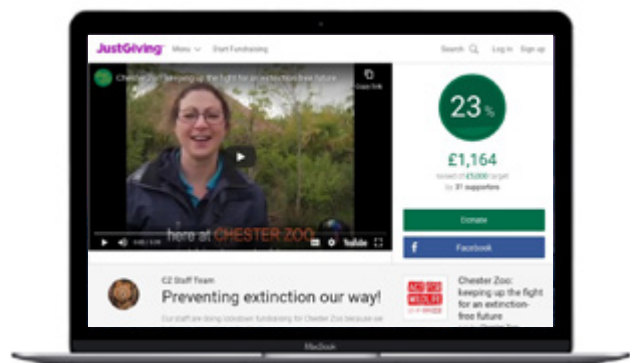
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/chipinforhhs>

This fundraiser is asking donors to make their own golfing challenge video and post it online, then requesting a donation to his chosen charity. It's a low effort and low cost method of raising funds, and can all be done at home and shared online.



<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ChesterZooOurZoo2020>

This fundraising page has been set up on behalf of Chester Zoo by their staff. In lieu of accepting paying visitors, the zoo is raising funds and awareness through hosting a virtual tour. Using the theme ‘endangered species’ the tour takes viewers to multiple enclosures. This is the first time that Chester Zoo have been able to link a YouTube stream to both JustGiving and Facebook at the same time, allowing them to reach more supporters than ever before.



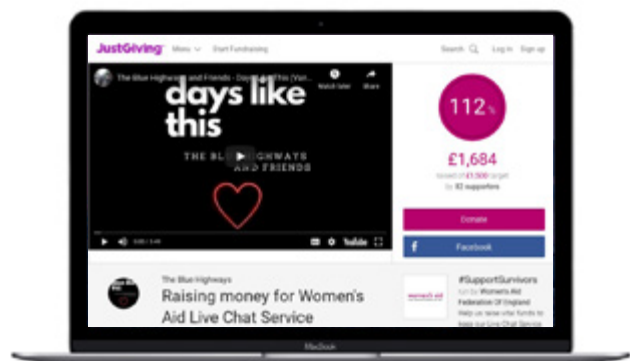
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/virtualpubquizaruk>

This fundraiser has been livestreaming quizzes for over 10 weeks and at the time of writing has raised over £220,000! The quizzes are hosted on YouTube, where a donation link is listed in the video bio, and then also livestreamed directly onto the JustGiving Fundraising Page. This family friendly idea has caught the attention of several celebrities, such as Stephen Fry and Jonathan Ross, who have frequently started to guest host or make special appearances.



<https://justgiving.com/fundraising/The-Blue-Highways>

This group of fundraisers created a cover song of Van Morrison's 'Days Like This' to raise money for Women's Aid Federation of England. Instead of selling the single, supporters have been asked to listen via JustGiving and then donate how much they feel is appropriate. This idea has great longevity, as the stream is available to watch any time. Plus, the page can remain live and collecting donations long after the song was first recorded and uploaded.





# SECTION 5: CHARITY STORIES

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## British Red Cross

The British Red Cross helps millions of people in the UK and around the world get the support they need if crisis strikes. Their virtual event, Miles for Refugees, grew from 177 registrations and £28,000 total profit in year one, to over 2,200 registrations and a total profit of £285,000 by year three.

The virtual event asked participants to do the following:

- Pick a distance to aim for over one month. The distance reflects part of a journey a refugee might be forced to take to reach safety, eg. 22 miles across the English Channel, 285 miles from Paris to London, or 2,700 miles from Damascus to London.
- Walk, run, swim or cycle during the month to rack up the miles and record progress online.
- Ask friends and family for donations to reach a £150 fundraising target.

Maddy Janes, Mass Participation Manager and Product Manager said: "This was our first virtual event, at a time when many of the flagship charities were already doing them, so a lot of research was undertaken to analyse how other charities had created success with theirs.

"The ease of reporting the progress of Miles for Refugees using live data throughout the campaign was a huge reason for its success. A significant amount of resource was put behind the campaign, so being able to report in real-time and be reactive as the campaign progressed, to make strategic decisions that kept the event engaging for our supporters. Seeing in real-time that it was going to raise significant funds for the charity was also hugely important in driving internal engagement."



## ABF The Soldiers' Charity

ABF The Soldiers' Charity is the national charity of the British Army, providing a lifetime of support to soldiers, veterans and their immediate families when they are in need. They recently launched Operation Bletchley – incorporating a custom microsite and behavioural communications.

The Operation Bletchley event was a virtual codebreaking challenge. The scene was set in 1941 and participants are secret agents tasked with cracking the codes and delivering the secret message, whilst undertaking either a 50 mile and 100 mile challenge available, set in London or Paris. Participants were able to take part wherever they were in the world and log their progress via a phone or fitness app.

Steve Oatley, Head of National Events, said, “The power of digital has really been proven in that a ‘behind the scenes’ charity can have a very successful fundraising campaign. We have been absolutely delighted with the results for a first-year Virtual Event, not just the fundraising but also the engagement, the reach into new audiences, and the communities being built around it. We look at it as something with enormous potential to grow in the future. Operation Bletchley achieved over 700 sign-ups against a target of 200 and raised over £30,000! Our goal was to open up the charity to a whole new audience, and both virtual events really achieved that.”



# SECTION 6: HOW TO MAKE VIRTUAL EVENTS A REALITY: ADVICE FROM ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH UK

BY LUCY SQUANCE, DIRECTOR OF SUPPORTER-LED FUNDRAISING, ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH UK

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Prior to 2016, we at Alzheimer's Research UK did not have a mass participation event included in our fundraising activities. This wasn't for lack of trying, but with just 80 people making up the organisation's entire workforce, we did not have the infrastructure to establish a physical event series.

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So, we had to think differently.

With limited resource we had to get creative to maximise our reach to a new audience, and that's where our journey with virtual events began.

Following countless discussions and idea generation sessions, Running Down Dementia (RDD) was born.

Developed with Blackbaud's Everydayhero platform in 2016, it was among the first virtual mass participation charity products in the UK. It has now raised over £907k for the charity and attracted thousands of supporters, and we are immensely proud of it.

## What worked?

The beauty of virtual events is they present a lower upfront risk for charities – making them an attractive alternative. We were able to launch RDD with a controlled budget and had clear and immediate visibility on performance. As a new product in market, it was vital to show impact on our team efforts.

Our winning factor: 'keeping it simple' most definitely encouraged take-up.

The clear and accessible proposition is 'Run 100km, Raise £100'. Anyone can enter, its free and the challenge is over 20 weeks. People love that they can do it in their own time and at their own pace. You don't have to be at a set location on a set day at a set time.

Ultimately, the most powerful sign of success we've seen from launching a virtual event is the positive impact on the lifetime value of a supporter. Due to the digital nature of this type of initiative, we were able to personalise the supporter journey at scale. Tribes of loyal like-minded supporters naturally form via online platforms and groups. Our team were able to nurture relationships online. Those supporters, in turn, shared their progress, celebrated each other's successes and provided encouragement when times were tough. This fostered deeper engagement and authentic relationships with the charity.

## What to watch out for

Virtual events do not come without their challenges and the main 'watch out' for charities looking to invest, is that participants still need first-class supporter care. Just because an event is virtual doesn't mean charities should rely solely on automation and triggered communications. Any successful peer-to-peer fundraising needs dedicated resource offering participants exceptional supporter experience and authentic relationships with the cause they are supporting.

The ongoing challenge is to continue to evolve virtual events to sustain interest and excitement for supporters.

## Learnings

- For Alzheimer's Research UK virtual events have been an effective acquisition tool for new supporters. 92% of Running Down Dementia runners were new to the charity and over a third went on to support the charity again. The charity now has over 12,000 new supporters that they didn't have three years ago, raised £907,000 with an overall product ROI of 2.6.
- A key part of the charity's success has been a culture and passion to innovate. Having a highly motivated and skilled project team in place focused on the product, marketing, stewardship and measurables is key as well as having clear KPIs that aren't just financially focused but look to the longer-term goal of increased supporter volume, brand engagement and retention.
- Increasing the number of sign-ups year on year is hard. Just increasing media spend isn't the answer; you need to work with a media agency who are insight and target driven. Use this insight to inform your creative direction; who is your key audience, what media formats do they prefer, balance of challenge vs cause messaging? Engaging, creative content is essential to drive acquisition. This includes case studies, photography and film for the audiences you have identified.
- With 80% of sign-ups coming via mobiles, your website must be designed to reflect this.
- Participants expect personalised communications and authentic engagement from the charity they are supporting. They also want to see transparency and tangible impact from the money they have raised.
- Driving people towards a final date to get their donations in works. Virtual products deliver good remittance and average gift amounts. On average 36% of all RDD participants remitted over the three years of RDD. This increased to 42% in 2018 due to more investment in stewardship comms.
- Be brave and try new products and audiences. One of our other virtual events, Cycling Down Dementia (CDD), went against everything we believed about cyclists raising money and achieved a higher remittance of 59% in year one and 51% in year two, at an average gift of £280.



# CONCLUSION

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Although the current situation has made us need to think out of the box when it comes to fundraising – organisations can take this opportunity to consider new ways of doing things and running with them, in order to secure our plans for the future.

We hope this eBook gives you some inspiration and helpful advice on getting started with your virtual fundraising.

You can take a look at our further Virtual Fundraising resources here: <https://hub.blackbaud.co.uk/virtual-events>

We will be running regular free webinars covering the topic too, find out more information and sign up here: <https://hub.blackbaud.co.uk/virtual-events>



#### Contact us

If you'd like more information about Virtual Fundraising, or you'd like to find out more about what we do here at Blackbaud, please contact us at [solutions@blackbaud.co.uk](mailto:solutions@blackbaud.co.uk)

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