



strategy + support for
musicians creating change

Air Traffic Control

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CREATIVE WAYS TO RAISE MONEY

Many musicians want to help raise money for the causes and issues that they care about. There are a lot of creative ways to do this. Here are some that we've heard about:

- Auction guest spot to sing a song on stage. On two occasions the Indigo Girls have auctioned off the opportunity for a fan or two to sing one of their most popular songs live and on-stage with them. The proceeds have gone to benefit Sweet Home New Orleans and their work to support the NOLA music community. One auction was held online via Charity Folks and the other was held at the concert itself, with bids being placed at the beneficiary's table at the show. Payment was collected before the winner was allowed to sing. The two auctions raised a total of \$11,250.
- Encourage audience members to throw money on stage during a performance. Dave Wakeling of the Beat has been raising money for Smile Train by encouraging people to shout out requests for songs and then agreeing to play the request and asking fans to throw real (paper) money at them during the performance. The idea has worked so well that they added a final throwing session during the encore song "Tenderness". During their five-month tour in 2007 they raised \$16,743, which they note is the equivalent to 66.97 smiles.¹
- Ticket surcharges. Ticket surcharges are great for charitable and legislative activism. The concept is pretty straightforward: add a surcharge to each ticket sold per show along a national tour. The money is then donated directly to one or more organizations. It is an easy and simple way for artists to highlight the work of effective local nonprofits and give something back to the communities that support their performances. The Beastie Boys, My Morning Jacket, Pearl Jam and many other artists have all used this technique effectively.
- Auction band items. Auctions can be set-up for merchandise, gear, meet-and-greets, tickets, VIP passes, etc. Companies such as Charity Folks or Charity Buzz can manage an auction and give all of the proceeds to charities. The Indigo Girls auctioned a chance for fans to sit-in on a sound-check through Charity Folks raising over \$1,000 for Honor the Earth (www.honorearth.org). Kanye West has also used Charity Folks to auction VIP tickets and a chance to meet him backstage with all proceeds benefiting Shine on Sierra Leone (<http://www.shineonsierraleone.org/>). Additionally, several artists including Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson and Robert Plant provided handwritten, personalized lyric sheets for an online auction to benefit Americana Music Association, raising over \$30,000 for the nonprofit organization. (<http://americanamusic.org/>)

¹ <http://www.davewakeling.com/smiletrain/> and www.smiletrain.org

- Golden circles. The idea behind golden circles is similar to auctioning tickets in that fans pay for “Gold” or “Silver” tickets, which include prime, reserved seating, as well as a private post-show reception and meet-and-greets. The proceeds of the price of the Gold and Silver tickets are then donated to an organization of the artists’ choice. Bonnie Raitt has used this technique to raise money for a variety of different causes and Tickets-for-Charity² uses this concept to raise money from high profile music and sporting events.
- Auction tickets for an exclusive show. Radiohead held a concert in Los Angeles that raised \$572,000 to benefit Oxfam’s Haiti relief work. Tickets for the benefit show were made available by auction and fans paid an average of \$440³ each to see Radiohead perform at a small venue.
- Hold a raffle for tickets to every show for one year. Here is a great example for venues that want to get involved in fundraising activities: The 930 Club in Washington DC holds an annual raffle in the month of December where local patrons can donate food, clothing and/or cash in exchange for raffle tickets. Each raffle ticket enters you in the chance to win two free guest passes to every show at the 9:30 Club for the entire next year. There are also a bunch of secondary prizes and all the proceeds benefit local DC charities.⁴
- Volunteers with donation buckets at exit of show. Jars of Clay started Blood:Water Mission⁵, a project that aims to get clean blood and clean water to African villages. Of their many fundraising techniques, one in particular hails from their roots as a Christian rock band. Between songs inspired by their trips to Kenya and Rwanda, Jars of Clay will give a short but sincere appeal to drop a dollar in volunteer-held buckets on the way out of the venue, church-offering style. The results: the donation buckets average \$3-5 per head. A lot more than the \$1 ticket surcharges they used to do!
- CD royalties, donating songs, remixes of songs. The list of examples is endless. An artist or band donates an existing song or a remix version of a song and all the proceeds are donated to a specific cause. This can be a collection of songs, a download through iTunes, the artist’s site or directly through the organization itself. One such example includes the music project entitled Instant Karma: The Amnesty International Campaign to Save Darfur.⁶

Air Traffic Control (ATC) exists to help musicians play an effective, unique and vital role in the promotion of social justice. Musicians and managers established ATC five years ago to assemble an experienced and trusted team of leaders, resources and tools that would help them to create more effective social change collaborations with each other and with social justice organizations. As a result, ATC became an artists’ air traffic control—one that develops capacity, efficiency, and coordination to produce stronger and more creative social change partnerships. For more information, please go to www.atctower.net.

² www.ticketsforcharity.com

³ As reported by The Huffington Post: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/25/radiohead-for-haiti-benef_n_435650.html

⁴ For more information visit:

http://blog.washingtonpost.com/goingoutgurus/2005/12/free_930_club_shows_for_an_ent.html

⁵ www.bloodwatermission.com

⁶ <http://www.instantkarma.org/InstantKarma.html>