

Building Relay Excellence – The 5 D's of Development

Wondering how to improve the performance your Relay year on year? Use the 5 D's. Before we explore the 5 D's (D stands for Development) it is important to remember what Relay For Life is and is not.

Relay For Life 'the event' is the celebration and recognition of the months of fundraising and awareness raising that the community undertakes, it is the opportunity to remember those lost to cancer and to celebrate the lives of those surviving cancer.

Across the Globe people get involved with Relay to beat cancer... they raise donations throughout the year for that very cause and to fight back! Remember that the Relay event is the time to celebrate being a community that joins together, to have fun and recognise these amazing achievements.

The 5 areas of Development below have been identified as being the key areas that drive the growth and development of Relay.

1. Leadership Development
2. Team Development
3. Fundraising Development
4. Survivorship Development
5. Event Development

Leadership Development

The most successful Relays have clearly structured Committees (similar to a business environment) and recruit Lead Chairs that enable them to reach and engage a broad base of people in the community – local business, places of worship, government, organisations, schools etc.

There is one person per Lead role, the seven Lead roles are filled first and each person 'fits' the key skills required of the role they agree to. In addition, they have a solid understanding of their own role and the roles of others. They have great communication channels with each other and with Cancer Research UK and have well-structured meetings.

The Leadership of key roles can be rotated and new Committee Members are constantly sought to bring freshness, open new doors and aid the growth and development of the Relay. Succession planning (continuity) is part of the planning process and good committees will have identified potential successors, recruiting

them into Vice roles or sub-committees to ensure the longevity and sustainability of the event. In addition, they listen to their participants and encourage their input.

Team Development

For the most successful Relays, team/participant recruitment and retention are the top priority, because without teams there is no Relay and no income.

The more teams/participants they have and the more they motivate and engage them – the more likely it is that the teams will raise more £££'s.

The most successful Relays are those that develop a strategy for recruiting teams and participants and have a great communications plan to keep people engaged and enthused. They think about their different audiences e.g. team returning for 3rd year as opposed to a brand new team who know very little about Relay. They adapt and often personalise their communications to suit their audiences. Good communication and building relationships helps participants to feel integral to the event, creates excitement and ambition and ensures everyone has a positive experience before, during and after the event. Great relationships = great commitment.

In addition, great communication can ensure they share fundraising ideas with their teams, it will enable them to know how their teams are doing towards their goal, it enables them to encourage, thank and recognise their teams which often leads to fewer 'no shows' on the day. They obtain information and knowledge from their Staff contact about the research work of Cancer Research UK and they share it with their participants, it creates a feeling of value and worth. They use recruitment incentives as a useful tool. They co-ordinate on the day fundraising so that activity is varied, safe and fun. They set expectations with their teams and share kit lists and a programme of events in advance.

Relays that have a theme such as fancy dress are those that appear to have more energy and engagement from participants and visitors alike at their event.

Fundraising Development

The most successful committees understand that Relay is not a sponsored event and is more the 'grand finale' of months of fundraising in the community. They are not afraid to talk targets with their participants, they make 'the ask' and share their own stories, the reasons why they need to raise more money to beat cancer. They connect with people at an emotional level and value people and their contributions. Teams that are led by enthusiastic, motivated and committed Team Captains are those that raise more money.

Committees who encourage their teams to raise money through a combination of individual/team fundraising activities and who approach it as an on-going all year round basis are the most successful.

Fundraising ideas and activities should be shared, and it is good practice for the committee to also arrange some fundraising activities of their own. Encourage online fundraising as; if the donor is eligible, they can opt-in to add Gift Aid to their donation and generally an online donation tends to be more than an off-line one. Effective communication is essential in ensuring that teams have the correct tools and ideas to go out into the community and fundraise.

Reward and recognition of those who have aimed high and achieved is important and to remember you are only limited by your own creativity and drive, enthusiasm is infectious. Recognition of all donations is important as when teams feel valued, they are likely to want to do more. Incentives are used to create friendly competition and encourage participants to go that 'extra mile'. Together we are beating cancer.

Ensure all are presented with a certificate by the committee at the end of the event and communication is ongoing so that the teams feel part of the bigger picture.

Survivorship Development

Cancer survivors are the VIP's of Relay For Life. The most successful Relays put survivors and their caregivers at the heart of the event and involve them in every aspect of Relay.

Survivors are not only critical to the spirit of Relay, but also to the event's financial success. Successful Relays place an emphasis on engaging survivors in as many ways as possible, before, during and after the event.

The successful survivorship chair usually has a very close connection to cancer in some way. They are outgoing, willing to approach people and at ease talking about cancer. They strive to have survivors represented on the committee, as team captains and team members too. They are not afraid to ask survivors to be actively involved such as speaking during ceremonies. Having survivors as case studies, to share their own personal messages about 'why we Relay' assists in the promotion of the event and inspires others to get involved/raise more money. Visible presence by cancer survivors at Relay not only serves to highlight that anyone can get cancer but also that, thanks to money raised at Relay more and more research can be done and in turn, more people will survive cancer now and in the future. They show us all that there is 'Hope' and that we ARE making a difference to those that face cancer now and in the future.

Most successful Survivorship chairs look at how Survivors are hosted, how they engage them with each other and the event, their wellbeing and their enjoyment. They also ask for feedback so that they can continue to grow and develop Survivorship at their next event.

Event Development

The most successful Relays create an inviting and engaging atmosphere. They think about the IMPACT that they would like to make at the event and plan their ceremonies and associated activities to create the desired effect. They use music effectively throughout. They think about the site plan, people need to feel welcome from the moment they arrive and they need to feel valued when they leave.

'The Show' needs to be kept fresh and impactful – to keep people coming back, it's not about how many jugglers and marching bands are present but more around how the teams/survivors are part of the activity and entertainment.

The most successful Relays look appealing and welcoming to visitors on the day which in turn may lead to those people entering teams in subsequent years.

Cancer Awareness and information is part of 'the show', as is survivorship involvement and recognition – this energises the Relay participants and sets a positive tone.

Successful events recognise the importance of all the ceremonies, but especially the Candle of Hope ceremony – the time when everyone reflects, remembers and celebrates.

They rehearse, they check equipment, and they are conscious of health and safety and people's welfare. They work together as a committee to ensure every penny spent on Relay is appropriate and delivers maximum value for the charity. They seek input and feedback from their teams, participants, survivors and each other throughout the planning and post event in order to develop their activity, keep it fresh and truly engage their community.