**Business Outreach Fundraising**

**Raisbeck Aviation High School Skunkworks Robotics**

**FRC Team #1983**

One of the unique parts of *FIRST* robotics is the benefits it provides to STEM industries. The business outreach fundraising style utilizes the mutual benefit to help *FIRST* teams obtain the materials they need to have a potent program and includes assistance to local businesses.

The words “Business Outreach” suggests the concept of combining fundraising with reaching out to businesses. By having team members present to industry leaders an overview of the *FIRST* program and then asking them for support, they accomplish in raising awareness of *FIRST* and potential retrieve valuable resources needed to support the program. To ensure successful outcomes, we recommend using supporters contacts to search for potential contacts and bring up an opportunity. When contacts are made, and presenters are chosen, the passion for the program is very contagious.

Below are steps to having a successful business outreach.

Timeline:

1. Planning should begin shortly after school starts. This should give you enough time to prepare for everything quickly rather than leaving everything for later. You should incorporate your parents and others who are involved, to share plans and ask parents, mentors and students to begin searching for contacts who could potentially be interested in *FIRST*. Show the students why you are partaking in Business Outreach.

* Contacts can include any co-workers, neighbors, business contacts, and industry groups
* Team members should raise awareness about *FIRST* at dinner parties and other outreach events with family and friends
* Try and contact industry groups, school boards, unions and other organizations to share the message.
* Have students be paired up for presentation: stronger ones with weaker ones, upperclassmen with lower classmen

1. Once a list of contacts have been decided, students email the business to set up an appointment

* Whichever student gave a certain contact, they get the contact they that contact: Ex. Student A gives contact A, they get contact A
* Have students send a rough draft of a professional email for further facilitation. If not approved, have the student send the email again until the requirements are deemed satisfactory
* In the presentation, students should incorporate a story to be more persuasive
* Document results on a Donor Form: Which companies accepted a presentation, which ones denied the presentation
* If the contact does not send an email back, send a follow up. If they do not respond, they are most likely not wanting one, and you should have that group ask for a new contact

1. During the two above steps, students should prepare their short presentation

* Beforehand, conduct a presentation yourself to give a rough idea on what the presentation should look like
  + After the presentation, tell students what you are looking for within the presentation: Professionalism, Presentation Quality, Personalization
    - Professionalism: How well you are presenting
    - Presentation Quality: How much you know about the presentation/topic
    - Personalization: Stories! Add your personal experiences to connect to the business and sway the audience
* One by one, have groups present to help, teach, learn and get rid of bad habits

1. Once the presentation is ready and it is the time to show it, students will present to the industry leaders
   * + Make sure to be ready and don’t be afraid to rehearse more than once
     + Don’t be nervous. In the end of the day, you are a teenager giving a formal business presentation to a group of adults and that is something those adults have never seen before.
2. Follow Up
   * + After the season, make sure to write thank you cards to your companies
     + Make sure to record your donations on the Donor Form to keep for next years
     + Invite them to competitions/events

Networking:

A common struggle that comes with starting up Business Outreach is figuring out where to look for professional business contacts. Your robotics team consist of bountiful resource for contacts.

* Ask your peers to reach out to family for possible contacts. There is a good chance that each student has a member of their family that works for a business that you can reach out to. Whatever contact their family member has, that person has a boss and that boss has an email.

- The next task after creating your list of contacts is implementing teams for each contact. The general rules for those teams are:

1. One upperclassman, one lower classman, strong presenter with a weaker presenter.

2. Choose contacts this team will be passionate and excited about. If they are the program lead, send them to a company they can connect with and share their passion about robotics and program for.

3. Match the contacts with those who provided the contact. If Joe shared his Dad’s construction company, then send Joe to his Dad’s construction company.

4. Send the same team to the same company the next year. This make Business Outreach a lot more personal for the business a puts a face and a name to your team in a much greater way.

Presentation:

Your delivery of the presentation needs to flow well and be professional. That is the key to a successful business outreach meeting. There is a list of habits that need to be watched out for, along with a list of tips that will help you better prepare for your presentation.

Don’ts:

* Play with your hands, sway back and forth, overuse your hands when talking. There are plenty of nervous habits that people go through. Try and tone them or get rid of them all together.
* Read off the slides
* Yawn during the presentation. Cover your mouth. It’s polite.
* Not pay attention
* Speak too fast
* Stick your hands in your pockets
* Slouch
* Say “um” or “uh” too much

Tips:

* Take breaths
* Speak slowly and clearly
* Don’t get too flustered if you screw up. Take a breath and say “excuse me, what I meant to say was...”
* When it comes to the presentation about asking for donations for the team, don’t get caught up in asking for money. Lightly touch monetary support as a form of support and keep moving.
* Don’t be nervous. You have no reason to be nervous. At the end of the meeting you are a group of teenager giving a business presentation to a group of adults. They will be impressed.

Conclusion:

Business Outreach is an integral part of the team. It allows a team and it’s members to not only learn more but teach more.