When asked to share a few “words of wisdom” for successfully promoting and engaging employees in the Johns Hopkins Medicine United Way Campaign, here’s what a few coordinators and ambassadors had to say:

1. What techniques or strategies were most effective in your departmental UW campaign?
2. What words of wisdom would you share with other Coordinators or Ambassadors?

- Incentives, incentives, incentives...
- I asked for a few minutes on the agenda at our monthly team meeting. Gave an appeal and entered everyone who made a donation into a drawing for NFL apparel.
- Find ways to have fun with the campaign and remind everyone that it is for a good cause.
- For the Juvenile Diabetes fundraiser several months ago we had food ordered and a percentage of that order went to the charity. We are doing that again for the United Way.
- The deadline approaches quickly so I would just advise a coordinator to have a plan early and talk it up to their staff.
- They believe in United Way and or use it for how they give to a charity because it is easy, tax-deductible and you don’t miss the money if it is ongoing. Kind of like our 403b. With that I would say play the angle of if you give $10 a pay it is something you won’t miss.
- Commitment: a lot of people don’t want to be solicited at work and turn you off when the subject comes up.
- If you email your entire department most people hit the delete button.
- Maybe pass out forms at Departmental Grand Rounds and don’t let people leave without completing a form.
- Maybe sell the angle of brown bag your lunch once a week instead of spending $7.35 at Subway for a 6” sub, chips and a drink.
- Don’t bring up that Johns Hopkins Medicine gets United Way dollars. It probably figures somewhere in EES and the RCA. I think we get money from them don’t we?
- Direct appeal. My department is small, so it was easy to reach everyone at once. The “ask” feels much more personal. I recommend that rather than ask in a large group, break people into smaller groups. Maybe add something to a 1:1 meeting if possible.
- I used a ‘gimmick’ to get their attention. I got $100 Grand candy bar and attached a note that said, “You don’t have to give $100 Grand to make a difference.” The next year I used mint lifesavers and the note read, “You don’t have to give a mint to be a lifesaver.” Both notes ended with “Please consider a donation for the United Way.”
- Make sure that your employees know that anything they give is helpful. Relate the money to something they can give up. $5 = one caramel latte at the coffee bar, but $5 to the United Way = food for a week to a family in need.
- Use the tools that your department already has, as PM&R we communicate dominantly by e-mail so people are used to receiving updates and messages about events. It was very easy to send out a motivating e-mail or attach a personal story to encourage people to donate.
- Be a positive influence during the campaign, know that even if people are unable to donate money there are opportunities to donate time or other resources. Just being that person they can go to with questions or concerns is the most important role we can play.
- Giveaways and raffles.
- Emailed UW information to staff.
- Luncheon.
- Be consistent with your efforts. Keep employee’s aware and informed about how their donations help others less fortunate.
- Don’t get offended when someone does not want to make a donation. Continue to move forward and be diligent in your efforts.
- What worked best were the online donations instead of having to turn in cash. Also, finding a prize just about everyone would want. The IPAD prizes were a huge hit!
- Friendly competitions between units have helped to encourage participation.
- Ensure employees know that they can select their own charities of choice when donating. Try to have employees see the ‘real face’ of those in need.
- Do fundraisers which are applicable to all people in the department. We did bake sales, but also alternated low calorie bake sales, gluten free, healthy recipe versions, etc. More people were willing to purchase because there was a greater variety, but also it wasn’t as guilty of a pleasure for them to indulge.
- Do fundraisers that happen outside of the office—something where everyone can come out and have a good time and enjoy off the clock (Painting party, Applebee’s fundraiser, etc.)
- Do long-term games for prizes. We did “change for hope” which different teams competed to win a gift card, gift basket or a personalized art piece. Change was collected in jars, and when you insert in cash to another team’s jar, it deducts from their total. When people walk past, they see the changes almost daily and make it an effort to offer more to the initiative.
- Try to ask for more assistance from management in your department. When multiple people are asking for funding, the word spreads faster, but people also are getting asked from multiple parties, so they will not feel confronted by one individual.
- We sponsored a specific group (Caroline Center). Folks liked knowing where the money would go. We also had the group come in and discuss what they do with our donations.
- Continue to remind folks about the goal and make it fun!
- I shared the information packets that were given to us at the beginning of the campaign. The employees agreed with me the situations people face could happen to anyone, United Way has helped many people get on their feet through education and providing shelter to those who really need it.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for assistance from your co-workers to help the United Way Campaign, we all need help in some form or fashion.
- We had a silent auction in pediatrics the last two years and our leadership group felt that since you could not receive individual credit we needed to do something different. We are
now brainstorming about how that might be accomplished so our percent participation can be acknowledged in our unit efforts. Hope to get some great ideas from others!

- Have events that allow camaraderie amongst members of a department and make it fun, but informative.
- Be informed, be accessible for questions and think of ways to engage members of your department.
- For the OCME department, what worked for us were smaller fundraisers: $1 Casual days, candy drive and constant reminders via emails and at All Staff meetings – face-to-face meetings. At the All staff meetings, we played one of the UW videos and discussed where and how the dollars are used to help families in need.
- Be creative and think of ways to connect the staff to the program. People may not have a lot to give, but they feel good when they are able to make smaller contributions by participating in casual days and candy drives.
- Make it a group effort and involve others.
- Do fun activities: we had raffle and each department contributed to the baskets, we also had a bake sale with donations
- Send frequent reminders, advertise
- We found that the employees were incented to donate if there was something in it for them. With this in mind, we brainstormed ways to make donating attractive to them. The most popular being the “jeans” coupon. Another popular item was free parking for a week (our campus has undercover reserved spots). We also hosted an event, for which the department picked up the cost of popcorn and water. At the event we had several donated items (flat screen, Xbox, Ravens tickets, Broadway show, etc) that were raffled off – the tickets were purchased at the event, in advance and as a combination with the jeans coupon. Two other items were – the donation of candy for sale and jugs collecting change by the elevator.
- To bring awareness to the campaign we followed a suggestion that we learned in the introductory session – leaving a note card with a slogan and the website on each individual’s desk – we purchased bulk mints and wrote the slogan: “It doesn’t take a mint, every dollar counts. Donate now.”
- Guests speakers, Candy bar sales, Silent auction
- It’s a lot of work to organize events and push the word. To be successful, you need a team of players. Get volunteers, organize to meet to discuss departmental goals and delegate out ideas to promote.
- For 9 South, I utilized the materials from the UW website to post in our staff lounge and created table tents to remind staff to bring in their donations for the Silent Auction. I also sent out emails to recognize staff for their contributions and included fun facts about the UW on a weekly basis.
- My advice would be to get the whole team involved and decide as a unit on what your efforts will be to support the UW. This way you gain more support from staff. Make it fun and rewarding for staff to support the cause and try to avoid stressing throughout the process.
• I think that showing the video and talking to staff on a personal level about actual programs that their monies would help to fund was the most successful way to get buy-in. I think they need to also know that many different organizations are part of UW and that they can designate to a specific one of their interest so providing a list was helpful.

• The most effective Technique/strategies is having enough Ambassadors. I had 10-15 Ambassadors that helped for a department with 400 people. We did bake sales as our fundraiser and each Division made $200- $350. Each division had a lot of donations of baked goods. Each Ambassador for their area was responsible for the communication and the coordination of the baked goods. It was a simple way for us to fundraise. We didn’t do the mass e-mails but during a staff meeting the ambassador would have time during the meeting to talk about United Way. The wisdom that I would share is to plan early. We met in the beginning of August and started our planning fundraising events. We wanted to spread out our events to make sure it wasn’t overwhelming for the volunteers and also our employees.

• We utilized department leadership as leverage. In our area, we had to reach either a $ amount or # of donations to have leaderships staff "on the front lines". We had the highest number of donations compared to past years.

• Analyze your team...understand the employees...Think outside of the box and research what would engage employees.

• The key seems to be getting the faculty involved and donating as they tend to donate more freely as well. I partnered with a faculty member the last two years to help me get some emails out to her peers (aka – they might read hers before mine). It would be nice though if there was some sort of targeted JHM Ambassadors towards the faculty?? As I do think the power of the “ASK” is big help!

• We did see higher participation where Ambassadors talked it up and asked in-person for staff to take a look at the website and consider donating. Also where we have had Ambassadors share personal stories about UW impact.

• I was surprised by such a low participation rate by the Health System as a whole based upon stats that were continually sent out last year.

• More real life examples of individuals assisted by the United Way Program may boost a person’s willingness to contribute.

• Doing raffles and offering rewards for participation I felt was the most effective way of raising money. Oh and always have event collections near or just after payday, this is when most people are likely to join.

• Don't give up. Be patient with others and remember why you are working to raise money.