

It's a great idea to email people about your fundraising for Sullivan's Heroes. And it can really give your sponsorship money a boost. Here are Virgin Money Giving's top tips on how to send an email that will help the pennies roll in.

1. Don't be shy

Family, friends and workmates are the obvious choices to tell about your fundraising. But think more widely too. Remember you're doing it for a very good cause – the charity you've chosen. Think about people at clubs you belong to, schools, church, neighbours, even local businesses and the press. The more people you tell, the more money you're likely to raise.

2. Grab their attention

Think about the subject line for your email. If you make it exciting or interesting more people will open it and read on. 'Do you want to see Dave without any hair?', 'I'm going to run through the middle of London in my pyjamas' and 'Want to see me chase Paula Radcliffe for 26 miles?' could all raise interest.

3. No spam jam

Think a little about spam filters when you write your subject line. Anything with the word 'free' or 'exciting' or a naughty word in is likely to get caught before it ever makes it to the recipient. You probably see enough spam yourself to know the sorts of words that will get caught.

4. Keep it simple

Think about what you want to say in your email, then jot down a few notes before you write it. Spend a few minutes ordering what you want to say and making it as straightforward as possible. Ask someone else to read it and see what they think. It'll help you see how others will read what you've written, and could help you tighten it up a notch, which will help get more responses.

5. Tell your story

You probably have quite strong reasons for why you've chosen the activity you're doing, and why you're supporting Sullivan's Heroes. Share some of your passion and motivation. Tell people why Sullivan's Heroes is important to you – maybe talk about your connection with the charity or why you think the work they do is important. Let them know what training or preparation you're doing too. Your chosen event is a challenge in itself, but so is all the hard work that goes into the run up.

6. Show you're for real

People are more wary of emails nowadays. Especially ones asking for money. We've all heard about scam emails doing the rounds. So it's important people know your message is 100% genuine:

- Link to your fundraising page on Virgin Money Giving and keep it updated with your progress (tell them in your email that you'll do this, to keep them coming back).
- Provide links to Sullivan's Heroes so they can see for themselves that the charity really exists, and the work they do
- Give users a legitimate and secure way to sponsor you. Point them to your Virgin Money Giving page. Don't ask for money to be sent to you in the post or deposited in a personal bank account.

7. Ask generous people first

You know you can probably rely on one or two people to donate a decent amount. Ask for their support first. That way, when people go to your Virgin Money Giving page, they'll see what people before donated and will want to donate similar amounts. So £10, £5 or even £3 could help set the bar. But bear in mind that £100 could be intimidating!

8. Ask again

You know how it is with emails. Sometimes you have good intentions, but are too busy to read them. It slips your mind, then you think maybe it's too late. So give people who missed it earlier another opportunity to sponsor you. Don't be embarrassed to email again.

9. And again!

You can update people on how your training is going, let them know how much you've raised, then put a reminder at the bottom of the email about what you're doing, when, and why. It can be short and sweet and doesn't have to seem like a nag – '3 weeks in and fundraising is going well, I've raised £xx so far and only another £xx to go...'

10. Get help

Ask people to forward the email on. They may have contacts that you don't, and may know people who would like to sponsor you.