

There are hundreds, possibly thousands of small, medium and large size businesses in your area. Each one of them, a potential NAMIWalk sponsor. So, how do you go about getting them to sign on as a NAMIWalk sponsor?

First, don't panic! Instead...remember the goal. Imagine that someday people are treating mental illness just like any other major disease. Imagine talking openly about bi-polar and schizophrenia, as we do the various types of cancer. Your work on the NAMIWalk, including soliciting corporate sponsors, will help Montanans do away with the stigma surrounding mental illness and create communities of recovery. Your work involving businesses in NAMI's efforts will help raise awareness and funds...both of which are needed to create change. How do you approach businesses? Here are tips for getting started:

1. Set realistic goals for the number of corporate sponsors you will obtain and the total amount of money you will raise through business donations. Be realistic. If you've never requested donations from businesses, set a goal of three business sponsors for a total of \$500. Write your goal down and place it on the refrigerator or some other location where you can't miss it. This is your goal; without it progress will be difficult.
2. Make a list of the businesses that you want to approach. Do this on your own or with other NAMIWalk team members so that you don't replicate efforts. Think about:
 - Businesses you work with
 - Businesses who have supported NAMI or efforts like NAMI in the past
 - Businesses where NAMI members work
 - Businesses that work with or provide services for the mentally ill (Hospitals, Clinics, Pharmacies...)
 - Ask personal acquaintances involved in business for ideas
 - Talk to your friends, neighbors, fellow churchgoers
 - Use the Yellow Pages
 - Get a local Chamber of Commerce directory
 - Go door to door down Main Street
3. Write your opening "pitch" down and practice. "NAMI is a national organization working in communities across Montana to help us raise awareness and funds for those touched in one way or another by mental illness. Our major fundraiser is the NAMIWalk on September 30." This is not just a fundraiser...it's a chance to do something meaningful on behalf of some of our most at-risk community members.
4. Be prepared with written information about NAMI as well as information about this NAMIWalk, including levels of sponsorship. Businesses will ask "How much are you looking for?" This is a great time to say "My overall business sponsor goal is \$500 this year." They might not give it all...but they'll give more than if you say "Well, whatever you want to give is fine."
5. Suggest alternatives to cash donations. "Will you sponsor our teams lodging and gas mileage to the Walk?"; "Will you sponsor a billboard on Main Street in September?"
6. When someone declines, bless and release. You will find the people for whom this is the right cause.
7. Schedule coffee or lunch with your top prospects to make a personal pitch about NAMI and the NAMIWalk.
8. Don't wait until the last minute. Pace yourself. Dedicate and schedule a few minutes each day to make calls, write letters, send emails and keep your efforts moving forward.
9. Keep records on your sponsors, including name, address, phone numbers and email addresses. Also include how much they offer/pledge and record when money is actually received.
10. Send all your sponsors a personal thank you and be assured NAMI Montana will also send a thank you after the walk!

And most importantly – HAVE FUN – and remember, you are offering others a chance to do good with their own good fortune. That's a gift.

Fight the Stigma → Build Recovery