



# Engaging fundraising: How The Examiner garnered \$15,000+ in donations via COVID-19 Local News Fund



Examiner Media, serving Westchester and Putnam counties in New York, was among the first news organizations to join the COVID-19 Local News Fund program, established by Local Media Foundation. In the first 10 days, Examiner Media crowdsourced more than \$15,000 through engaging tactics and saturation of the key message: local journalism is incredibly valuable.



Adam Stone

Publisher Adam Stone said at first he was hesitant to approach the community for help supporting the local free community paper, which has operated since 2007.

"I think many of us might be reluctant to go down that route too aggressively because you don't want to over-ask or abuse people's generosity. But what I realized early on in the process was that people are eager and want to give," he said. "And beyond that, you're fundraising for something much more important than yourself. ... I realized it was bigger than me. It was about our readers and our advertisers and our employees."

Once he realized the responsibility to ask the community for support to sustain operations, Stone said he began personal outreach to individuals he corresponds with regularly as a local publisher.



"I'll introduce the topic in sort of a non-threatening way, and one way I've done that is not by asking specifically for donations, but instead providing a link to a column that I wrote on the topic and then suggesting or asking that, if you are supportive of the mission of local news, you pass this link along to at least one person in a position to give \$25 or more. So it's a very modest ask."

This method of fundraising is passionate and personal, which helps highlight impact of local journalism.

"It's been incredibly effective and almost 100 percent rate of conversion or close to it," Stone said. "What I did at first was I wrote a sort of very honest, transparent editorial about our challenges, including layoffs, and that's something I would normally never get into in public. I would highly recommend a deeply personal, very honest approach in putting yourself out there to your readers."

In addition to direct personal appeals and the initial op-ed published in the paper, Stone said he is planning a cadence of regular content related to the fund, including columns from other staff members. A house ad and follow-up post thanked initial donors, and a youth perspective piece from Stone's 13-year-old daughter explained the importance of sustaining journalism and directed readers to the fundraising page. On social media, Stone is frequently interacting with followers — enough to turn some into donors, he said.

"It's really important to engage with everybody that's supporting you, and social media is such a powerful tool in that way," he said.

Hear advice from Adam Stone who spoke during the COVID-19 Local News Fund Office Hours Series in the video below.