

# Case Study: Cincinnati Reds



Learn how solid team work and the leading electronic raffle system allowed the Reds Community Fund to increase total raffle proceeds by 182%.





## A TEAM EFFORT

All hands on deck and the right technology helped the Reds increase raffle proceeds by 182%

“To say our first year with 5050 Central was groundbreaking would be an understatement.”

*Charley Frank, Executive Director, Reds Community Fund*



**In his own words:** Check out Charley Frank's video interview by scanning in this QR code or browsing to [http://bit.ly/pointstreak5050\\_RCF](http://bit.ly/pointstreak5050_RCF)

## KEY RESULTS

- Extended ticket selling time from 3 hours to 5 hours
- Increased total raffle proceeds 182% year-over-year
- Grossed more than \$10K in 48% of games, set an all-time record pot of \$57K in a single game and surpassed their goal of raising \$1 million
- Gave RCF the confidence to pursue their dream







## THE SITUATION

Charley and Matthew looked at each other and shared an epiphany. “We’re on track” said Charley, “We can make this happen”. While crunching some numbers after a full season of using 5050 Central, Charley Frank, Executive Director of the Reds Community Fund (RCF) and Matthew Wagner, Finance and Operations Manager, came to the realization that they would be able to follow through with their ambitious dream to build and sustainably operate a brand new Reds Urban Youth Academy.

## THE CATALYST

Record raffle draws from other baseball teams such as the Boston Red Sox, Arizona Diamondbacks and Chicago Cubs signaled the need for the Cincinnati Reds to change things up.

“A while back, a bunch of the community outreach folks from other MLB clubs got together to swap war stories. You know, best practices, what was working and what wasn’t” said **Mr. Frank**, “In particular, we admired the fundraising operations of the White Sox and we knew that we could also realize some big gains. So with the blessing and support of our COO [Phillip J. Castellini], we started to explore what fundraising technologies were out there.”



*Field of dreams: Artist's rendition of new Reds Urban Youth Academy*

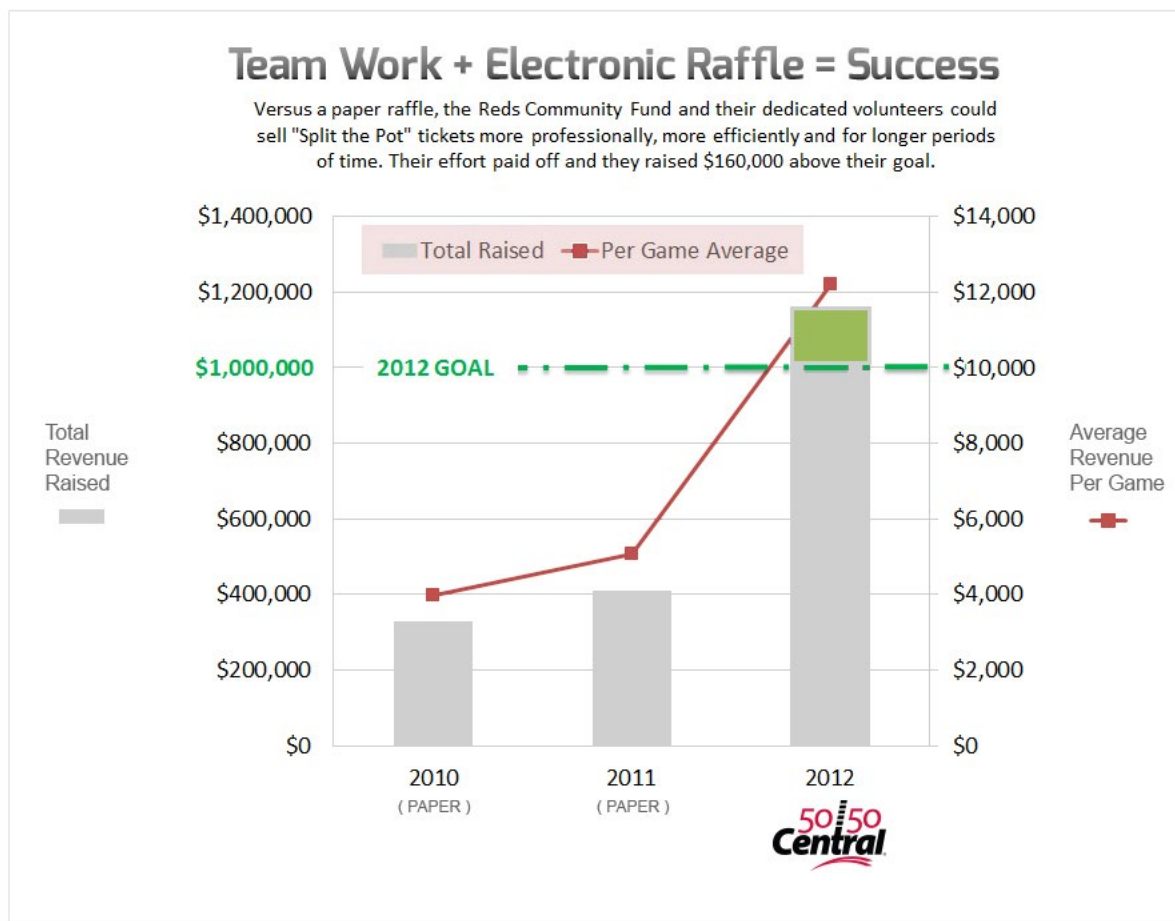


## IMMEDIATE IMPACT

Prior to adopting 5050 Central's electronic raffle system, the RCF raised an average of \$5,086 per game through their "Split the Pot" initiative during the Reds' 2011 season. Over two entire seasons of running Split the Pot, a grand total of 163 home games, the Reds' single highest pot was \$18,197, during a 2010 playoff game against the Phillies. This record high point of \$18,197 was 1 out of only 5 games over these two seasons that grossed more than \$10,000. By comparison, after implementing 5050 Central for just one season, the Reds generated over \$10,000 in 41 out of 86 games. Their average raffle size during the regular season? \$12,211 per game; a 140% increase over their 2011 average.

Sales heated up even more during the Reds' 2012 post season, where the RCF grossed an incredible total of \$148,940 (averaging \$49,649 per playoff game), including one game against the San Francisco Giants on October 9, 2012 which saw an incredible all-time record pot of \$57,249 - a full 215% greater than the previous high point of \$18,197 back in 2010.

## THE SOLUTION





## THE SECRET(S) OF SUCCESS

Versus a paper-based system, 5050 Central's highly automated and streamlined split-the-pot (also known as '50/50') raffle system extended the selling period by roughly two hours and eliminated the need for ticket sellers to return to base to restock on paper tickets. The net effect had a powerful impact on sales. It simply gave ticket sellers more time to sell, resulting in more funds raised for RCF's causes.

"We used to close our old paper raffle at the bottom of the 4th inning so that we could stop and manually count up the pot" continues **Mr. Frank**, "Now we're able to keep on selling right up to the middle of the 7th."

The Reds also credit the success to the fact that, with 5050 Central's real-time pot tally, fans as well as ticket sellers at the Great American Ball Park could see the pot grow in real-time on the stadium's big screens, thereby enticing more ticket sales.

"With 5050 Central's technology and its ease of use and the ability for all of our ticket sellers and volunteers to be able to know and communicate the record size of our daily pots has really lifted the program to new heights" said **Mr. Frank**, "Not just financially, it's just made it a much more polished, much more effective program."

Success Factor	Paper Raffle	Electronic Raffle
Ticket selling time	3 hours	5 hours
Fans know the pot at all times	✗	✓
Ticket sellers know the pot at all times	✗	✓
Ticket sellers have unlimited tickets to sell	✗	✓
Instant sales & reconciliation reports	✗	✓



## WHY 5050 CENTRAL?

"We had heard good things about 5050 Central, particularly from people in the sports industry whom I respect and admire" explained **Mr. Frank**, "And after being put in touch with **Kevin Lovitt** (5050 Central's President), we became convinced that 5050 Central was the right fit. There was a comfort level there and we felt they had the technology and expertise to help us realize our goals. RCF's mission is very important to us and finding the right technology partner was essential."

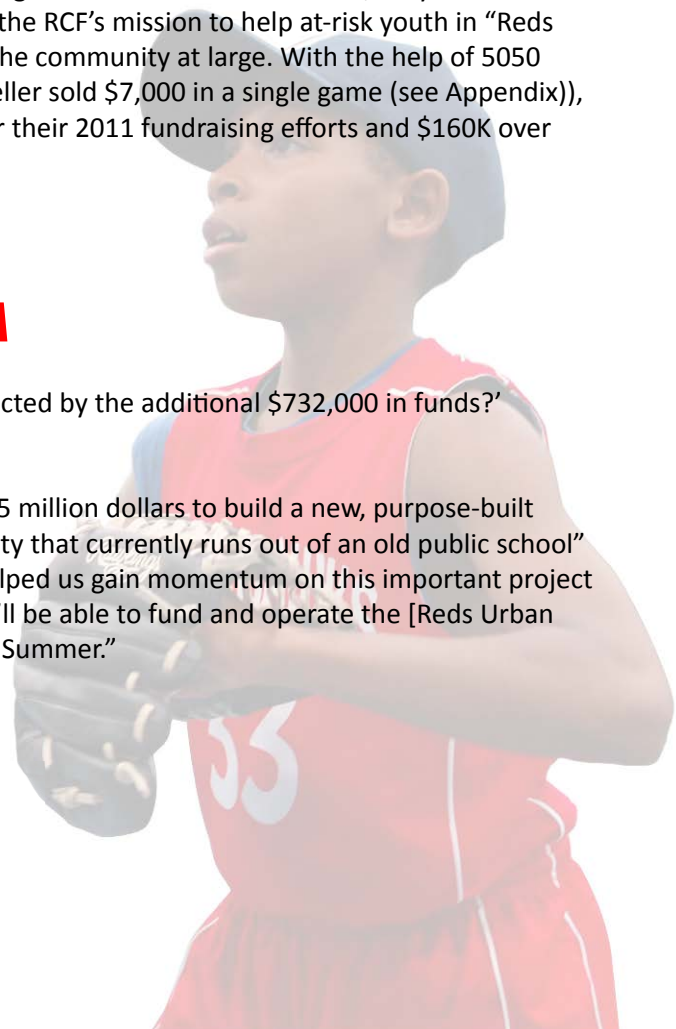
## A STATS DRIVEN GAME

Prior to 5050 Central, the Reds Community Fund raised \$411,000 during their 2011 season. For 2012, they set themselves the ambitious goal of raising \$1 million dollars to support the RCF's mission to help at-risk youth in "Reds Country" - the greater Cincinnati area - and to connect baseball with the community at large. With the help of 5050 Central and some very motivated ticket sellers (one stand out ticket seller sold \$7,000 in a single game (see Appendix)), RCF surpassed their goal and raised \$1,159,760 - a 182% increase over their 2011 fundraising efforts and \$160K over their goal.

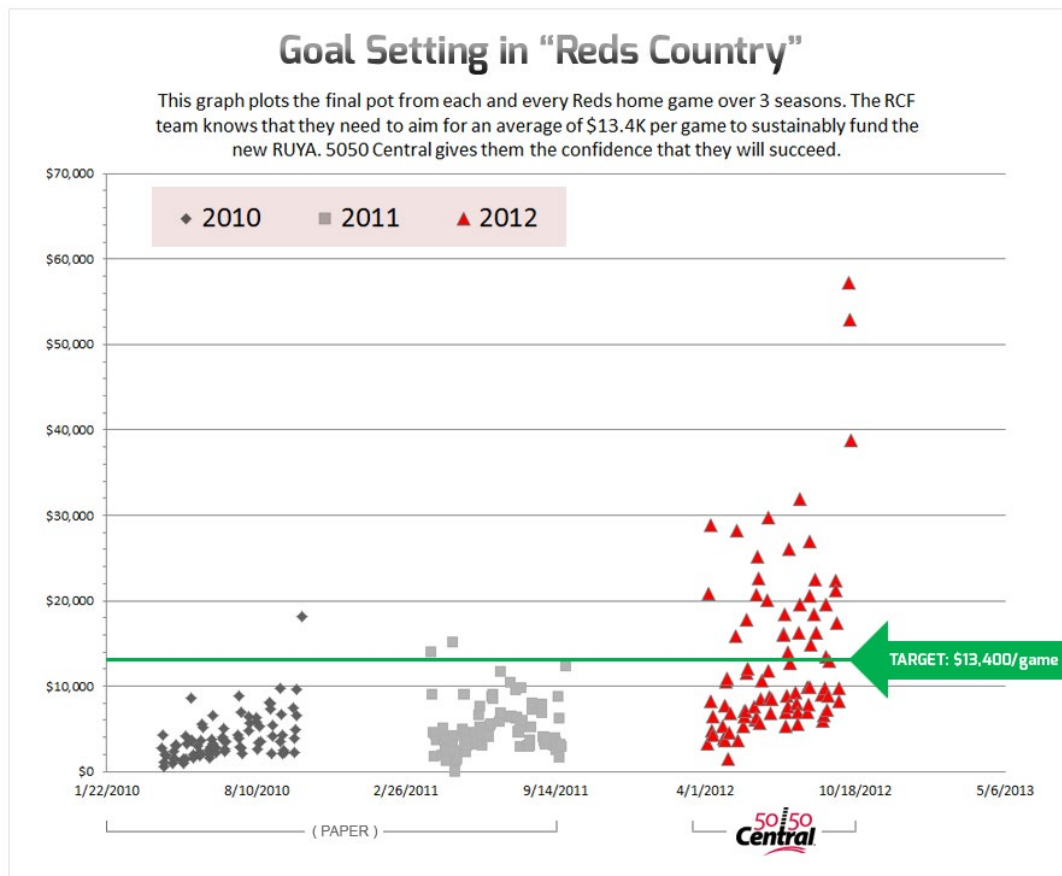
## CONFIDENCE TO PURSUE A DREAM

When asked 'Can you point to one project that has been directly impacted by the additional \$732,000 in funds?' **Mr. Frank** replies instantly: "Yes, absolutely."

"A huge part of our story is that we've been in the process of raising \$5 million dollars to build a new, purpose-built Reds Urban Youth Academy (RUYA) facility to replace our current facility that currently runs out of an old public school" continues **Mr. Frank**, "The success of the Split the Pot initiative has helped us gain momentum on this important project and the predictability of 5050 Central gives us the confidence that we'll be able to fund and operate the [Reds Urban Youth] Academy in a sustainable manner. Our hope is to open by next Summer."







**Mr. Wagner** echoed Mr. Frank's thoughts on the confidence gained from a predictable and sustainable fundraising program.

"A huge unexpected benefit of [5050 Central] was the fast and accurate reporting it enables" said **Mr. Wagner**, "I'm now able to track precisely which ticket sellers sold what, when they sold it and where (in the case of fixed selling stations). Put in the context of my role as finance and operations manager, I can now make a clear and compelling business case to our CFO that, for example, an investment in paid ticket sellers would pay off. It comes down to simple math."

These reliable numbers gave the RCF team the power to confidently predict that they would be able to fund the capital cost and ongoing operational cost (including programming, staffing, equipment, etc.) of the brand-new *Reds Urban Youth Academy*.

"It was a great feeling" continues **Mr. Wagner**, "We could start with our goal [to build a new RUYA] and then simply work backwards from the overall budget to per game averages needed to fund it. This past year, we averaged about twelve grand per game and I know that we need to hit an average of \$13.4K per game to sustainably fund the new RUYA. It gives us a realistic target to aim for and I can tell you everyone here is confident we can and will hit that number. I mean, I had one unpaid intern last season sell \$150K in split the pot tickets all by himself! Imagine what we could do if we could retain that enthusiasm and learning curve going into next season?"



## GOOD WORDS, GOOD DEEDS

“Since new ownership arrived in 2006, our community fund has been very focused on our local baseball and softball community” replied Mr. Frank, “It’s become a higher purpose that everyone in the Reds family has bought into: Having a Reds presence in the community and making a real difference.”

In addition to the Reds Urban Youth Academy, the RCF touches the lives of over 40,000 kids and coaches by providing free, year round baseball and softball instruction to youth ages 8 to 18. Some of the other projects the RCF supports include: *Reds Rookie Success League*, a free, coed, character-building program for 6-12 year olds in Greater Cincinnati, Butler County, Clermont County, Louisville and Dayton; *Youth Baseball and Softball Funding*, which underwrites expenses for over 400 inner-city teams throughout Reds Country; and *Field Renovation*, which has helped restore more than 325 baseball and softball fields.

**Mr. Frank** adds: “None of this would have been possible without the support of our ownership, who made it a priority to have Split the Pot signage in The Great American Ball Park, including a permanent space on the score board, which is key, or the support of the good folks at **Coldwell Banker West Shell**, who sold tickets themselves and also organized other organizations to pitch in, or our corporate sponsors who chipped in to make this happen.”

**The Reds Community Fund and 5050 Central. Truly a team effort!**

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU PERSONALLY?



**Charley Frank**  
Executive Director  
Reds Community Fund

“It means that we can make the new youth academy a reality and increase the number of lives we can positively impact”

“It means that I can make a stronger business case that will ultimately generate even more funds for our cause”.



**Matthew Wagner**  
Finance and Operations Manager  
Reds Community Fund



## APPENDIX: INTERVIEW WITH AN ACE

**BEST PRACTICES:** Q & A with stand-out ticket seller Cameron Koehler. He was so good that they needed to change the incentive scheme after he won club seats too many times.



*Photo: Cameron works efficiently, with purpose and uses group psychology to maximize his sales.*

**You single-handedly raised over \$7K in one game and \$168K over the season for RCF. What's your secret?**

I think one of the biggest drivers is something called 'social proof', a concept I learned during my psyche major. As soon as you get one person to buy, it changes the group psychology. Most people's default thinking is 'I don't want to part with my \$10'. Then they see someone hand over cash and their thinking switches to 'I don't want to lose out on the chance to win that money'. It's the fear of loss. So when I get that first person to buy, I make sure everyone around them sees it happen and if they're not paying attention, I try to get their attention, make a big show of it. You have to be extremely loud, fast and repetitive. I cut out the fluff in my pitch and just focus on what the pot is at. That's what people care about, 'what would I get if I won?'. Then you have to repeat yourself so that the message sinks in. Remember, the fans in the stands are constantly getting pitched for beer, hot dogs, cotton candy, you name it. Your signal has to be clear enough to cut through that noise. I also create scarcity. Tickets may be unlimited, but time isn't. At the top the 7th as we're winding down sales, I'll add on "Last chance" to my call out. And finally, you have to be fast and organized because the biggest constraint limiting your sales is just simply time.

**What do you mean by 'fast and organized'?**

Well, for example, I organize my cash float so that I can quickly make change instead of flipping through a stack of mixed bills. And if I see a guy waving a \$20 in the air, on the way over to him I print up a \$20 ticket. If it turns out he wants change, I'll still sell that \$20 ticket to someone else. You have to be a good multi-tasker and efficient to make the most of your selling time.

**What's your standard call-out to the crowd?**

Like I said, I only focus on the size of the pot. If it's a low pot, I'll use last night's pot, whichever is the stronger message. So I'll yell out something like "Ten thousand dollars and counting" or "Last night's pot was ten grand". The folks that know split-the-pot understand what I'm saying and those who don't, well, I pique their curiosity with a big dollar amount.

**Do you track your personal bests and try to beat them?**

Yes, I think you have to otherwise you'd get complacent. Goals are definitely important. If you didn't know what your best is, how could you beat it?

**If you were recruiting a team of elite ticket sellers, what personality traits or past behaviors would you look for?**

I'd definitely look for extroverts, people who are naturally outgoing and aren't afraid of yelling and being the center of attention. That's something you just can't teach. Then I'd look for any sort of sales & marketing experience, particularly where you were in role where the faster you were, the more you earned; for example, a server in a restaurant needs to turn tables quickly in order to earn more tips. The third thing, which is related to the last, is efficiency, the ability to multi-task and do it quickly. I'd much rather have someone whose work was 'good enough, but fast' than someone who was 'perfect, but slow'. I'd also look for a natural desire to do well. It's easy to slack off as a ticket seller and watch some baseball, so I'd look for people who naturally want to achieve.

**Why does it help to know the current pot at all times?**

Because that's the single most important thing to the consumer. If you're making that buying decision, that calculation of 'Do I part with my ten bucks or not?', then the most important factor is your potential return: 'How much money could I get back if I won?'. If you're able to communicate that key information at all times, then you're one step ahead of the game. Having a real-time tally of the pot also communicates growth which further amplifies the fear of loss. If I'm walking down the aisle and shouting out that the pot is at nine grand, and then I walk back up and the pot is at ten grand, then people are going to think 'whoa, the pot just grew by a grand in the last 5 minutes. I'd better get in on it'.

**When not a superhero ticket seller, what's your Clark Kent day job? And have the skills you refined at the ballpark helped you in your job?**

I'm an Account Executive at Clear Channel Communication. I help local, regional and national companies reach their goals, mainly in radio and digital media. And yes, I definitely apply the skills I learnt selling raffle tickets to my current job, although there's a lot less yelling. I've also learned the value of reciprocity, giving something in order to receive something. I've had good success here, being the fastest Account Exec to reach \$100,000 in new business and the youngest to receive the "Primo Award" for best sale of the month.

**Do you feel like you are a part of the RCF's bigger mission to help connect baseball with the community?**

Yes, I've always felt connected to the mission. I know that by doing my part by raising \$168,000 last season the Reds Community Fund can go and do their community outreach, like the Urban Youth Academy and so on. Sure, you're just a spoke in the wheel, but wheels need the spokes in order to work properly, don't they? You're a prerequisite to whatever it is the organization is trying to do and that feels good.

**If another MLB club called you up to consult on optimizing raffle sales, would you do it?**

Absolutely. 1000% yes.

*About Cameron: Ace ticket seller Cameron Koehler, 24, knows the psychology of selling raffle tickets and can be reached via email at [camkoehler7@gmail.com](mailto:camkoehler7@gmail.com) or on Twitter @Koehlerthanu.*