

Independent Challenges

If you plan to organise a challenge of your own then there are a lot of exciting decisions to be made. However, for the success of the project and the reputation of your charity, independent challenges have to be organised impeccably. This section will give you the organisational essentials for such challenges.

Even if you plan to sign up to a packaged challenge then it's important to understand what is involved in it's organisation nevertheless. Awareness of the necessary organisational tools, logistical procedures and administrative requirements will be very useful. Just because you will not be taking the decisions, does not mean that you will not have an important part to play.

1. Planning the Expedition

The Challenge Participants

If you plan to undertake an independently organised challenge as a team, then the choice of its members or the decision to join a particular group is crucial. Throughout the project you will be relying upon the motivation, the emotional stability, the honesty, the physical condition, the common sense, the skill, the ingenuity and the friendship of your team mates. With them you will be undergoing intense physical and emotional stress, that you may never have experienced before.

Similarly, you will be sharing a potentially life-changing and certainly unforgettable experience with your team. You may have to ask them to put their safety in your hands and yours in theirs. The trust and interdependence that can develop is a wonderful legacy of your challenge.

Your first decision may be whether to take on the challenge single-handedly or as part of a team.

1. Solo Challenges

Every aspect of the project, from the daily highs to the lows and from the organisational pressure to the final rush of achievement, will be magnified if you take it on alone. You must therefore be confident in your own ability and your own motivational skills. Frequently, you will come up against obstacles that you have to deal with alone. At the same time, success in coping with each of these obstacles and completing the challenge will ultimately be more extraordinary accomplishment. In reality and in the perception of potential supporters, the test of endurance is more substantial, making the solo challenge more inspirational. As your job is to inspire people to support you and your cause, this can be an important asset.

➤ In 2000, journalist and writer Alexandra Pratt undertook a trip by canoe across the interior of Labrador and Quebec, aiming to trace the voyage of Mina Hubbard, an explorer who had been the first and only person to complete the journey 100 years previously. As a young woman arriving alone in Labrador with such a remarkable plan, Alex received enormous support and kindness from its citizens. The lifelong relationships that she developed were, in her opinion, a result of her decision to take the project on as a solo expeditioner. However, Labrador and the violent current of the river, were extremely testing for Alex and her guide. They could not complete the route and she had to pay a price for taking on the voyage with minimal resources and her determination to go it alone, and could cover only 100 of the 576 mile journey. This is very representative of the potential balance of advantages and disadvantages that going solo holds.

Tips for Solo Challengers

- Make a big deal of being solo and unsupported (if you are!) and use it to help you inspire support.
- Demonstrate total financial transparency, impeccable organisation and thorough contingency and safety planning.
- Ask for help - do not hesitate to be up front about the degree to which you need the support of others.
- Accumulate volunteers and supporters and delegate to people that you trust.

2. Group Challenges

With each new member come new ideas, new skills, new contacts, new sponsors and more support and enthusiasm. At every stage of the project, from the first line drawn on a map to the final hug of celebration, having a team of people, however big or small, to share everything, can add a tremendous amount. Good, reliable and committed team members represent halving of responsibility and doubling of capacity.

However, if the wrong people get involved for the wrong reasons, then the antagonism within the group can be destructive.

Putting a group together

Do not let the excitement of the idea distract the prospective members from understanding the nature of the commitment. If a few of you have come up with an idea together and you are all set on being a part of it, then talk very honestly about:

- what attracted you to the idea?
- what you want to achieve by it?
- how much time are you going to be able to commit to the whole project?

If you are an individual or a very small group there is a temptation to approach your best friends. There are obvious benefits to this, but don't rush into a partnership without examining every angle. Ask the following questions:

- Are they motivated by goals similar to yours?
- Are they self-reliant and also able to be part of a team?