

The dividends of generosity

FIT For Charity Run

Motivated by the devastating Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami at the end of 2004, a group of employees working for financial services firms and companies in related industries resolved to do something to make a meaningful difference in our community. Their determination and vision led to the creation of the annual Financial Industry in Tokyo (FIT) For Charity Run in 2005.

At the inaugural run on 4 September 2005, a total of 1,500 participants from over 50 firms, along with their families and friends, ran or walked 5km or 10km courses around the Imperial Palace. The event was a great success, raising ¥17 million for local charities. It also attracted a great deal of attention, which led to rapid growth in scale and participation, with contributions doubling in 2006 and doubling again in 2007. From 2008 to 2019, the event was held in and around the old National Olympic Stadium.

Mission and identity

The FIT For Charity Run is a powerful expression of the financial industry's collective commitment to making a positive contribution to our community, to foster teamwork within firms, and to build relationships across the industry. It raises funds for local non-profit organisations (NPOs) that serve important needs that are not necessarily well-recognised or well-understood. Many of the organisations have limited fundraising capabilities, so contributions from the FIT For Charity Run make a significant impact on their efforts to address social issues.

The FIT For Charity Run is organised and run entirely by volunteers. It is supported by donations from sponsor companies and participants, as well as sales of FIT T-shirts and raffle tickets.

The beneficiary organisations are nominated by, and voted on, by the sponsor firms. The FIT Charity Team conducts due diligence on the nominated charities to ensure they comply with the FIT guidelines, which define what cause areas are eligible and require the exclusion of organisations with religious and/or political ties.

It also collects and evaluates details about how the organisations plan to spend FIT donations.

Significant scale and impact, even during the pandemic

Over its 16-year history, the annual FIT For Charity Run has attracted some 85,000 participants, raised more than ¥900 million, and supported over 120 NPOs. By 2019, the run was being supported each year by more than 100 firms and over 5,000 participants, consistently raising close to ¥60 million for beneficiary organisations.

After the Covid-19 pandemic struck, it was decided to hold FIT 2020 online to prioritise participant safety, and the entire month of December was made "FIT month". An app was developed with a vendor that allowed participants to register, pay the participant fee, and post their time records online to share with fellow participants. In addition to running and walking, cycling was added as an option, which proved very popular. But overall participation fell by half to just over 2,500 and donations dropped to ¥36.5m. Under the state of emergency, many charities' financial situations were exacerbated, so it was important to continue supporting these organisations, even on a reduced scale.

A way forward

We learned a lot in 2020. One of the benefits of moving online was that participants could choose where and when to participate. We also had



participants join from all over Japan, as well as from overseas, including China, India, the US, and a number of countries in Europe. More than 14,000 posts were recorded on the FIT 2020 app.

Despite the challenges created by the coronavirus pandemic, we have seen continued engagement and support from Tokyo's financial community. Many business leaders see the value of making a collective impact, while providing their staff with an opportunity to learn about social issues and engage with NPOs.

Preparations for FIT 2021 kick off this month. We invite both regular and new participants to join us in making a difference to the community in which we live and work. ●

Please follow FIT For Charity on Facebook and visit our website www.fitforcharity.org



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