

You don't have to be mad ...

I'm enjoying this...grunt...I'm enjoying this...groan...I'm enjoying this...am I?

The sky is blue, the autumn trees radiant, I'm surrounded by thousands of like-minded souls (and soles) and we're all heading the same way. I'm on the Royal Parks half-marathon and I have a mile to go. With legs pleading with me to stop, it feels like a hundred.

Remind me – why am I doing this? It was so easy signing the application form three months ago.

So I tell myself I'm enjoying it and that helps me through the pain of the last thousand steps. The shouts and fanfare as I cross the line brought tears of relief to my eyes. I've not collapsed. I've done it and lived to tell the tale.



'I'm not running for charity. I'm trying to get away from a group of chuggers'

This article is part of a series by Martin Farrell that looks in a light-hearted, but nevertheless serious way, at some of the more subtle issues facing trustee boards.

On a high for the rest of the day fuelled by free food, music and party atmosphere, I wonder why on earth do trustees push themselves to extremes for their charities?

And extremes there certainly are. While pondering this piece I've heard of trustees volunteering to do all sorts of extraordinary things like jumping out of planes, trekking to Everest base camp and

the south pole, running endless marathons and swapping a honeymoon for cycling across desert landscapes. Some even arrange golf tournaments.

Makes my 13.1 miles look a bit tame. But that was my challenge and theirs was theirs.

So...why? Why don't we just read our papers, turn up to board meetings and, if we're feeling really brave, sit on one or two sub-committees?

The trustees I have spoken with were compelled by some sort of personal impulse: to prove something to themselves; to do something for a friend or relative who had been helped by the charity or to 'do it before I die'. The charity they



helped just graciously provided them with a vehicle for doing so and motivated them to get up and get going.

There's the accountant whose clients tell him how tough things are who responds by running to raise money to help people with heart problems like his father. The trustee who raises funds for a youth charity as his response to the vicious knifing of his close friend. The just-turned-60 children's charity trustee who walks for weeks at high altitude to confront the early death which has claimed other members of his family.

I had wanted to know if I was capable of doing another long run, having done a marathon 23 years ago. And I wanted the thrill of being part of a group challenge, to be engaged with youthful exuberance. Raising cash to send unwanted school books to Tanzania, fuelled my feet to cross the line.

What is it for you? Whatever your extraordinary challenge may be, whether or not it involves physical extremes, there is the thrill of crossing the line waiting for you somewhere out there. And money to be raised on the way.

'I've done it.' Know how good that feels. ●

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