

Fundraising *Doesn't* Cause People to Stop Giving Their Tithe and Offerings

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Are you reluctant to begin a major fundraising project because you are afraid that tithe and offerings will be reduced? Pastors and church leaders all too often express such fear. Is it a realistic fear? There is no evidence to support the supposition that tithe will be reduced and that offerings will go down, yet because the fear exists among some, it needs to be examined. On the other hand, if a building program (or any major renovation or similar project) is not properly planned the giving of tithe and offerings may indeed go down. In this article we will share principles that will enable you to implement a major project without experiencing a downturn in tithe and offerings.

Seek input: The congregation needs to be part of the planning for any major project. If there is a genuine need for a new building or similar project, they need to be heard and be involved in deciding that the project it is worth doing. If they are involved, they will realize that a capital project is in *addition* to the regular operation of the church.

Be realistic: Do not allow unchecked enthusiasm to drive a capital project. You need to be realistic about fundraising by asking appropriate questions. For example, is the goal within the reach of the congregation or will the congregation become discouraged because the goal is unrealistic? If the project is unrealistic the congregation may indeed become discouraged and *all* giving—regular and fundraising--could be affected. Discuss the fundraising concept with major supporters of previous projects and listen to their input.

Stewardship: The church needs to have a healthy stewardship atmosphere *before* it enters fundraising. Stewardship education is not a “quick fix” solution for financial problems or something that a church does because it wants to start major fundraising. Quality stewardship education can create a long-lasting positive atmosphere in the congregation.

Organize: A fundraising campaign needs to be properly organized. A properly organized campaign is well planned and it has a defined beginning and ending. At the start of the campaign, the members need to have a clear understanding of the project goals and what will signal the end of the campaign. The goal of a campaign is not to raise “as much as possible,” but rather to raise the funds needed for a specific project. The congregation or constituency needs to experience the joy of successfully completing a project.

Communicate: Some projects fail even though the congregation wants the project. If the project is realistic and is well organized, the church will have a positive view of stewardship. Why do some projects fail? Because of a lack of communication. Just because the members of the various committees overseeing the project know what is happening, do not assume that all church members do. Avoid communicating only when more funds are needed or more volunteers are needed to work on a project. Communicate on an ongoing basis and also communicate through various ways. Modern technology has changed the way we communicate, but don't assume that high tech communication is the only effective way. Some people like to hear updates from project leaders. Others like to read about the progress and others like to be invited to actually see what is happening. If you want to be effective in your communication, use various channels and not just those you favor.

Thank them: We plan, implement and receive funds for projects, but it's easy to forget to thank the members for their support. Keep in mind that church projects are successful because members *choose* to participate. Likewise the church should *choose* to thank the project supporters. A person who invests in a business hopes to be rewarded by getting a good return on the investment. A musician, who practices extensively, hopes to be rewarded by giving an outstanding performance. Acquiring knowledge and getting good grades reward a student who studies diligently. How is a church member rewarded for supporting a project? By experiencing the satisfaction of participating in something that is important to the church and receiving thanks from the church. Surely, the church can do that much.

If a church member understands the importance of a project, that individual will support it without decreasing the returning of tithe and giving of offerings. The steps outlined will help to create a partnership that will bless both the congregation and the individual member.