

Selecting and Structuring the Right Campaign

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Just like taking the time and making the effort to find the right house to live, or the right selection of clothes to wear for an event, it's important to determine the right campaign format and structure for a fundraising effort.

There are several campaigns that an organization might consider. These often build on each other, although it's not inconceivable that they might also stand alone.

The first of these is the annual fund campaign. This campaign is an organization's effort to secure operating funds for that particular year. There are many benefits to such a campaign:

- Secures new donors.
- Renews existing donor gifts.
- Develops the habit of giving by donors.
- Informs about the organization, its successes and its plans.
- Encourages repeat and upgrade gifts.
- Lays the foundation for other campaigns that build on this one.

The most likely donors and prospects for the annual fund are those who have the closest relationship to the organization, such as those who have benefitted from the organization's work, relatives such as parents, vendors who do business with the organization, occasional grants from government or foundations (although these will likely be one-time gifts and can't be depended upon for renewal, a basic tenet of the annual fund), and those who have an interest in what the organization does, community members, and board members as well as volunteers.

Steps in developing an annual fund are usually the following:

- An appropriate case for support is developed for that year. This case statement is drawn from the overall case for fundraising for the organization.
- A goal is determined by using a gift range chart.
- Volunteer leadership is enlisted.
- Donor and prospect lists are developed.
- Materials are prepared.
- A budget is put in place that acknowledges the money needed in order to raise the goal.
- Gift receipting, acknowledgement, and reporting means are in place.
- A timeline for activities is developed.

The annual fund is truly the foundation for giving, because other campaigns most often build on this fundraising effort, such as a capital campaign.

The capital campaign usually has a large goal; and the gift range chart for this fundraising vehicle is different from the annual fund because a smaller amount of major donors will usually give the largest amount. This campaign is most often for buildings and renovation, although the model for this campaign can also be used for endowment campaigns. The usual elements necessary for a capital campaign are:

- Clear mission and purpose statement.
- Specific goals and objectives.
- Commitment to development.
- Active CEO.
- Board dedication and participation.
- Staff and budget.
- Committed volunteers.
- Successful, existing fundraising program.
- Prospect research, identification, and cultivation.
- Acknowledgment and recognition.
- Public relations program.

Other possible campaigns are the major gifts campaign, a campaign to receive legacies and other planned gifts (depending on the country), and special projects campaigns. The major gifts campaign focuses on a special project or program and requests donations from selected donors who can provide larger amounts than they might give for the annual fund. Of course, major gifts are also essential for successful annual and capital campaigns, as we can see from the gift range charts. Planned gifts are sophisticated instruments whereby a donor will be able to benefit not only himself/herself and the heirs but can also leave funds for an organization. This is truly a win-win relationship between an organization and its donors. Special project fundraising can involve all donors, but most often the majority of givers come from the annual fund donor base.

In order to carry out any campaign, the following structure is necessary, with few exceptions that need to be carefully weighed and considered, because each point in the following list is vital for fundraising success.

- Understanding our donor markets' understanding and acceptance of our mission, goals and objectives, and using marketing and communications to support fundraising.
- A clear definition of what the needs are which we are trying to fulfill, and therefore the need for specific funds.
- An outreach program for identifying, cultivating, and soliciting prospects and turning them into donors.
- Appropriately researching our prospects and keeping good records on our donors.
- Enlisting and wisely using volunteers.
- Putting in place the right case for support so that we can attract both new donors and renew the gifts of existing ones.
- Efficiently keeping records.
- Having appropriate thank-you and recognition procedures in place.

- Understanding that fundraising consists of the right person asking the right prospect for the right cause, in the right way, at the right time, and for the right amount (a principle of The Fund Raising School).
- Remembering that people give to people with causes.

As has been described in a previous chapter, these campaigns, as described above, will utilize the strategies or tools that are appropriate for the identified prospects. Campaigns and strategies go hand in hand in carrying out a successful fundraising program.