

Should You Hire a Fundraising Consultant?

By

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Sometimes it's necessary for a pastor and a church committee to acquire the services of a consultant. While Philanthropic Service for Institutions (PSI) can provide many resources and much hands-on assistance such as in planning, training of boards and volunteers, providing sample materials or reviewing your own materials, there are some vital steps in a campaign are beyond the scope of PSI's staff time and resources. Sometimes more hands-on help is needed when implementing specific fundraising efforts.

Hiring a fund raising consultant is a major decision and may have a significant impact on the success of your program. A consultant or consulting firm may provide several types of services, and you will need to determine exactly what your needs are so your money is well spent. For example, if you're engaging in a capital campaign, you may benefit from an objective evaluation process called the feasibility study, which includes internal and external interviews and result in suggestions of whether or not you can raise the amount of money you desire. Other ways that a consultant may be needed are in technical expertise, training of boards and volunteers, evaluating gift markets, helping prepare materials, and in coaching personnel involved in fundraising.

When it is desirable to hire a consultant, first and most importantly, consult with PSI. We keep a list of consultants who have been approved and have a successful track record of working well and understanding faith-based institutions, particularly Adventist. We will advise you on what type of consultant you might hire, what to investigate since you will be paying the bill (this is a business transaction, after all), what questions to ask, how to determine a track record of success, and also give you some referrals. Then you can make an intelligent decision regarding the hiring and use of a consultant.

Who might be a consultant? There are major companies who work with faith-based organizations, there are "solo performers" which are one-person organizations and contract with others as needed, and there are those who position themselves as consultants when actually their experience is limited and credentials are scarce. We cannot urge strongly enough—while consultants are valuable, the services and credentials of consultants vary across the map, literally and figuratively speaking, and if you're not careful, you could be paying for bad advice or even very little service. There is little uniformity among consultants and their services, including their fees; therefore it truly pays to be the knowledgeable and savvy "buyer" of their services.