

CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS

Don't Be Afraid (of Capital Campaigns)

Launching a capital campaign can be intimidating – focusing on future rewards is the antidote.

By Jan Halpin

When a nonprofit organization decides to launch a major capital campaign – especially a small organization, or one that has never done a major capital campaign before – often the overwhelming emotion is...fear. Fear of the process. Fear of failure. But mostly fear of the unknown. How is this going to succeed?

At The Phoenix Philanthropy Group, we've managed campaigns ranging from \$500,000 to \$700 million, so we know that feeling intimidation is understandable. I'd like to suggest an alternative emotion, however: Anticipation. Anticipation of the rewards of success.

First, the steps leading up to a capital project are just as important as the actual execution of a campaign. In the preparation phases many aspects of the organization are tested and studied. Strengths and weaknesses are examined. In fact, all of the components of a campaign are primarily process oriented (and making sure that process moves in the direction it needs to is the consultants' role.)

And then, suddenly, the magic happens! Campaign leadership obtains significant gifts. Everyone is caught in the wave that they really can do this – and the energy propels them forward. The ride isn't without some bumps and the occasional left-turn; but being flexible and open to options other than just the "plan," makes the ride even more rewarding.

The anxiety melts away, and the rewards become clear. Completing a campaign allows your organization to secure the funding needed to build a stronger organization, make dreams a reality, provide more for your constituents, and enhance your community. This is an incredible accomplishment for all involved – but the best is still yet to come.

In my experience, an organization that has successfully completed a capital campaign is truly transformed. How? Their image is enhanced among nonprofits and the greater community. The Board is viewed as one of leadership with the ability to make things happen. And staff members are recognized as accomplished professionals able to provide increased valuable services to their participants. Most importantly, the organization is now positioned to confidently embark on future campaigns or other opportunities for growth and enhancement.

Yes, making the decision to launch a capital campaign can be intimidating. But positively focusing on the future rewards is the best way to ensure success.

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