

## FUNDRAISING AND CAMPAIGNS

# Fear Not: The Positive and Transformative Value of Campaigns

*Campaigns need not be a source of fear for Board and staff leadership. Developed and managed effectively, a campaign can have positive and lasting impact on the fundraising operation, team, and culture, as well as the organization as a whole.*

*By Jan Halpin, Principal*

**F**ew things have the potential to transform a nonprofit organization – or, often times, strike fear into the hearts of Board members and staff leadership – quite like a significant campaign. Whether bricks and mortar, strategic growth, endowment, or a combination of these – and whether the goal is to raise \$1 million over one year or \$100 million over five – the very word “campaign” elicits thoughts of extensive planning, increased infrastructure and staffing, added operational costs, greater scrutiny, and, of course, more work.

While much of this is often true, campaigns need not be a source of fear for Board and staff leadership, or anyone else in the organization. Campaigns themselves are nothing more than an intensified, time-limited fundraising effort to raise significant dollars for a specific project – an annual campaign on steroids.

Though unquestionably requiring more preparation, in particular at the front end, campaigns can pay off far beyond achievement of the campaign goal itself. Developed and managed effectively, a campaign can have positive and lasting impact on the entire fundraising operation, team, and culture, as well as the organization as a whole.

Among the many potential benefits of a successful campaign are:

- Positively impacting your organization’s mission and the people and communities it serves
- Assessing and clarifying your organization’s overall goals and needs
- Defining and aligning your long-range strategic plan and annual operating plans
- Examining, strengthening, and re-articulating your case for support
- Energizing and further engaging your Board of Directors and other volunteer leaders
- Re-engaging and strengthening relationships with past donors, and building relationships with new donors and prospects, especially at the major gifts level
- Reassessing the development team and making sure the right people are on board and performing at the highest levels
- Ensuring that your “fundraising house” is in order – from having up-to-date policies, procedures, systems, and reporting in place; to updating your donor and prospect data; to ensuring the development team is fully trained on and utilizing your donor/prospect- and moves-management tools
- Achieving or exceeding your campaign goal and benefitting from the results

Beyond these very tangible benefits, a successful campaign can also instill a whole new level of pride and confidence among the volunteer and staff leadership, the fundraising team, and across the entire organization.



Nearing the end of a successful campaign, the fundraising operation is typically performing at its best. The great challenge is to keep it that way, and avoid the very real tendency to “let down” in intensity as you move into the next campaign or phase of fundraising. Being able to do that requires advance planning during the campaign.

Make no mistake – campaigns are a lot of work. They require strategy, planning, resources, execution, and a total commitment from each staff and Board member. But with clear direction and planning, the benefits of a campaign can far outweigh the challenges.

The details around planning, preparing for, and conducting a campaign are far too extensive to cover here. Even before any planning begins, ask yourself why a campaign is needed – what is the strategic outcome, how will it impact the community and those you serve, and what are your real needs? If the answers lead you on a campaign path, following are some thoughts and advice based on my years of campaign experience, both as a leader of nonprofit organizations and development operations, and as a consultant:

- Understand that you don’t just wake up one day and say, “Let’s start a campaign!” Besides careful forethought and planning, you will need to gauge the feasibility of the campaign’s success with key constituents – donors, volunteer leaders, partners, and the community as a whole.
- Recognize that planning for and conducting a campaign is a significant extra project, over and above your usual activity; as with any big project, break it into parts to avoid being overwhelmed.
- Recognize that you will need to budget specifically for the campaign planning and operations in addition to your normal budgeting; anticipate that your annual giving may suffer during a campaign and plan accordingly.
- Recognize that conducting a campaign will require that you operate in a more focused and deliberate manner; getting clarity and buy-in on the goals, objectives, plan, and responsibilities up front, and across the organization, are essential for success.
- Take a close look at the people and resources you have before embarking on a campaign; without the right assemblage of both, your campaign will suffer.
- Realize that no two campaigns are alike and that the best campaign is one that is successful for your organization; know up front that situations will arise that you did not plan for – flexibility is key.
- Celebrate your successful completion of the campaign, but don’t let down afterward; plan ahead and be ready to transition directly into the next strategic effort.
- Strongly consider retaining outside expertise to help with your campaign planning and implementation; a third-party expert can provide important knowledge, experience, objectivity, energy, and resources to help keep the pieces of the campaign moving forward.

Armed with this information and guidance, you can dispel any notion of fear and help your organization and mission benefit from the positive and transformative effects of a campaign.

*To learn more about The Phoenix Philanthropy Group and our campaign expertise and services, please email us at [info@phoenixphilanthropy.com](mailto:info@phoenixphilanthropy.com) or call 1-877-524-8774.*

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*Jan Halpin is Principal of The Phoenix Philanthropy Group. She can be reached at 480-250-7760, or by email at [Halpin@PhoenixPhilanthropy.com](mailto:Halpin@PhoenixPhilanthropy.com).*