

AmPhil

A GUIDE FOR NONPROFIT LEADERS:

5 Insider Tips for Planning a Lucrative Capital Campaign



When you're looking for a big fundraising payoff, capital campaigns can be an alluring prospect.

AN ALL-TOO-COMMON MISTAKE: THINKING A CAMPAIGN IS GUARANTEED TO BRING IMMENSE REVENUE, ITS RISK WILL BE LOW, AND DISTANT DEADLINES MEAN THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!

A fundraising team's thoughts leading up to a capital campaign may look something like this:

1. We need a lot more money.
2. Capital campaigns bring in a lot of money.
3. Let's launch a capital campaign.

The reality is, campaigns are far more complicated than that. You can set a campaign goal, but that's where the going gets tough. To be successful, a capital campaign needs to come with a practical plan.

Let's explore the five key questions you need to ask yourself—and be brutally honest answering—before you kick off a capital campaign.

1

Why are we undertaking a capital campaign?

THE FIRST STEP TOWARD EXECUTING A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN IS ESTABLISHING WHAT YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH THROUGH IT.

Without a clear picture of the impact your campaign will have on your ability to fulfill your mission, it will be difficult to convince staff, volunteers, and donors to support it. Before you kick off your campaign, pause and ask such questions as :

1. Is there a compelling case for support of your campaign?
2. How will a successful capital campaign affect your organization? What will happen if the campaign fails?
3. How will the world change as a result of the capital campaign?
4. Is it important for you to maintain annual support – or even grow it – during the campaign?

Which leads us to the next question...

2

How much do we actually need?

DON'T CHOOSE THIS NUMBER WITHOUT SOLID RESEARCH.

You need to do your homework before you can develop a realistic, practical budget. You don't need to ponderously recite every last detail to your donors, but you should give them the information they need in order to feel confident that you've carefully considered where their donations will go and what they'll help you achieve.

When determining the amount you need, don't leave out such items as possible additional staffing needs, fundraising costs, and inflation. A feasibility study may be in order to determine if your goal is achievable.



3

Can we identify supporters?

YOU NEED TO IDENTIFY WHO WILL COVER A LARGE PORTION OF THE CAMPAIGN GOAL RIGHT OFF THE BAT.

Identify where your potential top gifts will come from and if you have a donor base that can handle this type of fundraising plus (this is important) continued annual support. You'll want to know if the campaign is compelling to donors, if they would support it, and if so, at what levels. This is where a feasibility study could be a useful tool.

Long-time donors may be happy to contribute, if they haven't maxed out their ability or willingness to give. **First-time donors shouldn't be treated as one-time donors—your goal should be to convert them to ongoing partners.** Asking a wealthy donor to shell out just this once may sabotage your long-term relationship. Examining these items pre-campaign will allow you to enter the quiet phase of fundraising with the confidence to shoot for the stars (with the help of serious rocket fuel from current donors).

4

Do we have an agreement?

GET STAFF AND BOARD ALIGNED ON THE FUNDRAISING PRIORITIES. INTERNAL ALIGNMENT CAN MAKE OR BREAK A CAMPAIGN.

Without the support of staff and board, the campaign can't happen. Ensuring that everyone is on board with the goals and that they're excited about accelerating the organization is crucial.

An aside: mapping out your general timeline is important, but you don't want to set an exact end date right out of the gate. Stating an exact end date should wait until you're entering the campaign's public phase.

5

Can we commit?

THE UNVARNISHED TRUTH: A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN IS A HECK OF A LOT OF WORK.

It takes planning, dedication, and a significant financial investment.

So ask yourself (questions within questions): Do we have the right people on the staff and board to pull off this colossal effort? Do we have the budget for travel, mail appeals, collateral materials, and general campaign infrastructure? Will we have the stamina to do extra major gifts fundraising, execute additional marketing and communications, and lead a volunteer committee?

A capital campaign doesn't run itself. But if you're ready to put in serious time and serious energy, a campaign can have a serious payoff.

That is, if you can answer the five questions above with confidence and conviction.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
FUNDRAISING HERE.**

AmPhil
STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

 AmPhil.com

 302.635.7354

 info@amphil.com

