

THE CAMPAIGN GAME PLAN

For many nonprofits, annual fundraising campaigns are almost as sure as death and taxes. Experienced fundraisers know how all-encompassing they can be and how much advance preparation is required in order to be successful. Depending on the size of the organization and how lofty its campaign goals, the revenue a campaign generates can often represent the lion's share of the organization's operating budget.

With so many campaigns overlapping, however, the donor marketplace can easily become saturated with a host of messages and solicitations. How can you market your campaign effectively? Here are seven tips to guide you:

1. Start with a well-written case for support. Without one, it is difficult to determine what the campaign focus and "ask" will be. Even then, the top needs, as outlined in the case, may not automatically be the best choices for marketing purposes. The case serves as a starting point to understanding the campaign needs and deciding how best to frame the marketing approach.

2. Develop a campaign marketing plan. Without a bona fide strategy, it is challenging to develop the execution tactics. A marketing plan will help determine the campaign's strategic objectives, which market segments to engage and their specific messages, what the barriers are and how to overcome them, and who will be involved.

Once these are identified, you can develop tactics based on your campaign marketing budget. No matter the size of your organization, it seems as though the marketing budget is never enough. You will likely need to include creative, low-cost ways to reach your audience.

Recognize that it takes money to make money. If no one knows about your campaign, it is unlikely that you will reach your goals.

Include metrics in your plan wherever possible. This way, you can evaluate how you are faring during the campaign so you can make any changes if necessary. It also helps to show what succeeded in case you need to build the case for an increase in next year's marketing budget and tactics.

3. Go after media partners. Start early so you have ample time to create media sponsorship packages to get media outlets on board. In-kind donations of newspaper and magazine ad space, radio and television spots, signage and online promotions can make the difference in your campaign reach.

Do not expect something for nothing in these relationships. Ensure that media partners receive exposure, thanks and presence in your campaign materials and at campaign events.

How to effectively
convey your campaign
messages to your
organization's donors
and supporters

By Elaine Fogel

Campaign Marketing

Ask them how you can help them achieve their goals through the partnership.

Come up with co-branded promotions ideas that can get them excited when you make your presentation. Not only do they want to look like good corporate citizens, they also value any buzz you can bring to the table on their behalf.

4. Go after campaign sponsors. Again, start early to solicit campaign sponsors. It is always ideal to get cash donations, but if that is not in the cards, in-kind offers can be extremely valuable. Maybe your regular print supplier will provide some pro bono printing for the campaign, or your organization has relationships with companies that can offer their human resources for envelope stuffing, mailing, public relations, or other services. Every little bit helps especially

if it means taking something off your plate and delegating it to external resources.

Do not limit yourself to large companies only. Many small and mid-size businesses are recognizing the value of corporate philanthropy and may be able to offer something you can use. Perhaps their staff can help with telephone solicitations or personalized phone invitations to campaign events. A local courier may come on board to provide pro bono delivery service if your campaign is held in one city. Be creative and develop a list of items and services required, so when you approach new prospects they will have options from which to choose.

5. Stick to a theme. If your campaign has multiple themes and messages, it can be confusing. Use one overall theme and give the campaign a name, whether you use that name externally

or not. Develop your materials based on the selected theme to ensure consistency and recognition in the marketplace.

Develop specific campaign colors, font styles and one tagline that do not deviate too much from your organization's umbrella brand identity. If people were to place your campaign print materials next to your organization's "regular" materials, they need to see that they are related – not necessarily identical, but connected.

To ensure that staff and campaign lay leaders communicate effectively and consistently, put together a campaign marketing and communications handbook and use it in training sessions before the campaign launches. This can include the proper use of the campaign or organization logo and tagline, Pantone and equivalent RGB

colors, key campaign messages, campaign spokespeople, media contacts, etc. The more informed the staff and lay leaders are, the better equipped they will be in helping the campaign succeed.

It is everyone's job to support the campaign, whether they are on the fund development staff or not. Plan internal campaign promotions to make it fun and build staff buy-in and support.

6. Monitor your progress. Subscribe to media monitoring during the campaign to see what is getting printed, aired and posted online. Develop a fundraising meter so you know where your revenue stands every day.

Evaluate all your marketing communication channels to see what is not. Do not be reticent about making adjustments. If things are going slower than expected, figure out

ways to ramp up your tactics. Perhaps senior management or the board will allocate more marketing funds midway through the campaign to boost results.

7. Develop a cohesive internal approach. The worst case scenario is when campaign staff do not work cohesively with marketing and communications staff. It is very important for the senior fundraisers and marketers to check their egos at the door and work together as a team. With a mission-centered approach, the marketing staff can serve as internal consultants to the fundraisers, managing campaign marketing communications so fundraisers can focus on what they do best: raise money.

For small organizations, the fundraiser is often the marketer as well. In these cases, it is beneficial to develop a campaign marketing lay committee, so

the responsibilities are not dependent on one individual.

Campaign marketing can be an exciting adventure, giving you and your staff an opportunity to spread your marketing wings in ways that are not always possible the rest of the year. The effort is often frenetic and pressure-filled, but when the results are in and you realize that your efforts are helping the organization live its mission for another year, it is ever so can gratifying.

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