

## “CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS: CAN WE DO THEM OURSELVES?”

Once a community has decided to pursue its dreams and launch a capital campaign, a question arises in some quarters, “Should we hire a fundraising professional, or should we attempt to do it ourselves?” This is a fair question considering some churches have advancement professionals on staff and have a great deal of lay talent. As someone who has worked on the staff of non-profits; been trained in stewardship, development, and capital campaigns; and worked on 290+ campaigns, I will offer you an answer and some points to consider.

The short answer is, “**Don’t attempt to do a capital campaign by yourself!**”

- 1) **You only have one chance!** It is never easy raising money. An organization has only one chance to get it right. From the beginning, you must give it the **very best effort possible** to reach its goals. There are no do-overs. Once a campaign misses deadlines, loses momentum, and bogs down – it is finished. And this failed campaign will have a lasting effect on your organization and community.
- 2) A capital campaign is a complicated project with many moving parts and sub-specialties. These campaign aspects include leadership, strong case, design calendaring, timing, print, visual, lead gifts identification and solicitation, mid-tier gifts, weeks of ongoing communication, membership pledging, and three to five years of pledge collections. A successful professional must have knowledge and years of experience with all these aspects of a campaign.
- 3) A capital campaign consultant should be a trained professional with the experience of directing many capital campaigns. This vast experience gives him/her the **ability to identify opportunities and overcome obstacles**. And every organization has issues and obstacles to address and overcome. An experienced professional has seen his/her share of challenges.
- 4) **An experienced, fundraising professional should be able to raise you at least 2X to 4X the amount you could raise on your own, sometimes even more!** That increased value will pay for itself many times over.
- 5) In 25 years I have only seen one small, wealthy, rural church successfully raise most of the money it needed on its own! They raised most of the needed \$165,000, though not all, because the pastor went to visit each of the 60 households personally.
- 6) I know of another wealthy, rural church that wanted to raise \$3 for a social hall-gym. They raised \$1.5 million, on their own, though the neighboring pastors and knowledgeable campaign professionals knew they could have raised \$3 million-plus. And their dream was never realized, as the beautiful social hall was essentially turned into a steel gym.
- 7) After finishing a church capital campaign, one campaign leader said to me, “**Either you hire a consultant, or you do it the wrong way!**” I used to think that was a bit strong, but now I see how true it is.
- 8) **In the beginning a community a community worries about its fees; in the end, it worries about how much money it raises!** A few dollars saved in the beginning can mean hundreds of thousands and millions lost in the end. A community can “Trip over dollars picking up dimes!”
- 9) Every career requires its own skill sets, training, and years of experience to become skillful at it. This fact is true of all occupations – waiters, chefs, bakers, plumbers, teachers, fundraising consultants, architects, construction managers, accountants, lawyers, doctors, etc. These days, attempting these things ourselves can produce colossal failures. You will raise much more money and save yourself headaches, embarrassment, and failure by hiring an experienced capital campaign consultant.

**Feasibility study or capital campaign questions? Contact Mark Filips and VisionWorks today at 402.999.2970 or [markf@VisionWorksCo.com](mailto:markf@VisionWorksCo.com) for expert advice you need!**