



Strategic Planning • Annual Giving • Capital Campaigns

Studies: Assessing Support and Planting Major Gift Ideas!

Dear Friend,

Churches, school, and organizations only have one time to get their studies and capital campaigns right! There are no do-overs.

Every year I receive calls from organizations whose capital campaigns have failed. One church called to say they didn't do a feasibility study (mistake), launched a \$5 million campaign on their own (another mistake) to renovate their church and campus, and now found their \$5 million campaign turning into a \$1.6 million campaign.

After some questioning, I discovered their major donors (and membership) did not like the proposed, modern church renovations. The major donors were balking. A study would have discovered this, and adjustments could have been made. Instead, their campaign failed.

From time to time every organization must consider a capital campaign. **And to lay the groundwork for a successful capital campaign, they SHOULD consider a feasibility or planning or preparatory study (“study”).** If you don't like the name “feasibility study,” then think “planning study” or “preparatory study.” The name isn't important; the results are! Studies are essential AND serve multiple purposes!

A study is a process of interviews (30 to 50) with large donor prospects and some focus groups with general members. Their feedback will mean failure or success for an organization. You can even say that a successful capital campaign begins with a study! Even if an organization is certain it is going to conduct a capital campaign, it is important to gather as much information as possible to design as successful a campaign as possible.

A study gives information and plants the seeds for needed, large-scale gifts. Without this information, an organization is flying blind and doing a lot of guessing. A study lays out what issues to address, how to craft the message, who the major donors will be and what their issues will be, what the ideal process will be, what teams will be necessary, etc.

A Study will help you:

1. **Strengthen relationships** with major donors
2. Surface additional **major donor prospects**
3. **Increase the size of individual major gifts – individually and as a group**
4. **Assess the opinions** of the case or plan
5. Provide information to **set realistic yet aggressive financial goal (s)**
6. Raise the **financial giving sights of the whole organization**
7. Surface the names of **campaign Steering Committee members**
8. Discover good dates and bad dates to **create an optimal campaign calendar**
9. Create **excitement and momentum**
10. Instill **greater confidence** in the organization's leaders

One huge benefit of a study is that the consultant gets to pre-inform the major donors. Major donors like to be informed. With these contacts and information, \$100,000 initial gifts can turn into \$500,000 gifts and \$1,000,000 gifts can turn into \$2,000,000 gifts! But this happens only because of information and time!

A study takes six to eight weeks, and the study phases are:

**Preparation (3 to 4 weeks) -> Interviews & Focus Groups (1) ->
Analysis (1 to 2) -> Presentation of Report (1)**

If knowledge is power (and success), then a studies are the beginnings of successful capital campaigns!

If you have found “Feasibility Studies: Assessing Support and Planting Major Gift Ideas!” helpful, then contact Mark Filips and VisionWorks at 402.999.2970 or markf@VisionWorksCo.com. Let us put our expertise to