

ASSESSING CAMPAIGN READINESS

An organization will want to objectively assess whether it is ready to take on a capital campaign, which is a complex, intensive, demanding exercise that requires a relentless focus on detail and quality of leadership throughout. The following “Test for Readiness for a Capital Campaign” (adapted from *Hank Rosso’s Achieving Excellence in Fund Raising, published by Jossey-Bass 2003, pp. 137-138*) offers the organization an opportunity to assess your readiness based on the findings of your pre-campaign study and your score on the following test.

1. Institutional plans (score 0-5)

- Do you have a three year plan that has been prepared by senior staff in collaboration with the board, and approved by the board?
- Does the plan identify capital as well as current support needs for the planning period?
- Have staff and board members committed themselves to meet the financial needs through fund raising?

2. Case (score 0-5)

- Does a written statement of the case exist?
- Does it identify the mission as an expression of the organization’s values?
- Does the case for support fill a justifiable and urgent, valid need and generate excitement?
- Can it be dramatized in such way that it tugs at both the heart and the purse strings?
- Has it been tested in such a way that there is some substantiation?

3. Constituency (score 0-5)

- Has the organization identified its constituencies beyond those who are closely involved with its programs?
- Has it analyzed constituencies for fund raising purposes by asking who the potential contributors might be?
- Has a strategic cultivation program been devised to involve the constituencies?

4. Market involvement (score 0-5)

- Do staff and board know the make-up of the market?
- Are they knowledgeable about market needs, interests, and inclinations?
- Does the organization have a history of interacting with its market and its various segments?
- Is fund raising structured so that it appeals to the specific interests and needs of different market segments?

5. Gift support history (score 0-5)

- Has the fund raising program historically sought gifts for current program support, special gifts, capital and endowment?

- Has the organization successfully raised its objective in its annual support campaign in the past two years?
- Has this gift experience been catalogued in a way that enables staff members to analyze the potential for a capital campaign?
- Has the fund raising program been active in its approach to larger donors: individuals, corporations, foundations, and others?
- Does the fund raising staff spend time periodically evaluating the potential of its donor base?

6. Prospect development plan (score 0-5)

- Is an active prospect development plan in place?
- Does this plan include the presence of a prospect development committee?
- Do staff members and volunteers devote time periodically to discuss large gift prospects?
- Has this prospect research information been recorded in a manner that will make it available to staff members and volunteers for use in their fund raising assignments?

7. Record keeping (score 0-5)

- Is a proper record-keeping system in place for contributions?
- Does it provide for responsible storage and retrieval of confidential information?
- Are gift-receiving, gift-recording, gift-acknowledging and gift-reporting policies and procedures in place?
- Will these procedures permit the appropriate acknowledgement of campaign gifts in a timely manner?

8. Communication program (score 0-5)

- Is the communication program a two-way system of providing information and receiving feedback from your constituencies?
- Is the feedback heeded when a new communication program is designed and the materials are prepared?
- Have you optimized your website in terms of creating opportunities for dialogue with your constituencies?

9. Fund raising staff (score 0-10)

- Is competent, qualified staff available to plan and direct the campaign and to provide the level of support that volunteer leadership will require?
- Is this staff able and in a position to devote sufficient energy and time to this effort?
- Will the rest of the staff, management, program and support staff give their full support to the fund raising team during the period of the campaign?

10. Involved governing board (score 0-15)

- Have the members of the governing board embraced their role as primary stewards of the organization?
- Have board meetings been well attended during the past two years?
- Have board members been active in planning, approving, and clarifying policy; supervising management of resources; and generating resources through fund raising?

- Has the board been responsibly involved in the planning process for the capital program?
- Are members willing to give annually to the organization according to their abilities and to ask or refer others?
- Has the organization operated within a balanced budget for the past two years?

11. Potential large gifts (0-15)

Large gifts are the top 10-20 gifts that are required to produce 40-60% of the campaign goal. The top gift ideally should be 20% of the goal, and the next two gifts each should equal about 5-10% of the goal.

- Have **valid** prospects for these gifts been identified?
- Have you identified and been cultivating the 200 sources that are most likely to provide the other largest gifts for your campaign (80-90% of your goal)?

12. Fund raising leadership (score 0-20)

- Does the organization have as part of its actively involved constituency a quality of volunteer leadership that will give the energy, enthusiasm and drive that is necessary to press the campaign on to success?
- Will this leadership be willing to give and ask at the level required, and will it commit itself to do so?
- Will the number of volunteers needed to support campaign leadership be available to the organization?
- Has the CEO or ED been on the staff for at least two years?

Scoring the test

The maximum score is 100. A score of 75-100 indicates a reasonable chance for success. A score of 50-75 means there are problems that may have to be addressed before any decision can be made to move forward with a campaign. A score below 50 serves as a warning that the organization is not ready and that there may be problems that will have to be addressed before a campaign is begun.

Note that the last four items total 60 points. If there is a serious readiness weakness in this area, plans for a campaign should be put on hold until these weaknesses can be corrected or eliminated.

It is also important to note that a general rule of thumb is that you will be able to raise ten to fifteen times the funds in a capital campaign that you have been raising annually. This must be factored into your decision-making.