

The Goettler Series
To Advance
The Business of Philanthropy

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“Ready! Set! Go!”

The Essentials
of Preparing for a Campaign

The Goettler Series

This article is one of a series on what we at Goettler Associates consider to be the essential elements of fund raising and institutional development today.

We have developed this series in response to interest expressed by our clients and our colleagues in the field.

One must, however, always exercise caution in writing an article as a guide or “how-to” piece. While the article addresses general principles, each philanthropic institution finds itself in different circumstances.

We like to think that one of the qualities that distinguishes Goettler Associates in the fund-raising field is our recognition of this fact: that each institution, each campaign, each situation is different, and that each requires the experience and skills of a team of professionals to listen, learn, analyze and interpret — and then to organize and carry out the strategy appropriate to the specific circumstances.

On the other hand, we also recognize the need to increase awareness of the time-tested principles of successful fund raising and to advance the “state of the art,” so to speak. We intend this series to be an important contribution in this respect.

This series may also help you understand how we think and how we approach fund development and advancing our philanthropic sector. We hope that it will provoke questions — and that you’ll call us for answers.

**Ready!
Set!
Go!**

*The Essentials
of Preparing
for a Campaign*

In a capital fund-raising campaign, success never “just happens.” Victory Specifically, the success of a campaign depends on the *right people* asking the *right prospects*, in the *right way*, for the *right amount of money* — for the *right reason* and at the *right time*. The principle may sound simple, but the execution is not.

Specifically, the success of a campaign depends on the carefully orchestrated interaction of several key elements — including leadership, timing and the case for support.

This is a complex and delicate process that calls for a strong plan of campaign, committed leadership, a hard-working volunteer corps, and competent campaign management.

Most campaigns are either won or lost long before the kickoff. The best way to ensure success is to be as prepared as possible. By the time the campaign is

announced publicly, it should already be moving and gathering momentum.

At Goettler Associates, we often say, “It’s what you do up front that counts.” A state of pre-campaign readiness is essential to success.

But how do you know *when* you’re ready to launch your campaign?

To help you answer this question — and prepare for a successful effort — we have developed the following guidelines. It is our experience that completing these steps before launching a campaign will greatly improve your prospects of success.

Talk over your earliest plans with professional fund-raising counsel.

A firm that specializes in pre-campaign counseling can provide you with an objective assessment of your plans as they unfold. Later, the firm can be retained to manage a capital development program based on firsthand knowledge of your specific circumstances.

Most campaigns are either won or lost long before the kickoff. By the time the campaign is announced, it should already be gathering momentum.

Expect professionals to *listen* to what is different about your situation, and to develop plans, strategies and tactics that respond to what is learned.

Rather than attempting to forecast the future, the strategic planning process enables you to design a desirable future.

□ Select and enlist members for ad hoc committees to assist with the planning process.

One committee, for example, is assembled to examine your organization's mission and goals. Another group helps to organize a data base on prospective donors and leadership, while a third works on the budget.

These committees should represent all significant constituencies of your organization — including staff, trustees, friends and the community at large. These committees will meet frequently over a short period of time.

Exercise judgment to make sure that the *right* people are enlisted for the *right* committees.

While these groups need to be large enough to connect the organization with all its major donor publics, they should not be so large that they become unwieldy.

Through the participation of the members, you will gain a better understanding of both the external realities and, in all likelihood, the individual members' commitments to your program.

□ Implement a strategic planning process.

The best way to determine your fund-raising objectives, and to set directions for a more vital and useful future, is to use the *strategic planning* process. Through this process, you arrive at a series of steps to be taken, over a period of *five years or more*, that will enable your organization to become more effective in fulfilling its mission — to provide greater benefits to your constituents.

Rather than attempting to *forecast* the future (as in traditional long-range planning), the strategic planning process enables you to *design* a desirable future — and *invent* ways to bring it about.

Strategic planning is an *entrepreneurial* process — in that you are encouraged to reach decisions which (1) respond aggressively and intelligently to opportunities, and (2) shed unproductive areas. It is also a *participatory* process involving key staff members and trust-

ees of the organization in the tasks they perform best. Because these individuals are involved in creating the plans, they will commit themselves to *making the plans happen*.

The Strategic Planning Model

- *Articulate your mission and goals.* Define what your organization hopes to accomplish, in terms of benefits provided to your constituencies. The plans must be compatible with your organization's character and supportive of its mission.

Take into consideration the history and accomplishments of your organization; its current position among peer organizations; and your expectations and vision for its future.

- *Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses.* Take stock of the achievements and capabilities of key staff and board members. Examine the other resources available to your organization, including facilities, endowments and operating revenues. Evaluate the record of achieved results and the real strengths you will be counting on. Finally, decide which programs to abandon and which to supply with resources.

- *Evaluate you opportunities.* Here, you accumulate essential background information against which to consider risks and rewards.

Identify opportunities for growth and advancement by examining the external environment for emerging needs and trends; changes in the size and nature of your organization's markets; and competitive factors.

Investigate several alternative courses of action and choose the one that is most desirable, feasible, and cost-effective.

- *Choose the best scenario.* With this step, you begin to move from where you are, and what appears to lie ahead, to *what might be done about it*. First, several alternative courses of action, or "scenarios," are proposed. Each one will include priorities, costs, a time line and standards to evaluate the results. You may need to seek specialized assistance from architects or planners.

Next, investigate the feasibility and desirability of the alternatives — based on their expected effectiveness in fulfilling your organization's mission and achieving its goals.

The best alternative is selected on the basis of your judgment that is the most desirable, feasible and cost-effective way to proceed.

- *Develop a five- to ten-year financial plan.* Refine the assumptions underlying your revenue projections and prepare a multi-year resource allocation plan — which will provide the basis for setting the long- and short-term objectives of your campaign. This should be a thorough and realistic examination, prepared with the aid of your financial advisors.

Determine the anticipated income from all existing and potential sources, as well as current expenses and those projected for new operations.

Allow for inflation, and for the addition or reduction of activities in accordance with your plan. Include sufficient reserves to prepare for and conduct a capital campaign (i.e., increased budgets for development and public relations) — whether or not you plan to retain counsel. And consider cash flow requirements, including construction loan costs.

- *Validate the financial plan.* At this point, most organizations conduct a fund-raising *campaign planning study* — a series of personal and confidential interviews with the most important members of your donor constituency.

A study tests the community's perceptions and attitudes toward the organization and its readiness for a campaign. With respect to the strategic planning process, the study validates the assumptions and projections for contributed income contained in the financial plan.

People who are informed about your plans and given a chance to discuss them will be more likely to support your campaign.

Among other things, a study will provide you with considerable information about your organization's "image" — as perceived by your donor constituency, by your community and, in some cases, from a national point of view. The study will give your constituents a voice in the planning process and provide evidence of their participation.

Use the study to assess available resources and leadership for the campaign; to determine the most effective strategy and timing for the effort; and to establish a communications link between your organization and its soon-to-be donor public.

The Leadership Awareness Program

Either before or after a study, you may wish to consider implementing a *leadership awareness* (or “cultivation”) program. This kind of program — organized around a series of carefully planned small-group meetings — will enable you to share your plans informally with community leaders and top prospects; encourage discussion and feedback; and increase their involvement with your organization and its plans. No solicitation is conducted; only ideas and opinions are sought.

The principle is that “friend raising,” or the building of relationships, comes before fund raising. People who are informed about your plans — and given an opportunity to discuss, and even influence, those plans — will be more likely to support your development program.

A sense of involvement and “ownership” leads naturally to volunteer advocacy and financial commitment.

When a leadership awareness program is conducted *before* a campaign planning study,

those who will be interviewed in the study are included in the awareness program. In this way, their responses to the questions posed in the study interviews will be better informed — and the results of the study are likely to be more positive.

Often, a leadership awareness program is conducted *after* the planning study, but *before* beginning the campaign. Typically, issues to be addressed and audiences to be reached are identified through the study. The awareness program is used to address these issues; build enthusiasm for the coming campaign; and identify prospective volunteer leadership.

In either, case volunteers are enlisted to host the meetings and trained to make the presentations. Hosts, presenters and guests are carefully selected and matched on the basis of affluence, influence and peer-group affinity. The reactions, concerns and suggestions of those in attendance are carefully recorded and analyzed.

In effect, by sharing information on your development plans on a selective basis, you enable the participants to become “insiders.” By encouraging their input, you provide them with a sense of authentic involvement. This *sense of ownership* leads naturally to volunteer advocacy and financial commitment.

At the same time, by providing community leaders with a forum to air their questions and concerns, you can expect to learn a lot about how your organization is perceived by leadership — and how its programs and its image might be improved. Through this process, you create a productive *dialogue* between your organization and its prospective donor constituency. And you position your organization as one that *listens and responds* to its donor marketplace.

Mobilizing for the Campaign

When the potential to conduct a successful campaign has been confirmed through a campaign planning study, your next step is to develop a *master campaign plan*. This document will translate the basic principles of campaigning and the specific circumstances of your organization into strategies, policies, procedures and an action plan.

The campaign manager writes the plan with time-tested precepts in mind. For example, the campaign must be organized so that it can be effectively managed, and so that a sense of urgency can be maintained throughout.

The plan of campaign should include an organizational chart; a table of standards (indicating the number and levels of gifts required to attain the goal); a timetable; operating procedures; and written job descriptions for all volunteer leadership positions.

By sharing the plan of campaign with the board and key staff members, you can make sure that all of you are moving forward together. Hopefully, key staff members and trustees will be so closely involved in the planning process that they will feel responsible for its success.

To develop an effective case for support, translate the institution's "needs" into donor benefits. Write from the prospect's viewpoint.

The plan must take into account the capacity and willingness of the current staff to organize, motivate and execute. First, the staff must be willing to accept increased responsibilities. Second, they must have the training and competency to follow through.

To set the stage for the successful solicitation, staff, trustees and counsel must work together to complete these essential tasks:

□ Develop a list of prime prospects, based on research and evaluation.

Prospect research, although it can be tedious and time-consuming, should continue through-

out the planning stages and the campaign itself. Like legal research, this process lacks glamour — but if you want to win your campaign, there's no getting around it.

- *Use a stratified and sequential approach.* Focus your research initially on prospects for the largest gifts, then expand to the next level of support.

- *Study previous fund-raising efforts.* To prepare for a new capital development program, an organization must evaluate its experience with earlier projects. It is useful to construct giving histories. Analyze a specific donor's response to your and other previous capital campaigns and annual giving programs. From a composite history of individual donors, you can draw a statistical profile.

- *Review these elements:* the success of the direct-mail fund-raising program; the number of solicitors in the last campaign and their effectiveness; and the donor response at various levels of support. Also determine how many solicitation calls were required to complete the campaign. If this will be your first major campaign, draw on the experience of your peers.

Establish a prospect review committee. This anonymous task force is charged with the responsibility of determining a reasonable level of support, or "asking figure," for each pros-

pect in light of the campaign goal.

Base this evaluation on the personal knowledge and judgment of committee members. Look for possible linkage between each prospect and your organization.

Use this process to involve key people in the campaign, recognizing that participation breeds support. These people will also be able to suggest prospects who may have been overlooked. This kind of advice is invaluable, especially if it is reinforced by professional counsel's focus on "keeping the sights high."

Develop a campaign marketing plan.

Use the data collected in the strategic planning process and the study to develop your marketing strategy. This management tool should *position* your campaign, in the minds of your key donors and volunteers, in relation to other enterprises that compete for their time and dollars. The plan includes a checklist of marketing tools (brochures, audiovisual presentations, etc.)

Build the case.

Your case for support, based on the strategic plan and marketing plan, is the single most important element in marketing the campaign. It will provide the basis for all printed materials, proposals and audiovisuals.

To develop an effective case for support, the organization's "needs" are translated into benefits to the donor. The case is written from the viewpoint of the *prospect*, and responds to the prospect's interests, concerns and aspirations.

- *Make a persuasive and compelling argument for the programs that will be advanced by the campaign.* The case is like a prospectus for an attractive investment opportunity; it articulates the accomplishments of the organization, its potential and a vision for its future.

- *Ensure that your case is written as a strategic fund-raising tool* — not as a self-serving description of the organization.

□ Identify and evaluate potential campaign leadership.

Success will depend on objectivity and judgment in the selection of leadership. The two most significant criteria are influence and affluence. Other factors include interest, enthusiasm, availability of time, access to prospects and willingness to accept an active role in the campaign.

Target those leaders who can be effective in two dimensions: within each of the various segments of the organization's total constitu-

ency; and at each of the various levels of financial capability.

Guide the selection of leadership by using written criteria — recognizing that most top volunteers will be tried and true leaders.

□ Plan the organization of volunteers.

Once the top echelon of leadership has been enlisted, volunteers are recruited in numbers that relate to the scope of the campaign (as well as the number of volunteers available).

Select volunteers from among those who were considered for leadership positions — but who were not asked or were not able to take on these positions. Others will include the "fresh faces" who have not been tested in a campaign situation.

An investment in pre-campaign preparation pays big dividends. It enables you to establish a firm, but flexible strategy for the campaign; involve campaign leadership in the earliest stages of planning; and determine realistic and achievable goals. And once the campaign is announced, the planning and preparation you have done will make it possible to create and sustain a sense of urgency and momentum.

“Make It Happen”

It takes a significant amount of research, energy and direction to determine what constitutes the *right* people, asking the *right* prospects, in the *right* way, for the *right* amount of money, for the *right* reason, at the *right* time.

For this reason, most organizations retain professional fund-raising counsel.

Very often, we at Goettler Associates are called upon to assist in the planning and execution of these tasks. It may be a good idea to talk with us in the early, thinking stages — when the seeds of success are planted. It is not unusual for organizations to begin talking with us as long as two years before starting the campaign “get-ready” process.

People say I’m known for the expression, “Make it happen.” You can, indeed, make *your* campaign happen — in the most successful way — if you:

READY

yourself by completing the preceding steps.

SET

in motion the series of steps on which success will be built.

GO

with a tested fund-raising firm. Naturally, we hope it will be Goettler Associates.

About the Firm

Goettler Associates was founded by Ralph H. Goettler in 1965 to serve the nation's nonprofit organizations. The firm brought together a group of highly qualified professionals to serve the total funding and marketing requirements of clients' major fund-raising initiatives. Since 1965, we have helped more than 1,500 nonprofit entities raise over \$1 billion to fund capital projects, build endowment, or facilitate special projects.

Services

Goettler Associates is a full-service, client-oriented firm. We tailor a program to the special circumstances of each client. This often requires a combination of several essential elements, including capital, annual, and deferred giving; and marketing and public relations. We take pride in the quality of counsel that we can provide in all of these areas.

We have helped our clients conduct successful capital campaigns, increase annual operating support, establish planned giving programs, and strengthen their endowments through our services:

Studies and Assessments

- › Campaign Planning Studies
- › Development Assessments
- › Strategic Planning

Donor Cultivation and Campaign Positioning

- › Leadership Awareness Programs
- › Case for Support Development
- › Campaign Identity and Marketing
- › Writing, Print Design, and Video Production

Development Support

- › Prospect Research
- › Endowment Management
- › Executive Search

Campaign Management

- › Resident Campaign Direction
- › Periodic Campaign Consulting
- › Consultation on Annual and Deferred Giving Programs

The Team

The Goettler Associates team of fund-raising professionals draws upon a wealth of experience and is supported by extensive human and information resources. Our consultants average more than fifteen years of experience in institutional advancement.

Building on Trust

Our Mission is to assist nonprofit organizations in achieving challenging fund-raising goals by:

- › strengthening the client's image and awareness;
- › recruiting, training, and motivating volunteers; and
- › attracting significant philanthropic support.

We guide our clients toward their financial goals through:

- › the integrity and high performance standards of our employees;
- › effective and honest relationships; and
- › the quality of our work in achieving success.

Let's Talk About Your Situation

Fund-raising campaigns have been won without implementing all the principles and strategies discussed in this article. Often, in the course of planning and executing a particular campaign, we find that the best way to achieve success is to “invent” new tools and approaches to replace the standard ones. We at Goettler Associates strive to apply the principles of fund raising in a flexible way that is appropriate to the needs and circumstances of each individual client.

There are certain constants, however. Our experience shows that the campaign which is properly conceived, planned, and executed—with the assistance of professional counsel—is the campaign which invariably enjoys success.

We'd enjoy talking with you informally about these ideas. Or, better yet, we'd like to learn about *your* situation and discuss with you how we can apply our experience and talents to further your success. We would welcome the opportunity—without cost or obligation—to learn more about the current status of your advancement program. This includes your development objectives, the challenges you face, and the resources you have for achieving your goals.

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