

## Capital Campaigns: Studying what is feasible.

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Preparing for your capital campaign begins with a feasibility study, six to twelve months before you host your first campaign meeting of volunteers.

A feasibility study is a specialized process in which analysis is conducted on your church's ability, capacity and capabilities to successfully operate a capital campaign. Feasibility studies before a campaign, result in better decisions in the construction and launch of your campaign. Studies show a 92 percent success rate for campaigns preceded by feasibility/planning studies. A study is traditionally facilitated by a consulting group. Through experience with other studies, as well as by providing third party anonymity to study participants, more accurate data is collected and assessed when a feasibility study is led by a consulting firm. Results of the feasibility study are developed and presented in a report that outlines not only your church's internal ability to operate a campaign (human resources, data collection tools, organizational capability to devote time and money to a campaign), but also to the external capacity for campaign success.

### How is a Campaign's Financial Goal Set?

The financial goal of your campaign cannot be determined without a study. Your campaign goal is not how much you need, but by how much you can predictably be expected to raise. Taking a measurement of past giving history, donor statistics, environmental issues impacting your efforts, as well as time and human resources available, your feasibility study consultant will project a range in which you can rely on campaign funding, if all activities are implemented as directed. This range is a more realistic and reliable goal than using the cost of your project as a campaign goal. In many cases the goal revealed through your feasibility study will be sent back to your project planning and/or finance committee for consideration, as it will affect the projects scope and funding plans. Without a study to determine how much can be raised, it would be folly to start out a campaign, attempting to fundraise to reach an artificial and unknown amount. Worse is to ignore the feasibility study determination and set an artificially increased goal. No church can benefit from falling short financially on a capital campaign, it does more harm than any of the good from the effort.

### Who Do You Ask?

Another outcome from your feasibility study is analysis of your current and potential donor base to the campaign. A well facilitated study will determine best prospects, range of gifts (as a gift chart) and the number of gifts required, and a categorized donor base for consideration. Imagine an infographic outlining who to ask, how much to ask for and when to make the ask. With this information, you can confidently move into planning and implementation with a visualization of how you can be successful.

### **Planning for your Campaign**

After your feasibility study is completed, your organization has to take the next step- planning for, launching and operating your campaign. Feasibility studies are time sensitive, because it deals with dynamic data. The data revealed and used for results in your feasibility study has an expiration date, like milk. Waiting too long after a feasibility study is completed for your campaign to begin, can be detrimental to your fundraising effort. Sometimes waiting too long to launch after a study is completed results in money being left on the table, because the information used has changed drastically for the better. It would be horrible to ask a donor for an amount that is too low, because the study was produced with information three years prior! Worse, and more common, is a campaign that is delayed well beyond the value of the study, resulting in missed goals due to donors leaving the church, other organizations in the community launching their own campaign, project costs increasing, etc. Ideally, study results are valid for about six to twelve months, but no longer. Be certain that your church is ready to move forward when the feasibility study is completed.

As with the feasibility study, the planning, launching and implementation of your capital campaign benefits tremendously by bringing in counsel. Don't try to save money in this area, as a good consulting firm will not only help you raise more money but save you money as well.

### **Develop your Volunteer Leaders**

Your feasibility study will have delivered a list of potential volunteers for your campaign effort. Include these individuals in your campaign committees as well as your board. Begin to inspire, organize and engage your volunteer campaign members immediately after your feasibility study ends, while the experience of being interviewed and the buzz of the study is still fresh in their minds. Preparing your committees and drafting your plan will be a four month project at least, given the busy schedules of volunteers and competing church priorities.

### **Pieces of the Plan**

Planning for your campaign requires attention to details in a broad area. Staffing is critical, and plans may need to be developed to increase staffing temporarily to assist with campaign or back office workloads. In addition, operational tools for managing the campaign will be essential- CRM software, Data management, material production, media and distribution lines for campaign materials. Financial forecasts should be developed in collaboration with finance, so everyone invested in the financial outcomes has a schedule of when the funds can be anticipated for use. Internal policies and procedures for campaign implementation are to be developed as guiding and aligning instruments. Crafting a campaign case statement that is inspiring, informative and catalytic is an early planning activity. Additionally, prospect development and solicitation briefs and strategies set the foundation for your cultivation's and asks. Good counsel will lead and facilitate all of this and more as you move toward your campaign launch date.



### Campaigns Added Benefits

Although campaigns require a significant investment of time and resources - expect to spend about 20% of your campaign goal on the planning and implementation of your campaign- the return in campaign funding, future funding, increased donor base, increased visibility and internal enthusiasm and engagement for your mission is invaluable and well worth the investment. A well organized and operated campaign can change your church for ever.

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If you are considering a campaign for your religious institution, Harvest Development Group, LLC can make your campaign more successful, starting with a study to determine if your campaign goal and effort are feasible.

Call or email us today for a conversation about your vision and ways we can help.

For more info please go to [www.harvestdevelopmentgrp.com](http://www.harvestdevelopmentgrp.com)

*About the Author: Sondra Lintelmann-Dellaripa has over 20 plus years of proficiency in leading successful fundraising efforts for nonprofit groups. Her executive level experience brings not only vision and strategy, but also implementation, benchmarking and project management. She has worked with a broad array of nonprofit groups including social service agencies, hospitals, colleges, churches, and membership organizations. She is President and Principal Consultant for Harvest Development Group, LLC. a full service consulting agency to successful nonprofits.*