

A Ministry Campaign from 5,000 Feet

By Paul Edwards and Mark Dillon

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?” [Luke 14:28]

A major fundraising campaign can be an exciting, galvanizing event in the life of a ministry. At certain moments, it becomes apparent to ministry leadership, through deliberation and prayer (“it seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us”) that God’s plan is for growth at an accelerated rate. His plan may include a building, or sustaining endowments or other substantial capital investments, in addition to growing support for the operational needs of the Ministry. When this happens, ministries that exist for Christ’s Kingdom and purposes turn to the thoughtful Christian stewards who love the mission and desire for God to use what He has entrusted to them for God’s purposes in that place.

This is not without precedent in scripture:

- Moses takes an offering to fund the tabernacle and complete its furnishings (Exodus 25)
- David raises a matching gift from Israel’s wealthy families to fund the Temple’s construction (1 Chron. 29:1-9)
- Josiah raises designated funds to rebuild the Temple (2 Kings 22)
- Ezra raises funds to rebuild the Temple and Nehemiah makes a major gift and raises funds from his secular boss to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:8 and Ezra 7:11-26)
- Paul takes up an offering to provide relief to the Jerusalem Church during an empire-wide famine (2 Cor. 8-9)

When a vision for God’s work in our time enters the hearts and minds of leadership and a campaign appears to be the preferred method for raising resources, it is important to consider the “cost” and how a campaign will change life and operations for the Board, the CEO, the Advancement Team and yes, the faculty and staff and financial partners of the Ministry.

While no two campaigns are identical, many share a similar process, go through similar phases, have common success elements and are subject to similar pitfalls. These elements of success (and pitfalls) are worth understanding and embracing early in the campaign planning process.

Elements of a Successful Campaign

Mission Alignment

Your Ministry exists for a purpose as described in your mission. If a campaign and its components do not advance that mission in a tangible way, it is probably not necessary nor will it be exceedingly successful. But, if the goals of the campaign demonstrably advance God's kingdom purposes in this world, financial partners will likely, if challenged, rise to the opportunity and fund the vision.

Compelling reason to move forward

Givers only support what they understand and embrace as part of their passion as thoughtful Christian stewards. So, if the priorities identified by leadership as important to your future are thoughtfully conceived and well-articulated as to rationale, cost, urgency and impact on the Ministry's future direction, many givers will support the vision and joyfully participate.

Reputation of trust and achievement

True givers behave like investors. They take their stewardship of resources seriously. Consequently, trust is important. They not only look at the project(s) at hand, they care deeply about your track record of stewardship of resources and your past progress toward mission.

Reputation is deeply important in the giving decision. Most thoughtful givers have accumulated wisely and spent prudently. If they sense the same from you, they are more likely to release resources toward your cause.

Unified Board

The Board sets the tone for the entire campaign. Boards are not mere approvers of a campaign. Any group of men and women can declare, "CEO and Advancement team, be warmed and filled, we approve you moving forward to fund our vision." Wise Boards assume the ultimate responsibility for a campaign's success. They demonstrate this by their personal and collective giving, but just as importantly, by their willingness to assume the mantle of responsibility for the success or failure of the campaign. Who can I bring to the table to hear the story? Who can I solicit financial support from? What is my responsibility for the success of this campaign? These are all necessary questions to be answered by every member of the governing board.

There is another crucial commitment by the Board. If the approved comprehensive campaign represents the highest priorities of the Ministry, then internal funding requests, except for extraordinary circumstances, need to wait until the current campaign is won. A comprehensive campaign needs to be a "harness" of focus and activity for the duration of the campaign. This needed discipline needs to be embraced by the campus community and managed by the governing Board.

Fully engaged CEO

Our firm conviction is that the CEO is the chief fundraising officer of the Ministry. Of course, the Advancement division must facilitate the CEO's role and supplement it with the activity that only they can produce. Nonetheless, the CEO bears the ultimate responsibility for the funding success of the Ministry.

Consequently, the CEO cannot be content to be the cheerleader or merely the vision-caster for the Ministry or the campaign. He must be integral to the narrative of the campaign and to solicitation of the gifts that can only be secured (in their fullest form) from financial partners who require the CEO's attention. The responsibility of the Advancement team is to fully prepare the CEO by identifying those that need his attention and to orchestrate the timing and content of the solicitation.

Wise and Competent Advancement Team

Seeking gifts for established priorities is hard work—very hard work. So, the Advancement team must possess a clear vision of the task at hand and a detailed plan (see below) of how to achieve the intended result.

A successful campaign requires much of the Advancement Team, including a clear understanding of the elements and rationale for the campaign components, identifying and carefully soliciting key commitments, and personal commitment to the goals. Business as usual or lukewarm commitment to the priorities will not do. The team must possess an "all hands-on deck" attitude, perseverance in working the plan and adaptability to changing circumstances. Teamwork in accomplishing the goals and frequent prayer for God's guidance and blessing will add joy and courage to accomplish the task at hand.

Qualified/Capable Givers

Successful campaigns require extraordinary gifts from those who love and care for the mission of the Ministry. Wealth is not distributed evenly, so it is to be expected that generous, even sacrificial gifts come in all sizes. While each is precious in the sight of God (and experience tells us that some "smaller" gifts are given with much more sacrifice than large ones), nonetheless, large commitments are essential to campaign success.

It is usually required that the top 30% of a campaign goal come from a handful of givers. The next 50% or so must come from as few as 100 families. All the rest of the giving community will likely make up the final 20% of the campaign total. It is also often the case that the leadership level gifts that launch and elevate a campaign are given not just out of income, but out of stored assets as well. That is why it is important that the campaign projects are compelling, and mission aligned.

It is imperative to know who those top 100 prospective givers are. What is their history of giving to the Ministry? What is the current state of their relationship to

the Ministry? Have they interacted with the campaign priorities and had opportunity to express both what they like and what they have questions about? Who is the best person to enter into conversation with them, leading to a specific invitation for a financial commitment?

Without the discipline of thoughtfully engaging (and in some cases, reengaging) people with the Ministry and its funding priorities, there is little hope of reaching the funding potential of a campaign.

Coordinated movement and direction

There is a rhythm to every successful campaign, and it requires attention to movement and direction.

Inside -> Out

Campaigns start with the Ministry community and expand outward to all its constituencies. The progressing is something like this:

- The Board
- The CEO and Cabinet
- Faculty
- Staff
- Current financial partners
- Prospective financial partners
- All alumni and friends

Up -> Down

This simply means highest needed gifts to the lowest. If a campaign requires multi-million-dollar gifts to succeed, it is with those who have capacity to give at that level that we much engage first. It is only in securing the needed large commitments that we can go with confidence and integrity to the whole Ministry family.

Quiet -> Public

One of the Ministry's greatest assets is its reputation of trust and achievement. Consequently, it is prudent to secure the key commitments that ensure at least 50% of the total goal before publicly declaring a firm goal. Quietly involving your closest and most capable financial partners enables the ministry to engage the broader public with confidence and integrity.

Knowledge -> Engagement

Understanding the priorities and the costs of a campaign is only a first step in securing generous gifts. Of course, the numbers need to add up and the goals need to be convincingly worth achieving. But giving is also an emotional decision. Does the project move me? Does the campaign align with God's call on my passions and

resources? What “heart considerations” are guiding the giver? If head and heart align, then a specific call to give (solicitation) will often be well received and result in a gift.

A detailed plan

Planning is always needed for fundraising success but is even more crucial for a successful multi-year campaign. Laying out a credible path to success is essential for CEO/board buy-in and for the morale and confidence of the Advancement team. Key elements include:

- Kind of campaign – many options are available: endowment, capital, comprehensive, inclusive, major gifts – all are categories of campaigns and have specialized requirements to be successful.
- Campaign time frame – a broad category for several very important questions: how long will the campaign last? Will there be a public phase? What are the decision/transition points? If the campaign is going well, will the duration be shortened, or the goal extended? If the campaign is going poorly, will the time frame be lengthened?
- Pledge period – over how many years may a campaign pledge be paid? At what point does a pledge become uncollectable?
- Gifts required – what is the level of funds received sufficient to go public? To declare victory?
- Theme – is there a theme? How is it expressed visually? Will it be protected by a service mark?
- Case for Support – who will write it? How does the case work in actual fundraising?
- Identified potential givers – how many are there and at what levels of giving?
- Staffing – how many staff and contractors are needed for the number of prospects? Will new revenue streams be started during the period of the campaign?
- Budget – what is the incremental spend for the campaign? How will this be paid for?
- Events – what kinds of events are desired? Kickoff, briefings, ending celebrations, rolling kickoffs, etc.?

Ministry-wide buy-in

A campaign that is perceived by the Board or the CEO or the Ministry community as an “Advancement thing” will never reach its full potential. The best campaigns are understood and embraced by the whole campus community: faculty, staff and clients.

Just as givers are not motivated to be involved unless they understand the components of the effort and the outcomes for the (whole) Ministry, so too faculty, staff and clients. This requires, of course, that, particularly, the CEO and key administrative leaders (Chief Financial Officer, Marketing, PR, Advancement, etc.) are champions for the campaign and keep the ministry community informed of progress and the end goal of the campaign

Not every priority can or should be part of any one campaign. But, if all can see their Ministry rising closer to its God-given mission, it is a Ministry-wide effort—and victory.

Communicate the campaign's vision, mission, strategy, and schedule so well and so often that all ministry staff and volunteers understand the "why, what, how and when" of the campaign. A successful campaign lifts all boats.

Adequate budget

The incremental increase in the fundraising goal represented by a comprehensive campaign must have financial and people resources to accomplish the task. What programs, collateral and people are needed to accomplish a successful outcome? As that figure is hammered out in consultation with Ministry leadership, a plan to ensure those resources throughout the campaign is essential.

A Guiding committee

Accountability for the progress of the campaign is essential. To whom does the CEO and Advancement leadership report progress, successes and even failures?

This might be a committee of the Board or an external committee (though including selected Board members) consisting of men and women of stature and insight. Their role is to encourage the Advancement team and keep them accountable to the campaign plan.

Shared success with all

While less than 100 families may well make the difference between ultimate success and failure of a comprehensive campaign, all members of the ministry family, who love and care for the mission and have demonstrated that with their giving, are a part of the success of the effort. In fact, some of the smaller gifts from faculty, staff and alumni will have surely been given with more sacrifice than some of the six-figure gifts.

Regular updates, special campaign benchmarks, stories from the front and other opportunities for praise and prayer should be available to all as the campaign unfolds. The goal: that everyone who gives during the campaign feels part of the success and takes joy in what everyone, together, has accomplished.

A Culture of Gratitude

Most giving is motivated by gratitude. Gratitude for God's abundant provision to the giver and their family. Gratitude for the imprint and godly direction that your ministry imparted. Wanting a better result for future generations of clients.

A campaign is the perfect setting to deepen a culture of gratitude among clients, faculty, staff and financial partners. Clients and faculty can participate in saying thank you to donors, large and small. Prayers of thanks by the ministry community

can focus attention on *God's* provision, albeit through His people. That culture of gratitude can impart joy in the classroom, at faculty meetings, at Board meetings and in worship settings. It can energize young alumni to give back and others to re-engage.

Win friends for a lifetime

A campaign is a battle, not the war. A campaign is not an end in itself. The infusion of capital from generous gifts is an anticipated outcome, but not the only one. A campaign is also a milestone event in the life of a Ministry that reaffirms the mission, deepens engagement and equips the Ministry for more effective service in the future. It places its givers, the Advancement team and the Ministry community on a higher plane of achievement that will serve the Ministry for many years to come.

Intended and Unintended Outcomes of a Successful Campaign

Intended Outcomes

1. Challenge the staff and board leadership to grow in their roles and deepen their faith. The ministry benefits in its next phase of growth by having staff that honed skills in planning, managing and executing other major initiatives. Board members benefit by seeing God work out the trials, provide through the lean months and show Himself able to sustain us in every circumstance.
2. Challenge some faithful friends again to help with a significant financial investment.
3. Revisit some lapsed financial supporters and confirm whether more is coming in the way of financial help, thus thinning the inactive donor file.
4. Welcome new supporters drawn into the ministry family by the vision behind the campaign, and thus enlarge the active donor file.
5. Build departmental teams and inter-organizational collaboration through a shared unique experience.
6. Achieve the goal and celebrate one of many milestones in the ministry's history as God demonstrates His continuing and probably miraculous provision for His work.

Unintended Outcomes

1. Mature the staff and systems that support the fundraising. The people and processes ancillary to direct fundraising include the administrative teams, finance, facilities, executive office, and personnel functions. These teams experience challenges to old-ways of working and a business-as-usual "velocity of work." The campaign draws these departments in and creates pressures to ramp-up their standards to meet the needs of the new initiative.
2. Opportunity to re-allocate resources even as the campaign brings in new funds. Because campaigns involve examining use of resources throughout the Ministry, there is opportunity to curtail outdated activities enabling even more progress toward agreed-upon objectives.
3. Teach a next generation of leaders about how God provides for His work, done His way, in His timing, for His glory. Tests abound for the next generation. They can expect to rise to challenges beyond their experiences to date, make

mistakes, experience personal failures, work with people of backgrounds that differ from their own, face temptations to take shortcuts, endure quick successes, recover from leadership mistakes, and work through heretofore-unseen character flaws in themselves and colleagues.

4. Model how Christian leaders manage both success and crisis. Both will invariably erupt during a campaign.
5. Stretch the PR and marketing functions, as they understand a campaign is more than unavoidable and embrace it as an opportunity to accelerate growth in people, creativity, new technology and new systems while sharpening the ministry's identity with its publics.
6. Deepen the ministry's capacity to prudently and confidentially steward sensitive data about individual, corporation and foundation prospects and donors.
7. Experience substantial growth in the quantity and depth of prayer surrounding all phases of the campaign.
8. Celebrate the departures by some familiar staff and volunteers. These individuals may see the campaign as the end of a chapter. Some do not see themselves as part of either the process or the organization about to emerge upon completion. Still others are recruited away to serve on other campaigns.
9. Prepare the ground for the next campaign.

These outcomes are part of the complete picture. Their careful consideration is part of "counting the cost." Awareness of these outcomes informs choices made by ministry leadership as the groundwork is laid for success.

Phases of a campaign

While no two campaigns are alike, successful campaigns typically proceed through five phases. Each phase has a goal and several objectives, and a list of associated activities. Each phase is either public -- i.e., activities and communications are visible to the larger ministry community other than ministry insiders and staff, or non-public -- i.e., activities and communications are mostly internal, behind the scenes or invisible except to those engaged in direct activity in that phase. Each phase has several associated pitfalls or tendencies to guard against.

Leadership must regularly evaluate progress. Failure to inspect what we expect allows deadlines to slip and focus to drift. Each phase has some room for a course correction based on new data or rework from a prior phase. However, the further forward a ministry proceeds to a public announcement the harder it becomes to change course. With greater laxity, the greater the likelihood that momentum will dissipate or disappear altogether.

1. Planning

In this first phase, volunteer and staff leadership pray through and evaluate their commitment to using a campaign to fund the vision. A campaign is a common method for achieving God's purposes, but it is not the only one. God will guide leaders to lay the right foundation for a successful experience. The phase is non-public. The phase goal is a detailed **fundraising campaign plan** and a draft of a **Case Statement**. The plan includes:

- lists of prospective donors and leaders.
- calendar for all phases.
- volunteer and development staff job descriptions for leaders.
- description of celebratory and commemorative opportunities.
- an internal education and external information strategy.
- a table of gifts needed.
- an operating or business plan for how the programmatic vision will be accomplished, year by year, objective by objective.
- the internal, enforceable agreements about direction, leadership and alignment, if one or more independent or quasi-independent entities are participating.

The ministry's leadership commissions a compelling Case Statement. The Case is a written "apologia" for the campaign – a logical and emotional rationale for funds currently for this vision. Writing the case takes time, many drafts and requires consensus-building among stakeholders. Its components are described later in this article.

Included in this phase is a careful internal evaluation of funding needs, a discussion of whether campaign counsel is needed, and an honest appraisal of the ministry's readiness for such a major undertaking. If the administration has reservations

about its internal preparedness for conducting a campaign, an independently administered **readiness assessment** can identify strengths and pinpoint weaknesses that must be fixed to minimally ensure adequate support for a successful campaign. A readiness assessment typically covers the following:

- develop a qualified list of probable and possible donors.
- identify seasoned volunteer leadership.
- evaluate the people, systems and process that support ongoing fundraising.
- evaluate the people, systems and processes that will support a campaign.
- outline the compelling message that communicates the urgency and importance of your mission.
- recruit or promote and train development leadership commensurate to the task.
- educate and enable the CEO and key senior leaders in their respective roles.
- evaluate the PR, marketing, gifts processing, planned giving and executive office functions and their respective capacities to serve a campaign.
- scan the few other local initiatives and comparable national organizations that may compete directly for funds or visibility.

The readiness assessment often recommends changes that can be made rapidly to prepare the ministry to consider a campaign. While the assessment may take several months, making the changes can take a year or longer.

An old saying characterizes this phase: "if you don't know where you are going there are many ways to get there."

The pitfalls to avoid in this phase:

- ✓ Failing to settle on a single, compelling vision – Campaigns that look like a pile of uncoordinated and disparate projects cannot be made to cohere into an effective agenda for fundraising. It is hard work to define and refine "the big idea" and make it the focus. A compelling vision clearly communicated is one of the key factors in a campaign's success.
- ✓ Analysis paralysis – the mistaken belief that more supporting data and analytical interpretation will yield a better campaign. There is a balancing point between data and analysis that supports leadership in its decision to take the next steps, and data that creates confusion, doubt or muddled thinking. Data about the need, the list of names, and the system's readiness to spend funds well, account for their use and support a campaign with reliable reports -- are critical to ultimate success. However, at this stage, data primarily serves leadership's task of deciding whether to proceed.
- ✓ Creeping elegance – adding more and more funding items to the growing campaign inventory for fundraising or constantly changing plans every time a leader comes up with a new idea. While the campaign should always be on the lookout for fresh ideas, campaigns fail when either too much is loaded on or focus is lost for the sake of one more opportunity.

- ✓ "We can't!" – inexperienced voices will tell leadership why a campaign cannot go forward. Experienced voices can be challenged to "show me how we can go forward." In this phase, believing is seeing and not the other way around.

2. Refining the vision

This second phase road tests the vision and our justification for a campaign with our external publics. It is data collection and feedback from "outside the camp" akin to Moses sending the twelve spies to survey the Promised Land. The central idea that drives a successful campaign is the vision for a "changed present or a preferred future." This vision must be detailed enough to grow confidence, complete in what it embraces, timely, emotionally moving, and within the realm of the possible, but requiring faith to be fully realized. Once articulated, it must be calibrated and, in some instances, refined by the feedback and comments of those who know us, have financially supported us in the past and may be our best advocates, intercessors and donors in the campaign.

The phase is non-public. It can last 3 months, and allows a ministry to objectively evaluate the following:

- the image, message, reputation, and how well we are regarded by those who know us well.
- which organizations are supported also by those who support us, and how we stand vis a vis them?
- if the vision articulated in the case for a campaign is viewed by leaders and current and potential donors as compelling, important and urgent.
- whether quality volunteer leaders are available and eager to help.
- how many prospective donors will answer our call to give?
- what is the potential giving level over several years for each prospective donor?
- whether proper staff and administrative resources are available to conduct a campaign AND keep the present operation running well.

The phase goal is a completed **feasibility study** conducted by an experienced and independent third party. The feasibility study tests the written Case Statement with an outside audience. If a readiness assessment was conducted and corrective actions have been taken, the feasibility study may also evaluate external perceptions about staffing, systems and the ability to achieve the goal. The study's results inform leadership in making decisions about the following:

- the amount to be raised and therefore publicly declared as the stated goal.
- the timing of a public announcement of the goal, the objectives and the amount already committed or pledged.
- necessary PR requirements before and during a public announcement.

- development staff capacity to follow-up on prospects initially interviewed in the study and then through the solicitation phase.
- senior leadership's ability to sustain momentum, keep the ministry running and keep the board engaged and focused.
- volunteer leadership's capacity and willingness to help.

A typical feasibility study combines feedback from personal interviews of current major donors with mailed or online survey feedback. Feasibility study interviewees include ministry leadership, constituents, current and previous donors, potential donors, board members, foundation leaders, and community leaders. Each interview lasts approximately sixty-ninety minutes. Interviewees review a working draft of the Case Statement, along with financial information and initial project plans in order to establish a general knowledge of the ministry's vision, history, commitment, and plans. It is not unusual for the Case Statement to undergo major re-writing after these interviews as donors bring fresh insights and additions to the document.

Wisdom in this phase comes from Proverbs 15:22 – “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”

Pitfalls to avoid in this phase:

- ✓ The right feedback versus lots of feedback – while a significant volume of feasibility study feedback is important, campaign success traces disproportionately to the giving of a smaller number of funders. Their feedback carries significant and sometimes disproportionate weight. Leadership must ask, “Have the right people been asked and what did they say?” At the same time, leadership evaluates all individual feedback against the whole to guard against being misled by a misinformed but powerful minority opinion.
- ✓ We all must be on the same page – a study will tell you who is not in alignment with the vision and the campaign as presently defined. Leadership must decide if the costs (in time and momentum) associated with seeking alignment with those that are not on board are worth paying. Many campaigns find that initial skeptics and detractors join a campaign later, once initial success has been demonstrated.
- ✓ Second-guessing – most feasibility studies conducted by experienced professionals have an eerie ability to turn out as predicted. Staff and leadership are encouraged to heed the advice of paid counsel and be skeptical about going in a direction that diverges substantially with the advice of counsel. Leadership must guard against beliefs in our ministry's “terminal uniqueness,” or our ability to defy norms, or our experience and feelings overriding study feedback and study findings. Failure to heed feedback only serves to delay or stop a campaign, usually at the cost of time, momentum, and volunteer leadership.

3. Organizing for results

This phase parallels the previous phase and involves the creation of tools to support fundraising. It also involves a commitment to the staff's training on both the content of the case and the "conduct of the campaign." The phase is non-public. The phase goal is to have the following deliverables in place by the next phase:

- Written and/or video case statement.
- Web pages that support the campaign.
- Campaign theme and graphic treatment.
- Leadership selection, training, and management.
- Public relations plan and media training for spokespeople.
- Development staff training on presenting funding objectives, using marketing tools and the calendar of deadlines and milestones.
- Prospects are prioritized in tiers and the top tier names are assigned a dollar target and likely date for solicitation.
- Pledge accounting, gift acceptance policies, complete records and central files.
- Pro-forma cash-flow projection for the first three years of fundraising.
- Realistic budget to support the first three years of fundraising.
- Completed research on up to 300 prospects.
- Briefings for staff and key volunteers that facilitate feedback to leadership.

The previous phase's study results provide names of suggested campaign leadership, what amounts need to be raised from various groups (nonprofit leadership, constituents, community, vendors, corporations, foundations and affiliates, etc.), the timing of a public announcement and the anticipated duration of the solicitation phase, and which components of the agenda have the greatest potential for funding. It is likely that a period of increased external PR and internal marketing are required as a precursor to the public launch of a campaign. Each campaign settles on its own leadership structure – single chair, co-chairs, chair and vice chair, etc.

Pitfalls to avoid in this phase:

- ✓ The wrong volunteers at the helm – It is better to have a few leaders and the right ones, than many who are not able to give time, treasure, advocacy, priority, prayer and personal contacts to the task. People give to vision through people. If the leadership looks like a poor fit for the task, new donors will doubt the team leading the effort and hesitate to give.
- ✓ Deciding not to decide – The temptation can be very strong to second-guess plans for a public announcement of a goal and expected duration of a campaign. The mistaken belief that more data from prospect interviews or surveys will help, only delays a decision, undermines momentum, and shakes the confidence of volunteers committed to leading the campaign.

- ✓ Weak PR – effective PR can rapidly accelerate the success of a campaign. The most effective PR spends little energy on the campaign as news and instead positions stories about the people and work of the ministry. Awareness will not happen easily, so this is work. Passivity or lack of focus only serves to undermine the campaign.
- ✓ Only along for the ride – If the ministry embarks on a campaign, then all departments participate. Parts of the ministry that choose to remain uninformed or believe they are exempted, only serve to undermine morale and retard progress.
- ✓ “What, me worry?” – Anxiety is God’s cue to pray. Pray opens more doors, resolves more conflicts and settles more issues than any other activity. The ministry that proceeds forward “on its knees” will take every trial and triumph to God in pray.

4. Soliciting gifts

This phase is the core of the campaign and focuses on the actual cultivation and solicitation of major gift prospects. Many campaigns split this phase into a **quiet** solicitation stage and a **public** solicitation stage, bisected by a **public announcement** of the goal and progress-to-goal so far.

During the quiet stage, leadership gifts are solicited in-person through face-to-face meetings. Prospects interviewed during the feasibility study are now contacted by development staff and given a report of the feasibility study findings. Campaign leadership makes visits with study interviewees, where they are invited to serve the campaign as volunteers or on an honorary committee. All are asked for a gift, a pledge or a memo of intention to give. Before anyone signs up as a campaign volunteer, each must make some type of financial commitment. Each prospect is asked for an amount, given a time-period in which to respond and is pursued graciously until a decision is made. Getting "no" is normal and requires the willingness and experience of leadership to work from "no" to "yes." Getting a decision is critical.

The quiet stage ought not last long. Some donors will hold back waiting to see the ministry take a public "step of faith." Others may need the stimulation of a public announcement to encourage them to think sacrificially. The duration of this stage depends primarily on how many names must be personally engaged to consider a gift PRIOR to a public announcement. That number of solicitations varies with each campaign, though conventional wisdom holds that an announcement ought not be made until between 30% and 40% of the announced goal is in hand in the form of cash, pledges or memos of intention to give. A recent CASE evaluation of 200 campaigns of over \$100 million reported the first 500 gifts received on average accounted for 72% of the revenue ultimately raised by the campaign. At this stage, a realistic cash-flow projection can be made for the expected duration of the campaign.

During this quiet stage, key leaders host regional small gatherings or "information receptions" at the homes of prominent people associated with the ministry. These gatherings introduce the plans for the campaign, provide a time for questions and answers and afford the develop staff present to meet prospect couples for contact and follow-up after the event. The PR plan is implemented.

Leadership chooses the timing, tone and dollar goal for a public announcement. A few factors weigh heavily in the timing:

- Are there enough qualified prospects to carry the campaign successfully through the public stage?
- Is there enough trained staff in place to carry the volume of public stage solicitations?
- Are there other campaigns poised to publicly launch that could compromise the success of the campaign?

- Has the senior staff and CEO prepared for an intense period of meetings and travel, affecting time in office and time for other non-campaign events?
- Has the ministry budgeted for an appropriate and well-supported launch?

The public stage begins with an announcement of the campaign's launch. Elements of a public announcement include:

- Formal event that declares the vision, the dollar goal and duration of the campaign, the amount pledged or in-hand so far, any large gifts of note, and the leadership in place.
- Celebration of the milestones completed in the areas of ministry and program.
- Service of prayer and dedication of the leaders to the task.
- Opportunity for the wider family to learn about the campaign, see results of the work done and hear how they can help.
- Unveiling of any memorial or physical remembrance about the task.
- Communicating a calendar of anticipated activities including the closing celebration, regional updates or celebrations, and coming milestone announcements.
- Prepared statements to the local and national press.

During the public stage, the web pages supporting the campaign are launched. A quarterly newsletter circulates to donors and volunteers. Proposals go to foundations and corporations. Contact is made with the next tiers of prospects. The public stage provides the opportunity for entities within the ministry to play a participating role commensurate to their staff and budget. Auxiliaries entities can host events, use their external communications to share the campaign, participate in staff training events that provide information and tools about the campaign, honor their staff and leaders, and join the main campus for celebratory events.

Typically, several years are needed to complete the solicitation phase while payments on pledges can take 3 years on average. Campaign leadership monitors quarterly the rate of names solicited, and progress made confirming gifts from specific prospects. The campaign goal can be "upped" if the anticipated average solicitation amount is ahead of predicted levels and more names that are qualified remain to be contacted. The campaign duration can be extended if progress is behind schedule and/or the average amount expect per prospect is 10% lower than anticipated. Public campaign progress reports ought to reflect progress on achieving the vision. Progress against the dollar goal is of secondary consideration. A campaign can be completed in as little as 6 months (in a local church campaign) or can take several years at a university, medical center or large ministry.

Two scriptures capture the spirit and passion of this phase. From Isaiah 64:4 "From of old who has seen a God like you – a God who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him." The other is James 4:2 – "Ye have not because ye ask not."

Pitfalls to avoid in this phase:

- ✓ Underestimating the need for internal PR – Regular communications provide the glue that keeps frontline and supporting departments informed and engaged with the campaign. Too little communication causes lapses in focus, especially as new staff have joined the ministry long after the initial wave of communications in phases 2 and 3 has passed. The vision and its various themes, the campaign to achieve that vision and its progress – need frequent, creative, fresh articulation.
- ✓ Overestimating the reach of external PR – Merely developing and placing stories in the right media is not enough. Finding out if our audience saw and read our stories and what our audiences think is an important calibration of PR. This audience feedback serves to tailor future efforts and leads to greater PR efficiency and effectiveness.
- ✓ Switching horses – avoid changes in key staff and volunteer leadership unless it's absolutely required. Leaders who launch a campaign are expected to remain through the closing celebration. Leadership departures undermine momentum and confidence in the vision.
- ✓ Losing focus – Leadership must sustain a laser-like focus on the campaign's progress-to-goal, funding progress by key objectives, and progression through the list of qualified prospects supports momentum and results. A campaign does not run itself and is very susceptible to stalling in progress-to-goal, drifting away from funding critical objectives, or running out to steam because too many prospects qualified to give substantial gifts are giving at levels well below their anticipated capacity.
- ✓ Avoiding failure – Leadership manages risks not to avoid failure but to improve the prospects for success. The solicitation phase of a campaign can suffer from a too conservative, risk-averse approach to raising money. Contemplating success and steering toward it are conscious choices made by leadership to keep the campaign on the bold edge of ideas and opportunities and thus on target to meet the goal.
- ✓ An "angel" is in the details – Attention to detail makes all the difference in sustaining momentum. Failing to pursue the details of every gift leads to dropped gifts, reneged pledges, and lost commitments. In a successful campaign, it is an angel in the details, not a devil.

5. Finishing well

This phase is about follow-up, follow through, and finishing well. This is a public phase. Significant staff energy is given to follow-up on pledges and memos of intent to convert gift commitments to payments. All prospects are encouraged to complete their commitments during this phase if they have not yet responded.

Local PR initiatives happen in this phase, as “the story” of the vision finds expression in local people and local participation.

Leadership gives time to follow-through on the details of the vision and how it is being delivered. Leadership has a responsibility for stewardship of results, for reporting back through personal visits, and for verifying that “the money is doing what we said it would do.” Leadership may also follow through on open or stalled gift negotiations, or on new project ideas that were not part of the original plan.

Finishing-well involves thanking givers, praising God, and fulfilling commitments as good stewards. The staff and leadership ought to help define the community’s celebration of the successful close of the campaign. Care should be given in defining the type of recognition of leadership’s role, and how to weave in praise to God for His provision through human stewards. Elements of a public closing celebration include:

- Formal event that declares fulfillment of the vision, and/or the dollar goal with a reporting of the amount pledged or in-hand so far, any large gifts of note.
- Celebration of the milestones completed in the areas of ministry and program.
- Service of prayer and thanksgiving led by those who are served by the vision.
- Opportunity for the wider family to celebrate what God has done, drawing on the broad artistic and cultural palette of the ministry.
- Unveiling of any memorial or physical remembrance about the vision.
- Expressing recognition to those who carried the burden.
- Prepared statements to the local and national press.

During the post-campaign stage, the web pages point to the emerging agenda and opportunities in the next chapter of the ministry’s life. The quarterly newsletter ends. Stewardship reports go to major donors, foundations and corporations. This phase provides the opportunity for entities within the ministry to bring forward their own funding agendas. Some may even launch their own campaign. A campaign history may be written and published.

My favorite saying in this phase – “End well and the first campaign need not be the last one.”

Pitfalls to avoid at this phase:

- ✓ “The slump won’t happen here.” – Most campaigns experience a fall-off in donations in the first year after the campaign concludes. This “slump” can last for more than a year and takes significant effort to recover the rates of income received during the mid-years of the public phase. Effective slump-countering measures include opening new geographic regions with a visible presence and new volunteers; developing a post-campaign project of significance and with sufficient distinction from the campaign agenda;

retraining of staff for raising ongoing operating support; refreshing leadership with a new team.

- ✓ "The supporters will always be here." – Donors and volunteers will move on mentally and emotionally unless asked to stay. Many donors view a campaign as an endpoint and must be encouraged to stay with the ministry into the next chapter. Never assume donors get this. Always make a conscious effort to inform and inspire donors to continue support beyond the end of a campaign.
- ✓ Cutting corners on recognition and celebration – The community needs opportunities to celebrate God's faithful provision and answers to our prayer. Donors and staff expect the ministry to expend some effort in tangible remembrances, so that faith grows. The ministry may dedicate a memorial as an encouragement to the next generation. Giving scant thought, creativity and budget to this activity sends a poor signal about leadership's view of the effort and sacrifices made to complete the task. God is the provider of seed for the sower. God deserves a rich bouquet of thanks for what He did in our midst, through these people.
- ✓ Being surprised at the unintended outcomes – This paper began with intended and unintended outcomes. Leaders need to expect the outcomes indicated on pages 3 and 4 and make provisions for them.

Final Thoughts

For all the reasons stated above, a campaign is not to be entered into lightly. It demands much of the entire Ministry community and the outcome is not a given (at least not if the goals are God-sized and if their attainment will change the future of the Ministry).

If planning and discernment of God's spirit points to a campaign, you can be confident that He will provide the resources to see to its completion. Crises are opportunities to invite God's activity and expect His plan to take over. We may make our plans, but it is the Lord that directs our path.