



Conducting a Major Gifts Campaign

by Stephanie Roth, adapted from “How to Raise \$50,000 in Six Weeks” by Kim Klein, published in the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*

Here’s a way to organize your individual donor fundraising using a time-limited campaign format that helps focus your efforts, build a team and raise more money! Following are nine steps for carrying out a fundraising campaign that can be used for small or large campaigns, and to raise just about any amount of money.

1. Set goals

How much money do you want (or need) to raise? In addition to a financial goal, how many gifts do you need to bring in and/or do you have a goal for getting current donors to renew? And what are you raising money FOR? Even if it’s for general support of your programs, you’ll want to make a case for why someone should consider making a gift to your organization at this time.

2. Find a 10-week timeframe to prepare for the campaign and then implement it.

You’ll need two-three weeks to get everything organized, six weeks to carry out the solicitations, and a week of wrap-up.

3. Create materials – Weeks 1-3

Most important is the letter or email that you’ll be sending to your donors & prospects. You’ll also want to write up a brief description of the campaign to send to the people you’re recruiting to participate in the campaign. (In addition to making a case for the fundraising campaign, you’ll want to tell the solicitors what you’re asking them to do.) Other helpful tools for the solicitor team are:

- a fact sheet (or FAQ) about your organization, since some of them will not be as familiar with the organization as you are,
- a brief set of “tips on asking for money” can be very helpful to volunteer solicitors,
- a gift range chart:

For example, to raise \$10,000, you might look for gifts at the following levels:

2 @ \$1,000 = \$2,000

4 @ \$500 = \$2,000

8 @ \$250 = \$2,000

15 @ \$100 = \$1,500

25 @ \$50 = \$1,250

50 @ \$25 = \$1,250

TOTAL = \$10,000

Total number of gifts needed: 104

Total number of prospects needed: ~208

Keep in mind that you’ll need to ask at least twice as many people as the number of gifts you’ll

(cont.)

ultimately receive. So for the gift range chart above, which totals 104 gifts ranging from \$25 to \$1,000, you would need to ask at least 208 people, because at least half of the people you ask will say no to your request.

4. Recruit a team of askers – Weeks 1-3

This is probably the single most important factor to a successful campaign – finding people who will participate in soliciting their contacts, as well as your organization’s current donors. In addition to board & staff members, consider asking volunteers, current donors, and people who have expressed an interest in your work.

5. Identify prospects – Week 3 or 4

In addition to your current donors, you’ll want to take some time to brainstorm new prospects. It’s most effective to do this together with your solicitor team, and you can review what makes someone a prospect to help them come up with more names. (ABC: Ability to make a gift of the size you’re requesting, Belief in the cause, Contact – you know the person, or they know your organization)

6. Launch the campaign – Week 4

Pick a date when the campaign officially starts, which should be the date you start to send letters (or personal emails) to your prospects. You can either send all of the letters out from the office, and ask the solicitors to make follow-up calls and emails to ask for face-to-face meetings, or have the solicitors send out their own letters. The latter is better for increasing the personal touch, but requires a pretty high level of commitment and trust that the team members will follow through. You can also generate the letters at your office and have the solicitors come in to write personal notes on ones to those they’ll be trying to meet with.

In addition, it can be very helpful to get your solicitors together for a “launch event” where you provide a brief overview of the campaign, brainstorm more prospects, give them some tips in how to ask for money, and thank them for their participation.

7. Follow up with the team of askers – Weeks 5-9

Once a week, send out emails updating everyone on how the campaign is going – how many asks have been completed, how many gifts have come in, and how much money has been raised. Give shout outs to those who are following through with their prospects, and let everyone know that their job is to ask, even if some of their prospects say no (and that will happen!). It’s also important to call your solicitor team every couple of weeks to offer support, ask how they’re doing and motivate them to keep going.

8. Hold a meeting with the team to keep momentum going – Week 7

Midway through the campaign, hold a check-in call (or in-person meeting) with the solicitor team to talk about how it’s going and pick up the momentum. If energy is lagging, ask people to share what’s going well and what their challenges are, with time to troubleshoot together.

9. Complete the campaign and evaluate – Week 10

Whether you reach your goal or not, take the time to acknowledge everyone’s efforts and let them know how much money was raised, how many people contributed, and how many people participated in the campaign. (Also make sure you thank all of the donors.) Then ask for feedback from everyone so you can improve upon the campaign next time. The more positive the experience, the more likely your team members will agree to do this again.