

Keys to a Successful Capital Fund Campaign

--- How do I know if it is the right time for a capital fund campaign? ---

With recent studies indicating that many churches in America are either in the midst of a capital fund campaign or considering one, what are the indicators that a church is ready and able to have a successful campaign?

Vision and Strategic Plan

Do you have a clear sense of God's vision for your church and a developed strategic plan for addressing that vision as it pertains to ministry and facilities? The vast majority of churches with a defined vision and strategic ministry plan find that a capital fund campaign helps their congregation focus on and own that vision and strategy.

Compelling Need

With an increasing amount of charitable giving in our culture being need-driven, specific needs addressed by a campaign are crucial. The vital urgency of these needs is the driver of a successful campaign. Although often the needs driving a campaign relate to building construction and mortgage reduction, increasingly churches are using campaigns to address ministry needs such as outreach ministry, the launching of new ministries, and missions. The sensing of an urgent, compelling need is a high motivator for people in our culture to give.

Commitment of the Pastoral Staff and Lay Leaders

With any venture, whether in the church or otherwise, success rises or falls on leadership. The church's staff and lay leaders must be committed to the capital fund campaign. If that commitment is not there, don't attempt a campaign.

No Major Success-Limiting Issues

There are certain conditions or issues that can hinder the success of a campaign, such as the absence or short tenure of a pastor, economic issues in the community, the prior giving history of the church, disunity within the church, the lack of vision, etc.

Willingness to Work With Professionals

Generally speaking, a church that chooses to run its own in-house capital fund campaign will raise 60% or less of what could have been raised had the church used a professional campaign consulting service such as Vision Ministries. What is saved by not paying a consultant fee is more than lost in unrealized pledges---which is to say, if conditions in the church are favorable for a campaign, then using a professional consulting service should more than pay for itself in increased pledges and giving.

Timing

Rushing into a campaign or dragging out the campaign for too long can hinder the results. We recommend that a church plan for a campaign at least six months in advance.

Willingness to Sacrifice

Successful campaigns happen because of sacrificial giving and living on the part of the congregation. Our goal in a campaign is not to just raise money but to raise people to a higher level of Christian stewardship. We have found through our campaigns with churches that people will give to God's work as they sense the need and are led by God's Spirit. No "strong arm" tactics are used. You cannot coerce people into sacrificial giving and living. That must come from the heart and out of love for God and His church.

Commitment to Effective Follow-Up

Just as important as the pledges made at the beginning of a campaign is the actual amount received throughout the length of the campaign. A capital fund campaign is considered "successful" if the church receives at least 90% of what was initially pledged. That takes effective follow-up. Too often we hear of churches where little if any ongoing contact was provided by the consulting service after the pledge phase was completed. At Vision Ministries we are committed to staying in a consulting role with you through the entirety of your campaign and to providing ongoing follow-up resources. The follow-through giving track record of churches using Vision Ministries has been very good.