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CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION PLANNING

Is your church interested in purchasing a new building or expanding an existing one to accommodate your members? Are you working to integrate an after-school program that would need staff and equipment funding to operate effectively? Large efforts like these require a **capital campaign**—fundraising and outreach focused on raising money for your church's specific need. A capital campaign also generally includes: a defined financial goal, a timeframe for achieving the goal, identified fundraising staff/volunteers, a focus on gathering large donations, and a plan to recognize major donors.

However, one of the most important aspects of a successful capital campaign is strategic communication. Strategic communication effectively shares your church's goals with targeted donors through clear, concise, compelling, and consistent messaging.

While capital campaign outreach may seem daunting, a strategic communication plan will break down the process into accomplishable tasks:

1) Set goals and objectives.

Pre-planning helps set up the groundwork for your *Capital Campaign Communication Plan*. In this phase, you will define your campaign objectives. For example, what do you want to raise money for? What is your "working goal" for fundraising? (Tip: Aim high—it is easier to lower your goal than to raise it.)

In this stage, nothing is set in stone. The idea is just to explore basic communication opportunities: Who are potential lead donors? What would they need to hear to get on board? What are gift levels your campaign can use as incentives to donate? Who within your church will have lead roles in organizing the campaign and getting out your message?

In pre-planning, you will also set your communication goals, and recognize your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to a successful campaign. With these laid out, begin to focus on your strengths and opportunities, and work to minimize threats and weaknesses.

2) Create a budget and calendar for communications.

While defining how much your church would like to raise is critical, it is also important to decide how much you can spend on communications. These costs should be included in your overall campaign goal. In addition to budgeting communication, the coordination process also includes setting a campaign communication calendar. It is recommended that during the campaign period, your church does no other type of fundraising outside the capital campaign to avoid any distractions from your main campaign goal. Your campaign calendar will be divided into four sections:

a) Quiet/Internal Phase: In this phase, you will be working with members closest to your church. Your objective will be to make clear to these key members what the capital campaign goals are and what your church hopes to accomplish with the money raised.

b) Announcement: This marks the start of the public phase of your capital campaign. (Tip: Don't release the announcement until a significant amount has been raised already from your internal and large supporters). The announcement is an update on the campaign's success-to-date.

c) Public/External Phase: In the public phase, your capital campaign is in full swing, and you should work on building public support and excitement toward your church's campaign goal.

d) Celebrate & Give Thanks: Your capital campaign can end in a final celebratory event of your fundraising achievement. This is also the time to thank all who supported the campaign.

3) Develop a case for support, with variations for key target audiences.

Begin your capital campaign with a written "case for support" to present why donors, volunteers, and staff should be on board with the project. A case for support includes other information, too, including: introducing your church and the challenge the capital campaign resolves, a brief history about your church and an overview of its programs and services, a careful assessment of the capital campaign need, a demonstration of the resources in place to make fundraising efforts work, and a call to action. The case for support can be modified into a campaign brochure and other written materials for a public audience as well.

When planning your messaging, think of your internal and external audiences and the best ways to send your message to each audience. When you've discussed who you're trying to reach, it is important to also decide how to best reach them. Perhaps your internal audience (church members) would be more responsive to a letter or e-newsletter with regular campaign updates, while your external audience (small business owners, partner churches, etc.) would be receptive to e-mails or social media posts. Regardless of the medium used for outreach, your message about your campaign should be simple, clear, and cohesive: What is the goal of your capital campaign and why is it important? Why should your audience care?

Help from a marketing group to design materials and keep a consistent "brand" across all messaging (web and stationery) is recommended.

4) Plan how the messaging will vary at different stages of the campaign.

Your campaign messaging, both internal and external, must be adapted for each target audience. One way to look at this is according to your campaign calendar phases:

a) Quiet/Internal Phase: Since this phase is dealing with key members closest to your church and organization, they are already familiar with your work. For this group, you can work on a targeted campaign newsletter (or e-newsletter) with updates. Even if these contacts are not on the campaign committee, it will make more members of your church feel involved and united in the capital campaign effort.

b) Announcement: Since this is the launch to the public phase of the capital campaign, your announcement should get the attention of a broader audience of supporters. Try a newsletter or personal phone calls to potential outside donors to keep them in the know about your growing campaign. Your announcement can also be accompanied by a campaign kick-off event with community leader participation.

c) Public/External Phase: This external phase is all about spreading the word about the campaign in your community—that means posting about it on your website and social media outlets and

sending out press releases. The public phase is also about building excitement for achieving your campaign goal. You can use milestones like “75% of goal reached” as ways to get publicity and keep attention on the campaign’s progress.

d) Celebrate & Give Thanks: When your capital campaign funding goal is achieved, it is time to celebrate and give thanks to those who made it possible. Celebrate with the community through a press release of your achievement. Remind donors of their pledges, and phone or mail thank yous to donors who have already contributed. By acknowledging your donors and keeping them in the loop of your accomplishment, a relationship for future successful collaboration remains intact.

Back to Basics

These are all big steps in strategic communication, and when they feel overwhelming, it is helpful to return to the basics of your plan:

1) **What** is your campaign goal? (How much are you hoping to raise and what for?)
2) **Who** will help you get there? (Who are your target audiences? Who are your target donors? Who will be the engine behind the campaign messaging?)
3) **Where** are your target audiences? (Are they responsive to campaign e-mails or do they prefer personal phone calls?)
4) **How** do you get their attention? (How do you strategically communicate with your target audiences? What messages and outreach tools will be most effective for each audience?)
5) **When** does your campaign start and finish? (What is your campaign calendar? When should your goal be reached?)
6) **Why** is it important that the campaign is successful? (Why does this all matter to your church and community? What will the *impact* be?)

At PhoneTree®, we’re in the business of helping people. We use our top-of-the-line messaging solutions to inspire your members to do more. With automated phone call, text messaging and email software, you can help motivate your congregation to act, while empowering them with information. With over 25 years in business, nobody understands better than PhoneTree the power of well-crafted church communication.

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