



Making Board Campaigns Successful

Many organizations use Board-driven gift clubs to initiate or expand a major gifts program. A Board-driven campaign emphasizes major gifts and/or multi-year pledges and may be paired with a matching or challenge grant as an added incentive to donors. Every organization determines for itself what constitutes a major gift. Grassroots organizations may consider \$1,000 a major gift. For large institutions, a major gift may start at \$5,000 or higher. Major gift programs are cost-effective because individuals tend to be loyal and lifelong donors contribute to the long-term sustainability of nonprofit organizations.

Gift clubs are successful for three reasons (1) they leverage personal connections (2) face-to-face requests are the most likely to yield positive results (3) By virtue of being Board-driven, the campaign enjoys support at the highest level of the organization and is prioritized. Not every organization is ready to launch this kind of campaign. Consider the following prerequisites:

- The organization has a coherent vision for the future and can articulate it
- There is trust and confidence in leadership and front line staff
- The organization has a track record of fiscal responsibility and solid management
- The organization has some donor base or is in contact with prospects for giving. A prospect is someone who has the means to make a gift and is interested in the organization.
- Board leadership-every Board member understands the need for and is willing to play a role in the campaign, including 100% Board giving.

Preparation is by far the most important step in executing a successful campaign. When a campaign is executed well, the Board will emerge as a stronger force for leadership and fundraising. When a campaign is poorly executed or the Board is ill prepared, fundraising is rarely successful. A skilled consultant who has experience working with leadership volunteers can walk the

Board members through each step of the campaign so the experience is positive for each individual and the organization.

Some important considerations...

- At least some of the Board must be willing to ask for gifts, but acknowledge that not every board member is a natural asker.
- Asking is only one part of fundraising. Every campaign also needs planners, strategists, connectors, and thankers; find a role for every Board member.
- Do not rush to ask, do your homework first. Most campaigns are 80% preparation; 10% asking and 10% follow up.
- Make sure the Board is well equipped with a coherent case for support, basic information about the organization, and donor cards or pledge forms. Practice with the people who will do the asking.
- Test the case first with your nearest and dearest. Use the constructive feedback to continuously improve the case for support.
- Conduct the campaign top-down and inside out. The Board must make their own gifts first and paid leadership must support the campaign.
- Use leadership gifts to leverage additional contributions or inspire current donors to step up.
- Keep the lines of communication with Board members open throughout the campaign. Listen to your Board if something is making them uncomfortable. The staff is responsible for supporting and facilitating Board members' success.

On Course provides campaign planning, preparation, training and coaching for Board-driven campaigns. First-time campaigns usually take about four to six months to plan, execute and evaluate. For a free one-hour consultation to assess if your organization is ready to launch a major gift campaign, contact jeri@oncourseforsuccess.com or (503) 704-3615