



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
FOR CHURCHES

If your church is considering a capital campaign, there's LOTS to plan and consider. With project costs and donor asks to wrestle with, it's too easy to set aside your campaign's communications strategy...or not have one at all.

We often see churches miss significant opportunities to communicate the spirit of their unique campaign project, the good it will do and the way it advances the kingdom simply because they haven't put the right plans in place. A well-communicated campaign not only raises more financial support, it grows excitement, advocacy and interest among your members and community.

In this article, we'll outline a roadmap for a simple but effective strategy for your capital campaign's communications.

We'll unpack how to develop a case statement, build your campaign's branding, what media platforms to consider and how to best get the message out to your members and supporters.

As you use your campaign planning months to develop your project scope, costs and assess your donor capacity, your communications planning can begin to take shape. Your campaign planning and silent phases offer you opportunities to glean the kind of information your general members will need and want to consider their own pledges of support.

Campaign communications planning begins with a clear message of your project's goals and ties to your mission. Your understanding of your audiences and their needs will guide your strategies. Set aside time throughout your planning and silent phases to sort through the information you'll need for future communications pieces.

TAKE THESE STEPS IN THE CAMPAIGN PLANNING AND SILENT PHASES:

- Keep careful notes as you identify how this project ties to your church's mission. What specifically will this project do for your church, its ministry and those you serve?
- Who are the audiences served by this project? How will they be affected?
- Who are the various target audiences for your campaign? What are their communication needs? How do they like and expect to receive information from your church or pastor?
- As you interview key stakeholders and potential donors, note what drives their passion for this particular project. Who in your member and prospect base has a great testimony about the ministry enhanced by this project? What are they saying about the future of this ministry and your church?
- Stay attuned for course corrections or information your members need about the project. If, for example, many members struggle understanding the phases or the financing of the project, make notes of what clarifications may be needed in your materials when you launch publicly.
- As you thank your lead donors for their commitments in the silent phase, ask what they would say to others who haven't yet pledged their support. What motivated them to be a donor and what do they think others need to hear?

PRE-CAMPAIGN LAUNCH CHECKLIST

Your campaign's case for support will be critical to informing your overall communications, and we'll dive into that and campaign branding later in this article. But in addition to branding and your case statement, these are other key components of a campaign communications pre-launch checklist:

1

COMMUNICATIONS INVENTORY

(Audiences, vehicles, and platforms)

This is an inventory of your existing platforms and communication vehicles. It may be that your annual marketing plans for your church already have these outlined. If not, use a grid or chart to map out your web, email, print, social media and onsite marketing venues and vehicles. You'll want to identify and list your key audiences alongside each of those platforms in the grid or plan, and that will drive your strategy to reach all of your segments at various points during the life of your campaign.

For example, for print communications, list each time you mail your members or a subset of your members and who's receiving that piece. This information will help you develop a campaign communications plan that lives with, leverages and supports your church's primary marketing and communications year-round.

2

CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS CALENDAR

Taking your inventory of vehicles and audiences and laying it out alongside or in a calendar will be important in ensuring your members continue to receive what they expect from your church and that the campaign communications are well-embedded in those pieces.

Sending your church's monthly e-newsletter with no mention of the campaign or any campaign update after the launch would send the wrong message – and misses a key opportunity to inspire and encourage donors. At the same time, sending a campaign email that has a very different look and feel from your normal communications within a day or so of your church's regular email also creates donor confusion and could lead to members seeing the campaign as a "special project" not embraced by the entire congregation. Planning your calendar intentionally – integrating with your ongoing communications – will avoid those optics and make the most of your tried and trusted existing media platforms your members expect.

3

PROJECT COLLATERAL

As you develop your costs and project plans, keep in mind that you will need and want visuals across multiple platforms in the life of your campaign. While we advise against investing in the cost of artist renderings too early in the life of your project (if it's construction or renovation of space, for example), you eventually will need plans and renderings for your donor meetings in the silent phase, for your case statement and for your campaign launch materials. Once the plans are solidified, ensure you have visuals from various angles, resolutions and dimensions that can be used onscreen, video, social media, web or print.

4

TESTIMONIALS

Don't wait until launch week to gather quotes and testimonials from those impacted by the project or those lead donors willing to share their passion. You'll want those for your case statement but also throughout the life of the campaign. Donors will be inspired to give when they see a wide range of advocates for the project sharing its impact. Consider your platforms like quick videos and social media as you identify and secure those willing to share their stories.

We hope that checklist will be helpful as you move through your campaign's planning phase. If you've followed the pre-launch checklist, you'll be ready to draft your case for support and embed its message throughout your communications.

THE CASE FOR SUPPORT

So what is a case for support? Campaign case documents can take many forms, but the most common is a brochure or printed piece. It's designed - visually and through its copy - to excite, inform and engage donors about the campaign project. Case documents for capital projects often include visuals or renderings of the envisioned project and/or photos.

A case for support typically contains the following components. The order may vary depending on the mission or project, but any case should address these areas:



THE PROBLEM

This section should introduce the challenge the campaign project will solve - why it's important and why now.



THE SOLUTION

This should introduce the campaign project and why it's the solution to the problem you outlined. This section is a good place to include a quote or two from those in the ministry or impacted by the ministry.



THE STRATEGY

Why is your church or ministry uniquely positioned to do this project (new building, new renovation, ministry expansion – whatever it is)? This is the place to outline the project plan, timing and projected costs.

PARTNERSHIP AND INVITATION

Case documents typically close with an appeal to join in supporting the project. Because donors will be asked for different amounts based on their relationship and capacity, this section rarely makes a specific dollar request. Some churches choose to include a donor pyramid, sharing how many donors at what levels will be needed for the campaign to be successful. That pyramid or chart allows for conversation with each key donor individually about where they see themselves. It also allows donors who will respond to a public launch ask and appeal letter to understand their commitment in the context of the overall campaign need. This is another place where a quote from a lead donor or advocate can be impactful.

Your case for support will be the most-used and accessed document throughout the life of your campaign. It has to bring the project to life and clearly tie it to your church's mission and ministry. You will often use sections or sentences from the case in your various other communications, and the case should be the base document from which everything else emanates.

While it doesn't have to be fancy or expensive, it is worth doing the highest quality job you can afford knowing it will have a two- to four-year shelf life and will be the piece speaking to your members and donors.

CAMPAIGN THEME AND BRANDING

We'll close by talking a bit about campaign branding. You might wonder why this is the last topic. Many organizations tackle this first and spend a lot of time, energy and money on a campaign tagline, logo and look only to find themselves several months into planning with branding that doesn't fit well with the campaign project.

While it's tempting - and yes, fun - to dive right into campaign themes and graphic logos, we'd recommend you allow your planning and your case document to shape the direction of your branding.

What do we mean by campaign branding? Most capital campaigns have a theme or tagline and a graphic design look, mark or logo. You've likely seen this most often from your alma mater - when a college or university is in a campaign, you'll see materials and sections of the alumni letters you get that include the campaign branding. It might be a slogan like "Building The Future: City College" in the case of a campaign for a new building.

There's often a campaign logo or mark that is included as part of the branding and may feature a color palette specific to the campaign that's different from the organization's primary branding. Churches and nonprofits often include the campaign logo on their letterhead or order specific campaign branded letterhead, thank you cards, receipts and other printed pieces for use during the life of the campaign.

While not unique to churches, developing a campaign logo and look that works well alongside your primary branding and logo can sometimes be a challenge. You want your members to recognize the campaign's messaging and materials but to not have the campaign brand overtake or diminish the church's primary brand. They have to live together and strengthen each other as you develop your materials. Again, spending a lot of time on this too early in your planning process may mean having to re-do it once your campaign plans and case statement has gelled. The branding should be solidified and integrated throughout your materials and your launch event when it's time to announce the public campaign.

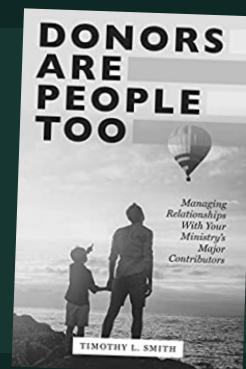
If your church is considering a capital campaign, there is a lot to think about. In the rush to launch a campaign, we often see churches miss significant opportunities to effectively communicate their unique campaign project's outcomes and impact simply because they haven't put the right plans in place. A well-communicated capital campaign is not only more likely to be financially successful, it can also expand overall advocacy and interest in your ministry in your church's community.

We hope this series has given you a roadmap you can customize to your church and your campaign's needs. Enjoy the process and have fun as you build your case and develop the stories, videos and messages that will make your project real for your members.

TIMOTHY L. SMITH

Find Tim's book, *Donors Are People Too*, which features expanded guidance on a campaign case for support.

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Let's Talk

We know the challenges of switching or implementing new technology and how that can be intimidating. But we also know the unbelievable changes that have happened within churches that have partnered with us for their ministry needs. Let's connect and see how we can assist you in the greatest thing you do - grow God's Kingdom.

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