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## The Pastor's and Chairpersons' Roles in a Successful Campaign

*By Mark Filips*

As a stewardship consultant I am often asked, "What makes for a successful campaign?" That is a difficult question because each pastor, chairperson, leadership team, parish, and locale is so different. And yet, there are elements of successful capital campaigns that keep reappearing.

A capital campaign is an exciting adventure for most parishes because it is a process that allows them to move from dreams to reality. It is the combination of prayer; inspiration, drive and conviction; well-crafted plans; effective communications; the employment of gifted individuals and teams; and the sacrifices and financial resources on the part of many people that turn dreams into reality.

While all these elements are present in a successful campaign, further analysis of campaign results indicate that the role that the pastor and campaign chairperson assume as the campaign unfolds is critical to success. The following elements are found in pastors and chairpersons leading successful campaigns.

### **1. The pastor and chairs of successful campaigns are people seeking God's guidance in prayer while encouraging the parish staff, campaign team, and parish to do the same.**

Very simply, God has great hopes and dreams and plans for us as individuals, families, and parish. In order for us to come to know these hopes and dreams we must be people of prayer, seeking God's path forward, praying, "Lord, what do you want to do through us?" "What are you calling us to?" And once we have spent time seeking God's will in prayer, we must get involved and invest our resources in God's plan. Time in prayer, talent through involvement, and treasure through the giving of resources is the only way dreams become reality.

### **2. Successful pastors and chairpersons turn God's dream into a plan for the parish.**

Whether it is building a new church or campus or school, renovating our facilities, developing new ministries, or paying off debt, our dreams must be turned into a plan with clear outlines and detailed estimates of costs needed to achieve the goal. A parish's case should be crystallized and in place by the time the campaign begins.

### **3. Successful pastors start casting the vision early and often to all parishioners.**

Spend some time imagining what your project will look like when it is completed. What groups will be touched and impacted? Whose lives will be changed?

It is often helpful to get together the dozen people who will make the most significant investments in your project, make a presentation to them, and then ask them, "Who will be impacted by this project?" How will they benefit from this project?" Have them spell out on flip charts as many benefits as possible. Later on, group these responses together, use them in your presentations and employ them in your communications. The responses gained in this exercise will go a long way in opening peoples' eyes and gaining their support.

### **4. Successful pastors recruit chairs and team leaders who are enthusiastic about the vision.**

The pastor is the spiritual leader of the campaign, casting the vision, leading prayer and worship, writing homilies and articles, and soliciting lead gifts. The chairpersons are the functional leaders of the campaign. The chairpersons should share the vision. They should be excited about impacts and benefits to individuals, groups, the parish, and the whole community.

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### **5. Successful pastors recruit chairpersons who have the demonstrated ability to lead people and complete projects.**

The chairpersons are the functional leaders of the campaign. They are the public face of the campaign, they are involved in the recruitment of effective team leaders, and they coordinate and oversee the teams as they complete their tasks.

The chairpersons should be able to "stir the waters," while being reliable. They should be able to complete tasks on time, and be able to get things done. Sometimes a pastor may wish to recruit a key parishioner who is an influencer, inspiring and charismatic, but this person is not known for completing tasks well. In this case, the pastor should also enlist one or two co-chairpersons who can "stir the waters" and get things done.

### **6. Successful pastors and chairpersons recruit team leaders who are supportive of the vision, who have demonstrated abilities in the areas called for, and who also know how to "stir the waters" and get things done.**

Pastors and chairpersons are responsible for recruiting team leaders and building a leadership team. They will therefore want to recruit people who support the parish vision. Since there are various teams needed and tasks to be completed, they must also recruit team leaders who have demonstrated abilities in these areas. This cannot be stressed too strongly. A campaign is like a Rubik's cube with many moving parts. Failure to meet deadlines can bog a campaign down, or worse, ruin it. Again, you want team leaders who are "short on talk and long on action."

### **7. Involve as many people as possible in the leadership, the work and the presentations.**

Generally, it is better to involve as many people as possible on leadership teams. More people involved on the various teams

means more people have a greater understanding of the vision. This often translates into more people becoming invested in the vision, which gives campaign a greater chance of success.

### **8. Pastors and chairs of a successful campaign must be praying about God's call to them and their sacrificial gift, and they should be sharing the fruits of their prayer with others.**

Pastors and chairpersons should be praying about the sacrifices God is calling them to make. When they are seeking God's leadership, He may take them to places they never thought they would go and be calling them to things they never thought they could do. There can be resistance and significant challenges. And it can be difficult.

Sharing your call to sacrifice with the folks is itself inspiring and helpful. They are going through the same thing. Pastors and chairs who share their stories and even the sacrificial gifts they've made tend to have the most successful campaigns.

Pastors and chairpersons who sacrifice and invest will lead their people to sacrifice and invest. We all can take great comfort in remembering that we are neither the first nor the only ones to sacrifice and invest. Our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents built beautiful churches and schools and institutions across this country, not because they had more, but because they sacrificed.

### **9. Successful pastors and campaign chairpersons are prepared to reach out to the top 30-75 donor prospects.**

A successful campaign requires large gifts among the many gifts received. Every donor and every gift is important. And each parishioner is called to give back to God for God's work and to sacrifice. In fact, the message of the campaign needs to be, "Not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice." The business leader and the retired nurse,

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because they will make sacrifices in their own way, will not be making the same kind of gift.

Though all gifts are necessary, it is important to keep in mind that the larger gifts of a campaign will make up at least 30-40% of all funds received. Therefore, the pastors, chairs, and major gifts team will need to approach people of financial means for the first gifts and lead gifts of the campaign. They must also encourage everyone to participate as everyone has a part to play and everyone will receive a benefit. As Mother Teresa said, "No one is so rich that they have nothing to receive, nor so poor that they have nothing to give." The larger financial gifts of some parishioners and the sacrificial gifts of all parishioners lead to the combined result of an effective and successful campaign.

**10. The pastors and chairs of successful campaigns oversee and support all the teams comprised of the leadership team.**

After good and effective leaders have been recruited and trained, it is up to the pastors and chairpersons to guide the individual teams, coordinate their efforts, support them in their work, and appreciate them for all they will be doing. Again, the abilities of the chairpersons will be important in fulfilling these tasks. And when it comes to the team leaders and the people who make up their teams, you can never say "thank you" enough.

In conclusion, pastors and chairpersons who are entering into a campaign wish it to be successful. No one who is going to put that much time, effort, prayer, and resources into such an effort will want it otherwise. Following these ten elements of careful planning and leadership will lead you to the successes you are seeking, taking you a long way down the road of turning God's dreams and your dreams into reality.

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