

Re-Energizing A Stalled Capital Campaign

Your [capital campaign](#) raised the big leadership gifts. Maybe you got lucky and a few materialized that you didn't expect. There was so much enthusiasm for where you were headed.

There was early energy. There was forward momentum... until there wasn't. Maybe it's been several weeks or even months since the last gift came into your capital campaign. Things feel eerily quiet and there's a pit in your stomach.

Campaigns stall. It happens to the best teams, under the best of circumstances, with the best of planning.

What you shouldn't do is hunker down and hope things will get better on their own. Take action sooner than later because momentum matters in every campaign.

Revisit the gift table

Math doesn't lie and this is your road map for getting from where you are to over-the-top. Do you have enough prospects?

You may have been advised you'll need 3-5 prospects for every gift you close, sometimes more.

In my experience, the ratio of prospects to closed gifts is directly related to the acumen of the development team and the maturity of the donor engagement effort. Which brings us to qualification. How well qualified are your prospects?

Do you know when each of them want to be enlisted?

Some donors lead boldly. Others follow cautiously. Engaging your donors at the right stage for them is crucial. If you've exhausted your known major donors it is probably time to research your mid-level donors and create an upgrade plan.

You may also benefit from additional screening to find buried treasure.

Talk with donors who declined to participate

Are there common objections or questions in their minds that haven't been answered? Every case for support is evolving. Sometimes the case for leadership gifts is different than the case for the public phase.

Every decline should be followed up with some basic questions: Is that a ‘no, not now’ or a ‘no, not ever’ is a question every solicitor should be comfortable asking. Is the prospect open to a future discussion?

If so, what progress will she need to see before she feels comfortable joining the campaign? If you don’t know what the problems are, you can’t fix them.

Get honest about follow-up and evaluate processes

Who is responsible for follow up and is it happening? Especially with volunteer solicitors, it is essential that everyone understands the importance of capturing notes and tracking moves. This is the responsibility of staff to put a plan in place and make sure it is working for the volunteers, the donors and the campaign.

A general lack of engagement on the part of volunteers is not usually the core problem.

While frustrating, it is more often a symptom of underlying problems with campaign structure or planning: poor training; poor staff support or communication; or weak campaign leadership and vision. All of these erode volunteer confidence and drag down momentum. Often, the public phase feels like a different campaign altogether.

It may be that you aren’t stalled; you’ve simply crossed over into the next phase and you need a different structure and approach to be successful.

An independent assessment from an experienced consultant can help you to regain your bearings and clear the path forward. Just because you didn’t engage a consultant in the planning or early phases doesn’t mean that you can’t benefit from outside assessment for the final sprint.

Need some fine-tuning, or a major rebuild? Rose City Philanthropy can help get your campaign back on the road. To schedule a complimentary consultation, contact Jeri Alcock, Partner and Senior Consultant, jeri@rosecityphilanthropy.com or 503-704-3615.