

Top 10 Success Factors in Church Capital Campaigns



What differentiates a great church capital campaign from the other kind? Our post-campaign analysis of capital campaign consulting engagements identified several critical success factors shared by the more successful church campaigns. Variables were minimized as these capital campaigns were managed by the same consultant using the same program, and were then evaluated on fifteen success factors, the top ten of which are listed below.

Regarding financial results, there are two stages of giving: an initial sacrificial gift and longer-term pledges. Churches which excelled in the amount received in the *initial sacrificial offering* received, on average, 30% of their total campaign contributions on commitment

Sunday; two to three times that of those that did not excel in these areas.

The primary success factors common to campaigns with larger initial offerings: (In no particular order)

1. Adequate time and overall prioritization of time and focus
2. Compelling testimonies
3. Emphasis on promoting/encouraging the initial sacrificial gift
4. Focus on major gift donor development

Household participation in longer-term pledging is a significant quality factor in successful campaigns. For the *top tier* of churches, as ranked by percentage of participating households, the average household participation was in excess of 85%. These churches not only experienced a more financially successful capital campaign, but also realized a greater overall level of spiritual development, unity, and support for the effort. These churches also typically experienced an increase in the number of households contributing to the general fund, both during and following the capital campaign.

The primary success factors common to church capital campaigns with higher levels of household participation: (In no particular order)

1. Adequate time and overall prioritization of time and focus
2. Compelling testimonies
3. Good personal communication (one-on-one, one-on-few)
4. Frequency of outbound communications

Those churches that had the largest percentage of household participation and highest percentage of up-front giving to the campaign had the best overall financial results. While none of the churches excelled in every one of the quality factors, there is a direct correlation between overall results and performance in these two key areas of household participation and up-front giving.

The most common success factors that kept average church capital campaigns from being great campaigns:

1. Inadequate time to prepare
2. Lack of involvement or leadership by the senior pastor
3. Failure to have personal communication with potential large givers
4. Lack of emphasis on an initial sacrificial offering

Campaigns which consistently experience the best spiritual and financial results are those that most diligently seek and implement proven best practices. These churches adapt best practices to their culture and DNA without abandoning them. Successful churches utilize all the available resources, including a high degree of interaction with the capital campaign consultant. The consultant is able to guide and equip the church and help adapt proven processes to its unique situation.

Top Ten Success Factors:

1. Adequate Campaign Preparation Time

Adequate time depends on several factors, not the least of which is the size of the church, complexity of the campaign, and prior experience of the leadership in *effective* capital fundraising. Time is your friend in the capital campaign. The more time the church has to prepare for the campaign, the less demanding the time commitments will be, the more easily it will coexist with other church activities, and the greater the spiritual and financial impact for the church. *Quality* of time invested is just as important as the *quantity* of time. For a relatively short season, the capital campaign *must* be one of the top priorities for the church leadership. Prioritization by the leadership will translate into prioritization by the congregation. If you fail to show it is a priority to you, the congregants will fail to make it a priority in their lives.

2. Effective Use of All Communication Channels

Communication must happen through every available “channel” that the members “tune into,” whether spoken, visual, or written. Technology provides many channels, and all should be used to the fullest to develop a compelling communication strategy that is consistent in message while varied in approach and medium. Effective communication first requires a clear and compelling case for support. That case for support, communicated in the proper fashion, is a key component in unleashing abundant giving.

3. Effective Use of Powerful Testimonies

People will give when they believe in the vision and see the results of their giving. Personal testimonies show the fruit of the ministry while providing a strong personal and emotional appeal. During the public phase of the church capital campaign, the proper use of the right type of testimonies each week, from those both in the church and in the community that have been blessed by the ministry of the church, will greatly impact the campaign results.

4. Emphasis on Initial Sacrificial Offering

The church, in order to maximize the financial results, must emphasize both an initial sacrificial offering from how God has already blessed the giver, as well as an ongoing commitment to give as

God provides. Both types of giving must be communicated consistently through multiple communication channels, not the least of which is the pulpit. Churches that emphasized the initial offering excelled in the amount received on commitment Sunday in addition to their overall financial results.

5. Fervent and Effective Prayer

Prayer should start before the formation of the capital campaign team and then should be augmented by systematic prayer facilitated by the prayer team. Prayer should happen corporately, in small groups, in special prayer vigils, and individually throughout the entire campaign. Prayer is one of the four spiritual foundations of the campaign, along with testimonies, preaching, and teaching. No deep spiritual impact is likely to happen without fervent and effective prayer. Prayer is one of the three pillars of the spiritual aspects of the campaign.

6. Focused Preaching and Teaching on Giving

The public phase of the capital campaign, which includes the time of preaching and teaching, will typically last five to seven weeks. The preaching series is normally preceded by a shorter series on ecclesiology and vision, thereby setting the stage for the campaign. [Preaching and teaching God's Word](#), as it applies to the principles of giving, must be clear and unapologetic. The preaching series is augmented by a purposeful teaching time in either adult Sunday school or small groups. This critical teaching time is designed to be interactive and serves to answer members' questions and help them apply the teachings to their lives. Preaching and Teaching comprise the last two of the spiritual pillars of the campaign.

7. Frequency of Outbound Communications

Outbound communication refers primarily to written or graphic communication delivered in printed or digital form. These communications must provide content of value that addresses the range of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs of the congregation, and should employ all written communication channels. Some of the most important communications are those directly from the senior pastor and pastoral staff that [state the needs](#), cast the vision, and make a personal appeal for support.

8. Major Gifts Donor Development

Leadership gifts fall into two categories: sacrificial giving by the leadership team and those that God has blessed with the financial ability to be major givers. Advance giving by the leadership team demonstrates leadership by example and is encouraging to the congregation. Major gifts, however, will make up a significant percentage of the campaign goal. Proper major donor development takes time and effort and is typically directed at the top 5%-10% of givers. Those who are blessed in financial resources often expect to be asked and may even be discouraged when the church does not take the time to do so in a personal fashion.

9. Overall Involvement of the Senior Pastor

Leaders lead. Church capital campaigns that live up to their maximum potential largely do so because of the personal support and commitment of the leader(s) in the church. It is not necessary for the pastor to lead the campaign in a tactical role, but the [role of the pastor](#) of the church is quite critical in the areas of spiritual development, excitement building, and donor development. In other words, *the*

pastor does not need to run the campaign, but does need to lead it. While there are likely to be other contributing factors, the greatest successes and failures in capital campaigns can usually be directly traced back to the pulpit and the effective participation, or lack thereof, of the pastor or leaders.

10. One-On-One Communication (Shepherding)

Shepherding your church in a capital campaign involves one-on-one or one-on-few communications. The goals of one-on-one communications are to let your people know you care enough to connect with them individually, to personally encourage them, and to answer their questions. Donor development of potential large gift givers is one example of shepherding, but it should not be limited to just those few. Every household should be personally communicated with in some fashion at least once during the campaign.

In Conclusion

Successful execution of a church capital campaign is part science (process) and part art (effective adaptation of experience). The church obtains the best spiritual and financial results when it implements best practices. Best practices are those methods and techniques that have consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means. The more closely the church adheres to proven best practices, the better the results, both spiritually and financially.

There is also a direct correlation between the level of interaction with the consultant and campaign results. An experienced consultant knows what has worked well for other churches and why – these are best practices. While fundamental principles change little over time, the manner of working out those principles does evolve with changes in culture and technology. How best practices are applied will vary from church to church according to its culture and demographic. A consultant provides great value to the church by helping it to know what it does not know, providing best practices, and then adapting those proven methods and techniques to best fit the culture and circumstances of the church.

About the Author: Stephen Anderson was the founder and principle coach/consultant of AMI Church Consulting. He was the author of the book, *Preparing to Build* as well the *Abundant Giving Campaign* program. (Edited by Rod Rogers, January 2019)