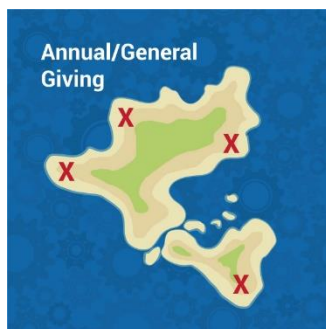


The Three Elements of a Successful Development Operation

Private Christian and Catholic schools rely on the donations of alumni, parents, grandparents, and faith communities to support their mission and vision and fund capital improvements that support student learning. Every successful development operation includes three essential elements: an annual/general giving program, feasible capital campaign goals, and a strategic plan that illustrates how donations and gifts contribute to a school's financial sustainability and aspirations.

Element 1: Annual/General Giving



Direct and Indirect Solicitation

What's the number one reason anyone gives to an organization? *They were asked.* Whether direct or indirect, solicitation of your school's supporters is one of the most essential tools to increase the amount of money your annual general giving campaigns generate.

Many schools already use indirect solicitation to ask prospects to donate. The "Give Now" button on a website or advertisement in a school or congregation's quarterly publication are both examples of indirect solicitations. Indirect solicitations rely on prospects to make the decision to give on their own.

A direct solicitation asks someone to consider a gift of a specific amount. The call to action is specific and explicit: *Mr. Smith, please consider giving \$33 to support Catholic education at our school.* The most effective direct solicitations share why a donor should give to your school. Before embarking on a direct solicitation campaign, create a list of the top 10 reasons people should support your organization.

Escale Tip: If you're soliciting a donor for the first time, consider asking them to make a small initial gift, such as \$50. Escale Advisors has found odd-number amounts, such as \$33, can also catch a donor's attention.

Database

Before you can embark on any giving campaign, you need to have a clear idea of who you are targeting with your solicitations. Maintaining a database of names and contact information for these potential donors is vitally important to the success of your development operation.

Databases are more than just a list of names and addresses. A school's database should include records of prospective supporters, or people who are currently or have been deeply engaged with your organization, including parents and alumni. It should also include suspects, or people who

have an indirect connection to your school and may support you in the future, including grandparents and members of your school's faith community. A well-managed database includes information on past gifts so it is easier to understand and leverage an individual's giving propensity and capacity.

Marketing and Communications

Every school has its unique strengths, vision, and culture; in other words, every school has its own brand. Your school's brand is a big asset when communicating with potential donors. But first, you need to deeply understand who those donors are and how they wish to be communicated with. Invest some time in developing personas for your prospective supporters. Who are you reaching out to? What's their relationship to your school? How old are they? What kind of work do they do? How much money do they make? How do they like to be communicated with? The answers to these questions will help you create a healthy database of contacts and better direct your marketing dollars.

Escale Tip: Leverage several different marketing tools when soliciting prospective supporters. Email, texts, newsletters, calls, and publications are just a few tried and true strategies.

Moves Management

To become a supporter of your school, prospective donors must have the capacity to give, affinity for your school, and be ready to write the check. Moves management is the process through which organizations turn prospects into long-term major supporters. Understand capacity by looking at past giving data. Grow affinity by sharing what's happening at your school and why supporting you is a good choice. Maintain contact with major supporters so you know when they are ready to give to your school.

Element 2: Feasibility and Capital Campaigns



Modeling and Forecasting

Modeling and forecasting help you understand what it takes to maintain your school's operations and give you an idea of what you will need to complete a capital project. People who give substantial gifts want to be confident that your school has an understanding of its financials and a comprehensive business plan, which assures them that their gifts will help sustain a healthy organization.

Case for Support

Why? Why Us? Why Now? These are the questions a case for support document answers. Potential supporters need to know why you and your school are good investment of their giving dollars. They also need to know why you need their support right now rather than a year from now. Your

Escale Tip: Your case for support should be approximately four to eight pages long.

case for support documents should share why donors should support your school, your school's mission and unique value, and why you need their contributions now.

Feasibility and Readiness

In the simplest of terms, the feasibility of your capital campaign is the balance between the funds needed to complete the project and the amount of money you believe you can realistically raise. Taking on a capital campaign project that is too large can create skepticism among your potential donors that the campaign will ultimately succeed. However, a capital campaign with strategic goals and a few early leadership gifts can help create confidence in prospective supporters and improve donors' readiness to give.

Needing funds is only one factor in the decision to embark on a capital campaign. For a campaign to be successful, a school's leadership team—including paid staff, volunteers, and board members—must have the systems, process, and people in place to manage the campaign, from marketing and acquiring gifts to managing donations and thanking donors. Ultimately, people do not give money to an organization or a building—they give to the leaders who will be managing and spending their dollars.

Element 3: Strategic Planning and Leadership



Strategy

A sound organizational strategy is the foundation of a sustainable development operation. Developing a strategic vision and plan for your school takes reflection, data, and collaboration with key stakeholders. Start with a SWOT assessment of your organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, then use the findings to create a five-year plan that includes the mission, vision, and values that guide your school's operations. From there, use the five-year plan to create an annual plan with specific objectives, goals, strategies, tactics, and

individual KPIs for anyone with a role in your development operations.

Outcomes Focus

Organizations that focus on outcomes understand where every dollar comes from and which programs it supports. This includes finite resources, such as net tuition revenue, and fixed expenses, such as facilities costs, as well as more fluid revenue and expenses, including annual giving programs and capital campaigns.

Organizational Structure

All schools have an organizational structure, from the visionary leaders who establish the school's value and its strategic vision (usually the priest, pastor, or headmaster) and chiefs of staff who manage the team's staff to the dedicated team members who manage fundraising efforts, manage the school's finances, and of course, the talented educators who deliver an exceptional learning experience. Understanding who is on your organizational chart and how they support your school helps you run a more efficient and sustainable organization.



Systematized

Systems. Process. People. Any system is simply an organized group of people moving through a particular process. You and your team are a system. A healthy school has processes and systems that support every element of its operation, from admissions to alumni relations. The more systematized your operation is, the more investable it will be for the people you rely on to fund your school.

Closing Thoughts

At the end of the day, people want to invest in an organization that has a good strategy, high accountability, and is outcomes focused. They will look to see if a school has a sound structure, an efficient way of doing its work, and the right people in the right places to execute and improve its processes in pursuit of a good system, a good product, and a good organization.