

Fundraising Promotional Materials

Every financial campaign, whether large or small, can benefit from promotional materials that make a compelling case for giving.

Your building is in need of major repair or restoration work that has already been identified and prioritized. You've now decided to conduct a capital campaign and have a financial goal and plan. But how do you best appeal to the congregation and community-at-large for support? Every capital campaign, whether large or small, directed by a fundraising consultant or coordinated by volunteers, benefits from promoting its case through well-executed written and visual materials that make a compelling case for giving.

The development of any promotional materials is typically spearheaded by the campaign's Communications or Publicity Subcommittee and the fundraising consultant, if one has been hired. The most basic way to communicate your need is through printed materials. Letterhead, brochures, pledge cards, return envelopes, and receipts are essential for every campaign. In many cases, an institution's existing letterhead is often suitable.

Since the persuasiveness of a brochure and any cover letters are of the utmost importance, it can be advantageous to have copy written or reviewed by a fundraising consultant or a skilled writer with relevant experience. An outside writer, detached from the religious institution, often brings a fresh perspective. With desktop publishing increasingly widespread, a member of the staff or congregation may have the capability to design materials that are ready for printing. Once the copy and design have been approved, several bids should be solicited for services such as printing, labelling, and distribution.

Larger campaigns may consider additional items: multiple brochures for specific donor markets, special campaign letterhead and envelopes, presentation folders, videotapes, souvenirs, and exterior banners and signs. These additional items should only be created if they have been carefully planned to serve a specific purpose in reaching a target audience.

Part of the campaign strategy should be to look for gifts of services and underwriting of costs to help reduce expenses. Graphic designers, photographers, printers, advertising agencies, public relations firms, and video producers with connections to the congregation may provide services pro-bono or at a reduced cost.

It is important to engage your audience with distinctive materials about your institution -- a well-articulated, compelling case with attractive graphics and a catchy logo or slogan can raise the interest of a prospective donor. Since each campaign is different, materials should correspond to the scale of the campaign and to the expectations of the target audience. For example, a sophisticated brochure for a large campaign is important to capture attention in a competitive urban market, whereas the same type of material would be overkill for a small-scale campaign in a rural area. A videotape can impress the

congregation and community with building restoration needs by showing dramatic problems close-up, but is of no interest to foundations who only want written materials and photographs.

The Perry City Friends Church, located in a rural hamlet in Schuyler County, New York, conducted a modest but effective campaign to raise \$30,000. A one-page brochure with a drawing of the church on the front summarized the history of the building, its repair needs, and budget. A cover letter appealed to individuals to help preserve a local landmark and improve the facilities so that it could function as the only year-round community center in the area. Pledge cards and return envelopes accompanied the mailing. Early restoration work completed by volunteers demonstrated enthusiasm and accomplishment.

A \$5,000 grant from the Landmarks Conservancy's Sacred Sites Program boosted the campaign by giving it outside endorsement and a dollar amount to match. Periodic update letters and invitations to open houses sustained momentum and encouraged additional contributions. Several hundred people from the community contributed amounts from \$2 to \$500 or more. Pat Burgevin, Clerk of the Church, says that the appeal was effective because everyone was familiar with the building and wanted to preserve a piece of local history, even if they had no involvement with the Friends.

When the Church of the Holy Trinity in Manhattan needed to raise over \$700,000 for restoration of its bell tower, an important campaign tool was a videotape that showed the serious structural conditions of the inaccessible interior and conveyed the social value of community outreach programs housed in the parish's buildings. The videotape, produced for \$5,000, was shown at specially organized gatherings and routinely at the church.

Holy Trinity also produced two brochures using desktop publishing and architectural photographs with lively, inspiring copy written by a fundraising professional. A one-color, four-page brochure for the parish (printed for \$300 per 1,000 copies) presented the campaign case to a spiritual audience, along with the restoration budget, ways of giving, and commemorative opportunities. A simpler, two-page brochure described the restoration project and financial needs to the community-at-large.

A growing number of religious properties have benefited from the formation of separate not-for-profit organizations that help to raise money from members, the community, preservationists, businesses, and foundations. Save Our Universalist Landmark (S.O.U.L.) in Manhattan supported the restoration of the Fourth Universalist Society. Its concise brochure had a powerful graphic image and listed an honorary committee of prominent New Yorkers representing diverse constituencies. Friends of the First Presbyterian Church in Hudson, New York printed a one-page brochure which accompanied cover letters targeted to specific groups.

In some cases, instead of establishing a new not-for-profit organization, an existing local preservation group or parent religious organization can act as a sponsor for a restoration campaign. An appeal brochure and letter from a well-regarded sponsor can significantly broaden the audience for a campaign. The sponsor's logo and graphic image can be used in developing the brochure design. The materials should cite key contacts at both the sponsoring organization and the religious property.

Congregations may also raise funds through entrepreneurial activities including space rental. The Fourth Universalist Society of New York markets its facilities for events in a professional and businesslike manner. Their rental brochure, "Landmark on the Park," clearly describes the building's spaces, capacities, equipment, and services and is illustrated with black-and-white photographs.

1. Clearly present the case for the campaign, providing donors reasons to give.
2. Make the case compelling and dramatic with words and graphic images.
3. Explain the architectural and historical significance of the building.
4. Tell how the congregation and buildings serve the community.
5. Demonstrate the urgency of the needed repairs.
6. Present a budget and timetable.
7. Show the distribution of donations needed by size -- also know as the pyramid of gifts.
8. Offer commemorative opportunities.
9. Provide campaign information: ways of giving; pledge period; to whom checks should be payable and where to send them; and who to contact for more information. Adapted and reprinted with permission from *The Complete Guide to Capital Campaigns for Historic Churches and Synagogues*, by Peggy Powell Dean and Susanna A. Jones, published by Partners for Sacred Places.

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