



When is the Right Time for a Major Gift Campaign?



In our work with thousands of nonprofits, one of the questions we are often asked is this: “How do you know when it’s the right time for a major gift campaign?” The simple answer is: “If the nonprofit needs money, it’s the right time to raise major gifts.”

However, needing money does not guarantee that you will raise major gifts. That takes intentionality. Asking these questions will help predict your nonprofit’s ability to complete a successful major gift campaign:

Is your vision big enough?

Needing more money to keep the lights on and “help people” is not a bold vision; and donors want to invest in something big. Raising major gifts requires you to think well beyond the day-to-day tasks, and imagine the lives you could change if you had all the money you needed. Would you establish a new, permanent home? Would you renovate your current space? Would you retain additional staff members, expand programs, create a strategic reserve, build an endowment ... ? Take time to dream; then plan.

Have you done your homework?

How do you know how much money you could realistically raise? How long would it take? Who cares deeply about your mission, and who will lead your campaign? What steps do you need to take before you launch the campaign? Undergoing a pre-campaign study—conducted by objective, experienced and highly professional fundraising consultants—will provide the answers to these questions and more. Combining proven experience, research and donor/prospect-derived data, the pre-campaign study will provide a “roadmap” for success.

Do you have the right leaders?

Leaders can make or break a campaign. When your staff, board and campaign leaders are informed, mission-focused, determined and committed to executing the campaign in a disciplined manner—using a donor-centric, strategic campaign plan—the campaign will have a much greater chance of success. The right leaders feel ownership in success and take pride in what happens under their watch.

A successful major gift campaign takes the right vision, plan and leadership. It takes courage. Are you ready to raise major gifts? Hartsook is ready to help you make it happen!

Karin Cox, Co-Founder and Senior Executive Vice President, kcox@hartsookcompanies.com

