



WINKLER GROUP

Fueling Your Vision

THE **SECRET** TO A LARGER CAMPAIGN GOAL

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Would you believe that by spending four extra months or so before launching a capital campaign, you could double your campaign goal? And that you would likely finish your campaign faster?

It's true. The secret to achieving a larger campaign goal isn't a magic formula or a new app. It's nothing that exciting or that quick. The secret is proper planning before a campaign even begins. A campaign's secret weapon is the campaign study.

Think about it this way. Would you start building a new student center, hospital wing, or food bank without first asking for input from the people who will use it? Or without hiring an architectural firm to create plans? Of course not.

Launching a campaign without proper due diligence is no different. Spending a little extra time and effort on the front end creates significant return on investment. And as a bonus, you'll build lifelong authentic donor relationships that yield significant investment even after the campaign ends.



THE DANGER OF JUMPING IN

A large university contacted us after their campaign stalled. Within minutes of the call, it was apparent they had never conducted a study.

The university president and cabinet had determined the priorities without input from key alumni or donors. A flashy case for support was developed—also without widespread input. There had been no cultivation, no attempt to listen to or consider the donors' philanthropic priorities. Instead, blanket asks were made to large groups of leadership donors.

We conducted a mid-campaign assessment to determine a path to get the campaign back on track. During interviews with prospective donors, we identified multiple seven-figure gifts from donors who decided to give only after they felt engaged and heard. The campaign slowly gained momentum but never fully recovered from its rocky start.



CAMPAIGN FAILS AND OTHER REASONS TO PLAN

We're often asked, "Why do we need to do a study when we already know how much we need to raise?"

There's a stark difference between what you need to raise...and what your donors will fund. Are your donors inspired enough by the project to contribute over and above their annual giving? Do they think the new buildings or project will advance your mission? Do they even care enough about your mission to make your organization one of their philanthropic priorities? These questions must be asked and answered before the first gift solicitation is made, or you risk jeopardizing the success of the campaign.

Without a campaign study, we've seen both small and large organizations stumble. They've built a building they can't afford and are now having to service the debt instead of expanding programming. Others have alienated donors who feel that what they gave wasn't enough because the campaign never reached its goal. This has lasting implications for future fundraising success.

Real campaign planning goes far beyond setting a goal amount and building a prospect list. And it begins long before the first ask is made.

A well-planned campaign will:

- ✓ Raise more money
- ✓ Reach the goal faster (taking less staff time)
- ✓ Increase your annual fund
- ✓ Increase planned gifts
- ✓ Drive long-term, sustainable revenue
- ✓ Help avoid campaign failure

A campaign may seem daunting.
Working with a partner like the Winkler Group makes the process more manageable.

Book a consultation with one of our campaign experts to get started.

A LARGER GOAL... FASTER

A campaign study by itself doesn't always raise money. That is one reason many bottom-line board members or CFOs fail to see its value. But a good study always recoups its cost...and then some.

For example, during a recent campaign study interview for an independent school, a prospective lead donor indicated he would likely invest \$500,000 in the campaign. However, after hearing the school's plans during the study, providing input, and then hearing how that input helped shape the ultimate campaign priorities, he doubled the intended gift. He also encouraged other family members to invest in the campaign, which they did, for a total \$4 million family gift.

Had the donor not been part of the campaign study, his family's gift would've stayed in the six-figure range. The entire campaign benefited from the study as well—89 percent of the campaign goal was raised before the first steering committee meeting. The total amount raised exceeded the original goal by 16 percent.

A few years ago, our firm made the decision to turn down any opportunity to manage a campaign if we could not first conduct a study first. A study is simply too critical to forego.

The intel we glean from donors becomes the campaign road map. A good study doesn't just answer questions...it draws donors in and gets them ready for their role in the campaign.

PRACTITIONER TIP

THE VALUE OF EACH CAMPAIGN STUDY INTERVIEW

One of the reasons the Winkler Group never caps the number of prospective donors we interview is because each interview is a treasure trove of information. From each interview, we can develop a personalized strategy for each prospective campaign leadership donor.

Some of the information we glean from each interview that drives a cultivation and solicitation strategy includes:

- ***What is the ideal ask amount—one that is respectful but encourages a donor to stretch?***
- ***Which campaign priorities or naming opportunities will most inspire the donor?***
- ***Who should be in the room during the solicitation? Which steering committee or staff member will encourage them to invest?***
- ***Should the ask be for an outright gift or suggest a three- or five-year pledge period?***
- ***Should the ask include a grant from a donor-advised fund or family foundation?***

RESIST THE URGE TO BEGIN WITHOUT A PLAN

It's tempting to want to forge ahead and start asking for gifts as soon as campaign priorities are determined. Often board members, particularly those who have never been through a campaign, see little value in a campaign study. It's our role—as development and advancement professionals—to demonstrate why it's important to take the time do things right.

Before the first campaign ask is made, behind-the-scenes work must be done.

A robust campaign study takes between four to six months to complete. Also known as a feasibility study, readiness assessment, or planning study, a campaign study measures an organization against four benchmarks of campaign readiness. We call them pillars because they are as essential to a successful campaign as four walls are to a building. They are:



**Compelling
Campaign Priorities**



**Confidence and Trust
in an Organization and
its Leadership**



**Willingness of Donors
to Invest in the
Campaign Priorities**



**Willingness of
Volunteers to
Participate**

PRACTITIONER TIP

A ROBUST CAMPAIGN STUDY SHOULD TAKE NO MORE THAN FOUR TO SIX MONTHS TO COMPLETE.

The cost of a campaign study ranges from \$40,000 to \$100,000 depending on how many interviews or focus groups are conducted and how much of the work is done by the client or the consultant. When hiring a consultant, ask if there are additional charges for interviews past a certain threshold. Also ask if the data collected is given to the organization once the study ends.

In addition to measuring readiness against the four pillars listed above, we consider a campaign study as the first phase of a campaign since it also:

- Identifies internal and external gaps in an organization, its development/advancement operations, and its donors
- Provides recommendations about how to fill those gaps
- Creates messaging that will inspire donors to stretch in their giving
- Identifies volunteer leaders for the campaign
- Identifies potential planned gift prospects
- Provides a confidential list of donors willing to contribute and volunteer
- Primes the campaign pump by stirring the passion of donors and campaign volunteers.

If the data from a campaign study indicates an organization is ready to launch a campaign, the board should vote to move forward immediately after the study results are presented. If not, momentum is lost, donors lose interest, and the organization risks donors shifting their investment elsewhere.

On the other hand, if a study finds that donors could get behind the proposed priorities if they were better cultivated, we often recommend an organization launch the campaign but spend a few extra months on intensive cultivation efforts before the campaign's silent phase begins.

BEYOND THE CAMPAIGN STUDY: WHAT'S NEXT

Armed with the results of a campaign study that indicates readiness, you're poised to launch a campaign. During this stage, the robust data collected during the campaign study becomes your playbook. The campaign will be more successful because all its strategies will be based on data, not intuition or hope.

With a study in hand, you will be on your way toward a:

- Strong case for support with compelling, urgent priorities
- Realistic financial goal
- Record of funding success
- Strong pool of qualified donors
- Group of volunteers willing to help solicit campaign investments
- Board that is fully behind and excited about the campaign

Typically, the first three to four months of any campaign are spent on behind-the-scenes work including recruiting the campaign steering committee, writing a compelling case for support based on campaign study feedback, refining campaign priorities, and drafting campaign policies. These efforts—and more—simply could not be accomplished without the information gleaned during the campaign study.

Once these months of planning are over, you will finally be primed and ready to start asking donors to invest in the campaign. **Because you've taken the time to engage your donors, you will know exactly who to ask, which priorities they're most interested in, how much to ask for, and who should do the asking.** You'll settle into a rhythm of cultivation—solicitation—repeat. Engaged donors will invest in a larger campaign goal that transforms your organization and those you serve.

PRACTITIONER TIP

What if the results of the campaign study require more planning to solidify the priorities? Should an organization delay the launch of a campaign?

The short answer is no. Organizations that delay the launch of a campaign lose momentum; donor excitement fades. Instead, campaigns we lead include a few months of planning before any asks are made. This is the time to reassess priorities, identify land to purchase, rethink a facility's design, or reconfigure a program to align with feedback from donors and stakeholders.



WINKLER GROUP

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For 17 years, the Winkler Group has helped transform nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, healthcare organizations, ministries, and cultural organizations through expert capital campaign management and strategic planning. A national firm headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina, with offices across the U.S., the Winkler Group proudly serves organizations with great causes.

Book a complimentary consultation with one of our campaign experts today.