



Managing Your Donors Under The Current Market Conditions

Over the past month or two, the market has thrown us one curveball after another. Some investors have had outstanding losses and others have used the rallies to pick up some good deals. This will pass and the financial markets will settle down. But while the economic and financial brains work it out, we recommend that you focus your development energies on three concepts in sequence: **EDUCATION**, **CULTIVATION**, and then **SOLICITATION**. Too often we're premature with the solicitation, but now you have time to prepare your prospect(s) properly by performing the first two steps thoroughly. And it's OK to wait on the solicitation step until the market is more hospitable. Your donors will appreciate your patience.

Education means providing your prospect(s) with information about the school: institutional accomplishments, administrative changes, financial details, any strategic or master site planning — the information anyone would want before making an investment. Cultivation refers to those steps and preparation necessary to improve the outcome of a successful solicitation. It's the time you take to get more information about your donor's giving history, preferences, and readiness. It's also the series of steps you take to involve your prospect in the school. Whether cultivation is done one-on-one or in a group setting, it's a respectful way of assuring that they know as much as possible about your school's short- and long-term hopes and aspirations. The following is a list of suggested cultivation activities:

1. Mail key prospects an "inside scoop" newsletter periodically
2. Distribute invitations to special events
3. Circulate press releases and special letters
4. Invite prospects to serve on the strategic planning committee
5. Volunteer to host a meal or reception
6. Send a card for special events
7. Ask prospects to be guest speakers
8. Provide special honors and recognition to the prospect
9. Invite prospects to participate in the feasibility study
10. Ask prospects to participate in recreational activities
11. Have prospect teach a class or seminar
12. Visit the prospect, or have him/her visit the School
13. Ask the prospect to serve on the Board
14. Seek advice from prospect on an area of interest/expertise
15. Conduct proper stewardship—thanks and recognition
16. ...Do whatever it takes!

For solicitation, be sure your volunteers are armed with effective campaign materials and properly trained in the art of solicitation and follow-up. It's a blend of information and intuition. In many cases, the follow-up is as important as the solicitation, and sometimes more so. For example, when following up with a prospect, suggest that the volunteer not leave a message until the third attempt. There are other ways to make good use of your volunteers' time.

While you're waiting for the financial markets to settle down, this may also be a good time to fine-tune the Development Office—maybe conduct an assessment to make sure the annual fund is managed well and your office is running as efficiently as possible. There may be a few things you hadn't thought of. We would be happy to help you with that. See below for a list of topics an assessment would cover:

Institution
Development Operations
Record Keeping
Trustee Involvement
Alumni Relations
Annual Giving
Donor Cultivation & Recognition
Planned Giving

Capital Campaigns
Publications/Public Relations
Research
Foundations & Corporations
Special Events
Auxiliary Programs
General

For more on volunteer training and/or a Development Office assessment, contact us at info@fordassociates.com.

2007–2008 Annual Fund Survey Results Show Success

We recently surveyed our client schools regarding their 2007–2008 Annual Fund results. Our participation level in the survey was the highest on record, with a whopping 48 schools participating. Thanks to the schools who replied (18 participants chose to remain anonymous).

Casady School	Riverside Military Academy
Chiaravalle Montessori School	Rye Country Day School
Christ the King School	Springside School
Collegiate School	St. Andrew's Episcopal School
Colorado Rocky Mountain School	St. Anne's-Belfield School
Da Vinci Academy	St. Catherine's School
Far Hills Country Day School	Tampa Preparatory School
Friends Select School	The College Preparatory School
Garrison Forest School	The Columbus Academy
Greenhill School	The Hewitt School
King Low Heywood Thomas	The Orchard School
Lake Country School	The Walden School
Pace Academy	The Williams School
Pacific Hills School	Trinity-Pawling School
Portledge School	Westminster School

Survey highlights are as follows:

1. 35% of schools set an Annual Fund goal of \$1M or more.
2. 2007–2008 was a successful year; 85% of the schools met or exceeded their goal.
3. 79% raised their goal over the previous year, in amounts ranging up to 20%.

We were pleased to see that 85% of schools reported 100% trustee participation. Interestingly, 40% of those surveyed said they do not have a full time staff person dedicated to running the annual fund. Just think of how much more they could raise with a full-time professional managing the Annual Fund.

Regardless, kudos to all for making the Annual Fund the lifeblood of your school's development program every year. We salute you!

If you need help with your annual giving program, let us know. Our new service, **Jump Start Your Annual Fund**, is designed to help you make a good program even better.

An Innovative New Service

We're proud to offer a new development service: **Coaching for Heads**. More often than before, Heads of School — either experienced or new to the job — need coaching in their development leadership responsibilities. They may or may not admit it but, at times, Heads of School can be out of their comfort range, and need guidance in development, if it's an area with which they're not familiar. The tasks are many: finding a new Director of Development, starting a development program, selecting trustees effectively, cultivating and soliciting prospective donors, recruiting a chair for the Development Committee, editing development communications, managing a strategic planning process, making a personnel change in the development office, running the development office in a small school, planning for a capital campaign.

Many heads come into their positions via the classroom/academic route, where often development is a low priority. Once he or she becomes Head of School their development responsibilities often become prominent, yet their comfort level with development is quite low. Some new Heads are also finding that the Board's development expectations may exceed what the search committee had suggested would be acceptable in terms of quickly getting up to speed in this important area. We have found that many Heads need guidance on specific issues, and they need a listening ear.

Our **Coaching for Heads** service can run for either three or six months and includes onsite visits, email and phone support, and meetings with the Board chair and/or Development Committee chair to discuss specific issues.

Feasibility Study: Time-tested and good for everyone

Conducting a feasibility study is still the most effective and obvious way of determining how much you can raise in a capital campaign. It also provides excellent research, education, and cultivation, which engender in your donors an appreciation for being included. Other nonprofits are conducting their own studies and in many cases, your prospective donors are participating. Your job is to communicate with and involve your donors so that they will consider you to be one of their top charitable priorities. Although we feel that between now and the holidays is not an optimal time to be conducting a feasibility study, hopefully the climate will have improved by January. In any event, we have used the following fifteen questions to initiate the discussion. This is especially helpful when you have a Board or Head who isn't sure that investing in a feasibility study is necessary.

Planning & Implementing Your Capital Campaign: A Full Court Press

1. Have we clarified our priorities to the extent that our needs are justified?
2. Is our Board ready for a capital campaign?
3. Is there a sense of urgency about our needs?
4. Have we completed strategic planning which clearly points to the needs?
5. Do we have a convincing case for support—appealing to both the heart and the head?
6. Who is our direct competition and what are they up to?
7. Can we identify 5–10 top lead gift prospects?
8. Do we have willing and visible volunteer leadership?
9. Do we have sufficient staff and systems to support a campaign?
10. It costs money to raise money; are we willing to invest?
11. How well has the annual fund performed for the past 2–3 years?
12. Do we have a positive image in the community?
13. Can we identify 2–3 times as many donors we will need for each gift category?
14. Should we conduct a feasibility study? (What if the study indicates that we're not ready?)
15. Should we hire a consultant?

If your school is considering a **Feasibility Study**, we would be more than happy to talk with you and/or meet with your selection committee.

A Twist on Personal Capital Campaign Solicitations

Capital campaign volunteers have become harder to recruit, and when it's time to solicit prospects at the lower gift levels, it's even more difficult to do so effectively, efficiently, and personally. Direct mail is one option but making it a little more personal can have huge advantages. Over the past two years, we have developed an alternative campaign solicitation strategy for these smaller donors. The pretext is to make it as easy as possible to personally get campaign materials into the smaller donors' hands.

There are five basic steps:

1. **Recruit your volunteers** using the ratio of 1 volunteer to every 10–12 prospects. When recruiting, promise that there will only be a few meetings and that you will train the volunteers to personally deliver a packet, but they will not have to solicit the prospect. The packet will solicit for them.
2. **Prepare your packets** consisting of a.) a solicitation letter, which provides campaign background and a specific ask amount, b.) a case statement and collateral materials, c.) a pledge card, d.) a return envelope.
3. **Send a letter** to all prospects explaining that as you're bringing the campaign to a close, your commitment to donor participation remains strong, and that shortly a volunteer will be calling to deliver a packet of information on the campaign.
4. **Train the volunteers**, provide their prospects lists and packets, and encourage them to get started. The beauty about this system is that they can hand the packets off anywhere: an athletic or social event, carpool, or parent meeting. Just make sure it's handed off in-person, and not put it in the mail or mailbox.
5. It has worked well to **organize** the parent volunteers by grade level and alums by class year. Organized effectively, you should be able to do this with three meetings only.

If you need assistance designing a packet program contact us at info@fordassociates.com.

3 New Services: Mini Assessments

In response to your requests, we have added new mini assessments in the following areas:

ALUMNI RELATIONS

Often school development offices overlook or underfund the critical alumni program in order to take care of current day-to-day needs. A two-day review of your Alumni Program includes interviews with your staff, alumni association president, and several alumni as well as a focus group of local alumni. Our review will include data management, publications and your website, as well as the structure of your alumni organization, archives, reunions, cultivation, and stewardship. You will receive a written report of our findings including commendations, questions, and recommendations.

ANNUAL GIVING

A two-day review of your annual giving program would include interviews with your staff as well as several volunteers, and possibly a focus group of current parents. We would review all operations from anecdotal records data management to stewardship, including all of your annual fund printed and on-line communications, training systems, etc. You will receive a written report including commendations, questions and recommendations.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND DEVELOPMENT

We are now offering a daylong workshop for your Development Office and members of your Board of Trustees. The purpose is to educate the board on their development responsibilities. The day will be spent meeting with your Board, Development Committee, Board Chair, and the Head of School. We will cover topics from Board orientation to their role in cultivation and stewardship. There will be an opportunity for self-assessment.

If you would like to discuss any of these topics or services, please contact us at info@fordassociates.com. Thanks for your ideas, suggestions, and support. Our work is only as good as the feedback we get from our independent school clients and friends—so keep it coming!