



FORD & ASSOCIATES
Comprehensive Development Counsel

THE Oracle

Spring 2008
Independent School
Development Tips

Annual Fund: Wrap Up as you Ramp Up

Just as you are putting this year's annual fund to bed you can do your best planning for next year. These relatively easy steps, taken now, will make for an easier time when deadlines approach later this year.

1. Review what went well this year, and determine what could be improved.
2. Meet with the Development Committee to discuss other fundraising plans and possibilities for the upcoming year. Will there be conflicts and/or confusion, especially if you're in, or heading into, a capital campaign?
3. Recruit and meet with your new volunteer leadership. Give them a job description, timeline and seek input on identifying other potential volunteers.
4. Work with the Admission Office to make sure prospective families receive information on the annual fund and other charitable responsibilities and opportunities.
5. Strengthen your message. A strong curriculum, small class sizes and individual attention provided by a dedicated faculty costs more than tuitions provide today. Your message should explain why you ask for financial contributions above and beyond tuition and how the annual fund differs from a capital campaign.
6. Review your website and edit your online-giving menu if necessary. (More about online giving in our next newsletter!)
7. Remember: your annual report is the first step to next year's annual fund as well as the culmination to this year's effort. People like to see themselves—in print and online—so, as you begin to write the annual report, include as many names and pictures as you can.

The cost of planning ahead and putting some of these tedious tasks behind you: a few hours. The feeling you get when July 1st rolls around and you have them behind you: PRICELESS!

Communicating Online

We have embraced the current culture of online communication through our own email subscription service and have learned a few things along the way. As a "hot" method of keeping in touch you may be communicating with your donors in the same way, or thinking about it. We hope the following five hot tips will help you keep your constituents interested in staying connected to your school as you conduct even better stewardship:

1. **Designate several topics of interest** and ask your readers to sign-up by choosing the topics of most interest to them. By sending pertinent information precisely to those who want it, you can further ensure that your readers will continue to open and read the email in which they have already indicated an interest.

2. **Use your institutional brand** so that the recipient easily recognizes your e-communications. This may include the same header on each email piece or a consistent layout.
3. **Vary an element in new emails** while preserving the brand to keep your communications interesting and provocative. A different photo, background color, or font can assure that your reader recognizes different content at first glance.
4. **Use an online email service** if your school does not have its own method of sending mass emails. Most services are reasonably priced and easy to use. By taking advantage of an outside vendor, you have access to tips, classes, and templates. These vendors also ensure that you are meeting the requirements of The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 and may reduce the number of your emails being sent to your constituents' Junk Mail boxes.
5. **Design a dynamic email format** with links to your school's website. This can include navigations to the alumni page, online giving feature and others such as your gala or campaign pages.

Speaking of preferences...you can update your preferences with us. Just click the link at the top of this month's email. Currently we have topics of interest based on our various areas of expertise and services offered. These include Capital Campaign, Annual Fund, Executive Search, Development Assessments and others. If you would like us to add a topic, let us know.