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The Fundraising Plan

In 1966, Harold J. 'Si' Seymour published a book that every fundraiser, volunteer or professional, should have on their shelves.

"Designs for Fundraising: Principles. Patterns. Techniques" has been through many editions since then. Not a word has been changed from the original text.

Why? Well, firstly, Si knew his stuff. He began his fundraising career with the Harvard Endowment Campaign in 1919. Over the next five decades, most types of organisations across the great spectrum of the not-for-profit sector benefited from Si's guidance.

But, apart from this, Si championed an unpretentious, "say it as it is" style that is seldom seen in today's overly complex, multi-billion pound fundraising industry.

Indeed, from the way Si writes, you'd almost think that fundraising is organised common sense:

" . . . it is surely clear now that in the decades ahead more causes, with more good reasons, will be seeking more funds from more people than ever before . . . That, simply, is the main reason for this book.

My purpose is to summarise what many good people have learned about fundraising in the last fifty years or so, and to arrange the findings so that the essential processes can be better understood and better

enjoyed, and become more fruitful. Accordingly, I hope to explain not merely what should be done, but when and why."

Marvellous words of clarity and certainty, that go to the core topic of this Issues Paper and the starting point of Seymour's great book: what should be in a fundraising plan.

"What you do ahead of time is what counts most"

As one of the opening chapters of Seymour's book suggests, fundraising campaigns are either won or lost in the preparation and planning phases. This is where we have to assume that two or three key stages have already been undertaken. As outlined in previous Issues Papers, let's assume that:

- The organisation has done its quantitative and qualitative research.
- There is an institutional plan that clearly highlights where projects and programmes fit in to future strategy.
- There is broad consensus throughout the organisation that the projects and programmes are the right way to proceed.
- The projects and programmes have been properly costed.

- Members of the organisation's governing body all agree as to the purpose of the organisation and are fully supportive of the way ahead.
- The organisation has been in some sort of dialogue with its stakeholder groups (who should be treated as partners not just periodic donors or consumers).
- Some thought has been given to how the level of funding needed might actually come in across the different audiences to which the organisation and its fundraisers have access.

The anatomy of the campaign plan

If you've got this far, it's time to draft a written fundraising plan:

The fundraising 'Case'

To begin, simply state, with confidence, clarity and enthusiasm why you need to raise the money. This "case statement" is your fundraising story. And it should be exactly that; a narrative that flows with ease, because it is a story that will be told time and time again by Board members, volunteer fundraisers and professional fundraising staff.

Articulate your financial goals with certainty (be they annual, capital or endowment targets) and talk about these goals as *opportunities* rather than burdens.

Ethos and attitude towards fundraising

Early in the Plan it is important to state, as a matter of policy, what forms of fundraising you are prepared to accept as an organisation. There are many ways to implement programmes within the fundraising "mix."

Questions need to be asked about what is right for your particular target audiences. This is a matter of logistics as well as philosophy.

If you have to cover an entire nation with a fundraising programme then one would think that you would have to use some broad, direct response programmes. However, if you are approaching a "closed constituency" (e.g. an alumni base, church congregation, industry sector or small community) then maybe you should be consider doing nothing else than person to person fundraising. If your organisation doesn't want money from particular sources, you and your fundraisers should be aware of that.

The three fundraising platforms

The development of your fundraising programme is a matter of selecting from the fundraising menu represented by the "three fundraising platforms" (see diagram on page 6).

Annual fundraising tends to flow from operational need: the year-to-year effort to pay for the core costs of the organisation.

Major gifts fundraising can be a key part of an annual fundraising programme, but tends to be associated with capital fundraising for special projects or programmes. The period of giving tends to be over a pledge period of 3-5 years. There is usually a separate task force of volunteer leaders assembled for such initiatives.

Finally, endowment fundraising is vision-led and based on the cultivation of legacies and other planned gifts. Ultimately, endowment fundraising is geared to building a sustaining "corpus of assets" to secure the future of your organisation and its work for future generations.

Your choice of fundraising mix will depend on where you are in your organisational development. Mature not-for-profits each year develop annual fundraising plans that include programmes from all three fundraising platforms. The key is to constantly review what you are doing and why. In the process, you should aim to achieve a sensible balance across the three fundraising platforms through joined-up fundraising.

Where is the money coming from?

Of course, the plan can only really be shaped when you know where you hope to get the money. Ideally, you will have given this considerable thought, by segmenting your database and by targeting groups (perhaps with different cultivation packages) across the fundraising platforms.

If you have a major gifts and legacies programme, you will have conducted some kind of prospect review and evaluation to try and see programmes through the eyes of prospective givers and match streams of potential resources to streams of opportunities.

You need to articulate who you are going to approach, for how much, for which part of your organisation's work and why.

Fundraising programmes

At this point in the plan it is worth describing each of the fundraising tools that you are going to use.

For example, if you have a direct mail programme, whom are you going to mail, with what, when and why?

If you are planning major gift solicitations when will they take place? Who will lead the initiative? Will there be a scale of giving (highlighting levels of giving needed

to achieve the target)? Do you have a list of giving opportunities customised to the realities of the amounts needed?

If you are planning a major event – again, the key questions of whom, what, where and when need to be worked through: along with the realisation that big events tend to have a significant (at least six months) lead in time.

If you are planning to launch or continue your legacy drive: how are you going to position this sensitive but important form of giving to interest and involve your most loyal supporters?

Organisational chart

Who's going to do the work? Who are they accountable to? A user-friendly organisational chart should map this out and confirm exactly who's supposed to be doing what.

Task descriptions

As a second insurance policy against confusion of roles, get written job description summaries into your fundraising plan: for Board members, volunteer leaders, management team members and all staff associated with fundraising in your organisation.

If volunteers are used in fundraising (and, for the sake of your organisation's well being, we hope they are) the expectations you have of them (and they of you) should be clearly set out.

Communications & fundraising tools

What fundraising promotional tools do you plan to have at your disposal? Advertising and PR schedules, grassroots distribution of direct response materials, leaflets, broadsheets, specific campaign brochures,

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“ways of giving” documentation, gift and pledge forms, question and answer sheets, video, CD-ROM, PowerPoint presentations, written proposals? All are valid.

Have you asked the key question we’ve heard many a highly-paid PR consultant ask: “why are you doing this?”

You need to know why you are spending money, and be convinced that it’s the right promotional tool for the job; remembering the fundamental principle that publicity, in its own right, does not raise money.

Tax Effective Giving

It’s never been easier and as tax effective to be generous to charitable causes and we recommend the inclusion of a stand-alone, tax effective, “Ways of giving” section in your fundraising plan.

Donor acknowledgement & recognition

You should know, in detail, what happens to money and associated mail (and information) when it arrives in your organisation. How are gifts and pledges recorded, processed, acknowledged and reported? Many organisations seem to think that fundraising stops when the money is received when, in fact, the job’s only just started.

How do you plan to recognise donors and sponsors? A brief, written policy document is always a good idea.

Fundraising timetable

It is important to know when you are planning fundraising programmes - and why. Does your organisation suffer from weak revenue months? Can you have an

impact on seasonal fundraising cycles with new programmes and scheduling?

Above all else, without prose and chart timetables, how can you guarantee that you don’t miss crucial fundraising deadlines and donor expectations?

Fundraising is about money!

It shouldn’t be necessary to state the obvious, but no plan is complete without programme-by-programme income and expenditure spreadsheets.

You need to keep your whole plan relevant by linking it back to this key management tool that should be monitored for successes, soft spots and variations.

Yes, that means that fundraisers need to work alongside the good folks in finance – and vice versa!

Reporting

Again, set the right expectations. Let Boards and management teams know how you are going to report: on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis. Be confident about your targets (that includes, on occasions, the confidence to state why they have been missed).

Whose plan is it anyway?

Finally, if a fundraising plan is to be meaningful and actionable, it needs to belong to everyone in your organisation – not just the Fundraising Department.

It’s not your plan. It’s your organisation’s fundraising plan.

It should involve the Board, senior management, employees and, of course, your various audiences of volunteers and prospective donors.

What is the fundraising plan used for?

Of course, the fundraising plan is your "blueprint for success". But, the plan's no good to anyone if it merely stays on your shelf or in a drawer.

Use the plan to:

- **Focus** your Board and management leadership on what is required of them and the organisation as a whole.

If your organisation is to be truly successful, fundraising needs to be accepted as part of everyone's job.

- **Enlist** quality volunteers to your fundraising teams.
- **Make sure** that your organisation's investment in fundraising is sufficient and is yielding an acceptable return.

Fundraising priorities and perspective

Finally, use the fundraising plan to get your priorities right and to help you nurture and value what Si Seymour calls "perspective":

"Perspective means lots of things to development offices, and all the things mean a lot. It means, for instance, that you never overlook the law of diminishing returns, that choices always have to be made between what is desirable and what is really necessary, and especially, perhaps, that the good laws and principles of organised fundraising are a priceless gift of the long years, and can be ignored or trifled with at your peril"

Summary: the fundraising plan

1. Your ethos and the fundraising principles that flow from this.
2. Why do you need the money?
3. Fundraising targets
4. Target audience/s
5. Fundraising programmes
6. Organisational chart
7. Task descriptions
8. Communications and fundraising tools
9. Acknowledgement / recognition policy & procedures
10. Tax effective "Ways of Giving"
11. Timetable
12. Income & expenditure projections
13. Reporting procedures

Want to talk it through ... ?

For an informal discussion about how to put "The Fundraising Plan" into action, please contact **Paul Molloy**:

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Fundraising Platforms

Annual funding	Capital funding	Endowment funding
Budget-driven to sustain operations	Opportunity-driven to fund special projects and programmes	Vision-driven to secure the future
Fundraising tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media appeals • Public collections • Mail drops • “Mail & Dial” telephone campaigns • Events • Member-get-member programmes • Regular giving programmes • Joint promotions and cause-related marketing • Recognition “clubs” 	Fundraising tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-to-person solicitation for “big gifts” • Cash gifts, multi-year pledges, specific grants and gifts-in-kind. • Joint promotions • Cause-related marketing • Giver clubs • Designated gifts and other naming opportunities 	Fundraising tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bequest programme to solicit legacies and other forms of “planned gifts” • Will making service • Direct mail (segmented) • Publications • Broad advertising and promotion

