

*Section***Four**

How To *Get Started*

IV How to *Get Started*

Positioning

Before beginning a fundraising program, it is important to define your institution's position in its community and, if necessary, to alter your position so that your library is more effective. Ask yourself the following questions.

- What other fundraising programs are going on?
- What level of service are we providing?
- How satisfied are our customers?

Positioning is part of a marketing approach to a development program (see glossary). Once you have firmly identified your position in the community, you can adapt your fundraising programs so that they are most effective in reinforcing and promoting that position.

In order to position yourself properly, you need to understand your organization. Consequently, it is a good idea to do an audit of your library.

You need to determine the needs of the institution that could be met through private dollars. Once you fully understand your library, it is possible to begin to reinforce, or if necessary to alter, your library's position so that it is favourable for fundraising. The role of the Board cannot be over-emphasized in this process. The library must have leadership (Board, etc.) that positions itself in several dimensions to earn the confidence it seeks - the confidence that gifts given to the library will be used effectively.

This positioning would include:

- building a governing Board composed of powerful members of influence, affluence or both;
- setting a marketing strategy to promote the library's integrity, values, services, and potential;
- communicating the library's values in every media form to those 10% of its constituents who have the power to affect the destiny of the library (such constituencies could be the Board, Friends, staff, corporations and individual prospective donors);
- studying the library's wealthy constituents to ascertain their interests, concerns, ideals and personal nuances;
- ascertaining the personal needs of those few constituents so as to set a strategy for eventually requesting an investment;
- creating an asset-builder/building psychology among all other constituents.¹¹

It is at this point that the library's mission and policy statements should be re-examined to ensure that they are aligned with the library's intended position.

Fundraising Kit

Do an Audit of Your Own Institution

1. Determine your institution's strengths and weaknesses

	Superb	Good	Adequate	Poor
• Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Collections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Building/Facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Quality of Service Provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Uniqueness of the Institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Public Policy Issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of your institution with respect to fundraising:

	Superb	Good	Adequate	Poor
• History of the Institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Competition in the Community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Volunteer Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Funding Sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Support Systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Communication (publications, public-relations expertise)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Commitment of Administrative Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Commitment of Other Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Fundraising Expertise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Identified Needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Feasibility Study

Related to positioning is the need to determine:

- how much money you need to raise and for what purpose;
- the level of support and commitment for your library in the community.

Although your assessment of your needs is an internal process, you can objectively determine the degree of community support for your library and the possible success of specific fundraising techniques by undertaking a feasibility study. The feasibility study is a carefully structured survey undertaken with confidential and non-committing interviews with friends and supporters of the organization. You may conduct as few as thirty or as many as seventy. By such “testing of the waters”, you are provided with a reasonably reliable evaluation of the chances of success of your fundraising campaign. In fact, a feasibility study can help you to determine a realistic fundraising goal (how much money you can, in fact, raise), which you can then compare with how much money you feel you need. Never set your goal above what you can raise or else your campaign will be perceived as having failed. In addition, a feasibility study can help you identify potential leaders for the campaign (e.g., people who could be appointed to a fundraising committee, if one is set up).

To be valid, a feasibility study must be conducted by an outsider. Survey respondents will speak more candidly to a professional outsider who establishes confidence and guarantees confidentiality.¹²

The feasibility study is a community-based approach that:

- can be used in the early stages of a campaign, or in the final stages of preparedness;
- assesses the degree of acceptance and enthusiasm among your constituents for a plan or program;
- identifies the group of people who will make your programs/campaigns successful;
- provides a tool which you can use to pace your campaign for the greatest possible return;
- helps you devise a strategy to break out of traditional constraints through identifying allies and partners, and what will enlist them in your program;
- helps with subsequent solicitation of contributions since such studies tend to arouse and confirm interest in the purpose of the drive.¹³

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In her seminar (see "Background"), Suzanne Walters described the results of a feasibility study conducted by the Junior League of St. Louis. The first step was to identify the constituencies. Then several interviews were set up with representatives from the constituencies. Based on the responses given during these interviews, the overall level of interest was assessed including each individual's willingness to give, willingness to work on the campaign, recognition of the campaign goal as an urgent need, etc. In the case of the Junior League of St. Louis, over 80% of those interviewed recognized the urgent need for the fundraising activity and indicated an overall interest. This level of support is necessary for a campaign to be successful.

Human Resources

Before getting into the specifics of a fundraising campaign, a few key human resource questions have to be decided.

- Are you going to hire development staff to organize the fundraising campaign?
- What will be the role of your volunteers, including the Board?

An organization may decide to do without a development office and rely solely on volunteer help. Board members need to be concerned with what volunteers can do, how they are organized, and how they are trained. The major responsibilities of the volunteers can be as follows:

- identifying potential prospects (see under "Prospect Research");
- dreaming up, organizing, and managing every detail of fundraising events and benefits;
- assembling, processing and distributing printed materials and newsletters;
- maintaining mailing lists, records and files and providing general assistance;
- raising public awareness by receiving visitors, guiding, making speeches;
- helping with a capital campaign by being the persons doing the asking.¹⁴

Alternatively, hiring development staff can be particularly effective for larger campaigns. Development professionals are fully familiar with fundraising and can take the time that is often lacking on the part of volunteers or staff to:

- research potential donors thoroughly and systematically (see under “Prospect Research”);
- generate ideas;
- write proposals;
- draft correspondence;
- put fundraising techniques into action;
- maintain files and record systems;
- train volunteers.

Whether you use a professional fundraiser or not, you need committed, well-trained volunteers with connections at all levels of the community--especially the levels with most of the money. Volunteers, including Trustees, are especially helpful when it comes to asking for a donation or soliciting funds. Volunteers who have made a donation are the most effective fundraisers in your community.¹⁵

*In 1991, the **Edmonton Public Library** had a development officer on staff to develop the infrastructure necessary for successful fundraising. This individual helped to assess the library's position in the community, developed a prospect list (outlined in more detail under “Prospect Research”) on data base, helped to set up a Friends of the Library program, and organized the first few fundraising events (in this case, charity auctions). Although his position was only of one year's duration, this individual helped to lay the groundwork for fundraising with respect to that library.*

Fundraising

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Costs of Fundraising

There are several general cost factors to consider with respect to fundraising, particularly if you are planning to start a development program and hire development staff devoted to fundraising.

Examine each of the fundraising techniques (e.g., activities, direct mail) in light of how effective they will be in raising the money you require and what will be required in terms of money and personnel to get these techniques off the ground. To an extent, the amount of money and the purposes for the money may dictate the fundraising techniques you choose. Consider the following.

Factor	Explanation
Return on investment of time and effort	Everyone's time is limited. You don't want to waste it on activities that won't get you the money you need to do the job.
Potential for more than \$10 per capita	If you are going to build a new library, you will need about \$10 per person living in your service area. Don't waste your time on bake sales and collecting returnable bottles.
Need for many volunteers	Some fundraising projects require more people than others. Sometimes a few well-connected solicitors are more effective than an army of volunteers knocking on every door in town. Recruiting many volunteers, however, is good public relations for your campaign. Balance the two.
Need for special training for volunteers	It doesn't take much training for volunteers to go out and collect returnable bottles, but if you want them to telephone people to solicit for the library's building fund you will need a high level of training.
Need for up-front cash	If a project takes a lot of "seed money" and you are already operating on a shoestring, maybe you should try another activity first. ¹⁶

But what if you have hired development staff? What costs must be taken into consideration? The development office is one of the few programs of non-profit organizations that pays for itself. This alone suggests that budget allocation to fundraising is an investment, but how big that investment should be is a difficult judgment to make. Start with a rough estimate of development costs running, over a reasonable period of time, at one-fifth of contributed receipts. Then refine that ballpark figure by closer examination of probable cost for dollar raised of each development program in the total fundraising effort.¹⁷

Friends of the Thunder Bay Public Library aim for a new branch

The Thunder Bay Friends of the Library are part of a coalition of groups whose aim is to establish a new branch in the northwest corner of the city. Along with two citizens' groups, the Housing Cooperative and the local Rate Payers' Association, as well as the Library Board and Administration, the Coalition has embarked on "Bucks for Books" - an extended campaign to raise \$125,000 to open a branch in the County Fair Mall.

Capitalizing on a donation of \$10,000 in advertising from the Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal, the coalition put their advertising dollars into inserts with the weekly television schedule. The donation itself and the way the advertising dollars were used has helped to increase awareness of the project in the community. Thunder Bay's former Mayor is the honorary campaign chairman.