

SHOULD A CHURCH HIRE AN OUTSIDE CONSULTANT?

Thoughtful church leaders, when faced with the need to raise significant funds for capital needs, consider this important question. Many church growth, church building, and secular financial consultants join a host of pastors and lay leaders in celebrating the benefits of professional capital campaigns. But haunting questions remain: “*Why should we hire someone from the outside to tell our people to give?*” “*Why should we pay an outsider to raise money when our pastor (staff member, a lay leader, etc.) can do the same thing?*” “*We don’t want someone to pressure our congregation about giving; people will be offended!*” On and on the discussion goes.

Several facts confirm the wisdom in using a consultant to meet challenging financial needs.

1. Most churches do not have staff or lay people with the time and expertise to design and direct an effective campaign. The task usually falls to the senior pastor who can compromise his/her pastoral role as “the fund-raiser.”
2. A church stewardship consultant can positively influence the financial results of a capital campaign. Studies show that a typical consultant directed campaign will raise 50% or more above a self-led campaign.
3. An experienced stewardship consultant will bring a spiritual focus to a capital campaign.
4. An experienced consultant will provide a well organized and proven plan of action to reach the total congregation, involving and reaching people outside the faithful givers.
5. A professional consultant will create a positive infrastructure of accountability about the timely completion of assignments in the campaign.
6. A consultant must only raise the amount of the fee, over what a church could raise on its own, to be a worthwhile investment. Campaign results show that the return will be many times more than the cost of professional services.

7. There is often a great deal of emotion about hiring an outsider to direct a capital campaign. Consider the experience of one Texas Methodist church that faced this problem several times.

*Several years ago a United Methodist church with a \$400,000 annual budget needed almost \$1,000,000 for purchase of new land and building. The Senior Pastor had observed several friends who had experienced a professionally led capital stewardship campaign. He decided that he knew enough and would commit the time to design and direct the campaign himself. **Despite his best efforts, the campaign resulted in approximately \$200,000 in three year pledges.** Since that was not enough to proceed with the project, three years passed. The church decided to hire a professional consultant (for a \$30,000 fee) to lead a new capital campaign, although some members were not in favor. **This campaign resulted in over \$800,000 being committed.** As this three year giving period ended, new projects had developed and additional capital funds were needed. A new capital campaign was planned. The regular budget had grown to \$600,000, and new people had joined the church. Even though the leaders had the experience of the two previous campaigns, they determined to do it themselves. They had excellent promotional materials and felt good about their efforts. **But they only raised \$300,000. They saved a \$30,000 fee but lost at least \$500,000 (based on their experience in the previous campaign).** Over the next three years they were unable to fund ministries and programs, pay apportionments and meet their debt obligation. With professional help a fourth campaign for debt reduction only raised almost \$1,000,000.*

The cost of a professionally directed campaign proved to be good stewardship!



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