

Funding Your Campaign

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Money matters in politics. Financial resources are necessary for almost all campaign activities, especially advertising and organization building. (See Chapter 2 on developing a campaign budget.) Candidates with more financial resources can deliver their message to more voters more often. Success in fundraising is a signal to organizations, party leaders, and political reporters that you are a serious candidate.

As a candidate, you will be running an operation the size of a small business for several months. Unless you raise money, your organization will have no income. Saving money by using your home as your campaign headquarters and using volunteer labor may be good options for small races. But even if you do not plan to advertise or hire staff, the cost of materials can be steep.

Some candidates for local office attempt to campaign inexpensively and use their own funds. For some candidates, this may be a viable option. Too often, candidates underestimate the costs of campaigning, attempt to raise money when it is too late, and incur major debt in their effort to win. No matter what your expected level of expenses, you should develop a realistic budget and a fundraising strategy that allows you to raise the necessary funds in a timely fashion and avoid going into debt.

Planning Your Fundraising Strategy

Deciding to raise money puts you in the game. To succeed, you need to plan your strategy and focus your energy on achieving your goals. This requires budgeting, brainstorming, and a willingness to pursue many leads even if most are unsuccessful. Candidates will raise more money if they plan carefully, take a prominent role in their own fundraising, and recruit a group of supporters to help.

It Starts with a Plan

Fundraising is too important to leave to happenstance. Effective and successful fundraising requires a plan, based on a campaign budget and a timeline that specifies when amounts of money must be raised to meet cash flow requirements. The goal should be to keep ahead of your expected expenses so that you always have some cash on hand. If you do not meet your fundraising goals, you can always adjust them, but if

you don't have a plan you will never know what your fundraising goals should be.

One quick way to estimate the cost of your campaign is to check the campaign finance reports of those who have campaigned in the past for the office you are seeking, especially those who won. Remember, campaign costs go up in every cycle due to inflation and political trends. If you are trying to estimate your own expenses, always budget more than you initially think you will need. If you plan to advertise, check rates in advance.

If you plan to rent office space, research its likely cost. If you plan to hire staff, think about how many employees you will need and estimate the wages you will need to pay them.

Your fundraising plan should be more than a list of prospective donors and a budget. It should include the methods you will use to raise the money your campaign needs, such as fundraising letters, phone lists, online donations, and events. A diverse fundraising effort gives you the opportunity to ask for and receive donations from all types of contributors—from a house party attendee to an official political committee.

■ TAKE NOTE:

Raise funds in advance of expenses—not as they occur—so you always have some cash on hand.

■ ADVICE FROM PROFESSIONALS: "The Money Hunt: Drafting a Fundraising Plan," by Joanne Davis

You don't have to plan to fail; all you have to do is fail to plan.

Unknown

Does having a finance plan mean that your campaign will be guaranteed the money you need to win? No, but having a plan and following it will ensure that your fundraising operation is organized, efficient and able to maximize all fundraising opportunities. *That* will get you the funds you need.

Ideally, a candidate should not head the fundraising operation. If you have the resources, hire a professional fundraiser. If not, ask a trust-

ed friend who is goal-oriented, has good management and organizational skills, and is attentive to detail to be your finance director.

Then make sure he or she understands that any good fundraiser can go out and raise money. But a good fundraiser, working with a good finance director, can really maximize the dollars that will flow into a campaign. If you serve as both fundraiser and finance director, it is imperative that you combine the strategy of planning the finance program with the implementation skills needed to execute the plan.

Many people abhor planning. There are 10,000 excuses folks come up with—planning takes time, planning takes strategic thinking, planning demands the use of systems and time management. Many campaigns lurch forward at their inception without a thought to developing a fundraising plan—or they hire a fundraising consultant and expect dollars to miraculously start flowing into the bank account. Sometimes it works and money is raised; yet without a plan you may miss important sources of contributions and fail to build relationships with donors that will ensure consistent fundraising in the future.

Building a finance plan is really not that complicated. The challenge is to make sure that the finance organization is well integrated with the rest of the campaign. Don't let the finance operation stand alone—those charged with raising money must know what the communications, polling, scheduling, and political arms of the campaign are doing in order to maximize fundraising.

After it has been established and confirmed by the candidate and the campaign manager that fundraising and finance are interrelated with every aspect of the campaign, the fundraiser and finance director (if there is one) should write a plan. Key to that plan are the following elements:

- **Identify the amount to be raised.**

Sounds obvious, but you must have a clear understanding of what the candidate and the campaign management team are expecting to spend before you can write a plan. Question the amount needed—has the amount been calculated after careful examination of the race? If you believe so, then you are ready to discuss honestly whether or not it is an achievable goal. You must also be able to confidently promise donors that their investment will be wisely managed—you have a fiduciary responsibility to the donors as well as the candidate that the money will be properly managed.

- **Identify the team that is going to raise the money.**

If you are fortunate enough to have a Finance Chairman, a person who will lead the finance committee, work with that individual to draw up the plan and make certain that he or she is committed to help with the fundraising efforts.

From there, develop a committee. Ask each member to take responsibility for raising a specific amount of money. Make them accountable and make sure they are working. Give them the support they need and stay in constant communication with them. The candidate must be willing to acknowledge the committee's efforts as well, with public acknowledgement and private thanks.

- **Assemble a list of every possible source of funds.**

If you are working with a new candidate, you will no doubt start with that individual's holiday card list, then move on to his or her colleagues, neighbors, friends, and business associates.

Even if you are working for a candidate who already has a "house-file" of donors, you must constantly be researching possible new donors. The Internet is a treasure chest of information—you can look up donors to nonprofit organizations, other candidates, political parties, ideological causes, etc. Note: federal law prohibits the use of federal campaign reports for the purpose of soliciting contributions. The possibilities are endless, but you must incorporate this "prospecting" into your overall finance plan.

- **Incorporate all methods of fundraising into your plan.**

There are many methods of fundraising, some generate more contributions than others. They should all be part of your plan. Common methods include events, telephone calls, telemarketing, web contributions, donor clubs with member benefits, and direct mail. The challenge is to *go beyond the common methods!* What else is out there that can be incorporated into the finance plan in order to generate funds? A great example is Howard Dean's use of Internet-based fundraising to generate income for his presidential primary campaign. It's this kind of effort that will make your finance plan the envy of everyone—including your opponent! Set up a Web site where donors can give directly (on-line) to your campaign. Include your Web site address in all your campaign materials.

- **Use tools provided by other arms of the campaign organization.**

This is where the integration of the finance operation with the entire campaign organization is vital. Know the political direction that the campaign is taking so that you can more appropriately target donors—for example, by ideology. Use all of the endorsements that the political team has secured in order to bring credibility to the campaign. While you can never guarantee a win, donors like to know that the campaign is viable—endorsements will reassure them. Feed polling data (if you have it) to donors and potential donors to let them know how the campaign is going and encourage more contributions. Work with the communications team to know the talking points and distribute them to your donors—they will really feel a part of the campaign with this information. Work with the scheduler to make sure that the candidate has time for fundraising calls or will remember to show up at the fundraising events you plan.

- **Set up a tracking system to track contributions.**

You must be able to tell how much money has come in, from what events, and what else is out there. At any given time the campaign management team is going to want to know how much they can spend. If you set up a comprehensive tracking system, you will be able to supply that information at the touch of a computer key.

- **Don't forget to say thank you—and ask again!**

A simple thank you letter and/or phone call is imperative to the success of your efforts. Donors want to know that the candidate and the campaign recognize their contribution, no matter what the level. So, someone who gives \$25, and receives a postcard thank you promptly, is much more likely to contribute another \$25. A donor who gives a maximum contribution and receives a personal thank you letter is much more likely to go out and recruit others to give the maximum than a donor who gives and is never recognized. Unless the campaign is so well funded that it doesn't need any money, each thank you should include a line inviting the donor to participate further—either by recruiting others to give or to give again themselves.

A good finance director is not necessarily a good fundraiser, and vice versa. Building a strong finance plan and putting the systems in place to

implement the plan will enable the fundraisers to work more efficiently and effectively—and raise more money!

Joanne Davis is president of The Davis Group and has over twenty years of experience overseeing the fundraising efforts of top elected officials, state political parties, and nonprofit organizations in California and nationwide.

Creating a Finance Committee

A diverse group of supporters that help raise funds will expand the number of potential donor prospects for the campaign. Finding a campaign treasurer is the first step; the second is to appoint a fundraising director to oversee the development and implementation of the fundraising plan.

Next, form a finance committee of people with a large pool of friends and acquaintances to ask for money. Committee members can use their contacts to set up meetings with prospective donors; they can host fundraising events and get others to do so. Pick committee members with different contacts, rather than your closest friends and work colleagues. You want your committee to cast its net as wide as possible.

The joint nature of the enterprise creates mutual accountability and even a little friendly competition. Periodic reports (by email) and meetings to assess progress will keep the effort on track. Committee members can allocate calls to prospective donors among themselves and make decisions about prospects that the candidate should contact. Such meetings are an opportunity for the candidate to express appreciation for what committee members are doing.

Identifying Your Donors and Developing a Target List

Raising money is based on a simple principle: contributions require contributors and larger numbers of contributors produce more contributions. As you brainstorm, write down specific names along with categories of potential contributors, such as members of community groups or

clients. As your list grows, your donations should grow exponentially because every contributor can help convince others to contribute.

Whom to Ask?

Your friends, family, coworkers, professional associates, members of groups to which you belong, those who contributed to previous campaigns of like-minded candidates, and those who support your positions on the issues (or strongly oppose your opponents' positions) are all potential donors to your campaign. Prepare a list of potential donors, their contact information, their previous giving history, and people on the campaign who know them. Call those most likely to give first, but contact *everyone* on the list.

■ TAKE NOTE:

The people who are most likely to contribute are those who have contributed before.

Some candidates believe that once someone has donated to a campaign, he or she has contributed his or her due and should be crossed off the list. This is directly contradicted by professional advice, which says that those who are most likely to contribute are those who have contributed before. In other words, if someone donates to the campaign, he or she should become a target of future fundraising, not taken off the list.

Tactics for Soliciting Large and Small Donations

Large donations are typically acquired through direct contact with the candidate or someone in the candidate's inner circle. As you develop your list of names, make sure that you indicate the range of likely contributions from each person. Supporters with higher incomes, more interest in politics, a history of political donations, and more stake in the outcome of the election are all more likely to be large donors. Candidates should make personal phone calls to everyone they know in the large donor category, unless the potential donor is a close friend of someone working on the campaign.

If large donors are noncommittal, tell them that you will call back after they have had a chance to think it over. If they say they will donate later, follow-up with phone calls and send donation envelopes. If their friends have contributed, mention that they are supporters. If someone

gave you his or her name as a potential contributor, prominently mention your contact and why they thought the prospect would contribute.

Small donations are usually made in the form of checks written at fundraising events and in response to fundraising letters. Sources of potential fundraising lists include donors to similar past candidates and organizational mailing lists. Small donors still like to feel connected to the candidate so do anything you can to personalize your letters.

When planning your events, appoint different people to oversee them, select locations all over your district, and tell everyone to invite their friends. Appeals to small donors should include a statement of the stakes of the election, an indication that the campaign is on track but needs more help to win, and easy methods of contributing.

If people cannot offer financial assistance, give them a list of other ways they can help the campaign (placing a sign in their yard, making phone calls, walking door-to-door, etc.). You can accept in-kind contributions, subject to any applicable contribution limits, such as office supplies and advertising, which can help to reduce expenses to the campaign.

Fundraising Tools: Phone Calls, Direct Mail, and Events

The primary methods of fundraising are face-to-face meetings, phone calls, letters, and events. Each requires a different set of skills and type of preparation but all are critical to your fundraising success. In general, face-to-face meetings and candidate phone calls should be reserved for large donors; letters and phone calls from supporters should be used for small donations, though large donations should always be requested. All supporters should be invited to your events.

Writing an Effective Fundraising Letter

The core of any direct mail package to your supporters should be a fundraising letter. As with all of your campaign materials, the most important aspect of the letter should be clear prose that makes reading easy. Use bullet points, headings, bold, and italics liberally but not in a way that makes the piece difficult to read. Personalize your letters. Use names in the address and greeting and then use “you” and “I” throughout the letter.

Your letter should say that the campaign is going well but needs more resources to keep the momentum going. Emphasize the need for immediate contributions; inform the reader that a contribution is more valuable if it arrives earlier rather than later in the campaign. Stress the benefits that supporting your candidacy will bring (for example, by helping ensure the election of a person with values or issue positions similar to those of the letter's recipient). Avoid, of course, any implication that support for your candidacy will result in any special favors or access.

Do not be afraid to repeatedly ask for contributions in the letter. Ask for a specific amount or range of contributions, but leave open the option of a lower amount. Include a request for "in-kind" contributions, such as, free printing services, office space, refreshments for volunteers, and other tangible gifts that might benefit the campaign.

■ LEARN MORE ON THE WEB:

See our sample letters and event invitations at campaigns.berkeley.edu.

letter current, you might include references to popular culture or recent events that have been in the local news. Before printing and sending out

Keep in mind that your base may require a slightly different message than swing voters. Tailor your letter to your audience and to the political context. Comparisons with your opponent(s) are still helpful, even if you know that the recipient is a solid supporter. To make your letters, test them out on friends and campaign volunteers and ask them to suggest improvements.

■ BRIGHT IDEA: Online Contribution Forms

On your Web site, make it possible—and easy—to contribute. Include a form so you can contact prospective donors by phone. You can use third party services to accept credit card contributions (for a fee).

Other materials should accompany your letter in the direct mail package. Make sure to include a matching reply card and envelope. Request contact information, including email and phone numbers, on the card. Provide an opportunity for people to offer other help, including volunteering, hosting an event, and displaying a yard sign.

In the package, a personalized letter should be the first thing the recipient sees. Do not be discouraged by a small response rate to your direct mail fundraising efforts. It can cost up to forty cents for every dollar you raise using direct mail.

Planning Fundraising Events and House Parties

The key to a successful fundraising event is to keep it simple and minimize costs. Do not limit yourself to either big- or small-ticket events; a variety will enable you to appeal to a broad spectrum of the donor community. Start planning early and ask many people to host events. Individuals can host house parties and committee members can host public events. Put the names of your hosts on all materials, including invitations. If your event requires tickets, recruit lots of people to sell tickets. Consultants estimate that each ticket seller will only sell about five tickets for each event.

Select locations that are accessible and well known to your supporters. Do not underestimate the value of an intriguing location or activity. (An example might be a newly renovated historic home.) This helps to attract participants and encourages people to show up. Inviting local celebrities or other special guests to your events can improve attendance.

At the event, your primary concerns will be seating and space. Make sure that you have room for everyone but that the room does not appear empty. If the event is private, make the participants feel involved in the campaign by updating them on recent and future events.

Contribution cards and envelopes should be abundantly available throughout your campaign. They should be preprinted with the campaign's address and include all the information required by state and local campaign reporting laws. Envelopes should be included in campaign mailings and carried by the candidate and volunteers to all events.

■ BRIGHT IDEA: Fundraising Envelopes

Include fundraising envelopes in campaign mail and carry them with you to distribute to new supporters you meet on the campaign trail.

Meeting with Prospective Donors

The best way to generate high dollar contributions is to meet face-to-face with potential contributors. This approach to fundraising must go hand in hand with other efforts. Make a phone call to set up these meetings and send campaign materials before you meet. Some meetings will

be impromptu, perhaps occurring at an event. No matter what the circumstances, be prepared with a pitch and contribution materials.

At your meetings, try to establish a rapport with your prospect quickly and move to your pitch. It is helpful to make your donors feel connected to you and to your campaign, but this should not distract you from asking for money. Your pitch should include your rationale for running and a brief statement of what you hope to accomplish as an officeholder, but most of it should emphasize your common ideas and interests with the prospective donor. This means you will need to prepare for the meeting by obtaining and reviewing information on the donor's background and major issue concerns. Make your donors feel they are part of your inner circle, but do not tell them they will receive special favors for their contribution.

The most important part of the conversation is when you ask the person to contribute a specific dollar amount. Afterwards, pause and be patient. Let your donors ask questions and voice their concerns, but make it clear that you would like a check from them before you leave. The most common excuse given by donors is that they cannot afford to make a contribution. You can respond by offering to accept a lesser dollar amount and by pointing out that you are most interested in their financial support, rather than the specific amount.

Be prepared to answer your prospective donors' questions. Most will want to know about your chances of winning. They may ask how much money you have already raised, who is helping you with the campaign, what groups have endorsed you, and what your plan is to win the election. You should have good answers to these questions and be armed with the latest indications that your campaign is gaining momentum.

If your prospects offer to contribute, ask them to give you a check at that time and make sure you gather the required information. Request names of other potential contributors and ask permission to use their names in your solicitations.

■ **ADVICE FROM PROFESSIONALS: “Asking for Money,” by Michelle Maravich**

Dear Abby,

I am thinking of running for political office. Where should I begin? Every time I think of having to raise money to support my candidacy, my palms get clammy, my heart starts racing, my throat goes dry and I want to quit! What should I do?

Signed,

Wanna B. Elected!

Dear Wanna B.,

You are not alone. Many who have gone before you have suffered the same stage fright. Here are a few ideas to help you launch your fundraising ship:

Tip one: Hire a stunt double.

Tip two: Self-finance.

Tips three, four and five: Mortgage your house, marry rich, hit the lottery.

If these tips are not helpful, then try this: sit down, get organized, and dive in. Virtually every candidate has to raise money for his campaign, and it is an important test of both the candidate’s viability and commitment to his candidacy. Convincing voters that you are the right choice at the ballot box starts with convincing your friends and others that you are an important investment and that your message deserves to be heard.

Here’s an outline of steps to follow when fundraising:

Step One: Identify donors and rank your list.

Whether this is a first time candidacy or a re-election, the overall process of raising funds remains the same. Begin by identifying donors out of your sphere of influence and ranking the approach and amount of money to be asked.

Identifying: The candidate compiles a list of potential donors, including everyone she knows—friends, family, business associates; the names of past donors (if they exist) or people who have contributed to candidates for this office in the past (ask previous candidates for a list of names, you can also get this information from the government entity that regulates your election); and the names of donors who should care (business, labor, PACs). As the campaign progresses, the list will grow.

Ranking: After compiling your list of donors, rank them by their ability to contribute, propensity to contribute, and the fundraising tool to reach them. The candidate and the finance team do this task. I use a coding system of letters and numbers. The letters (A-D) define the proximity of the potential donor to the candidate, with “A” being those closest to the candidate and “D” being those furthest away. Next to the letter, place a number indicating the amount the potential contributor will be asked to give. For example, a potential contributor could be assigned an A/100, reflecting his close relationship with the candidate and his ability to contribute \$100. Another potential contributor could be assigned a C/2500, reflecting a business relationship in the district and her ability to contribute \$2,500. While this system is subjective and based upon the judgment calls of the candidate and staff, it provides a structure and a road map for the candidate calls and solicitations.

Step Two: Develop your strategy.

Begin your fundraising by calling the “A” donors with the highest dollar level. Once you finish the As, move on to the Bs and work your way down the list. I recommend candidates call all the way through the D names. Everyone must be asked to support your campaign and the best way to do this is through a direct and personal call.

Each group of donors requires a different approach and different expectations. If there are people on your list whom you feel would be able to solicit their friends, ask them to host a fundraising event in addition to giving to your campaign. As you work into the Cs and Ds, some of these people will need to meet with you before giving to your campaign, since

they are further from your sphere of influence. Leaders of PACs and other interest groups may ask for a meeting with you or ask you to interview with members of their organization to see if you merit their support. Remember that everyone needs a call to start the process. It is important to prepare a letter of introduction about your candidacy and campaign to send to potential donors if requested.

Once your campaign has organized fundraising events, invite potential donors to attend these events when you call them, but remember that events are only vehicles to collect the money. Try to get a financial commitment from them at the time you place the call.

Keep your list clean and well organized. Make sure all donor contact information is up to date. Keep all names on the list, even those who indicate they will not be supporting your campaign, and provide a space for making notes about each prospect. You or your staff may need to be reminded of whether a potential donor declined to make a contribution later in the campaign or the next time you run. It is important to keep accurate, long-term records—someone who says no to you the first time you run may support you later as you move to higher office.

While you may have already placed calls to and even collected contributions from some of the people on your list, be sure to invite everyone on your list to your fundraising events since it provides an opportunity for them to see you and see the momentum of your campaign. They may be inspired to increase their contribution!

Step Three: Develop a compelling message.

Before you ask for money, develop your basic political and fundraising messages and understand how, when, and why they are used. You must be able to answer these questions:

1. Why are you running for office?
2. What is your personal history? Why are you qualified for this office?
3. Who is supporting you? What individuals, organizations, business leaders, and other notable people have already given money, endorsed your campaign, and offered other forms of support?
4. Why should someone support you?
5. How much money do you need to win?

Donors, like investors, need to know how much money is needed and why. All the primary players (the candidate, steering committee, and staff) must know and be able to clearly state exactly what the success of this campaign means and how much money it is going to take to win.

■ Tips for meeting with prospective donors:

- Do not be late.
- Be optimistic.
- Be aggressive.
- Be sincere.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Be convincing.
- Be flexible.
- Do not lie or mislead.
- Stay away from volatile issues.
- Do not take the prospect or their money for granted.
- Don't leave without a check.
- Ask for names of other potential contributors.

Step Four: Ask for money.

Whether you are asking for money in person or over the phone, follow these guidelines:

1. Establish a rapport. Acknowledge who they are and how you know them or why they should be interested in giving to you.
2. Tell them how they will benefit from your election.
3. Demonstrate how you can win. (Cite recent poll numbers, a weak challenger, money in the bank, significant endorsements or any other evidence that proves the viability of your candidacy.)
4. Tell them how their contribution will be used.
5. Ask for a specific amount.
6. Shut up! Wait for their response before you say another word. Give them the opportunity to think through the request and let them respond. They may surprise you with a yes and a larger amount than you expect. If they agree to give, make arrangements to immediately collect their contribution. If they say no, find out why—perhaps the timing is not right for them.
7. Once you have received their contribution, immediately send a thank you! If it is a large contribution, you may want to call and thank them.

Remember, if you don't ask, people won't give.

The corollary to this rule is: What is the worst that could happen?

Here's what I post for every candidate:

Long phone calls mean fewer phone calls.

Always ask for dough.
 If you don't ask, people won't give.
 Just because they won't give, doesn't
 mean they don't like you.

Leadership takes time, time is money,
 money is scarce and that's not funny.

Time is limited, fundraising is hard
 work, life is short, and campaigns are
 shorter.

Now show me the money!

Michelle Maravich has led the fundraising efforts for the California Democratic Party and the California Coordinated Campaign for the past five years and is one of California's leading political fundraisers.

■ ADVICE FROM THE FRONT LINES: "Why I Donate to Political Campaigns," by Shaun R. Lumachi

When I believe in candidates and their political views I donate to their campaigns. There are also times when I disagree with candidates on specific policies, but still make a donation based upon our friendship and my belief in them as a person.

I have a friend who recently won a seat on his hometown city council. Our friendship began in college when we worked together in student government. We sometimes found that we disagreed, philosophically, on policy related issues that impacted the people that we represented. However, he has gained my support through experiences we have had as friends.

I respect his ability to seek advice from people in his decision-making process. He is confident about his ability to make good decisions and

■ BRIGHT IDEA: Role Playing

If you or your volunteers are new to fundraising or are uncomfortable asking for money, run through some mock meetings or phone calls with potential donors. Develop an outline of key points to be made, including:

- The campaign's key messages
- Respected organizations or individuals who have endorsed or contributed to the candidate
- What kinds of campaign activities the donation will support (based on the campaign budget)
- The amount being requested
- A request for names of others who might contribute

Materials to take to a meeting include the campaign plan and budget, the candidate's biography and positions on key issues, and pledge envelopes with blanks for the required campaign reporting information.

is not afraid to fail. As a leader, he focuses on goals and works hard for results. We have these characteristics in common. His city council election was important to me because I wanted to see my friend, a person I strongly believe in, succeed in fulfilling his goal of being a public servant.

I will also donate to a political campaign when I do not know the candidate but believe in his or her policies. I am an advocate for our state's business community. I support policy issues that enable our community to flourish by creating more jobs. I recently donated to a candidate running for the California state legislature who shares my views. I have a desire to see him win because he will apply our shared philosophies when voting for laws that impact my community. He believes in opposing new taxes. The current political climate in our state assembly is heating up when it comes to supporting taxes. Numerous laws have been proposed that would raise taxes and impose new ones to deal with our state's budget deficit. I believe increasing taxes will deter business growth in our state. Electing representatives who will oppose new taxes is vital to the success of our businesses and creating more jobs for our citizenry.

My belief in the person and his ability to succeed is important in my decision to donate to his political campaign. Working closely with my friend in college enabled me to establish a relationship and learn more about him. Through active participation in local government I was able to donate to a candidate who shared my views on certain policies. Building relationships and participating in the political process are the two key factors that influence my support for candidates.

Shaun R. Lumachi is a community leader and president of Chamber Advocacy, a professional advocacy consulting firm that empowers chamber of commerce members by showing them how to leverage their voices in public policy discussions and decision making.

Soliciting Support from Constituency Groups

You can accept support from groups as well as individuals. The benefit of group contributions is that they tend to be larger and can serve

as jumping off points for other contributions from group members. As you develop your target list, make sure you consider including all local groups that contribute to local candidates as well as groups you belong to that might consider supporting you.

Some groups may be prohibited by their internal rules or campaign finance regulations from contributing directly to your campaign. These groups still may provide fertile ground for individual contributions and you should solicit invitations to speak to their members.

Not All Support is Helpful

When meeting with constituency groups or individuals, make clear that what a contributor is supporting is a person who will always exercise his or her best judgment about what is best for the community—someone who will serve the public with integrity and conscientiousness. If you get the sense a potential donor is expecting a specific return on his investment in your candidacy, be clear that your expectations are different. If he continues to imply that he wants something for his contribution, point out that the law does not allow you to make such promises and you cannot accept the contribution unless he understands that it will not buy him anything but an ethical public official.

What about contributions from adult business owners, developers with project applications pending, or others who might reflect poorly on the candidate and the campaign? Voters are suspicious of a candidate whose campaign appears to have been bankrolled by those who have a direct stake in the candidate's future decisions as an elected official. Moreover, your opponents may make an issue of such support in the campaign in an effort to undermine the voters' trust in you. This is where "good ethics is good politics." Although such contributions may look like easy money, accepting them may cause more headaches for the campaign in the long run.

■ **BEST PRACTICE: Be clear about the lack of quid pro quo.**

Do not give contributors the impression that you will do something as an officeholder in exchange for their contribution. If you think they are expecting this kind of treatment, be up front about how your expectations do not match theirs.

Disclosing Contributions Made to Your Campaign

If you do not feel comfortable telling people about who is contributing to your campaign, you are probably soliciting contributions from the wrong types of supporters. Public disclosure will be requested by the media and may be required by law. Since the information is often public already, you should make it as accessible as possible, for example, by prominently displaying the names of your contributors on your Web site. Talk to reporters and voters about the contributions you have received from many small donors and community organizations to illustrate the depth and breadth of support for your candidacy.

■ WHAT DO VOTERS WANT?: Disclosure of Campaign Contributors

Our survey found that voters favor candidates who disclose information about their campaign contributors. The survey asked, "If a candidate publicly released a list of his campaign contributors and amounts received as soon as he got them, would this make you view him much more favorably, somewhat more favorably, or would it make no difference to you?" Forty percent of respondents answered "much more favorably," and 26 percent said "somewhat more favorably." (Thirty percent said it would make no difference.) On a scale of 1 to 3 (where 1 = "no difference," 2 = "somewhat more favorably," and 3 = "much more favorably") the average response was 2.13.

Focus group participants expressed a similar degree of support for candidates who disclose their contributors. Participants noted the symbolic power of disclosure: by making information about their contributors easily accessible to the public, candidates add transparency to their campaigns and demonstrate that they don't have anything to hide.

If you release more information than the law requires, you can point out your openness to the voters and members of the news media and ask your opponents to be just as open as you. This is especially helpful if you believe that you are being more conscientious than your fellow candidate(s) in deciding whom to ask for contributions. In all campaigns, disclosure can serve as a signal to voters of your integrity.

Conclusion: Five Things to Know about Financing Your Campaign

1. No one will give unless asked.

A veteran congressional fundraiser observed that the effective fundraiser is one who will ask ten more people for money after having asked ten people for money and having been turned down by nine. Knowing what donors have given to other candidates can help you decide how much to ask for. Some professionals recommend

going twenty percent above what one might reasonably expect a donor to give based on past history; the donor will sometimes give somewhere between past amounts and the amount requested.

2. The candidate is the most effective fundraiser.

Most large contributors expect a direct appeal from the candidate, usually in person. You can ask your supporters to identify and introduce you to likely contributors, but you should always be directly involved in soliciting large donors. Be prepared to make the sale with information and answers to common questions.

3. Do not exchange contributions for political favors.

The last thing you want is for a contributor to think that his or her contribution controls your decision making, even on a single issue, once you are elected. Your duty as an elected official is to act in the best interest of the community and not to provide special favors to your contributors. Make your expectations clear to donors who may have different ideas about what their contribution will buy.

■ BEST PRACTICE: Disclose campaign contributions.

Keep records of your contributors and their contributions and make this information public. Practice disclosure to build your reputation as an open and ethical public servant.

4. In-kind contributions can be as valuable as money.

Every donated item represents money you do not have to spend and is just as good as the equivalent money raised. As you plan your campaign budget, for each expense item ask whether someone might be in a position to donate it.

5. Thank your contributors.

Acknowledge every contribution, however modest, immediately. It is not just a courtesy; thanking your contributors is a relationship-building tool that keeps the door open for future requests for assistance. Create a system to make sure donors are always thanked in a timely fashion.

