# American Majority

CAMPAIGN FUNDRAISING

Fundraising: How Important is it?

Fundraising is the water that makes your grassroots grow. Grassroots campaigns without adequate funding can quickly find that they've failed to realize their potential. While voter contact mechanisms such as going door-to-door, phone banking, and social media engagement are low-cost and rely largely on volunteer efforts, campaigns still incur expenses related to these undertakings along with start-up costs for printed collateral, a website, office space, phones, food for volunteers, and transportation. These costs often escalate as the campaign matures.

Candidates with races that target large numbers of potential voters will find that direct contact efforts alone will not make them sufficiently competitive to win on Election Night, and that they may have to employ direct mail, radio, online, and perhaps even television advertising in order to build adequate awareness about their campaigns. All other things being equal, the candidate who has more money will often win the day, and we all know of underfunded candidates who lost even though they were the better person for the job.
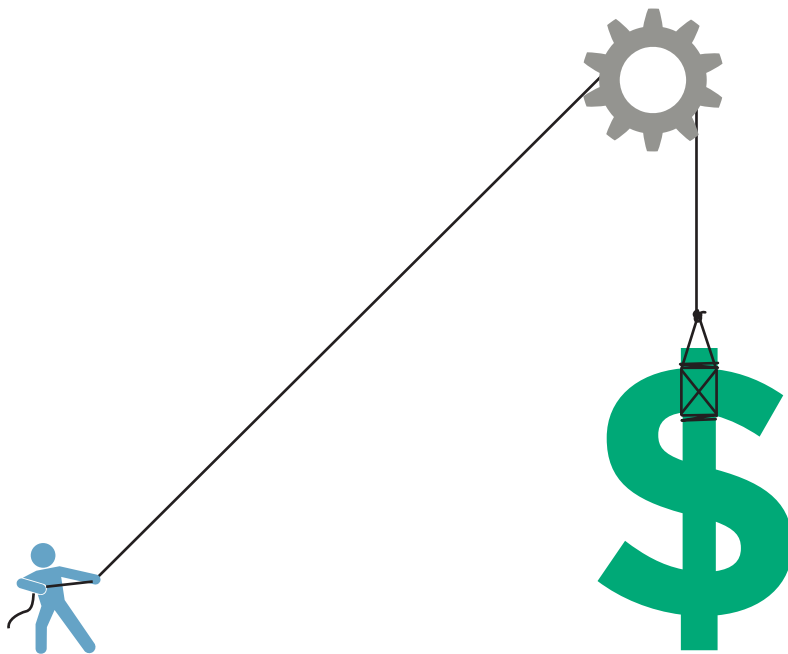
How Do I Get Started?

First, know exactly who you are, why you are running, what you believe, what makes you different from your competition, why you can win, and how potential donors can help you. These are the questions on every donor's mind, so be able to answer them before you ask for the first nickel. Create a Candidate Fact Sheet (please see American Majority Resources at www.AmericanMajority.org) that answers these questions, and a simple Contribution Form to collect all the donor data that your campaign needs and that is required by law. You can fill out the Contribution Form yourself when speaking to prospective donors on the phone.

Who Do I Ask for Money?

Sit down with a legal pad and list all of your spheres of influence. Examples are family, friends, business associates, fellow employees, former classmates, members of organizations you belong to, and acquaintances. In a spreadsheet, list how much you feel you could reasonably expect each of them to give, and ask them for that amount. Don't stop until you've listed at least 50 individuals.

Name_____ Address _____

Home Phone _____Cell Phone_____

Email _____ Amount $ _____

Name_____ Address _____

Home Phone _____Cell Phone_____

Email _____ Amount $ _____

Name_____ Address _____

Home Phone _____Cell Phone_____

Email _____ Amount $ _____

Name_____ Address _____

Home Phone _____Cell Phone_____

Email _____ Amount $ _____

The next group of individuals you will approach are those who historically give large amounts to campaigns in your area. You can find out information about such donors in publicly disclosed state, local, and federal election commission documents. Also, think of the individuals who might side with you because of something they stand to gain from your election, because of shared ideology, or because of opposition to your opponent. Donors in these last two categories of individuals will take longer to cultivate, so start early.

Cultivation of donors cannot be rushed. The earlier you begin, the more money you stand to raise. Spend your time cultivating your largest donors first and then work your way down the ladder. When you are asking for money, know how much you feel an individual can give based on your research. Always ask for more than you believe the individual can afford. In fundraising, if you leave money on the table, it may be hard to pick it up later.
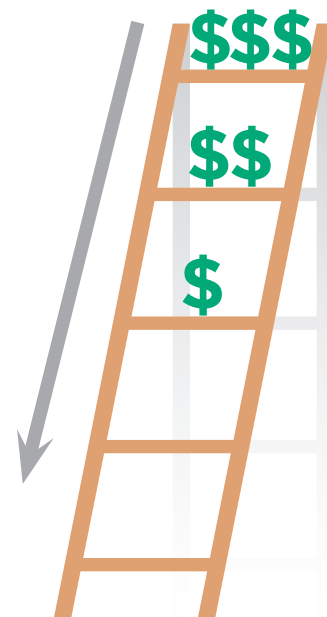
Why Do Donors Give?

Donors give because of personal relationships with the candidate, passion for shared ideology, access to the candidate, opposition to the opponent, peer pressure, and for the social interaction campaign involvement can bring.

But the biggest reason donors give is because they are personally asked by the candidate or someone they respect on the candidate's behalf.

How Do I Meet My Fundraising Goals?

Plot activities on your campaign calendar that will force you to focus your efforts and create artificial deadlines. Here's an example to consider. If you know you must raise $10,000 in a particular month, place one campaign reception on the calendar to raise $5,000 (targeting high-end donors), a candidate call-a-thon to net $2,000, personal visits for $1,000, and an email/letter campaign to collect the last $500.

You cannot control how much money you raise on any given day or week, but you are completely in control of the activities or actions your campaign will execute. Instead of setting goals like, "Raise $250 per day in the month of July," break down your goals into practical, measurable steps.

25	1	5	2
CALLS	VISIT	PEOPLE ADDED TO DATABASE	PACKETS MAILED

Here's an example: Our campaign will make twenty fundraising calls per day, schedule one fundraising visit per day, add five people to the database per day by getting potential donor referrals, and send out two PAC packets per week. Put these goals on a checklist for each week and make sure they are accomplished. Set aside a specific time each day when you will commit your efforts solely to fundraising and do not allow any distractions or more enticing campaign activities to ensnare your attention. If you create and execute measurable inputs you will have measurable outputs in campaign revenue.

Campaign Fundraising Tangibles Checklist

Must-Haves:
- ✓ Campaign Fundraising Software
- ✓ Your Campaign Logo
- ✓ Letterhead
- ✓ #10 Envelope (carrier)
- ✓ #9 Envelope (reply)
- ✓ Donor Cards and Forms
- ✓ Event Shells
- ✓ Candidate Fact Sheet
- ✓ Contribution Forms

Should-Haves:
- ✓ Campaign Website
- ✓ Initial, Small Supply of:
  - o Yard Signs
  - o Banners
  - o Lapel Nametags
  - o Bumper stickers

Nice-to-Haves:
- ✓ Campaign Phone
- ✓ Campaign Computer
- ✓ Printers
- ✓ Office Furniture
- ✓ Organizational Supplies
- ✓ White Boards

Two Things to Master: The Campaign Fundraising Event & Fundraising Letter

Most of the money a candidate raises often comes from successful political fundraising events. According to Brandon Lewis in *How to Raise Money for Political Office*, it will likely be in the 60-70 percent range, if not higher: you will probably have a minimum of three events for the smallest of races (and) ten or fifteen events for state senate and house races.

Political fundraising letters serve a dual purpose: They help you get votes and make impressions on influential people in the community as well as raise money. Even if your campaign is small, send four or five letters to your potential donor universe. Keep track of your expenses and understand the true total cost of mailing. On the next page, we've included a simple guide to assembling the fundamental aspects of a campaign fundraising letter. For an in-depth look at direct mail and fundraising events, we recommend that you read *How to Raise Money for Political Office* by Brandon Lewis.

Assembling Fundamental Aspects of a Campaign Fundraising Letter

Step One: Why are you writing the letter, who are you targeting, and what is the central message you hope to communicate? _____

_____

_____

_____

Step Two: What will your direct mail package look like and what will it contain? Outer envelope (style, size, teaser, graphics, etc.) _____

_____

_____

_____

Step Three: Draft the outer envelope language (it should entice the recipient to open the letter): _____

_____

_____

Step Four: Write the first two paragraphs of the letter (the lead should be compelling and summarize the point of the letter):

Step Five: Write the P.S. (it should sum up the letter and ask for money):

Step Six: Write the text of the entire letter in a separate document.

Step Seven: Write the reply device in a separate document.

Step Eight: Consider what should be underlined, italicized, or placed in bold print.

Step Nine: Download your database from Campaign Treasurer software (see last page) and set up a contribution source code for tracking with the name of the letter and date sent in the title.

Step Ten: Merge and double check your outer envelope, reply envelope, letter, and reply device.

Step Eleven: Print one sample copy and have three people review it for errors.

Step Twelve: Merge, print, stamp, and stuff your direct mail package.

Step Thirteen: Make follow up calls to increase redemption rate of letters if appropriate.

Step Fourteen: Track contributions received in Campaign Treasurer software and note return addresses for correction in the database.

Fundraising Events: A Timeline & Step-by-Step Checklist

Event Name_____ Event Date _____

___ Date _____ Identify a target market or area (county, community [Bledsoe County, Lookout Mountain, TN] and/or an association or group (home builders, doctors, political action committee). Target database (Excel). Timeline: two to three months out.

___ Date _____ Schedule a meeting and/or make phone calls to meet with the leaders or influencers of these groups or areas. Get their commitment to help you put together a fundraiser. Pledge of support (Word), candidate call sheets (word). Timeline: six to eight weeks out.

___ Date _____ Set a date for the fundraiser, nail down a location, set prices for committees and tickets, and then create an event information sheet. Event information sheet (Word document). Timeline: six weeks out.

___ Date _____ Build Host Committee. Seventy-five percent of your money comes from building the host committees. Get as many commitments as you can, beginning at the higher levels and working your way down. Ask people who sign up as hosts to find other hosts to commit, and/or get names from them for the candidate to approach. Target database (Excel), event tracking (Excel), candidate call sheets (Word). Timeline: four to six weeks out.

___ Date _____ Create and proof snail mail invitation and email invitation. Gather additional names from hosts to invite to event. Add those names to the event mail database. Target database (Excel), event invitation (Word), contribution card (Word), outer envelope (Word), and inner envelope (Word). Timeline: one month out.

___ Date _____ Send invitations via snail mail and email. Send additional invitations to hosts in the mail and via email so they may recruit additional hosts and guests. Timeline: three weeks out (drop date).

___ Date _____ Begin calling hosts, and get the candidate to call hosts, to encourage them to invite guests. Ask the hosts for the names of their personal contacts who have confirmed attendance and add them to the event tracking sheet. Event tracking (Excel) and candidate call sheets (Word). Timeline: two weeks out.

___ Date _____ Finance Coordinator calls all hosts and influencers to continue to build crowd. Get volunteers to call entire invitation list. Email entire invitation list. Timeline: one week out.

___ Date _____ Make final calls to firm up attendance and secure last minute guests. Email entire invitation list. Timeline: two days out.

Day of Event

___ Date _____ Create event timeline and guest list for candidate, event host, and others.

___ Date _____ Update event tracking and print nametags.

___ Date _____ Check to see if you have pens, tape, scissors, signs, banners, markers, etc.

___ Date _____ Mark tags corresponding to hosts and guests of honor, plus those who owe money.

___ Date _____ Collect checks, log receipts in event tracking, and write thank you notes.

What Are Some Common Fundraising Mistakes?

1. Distraction. Do not let activities such as speaking at Rotary Club, attending luncheons, reviewing proposals, or doing campaign research online distract you from your fundraising efforts. There will always be something more fun to do on a campaign than raising money, but there is little else more important. So, get the hard work of raising money done first, and then reward yourself by engaging in the more exciting aspects of campaigning.

2. Excessive Expense. You want to spend the vast majority of your money on voter contact. Keep fundraising expense and logistics simple and affordable. Events are for raising money for voter contact, not for entertaining guests or the excitement of planning a party.

3. Disorganization. Have a clean, organized space devoted to conducting your fundraising efforts. Have file trays, manila folders, stationary, dry erase boards, and fundraising tools on hand. Use an affordable campaign fundraising software program to manage your donor database. You will make hundreds or even thousands of fundraising contacts during your campaign. If you do not have a deliberate protocol for capturing data, logging contributions, following up on pledges, writing thank you notes, segmenting donors, and measuring an event's effectiveness, your campaign an quickly get overwhelmed by fundraising minutia and lose much of its effectiveness and momentum. Develop a system and use it without fail.

4. Call Reluctance. The majority of candidates have a genuine fear of asking for money. Remember that you're not asking for your personal benefit, but that you are asking them to make an investment so that your shared values can be used to guide the government that serves your potential donor.

5. Procrastination. Fundraising is the one element of running a campaign that cannot be expedited. Building relationships and gaining trust takes time. The earlier you start the process the more people you can reach, and you will raise more money per person which translates into a larger campaign budget for your efforts.

American Majority is the nation's premier political grassroots training organization, providing customized innovative training that empowers conservatives across the country to become new leaders.

americanmajority.org • team@americanmajority.org