

## Effectiveness of Various Fundraising Methods

A variety of fundraising methods are utilized by parishes to support programs, ministries, services, new construction, renovations, property acquisition, debt retirement and building the endowment. These are listed below with brief commentary. An excel spreadsheet offers further qualification of each method by size of gift, potential spiritual impact on the people solicited, cultivation required, other time required, cost to conduct, emotional risk factor, expertise required and frequency required.

Every method has exceptions and variables. The excel sheet merely describes general truths concerning the method employed. For each of these examples there will be exceptions and variables. For example, the presence of the priest is often a positive determinative factor, but what if the priest is controversial or ineffective?

The quantification of “potential spiritual impact” is a tough one but generally it suggests that some conversation occurs, even if implicitly, regarding values, priorities in life, gratitude, relationship with God, the parish, understanding of mission, etc. For example, if the priest and the chair of the stewardship committee personally meet with a couple to discuss the need to fund a second priest for the parish, this is likely to be far more spiritually impactful than if the couple receives an impersonal letter announcing an effort to fund this.

Two people meeting with a couple – the strongest team a parish can field is the priest with an expert Orthodox fundraising consultant; then the priest with the chair of the capital campaign and so on. If the meeting is with just one spouse, then there is the risk of the second spouse, who did not have an opportunity to hear the “case” or offer their thoughts and feelings, not supporting a meaningful gift because they have other priorities for the family. If just one person is meeting with a couple, then the person must be able to effectively ask for a gift.

Special gifts for a special need that is not a capital campaign request but is above and beyond stewardship may range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 if a time span is offered for it to be honored.

Personal letter with telephone follow up – this is significantly less effective than personal meetings when a major gift is involved but moderately sized gifts can be raised this way. The advantage is that more people can be solicited in less time. Personal telephone call follow ups are critical and time-sensitive.

The small group gathering is best used for cultivation of prospective donors. This would mean securing a meeting or connecting by phone with them very soon after the

gathering. The challenge with asking at the gathering is that the request must either be made at the lowest acceptable common denominator or at a modest level. The inability to personally discuss each person's financial participation is limited because this would require confidentiality. People will not disclose that they have a kid in rehab or that their preparing to sell their business in a gathering of people.

Event fundraising ranging from small social gatherings to all parish banquets offers the advantage of speaking to many people simultaneously. In this way they are efficient. But the amount received will be significantly less than person to person meetings with each couple or person. One priest hosted a dinner in his home and received \$400,000 in commitments from those gathered against a \$5 million dollar campaign. The wealthiest person jumped up and committed \$50,000. Taking their cue, everyone else came in below that. The priest was delighted with the result, except that later he realized that from that group he really needed \$4 million and they were actually capable of giving that. It was much more difficult to go back and ask again once they made their commitments.

Low-level fundraising events – these dominate the calendars of so many of our parishes, primarily because people have not yet discovered the joy of biblical, sacrificial giving. One priest counted the number of times his parishioners were asked to give on an average Sunday – it was 14! He wondered what message this sent to visitors. Where in the New Testament does it encourage constant low level fundraising events? If stewardship is alive and active then there is the possibility of increasing the level of New Testament type events: helping the poor and needy, teaching, fellowship, evangelization, mission, worship, etc.

Types of fundraising not recommended include pleading from the amvon, constant reminders in bulletins, unqualified general appeals (though special circumstances or festal celebrations are acceptable) and advertising. If the priest or parish treasurer is frequently raising an alarm regarding deficits or dire emergencies then three things happen. The first time it's done, there is probably a modest response. Then people stop listening. Then people begin to question parish leadership and management. Other methods may feel attractive because there is zero personal risk involved and many people can be reached with minimal effort – such as all parish mailings.

It is the fervent prayer of Stewardship Advocates that priests and those involved in raising the money to finance the ministries and maintain the facilities of the parish would discover the deep, lasting, effective *spiritual benefit* of person to person fundraising. Jesus unhesitatingly asked people for major changes in their life, for repentance and even for major financial commitment. Can we do any less?

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:17-22)