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The Case for a Staff-Led Feasibility Study

by Gary Hubbell

You've decided you need to plan a campaign. Tradition suggests you hire a fundraising consultant to conduct a feasibility study, right?

Maybe not.

Consider using your own talented development/advancement staff to conduct all or some of the interviews. Feasibility study interviews are great cultivation moments and ought not immediately be delegated to a third party. Instead, it may serve you better to ask the consultant to help you design the interview questions and to train your team to conduct the interviews. Later, you may even want counsel to help perform content analysis and assist you with interpreting strategy implications. But don't be too quick to delegate that golden moment of asking your best donors and prospects to think aloud about their response to your emerging plans, relevance to their giving priorities, and issues that may block or unlock campaign potential.

Feasibility study interviews conducted by your own staff may yield key benefits:

1. Strengthens donor relationships with staff (instead of a consultant not known by the donor) using targeted conversations.
2. Donors feel better knowing the conversations are about them first, rather than simply about their money (a huge benefit for a principles-based fundraising philosophy).
3. Staff members gain experience asking sensitive questions about personal giving and interests.
4. Obtains valuable donor/prospect information that can be imported directly into the donor data management system without being filtered (or lost!) by the consultant.
5. Achieves greater scheduling flexibility for completing interviews.
6. Fields multiple interviewers to gain multiple perspectives.
7. Staff members feel a greater sense of ownership of the information.
8. Increases staff credibility among internal constituents.
9. Helps retain staff who achieve valuable career building experience.
10. Saves money in consulting fees, redeploying that savings into other budget needs.

Having experienced, knowledgeable, and available staff to conduct these interviews is essential to the success of this option. As with any option you choose, there will be some trade-offs, but don't be too quick to outsource these golden moments.

Got a better idea? Let me know what feasibility study alternatives have worked best for you? Call me or send me an [email](#). Thanks.

--Gary Hubbell--



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