



Christian School
M.A.P.
To Success

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Challenge Number One

Raising of Funds

Virtually every Christian school faces the challenge of raising funds to accomplish their mission. Most schools have what is commonly known as a GAP. A GAP is defined as the financial difference between what tuition/fees cover and the actual cost of running your school. Because of the fact that most Christian schools have a GAP, there is a need to

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raise funds to take care of the GAP. Besides the GAP, most schools have a wish list of things they would like to see accomplished at their school if they only had the resources. These items can be as diverse as: technology enhancements, salary increases, building improvements, arts and sports upgrades, etc.

Regrettably, many schools engage in what seems like endless fund-raisers to raise these additional funds. Administrators often go along with these endless fund-raisers because they do not know any other way to raise funds. These endless fund-raisers weary students, staff, parents, and your constituency in general. Also, these endless fund-raisers usually involve your students or constituency selling someone else's products. Essentially you become their sales force but only receive 50% or much less of the profits. Endless fund-raisers do not help you developmentally because people are not participating because of relationship. The support of those that do participate because of relationship is squandered since the school only receives a portion of their participation dollars. We have all bought products we did not want or need and would likely have given the same or increased dollars if asked properly.

Relationship is the key to having a development program that results in sustainable giving to your school. Sustained giving will help your school year after year. You must identify the constituency groups existing within your school that believe in your mission and give them the opportunity to give to your school. The number one reason people do not give to your school is because they are not asked in a clear and discernible way. A comprehensive and effective development program will include a development calendar and a clear plan as to how to raise funds without endless fund-raisers.

Challenge Number Two

Retaining Present Students

There is an old axiom that says, "once you catch them, keep them". This is definitely applicable when it comes to the students enrolled in your Christian school. You must retain the students that you have! Open the front door to your school and close the back door! It is far more expensive and time-consuming to recruit new students than to retain the students that you already have enrolled. It is very discouraging to work hard to recruit a new student only to have an existing student not return to your school. It is an expensive proposition to recruit new students.

It is interesting to note that every parent in your school has expectations about what your particular Christian school can offer their family. These expectations may be realistic or unrealistic but nevertheless the parents have them. These expectations and your ability to meet them have much to do with a parent's likelihood of re-enrolling their child for another year at your school. Many times, the more students you have in your school allows you to offer more programs which lead to increased student numbers. There is a critical mass that you need in your school in order to maintain and increase the level of education that you are offering to your constituent base.

Parents also have their children enrolled in your Christian school for a myriad of different reasons. These reasons may be as varied as: the desire for a Christ-centered education, low pupil to teacher ratio, qual-

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ity academics, a safe and secure campus, disciplined classrooms, etc. It is the job of administration to capitalize on the reasons that parents have their children enrolled in your school.

Every school has strengths that need to be emphasized to the existing parent base. It is also important to maintain good communication with the home. Lack of communication is a reason some parents choose to not re-enroll their children. It has been said that people tend to be "down on what they are not up on". This is another reason effective communication is imperative for the Christian school that desires to retain the students they already have in their school.

Remember, the best fund-raiser a school can have is to fill every seat with students whose parents are paying tuition. A comprehensive and effective development program will include strategies for retaining the students that are presently enrolled.

Challenge Number Three

Recruiting New Students

One of the constant needs for Christian schools is the need to recruit new students. Each Christian school needs to trumpet to the community the strengths that their school has to offer. Each school also needs to clearly articulate its mission and then seek to find students that will help their school accomplish its mission.

It is very important for each school to identify the unique existing “fishing ponds” that it has access to in order to recruit new students. These “fishing ponds” can be as varied as the communities in which your school resides.

It is also important in recruiting new students that your school clearly develop not only a recruitment process but also an admissions process. Every phone call or inquiry into your school is an extremely important contact. It is imperative that each inquiry be dealt with in a serious and professional matter. Systems need to be developed to handle each inquiry in an identical manner to make sure that you are properly handling inquiries into your school.

There are several ways to get the message out to your community that

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your school exists. Unfortunately in many communities, it seems that the Christian school “is the best kept secret in town”. It is the job of the school to use every way possible to get the secret out. Advertising dollars need to spent in the most effective way possible. We also know that positive word of mouth continues to be the most effective advertising that your school can do.

It is also very important for parents to understand the financial options available to them for paying tuition. If there is financial assistance available, it should be clearly articulated to potential parents. A comprehensive and effective development program must include defined strategies and procedures for recruiting new students for your school.

Challenge Number Four

Planning Special Events

Nearly all Christian schools have special events, projects, or programs throughout the school year. Some of these events are designed specifically for the purpose of raising funds. If the event is done correctly it can also give public relations value to the school and help the school developmentally.

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It is important that the distinct purpose of each event be determined beforehand and explained to all who are involved. It is also important that each event be organized, staffed, and administered well. If each person involved in an event clearly knows that there is quality leadership for an event, they are more likely to do an effective job.

Proper organization is the key to success for any event. It always seems to come back to effective and knowledgeable leadership and planning. Each event needs to be staffed by volunteers or by paid staff who know exactly what their individual responsibilities are for the specific event. This takes proper training for each and every person involved with the event. Each event also needs a timeline to make sure that everything is done in a timely manner.

Another big key for the success of your event is accountability. It has been said that "people do what is inspected not what is expected". Therefore, accountability is very important. Systems need to be in place to provide for accountability.

Each special event also needs to be analyzed after the event is over to make improvements in the effectiveness of future events. There are a number of special events that Christian schools across the country are conducting to raise funds. It is not necessary to re-invent the wheel but to capitalize on the success of others. A truly comprehensive and effective development program includes the planning and execution of special events for the raising of funds.

Challenge Number Five

Good Financial Stewardship

It goes without saying that every Christian school must maintain good financial stewardship and do the best job possible with the resources God provides them. Every school is unique and the resources that they have carry a high degree of responsibility for each and everyone involved with the stewardship of these resources.

These resources are faculty and staff as well as the buildings and grounds that house the school. Good financial stewardship also involves: tuition collection strategies, wise insurance purchases, proper building maintenance, clear purchasing policies, check writing procedures, etc.

It is imperative to realize and properly maximize the fact that tuition/fees are usually frontloaded, but expenses such as salaries/benefits are paid year round.

One of the most widely overlooked aspects of financial stewardship is cash flow analysis. It is imperative that each school know on a regular basis exactly where they are at in regards to cash flow. With the uniqueness of the typical Christian school fiscal year, it is imperative to realize and properly maximize the fact that tuition/fees are usually frontloaded but expenses such as salaries/benefits are paid year round. Cash flow analysis is critical to the effectiveness of administration of each Christian school.

It is also important for each school to have a realistic budget and to stay on budget as much as possible. This means purchasing only those items that are in the budget and always properly categorizing budget purchases. All too often budgets are not realistic. Budgets need to be realistic by effectively looking at the past, present, and future.

Keeping a clear accounting of all designated gift monies that are given to the school is vital as well. This is important because when the purchase is ultimately made of the designated item, the funds must be available. A comprehensive and effective development program includes policies/procedures and a clear analysis for good financial stewardship.

Challenge Number Six

Maintaining Complete Records

In this information age, it is imperative that every Christian school maintain good and complete records. This is especially important for

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the schools that desire to have a comprehensive development program. Good records will often make or break a development program.

Records maintenance can sometimes be a challenge for a number of reasons. First, there is the vast amount of important information that needs to be maintained. Second, there is confusion over software selection and the need to have the right software database that is user-friendly and not burdensome. Third, there is the need for someone to have the dedicated responsibility of maintaining the database.

Maintaining good records is easier when you have at your disposal the technology and computer software program that will allow you to store all the pertinent information you will need. Some of the most pertinent information you need is: students' names/addresses, parents' names/addresses, phone numbers (home, cell, and work), occupations of the parents or place of work, relationship to the school, etc.

The software you use should do exactly what you need it to do. It should work for you and be able to clearly give you the information that you have entered. Another important aspect of development software is the ability to track donations. You should be able to enter donations, thank your donors, receipt them after each donation, and send them a year end donor receipt. A good software program will also allow you to easily purge all old information from your database. This eliminates waste and also has the potential to avoid embarrassment.

A comprehensive and effective development program should include the selection of user-friendly software and procedures for keeping a well-maintained database.

Challenge Number Seven

Attracting, Retaining and Motivating a Superior Staff

In order to take care of the most valuable players (MVPs) of your Christian school you probably want (and most definitely need) to provide the best salaries/benefits you can for your faculty and staff. This will help you in attracting and keeping quality faculty/staff .

Although we know that people are not working at Christian schools for the money, we should endeavor to take care of them as best as we pos-

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sibly can within our budget framework. Not only is this the right thing to do but it is also a testimony to our community and may also keep our faculty/staff from “jumping ship” because of extreme need.

It is very important that your school have a salary scale that is fair and balanced. Years of experience and educational background are two key factors in implementing a good salary scale. When it comes to providing benefits, the administration needs to make sure they know what is available to offer and at what cost. With the myriad of choices in today’s marketplace, administration must do the best possible to keep up with the options that are available. Some of the most commonly offered benefits to faculty and staff are: free or discounted tuition for faculty and staff children, health insurance, disability insurance, 401K or 403B retirement, and a Cafeteria 125 program.

When putting together faculty and staff contracts it is important to spell out compensation, compensation pay periods, and benefits. It is also important to clearly delineate sick days, personal days, and vacation time.

Christian school faculty and staff dedicate themselves to serving the Lord in the vital ministry of Christian education. We need to make sure that they are not the ones to bear the brunt of the cost of Christian education through low salaries and poor benefits. A comprehensive and effective development program includes a clear articulation of salaries and benefits for faculty and staff.

Challenge Number Eight

Board Training and Long-Range Planning

Almost every Christian school has a school board that is involved with the school in one capacity or another. The school board is important because it helps provide accountability for the school. It is extremely important that the school board be made up of individuals who understand their responsibilities as a school board member.

Often times, school board members have not been effectively taught their responsibilities as a school board and therefore their contribution is not as constructive as it could be if they had been properly trained. Training takes time, but it is time well spent for the future of the school.

There are distinct factors that one should look for in recruiting school board members. It is imperative that school board members be strong Christian school advocates. This should go without saying, but sometimes we need to be reminded of this fact. School board members also need to be "big picture people" who can set aside any personal agendas they have for the good of the organization as a whole.

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One area that is often overlooked by school boards is the area of long-range planning. Scripture tells us in Proverbs 20:18, "Make plans by seeking advice". Administration and the school board should always be looking down the road to make long-range plans. Regrettably, often the crisis of the moment and the tyranny of the urgent take the focus off of long-range planning and accomplishing long-range goals. Administration and the school board need to make sure their time is spent discussing the issues of the present as well as the issues of the future.

A comprehensive and effective development program includes both school board training and long-range planning.

Challenge Number Nine

Cultivating Major Donors

Most Christian schools have the potential of developing a major donor program. Even the smallest of schools can have a major donor program. A major donor is defined as any donor that makes a donation to your school of \$1000 or more.

Potential major donors are located by looking at the existing constituency base of your school. Major donors are usually found right under

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our noses but we do not always know how to properly recognize them and cultivate relationships with them. Major donors are key to the success of your school because they can provide an on-going base of support.

You must cultivate relationships with potential major donors. People will not give to your school simply because they have the wherewithal to give. It is also surprising at times who really are the potential major donors. It has been said that "you cannot judge a checkbook by its cover". This is also true sometimes when looking for major donors.

There are some distinct characteristics that major donors have that set them apart from all other donors to your school. Major donors definitely desire that their gift truly make a difference in the operation of your school. One key factor to also realize is that usually major donors will also know other potential major donors who can contribute to your school.

It is important in making a major donor appeal that you consider a number of factors. If all the factors are not taken into account then the success of a major donor program will not be realized. Everything from the right timing of the ask, who will make the ask, where the ask is made, donor giving potential, etc. must be taken into account when establishing a major donor program.

A comprehensive and effective development program includes a systematic approach to cultivating major donors in order to have a successful major donor program.

Challenge Number Ten

Preparing For Successful Capital Campaigns

It seems that every Christian school is in one of three distinct categories. They are just completing a capital campaign, they are in the midst of a capital campaign, or they are contemplating the beginning of a capital campaign.

A capital campaign is defined as any major endeavor that involves the giving of capital usually over an extended period of time. Capital campaigns can be as varied as: building new classrooms, major remodeling projects, new gymnasium, library expansion, refurbished athletic fields, technology improvements, etc.

It is very important that each Christian school prepare the "soil" of your constituency in order to have a successful capital campaign. This means making sure all of the key areas of a comprehensive development program are in place.

These key areas include but are not limited to: donor database and software, annual fund, major donor program, etc. When preparing for a capital campaign it is also imperative that the donor constituency

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have a "buy-in" to the campaign. The attitudes of the parents, faculty/staff, alumni, grandparents, and friends are keys to the success of the campaign. It has been said that people will get excited about a vision but they will only give to a plan. Even if no votes are taken by the constituency prior to the campaign, people will vote with their pocketbook as to whether they believe in the plan that is laid out regarding the capital campaign.

Every capital campaign needs to be preceded by a professional feasibility study which should reveal everything from the prevailing attitudes of the constituency to the potential financial support for the campaign.

A comprehensive and effective development program includes all the necessary preparations in order to ensure a successful capital campaign that meets or exceeds its goals.