Brakeley Briscoe
Considering Philanthropy
Spring 2012

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Finding Campaign Leadership

by George A. Brakeley III

Every campaign I have advised, over more than four decades, has succeeded because it had strong leadership. And when campaigns have been less than successful, leadership has been the heart of the challenge. The synergy and single-minded dedication of the leadership team — the CEO, the chief development officer and the volunteer chair or chairs — makes all the difference between a perfunctory campaign and a hugely rewarding one. When it comes to the pace-setting gifts at the top of the gift pyramid, moreover, there is no more important player than the volunteer chair or chairs. And these leaders are truly hard to find these days.

Sometimes, during the pre-campaign planning and feasibility study, an obvious candidate who evokes the admiration and respect of all emerges from the process. But more often than not, the volunteer leadership outlook is murky at best. So how do you find and recruit the "right" person or persons to champion your cause?

We often recommend a formal leadership selection process, replete with an ad hoc committee, at least one and sometimes a series of meetings, lots of strategizing, and a high level of candor and setting aside of personal agendas. Here's how it works.

Role and Function Statememt

The first step is a role and function statement that unambiguously sets forth the criteria for the ideal campaign chair(s) set in the context of the client's special circumstances (versus boiler-plate). The criteria include: a true believer in the cause; able to articulate that belief; respected by all; ready to make the very best gift he or

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Prospect Portfolios: Getting Donors in the Major Gift Pipeline

by June T. Poust

Many large fundraising programs have well developed prospect portfolio management systems and a substantial major donor list. The rest of us aren't all so advanced. What are portfolios and why do we need them, too?

Portfolios are a way to organize your institution's donors and prospects to ensure that everyone — at every level of gift — is being managed by a staff member and moved up the spectrum of giving. If you don't have any designated major gift fundraisers, then you need to identify one or two senior staff who will each be responsible for managing a portfolio of prospects. Without this, you are probably working hard on your annual fund, but not upgrading the most

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promising of these donors into major givers. As a result, your major gifts program could be working the same prospects every year and not adding very many new ones.

What is a major gift?

This is a definition you determine for your organization. One way to do this: list your highest single gift donors. Scan down the list until you reach twice or three times the number of donors you can assign to portfolios at any one time. Consider whether that is a realistic minimum level for a "major gift" and adjust the level accordingly. For some organizations "major" can be as little as $1,000; but be sure you set a level that warrants the personal attention a portfolio system gives each prospect.

Typically, a full time major gift officer has a portfolio of 75 to 125 prospects. People with other assignments besides major gifts should be assigned smaller portfolios. Major gift officers with very high value prospects/donors requiring a lot of attention will have smaller portfolios.

The prospects in any one portfolio are drawn from four roughly equal groups:

- Donors in stewardship — those who have recently made a major gift and should not be forgotten. This can also include planned gift donors.
- Prospects to be solicited in the next 12 to 18 months for whom you are actively devising strategies.
- Prospects in cultivation — those who have substantial gift capacity but are not currently ready for major gift solicitations.
- Prospects in acquisition or discovery. These are usually lower level donors you want to turn into major donors.

The idea is to keep prospects flowing in and out of focused prospect management. Prospects put into a gift portfolio should already be qualified to be in there either by gift capacity or past giving to the institution.

The portfolio manager's job is to move prospects from entry level to stewardship level (meaning they have made a major gift) in a finite period of time … typically 18 to 24 months. You want to hold regular staff prospect review meetings to monitor this progress and to determine which prospects cannot be moved to the next level in the portfolio at this time and to replace them with new prospects. In this way you maintain a steady flow of prospects and keep focused on raising their sights and funds for your programs.

Team Captains

Think of portfolio managers (PM) as 'team captains'. It is their responsibility to oversee all aspects of the cultivation, stewardship and solicitation. The team for any one prospect may consist of different individuals (staff and volunteers) as the prospect's relationship is developed. This means that major contacts with the prospect are reported to the PM and the PM manages the timing and substance of solicitations. To put it one way, the PM makes sure the ask gets made, but does not necessarily do it him/herself. For lower capacity major gift prospects, especially when they are at the qualification stage in a portfolio, the PM often makes the calls or other moves him/herself. For higher capacity prospects the PM may manage the work of the CEO/President, senior fundraising volunteers, program staff or faculty. Often the chief development officer or a very senior major gifts officer serves as PM for the President's portfolio.

In larger organizations where several programs or schools may have interest in a particular prospect, it's the PM's job to direct traffic. The PM assures that, from the prospect's viewpoint, you are all one organization working together for the good of both the donor and the organization. Most important, you want to ensure that several people aren't asking the prospect at the same time!

Prospect Information and Research

Making a portfolio system work depends on a strong prospect information management and research system. You need research to help assign prospects to particular portfolios and to set appropriate gift targets for each portfolio cycle; you need your data systems (and your PMs) to keep your prospect/donor information system current so you can evaluate the pace of moves and movement toward the target gift. And you need to keep refreshing your portfolios with new prospects as some of the assigned ones need to be dropped or parked for a time.

This is how you convert an annual donor, typically giving through

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she can make; fearless about asking others to give.

A useful complementary document is a description of "Predictable Demands on the Chair's Time", which lays out all of the meetings, tasks and other requirements that the campaign will impose on its leaders during the campaign (ending of course with a qualifier that says, " … plus that which we can not anticipate").

Leadership Search Committee

The next step is forming a leadership search committee, which should comprise the CEO, the Board chair (who usually serves as the committee's chair), the Development Committee chair, the chief development officer, the campaign consultant, and perhaps six other volunteers who either represent key segments of your constituency or are themselves possible campaign chairs — or, ideally, both. The committee's role and function statement makes it clear that this is as serious an assignment as obtaining a nine- or ten-figure gift, requiring the same kind of careful research, planning and structuring. Members are told that, if we're lucky, we might be done in one meeting, but it could well stretch out over several months and a number of meetings.

Preparation for the first meeting, which will take about two hours, includes a list the client has drawn up with the names of 30 to 40 possible candidates — some intimately involved in the organization's life, others more distant, a few purely speculative. Staff should prepare background information on each candidate which is not handed out but which the chief development officer and the consultant have in front of them. And this is a lot like a leadership gifts committee meeting.

At the meeting, brief the committee on what it needs to accomplish and urge members to be as candid as they can be about the candidates, even if they feel a bit uncomfortable about the process. Distribute and review a one page description of the criteria for top-level campaign leadership and the "probable demands" paper. Then distribute the list of candidates (only, without the background information). Tell the committee members that, while their own names are on the list, they will not be asked to say anything about themselves until later on. Then ask members to discuss the list, rating each name as a group: 1:good candidate; 2: maybe; 3: not a candidate.

Conversation about each name can take as little as a minute, but usually takes longer. Members may be reticent at first, but they usually warm up quickly. Once the initial ratings are done, ask the committee who is missing from the list. Some more names may be volunteered, and they should be similarly rated. Then ask the committee to review all of the 1's and rank-order them. The goal is to finish with a list of about six people who are all very good candidates, ideally in priority order.

Campaign Volunteers

At this point I like to say, "Now let's go around the table and hear what each of you has to say about your own willingness to be a campaign volunteer and at what level." If you've been astute in selecting the committee membership, this can easily be where the rubber hits the road, in that your very best chair candidate may be sitting there taking all of this in.

While the process focuses on group conversation and consensus, some of the best outcomes arise from behind the scenes strategizing and conversations. Recently, during a feasibility study interview I found what I believed to be a good campaign chair candidate and so, ahead of the leadership committee meeting and with the clearance of top leadership, I asked him if he was genuinely interested and, if so, what he might say at the meeting. So when the round-the-table comments came to him, he told the group how important the institution is to him and his wife and stated that, if asked, they would serve as co-chairs. The committee's immediate response was highly supportive, and he and his wife were elected by acclamation. A bit later in the meeting he announced what they would give, which he and I had discussed earlier as well - and it was a very good number indeed. Would that we should all be so lucky!

But what if you don't get that lucky? In that case, go back to the list of 6 (not an arbitrary number — could be fewer or more) and talk about who the clear #1 is, then numbers 2 and 3 and so on. If time allows, determine who the right person or persons might be to ask the #1 candidate to serve (the CEO and the Board Chair often take on this assignment), and begin to lay out the strategy, plan and the next steps for that crucial ask.

Further Investigation

Sometimes, however, the picture is not yet clear enough to allow you to proceed in that way. There may be some further investigation to be done about some of the top candidates, such as consulting a third party who is not on the committee or commissioning some really in-depth research. It may be

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that the CEO, Board Chair, Chief Development Officer and campaign consultant need to meet as a sort of rump sub-committee to sort out matters the committee cannot or should not address. Whatever the outcome, unless you have your chair, set the date for the next meeting of the full committee.

If additional meetings are needed, their agendas will be driven by whatever homework will have emerged from the first meeting, but priority #1 will be to focus on the same 5 or 6 top candidates (although a new name or two may have emerged in the meantime), review their rank order, and develop the strategy for approaching the top candidate or candidates.

In this fluid and flexible process you avoid a common pitfall — asking someone to chair without a well-considered strategy — which too often results in multiple unsuccessful “asks.” There can be no more important selection in the campaign than finding the right chair or chairs; do it well.

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direct response methods (mail, phone, web), to a major donor. You can’t give every one of those donors personal treatment, but with a portfolio system you can give your major gift fundraisers (and your president and senior volunteer fundraisers) some tools and metrics to determine where you want to get and how far along you are toward your goals.

LET’S MEET: CONFERENCES AND SPEECHES

March 21, 2012-March 24, 2012

AAMC Group on Institutional Advancement (GIA) Annual Conference; Palm Springs, FL. Brakeley Briscoe exhibiting. Alden Briscoe and Susan Holt attending.

April 1, 2012-April 4, 2012

AFP 48th Annual International Conference; Vancouver, Canada. Brakeley Briscoe exhibiting at booth 835. Marianne Briscoe and Alden Briscoe, Julian Marland of Brakeley Asia, YoungWoo Choi of Doum & Nanum, and Maria Elena Noriega of Noriega Malo y Asociados attending. YoungWoo Choi (Doum & Nanum) and Julian Marland (Brakeley Asia) leading the education session: Philanthropy and Major Gift Fundraising in Asia; Myths and Realities on Tuesday April 3 from 9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Marianne Briscoe, YoungWoo Choi(Doum & Nanum), and John Cerniglia (Habitat for Humanity) leading education session: Trans-National Fundraising on Tuesday April 3 from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

May 17, 2012-May 19 2012

AHP Mid-Atlantic annual conference; Alexandria, VA. Brakeley Briscoe exhibiting. Timothy P. Snyder attending.

June 8, 2012

AFP National Philanthropy Day; New York, NY. Alden Briscoe attending.

July 15, 2012-July 18, 2012

CASE SUMMIT for Leaders in Advancement; Washington, DC. Marianne G. Briscoe and Kristin Watkins (Portland Community College): Community College Campaign Leadership, Prospects and Case: Getting It Right Before the Feasibility Study on July 15, 2012 from 2:45 p.m.to 4:00 p.m.

October 24, 2012-October 27, 2012

AHP 46th Annual International Conference; Atlanta, Georgia. Brakeley Briscoe exhibiting at booth 113. Susan S. Holt and Timothy P. Snyder attending.

January 13, 2012-January 15, 2012

43rd Annual CASE-NAIS Independent Schools Conference; Washington, D.C. Marianne Briscoe and Alden Briscoe attending.