



'TIS THE SEASON FOR GIVING

8 steps to create and launch your year-end fundraising campaign

Seasons. Maybe you live in a part of the country or world where you get to experience all four seasons. For some of you, it is likely you only see two to three, or perhaps you see all four, but one or two of those is short-lived. Weather is not the only kind of season we face. In camping ministry, we have different seasons. Our summer season is generally full of camps, retreats, family camps, training summer staff and more.

After summer, many of us go into retreat season or our fall programming. Spring also brings more program activities along with preparing for another summer season. In this article, I want to help you focus on a season that we often skip. By skipping it, we often miss out on incredible ministry opportunities and much-needed resources for our camp or conference center. ►

In camping ministry, November and December can mean a break from the action of camp. Now don't dismiss me yet; I know many of you are hosting "Winter Chills," "Winter Jams," "Winter Blasts," etc. These two months bring about more holiday breaks and time with family (and hopefully some much-needed rest). However, during these months, we often skip the end-of-year season of giving and fundraising.

The Importance of Year-end Fundraising

Why is this season so important to our camp and conference center? First, fundraising is ministry, and when we decide to skip this season, we miss out on incredible opportunities to connect with our champions and help them take hold of that which is truly life. Paul commands Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:17–19 (ESV):

"As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

By skipping over this season, it is as if we are ripping life from those connected to our ministries. Yet, we never want to miss an opportunity to minister — to steward these incredible relationships and allow champions to give and serve — which brings life that is truly life.

Second, end-of-year giving is important because champions do end-of-year giving. We are seeing about one-third of all giving coming in during the last few months of the year. So check your pulse if that doesn't excite you or increase your anxiety.

Making a Plan

Now that we know end-of-year campaigns and giving are important, how do we make sure we plan in such a way that we are effective and successful? Before I take you down the path to an effective end-of-year campaign, I want to pause and say you must plan well. Your campaign will never get off the ground without proper planning and steps. If you have a fundraising plan (I hope you all have a fundraising plan!), the end-of-year campaign should be just another step in your plan that you are implementing.

If you don't have a fundraising plan, take some time now to stop and plan following these steps:

- 1) **Set a goal and focus.** Make sure your end-of-year campaign is highly focused. Will your end-of-year campaign raise money for camper scholarships, a program item (boat, ropes course element, new pool slide), part of an ongoing capital campaign or for your operation or general budget gap? The thought here is that people like to give to specific and impactful projects. They want to know their dollars are making a difference. Therefore, the more focused you can be — letting them know exactly how their money will make an impact — the better. After you have the focus, set a dollar goal to be reached, so you and your champions will know when you have completed the goal.
- 2) **Build a key message.** A key message is how you communicate the existing problem, the solution needed and the outcome when the solution is applied. This idea comes from Hollywood. When a film producer creates a film, they use key messages or one-liners to attract the interest of investors. Then they use that same key message in their advertisement to get you to the theater to watch the movie.

We also see this in Scripture. John 10:10 says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Using that verse as our basis, let's determine our key message. *The problem:* The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. *The solution:* I (Jesus) have come. *The outcome:* That they may have life and have it to the full. *Our key message:* This is worth your time; come check it out and join us. ►



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Photo courtesy of David Yeagley

3) Use champions' stories. Sharing stories from those we serve is critical, but don't forget our champions also have stories. When your champions give their time, talent, treasure and testimony, they are being impacted by your ministry. Why not ask a champion to share how they have been impacted by their giving, inviting others to join them? Allow your champions to be your megaphone. They can do this through written communication, videos and sharing on their social media platforms. Release your champions to help bring more champions to your camp and conference center by capturing and sharing their stories.

4) Layer your communications. You may have heard of the *Rule of Seven*, created by the film industry in the 1930s. It states that a prospect needs to "hear" the advertiser's message at least seven times before they'll take action to buy that product or service. This is also true in our fundraising communication efforts.

How do we make sure we are communicating our focused key message effectively? Think layered cake. A layered cake is not your everyday cake. A layered cake is for special occasions; it is the same goodness over and over through each layer. Make sure you approach your end-of-year communications in the same way. Send the same focused key message in multiple ways and to multiple channels, whether it's in direct mail pieces, email blasts, social media posts, blogs, vlogs, your website, small- or large-group presentations, micro- and large-scale events, etc.

5) Plan well. I said this in the beginning but it needs to be repeated. None of the above happens without a well-thought-through plan. Since videos will need to be created, text and key messages will need to be written, mail pieces will need to be stuffed, and communications must get sent out, you must plan well. Create a communications calendar that includes deadlines well in advance to collect stories, create videos and content, and plan for the campaign launch and beyond.

Then, hold yourself and your team accountable to the calendar and plan. You can go as far as using a software system like Trello or your physical day planner. But however you choose to do it, make a plan and then move forward.

6) Launch. The launch is the moment in time your end-of-year campaign will officially go public, and all channels will be flooded with your key message and focused ask. First, decide how long your campaign should run. Many like to launch a campaign on #givingtuesday (the Tuesday after Thanksgiving) and let it run through the end of the year. Others like to do a separate #givingtuesday ask, followed up in December by an end-of-year ask. The time frame is up to you. But make that decision by knowing your champions and their giving habits. Second, follow the plan making sure your champions and potential champions hear the need and call to action.

7) Follow up. One of the most missed opportunities in fundraising is the follow-up that happens right after a gift is given. Again, this takes planning. Have a plan developed before the launch on how you will follow up with each champion that makes a gift to your organization. We cannot skip this step. Stewarding a gift well brings about appreciation and connects the champion to your organization more deeply.

8) Follow through. If you have ever played golf, you know that the point of impact must be followed by proper follow-through. If you don't follow through correctly, your ball will end up in the rough or out of bounds. Our end-of-year campaigns should take us into the next year. The excitement shouldn't end because the calendar hits January 1. End-of-year giving and excitement should propel us into the next year's vision and giving. Therefore, have a plan that runs well into January and the following year.

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Seasons come and go quickly, so don't let the end-of-year giving season pass you by without allowing your champions and potential champions to join you in the cause. With a great plan and following the steps listed, you could have an incredible end-of-year season that boosts you into next year. Need help building an end-of-year campaign? That's what I'm here for! Email me at sshaw@ccca.org and let's make sure your camp or conference center has a great end-of-year plan that drives you into the New Year. ■



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