

Van Lunen Project 2011

Defining Development

By Curt Tuininga, Principal, Centennial Christian School

Project Summary

The goal of this project was to create a third stream of income for our school by starting an annual fund. Independent schools in British Columbia are blessed to receive government funding to the tune of fifty per cent of the per student amount given to public schools. To this we add tuition money and any donations. Centennial Christian School had no development plan and so, my goal was to begin development work beginning with an annual fund.

The entire process was guided by the invaluable advice of Don Distelberg of The Timothy Group. The final product was to be a Leadership Giving Brochure and an Annual Financial Development Plan. Any monies generated by the plan were to be directed to offset Tuition Assistance.

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In the past few years Educational pundits have made it clear that independent school leaders can no longer just be educational leaders. Instead much like CEO's of corporations; Principals must also be able to bring business and fundraising skills to their roles. While I had been involved in many of the business side of schooling the area of development was completely new to me and, other than one small capital campaign, new to the school.

As a result the help of Don Distelberg of The Timothy Group was invaluable. He and his assistants provided us with templates, advice and training that allowed us to create a plan and begin a campaign.

History

Centennial Christian School has been in existence since 1967 and has grown from a single Church denomination into a denominationally diverse community. Historically the founders of the school made great financial sacrifices in order to have their children educated at a Christian school. In 1977 the provincial government granted independent school's thirty per cent of the per student operating funding given to public schools and in 1989 this was increased to fifty percent. This meant that tuition could be reduced and Christian Education in BC could be the least expensive in Canada.

However, while this change made Christian Education more affordable and enrolment rates soared it meant that many families who joined independent schools did not have a tradition of sacrifice or service to Christian schools. This has had an impact on the desire of some to donate to Christian school efforts. It also meant that most Christian schools in BC only fundraised as part of capital campaigns as no public funds could be used for building. So when enrolment began to decrease, per pupil cost rose and a third source of income became necessary, there was very little tradition of giving on which to build. As a result introducing an annual fund faces some major hurdles in our community.

Creating a Plan

Background information about creating a development plan was gathered from a number of sources. The Development Directors of Abbotsford Christian schools and Langley Christian schools shared a wealth of resources with us including letters and forms. But the best resources came from Don Distelberg of The Timothy Group. Don gathered information from us and laid out an Annual Financial Development Plan.

Using templates from Don we designed a Leadership Level Solicitation document which showcased the history of the school, the mission of the school and the plans for the future. The document was printed

professionally and it closed by inviting supporters to consider a generous leadership level donation. A pledge card was available for those who were unable to give immediately.

The plan was designed to raise \$100 000 by way of a three part solicitation strategy. While a variety of strategies can be used to raise this contribution, we chose the following summarized as follows:

Personal solicitation	\$ 75,000
Events solicitation	25,000
Mail solicitation	<u>5,000</u>
Total	\$100,000

Details of these strategies follow:

Strategy: Personal solicitation

Major Donor prospects will be identified through research. The Principal will convene a small group of individuals to review lists of alumni and other donors. A list of 20-30 prospects will be developed and a strategy prepared for each which will include: who (Principal plus a volunteer) makes the request, for how much, at what time. A Leadership Proposal will be developed to give to donor prospects. Personal visits will then be made to prospective donors to request specific amounts \$1,000 - \$10,000. An annual plan of moves will be prepared at the beginning of the effort and monitored monthly.

Target Audience: Alumni, parent, grandparent and area individuals and foundations

Timing: On-going, based on individual plans

Contribution Goal: \$75,000

Projected Expense: \$1,000 (for research, travel, meals and entertainment)

Strategy: Events

In the fall of 2011 a New Friends Dinner will be held seeking to bring 50-100 new \$500-1,000 donor prospects into a setting to hear the story, invited by current school constituents/donors.

New Friends Dinner

Target Audience: Prior individual donors and new prospects

Timing: October 2011

Contribution Goal: \$25,000 (gross)

Projected Expense: \$2,000

Project Results:

Our results to this point are disappointing, but only because not enough time has been devoted to the personal solicitations. We have raised \$21 500, which is good start especially as we have completed only a few visits. Due to my teaching schedule and the busyness of the Board member volunteers we have not made enough appointments. We do plan to continue to pursue visits in June, July and August and we do believe the goal of \$75 000 is attainable by the end of the summer.

What We Have Learned:

The first and most obvious thing we learned was that we should have started this process a long time ago and if we had we would have been reaping the benefits now. However we now have in place a plan and process that can be followed for years to come.

A second thing we learned was that asking for money is the best way to raise significant amounts. Many supporters of the school are very willing to continue to support the vision by way of money even years after their children have graduated. Grandparents and alumni are another source of financial support also.

Another thing that we learned is that having a mission and a goal that has some emotional connection makes a big difference to donors. Many are willing to give in order to reduce costs so that families who cannot afford Christian education may be able.

We also learned that it is very important to have the right people involved in the solicitation process. They must be people who are passionately committed to the school and who have the requisite people skills in order to ask for money. They must be seen as people of integrity who have invested in the school in such a way that donors recognize in them a similar willingness to be generous with time and money.

Finally, we learned that soliciting money is part science and part art. A plan, like the one above, is the science and it is vital, but the art part of it comes through people skills and with practice. Relationships with prospective donors in a school community are usually built over time and a great deal of work and art goes into them