

The Biggest Threat to Christian Education and the LHSAGM is... MONEY

My project focused on revamping our advancement efforts and creating a new philosophy of advancement, built around the concept that advancement is about relationships and NOT just about the money. “**Funds follow Vision.**” We need to raise approximately \$50 to \$75 million in the next ten years to realize our mission.

What did we do? We needed a 100% overhaul of our advancement department. The advancement department did not reflect the values, mission, and vision of our organization. We completely reworked nine areas:

- **Major gifts.** In 2017, we hired two new major gifts officers. Our large donors need to hear from the CEO in addition to the gifts officer, so I spend 50% of my time visiting with major or potential donors. My two major gifts officers see fifteen or more donors per week, in face-to-face meetings.
- **Grant writing.** We hired a professional grant writer and committed 15 hours per week to support the grant writing process. We will submit twenty grants in 2018.
- **Capital campaigns.** We developed a capital campaign strategy that included intentional phases: Silent, Quiet, and Public, with specific strategies for each. We developed timelines and action steps that included direct meetings with donors, dinners, listening town hall meetings, CEO roundtable discussions, advisory meetings, celebration events and written appeals.
- **Planned-giving.** We hired a top-quality planned giving consultant. We provide estate and planned giving advice FREE to our donors. We set a goal of placing twenty documented estate gifts per year.
- **Annual fund (Alumni) development.** We are working with our ad agency to re-brand what annual giving is. This includes the addition of an annual fund advancement person.
- **Events.** Our goal was to improve the quality of our events and make each one of them high quality, special and memorable for the attendees. We will deliver four high quality events for our supporters.
- **Church partnership relationships.** Church contributions are 4% of our budget. We partner with them to educate children so they can be lifelong and eternal members of God’s kingdom. We committed to visiting the senior leadership of the 31 churches that support us to ask how we can support them.
- **Private business funding relationships.** Students who do not want to attend college are educated through academies that include Career (wood, welding and manufacturing), Power Technologies, Automotive, Trades, Art, Urban Education, Free Enterprise, STEM and others. We currently have eight local businesses that have invested dollars, equipment and time in our academies.
- **Advancement Operations and Administration.** Acknowledgement of gifts, receipts, donor data base management, and advancement support are critical to a high performing advancement department. We acknowledge every gift with a phone call the day we receive it. A follow-up hand written letter of thanks is sent for every gift over \$100.00.

What did I learn from this project? If you want to be good at something, you must be bold, intentional about it, consistent in your work, and relentless in protecting it. Every aspect of your organization must be an aligned and reflect 100% of your core values, your vision and your mission. “**Funds Follow Vision.**” We made an intentional, committed and bold decision to invest and pour into our supporters. We committed to telling them our story of hope and our commitment to excellence, Biblical truth, service, integrity, communication, love and faithfulness to our students, co-workers and community.

What difference has this made in our schools?

Total Grants Received: \$1,650,000. Capital campaigns: \$3,550,000 received for all projects. We have documented and completed 23 planned gifts with a value over \$13,000,000. The Auction raised \$340,000. Private businesses have donated in-kind equipment or cash of over \$300,000. Our foundation balance grew from zero in 2014 to just over \$3,900,000. In our association of three schools, our brand statement says: WE TEACH TRUTH. JESUS MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.