

Food for thought

Food Bank turns surprises into opportunities

Clear communication can help avoid unexpected problems in planning a capital campaign. This is the second article in a series about the Food Bank of North Carolina. The Journal is observing capital campaign meetings and has agreed not to identify potential donors.

BY TODD COHEN

RALEIGH

A capital campaign can live or die because of planning, but even the best-laid plans can suffer from miscues. The secret is to communicate within the campaign organization as often and as clearly as possible and — when possible — to convert unexpected turns of events into opportunities.

The Food Bank of North Carolina is learning those lessons as it considers a capital campaign to pay for new equipment and possibly a new building.

Faced with the need to identify individuals to lead the campaign and make major contributions, officials of the Raleigh nonprofit and its fundraising consultant recently got their signals crossed.

At a regular weekly session in February, Food Bank officials talked at some length with consultant Carol Siebert of Raleigh-based Capital Consortium Inc. about how to approach two prominent community leaders in the Triangle.

But Siebert and the Food Bank officials came away with distinctly different impressions of the objective of an initial meeting the Food Bank planned to have with the pair.

The breakdown in communication became clear in a later conversation involving Siebert; Duane Lawrence, president of the Food Bank's board of directors; and Greg

Kirkpatrick, the Food Bank's executive director.

During their regular monthly campaign luncheon meeting in March, Siebert was taken aback by the fact that Lawrence and Kirkpatrick had asked the two community leaders to join the Food Bank's board of directors — an offer they declined.

As Lawrence and Kirkpatrick told Siebert about their visit, Lawrence was surprised to learn that Siebert believed they had done the wrong thing.

"I thought we had to be very clear about what we wanted from them, and not waste their time," Lawrence said.

Siebert said she had made clear that the visit with the community leaders was to be exploratory. She was not surprised to learn that they had said that, because of other commitments, they could not serve on the Food Bank's board.

Courtship is a subtle process, and takes time. Popping an important question too soon — especially on a first visit — can make someone feel pressured.

But the discussion ended on a positive note, when Kirkpatrick explained that the community leaders had offered to serve on an advisory committee for the Food Bank.

Siebert seized on the silver lining in the unexpected turn of events, and suggested that the chance to enlist the two community leaders could be a mechanism to involve more people in the Food Bank's work.

That involvement, in turn, could strengthen an eventual capital campaign.

Indeed, said Siebert, an advisory committee could serve as a kind of ongoing focus group for the Food Bank and the capital campaign.

The incident with the two community leaders was one of only several surprises in store for Siebert.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN: On The Inside

Another arose during discussion of plans the Food Bank and Capital Consortium had for a benefit concert by singer Mike Cross. The idea was to invite prospective contributors to the concert to begin to educate them about the Food Bank.

While arrangements for inviting guests were being sorted out, Kirkpatrick mentioned an idea to change the Food Bank's name to better identify it with Second Harvest, the national network of food banks.

"This has been on the serious back-burner for many years," he said.

Again, Siebert seemed caught unawares.

"Mama needs to know everything," she jokingly scolded her lunchmates.

Siebert explained she has concerned that changing the organization's name in the midst of a capital campaign could confuse potential contributors.

But Kirkpatrick argued that identifying the Food Bank as part of the Second Harvest network would have numerous benefits.

First, Second Harvest has been selected by the Ad Council as the next subject of a pro-bono advertising campaign the council produces periodically. Previous Ad Council campaigns — such as "Only you can prevent forest fires," and "A mind is a terrible thing to waste" — have had enormous impact.

Food banks that are members of Second Harvest would be able to piggy-back onto the national television spots produced by the Ad Council.

"If it has that kind of impact,"

Kirkpatrick said, "this could be the thing Second Harvest has been hoping for to push food banks into the public consciousness."

What's more, he said, Second Harvest was about to release a national survey about hunger that would document for the first time who is hungry in America, and who uses food banks and other emergency feeding programs. The study — and Second Harvest — would receive national publicity.

Siebert had some practical questions. First off, she asked whether there was a problem with the food bank's current name.

Kirkpatrick said there was.

"Food Bank of North Carolina," he said, has the connotation of being either part of state government or an umbrella organization for food banks across the state. In fact, the organization is trying to focus its efforts on the Triangle and the 34 counties it serves in eastern and central North Carolina.

Siebert still wanted to know if Kirkpatrick could document the fact

that people have a misconception of the organization because of its name. She also wanted to know whether Kirkpatrick would address these issues in the "case statement" he was preparing that describes the Food Bank and its need for a capital campaign.

"I think the name change is inevitable," he told her. "I think it's good. The

Courtship is a subtle process, and takes time. Popping an important question too soon can make someone feel pressured.

question is, strategically, when do we do it?"

Siebert replied: "Without data, the best time might be once you have 80 percent of your lead gifts and you do a public announcement of the campaign."

Kirkpatrick agreed to include the issue in the case statement.

At the end of the two-hour meeting, John Bennett, president of Capital Consortium, joined the meeting, and the subject returned to the issue of the visit Lawrence and Kirkpatrick had paid the two Triangle community leaders.

"We could have told you in advance they would have said 'no,' and you could have saved yourself the ask," Bennett said.

Lawrence said his biggest disappointment was that he and Kirkpatrick "were so clear about what we thought we were supposed to do."

As a solution to the numerous communications problems that cropped up during the meeting, Siebert reminded Kirkpatrick that she had encouraged him to prepare weekly "action minutes" that note briefly who is handling which assignments and who has spoken with whom about campaign matters.

The result, she said, will be clearer lines of communication and clearer signals about who's responsible for what.

In retrospect, Kirkpatrick said later, "the potential for miscommunication is so great that any objectives related to meetings with important community leaders should be written down and agreed to by all the principals involved."

In fact, he said "if we had done that, if any one of us had been asked to write down the objective of that meeting and the action part of it, then whatever disagreements we had would have surfaced and we would have cleared them up before the meeting."

DEAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

rate and foundation giving for Duke University, as Kenan-Flagler's associate dean for external affairs.

"We had a 7 a.m. breakfast," Rieron says. "He impressed upon me that he does not want to raise more and more and more gobs of money. He wants to raise the right money, the money that will make a difference."

Fulton, says Rieron, "comes out of a business background where you think and manage strategically, and he's bringing that approach here, and that's why I'm here."

The new fundraising campaign will finance a new facility for the school's executive education program; endowments for curriculum; case development, which involves faculty and students working with companies and writing up complex business decisions to use in classroom instruction; faculty support, research and summer employment; fellowships for master's and doctoral candidates, including minority students; an international scholars program; and new technology.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A hint of how Fulton will fare in his new job can be glimpsed in his past fundraising performance.

In the early 1980s, Winston-Salem State raised \$3 million in the largest campaign the school ever had waged. But by the late 1980s, the school had developed a strategic plan that identified needs totaling \$55 million. Of that amount, \$25 million would have to be raised privately, with the remainder coming from state appro-

priations and self-liquidating projects, such as new dormitories, that would be repaid with student fees.

The school hired Ketchum Inc., the giant fundraising consultant based in Pittsburgh, to conduct a feasibility study for a capital campaign. Ketchum concluded that raising even half the goal would be tough.

"We didn't have a history of raising a whole bunch of money," says Nat Irvin II, the school's vice chancellor for development and university relations. "So there was some reason for skepticism."

But Irvin says that Fulton, then a trustee, believed the school was "an underleveraged asset" that people "just did not know enough about."

Fulton agreed to be chairman of the campaign and, Irvin says, "took it upon himself to take the WSSU

story to a larger audience ... We're talking about white folks. It was an audience in many respects that needed to be convinced."

As the campaign's national chairman, Fulton instituted his hard-charging, hands-on tactics. He held weekly 6:30 a.m. meetings to review prospects, assignments and progress.

He kick-started the campaign with the initial gift of \$2 million from Sara Lee and set up a "partners program" in which area companies work with Winston-Salem State students.

He also instituted a regular schedule of one-hour visiting sessions for community leaders.

Fulton had hoped to get a \$100,000 gift from one of those leaders. In the end, he managed to pull in an anonymous gift of \$1 million —

the largest gift the school ever had received from an individual.

"He worked himself and others around him worked, too," says Thompson, the Winston-Salem State chancellor. "He did not ask anyone to do anything he was not prepared to do himself."

Fulton says his role as dean will

be to define his vision for the business school and help shape strategies to make that vision real. That will require a lot of 6 a.m. breakfasts and regular forays into the real world. "The worst thing that could happen to me," he says, "would be to be locked into this little business school office."



Capital Consortium, Inc.

FUNDRAISING COUNSEL, RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

2700 Wycliff Road • Suite 312 • Raleigh, NC 27607
(919) 783-9199 • FAX (919) 571-9937

Planned Giving - Need Help?



Join the North Carolina Planned Giving Council
To learn more, visit our next meeting:

"PLANNED GIVING START-UP KIT"
Wednesday, May 18, 1994
11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Salem Academy and College
Winston-Salem, NC

Excellent program for development officers,
executive directors and board members!
\$20 (includes lunch) for guests, \$15 for members

Call Shelly Danyluk, V.P.
for information and reservations
1-800-332-7832

The Council is a nonprofit organization organized
to promote planned giving in North Carolina. Annual dues: \$50