

How to Choose a Capital Campaign Consulting Firm That's Right for You & Avoid The Many Common, Costly Mistakes Churches Make

Giving you the best opportunity to get the most benefits, best results and best return on your church's capital campaign investment

Introduction

How do you choose a capital campaign consulting firm that's right for you?

The purpose of this report is to give you the answer to this very important question.

The commitment to hire a capital campaign consulting firm isn't easy. Choosing the right consulting firm can literally mean the difference between the overwhelming success of your proposed project, campaign and church and your potential struggle, shortfall and even failure. It's that critical. That's why this report has been written. In fact, there are seven main reasons why you should read this report.

1. So that you can become educated about what's required to get the best results and return on your investment in a church capital campaign.
2. So that you'll know the easiest, most efficient and effective ways to go about searching for prospective church capital campaign consultants and requesting, getting and evaluating essential information from them.
3. So that you'll know how to best structure and schedule the consultant interview and the selection process; key questions to ask and how to discern and decide which consulting firm will serve you best.
4. To reduce the element of risk associated with the decision you have to make.
5. To give you the confidence to strike up a strong and lasting relationship with the firm you choose.
6. To give you an idea of how capital campaign consulting firms work and charge for their services, as well as the other costs associated with a capital campaign.

- To understand the five common and very costly mistakes that churches make in choosing and using counsel and how to avoid them.

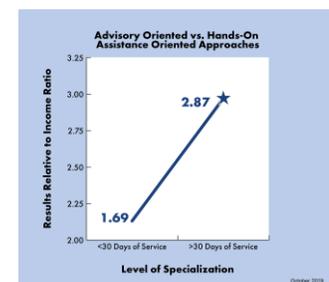
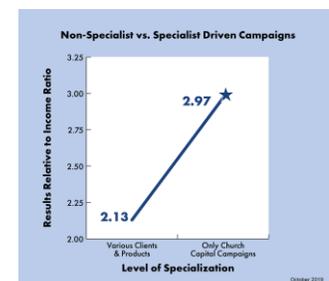
After reading this report, I promise you one thing – you’ll be able to make a more informed and better decision on the choice of a capital campaign consulting firm that will serve your church best. It won’t guarantee the success of the effort, but it will give you the best possible chance of achieving your church’s capital campaign potential.

What’s required to get the “best results” in a church capital campaign?

Before we go through the process of elimination to find the ideal capital campaign consulting firm for your church, it’s important to highlight what’s required to get the best results, most benefits and best return on a church’s capital campaign investment, as well as what creates the most successful partnership between a church and a capital campaign consulting firm.

Getting the best results and return on your church capital campaign investment requires operating in a very particular way. There are no shortcuts or substitutes. In fact, extensive studies over the past 20 years have shown that there are five essential things a church must have or do to realize their potential in a church capital campaign. These essentials include:

- The campaign must be professionally driven.** Professionally directed campaigns for churches out produce self-driven campaigns by an average of one-half times the church’s annual contribution income. And, since the extra fees and expenses associated with professional counsel rarely exceed the sums a church would actually lose by not having/hiring professional help, it makes hiring a consulting firm an excellent investment, though it’s sometimes erroneously viewed as an unnecessary additional expense.
- The campaign must be driven by a seasoned specialist.** Specialist-driven campaigns or, in other words, campaigns directed by someone who only works with churches and only does church capital campaigns, out produce campaigns directed by those that provide a wider array of services or that serve a more diverse client base by almost one-times a church’s annual giving. You’ll get a better result, too, if you hire a *seasoned specialist* or, in other words, someone that only does church capital campaigns and has done many, and ideally, hundreds of them.
- The consultant must devote 30 to 40 full days of on-site service to the actual campaign.** This exact level of on-site service and support has proven to produce optimal results and return on a church’s capital campaign investment. This level of service will enable the consultant to be on-site to organize and attend all campaign meetings and major events and to personally handle all “consultant critical” tasks that require specialized training and expertise. It will also enable the consultant to serve as a “driver”, rather than just as an “advisor”, which leads to less work for volunteers and church staff and better campaign results. Getting more than 40 days of service has not proven to increase results, only expense. However, getting less than 30 days of on-site service and hands-



on help has proven to substantially diminish a church's capital campaign results by more than one-times a church's annual giving.

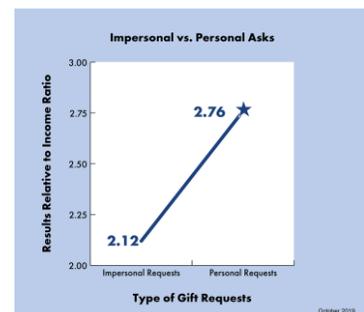
4. **The campaign must be organized and run over a 6-month timeframe.**

Scheduling a church campaign to run over a 6-month period of time has proven to be optimal, because it allows an adequate time for volunteer recruitment and (major) gift development without going so long that people lose enthusiasm for the effort, and the campaign itself will run out of momentum. Scheduling a campaign over a longer period than this could adversely affect the campaign's momentum. But scheduling the campaign over a shorter time period will adversely affect the time people have to recruit volunteers and ask for gifts. This will hurt the campaign and its effectiveness substantially more and will result in raising approximately one-times the church's annual giving less.



5. **You must ask for gifts in the most proven to be productive and successively successful ways.**

Asking for gifts is most productively done "in person", with the most committed and capable prospects for gifts asked first by those they know and respect most, where gifts requested are challenging and tied to something specific within the prospective donors capabilities and interests, and where gifts are knowingly and gratefully received. You should then progress to asking all others for their gifts, ideally using the same approach described above where gifts are asked for in person first, in a group setting second, by phone third and by mail and email last, after exhausting more personal and productive outreach methods first. Anything other than this will produce less than the best results and will result in raising approximately one-and-a-half times a church's annual giving less.



So, the most important requisites for successful partnership between the church and a capital campaign consulting firm include finding someone who:

- Has a passion for their faith, working with churches and helping them with their capital campaigns.
- Wants the best for you and wants to bring out the best in you and, therefore, will advocate operating your campaign the exact way that they know, or should know, will work and serve your church the best.

To be honest though, consulting firms that fit this profile exactly are few and far between. Yet, those that bring all of these attributes have proven to out-produce those that deviate from this exact approach *by an average over one-times a church's annual giving in results!*

Some words of caution though...

- Oftentimes it's easier to find a firm that meets some, but not all, of these best results criteria.
- Oftentimes too, it's easier and maybe tempting to go with seemingly simpler and less expensive approaches. But this can cost your church dearly in terms of lost income and other benefits that you otherwise could get.

- In most cases too, consulting firms don't steadfastly promote utilizing this exact approach, because they realize they risk losing business and limiting profits if they do. That's why they often take advantage of people's lack of fundraising knowledge and fundraising fears and advocate easier, less expensive and effective alternatives that most churches won't know will literally cost them hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars in lost income and other benefits.

That's why it's so important to root out the best from the rest and search for and select the diamond in the rough. And, if that means requesting information from and only interviewing one or two firms, so be it! In fact, it will save you a lot of time, confusion and work. It will also lead to better results, because these are the things that set the best church capital campaign consulting firms apart from the rest and form the basis for the ideal partnership between the consulting firm and the church.

In summary, the ideal consulting firm will always put the church's interests first and will always and only do what's in the church's best interests. In other words, they won't say and do what "sells" well at the expense of what they know will "serve" your church really well and will allow you to achieve your true potential.

What distinguishes the best church capital campaign consultants from the rest?

Quite simply, they bring all of the attributes and always and only advocate operating methods that they know, or should know, works and serves churches best and will provide you with the best results and return on your church's capital campaign investment. In short:

1. They specialize and have a great deal of expertise and experience in, and ideally solely do, capital campaigns for churches and offer supporting proof in the ways of client lists that show goals set and results achieved, case studies and/or testimonials.
2. They provide at least 30 and ideally no more than 40 full days of on-site service to churches during the course of their campaigns, to maximize rewards and minimize waste. This provides enough time so that the consultant can organize and attend all meetings and major events and personally tend to "consultant critical" or "expert essential" tasks like campaign planning, organization and orientation material development, case statement and printed and promotional material development and volunteer orientation, training and oversight, without spending too much time, which results in no better returns and only increased expense.
3. They consistently run their church campaigns over a 6-month period of time, minimally, to provide adequate time to maximize volunteer recruitment and the time people have to gather all, and especially, major gifts.
4. They advocate asking for gifts in the most personal and productive, and successively successful ways where specific, challenging gifts tied to people's interests are personally and knowingly asked for and received, starting with the most capable and committed prospects for gifts in person first, in a group setting second, by phone third, and finally, by mail or email last without ever skipping a step or prematurely proceeding with another approach before exhausting a more personal and productive outreach method first.

5. They resist the temptation to advocate what “sells” well, but rather, they always advocate and operate in the manner they know will work and “serve” your church the best.
6. They offer supplemental and continuums of services to assure that your campaign is as successful as possible, and you realize your campaign potential.

They do this because they have your church’s best interests at heart, they know that this is sound stewardship and that anything less or other than this will produce less than the best results and return on your church’s capital campaign investment.

Searching for prospective consulting firms and narrowing down your list

Finding prospective consulting firms is easy. In fact, there are a couple of really simple ways to do this.

1. Web Searches

Search the web for “church capital campaign specialists”. This should yield a number of potentially viable candidates.

2. Seek Referrals

Ask your denominational hierarchy and/or other local churches who they used and interviewed for their capital campaigns. This too, is a great way to gather names of potential consulting firms who do capital campaigns for churches.

Then, when you’re on or visiting the websites of potential consulting firms, “rough screen” them to see which, at first glance, most closely meet the “best results” criteria mentioned on pages 2 and 3 above. Your goal at this stage of the process is to narrow down your list to a select few, and surely no more than 5 or 6, to request information from before you pare down the list even further to those you’d like to interview. And, if you find only one or two candidates that meet this exact profile of the best consulting firm to serve you, that’s okay too! In fact, it will save you a lot of time and confusion the fewer the candidates you actually have to review and interview.

Requesting information from prospective consulting firms

Once you’ve narrowed down your list to one, two or a few, and definitely no more than 5 or 6 firms, at most, that seemingly bring most, and ideally all, of the attributes required to get the best capital campaign results for you, reach out to these firms for additional information. Suggested text for a mailing or email, which you can also use as an outline for a phone call, is included on the next page.

Subject: Capital Campaign for (Name and Location of Your Church)

Our church is planning or considering a capital campaign to (describe the purpose of your campaign here). In all, we are needing to raise \$_____ in order to meet our needs.

We are a church community comprised of _____ registered and _____ annually contributing families or households (and, if applicable, have a list of _____ non-church households who are school parents, alumni, etc. that we believe might also be prospects for gifts too).

Our annual gift or offering income is \$_____.

At this time, we are looking for a suitable capital campaign consulting firm to help us meet our objectives. So, I would be grateful if you could send me:

- 1) Some background information about your company, clients and services.
- 2) Details about your typical and recommended approach to a church capital campaign.
- 3) A list of your most recent clients and some client quotes, letters or references.
- 4) Information about consultant and other costs associated with your service and the campaign.
- 5) Any other information you think might be helpful.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Pastor or Contact Person

Important: DO NOT SEND a more detailed “Request for Proposal” (RFP’s) with a lot of (other) specific questions to be responded to in an order other than the one suggested. Send or make “Requests for Information” instead requesting the above information in the sequence suggested. This is what you most need to know at this time. Let the consultants dictate to you what, if any, additional information they think you may need to know. After all, they are the experts. RFP’s only take a lot of extra time to prepare and respond to. They are not needed to get the information you need to know to decide on “who” to interview. They also drive up consultant costs, which they, ultimately, will pass on to you.

Evaluating responses and determining who to interview

One of three things will happen when you reach out to each company:

1. You’ll get those who will want more information from and will attempt to arrange a meeting with you.
2. You’ll receive the details you requested in the mail or by email.
3. Neither of the above (yes, some companies in all industries will amazingly not respond to a letter that might lead to potential business).

With response (1) you should give the company the information they request, but let them know that you don't want to meet at this stage. You will want to first review all information and responses received, and ideally choose one, two or at most three firms to interview, based on their responses to your information request.

Obviously, with a company that does not respond, don't contact them again.

But in a very short time you should receive the requested information and will have a few companies from which to choose. This is where the process of elimination begins.

You will learn a great deal from the information requested and received. This is what you need to look for to help you narrow the numbers down.

The Cover Letter:

The cover letter, at this stage, is an important tool in narrowing down the number of consulting firms to those with whom you will meet.

In fact, you can learn a lot and even base your judgment of each firm on the strength of the cover letter message or response to you. This may surprise you, but the cover letter content is crucial. It should show a sincere and strong interest in serving you, it should state the benefits that you'll receive in working with them and tell you what makes them special and/or sets them apart from others.

In short, the cover letter and the content of the other information they send to you should both passionately persuade you to use them, because this is reflective of how passionately they will present your case for supporting your capital campaign to others.

If some companies don't include a cover letter with the information they send, exclude them from consideration. This shows a lack of concern and passion for you, your uniqueness and theirs.

Other Considerations:

Other important information to look for in the information sent includes:

1. Does their cover letter, website and the information sent reflect that the company takes pride in their work and that quality is of utmost importance to them as it is and will be to you?

Is the material received well designed and prepared? Is it attractive? These things are important because it is reflective of the company's work and its image of themselves and how well they will present and represent you.

2. Did they get the spelling of your name and the church/project details correct?

Getting key details wrong shows a lack of attention to detail. This, too, could be a reflection of their work.

3. Does their website and the information they sent show that they just work with churches?

Ideally, you want to work with a firm that just works with churches and is uniquely sensitive to your uniqueness.

4. Does their website and the information sent show that the only service they provide is helping churches to prepare for and conduct capital campaigns?

In addition to a firm that specializes in working with churches, it's also ideal to get someone that just helps churches prepare for and conduct their capital campaigns. This is important, because it means they are wholly committed to, and probably do what they do better than others who don't specialize to the extent that they do.

5. Does their client list show that they have done many church capital campaigns?

Ideally you not only want to work with a firm that just works with churches and helps them prepare for and conduct capital campaigns, but also, a firm that has literally done hundreds of successful church capital campaigns already, because this shows that they're experienced in doing what you need them to do for you.

6. Does their website and the information sent show that they bring all of the other operational essentials required to get the best results in a church capital campaign that will help you to reach your church campaign potential?

In other words, beyond just working with churches, just doing church capital campaigns, and having run many successful church campaigns already, do they also:

- Devote at least 30 and ideally no more than 40 full days of on-site service to churches during the course of their campaigns to maximize rewards and minimize waste;
- Consistently run their church campaigns over a 6-month period of time, minimally, to provide more time for maximum volunteer recruitment and all (and especially major) gift development; and
- Advocate asking for gifts in the most personal and productive, and successively successful ways where specific, challenging gifts tied to people's interests are personally and knowingly asked for and received, starting with the most capable and committed prospects for gifts first, in a group setting second, by phone third, and finally, by mail or email last, without ever skipping a step or prematurely proceeding with another approach before exhausting a more personal and productive outreach method first?

These things are all critically important and needed to get the best results and return on investment possible in your church's capital campaign. In fact, any deviation from these best practices and best results principle will literally result in raising hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars less in your church capital campaign.

7. Do they talk about benefits you will receive?

Benefits are what you are buying. That's what is important to you. Therefore, the company should not only tell you what they do, but how your church will benefit from all that they do.

8. Do they offer proof of satisfaction and success in the way of case studies, goals set and results achieved, testimonials from satisfied clients, etc.?

Case studies or a list of clients showing their goals and the results achieved, together with testimonials from specific, satisfied clients shows proof that the consulting firm has both successful experience and satisfied clients. Think twice about hiring someone who doesn't readily provide this proof.

Structuring and scheduling the interview and selection process

Select up to 2 prospective candidates to personally interview, those that meet most and ideally all of the aforementioned criteria, especially what is required to get the best results in church capital campaigns. Call the firms that were not selected to inform them of your selection and "why" they were not chosen. This is both courteous and helpful to them, since we are all trying to do God's work together.

Then, follow these simple steps and must do's:

1. **Contact the firms you'd like to meet with, share with them who else, if anyone, you've chosen to interview and to find out when, within a reasonably generous timeframe, they're available to personally, or ideally, "virtually" meet with you.** Then bring these dates back to your interview committee and decide on an interview date that's mutually convenient to everyone. This is important because you really want to meet with all firms you're considering on the same day, and if you're planning to interview more than two firms, which we don't recommend, over consecutive days. This will assure the greatest recall of the information presented. Keep in mind too, that the best church capital campaign consulting groups are often really busy and most churches and their representatives are only available to personally meet at night, which severely limits when most are able to interview. It's important to keep in mind too, that most church capital campaign firms' representatives, must travel many miles to the church, more than most selection committee members will have to. So, it's smart of your church to check with the firms' availability first, before bringing these dates back to the committee to set a mutually convenient time when everyone is available to meet. These problems are lessened however, if you choose to do "virtual" versus "in-person" interviews, which is highly recommended for these and various other reasons.
2. **Plan to interview no more than one or two firms total and all of the firms you are considering on the same day.** Interviewing only one to two of the best, most qualified firms on the same day ensures the best use of your time and recall of the information presented and will help to avoid information overload and putting anyone into the often dreaded and least remembered "middle position(s)" which will help you to make a better, more informed decision about who is best to serve your church in your capital campaign. And, if you are needing or planning to interview more than two firms, which isn't recommended, plan to spread your interviews out over multiple but consecutive days. Otherwise, you'll forget most of what was earlier presented and this will set yourself up for making a less well-informed, and possibly even a poor, selection decision.

- 3. Plan to allow at least an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes for each interview.** It will take a minimum of an hour for firms to thoroughly explain their background, their proposed approach to your campaign, the services they will provide, campaign costs and to adequately answer your questions. An extra 15 minute “cushion” between interviews will provide some flexibility to allow for interviews that run a little long, for a short debriefing session after the interviews end and/or for a restroom and refreshment break in-between interviews, which will keep your people fresh and aid their recall of important information presented.
- 4. Plan to record the interviews, whenever possible.** Recording the interviews will allow you to send the recordings to people who may have missed the original interview meeting(s). They will also allow you to playback interviews for the purposes of refreshing the memories of all to what was said and to enable you to clarify key points and potential differentiators that came out in the interviews.
- 5. Plan to reconvene within 48 hours (two days) to make your decision.** It’s usually best not to make an immediate decision about the firm you’ll use at the conclusion of the interviews. Rather, you should evaluate all of the firms interviewed against how they stack up to the five essentials required to reach your church capital campaign potential, listed on page two of this report, and responses to each of the key interview questions listed in the following section against the ideal responses. It also gives you time to check with a few churches who have used the firm(s) you are considering that have done campaigns similar to yours and to ask, among other things, what they raised and what their annual gift income was at the time of the campaign, the latter two of which are critical to assessing your fundraising and return on investment potential with each firm. Finally, it also gives you time to call back the firms interviewed to let them know which way you are leaning, and why, and/or to ask any clarifying questions you feel are needed. This will give everyone the chance to fill in missing information and to clear up any misconceptions. These follow up actions and this timing is critical because studies have shown that most people forget a majority of what they have learned within 48 hours (two days) of learning it. So, more immediate decisions tend to lead to more informed and better decisions.

Important: DO NOT insist on meeting with a prospective consultant, at least initially. The best ones with companies that get the best results are more “service people” than “sales people” and have less flexible schedules as a result. Be wary of consultants that are too available, which may mean that they are not in demand or not as client service oriented as you’ll want and need them to be if you select them to serve you. You can always request to meet with the proposed consultant later, if you want to. But always look to “process” first and “people” second because even the best people will fail or fall short of their potential if they don’t have a proven to be most productive process that they consistently follow.

Interviewing prospective capital campaign consulting firms

In interviewing prospective capital campaign consulting firms, first it’s important to structure and schedule your interviews and the final selection process correctly, and second, it’s important to ask and/or have answered all of the right questions, which will enable you to get, recall and decipher critical differences between firms and make the most informed decision about who would be best to guide and serve you in the capital campaign for your church.

In terms of structuring and scheduling interviews and the final selection process correctly, this was covered in detail in the last section. So go back and read this again if you missed it and need to.

In terms of conducting the interviews themselves, here are some general suggestions:

- First and foremost, it's strongly suggested that you conduct your interviews "virtually" instead of "in-person" if you can, with each meeting participant using their own computers to participate in the meeting at a place of their choosing. Virtual meetings, held at a place of its' participants own choosing are easier to schedule, easy to record, less time consuming and more time and cost efficient and environmentally friendly than in-person meetings are. Virtual meetings can also save your church literally thousands of dollars in consultant costs because the firms involved won't have to build the cost of these preliminary meetings into their fees as they otherwise would. Virtual meetings are also "contagion free" making the risk of spreading or contracting infectious illnesses virtually impossible, so to speak, as contrasted with in-person meetings where potential contagions are likely to be much more prevalent and present. Plus, you'll literally get all of the same information needed to make a sound decision as to who would be best to serve you in your church capital campaign with virtual meetings as you would be through personal meetings.
- That being said, if you do want to meet "in person" with potential fundraising firms or virtually with firms having the key the leaders of your project and/or church all together in-person in the same room, here are a few suggestions for this:
 - First, plan conduct your interviews in an amply sized, heated or air conditioned and ventilated room.
 - Second, arrange meeting seating in a conference, classroom or in a u-shaped style set-up with meeting participants spread out a bit and the interviewee, presenter or computer situated at the head of the table or room. This makes it easier for everyone to see the presenter and makes it easier for the presenter to see and make eye contact with everyone in the room.
 - Third, plan to serve some light food and refreshments to keep your people fresh.
 - And fourth and finally, ask all meeting attendees to fill out and wear nametags and/or to introduce themselves at the start of each meeting. This will aid the presenter in getting to know you as individuals and readily recall everyone's names.
- And whether "virtually" or "in-person", ask each interviewee or presenter to make his or her presentation and to cover their firm's background and experience in working with and doing capital campaigns for churches, how they would propose to approach your campaign in terms of staffing, schedule and services, and what they see as anticipated consultant costs for your campaign. As an alternative, you could also lead the interview yourselves by asking the following key questions, which should always be asked and/or answered one way or another in every interview presentation.

Key questions to ask to assure that you select the right firm

When you interview each firm, ask and make sure that they adequately answer the following key questions.

1. What types of organizations, including and other than churches, does your firm serve?

This is important because ideally, you want to work with firms that only work with churches and are uniquely sensitive to your uniqueness as a church, because some, more secular oriented fundraising firms' methodology and terminology can be both inappropriate and offensive in a church setting. Oftentimes too, these firms don't routinely incorporate important spiritual elements and the importance and power of prayer, which is especially important in church capital campaigns.

2. What types of services beyond capital campaigns does your firm provide to churches and others?

Ideally, you want to hire someone that not only solely serves churches, but also, just does church capital campaigns and feasibility and/or planning studies to help churches better prepare for their campaigns. This is important because specialists generally outperform generalists, provided that they also do what it takes operationally to get the best results possible in a church capital campaign. With a church capital campaign specialist too, you'll be assured of equal priority and the best personnel, which isn't always the case when a company is providing services to bigger, much higher paying clients than you.

3. What is your typical approach to a church capital campaign?

Achieving the best results and getting the best return on your investment in a church capital campaign requires hiring a church capital campaign specialist, who will propose and agree to operate your campaign in a very precise and the most proven to be productive way.

This means that you need a firm who'll provide you with a high level of individual attention and hands on support without waste, or, in other words, getting someone who'll provide at least 30, and no more than 40 days of on-site service to you ideally, over the course of your campaign. This is important, because you want someone who'll coordinate and attend all meetings, major events and handle most of the day-to-day tasks associated with the campaign and someone that'll serve as a "driver" rather than merely an "advisor" for you. This is critical, because most churches don't have development staff like other non-profit groups do. And, even if your church has a development or stewardship director, they probably don't have much experience with capital campaigns and/or usually already too much to do. As a result, they won't have the expertise and/or time to be able to devote to the campaign, which can be detrimental to the campaign's success. At the same time, you don't need someone to be at your church every week or full-time. That's because there are certain slower times inherent in any capital campaign, especially in between key activities, meetings and events where having a full time consultant or person who comes to the church every week would be more service and more expensive than you need, because they'd be doing things that another less costly staff person could do equally as well and it won't or hasn't proven to enhance results.

You also need a firm who'll agree to schedule the campaign over a 6 month period of time, minimally, so that there's adequate time to enlist volunteers and cultivate and bring to fruition the best gifts, both of which will have a big impact on your campaign's results. A shorter schedule than this, on the other hand, will shorten the time people have to complete these tasks, which will negatively impact your campaign's success.

You also need to have a consultant who'll coordinate and coach asking for gifts in the most proven to be productive and successively successful ways. This means someone that will stress asking everyone for specific, challenging gifts, tying these requests where you can into specific and significant benefits

within people's capability and interests, and personally, graciously and knowingly accepting whatever the donor decides. It also means asking for gifts in person initially and primarily, in a group setting second, by phone third and by mail or email last, without ever skipping a step or before exhausting a more personal and productive outreach method first. Anything less, or other than this, will produce less than the best results and gifts.

4. What services do you provide as part of your capital campaign services and can you differentiate for us, what you actually do versus what you advise us on, assist us with, or ask us to do?

Some consulting firms will say that they "help" you do something, but what they really mean is that they'll tell you how to do it, provide demonstrations or samples and then delegate the task to you. This is unacceptable, because it'll inevitably lead to much more work and less than the best results for you. That's not to say, however, that consultants need to always be around and do everything. This would be a misuse of your resources, too, since there are certain slower times in any campaign, when there's not a lot to do or the work that needs to be done can be handled just as effectively by a clerical person, instead of a higher paid consultant.

A consultant, however, should hire, train and supervise a local campaign assistant, prepare all organization and orientation materials, write the campaign case statement, prepare all campaign printed, promotional and communications materials, organize and attend all campaign meetings and key events, and coordinate and prepare materials for a sound fulfillment and follow-up process for you. They should also provide ongoing, on-call follow-up support for the entire fulfillment period. Anything less is unacceptable, because it will result in less than the best results for you.

5. What approach do you take to staffing our campaign, how many days of service do you provide and how much of this time are you and/or your consultants actually here at our church?

In addition to strong supervisory and back up support, the most effective firms also provide you with an experienced on-site consultant, too, one who is almost wholly devoted to client service and serving you. These people are the key to providing your church with the depth of service that research shows churches need to attain optimal results in their capital campaigns.

To get the best results, your consultant should be working on an average of only two or three campaigns, at most, at any one time including yours; they should not be doing sales and other administrative activities; they should come to your church at least every other week and personally attend all meetings and key events and attend "consultant-critical" tasks where specialized expertise is required; and they should be proposing to provide at least 30 and, ideally no more than 40 days of on-site service to you during the implementation of the campaign.

6. Are you and/or your consultants here at all of our meetings and key events and can you elaborate on this and tell me all of the meetings and events you will be present for?

This is a great follow-up question to the one previously asked, because it gives you a great sense for the depth of the consultant's work, as well as, how often they'll be at your church and how present they are for you and your volunteers.

7. What additional talents and back-up support does your firm have and provide?

The best firms have specialists that can help with writing, graphic design, printing and production of audio-visual materials. They also have qualified back-up support, in case the consultant that's working with you gets sick or has some other sort of emergency that may otherwise disrupt or delay service to you.

8. Over what period of time do you recommend conducting the campaign and why do you see this as an ideal timeframe?

The ideal timeframe for a church campaign is no less 6 months. A timetable much longer than this could adversely affect enthusiasm and campaign momentum. But a timetable shorter than this is even more problematic because it will adversely affect the time people have to recruit volunteers, ask for gifts and complete other critical tasks, which will compromise your success in these efforts and, as a result, adversely affect the campaigns' overall financial success.

9. Do we need a lot of volunteers for the effort and how are they best attained?

You can do quite well in a campaign if you have just 5% of your households involved as volunteers to invite people to make the most important advance or major gifts. But, the more volunteers you can get, the better. That's because if people are involved they're more committed. And, if they're more committed they'll make better gifts too. Plus, the more volunteers you have, the more gifts you'll have before reaching beyond your volunteer network. And, these volunteers will be even more effective in asking others for what they've already done themselves. More volunteers also means that you'll be able to reach out to more people personally, which will lead to more and better gifts and other benefits, such as being able to update your church membership list, identify who's hurting and in need of pastoral care, and it will help people get to know one another better, build relationships and an even stronger sense of unity and community.

The key to getting lots of volunteers involved in a campaign is to provide a variety of opportunities for involvement, get the right people involved at the top of the organizational pyramid, and to make sure that the right person "asks" each person for their volunteer commitment. Asking for involvement in the most personal and productive way possible and limiting the scope and length of each person's job, so that it is not an overwhelming task for anyone, is also critical.

10. How do you approach asking for gifts and training people how to ask?

The best consultants will coordinate and coach asking for gifts in the most proven to be productive and successively successful ways. This means they advocate asking for specific, sacrificial gifts, tying these requests into specific and significant benefits within one's capability and interests, and personally, graciously and knowingly accepting whatever the donor decides. It also means asking for gifts in person primarily and first, in a group setting second, by phone third and by mail or email last, without ever skipping a step, or before exhausting a more personal and productive outreach method first. Anything less, or other than this, will produce less than the best results.

The best consultants also extensively train and equip campaign workers to ask for gifts in ways that are effective, yet easy. They'll provide "how to" instruction and an ample, practical practice session. They'll prepare tools like a campaign brochure, video and written gift proposals to aid in presenting the case and asking for gifts. They'll encourage people to pair up in groups of two and to personally select those

they'd like to do their visits with and solicit. They should also encourage people to break their visits in two, where they need to, with a first visit designed to explain the campaign, answer questions and ask them to prayerfully consider their gift commitments, and a second visit to further discuss and/or gratefully accept whatever the donor decides. This all makes asking easier, more enjoyable and effective.

11. Do you help in asking for gifts?

Consultants can be asked and may be helpful in asking for some gifts. But, consultants should only be used sparingly, if at all, and only in select situations, such as asking for key gifts. They should never be asked or offer to do a lot of or all of the "asks", because people ultimately respond best to their peers rather than professionals, and there is absolutely no substitute for the active involvement of volunteers in getting the highest level of commitment.

12. Do you do anything special to help inspire greater participation and gifts?

The best firms go to great lengths to help inspire greater participation and gifts. They coordinate a member census to expand and update contact information for members prior to announcing the campaign. They develop a campaign video, in addition to a campaign brochure, because they know that a picture is not only worth a thousand words, but tens if not hundreds of thousands of extra dollars too. They coordinate various planned or creative giving seminars to educate people about various and very beneficial additional or alternative ways they might make gifts. They develop giving opportunities and donor recognition plans to inspire and recognize both exceptional and everyone's gifts. And, of course, they coordinate the gathering of people's gifts primarily in-person first, in a group setting second, by telephone third, and by mail and email last and they never skip a step or move to a next best approach before exhausting a more personal and productive approach first. The best ones too, won't charge you extra for any of these services. Rather, they'll include them in their basic program costs and fees, because they know how important these things are, and that they'll assure better participation and gifts.

13. What resources do you bring in the way of computer technology and other systems to help make our campaign more efficient and effective?

The best firms have standardized, systemized and computerized many of the routine tasks associated with conducting campaigns. Their consultants bring to the job powerful, personal computers, campaign management software systems and extensive computerized templates with standard campaign materials, so they don't have to do things manually, reinvent the wheel every time and create things from scratch. This frees them to focus on what's unique about you – your case and your cause, your people and how best to approach each individual about their involvement and gift. This also saves your church staff and volunteers, as well as the campaign staff, hundreds of hours of time, all of which helps your campaign to be more efficient and effective. Ideally, the church would also have the option of continued use of some software that will aid in the fulfillment of pledges and other important follow-up work too.

14. What are your fees for the campaign and how are they determined?

Fees for the campaign should be based on the time it takes to perform the services necessary to make a campaign for a church of your size as successful as possible, without cutting corners or spending more than is needed to get the best results and return on your investment possible.

15. What are the other costs associated with the campaign and does this cover travel, administrative support and all other expenses?

Other costs you can and should expect to incur, include consultant travel and other campaign overhead expenses such as secretarial support, printed and promotional materials, postage, special events and other expenses, the latter of which should be more or less equal, if following an approach that will yield the best results.

16. Do you suggest that we conduct a fundraising feasibility and planning study before the campaign begins and, if so, what is your approach, what is it designed to assess, who does it involve and how do you survey them, and finally, what does it cost?

The best firms will tell you that feasibility studies are optional, but helpful. They'll tell you they give you the chance to test your case and refine it before the campaign begins. They'll tell you it'll help to identify key leaders and donors and what might entice them to get involved and give more.

A well done study should be designed to assess all things that impact a campaign's success: satisfaction with your church, awareness and acceptance of your project and its individual components, awareness and acceptance of your planned campaign, competition for funds, volunteer and volunteer leadership willingness and potential, and your individual key and collective financial gift willingness and potential.

The study should minimally involve the consultant conducting between 30 to 60 individual, in-person, confidential interviews, with those who are the most involved in, and generous to, your church. In-person interviews yield the most candid, in-depth response. And, focusing interviews on those who are the most active and generous makes sense, since these are the people you'll depend on most for your campaign's success, since they are the most committed members of your faith community. Conducting 30 to 60 interviews should suffice for information gathering and analysis purposes. More interviews can be done, but there are other, more cost-efficient ways to inform and involve more people in the process, if you'd like to. That's why the best consultants will also offer to incorporate church-wide informational meetings and online surveys in addition to individual, in-person interviews as part of the study process too, which should be of little to no additional cost to you.

Run away from those who say that a feasibility and planning study is not helpful, or those that don't follow this exact approach. Because the fact is, some firms cut corners on studies, they don't assess all the areas that they should, or all of the areas they should thoroughly, they don't always focus on surveying the most impactful people in the most impactful way, and they don't have vehicles to give everyone the chance to participate and have a say. Some don't like to do feasibility studies at all, because they're not very profitable and can delay your moving forward with the actual campaign.

Costs for the study should be based on the firm's time and expense and should not be discounted substantially from their typical daily fee. Beware of firms that use the lure of no or low fees as an enticement to buy, because it often leads to inferior information and results. Capital campaign consulting firms know that the vast majority of churches that choose them to do the study will, and ideally should, retain them to conduct the actual campaign. They know that church's do this primarily as a matter of convenience. But, what they don't always know, is that they should also do this because of the detailed knowledge the firm will gain, which can be especially helpful in their campaign. And, this is knowledge that will otherwise be lost to you if you choose a firm other than the one you used for the study to conduct the actual campaign. So, don't be fooled by lower fees, because it can lead to the selection of a

firm that is often less than the best, which will cost you more in lost income when it comes to the actual campaign.

17. What sets you apart from your competitors?

This is a great question and allows the firm to give you specific examples and benefits of how they differ. It allows you to better compare and contrast between potential providers. The best firms know how they differ and are eager to share this information with you.

18. Do you guarantee your results?

The best firms will offer some sort of satisfaction and/or results-oriented guarantee. It would be best to have both.

And finally...

In addition to the questions above, you need to draw two conclusions about the firms you interview:

Did the presenter ask questions and was he/she a good listener?

Did he/she ask and answer questions? This is essential, because you want to work with people who are passionate about you, people who listen and respond thoughtfully and thoroughly to what you have asked.

Do their ethics and philosophies match those of your church?

Are they upfront and honest with you? Do they always advocate operating in ways that are proven to work and serve churches best, or were they willing to do or say whatever it takes to sell you?

Discerning and deciding who will work and serve you best

It's usually best not to make an immediate decision about the firm you'll use at the conclusion of the interviews. Rather, you should evaluate all firms against:

- What's required to get the best results in a church capital campaign,
- Answers to the interview questions asked against the ideal answers,
- What you can expect to raise with each firm, and which firm will provide you with the best return on your investment.

It's also wise to call the firms interviewed to let them know which way you are leaning and why and/or to ask any clarifying questions you feel are needed. This will give everyone the chance to fill in missing information and clear up any misconceptions.

You should then plan to reconvene within 48 hours (or within two days) of your first interview to come to a decision. This timing is important because studies have shown that most people forget a majority of

what they have learned within 48 hours (or two days) of learning it. So, more immediate decisions tend to lead to more informed and better decisions.

We've talked at length in previous sections about what's required to get the best results in a church capital campaign, key interview questions to ask and have answered, and the answers to key questions you should hope to hear.

Now let's look at comparing costs between firms, what you can expect to raise with each company and who will provide you with the best return on your church's capital campaign investment, which is important final financial analysis to do.

Comparing costs, what you can expect to raise and the return on your investment

Consultant Fees

Firms should charge you *fees* for the time (hours or days) that they plan to devote to the campaign, performing the services that they propose to provide. Some firms may base their fees partially on the size of the church, the church's location and even the goal of your campaign, all of which are valid variables, because your effort may require more or less of the consultant's time, depending on these variables.

But they should never base their fees on any other things, especially a percentage of what is ultimately pledged or raised. This is against the code of ethics of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and can lead to high-pressure tactics and/or the perception that the consultant is self-serving, neither of which you want to occur.

Ultimately, it is your responsibility to find out from each firm how they arrived at their fees. Remember, too, to ask about the number of on-site and off-site service days each firm plans to provide to you, the former of which is more verifiable and essential, if you're going to realize your campaign potential. This will give you a sense of the extent of the consultant's services compared to others and the consultant's cost per day. Both are useful evaluation tools.

Consultant Travel Expenses

You should also ask about *travel expenses* that might be charged back to you. Some firms build per diems into their fees that they pay to their consultants. And these per diems almost always exceed the consultant's actual travel expenses for the campaign. Other firms will provide a reasonable estimate of travel expenses and stay within these limits for the campaign.

Campaign Overhead Expenses

Other *overhead expenses* for the campaign should be more or less the same and will include costs for things like secretarial support (even if your church staff does the work), printed and promotional materials, postage, special events and other, more minor campaign related expenses. If overhead expenses are a lot different, it usually indicates "corner cutting" in some ways or that there is some hiding of expenses involved, such as secretarial expense and copying costs, which are sometimes not reflected in campaign budgets, because they are expenses the church is incurring anyway and they're not usually charged back to the campaign. Reputable firms however, should be very upfront and honest with you about these types of costs.

Discerning Differences in Value

Prices charged between firms often vary greatly. But, the way to look at fees is to look at the *value* you'll receive in terms of *days of verifiable on-site service*, *specific services provided*, and especially, *what the firms typically raise in campaigns similar to yours, relative to a church's annual (gift) income*. This will enable you to apply this multiple to your church's annual gift income to see which firm will provide you with the best return on your church's investment.

The following is some great, general advice about basing your decision solely on the price of the service or the fee a firm has quoted and is planning to charge you...

Words of Wisdom

It is unwise to spend too much. But it's usually worse to spend too little. In the end, remember that a firm's fee is often a reflection of their experience and expertise and the quantity and quality of service that they provide and you will ultimately receive.

In this regard, be advised that you are far better off paying a little more than you have to rather than less than you should. That's because in most cases, you truly do get what you pay for and the common law of business typically prohibits paying a little and getting a lot.

Lower fees often means less service and, as a result, lower results. So, in looking at the lowest bidder you may be well advised to add something to that consultant's overall cost to account for the lower level of results you may achieve. And, if you do that, you will have more than enough to buy quality without overspending.

While it is often tempting to go with the firm that has quoted the lowest cost or fee, don't, unless they also prove to be the most productive and greatest value.

To discern which firm will provide you with the best value or return on your church's capital campaign investment, you first need to determine what each firm typically raises in their campaigns for projects that are similar to yours, relative to the church's annual giving income.

You can do this by either using research that may be readily available to you, and/or by calling a few of each firm's most recent clients, whose projects were similar to yours in terms of the type of project they were raising funds for, and asking two key questions in addition to any others you may have, including: 1) "What did you raise in your campaign?" and 2) "What was your annual gift income at the time of the campaign?" These are great questions to ask and are the truest measures of a firm's productivity that takes into account and takes out demographic differences between church communities.

Once you have the answers to the above questions, you can then perform a couple of simple computations to determine how well your church would do with a particular company.

For example, if after making six calls to various churches, you discover that Firm 1 raised a total of \$12 million in their campaigns that were similar to yours and that the annual giving income for these same churches totaled \$6 million. In this instance, ‘Firm 1’s’ results relative to income ratio is 2 – meaning they raised, on average, 2 times a church’s annual giving income in similar campaigns. In making the same number of calls to ‘Firm 2’s’ clients, you discover that they have raised a total of \$6 million dollars for their clients with projects similar to yours and that the annual gift income for those churches totaled \$1.8 million. In this instance, ‘Firm 2’s’ results relative to income ratio is 3.33 – meaning they raised, on average, 3.33 times a church’s annual offering income in similar campaigns.

Now, apply these same multiples to your church’s income. If your church’s annual giving income totals \$500,000 per year, you could reasonably expect to raise \$1 million if you chose ‘Firm 1’ while you could raise \$1,665,000 million if you chose ‘Firm 2.’ See the chart below:

	<u>Firm 1</u>	<u>Firm 2</u>
Expected Gross Income	\$1,000,000 (2 x \$500,000)	\$1,665,000 (3.33 x \$500,000)

Next, subtract each consultant’s costs (fees and travel expenses) for conducting the campaign to determine which firm would provide you with the best bottom line value and return on your investment. Let’s say, for example, that Firm 1’s costs total \$50,000 and Firm 2’s total \$100,000. See the chart below:

	<u>Firm 1</u>	<u>Firm 2</u>
Expected Gross Income	\$1,000,000 (2 x \$500,000)	\$1,665,000 (3.33 x \$500,000)
Expected Fees & Travel Expenses	<u>(\$ 50,000)</u>	<u>(\$ 100,000)</u>
Expected Net Income/Return on Investment	\$ 950,000	\$1,565,000

It is clear from this example that Firm 2 will provide the greatest value and return on your investment for you, despite the fact that their costs are considerably more, in fact, more than double those of Firm 1. In this instance, barring any unusual circumstances, you should choose Firm 2 to serve you.

In summary, the bottom line is that productivity, return on investment or value should be more important than consultant fees and expenses, because while it’s unwise to pay more than you have to, sometimes what initially may seem like a bargain can actually cost you more (in lost income) than working with someone whose costs and productivity are significantly higher.

What to do once you’ve made your selection

After you have selected the best firm to serve you, ideally the one that will provide the best results and return on investment for you, notify them by phone, request a contract and begin looking at start dates with them.

It’s also really important and courteous to reach out to those you did not select to let them know who you ended up choosing, and candidly sharing with them the reasons for your selection. Most consultants go to great expense to cultivate and travel to come to meet with you. And, since we’re all in God’s work together, it’s only right and righteous to personally follow up with each firm you interviewed.

The 5 common and costly mistakes churches make in choosing and using counsel

1. **They structure the interview and selection process poorly.** They don't, among other things, limit the number of firms they interview to one or two at most; they don't consolidate their interviews to a single day or, if interviewing more than two firms, to consecutive days; they don't allow at least an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes for each interview, so firms can adequately explain all that they do; and they don't make their decision of who to use within 48 hours of their initial interview while the information gathered is still fresh.
2. **They don't compare and contrast what matters most.** They don't compare apples to apples and look at the things that matter most in contrasting competitors and what's required to get the best results. Things like:
 - Do they specialize in, ideally only do, and do they have a long and strong track record in only conducting church capital campaigns?
 - Do they provide a "just right" level of on-site, hands-on assistance and promise to spend at least 30, and ideally no more than 40 full days of service to you at your church to organize and attend all meetings and major events and to personally handle consultant or specialist essential tasks, such as preparation of organization and orientation materials, development of the campaign case statement and printed and promotional materials and the orientation and training of all campaign leaders and volunteers?
 - Do they promise to allow at least 6 months to conduct the actual campaign to allow more adequate time for volunteer recruitment and all, and especially, major gift development?
 - And do they promise to coordinate asking for gifts in the proven to be productive and successively successful ways where specific, challenging gifts tied to people's interests are personally and knowingly asked for and received, starting with the most capable and committed prospects for gifts in person first, in a group setting second, by phone third, and finally, by mail or email last, without ever skipping a step or prematurely proceeding with another approach, before exhausting a more personal and productive outreach method first?

They also don't always look at:

- How much each firm typically raises in campaigns similar to theirs relative to the church's annual giving income, and
 - When subtracting out the firms anticipated expenses, which firm will provide the church with the best return on their investment?
3. **They buy what's easy, not what's most beneficial and effective.** Again, achieving the best results and return on investment in a church capital campaign requires operating in a very particular way. There are no shortcuts or substitutes. To get the best results:
 - The campaign must be professionally directed by a firm that specializes in and ideally only does capital campaigns for churches.

- They must provide a high level of individual attention, and on-site hands-on support during the course of the campaign totaling 30 days minimally, and no more than 40 days ideally to maximize rewards and minimize waste.
 - They must coordinate the campaign over a minimum of 6 months, so there's an adequate amount of time to maximize volunteer involvement and the development of all, and especially, major gifts.
 - And, they must coordinate and coach asking for gifts in the most proven to be productive and successively successful ways, where specific, challenging gifts tied to people's interests are personally and knowingly asked for and received, starting with the most capable and committed prospects for gifts in person first, in a group setting second, by phone third, and finally, by mail or email last, without ever skipping a step or prematurely proceeding with another approach before exhausting a more personal and productive outreach method first.
4. **They buy the company's "consultant or sales person" versus their "process or success system".** Sometimes too much emphasis is placed on "who" presents to or will represent you, versus the capital campaign process or success system his or her company will bring. And, while both are important, process trumps people in order of importance, and you should be looking to hire first those who bring a process or success system to you that has proven to, and will produce, the best results and return on your investment for you. The people who will be involved in serving you are important too, but they become far less important, even interchangeable, if the company has in place and uses a well-defined, documented and repeatable success system for conducting church capital campaigns.
5. **They don't always heed the advice of the experts they engage.** When you engage an expert, the most important thing you can do is to trust their expertise and follow their precise advice. Don't second guess them and go another way, because it will inevitably take you down the path of struggle and unrealized potential.

Good Luck and God Bless You In Your Search and Selection Efforts!