Capital Campaign Pro
Everything You Need for a Successful Campaign

Educate Your Board About Capital Campaigns

7 Creative Ways to Use Our New Book

A Board Member's Guide to Capital Campaign Fundraising:

How to Raise Game-Changing Money for Your Nonprofit

BY SARAH PLIMPTON

Since Amy Eisenstein and I published *A Board Member's Guide to Capital Campaign Fundraising: How to Raise Game-Changing Money for Your Nonprofit*, we've been thrilled (and honestly humbled) by the response.

Dozens of nonprofit organizations have purchased copies in bulk for their boards, and the book is now winging its way into boardrooms across the country.

As organizations begin putting it to use, we wanted to share a few ideas for getting the most out of it. After all, we didn't write this book to sit on bookshelves and gather dust. We wrote it to become part of board meetings, committee discussions, and leadership conversations.

We know the organizations that'll benefit the most won't simply read the book — they'll use it to spark conversations, build a shared understanding of capital campaigns, and strengthen their boards over time.

7 Ways to Educate Your Board with *A Board Member's Guide*

Whether you're planning a campaign, in the middle of one, or looking to regain momentum, here are seven creative ways to make *A Board Member's Guide to Capital Campaign Fundraising* a true workhorse for your organization.

1. START A CAMPAIGN BOOK CLUB

Board education is most effective when it's spread over time. Instead of asking board members to read the entire book at once, assign one chapter before each board or development committee meeting and dedicate the first 10–15 minutes to discussion.

Questions to spark rich conversation:

- What surprised you?
- Which ideas challenged your assumptions?
- How does this apply to our organization?
- Is there anything we should be doing differently as a result?

Over the course of a year, your board will build a shared understanding of *campaign strategy* one conversation at a time. Instead of relying on a one-time training that everyone soon forgets, you'll create an ongoing culture of learning that strengthens your board throughout the campaign.

2. CHALLENGE COMMON CAMPAIGN MYTHS

Capital *campaign myths are surprisingly persistent*, and almost every board brings a few of them to the table. Left unaddressed, they can slow decision-making, create unnecessary anxiety, and make it harder to build consensus.

Consider reading and discussing:

- **Chapter 17:** *Do We Need a Campaign Brochure?*
- **Chapter 18:** *What's So "Quiet" About the Quiet Phase?*
- **Chapter 19:** *Will a Campaign Impact Our Annual Fund?*
- **Chapter 20:** *Why Wait So Long to Go Public?*

Use these chapters to proactively identify and challenge assumptions that may be influencing your board's thinking. Replacing myths with campaign best practices builds confidence and helps boards make better decisions throughout the campaign.

3. BUILD BUY-IN FOR YOUR FEASIBILITY STUDY

A *feasibility study* is one of the most misunderstood parts of a capital campaign. Board members often wonder whether it's necessary, whether it's worth the investment, or if their organization is "ready." Instead of answering those questions one at a time, educate your board before it's time to vote.

Consider reading and discussing:

- **Chapter 14:** *Why Do We Need to Do a Feasibility Study?*

Use this chapter to discuss what your organization hopes to learn from a feasibility study, what questions board members still have, and how the results will shape your campaign. You'll likely uncover concerns — but now you'll have a shared framework for discussing them.

4. NORMALIZE BOARD GIVING CONVERSATIONS

Conversations about board giving shouldn't begin when it's time to ask for campaign gifts. The strongest campaigns introduce these ideas early, revisit them often, and create space for honest discussion along the way.

Consider reading and discussing:

- **Chapter 10:** *How Much Should Board Members Give?*
- **Chapter 12:** *How Should Board Members Be Solicited?*

Use these chapters to discuss what a meaningful campaign gift looks like, why *every board member should participate* in the campaign, and how your organization plans to approach board solicitations.

By the time individual gift conversations begin, board members will already understand the philosophy behind the process, making those meetings far more comfortable and productive.

5. BRING NEW BOARD MEMBERS UP TO SPEED FASTER

Capital campaigns often outlast board terms, which means new members regularly join after major decisions have already been made. Rather than expecting them to catch up as they go, include a copy of the book in every new board member's orientation packet. It provides a shared foundation and vocabulary from day one.

Discuss together:

- **Chapter 1:** *What Is a Capital Campaign?*
- **Chapter 5:** *What Is the Board's Role in a Campaign?*
- **Chapter 6:** *What Is a Board Member's Individual Responsibility?*

One hour of discussion early in a trustee's tenure can prevent months of confusion later.

6. SET NEW BOARD CHAIRS UP FOR SUCCESS

Just as new board members need context, so do new board chairs. An incoming chair isn't expected to run the campaign, but they are expected to lead the board through it. Without thoughtful onboarding, they can find themselves in that leadership role before they fully understand what it entails.

Consider reading and discussing:

- **Chapter 7:** *What Is the Board Chair's Responsibility?*

Use this chapter to help incoming board chairs understand how they can best support the executive director, lead the board, and champion the campaign.

7. REIGNITE CAMPAIGN MOMENTUM

Every capital campaign experiences *periods when momentum slows*. Gifts take longer to close, volunteer energy wanes, or the next steps become less clear. These moments are normal—and they're an opportunity to step back, reflect, and make strategic adjustments rather than simply pushing harder.

Consider reading and discussing:

- **Chapter 21:** *What Are the Most Common Mistakes in Capital Campaigns?*
- **Chapter 24:** *What if the Capital Campaign Stalls?*

Use these chapters to facilitate an honest conversation about where your campaign stands. Ask board members to reflect on the following questions:

- Which challenges feel most familiar?
- Which obstacles are within our control to address?
- What should we keep doing? Start doing? Stop doing?

These discussions often generate fresh ideas, renewed commitment, and a clearer path forward.

Make *A Board Member's Guide* a Workhorse

Every nonprofit owns books that end up on shelves. We doubt this will be one of them.

Dog-ear the pages. Bring it to board meetings. Refer back to it when new board members join. Use it to build engaging board agendas. Pull it out when your campaign loses momentum or your board has difficult decisions to make.

The more this book gets used, discussed, highlighted, and passed around, the more valuable it becomes. (And your board becomes more valuable too!)

Remember: the real value isn't in the pages. It's in the conversations they inspire.