

## “WHEN DO WE GO PUBLIC?”

I am frequently asked by volunteers and staff “*when do we go public?*” with their campaign. My response is to provide some general guidelines:

**“Quiet Phase”:** The initial phase of a campaign, generally 12 months to 24 months in duration, should be focused on securing sizable gift commitments from a few key donors most intimately involved with the organization. The principal objectives are to demonstrate that the campaign will be successful, and encourage generous support from subsequent donors, i.e. “setting the bar high”.

Gift commitment objectives during the *Quiet Phase* generally are to secure:

- A “lead” gift commitment representing 10% to 20% of the campaign dollar goal with variables applied within that range such as size of campaign dollar goal; identification of potential donors at “lead” gift levels; gift expectations from remaining potential donors.
- 100% gift participation from the governing board totaling from 10% to 30% of the campaign dollar goal. If board participation is around 10% there is hopefully an “angel” not currently on the board. If participation is around 30% the campaign can be off to an excellent start.
- A number of major gifts which together with a “lead” gift and governing board gifts totaling between 60% to 80% of the campaign dollar goal with variables applied within that range such as size of campaign dollar goal, and gift expectations from remaining potential donors.

During the *Quiet Phase* many of the organization’s supporters and friends, and certainly those people being solicited, will be well aware that a campaign is underway, so terms like “quiet” and “silent” are a bit misleading. However, a broader solicitation of gifts during this Phase should be avoided until identified potential major donors have been personally contacted, properly cultivated and appropriately solicited. The rationale is to avoid swift gifts at lower levels; or as a colleague of mine suggested: avoiding “shut up/don’t contact me gifts”.

Based essentially on the magnitude of the campaign dollar goal as well as the size and geographical distribution of an institution’s constituency, one of two intermediate campaign phases may be planned before entering into the *Public Phase*, e.g. *Major Gifts*, *Special Gifts*, *Regional Gifts* phase.

### **“Public Phase”:**

The “public phase” of a campaign is essentially a call for all constituents to participate, and would generally follow:

- Broadly communicated campaign announcement and ongoing campaign gift reports
- 60% to 80% of the campaign dollar goal raised in cash and confirmed pledges