

Rethinking Campaigns

By Rika Peterson

It's not just you. There really are campaigns running all the time. Why? Because campaigns work. They are one of the most successful and shiny fundraising mechanisms available to fundraisers. A campaign, however, is not the answer to every new initiative or expansion effort proposed within an organization; it is not a catch-all.

I have seen organizations try to sell a concept by launching a campaign, instead of driving fundraising based on the soundness of their appeal. Big picture, the unintended drawbacks can be any of the following:

- Too many concepts incorporated into one campaign leaves room for a donor to bypass supporting all together because one of the components does not click.
- Donors spending too much time trying to connect the dots between all of the components included in the case for support.
- Too much attention on recognition and goal achievement instead of the intent and vision.
- One too many campaigns inducing donor fatigue.

In a recent Chronicle of Philanthropy article, Arthur Ochoa, Senior Vice President of Advancement at Cedars-Sinai, addressed how prolific campaigns have become and offered this potential alternative fundraising strategy to the traditional, prolonged campaign structure: "shorter-term fundraising goals that don't try to thematically tie together things that don't have any business being tied together."

How Ochoa reimagines the time typically occupied by one long campaign is by having a case read like this: "Over the next five years, we need to raise X number of dollars. Here are the priority projects; here's our inventory...cobbling together all the small constituent pieces that wouldn't have to be artificially shoehorned together in a campaign." Instead of manufacturing the story you think you need to tell, create short-term fundraising goals within a campaign linked to long-term priorities.

We could not have said it better ourselves. *Don't force the case—that is your case!*