

How to Write a Compelling Case for Support

The first task is to understand the underlying principle for your appeal and capture that within a simple yet thorough document. Fundraisers call this the case for support or case statement. It tells the prospective donor how your organization will use the funds and who will benefit.

The Case for Support is the statement of your cause explaining what your nonprofit does, why your agency is important and, most importantly, why people should support you. It appears in applications for grants, appeals for donor support, on your website, and wherever you need to explain why a potential donor should support your organization.

First Describe your Agency History!

- **Who you are and why you exist?**
- **What societal problem and/or issue caused you to begin service?**
- **What is your track record, what have you done and what do you continue to do annually?**
- **How does the donor know you're credible?**
- **What have people said about your work?**

A winning case statement must be one that captures a prospective donor's attention, and then offers a strong reason for investing in a particular project. The ingredients of a winning case statement essentially are the same as the components of a prospectus seeking to inform and interest potential investors in a profit-making endeavor. Every fundraising campaign has the case statement at its center. So, it is important to write one that is inspiring; that draws the reader in and moves them to respond both logically and emotionally by supporting your cause.

Why is the Case necessary?

- **Describes your inspiring work.**
- **Demonstrates forethought and planning.**
- **Defends your agencies existence.**
- **Defines your vision.**
- **Differentiates you from other nonprofits.**

Step back and remember why you are doing your job in the first place, re-read your mission statement and revisit some of the ways your organization has helped others.

What is Your Objective?

- **What will it achieve when completed?**
- **What new opportunities will be created?**
- **What will it mean for the people (children, faculty, families, etc.)?**

It is often hard to draw back from everyday pressures to write on a broader scale about the vision and mission of your organization with the kind of passion that first inspired you to become involved. However, being able to write with this kind of passion is absolutely crucial to writing a successful Case. If you don't communicate the passion, it is unlikely that anyone reading the document will feel it.

What is the Purpose of the Case?

- **To “make the case” for why an individual, corporation or foundation should invest funds in your organization.**
- **Case statements are used for all kinds of fundraising campaigns.**
- **The best ones link your organization's needs to the donors' interests.**

As George Stanois reminds us in *12 Step Fundraising*, people give to people, not a cause or bricks and mortar, remember that it's far more important to appeal to people on an emotional level.

Engage your donors in stories about how the organization has made a difference. Stories with memorable or unusual details will remain with readers longer than dry organizational facts or program descriptions.

What is the Need?

- **What is the current societal need or gap in services that you seek**

- to meet?
- **What created the need?**
 - **How widespread is it – nationally or locally?**
 - **How does that need influence me and/or all other members of our community? In other words, why should I be concerned about this?**

Keep the Case brief! Prospective donors are going to put it down no matter how perfectly it is written, so try not to bore your supporters with unnecessary data. Be sure to jazz it up with attention-grabbing quotes and captivating stories about how your organization has helped people. Include some pictures and graphics that highlight your organization's achievements. It will help your Case stand out and make it much more attractive.

What is your Proposed Solution?

- **What do you propose to do about the problem?**
- **What is the scope of your solution?**
- **How long will it take or what are the parameters?**
- **How do you know it will work or that this is the best solution?**
- **Where will the funds come from or what do you and your Board intend to do to generate the necessary funds? (Capital campaign, annual fund drive, etc.)**

It is also important to make the problems real for your prospects. To do this, you need to know your audience and how your message will be important to the person you are writing to. Speak directly to them and show them how you solve problems that they care about, for the community, or disadvantaged people, while impressing upon them a sense of urgency; that the time for action is *now* and that *their* gift is a necessary part of the solution.

What is the Cost?

- **How much is the total cost of the proposed solution?**
- **How do you break that cost down into specific line amounts?**
- **How will each of those line items contribute to the solution?**
- **What specifically does each line item include?**

Board members and community leaders are more likely to support a plan they helped create. Include the features and costs of the project, but focus on the benefits. Make an appeal to the heart as you stress why every gift will matter.

Now you are ready to “test” the Case. Present it to your nonprofit colleagues, your board members, your prospects and listen to what they have to say. If they misunderstand the strategy or goal, rewrite it until it can be clearly understood. If they don’t immediately see the importance of what you want to achieve, rewrite it until they do.

Resources

Stanois, George. *12 step fundraising with George Stanois (Step 1: Develop a Fundraising Case for Support)*. Available at:
http://www.12stepfundraising.com/?page_id=7

Kihlstedt, Andrea. *Capital Campaigns: Strategies That Work*. Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2009.

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