

THE FIRST MONDAY REPORT

Thoughts on Fund Raising for Campus Ministry

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“Making the Case”

Most of us have been on one side of this question or the other: “Can I have an increase in my allowance?” In the easy chair sits the parent behind the newspaper, perhaps pretending not to hear the first time. Again the plea, this time with a little more urgency. Then the paper lowers. The pulse rate rises, especially if this is a repeat performance. A voice clears, eyes meet. “Well, make your case,” comes the reply. “Tell me why you need more money and maybe I’ll consider it.” This is the crucial point in the transaction. If a good case can be made for an increase, something that is urgent and necessary, it may be granted. But if there follows only a stammering, “Well ah, just because,” there is little hope for the one on the short end of the bargaining process. The case has not been made; the request has not touched the heart of the parent. And even though they may adore the child, the reason for increasing an allowance is yet to be stated clearly and in a compelling way.

Jerold Panas has written a very informative and delightful book¹ about writing case statements, which may sound as exciting to most of us as sanding drywall. I commend it to you as a resource that arises out of his wide experience in fund raising. He refers to the case statement as the “mother ship” of all the other material that is generated for a capital campaign, as well as for the annual fund, for planned gifts, and for foundation grants. If you’re interested in raising funds, he enjoins, you need a case statement. Period. And not just one that is constructed and then hidden away, like a piece of hastily-built furniture. A good case statement should be reviewed, assessed, and revised, along side your mission statement, with some regularity. It is your basic document, your “Institutional Credo”, says Panas. “The case explains why you are worthy of voluntary effort and financial support. It defines who benefits and why your organization is uniquely positioned to provide the services and use the funds effectively.”²

Panas indicates that the crucial question your case statement must answer is: “Why do these folks deserve my support?” The reader will want to be certain that your organization is a wise place to invest their time and money. He

¹ Jerold Panas, “Making the Case: The No-nonsense Guide to Writing the Perfect Case Statement,” (Institutions Press: Chicago, IL, 2003) 136 pp.

² Panas, p. 9.

continues, “People don’t want to give money away. That’s not the motivation. They want to invest in a bold and heroic cause. They want their funds to change lives or save lives. You want them to know that by giving, they have the power to make great things happen. It’s their money. It’s their decision. They want to see the impact. Don’t ask for their money. Go for their heart.”³

Before you spend a lot of time and energy on a case statement, you and your board will need to decide how it will be used. (And propping up the short leg on the table isn’t one of them) It may be used for information, as a solicitation tool, to motivate and inspire persons at the core of your ministry, as a stand alone, send ahead, or leave behind document, to distributed *en masse*, online, or only in person. It can take a number of formats. Most frequently it is a bound booklet or encased in a three-ring binder. It could also be printed as a companion piece to accompany other materials. It could be done in a series⁴ It could have a longer format and an abbreviated format, such as a brochure. It could be a video, CD Rom, or power point presentation. It might be placed on your Web page⁵. Regardless of the format, it usually needs personal interpretation, if for no other reason than your case needs to be as personal as possible to reach the heart. Of all the formats mentioned above, think about how you can present your case in as direct a way possible.

There are a variety of uses for a well-honed case statement according to Panas⁶, which I offer here with some comments:

1. It assumes and secures agreement, understanding, and commitment among your primary leaders and board members. You want to assure that there is total dedication to your cause and that everyone understands what that cause is. Often this is referred to as the “internal case,” that which everyone wrestles with before it goes public and becomes the “external case.” If you are having trouble with your campus ministry board lacking focus, try working with them over a case statement. Everyone must agree and sign off on it with spirit and courage. It can be a unifying experience.
2. It provides a direction and a defined strategy for how to present your vision and the urgency of it to your primary constituency in the most effective, dramatic way. It becomes an “expert witness” for your mission. What we miss, often, in campus ministry, is the urgency that is NOT related to panic, failure, or short-sighted planning. Our ministry is urgent, because the gospel is urgent and the needs of young adults on campus are urgent. A well-defined strategy that addresses these urgencies is what the case statement speaks to eloquently.

³ Panas, pp. 9f.

⁴ Some excellent work has been done by University Lutheran Church, Evanston, IL. Write to Campus Pastor Lloyd Kittlaus for samples.

⁵ Douglas Mason, “A Compelling Case Statement: Make it Sizzle!” (International ALDE Conference presentation, 2000)

⁶ Panas, pp. 13f.

3. The case informs leaders and workers of your program and your audacious dreams. It is a big, bold vision that you're setting forth, one that if successful will "work to the immense and unending benefit of those you serve." We need to get beyond our Lutheran modesty at this point and project wild dreams and marvelous accomplishments of biblical proportions. All things are possible, yet they must also be planned for; this is the balance you are seeking.
4. An effective case enlists friends and new leaders to your cause. It is the invitation to join up, to make a difference, to invest themselves in something meaningful that attracts them. They see current leadership focused, excited, committed, and they want to join them. Your case should make them hopeful, as well as challenge them.
5. It is an early working document and cultivation piece for prospective donors. Used in this way, it is presented as a draft, a work in progress that they, as your primary supporters, are asked to help you shape. You value their input and their ideas. You want them to be among the first to see the final case—and you can imagine that they will want to support a vision and a plan that they helped to create.
6. It is a document that helps others endorse your vision. It becomes like a magnet, attracting new attachments as it moves along. As people hear it and support it, your sphere of influence widens, your family increases.
7. Once you describe and define your dream, the case becomes the source book and guide for writing all subsequent publications, articles, and media pieces. A well-written case statement will give you the wording, the images, the stories, and the pictures to use in a well-rounded set of interpretive pieces. Do this one well, and it makes other tasks that follow much easier.

Not everyone can write a case statement, and it certainly should not be placed in the hands of a committee. Nor should it be given to anyone skilled in a certain kind of prosaic style, a grant writer for example. The writer of a case statement must make the presentation sing, allure, sparkle, compel, invigorate, bristle with excitement. Panas likes the word "heartfully," because it contains both the words "art" and "ear." Edmund Wilson, he notes, called it, "a blaze or heartfelt ecstasy." It is what the artist August Rodin said of his sculpture, "I try to make the blood circulate through the marble."⁷ Write in picturesque language, but also use a wealth of pictures effectively. Don't be text-heavy, use white space liberally. Make your point in such a way that anyone unfamiliar with your organization can be drawn to its significance within ten minutes. Captivate them, but don't make them captive to tired language and images. Help their imagination soar, but give them an anchor in reality.

⁷ Panas, pp. 27ff.

While one size doesn't fit all when it comes to case statements, as we referred to above in the variety of presentations, there are common elements that need to be included in every good case, even though they may not separate out into the distinct categories below:

- The title develops the theme and tone and makes it memorable. The task of the title is to get the reader to think, “Hmmm,” and turn with some interest to the first page.
- Dynamic first paragraphs hold the attention of the reader and compel him/her to read deeper. They provide a bridge to the other core information deeper into the document. Like any novelist knows, lose your reader on the first page and they won't finish the book. Use images that elicit imagination, emotion, and reflection. Don't simply tell the reader that to think; invite them to walk with you and dream.
- The irrefutable section of the case is the place where you develop the urgency of your vision. It must seem bigger than the institution itself, it has to reach farther, and move deeper. Your mission statement is the centerpiece of this section, but stated with fire and drive. It has to have the sense of “we just can't stop dreaming about this until it's done!” While the first paragraphs need to be a “Wow!,” this section needs to be a “Well, OK then!”
- The case goes on to describe your unique position as a community that can meet the needs of young adults on campus. Why you and not some other group—a church nearby or an evangelical ministry? What makes you stand out? Why can you do it better?
- Describe the strengths of your ministry, its current mission, and its history of faithful work and witness.
- Reinforce the urgency at several points. Don't make it about money, but about meeting needs and changing lives.
- Describe how you will make it happen. What are some particular goals that you have set? What will it take to achieve them? Now you can talk about money in terms of budget and financial challenge. Keep positive, however, no one wants to fund a ship tilted toward disaster.
- The benediction. Say it one more time with assurance and passion. Emphasize the theme for final emphasis—not unlike a good sermon. Lift the vision one more time. Use the “F” word—which for Panas is “fervor.” Quoting author Mary McCarthy he urges that “the reader must become susceptible and responsive to being thrilled.”⁸

Put succinctly, the case statement is built around the common questions of “who, what, when, where, why, how, and how much.” By the time the increase in allowance is granted, all of these questions will have satisfactory answers,

⁸ Panas, p. 46.

and they will be convincing and urgent. Tell the story. Lift up our hearts.
Make it pop and sizzle!

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