

---

## ***The Essential Case Statement***

---

### **An Important Tool for the Success of a Major Gift Program**

---

One of the most important tools for the success of a major development program is a compelling case statement.

An effective case statement is more than just a brochure for prospective donors. It is the rationale for the very existence of the institution as well as for its growth and strengthening. It reveals the institution's productivity and demonstrates how the organization benefits society. It clearly presents the ways in which the organization wants to improve its service along with the new resources that are required.

That venerable sage of the profession, Sy Seymour, tells us, *"Those who read this piece will actually want to read it and will really need to know what it says...as the basis for their own understanding."* Before a community leader – who is perhaps not involved with the client or is only involved in a superficial way – can make an intelligent decision to become a campaign leader, s/he will want and need the information contained in the case statement. Often, s/he is used to making significant corporate decisions after getting all of the facts available. Without those facts, s/he will delay or avoid making the decision. When dealing with peers, s/he may not want to ask questions or may not know what questions to ask. The case statement will provide complete information,

prevent misunderstandings, and give a clear impression that "the homework" has been done. With a properly prepared case statement in the hands of the right committee, enlistment should proceed as planned.

We will borrow again from Sy Seymour: *"The case statement is an orderly compilation of those arguments that may be expected to influence a prospective donor to give or to act affirmatively and generously in behalf of a cause or an institution seeking aid."* Donors who can make important gifts are routinely besieged with requests for money. They will not support projects considered to be "fly by night" or unworthy of their affiliation. A properly prepared case statement will do much to show the sincerity and value of the organization and help to establish favorable consideration. Much as a banker demands full disclosure of a loan applicant's personal and financial status before making a loan, the important donor demands full and complete knowledge of the projects he intends to support. The case statement provides that information. With such preparation and the right solicitor, securing the hoped-for gift should also proceed as planned. An informed and motivated donor is a generous donor.

Hopefully, by now, you will begin to appreciate the value of a thoroughly prepared case statement. The case statement truly is the foundation upon which the success of every development program rests.

## **How Does the Case Work?**

---

The case statement is the campaign's major resource document. All subsequent campaign materials are developed from it.

1. Written from a donor's perspective, the case encourages involvement – even a sense of ownership – rather than a sense of duty or obligation.
2. The case presents a positive identity.

3. The case positions the institution's programs for development. It shows how the current fundraising campaign addresses issues and solves problems and shows that the institution and the campaign need the energy and dollars of the donor.
4. The case invites investment.
5. The case is convincing.
6. The case is built on the future. It offers a vision of the optimum benefits your institution could provide and shows how the funds being sought will unlock the institution's potential and turn visions into reality.
7. The case is written for your target market.
8. The case makes statements that are supportable and defensible.
9. The case shows that the project has been endorsed. It quotes leaders in the copy to add weight to and spur interest in the project.
10. The content of the case is emotional (sizzle) while its appearance is rational and orderly. It looks conservative and logical.
11. The case is optimistic.
12. It is brief – three to five pages. Too many ideas reduce its impact. In fact, a single, central argument is best.
13. "Facticity creates action," said Abraham Maslow. "When facts are so obvious, so clear, then action is demanded."
14. It answers these questions:
  - What do you do?
  - What distinguishes you from others?
  - Why is money needed?
  - What will be the benefits?
  - Who are the leaders of the campaign?
  - What will you do with \$?
  - What will it cost?
  - Where will futures come from?

## Five Important Uses of a Case Statement

---

A case statement is both an internal and an external document. It has five main uses:

### **1. OBTAINING CONSENSUS**

Internally, and particularly during the early phases of campaign planning, the case statement is valuable in obtaining a consensus about the organization's priorities, the directions envisioned, the resources deemed most crucial, the avenues of service to be stressed and opened up, and the organization's thrust in the educational world. At the early stages, the case statement goes through many drafts. At this point, it is an internal document. Representatives of key groups in the institution read and revise. Through repeated versions, a general agreement develops concerning priorities, aims, and financial goals.

### **2. RECRUITING VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP**

The case statement is useful in recruiting key leaders for a major development effort. This must be done early in the planning phase, even before any brochures are printed. The case statement, which shows specific reasons for the extent and goals of the campaign, helps answer prospective campaign leaders' and workers' questions and gives them confidence in the planning and direction of the campaign.

### **3. OBTAINING MAJOR GIFTS**

Often, in a major development effort, a proposal for a major prospect is required even before brochures and other printed materials come off the press. The case statement, even in draft form, is very effective with

a personalized cover and a personalized approach keyed to the particular donor – as a tool in the solicitation.

**4. TESTING THE MARKET**

The case statement can be used to determine how the potential major donors feel about the proposed campaign. It provides a vehicle to bring the prospective major donor into the planning process and allows her or him to react to the proposed objectives.

**5. FORMING A BASIS FOR THE "SALES" BROCHURE**

Finally, the case statement, once consensus has been reached by the powers that be, is the basis for solicitation materials.

## **Elements of a Case Statement**

---

**I. THE MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

Donors are mission-oriented, and the first section of the case statement should define the mission of the organization. Prospective donors want to know the following questions: Why was the institution founded? What role does it have in its community? If it were not in existence today, would it be founded? What is its philosophy of purpose? What is there in its heritage and present organization that must be preserved and strengthened?

**II. THE ORGANIZATION'S SERVICE, ACHIEVEMENT, AND PRODUCTIVITY**

Mission and purpose are important factors in obtaining support. Action, productivity, and achievement are also vital. How does the institution serve? How has it grown – in programs and in meeting the needs of its constituents, the community, and society? What kind of alumni has the

organization produced? How has the institution grown in physical facilities, in endowment, and in philanthropic support?

Even more important, what are the measurable results of the institution's programs and services? Many business executives are asking pertinent questions about measurable achievements of philanthropic institutions – such as the comments of James F. Bere, chairman and chief executive officer of Borg-Warner Corporation:\*

*"Philanthropy is not expected to show a profit, but it is supposed to have results. Inefficiency and unclear purpose can develop in both profit and nonprofit sectors. But in business, we are held to account: if less money is available, we must cut costs and do things better. In the future, business will be asking for similar accountability from philanthropy....Frankly, the more we are asked for, the harder we must look at the requests. Grant seekers must go beyond simply asking in the name of a good cause... Philanthropic or business organization, we face the same rule: become more productive or be prepared to fade away."*

### **III. NEW DIRECTIONS -- HOW THE ORGANIZATION WISHES TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND REALIZE ITS FULL POTENTIAL**

What are the long-range plans of the organization? What is the thrust that the organization wishes to embark on? What are the objectives, new programs, and changes in current programs that will enable it to fulfill its mission in today's world? What facilities must be improved or obtained? What financial support is required? In other words, what does the organization want to do that it is not now doing?

### **IV. WHAT ARE THE NEW RESOURCES REQUIRED?**

What will it take in new resources to make possible the organization's new thrust or continued programs? What new construction must be provided? What renovations and remodeling projects are required?

What equipment is needed? What endowment is needed for general operations, for the support of faculty salaries and opportunities for faculty development? How about scholarships and financial aid and the library? What is the level of current operational support required? What are the priorities?

**V. THE PLAN TO OBTAIN THE NEW RESOURCES --THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

Describe the major development program – its theme; goals, and length of duration. What are the goals for expansion and/or improvement of the physical plant, for equipment, for endowment, for current operations, and for estate planning?

What is the organization, leadership, and time table? What publics will be contacted, and when and what are the goals for each? What is the range of gifts needed? Are there opportunities for memorial gifts and with what price tags? What are the ways in which gifts can be made – such as cash, pledges, or estate planning?

**VI. WHAT THE SUCCESS OF THIS PROGRAM WILL MEAN TO THE ORGANIZATION**

Emphasize again what will be done with the funds sought and what success will mean to the institution, to the community involved, to all constituencies, and to society.

**VII. VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP**

List the leaders of the development organization, the board of trustees, associates, alumni and parents, boards, the church constituency, other

sponsoring and advisory groups, and other volunteers involved in the program.

**THE PROCESS OF CREATING THE CASE STATEMENT IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE FINAL DOCUMENT**

The consensus reached through the various drafts of the case statement, revision after revision, and the incorporation of ideas from many key groups – such as trustees, faculty, administrative staff, patients, alumni, and parents – will enable the program to have credibility, a clear sense of direction, and a definite plan that is not likely to change. A case statement provides direction and a means of institutional communication, particularly in the important formative days of planning and setting goals.

*I hope you have found these ideas to be useful. If I can be of any further assistance, please give me a call. To learn more about The Huddleston Group, visit our website at [TheHuddlestonGroup.com](http://TheHuddlestonGroup.com) or email me at [ron@thehuddlestongroup.com](mailto:ron@thehuddlestongroup.com)*

Good luck.

Ron Huddleston, CFRE, FAHP  
President

This material is for limited distribution only and may be reproduced without permission only to other members of your organization.