Apra's Campaign Toolkit Introduction

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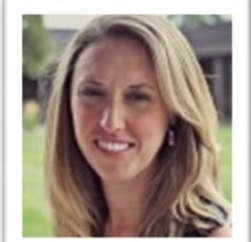
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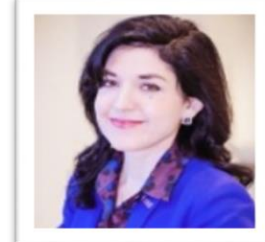
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Introduction

Apra's Campaign Task Force Member Karen Isble, VP of Advancement, Kalamazoo College, offers her thoughts on the value this new resource can provide to prospect development professionals at any stage in their career.

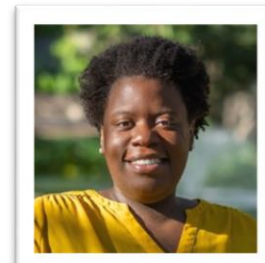The role of prospect development in campaign planning and strategy has evolved rapidly as the professionalism of prospect development (PD) teams has grown more sophisticated over the past several decades – particularly as the role of data analytics has become increasingly vital to our work, particularly for organizations with large constituencies.

In decades past, you might find a campaign that was solely planned by a VP and an external campaign consultant, with research staff being asked to implement the results and recommendations, having had little or no input. While that is, we hope, rare today, it's critical that, to be seen as necessary partners at the planning table, PD professionals are armed with the knowledge to apply strategic use of their expertise to the campaigns of which they will be a part.

More often, these days, you will find PD professionals and teams out in front of the campaign planning and strategy process – many organizations no longer hire campaign consultants for feasibility and goal-setting, leveraging the knowledge of their internal PD teams for this highly-visible, mission-critical work.

When the Apra Body of Knowledge (BoK) was originally developed, there was a domain wholly devoted to campaigns. We realized that many of the skills PD professionals need to be successful in campaigns overlap with the skills needed in their day-to-day jobs. As we streamlined the BoK to keep those domain skill sets where they belonged, we also didn't want to lose the overarching layer of additional knowledge needed for campaigns that often blurs the lines between skill sets in research, relationship management, data analytics, and more. Thus, the campaign toolkit was developed.

Campaigns are a journey of strategic planning, data optimization, marketing and communications and event strategy all interwoven around the traditional donor cycle. It requires varied strategies at every level of the donor pool. When thinking about how campaigns are different from "business as usual," we can cite these differentiators, among others:

- Multi-year, rather than annual goals (spread over 5, 7, 10 or more years in recent times)
- Specific, comprehensive targets across the organization, often backed by a multi-year institutional strategic plan
- A heightened marketing and communications with an overarching, unifying message that creates a sense of urgency
- *Visible accountability* to the outside world – once big goals are announced, everyone will be watching to see if you make it to the finish line

The role of PD professionals is extremely varied over the life of a campaign, with much of the heavy lifting being on the front end, during initial planning, feasibility and goal-setting. We hope this toolkit will help guide you through what you need to know to provide the right strategic intelligence to your organization, regardless of what stage your campaign is in: early, middle or late stage; quiet or public phase.