

# Overcoming Your Board's Reluctance to Ask for Funding: A Charter School Case Study

## THE SITUATION

Roxboro Charter School, located in Roxboro, NC, is a 10-year-old public charter school. The school has been ranked in the top 3% of North Carolina public schools and regularly graduates close to 100% of their seniors. To provide even more opportunity for their students, the school wanted to expand the renovations of their facility, an old cotton mill, to create a new auditorium and gym.

The school's board of directors didn't envision using this just for their students, however; they wanted to create a new family and community venue. To achieve this goal, school officials realized that they needed to engage the entire community, involving them in the planning process as well.

## PROJECT GOALS

- › Secure the funding needed to build a new gym/auditorium
- › Engage community members in the planning process, broadening base of support
- › Complete renovations quickly so current students could enjoy the new facility



## CHALLENGES

- › Board members did not feel comfortable asking for money
- › School admission is lottery-based, so potential funders had no guarantee their child would attend the school
- › As a North Carolina charter school, they were ineligible to receive state funding for bricks and mortar needs

## THE CONVERGENT APPROACH

The funding feasibility study is widely considered to be a key component of the capital campaign process, and that was definitely the case here. RCS had to come up with a strategy to raise the funds needed for their renovation without the support of any state funding, and they had no way to guarantee local parents that their children would be able to attend the school and utilize the new facility.

To overcome these obstacles, community members were asked to participate in the feasibility study and provide their thoughts on how to best renovate the cotton mill so that the new facility would be an asset to the entire community. This input helped shape the plans for the size and specifications of the renovation so that the finished product would provide a new and much-needed event space for the community.

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To complete the campaign as quickly as possible, RCS engaged Convergent on a full-time basis. Their project director was on-site five days a week, ensuring the campaign moved forward on schedule. Additionally, their project director made the 'ask' on behalf of RCS, relieving the staff, board members, and volunteers of the responsibility. Our professional solicitations focused on the return on investment that investors would receive by supporting the new facility, instead of relying on personal connections to justify the pledge amounts requested.

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## RESULTS

- › Secured nearly \$1,600,000 in pledges in just twelve months for the Raise the Roof campaign
- › Community members were more informed about the quality of the school's educational programs and success, increasing their base of support
- › Convergent's aggressive timeline enabled the school to begin renovations ahead of schedule, ensuring that current students benefitted from the success of the campaign

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## CLIENT FEEDBACK

// There were times when I was present at the ask and was actually shocked at how much our campaign director asked potential funders to commit, not to mention when they actually agreed to that amount!"

// We really appreciated not only how professional our project director was in his interactions with our community stakeholders, but also how invested he was in our community while here. He attended community events and became a familiar face, leaving a very positive impression. It's easy to be seen as someone that gets in, gets money, and gets out, but that's not the impression he left at all."

- *Natalie Brozy, Managing Executive Director*

