

Winning Edge #66 – Create a Fundraising System, Not a Goal

This is Trevor Bragdon with Commonwealth Partners' *The Winning Edge*: Tips to help conservatives persuade and win.



Have you ever had a task you put off and put off? Then when you finally do it, you realize it takes way less time and wasn't nearly as bad as you imagined?

Fundraising is like that for most candidates.

In reality, 50 to 100 hours of focused fundraising over a year is usually enough to raise what you need to win.

The hard part? Getting started.

How do you actually get to those 50 to 100 hours? The common advice is to set a goal. Something like, "*I will raise \$50,000 by July 1st.*" The problem is that's so far off it doesn't give most people the motivation to get going in January.

Instead of a goal-first approach, try a systems-first approach. This idea comes from Scott Adams, who says, "If you do something every day, it's a system. If you're waiting to achieve it someday in the future, it's a goal."

How do you create a fundraising system instead of a goal? Think about the inputs—the activities that actually result in money being raised. Take fundraising phone calls. We know we need to do them, but they make us uncomfortable. So we put them off until we have a deadline, like an upcoming fundraiser, where the fear of an empty room finally overcomes our fear of making phone calls.

But what if you just created a system where you made at least 10 fundraising phone calls each week? Some weeks you might do more, but other weeks when session and work get busy, you're still making progress with those 10 calls.

Or another system could be spending an hour or two each week on fundraising. You block an hour on your calendar, say every Tuesday and Thursday, and you make calls, send fundraising emails, and set up events.

Each week you stick to your system, you're winning. The calls and hours add up quickly. What's painful to do in January becomes easier in February. By March, you're making way more progress each week than you imagined at the start.

Now, if you're a statewide candidate or need to raise more than \$250k, the reality is a weekly system won't be enough. You'll need a daily fundraising system instead. Focus on either one hour a day, or 20 calls a day to start. It's a heavier lift, but the stakes are higher, and so is the pool of donors who need to hear from you.

But here's what's powerful about any system, whether it's 10 calls a week or 20 calls a day: it changes the way we think about ourselves. If you're just focused on a goal, you work toward it and you might meet it or you might not. But with a systems approach, the activity becomes part of your identity. You become a "good fundraiser" because you fundraise consistently.

So this January, build your fundraising system. Pick either a time each week or a number of calls you'll make, and just do it every week. By summer, you'll be one of the best fundraisers in your caucus.

Source: Adams, Scott. *How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big: Kind of the Story of My Life* (p. 51). (Function). Kindle Edition.