Building an Effective Advocacy Campaign

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Liz Kuoppala and Kenza Hadj-Moussa
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
As you requested, I have learned to “do more with less.”

I’m doing more unnecessary work, with less planning, less intelligence, and less guilt.

I hate the first staff meeting after budget cuts. And less career aspiration, too!
MINNESOTA COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

- Advocacy organization established in 1984
- New strategic direction in 2011 – to focus on specific advocacy campaigns
- 4 full-time staff
  - Executive Director
  - Communications Director
  - Membership Director
  - Policy Director
- 150 member organizations
- 12-member board of directors
LEADING EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY IN CHALLENGING TIMES

- $100 million for housing in state’s bonding bill (2014)
- Eliminating time limits on education for moms and dads on public assistance (2014)
- 24% increase in housing funding; 42% increase in homeless funding (2013)
- Increased welfare cash grant by $110/month “housing allowance” (2013)
- Repealed “Family Cap” on public assistance (2013)
- $37 million for housing in state’s bonding bill (2012) – previous average ranged from $0 - $8 million
CUTTING THE ISSUE

- Is there a problem we’re trying to address?
- Is there a solution?
- Can the solution be broken into achievable goals?
- Will the solution help people?
- Does joining them add value?
- Is there any one else working on these goals?
ANALYZE STRATEGICALLY

- Can you build a coalition to work on these goals?
- Does working on these goals build movement strength?
- Is the goal big enough to challenge and inspire?
GO, FIGHT, WIN!

Develop a case (research, fact sheets)

Build a coalition (grassroots and grasstops)

Develop action plans for each team
CAMPAIGN PLAN BASICS

Build evaluation into your plan

Outreach
Number of engaged participants, percent of regions engaged, endorsements, petitions signed

Public Policy
Policies changed or introduced, level of support, appetite for issue

Communications
Social media, news coverage, public opinion, media reach
POWER MAPPING EXERCISE

Who are the primary and secondary change-drivers?

Power

Access/Influence
CAMPAIGN PLAN : COMMUNICATIONS

Tailor to Your Audience

- How do they prefer to get their information? Ex: Fact sheets, experts, constituents, trusted allies, concrete examples, broad theories

- How do they prefer to make decisions? Ex: Head (objectively) or heart (personal or group values)?
CAMPAIGN PLAN: COMMUNICATIONS

Understand Frames

- Frameworks Institute
- Spitfire Strategies
- *Don’t Think of an Elephant* by George Lakoff
  - If a lens doesn’t work with your issue, it’s time to reframe the issue
  - Don’t reinforce a frame that doesn’t work
  - Reframe by changing your words, your attitude, and narrative
CAMPAIGN PLAN : COMMUNICATIONS

Keep it Simple

- Avoid the “curse of knowledge”
- **Made to Stick by Chip and Dan Heath** – SUCCES
  - Simple
  - Unexpected
  - Concrete
  - Credible
  - Emotional
  - Stories

Make it simple, but significant.

- Don Draper
CAMPAIGN PLAN : COMMUNICATIONS

Keep it Simple – Case Study

Homes for All supports $100 million in bonds for housing.

Housing is the foundation for stable families, strong communities, and a competitive state.

In the last decade Utah quietly decreased homelessness by 78%. Lawmakers knew it was a dollars and cents issue: investing in housing is cost effective.

A Winning Message for Minnesota Lawmakers

- We lead with the most important information
- Housing is framed as a common-sense community issue.
- It’s accompanied by an unexpected story

Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
CAMPAIGN PLAN: COMMUNICATIONS

Make media work for you

- Traditional Media
  - Have coffee with reporters who cover your issue
  - Send news statements

- Social Media
  - Use Twitter – be respectful, credible, and timely

- Build an Echo Chamber
  - Stay on message, bring in new and unexpected messengers
CAMPAIGN PLAN : COMMUNICATIONS
Plan and evaluate

▶ Use your campaign goal to guide communications activities.
  ▶ Craft and test your message.
  ▶ Share the message with allies to create an echo chamber.
  ▶ Build relationships with reporters, editorial boards.
  ▶ Use reports, anniversaries, ground-breakings, and ribbon cuttings for media opportunities. Link to campaign goal.
  ▶ Stick to your message. Freshen it with new facts, stories, and messengers.
WORKING IN COALITION

▶ Obvious allies
  ▶ Make it easy to join
  ▶ Focus on areas of agreement
  ▶ Identify & utilize strengths
  ▶ $1 + 1 > 2$

▶ Unlikely allies or community partners
  ▶ Identify self-interest
  ▶ Make them look good
  ▶ Utilize their knowledge & connections

▶ Move forward respectfully
SMALL GROUP EXERCISE

- Identify your issue – bold but achievable
- Identify potential partners – which ones do you have good relationships with now; which ones can you build relationships with
- Frame your issue in a way that will speak to your audience
- Identify your target(s)
- What can you accomplish – set one-year goal, broken up into monthly steps
- What will you measure to see if you’re on track
RESOURCES

- The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations by Marcia Avner

- Advocacy Progress Planner (Julia Coffman, Center for Evaluation Innovation)

- Advocacy Capacity Tool (Sue Hoeschstetter, Alliance for Justice)

- What Makes an Effective Coalition? (California Endowment, March 2011)
STAY IN TOUCH

@MNHomelessCo

kenza@mnhomelesscoalition.org and @KenzaHadjMoussa
kuoppala@mnhomelesscoalition.org and @lizkuoppala

www.mnhomelesscoalition.org