

Strategic Doing: In the Campaign

THE BASICS

Sometimes you can miss the forest for the trees. Before we go any further, we want to give you the big picture of the campaign. We've gone from the planting of an idea to laying the groundwork through strategic thinking. Now: strategic DOING. Yes, there is a strategy to be found among all the frenetic activity!

First, refer to the pre-campaign timeline outlined in Chapter 2 Blue Pages on p. 44. While you may not be involved in the 'nitty-gritty' of these activities, your role is critically important and involves creating a synergy between yourselves and the professional advocates. We'll come back to this later when we introduce the Power Prism in the next section.

Second, take a look at the chart on the next page, which details how a bill goes through the legislative process and makes it to the governor's desk. It will help you get an idea of what kind of action needs to happen at each point along the way in order to get a bill signed into law. This is a typical schedule of grassroots activities in support of a bill in a state with a six-month session that begins in January and ends in July.

*Warning: In most cases, only "emergency" bills addressing a clear and present crisis pass in the first year they are introduced. Don't be discouraged if your first attempt is not a success. It just means that your advocacy skills will be sharper and your local volunteers will be more prepared for the next round of the campaign!

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Timeline of a Six-Month Session Bill

Timeframe	Grassroots Activity
September – October (Year Prior to Session)	Trainings in the field to prepare grassroots leaders for meetings with local state policymakers. Goals: Learn the background on local officials, learn how to manage a district-based meeting and learn how to talk about how the problem affects local constituents and how the solution will help. Start storybook collection process and start building the “faces book” of local policymakers.
November – December (Year Prior to Session)	Grassroots activists begin district-based meetings with local state policymakers using fact sheets and briefing materials supplied by statewide coordinators and the local storybook. Goal: Persuade local officials to “go on record” in support of solution and pledge to communicate their support to leadership, or agree to meet again to clear up any misunderstandings and to provide more detailed information.
January – February (Year of New Session)	Targeted district-based meetings with committee members who will be conducting a hearing on the bill and as many other local and state policymakers as possible. Goal: Persuade local state officials to “go on record” in support of solution and pledge to communicate their support to leadership, or agree to meet again to clear up any misunderstandings and to provide more detailed information. Begin to recruit local activists willing and able to go to state capital to testify at hearing.
March – June (Year of New Session)	The hearing will be conducted. Grassroots activities include ongoing “education” of legislators as bill progresses through the House and Senate and reaches the Governor’s

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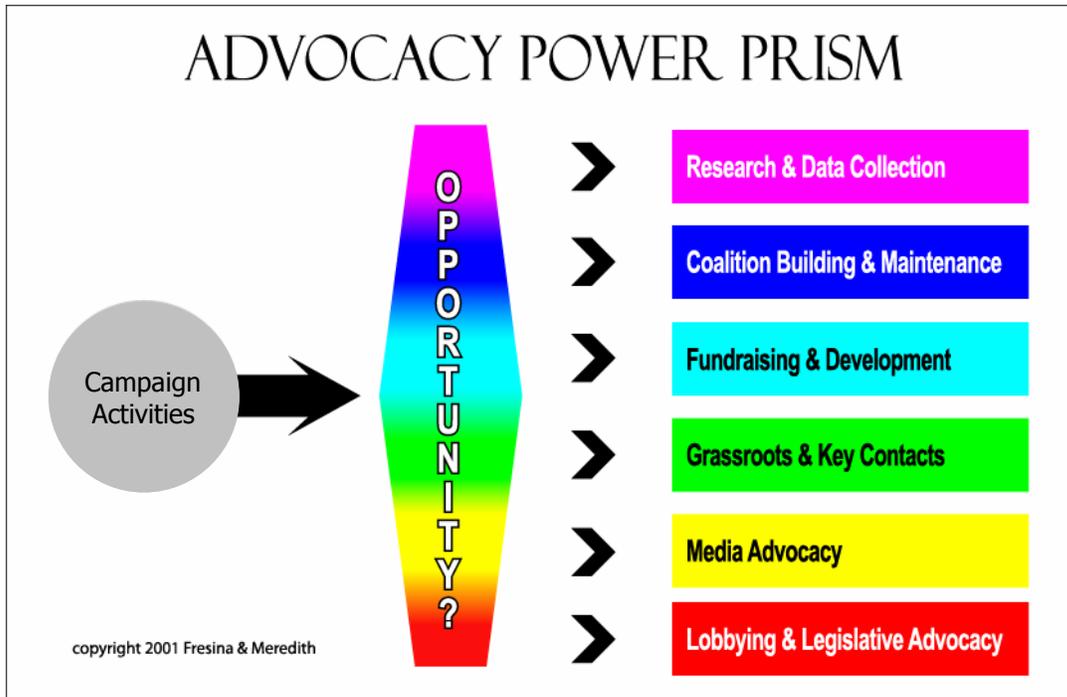
	desk. Grassroots activities will then focus on making sure that s/he doesn't veto the bill. Then, celebrate!
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Believe it or not, sometimes all of these activities are crunched together in a week or two. The job of the campaign is to keep in touch with you about time, place and strategy for grassroots action so you know in advance what to expect. We'll explore this further in the next section.

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Introduction to the Power Prism

The Advocacy Power Prism is a campaign-tested tool for making sure all the bases are covered even during the most frantic times—times when the expected and the unexpected threaten the emotional stability of the most experienced campaign operatives. It's just another “checklist” for organizers to use to make sure they've thought about all the possible ways to exploit and magnify any new piece of information or any



planned event.

The Power Prism splits the key operations of a well planned and managed campaign into six “elements”:

- Research and Data Collection
- Coalition Building and Maintenance
- Fundraising and Development
- Grassroots and Key Contacts
- Media Advocacy
- Lobbying and Legislative Advocacy

As a grassroots leader, you'll be thinking you don't have enough time to think about how to exploit each element of the Power Prism. Don't worry. We're just trying to show you the big picture of the decision-making

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dynamics within a fast-moving statewide campaign so that you can more easily understand your role. The following sections will highlight which elements will be most important in your efforts.

THE MESSAGE

Reviewing the Message

First, a quick review of what a message is:

A Message successfully defines your public policy issue as a compelling, sympathetic problem with an achievable

At this point, you should have spent a lot of time cultivating your basic message by using the fill-in-the-blanks rap sheet (see p. 9 in Ch. 1 White Pages). A good effective message gives you the perfect platform for a **hero opportunity** – the opportunity for a policymaker to step in and propose and champion a solution that brings a measurable difference into the lives of a critical mass of constituents (see p. 5 of the Chapter 1 White Pages for a more thorough review). Everyone wins!

Although we've talked about the message mostly in the context of delivering the short 30-second elevator speech using the fill in the blanks rap sheet in Ch. 1, the next sections will show you how to package and deliver your message in a variety of ways.

We will be doing this by putting the message through relevant components of the Advocacy Power Prism.

Packaging the Message

Grassroots & Key Contacts

Remember the campaign storybook that we asked you to fill out in Chapter 2? You'll want to keep on filling out storybooks of affected constituents. While many stories will be compelling, you also want to find people who will be comfortable telling their story to an audience or to the media. We'll come back to this element in the next section, "Delivering the Message."

Lobbying & Legislative Advocacy

Everybody always asks which form of communications to a policymaker is better – letters, phone calls, petitions, postcards, email, fax, carrier pigeon (just kidding). The Answer is...it depends!

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The general rule of thumb is that policymakers pay the most attention to the communications that took the most time to submit. Thus a handwritten “Mom and Pop” letter that ends with “God Bless You” weighs more than a signature on a petition.

However, a delegation of fifty people delivering a well-publicized petition with 10,000 signatures in a 35,000 person district carries a lot of weight too!

The “most time” rule also applies to phone calls versus emails. Legislators value the opinion of someone who cares enough to engage in a conversation during working hours with a complete stranger to advocate for their cause.

On the other hand, email has changed the way many people communicate. It can be a less scary way for new advocates to make first contact with their legislator. Sometimes, email can even offer a casual approach to begin a relationship with your representative or senator, but make sure your messages always include descriptive subject line so your policymaker knows it's important and timely.

On the following pages you will find examples of several different forms of communications, including:

- Petitions
- Letters
- Phone calls
- Emails, Postcards and Brochures

While the formats may be different, you'll see that the basic steps to communicating your message remain the same for each:

- Describe the problem
- Share your story, explaining how you've been affected by the current situation
- Offer the policy solution you want to see happen and how it would help you
- Ask for your public official's commitment of support for the policy change

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Petitions

Especially with the advent of online petitions, which seem to disappear into cyberspace, we may tend to overlook this method because of its overfamiliarity. As a general rule, calls and letters to your public policymakers will be the most effective. But as we mentioned before, a petition with a simple appeal – basically, your message – can be leveraged into a public awareness tool.

You'll want to utilize your coalition network to cast as wide a net as possible. Find volunteers who will be persistent and enthusiastic in collecting names as well as who are comfortable in explaining the issue.

Organize your volunteers to gather meaningful signatures. If you collect signatures from constituents at your local church, label that petition page so your lawmaker sees the home-town connection. Quantity, or lots of names, on a petition is important, but quality can get you the attention you're looking for!

If you want to go the 'e-petition' route, then you can do so at petitionsonline.com or ipetitions.com.

Here's an example of a petition:

PETITION		
<i>We, the undersigned, ask for a bill to be passed that allows for adoptive parents to be matched with children, regardless of their religious backgrounds.</i>		
Name (please print)	Address (please print)	Signature

 You can find a petition form that you can tailor to your own needs on page 5 of Appendix I.

THE MESSAGE

Letters to Your Legislators

Public officials hate form letters, but like we mentioned before, love letters with a personal touch (who doesn't?). Good letters include a short personal note explaining the writer's involvement with the public policy problem, offer a solution, and ask for a commitment to help. Good letters also include the writer's full name and address. One more thing to include if you can is the bill number of the policy solution you're working on. Just putting the number in parenthesis somewhere in your letter will help your public official pinpoint the exact proposal your writing about. Feel free to handwrite or type your letter using simple business stationery and, finally, be brief and be polite.

Most likely you will get a 'model letter' from your professional, state capital-based advocates. These letters are helpful as a guide, but even if you end up using the model letter in its entirety, we encourage you to include a handwritten note somewhere on the letter to share your own thoughts and story.

You can usually find a list of your senators and representatives on your state government's website. Another great resource is Project Vote Smart (www.vote-smart.org), which allows you to find your state senators and representatives according to zip code.

While it is true that legislators place more weight on letters from their constituents than on letters from people outside their district, statewide officials and legislators do pay attention to letters from community leaders on issues impacting state policy.

Here's an example of a model letter:

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May xx, xxxx

Senator _____
State Capitol
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Senator _____:

My name is Rebecca John and I am a woman who is seeking to adopt a child who needs a home. My husband and I have been waiting for a very long time to start having a family of our own. I have heard that there are 2,000 kids waiting to be adopted. Unfortunately, there is a law currently in place which does not allow for me to adopt anyone who has a different religious background from my own. I am asking for you to support a bill (House Bill 3289) which will allow for matches to be made...

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Phone calls

When calling your legislator, it's a good idea to prepare yourself beforehand and practice with a phone script. Normally one will be provided for you by your professional advocate. If you don't reach the public official on the first try, add a request that the official get back to you with a reply. Ultimately, don't be disappointed if your representative or senator is not available to personally take your call. Staffers are probably more up-to-date on pending issues, and, if you communicate your message effectively, may be the right persons to talk to in order to get your message across.

Here is a sample phone script:

Phone Script for Rep. _____'s Amendment #542 (an amendment that requests that the adoption law around religious background be changed)

Main Message

Caller: I'm calling to ask for Representative _____'s support of Rep. _____'s Amendment #542.

This amendment would allow for potential adoptive parents to be matched with children who need homes, regardless of religious backgrounds. As the law currently stands, there are many children who are waiting to be adopted and parents who wanted to adopt them, but this law prevents them from doing so.

Other Points to Make If Asked

There are 2,000 kids waiting

We've been waiting for a long time and want to start a family

Sponsors include...

THE MESSAGE

Email, Postcards and Brochures

Email: While sending email has become a more familiar part of the landscape, most public officials haven't yet figured out how to value constituent email messages. (Many depend on staffers to read or send their email messages!) As a result, it's especially important to include your full name, address, and phone number in any email communications so that they can respond to you by snail mail if that is their preferred method of communication. Be explicit in your subject heading describing what your email refers to—the amendment or issue at hand.

While email is more informal, use the same etiquette you would with a traditional letter: address the public official respectfully, be polite, be concise, share your story, the problem, and the policy solution you're writing about.

Postcards/Brochures: You may get pre-printed postcards, brochures or other handouts from your professional advocate groups. Be ready to perform literature drops if needed, with brochures, to your legislative delegation. For postcards, treat them like you would form letters – mail them in to your legislators, but make sure to add a personal note if you can.

Sample Email

To: Senator ____
From: Martin Smith
Subject: A Letter from your constituent about the adoption bill

Dear Senator ____:

My name is Martin Smith and I am seeking to adopt a child who needs a home. My wife and I have been waiting for a very long time to start having a family of our own. I have heard that there are 2,000 kids waiting to be adopted. I am asking for you to support a bill which will allow for matches to be made...

Sincerely,
Martin Smith
123 Pleasant Road
Boston, MA 02115

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*You can find a brochure sample at the Public Policy Institute's website: www.realclout.org/miracle.

Delivering the Message

Media Advocacy

There are lots of ways you can deliver the message locally. We talked in the previous section about gathering petitions and handing out postcards. Putting on a campaign bumper-sticker is another. From time to time your statewide campaign folks will be sending you some model press releases for you to help them fill out and send in to the local media.

Trust us, the statewide people know that it is easier to get a story in a local paper if it features local affected constituents. That's why you were asked to construct the story book in the first chapter and why we said that it was important to keep on collecting these stories in the previous section.

We want to encourage you to get the contact information of reporters who specialize in human interest stories. You can often find this out just by reading your local paper, and it can be especially helpful to pay extra attention to who's writing stories about topics related to your campaign issue. Then, when your campaign is ready to highlight the issue, you will know exactly who to call with contacts from your campaign story book that they can utilize in their reporting. Ask the paper to take a photo, or take a photo yourself from a community meeting or local campaign event and submit it along with your press release. In this age of digital photography, emailing photos can also be an effective strategy.

Below you will find an example press release to demonstrate how to promote your message and create one of those Hero platforms for your local policymaker at the same time.

For More Information, Contact: Name and Phone Number

Date

Yesterday, Governor Sargent signed a bill into place that will allow for prospective adoptive parents to be matched with waiting children,



regardless of religious background.

Judith Meredith, of Families for Interracial Adoption, claimed the passing of the bill as a significant step forward for families state-wide...

THE STRATEGY

You will find during the course of the campaign that there are many moving parts and that you may not always know what is moving what! However, do not be discouraged. Keep working at it and keep in frequent communication with your professional advocates.

Your local coalition should mirror the statewide campaign coalition of partners as close as possible to help build community-based support for your issue. As the local grassroots leader, it will be helpful to you to organize your local coalition into subcommittees based on the six elements of the Power Prism, making your 'reactive' roles into 'proactive' ones:

Subcommittee	Tasks
Research & Policy Experts	You may need just one person on this subcommittee. This person is the 'local expert,' and is able to put a local handle on a policy issue (i.e. translating into plain English).
Coalition Steering Committee	As the coalition grows larger, it will be this committee's responsibility to see that new groups and individuals are welcomed and made to feel that they have important roles to play in the process. Do this by organizing your local coalition around specific tasks that will need to be accomplished.
Fundraising & Development	This subcommittee recruits funders and collects money from members towards the campaign for local expenses, like postage, hall rental, van rental, etc.
Grassroots & Internal Communications	Set up a telephone tree and email list so that you can keep all local coalition members updated with the latest information. You might want to recruit people who feel comfortable with database software and/or technology for this subcommittee.
Media Advocacy	This subcommittee involves finding the

	correct contacts for local papers, TV and radio stations. You might want to recruit people who are comfortable talking to reporters, who have access to digital cameras or are comfortable with them, and who are email-savvy.
Legislative Advocacy	These subcommittee members are responsible for keeping or building personal relationships with local delegations of legislators and their staff.

Here's an example of where you need to think of all six elements:

Your local campaign coalition is participating in a statewide event at the state capitol to raise visibility for your issue and to get some face-to-face time with policymakers. Use the Power Prism elements to plan and to encourage successful participation from all the members in your local coalition...

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Research & Data Collection: Work to develop talking points and briefings that describe the local impact of your campaign for your advocates to use when meeting with their local legislative delegation.

Coalition Building & Maintenance: Make sure that somebody from each of the organizations participating in your local coalition is represented as part of your group. You should all go to the event together – groups demonstrate impact, especially to policymakers who answer to their community constituents.

Fundraising & Development: Raise the necessary funds to cover lunches, buses, babysitting, etc., or secure a local bus company that will provide transportation services as an in-kind contribution.

Grassroots & Key Contacts: Keep grassroots members informed of the latest updates.

Media Advocacy: Keep in touch with the local media, especially with reporters who covered human interest stories or have covered your campaign in the past. Arrange for a local reporter and/or photographer to meet your group before you depart for the state capitol. Coordinate interviews with a few local participants as they board the bus for the event.

Legislative Advocacy: Call ahead and make appointments for your local group of advocates to meet with your legislators.

In Conclusion

Throughout these three chapters, we've provided insight into how public policy can be changed for the better by a group of people who care about an issue. We've also given you the tools to participate in and help WIN a public policy campaign that all started from a good idea.

Hopefully, you've been inspired by the power of knowing that your own Real Clout can make the difference. Use these tools to participate in other campaigns or read the blue pages to learn how to coordinate a campaign from the ground up and start your own policy change initiative!

And finally,

Keep at it! Sooner or later, at the end of a hard-fought campaign, you will be able to say to yourself, "I was the right person in the right place at the right time and I helped bring a small measure of comfort and justice to thousands of people who don't even know I exist."

TOUGH QUESTIONS AND EASY ANSWERS

On Non-Profit Lobbying

Q: We are trying to raise some money to pay for buses into the state capital for lobby day and were planning to just pass the hat. However, a local business man is interested in plunking down a cool \$2,000 and is willing to write a check to the bus company. He wants to know if he can claim a tax deduction for the contribution.

A: *If he writes a check to one of your 501(c)3 non-profit organizational partners who then pays the bus company, he can claim a tax deduction. Just be sure he requests that the funding be used for your campaign.*

On Working with Nontraditional Partners

Q: I work for a large community hospital and our state association has asked us to put together a local coalition to promote pending state legislation that would permit the distribution of emergency contraception to rape victims in our emergency room. Boy what a mess. Where do I start?

A: *The easy answer: start with the easy ones! Build a base by approaching groups you know are on your side of the issue. As your local coalition develops, your campaign will begin to build momentum and before you know it, you'll have a solid foundation of organizations that deeply care about working with your hospital to pass the pending legislation. From there, delve into the exercise of identifying other potential partners that will broaden your local coalition's scope and a plan for recruitment.*

On Communications and the Media

Q: I'm a member of a state-wide teen group working to set up a network of teen mental health drop-in centers in schools or community-based organizations. How can we do a coordinated campaign to get local papers and the local cable TV to cover us?

A: *Call you local newspaper and find out who covers feature stories. Schedule a meeting with the reporter and bring a small group from your campaign in to meet with the reporter. Local media outlets are always looking for ways to highlight hometown initiatives that their readers can relate to, especially when it's positive news! Be sure to bring background information about your network of drop-in centers to leave with the*

reporter – maybe a list of the center locations, a picture of the teen working group, etc. – as well as a contact name and number for follow up. Most importantly, be honest, be real, and be passionate!