

Strategic Doing: In the Campaign

At this point, you are probably kicking off your campaign, and it's easy to think...full steam ahead! The advocacy model that we will be discussing at length in this chapter, the Power Prism, encourages you to stop and think before you act. The Advocacy Power Prism is a campaign-tested tool for making sure all the bases are covered during even the most frantic times – times when the expected and the unexpected threaten the emotional stability of even the most experienced campaign operatives! It helps you to stop for a moment and systematically view everything through the Power Prism.

The six elements of the Power Prism are:

1. Research and Data Collection
2. Coalition Building and Maintenance
3. Fundraising and Development
4. Grassroots and Key Contacts
5. Media Advocacy
6. Lobbying and Legislative Advocacy

The Advocacy Power Prism was developed by Lori Fresina and Judy Meredith to capture the campaign model created for the Alliance for a Healthy New England, a campaign initiated in 2000 by Community Catalyst, the New England Division of the American Cancer Society, and the Council of New England State Medical Societies. It has been used in trainings by groups as diverse as the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Phillip Morris, the NRA, the AFL-CIO and the Boston Foundation. The tool

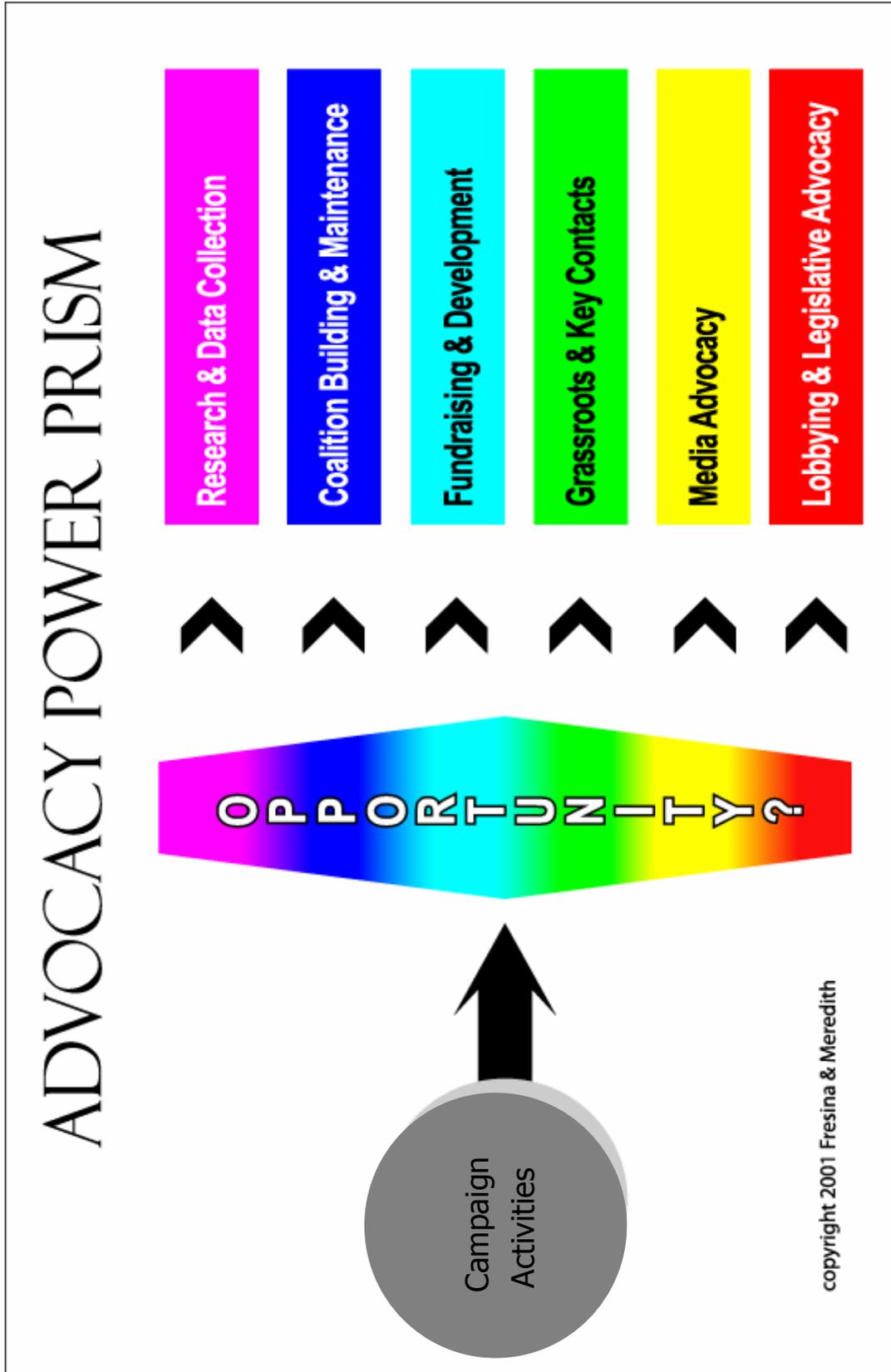
Chapter

3

Blue Pages

works well for long-term advance planning as well as minute-by-minute campaign implementation.

You will find the Advocacy Power Prism on the next page. We'll explore each element in detail throughout this chapter.



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Sometimes under time pressure, we tend to go from Point A to Point B without stopping to think how else an event or situation can be leveraged for maximum effect.

For example, in the traditional way of doing things, when a significant announcement is made, we would probably issue a press release, hope it runs and consider the printed story our endpoint. Instead, the Power Prism model might work like this:

- The passage or failure of a similar policy initiative in another state can be used to leverage a new spin for the media, refresh public education and reboot lobbying efforts.
- A newly released attack report by the opposition can prompt a quick and indignant response by coalition leaders that guarantees access to the statewide media and an opportunity for grassroots activists to meet with local public officials to offer a counter-offensive.
- A well-researched policy analysis can be sent out to all coalition members and grassroots activists to forward to local media using their own voices, can provide an opportunity for a literature drop to public officials, and can be a resource for ongoing coalition-building efforts.
- Near misses and close calls can also be used to leverage additional resources from past donors and coalition members, can get another hit in the media, and re-energize grassroots activities.

The Power Prism can be seen as a guide for making the most of the residual effect—instead of an event or situation impacting just one aspect of your campaign, the Power Prism model can help you recognize other proactive activities that you can set in motion as a result. As you can see from these examples, you may create the ‘something’ that happens or it may be something external to your campaign environment. Here are a few more general examples of internal and external campaign events.

INTERNAL CAMPAIGN EVENTS	EXTERNAL CAMPAIGN EVENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Press Events• Enlistment of new coalition members, endorsements• Filing of legislation• Conducting of a poll and releasing its results• Launch of a new campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National data is released, related to the issue• Lawmakers propose bad legislation (or good)• The passage or failure of similar legislation in another state• A negative editorial

• Community-based activities	• Proposed funding cuts, etc.
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On the next page you will find an example of the Power Prism as applied to a hypothetical situation. We will expand on each element of the Power Prism in the next section.

The Power Prism in Action

You plan to issue a press release.

Coalition Building & Maintenance

- See if any coalition member organizations want to include a quote of their own;
- Notify coalition organizations shortly before the release goes out;
- Ask coalition organizations if they want to have one of their media contacts for more information.

Grassroots & Key Contacts

- Alert grassroots activists that the release has gone out;
- Ask them to monitor their media outlets for related stories;
- Prepare grassroots activists who are willing to be spokespeople with relevant talking points;

Ask them to forward the release and a friendly 'Thought you might be interested' to their lawmakers.

Media Advocacy

- After sending the press release, follow-up with media contacts to offer interviews with spokespeople, especially with a local angle.
- Follow up on any media coverage created by the release with related

Research & Policy Analysis

if the news stories include an opportunity, ask for a chance to submit an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor to respond to those points.

- If the resulting news coverage includes any perspective that is not based in fact, reply with a letter to the editor, request an editorial

Lobbying & Legislative Advocacy

Op-Ed. Or you could just call the reporter with the correct facts. If the resulting news coverage leaves or creates lingering questions, find the answers and get them on the record.

- Make sure your legislative allies know the content of your release and if they want to include a quote and a great way to get them on the record. Once the story has been printed, make sure ALL lawmakers in the relevant decision-making body get a copy – preferably with a note from the coalition.

Fundraising & Development

THE ELEMENTS, ONE BY ONE

Research & Data Collection

Element 1

This element features the coordination of each coalition members' policy expertise and background on the issue:

- Compile a baseline package of solid and credible data and analysis in support of the proposed policy change, and;
- Develop the capacity to respond quickly and accurately to developing events.

Staffing

Your coalition should have at least one member who can create various templates for fact sheets, reports and quotes from outside experts. At some point, you should also have enough resources to do a 400-person poll. See Chapter 2 Blue Pages, p. 49 to read about hiring a pollster for your campaign.

Tasks

1. Develop effective and achievable proposals to meet campaign policy goals.
2. Develop and distribute a series of reports, briefings, fact sheets, alerts and updates to make your policy proposal and its affected programs accessible and understandable.
3. Plan and conduct a series of polls and focus groups—research on voter support for your issue can help influence elected officials...the more local, the better.
4. Continuously monitor proposals and changes in programs related to your policy solution as well as changes in federal policies affecting your agenda.
5. Continuously monitor similar state and federal policy proposals and collaborate as appropriate.

THE ELEMENTS ONE BY ONE---RESEARCH & DATA COLLECTION

Campaign Element Goals

The “About Time Campaign” Stage One Goals:

- Develop final draft of policy proposal in consultation with key coalition members.
- Finalize list of reports, briefings, etc. that will be needed throughout the campaign.
- Gather critical statistics. Data about the scope of the problem, the potential impact of your proposed solution and how such solutions can be implemented are all essential.
- Conduct poll on policy issue and use results to frame the campaign.

The Action Checklist

Research & Data Collection Action Checklist		
<i>Key Question</i>	<i>Who is responsible? By when?</i>	<i>Completed?</i>
Do you need help drafting a regulation or bill?		
Has your coalition met with groups or administrative offices that are part of your policy solution?		
What data do you need to back up your policy solution?		

-  See Appendix II, pp. 23-29 for the “About Time Campaign” Power Prism Workplan.
-  See Appendix II, p. 30 for a complete Action Checklist for Research &

Coalition Building & Maintenance

Element 2

A Power Prism operational coalition is convened and managed by a small group of self-interested, diverse provider and consumer advocacy groups that is:

- (a) Willing to share power, credit and blame;
- (b) Able to make decisions and address disagreements through a strong governance process that includes agreeing not to make side deals;
- (c) Willing to mobilize their own grassroots members into district based activities; and
- (d) Willing to contribute significant organizational resources (cash, staff or materials) to build internal coalition capacity to design and implement a campaign to promote positive policy change.

Coalitions are both a necessary evil and the land of opportunity for advocacy work. They are hard work. No matter how big they are, usually a very small handful of people do the bulk of the work. If the campaign is something that you or your organization REALLY cares about, then consider becoming a 'worker bee' for the coalition. You'll have lots of work, but lots of power!

A Note on the Power Prism Workplan:

As you develop your coalition structure, you should also begin to build a workplan for your campaign, connecting the task and activities of each element of the Power Prism with the staffing that you will need. We've provided an example of a Power Prism Workplan with goals for several stages of a campaign, organized element by element, in Appendix II that you can refer to and revise as your campaign coalition sees fit. The following pages will help you get started.

Coalitions don't end with a long list of supporting organizations. They must be maintained. That means that you need to consistently look for opportunities to make member organizations and their memberships feel invested in your cause and policy solution. Also, it's important to share power, so look for ways to create public leadership opportunities for each coalition member. A critical part of maintaining a coalition is having a set of ground rules that all members of the coalition can agree and adhere to (See the "About Time Campaign" Operations Planning Tool in Appendix II, p. 16). Coalition organizations should be enlisted based upon their ability to influence lawmakers. If a target lawmaker is a board

member for a particular community-based organization, try to recruit them to your coalition – but remember, you also need to provide them with hero opportunities!

THE ELEMENTS ONE BY ONE---COALITION BUILDING & MAINTENANCE

Staffing

The Coalition Coordinator should be a staff member dedicated to coalition maintenance. Although the executive director of an organization can be involved, normally a campaign manager should be hired to oversee the coalition-building responsibilities.

Tasks

1. Recruit coalition members.
 - a. Consumers: broad range of diverse membership-based advocacy/mission-driven non-profits
 - b. Providers
 - c. Faith-based organizations
 - d. Business: Chambers, small businesses, large corporations, enlightened individuals, industry leaders
 - e. Labor: AFL-CIO appropriate locals
 - f. Other
2. Develop governance structure including a Steering Committee and working sub-committees – Research and Policy Analysis, Grassroots Mobilization, Media Advocacy, Lobbying & Legislative Advocacy, Fundraising & Development.
3. Build and maintain internal communications, including bi-weekly meetings, email updates, action alert system and up-to-date website.
4. Plan a series of public displays of unity through press conferences, advertisements, op-ed in local newspapers, etc.
5. Plan a series of coalition-sponsored campaign activities, for example letter-writing drives, community meetings, and rallies at the state capitol.

Campaign Element Goals

The “About Time Campaign” Stage One Goals:

- Determine initial steering committee composition.
- Hold first meeting to discuss governance structure; shape of

THE ELEMENTS ONE BY ONE---COALITION BUILDING & MAINTENANCE

legislation; key legislative sponsors.

The Action Checklist

You will also find that there are crucial questions that will need to be addressed in order to make your coalition most effective. Some of the key questions that you will want to answer as part of an “action checklist” for coalition building and maintenance are:

Coalition Building & Maintenance Action Checklist		
<i>Key Question:</i>	<i>Who is responsible? By when?</i>	<i>Completed?</i>
Is there already a coalition working on your issue?		
If so, what organizations are part of the coalition currently?		
Of those, which are active participants? Core decision-makers and worker-bees?		
What other organizations need to be invited?		

-  See Appendix II, pp. 23-29 for the “About Time Campaign” Power Prism Workplan.
-  Also see Appendix II, pp. 31-32 for a complete Action Checklist for

**Fundraising &
Development**

Element 3

This element is managed by the coalition's steering committee and includes an assessment of all coalition members' willingness to contribute funding, staff and in-kind contributions, as well as solicitation of allied organizations, corporations and supportive individuals. Non-profit coalition members can and should solicit foundation dollars for public education and leadership development components of the public policy campaign.

This element is normally the Achilles' heel of any public policy campaign. It's important to offer full disclosure of all funds raised and expended to the full coalition. Advocacy campaigns and coalitions require money for infrastructure, staffing, collateral materials, research, lobbyists, media, etc.

Create two budgets:

1. A bare bones, must-have, do-or-die budget
2. A fantasy budget – what would you do to win if resources were not an issue?

Staffing

Your coalition should have **a small team** – led by the organizational representatives from your convening committee – who are dedicated to selling your campaign to their own board members and donors, in addition to external funders.

Tasks

1. After your budgets are prepared, work with coalition partners to identify which needs can be covered by members through cash and in-kind contributions.
2. Encourage coalition members to solicit contributions from public and private sources to support their own in-kind contributions.
3. Design a plan for raising money to pay for unmet needs.
4. Identify potential funders.
 - a. Private foundation funding opportunities
 - b. Major national and/or statewide organizations that may have an interest in your policy proposal to contribute to the campaign

- c. Corporate interests
 - d. Supportive individuals
5. Establish a transparent budget and budget process available to the steering committee.

THE ELEMENTS ONE BY ONE---FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT

Campaign Element Goals

The "About Time Campaign" Stage One Goals:

- Construct a campaign budget.
- Establish clear financial and organizational commitments from all voting Steering Committee members.

The Action Checklist

Fundraising & Development Action Checklist		
<i>Key Question</i>	<i>Who is responsible? By when?</i>	<i>Completed?</i>
Is there a fiscal agent for the campaign operations?		
Do you have a campaign budget?		

<p> See Appendix II, pp. 23-29 for the "About Time Campaign" Power Prism Workplan.</p> <p> See Appendix II, p. 33 for a complete Action Checklist for Fundraising &</p>		
Are there local foundations/businesses that might help fund your campaign?		

**Grassroots & Key
Contacts**

Element 4

This element focuses on the recruitment, education and mobilization of district-based coalition members who are willing to participate in community-based public education efforts with local public officials featuring affected constituents. You should establish good constituent contacts on the ground in most communities that are motivated and trained, and a good number of these constituents should also be willing to share their stories.

Pressure from the grassroots is one of the most important resources we have, yet it is sorely underused. Lawmakers will tell you that a handful of calls or letters from their constituents on a particular issue gets them to sit up and take notice and makes that issue important to them.

Staffing

The Grassroots/Field Coordinator should be an effective organizer who is both at ease with meeting new people and comfortable with databases and email communication.

Tasks

1. Identify, engage and mobilize influential community leaders in targeted districts to marshal their communities into a network focused on educating their local legislators through district-based meetings and statewide events.
2. Identify and mobilize members and employees of key ally organizations.
3. Identify and empower individual consumers affected by your policy proposal.
4. Establish local "Civic Committees" of prominent persons who volunteer to stand up and speak out on behalf of your agenda. Possible members include consumers, providers, including board members who are businesspersons, religious leaders, other respected local leaders and celebrities.
5. Develop communications protocol and communicate regularly with advocates to provide campaign updates and alerts for action throughout the legislative process.

6. Include 'power profiling' in your research: learn as much as possible about your grassroots activists (their relationships to lawmakers, local leaders and media).

THE ELEMENTS ONE BY ONE---GRASSROOTS & KEY CONTACTS

Campaign Element Goals

The “About Time Campaign” Stage One Goals:

- Begin building the base for local advocate networks.
- Develop organizing plan and schedule of probable opportunities for public events and legislative meetings.

The Action Checklist

Again, here is a partial list of key questions that you will want to address:

Grassroots & Key Contacts Action Checklist		
<i>Key Question</i>	<i>Who is responsible? By when?</i>	<i>Completed?</i>
How many grassroots activists do you have access to?		
Of those, how complete are your records (email addresses, voting addresses, etc.)?		
Who manages communications with grassroots advocates?		

-  See Appendix II, pp. 23-29 for the “About Time Campaign” Power Prism Workplan.
-  See Appendix II, p. 34 for a complete Action Checklist for Grassroots &

Media Advocacy & Communications

Element 5

Power Prism media advocacy includes an affirmative statewide communications strategy that targets key statewide and local media markets by:

- Coordinating and leveraging coalition members' press contacts;
- Featuring the stories of affected constituents in local newspapers as well as television and radio.

Media advocacy means getting your story into the section of the paper and news programs that decision makers care about: above-the-fold-on-page-one; opinion pages; political pages; 'hard' news programs, etc.

Media advocacy is different from public relations, media relations, marketing and communications. It highlights the 'controversial' aspect or the real impact of your campaign so that people will want to take action around the public policy issue.

Staffing

A Media Advocacy/Communications Coordinator should be a staffer with a good set of press contacts, as well as specific contacts with reporters who specialize in human interest stories. They will work closely with the executive director and policy coordinator in order to communicate the message clearly to the media.

Tasks:

1. Design and coordinate media plan, including paid and earned media coverage.
2. Develop media contact list, leveraging coalition member's relationships with reporters and editors.
3. Plan and conduct series of message delivery workshops for local activists and coalition members.
4. Coordinate media attendance and news coverage for every public event.

Campaign Element Goals

The "About Time Campaign" Stage One Goals:

- Hire/Designate Media Advocacy/Communications Coordinator.
- Develop message for initial media outreach.
- Finalize strategic media plan.

THE ELEMENTS ONE BY ONE---MEDIA ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS

A Special Note on Media Consultants (taken from Real Clout)

Finding a consultant is easy. In fact, after a few discreet inquiries, they will find you, as word of your search gets out among professional political consultants, lobbyists, pollsters and public relations specialists. Choosing the right consultant is another matter.

Let's start with the huge assumption that your campaign has a budget for the entire campaign. This campaign budget has a ballpark estimate for media expenses, including money for a part-time staffer for six months. The salary is based on comparable salaries among member organizations that have the money to hire a media person.

First, take the total salary listed in the budget and divide it by six to find out how much to pay per month. Develop a straightforward job description that lists specific tasks a part-time media person is expected to carry out. Write this up into a Request for Proposals and start circulating the request among consulting firms and freelancers.

Campaign managers won't have to wait long to get good feedback from potential consultants. Some will say straight out that they can do the job more cheaply if they can work from home most days and only come in two mornings per week. Others will say that they would be happy to sit at a desk in the campaign office, but the fee would have to be increased to cover transportation and lunch expenses. Still others will say that their firm requires payment up front. Any negotiated arrangements can be put into a simple contract or memo of understanding outlining work expectations, payment and schedule.

A good system can be set up by organizing media people from member organizations to form an advisory committee to help choose a consultant and carry out a program of ongoing support and assistance.

For the media plan, the Communications Coordinator should create a schedule that will revolve in part around legislative advocacy efforts, for example, timing press releases in conjunction with key events in the legislative and administrative timetables.

Goals might include:

- Getting the media to ask the critical questions of decision makers – their questions about your issue make your issue viable and real.
- Getting the media to editorialize in favor of your position.

THE ELEMENTS ONE BY ONE---MEDIA ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS

- Creating and identifying tension/controversy points around your issue that are provocative enough to merit media coverage.

The Action Checklist

Media Advocacy & Communications Action Checklist		
<i>Key Question</i>	<i>Who is responsible? By when?</i>	<i>Completed?</i>
Do you have a complete and up-to-date media list?		
How strong are your relationships with the media?		
Do grassroots activist and coalition members know the basic principles of media advocacy?		

-  See Appendix II, pp. 23-29 for the "About Time Campaign" Power Prism Workplan.
-  See Appendix II, p. 35 for a complete Action Checklist for Media

**Lobbying &
Legislative Advocacy**

Element 6

This element features:

- The coordination of each coalition member's governmental relations staff and resources; and
- The development of a state capital-based strategy and a district-based grassroots strategy that targets key members of the legislature and utilizes affected constituents and supportive community leaders.

Legislative advocacy should be a top priority of coalition organizations and grassroots. It is important that your issue is represented broadly throughout the legislative arena and you should make a point of developing strong, trusting relationships with lawmakers. You should also get to know key legislative and committee staff – these people often help lawmakers set priorities and assess the value of different issues.

Staffing

Your coalition should have **one full-time coordinator** who can concentrate on governmental relations. You should also have a standing committee of professional lobbyists who can be assigned by coalition members, during appropriate times, to work part-time and you may want to hire a legislative consultant dedicated to your campaign. Coordinate your legislative advocacy efforts with other elements of your campaign. Create a presence with lawmakers through literature drops, lobby days, briefings, etc.

More on communication: The legislative advocacy coordinator has one of the most critical coalition roles in maintaining the connection among all the professional lobbyists. In other words...make 'em talk! Schedule weekly meetings over coffee in the state capital with your committee of lobbyists to share the latest scoops, tweak the plan for the next round of legislative visits, and brainstorm new ideas for strategy.

Tasks

1. Identify and establish a group of key sponsoring legislators.
2. Develop a plan to promote campaign agenda through legislative strategies and to engage legislative sponsors in disseminating materials to their colleagues.

3. Develop strategic advocacy plan around the budget and legislative policymaking schedule.
4. Plan and coordinate a regular schedule of meetings to maintain open and consistent communication among all professional lobbyists.
5. Include 'power profiling' in your research: Learn as much as possible about your legislative heroes and potential heroes (their interests, affiliations and goals).

THE ELEMENTS ONE BY ONE---LOBBYING & LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

Campaign Element Goals

The “About Time Campaign” Stage One Goals:

- Hire/Designate Legislative Strategy Consultant (Lobbyist)
- Agree on key legislative sponsors.
- Set up a plan for co-sponsor solicitation and press announcement for bill filing.
- Brief legislative leadership and other key public officials.
- Finalize strategic advocacy plan around budget and legislative schedule.

The Action Checklist

Lobbying & Legislative Advocacy Action Checklist		
<i>Key Question</i>	<i>Who is responsible? By when?</i>	<i>Completed?</i>
Do you have designated or hired legislative consultant who's a trusted insider/lobbyist?		
Is someone keeping a list of legislators and a record of their support or opposition to your campaign?		
Can you create a schedule of regular strategy meetings for coalition lobbyists and for literature drops to legislative leaders?		

-  See Appendix II, pp. 23-29 for the “About Time Campaign” Power Prism Workplan.
-  See Appendix II, pp. 36-37 for a complete Action Checklist for Lobbying

An additional note about direct lobbying:

In most states, it is required by law to register as a lobbyist if you're going to be paid to participate in direct lobbying efforts for an issue. The

THE ELEMENTS ONE BY ONE---LOBBYING & LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

Secretary of State's office is the usual place to find registration forms and details about fees and reporting requirements.

You can also find several helpful links in Appendix III and on the *Public Policy Institute* website with information about what non-profit organizations and their staff CAN do to impact positive public policy: www.realclout.org.

What Next?

After you've put your campaign through all six elements and come up with a list of possibilities, narrow it down to the most important steps and come up with a plan to make it happen. Be specific:

- What is the next step?
- How will it be done?
- Who will be responsible for doing it?
- By when?
- What else is needed?

Now that you've decided upon your first-tier Power Prism actions, it's time to stop again and consider if that first-tier action might spur a second-tier Power Prism action.

For example, if your action does not create an opportunity for five of the six Power Prism advocacy tools, but does create a good opportunity for media advocacy – say conducting an Editorial Board visit – could that action (the board visit) become even more powerful or have more impact if you ran that through the Power Prism?

- Does that Editorial Board meeting create an opportunity for strengthening your coalition?
- Might there be a local grassroots or grassroots person from the paper's readership who could attend the board meeting with you to share their personal perspective on why the issue is important?
- If the Ed Board runs an editorial on your issue, are you prepared to do letters to the editor or an op-ed response? If you like the editorial they run, follow up with a polite thank you note.
- What materials do you need to have for the Ed Board meeting? A concise, data-driven pitch is essential. Are you prepared to answer their tough questions with objective facts?
- Consider inviting your legislative champion to attend the Ed Board meeting with you. It's possible that they would get named in a resulting editorial, and all PR is good PR! If your meeting results in a good editorial, make sure that all lawmakers get a copy of it with the paper's masthead showing.
- If your meeting results in a good editorial, also make sure that current and past funders get a copy and that they know your Ed Board meeting pitch is what precipitated the appearance of the editorial. Save all such materials for future fundraising pitches. It shows that you know what you're doing AND you get results!

Essentially, everything you do throughout the course of a campaign creates opportunities to do more!

In Conclusion

Throughout these three chapters, we've given you the tools to plan, manage, act and WIN a public policy campaign that all started from a good idea.

It won't necessarily be easy, but it will be rewarding. Not only for the positive policy change you can make, but also for the strong relationships that can be forged with like-minded organizations, the sense of power in democracy that can be gained by the ordinary citizens who participate, and the heightened awareness and sensitivity toward your cause that can be built.

Just remember a few fundamental tips for a successful Real Clout public policy campaign:

- Make sure your coalition meets regularly.
- Engage every partner in a way that is meaningful for them.
- Be able to effectively describe your campaign in 30-seconds or less.
- Use the Advocacy Power Prism to make sure nothing is being neglected.
- Remember that each element of a campaign is dependent on another.

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 a community-based outreach organization trying to implement education and employment initiatives for low-income residents. We have begun to do much more advocacy work this year with our state legislature and our city government. In fact, many of our clients have really taken to their new-found roles as advocates. But since we're new to this, I'm wondering how much is too much when it comes to lobbying for our cause?

A: *The first thing to remember is there is a difference between education and direct lobbying, and you can do both. Especially since you're just beginning to participate in the policy discussions, you and your advocates can spend as much time as you want introducing lawmakers to your organization and telling them about the difference you're making to their constituents. Become a resource, identify allies for your cause, and promote your good work. Direct lobbying is when you specifically ASK a policymaker to support or oppose a specific bill or line item. Depending on your organization's tax status, the amount of time spent direct lobbying may be limited—note that: limited, not restricted!*

On Working with Nontraditional Partners

Q: My organization is small, but we partner with a number of larger groups as part of coalition. This coalition is very high-functioning and has been working together on a number of evolving housing initiatives for over five years. The group as a whole is very committed to its mission, but there are times when our individual organizational decisions do not mesh with each other. What do we do when we're asked as a coalition to take a stand in favor of a policy position that my non-profit doesn't support?

A: *Good question! Remember that every organization comes with its own values, bureaucracy, politics, resource constraints, donor base, etc. and there's just no way, short of dictatorship, that you can expect to always agree. But that's okay. If your coalition has lasted this long it's probably because there's a lot of mutual respect among the groups. As a coalition, you will have to decide how important it is to take a stand on any controversial issue – how significant is it in terms of the coalition's priorities? It may be determined that while the "coalition" may not speak out as a group, a few of the organizations decide to jointly lend their support, allowing others, like your non-profit, to be independent of that decision.*

TOUGH QUESTIONS AND EASY ANSWERS

On Communications and the Media

Q: I work for a good-sized health organization that's been working with many other groups to finally get some meaningful form of universal health care coverage passed in our state. The topic has gained momentum and the attention of the media, but it seems like it's out of control and it's hard to make sure our coalition's voice is still being heard over all the political rumblings. What can we do?

A: *When a group works so hard for months and months (even years!) to get a solution on the table, it's understandable to feel like your voice gets lost as the discussions get bigger and bigger. Instead, consider that you've done a good job raising the awareness level about the problem that needs to be solved, so now everyone wants a part of it. Every time the media covers the health care topic, more and more people are learning about the issue and it presents an opportunity for you to offer your organization's expertise. Send a press release highlighting a different angle of the debate that plays into the most recent coverage, make sure reporters who are writing on the issue know you're available for background information and spokespeople, and help local advocates write letters to the editor, especially in community-based papers. The bottom line is to take advantage of the spotlight. You know what they say...no publicity is bad publicity!*