

## Basic Principles and Methods of Campaigning

### What is campaigning?

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a campaign is a series of planned activities to gain a special object.

It is essential for all these elements to be present in order to achieve success:

- A campaign consists of a **series** of activities – it is unlikely that you will achieve your goal with an isolated event
- These activities must be **planned** – unstructured campaigns have little hope of getting anywhere
- These activities achieve a specific **goal** – campaigning will have no effect if you spread your limited resources over a number of issues. Also, your goals must be clear, attainable and specific – badly defined or unattainable goals can cause a campaign to fail.

Campaigning is about trying to change the norm. It is about persuading and mobilising people to make changes that they would otherwise not consider. It needs to be focused in its goals and target audience. It differs from education – education leads people to consider different points of view, and may or may not lead to action. Campaigning, on the other hand, pushes one point of view, and effective campaigning **MUST** lead to action that causes change.

According to Peta: *If there is a specific type of abuse that you want to target, and you've got all your facts together, you are ready to organize a campaign—a long-term plan of action focused on one particular issue. Set an achievable goal, plan escalating levels of action, and be prepared to stick with it until you win.*

If you are not able to cover all of the points above, you should probably not start a campaign immediately. Your organisation should either look at other ways of achieving its goals, or start by gathering all the elements required to conduct a campaign.

A campaign is almost always going to end up being a long term process. Before you think about starting a campaign, there are a few questions you should ask yourself:

- Is there a clear goal in the first place?
- Can you achieve the same goal in other ways?
- Do you have the time and resources needed to implement this campaign?
- Can you gather sufficient objective information and evidence?
- Is your organisation prepared for the long haul (and frustration and difficulty)?

There are three essential elements for any successful campaign:

1. You **MUST HAVE** specific goals that you can measure.
2. You **MUST KNOW** who your audience is – who do you need to change? What makes them act?
3. You **MUST HAVE** messages that move your audience and make them act.

### Principles of strategic campaigning

1. **Focus:** You must have specific objectives, and know where to focus your resources for best effect. Creating a strategic plan will help you to decide where to focus your efforts. *In-depth research and analysis are needed to determine the focus of your campaign.*
2. **Clear communications:** You must be able to communicate your goals and plans clearly to others, within and outside your organisation.
3. **Relevance:** If your campaign is not important to the people it is trying to change or influence, it is unlikely to succeed. You must therefore ensure that your solution to the issue is formulated in a way that affects your target audience and addresses their problems.
4. **Credibility:** Your credibility is one of your most valuable possessions, and it will be attacked by your opponents during the course of your campaign. If you do not remain credible to your target audience, you will destroy your campaign. *You must lead by example, and your information must always be objective and accurate.*
5. **Timing:** You will need to do different things at different times, depending on the current environment. *Again, proper research is needed to determine the best campaigning methods.*
6. **Commitment:** A campaign should continue until the issue is resolved.

*Reference: Amnesty International*



## Steps of strategic campaigning

1. Overall strategy
2. Research and analysis
3. Goals
4. Targets
5. Message
6. Tactics
7. Evaluation

1. **Strategy:** This is the long term organisational strategy for this particular issue. Campaigns will be part of this strategy, and other elements, such as education, rescue, etc. may be involved. There are many problems within a major issue, and some will be suitable for campaigns. We must focus our efforts on creating campaigns that:
  - a) result in measurable change
  - b) are easy to understand
  - c) have clear targets
  - d) have clear time scales
  - e) have achievable goals

If the problem we want to tackle cannot meet the above criteria, our chances of success are low. It is possible that we will then need to approach this issue from another angle, such as education.

2. **Research and analysis:** Many groups go into a campaign without extensive knowledge of the issue, or their targets, or even any clear idea of what they want to achieve. It is clear from the campaign planning process that thorough research is needed before starting a campaign, in order to determine the campaign strategy and tactics, and also to provide credibility and substance to the campaign. The following must be researched and analysed:
  - a) The background to the issue – including the history of the problem and the work that has been done so far
  - b) Current situation – including scale and scope of the impact on different stakeholders, current state of the problem (with as much evidence as possible), and the current political and social climate. Also look at existing public awareness, technology, industry and the opposition
  - c) Organisational readiness (organisational resources, planning processes, level of buy-in from staff and supporters)
  - d) Potential supporters who can influence the issue

Both primary and secondary research may be necessary.

Primary sources are original, non-interpreted information. These include surveys, interviews, and both overt (open) and covert (undercover) investigations. These can be expensive, time-consuming and even dangerous.

Secondary sources interpret, analyse or summarise. These include published statistics, published texts, media and personal documents. The advantage is that this type of research is often cheaper and more easily accessible than primary research – as we know, we can find most of it on the internet. However, this can often be inaccurate or biased.

3. **Goals:** based on the analysis above, you should define campaign objectives clearly. These should be SMART:
  - a) **Specific**
    - Clear to everyone involved
    - Defined properly
  - b) **Measurable**
    - How will you know when the goal has been reached?
    - Can you reach this goal, and how long it will take?
  - c) **Agreed Upon**
    - Everyone involved must agree with the goals
  - d) **Realistic**
    - Do you have the time, resources and knowledge available?
  - e) **Time Based**
    - The time required to reach this goal must be clarified



4. Target audience: You will need to define your target audience(s), and determine the best ways to engage their interest and lead them to take action.

There are three main types of audience – decision makers, people who can influence the decision makers, and supporters. You will need different tactics for different audiences, as the problem and solution must be framed in terms that appeal to them.

5. Message: As people who are deeply involved in the issue, we know that there are many different important aspects to the problem. However, we do not need to, and should not, try to communicate all of these to our audiences. At best we will confuse them, and at worst, we will turn them against us. We need to choose our main message, and keep communicating the same thing over and over again – even if it feels like they don't understand the complexity of the issue. We are trying to make people take action, and we should keep our message as simple and as clear as possible – if you cannot communicate your message in one simple sentence that everyone can understand, you need to revise it.

Can you turn your message into an interesting story?

6. Tactics: You will then need to create a detailed timetable of different tactics that you are going to use to achieve your goals. Short and medium term objectives should be set. Things to consider when you determine your tactics:
  - a) Are these the best way to communicate your message?
  - b) Will the audience want to take action because of these tactics?
  - c) Do you have the time, money and other resources to implement these tactics?
  - d) How will the opposition react?

You will need to consider a wide range of tactics, for different audiences. You must also have definite deadlines for each tactic. Where possible, try and use major external events to attract interest to your campaign. Also, be aware that campaigns may not go according to plan - there are so many external factors that can affect them. Try and have contingency plans in place to deal with major potential obstacles.

7. Evaluation: Every part of your campaign should be evaluated at regular intervals, and changes made if necessary. No campaign plan can be set in stone, as external factors constantly change. If your campaign tactics are no longer meeting your objectives, you will need to modify your plans. Evaluation and documentation will be invaluable in this process. As your campaign moves forward, you may also have to reassess the situation, and create a new plan that takes into account any changes – this can include modifying your goals, targets, tactics and timeline.

Some questions to consider for evaluation:

- a) What do you want to evaluate?
- b) Why do you want to do an evaluation?
- c) What tactics are succeeding?
- d) Why has something not worked?
- e) What do you need to change?

It is important to consider evaluation as part of your initial planning.

## **Campaign tactics**

There are many different tactics, and they need to be used following a strategic evaluation of the most effective methods.

Some techniques that are used often:

- Media events
- Direct actions
- Direct communications
- Public hearings
- Strikes
- Demonstrations
- Petitions
- Boycotts

Internet campaigning is an area that is rapidly growing – however, like any other tactic, it needs to be evaluated to determine the best use of this medium.



## Campaign materials:

You will need a variety of campaign materials, depending on your audience and tactics. Some things to consider when creating materials:

- Choose the material based on your audience
- Start from your audience's point of view – what affects them?
- Stick to the point – it is tempting to tell them everything you know about the issue, but keep it concise and clear if you want your audience's attention
- Make it interesting
- Provide action points for the audience
- Learn from others – do some research into what has worked for other NGOs in your sector and in other sectors
- Time and resources, including skill sets
- How you say it is as important as what you say – the message has to appeal to your audience
- Using online and offline materials will depend on the situation. Although online materials may seem more cost-effective, if they are not appropriate they should not be created, as the investment in time and human resources also needs to be considered

Campaign materials include:

- Reports
- Leaflets
- Posters
- Postcards
- Petitions

## Media, lobbying and outreach

Three areas will require individual strategies within the campaign plan – media, lobbying and outreach. It is important to be aware of the situation regarding media and lobbying in your country. If there is widespread censorship and control of the media by the government, and few opportunities for lobbying, you will have to considerably modify or restrict campaigning in these areas.

1. **Media:** The media are usually essential for the success of your campaign. It is important to develop your knowledge of how to deal with them – they can be hostile, indifferent or sympathetic to your campaign, and you will need plans for each of these scenarios.
  - Understand your message
  - Develop relationships with the media
  - Be creative to get coverage
  - Develop a media contact list
  - Make it easy for them – give them stories, facts, photos, etc. in the most convenient format possible
  - Choose the most appropriate outlets – TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, internet
  - Get media training from a PR firm if possible
  - Media tools include press releases, press conferences, letters to the editor, newspaper columns, advertisements, interviews, internet forums and websites. Different tools may be appropriate for different campaign tactics at different times – there is no 'one size fits all' tool.
2. **Lobbying:** You should have long term strategies for dealing with the government for all areas of your work.
  - Know the wider issues – understand how the government works
  - Know your opponents and their strategies – they will be lobbying as well
  - Develop proactive relationships with sympathetic politicians
  - Lobbying should be in conjunction with public and media campaigning
3. **Outreach:** Outreach is about extending the communications network to other groups potentially concerned about an issue. Targets need to be identified based on research, and could include other NGOs, such as consumer or conservation groups; members of the business community; students, and others – these targets would vary depending on the campaign. They have the potential to significantly enhance the impact of a campaign. However, we need to think about whether we have the resources to manage these relationships. We also need to consider whether the inclusion of any particular group could have negative consequences – this will arise out of our analysis.



## **Crisis management**

We may need to respond to crises that arise from time to time. These responses need to be immediate, and are also short term. It is important to make plans within your campaigns for potential crises, and build partnerships and networks to enhance your effectiveness. Finally, once you have finished responding to a crisis, you should incorporate the knowledge you have gained into your long term campaigns.

## **Further resources**

- <http://www.campaignstrategy.org>
- <http://www.thechangeagency.org>
- <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/campaigning-manual-eng>
- [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what\\_you\\_can\\_do/campaign/activists/toolkit/plancamp.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_you_can_do/campaign/activists/toolkit/plancamp.htm)
- <http://www.peta.org/actioncenter/AAactguide12.asp>

