Fixing Campaigns

Most campaigners love starting things. Most of the tools in my book *How To Win Campaigns: Communications for Change* [1], in others like it, and at campaign websites such as www.thechangeagency.org, are about planning or organising campaigns, and tend to assume that you are starting from scratch. In reality many of the problems campaigners and campaign directors face are about existing campaigns, which have got problems.

This Newsletter captures a few ideas to help you think about how to identify and fix those problems, taken from the sections 'Fixing a Campaign', and 'Staying on the Side of the Victims', and elsewhere, in *How To Win Campaigns*.

The 'Real Victims Deserve our Sympathy'

That is a constant media reprise. The case of the most empathetic figures is implicitly right in almost all media stories. It makes the media seem nice.

So at any scale, try to ensure that the most empathetic figure in the story is you, or on your side. Don't let the media fall out of love with your campaign through the natural tendency for it to dry out and become an elite dialogue.

- Causes start their lives as 'left-field', driven from the heart and over simple instances of injustice or abuse, expressed in everyday language.
- As time goes by, progress brings calls for systematic evaluation, qualification, objectivity, dispassionate analysis. 'Expert' dialogue develops: this is harder to understand, less public.
- Knowledge of problems and solutions progresses; the campaign pushes for further change; perhaps losers start to fight back. For example, polluting industries see costs rise and markets shrink as policies favour cleaner technologies. They are self-interested, yes; but what they now kick against is an abstraction, a bureaucratic policy, an esoteric issue and statistics, maybe about risks yet to arise or problems that seem far away.

Now flesh-and-blood 'victims' are appealing for 'fairness'. The woeful business person finds a sympathetic hearing in an economics report on TV, positioned against 'bleeding-heart liberals', 'rules' or 'the interests of frogs'.

Or because your campaign which started out as about the rights of patients to have access to new medical drugs has become about pharmaceutical regulation, companies can now position themselves as the victims, perhaps pointing to 'red tape' threatening the investment of shareholders, or implying that anti-capitalist pressure groups are trying to 'stifle innovation'.

In other words, you've been re-framed.

Now the campaign 'no longer deserves sympathy' and the media positions the campaigners as the ones to blame.

Avoid this roll-back in two ways:

First, don't let it happen.

- Keep the victims' reality locked into the heart of the campaign, be they coral reefs succumbing to climate change, victims of chemical poisoning, cancer patients, or slum-dwellers thousands of miles away;
- Make them the channels or messengers, or get as close as you can;
- Keep experts on tap, not on top.

Second, lead renewed calls for progress with evidence of the victims in terms that make them the most empathetic characters in the story – not, say, the latest results of a computer model –

unless a victim is also the messenger. (A good example is the role of Handicap International Belgium in the Cluster Munitions Coalition - see www.banadvocates.org)

Left to drift, campaigns tend to dry out, become status conscious and accumulate experts – scientists, lobbyists, policy workers and others. It's cheap, too – expert chats have no need of costly mobilization, communications staffs, political theatre, legal, marketing, protest, action or other elements of the campaign army. Most experts like to talk to experts, not to the public. That is no way to run campaigns.

Are You on a War Footing?

Any campaign can become tired or stuck, or both, or need a change. A few weeks ago I got asked to talk to a gathering of campaigners from a wide range of organisations, who regularly meet to compare notes and exchange ideas and experiences. 'Keeping a campaign fluid' was one of the things they asked me to talk about. I gave them a list of things to try much like the one below. One thing I hadn't anticipated though, which in retrospect is obvious, is that some organisations try to 'campaign' on a 'nine-to-five' basis.

I guess that's ok if your campaign is intended to gradually change a context, and/or is finally delivered by others but when or if it ever reaches the point that you are engaging with an opponent in 'real time', then you must get onto a 'war footing'. Organisations which are designed to campaign and do nothing else tend to be like this all the time - hence all the problems of 'burn out' - but others which adopt campaigning just as a sideline, or a way to enhance advocacy, or to get a little extra profile, tend not to be. If however they try to 'call a division' (see p 167 in *How To Win Campaigns* 2nd Edition) and to force a result, this is unlikely to work.

Everyone laughed at that campaigners' get-together when one young man said something like "I suppose it's not how you're supposed to do it but we got an opportunity a couple of weeks ago, on a Friday, and decided to launch a campaign for the next Monday morning ...". He was engaging and funny (and it had worked) but I was surprised afterwards when he told me "I've never worked so intensely on the campaign as that weekend - I was in the office until nine-o-clock that night - the latest we've ever stayed".

I'm glad it worked for them but you can't run campaigns like that. The pattern of effort needs to fit the external process you are engaging with, and if it's media and politics or rapid corporate decision making then you must be quicker than your opponents - to get inside the OODA loop see *Campaign Strategy Newsletter 63* [2]. That means having your campaign units on something much more like a 24/7 basis, at least during critical days or weeks, otherwise you won't get to set and retain control of the agenda, be it 'media', 'politics', corporate or 'public' attention.

Things To Try

Here are some ways to stimulate thinking on changing a strategy (page numbers refer to How To Win Campaigns 2^{nd} edition).

Resources, Objectives, Activities

The main areas which it's usually worth thinking of changing are resources, objectives, and activities as perceived by supporters (including engagement opportunities). The principal options for change are to become more (or less) popular, or more or less ambitious or to give greater agency. For instance, get your campaign 'led' (ie fronted) by a celebrity (though this has pros and cons - see p 256).

Change in effective resources could involve converting invisible or visible support. Change in the objective might be from one that is too large or too small to stimulate engagement, to a 'bite-sized' objective. New forms of involvement might bring in whole new constituencies.

Scale Change

A useful technique can be to step up or down strategy levels. Consider if your campaign would do better if its proposition changed focus from one of those levels to another. Eg with respect to climate

- future of society;
- industrial future;
- energy future;
- fossil fuels future:
- oil company future;
- future of a site/technology;
- attribute of a site/component/brand

Or from the global to national, regional, local, community, street, neighbours, family/home, or individual, or vice versa.

More Things to Try

- If there isn't a Critical Path, make one (p 123)
- Storyboard the campaign pictures only, no words past, now and future (p 158)
- Look 'outside the light' get new knowledge eg from focus groups or interviews with 'stakeholders' or relevant audiences you don't know much about (p 100 and 108)
- Deconstruct the campaign, reassemble from fewer parts re-imagine it
- Apply the chip shop queue test gather n no. conversations and try to find connections to your campaign (looking for dilemmas) (p 111)
- Apply the chip shop queue test (p 111) run versions of you campaign as stories past different groups look for dilemmas which get them talking and keep them talking
- Issue map with peer groups look for new points of intervention (p 103)
- Change viewpoints: get people with a peripheral involvement to explain the campaign to friends and associates and then them to others go in different directions and follow the process as it 'changes your campaign'
- Apply the scandal equation look for a scandal; change the factors one at a time (p 200)
- Map all the actors and re-imagine the campaign with different ones as victims
- Run focus groups with the six outside Values Modes (or 3 Maslow Groups) and look at the 'issue' and campaign through their eyes (p 72)
- Use the Values Map Attributes to recast the campaign on the opposite side of the map
- CAMPCAT one at a time, try changing context, channel, messenger, trigger, audience
- RASPB one at a time try changing R and B (Responsible party and Benefits the others are Action, Problem and Solution) (p 175)
- Your brand map it with the glass onion model and try revealing different layers in your communications (p 262)
- Multiple intelligences one at a time try reworking the campaign to utilise different intelligences (p 47)
- Character and personality run Bridge's organisational MBTI [3] on your organisation and identify MBTI type, then look for an organisation as an ally with the opposite strengths

- Character and personality run MBTI on yourselves to identify MBTI type, then look for people with the opposite strengths to re-imagine the campaign
- Urgency and feasibility identify which phase you need to be in and consider if a switch needs to be made (p 162)
- NLP analyse your outputs in terms of preferences and consider remedying deficits [4]
- Time re-imagine the campaign in terms solely of the past, present or future, whichever it has least reference to (p 59)
- Run a Campaign Programme prioritise one at a time, in 'pushes' of 6 12 months where there is a motivating 'need' for particular groups to be involved, to create internal energy
- Change roles inside the campaign, and organisational ownership/ control letting the accounts department take charge for a week may produce something startling

The Lessons of Silent Spring and other blog posts

I've recently written a short series of blog posts for *The Earthscan Blog*. Let me know what you think.

Part 1: Lesson of Silent Spring - http://www.earthscan.co.uk/blog/post/How-To-Win-Campaigns-on-Climate-the-Lesson-of-Silent-Spring.aspx

Part 2: I Was Part of the Problem - http://www.earthscan.co.uk/blog/post/I-Was-Part-of-the-Problem.aspx

Part 3: Changing Campaigns - http://www.earthscan.co.uk/blog/post/Changing-Campaigns.aspx

Part 4: Changing Campaigners - http://www.earthscan.co.uk/blog/post/Changing-Campaigners.aspx

You can order the updated and extended *How To Win Campaigns* at http://www.earthscan.co.uk/?tabid=102418

Earthscan have two special offers currently: a 20% discount (code HTWC20) and/or a 25% discount and entry to a competition to win a Flip video camcorder (code HTWC25). Just enter the code in the voucher box when you order. Valid until the 15th October.

- [1] How To Win Campaigns: Communications for Change, Second Edition, Chris Rose, pub Earthscan 2010
- [2] http://documents.campaignstrategy.org/uploads/campaignstrategy_newsletter_63.pdf
- [3] Bridges, W. (1992) *The Character of Organizations: Using Jungian Type in Organizational Development,* Davies-Black Publishers, Palo Alto, CA.
- [4] there are many books and online resources eg http://www.new-oceans.co.uk

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HOW TO WIN CAMPAIGNS pub April 7 2005 Earthscan by Chris Rose see

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