

# Campaign Strategy Newsletter 86 – June 2013

## Why Too Much Focus on Opinion Polls Can Lead Your Campaign Astray

Using examples from climate change, a new Campaign Strategy blog post and report show how, while on the surface opinion polls have an alluring factual objectivity, in reality they can be as tricky and dangerous as sirens tempting sailors onto the rocks. It proposes *'ten rules'* for campaigners interpreting opinion polls and illustrates many problems, ranging from the way people answer supposedly analytical questions with intuitive, unconscious responses to the herd-behaviour of the media, the impact of framing, values and the often hidden influence of the 'choice architecture' of polls.

It notes how, in 2002, pollster Frank Luntz advised politicians and fossil fuel industry spokespeople to 'keep the debate open' on global warming; a strategy that did not require winning the argument, only perpetuating an impression of scientific uncertainty. This strategy was so successful that it still poses dilemmas for campaigners today, especially if they focus on trying to change opinion to change outcomes, rather than changing behaviours to change outcomes and letting those change opinions.

It concludes: *"To chase the chimera of changing opinion rather than changing outcomes, risks leading you round in circles, like A A Milne's Pooh Bear who ends up walking round and round a tree in pursuit of a Woozle, before he realises he is following his own foot-steps. Winnie-the-Pooh concluded 'I have been Foolish and Deluded, and I am a Bear of no Brain at All' ".* The report suggests: if you are going to follow opinion polls, be sure to engage the brain first.

Blog post: <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=241> *Why Opinion Polls May Not Matter As Much As You Think on Climate Change. Or Much Else Besides*

Report: <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Beware-The-Siren-Songs-Of-Opinion-Polling.pdf>

## The Unwise Campaign Footprint

How many campaigns does it take to stop Americans changing a light bulb? The answer is that it depends on who the Americans are and what sort of campaigns. *The Unwise Campaign Footprint And Its Impact on The Carbon Footprint* posted at <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=228> discusses an example from Pennsylvania University research which shows that, for some people, an 'environmentally friendly' label discouraged changing to more energy efficient bulbs, even though they would have saved money.

Readers of *Campaign Strategy Newsletter* may recognize this as the inadvertent effect of Pioneer (especially Concerned Ethical) style campaigns on some Prospectors (especially Golden Dreamers) and on Settlers.

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(For a values introduction see <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Summary-of-Values-Based-Segmentation-CR-CSL-March-2013.pdf> - and find detailed papers on the *12 Values Modes* at the home page [www.campaignstrategy.org](http://www.campaignstrategy.org)).

This is the same values-driven, identity-based rejection of overtly ethical messages and messengers that accounts for the ‘paradoxical’ finding that people will say the climate is changing at the same time as saying they “do not believe in” climate change, discussed in a previous post <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=219> and report *Climate Change, Energy and Values*, <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Climate-Change-Energy-and-Values-April-2013-CR.pdf>

The post shows that in Brazil, Argentina, India, the USA and China, the people who will have been at either end of this values polarisation (the Prospector Golden Dreamers and the Brave New World Settlers at the ‘power’ end, and the Transcender Pioneers and the Now People at the ‘universalism’ end) are consistently those who take opposed ‘strong’ views on the existence of climate change.

It’s probably the same polarity at work in which some Republicans reacted against a programme to reduce energy usage, some even increasing it, identified in the University of California study cited in the post.

Brian Fitzgerald responded to the above examples: *“So resonates with an experience I had with a conservative US Midwesterner, at a panel on electric cars. He said that as an owner of an electric car for political reasons (energy independence BOO YA) he cringed every time he saw an ad touting their “kindness to the Earth” angle. He saw it as \*undermining\* his sales pitch to his conservative farmer neighbours that this was an act of radical patriotic nose-thumbing to Obama, Osama, and the forces of foreign oil.”*

Not all Republicans by any means are climate sceptic, or reject climate action (indeed, if it is framed in the right way, with the right actions and right messages, almost anyone will be pro-action), but in the US and elsewhere there is a skew to more right-wing views being associated with climate action rejection. The solution to this is most definitely not to attack people’s values but to find a way to work with them to get the right outcome and if you are not the right messenger, don’t try to be.

### Politics

*The Unwise Campaign Footprint And Its Impact on The Carbon Footprint* also discusses the way politics can lock in values differences, but for the most recent CDSM analysis on the values of UKIP and all UK political parties, see Pat Dade’s piece at: [http://cultdyn.co.uk/ART067736u/State\\_of\\_Parties\\_May\\_2013.html](http://cultdyn.co.uk/ART067736u/State_of_Parties_May_2013.html)

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## Mobilisation And The Power Template for Strategies

Almost every NGO I know seems to be trying to increase 'mobilisation' via 'online'. There are endless courses, online advice sources, training programmes and conferences on it.

An emerging common theme seems to be the need to integrate online and offline activity, a great example of which is *Washington Bus*' 'common sense' ideas that almost any campaign could emulate as reported here <http://tinyurl.com/mjv7jcz>. I believe it's the offline, human-human interactions that create the higher energy common bonds underlying effective networks (see *Is 'Online' Increasing the Number of People Engaged in Campaigns?* <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=116>)

One problem I've discussed with a number of campaigners is that 'mobilisation' is used to mean different things, even within one organisation. Of the many facets to this issue, one is allocation of effort and investment of resources and another is strategy. I'll try to write something more systematic about it in future but here are a couple of thoughts. I'd be interested in your views:

### Effort Allocation

If you're putting together the human and other resources needed for a campaign, or building up a base of people with whom your organisation has a relationship (a 'community' if you like) whether for fundraising, forms of other activism or both, it makes sense in lots of ways (eg economy, effectiveness and efficiency) to have a plan so that you can allocate your efforts.

One way to do this is to think about the people who can engage in your campaign, and how you might target them. For instance:

1. People you control and can deploy – you, staff, paid hires, dedicated volunteers. While this may be anathema to some who aspire to the freely self-organising model, the truth is that, even now, organisations who can deploy controlled effort tend to be more effective because the effort can be closely focused and because, like a ship with an engine, they can make headway when there is no interest in an 'issue' or when the tide is flowing against you.

Then a lot of others who you need to persuade ...

2. Active supporters who have committed to respond once asked
3. 'Supporters' who are committed in general but need to be re-activated
4. New joiners who you now go out and recruit
5. Others in the networks of other organisations, where the network/organisation joins you in an alliance or coalition but where the primary loyalty is to that network not yours

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6. 'Elective' joiners or 'walk-ins': people you don't even know exist but who "turn up" once you start
7. Parallel action-takers who may never be in contact but do useful things in parallel – which happens once there is a high level of alignment in society. They may also respond to an ask from you but they may not if, for example, there's a values clash (see the light bulb example)
8. Passive, parallel aligned support, which can be revealed in chatter/response to polling etc (but which even in 'huge' campaigns, typically is an order of magnitude bigger than the numbers who actually take any action).

### **The Campaign Strategy – Mobilisation Strategy Fit**

Many past *Newsletters* have discussed aspects of making instrumental (ie outcome-changing) campaign strategies. For the extreme case of a campaign whose assets and resources are entirely in the direct control of the organisation (#1 above) and involves a bit of targeted advocacy and 'media' or social media work which is designed to align 'public opinion' (effectively #8 above), it is relatively easy to create, test and plan a critical path and then use your assets and resources to execute it.

This is what in old-style politics used to be called a 'Vanguard Campaign' where the campaign was visible and is still, in effect, how many PR and public affairs campaigns work. The old Marxists used to refer to an 'organisational weapon' and the 'organising' tradition of Saul Alinsky and others applied this to civil rights and other social issues.

So the discipline of the strategy planning process is applied through control of assets and resources deployed in it, like a military strategy.

Once you embark of loosely defined 'mobilisation' as an aim, it is all too easy to lose the capacity to be strategic. This is less of a problem where the discipline (eg a set, detectable objective) is provided by an external event coming from outside the campaign.

For example, in the case of the campaign against UK government sell-off of public forests, in which 38Degrees played a pivotal role (see Newsletter [http://documents.campaignstrategy.org/uploads/campaignstrategy\\_newsletter\\_67.pdf](http://documents.campaignstrategy.org/uploads/campaignstrategy_newsletter_67.pdf) and subject of a recent blog <http://tinyurl.com/kxtt3tz> by Johnny Chatterton, now at [www.change.org](http://www.change.org)), the UK Government effectively supplied the objective in the shape of a decision to be reversed.

In the case of a complex and wicked problem like human rights abuses, global hunger, GM farming or climate change, the strategy-making process starts with an almost infinite universe of possibilities. If the strategy-making machinery is a loose and maybe unbounded community, the potential problems are obvious, both in making a strategy and then having any rigour in its execution.

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There are many possible 'solutions' to this but I'll make just one suggestion. One useful template to use is a power test or 'power template', in other words asking, as the **RASPB proposition** template does, who has the power to stop this problem? [Responsible party (test: do they have the power to stop it ?); Action – the action ask; Solution – bigger picture solution; Problem – bigger picture solution; Benefit – arising from taking the action]

The importance of this is that it distinguishes between all possible contributors to the problem and those who, if they acted differently, could actually stop it.

For a narrative and more interesting exploration of what this means, see James Turner's recent article in the LA Times about his friends' holiday trip: The battle against global warming should not be about judging people's every choice. <http://tinyurl.com/lqf45st>. In his story it is those with the power, the oil and car companies, who have the power and thus the responsibility. Starting there and asking how we can make a campaign that changes their actions provides a template to design mobilisations, with all its whys and hows.

## Other Things

### Thanks for all the Fish

Congratulations are due to Chris Davies MEP, Ocean2012 and all forward thinking fishing groups who helped achieve the recent success in improving the EU Common Fisheries Policy <http://createsend.com/tj-937DB94BC27976DE>

### Snails beat UK Government For Speed

'Negawatts' (payments to reduce energy demand) is an idea first proved in Kiel, Germany in 1990 [tinyurl.com/pj3x9qe](http://tinyurl.com/pj3x9qe). 23 years later, the UK Government has just adopted it. Speed of travel of idea: 89 metres per day. Snails have moved faster.

### And Finally – What's In A Name?

An example from a (maybe too) controlled organisation - the RSPCA: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10200205754281506&set=a.1117775539540.2020005.1081544316&type=1&theater>

(For those outside the UK, Bury St Edmunds is a place and this is a charity shop).

### The Campaign Strategy Newsletter

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### Books By Chris Rose:

*How to Win Campaigns: Communications For Change* (edn 2) Earthscan/Taylor and Francis 2010, in aid of the campaign to get Amazon to pay its taxes, try a different bookseller. Eg UK, Waterstones <http://tinyurl.com/alc4k8x> or the publishers Taylor and Francis.

*What Makes People Tick: The Three Hidden Worlds of Settlers, Prospectors, and Pioneers*, Troubador (2011), order it post & packaging free from <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org>