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What Makes A Successful Campaign?

Part of the R&D Decade project

Eight Key Tools for a Successful Campaign

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Our in-depth analysis of 25 campaigns shows that there is no exact formula for creating a successful campaign. However, there are tools found consistently through many of the campaigns, which are useful to understand.

The 8 key tools deployed by major campaigns are to:

1. Craft a succinct and clear message

With the public often spending little time tuned in to current affairs, it is important to have a simple message that cuts through.

2. Demonstrate large public support

Through protests or petitions, this has shown to be incredibly effective in persuading politicians that an issue will impact them at the ballot box.

3. Engage through social media

The age of social media has meant that every campaign now needs a presence online. It will not necessarily change results – and it can often be over-relied on – but a campaign can no longer get away without having one.

4. Provide an online toolkit

Online toolkits allow users to generate their own relevant content for a campaign. An online toolkit can increase user engagement and allow content to be shared organically by supporters.

5. Evoke emotion

Emotional campaigns have been some of the most successful - sharing personal stories and case studies allows the public to empathise with an issue on a personal level.

6. Create coalitions

Where there are campaigns with multiple groups affected by the same issue, working together can help amplify issues and share resources.

7. Enlist high profile people and organisations

This has been effective for certain campaigns, by helping to spread their message to large social networks and different follower bases or media outlets.

8. Secure extensive media engagement

It remains vital for any campaign to engage with consumer media – newspaper circulations may be dropping but news circulation more broadly is thriving online and on social media.

Below we examine in more detail how these 25 campaigns used these tools.

1. Craft a succinct and clear message ·····································

Campaigners often only have a few seconds to capture the interest of members of the public, perhaps as they pass an advertisement, read a headline, or hear a spokesperson speak. Therefore, messages must be clear, persuasive and delivered quickly to attract and hold attention.

One example is from the Vote Leave campaign: "We send the EU £350 million a week. Let's fund our NHS instead." This message was branded on a red bus driven around the country, delivered to homes through leaflets, and published across many media sources. The simplicity and repetition of the message allowed it to cut-through and reach much of the public.

The School Cuts campaign's message, "4 in 5 schools in England are still in crisis in 2020 after years of Government cuts. Is your school on the list?" was effective because it was both succinct and personal. In this case, personalising the message enhanced public engagement because it took the campaign from being abstract and distant to directly impacting the individual.

• Other campaigns that utilised a succinct and clear message were: Fair Fuel UK; ONE Campaign's 0.7% of GNI on Aid; and the Campaign for Fairer Gambling's Stop the FOBTs.

2. Demonstrate large public support ·································

An important tool used by nearly all of the successful campaigns we analysed was demonstrating large public support for the campaign, either through in-person protests or online petitions. Large scale protests are organised in strategic locations to further the campaign's aims, either by gaining media attention (protesting in disruptive places), public awareness (protesting on busy streets), or proximity to relevant decision makers (protesting policy changes outside of Parliament).

The Extinction Rebellion campaign used protests as a central part of their message delivery. They met in Parliament Square, spent 11 days blocking Oxford Street in Central London, and organised a synchronised international protest in more than 60 cities. The founders of the campaign used arrest as a tactic. They accredited

much of their success in reaching the public to the amount of people who were arrested during protests. The extensive protests and arrests attracted large amounts of media attention, which the campaign has used to further spread their message.

Petitions are another great tool for demonstrating public support; if they are signed by more than 10,000 people they must receive a response from government, and if they are signed by more than 100,000 people they are considered for debate in Parliament, which can lead to real policy change. One extremely successful example of a petition was Hugh's Fish Fight, a campaign to change EU rules on fishing discard. This petition received more than 900,000 signatures, an important tool used in getting the issue in front of decision makers and achieving their campaign aims.

- Other campaigns that successfully utilised petitions were: Action on Sugar; Fair Fuel UK; Campaign Against Modern Slavery; Out of Sight Out of Mind; Raise the Rate; and PacketInWalkers.

3. Engage through social media

A common thread among modern successful campaigns is the use of social media to engage the public and to spread their message rapidly at low cost. Social media allows campaigns to target new demographics without geographic restraints, as well as improve coordination amongst supporters (for example, sharing times and places of demonstrations).

The ONE campaign to get the UK to commit to spending 0.7% of GNI on aid managed to get their hashtag #TurnUpSaveLives to trend on Twitter twice on the day of the vote in Parliament. The pressure that this public support placed on Parliamentarians likely had an impact on their decision to ultimately put the 0.7% commitment into law.

Labour's campaign in the 2017 General Election used social media successfully. They not only spent more on social media advertising than their opponents, but they also spent smarter; Labour's advertising was more targeted and was shared more organically by supporters. According to estimates, more than 15 million people watched at least one Jeremy Corbyn video during the campaign.

- Other campaigns that successfully utilised social media were: Hugh's Fish Fight; Missing Type; Repeal the Porn Laws; 2% Government Spending on Defence; WASPI; Stronger In; Vote Leave; This Girl Can; PacketInWalkers; and Action on Sugar.

4. Provide an online toolkit ....

Many of the successful campaigns we analysed used online toolkits to allow supporters to generate their own content and engage with the campaign. This user-generated content is useful in gaining new supporters because people are more likely to be sympathetic to a cause when they see someone they know and trust supporting it.

The 'This Girl Can' campaign by Sport England, which seeks to increase physical activity among all women across the UK, has been very successful at building an online presence. One key tool that this campaign utilises is free-to-use online resources, such as photos, images, poster templates, logo and brand guidelines. Through this, supporters are free to create and share their own content with their social networks; ultimately, this creates and spreads free advertising for the campaign.

The London Living Wage Foundation, which aims to get employers to pay the real living wage to their employees, provide an online toolkit to help both employers and employees support their cause. Employers can download press templates, reports, and logos to help the public recognise them as living wage employers, which the Foundation argues is good for business. Employees, on the other hand, can download resources to help encourage their employers to become living wage accredited. Ultimately, the campaign has been successful in getting 6,171 accredited employers.

- Other campaigns that successfully utilised online toolkits were: Rainbow Laces; Labour's 2017 General Election; Stop the education cuts; Hugh's Fish Fight; and Stop Funding Hate.

5. Evoke emotion ....

Emotion is a very powerful tool in persuasion and is key to many successful campaigns. One example of the effective use of emotion was Macmillan Cancer Support's 'Tackling the Carers' Crisis' campaign, which pushed for legislative change to provide additional support for carers for people with cancer. The campaign interviewed over 400 carers and shared their stories with the public, garnering public sympathy for the cause. They openly discussed the financial, mental health and social issues that carers face due to the lack of adequate support. Macmillan also used emotion as a tool in their research papers, one of which was entitled "Do You Care?". This tactic had a big impact, shown by over 15,000 people signing their petition. Ultimately, Macmillan was successful in getting legislation

passed (although they believe more needs to be done).
One way campaigns can share personal stories to support their aims is by encouraging supporters to send letters to their members of Parliament. 'Raise the Rate,' a campaign lead by Sixth Form Colleges Associations, encouraged participants to send letters to Parliamentarians calling on them to raise the funding rate for sixth form students. Twelve associations representing school and college staff and students also wrote letters to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging him to increase funding.

- Other campaigns that successfully utilised emotion were: NHS Missing Type and the Living Wage Foundation.

6. Create coalitions

A useful tool used by many of the successful campaigns we analysed was collaboration with organisations, people or campaigns with similar missions to create synergy behind the campaign. Collaboration can be a useful tool because it can expand the campaign's reach and audience, provide insights into the successes and failures of similar campaigns, and give the campaign's message more credibility.

Cancer Research UK's 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind' campaign, which aimed to close loopholes regarding tobacco advertising, worked with other public health campaigners to raise awareness of their research and their campaign message. By working in conjunction with other public health campaigns, 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind' was able to reach many people and subsequently got over 1,300 people to write to members of Parliament and local papers about the issue.

A campaign can also target new audiences who they may have otherwise found difficult to reach by collaborating with other organisations. A good example of this is the 'Stop Funding Hate' campaign, which aims to tackle hate speech in the media by persuading advertisers to pull support from publications that spread hate and division. The 'Stop Funding Hate' campaign partners with organisations such as the National Union of Students, and faith groups such as 'Stand Up!'. By tapping into their partners' networks, they can reach new audiences who are likely to be sympathetic to their message, including students, activists, religious groups and anti-racism groups.

- Campaigns that used coalitions effectively were: Tier 2 Campaign; Macmillan Carers; Stronger In; Campaign against Modern Slavery; Rainbow Laces; 0.7% on Aid; Action on Sugar; 2% Defence Spending; and WASPI.

7. Enlist high profile people and organisations ....

Enlisting high profile people and corporations to show support for your campaign can have enormous repercussions on the reach, audience and credibility of the campaign. Hugh's Fish Fight is a great example of the effectiveness of enlisting high-profile people and corporations. This campaign to change EU rules on fishing discard was led by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, a TV host on Channel 4. He was able to leverage his position as a high-profile individual to reach millions of people across the country and share his message. His status also attracted other high-profile organisations to join his efforts such as Greenpeace, Fish2Fork, the Marine Conservation Society, and the WWF. The powerful individuals and corporations supporting this campaign ultimately resulted in 900,000 signatures on their petition, as well as significant pressure on politicians and leading retailers to implement change.

Media also tend to take more interest in campaigns supported by high profile people and corporations, which in turn spreads the message further and garners more support for the campaign. In the case of Hugh's Fish Fight, the Independent ran a front-page story on the campaign soon after it was launched. This kind of media coverage is at least partly due to the high-profile nature of the campaign leader.

- Campaigns that enlisted high profile people and corporations were: Repeal Porn Laws; Rainbow Laces; WASPI; NHS Missing Type; Action on Sugar; Stronger In; and Campaign Against Modern Slavery.

8. Secure extensive media engagement ....

Media engagement is without doubt a vital part of any successful campaign; every campaign we analysed engaged with either traditional or online media, or both.

38 Degree's 'PacketInWalkers' campaign used a combination of traditional and online media to spread its message. However, it was particularly effective at engaging with traditional media. The campaign secured coverage in international news outlets, such as CNN and Time Magazine, and featured as BBC News' most read story of the day. The campaign encouraged supporters to post crisp packets back to Walkers to highlight the lack of quality recycling schemes and the environmental consequences of using plastic in the crisp packet manufacturing process. The use of media was extremely

effective, shown by the sheer amount of people who signed the petition and mailed packages back to Walkers. Just two months after the campaign was launched, Walkers announced a new recycling scheme, which includes encouraging consumers to send any crisp brand packet to over 8,000 collection points across the country.

During the EU referendum the Vote Leave campaign engaged with a combination of media outlets but focused mostly on online campaigning. The Vote Leave campaign engaged with online media and social media more effectively than the Stronger In Campaign, which was a big factor in Vote Leave's ultimate success. Vote Leave put a heavier emphasis on Facebook as opposed to Twitter, whereas the Remain Campaign did the reverse. Facebook turned out to be a more effective tool in reaching their target audience; in the last 30 days before the referendum, Vote Leave received nearly 4 million interactions on social media, whereas Stronger In received just 2 million. This example speaks to the importance of understanding the different demographics across different media outlets and strategically engaging with them.

- Other campaigns that used extensive media engagement were: This Girl Can; Tier 2 Visa; Campaign for Fairer Gambling; WASPI; Stronger In; Fair Fuel UK; Rainbow; Campaign against modern slavery; Labour 2017 General Election; Hugh's Fish Fight; Out of Sight Out of Mind; the Opioid Timebomb; and NHS Missing Type.

This research was produced by Public First under commission from the Wellcome Trust and the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) as part of their R&D Decade project (see website for more information).

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