

Ten campaigning tips for lobbying MPs

Charity Parliamentary Monitor

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Introduction

Taking a retrospective approach to issues can be a powerful tool: we can learn from past experience to gain knowledge for the future.

nfpSynergy has a wealth of back-data regarding MPs' opinions of charities and their campaigns, comments from those who work in this area and experience of the sector. This has enabled us to compile the following list of ten tips, which extract the most salient issues to emerge from our research, to help you in your future charity campaigns and lobbying.

One methodological approach underpinning these tips should be that your approach is holistic, whereby all of our tips feed off one another in some way: taking a certain approach regarding one aspect will be shaped and enabled in some way by taking a certain approach regarding another aspect. It's an integrated 'system'.

Of course, the degree to which you take on board each tip will depend in some ways upon the nature of your campaign – so it's also a pragmatic system, echoing the pragmatic constitutional and societal arrangement of the United Kingdom.

Summary of ten tips:

- 1) Be specific about what you want from your campaign
- 2) Timing, timing, timing!
- 3) Constituency focus should be more readily exploited
- 4) Encourage and empower your supporters to lobby
- 5) Keep up the pressure – create a memorable and powerful campaign brand and continually refresh it
- 6) Direct/personal contact with MPs is essential
- 7) Send MPs targeted, concise letters and regular, punchy news
- 8) Ensure both long-term and short-term commitment from MPs
- 9) Use the media and public area more widely – think of the bigger picture
- 10) Join forces where necessary

TIP 1: Be specific about what you want from your campaign

Whilst promoting awareness of your campaign is important up to a point, it is important that you ensure action is taken by the government and MPs.

In our Charity Parliamentary Monitor, high awareness of campaigns is a precursor but not a guarantor of action.

We have asked MPs how aware they are of given charity campaigns and what (if any) action they have taken regarding each campaign, from tabling/signing EDMs, speaking/writing to the relevant Minister, asking a PQ or raising an issue in debate and supporting action taken in constituency.

Whilst in our June 2004 research there was a degree of positive correlation between awareness and action taken, there were many exceptions. Further, in our January 2005 wave of research and in our most recent wave of research in July 2005, campaigns which yielded the highest awareness scores did not win hands down in terms of action taken across the board and campaigns which yielded relatively lower awareness scores often scored as well or higher in terms of some aspects of action taken.

Therefore, you cannot rest on your laurels once you have worked hard to raise awareness levels, assuming that MPs will automatically take action. There are no such guarantees. Rather, you must be specific and focused about what the issues are and how you want MPs to take action ¹. The key issue is to ensure that awareness is converted into action.

As one MP stated:-

"...MPs should be asked to do specified things or support specific campaigns" ².

- and linking it into our top tip about timing, one MP prescribed that you:

"Lobby on specific legislation" ³.

TIP 2: Timing, timing, timing!

Making sure you get the timing right with your campaigning and lobbying is key and covers a whole range of aspects.

One of these aspects links into a later tip about the media public awareness /general climate of public opinion. If a relevant issue for your campaigning is related to a 'hot' issue amongst the general public, then use that to drive your campaigning schedule. Equally, you could try and utilise your campaign drive to spur on public debate and passion about the subject - see

¹ ...and make sure is in tandem with our top tip about timing - see tip #2.

² CPM. Wave 8, June 2004

³ CPM Wave 8 June 2004

tip 4 on empowering supporters to lobby and tip 1 on being specific about what you want from your campaign.

Another crucial aspect is ensuring your targeted lobbying works around the schedule of the government and MPs and the timetable at Westminster and in the House, where at all possible or applicable.

One MP commented:

"Take more care with scheduling. Too often events clash or I cannot attend due to parliamentary business"⁴.

Many 'hot topics' dominated the top ten issues in the January 2005 wave 9 'unprompted' question of our CPM, where we asked MPs to name issues for which they had received correspondence. This indicated that the correspondence MPs were taking most note of and/or receiving most correspondence about was readily linked to topicality and relevance to the timetable of the House, such as the debate of Bills ('Hunting' registered at 30% plus another 8% for 'Anti-hunting', Pensions Manifesto with 15%, Mental Capacity Bill issues with 10%, Gambling Bill with 10%), issues on the government agenda and/or issues of general topicality (of varying importance) such as the UK's presidency of the G8 this year in relation to the Make Poverty History Campaign, which was mentioned by 11% of MPs, the Asian Tsunami (mentioned by 8% of MPs), food/dietary supplements (mentioned by 7% of MPs), health/healthcare issues (mentioned by 6% of MPs), and BBC2's screening of Jerry Springer the Opera (mentioned by 6% of MPs).

Whilst your lobbying may be an attempt to get certain issues onto the agenda in Parliament, it should work most concertedly the other way, whereby ongoing issues in Parliament are relevant to your campaigns or issues your charity feels strongly about. Such occasions are real opportunities which should be prepared for and seized upon.

Many of the verbatim comments that we have collected from MPs reflect this advice and cover a variety of angles⁵. One MP suggested:-

"Briefing notes for debates and parliamentary questions."

Another cited:-

"...reading of a bill at fortunate time"

- as key to successful campaigning.

Another said:-

"If an MP makes a speech, e.g. on Mental health, a follow up case [study] from a charity is extremely effective."

⁴ CPM, wave 8, July 2004

⁵ CPM, wave 8, July 2004.

Summary of the basic stages of passing a Bill through the House of Commons before going to the Lords (and if/when to lobby)⁶:

- First reading: The title is read out before the Bill goes to print.
- Second reading: The Bill is debated on the floor of the House, followed by a vote to decide whether it should proceed to the next stage.
- Committee stage (standing committees): Here, the Bill is scrutinised line by line by a group of MPs reflecting the party balance in the House. Where agreed, amendments are made to the Bill.
- Report stage: The committee reports back to the House and amendments made are discussed. It is possible for more amendments to be made at this stage.
- Third reading: The Bill is voted on once again. If it passes the vote, it is then passed onto the House of Lords for scrutiny and revision.

Many argue that one of the key lobbying moments for charities is at the committee stage in the House of Commons, where many of the key issues of the Bill are discussed and where key changes may be opportune. However, one MP warns:-

"What works: asking MPs for support for EDMs, letters to ministers. What is usually unrealistic: pressing for amendments to Bills".

It will no doubt depend on the nature and context of the Bill and your campaigning to some extent.

The Bill then moves onto the House of Lords where again there may be opportunity to lobby Peers on the detailed revision of the Bill.

Another way in which timing is vital for your campaigning is in terms of briefing MPs about your campaign (what it's about, what you want answering, what action you want taking) in advance so they are able to prepare before they have to respond to you and your supporters. For example, give MPs advance notice of mass lobbying so they can research issues and engage in proper and useful discussion, e.g. the Trade Justice Movement, Make Poverty History campaign.

⁶ After the 'Green' paper consultation stage where applicable, i.e. at the White Paper stage

TIP 3: Constituency focus should be more readily exploited

Whilst our research shows that MPs often recall more direct contact with given charities in Westminster than in constituencies (e.g. 74% recall of 'correspondence at Westminster' vs. 63% recall of 'correspondence in my constituency'⁷), it also shows strongly that MPs believe constituency contact to be more influential and qualitatively more effective. Our questions regarding most frequent vs. most influential contact, regarding action taken by MPs and the general verbatim comments all point strongly towards a prescription for constituency contact.

Many of our verbatim comments from MPs prescribe constituency contact as key to successful campaigning, for example, when asked:-

"How do you think charities can lobby MPs and get the message across more effectively in the House of Commons?"

- one MP summed up many of the comments made by replying:-

"By making contact through constituencies, using people genuinely committed to the relevant cause..."⁸

Many other MPs made similar - if less comprehensive - comments, such as: "lobby through constituents", "constituency events are the best way;" "there should be a constituency angle" and "get constituents to write in!"

Another made an interesting point:-

*"...(by) getting constituents to **unite** them."⁹*

In June 2004 (wave 8 of our research), we asked MPs to rate the three 'most frequent' and three 'most influential' ways in which they directly heard about the work of charities and their campaigns. Whilst 'correspondence at Westminster' was rated as the 'most frequent' form of contact with 74%, 'correspondence in my constituency' was rated as the 'most influential' form of contact, rating 9% above 'personal briefings or face to face meetings at Westminster'. This carried on a trend from previous waves of research where this question was asked and where there too 'correspondence in my constituency' was rated as 'most influential'. It is fair to say that some charities have the right idea, with 'correspondence in my constituency' still being rated as second most frequent form of direct contact by MPs in June 2004 with 63%. However, this still means that its 'most frequent' ranking did not match its 'most influential' ranking and hence that there is further potential for seizing on such opportunities and strengthening the influence of charities on MPs in terms of campaigning and lobbying.

⁷ Furthermore, in our question regarding direct contact for specific charities, 'in Westminster' often rates above 'in my constituency' in terms of recall of correspondence.

⁸ Ibid. (Note how this links to our top tip #4 regarding empowering your supporters and the general public to contact MPs and make an impact about any of your campaigns about which they feel passionate).

⁹ Ibid.

In our question regarding awareness and action taken for particular campaigns, a notable proportion of MPs say they have received letters from constituents regarding campaigns (from 14% of MPs regarding Shelter's "Million Children" campaign to 65% of MPs regarding the "Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance in our last wave of research in January 2005) - something which is promising and to be built on.

In the same question, between 8% of MPs (for The Salvation Army's "Gambling Bill" campaign) and 19% of MPs (for the RSPCA's "Animal Welfare Bill" campaign) said they 'took/supported action taken in constituency' and between 3% and 20% said they 'contacted media in their constituency' regarding these campaigns ¹⁰.

As these examples show, constituency contact can cut in at different angles and there are a range of ways of making an impact in accordance with this.

Of course, this is not to say that all contact should be shifted to the constituency level, however it should be factored in to a strong degree in some way.

TIP 4: Encourage and empower your supporters to lobby (in specific, targeted ways)

Whilst political commentators now challenge the claim that government in the United Kingdom can best be summed up as "power of the people, by the people, for the people", it is still largely agreed that it is "through Parliament and not by Parliament" and "for the people" – or rather "the electorate".¹¹ This is useful to remember in your campaign approach: People – or the public – are central to the democratic process. It is they who have (in theory)¹² elected and hence entrusted MPs and the government to pursue their best interests and to listen and respond to their concerns.

In the new political era of increased legitimacy, freedom and effectiveness of charities lobbying MPs and government, encouraging those members of the public (and the electorate) who support your campaign to voice their passion for the cause is a very powerful tool.

As one MP stated:-

"Use local people as an entry route." ¹³

Another said:-

¹⁰ However, the ranges of scores for such action taken in constituencies for these campaigns were not necessarily proportionate to the levels of awareness for each campaign, linking on to our top tip #5 (please refer here for more information).

¹¹ Political Power and Democratic Control in Britain - Weir and Beetham.

¹² Of course, one cannot account for those who have chosen not to vote - the principal still remains that they had the right to vote and hence are still represented by MPs and the government.

¹³ CPM, wave 8, June 2004, verbatim comments.

*"Use constituents to lobby locally or national campaigns."*¹⁴

One of the most salient examples of this is the early work of the Trade Justice Movement, who harnessed public support into mass lobbying to massive effect such that with only two staff and a budget of £65,000, it topped our campaign recall poll with 35% of all MPs recalling the campaign in our July 2002 CPM survey, with recall still going strong in June 2003 with 18%. Sadly, this high success died down in latter years, with it scoring only 2% in January 2004, this downward trend continuing at the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005. You must also ensure that such support is sustained (see tip 5 about keeping up the pressure for more on this).

There is much potential for charities who have previously focused their attention on behind-the-scenes lobbying alone to increase their awareness and effectiveness amongst the government and MPs in this way. Cancer Research UK provides us with an example of such a charity, since they have recognised the potential of their existing supporters and volunteers in their smoke free workplaces campaign, deciding for the first time to extend their lobbying from behind-the-scenes and throwing it open to the public realm as well.¹⁵

As important as support and lobbying for your charity campaigns from supporters (and potential supporters in the general public) is, it is not the powerful tool it could be without the organisation and facilitation of your particular charity and its campaign team, in conjunction with briefings and follow-up from the policy team¹⁶. A holistic approach is key to the entire process working effectively. Focus is also key (see tip 1 on being specific about what you want).

Empowering your supporters / the general public to lobby MPs and the government should be made as easy as possible and co-ordinated for mass effect (e.g. providing a link on your website where supporters can email their MP about a particular campaign). However, it also needs to be 'organic', in the sense that your supporters really understand the issues involved in the campaign and are aware of what you are asking them to do and the nature of the impact of what they are doing (e.g. once you have contacted your MP you are asking them to act on your behalf about a certain issue, they may well keep you updated with progress in the form of letters or emails, etc.)

Without the support being 'organic', it may well yield effects, but it is less meaningful and also risks you appearing as if you are putting words into the mouths of your supporters. Additionally, if your supporters do not fully understand all the issues of the campaign and the action they are being asked to take, they are less likely to be passionate about it and hence ultimately less effective than they potentially could be.

As one MP advised:-

*"...don't send out obvious 'cut and paste' letters."*¹⁷

¹⁴ CPM, wave 8, June 2004.

¹⁵ Guardian Unlimited, March 4th 2005

¹⁶ Of course, the organisational structure is different for each organisation, although there will be some basic similarities.

¹⁷ CPM, wave 8, July 2004

TIP 5: Keep up the pressure – create a memorable and powerful campaign brand and continually refresh it

If you wind up a toy soldier, you can't expect it to carry on marching without winding it up again after a while.

All too often we have seen campaigns rise to the top of the poll for recognition, only to slide back down to obscurity six months later.

We have already touched upon the awe-inspiring rise and disappointing demise of spontaneous recollection from MPs of the Trade Justice Movement identified in our research (see our tip about empowering supporters to lobby). It could be argued that the potentially strong foundations of their campaign 'brand' as a result of mass lobbying was not crystallised by keeping such a trend going. Campaign success and progress should not be taken for granted; it should be nurtured and built upon.

Of course, sometimes campaign 'boom and bust' is due to the fact that a specific campaign may be launched (and perhaps also an 'ad hoc' compact created) to deal with a specific, one-off aspect of an issue which completes its natural course in parallel to the object of its campaigning. The 'Way To Go' campaign is one such example. In our June 2004 poll, it seemed to spring out of nowhere in our question regarding issues for which MPs recalled correspondence, with a spontaneous score of 9%, i.e. MPs were not prompted on the name of the campaign. However, by the time our next poll was conducted in January 2005, it had fallen back into obscurity. This is in many ways understandable given it was set up to influence the Government's Transport White Paper published in July 2005 and supported by many organisations such as Age Concern and Help the Aged, so such occasions may make efficient sense.

However, other such occasions may spell a missed opportunity to build upon.

Whilst sometimes the shelf-life of a campaign may be in part attributable to timing, specifics being achieved regarding a particular campaign and so-on, an overall campaign area 'brand' which umbrellas all of your campaigning in a given area should also be thought about for long-term effectiveness and sustainability – and for making your campaigning worthwhile in the broader sense. It could also ensure that success in one particular instance is capitalised upon as much as possible – treat it like gold dust.

For example, in our other areas of work, we have seen that breast cancer awareness month each October promotes a lot of interest and support. This particular campaign, by its very nature, has a finite period. However, once this month is up, the organisations involved do not simply stop campaigning to raise breast cancer awareness. For example, Breakthrough Breast Cancer (one of the subsidiary charities of this joint campaign) does much good work throughout the year to campaign and promote breast cancer awareness alongside (other campaigns) – so the overall drive for breast cancer awareness remains a campaign priority outside the realm of the specific breast cancer awareness month.

Such examples should be encouraged in the realm of lobbying and campaigning MPs, as well as the general public, the media and so-on (again taking the holistic, inter-linked approach).

TIP 6: Direct/personal contact with MPs is essential

Something that comes through very strongly when we asked MPs how they think charities can lobby MPs and put their message across more effectively in the House of Commons is that MPs prefer the personal touch when you are lobbying them about your charity and campaigns:-

For example¹⁸:-

"[Charities] should provide good, clear, personal correspondence to MPs."

"Direct face to face contact."

"By personal contact".

"...If you have something to say, book a 15-20 minute appointment and say it."

"Individual meetings followed by a written approach."

- and:-

"[Charities should take] the personal approach. Meet with MPs in their office".

One reason for this being preferred is probably a matter of simple logic: if MPs think that the same mail out has been sent to many MPs, they won't themselves necessarily feel ownership of that correspondence or issue and therefore are less likely to feel induced into responding or taking action. On the other hand, if they feel that they have been specifically targeted to respond and take action, then they will be far more likely to do so, as they will feel it is their specific responsibility as an MP, rather than the responsibility of all MPs who have been sent the mail-out, including themselves.

The other reason is that in some cases, it is far more efficient and effective for an MP who has specialist knowledge or a special passion for a given campaign or subject-area to be approached to voice or take action about a given issue. Here, you should focus on who you need to lobby to achieve real action and hence change. Many of the verbatim comments from MPs reflect this ¹⁹:-

"Identify members who have those interests and meet them directly on specific issues."

"Target MPs with a specific interest either personally or through their constituency."

"Study what MPs are interested in and customise information for them, their area."

"Specialist meetings with acknowledged experts for those MPs with a clear interest."

- and:-

¹⁸ CPM wave 8, June 2004.

¹⁹ CPM wave 8, June 2004.

"Target individual MPs likely to have an interest, arrange a private meeting / briefing and /or ask to attend a constituency meeting or event".

TIP 7: Send MPs targeted, concise letters and regular, punchy news

We have highlighted the importance of briefing MPs (our tip about timing/advanced warning of lobbies and our tip about keeping up the pressure) and keeping them up-to-date with regular news (our tip about short-term and long-term support from MPs). How you do this is as important as actually doing it at all.

In terms of **style** – many of the comments we have received from MPs suggest that keeping it targeted and concise is the key. One MP advised:-

*"An A4 sheet with 2-3 strong points".*²⁰

Another said:-

*"It should be brief, functional and to the point with suggested draft press releases which could be used by MPs' staff."*²¹

In terms of **form** - our research has shown that correspondence to MPs in the form of letters remains a powerful tool. In January 2005, wave 9 of our research with MPs, we asked them to name their most preferred and least preferred mechanisms for receiving regular news or briefings about charities.

'Letters containing briefings or news updates' was by far the most preferential mechanism for receiving regular news or briefings about charities for MPs, with 66% giving it highest preference. 'Emails from any source' came second in the highest preference stakes with 20% (one third of the score here for letters).

The least preferred mechanism was faxed briefings or newsletters, with 33% of MPs putting it as their lowest preference and another 33% of MPs putting it as their second lowest preference. Phone calls scored evenly across the board of preferences, with slightly more MPs rating it as their lowest preference (29%) or their middle preference (19%) – so the jury is clearly out as to whether phone calls are preferential or not.

The figures showing the preference for letters was bolstered by the verbatim comments we have received from MPs over recent waves, where MPs have made suggestions such as:²²

"Send us regular short (1 sheet of A4) briefings. Don't exaggerate and minimise the cheap postcards campaigns which are a nuisance".

- and:

"[Send] easy to read and short material".

²⁰ CPM, Wave 8, June 2004

²¹ Ibid.

²² CPM, wave 8, June 2004.

- and linking this up with our tip regarding direct, personal contact, one MP suggests that charities can best lobby MPs and get their message across more effectively with:

"[A] 1 page letter, followed by [a] 20 minute meeting (one to one)".

TIP 8: Ensure both long-term and short-term commitment from MPs

Our research regarding specific action taken on the part of MPs focuses on the one-off, 'short-term' actions that MPs may undertake in support of your particular campaign. For example, tabling/signing EDMs, speaking/writing to the Minister, asking PQs/raising issues in Parliamentary debate, contacting media in their constituency. As tip 1 about actually asking MPs to take action in such ways reinforces, such actions are likely to be vital to the success of your specific campaigns.

However, one must also bear in mind the potential of eliciting a more long-term commitment from some MPs, particularly if your campaign involves longer-term actions such as seeking the enactment of new or revised legislation. Having some key MPs 'signed up' to come on board and help you in such tasks will be invaluable. Of course, this is likely to entail co-operation on your part, by way of briefings, attending and perhaps partaking in committee hearings etc. – really using your expertise to help assist and inform MPs so that they in turn can assist and help your campaign aims and objectives.

We can also look at the flip side of the coin here, in part linking into tip 5 about keeping up the pressure – if you continue a campaigning umbrella 'brand' which can be sustained even throughout periods where you are not focusing on specific campaigns, then you are more likely in some respects to gain long-term awareness and hopefully also support from MPs. This is distinct from the previous point in that it does not involve 'signing MPs up' for particular long-term action but rather keeping the general charity name and thrust of what you campaign for in the hearts and minds of MPs – something to aid your general charity awareness, campaigning and effectiveness ratings in the eyes of MPs.

TIP 9: Use the media and the public arena more widely – think of the bigger picture

The more widely your campaign is known amongst the general public, the more likely you are to attract new and passionate supporters who you can then empower and encourage to lobby MPs and the government in various ways such as voicing their support and pressing for the kind of action to take you and they want. It may also help to further impassion existing supporters. This follows on from tip 4 on empowering your supporters to lobby and tip 3 about focusing on constituencies.

Equally, MPs do have a particular role in representing their constituents, serving the party to which they are affiliated and so-on, but outside of that role, MPs are also members of the public. They may pick up on certain campaigns and issues through the media, be it TV and radio programmes, newspapers and magazines, adverts etc. One knock-on effect may be that MPs and the government as a whole realise that a certain campaign or issue featured in the media is a 'hot' issue in the climate of public opinion and hence may need addressing. Another knock-on effect may be that when MPs are contacted by a given charity or their supporters regarding a campaign which has had a high profile in the media, the heightened recognition may mean they are more likely to sit up and take sustained notice and interest in such campaigns. In a sense, such campaigns have shown themselves to be of more pressing concern to the general public and so may induce the government and MPs to treat them as such in terms of discussion and action taken. A recent example is the Channel Four programme featuring Jamie Oliver addressing the issue of poor quality school dinners in schools.

In a similar but more general way, increased media awareness of given charities 'per se' may also mean that the government and MPs sit up and take more notice of their future campaigns. Cancer Research UK's recent impressive scores in our Charity Parliamentary Monitor are likely to be attributable on the one hand to increased behind the scenes lobbying but additionally because of their massive research campaigns to raise awareness of and support for the charity (this is not a definite proof but rather an inference of sorts).

One of the verbatim comments from MPs recommends:-

"Have a good media profile, use it well." ²³

- for effective campaigning.

It's also something that some MPs not only prescribe but also seem to positively like, which will encourage action and support in a bilateral beneficial arrangement. As one MP said:-

"Press opportunities so we can not only take action but show constituents we do the work." ²⁴

Another said:-

"Good campaigns that give MPs good media coverage." ²⁵

Focusing on media coverage as well as direct political contact is not always something that charities have tapped into in the past, possibly in part due to fears of being seen as too 'political'. However, a new climate of increased legitimacy and freedom of charity campaigning has opened the doorway to such opportunities that really should be seized upon and utilised to maximum effect.

Here, the holistic approach comes into play yet again, where various audiences are inter-linked and can feed off each other, allowing recognition, support and action of your campaigns to build.

²³ CPM, Wave 8, June 2004

²⁴ CPM wave 8, June 2004.

²⁵ CPM wave 8, June 2004.

TIP 10: Join forces where necessary

The ethic of coming together when possible and appropriate to do so is more fitting than ever in the realm of the third sector. If there are several organisations lobbying for the same particular, focused cause, then it often makes logistical sense to form an alliance to better equip all parties in fighting for that cause – pooling resources, expertise and passion for the cause.

Of course, the notion of 'cause' in the wider sense may refer to your particular organisation and its mission statement, so the point is not to forsake and merge your overall campaign objectives. In fact, joining forces when aims are wide and undefined could spell tension rather than benefit. Rather, when specific issues – perhaps regarding a piece of legislation – overlap with other organisations, it is then that coming together could be the key to campaigning success and where the whole is stronger than its component parts in terms of political leverage.

The "Children are Unbeatable!" Alliance (a huge alliance including the likes of NSPCC, ChildLine and NCH but also smaller organisations and groups), which campaigns for children to have the same legal protection against being hit as adults and promotes positive, non-violent discipline, is an example of how effective joining forces can be. In our January 2005 wave 9 survey of MPs, a massive 65% of MPs polled said that they recalled receiving a letter from constituents about the Alliance's "Equal Protection For Children" campaign, taking the top spot for this aspect by a margin of over 20%.

The Children are Unbeatable! Alliance involves a whole host of organisations coming together. However, joining forces can come in all shapes and sizes and involve few or many organisations. For example, the National Autistic Society and Tree House joined forces to create an Autism Manifesto for the General Election in May 2005, so in this instance, coming together consisted of only two organisations joining together, rather than many organisations coming together.

If coming together to form a more successful campaign entails some trade-off with recognition of your particular charity as an individual rather than part of a campaign collective in the short-term, it may well be worthwhile for the 'greater good' of the campaign cause. In terms of a specific issue, compromise may be justifiable and hence tolerable.

However, the long-term may require that both ends of the ship are kept afloat, which can be achieved if you think about your umbrella campaign 'brand' in a particular area (see tip 5 about keeping up the pressure), alongside the fact that other campaign areas may well be under way. So whilst in many instances, joining forces makes logistical and campaigning sense, you shouldn't spread your butter too thickly in one area, meaning that you have to spread it thinly elsewhere, creating tensions internally and externally. Getting the balance correct is the key.

The way in which charities join forces is also vital, where trust, honesty and openness at the outset are of central importance, as is ensuring that the parameters of the joint venture are clearly defined and administered so as to avoid any misunderstandings or tensions regarding the nature, scope and direction of coming together over a particular issue.

Conclusion/Summary

These top tips are quite literally a starter for ten when looking to elicit a successful campaign and lobbying approach. They should be looked at holistically and pragmatically such that our tips are not meant as a 'one size fits all' prescription. Every charity and/or campaign is different, but there are general rules of thumb common to all which fit together in a whole host of ways and to different degrees for each charity and not-for-profit organisation.

Remember: be persistent yet realistic, be inspirational yet rational.

About nfpSynergy

nfpSynergy is a think-tank and research consultancy dedicated to not-for-profit organisations and issues. The purpose of nfpSynergy is to provide ideas, insights and information to help not-for-profit organisations thrive in a changing world. Our services and activities include syndicated research, project work and independent research and policy work. (See below for further details.)

Charity Awareness Monitor (CAM) - The Awareness Monitor tracks the attitudes and awareness of the general public to charities, pressure groups and voluntary organisations eight times a year - four by telephone, four by paper.

Charity Parliamentary Monitor (CPM) - CPM tracks bi-annually the attitudes and awareness of MPs and the Lords to charities and pressure groups and their campaigns.

Charity Media Monitor (CMM) - CMM tracks bi-annually the attitudes and awareness of journalists who work closely with charities using both a questionnaire and qualitative interviews.

Charity Brand Attributes - This programme is designed to help charities find out in more detail how they are viewed by the public by researching which words or phrases the public associate with them.

Independent policy and research work

nfpSynergy carries out a range of internally funded research and policy projects, the results of which are often distributed free of charge. Recent reports and commentaries focus on charities internet use; payroll giving; gift aid; trust in charities; key trends in the wider social and economic environment and branding for charities.

Project and consultancy work

Of course, organisations often need tailored research or support to help them meet their objectives. As such, we regularly work with charities on a more focused and individualised basis. We have recently worked with a variety of voluntary organisations on projects which include: a communications audit, a series of seminars and briefings on the implications of the socio-economic environment, an analysis of corporate relationships and influence, and a global staff survey (in 35 countries) for a development agency.

If you would like to know about any of the work we do please contact us on insight@nfpsynergy.net, or call on 0207 426 8866

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