

Hi, this is Chris Micheli, a principal at the Sacramento governmental relations firm of Aprea & Micheli and an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law. Today's podcast is based upon an article written by Ray LeBov and myself. We called it "Strategies and Tactics to Implement Public Policy Changes."

Basically, the purpose of the piece that we wrote is to provide our readers, or in this case our listeners, with some guidance on developing a strategy and any relevant tactics needed to implement successfully that strategy for legislative action.

As you might surmise, there are a number of aspects of a policy advocacy strategy that has to be put together and developed. These include identifying your issue, your goals, determining the relevant decision makers, identify those who can influence the decision maker or the decision makers.

Identifying opposition and the obstacles to reaching your policy goal. Determining your own strengths and weaknesses and those of your opponents. Deciding on the key messages as well as the individual tactics to use to advance your public policy goal change.

The first step is to identify the specific issue to address in your advocacy efforts. This issue should be of particular and direct importance to your organization. Your goal must be to demonstrate support or evidence, and hopefully your goal is achievable.

Start your advocacy strategy planning by developing a detailed statement of the problem that you're going to address, along with your proposed solution as well as any underlying cause.

Once you've identified the problem to address policy, fiscal and political implications will help determine your goals. It also may make sense to develop multiple goals and then compare and contrast those to determine which ones you should actually pursue.

When you're identifying your advocacy goals, it's really important to describe the change that you desire, the action or actions that need to be taken, the governmental entity or entities that will have to make the public policy change, the likely timeline to achieve these changes and your goals, as well as your desired deadlines to achieve these goals.

It's also important to develop the data and evidence that will be necessary to achieve your advocacy goals. Next, you want to identify the decision makers, whom you have to influence in order to achieve your policy goal as well as those who can influence those decision makers.

Now, some of these influencers on the decision makers may be in your own organization, while many others may be outside of your organization. Your list of influencers will help you develop your plan and your tactics for advocacy activity as well as the messages that you'll need to develop and advocate.

At this point in the process, you'll want to determine the key decision makers' interest as well as their understanding of your issue and their likely position on your particular issue. Your advocacy efforts may need to include enhancing the decision makers' awareness, as well as your understanding of the issue.

Then you have to determine whether these folks support, oppose, or are neutral on your proposal. You also need to examine the opposition and the obstacles that you'll face in achieving your policy goal.

Some individuals or groups may oppose because they have a competing goal. Others may oppose because they lack sufficient information to fully understand your issue, while others may simply prefer the status quo.

You'll also have to assess the intensity and power of your opposition. You'll need to gauge the influence of your opposition. Your level of engagement with the opposition will largely depend upon the level of the opposition that they have with those decision makers.

If it's not possible to address all the opposition concerns through amendments, and of course those amendments should not significantly impair your achieving your goal, then you'll want to better understand the opposition's perspective and what strategies and tactics they may employ to try and defeat your public policy advocacy goal.

Now, this may necessitate coalition building on your own or some sort of strategic partnership, which may help eliminate or outweigh your opposition's impact. At the same time, it's invaluable to appreciate your organization's assets and shortcomings. For example, what types of skills, expertise, and resources are available for pursuing your goals.

For example, if you have multiple influencers that can impact the process, then that would be a very valuable asset. Who might your advocacy partners be? You're more often likely to be successful in pursuing your goals when you bring together a group of those who are similarly interested rather than trying this just on your own.

Once you identify those potential advocacy partners, then you need to determine how your organization is going to work with these other groups. What are the overall goals? What are the strengths and weaknesses? Is there a clear team leader? How will the partners do their work? What are even potential downsides or risks to working with these groups?

Now, next is to plan your advocacy tactics. In other words, what activities will your organization engage in, in order to achieve your goal. You must also develop an easy to understand message that makes a compelling case supporting your advocacy goal.

Your key messaging points in your advocacy documents must concisely and persuasively ensure that decision makers know what the decision and the issue is, why they should care about it, what your solution is, and basically what course of action that they're being requested to ultimately take.

Then finally, who is the messenger? Who delivers your message or messages is almost as important as the messages themselves, because having an effective messenger will ensure that the greatest influence on the decision maker or makers occurs.

So choose your messenger upon who has access and credibility with the decision maker, and who can be influential. Of course, as circumstances change during the course of your advocacy campaign, you may need to adjust your goals, strategies and tactics as you proceed.

Thanks for joining this podcast. I hope you found it helpful.