

Hi, this is Chris Micheli with the Sacramento governmental relations firm of Aprea and Micheli, and an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law. Today's podcast is on effective lobbying in California. My colleague Ray LeBov and I wrote a brief article on trying to remember the four key elements of successful lobbying in the state of California. Ray and I have put together several suggestions for improving as a lobbyist. Entire books, of course, have been written on this topic, but we try to cover briefly some of the main suggestions.

First, keep in mind the four P's - process, players, policy, personality. So know the process, know the players, know the policy, and have the right personality. These are the four P's of being an effective lobbyist.

The first is know the process. Understand the rules governing the legislative process in the Constitution, the Government Code, the Joint Rules, and the Assembly and Senate rules, not just the rules of how a bill becomes law, but all the rules, whether they cover ethics or the details of the budget process.

Know the players. Who are the players on both sides of the issue or the bill that you're working on? Both the public officials, the elected officials, the staff, the administration officials, and the private sector, proponents and opponents, have a working relationship with all of them. It undoubtedly will improve your chances of success.

Know the policy. While you may not be an expert as much as your client is on the subject matter, still, know your bill and have a working knowledge of the subject matter in general.

And have the right personality. Exhibit a pleasant demeanor when working with others during the legislative process. We're all professionals, and you can just as easily find yourself working on the same side of an issue as you can working against somebody. So treat others with respect, and expect the same treatment for yourself.

So beyond the four P's, what else? Well, we have several suggestions, Ray and I do. Seek guidance from others. Even after working in and around the California Legislature and the capital for several decades each, we have each learned something new on a regular basis, with every passing legislative session. Feel free to talk to your colleagues and staff and others to learn more about a bill, a public policy area, or the legislative process itself. And listen to suggestions that are made by others with whom you work. Ask others why they succeeded or why they failed with a particular bill or issue.

Next, your word is key. Keep in mind that the capital community, whether in Sacramento or other state capitals around the country, is small, and word gets around quickly about those who are trustworthy and those who are not. Your reputation as a lobbyist can be made or broken by what you do, how you do it, and what you say.

Next, be flexible. If there's one cardinal rule in the legislative process, it's being flexible. Whether waiting for an appointment with an elected official like a legislator, or waiting for your bill to be heard in committee, or even on the floor, one's best laid plans sometimes run into unforeseen hurdles that you have to get over. So it's important to be flexible in your dealings with others throughout the legislative process. Being patient is also a beneficial asset when working on bills or on regulations.

Next, do some research. Whether it's research for your bill, a public policy issue, or even a legislator that you're about to lobby, it's important to do at least some basic research. For example, you can use the legislative websites of the Senate and the Assembly to learn about the background of legislators sitting on the key committees to which your bill will travel. Even Google information, any studies or academic research on a particular policy issue. The point here is to learn information, and a lot of it is readily available to you. So take advantage of it.

Next is be prepared. Another cardinal rule for us is that lobbyists need to be prepared, and they have to plan contingencies for different possible scenarios that can often arise during the state legislative or regulatory processes. For example, understand what you can control, and be prepared to reassess your strategy and even your tactics when you're approaching a legislative battle or a regulatory or rulemaking process. You may have been prepared to defeat a bill in a particular committee, but some obstacle there precluded you from doing so. Try to plan the entire trip that your bill will take through the legislative process or your regulation through the rule making process. Note both the opportunities and the potential hurdles that you'll likely have to address.

As you can imagine, there are certainly many other potential suggestions that Ray and I can make for you to become a more effective advocate, but these are some of the recurring ones that we often share with colleagues because we see in which it's not done properly. Thanks for joining today's podcast on some tools to be an effective lobbyist in the state of California.