

CREATING A WINNING CAMPAIGN TEAM FOR TOBACCO CONTROL POLICY

Background:

The political environment in New Mexico and Albuquerque in the summer of 2002 made it clear to our statewide coalition core group that the three major policy efforts on our agenda would be running on parallel time tracks. We needed to come up with a plan that would allow us to realistically allocate human as well as financial resources to give each effort sufficient attention and energy to achieve ALL our desired goals. Our solution was to create Campaign Teams for each major policy initiative: Albuquerque Clean Indoor Air, State Cigarette Tax, and Tobacco Settlement. All three campaigns culminated in the *same week* in March 2003.

By treating each policy goal as a separate “campaign”, we were able to establish a strong identity for our coalition as the driving force behind each effort, maximize resources, win the prize in all three campaigns, and still tackle other unanticipated projects and challenges. We passed a strong Albuquerque ordinance, preserved funding for the state tobacco prevention program and saved the tobacco settlement fund from obliteration, AND passed a 70-cent cigarette tax increase (more than we asked for!).

WHY CREATE CAMPAIGN TEAMS FOR TOBACCO CONTROL POLICY?

- Multi-tasking to achieve sound tobacco control policies can make you crazy if you aren't organized, with a strong support team. Consider this a “preventive” measure!
- Convincing policy makers to give you what you want needs to be approached realistically as a political campaign – it's not enough to think you're “right”.
- Winning is about strategy, not just tactics, and you have to have a specific game plan.
- Staff, volunteers, and advocates need to know who's in charge of making the coalition's priority efforts happen and who to go to for answers or to get involved.
- Campaigns give volunteers lots of specific things to do and makes them feel needed – they are an essential component of any successful campaign!
- Campaign teams can develop focused messages and strategies and respond to a specific issue, regardless of what is going on with another issue.
- It is important to be CONSISTENT and UNIFIED if you want to win.
- Your work isn't done once a policy goal is achieved – there are implementation, enforcement, media, and sometimes challenges to deal with. Campaign teams can plan for and undertake those “follow up” tasks.

HOW DO YOU CREATE A WINNING CAMPAIGN TEAM?

- **Start with a healthy coalition!** Optimally, you need to have: 1) a strong, diverse core group that trusts each other, includes an array of expertise and experience, and is willing to work; 2) an existing volunteer/grassroots base (you can expand this, but don't expect to start from scratch); and 3) some staff and funding. If you know you have multiple issues coming up, but you fall short in any of these areas, do what you need to do to strengthen your coalition first.
- **Think outside the box.** The campaign structure you are about to create is a separate animal from your existing coalition organizational chart.
- **Identify a Campaign Team Leader** – This person needs to know EVERYTHING about this campaign. This position is FULL TIME, and it is not for the faint of heart! Select this Campaign Leader carefully, because he/she needs to be the right person for the job.
- **Identify a Media point person** – This person needs to know EVERYTHING about media and communications related to this campaign, is responsible for identifying and informing spokespersons, must have a good rapport with news media, and needs to be able to think and write fast!
- **Identify a Field Coordinator** – This person will be responsible for creating a “field action team” and coordinating (and motivating) volunteers and advocates to accomplish specific tasks.
- **Identify a Policy Manager** – This person can develop a Policy Binder anticipating key questions/arguments with consistent answers, and compile relevant and most current information and data.
- **Know the legislative process.** Find out who makes the final decision, who makes interim decisions (e.g., committees), how you can provide input, how long the process takes, what “detours” could occur along the way, etc.
- **Know your targets** – who can give you what you want. Find out everything you can about them – create target “profiles”. Identify the best people to approach them and what will make them listen. This will help you develop “smart” allies and endorsers for your campaign.
- **Identify your message** – and stick to it. Repeat it every chance you get. If you do a poll (which we strongly recommend), message testing is critical.
- **Know what kind of budget you have to work with**, and if you need more, look for it NOW. Identify someone who will be responsible for all administrative and budget details.
- **Take the time to develop a strategic plan** – but remember it needs to be FLEXIBLE.
- **Schedule regular weekly campaign team meetings** to review plans, tasks, changes. Remember you won't always agree, but once a course of action is selected, everyone needs to be on board. Consensus is ESSENTIAL, and if you aren't there, you don't have a say.
- **Assign responsibility and timelines**, don't just identify tasks.
- **Keep your legislative champion(s) informed** – if there's a change in the program, or some new info, they need to know.
- **Develop a communications card** (index card or wallet size) with campaign members' work, home, cell phones, and make sure every campaign team member has one.
- **Whatever you do, maintain your sense of humor.** Don't forget to celebrate!