

Tactics to supercharge your remote advocacy communications

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No one knows just how long this crisis will affect how we practice public affairs, which means that most organizations will need to get beyond the 101-level tactics to be effective.

Here are some ideas:

Issue Education

Convene your own “committee” of issue experts. Don’t overlook the importance of education. It’s possible that legislators’ ability to learn from lobbyists or even committee meetings will be limited. You can help fill the void. Set-up a Zoom presentation (or series of presentations) with your experts so they can walk legislators through your issues and what’s at stake. Make sure legislators have an opportunity to ask detailed questions.

Deliver a virtual site tour. Same idea as above. If your facilities are an important part of your story, investigate if you have videos and/or photos that you can combine to help legislators better understand your business and your issues.

Advocate training academies. Your advocates (or members) are likely in the same boat as legislators. COVID-19 has turned their lives upside down. Assume they haven’t had the time to think through how it affects your issue. Record a series of short videos (target 5-10 minutes max) that get your advocates up to speed. Or, you could do a Zoom presentation and record it so it’s available on-demand. If you have PowerPoints ready to go now, use them to get started. It is important to establish a clear goal for this education series so advocates know exactly why they’ll be investing their time.

Mobilization

Do a virtual lobby day. Though your day in Raleigh has long since been canceled, digital tools can help you replicate both the show of force and the quality interactions with legislators that lobby days are designed to deliver. Pick a day (midweek is probably best) to have your advocates send an email to their legislators.

But, also, ask them to follow-up by calling their legislators later in the day. The follow-up call makes sure the email isn’t lost and underscores the importance of the issue. Very few constituents will do both of these things—let alone on the same day.

Ahead of your chosen date, have advocates in key districts schedule 30-minute Zoom meetings. If you can join your advocate, all the better. A Zoom meeting will still allow you more time to tell a more detailed story and build a stronger personal connection with the legislator.

Collect video content. Take advantage of the fact that most advocates will be sitting in front of a screen and a camera for days on end. Ask them to record a short video (30 seconds-1 minute is perfect) that explains why your issue is important to them. (Make sure they identify where they live, too.) Have them email you the video. When you’re at a point where you need to remind legislators about your issue, email them the video on behalf of your advocate.

You could also record short (5-10 minutes max) “constituent roundtables” on Zoom with your advocates. Develop a list of questions for your advocate that will draw out your key message points and their personal story.

If you get a large number of videos, consider posting them on a dedicated webpage. You can also post them to social media and tag the targeted legislator. Which leads me to the next tactic...

Don’t overlook social media. Some state legislators are more active on social than others. Investigate your legislative targets via Facebook’s Town Hall feature. Search them on Twitter. If most of your targets are engaged, create a hashtag for your issue. Ask your followers to tell their stories (in a platform-appropriate format), tag their legislator, and include your issue’s hashtag.

Don’t Ignore Offline Tactics

Remember that our remote world hasn’t just made online communications channels more important—it’s done the same for old-fashioned analog channels:

Mix-in letters to the editor. The local papers that serve legislators’ districts need content. This is the perfect opportunity to deliver your issue messages and build broader public support in the process.

Invite a legislative champion to a tele-townhall. You can do this one standalone or as a part of your virtual Lobby Day. Invite your advocates to join a call during which your legislative champion(s) provide an update on your priority issues. Keep it to 60-minutes and leave at least 15-20 minutes for a moderated Q&A. There are lots of phone services that make the set-up easy. Let us know if you need a recommendation.

Lastly, we covered the tactic of [printing and mailing letters to legislators in our last blog post](#), but it’s worth mentioning again here. Almost every organization ignores the mail...so you shouldn’t.