

# Engaging policy makers and making change happen

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# Why are we here?

- ❖ The status quo is not acceptable (or we would not be here today)
- ❖ Change does not happen automatically (or it would have happened already)
- ❖ We can imagine something different, something better
- ❖ The future has not happened yet so we can change it

# Why is change so hard to achieve?

- ❖ The status quo 'works' because it is known. Change is unknown, you have to prove that what you want will 'work better'
- ❖ Even small changes can have unintended consequences and might be dangerous
- ❖ Some people or organisations benefit from the status quo and will oppose change
- ❖ Change = loss of control = unpredictable = fear
- ❖ Change requires effort, negotiation, compromise, leadership
- ❖ No wonder helping people and organisations to change is a specialised profession

# Successful advocates communicate

- ❖ Why change is needed and why now.
- ❖ What you want to happen and how things will be different.
- ❖ Who will benefit and who will lose out.
- ❖ What it will cost and who will pay for it.
- ❖ What you want someone to do and when they should do it.
- ❖ How you will help them.

# The framework for action

- ❖ Understand the potential winners and losers of a change.
- ❖ Identify appropriate windows of opportunity for advocacy.
- ❖ Build coalitions and alliances to multiply the impact of messages.
- ❖ Develop arguments appropriate to target audiences.

# Do your homework – invest time in intelligence gathering

- ❖ **Policy-makers** – where are they in their career? What are their ambitions? Have they made any issues their own? Are they looking for a legacy? Is their personal capital to be gained?
- ❖ **Media** – get to know which journalists cover what type of story, think about appropriate angles to your story and then pitch it.
- ❖ **Timing and context** – are there elections coming up? Could this be a 'good news story' for an embattled government or media hungry opposition?

# Some exercises to have fun and up your advocacy game

- ❖ **Elevator pitch:** imagine that the most important person that you need to influence unexpectedly gets into a lift with you... and you have 60 seconds until it reaches their floor to make your case. Keep practising until you have a concise, clear and memorable few sentences ready.
- ❖ **Cocktail party:** generate a list of random topics for conversation, e.g swimming, favourite authors, train timetables etc. Start talking about this topic and bring up your cause within 60 seconds.

# Challenges that can be hard to overcome

**Ideology:** despite accepting the need for action and the type of action required, policy-makers may refuse to act because they do not believe in government regulation, think that action is better taken by other actors (self-regulation) or at different levels (global, national or local).

**Timing** : policy-makers can lack courage at critical moments because of electoral timetables.

**Conflict of priorities** : Not 'their' issue, unwilling to spend their social or political capital, more urgent issues to resolve.

# Make friends with your brain

At birth we have 100 billion brain cells (neurons), most of which are not yet connected in networks. Forming and reinforcing these connections are the key tasks of early brain development. Connections are formed as the growing child experiences the surrounding world and forms attachments to parents, family members and other caregivers.

In the first decade of life, a child's brain forms trillions of connections or synapses. If they are not used repeatedly, or often enough, they are eliminated.

*The brain ignores patterns that are the same.*

*The brain seeks similarity and familiarity to interpret the signals that it receives.*

# Change means learning to do things differently

What can we learn from models of behaviour change ?

- Repetition is needed (minimum 6 months)
- Intention with focus and energy delivers results
- Persistence, it may take several attempts
- Attention to the ecology, a change can unbalance other issues or relationships

# The key elements

Using your evidence to create the key elements of an advocacy strategy including:

- ❖ Goals,
- ❖ Roadmap/timing,
- ❖ Partners,
- ❖ Intelligence
- ❖ Champions,
- ❖ Opponents,
- ❖ Timing,
- ❖ Messaging.