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Public Affairs
Council

Starting a Grassroots Program from Scratch

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About Me:



- Areas of Focus:
 - Digital Advocacy
 - Communications and Storytelling
- Previously managed grassroots and digital at the *American Dental Association*
- Former communications staffer for a Member of Congress, and several state legislators

Today's Agenda

- Types of Grassroots Programs
- Strategic Planning
- Budgeting
- Tools and Technology
- Q &A

Types of Grassroots Programs

1. **Employee or Member Program:** usually open to all employees of a company or members of an association. It can be an opt-in or opt-out.
2. **Grasstops Program:** an invite-only or exclusive group of advocates who can either leverage their knowledge, seniority, relationships or their stature to advocate for your organization's policy positions
3. **Customer or Supporter Program:** open to customers or public supporters who care about a particular policy issues and would like advocate on behalf of your organization.
4. **Key Contact Program:** select advocates are chosen to manage the relationship and serve as the primary contact for a legislator
5. **Grassroots Ambassador Program:** leaders or ambassadors are chosen and use peer-to-peer tactics to get other members to join your organization's grassroots advocacy efforts
6. **Next Generation Program:** younger advocates are encouraged to join a tailored program designed to increase the amount of activity amount emerging leaders

Before You Start a Program

Questions you should ask before you start a grassroots program:

- At what level of government will the grassroots program operate? Federal, state and/or local? Or even global?
- Will it be legislative- or regulatory-focused, or both?
- Do you need coverage in all of the legislative districts or just in the key districts?
- If it's a corporate program, will membership include: retirees, suppliers, customers, community leaders, etc.?
- If it's a trade association program, will you run your own program or encourage the member companies to communicate on issues to their employees?

Foundation and Mission

- Mission, Vision, Values
 - Who you are and what you do
- Political Involvement Policies
- Ethical considerations
 - Are you up-to-date on current rules and law
- Transparency
- Areas of Focus
- Contracting – Determine your needs

Grassroots Advocacy Launch Checklist

1. Assess the landscape
2. Define the goals – what does success look like?
3. Identify resources
4. Create a data management plan
5. Enlist senior executive support and engagement
6. Create an identity
7. Build a communications strategy
8. Start educating
9. Develop key messages and messengers
10. Activate your supporters
11. Measure it
12. Improve and make changes

Types of Grassroots In-Person Engagements

1. Fly-In or lobby day
2. Pizza and Politics
3. Policy Roundtables
4. Town Halls
5. GOTV and Voter Registrations Drives

Obstacles and Common Pitfalls

- HR
- Legal
- IT
- Heavily Partisan Employees
- Government Affairs Team Members
- Lack of Executive Support
- Organizational Culture

Risk Mitigation

Risk	Detail	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
<i>Policy and Politics event will seem like a partisan event</i>	<i>We have an on-going issue with some teams in the organization who are actively against inviting any conservative politicians to the company</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Brand it without DC or patriotic colors, do not hold during election season, communicate to employee groups of importance</i>

Launching A Grassroots Program

REACT

1. **R**ecruit
2. **E**ducate
3. **A**ctivate
4. **C**oordinate
5. **T**rack

Budgeting

1. Staffing
2. Design, printing, and digital content production
3. Database and software
4. Training and education
5. Travel
6. Special events and fly-in
7. Reward and recognition
8. Advertising
9. Volunteer oversight costs



Key Takeaways

1. Decide on what type of program fits your needs and organization
2. Obtain approval from leadership and key components
3. Win the hearts and minds by demonstrating an early success
4. Create a branded program and start the REACT process
5. Measure and report up
6. Continually improve and evolve based on your needs

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