

Measuring and Communicating the Value of Grassroots

Do your key internal stakeholders have a clear understanding of the value grassroots brings to your organization and advocacy?

Being able to answer that question with an emphatic “yes” requires three steps: analyzing why you have a grassroots program, understanding who you’re engaging with and why and assessing how your initiatives are advancing. This resource will guide you through those three steps and help you communicate the critical value of grassroots.

Step 1: Analyze

The first step in any measurement process is to ask yourself, “Why do we have a grassroots program or campaign?” This question is vital because if you can’t provide a compelling answer, how can you measure when you’ve succeeded?

Here are three critical components of such an analysis:

- A. **Survey your current situation and evaluate important issues your organization and/or industry have a stake in.** Look first at your business priorities and government relations objectives. On which ones do your grassroots efforts stand the greatest chance to affect the outcome? Which are the likeliest to be well-received by your advocates and inspire them to take action? Is there a particular legislator you’re trying to sway, and upon whom a grassroots campaign would have a significant impact? Prioritize your opportunities by scoring them. You must be intentional and realistic about the role that grassroots can play on any given topic.
- B. **Get the perspectives of your internal and external stakeholders.** Collaborate with your government relations staff and engage business unit leaders, committees and senior leadership to get their opinions on where they think your grassroots efforts will make the biggest impact. If they think that a grassroots campaign is going to accomplish X and you’re expecting Y, you’re setting yourself up for failure from the beginning, no matter what metrics you use.
- C. **Establish your priorities and expectations, then create a benchmarking process to ensure you’re on target.** There isn’t one universal answer as to what a successful grassroots campaign looks like. That’s why you have to ask, “What does success look like for *my* organization?” Is the point of your campaign to sway one key decision maker, raise your profile in the industry or get internal buy-in and engagement? Remember: there is no finish line without a starting line. Make sure your benchmarks and metrics are set accordingly and related specifically to what you’re trying to accomplish with any given campaign or overall grassroots program.

Step 2: Engage

Grassroots is about people, so you have to develop your goals and metrics around your key stakeholder groups. Who are the key stakeholders and audiences critical to your program's success? Start by mapping out your engagement strategies for each audience with which you plan to interact. These can be broken down into two groups:

- A. **External Stakeholders:** Your external stakeholders can be grouped into three baseline categories: for, against and persuadable. Reassess where your key stakeholders are at regular intervals throughout your project in order to measure movement, trumpet advancements and adapt accordingly. Gauge the importance and influence of relevant coalitions or fellow industry partners that might offer added insights and resources to your efforts. Also, target any key media channels, whether traditional, local or social.
- B. **Internal Stakeholders:** Consider who your current and potential advocates are. And be sure to get your senior leadership and CEO involved; the more internal buy-in and support you have, the better off you'll be.

Once you've identified these key groups, score your relationships with each, then determine which ones you'll focus on most. Finally, segment and leverage the assets with the greatest chance of achieving the results you want to see.

Step 3: Assess

The final step is assessing how your initiatives are advancing as compared with your objectives. Below is a list of fundamental (and helpful) metrics to help you to determine if you're moving the needle:

Common *output*-focused metrics:

- Number of advocates who signed up
- Number of letters, calls, emails, posts, etc.
- Web hits
- Number of key contacts recruited
- Number of site visits held
- Email open rates

Helpful *outcome*-focused metrics:

- Relationship markers that demonstrate more in-depth advocacy opportunities
- Key meetings obtained with legislators due to an increased awareness of your efforts

- Legislative advancements
- Increased awareness and recognition of the value proposition you provide your organization
- Demonstrated growth in your outputs
- Deeper engagement on social media beyond “follows” and “likes,” such as generating real conversations
- Quantified business value

So what's next? Now that you've analyzed, engaged and assessed, how do you leverage all of this information to generate an internal message that builds increased support from your advocates and your executives?

First, make sure you have a formal business planning process to help align your goals with your overall business objectives. To ensure that everyone's on the same page, formalize meetings with business leaders to review your issues and establish priorities. In the same vein, update leadership regularly on the status and direction of your efforts (e.g., a biannual review of your accomplishments).

Once you've set your goals, established benchmarks and started communicating about progress toward your goals, keep going. Review each segment annually and adjust as needed. You'll find that your measurement strategies can become an iterative process that makes subsequent years' work more focused and easier to manage.