

**ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF
CHILDREN'S REHABILITATION SERVICES**

PRESENTED BY: DAVID H. TSUBOUCHI

OCTOBER 3, 2005

RULE #1: Never assume people know who you are

(You are not in an episode of Cheers and everybody knows your name)

The first step that a non-profit organization must take is to look into the mirror and make an objective and realistic assessment of its goals, its assets and liabilities and its methodology for achieving its stated goals.

The members and executives of non-profit organizations volunteer their time and their own personal resources because they strongly believe in what the organization is trying to achieve. What they forget from time to time is that everyone does not share their commitment and beliefs. In many cases, the broader community is simply not aware of the organization or the good work that it does. If the general public is unaware or are ambivalent to the organization, it is likely that the elected officials are in the same position.

A number of years ago, I was asked to become the Chair of a Foundation for seniors. Within its own circles, this organization was well respected. They wanted to embark upon an expansion of their facility but they realized that in order for them to proceed, they needed support from both the public and governments.

When I sat down to discuss the resources that the Board members had at their disposal, we realized that although all the board members were well meaning, they were on the board specifically because they had a loved one in the seniors facility. The extent of their fund raising was \$2000 raised from their annual bazaar. They also had unrealistic expectations that if they asked the community for money, because of their good "reputation", it would be just a matter of time.

The first step I took was to bring in new directors who would bring in skills that had been lacking - government connections, business networks, and fundraising skills. By transforming the board, we were able to overcome the usual resistance to change. Change is not safe. Change is not secure. But the only sure thing in the world is that things change.

These new skills allowed us to cross over barriers of unawareness. We were able to capture the commitment of the business community as we had recruited some of its leaders. The government relations improved because we had recruited people with connections. Our first year's efforts saw an increase in fundraising from \$2,000 to \$150,000.

Step one is to broaden your own talent base. If you can get some former respected politicians to sit on your board, you are well ahead in the game of networking. If you can balance the politicians, all the better. Last year, the co-chairs of the Red Cross Golf Tournament were Floyd Laughren, former N.D.P. Finance Minister and myself.

Creating Relationships:

"Getting to know you, getting to know all about you"

RULE #2: Provide opportunities to get to know you

Whether the issue is government relations or business, it's all about creating relationships. In my business life, I have always taken the attitude that business deals come and go, but good relationships can last a lifetime. I do many things for friends and clients without the expectation of a quid pro quo. I have placed some people into jobs. I have put two business contacts together so that they could do business. In the end, by having this attitude, it has been better for business than standing with my hands open saying "what's in it for me?".

It's like Geoffrey Rush's character in "Shakespeare in Love" who was continuously facing barriers but never seemed upset. When asked why he was so confident it would work out, he would explain "I don't know, it's a mystery".

This can be applied simply to government relations. It is important to create a relationship at a time when there is not a burning issue. There would therefore be no discernable motive for doing so and, as a result, will be more easily accepted.

It is also important to provide opportunities for the elected official. A common way would be to invite the elected official to tour your facilities. This can provide a good photo opportunity with the local media for both the organization and the politician. This will allow more than just the people responsible for lobbying to meet with the elected official. Interaction with staff, volunteers, and the people being provided for by the organization will broaden the experience of the elected official.

Providing additional photos of the tour to the elected official will provide a memento of the trip, which, if provided in a frame, will likely be displayed in his office. If the organization deals with children, a thank you note for the visit created by the children, will almost certainly be visible in his office. The elected official may use the photo in his newsletter. These are all small things that add up to a possible commitment to you in the future.

If the elected official does something related to the goals of your organization, you may have an opportunity to present the elected official with a plaque honouring him. It is important to remember to thank people for their efforts because you will most certainly have more issues in the future.

Some of the most successful groups who get access to officials regularly provide annual updates on some of their issues and at the same time will provide some photos of the elected official or a copy of their newsletter containing his photo.

An example of the power of a photograph occurred when I was the Minister of Culture with responsibility for the Trillium Foundation. The Trillium Foundation had increased in budget from \$10

M to \$100 M. Many of the MPP's did not have confidence in the Trillium Board even though they were our appointees. Many could not see the value of the Trillium Foundation to the local communities.

I knew that the Trillium Foundation, through a rigorous local selection process, provided support for many local non-profit organizations. I asked the Trillium Foundation to keep records of all the newspaper articles on Trillium Foundation grants. Not surprisingly, there were hundreds of photos of MPP's from all three parties in their communities presenting cheques to the local organizations.

Each MPP received a collection of the articles featuring him or her. There was never resistance to Trillium after this event.

The secondary lesson is do not underestimate the power of the local MPP. Many organizations simply concentrate on the appropriate Minister forgetting that the local MPP can be a very valuable ally and advocate.

With respect to government members, they have considerable input into legislation or process issues at weekly caucus meetings or caucus retreats.

In most cases, when new legislation is being brought forward, the Minister will be required to inform the caucus members and obtain their approval. I have seen some very vigorous debates on issues. There have been instances when the caucus opposition to a new bill had been so strong that the legislation was either taken off the legislative agenda or reworked to a large extent.

The caucus retreats are even more intense than the weekly caucus meetings as the members and the cabinet ministers are isolated and must finish the discussion because there is not a limitation of time. Some debates at caucus retreats become quite inflammatory and stressful to the Ministers.

As legislation advances, it must undergo the committee process. The various legislative committees are composed of backbench MPP's and parliamentary assistants. Having friendly and sympathetic views at the committee stage is extremely helpful.

A number of the effective ways that MPP's can assist is by making statements in the legislature, arranging meetings with Ministers or high level civil servants or arranging press conferences.

It is almost as important to maintain support from the opposition MPP's to assure that they will not oppose your position if you are successful in getting government support. It is always preferable to move matters forward by working with the government, however, there may be a point where you know no support is forthcoming. It is at this time that you any have to unleash the opposition critics by having them ask questions of the government in Question Period.

Opposition M.P.P.'s will have easy access to the media as the media know these press conferences will most certainly have the makings of a news story. The government will have to respond to the issue.

To make this more effective, the TV media needs an interesting clip. The most effective tactic is to bring someone who needs the service the organization is promoting to the member's gallery and have the M.P.P. point that person out as he is asking a question of the Premier during Question Period. The media will be extremely interested in interviewing that person after Question Period.

With our government, we were almost always responded with the very minimum of a meeting if not a commitment. If the media got on the bandwagon, some momentum was created for the issue.

Photos of an opposition M.P.P. delivering stacks of petitions to the Premier's office or having them sent across the Chamber during question period is also effective.

Who Do You Meet with?

"Pay No Attention to the Man Behind the Curtain"

Many organizations approach government relations with blinders on, directing themselves forward with a blissful unawareness of their surroundings. They concentrate on the elected officials only and forget the power of the civil service.

I tried to put this into context a short while ago to another lawyer by explaining the process through which an issue is approved. As a result of a meeting with the Minister, direction may be given to the civil service to provide the Minister with some options for the issue.

Generally, any presentation made by the organization is passed on to the civil services with a direction to review the costs of the program. The civil servants then draft a background paper to provide (usually) 3 or 4 options with a highlighted preferred option. The Minister will then select one of the options and move the matter forward in the legislative process.

I asked the lawyer, wouldn't you be happier knowing that your issue was one of the options being brought forward by the civil servants and hopefully, the preferred option?

It is also not simply a matter of having the matter approved, it must also be implemented. This is also the job for the civil service. This is important because some matters when finally implemented bear no resemblance to the original plan.

It is probably important to meet first with the Minister prior to meeting with the civil servants. It is possible that the Minister could get his nose out of joint if he felt that he was playing second fiddle.

Another reason for meeting with the Minister first would be to overcome any longstanding resistance by the civil servants.

When I was the Chair of Management Board with the responsibility for I & IT for government, I was approached by ITAC, the umbrella group for the technology companies on two issues. The one issue was the ownership of Intellectual Property when companies deal with the government.

The Province had a standard clause that all intellectual property developed during the contract would belong exclusively to the Province. The companies wanted to have the ability to commercialize any new technology.

I met with the senior members of the civil service and asked them what the province did with the I.P. I was not surprised to find that I.P. that was developed figuratively sat on closet shelves gathering

cobwebs. The government made no use of it. But, because this is the way that the government had always dealt with IP, there was a reluctance to change.

I met again with the ITAC and discovered that there was a potential for the province to gain some revenue by allowing the I.P. to be commercialized. The alternative was a benefit for anyone.

In order to break the log jam, I took the opportunity to announce the initiative in a speech I gave to ITAC that was attended by the senior civil servants.

The general rule of government is once it is announced by the Premier or the Minister, it is going to happen. Every document for approval by cabinet contains a section dealing with public commitments made by the Premier or Ministers.

I used the public commitment, point of no return, to get Federal approval of the Ontario Sex Offender Registry when I was the Solicitor General. Once Laurence MacCauley, Federal Solicitor General and Anne McLelland, Federal Attorney General acknowledged and indicated their approval of our initiatives, it removed any possibility of a Federal dispute of jurisdiction. This occurred at a Provincial/Federal/Justice Minister Conference before all of our peers.

Timing is Everything

(Secret of Stand-up Comedian)

A persuasive argument to government is through the lessons learned from good and bad timing. If a government is predisposed to providing assistance, the challenge becomes having a timely implementation or timely legislation.

Timeliness is important to government because a good initiative today may be a bad story in 2 weeks.

An example of a bad story was the issue of the Dionne Quintuplets. When the story arose, the AG indicated that the current government had no responsibility as the matter had been dealt with legally in the past and it had taken place long ago under the government of Mitch Hepburn.

I had just seen the made for TV movie the week before and felt empathy for the sisters. If I felt that way, I was sure that the general public did as well. Although the AG argued that there was no legal responsibility, I had argued that this was the lowest level of responsibility. The real question was, is it right or wrong morally?

I lost that argument and the government proceeded to fight the request for more money. Several months later, after wide spread public support for the Dionnes, the government caved and provided compensation. If we had provided the same compensation at the start, we would have received credit for assisting these elderly women gratuitously.

Provide Solutions Not Problems

There are very few things that irritate government more than people demanding something only because they want it. Any government needs to explain why it is making the change it is.

The very successful organizations are the ones that present solutions and not simply problems.

In the early 1990's, the horse racing industry was dying. This industry supported over 50,000 jobs which were at risk. Race tracks were poorly attended and revenues were in a free fall.

Instead of asking to be subsidized, the racing industry proposed slot machines at the tracks. The portion allocated to the industry was to go to the tracks and the horse people. The government would benefit by having additional revenues which would be shared by the host municipality. An allocation would also be given to research and treatment of gambling additions (the largest in North America).

The net result was the revitalization of the industry, 20,000 new jobs, hundreds of millions of new revenue to government.

Instead of merely demanding money of the government, the industry made it easier to say yes by providing solutions for not only the government's need for revenue but for other stakeholders as well.

Solution building is simply a means of getting to "yes".

Conclusion

Successful government relations are a matter of a long term investment into a long term relationship. This requires good communication and benefits to both parties.

Simply lining up with your hand out will not be successful, but by putting yourself on the same side of the table as the government will provide the opportunity to seek and find commonalities of interest and benefit.

Confrontation may be a last resort but government just has to close the drapes and not look outside.

In the end, for government relations to be successful, one must create "relations".