

THE SHOWALTER GROUP, INC.
ROOTS OF SUCCESS
The Resource for Grassroots and PAC Productivity
www.showaltergroup.com

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Issue 1

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- TSG Client Results: Consulting Case Study



Amy Showalter
Grassroots and PAC
Productivity Expert

- The Habits of Effective State Advocacy Groups
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Amyism

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Grassroots and PAC Results:

"Your ultimate results are revealed in your daily routine. Tell me what you want, show me your weekly calendar, and I'll tell you if you'll get it."

Recommended Reading



The Influentials
Ed Keller & Jon Berry

The book represents the continuation of Roper ASW's search for the nuances behind the most effective marketing of all --

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The Habits of Effective State Advocacy Groups

While those of us in the government relations profession often debate about the most powerful interest groups and why they are successful, there is a way to truly find out—simply ask the customer, the legislator. We did just that a few years ago. We asked state legislators across the country, "What are the habits of effective advocacy groups in your state?"

Read the entire article on page 2

Lessons Learned from Innovate to Motivate 2003

As many of you know, I co-produce a conference for senior grassroots and PAC professionals each year. The Innovate to Motivate conference is not for everyone, nor do we try to be everything to everyone. Our attendees know that their ultimate success depends not only on their job knowledge, but also on their ability to win support for their initiatives. Thus, Innovate to Motivate's mission is to develop, equip, and motivate the best grassroots and PAC professionals in the country.

Check out the fun we had at the conference and read what people had to say about it!

<http://www.showaltergroup.com/about/photoalbum.php>

New Case Study – International Dairy Foods Association

The IDFA has a superb lobbying staff, but needed to bring consistency and sustainability to their corporate members' internal grassroots programs. There was an ongoing issue before the Congress that could have impacted the financial stability of their corporate members. However, many member companies viewed grassroots as a sporadic, adhoc effort, rather than a consistently executed education and persuasion program within their organizations.

Read the whole article on page 3

Recommended Reading

To grow a PAC or grassroots program, you need evangelists to spread the word. In *The Influentials*, Keller and Berry reveal that it's not the most educated or the most affluent who are the most influential. Rather, it's the citizens who are immersed in their local communities who wield the most influence with their social group and community. They are the one in ten who tell the other nine how to vote, what to buy, and where to eat.

This book provides grassroots and PAC recruitment assistance. Don't forget, however, that even the influentials need to be persuaded, not just educated, to join your cause.

Find it at Amazon.com



Research-Based Benchmarking Tool/Workshop

—
The Showalter Group's Fortune "Power 25"

Grassroots Benchmarking Inventory

Check it out at
www.showaltergroup.com

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About The Showalter Group, Inc.

The Showalter Group works with associations and corporations that want to increase their grassroots and PAC productivity. We provide highly customized solutions via grassroots consultation, public affairs staff and volunteer training, coaching for public affairs staff, keynote presentations, and grassroots project management.

To book Amy Showalter to speak at your next meeting, or to inquire about our grassroots or PAC consulting services or other products, contact us at:



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The Habits of Effective State Advocacy Groups

The results of the following research have been featured in many of my advocacy workshops, as well as various national and regional publications.

In our initial research review, we saw that the specific word "grassroots" was the second highest response as one of the habits of an effective advocacy group. However, upon further review of the responses, we noted that there were numerous responses such as: "active membership," "lots of members", and "regular people" that refer to grassroots.

Therefore, we are republishing the results. This change affects only the order of the number one and number two responses. The remaining effective habits are the same.

While those of us in the government relations profession often debate about the most powerful interest groups and why they are successful, there is a way to truly find out—simply ask the customer, the legislator. We did just that a few years ago. We asked state legislators across the country, "What are the habits of effective advocacy groups in your state?"

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The Habits of Effective State Advocacy Groups — continued

state?”

We conducted this project because we believe that there are a plethora of assumptions as to what works and what doesn't when influencing legislators. When it comes to getting results in the legislative process, it's lethal to assume something works because of anecdote, the exploits of similar organizations, or ideas gleaned from conference mythology. We must be assiduously accurate about what our audience values in order to make our message “stick.”

We conducted a random sample mail survey of state representatives and state senators across the country. We asked the open ended questions: “Which advocacy groups in your state are the most effective?” and “What are the habits of these effective advocacy groups?” The responses are remarkably similar across the states. The most noticeable difference was in Minnesota where, “reliable research” was cited as the number one habit. It did not make the top four in most other states. The aggregate responses:

1. Grassroots support
2. Money
3. Good lobbyists
4. Well organized

New Consulting Case Study — International Dairy Foods Association

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THE TSG SOLUTION

Our counsel and projects included, but were not limited to:

- a turn-key “tool kit” that member companies use to facilitate employee and senior management involvement in issues that impact their industry;
- creation and delivery of workshops for member company staff to reduce their learning curve relative to grassroots motivation, execution and implementation strategies;
- establishment of an annual award program for the best company grassroots program; and,
- personal coaching for select member company staff to accelerate their internal grassroots program establishment.

RESULTS

The following activities have resulted in a more consistent, clear message to members of Congress from member company leaders and employees regarding this industry's legislative issues. As a result, they achieved one of their most impactful legislative victories ever against a highly organized adversary. Individual company results include, but are not limited to:

- member companies who are consistently “on the record” with their members of Congress relative to industry issues;
- a higher percent of legislators voting with the industry via member company grassroots communications with legislators;
- member companies who have established Key Contact networks, one with over a hundred Key Contacts in the first recruitment drive; and,
- a member company that instituted a course on grassroots involvement as part of their mandatory new employee orientation program.

“Amy's expertise was perfect for our situation. Her passion and credibility are unparalleled.”

*Connie Tipton
Senior Group Vice President
IDFA*

Grassroots Support

Once again, constituents are king when it comes to displaying advocacy group prowess. Most effective are constituents who make their voices known on a *consistent* basis. Having great numbers of constituents advocating for your cause doesn't hurt either. The following responses represent the most common survey verbatims relative to the top response:

- "They have a strong, active membership"
- "They have a large membership"
- "They are real voters"
- "They have committed campaign workers"
- "They are regular people"
- "Very persistent members"
- "Their members maintain regular contact"

Thus, it behooves any group that wants to make an impact in the public policy arena to get their grassroots house in order. Note that their responses mentioned the importance of a large membership. Evidently, numbers still matter to lawmakers. We have to find ways to grow our grassroots networks, then educate and persuade the members of those networks to carry the message.

Reality Check: Do you have a plan to constantly grow your grassroots network?

What do you do to facilitate your advocates' ongoing, continuous contact with elected officials?

Do you find ways to get your advocates engaged in the district, or simply on annual lobby days or Washington, D.C. events?

Money

The results of previous surveys (Gallup, 1992; Lord, 1999) have shown that lawmakers are not influenced by money. Interestingly, they believe that money makes certain advocacy groups more effective than others. In their words, such groups "use money to help their friends". A large percentage of respondents did say that money matters not only for campaign contributions, but because "the group has the ability to hire highly qualified staff".

Reality Check: What is the state of your political action committee?

Do you attend to it all year, or just in election years with frenzied requests to our members/employees?

Are you using the money strategically?

Do you have a giving budget and written criteria for candidate contributions, so that you can clearly explain to PAC members why certain candidates receive contributions?

Are you using your budget money to hire the best staff available, or to hoard it away for the next crisis?

Good Lobbyists

Not surprisingly, legislators responded that "good lobbyists" make a group effective. Responses include: well connected; have a continuous presence; engage in calm and persuasive arguments. I noted that not one respondent replied that an effective lobbyist "educates us well" or "is a great teacher"; rather, they specifically used the word *persuasive*.

Virtually anyone can educate someone to the positive and negative effects of a decision. It takes an influence sleuth to know the individual triggers that will persuade them to your point of view. Thus, lobbyists who are cognizant of and adept at utilizing the science of persuasion will be more successful than those who simply distribute position papers with stultifyingly boring, one-sided arguments.

Reality Check: Do you know your legislator conversion rate?

Do our lobbyists really know the scientific basis of persuasion and human behavior?

Do they facts alone, or combination of emotion and facts to drive their arguments?

Organized

While being "well organized" is a feature of grassroots, I separated it from the grassroots responses because it received significant mention as a singular response.

When a group is organized, legislators know that the organization staff and members are in constant contact with each other. All things being equal, the lobbyist's message, the grassroots message, and any media messages are congruent. This clarity helps legislators make decisions on your behalf with less angst, this accelerating their commitment to your position.

Organization is also reflected with an infrastructure that supports and promotes regular meetings of members to discuss issues, plan strategy, and stay informed of political developments. Labor unions and real estate agents are a few groups that immediately come to mind that demonstrate excellent organizational habits.

Reality Check: Do you have a formal feedback system to know what your members are saying to lawmakers?

Are you relentless in trying to obtain this information?

If I called your organization to join your grassroots network, would you have precise direction for me relative to becoming more involved, who to contact with questions, how to communicate with legislators, etc.?

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Tips Booklet!



"Beyond
Fundraisers and
Fly-Ins: How to
Keep in Touch
With Your
Elected Officials
All Year"

See sample at
[www.
showaltergroup.
com](http://www.showaltergroup.com)

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