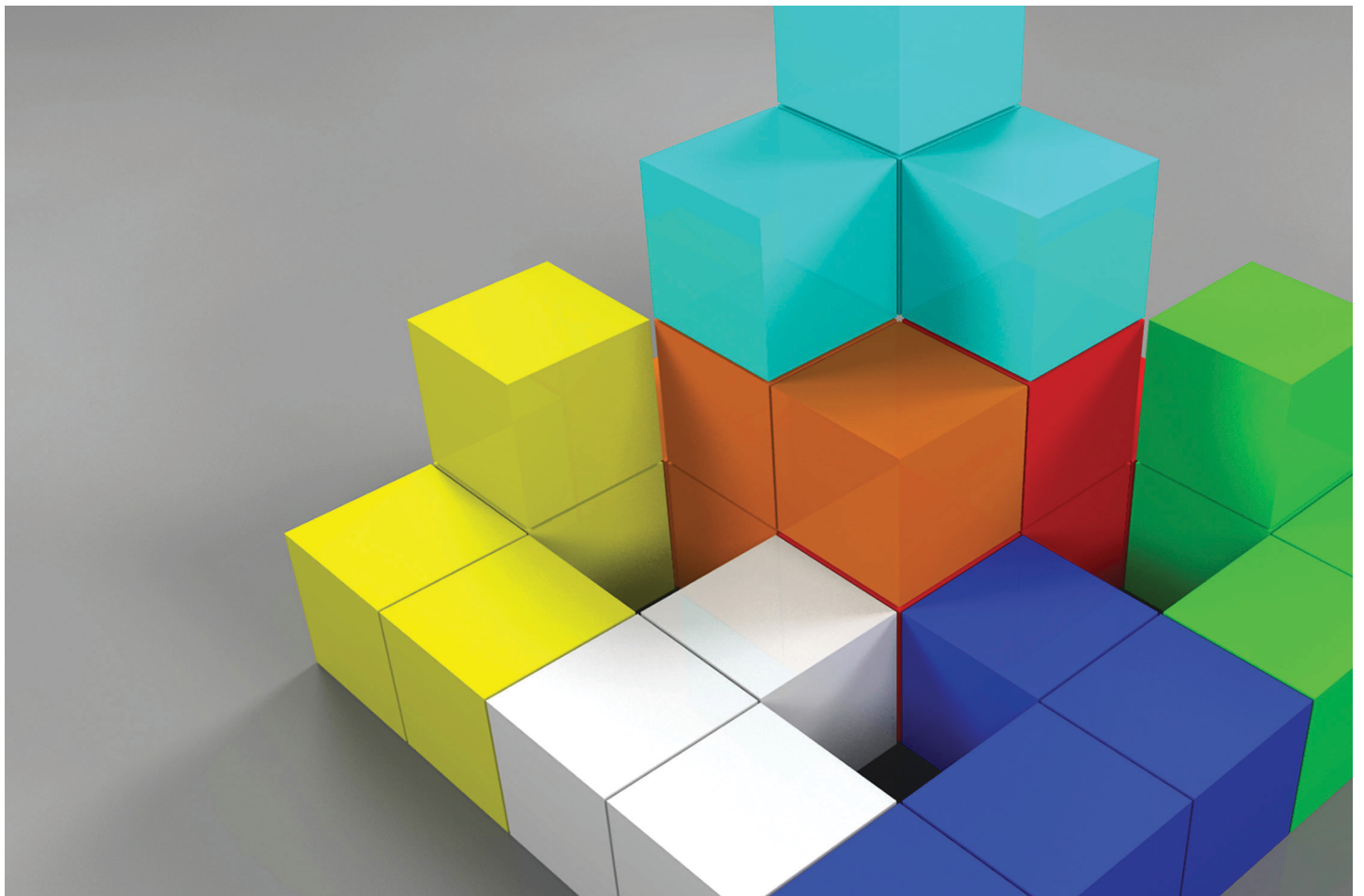


Campaigns and organisations



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Introduction

Campaigning organisations, whatever their size or orientation, are intent on achieving change in the behaviour or attitudes of their target groups. But if you have ever tried working to achieve change in this way, you will probably know that getting the results you want from campaigning can be difficult. It is all too easy to get sidetracked, or run out of energy and resources, before the objective has been achieved. And the decision to campaign on a particular issue can expose tensions and cracks within an organisation itself which may interfere with its ability to carry out its plans as intended.

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Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand some of the necessary changes that organisations may have to make in order to achieve particular campaigns
- give examples of how organisations have changed their campaigns to achieve their goals.

1 Problems facing campaigning organisations

This course aims to explore some of the problems campaigning organisations can encounter, and how such problems can be anticipated and even avoided. It consists of:

- a short case study about a parent teacher association which is campaigning for the lowering of the speed limit on roads within the vicinity of its school.
- an audio extract from a podcast interview on campaigning which forms part of the learning material for the OU Business School course B625 *Winning Resources and Support*. The interview is with Chris Stalker, Head of Campaigning Effectiveness with the UK's National Council for Voluntary Organisations.
- review questions for you to relate the points made in the interview to the scenario in the case study.

Case Study: Campaign at the crossroads

Neelam was feeling a bit dispirited. She had just chaired her third meeting of the Midchester Junior and Infants Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and yet again the subject of campaigning to lower the speed limit on roads around the school had come up, and yet again there was no progress to report. A number of parents were getting extremely impatient. It was now almost a year since the serious collision which had put one of the pupils in hospital for six weeks. The child in question had fully recovered, but concerns about how fast some cars still sped along the road in front of the school were as high as ever amongst the parents and staff at the school.

However, the local newspaper, after publishing a few readers' letters on the subject, seemed to have lost interest in the story. In fact the only reaction the letters had brought was another letter – to the school governors from a local residents' group complaining about the congestion caused by parents parking to pick their children up from school, and pointing out that this too was dangerous, quite apart from speeding drivers.

Furthermore, the school's local authority had just been through a massive re-organisation, involving a number of redundancies and departmental changes. No one seemed quite certain who currently held responsibility for road safety measures. The energy with which the PTA had begun to campaign had flagged as a result, and there was confusion and frustration where once there had been a burning will to get speed bumps built and traffic signs changed in order to protect the school children from irresponsible drivers. There now seemed to be little consensus on the way forward. Were they aiming at local drivers, local politicians, local residents, parents, school children or all of them? And how were they planning to reach them? And to what effect?

To add to the difficulties, another group of parents had made a strong case at the recent meeting for the committee to raise funds to buy and equip a minibus for school activities, such as travelling to sports competitions and music festivals. They were full of plans for events and a Christmas Raffle which they were confident would see the necessary sum

raised in a matter of nine months. The support and goodwill of local residents would be a vital ingredient in the success of the planned events, as they would be a key audience. It transpired at the meeting that one of the parents had a good contact at a local car dealership who might be prepared to offer them a vehicle at cost price, or even less as a sponsorship.

While pleased at the idea of a new resource for the school, Neelam was worried that the necessary fundraising drive would divert yet more attention and energy away from the road safety initiative, and – as another parent had remarked to her immediately after the meeting – it seemed ironic that the PTA were planning to spend money on a motor vehicle at the same time as they were campaigning to clamp down on drivers ...

2 Activity and questions

Listen to the following audio clip between Terry O'Sullivan, Senior Lecturer in Management at the Open University Business School, and Chris Stalker, Head of Campaigning Effectiveness at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

This audio clip is followed by a series of questions. It is suggested that you listen to the audio before attempting the questions.

Click to listen to the audio clip. (13 minutes)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Campaigning](#)

Question 1

What are the success factors mentioned by Chris Stalker as characteristic of effective campaigns?

The first is being absolutely clear about what you are trying to achieve, and building in an evaluation process from the outset so that you can monitor how successful you have been in achieving your objectives. The second is that the organisation has a very clear route to achieving change – in other words, they have a clear idea of whom they have to influence and how. And the final principle is to manage the resources devoted to a campaign carefully. It does not have to run at full capacity all the time – but react to opportunity and feedback.

Question 2

How does the Midchester Junior and Infants PTA campaign measure up against these success factors?

Not very well overall. At first glance it appears that there is clarity about the objectives of the campaign – to get traffic calming measures put in place around the school in order to make the local roads safer for school children. But as we find out more about the campaign a number of ambiguities emerge. For example, how would the

campaigners know they had been successful? Deciding on measures of success at the outset, against which to evaluate the campaign, would have forced them to be more specific about their objectives and more focused in their planning. It also appears that there is no shared idea about how the campaign will work – who is being targeted and how. And there seems to be no sense in which anyone is making decisions about resources to devote to the work. The campaign is flagging as a result.

Question 3

What measures of success might be appropriate for a campaign like this?

There is quite a choice – and your answer to this question will depend on your interpretation of the scenario. But relevant measures might include quantifying the campaign's outputs as well as trying to look at its outcomes. Outputs are the things that the campaign produces in the course of achieving its ultimate aims (outcomes). Examples would be the amount and kind of media coverage, the number of local politicians whose support has been enlisted, or the number of signatures on a petition. Outcomes are the intended impacts of the campaign – such as, in this case, 'a safer environment for our children' or 'zero traffic accidents in the environment of the school'. Outputs tend to be easier to measure than outcomes, and can give an indication of how successful the campaign is as it unfolds. Outcomes tend only to be something you can measure in the long term, and while they can help you decide whether a campaign has been successful, they can only do so after the event.

Question 4

What tensions between fundraising and campaigning does Chris Stalker identify in the interview?

He points out that in many organisations, especially smaller ones, they have a lot in common and may be carried out by the same person. Both campaigners and fundraisers are looking for a 'return', whether it be a targeted change or a targeted income. So both have an interest in efficient use of resources, and the promotion of the organisation's brand. However, fundraising and campaigning tend to have different objectives and can therefore find themselves in competition – or even at odds with each other. The perceived danger is that of overloading supporters to the detriment of the organisation's income.

Question 5

What kind of tensions are there in the case study between the need to campaign and the need to raise income?

Both activities require the scarce resources of time and energy, which are in limited supply to any organisation, but especially to those in the voluntary and community sector. This seems to be the case in the case study, where the excitement and interest of a new project with a clear end in sight (fundraising for the minibus) may divert the attention and energy of people who might have been active in campaigning for road safety measures (less clear end in sight, and losing its momentum as a project). The answer here for Neelam may be to stand back and think hard about the resources, and

potential choices, available. Perhaps assigning clear responsibilities to different groups may be the way forward. Another potential tension stems from the possibility that audiences (like local residents) who would be potential sources of fundraising income may be alienated by the effects of campaigning. However, if the PTA demonstrates the advantages of traffic calming measures to the area as a whole, local residents are likely to become advocates of the proposed changes.

Question 6

How does Chris Stalker suggest that organisations can handle tensions between fundraising and campaigning?

He mentions three routes. The first is internal negotiation – the different people in an organisation getting together and establishing a mutually agreed way of working. The second is restructuring – a management intervention to exert more effective control and co-ordination of the various activities of an organisation. This might be more appropriate in a large organisation, for example. The third way Chris mentions is to concentrate on what fundraising and campaigning have in common – the way they both emphasise the brand or image of an organisation. The two functions may thus find mutual benefits which motivate them in working together more effectively.

The example he uses is the NSPCC's Full Stop campaign – further details can be found at:

www.nspcc.org.uk/WhatWeDo/MediaCentre/OurCampaigns/Ourcampaigns_wda36383.html, accessed 16 May 2008.

Question 7

Finally, what advice would you give Neelam as to how to manage this situation?

There are a variety of valid answers here. Management is never a cut and dried situation, and this scenario has a lot of loose ends. But, as we discussed in the previous question, Neelam needs to think carefully about the PTA's priorities and the time, energy and resources available to it. She could certainly benefit from the principles of campaigning outlined in the interview by Chris Stalker, which were as follows:

- Decide carefully what you want to achieve.
- Build in evaluation from the start.
- Have a clear route to change (an identified process within which you want to influence decision makers – whether they are politicians or members of the public).
- Be willing to run the campaign at different levels of intensity through its duration, depending on the circumstances at the time.

And she could also benefit from the advice he gives about reconciling the potentially competing demands of fundraising and campaigning (a combination of activities which is necessary to most voluntary and community organisations):

- Respect the fact that they are different disciplines with different objectives.
- Keep in mind the idea of a 'return on investment'.

- Be careful not to ask too much of any one group of supporters or donors.
- Resolve conflict by internal negotiation, and be prepared to restructure if necessary.
- Find common ground in the organisation's brand and positioning in order to co-ordinate activities in the most mutually supportive fashion.

3 Conclusion

This course has introduced a series of ideas that relate to campaigning and how organisations can adapt their outlook in order to achieve their campaigning goals.

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Chris Stalker, Head of Campaigning Effectiveness at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

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