

AN ADVOCACY METHOD TO DELIVER SUCCESS

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What's the biggest measure of a winning advocacy campaign? Achieving your organisation's advocacy goals. Strengthening your advocacy practice. Working as a team, supported by your organization. Data-driven decision-making. Demonstrating flexibility and agility in strategic choices. Seeing your career grow. All the above and more?

In this post we argue that the cornerstone of advocacy success is the use of an advocacy method to build your advocacy strategy. Our shared belief in the transformative power of an comprehensive advocacy method led to the development of the [7-steps of advocacy](#) method and the creation of www.advocacystrategy.com. Indeed, both of us had already developed methods of the advocacy process and we are not alone in doing so. For Alan it happened in the context of his book: [How to Work with the EU Institutions: A Practical Guide to Successful Public Affairs in the EU](#) within which he, and Aaron McLoughlin, proposed an advocacy process to help empower people to more advocacy success. In parallel, Paul, who teaches public affairs and advocacy to university students and advocacy professionals, developed an 8-step method. The 7-Steps of Advocacy Method is the culmination of these two initiatives.

Through our own experiences working in advocacy and education we both realised that we could pool our know-how and extensive collection of best practices to build a stronger advocacy method using our existing building blocks as a starting point. We set ourselves the goal of defining a method that deconstructs advocacy into a sequential process providing an easy-to-use framework for building best-in-class advocacy. We want to be able to help people with their ongoing campaigns, but more importantly we want to empower people to build lasting advocacy foundations for themselves, their teams, and their organisations. Key to achieving this is a combination of knowledge, skills, tools, and deliverables across each of the following 7 steps: Prioritisation, Intelligence Gathering, Positioning, Information Management, Engagement, Management and Evaluation.

Let us explain why and what we mean.

Each advocacy campaign is unique to, amongst others, the issue, the external environment, to your organisation, its team, and resources. Campaigns must adapt to their environment as well as to feedback. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy, and no strategy is ever static. Strategies and the teams implementing them must evolve with time and circumstances. Each campaign requires a collective research and analysis effort to define goals and to work back from these goals to determine results, activities, and resources. So how do you build such a strategy with confidence?

Designing a strategy as a team can only be done effectively if you have a clear view of the component parts of your advocacy, a method. Our method is composed of 7-steps. Only when you and your team can sit back and assess every aspect of what you need to do, can improvements and changes be made. However, the tools and deliverables contained within each step are ongoing. They don't stop when you move to the next step. This is the drawback of all heuristic methods that seek to simplify complex processes. Methods provide a clear overview, but risk over-simplification. Thus, the outputs from each of the 7 steps are sequentially used to build the following step and eventually the overall strategy. At the same time each step is an ongoing process that continually delivers outputs that then serve to refine the campaign, strategic choices, and their implementation.

Though the method is sequential, you must see each step as an ongoing process that kicks-off with the identification of an issue that requires advocacy. In our visual this ongoing nature is particularly emphasised for three steps: Intelligence, Information Management and Evaluate as these permeate the whole advocacy process. So, the 7 steps represent a multi-stage end-to-end process, starting with the identification of issues and the definition of SMART objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) in the prioritize section, running all the way through to how we use those KPIs to continuously evaluate our processes and campaigning outcomes to learn for the future. Viewing advocacy in this way allows us to isolate and perfect our understanding and practice, of each individual component. Also, crucially, it allows us to understand the transitions where knowledge and insight are transferred from one step of the process to another.

To summarise we believe that the 7-step advocacy method provides advocacy professionals with four key benefits:

1. It provides a methodology to **deconstruct the advocacy process**. It is based on strength across the process and not in just one or two areas.
2. It provides a comprehensive framework. It makes your advocacy strategy more complete. Because to be successful, **you need to deliver across a complete set of activities** from one campaign to the next.
3. It delivers a **long-term improvement to your advocacy practice**. By adapting your advocacy practice to the method, you initiate long-term changes to the way in which you work individually and as a team.
4. It makes your **advocacy strategy more adaptable**. As internal and external events change, using our method makes it easier to react to KPI and understand what aspects of the strategy need to adapt as well as determine the consequences for other areas of your strategy.

A method is critical because it structures how your team works together to develop and deliver your advocacy strategy. It is also valuable because it maps out each step of the strategy in detail. Advocacy is an interdisciplinary profession and people draw from their knowledge of politics, law, communications, and business. Few people start out with an education in advocacy. Most juniors start their career without a full toolkit of knowledge and skills in advocacy. They learn by doing. To

address this, each step of the method contains a mapping of the knowledge, skills, tools, and technology required to do the job effectively.

To knowledge and skills, we must add tools and deliverables. Advocacy is a hands-on applied profession. Theory applied to practice can help people understand and explain political processes and the impact of communication strategies. However, advocacy professionals primarily need to be able to draw from a comprehensive advocacy toolkit. Such a toolkit often takes many years for junior professionals to acquire and master. Thus, using a method to map out tools and deliverables across 7 steps facilitates the acquisition of best-in-class advocacy tools and represents a key determinant in your ability to develop successful campaigns.

Our 7-step method, therefore, not only deconstructs the advocacy process, but also maps out its component parts; the key elements required to pull together an advocacy strategy. If you want to get better, you need to know how to do it, and, the more granular you can be, the faster and more efficiently you will be able to adapt.

In future blogs we'll be exploring each of the 7 steps to clearly define their purpose, but also to identify the key knowledge, skills, tools, and deliverables contained within them. We will also map out how steps interconnect with each other to form a campaign. In doing so we hope to share best practice and encourage more open exchange within the profession on how to do advocacy.

To further explore our 7-steps of advocacy method as well as our free advocacy tools, including our free advocacy assessment tool and report, please visit: www.advocacystrategy.com