

NDI
Political Development Program
Outline of Training Session Agenda

Presentation by Stephenie Foster

I. Key to Being an Effective Candidate or Organization
(need “money, organization, message”)

- (1) Money/resources
- (2) Organization
 - look ahead; always have a plan
 - be disciplined and organized
 - coordinate your message
 - make sure that your plan includes how to communicate your message
- (3) Message – be able to answer the question “why should I vote for you?”
 - Why are you different than others running for office?
 - Talk about accomplishments, OR AT LEAST, take credit for trying
- (4) Have a legislative/policy agenda with specific ideas:
 - What concrete ideas do I have to address problems that people face?
 - Make sure that your legislative/policy actions reflect your message
 - Example: “Contract with America” in 1994; “MMEE” in 1995-6

II. Strategic planning:

- (1) Why a plan?
 - It is a management tool.
 - Provides a way to measure progress (or the lack thereof).
 - Diminishes the demands on the day-to-day leadership’s time.
 - Gets the group back on track after a programmatic distraction.
 - Keeps the group somewhat pro-active, rather than reactive.
- (2) What should a **written** strategic plan address?
 - The political environment in which the group operates.
 - The group’s role in that political environment.
 - The group’s priorities, goals and objectives. (See discussion below)
 - Who the group must reach/persuade. (Who is the audience?)
 - How to measure progress.
 - A budget/finance plan.
 - A calendar/timeline.

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- OPTIONAL: Staffing plan; communication plan; reporting plan.

III. Setting priorities and goals: “Goals should be specific, immediate and realizable.” (Senator Barbara Mikulski)

- (1) Agree on the process that the group will use to set priorities (e.g., one day planning meeting, re-evaluation of priorities every 6 months, type of decision making -- consensus, majority vote).
 - Example: if your goal is to increase the number of women in elected or appointed office.
 - Measure: “Report Card” to show numbers. It’s objective and easily measurable.
 - Measure: Development of women’s talent bank. Can do outreach across the country to find out who would be in the bank.
- (2) Keep goals to a limited number and decide how to measure their progress.
 - Example: if your goal is to increase the number of women in elected or appointed office.
 - Measure: “Report Card” to show numbers. It’s objective and easily measurable.
 - Measure: Development of women’s talent bank. Can do outreach across the country to find out who would be in the bank.
- (3) Know that setting priorities and goals is an inherently political process within your group.
- (4) Know and lay out how life will be different if these goals are met.
- (5) Hold people accountable.

IV. Message Development

- (1) The group’s leadership must focus on certain questions:
 - What issues define our group?
 - Why does our group exist?
 - How is our group different from other groups?
 - How will life be different “if I represent you”?
 - How will we improve the lives of families?, of women?
 - What has our group already accomplished that can highlight its effectiveness?
- (2) When developing the message:
 - Be positive.
 - Be concrete.
 - Contrast your position with that of others, **or with the status quo**.
 - Be consistent.
 - Be convincing.
 - Make the message positive and concrete: **NOT** “we are in favor of protecting the environment” **BUT**, “we are in favor of a law to make harder for industries to dump refuse in our water supply.”
 - Contrast you group’s position with the status quo. For example, “we are fighting

for increased child care facilities, but Council member X has voted against our idea 6 times.”

- Be consistent. Develop “talking points” to distribute to the group’s members and leadership on these issues.
 - Educate people about the “message” at meetings and through newsletters and other printed materials.
 - Organize public events to talk about the message.
 - Goal is to repeat, so that people identify the idea with the candidate.

- Be convincing. People need to believe that the goal is worth fighting for and that it is (eventually) achievable.
 - Make sure that your words and actions support the message.
 - Have a legislative agenda/set of proposals to highlight your message.
 - If your message is “we are dedicated to improving the lives of children,” then reinforce through a coordinated, concrete actions, such as:
 - ** draft a new law ensuring that all children have access to a immunizations;
 - ** candidate could give a speech on the importance of children to the country’s future; perhaps visit a health clinic;
 - ** organizers could set up meetings between mothers and the candidate to discuss mothers’ concerns and the candidate’s ideas for addressing them.

V. Message Discipline: *“It’s the economy, stupid.” (James Carville)*

- (1) Develop a plan for internal and external communication about the message (the group’s goal, legislative agenda).
- (2) Be clear about the message and **repeat it often.**
- (3) Be able to put your message on one page and keep to it. (Keeps you on point and keeps the media and opposition from twisting your views).
- (4) Internal communications:
 - Have an up to date telephone list of leaders, members with address, phone, e-mail, and other basic information;
 - Schedule regular meetings, or have a regular newsletter for communication with supporters, staff;
 - Communicate about issues, how to discuss controversial aspects of issues, important political events and developments.

Use a combination of:

- regular newsletter or bulletin;
- meetings;

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- conference calls;
 - internet, e-mails, website;
 - targeted literature (topic specific);
 - a designated key person to handle certain constituencies issues (e.g., women's outreach person)
- (5) External communications:
- Develop talking points to use so that you can have more of an impact and use for speeches, interviews, one on one contact (Good examples are 1994 "Contract with America" and talking point documents on various issues).
 - Can also use for "at the table" roundtables to highlight stands on issues relevant to constituencies, such as women and families.
 - Organize events around your policy issues:
 - Visit a school to talk about education;
 - Visit a health clinic to talk about immunization;
 - Have a forum at a community center to talk about issues of concern in that community.
 - Train women as speakers/spokespeople:
 - Identify women leaders;
 - Make sure that you have geographic coverage; train on message;
 - Builds confidence; gets people involved and interested;
 - Also, many times people are more willing to listen to people who they can relate to, and who they know and trust.

VI. Coalition Building

Goal is to present the strongest and most broad based support for your group's issue/legislative agenda item. The group must take these steps:

- (1) Identify potential supporters. Look for common interests on the particular issue the group is working on (the coalition does not need to agree on everything, only on this particular issue at hand).
- (2) Find:
 - organizational coalition partners;
 - key individual supporters (prominent church leaders, union leaders, community leaders).
- (3) Don't make assumptions about coalition partners. **Take no one for granted.**
- (4) Look for unlikely alliances – it makes people notice and strengthens your hand.

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VII. Policy Agenda

- (1) Develop concrete proposals.
- (2) Become knowledgeable about the legislative process (how bills are enacted; what is the process under which legislative proposals are considered, etc.)
- (3) Quiz members of your group have personal relationships with legislators.
- (4) Organize coalition members to meet with their legislators.
- (5) Organize showing of public support (letter writing, phone calls).
- (6) Have community wide meetings and invite key legislators to address group.
- (7) **Declare** victory, even if you don't get everything you wanted. Highlight what you did achieve (even if it was meeting with legislators).

VIII. Increasing Women's Participation

- (1) Why is this important: a case study, Clinton/Gore 1996

Women re-elected Clinton in 1996

53% women voted for Clinton (40% men voted for Clinton)

37% women voted for Dole (49% men)

10% women voted for Perot (9% men)

Why did the Clinton/Gore campaign focus on women voters?

- Women tend to vote in greater percentages than men.
- When women vote, they favor the Democratic party (the "gender gap" of American politics).

Gender gap and the importance of the women's vote:

- 1992: 54% of voters were women; Clinton won with a 9% margin among women voters.
- 1994: when control of Congress changed, 54 million eligible women did not go to the polls. Only 51% of voters were women.
- Democrats lost control of the Congress for the first time in 40 years.

Strategy was threefold:

- "Raise the stakes" of the election.
- Target messages to women voters.
- Get the message out.

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Raising the stakes: Goal was to focus the debate on the future ("building a bridge to the 21st century") and to heighten interest in the election.

The message?

- this is a critical election, the future is at stake, on issues from education to health care to child care.
- highlighted what the Clinton Administration had done - from keeping the doors open to college to protecting the environment and, what the Administration would continue to do in an another 4 year term to make the daily lives of American families better looked to reach all women, from stay at home mothers to working professionals.

Why did the message work?

- not divisive.
- "every issue a woman's issue."
- education rose to a level of prominence during the last days of the campaign; in fact, polls show that education was the most important factor in determining how women would vote - 75% said it was very important. women believe that government can help solve problems; 53% men think government is part of the problem.

How did we know what issues voters cared the most about? Use of opinion surveys is critical. Need to focus most of the debate on the issue that voters care the most about. If polling is not an option, consider sending prominent women out around the country to convene a group of women and listen to what issues concern them. Can listen, advocate for the party and use to show that the party is actively engaging women.

How did we get the message out?

- Women's outreach director in DC and one in each state
- steering committee for each state "Women for ..."
- asked women's outreach directors to identify women endorsers; also women who would be interested in speaking on behalf of the campaign
- did extensive speaker training to ensure that we had women speaking on behalf of the campaign, whether on TV and radio or to their neighbors
- develop mail/flyers targeted to women

(2) How does this translate? Four basic points:

1. Find out what issues are important to women:
 - have a message answers the question "why should women support (be for) your party?"
 - use of polling/focus groups.

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2. Talk about issues that are important to women in ways that women relate to and care about:

- develop agenda;
- make sure that you do a "reality check;"
- use the principles of communication;
 - be consistent;
 - draw the contrast;
 - be concrete;
 - be convincing.

1996: major success of the Clinton campaign was the ability to draw those distinctions on a broad range of issues; women in key positions; in 1995-6, while the Republicans continued to talk about balancing the budget, Ds were able to agree, yet highlight priorities that talked about balancing the budget in a way that appealed to women, talking about concerns such as Medicare, Medicaid, education and the environment.

3. Make sure that your actions reflect your rhetoric:

- look for legislation that shows you are listening to the concerns you hear.

4. Put women in real leadership roles at many levels, as:

- candidates;
- appointed official positions;
- appointed party positions;
- staff.

Establish a women's office in the President's office; at various ministries (women's health office).

Women's outreach directors

- structure so that there are women's outreach directors in every province;
- **empower them to talk to women on behalf of the party/government; serve as spokesperson; deal with the press; be able to say (and mean) that they have the ear of those above them;**
- other ideas national, regional conference calls, women's caucus; blast fax; develop targeted literature.

Make sure they have needed information:

- the party's position on issues.
- how to discuss difficult or controversial issues.
- up-to-date information about political events and developments within the party, parliament

5. Women's campaign fund: put together training group (like EMILY's List) to identify candidates, raise money and train candidates and staff.

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