Grassroots Advocacy 101

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The Basics

• “Advocacy” vs. “lobbying” vs. “political action”

• Why grassroots?
  • All politics is local – grassroots brings it home
  • Build RELATIONSHIPS with decision makers
  • Cut through the noise
  • Supports lobbying in Albany
Grassroots Advocacy Tactics - Influence

- Mass email campaigns
- Phone blitz/call-in campaigns
- Letters to the editor
- In-district meetings with lawmakers
- Attending political fundraisers
- Testifying at public hearings
- Advocacy Days
- Hosting legislative breakfasts/policy forums/meet and greets
Grassroots Advocacy Tactics – Relationship Building

• Just like in business, personal relationships are crucial
  • What common connections do you have? Same alma mater? Support the same charities? Kids attend the same school?
• Don’t just reach out to elected officials when we want something – what else can we offer?
  • Attend a local event
  • Tour a member agency or customer business
  • Are there community events your agency could sponsor or participate in?
  • Expertise in insurance
• Grassroots builds the brand!
Grassroots Advocacy Tactics – Intelligence Gathering

• Learn who your legislative officials are – Senate, Assembly, County Exec, County legislators
  • State elected officials rarely “come out of nowhere” – they start at the local level!
  • Understand your district – what towns/cities are represented
• Sign up for your officials’ newsletters, follow on social media
  • What issues are important to them? How can this influence our approach?
• In meetings, ask about them
  • What issues do they care about? What issues affect the communities they represent
Case Study: 2019 UDAAP Bill

- Grassroots at every step of the way
  - Committees
  - Leadership
  - Key members
- Grassroots made a decisive difference
  - “phones ringing off the hook”
- Read more here: https://www.biginy.org/newsfeed/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=685