



K Street Café

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Building Trust with New Members of Congress: What's Your TQ (Trust Quotient)?

I wrote a two-part post last year <http://kstreetcafe.com/from-tension-to-trust-building-relationships-across-the-aisle-part-i/> on how to construct trusting relationships with new legislators, advocates and colleagues. Since there are over 50 new House members and 13 new U.S. Senators, it's time to review those recommendations and shape your new lawmaker relationships by increasing your TQ—your “Trust Quotient.”

Creating a trusting relationship with newly – elected legislators requires more than touring your facility and bringing members to meet with legislators for your annual Lobby Day event, although those are reliable tools that you should never jettison. We are challenging grassroots leaders to explore high level trust enhancement strategies, because that's what is required when your organization 1) has no existing relationship with the legislator; 2) needs to build trust quickly; and, 3) is influencing up --- which is the essence of all legislator influence, isn't it? They hold the cards and make the decisions---we are the underdogs.

What's Your Trust Quotient?

Ask yourself. . .

1. Are you engaging in disconfirming behaviors with your influence prospect, or are you saying exactly what the legislator would expect you to say?
2. Do you train your advocates how to argue against self-interest when meeting with legislators?
3. Do you give your advocates talking points that include the negative consequences of voting in favor of your position?
4. Do you share the weaknesses in your position with you advocates, or tell them to “Just tell your story” when talking with lawmakers?
5. Are you “stealing thunder” when advocating for your position, and are you teaching your advocates to “steal thunder?”
6. Are you creating an internal historical record of your stakeholders who have suffered for your cause?



Give yourself five points for every “yes” answer.

Score yourself:

20-30 points = Congratulations! Your organization has a high TQ. Retain your culture of “trust training.”

10-15 points = You have room to improve. Pick one trust building technique and integrate it into your 2015 government relations plan.

Less than 10 points: = Re-examine your current influence tactics. Persuade your organizational leaders that high TQ practices are necessary and start promoting internal cultural change.

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