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## Checking Your Grassroots Blood Supply

### Eight things to do now to improve your grassroots results

by Amy Showalter, the Showalter Group, Inc.

Has this happened to you yet this legislative session? It's 2:00 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon and you received word that your bill is up for a committee or floor vote in 48 hours. You are frantically getting your grassroots mobilized, posting your online content, trying to find out if you have any members who have a personal relationship with key lawmakers and wondering what you are forgetting.

Unfortunately, this is what many grassroots professionals use as their recruiting "strategy." It's obviously the worst time to engage in grassroots recruitment. It persists because we are biased and not thinking about the possibility that we won't have the grassroots resources to win.

Here is my list, in no particular order, of what you should consider as you review the effectiveness of your grassroots mobilizations thus far in 2017. Assessing these factors and creating a plan to improve upon the findings will reduce your stress and improve efficiency around the mobilization process.



1. **Audit your mobilization process.** What are you doing because "it's always been done that way?" What tools aren't you using? If there are snags in the process, where do they typically occur? With *whom* (staff or volunteers) do they typically occur?
2. **Mind the patterns.** Which legislative districts are most responsive? Review all email open rates, click throughs, forwards and page visits. You probably do this after each grassroots mobilization campaign, but look at the broader pattern and build on what's working. Review all of your metrics. How many individuals did you have to touch to find one advocate? How many advocates did you have to call to action to produce one meaningful communication? Is there a district with more personal lawmaker contacts than others? Rinse and repeat.
3. **Talk to your TB's (true believers).** Build from your strengths by surveying your consistent responders. What do they find compelling about your calls to action? What are their recommendations for getting more responses? The findings can be incorporated into your future mobilization process.
4. **Build the team.** The "email as panacea" crowd has now realized that we have to move online volunteers to offline activity (We knew they would finally catch up). However, you can't do this unless you have a "grassroots path" for them to walk. You need a well-lead, well-managed offline structure. Remember the origins of true grassroots – people talking with other people.

5. **Find unusual suspects and recruit them to your cause.** Legislators expect to hear from your association's members. But how much greater is the impact when they hear from their constituents who are not your industry insiders? What about individuals outside your industry who donated to their campaigns? What about community leaders, local elected officials and area employers?
6. **Build and maintain your database of supporters.** Determine who your inside and outside supporters are, the level to which they agree with your position and what they are willing to do for you.
7. **Ask the customer.** If you are really intent on improving, you'll do a survey with key legislators to determine your true effectiveness. They will tell you how you compare to other groups, if your members' communications are on target and on time, what your grassroots advocates do well and how you might improve your impact. You'll learn a lot about this aspect of your legislative brand.
8. **Think like Noah.** Noah didn't build the ark when it was raining. One thing is certain – the political rain will continue to pour. Audit your processes to ascertain if you have all the necessary tools and materials to build your ark before the storm arrives. Start hammering the nails today.

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