

Political lobbying

Key messages



What is lobbying?



Identifying and analysing your lobby target/s
Being a Member of Parliament



Selecting the right tool
The Cone of Experience



Planning the lobby
**Promoting your viewpoint –
ten stages for the potential lobbyist to follow**



Three key lobby elements
**A face to face meeting - getting in the door; making a hit.
Writing and presenting a submission
Using the media**



Choosing the right point to intervene
**How laws and policies are made
Sources of law reform information**



An exercise
Lobby self-assessment sheet

KEY MESSAGES

- See lobbying as a core activity;
- Need valid issue, credible organization and good timing;
- Know and believe in your cause and yourself;
- Market well;
- Understand your opponents;
- Appreciate your target/s;
- Sustain your energy;
- Make partnerships - strength in numbers;
- Take nothing for granted; and
- Be a negotiator not a begger - approach the lobby experience as an equal

lobbying

What is it?

It is a spectrum of persuasion to confirmation, within the realm of campaigning.

It can be direct or indirect.

It can aim to achieve a specific outcome or a general raising of awareness.

It is private rather than public, although a combination of individual elements can become high profile.

It can be multi-layered.

It can be one-off or ongoing.

It is an aspect of marketing.

It can be delivered by volunteers, by dedicated paid staff or hired paid staff.

What sort of agencies do it?

Individual agencies; networks of agencies.

Networks of individuals.

Private sector, often via industry bodies or sector bodies.

Voluntary sector.

Who is targeted?

People with real or imagined power:

- Politicians (local; national)
- Policy makers (political party officials and activists; Caucus research staff; local body and Government department key officials)
- Media (to cover issues, to influence others)
- Organisations (public, or voluntary).

IDENTIFYING AND ANALYSING LOBBY TARGETS

- ten things for the potential lobbyist to remember

- Attention junkies** MPs (Electorate and List, opposition and Government, in different ways) are driven by media coverage.
- Expert on a few things** Given the complexity of it all, most MPs specialise – mainly on what they did (and possibly plan to do) in life on the outside.
- Spectator** Most MPs from whatever party are less powerful than they think they are.
- Friendless** MPs work in a highly competitive atmosphere, finding friendships are not easy to make or maintain. Also, all MPs realise just how unpopular their profession is and seek constructive mutual lobby relationship.
- Human, after all...** MPs are also women or men, Maori, gay, Aucklanders, parents..... looking to life after Parliament. Average time there 6 years. Fearful of losing their job.
- Kangaroo** MPs spend their days and lives hopping from one issue to another, from one place to another.
- The paper war** MPs are overwhelmed by an endless stream of faxes, letters, E-mails, newspaper clippings, internal memos and telephone messages (to a variety of telephone numbers).
- Not knowing who to believe....** On many issues, MPs receive directly contradictory information arguing opposite points of view, both of which use facts selectively.
- The same vices...** MPs don't demand that information comes to them in a different way to other people. But the pressures they are under do mean that if the information is to make that special impact, it needs to have that extra edge.
- Whipped (and manifested and coalesced) into submission** The Party *whipping* system in Parliament, Coalition and other agreements and General Election manifestos – even Party policy – takes many decisions out of the hands of individual MPs.

PLANNING THE LOBBY

- ten planning stages for the potential lobbyist to follow

Know your topic and what you want to say about it	Collect sufficient up to date information on the topic and identify what is special about you and the message which you want to deliver.
Decide who you need to get to	Specify your target group, and break it into its component parts and levels of authority.
Analyse	Work out what their sources of information and current beliefs are on that topic.
Know the opposition	Research how rival interests working on the same topic manage to get their message over to that target group.
Narrow your options	Prioritise the potential ways of getting over to the target in terms of potential impact.
Select appropriate options	Identify how compatible your message is with those ways of getting the message to the target, remembering what resources are available to you and how your cause is perceived publicly.
The marketing mix	Combine your strengths, your message and your access to the information sources and your selected lobby option. Prioritise as you go.
Do it...	★
Reflect on it	Evaluate what you did; revisit the marketing mix. If things went poorly, work your way back through the process until you understand why that happened.
Record and archive	Maintain records of contact made and copies of material produced.

LOBBY ELEMENT: MEETING

- ten things to think about as you plan the meeting

Know why you want to meet	The meeting must fit into your pre-arranged plan. The type of experience which you generate for the MP will determine the impact made. Factors include - how important are they or could they be one day; how much time do they have available; what communication methods do they prefer. Use the Cone of Experience.
Notice given	If humanly possible, avoid making the meeting so urgent that other things have to be moved to make way for it. Let the MP's office know what you want to see the MP about.
Location	An MP's office is their comfort zone. Decide whether you want them to be comfortable, or want to challenge them a little....
Time	Ask for what you realistically need – but be prepared for a few minutes or even a postponement if chaos descends on their day.
Do your homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use any contacts which you have prior to the meeting.• Research the known views of that MP, both in general and specifically about that topic. Also any information in their background which can be a starting point for genuine communication.• Pay attention to any staff of the MP's who you meet in their office/at the meeting• Recognise the constraints on them, e.g. a Minister has the additional constraint of collective Cabinet responsibility.
Person and numbers	Don't overwhelm the MP with numbers of people – and make sure that everyone has a task or role. If they have a particular characteristic (e.g. Maori, woman), the delegation should reflect that. Take someone unexpected.
A dry run	If the message is complicated, if the task of persuasion is hard, if there will be more than a couple of you at the meeting...then meet and run through things beforehand.
Image	Wear whatever you feel most comfortable in and – if possible – fits with your message. Make sure that you know where the meeting place is, and that you are on time.
Something to leave	Never leave the MP empty-handed. Prepare something which fits in with your message and reinforces key points. Work through it at the meeting and leave it for them to consider...
Check you have the resources to keep the relationship going	Plan ahead what action you will ask the MP to undertake, and any commitments which you will make to them. Ensure that you have the resources to deliver what you promise, and make use of whatever they may do for you.

LOBBY ELEMENT: MEETING DELIVERY

- ten things to remember in the meeting

Not too long	Ask at the start how much time the MP has got – and/or check with their staff member beforehand. Plan your presentation accordingly. If it sounds as though they have lots of time, don't use it all up unless vital.
Keep them involved	You have come to discuss an issue, not lecture the MP about it. Make sure that you don't let your enthusiasm for the issue become a one-sided conversation. Use experiential techniques if appropriate.
Recognise tiredness & boredom	The MP may well be tired. Pick up the signs (snoring, irrational comments...) and focus down to the key points. Maybe even suggest a further meeting if things seem to be getting nowhere. Learn to read signs that MPs have stopped listening. Change the focus onto them; introduce something lighter.....
Follow the lead but stick to the knitting	If the MP wants to talk about something – even irrelevant to the topic – humour them and then try and massage the conversation back to the topic.
Illustrate and justify	When possible, bring issues to life with stories involving people, preferably real people from their Electorate. Don't make exaggerated claims which sound unbelievable and can't be justified.
Stay safe	Avoid entering the MPs danger zone/s.
Know your stuff	Only admit to ignorance if comprehensively cornered. If they ask a question, try and avoid saying that you don't know.
Cope with aggression	The MP may simply loathe the message – or the messenger. Do what comes naturally and won't destroy a potential lobby relationship forever. If possible, maintain your cool and follow rational argument, focusing on the most powerful and irrefutable facts. Be aware that a threat can backfire.
Leave your message	Never leave the MP empty-handed. Prepare something which fits in with your message and reinforces key points. Work through a pre-prepared document which reinforces key points and leave it for the MP to consider...
Make a hit	Leave the MP with some action to undertake. And negotiate yourself the ability to keep the channels of communication open. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow up the meeting with a thank you note or phone call.• Forward any information which the MP requests.• Keep in touch with them from time to time.• Ask them to do something for you which is achievable and keeps you in their mind – and make it easy for them to show support.• Don't plague them with phone calls.

LOBBY ELEMENT: SUBMISSION WRITING

Know where the issue is at and where it is going

Are you raising an issue **cold**, or inputting to an **established** process?

Cold – organise your information and arguments to get the issue on the agenda; aim to touch a raw political nerve.

Established – Has the issue got to Parliament or is it with officials? What is driving the review? What are they really prepared to move on? Organise your information and arguments accordingly.

Know the audience

Write to the level of understanding of the likely audience – both immediate (e.g. back-bench politicians on a Select Committee) and ultimate (e.g. Minister and their advisers). You need to know whose minds you are trying to move.

Talk yourselves up

Start the submission with information on who you or the submitting organisation are; who you represent; why your viewpoint is particularly valid.

Quality or quantity?

Is the priority to produce lots of (similar) submissions or a few special ones? Or a mixture of both? Where does your submission fit into that?

Focus on your special message

What are you uniquely or specially experienced to write about? Can it be backed up by facts or figures? Does it link to a specific amendment or change? – if so, try and detail that.

Work to your strengths

If you have stories to tell, tell them. If you speak better than you write, keep it simple and perform in front of the Committee.

If submitting to a Parliamentary Select Committee, you must state in the submission or cover letter that you wish to speak to your submission – otherwise you may lose the chance.

Make it look as good as it sounds

Aim for 4 pages maximum, with other material put in appendices.

Summarise and use bullet points.

Use visuals and white space effectively.

Make it look professional.

Keep it (quite) short and sweet

Write using clear language.

Tell the truth.

Be constructive – and present amendments etc. in as detailed a way as you can.

Present your argument in a logical order that flows well.

Offer constructive criticism

Don't get personal about the people who will be looking at the submission.

Keep something back

For Select Committees, and most others, you are allowed to present a supplementary submission. This can contain in-depth information on an issue important to you, and/or new information on an issue already raised.

If you plan to do an oral submission, keep something back to raise in your oral submission.

LOBBY ELEMENT: SUBMISSION PRESENTATION

Know your message

Work out your key message, making it as unique and memorable as possible.

Get it over briefly and clearly

- Plan to speak for no more than 5 minutes – and time yourself when practising. Keep 5 minutes extra in reserve (in case they have longer available); have a 3-minute version ready (in case they are under time pressure).
- Do not assume that the members of the panel have read your submission.
- Do not read your submission word for word. But do plan the flow of your presentation on the direction taken by the submission. Use ordinary language –and the occasional strong phrase to stress a point. Speak clearly. Avoid being too technical.
- Remember that you are probably not speaking to experts.

Give it colour and life

- Use anecdote, especially personal experiences, to get panel members on your side. Telling a story about an issue, and/or talking about yourself, is a good way of getting a message over.
- If possible, and if it doesn't confuse your message, have someone with you who can give the message more depth and character.

Stay calm

If the panel cuts back on your time, do not show your annoyance. Accept that they are a pressured body. Do not spark in response to panel members whose only intention is to upset you. Keep returning to your basic message.

Plan for the worst

Anticipate the most difficult questions which opponents of your message might ask you – and plan superb answers to them. If possible, deal with those issues in your presentation.

Don't say what you can't justify

Avoid making open-ended comments and exaggerations which you can't prove. That plays into your enemies' hand.

Don't demonise the members of the panel

The panel members will have a variety of views on the issue which you are submitting about. Do not assume that they are all against you, and don't attack those who you know are opposed. Don't ask rhetorical or direct questions of individual Committee members.

Give them a bit more

If you have something new and urgent to say, or more in-depth information on a matter raised in your submission, produce a supplementary submission. It could be in your own words; some statistics; an item from the media or a researcher. The panel staff will take the paper for recording and distribution.

Say it with more than words

If there is a non-oral way of getting your point over (for example, a role play; a photograph; using slides or a OHP, or whatever), and it fits in OK with your topic, use it. Make the experience of your submission a memorable one for the panel.

Wrap it up

If you want changes to what a bill says, or want an inquiry to make certain recommendations, make it clear and even provide wording.

LOBBY ELEMENT: MEDIA

- ten points for lobbyists keen to generate supportive media exposure

- Be realistic** Recognise the inherent risks and seductive opportunities involved in encouraging media interest.
- Write it down** Unless the situation is exceptional, write down what you want to say. It can be in the form of notes to yourself for a telephone or radio interview; or a release (containing news), a statement (a response to a previous or current event), an advisory (advertising an event in which you are involved).
- Know yourself** Keep asking yourself “What is special about the message I have to give?”
- Pause if possible** If you get a cold-call from the media asking you to comment on something, do everything to avoid responding then and there. That is high risk territory for mistakes. Offer to call back in a few minutes, end the call, work out something and phone back. Or offer to put your thoughts in writing and E-mail or fax through.
- Appearance counts** If writing a release, focus on key elements:
- One side, 1 ½ space;
 - Ariel lettering style;
 - The first sentence summarising the whole message in 25 words or less; then
 - Factual explanation of the news item and a quote, then
 - Your contact details, preferably a cell-phone.
- Be alert** If the media respond, get back to them fast. They work to tight deadlines. They are generally doing you more of a favour than you are doing them.
- Playing with fire** Before saying anything which might come back to harm you but you feel you must say, establish that you have “*off the record*” status and avoid saying anything that only you could possibly have known or thought. If radio phone, make sure that you are not on a car.
- Know your limits** Don’t try and control what the journalist might produce; don’t insist at approving something before it is published. If they offer that, fine.
- Don’t despair** At the bad moments, when a negative story about you first item in every news broadcast, remember that there is much truth in the assertion that “all publicity is good publicity”.
- Your target** A media release etc. which is repeated word for word, prominently, in the media which you have targeted is a bullseye hit!

LOBBY SELF ASSESSMENT SHEET - 7 steps to a clear plan

What is your lobby aim?

What specific information do you have on the issues involved?

To achieve the aim, what specific changes will be involved, in what and/or who?

What makes you the right person or organisation to deliver it? Do you have any allies in the fight?

Who are you up against? What kind of support do they have? How did they get it? What does this tell you?

What lobby methods have you tried? With what prior research and what success? Any models of other lobbies to work from?

What are the stages of the lobby, in order?

SOURCES OF LAW REFORM INFORMATION

- **The New Zealand Government** has a home page on the Internet at www.govt.nz. On this page is a section called “Currently consulting on:” which lists all the current reviews being undertaken by government departments as well as links to the actual review documents.
- **New Zealand Parliamentary Services** has a homepage at www.parlserv.govt.nz that links to the “Bills Digests”. There is an alphabetical list to all the bills considered by the current parliament, and their respective digests. These digests are succinct, apolitical summaries written for Members of Parliament. They have no official status.
- **Government print outlets**, e.g. Bennetts, will have the latest Bills and often review documents; the former are low cost and the latter sometimes relatively expensive. *Parliamentary Bulletin* lists all bills introduced by the current Parliament and current Select Committee hearings; it is produced by Parliamentary Services weekly while Parliament sits
- **The Capital Letter** is a weekly summary of Court cases and parliamentary activity such as the introduction of Bills; it can be subscribed to (not cheap) by mail or the Internet and copies are often held in public libraries
- Major reviews and the introduction of Bills are often announced in the **media**; however significant coverage of Bills is given at select committee when it is too late to make submissions; early coverage does not usually explain the full implications of a bill.
- It is often possible to be put on the **mailing/fax/email list for Ministerial press statements** e.g. a specific Minister’s office; politicians are generally thrilled to give out copies of speeches and press statements.
- **Personal contacts** can be invaluable e.g. Parliamentary Clerk’s office, politician’s office, Ministry staff etc