

Campaign Strategy Newsletter 44 October 2008
Campaigning Your Way Out Of Recession / Who Cares About The Environment

There are two main articles in this newsletter – one on the financial crisis and one on a new report posted at the website, on who cares about environment/climate in values terms.

Campaigning Your Way Out Of Recession

Now that the financial crisis is turning into an economic one, what opportunities does this offer to campaigns? Below are some ideas based around renewable energy. The principles though could be applied to other sectors where campaigners and advocates have objectives which could be met by economic growth – for the central opportunity is to harness them to the political need of the moment, which will be stimulating growth, employment and confidence.

To achieve this, campaigners will need to:

- Put the case in terms which meet the psychological needs of the time – first for security, safety and belonging, then profitability, and only after that, their favourite territory of ethics and global responsibility
- Persuade by providing evidence, not argument: allow politicians and the media to draw their own conclusions
- Resist the temptation to say “we told you so” and to push themselves forward as advocates in place of conventional pundits
- Speak to the immediate needs of the moment, and frame [1] the solution in terms of the problem as perceived by those who you need to influence (mainstream politicians and media), not an alternative ‘vision’

The New Role Of Governments

By part-nationalising banks governments previously 100 percent behind neo-liberal economics have changed their role, and the first element in the new campaigning opportunity is to use this newfound will for intervention and get it applied to the economy. This is why the financial crisis is a social storm wave: it has brought about a major social upheaval, particularly in political thinking.

However no government is going to try and replace the market – their strategy will be to try and kick-start the market economy. To do this they will need to build confidence and it’s in this soft, slippery and mercurial field that communications play a central role. Whereas campaigners can’t influence anything with their money, they can influence public conversations and perceptions.

Creating Centres of Confidence

The design brief for campaign strategies here should be to create ‘centres of confidence’: places, sectors, programmes and activities which attract investment, create jobs and engender growth, with the obvious subtext for campaigners that they also do social good. More about this below.

Fitting the Frame

Of course this ‘win-win’ was already the agenda of many ‘green growth’ advocates and some politicians already made this argument before the crisis broke. For example in London on 22 October UNEP is due to publish a report [2] calling for a ‘Green Economy Initiative’. The plan, backed by Germany, Norway and the EU, arises from a study commissioned by the G8 in 2000. It aims to promote investment in job-creating programmes that ‘restore natural systems underpinning the economy’.

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To those who already perceive the erosion of such systems as the biggest problem the world faces this is timely and may be 'best' response to the financial crisis but even this initiative, with its G8 pedigree, runs the risk of being filtered out of serious consideration by use of the 'financial crisis' or 'economic crisis' frame, as it does not start from the current problem of a lack of confidence.

Similarly, campaigners and Ministers engaged in the forthcoming climate negotiations at Poznan and Copenhagen face calls to set aside climate emission cuts because "we can no longer afford it". Fixing the climate does not, as a solution, fit the frame of the financial and economic crisis. The jigsaw pieces – the problem and solution – are not aligned (see motivation sequence at http://www.campaignstrategy.org/cr12_4.html)

Saying that that the world faces climate change on a scale which may makes the consequences of the financial crisis seem puny, or that deforestation costs the world more than the banking crisis [3] and government advisers saying that we ought to be cutting CO2 emissions 80% by 2050 [4] – to mention but a few, merely makes any messenger sound as if they have a different and irrelevant agenda.

Saying that we need to invest in climate-solving technologies and programmes 'anyway' as an answer to "we can't afford it" is effectively to advocate a distress-purchase: something you must buy even though you don't want to. That's not very attractive to Prospectors, who are almost certainly those most traumatized by the collapse of the success-ladder occasioned by the current crisis. Thus it will have little political traction.

When the banks were 'collapsing' and politicians used metaphors like the house is burning down, the ship has hit an iceberg, the patient has had a heart attack caused by over-eating, or the dominoes are tumbling, the frames demanded a rescue, a lifeboat, a lifeline, putting things back up again, or dousing the fire. It was no time to say "we've taken a wrong direction" – rescue not navigation lessons, resuscitation not health education was the order of the day.

So all those who hope that the immediate response can be turned into a moment of realization that we need to 'think differently', maybe think again. This is the most important reality check for campaign groups.

Creating Centres of Confidence

Put yourself in the shoes of politicians. Most must fervently hope for a progressive 'return to normality'. Of course we may want that to be a different reality from 'business-as-usual' but the first steps out must be in 'normal' terms and ones which resonate with the public mood, which is above all scared, anxious, nervous, seeking reassurance. The trick is to find ways to show politicians and opinion formers what advertisers would call 'evidences' that lead them to take actions which, in turn, start us on a journey towards that different future.

This is different from calling for such a future, or, unless you can get "quality time" with sympathetic political strategists advising Ministers, from explaining such a strategy. Calls for 'vision' and saying that, for example, we "ought to be investing more in renewable energy" or "we need to decarbonize our economy", imply that they are (in the case of 'vision') for the future, which means not-applicable-today, and, in the case of 'ought', that it isn't happening now. The only evidence which will really count is what works now.

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So welcome though the UNEP report will be, a more compelling 'narrative' could be started with evidence that 'smart money' is going into renewable energy now, and rather than from an environmental messenger, this needs to be sourced from the world of finance. The website www.greenchipstocks.com for example talks about the bull market in wind energy. The philosophy of that site, "a new way of life, a new generation of wealth" comes much closer to the tune that we need politicians to take up. As that site details, there are supply chain problems in meeting demand for building wind farms: that's a problem which politicians could show leadership on. That's a campaign agenda for these times.

Evidence from market analysts showing the profitability of wind suppliers, is one useful element in a package of evidence. Another is the car market. Although sales are down, sales of the Smart Car and the Toyota Prius for instance are up [5].

Campaigners only need a handful of such evidences to start a conversation between media, politicians and the public which is optimistic, positive and about opportunity not sacrifice, forward movement not retrenchment.

Governments could also take a number of actions in a sector such as renewables (or small or electric car production and transport-energy infrastructure) to give it greater prospects for growth and hence attract further investment. For example:

- They could create a larger market with direct public expenditure, bringing down unit costs, for instance by subsidising installation of solar thermal or pv on homes
- They could create wealth at a stroke by relaxing consent conditions [] on renewables eg wind (equivalent in resource economics terms to discovering oil or declaring they own the airwaves for licensing)
- They could create a tax holiday for renewables (eg no tax worldwide for ten years)
- They could create stability and predictability by committing to long term programmes
- They could invest in (or mandate) training for associated service industries

Outside renewable energy environmental jobs are being created in waste-to-energy schemes (eg biogas) and many other sectors. There is no reason however why the same approach can't also be applied to non-environmental issues. I'm not an expert but it might even apply to such 'unexpected' areas as international drug trafficking and terrorism. It has been suggested for example that Afghanistan's poppy crop could be diverted into meeting the world shortage of morphine (and that the UK is experimenting with licensed poppy production for codeine [6]). Could this be used to generate a more positive form of economic growth in pharmaceuticals? Less imaginatively, public procurement rules could be used to stimulate growth in a wide range of markets.

Communications Rules

One of the first tasks is to secure the right language. 'Green Chip Investments' is good, as is the Green Collar Economy – another American invention [7] At the very least this makes it possible to have a sound bite exchange in which the existence of such investment opportunities is naturally plausible.

But words are less powerful than stories and pictures. The iconic images of the crisis are of bankers faces starting aghast at stock market screens, and the Wall Street ex-employees existing their offices with possessions in a cardboard storage box. Last week *The Times* of London had a front page picture

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of an 'investor' wheeling a private wall-safe out of the front door of a shop, ostensibly on his way home to stash away his cash, having lost confidence in stocks and shares. An image quite likely to precipitate a further squirreling away of funds.

Any strategy to create a centre of confidence in renewables means catalysing events which create images that say "this is profitable" or "this is where the smart money is going". That might involve symbols of success, and people, institutions or processes associated with being clever with cash.

The following article in this newsletter looks at values and climate change. Right now, across the values spectrum, everyone is focussed on those priorities which always drive the behaviour of Settlers [8]: survival, safety, security, identity and belonging. Energy security and insulating householders and families against future price shocks are strong suits for renewable energy* in this regard. Safety and security come first as selling points.

Next comes profitability. Prospectors in particular, will be alarmed at the disappearance of opportunities for success. Anything highlighted as an example of a solution, needs to be profitable in the here and now. If it is, then there's an opening to say "and if policy measure X was taken, it would grow/become more profitable". If it isn't then policy X is 'just theoretical'.

Only after those are in play can we introduce Pioneer concerns such as global ethical responsibility. To start with that as a selling point in the current context would lead many, and especially the media, to discount a 'message' as having the 'wrong priorities'.

This means the selling points are in the order of diminishing utility:

Safety and security
Profitability
Ethical responsibility

* And of course energy efficiency – I am only using renewables as an example

[1] see www.frameworksinstitute.org – framing

[2] www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/a-green-new-deal-can-save-the-worlds-economy-says-un-958696.html

[3]] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/-/1/hi/sci/tech/7662565.stm>

[4] (UK Committee on Climate Change) UK urged to cut emissions by 80 percent by 2050 – Reuters – Tuesday 7 October

[5] The only segment of the market to show an increase in sales in September was small city cars, up by 22.9 per cent on last September. By contrast, and reflecting high fuel costs and changes in social acceptability and fashion, SUV sales were down by 42.4 per cent. Luxury saloons were the hardest hit category, with a 43.3 per cent deceleration. (UK example) Sean O'Grady - www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/car-buyers-desert-the-showrooms-953505.html

[6] http://www.embassymag.ca/html/index.php?display=story&full_path=/2007/september/26/poppyprimer/

[7] <http://www.greencollareconomy.com/>

[8] see *Using Values Modes* at www.campaignstrategy.org

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Visual And Acute

For a great example of the use of visuals to gainsay PR spin see the Greenpeace US anti-Kleenex (Kimberly Clark) campaign at <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/news/new-evidence-of-kimberly-clark> - according to Kimberly-Clark, they use "leftovers," not trees to make their tissues: "Much of [the] fiber from the Canadian Boreal forest comes to K-C in the form of wood pulp produced from sawdust and chips - or leftovers - of the lumber production process" the company told Greenpeace. However the Greenpeace website shows some enormous piles of what are quite obviously huge quantities of trees. This is also a good instance of finding acute or concentrated evidence of a problem, which, at the household tissue level, is diffuse.

Teen Activists

Notable at the very least for their great name – more Americans: ‘Inconvenient Youth’. Have a look at <http://www.inconvenientyouth.org/>

Who Gives A Stuff About Climate Change – And Who’s Taking Action?

This month, a new report *Who Gives A Stuff About Climate Change – And Who’s Taking Action ?* posted at www.campaignstrategy.org/whogivesastuff.pdf gives details of a 2008 nationally representative UK survey by Cultural Dynamics. Segmented by psychological values [1], in the survey the public agree or disagree with the following statements:

The environment – I’m not concerned, it doesn’t worry me

The environment – The balance of nature has been upset for centuries to come.

It’s too late to prevent serious problems

The environment – They should introduce an environmental tax

The environment – The situation is not as dangerous as it’s made out to be

Where would be the best place to start to tackle climate change? - At a planetary level

There is a real link between the energy I use at home and climate change

I feel so strongly about the environment that I’ve stopped buying from the

Organisations that I think damage it

As such, taken together with what is known about Maslow Groups and Values Modes, the survey gives a new insight into the differences between motivational groups in the UK in relation to ‘climate’, of a type not seen in most other surveys. For the first time it presents the results as values ‘terrain maps’ across the twelve Values Modes.

For example it reveals that, as with the attribute ‘nature’ (care for nature), the epicentre of environmental complacency lies with the three Values Modes Golden Dreamer, Happy Follower (both Prospectors) and Brave New World (Settler). This is much less true though of the Prospector ‘Now People’ who are paying attention to the new ‘green’ behaviours of the Pioneers (discussed in Newsletter 41 – Values Dynamic Tipping Point). For any nature conservation or environment group or ‘behaviour change project’ this tells you (a) who is likely to strongly reject any overt message and (b) who needs to be reached, if at all, with quite different offers and asks. It’s no use arguing with the convictions of these groups – they are founded in life experiences which you cannot change, so you have to work with them.

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The report also shows that the majority of people are concerned about the environment (57%) but that this is very strongly concentrated in the Pioneers (about 40% of the population). The form of scepticism that it's "all to late anyway" is still, as it was in 2004, most focused in the traditionalist Settlers but this is strongly rejected by the Pioneers, which is good news for those trying to mobilise support for remedial action.

Overall, 44% oppose 'introduction of an environmental tax' while a majority (56%) support it but the rejection is strongly concentrated just in the least influential Values Mode: Roots. Contrary to received wisdom therefore, the political support for such moves is broad, and when you look at those 'open to persuasion', this takes in a significant number of the Prospectors, who are not the 'usual suspects'. Politicians should take note, and, study the map.

Those believing that environmental threats are exaggerated are most concentrated in the Settlers and Prospectors with the strongest rejection of this in the Pioneer Concerned Ethicals, the 'natural ethical campaigners'. Meanwhile values come to the fore when we ask where would be the best place to start taking action. The Transcender leading edge Values Mode (usually the first to try new things) are not only highest on already avoiding services or products that damage the environment and see a link between their domestic use of energy and climate change but also disagree most that this has to happen at a 'planetary level'.

In contrast, Settler modes such as Roots and Brave New World take a "don't involve me, I can't do anything about it!" attitude which means they do see the planetary level as the place to start, consistent with their tendency to want to keep their own world small and manageable. To try and sell these people campaigns on the grounds they they should think globally and act locally is simply a waste of time: they will only act locally if you offer something which involves thinking locally.

Interestingly many of the Prospectors also agree that there is a link between energy used in the home and climate change – a potentially fertile area for communications if they are framed in the right way.

Perhaps most revealing for campaigners and advocates of action on climate is whether people 'feel a growing pressure to change the way I live to reduce the impact of climate change'. The great majority do (78%) – a far larger number than those who say they are so far taking significant actions. Moreover, the distribution also reflects the known dynamic for new behaviours to move anti-clockwise around the map from Pioneers, to Prospectors to Settlers. Even the Golden Dreamers, Happy Followers and Brave New Worlds score highly on this, despite their avowed disinterest in the environment or caring for nature: in other words the campaigners are reaching them, even if they don't like it. For a formula to engage these groups, see a subsequent Newsletter.

[1] See *Using Values Modes* at www.campaignstrategy.org and www.cultdyn.co.uk

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