

Campaign Strategy Newsletter No 50, April 2009 It's The Children Stupid!

There are two articles in this newsletter. First, thoughts on what can be done when the future of the planet does not 'tick the box'- last throws of the dice for climate campaigners in the year that time runs out for saving the climate as we know it - and second, a free International Values Campaign Planner pulling together work by leading values researchers and applicable to any subject, also posted at www.campaignstrategy.org/articles/int_values_campaign.pdf

"It's The Children Stupid!"

Time really is running out for the climate. Not just rhetorically but *really* really. Scientific consensus is that the greenhouse gas pollution causing climate change needs to be on the way down by 2015, meaning that if a bigger and better agreement than that reached at Kyoto is not achieved in the conference in Copenhagen this December 2009, it will be too late to organise another one [1]. As Tom Burke put it, this is 'arguably the most important year in human history'. [2]

We are four months into the year, and not far from the UN General Assembly (September) which many see as the last real chance for negotiators and politicians to sort things out so Copenhagen can be a success, and many 'inside the process' are in quiet desperation.

On the positive side: the public in many countries is greening but slowly; Obama's Administration makes a deal look possible; the G20 showed a new international will to negotiate; and heart-searching after the economic crash means the political power of the unbridled free market has for now, perhaps forever, evaporated.

On the negative side governments are bickering and hovering over even existing climate commitments, the major renewables investor Shell has pulled out in favour of the appalling Tar Sands, and although the science and physical evidence shows climate change is taking off faster than predicted, much of the media still treats it as a debating game.

Campaigners are in a dilemma. Do they tell the truth – that they think the will is lacking - and risk seeming defeatist and demoralising the millions who will turn out to try and support calls for action in the run up to Copenhagen, or do they bury themselves in the climate process and try to convince others and themselves that it really will be ok if we give one last heave? Should the like-minded precipitate a breakdown in order to repair it before Copenhagen, rather than be swept into having to say the inconsequential "something but not enough" when it's all too late to change?

Meanwhile with all manner of walks and talks and protests, trying to learn the lessons of Obama's use of the internet, the 'ethical base', the usual-suspects, will be mobilised. Yet as we all know and as the last newsletter showed [3], that will not be enough. Technologies and Plan Bs for climate engineering aside, so far as the big-politics route is concerned, if Copenhagen is to work it needs more political pressure, which most of all means wider acceptance, less opposition, and wider support for action.

So what at this awfully late stage, can be done? I have consulted my book of magic for late stage ideas and these seven are the best I can do.

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Conventional climate campaigns and rhetoric lack emotional power. They have it for the ethical base not others. That means not the majority. (See International Values Campaign Planner - link below). So there is no overwhelming hammer with which to knock out all those arguments for not-yet, not-quite-certain, maybe-not-worth-the-cost arguments.

The single most powerful identity factor in the UK is 'being a parent' [4]. There's no reason to think this isn't the case in most countries worldwide. So my number one suggestion is to take a leaf out of Bill Clinton's book and build 'narratives' based on children, thus invoking the emotional power of

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parent-child. Why do we need to save the climate? For the children. Can they do it? No they can't. Can we? Yes we can [5]. It's (for) the children.

(This framing could reach across values groups to new audiences not yet onside, and could change a lot of media-debate).

Prove You Care

In a report [6] posted at the Campaign Strategy site in 2008 the experienced public affairs lobbyist Simon Bryceson wrote "politicians are convinced that any proposed practical measures to address climate change domestically would be so unpopular amongst the electorate as to end their careers". Bryceson advocated a 'Spartans Strategy', threatening to unseat politicians unless they committed to support specific climate action. Although politicians privately confirmed they thought this viable, the response was otherwise muted.

Nobody though has shown that Bryceson's view of what politicians really think, is wrong. So assuming for most politicians it is right, which rather fits reality, the obvious need is to prove- you-care. Find out what politicians would see as proof and organise your base, and others, to provide it. This is not just saying get people to say they care – but to do things which politicians would take as proof. Don't provide opinion or argument, provide evidence of commitment.

(This would be a guide as to what to get the converted to do – ie the existing base who accept the need for urgent action. It would not be something to try and convert people with).

Bring Forward What You Were Planning To Do Before You Die

Conventional wisdom has it that we should mobilise the young and there are plenty of reasons for that, although it's also proposed because it's easy. It's also been said by someone that after 33 years of age people think about their mortality every day. It's also true that a lot of people are planning to do something green, something good for the climate, at some point in the future. So mobilise the old (33 upwards but especially over 50) to do that thing this year, preferably soon, and preferably before the autumn. Make people think about it, identify the thing in their mind, and help them do it. After this year, it may have far less effect, possibly none at all. Make what they do visible and make that visible to decision makers and media.

(This would be a way to activate the sympathetic but probably inactive base and people who feel the same way but that NGOs (etc) are unaware of – ie people who for whatever reason are intending to 'do something green' or 'about climate' but for whom it is not a priority: a promotion exercise, ie bringing it 'front of mind').

Offer Politicians Immortality

Politicians have much the same range of values as the rest of us but a place in history is one benefit to which they are closer than your average Joe. It's often part of the secret of their motivation: making their mark and being remembered. Flattery comes free to campaign groups – they can manufacture it but it should be used strategically. Offer politicians a place in posterity, maybe in the stars – like the Hollywood pavement effect but something bigger - but at a price. The ticket in, advance support for whatever the key demand is for Copenhagen. Then make it real, make it feel really good, make it last. Requires significant investment in production values.

(This is a way to set commonly understood test, to incentivise crossing the line to the right side, to make it possible for constituents/electorates or citizens groups to push for that decision well in advance of Copenhagen, and to enable and potentially make each and every politician play a part in the decision, and give media etc a clear sight of the key demand – which has to be simple, unambiguous and irreducible).

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Pump Up The Emotion

I'm not sure how long it takes to start a lottery (see 'Better Lottery' proposal in Campaign Strategy Newsletter 49) but the strategy-design principle VBCOP can apply here to whatever can be delivered before December. Look at existing media partnerships, public events and other opportunities for people to undertake and join in activities (not make arguments or take pledges) which are rich and powerful in the values around the emotional side of the values map where the climate movement is fatally weak. Things like: stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, novelty, adventure, fun, good time, visible ability, visible success, material wealth, control over others. Attract with these values, don't sell 'the issue', gain participation (behaviour), then make that count in terms of opinion and politics (see http://www.campaignstrategy.org/articles/VBCOP_unifying_strategy_model.pdf) Make the reason to be there "for-the-children" with "their climate" the "what" below that but remember, for people in this section of the values spectrum it's the emotional buzz of the fun, excitement, reward etc which is the main real reason to be there, not 'the cause'.

(If it works this sends a powerful political signal about wide-support because it also creates events/singularities big enough to be reported in media reaching large audiences but the way it will be judged is as much on who is there/taking part as on the numbers)

Desocialise Carbon

Begin the process of 'desocialising' carbon. Perhaps better to say feed and fertilise it because it's already started here and there. Make carbon the new smoking or the new fat – something to be avoided, not to be seen with. Until it is seen this way many of the rational recipes, policy proposals and arguments put forward so energetically and repeatedly by Environment Ministers, NGO campaigners etc will have little motivational traction. Again stay inside people's values to do this. Inner Directed Pioneers might find it natural to do things like apologise to the future or show other expressions of regret, or to admit to sense of national shame. Esteem seeking people will not be comfortable with that but would be more interested in 'better' stuff that enabled them to look better, eg the equivalent of carbon slimming and diets. Security driven ones would be outraged to suggest a national apology of any sort. Such a contagion requires careful construction for it can easily be poisoned if an action is simply 'sold' before the desire is there. Then it becomes a criticism.

(In values terms the main danger is that the Concerned Ethicals for whom it is natural to 'make the world a better place by being a better person' try to export that logic to others, who are not comfortable admitting they could be a better person than they are. If this social disapproval of carbon existed though, it would transform progress in eliminating fossil fuels because people would not want to be associated with them).

Show It's Really Serious

This means serious in terms of what matters to people who are not much concerned about climate change or its effects.

If for example, there was a real risk that the World Cup would be cancelled if an effective agreement was not reached at Copenhagen, what chance is there that it would not be reached? Not a lot, I'd suggest, even taking into account the low interest in soccer in the US. That might be possible (eg if footballers threatened it) but there are a host of other ways to do this. Think about it.

(This 'Homer Simpson Test' would be easy to research as a first step – find out what would be "really serious" to climate-unconcerned people then go away and brainstorm and investigate how to achieve this. Harder than refining the policy demands for Copenhagen but potentially much more important).

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Free International Values Campaign Planner

Free at www.campaignstrategy.org this month is a short presentation showing in diagrams how to use the 'wheel of motivations' around the social values map to create campaigns that reach outside the narrow reach of the usual 'ethical-issue-ask-think-act' model. This utilises the values analysis of CDSM (www.cultdyn.co.uk) Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing 2008 survey in the UK (based on 1,000 questions put to 8,500 people – the world's largest most intensive values survey), cross correlated with the international values research of Professor Shalom Schwartz at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. As such this values map shows the disposition of 'international values' and the dominant (not the only) driver for people in different parts of the map.

This can be applied to any campaign or public outreach communications project. If you need for some reason to try and reach all parts of society, you'll need ways to engage all around the map. This could be the case for a social programme aimed at public health for example, and is currently the case for climate change (above), where NGOs and often governments are repeatedly 'mining the same seam' in the inner directed part of the population, rather than also engaging security driven 'Settlers' and 'Prospectors'.

Readers who have followed the various articles at this website using values will see that the planner provides something of a short cut, being simpler than the 100 Attributes Map (also included) which it overlays, although with 21 inner affinities and 10 outer affinities (the ends of the Schwartz dimensions) it provides enough detail to easily apply to design of offers, asks, or propositions.

In general, to gain 'political legs' for a proposition (ie so that politicians sense there is wide support), you need cross-values support, which means at least something from each of the three main Maslow Groups. That's if politicians are after a 'soft landing'. If a simple majority is needed then depending on the weight of values groups in different countries (or the relevant region, group or community), then two out of three may do. If the relevant population is either in a huge majority or enjoys other power or influence then a campaign using just one values group as its base may 'win' but this is increasingly rare.

For example where there is affinity to the values around: achievement, visible success, and visible ability, appropriate offers might include prizes, tests and competitions – opportunities to be the best and so on. Where it's hedonism, good time and fun, the opportunities to be offered by a campaign might be social events to be seen at, involving celebrity (or being one). Where a campaign offer or ask is opposing values, the campaign will invoke rejection, and this will become active rejection if it forces people to take a position or seems to threaten them.

With a bit of skill, almost anything can be cast in terms that resonate with a set of values but be warned; you cannot 'make hot cold'. If people are out for hedonism, good time and fun, it's a tall order to convert this into 'be satisfied' with what you have. "Abstinence is fun really" is unlikely to work unless abstaining from one thing gets you something else which is equivalent in values terms (ie in terms of fun, hedonism or a good time).

[Data on the values profile of countries and advice on how to craft values propositions can be obtained from CDSM mail@cultdyn.co.uk]

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- [1] World faces last chance to avoid fatal warming EU 27 Feb 2009 11:58:35 GMT Source: Reuters, By Gergely Szakacs <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/LR49789.htm>
- [2] <http://www.grist.org/article/2009-03-30-mandarin-plea-climate-action>
- [3] Campaign Strategy Newsletter No 49 VBCOP,
www.campaignstrategy.org/newsletters/campaignstrategy_newsletter_49.pdf
- [4] That even takes into account the fact that many people don't have children: it's an average. Pat Dade *pers comm*, based on data
- [5] Barack Obama after 'Bob The Builder' http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_the_Builder
- [6] How to Make Politics Work For Climate, Simon Bryceson
<http://www.campaignstrategy.org/makepoliticsworkforclimate.pdf>

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