



*By using your energy and commitment to helping animals in a creative, organized way, you too can deliver a professional lobbying campaign worth big bucks on a shoestring budget.*



Contrary to popular opinion, animal advocates working on shoestring budgets do have the capacity to pull off the lobbying tricks that high-priced, paid lobbyists do, and more. The blood, sweat and tears that dedicated amateur lobbyists will throw into the mix, undistracted by the lure of financial gain, cannot be matched by the “suits”. The first step is to put yourself in the shoes of the paid lobbyist. Learn from the pros.

## **Pick Your Political Issues Carefully**

Do a careful analysis of the situation. Familiarize yourself with the relevant laws. Do your research on past and existing legislation. Collect progressive examples from other jurisdictions. Consider all your options: should you lobby for new legislation, or work to amend existing laws or the regulations that flow from them?

Pick your battles carefully. While actual passage of legislation into law isn't the only measure of success (sometimes we get mileage out of proposed legislation to raise public profile on an issue), we do need to be careful about allocating scarce resources. Don't spin your wheels on political activity that is so far ahead of public opinion, it's hard to get past first base. While such efforts may be ideologically sound, they burn people out and reduce credibility.

Wherever possible, aim for legislative initiatives that will bring about an end to activities that harm animals. Regulations sometimes accomplish this by creating de facto bans--rules that are so stringent as to effectively abolish a practice. Legislation that establishes a licens-

ing or regulatory system should be broad and general, with the specifics hammered out in the regulations that flow from it. This allows you to lobby for stricter controls without going back to the legislative assembly. Draft the legislation that you would like to see passed. Make sure your legislative proposal is factually and legally defensible. If you can, have a lawyer help you put the proposal into legalese.

## **Know the Political System**

Do your research (call information, visit the library or a government bookstore) so that you know the organizational structure of the level of government you are dealing with and the rules of the road. Contact a friendly political ally for a road map behind the scenes. Find out whom to lobby (and on whom not to waste your time), the committees you'll need to deal with, which staff will be assigned to the issue, timelines for deputations (verbal presentations) and written submissions, etc.

## **Get To Know Politicians and Their Staff**

Many things go into lobbying before you actually knock on a politician's door for a formal meeting to present your case. Professional lobbyists work the system long before they need something. The first step is positioning. Get to know politicians before you need them.



Establish friendly relations. Make sure they know who you are, and what your cause is. (One simple way of doing this is to wear a button with a slogan on it.) Use your social or professional connections to cross paths. If this isn't feasible, there are other options including working in party associations or election campaigns as a volunteer. There is no better way to make your presence known and appreciated to politicians than to stuff envelopes, canvas voters, answer telephones, raise campaign funds, put up election signs, or any of the other numerous tasks required to get a politician elected.

[ continued on reverse ]





## Lobby Like a Pro on a Shoestring Budget

### Get To Know Politicians and Their Staff

[ continued ]

Similarly, between elections, party associations need volunteers to build membership and support for their political machines.

Establish relationships with key donors, supporters and staff. Politicians rely heavily on these people for research, analysis and advice. It's equally important to get them on side. Often they're the ones you'll get to know first when you volunteer in party associations or election campaigns. They'll be your entrée to the politician's inner circle.

Diversify. Have people in your group cultivate politicians and their associates from different political parties so you're not left high and dry when a government changes hands. In fact, make a personal contribution to as many political parties or campaigns as you can so you'll be added to their invitation lists for special functions; then attend. Become a familiar face everywhere. Watch for politicians who have been elected with razor-thin majorities; they may be more open to well-organized constituent interest groups.

As you spend time with politicians and their associates, gradually introduce animal issues into the conversation in an unthreatening way. Try to find links between their interests and yours. There is no milieu better for this than an election campaign work party or a political fund raising dinner.

Develop a team of people to participate in these pre-lobbying activities. They should be comfortable at social functions and have intimate knowledge of the issues. Include experts in this group if you can. Politicians like people with lots of initials after their names. Increasingly, professionals are donating their services, pro bono, to work on animal causes.

After you have established an informal rapport, ask for meetings with politicians or their staff as a general introduction to your concerns or your organization. Make contact on a regular basis to keep lines of communication open. Offer to help out on animal issues. Political offices often have few resources to draw upon for assistance in specialized areas. Politicians won't forget that you provided information or resources that made them look good.

### Map Out Your Strategy

Don't fly by the seat of your pants. Good campaigns look easy because of the hours of thoughtful preparation put into strategic planning. Make sure that the human and financial resources needed to run your campaign effectively will be available to the finish. On the plus side, hard costs can be kept down by using labour-intensive strategies, particularly donated time and services. Vary your tactics to keep your opponents hopping. Build some small victories into your plans to keep your workers and supporters motivated as they work toward the long-term goal. Be ready to counter last minute manoeuvres; always remain calm, articulate and reasonable.

### Get Your Facts Straight

Know your facts inside out, and your statistics too (numbers simultaneously scare and impress people). To gain credibility you have to know every nuance of your issue. Rest assured you will be put to the test during the lobbying process.

### Develop an Extensive Material Resource Base

Collect evidence in the form of videos, photographs, inspection reports, newspaper clippings, articles, books, eyewitness accounts and expert testimony of veterinarians, ethologists, primatologists, wildlife rehabilitators, cruelty inspectors, zoo keepers, lawyers, economists and celebrities to name a few.

Photographs and video material are crucial for dramatic impact. Photos can be laser printed at a copy shop for reasonable cost (both black and white, and colour). Try to have one or more dramatic pictures blown up poster size and mounted. Contact organizations that provide videos for free, or low cost.

Prepare an information package setting out your major points in an abstract or Executive Summary (think of it as a "cheat sheet" for politicians who won't take the time to read more than a few lines). The body of your report can be more detailed for reference purposes, and for credibility. Make your package professional, but not too slick (glossy reports can send the wrong message about spending priorities). Generally, written materials should be neat, factually accurate and

[ continued on page 2 ]





## Lobby Like a Pro on a Shoestring Budget [ Page 2 ]

### Develop an Extensive Material Resource Base

[ continued ]

rational; there should be some contrast in typeface; have lots of white space for legibility; and include visuals (photos, illustrations, graphs and charts). Check for accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

### Put Together an Impeccable Team

Identify and train one or more key spokespeople in your organization with intimate knowledge of the issues, people who are comfortable with people. What the pros don't want you to know is that there's no great mystery to lobbying. The trick is to be friendly, knowledgeable, assertive but courteous. Your spokesperson must have a presentable demeanour (to politicians, that tends to mean businesslike). If you normally hang out in sweat pants and t-shirts, buy a suit for lobbying. Get your experts lined up. Politicians and the media like people with lots of initials. Increasingly, professional men and women (lawyers, veterinarians, behaviourists and educators, for example) are making themselves available pro bono (i.e. donating their services). Approach a legal defence fund, law clinic or other type of professional association for backing. Line the pros up to do media, personal meetings with politicians and presentations to committees.

### Network

Line up experts to speak at public hearings, or to personally lobby elected officials. Network with other animal protection organizations locally to develop a coordinated plan of action. Contact groups in other jurisdictions for letters of support; draw upon their resources and expertise. Get students and teachers involved in your campaign. Solicit endorsements from celebrities, or use direct quotes. Be diversified in how you get the word out; use the mail, phone or fax, and increasingly, worldwide computer communication networks such as the Internet.

Leave your ideology at the door and don't avoid working with groups who don't share all your values if you can find common ground on some issues, for the sake of the animals.

Those very groups often have legitimacy with the people you are trying to lobby. While you're at it, park your ego at the door too!



### Know Your Opposition

Familiarize yourself with your opposition: the players, the arguments they will use and their tactics. Compare notes with other animal advocates. Expect to be called a zealot, a terrorist, a crazy or any number of other names, or worse. Personal intimidation from "eco-opponents" is on the rise. Turn the tables. Expose their histrionics and scare tactics. Show them to be the irrational extremists that they try to portray us as. In contrast, use your team of experts, and your high profile or diversified base of support to strengthen your credibility.

### Get the Media to Work for You

Politicians are incredibly sensitive to media coverage, good and bad. Be proactive with the media. Plan a dramatic, not-to-be-missed media event. Animal exploiters can buy advertising; we often can't, so use the free media at every opportunity. Prepare a media release and media kit with a brief summary outlining your major points plus more detailed attachments. Have extra copies of visual material for both the print and television media to take with them.

Try to come up with a unique angle - for example, an unusual location for your media event; or a gimmick like slogan t-shirts, stuffed toys or hot-air balloons in the shape of animals. Use celebrity endorsements with the media to catch their interest. Send an information package to the editorial boards of your newspapers requesting a favourable editorial position; ask for an opportunity to meet with them.

Be reactive in terms of media. Respond immediately to current events; send out media releases promptly and you'll be called for a quote. News doesn't work if there aren't two sides to the story. The Canadian press is generally interested in animal issues, particularly in rural areas, and small to mid-size cities where there isn't as much competition for news.

### Now Get to Work Lobbying

When you're ready to work on a specific issue, identify a sympathetic politician and develop a good working relationship. Ask the politician to sponsor proposed legislation and see it through the political process (politicos can keep an eye on the twists and turns better than an outsider and quickly alert you to problems). Ask



## Lobby Like a Pro on a Shoestring Budget

### Now Get to Work Lobbying

[ continued ]

for a point person to be assigned on the politician's staff, and keep in close touch. Communicate with other bureaucratic staff whose specialized expertise may be called upon in the decision-making process. You can influence their thinking.

Be relentless in your pursuit of meetings with politicians. Be polite and courteous, but persistent. Make appointments to meet politicians in both their head offices and their constituency offices. Ask to meet with the party caucus (a group of politicians of the same political persuasion). Get your supporters out lobbying: bring in your experts, your powerful or high profile people, and don't forget the constituents (politicians are especially responsive to the people who elected them and who could potentially turf them out). Remember also, to

keep communicating with key staff. Send correspondence, news and reports to politicians on a regular basis. Organize a petition or a letter-writing campaign to politicians. Launch your media campaign in full force. Consider other attention-getting techniques such as public events, lectures, fundraisers, protests and boycotts. As with the media, be flamboyant in your lobbying campaign so as to stand out from the crowd.

By using your energy and commitment to helping animals in a creative, organized way, you too can deliver a professional lobbying campaign worth big bucks on a shoestring budget.



Zoocheck Canada Inc.  
2646 St. Clair Avenue East  
Toronto, Ontario, M4B 3M1  
phone: 416.285.1744, web: [www.zoocheck.com](http://www.zoocheck.com)

