Becoming a better politician

Political skills manual

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Introduction

The politician's trade is something best learnt in practice: that is the prevailing consensus in many political parties. Of course it is true that there is no school like the school of hard knocks, but that is no reason to throw aspiring politicians to the wolves without any preparation whatsoever. Political skills can definitely be learned. The extent to which political parties invest in this, however, varies greatly. In my opinion, a party's professionalism is directly related to the amount of attention devoted to training these skills. There is no excuse for poor preparation. The politician's trade, like any other trade, requires constant training.

The Alfred Mozer Stichting, the international foundation for the support of social democracy, has twenty years experience in the training and schooling of political parties, youth and women groups and individual politicians. Our dedicated volunteer trainers are skilled political professionals with a broad experience in – mainly Dutch – politics. We owe a large debt of gratitude to this pool of almost 80 AMS trainers, and in this introduction we would like to single out Berend Jan van de Boomen, the former AMS director and author of our previous manual, for special mention. He wrote a number of new chapters and we used parts of the old manual for this brand new version. We are very grateful for all the work he has put in.

This book gives parties and politicians one excuse less for performing poorly! We attempt to give as full a treatment as possible of the skills every politician should have. Unfortunately it is impossible to be complete. In addition to which, exactly which of the skills mentioned are required depends largely on the (political) context and traditions in different countries. That is why this manual offers universal ingredients for a delicious political meal – but it is up to you to decide which of these ingredients apply to your specific situation. There is no single blueprint, every situation is unique. Moreover, we cannot rule out the possibility that there are still ingredients that we have not heard of, or methods and techniques that are not being used in the political arena yet, but will be in the near future. But we do aim to provide a book that has something to offer for everyone. Whether you are launching a multimillion dollar campaign or working with the lowest of budgets, the tips in this book will ensure that everyone stands a chance. Good luck!

Arjen Berkvens, AMS director

Content

Chapter 1
Strategy

1

Lofty aims and ideals are commendable and necessary, but in the end what matters are the results you achieve. Politics is all about preparing and implementing strategies to achieve certain goals. What is a strategy? Politics is a way of achieving a given goal, and the political debate focuses on the latter: a great deal of time is spent deciding which goals to strive for. A strategy is the way you try to achieve a given goal. In the end, voters will judge parties and politicians by the concrete results they have achieved, not by the promises they made. Debating and thinking about ways to achieve the goals is at least as important as the nature of the goals themselves. So when you want to develop a good strategy, you first have to determine the goal. Your goal should meet these four criteria:

Concreteness. The more concrete the goal, the more enthusiasm it will engender amongst potential supporters.

Measurability. If a goal is not measurable (e.g. reducing the number of poor people by 50% in four years), it will never be possible to determine whether it has been achieved, or whether it ought to be amended. A party that does not set itself measurable goals will never know how realistic its plans are. And more importantly, it can never claim an undisputable success.

Feasibility. Goals can – and sometimes should – be visionary, but if there is no realistic chance of achieving them within a reasonable term, people will turn their backs on you.

Inspirational value. People will not get behind a (political) programme they are not enthusiastic about. The road to success is often long and strewn with frustrations and disappointments. The only way to keep faith in yourself is if you are inspired and motivated by the "higher" goal. So setting your aims too low (e.g. "we'll be happy if we get a single woman voted into parliament") is not a good idea either. A sound political goal strikes a middle course between inspirational value and feasibility.

Campaign strategy

The strategy is the way in which you want to achieve your goals. The kind of strategy you develop is largely dependent on the position of your party in society. To determine exactly what that position is you need to conduct research: What do voters think about the party? What do they think about its leader? What do they know about your programme and how do they feel about it? Does the voter consider your party reliable enough to merit their vote? What is the key to electoral success? Strategy development is of vital importance during campaigning. Political parties often employ a number of strategists focusing solely on this task. They frequently play an important role behind the scenes of the campaign and collaborate intensively with researchers. Strategists formulate research questions and use the results to plan a winning strategy. They also have to be able to adapt the strategy to changing circumstances.

Always remain flexible and prepared to adjust your strategy if things do not go as planned: "Be a moving target".

In this chapter, we will discuss the following aspects of strategy development for election campaigns: campaign objective, leadership, tactics/means, message and key issues, and target groups.

Campaign objective

To develop an effective campaign strategy you need to set a clear goal. As we already explained, this goal should meet four requirements: it has to be concrete, measurable, feasible and inspiring. Elections are nothing if not concrete and measurable. But an election campaign strategy can have a wide variety of goals, depending on the party's position within the political spectrum and what is feasible within the political context. Some possible campaign goals are:

- Becoming the largest party
- Minimizing an anticipated election loss
- Entering government (local or national)
- Becoming president

Leadership

The personality of the leader is hugely important in a campaign. The campaign goal, the strategy, the message, the style of your campaign, the media you target, the image you project and the voters you try to address: everything has to dovetail with the leader's personality, and vice versa. In addition to which, every leader has to display qualities like decisiveness, reliability and consistency. In America, presidential candidate John Kerry was destroyed by George Bush's slurs on his supposed inconsistency. He made Kerry out to be a turncoat, an unreliable candidate who was forever changing his opinions (flip flop). This ultimately proved Kerry's undoing.

Leaders have to be prepared to go to extremes to achieve their goals – without, however, compromising their personal views or integrity. Their strengths should be exploited, their weak points acknowledged and, if possible, turned into something positive. It is no use making leaders do things that are contrary to their personality. Skills are trainable, practice makes perfect, and changes can be wrought to good effect by concentrating on minor details (e.g. a brief daily session in front of the facial tanner), but talent, character and personality are innate qualities, and they make you what you are. George Bush's feeble communicative skills turned into a strength when people started to think he spoke "like the man in the street". In 2002 the PvdA entered the Dutch elections with Wouter Bos as its leader, who had relatively little political experience. This turned into a strength because the voters were longing for new leaders, people who were not perceived as political dinosaurs. By the same token, the gauche public appearances of the Christian Democrat leader Jan Peter Balkenende turned to his advantage when voters started to perceive this awkwardness as a sign of authenticity and sincerity.

Such changes in perception, however, require hard work from the campaign team. You do not get anything for free. That is why it is important that the leader has honest advisers who do not flinch from telling the truth. It is a good idea to hire campaign advisers who are not directly allied to the party and therefore not dependent on the leader for their (political) career.

Political leaders are constantly under immense pressure and (especially during a campaign) they work extremely hard. At the same time they have to stay fresh and alert in order to create a good impression in the media, interact well with voters and leave their mark at political rallies. Enabling them to do so is another major task of the campaign team: it has to create an ideal environment for them to function in.

In this respect sleep, relaxation and eating well are just as important for a good campaign as a good message. Leaders must be able to trust their team blindly, so they can focus exclusively on the goal without having to bother with the day-to-day details of the campaign. Only the most essential information ought to find its way to the leader. During the 2007 Dutch elections Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende did not know his schedule for the day until the moment he stepped into his car.

Tactics/means

Do not start thinking about tactics at the outset of your campaign. When we talk about tactics, we are talking about the instruments used during a campaign, which are a direct consequence of the overall strategy. As the Swedish campaign strategist Bo Krogvik said: "Campaigns that start with the colour of the poster are doomed to fail." The tactical choices you make ought to follow logically from your strategy. For instance, take the use of paid publicity: are you going to attack the opponent with negative radio and TV commercials, or will you make positive commercials conveying your own point of view instead? Will you put up posters all over town or canvass door to door? Will you rely mainly on paid publicity or primarily on free publicity?

The choices you make depend on various other factors as well:

- Money, of course. What is the campaign budget? Producing and broadcasting commercials is expensive. The smaller your budget, the more inventive you will have to be. A spectacular plan or a playful stunt can also gain the media's attention (free publicity).
- Volunteers. The more volunteers, the better able your campaign will be to invest in one-on-one interaction with voters (in the streets and by canvassing).
- Political culture. Whereas in the United States and Great Britain it is quite normal to sling mud at your opponent during the elections, such negative campaigning is fairly unusual in many other countries.
- Another question to consider is how free the media are. Is your party able to get any media exposure at all?
- Over the past decades voters have become increasingly assertive. One-way communication is a thing of the past. For this reason, a media campaign alone no longer suffices: direct interaction with voters is increasingly important, and this can be achieved by investing in an interactive website.
- Which tactics agree best with your political leader and your message? The media you use also contribute to the leader's image. For instance, he can present himself as a modern leader by making use of new media. In a good campaign, message and medium are in sync with each other.

The central message

The central message is the heart of a campaign. The central message is a short text of 50 to 100 words describing exactly what the party stands for. This is what you want to convey to potential voters. It is a fixed beacon you can return to again and again. If you manage to convey this central message to voters, an important goal will have been achieved, because it gives the party a clearly recognizable profile. Therefore the central message has to be repeated in everything the party does throughout the election campaign. It sets the tone for the campaign.

The central message basically consists of three elements: problem, solution and direction.

Example of a central message:
We want to strengthen our country both economically and socially. Everyone ought to be able to share in the increased prosperity and improved quality of life. We want to get more people off benefit and into work, a fair tax system, smaller school classes for our children, 30,000 extra jobs in health care, and a police force that is closer to the people it serves. That is what we have fought for in recent years. In the 21st century we want a country that is Strong and Social.

At the heart of this message are a number of key issues with corresponding promises, plus the campaign slogan.

Key issue:	More jobs
Promise:	Get people off benefit and into work
Key issue:	Fair distribution of wealth
Promise:	A fair tax system
Key issue:	Good education
Promise:	Smaller classes for our children
Key issue:	Safer streets and communities
Promise:	More police closer by
Key issue:	Better-staffed health care
Promise:	30,000 more health care jobs

The message ends with the slogan "Strong and Social". This central message actually promises the voter a number of transactions, all with this similar pattern: if you (meaning the various target groups) vote for us, this is what you will get in return. For the health care sector we even quote a precise figure. The overall message being: this is what you can call us to account for.

A different approach – the PvdA's message for the 2004 European elections:
Do we want to continue on the road of a conservative Europe with its alarming rise of unemployment rates, its ever-more expensive health care and its steady dismantling of our social security? Or should you vote for a Strong and Social Holland in Europe? So that we can limit Europe to take action only in those areas where it can really make a difference: stimulating economic growth, creating new jobs, fighting terrorism and crime, combating pollution and implementing an asylum policy that is strict but just. Europe should not follow the example of Holland under Prime Minister Balkenende. That is why the PvdA advocates more jobs and a robust social security; close surveillance of the external borders in the fight against traffic in women, terrorism and crime; an independent foreign and national security policy, instead of being George Bush' lapdog; and an open, democratic election to appoint the Dutch EC member. That will make Holland Strong and Social in Europe.

This message is more ideology driven. It does not contain any quantifiable promises but it does try to appeal to the sentiments of the average PvdA voter. In contrast with the first message, this one is more openly oppositional, witness phrases like "Europe should not follow the example of Holland under Prime Minister Balkenende."

Example of a combination of 1 and 2

It's morning again in America. Today more men and women will go to work than ever before in our country's history. With interest rates at about half the record highs of 1980, nearly 2,000 families today will buy new homes, more than at any time in the past four years. This afternoon 6,500 young men and women will be married, and with inflation at less than half of what it was just four years ago, they can look forward with confidence to the future. It's morning again in America, and under the leadership of President Reagan, our country is prouder and stronger and better. Why would we ever want to return to where we were less than four short years ago?

This message is a mix of quantifiable results and ideological intent.

Ten requirements for the message

1. Intelligible: Have a secondary school student read the message. If they don't understand what it says, the message is not suitable for the campaign.
2. Concise: A central message must be brief and to the point.
3. Clear: Voters do not want vague promises, they want to hear a loud and clear statement about what the party stands for.
4. Appealing and inspiring: Voters have to be able to relate to the message. That means it has to have a certain emotional charge.
5. Relevant: The message has to reflect the circumstances at the time of the election and the experience of the voters.
6. Distinctive: Voters immediately have to recognize the message as coming from your party and no one else.
7. Respectful and positive: The message merely offers voters a choice. It should not contain any sneers at other parties or at the voters themselves.
8. Confident but modest: The party does not have a monopoly on all wisdom. The party should be confident about its message, but remain open to new ideas and new developments.
9. Credible: The message has to correspond with the image the voters have of your party. Only then will you convince them to vote for you. For that reason, the message cannot differ too radically from how the party has presented itself in the recent past. The message and the image it puts forward have to conform to the election programme, and the highlights of the programme should figure in the central message.
10. Dynamic and stimulating: of course in the end the goal is to get the voters actually to go to the ballot box and vote for your party.

Common errors and pitfalls

A central message can easily fall short of the mark. Here is an example of an inadequate central message:
Trust the PvdA, for ours is the party with the widest administrative experience. We are in favour of a multicultural society and we advocate that ethnic minorities integrate while keeping their own language and culture. We want to reform the WW and WIA to increase the level of participation on the job market. Our solution for the expansive rise in the ageing population is an increased fiscalization of the AOW. We will not abolish the tax deduction for mortgage interest rates, but will no longer allow homeowners to use the surplus value of their real estate for consumptive spending. For the fight against crime we will establish a national DNA data bank. Our country is in a sorry plight, but with us at the helm you will soon see positive results.

Some ways in which this falls short:

1. Too much emphasis on administrative issues: a message concerned solely with technical administrative issues does not appeal to the voter. Such a message confuses means with ends. After all, government is only a means to achieve a goal. The message should be about those goals, not about the means. So do not use phrases like "more public and private sector collaboration to improve the quality of life in this town".
2. It is inwardly directed: do not focus on internal affairs that the voters cannot relate to. Make sure that internal party conflicts do not enter into the campaign, or even worse, that they are reflected in the message. A central message should be unequivocal and not reek of hard-won compromises.
3. It is not topical: if a message dwells too much on the past your party risks the criticism of being outdated. In this respect, it is generally not advisable to use words like "protect", "conserve", "preserve" and "guard" in a campaign message. The message statement has to make clear what the voters can expect from your party after the elections.
4. Too much jargon: some terms that are everyday fare for politicians and party officials, because they are part of the party's standard vocabulary, are completely meaningless to the average voter – they either do not understand them, or take them to mean something entirely different from what the party intends! So avoid the use of jargon, so-called "officialese". Always check this by having someone who does not know much about politics read your message.
5. Veiled language: sometimes the central message contains phrases that are actually meaningless. They are the result of hard-won compromises, or they have been put in because something had to be said about a particular issue the party does not yet have any clear views about. Delete phrases like that! Better to say nothing at all than to resort to weasel words. So do not write things like: "The challenges we are facing vis-à-vis the environment demand a vigorous approach. We firmly intend to start an open dialogue about this with all parties concerned."
6. Negative messages: negative messages are effective. Exposing the failing policies or unsound plans of other parties and contrasting them with your own positive and forward-looking alternatives is part of the political game. But although you do have to use the central message to distinguish yourself from other parties, do not fall into the trap of merely running down other parties or resorting to ad hominem attacks. Build on the strength of your own alternatives instead.
7. No internal agreement about the message: a message is supposed to unify the campaign. In every single part of the campaign the message should take centre place. Sometimes this goal is not achieved because in the course of the campaign a number of party officials keep calling certain elements of the message into question. Such discord is fatal for any campaign.

Key issues

It is important that the campaign highlights those views and objectives that will most appeal to the voters. Therefore when drawing up the campaign message, the starting point should not simply be the party members' own priorities for the coming term, but especially those issues that matter most to (potential) voters. These should be the key issues in your campaign. This does not mean that you should simply try to curry favour with the voter. Do not change your views to pander to the voters' wishes, because that will compromise your credibility. Stick to your own values and ideology. What is important, however, is that the issues you put high on your agenda are the ones that matter to the voter. That is why it is important to poll voters' opinions. This can be done in various ways, with opinion polls, focus groups, questionnaires in free local papers or debates in crowded places like malls or markets. Use as many ways as you can to inventory what the main priorities of the voters are, and use those as entry points to broach your own party's priorities in the debate. Wherever you can, make sure you relate everything to topical subjects and recent public debates in the news. These key issues will be the priorities that the party is to focus on during the campaign, and your party's views on them should be clear to every voter. Compile a list of three to five issues at the most. For instance:

1. Get people off benefit and into work
2. No child will leave school without a diploma
3. Provide every neighbourhood with its own local police officer

In addition to focusing on these key issues a party can also make more specific promises or pledges. In 1997 the British Labour Party made five pledges which they handed out to the public in credit card format, so-called pledge cards. The idea was that people would be able check the pledge cards after five years to see whether Labour had made good on its promises.

Labour's five pledges were:

- Cut class sizes to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7 year-olds by using money from the assisted places scheme
- Fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders by halving the time from arrest to sentencing
- Cut NHS waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients as a first step by re-

leasing £100 million saved from NHS red tape
- Get 250,000 under-25 year-olds off benefit and into work by using money from a windfall levy on the privatized utilities
- No rise in income tax rates, cut VAT on heating to 5 per cent and inflation and interest rates as low as possible

Pledges like these are a plain-spoken way of doing politics that appeals to specific target groups. They are also a mix of "classic" social democratic issues like education, health care and unemployment with "uncharacteristic" issues like tax cuts and crime fighting.

The message: some final remarks

Of course the message will be communicated not only by the campaign team, but also by the party leader, the candidates and the party members. It is therefore very important, first of all, that the message finds broad support within the party. Secondly, the message should be in line with the election programme, and must not contain statements whereby the party unintentionally dissociates itself from its own past contributions to government or municipal administration.

It is also very important to keep repeating the central message. Politicians tend to think that voters are just as interested in politics as they themselves are, but that is far from being the case. The "man in the street" will devote only a very small proportion of his time to anything that could be considered political thought. So on the rare occasions that you do have people's attention, it is vital that you communicate as clearly as possible and be as convincing as possible. The central message is useful here in providing a fixed point which you can revert to time and again in speeches and interviews. It can be phrased in different ways for different target groups, as long as the central import remains the same. This is sometimes described as "one message, a thousand voices": the central message is fixed and unequivocal, but it can be expressed in different ways depending on the target group you want to address.

A message that conforms to social trends is much easier to sell than a message that is oblivious to, or even runs counter to current trends. So always try to have your message latch onto a (preferably dominant) trend in the social landscape. And if you find that your message does not comply with a dominant trend, there is one consolation: every trend once started as countertrend. For instance, the worries about the dangers of climate change that green parties always warned about only became widely accepted around 2006.

Your message needs to have a precise aim, whether you address one person, a group of persons, a hall full of people or entire segments of society in a national election campaign. The larger the group, the more difficult it becomes to aim your message precisely. The disadvantage of a message directed at large groups of people is that the message has to be phrased more vaguely (aimed at Joe Public). Political campaigns are inevitably targeted at large groups of people. That makes it important to distinguish separate target groups within that group and formulate separate messages for each of them (within the framework of the overall central message).

Target groups

Politicians often want to appeal to the whole of the population. This is a common pitfall. Striving for this in an election campaign is a waste of funds and energy. A party has to investigate where its voters are located, what its electorate is. You can subsequently identify separate target groups within that electorate, like young people, elderly people or ethnic minorities, and develop specific messages for each of them, all derived from the central campaign message. There is practically no limit to the extent to which the electorate can be broken up into smaller target groups – according to age, ethnic origin or religious affiliation, town or region, hobbies and interests, etc. Developing micro messages for micro target groups can be very useful and valuable. The extent to which you can do this and to which it will be effective, however, does depend on the means you have at your disposal to reach those micro target groups. This will involve (expensive) communication channels like direct mail, and advertising in specific magazines or at cultural events or around very specific TV programmes. The main rule is: make it personal. Secondly, variety is important. Your party can reach out to students via student papers, the internet, student associations and unions, events at universities, student media, etc.

Another option is compiling or buying databases of people in specific target groups. For this, a party is entirely dependent on the existing voter registration and electoral system. In the 2002 elections the PvdA did not have any data about swing voters, because in Holland voters' political affiliation is not registered, and Holland has no constituency system (the entire country functions as a single constituency). In order to achieve direct contact with the voters, the PvdA bought databases in electorally important areas in the country. In these areas 300,000 people were interviewed by phone about their political preferences, and subsequently a database was compiled of 150,000 potential PvdA voters.

Yet another way to gather voter data is canvassing. Of course this involves a huge amount of volunteer labour. In their 2005 campaign the British Labour Party set itself the goal of sending seven personal messages to all the swing voters in crucial constituencies, by phone, text messaging, e-mail or direct mail. Great Britain's constituency voting system makes it important to target the so-called marginal seats. In the 2005 elections about 100 of over 600 constituencies were marginal seats. Consequently it was on these 100 constituencies that most energy was spent.

Step 1: The electorate

The first step is to divide the entire electorate (all the voters) into three groups:

- The people who always vote for you
- The people who are considering voting for you/are undecided
- The people who have already decided to vote for another party

The third group is a lost cause, as you will never be able to win them over. All efforts to do so are a waste of energy. The election battle is going to focus on the group of voters who are undecided, the so-called swing voters or "floating voters". To win them over you need a flexible approach directed at very specific target groups, each needing a tailor-made message.

Your own party's electorate can also be divided into three groups:

- Potential voters who need to be won over because they are considering voting for another party. This is the real battleground.
- Weak voters who might not vote at all. It is not that they are considering voting for another party, they just have to be convinced to actually get up and vote at all.
- Strong voters who will vote for you no matter what and who can be mobilized for the campaign.

Clearly, most of your energy and financial means ought to be spent on the "potential" and the "weak" votes. It is of vital importance that weak voters are motivated to go and vote, and that potential voters are persuaded to vote for your party. In a modern democracy parties are generally dependent on their own support base plus whatever portion of the swing votes they can land. So (weak) supporters and potential supporters are the groups to target. This does carry one risk, which is that you neglect your own support base (the "strong" voters). This should be prevented at all costs. If you lose this support base your whole campaign is doomed. The best way to prevent this is involving these grassroots supporters in the campaign to help

spread your message. This means investing a lot of time in an early stage to convince them of the central message, so that they in turn can become messengers in the campaign.

Step 2: Identifying the specific target groups

Within your own electorate you can also identify specific target groups and tailor your message to them. Target groups for political parties are becoming more and more diffuse. The traditional political party – a broad movement representing the interests of a clearly delineated social class (labourers, employers, ethnic or religious groups) – is a thing of the past. More and more voters have gone adrift and vote now for this party, now for that one. In the past parties addressed a clearly delineated natural support base, whereas now they have to focus on those target groups with which they have a special bond (material or ideological) and whom they expect to yield the largest number of votes. This means that you have to try to relate to the concerns of your target groups. In order to do that, you have to decide which groups you want to target even as you draw up the election programme. To give an example: a political party wants to fight for a better (financial) position of health care employees. This party's target group will then consist of health care employees and people who are dependent on health care. Knowing this, the party can plan visits to health care facilities, focus its marketing on this target group, decide which media to use, and maybe also recruit people belonging to this target group as candidates.

A number of standard target groups

Young people, elderly people, ethnic minorities and women are common target groups in election campaigns. For each of these you have to develop a message (within the framework of your overall central message) that will appeal to this specific group. You should also make lists of the media you can use for each target group and the issues that concern them most, and pitch your communications to their language register. Common target groups are:

Young people

If you want to appeal to young people it is very important to show that your party takes them seriously as a group. You can do this by incorporating their interests in your election message, by finding issues that appeal to them and by nominating young candidates for parliamentary seats. In this way you make it clear that politics, and your party especially, does take young people's interests to heart.

This is a highly variegated target group, with a large number of different subcultures and huge differences in educational level: university students require a different approach from young labourers. Many young people are interested in sports, music, dance, theatre and everything to do with new media. And in Holland some of their main concerns are the environment and asylum policies. One idea could be to put together a flyer about these issues especially written for a specific group of young people. Because few young people go to political meetings of their own volition, it is important to visit places where they do meet, like nightclubs, youth centres, health clubs, internet (facebook, etc.) and student unions. And pitch your communications to their interests. They have little time to spare for you and are used to short and fast messages.

Women
Women can be specifically targeted by addressing specific issues and by putting forward female politicians. In many countries there is a huge discrepancy between the number of male and female politicians, so you can urge them to vote for a woman in order to get more women in parliament. (Of course this only works if your party does have female candidates.) Issues that are of concern to women in Western Europe include: how to combine work with childcare, safety, domestic violence, and health care. Whatever you do, make sure that the female candidates figure as prominently in your campaign as the party's male candidates. After all, women make up more than 50% of the electorate!

Parents
Parents are concerned about issues like childcare programmes and safety in and around schools. Take care that you do not target only the mothers when addressing these issues. You could organize a meeting with parents about hazardous traffic situations on the way to school, in order to ascertain where the major problems lie. This meeting will then provide an opportunity to put forward the views expressed in your party programme.

Conclusion campaign strategy

So these are the main elements: campaign objective, leadership, tactics/means, message and key issues, target groups. If all goes well, they will converge to create a winning strategy. Here are a couple of examples of possible strategies you may use.

When you are in the opposition, your campaign might do well to stress change and renewal and mount an attack on the established order, by putting forward a new leader, a new team and an appealing and refreshing programme with a positive agenda promising change. Some slogans typical of these kinds of campaign include: "Because Britain deserves better", "A better life for all", "A positive vote!", "Holland deserves better", "Yes we can", "A fresh start", "New energy".

Another strategy you might take as opposition party is to paint the results of the incumbent government's policies in the blackest colours, stressing how badly your town or country has fared under the other parties' regime. In this way you can try to convince voters that only a vote for your party can turn the tide of misery. Typical slogans of such campaigns: "Vote against", "Stop the islamization of Holland", "Say no to this administration", "Labour is not working".

If, on the other hand, your party has been in government and brought about some positive changes, you can try to cash in on its success. Slogans typical of such campaigns are: "Let the prime minister finish the job", "Much accomplished, much to do", "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" You try to capitalize on the fact that many voters understand that four years is too short to implement a long-lasting policy and are prepared to offer you a second chance, having provided you with an initial victory in the first place.

Many parties try to win elections by feeding on people's fears. They frighten the voter by referring to their opponents' dubious track records in certain areas. Social democrats, for instance, are generally faced with the accusation that they are spendthrifts who only want to raise taxes; conservatives and liberals, on the other hand, are routinely accused of always wanting to cut government spending and only serving the interests of the rich. A good example of a slogan capitalizing on people's fears is the Serbian Democratic Party's "No Return to the Dark 90s." Another example is "New Labour, New Danger."

Finally, the entire strategy may focus on the leader's popularity. This is particularly effective if the leader has been a successful prime minister in the last administration. Public appearances of the leader take centre stage in campaigns of this kind. Typical slogans are: "Let Lubbers finish the job", "Choose Kok", "I like Ike". In the 2003 elections in Holland, the PvdA systematically stressed that voters should vote for "Wouter Bos' PvdA".

The political context may change in the course of a campaign. New political issues may arise, or the party's popularity may rise or sink due to external factors. The strategy determined at the start of a campaign may then have to be adjusted. In the 2003 Dutch elections, for instance, the PvdA changed its strategy mid-course: at the outset the goal was to win back the parliamentary seats lost in the previous election. As the campaign progressed and the party proved to be doing unexpectedly well in the polls, one week before the elections the goal was changed into becoming the largest party and making the party leader prime minister. In 2006 the opposite was the case. The PvdA entered the campaign with the intention of becoming the largest party and making its leader prime minister, with an appealing message about the future of the country. At the end of the campaign the strategy had changed to minimizing the anticipated electoral loss, with a simple message about our social democratic core values.

Strategy exercises

- *On the subject of leadership it is often effective to hold a Q&A session during your presentation. Before you show them your sheet with leadership qualities, ask the group what they think the people in their country expect from a leader. List those qualities on a sheet, and subsequently show the list you had initially prepared for the presentation.*

- *Formulate a realistic objective and a way of achieving it. Divide the participants into groups of three to six people. Have them formulate a general goal, drawing on their own experience. This does not have to be a large-scale, countrywide goal, it can be something on a more modest scale – preferably so, in fact. It is best if they choose a goal to which they can personally relate, like an actual town issue for members of a town council; or if the trainees are young people, an issue that is close to their hearts. Instruct them to outline a strategy that will realize the chosen goal within a limited amount of time (half an hour at the most). They should then check whether their goal meets all the requirements mentioned above. This should initiate a process of adjustment, resulting in a different goal from the one they started out with.*

- *If you are working with people who seem relatively inexperienced, this exercise can be broken down into smaller segments. For example:*
  - *Small groups drawing up goals and then presenting them in the whole group for feedback; identifying who the decision-makers are, and selecting one*
  - *Small groups making a profile of the targeted decision-maker and presenting it in the whole group for feedback*
  - *Having a brainstorm session about all the possible means (cold calls, mailings, networks, meetings, protest marches, newspaper articles, etc.)*
  - *Small groups making an action plan for the near future (for the duration of the election campaign, until the next party conference, etc.)*

- *Organize a competition. Divide the audience into groups of five. They are to come up with at least three campaign gadgets they plan to use in the campaign. The best gadget is rewarded.*

- *Have small groups develop a campaign message incorporating at least one slogan and three to five key issues.*

- *Pick out an important target group for your party. In your presentation explain what its characteristics are and why this target group is important for your party. Then have small groups think up one campaign activity, one appropriate campaign tool and one micro message for this target group.*

Know your opponent: SWOT analysis

Before you initiate a campaign it is crucial that you perform a SWOT analysis. This analysis provides you with information to base a strategy on. In a SWOT analysis you simply list all the potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to your campaign. The strengths and weaknesses are internal factors, in this case features of your own party. How much money and volunteers do you have at your disposal, how good are your politicians, etc.? The opportunities and threats are external factors: What is going on outside your own party? How are the other parties performing? What is the state of the economy? What role do the media play?

When doing a SWOT analysis, always ask yourself:
Am I being totally honest? Is what I note down true?
Are the sources I use entirely objective?
Is my SWOT too vague, is it concrete and applicable for practical use?

Table 1

Internal (everything that happens within the party)	
Internal Strengths 1. 2. 3.	Internal Weaknesses 1. 2. 3.
External Opportunities 1. 2. 3.	External Threats 1. 2. 3.
External (the context within which the party operates, the society at large)	

Example of a PvdA SWOT analysis for the 2003 national elections:

Internal strengths: new leader, new parliamentary candidates, solid social and economic programme.

Internal weaknesses: supporters disillusioned after the lost elections of 2002; no money; campaign team lacking in experience.

External opportunities: party is getting a good press; incumbent government very unpopular; fear of recession and rising unemployment.

External threats: voters at large still very critical of the party; media could turn hostile again; short campaign, lack of time.

When developing a strategy it is important that you try to turn weaknesses into opportunities and use strengths to neutralize threats.
For example:
A new leader and new candidates may favourably impress the media. This generates a lot of free publicity, saving you money on paid publicity.
If the voters are fed up with the current government, they might be more accepting of new leaders and new candidates.
Our social programme can allay the fear of unemployment. Our robust economic programme promises economic recovery.
Table 2 is a diagrammatic representation of this.

Table 2

SWOT analysis		**External Opportunities**	**External Threats**
		Name 3 1. 2. 3.	Name 3 1. 2. 3.
Internal Strengths	Name 3 1. 2. 3.	Combine internal strengths with external opportunities	Combine internal strengths with external threats
Internal Weaknesses	Name 3 1. 2. 3.	Combine internal weaknesses with external opportunities	Combine internal weaknesses with external threats

Exercise

In order to determine the position of your party, you can divide the participants into groups and have them make SWOT analyses of the party, or of the youth organization or women's organization, etc. This forces them to have a closer look at the party's internal strengths and weaknesses and its external opportunities and threats. During the feedback session, pay close attention to whether the participants really grasp the

difference between internal and external. The analysis is then presented in a plenary session and used as a reference point in the rest of the course, for instance when drawing up the central message. Instruct the participants to be as objective and honest as possible in their analysis. After having subjected their own party to a SWOT analysis, they can do the same with the political opponents. Hand out the tables depicted above and allow them about 20 minutes to fill those in and prepare for the feedback session.

Chapter 2
Research

2

A party that wants to conduct research for the benefit of an election campaign has to make a number of decisions: whether to do the research themselves or outsource it, and if so where; what type of research to conduct, how to question respondents, how to draw up a questionnaire, how to organize a focus group. In this chapter we discuss some of these aspects.

There are various ways political parties can conduct research: questioning people by phone, face to face or online. Such research, when held before important elections, can help in determining a campaign strategy. You are like a physician taking society's temperature, and this can yield the party a wealth of information – information you need to adequately respond to the changing circumstances and preferences of the electorate. Another way to use research is to test how voters will respond to your leader, your plans, message, poster, leaflets, etc. Good research will guard you from making certain mistakes and it can either confirm or refute the conjectures you had. Research is usually expensive, but there are cheaper alternatives, some of which can be conducted by the party itself. It is very important that the usefulness of the research is not disputed by the leadership of the party. Only if the key figures in the party take it seriously is it possible to achieve lasting results, and only then can research unify the campaign efforts. Politicians hate uncertainty. The decisions they make are often crucial for the future of a party or its success in an election. That is why politicians are so fond of research: it provides them with the certainty and hence the courage to make decisions. At the same time, however, that is the main pitfall. Real knowledge only comes after the elections! Never depend on research alone. It can also inhibit your decisiveness (the so-called "paralysis of analysis"). If the outcome of your research is that more research is needed, beware! Research is merely an instrument and should never become a goal unto itself.

The researcher

In view of the above, the researcher plays a very important part in the campaign team. Researchers have a major say in the development of the strategy and the message, and in the evaluation of the party leader. They report highly sensitive informa-

tion directly to the party or the campaign leadership, so it is important that the researcher is someone who can be trusted. After all, the media and your opponents will do their best to ferret out such confidential information about your party as well. Although the researcher has an important role in the campaign team, however, he does not have any formal decision-making power. On the other hand he does have a big influence on the direction the party and the campaign will take. This may lead to the researcher's work itself becoming the centre of debate. The research or the strategic advice it results in may be called into question. Wherever possible you should try to avoid this. The researcher functions best on the sidelines.

Some types of research:

Freely accessible research data

Doubtless there are freely accessible data available that can be of use to your party. For instance, there are polling companies that sell their data to various media. TV programmes sometimes contract such companies to be able to present a weekly poll. On the internet you can usually find the results over a longer period of time. They may poll voters' opinions on a wide variety of topics: what they think about the rising crime rate in their country, or whether they are in favour of the purchase of new fighter jets for the air force. Other polling companies are hired by town councils to investigate the opinion of citizens about local issues. Do gather all this kind of information, but beware of its limitations. Not everything is universally or infinitely applicable.

Another interesting source of information is the Eurobarometer: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm. This will tell you what Europeans think about subjects as diverse as electromagnetic fields, development aid or agricultural policies.

Recently, online polls have gained in popularity. These are not statistically sound. Unfortunately the media do sometimes use the outcomes of such polls as a reliable news source. Never take such arbitrary polls seriously.

Conducting your own research

The starting point of each new survey should be the last survey you conducted yourself. There are two key questions you need to answer first: what do you know about your own party and what do you know about the opponents? Then you start to plan your new research. The PvdA's 2002 campaign had a budget of about 2.5 million euro: 25% of this was spent on research! Most parties will outsource it to a professional polling agency, since this work is too specialized to do it yourself. Such companies have the experience, a database of people willing to participate in a survey, and tried and tested methods. Of course it is important that you choose the right company to do the job. It helps if you know what kind of further research you will need in the future: you can choose the company able to provide that.

Opinion polls

Once you have decided who will conduct the research, you start with a baseline measurement. This is a regular opinion poll in which a number of respondents are asked a large number of questions (by phone or, increasingly, online). This is to take stock of the current state of affairs in the country. How do people feel about important issues? How is your party doing? How are your opponents doing? How do people think about your party leader and the other parties' leaders? You thus gain a clearer picture of the context in which the elections will take place. Also ask people how they are planning to vote, and try to find out if there is any chance they will vote for your party. This enables you to discover who the hard core of your supporters are and where the potential for growth is (doubting voters). This baseline measurement will be the basis for all your further surveys. In subsequent surveys these data allow you to see what has changed and investigate why that is. For a reliable baseline measurement you need about 1,000 respondents, but the more the better. If you want to specify the results according to target groups, you need at least some 2,000 – but of course your budget has to allow for this. An interview should not take longer than about 20 minutes, which you should take into account when drawing up the questionnaire. Also do not forget that you will have to phone many more people than the 1,000 respondents you eventually need. Because of the growth of the telemarketing sector many people are more and more irritated when they get cold calls (often during mealtimes). If people do not have time for you, do not insist, but ask them if you can phone back at another time. Online questionnaires do not suffer from this problem, since these are usually sent out only to people who have consciously subscribed to a poll.

Focus groups

The information provided by a baseline measurement can be used for further research, for instance with focus groups. This is a relatively inexpensive type of research. A focus group is a group of about 10 people having a two-hour long discussion about different topics, chaired by a researcher. You can also have them fill in questionnaires. The main advantage of focus groups is the fruitful communi-

cation between chairman and participants and between participants themselves. It often yields useful information as input for further quantitative research (like opinion polls).

The focus group is observed by other party members – at least the campaign member in charge of research, but preferably also the campaign manager, who will have to implement the results of the research. They observe the group through a closed-circuit video system. The discussion in the room is recorded by one or more video cameras. The chairman's role in the discussion is important, not unlike that of the chairman at a meeting. He has to keep the conversation going, keep an eye on the script and be alert to raise the right questions. He also has to maintain strict neutrality in the discussion. All in all, a focus group requires thorough preparation. Close attention has to be paid to the following aspects:

The choice of participants. You have to pick the right people to find answers to the questions you have. Usually they will be people from a specific target group, e.g. voters who are hesitating between voting for your party or for another party, or people who voted for your party at the last elections but intend to vote for another party this time. Or you may want to select people from specific target groups, like elderly people, students, young parents or people with a particular ethnic background. Many parties rely on the expertise of polling agencies, who have large data files of people they can call in for this type of research.

Appoint a skilled chairman, with whom the session is prepared in great detail. It is important that the chairman is fully aware of the kind of information the party is after. As chairman you are the focus group's host. You welcome all participants personally, shake their hands and then have them introduce themselves to the group. Make a note of their names and take care to address everyone by their name during the rest of the session – but don't call them by their first name without first asking if they mind! During the introductory round, make sure you find out more than just their name, address and profession etc., by asking them some kind of personal question too, to break the ice. You may ask them what their favourite pastime is, or whether they have a pet. Make everybody feel at home. Explain what the purpose of the research is, that the data are gathered anonymously and that other people are watching the debate. Emphasize that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to the questions you will ask, that it is important that they really say what they think. As a chairman, make sure you do not pose leading questions. Do not ask: "Don't you think our country is in a sorry plight?" But instead: "What do you think of the state of our nation?" The chairman has to be a real tightrope walker with a keen sense for politics. Someone who knows when to ask the right question, who can smoothly zoom in from more general issues (like "safety in our country") to the micro level of personal experience ("Are you afraid to go out after dark?"). The chairman also has to be able to redress the balance between people who are too dominant in the conversation and those who are so timid they hardly make themselves heard. For tips about how to do this, see the chapter on meetings. The chairman has to be a skilful communicator, both verbally and non-verbally.

Pick a good room with all the necessary facilities: neither too big nor too small. And provide sufficient food and drink. In short, make them feel comfortable.

Write a good script enabling the chairman to pose all the questions the party wants to have answered. The script should contain a minute-by-minute treatment of what is to be discussed. This does not mean the discussion cannot deviate from the script. The chairman can announce a break or give the participants some questionnaires to fill in if he wants to consult with the observers. Or he can use his mobile phone to have the observers text him with instructions.

Thoroughly prepare the questionnaires. The participants are usually given questionnaires before, during and after the discussion, to gather additional data. These may contain questions about their political preferences, but they may also be used to test slogans and messages. If you want to test commercials, leaflets or posters, make sure there are no technical snags, like a malfunctioning computer, DVD player or TV.

Determine in advance how much information you want to share with the participants. Do you want them to know right away who is behind this research? Or will you disclose this in the course of the discussion, or only afterwards?

The members of the focus group volunteer to do this on the strict condition that the results are kept anonymous. Remarks made during the discussion should never be traceable to individuals. Also give them a fitting reimbursement, like a gift voucher.

The danger of focus groups

Focus groups have two main pitfalls. The first danger is that the research results will dictate the party's direction. Always stick to your own political compass. Re-

member that a focus group has its own internal dynamics and is not representative of society at large. With the average voter you never have the luxury of two hours to discuss your plans in depth. If a focus group is enthusiastic about your party's plans only at the end of the session, this suggests your plans need too much explaining. Focus groups are just an instrument; if you want more certainty, you have to follow up with a more representative poll. Once you start having focus groups discussing whether focus groups are useful, you are on the wrong track.

A second pitfall is the opposite of this: if your party is so convinced of being in the right that it is impervious to any outside influence, you might as well save yourself the trouble of organizing focus groups.

Other types of research

Another type of research is judging politicians with a perception analyzer. Have an audience watch a debate or a speech and give them a little box with a dial with which to indicate whether they think your party leader is performing well or not. The result of their constant monitoring is shown on screen as a line: if his performance is average, this will stay in the middle. If he performs well, the line climbs; if he does not do well, the line descends. This can also be used to test and improve draft versions of a speech. Or you can try to find out what kind of behaviour seems to agree best with your party leader: does he appeal to people when he shows anger, or does he create a more favourable impression when he stays calm and collected? Tests like these are a very effective way of convincing political leaders to make changes in their public performance.

Cheap and effective ways of doing research are the in-depth interview and the street interview. An in-depth interview is a little like a focus group, but with only one participant. Street interviews means a group of party members go into a neighbourhood armed with a questionnaire to try and gain some idea of how the people think about their neighbourhood and about local politics. This is a quick way of gathering input for an election programme. It ought to be a matter of course for politicians and parties to interact directly with the people and find out what their concerns are – unfortunately, all too often politicians tend to shirk this duty.

Exercise

Use role-play to practise holding a focus group. The trainees are divided into focus group participants and a group of party members and researchers who prepare the focus group. They write a short script containing the relevant research questions. One trainee is appointed chairman, the others observe. At the end of the discussion they evaluate whether their research questions have been answered.

Chapter 3
Communication and media

Effective communication is essential for a party – even more so during the long period between elections than in the campaign months. And a party's communication can only be effective if it is an integral part of the strategy. As the chapter on strategy illustrates, this is all about setting a goal and drawing up a plan to achieve that goal. We pay a lot of attention to the message and the key issues. These are key factors of communication. If you do not have a rock-solid programme, you can communicate all you want without ever making an impact. As soon as the party has determined its message and key issues, you can start developing a communication strategy. There is one dangerous pitfall you should try to avoid. Try not to communicate about the strategy and strategic considerations; the strategy has to be incorporated in the communication, not be a subject of communication. More about this in the relevant section below.

Timing is crucial in communication. It is a good idea therefore to plan your communications in advance and develop a media strategy. This should revolve around the following questions:

- *When* do you want to get your message across?
- *Where* do you want to get your message across?
- *Whom* do you want to get your message across to?

Every communication strategy revolves around the central message. This message is crucial because it is something you can always return to throughout the campaign. It is the fixed point you can refer to in all the various communication channels: interviews, speeches, debates, information booklets, etc. As stated before, the message contains the very essence of what you want to convey to the voter. It is the core of your communication strategy. The way in which you communicate has to be in line with your message – medium and message have to be well-attuned. If you want to present yourself as a dynamic party promising change, do not make a poster with a picture of your party leader behind his desk making a telephone call. If you want

to present an image of serenity, authority and reliability, do not have your party leader join in with a group of skateboarding teenagers, as the Dutch Christian Democrat Prime Minister Balkenende once did. (Even worse, he fell off the skateboard...) If you are a member of a green party, do not make a TV commercial showing your party leader zigzagging across the country in a car, as Holland's green party did in the 2006 elections.

It is also important to take stock of the various media at your disposal. A number of different categories can be distinguished:

Media where your messages are not edited

- Media channels with proprietary content: party magazines, flyers, posters, the website, text messages, YouTube, viral videos – and in the future parties may run their own digital TV channel
- Government-funded TV commercials on public broadcasting channels
- TV commercials that you buy

Paid publicity is scarce by definition, because there is always a limit to what you can spend. This method has to be used with care. Parties generally have far smaller budgets than commercial organizations. Keep in mind that, for better or worse, most media campaigns come to a head in the last two weeks before the election. In Holland this means all parties spend most of their money all at the same time, suddenly flooding the media with commercials. This is pure overkill. The competition is murderous and the voter no longer sees the wood for the trees. Compare this with how businesses use advertising. Suppose all mobile telephone operators would spend their entire publicity budget in one month: consumers would be bombarded by special offers, but would only be confused by their number and diversity. Keep in mind also that in the final month running up to the elections, they already are constantly in the news. There are TV and radio debates and many other special programmes highlighting various aspects of politics and the campaigns.

Close attention also has to be paid to what you put in the commercials. It is practically impossible to forge an entirely new image for the party. The best propaganda takes the image that is already present in the minds of the voters and builds on that. Positive commercials have to confirm the positive associations already existing in connection with your party, while highlighting the key issues in your central message. Negative commercials have to confirm the negative associations already existing in connection with the other party. If you want to change your image, you have to start early and make sure to be very consistent. One slight mistake and this mission could fail.

Free publicity

Media exposure does not always have to cost money. A good plan or a playful stunt can also get the reporters' attention, and may lead to a newspaper interview or other forms of coverage on radio or TV – at no charge to the campaign chest. There are various ways of getting into the media, like putting out a press release, organizing a press conference or granting an interview. To achieve this it is crucial that you maintain a good relationship with members of the press. Keep the press informed and invest in personal contacts with journalists. You can organize meetings where you provide background information about the wider context of your campaign. Also grant them a scoop every once in a while. Be sparing with press conferences and write helpful press releases. Many politicians who are new in the field are a little intimidated by journalists. They should keep in mind that journalists are no different from anyone else, and suffer from the same insecurities, laziness and vanities as anyone else. And remember they need you as much as you need them. Treat them as you would anyone else, with respect. Be polite and helpful and do not call their objectivity into question. Be aware that the media are always extremely interested in:

- strategy (coalitions)
- scandals
- opinion polls
- disagreements and internal discord
- conflicts, fights
- persons rather than issues

Always prepare in advance how you will answer all potential questions journalists may pose on issues in these areas, and distribute those answers widely in the party. Any sign of internal discord can be fatal – opponents will pounce on it, the media will blow it out of proportion and you will suffer in the elections. Sometimes a scandal cannot be averted. In those cases, apply the rules for crisis management.

Opinion polls are also a source of many questions and doubts for politicians. Never believe a politician who says he is not interested in the polls. That cannot be true. But do be ready with an answer when journalists ask about the polls. Keep your reply light-hearted when the polls are unfavourable, stay level-headed when you are doing well in them. In the end, the only poll that really counts is the election itself.

Staying silent about your strategic considerations is sometimes hard, yet you have try. How you came to make a certain decision, what your considerations were, speculations about your opponents' motives – those are all things the media will be asking you about, but which you had better not disclose, at least not until the elections are over. The voters just want to hear what you want to achieve, how you plan to improve their country. Ignore the interest shown by political pundits and the media in the strategic decisions you make during a campaign. Do not grant them a look behind the scenes if it does not serve your party's interest.

Staying silent about strategy considerations is especially difficult when the following questions are asked:

- The coalition question: which government can we expect? (Usually a good way to avoid answering this: "First, it is up to the voters now to indicate what they want, and it would be arrogant to speculate about the outcome in advance.")
- "What if" questions about the election results: "If your party loses the elections, what will the consequences be for the party's leadership?"
- Questions about individuals, polls, the decision-making process, political opponents

No matter how hard it may be, during a campaign it is vital that you remain calm when faced with such questions, try not to tackle the issues they raise and get back to your actual message.

Communicating the message is the main thing. Always carefully prepare media appearances and debates. Mention the message a couple of times in the preparatory talks with the journalists, to make sure they know it and will recognize it. Your aim should not be to convince the journalist but to try and convince the voters. Always try to steer discussions in the direction of your message and keep repeating that message throughout the campaign. If the repetition is starting to drive you mad, you know you are getting there. Do not go out of your way to find new things to say, but do adjust the message to the specific target group you address. A public debate with students requires a different register than a question hour with old people. Also remember that vivid stories are more appealing than a dry list of facts: "facts tell, stories sell". Wherever you can, try to illustrate your views with concrete examples. Always talk about the *people* the party cares for, not about statistics. So don't say: "50% of the retired population struggles with feelings of loneliness." But instead: "Today I talked to a number of elderly people in the Sunrise Care Home, where Mr Smith from Hay-on-Wye told me he never receives any visits at all. And

Mr Smith is not the only one. 50% of our retired population struggles with feelings of loneliness."

In many countries free publicity is extremely important for political parties, because the campaign budgets allow little room for paid advertising. That is why politicians try to make their mark in regular TV shows – in news and current affairs programmes, but also in less serious programmes that put entertainment value first. Parties conduct research to see which TV programmes and magazines offer the best platform for their leader, and which ones he might just as well avoid, depending on their electoral appeal. Free publicity does, however, harbour some big risks. Once you get in trouble, things easily escalate. One slip-up and everyone starts repeating that you are not doing well in your campaign, especially reporters. As the saying has it, "reporters are repeaters". One bad poll and journalists will come flocking with questions. The same goes for other negative incidents which you would prefer to forget as soon as possible. Even worse, journalists keep files about politicians which they use for years. Every slip (fraud, sexual escapades or political gaffes) will come back to haunt you when are written up in the papers. The clean slate you start out with as a politician only lasts a very short time. Very soon a number of received opinions about you will start to attach themselves to your public image, and they are almost impossible to shed.

Also keep in mind that journalists are pressed for time, have little or no staff to assist them and often do not check their facts thoroughly enough. Always promptly refute any damaging and untrue statements made by your opponents therefore: before you know it their misrepresentation of the facts takes hold, and then it becomes much harder to root out. Also, under no circumstances should politicians appear in TV programmes that do not suit their public image or personality. Any reluctance or reservation will always shine through in their conduct, so they run a grave risk of coming across as stiff or insincere. If you cannot sing, do not appear on a karaoke show. If kite surfing is not your thing, do not let anyone persuade you to go kite surfing for the benefit of some TV show. The idea that all publicity is good publicity is certainly not true for politicians.

To a large extent, the media set the agenda in the public debate, but they are not immune to the influence of the different parties. It is up to you to keep the initiative and make sure you set the agenda. Campaigning is the art of setting the agenda: the party that wins is the party that manages to set the agenda, ensuring that both its own strengths and its opponents' weaknesses are at the centre of the public de-

bate. One technique parties use to achieve this is called framing. Framing means implicitly conjuring up a certain image, certain associations in the listener's mind, by using specific words in your message. If you keep repeating those words in the right place you can, for instance, effectively blacken an opponent's reputation. One example were the slurs on the PvdA leader's character in Holland's 2006 election campaign. In a TV debate the CDA leader said: "Mr Bos, you are being evasive and dishonest." Bos was unable to counter the attack, it really hit home and the accusation stuck. Things went from bad to worse when the PvdA tried to parry the attack by returning to it again and again with reproaches like "my opponents have been trying to tarnish my reputation for years" and "let's not turn this into a mud-slinging match" – which actually only served to reinforce the original message. The CDA's tactics were a copy of the Republicans' tactics against John Kerry in the US presidential elections. Bush persistently accused Kerry of changing his views at the drop of hat. This so-called flip-flop behaviour became Kerry's biggest stumbling block. The very word was on everybody's mouth and was consequently repeated in the media over and over again. In the end, it proved Kerry's undoing.

How to defend against negative framing? You should always refute the attack without, however, repeating it in your reply. After which, you should try to get the discussion back to a topic on which you know you can beat the opponent. Here the principle of "don't think of an elephant" applies: when you set someone a task and tell them that whatever they do, they should not think of an elephant, it becomes impossible for them to *not* think of an elephant. If a politician is unjustly accused of corruption, he should of course immediately deny the fact. But the most important thing is to immediately switch to attack mode and change the topic of debate as soon as you have voiced your denial. Above all, avoid being caught in a cycle of having to repeat the denial over and over again, because every mention gives people occasion to think: no smoke without fire. Always react promptly, therefore, but also move the fight to your opponent's front yard. Here as always, attack is the best form of defence. Make sure that you have professional spokesmen in your campaign who are at hand to repeat your message if necessary and correct possible errors or misapprehensions. Always give journalists your side of the story, because opponents are sure to give theirs. Influencing journalists and persuading them to tell your side of the story is called "spin": you give the truth a spin in order to shift focus onto the part of it that best serves your particular purpose. After all, facts are objective, but no two opinions are alike. Have ten people look at a painting and you will get ten different opinions about the painting's meaning. And just like any artist will try to convey his intentions as clearly as possible, political spin doctors do the same thing.

But where an artist works with a brush, they work with debates, speeches, opinion polls, policy proposals and other important political events. There is, of course a limit to how far you can spin the truth. If you lie, the truth will eventually come out.

Parties do well to exert as much control over their media appearances as possible. Another thing to prevent is overkill. In today's world there are so many communication channels and so many TV programmes that it is sometimes more advisable to make yourself scarce. This depends on how well-known you already are, of course. Smaller parties and their leaders may have to settle for what they can. If you do appear in a programme, run it through with the journalists beforehand in order to prevent unwelcome surprises: what will the topics be, what do you have to do, who else is invited, etc. If the journalist does not want to do this, it may be better to decline the invitation. And if it turns out journalists do not sufficiently check their facts, you have to ensure that you know all the relevant facts by heart and that your campaign team or other party officials are at hand to parry unjustified attacks or correct misapprehensions. Put pressure on journalists to ensure that they hear both sides of the argument before they write their articles. The media are so important that they deserve a central place in your campaign.

The press release

Journalists receive a great number of press releases every day, so you should ensure that yours stand out. Your message should be clear and the layout should be attractive and inviting. If at all possible, you should address your press release to a specific journalist by name, while sending a copy to his editor. Having sent out your press release, follow it up with a telephone call to the journalist in question to ask whether he has seen it and if so, if he is going to use it. A good press release should meet the following requirements: Keep It Short and Simple (KISS). It must use the central message. The actual news must be stated in the very first line, preferably in bold print. It must contain an answer to these five questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? It must use everyday language, no jargon. All press releases should have a uniform layout, consistent with the campaign's house style. Do not forget to put in the date and the campaign's or the party's logo. The text should be double-spaced with wide margins (providing room for notes) and contain the name, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the person issuing the press release.

The press conference

The following rules should be observed for all press conferences: ensure that the location reflects an appropriate image. Ensure that phone and e-mail facilities are

available. Ensure that there is a competent chairman to introduce the people at the table. Announce the reason for the press conference. Use the central message. Use everyday language and avoid long speeches. Allow sufficient time for questions.

TV and radio interviews

Most politicians are interviewed frequently. The results depend heavily on the circumstances, and these have to govern your preparation. Is it a live interview or will it be recorded and broadcast at a later time? Will it be edited, or broadcast as is? A golden rule during interviews is: listen, listen, listen. This seems simple enough, but in practice it turns out to be not only one of the most important things but also one of the hardest things to do well. Really listening to the interviewer prevents you from reeling off standard stories. If you listen you respond better to questions, you make an alert impression on the TV or radio audience, you come across as attentive and therefore both reliable and human, someone who understands people.

Of course in an interview, too, the message has to be central. Always ask yourself: what is my message, what do I want to convey? What should the listener or viewer take away from the interview? What kind of headline am I aiming for? Keep your audience in mind: avoid all use of political or academic jargon.

Be concise. Every complicated issue can always be reduced to a single core. That is what you have to look for. Practice what you want to say under the shower or in the car until you can put it in a nutshell. And with that we mean 20 seconds at the most.

Never underestimate your audience. Even if the average audience of a popular TV programme or newspaper is not highly educated, that does not mean they are stupid. They generally have a sharp nose for half-truths and "wriggling".

Be aware of the programmatic latitude you have. Make sure you know beforehand what you can and what you absolutely cannot say. If you are not at the top of the party hierarchy, you need to be given a mandate. If the mandate is unclear to you, it is wiser not to grant an interview, for a trained interviewer will relentlessly undermine you with the material you yourself provide.

Step back and try to think what impression your party makes on the average viewer or listener. Do not gloss over the mistakes your party may have made. Being open about past mistakes strikes people as honest and responsible.

Do not fill in the gaps in the interview. You may feel inclined to keep talking to bridge a gap if the interviewer seems to fall silent. Suppress that inclination: it is merely an interview technique to make you say more than you had intended.

Be aware of loaded questions. Often a journalist will pose a question containing an implicit assumption to which he tries to get you to assent unconsciously. For instance: "Your party is not doing well. What do you plan to do about that?" Before you realize it you may implicitly admit that your party is not doing well. Watch out for that. Ignore the journalist's assumption or explicitly deny it.

Do not think of an interview as a simple affair you can treat casually. Prepare yourself carefully. During the interview be sure to be yourself and be confident. Do not try out any wild new things. Talk as though you are explaining something to a teenager and try to act as naturally as possible – with one exception: keep your eyes on the interviewer at all times. If you look away even for a second, it will seem as though you are insecure, or trying to dodge a question. This does not inspire confidence. (Of course this matters only in TV interviews.)

And last but not least: an interview is never over until either you or the journalist have walked out the door. Journalists often like to coax statements out of you that you would rather not make. Consider this scenario: the journalist has switched off his sound recorder and put on his jacket. At the door he stops and says: "Strictly off the record, what do you really think of the party leader?" Do not fall for it! A journalist is never off duty. Be careful with so-called "off the record" statements. You never know whether a journalist will not use it anyway, after which there is no way back: "Okay I said that, but it was off the record..." No way. Better to keep your mouth shut!

Body language

In TV interviews, it is said, the impression you make on the audience is based 70% on how you look, 20% on how you speak and only 10% on what you actually say. So it is important that you make a good impression on camera. Do not wave your hands, do not look down, do not frown (something politicians are prone to), suppress unappealing or impolite habits (e.g. picking your nose) and never look straight at the camera. Always look over your shoulder before the start of an interview to check whether you happen to be standing in front of a strange advertisement or a group of exuberant school children or something else that may put a weird slant on your message or distract from it. Make sure you are well-groomed when you appear

on camera. There really is nothing wrong with retiring to the lavatory beforehand (for men just as well as for women) to fix your hair, get that poppy seed out from between your front teeth or touch up your make-up. Anything is better than looking like a fool in front of (hundreds of) thousands of viewers. This is also a job for the PR team: keeping watch over details like these.

Written interviews

Many of the guidelines already mentioned apply to newspaper interviews as well. Newspaper deadlines sometimes cause journalists to phone you and ask for a reaction on the spot. Your main interest, however, should be to give a cogent reply that serves the campaign well. So if they call for an interview, never forge ahead right away. Always have them call you back, even if only after five minutes. Take a moment to consider what you want to say. And there is nothing disgraceful about refusing an interview. Sometimes this is the wise thing to do. Always ask yourself what you could gain by giving an interview.

And if you do grant an interview, keep these things in mind:
Use the central message. You can never repeat it enough, just keep saying what you want to get across to the voters and do not get tricked into saying more than you want. KISS: Keep It Short and Simple. Be positive and forward-looking. Use simple words, no jargon: research has shown this works best. Illustrate your views with concrete facts and practical examples. Show initiative in the conversation and do not be afraid to wrap up certain topics yourself. ("Thank you / That's all I have to say about that for the moment.") Never lie and only talk about things you are sure about. Take your time when you give a reply. Never hesitate, do not get lost in details, do not borrow your opponent's terminology. Never show you are irritated, never take issue with the interviewer and always stay friendly. (If things really go wrong, better to end the interview.) After the interview, ask them to send you the text for approval, and ask the journalist if there is anything else they want. Stay in touch with them.

Golden truths when dealing with the media:

"You never get a second chance to make that first impression."
"Reporters are repeaters."
"People remember in threes."
"A fat preparation for a lean presentation."
"Facts tell, stories sell."
"Play the media game, don't try to make the rules."
"The medium is the message."

New media

It was a total surprise for everyone with an interest in the US presidential elections in 2004: the Democratic candidate who led the polls was a relatively obscure former governor of a small state, with no fortune to back him up and no visibly organized support base. Yet the national press considered Howard Dean to be a serious candidate. It would be another six months before the Democrats would choose their candidate, but Dean finished first in the preliminary elections organized by Moveon.org, a movement trying, through their website and protest actions, to give progressive American citizens a larger say in the elections. Tens of thousands of supporters met to discuss politics in web forums and blogs. More than a quarter of a million people had given their e-mail address to the Dean campaign team. He had also gathered a total of 54 million dollars in campaign donations, made up largely of small donations. That was all the more striking as American election campaigns had always depended on large donations from law firms and lobby groups. Dean avoided the potential conflict of interest inherent in this dependency by showing there was another way. Another thing he demonstrated was that election campaigns are no longer fought out merely on TV and in the newspapers, but also on the internet. Outside the US politicians have now started to take advantage of the new media as well. The Dutch PvdA leader, for instance, intensively uses new media to keep in touch with people in society. He has a web portal, a digital newsletter and a podcast, and he uses a social networking site like Hyves. And with the help of the internet Barack Obama has managed to build up a huge grassroots following that helped him – against expectation – to beat Hillary Clinton in the preliminaries... and the rest is history. Besides which he managed to raise tens of millions of dollars in campaign contributions from ordinary citizens through the internet.

Here are a couple of (uses of) new media.

Grassroots website

Of course every political party has its own website, but all too often parties treat it as no more than a billboard: only something to look at. The internet offers a lot of opportunities for interactivity. You can either make the party's own website interactive, or create a dedicated grassroots website to serve as a meeting place for people, for the exchange of ideas and discussion, to organize events and mobilize people. You can create a web forum to stimulate discussion. Visitors can be given the opportunity to add their own content with so-called wikis, a technology enabling people to create a site together, made famous by the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia. The major advantage of an interactive site is that people feel they become part of your

mission. The main drawback, according to some people, is that you lose control over part of your campaign. Many traditional politicians have great difficulty with that. The wish for total control is still a knee-jerk reaction in most parties.

Social networking
MySpace, Facebook and (in the Netherlands) Hyves are examples of popular social networking sites, some of which count millions of members. The Dutch Hyves network, for instance, has more than 7 million members – a considerable amount for a country with a total population of 16 million people. Subscribers create their own personal profile and links to friends who are also members. Other things you can do is search for former classmates and collect information about what other people are doing. Politicians use sites like these to get into contact with young people, who make extensive use of them. In America MySpace receives almost as many visitors as Google and Yahoo. The power of these networks is that politicians can build a personal relationship with the voter by way of blogs, photos and interactively answering questions. The latest development is politicians creating a social networking site of their own, witness http://my.barackobama.com/.

Podcasting
Podcasting is a combination of the words iPod and broadcasting. Although the technology involved is not restricted to the iPod, the iPod's success was a big step in the development of podcasting. Podcasters make audio files containing debates, radio shows or music shows available for download through the internet. Podcasting can be an interesting communication channel for politicians. The audience you address is totally different from the traditional newspaper readers or radio listeners. During the nationwide town council elections in the Netherlands in 2006, PvdA leader Wouter Bos published his own shows (Boscast FM) on his website www.wouterbos.nl, commenting on the events of the past week or giving his views on recent debates and other politicians.

Viral videos
Another growing phenomenon are viral videos. In the 2006 Dutch town council elections, the Socialist Party issued a video showing party leader Jan Marijnissen on his way to deliver a letter to whomever had received the video in his e-mail. This possibility of personalizing the video and then forwarding it to friends made it an instant hit. Many people spontaneously sent each other the video just because it was such good fun. That is extremely effective: the party could not have sent a bulk mail to all those people themselves, since unsolicited bulk mail or spam is illegal.

Digital TV channels
The rise of digital TV will enable political parties to start their own TV channel. Many political parties already offer this in a modest way, via their own website.

YouTube
A much cheaper alternative to a digital TV channel is putting films on YouTube or even starting a dedicated YouTube channel.

Text messaging
If a party compiles lists of supporters' mobile phone numbers, it can use text messaging to invite them to meetings or remind them to go vote.

Communication toolbox

KISS
KISS is an anagram for either "Keep It Short and Simple" or "Keep It Simple, Stupid". KISS is a motto to keep in mind at all times during the course, especially when teaching communication.

For instance when drawing up the central message:
You have to know exactly what you want to say and be able to express it concisely. Many people can give a lengthy talk and still not manage to convey the core message. They run the risk of getting bogged down in digressions or side-tracked by minor issues. That is not KISS. The core of a message consists of a few sentences defining the main theme of what you want to convey. This central message is brief, but you have to be able to talk about it for hours.

AIDA
AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. These are the different stages an individual goes through before reaching a decision or taking action. The desired effect of a political message usually is to get the people to do something, to take action – e.g. cast their vote for your party. The message totally overshoots the mark if you ask the audience to make too big a step. That is why in your presentation you have to start by drawing attention, making clear how the desired action is in the target group's own interest, in order to enhance their willingness (and maybe even desire) to actually take the step you wish them to take.

IDD: Information, Debate and Decision

If you have something to "sell", whether it is a political message or a vacuum cleaner, these three stages are always pertinent. It is very important that you strictly adhere to the above-mentioned order. If you make a decision first and only then start to provide information and instigate a debate, people will feel they are not taken seriously. What is the use of debating a decision that has already been made? People will feel misinformed, uninvolved and excluded, and tend to be against the decision regardless of its merits. This makes the opponents' job very easy, because they only have to latch on to this latent resentment and fear. An example of this was the Dutch government's campaign to promote the European constitution. The government had actually already made up its mind about this. The information given to the public came too late and lacked coherence, and the debate was subsequently dominated by fear as the government, having lost its authority in the eyes of most people, tried browbeating the voters into voting "yes" by suggesting that a "no" would plunge Europe into chaos.

Exercises

- *Make an inventory of the existing media in the country and analyse the possibilities of your party to be able to penetrate this media with your message. This can be done in working groups or plenary.*

- *Develope a media strategy for your party, keeping in mind the SWOT analysis, the context your party has to operate in and the availability of funds.*

- *Writing a press release for an event your party is organising.*

- *Doing a role-play in which a press conference in practised.*

Chapter 4
Speaking in public

4

Politics is all about getting your message across. A good speech is one of the best ways to do this. There are other ways, of course, like giving a press conference, sending out a press release, giving an interview or paying a visit to a company or organization. All of these methods, however, give you less control over what will make the news. Here are a few tips for writing and giving a successful speech.

Tips for writing a speech

1. Message, message, message: always first determine which message you want to communicate. What purpose does your speech serve? What do you want to convey to your audience? Only accept invitations for giving a speech if you think it will offer a good platform for disseminating your message. All too often requests for a speech are granted without this condition having been met, purely out of habit or as a favour. That is a waste of time – for the audience as well as the speaker and, last but not least, the speech writer. If you have determined in advance which message you want to convey in your speech, you will be more focused during the writing and compose a speech that will have a more lasting impression on you audience. Every good speech should convey a clear message.

2. A thorough preparation is essential for every speech. What is the occasion? Speeches can be held at a variety of functions: you can give a lecture, a preliminary speech for an open debate or a dinner speech. What will be your subject? Do you have all the necessary information or do you still have to collect data? What do you know about your audience? Who are they, what language do they speak? What are their interests, why do they attend? What do they already know about your subject?

3. Make sure you structure your speech clearly and rigidly. A clear structure is indispensable in any speech. It provides anchor points for speaker and audience

alike. After all, when reading a newspaper article, you can always browse back to reread the previous paragraph's argument. When listening to a speech, there is no way to push the rewind button. All the old advice from classic oratory is still valid: a clear structure is as important in a speech today as it was in antiquity. A good speech is hierarchically composed, carefully building up to a climax sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, applying the same basic scheme used in a novel: after a general introduction the narrative builds up to a climax about three quarters of the way through, which is followed by a conclusion that puts everything into the right perspective. A nice touch is to end with a coda containing food for thought, not unlike the way priests close their sermons with a morsel of wisdom or a snippet of moral advice to ponder on. Helpful structural devices to keep your audience on track are short summaries of what has gone before and what is to follow: "up till now I have talked about..." and "now to my next point, which is..." Always be sure to lavish extra care and attention on the start and the finish of your speech.

4. Use vivid and evocative language. Facts tell, stories sell. Always try to be evocative in your descriptions and use narrative techniques – as though trying to get the audience to picture your story in their head like a film. It is a sure-fire way of getting your message across. Ideally, the audience will find your story so recognizable that it totally identifies with it.

5. Speak plainly. Speeches have to be read out loud, so avoid long sentences. The audience does not have the opportunity to reread a sentence, so everything you say has to be immediately clear. Too many speeches are drenched in jargon, because in many organizations using jargon is the standard way of displaying your expertise and hence enhancing your status. But in a speech, jargon is absolutely taboo. Using jargon or obscure words merely alienates people – the audience will perceive you as a prig or a smart aleck and close its mind to your message. So always, always speak plainly. Does your old auntie understand what you are trying to say? If not, get back to the writing desk!

6. A spoonful of humour makes the medicine go down. Humour and wit are immensely useful tools for enlivening a speech and creating sympathy in the audience. This does not mean your speech should be riddled with hilarious jokes and one-liners – but a couple of witty remarks can really contribute to the success of a speech.

7. Another way to dress up and enliven a speech is the use of rhetorical devices like imagery and puns. Imagery makes your speech more vivid and may add some literary panache. Other useful literary devices are antitheses and parallel structures, alliteration, and three-part lists. Take care not to overindulge in this, but use it where appropriate. Literary devices can help make parts of your speech quotable, enhancing its chances of finding its way into the newspapers. Devices like these have resulted in some of the most memorable political quotes, such as Roosevelt's "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself", Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country", or Obama's "There is not a liberal America and a conservative America – there is the United States of America".

8. Make sure the media use your sound bites. The days of people gathering from far and wide to come and listen to a political speech are over. Nowadays, people get their information from bits and pieces of speeches on the news, so you have to make sure that the media pick up exactly those sound bites you want. There is a common misconception that sound bites or one-liners are spontaneous contrivances, cooked up independently of the speech's central message, but the opposite is true. A sound bite should grow organically from the line of thought in the speech, from its message. If it does not, it will bear no relation to the speech and never make its mark. You can, however, anticipate which parts of your speech might be picked up by the media as usable sound bites. There are a number of reasons why certain parts will stand a better chance than others. Applause, for instance, makes it easier for journalists to edit and isolate a sound bite. So try to ensure that the line you would like the media to pick up induces the audience to applaud. The British oratory expert Max Atkinson has researched the ways political speeches can generate applause. The major factors he identified were the use of contrasts, three-part lists, logical build-ups to a conclusion, words that refer to the party's ideological flagships, and the mention of popular party members.

Tips for delivering a speech

Before the speech: make sure you are on time. Check the room and the technical facilities (is everything in working order?). Shake hands, talk to people. Don't be nervous – after all, you are the expert here.

During the speech: you can consult your notes, but do not read from paper. Make eye contact with the audience. Make sure to smile and stand straight. Be yourself,

do not play-act. Use gestures to emphasize certain emotions. Take your time: you set the pace. Take a sip of water every now and then, or a natural pause. Vary the volume of your voice.

And if you do happen to lose the thread of your story: relax and take a sip of water. Ask the audience whether they have any questions. Repeat your last line, or repeat your central message. Try to distract the audience with a joke.

After the speech: ask people whether they liked your speech. Make notes for the next time. If the speech has been recorded, watch the recording with your assistants.

Exercises

The trainees can practice the theory by each giving a brief presentation of 1 to 3 minutes. Divide the group into smaller groups of 4 to 5 people. They have to decide on a target group and a message they want to convey to that target group. This will take about 20 minutes. The person giving the presentation on behalf of their group tells the other trainees which intended target group they are to be, and the other trainees try to put themselves in their place.
When the presentation starts, keep an eye on the clock. Wave to the speaker when he has only 20 seconds left. In the subsequent discussion evaluate the presentation on the basis of the main elements in the theory: did it have a central message, did it fulfil the KISS requirements, did it successfully address the target group, was it well and clearly structured, did it make use of the appropriate stylistic techniques?

Another possible exercise is to have each of the trainees prepare a one-minute speech that has to contain a message, key issues and motivation. One option is to record the speeches on video, so you can give detailed feedback afterwards. Obviously all this takes a lot of time and you have to see how many people you can give a turn. If there are too many trainees you can split them up into smaller groups.

Chapter 5
Debating

Politics cannot exist without debates. Debating is a means to win people over to your point of view. During a campaign, especially in the last week, political leaders and other party members often engage in debates with opponents. Whether it is a TV or radio debate or a meeting in a country pub, a debate is always an exciting event requiring thorough preparation. The Olympic maxim that participating is more important than winning does not cut any mustard in an election debate. More pertinent is Dutch soccer idol Johan Cruijff's observation that "if you don't shoot, you can't score". If you want to score, one of the things you have to do is make sure you really get the central message into your system. Your task in the debate is to convey that central message, your party's views and priorities. That is why you have to determine in advance what you want the journalists to report in their paper, which quotes you would like TV reporters to select for their news broadcast. Try to phrase your texts about the key issues in such a way that they really stick out. Try to think in terms of one-liners and quotes and use striking imagery, like "the strongest bodies have to shoulder the heaviest burden".

A thorough preparation is key. Practice a debate in advance, try to act out the opposition's point of view as faithfully as possible. Do not exceed your time limit: if you have been allotted 30 seconds for an opening statement, practice until you can actually deliver it within the allotted time. Enquire what the debate is going to look like: will you be standing or sitting? And if you are going to be standing, will it be behind a rostrum or on an open platform? Prepare replies to parry your opponent's attacks, and also prepare your own attacks on his weak points. This requires a thorough grasp of the facts. Take care, however, not to appear priggish or to get bogged down in details and abstract figures. Also, do not try to sway the journalist leading the debate. The people you have to sway are in the audience: the voters. It is them you have to get to vote for your party.

General tips

- You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Smile, be amiable, shake your opponent's hand and wish them luck.
- Three-part lists are easier to remember – both for yourself and for the audience. If you want to briefly state your party's goals, make sure it is a list of three items at the most.
- If a question is put to you, always give a clear answer first ("Yes, I am in favour of that" or "No, I am against that") before you start to explain it. Make sure that the gist of your answer is not lost in the haze of a lengthy explanation.
- Facts tell, but stories sell. Politicians who speak from experience and illustrate their arguments with vivid anecdotes have a better chance of success. The experiences of real people are better illustrations of your views than figures and statistics. So do not say: "25% of the citizens of Amsterdam live on benefit", but rather: "This morning I paid a visit to the Smith family in the Dapper Street in Amsterdam. They live on benefit. Do you know how hard it is to make do on such a pittance? Their children cannot join a sports club, they are in debt, they cannot afford healthy food."
- Make comparisons: "It is a crying shame that you are complaining about a tax raise on the purchase of expensive cars, while there are scores of people who are condemned to buy unhealthy kinds of food because they lack the money for anything better."
- Do not protest against or try to change the rules of the game, usually laid out by the media. Do not attack the chairman of the discussion if you do not like the way the debate is going: "Mr Chairman, could you try and keep this discussion civil?" This will only alienate the audience.
- Try to manage expectations. In the 2004 US presidential elections, George Bush, a weak debater, had to participate in three debates against John Kerry, who was much more adept at it. According to the polls, Kerry won all of the debates, but because people had such low expectations of Bush' debating skills to begin with, Kerry hardly profited from these victories.
- After the debate, the tug-of-war about the interpretation of the results begins. Assistants and supporters convey their view of the debate to journalists. "We are very pleased with his performance, especially the way he managed to spotlight his health-care plans." The overall effect the debates will have is in the hands of the journalists: they select the fragments for news broadcasts, and they summarize and comment on the debate in the papers.

Non-verbal behaviour:

- Non-verbal behaviour is hugely important: 70% of your message is communicated non-verbally. So do not slouch in your chair, yawn or pick your nose. You have to look cheerful and positive. This means you have to be well rested and well fed. A debater in an election campaign has to prepare much the same way an athlete does. The 1960 debate between Kennedy and Nixon was won by Nixon according to the listeners who only heard it on the radio. But for those who saw the debate on TV, Kennedy won because he looked a lot fresher and more presidential.
- Keep looking at people. Do not look at the chairman but at the opponent you are addressing. Also keep looking at anyone who attacks you. If you look away it suggests that the attack hit a nerve. If you attack someone else, you also have to look at that person, otherwise it looks as though you do not really believe in what you are saying.
- Remember that cameras catch everything. They will be filming you even when you are not speaking, so always maintain an active posture. Do not glance at your watch, it will only create the impression that you are longing for the debate to be over. Stay active in a non-verbal way: stay alert, draw the cameras' attention.
- Be decisive and stake out your priorities in the debate. You do not have to pounce on every single topic. If the serving tray with drinks has passed without your getting a glass, do not run after it but wait for the next time it comes round. Then you resolutely take the glass you want.
- Do not moan and groan when someone makes a point you disagree with. It makes a disagreeable impression.
- Do not touch your face with your hands. It makes you look nervous.
- Hand gestures: if you make any, make sure they are open and inviting.

Tone:

- Your tone of voice is crucial. Keep it spirited and positive: you enjoy the campaign, you want to convince people, it's a fun job. Always stay amiable.
- Use humour... if you are good at it! A good spontaneous joke is invaluable, but a rehearsed witticism that falls flat is lethal. When in doubt, refrain from joking.
- No personal attacks! Always say something positive (be courteous) before you attack someone's position.
- Never be arrogant.
- Never be condescending or disparage other people's points of view. Everyone has the right to their own views, no matter how silly (in your view). Always stay respectful, even when you disagree.

- Attack the opponents' views, not their character. Do not belittle them. A good tactic is to start with a phrase like: "You make a number of valid points, but there is one thing I fundamentally disagree with..."
- Do not start swearing at your opponents and do not make comparisons with historical enormities like World War II, no matter how distasteful you think the other party's views are.
- Beware of topics in which you have a personal stake. They make it difficult to control your emotions. Your opponent can exploit that by provoking an emotional reaction.
- Try to listen to alternatives and keep an open mind towards new ideas, be confident without being arrogant. Viewers/voters' reactions will mirror your attitude. An aggressive attitude will evoke aggression. An open attitude will invite an open attitude on the part of the viewer/voter.

Tricks:

- Spring an unexpected proposal on your opponents, and ask them to subscribe to this proposal on the spot: "If everyone here agrees that parents ought to pay less for their children's education, I propose that we agree here and now to make textbooks freely available to everybody." This has a number of advantages: you make clear what you stand for, you make a practical proposal, you challenge the opponents, and by referring to a common interest you create the impression of rising above party divides. Of course this is possible only with a credible and workable proposal.
- Put questions to your opponents about facts or figures they are not likely to have at hand: "Do you know how many schools we have in our country? And do you know how many pupils they have on average?" "You say you defend the interests of people with minimum benefit, but do you actually know how much money a family on benefit actually has to spend on food?" Of course you can only do this if you yourself know the answers, and the facts you inquire about are not irrelevant.
- Use the rhetorical device of three-part structures. In the 2006 Dutch elections the PvdA's Wouter Bos asked his opponent: "Can you name three measures you have taken to increase the relative tax burden on people with high incomes? No? Give me at least two then! Can you name one single measure you have taken?"
- Rise above party divides. Experienced and reputable politicians often withdraw from the fray of political debates and try to make an impartial impression with conciliatory words. It is up to their opponents to try and draw them back into the tug-of-war of the debate.

- Take your opponents off guard by confronting them with statements they have made in the past. This requires that you have detailed knowledge of everything your opponent has ever said in the past. Even if it was twenty years ago, it still remains relevant. If you can catch your opponent contradicting himself during the debate, it can become an important weapon, and one that will haunt them during the rest of the election.
- Exaggeration: "Because you have done nothing to combat poverty, the fastest-growing 'supermarket chain' in our country is that of food distribution charities." "This government has done nothing to help people with low incomes, but never before has our country seen such an increase in the number of millionaires with a swimming pool in their garden." You have to beware not to stray too far from the truth with your exaggerations, and be prepared for lightning-speed counter-attacks: "You merely want to give those people more money, we want to give them jobs. Now that is what I call social responsibility."
- Forcing your opponent to make an impossible choice by presenting them with an imaginary dilemma: "If you had to choose between cutbacks in health care or buying new fighter jets for the air force, what would you choose?"
- Presenting opinions as fact: "It is a simple fact that every single person in this country is in favour of investing in care for the elderly."
- Quoting third-party sources: "Research has shown that the citizens of this town reject the council member's plans to raise parking fees."
- Generalizations: "All the renovations taking place in my street are being done by cheap Polish labourers. Everywhere in Holland Poles are stealing our jobs."
- The pre-emptive strike. Countering an anticipated attack before it has even started is a possible way of neutralizing its threat. You can do this by cornering opponents on their own turf. In the 2006 Dutch elections, for instance, the PvdA had prepared a fierce attack on the Christian Democrats' views about employment protection. What we were not prepared for, however, was that the Christian Democrats would actually launch their own attack on our views before we did. This made it impossible for us to "score points" on this issue. In soccer terms: take the defence to the opponents' half of the field. Another way of cutting the ground from under the opponents' feet is by saying something like: "I already know you are going to complain about our plans for a new highway, but so far I haven't heard you offer a single alternative solution." Be careful with this instrument, however, because it does highlight the weak points in your own case.

Exercise

At the end of a campaign training course you could organize an election debate. Four groups have about 20 minutes to prepare for the debate. An independent chairman is appointed, and a number of observers merely watch, to check if the participants apply the theory and to provide feedback. Choose a simple subject about which opinions are divided. E.g. the government has to make a cutback of one billion euros and proposes to cut down on care for the elderly.
Have the debate last about 20 minutes. For instance: 4 participants give an opening statement of 3 minutes each, in which interruptions are allowed after the first 2 minutes. After this each participant is given 1 minute for a closing statement.

Chapter 6
Organization

Political parties or special interest organizations within a party (for young people, women, businesses, minorities, elderly, etc.) generally strive to find the most effective way to achieve their goals. For special interest groups this is usually more straightforward than for a party, since they generally have a single aim broadly supported within their own group – although their effectiveness is sometimes hampered by traditions. In this chapter we will first discuss the party organization in general, and then focus in more detail on organizations for young people and women.

Few political parties have the luxury of building a new organization from the ground up. We call this a luxury because over the course of time existing political parties often become burdened with outdated organizational structures that are no longer effective. Unfortunately, it is often very hard to change existing structures. Party members, local chapters and party executives often cling to the old structures out of fear that a change will diminish their power, or simply because they do not think change serves any purpose. In addition, the members of any party can be categorized as follows:

- The workers, go-getters who prefer not to be hampered by rules and regulations
- The orthodox, sticklers for detail who always put strict adherence to the rules first
- The pragmatists, who put effectiveness first
- The ideologues, not interested in organizational matters and always trying to have debates run along ideological lines

Of course, these are merely archetypes. Few people if anybody fit any of these moulds exactly. It takes all sorts to make up a party: you always need a mix of these types, and exactly which kind of mix you require depends on the goal of your party. In this chapter, we will start with the assumption that there is a desire for renewal within the party, or that a group of people has decided to found a new party.

Example of a party organization: the PvdA

The PvdA, founded in 1946 as a continuation of the pre-war social democratic SDAP dating from 1894, is a party with about 61,000 members. It has 450 chapters spread over 483 towns and villages. It is divided into 12 regional sections, one for each of the 12 Dutch provinces. The PvdA participates in the elections and in the administration on all levels: local, regional, both houses of the national parliament and the European parliament (27 of whose 785 members are Dutch). It is a highly decentralized party granting its local chapters a large measure of autonomy: they decide who to nominate as candidates, they write their own election programme and after the elections they decide with which parties they want to collaborate in a local coalition. The same goes for the provincial administration. On the national level most of the power resides with the party conference. Every chapter sends delegates to the conference. The larger the chapter, the more weight their vote carries. One thing the delegates vote about is the list of candidates for the national and European parliaments. They also elect the party's executive committee every other year, and determine the party's future course by deciding on policy documents and election programmes. When the PvdA takes a seat in government, the party organizes a conference to vote on the new government's policy programme and the proposed cabinet members. Since 2002, the influence of ordinary party members has increased. They can now cast their vote for the new party leaders in the national and European parliamentary elections.

Founding or renewing a party

Any attempt to renew a party should start with a thorough analysis of the existing structures: what works well, and what has to be improved? When you found a new party, you have to develop an organization tailored to the target group, the intended strategy and the available means.

Most parties will at least have these two goals:

1. Develop a coherent and convincing world view, an ideology
2. Gain as many parliamentary seats and as much executive power as possible

Four types of parties can be distinguished:

1. Purist parties: for these parties their political and/or religious ideology comes first, while the acquisition of power is secondary. These parties are hardly – if at all – prepared to make compromises. They are parties of the true faithful with a coherent ideology.
2. One-issue parties: these are founded to serve one single concrete goal or a narrowly defined target group, e.g. one particular ethnic group, women, the environment, animal rights, elderly people, etc. Once they enter an election they are suddenly forced to develop a more comprehensive ideology.
3. Traditional parties: parties working within a coherent ideological framework and striving for the gradual acquisition of power. This usually takes place in small steps, the party's power spreading slowly but surely, from strength to strength.
4. Power parties: these are parties founded to support the establishment. They are often founded when a strong leader figure is trying to gain power. This type of party is common in countries with a presidential system, very rare in parliamentary systems.

Most social democratic parties in Western and Eastern Europe are traditional parties. International socialist organizations like the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the Socialist International have a hard time collaborating with parties of the other three types.

- Purist parties are often unable to gain power and tend to remain marginal.
- One-issue parties often have views that are too opposed to the social democratic ideology to make fruitful collaboration possible, and are rarely willing to compromise.
- Power parties do often try to collaborate with major ideological movements in an attempt to gain legitimacy. However, collaboration with social democratic parties rarely succeeds since these parties tend to have widely different views about internal party democracy, transparency and fundamental (social democratic) principles.

How are these parties organized?

Power parties are primarily focused on acquiring power in elective bodies and participating in government. Their members usually have little to say, as the party is ruled by a small group of people at the top. Gaining prominence in a party like this depends on who you are and who you know, rather than on your abilities. The party leadership usually decides who is appointed for certain positions on every level, from local party chairmen or town council members to the national party chairman.

Traditional parties have a strong membership base. The members participate in the decision-making process through formal party structures. Traditional parties are often strongly decentralized, with local and regional branches having a large degree of independence. Making a career in this type of party tends to be a long-term affair: you usually have to run through all the various levels in order to make it to the top.

Purist parties and one-issue parties are often very active in society. They are rooted in social movements or NGOs, and they frequently form alliances with NGOs to coordinate a protest action. Often they have no seat in parliament, nor have they ever participated in government. Parties like this often run into trouble when they do get elected because it forces them to make compromises and to express views about matters that are "extraneous" to their central interests. As soon as such a party gains seats in parliament, the organization often tends to focus on protest actions to support them.

When you intend to found a new party or renew an existing one, it is crucial that you first determine what you want to achieve and what type of party you desire. In other words: why do you want to go into politics? Because of a certain issue? On behalf of a certain target group? Out of conviction, a clearly defined ideology? Or is it for pragmatic reasons? Are you after quick success or long-lasting influence? Do you want to gain influence on the local, regional or national level? Do you want a party with many members who have a lot of influence? In other words: what is your goal, and what is your strategy to achieve this goal? The answers to these questions should guide your choice for a particular organizational model.

Important core functions of political parties

A party has a number of important tasks to perform. We distinguish between internal tasks (aimed at the members) and external tasks (aimed at the world at large).

Internal tasks
Internal communication (members' magazine, website, announcements, etc.)
Training and education
Party development
Finances
Secretariat
Research
Personnel and organization
Information technology
Legal support
Membership administration
Contacts with regional organizations and local chapters
Special interest groups within the party, like young people, women, elderly, etc.

External tasks
External communication to the media
Policy development
International contacts
Membership drives
Scouting new talent
Managing volunteers
Fund-raising
Campaigns
Events

Organizational structure of a youth organization

Most political parties have an independent branch for young people. These youth organizations are very important in providing young people with an opportunity to get acquainted with politics and gain experience. Not all youth organizations are similar. We distinguish three archetypical functions of youth organizations, but of course combinations of these qualities are common as well:

- Protest-oriented organizations
- Administration-oriented organizations
- Anarchistic organizations

Furthermore, there are two archetypal ways for such youth organizations to relate to their "parent party". They can be:

- Independent organizations that are not accountable to the party and have a programme of their own
- Organizations that put themselves at the service of and are dependent on the parent party

Protest-oriented youth organizations

Target of the organization: achieve political results by organizing demonstrations and other events and getting young people involved in them. Events are planned both at local and national levels: local protests aimed at local issues and national protest campaigns aimed at national issues. The organization's executive committee coordinates the various nationwide efforts. It organizes regular national meetings

to plan demonstrations and monitor the success of national campaigns. All campaigns and protests are focused on issues that matter to the target group, i.e. young people.

Campaign targets:
- Draw attention to the organization's views: the protest campaign is intended to propagate a point of view or to achieve a concrete goal.
- Draw attention to the organization's existence: actively propagating views that people can identify with is a way of bringing the organization to people's attention, building up a reputation and recruiting new members and sympathizers.

Meetings are organized to discuss the progress of the organization's activities. What are the hot topics in society? How do we respond to this? What are our priorities? At the end the campaign is evaluated and a new campaign planned.

Campaigning instruments:
The shape of the campaign depends on your goal. The activities can vary from mild to very radical, with everything in between. Do not lose sight of the goal and of your target group! Some options are: organizing a debate, handing out leaflets on the street, a protest march, distributing soup to the homeless. After each event you evaluate whether the intended goal has been achieved. How was the event organized? What went well, was there room for improvement? Remember that the activities are carried out by volunteers, so never forget to thank them for their efforts.

The advantage of this organizational structure is that you focus on concrete issues that fit in with your ideology and the concerns of your support base. It is an active way of influencing the political agenda without getting bogged down in endless meetings and bickering. It remains a committed and high-profile organization influencing politics from outside the mainstream. This makes the members feel actively involved in politics. There are drawbacks to this as well: protest activities may become an end in themselves, which will eventually deter young people who have an interest in politics but are not keen on protest activities.

Administration-oriented youth organizations
This type of youth organization mainly focuses on politics and on the parent party. The members are the heart of the organization: most of them are active in the local chapters, and a number of them operate at a national level. Local chapters are autonomous and free to plan their own activities. If these touch on national issues,

however, they are obliged to stick to the official views of the organization. These views are arrived at by ballot at national conferences. The national executive committee has the classic form of chairman, vice-chairman, international secretary, treasurer, etc. The national executive committee is responsible for organizational and political issues. Every member of the committee has a clearly defined range of duties and responsibilities.

Aims of this type of youth organization:
- Defend the interests of young people
- Get young people involved in politics
- Gain support for its own views within the parent party
- Gain support for its own views from other organizations in society

Ways to achieve these aims:
- Found new local chapters and keep these healthy and active
- Develop and distribute documentation, e.g. a member magazine and leaflets
- Organize and facilitate protest events
- Collaborate with other organizations

The advantage of this structure is that it provides members with an opportunity to develop a political antenna and hone their skills at speaking in public, debating, conducting workshops, and holding and attending conferences and meetings. The major disadvantage is that the organization risks becoming a copy of the parent party and getting bogged down in the same meeting culture. The idea is that the youth organization grooms its members for a future in the parent party, but if the organization becomes too bureaucratic it may only deter young people. This type of organization puts less emphasis on organizing events and protests. Although these are not ruled out, they are only one type of instrument used to achieve goals.

Anarchistic organization
This type of organization consists of an informal group of young people who have some kind of relation to the parent party. There is no formal membership. The main target is to make an active contribution to the parent party. The individual motivation of its "members" is to gain some experience in politics, but in contrast with the other two types of organization this one has no formal or institutional ties with the parent party. Its ambition is to influence the organizational and programmatic development of the parent party, but emphatically not to gain a position of power within that party. This organization's existence entirely revolves around its activities. It

is these that help them gain new volunteers and sympathizers. These activities usually do not involve protests and demonstrations.

Possible activities:

- Faxing or e-mailing a weekly newsletter about developments in the parent party
- Organizing stage events with a mix of politics, film, debate, music, stand-up comedy, lectures – something that really appeals to the young crowd
- Experimenting with new technologies
- Sending out so-called "private eyes" (A group of active young people go to a town and try to find out what the major issues are and what changes the residents would like to see. At the end of the day the result of this investigation is presented to the politicians in an informal setting, like a pub meeting.)
- Organizing political pub meetings

Advantages:

- No formal structures, no bureaucracy
- Few meetings (with the accompanying meeting culture), but many interesting activities that yield a lot of energy and new volunteers
- No risk of copying the parent party and its bad habits
- Focused on activities that appeal to young people
- By speed of action and active member participation, members quickly acquire new skills
- Plenty of opportunities to exert influence on the party leadership in an informal way
- A rich yield for the parent party in terms of new talent, new volunteers, fresh ideas and new technologies to be used in future elections

Drawbacks:

- Since it lacks formal structures, everything depends on the personal contacts of the leading figures in this movement
- No guarantee of long-term continuity
- Wobbly financial base: no members, no membership fees
- Heavily dependent on the support of the party leadership, without which the movement's survival chances are slim
- The fact that acquiring power is not a goal will eventually frustrate the active members, because it remains unclear whether your work pays off (the pursuit of power is the essence of politics!)
- The parent party runs the risk that the movement publishes articles, makes public statements or organizes activities that are not in line with its own views

Youth organizations can be categorized not only by organizational type, as described above, but also by the relation they bear to the parent party. We distinguish three types of relationships.

Dependent youth organizations

This type of organization is closely linked to the parent party. All members who fulfil the minimum age requirement have to become a party member before they can become a member of the youth organization. This means that the organization is not just an ideological organization for a specific target group (young people) but an organization within the parent party. All members of the youth organization subscribe to the tenets of the parent party. The youth organization fulfils a supportive role within the parent party and is not expected to have independent views.

Advantages: strong ties with the parent party. Strong influence on the parent party in issues that concern young people, because the youth organization's members are also voting members of the parent party. A youth organization that has a harmonious relationship with its parent party can be a real boon to the party.

Drawbacks: the youth organization is obliged to defend the parent party's views even when it does not agree with them. The organization's strong ties with the party leadership may result in young people being mobilized merely to promote the party's main policies instead of focusing on issues that actually matter to young people themselves. Forcing the youth organization to toe the line under all circumstances is not an ideal way of developing critical minds and offering insight in how political processes work.

Independent youth organizations

This type of organization is independent of the parent party. Its members do not have to be a member of the parent party and may even be a member of another political party altogether. This organization develops its own views on political issues independently of the parent party. It has its own political programme, which is not identical to that of the parent party. The youth organization often collaborates with the parent party in local, regional and national elections, and in return tries to get younger candidates in eligible positions on the party's candidate lists.

Advantages: strong ties with the parent party, but independent enough to criticize the parent party. This creates a healthy relationship, a win-win situation for both parties. They can operate independently, better enabling them to make the headlines

separately. The organization's members develop a critical mind and act accordingly. Lots of room for debate.

Drawbacks: potential for political conflicts between the organization and the parent party, which the outside world may perceive as internal party conflicts. Political opponents and the media may exploit these conflicts. The youth organization's loose ties with the parent party and its sometimes swaggering independence may cost the parent party an important group of volunteers (young people) during election campaigns.

Youth organizations without parent party

This type of organization does not have ties with any parent party but exists in its own right. Organizations of this type exist in a number of countries. Some are breakaway factions of a political party, but some are just independent organizations founded by enthusiastic youths who have no ties to existing political parties, but do have a clearly defined political goal.

There are examples of independent youth organizations in Georgia, Russia and Azerbaijan that have broken away from political parties. This may happen when there is a conflict between the youth organization and the party. Independent existence is difficult for these organizations, so you see them trying to find a future role for themselves. They are organizations in transition. Sometimes such organizations develop into real political parties, sometimes they rejoin the old parent party and sometimes they end up joining a new parent party.

OTPOR in Serbia, KMARA in Georgia, PORA in Ukraine and Zur in Belarus were all youth organizations founded to combat the political establishment and promote democratization. Although these are not youth organizations in the traditional sense, they did have an explicitly political goal. To achieve this goal they collaborated with opposition parties and their youth organizations. OTPOR, KMARA and PORA were very successful and were a vital force for democratization. They managed to unite young people of different political persuasions in difficult circumstances by devoting themselves to a clear and unambiguous goal. As soon as that goal had been achieved, these youth organizations fell apart. Some members joined political parties, others tried to transform OTPOR and PORA into political parties. This was doomed to fail: as soon as the common enemy had been defeated, these movements lost their raison d'être.

In this chapter we have discussed a number of archetypes. In reality, of course, many organizations are a mix of different types, and they always develop themselves. In addition to which, we are dealing with young people, and consequently volunteers, who may change their priorities from year to year.

Women in politics

Traditionally, social democratic and socialist parties put the empowerment and increased political participation of women high on their agenda. All over the world women are prevented from developing their full potential both in politics and in daily life. In 2007 only 18% of all parliamentarians worldwide was female. There are still countries where even a debate about issues like the political participation of and discrimination and violence against women is still taboo.

Barriers to political participation

Research shows that various factors contribute to the reduced political participation of women:

- Political factors: lack of support from within the party, lack of collaboration with women's organizations and other NGOs, insufficient access to education and to the ballot
- Socio-economic factors: poverty, illiteracy, the pressure of having to combine paid work with household duties
- Cultural factors: traditional role models, lack of confidence, negative image of politics, media coverage

Both political parties and women's organizations play a vital role in the fight for gender equality. At the same time, political parties tend to be male strongholds. Only 11% of all party leaders in the world is female. In most countries it is the parties who select candidates for parliamentary election – in this sense, they tend to have a gatekeeper function.

Just like young people therefore, women organize themselves independently of a political party. They have their own interests to defend – interests that are not always high enough on the agenda of the various parties.

An agenda of one's own

If a group of people decides to found their own organization outside the party, they

do this because they have certain interests to defend: issues to do with the position and the specific problems of their target group within society. This does not mean that women's organizations care only about women's problems. They may want to influence a number of different policy areas.

The agenda should meet the following requirements:

- It should offer a solution for the problem: what can be done about it?
- The organization should be able to achieve the proposed solution: how exactly is the organization going to solve the problem?
- It has to be the right moment to put this priority on the agenda: what can be done about it now? Is this the time to act, or are we acting prematurely?
- There has to be a clearly identifiable target group benefiting from the proposed solution: whom are we trying to help?
- The organization has to be able to reach out to this target group: do they appreciate your involvement? Do you know where to find them?

Once the agenda has been set, it is time to start promoting it and to generate publicity for the organization.

Example: Holland's "Red Women"

In the Netherlands up until 1995, the PvdA had a women's organization called the "Red Women" that defended the interests of women both within and outside the party. In 1995 this organization was discontinued and integrated into the party. The reason was a lack of new members: young women in the party felt less and less inclined to fight for gender equality on their own, separately from the men in the party. They wanted to be active in the political mainstream and thought the Red Women organization was too inward-looking. Besides, many of the goals feminists had fought for in the previous decades had by now been achieved, which created a general feeling that the emancipation struggle was at an end. This gradually weakened the support for a separate women's wing within the party, so that its influence waned.

But it was premature to conclude that the emancipation struggle – both within the PvdA and in society at large – was over. In the Netherlands in 2008 women are still heavily under-represented in politics. The portion of women in town councils after the 2006 elections is still only 26%. And the percentage of women in administrative positions on the local level is even less than 20%.

This is still an issue requiring attention. The PvdA does this by facilitating two integrated women's organizations: The PvdA Women's Network (PWN) and the Multi-Ethnic Women's Network (MEW). The PWN, founded in 2001, is a network open to all female PvdA members interested in gender issues. It strives to increase the number of women in political office, points out the gender aspects of existing political issues and puts its own issues on the agenda. The PWN organizes a number of national events, like the annual PvdA Women's Day, and it offers support to women who want to be (more) politically active. The MEW, founded in 1996, is a network of women taking a special interest in issues of ethnicity and integration, and the participation of female aliens, migrants and refugees. In addition to this there are also more easily accessible regional women's networks, in order to stimulate political participation closer to home.

For all these networks it is crucial that they look beyond the boundaries of their own target group. It is important to find support elsewhere. If you achieve results and expand your network of allies, your organization automatically becomes a more appealing and influential factor within the party. Your power is based less on the strength of your own supporters than on that of your allies! An important group of allies in this respect are men.

Strategy

Strategy development is the subject of another chapter. Everything in that chapter of course applies to women's organizations too. What follows are a few remarks tailored to the subject of strategy in the context of women's organizations.

There is no standard strategy for promoting women's political participation. The different cultural and political contexts in each country determine the effectiveness of different instruments. In Jordan, for instance, the women's movement has successfully pushed for reforms by an alliance with the royal family (Princess Basma and Queen Rania), while in Sweden women have exerted influence through organizations allied to political parties. Swedish party leaders pride themselves on being feminists, while in Jordan the word feminist still carries negative associations (aggressive, obsessed with sex, hatred of men, Western-oriented).

Here are a few strategies by which women's organizations allied to political parties can strengthen women's influence:

- Increase the number of external allies. Depending on the nature of the solution you are striving for, you can draw up a list of potential allies. These can then be

approached to ask if they want to support you on that issue. For this you need to build up a relationship with the ally in question. Remember they have to go through the stages of informing, opinion-forming and creating involvement before you can ask them to take action. Final agreement on a common target is subject to negotiation (see the modules about negotiation and communication). Do not forget that males can be powerful allies!

- Raising awareness about the importance of political participation. Campaigning for this together with various NGOs and celebrities can increase the issue's visibility and broaden support among the general public.
- Investing in potential female candidates. Scouting, training, and organizing accessible network events stimulates the growth of female talents.
- Campaigning for measures that help get women in political office. In many countries gender quotas have led to increased political participation and representation. In other countries family law reform improves the position of women in society in general.
- Collecting data and doing research about women's political participation. This provides insight into trends and deeper causes.
- Mainstreaming gender equality. Not treating gender equality as a separate issue but incorporating it into the wider political, social and economic debate helps to highlight its links to other important issues and increases support.

Many women's organizations feel they depend on the party, but in fact it is the other way round: any modern party that wants to appeal to a large voter base needs women. This is particularly true for social democratic parties, since the combination of a stable economy and social security they offer is something that particularly appeals to female voters.

Exercises

Divide the trainees into groups and have them think about what the priorities of a women's organization should be. Have them formulate a goal and see if it meets the requirements set out in the chapter about strategy.
Have the participants make a SWOT analysis of the women's organization.
Have the participants brainstorm about the women's organization's target group. They have to explain why this target group is important for the party and invent a micro message and an activity for this target group.

Campaign organization

The abovementioned remarks about the party's organization are valid especially when there are no elections in the offing. An election campaign puts heavy demands on an organization. To conduct a successful campaign, you should start forming a campaign team at least a year before the elections.

There are two basic approaches. The first option is to form a more or less independently functioning organization within the organization. This is the so-called war room model. An entire department is freed up for this team, and sometimes it even gets an entire building. The organization recruits the ablest people from the existing organization and experts from the outside, as well as volunteers and interns. Hard work is the rule, and time-consuming meetings are limited to a bare minimum. This organizational model is not unlike that of a mob family: a loyal and closed community that keeps criticism indoors and projects a positive image to the outside world. The main disadvantage is that such a hermetic organization is also closed to fresh ideas and useful criticism from the outside. The internal dynamics of such a group may lead to tunnel vision. In addition, the rest of the party may start to feel excluded from the campaign. And finally, this is an expensive solution.

The second option is to have the existing organization conduct the campaign, with the help of some external reinforcements. The main drawback of this is that the people responsible for the campaign often have other duties as well, which may lead to a conflict of interest. Also, during campaigns the party has to operate ten times more swiftly than usual. A party usually has a very democratic structure, but in a campaign a clear chain of command has to be put in place. What should be avoided at all costs is copying the meeting culture of the existing organization, which will result in a slow, formal and bureaucratic decision-making process.

There is a third option, which is a mix of the first two: a war room is set up within the existing organization, having all the characteristics described above. Clear agreements are made about a short chain of command and a swift decision-making process. Discussion is limited to the absolute minimum. People who ordinarily have special mandates or positions now have to adapt to the campaign circumstances. The advantage is that you do not exclude a large part of the party: all party members feel involved because you are all in this together. This increases the available manpower and creates a sense of involvement that can really benefit the party until well after the elections.

Campaign team

The campaign is always a collective effort of a group of people. That is why it is important to have a smoothly running campaign organization. It can be a small group of three persons or a team of ten people. There is no single ideal size for a campaign team – this depends on tactical considerations that may vary from party to party and depending on the size of the town/region/country, the political options, the available time, the size of the party and the knowledge and skills of the people. There is, however, a minimum size. A campaign team should consist of at least three people: a campaign coordinator, the political leader and someone responsible for communication. In this basic version, the coordinator is also the treasurer of the campaign chest.

Conditions for the campaign team

The campaign team will only function well if a real team spirit arises and all the team members feel they are engaged in a joint effort. To achieve this it is important to agree beforehand on the methods to be used and on what exactly is expected of everybody. Take heed of the team members' differences in personalities. (What might cause irritations? What is each person's strong suit? How do you maintain a fun atmosphere?) Have everyone explain exactly what their concerns and motivations are: what drives them to make an effort for the party, and in the campaign?

Make sure you not only involve the old hands in the campaign, but also make room for new talent (young people and/or people with different ethnic backgrounds). Try to mobilize broad support for the campaign team. The elections are an excellent opportunity to involve people from outside the small group of party familiars in party activities. Finally, it is important to give the campaign team a special status within the organization. It should not be hampered by vested interests, and be given enough (financial) leeway to achieve an election victory.

A number of aspects of a campaign organization

Political leadership
The party leader also heads the campaign team. He is responsible for the programmatic side of the campaign. He also has a say in the strategy, and the other campaign members advise him on the best ways to implement that strategy in the campaign. The campaign manager mainly works behind the scenes, but the political leader is constantly in the spotlights. During a campaign he is the public face of the party.

Campaign coordination/management
The campaign manager (or coordinator) has a central role in the campaign organization. This is the person responsible for the execution of the campaign, whose main task is making sure everybody sticks to the campaign plan (see below). This is done in collaboration with other members of the campaign team, each of whom have clearly defined duties. Campaign managers liaise between the campaign team, the MPs and the party leadership. They chair the campaign team meetings and evaluate the campaign after the elections have taken place.

Campaign research and strategy
Before every good campaign you need to conduct thorough research. In this research you chart everything you need to know to determine the campaign strategy, like the available media, the available talent among the members, the party's network, the issues at stake, how both the party and its opponents have performed during the past term and what their respective electoral positions are. The campaign research is part of the preparation before drawing up a campaign plan.

Monitoring the competition
One unit within the team compiles as much information as possible about the opponents. Public statements, plans, voting behaviour, election programmes, interviews, websites, everything should be taken into account. This information should be mined for material that can help you corner the opponent in a debate and mount an attack on his views. In addition, you have to anticipate anything your opponent might find about you, in order to know what kind of attacks to expect during the campaign.

Rapid response and media monitoring
This is a unit within the team that keeps tabs on what happens in the media. All public statements made by opponents should immediately be noted and responded to where appropriate. The people in this unit watch TV and listen to the radio 24 hours a day, they read all the papers and scour the internet for news. This unit, too, should find material that helps you corner opponents in a debate and mount attacks on their points of view.

Press liaison
A campaign's success depends on the party's media image. Voters are swayed not only by the views expressed in the election programme, but also by the way those views are brought to their attention. Does the party inspire trust, does it clearly com-

municate what it stands for, is the message clear and is the party open to ordinary citizens' opinions? The party's image is created in large part by the media. To keep some control over this, it is important to thoroughly think through your position and present a united front to the media, even at times of crisis or internal conflicts. That is why you should assign one individual the task of liaising with the press, or at least coordinating other party members' contacts with the press.

Communication means
In a campaign you need message carriers. These can be hand-outs like summaries of the election programme or nice little gadgets, but also the campaign newsletter, questionnaires and the website. These are all useful means of communication, but do take care that medium and message are one, that form and content are in harmony. Appoint one person to take care of all communications, in order to preserve a uniform look and consistency of message during the entire campaign. This person will have to take stock of all the various communication means to be used, design a uniform style, and supervise the production of folders, election programmes, the website and TV and radio commercials. Of course the technical side of this can be outsourced.

New media
Internet, text messaging, podcasts, Social Websites like Facebook, digital TV, YouTube, blogs, etc.: all of these are new ways for a party to communicate its message. This is a whole different ballgame from the traditional means of communication, so creating a special unit for new media is definitely worth considering.

Activities and events
During the election campaign various activities and events are organized. This can vary from having a stall at a market somewhere to staging a major, hip political event. One campaign member is responsible for the coordination of these activities and events. The actual organization is done by volunteers. The activities coordinator tries to invent new events and themes, coordinates their organization, liaises between volunteers, local politicians and the campaign team, and discusses how best to publicize the events with the campaign member responsible for communication. Budgeting the events, obtaining municipal licenses for events and roping in politicians to appear at them is also part of his duties.

Target groups
Parts of a campaign can be aimed at very specific target groups, like young people, pensioners or ethnic minorities. The campaign team can appoint one member to oversee a target group campaign. This may be – but does not have to be – a member of the target group concerned. This campaign member closely collaborates with the activities coordinator and the campaign member responsible for communication material. If certain target groups require special attention, he or she makes sure that hand-out material tailored to this target group is made, activities are organized, election candidates are involved and prominent organizations or representatives of these target groups are contacted.

Volunteers
A big turnout at the ballot is important (the voter, after all, is what the election is all about!). That is why you have to mobilize as many supporters as you can. A good way of doing this is through a national network of volunteers. Make sure you have visible contact persons, such as local coordinators who can mobilize local volunteers and provide feedback to the campaign team.

Budgeting
Campaigning without funds is impossible. Even the most basic campaign costs money. The planning of the campaign is largely dependent on the available means. That is why you have to appoint one campaign member as budget supervisor. This campaign member will manage the campaign funds: he will draw up an estimate of the costs and try to raise more funds if necessary. Sending out an appeal for contributions to the members (by letter or e-mail) is one possible task for this campaign member. When the job description is narrowly defined, this funds manager is no more than a kind of accountant making sure the campaign does not exceed its budget. But if the campaign team takes a more expansive view of his tasks, he is also a fund-raiser.

Secretarial and technical support and catering
The campaign manager needs an assistant to organize his agenda and help prepare meetings, and to function as a gatekeeper to contacts from the outside world. In addition, technical support should not be neglected. If the website is down or computers malfunction, prompt action is required. And finally, there is a golden rule for any campaign: always provide plenty of food and drink. In the course of a campaign the members will work increasingly long hours. Make sure they keep in good health and have food available at work.

Exercises

- *During the course of a campaign training special attention will be given to the way you organise your campaign. The exercise you can do is that the trainees will design their own campaign team. They should use the SWOT analyses for this and come up with priority areas. After recognising the strong and weak points in their organisation they should develope a strategy in order to improve the situation.*

- *During a campaign training it is a possibility to assign the different tasks in a campaign organisation to the trainees ans let them work in (competing) campaign teams. In these campaign teams they should exercise different tasks that are realities in daily campaign life, such as organising a press conference, holding an important strategy meeting or tackling a crisis situation.*

Chapter 7
Campaign Plan

7

A good campaign plan is the key to a successful campaign. Without a campaign plan you stumble from one incident to the next without being able to implement an overarching campaign strategy or to take the initiative. Also, the lack of a general guideline increases the chance of internal conflict, which is the last thing you need during a campaign. By writing a detailed, step-by-step campaign plan you create a yardstick by which to measure the progress of the campaign. Sticking to this plan also helps you identify potential snags ahead of time. It is a way of ensuring you make the decisions yourself instead of having them thrust upon you by the turn of events. A timely and well thought-out plan helps prevent unwelcome surprises. It is discouraging if you are suddenly confronted with a simple lack of advertising space in a local newspaper ("I'm sorry, you should have booked this three weeks in advance..."), or with volunteers who suddenly have no time for the campaign.

The written campaign plan

A campaign plan is a brief document concisely stating the main targets of the campaign. It contains the targets, a timeline and an estimate of the campaign's budget. This gives you a handle on what to do in the course of the campaign. All possible activities and parts of the campaign are described, from large-scale mobilization drives to the printing of election posters. And of course it is not intended to be a straitjacket: it points the way for the campaign without shutting out possibilities. Also, it is highly likely that the campaign plan will need adjusting as you go along. You have to be able to react to new events not mentioned in the campaign plan.

You can make the campaign plan as long (or short) as you want. But it should contain at least the following elements:

1. *A brief outline of the political context:*
   - What happened in the country during the last term?
   - What are the hot issues at the moment, and what are likely to be hot issues in the future?
   - What does the political landscape look like? Who is your biggest rival?

2. *The election strategy:*
   - What is your goal and how do you go about achieving it?
   - What is your central message and what is the image you want to project?

3. *Tactics and activities:*
   - What are your concrete plans for achieving the goal?
   - Which activities do you plan to develop?
   - Where are your voters and how do you plan to reach out to them?
   - Which specific target groups do you plan to reach out to (e.g. people with or without jobs, people working in health care, migrants, young people)?

4. *Media and communication material:*
   - Which media do you plan to use?
   - What other communication means do you plan to use?

5. *Budget:*
   - What is your budget?
   - How will you use this budget?
   - Will you try to raise funds, and if so, how?

6. *Timeline and allocation of tasks:*
   - When do the various tasks have to be prepared and executed?
   - Who is responsible for which tasks?

How to draft a timeline

Below is an example of a campaign timeline. The main condition is that you start well ahead of time. For a national campaign, a year's preparation is no luxury. A local campaign will take at least six months. The timeline indicates which steps to take month by month, week by week. We recommend you draw up a wall calendar or a planning board for the entire duration of the campaign. This provides an overview of important data and activities at a glance. Obviously, the planning will get more detailed as the election approaches. Devise a separate script for each activity with a distinct layout to make it immediately recognizable for all concerned. This script gives a minute-by-minute account of the proposed event, with near military precision. Such scripts ensure the uniformity of campaign operations, while serving as a checklist for all involved.

Example: PvdA timeline for a local campaign for town council elections – 6 months

Month 1 - Put together campaign team - Determine dates for campaign meetings - Meet with previous campaign manager - Write campaign plan Month 2 - Monthly campaign meeting - Put up a list of campaign members/contacts - Start raising funds Month 3 - Monthly campaign meeting - Find volunteers - Exploring voter market - Compile a list of (local) media Month 4 Definitive election programme ought to be determined by this time Week 8 - Monthly campaign meeting - Design poster and hand-out materials - Design ads - Volunteer meeting about campaign organization Week 7 - Book ad space in local printed media - Book ad space on local TV channel - Campaign on the streets on Saturday Week 6 - Produce commercials for radio and TV - Prepare activities - Campaign on the streets on Saturday	Week 5 - Prepare activities - Campaign on the streets on Saturday Week 4 - First weekly campaign meeting - Prepare activities - Campaign on the streets on Saturday Week 3 - Start campaign - Weekly campaign meeting - Put up posters and distribute them amongst members - Activities - Campaign on the streets on Saturday Week 2 - Weekly campaign meeting - Activities - Ads in the local media - Campaign on the streets on Saturday Week 1: - Schedule meeting to thank volunteers (after the elections) - Daily telephone round to discuss progress - Refresh posters - Activities - Ads in the local media - Canvassing Last week: - Daily telephone round to discuss progress - Activities - Ads in the local media - Last day "final offensive" - Arrange transportation to polling stations for the elderly and disabled Elections - VOTE

Exercise

You can divide the trainees into several campaign teams that each have to draw up a campaign plan.

- *What means and which people do they need to execute the tasks they thought up and achieve the campaign goal?*
- *Draw up a timeline. In strict chronological order, from the start of the campaign preparations to election day.*

The results of their work are discussed in the whole group.

Chapter 8
Party and campaign funding

Few topics in politics are as controversial as the funding of political parties and election campaigns. Within the confines of this manual we cannot treat this subject in great detail. For an in-depth treatment of political funding in different countries and political systems we recommend you consult
http://www.idea.int/publications/funding_parties/index.cfm.

Funding is very important for a political party: the availability of money determines what activities a party can engage in and what kind of campaign it can conduct. There are roughly five sources of political financing:

1. Membership fees and/or assessments (MPs turning over a percentage of their salary to the party)
2. Public funding
3. Donations from businesses or special interest groups
4. Donations from supporters
5. Income from property (e.g. real estate) or capital (investments or interest)

In many countries membership fees do not yield a great deal of money, but in some countries this is a major source of income for parties. Members are often prepared to give an extra donation during campaign time. That is why it is very important to build a good relationship with your grassroots supporters. Some rules of thumb for fund-raising from members:

- Lavish plenty of care on the letter soliciting contributions.
- Personalize the letter. Have it signed by prominent party members, preferably people from the party leadership.
- Create a feeling of urgency: why is it crucial that the members donate exactly at this time?
- Make clear what you want to spend the extra money on. If possible also ask for contributions for specific projects (newspaper ads, a TV commercial, a protest march, etc.).

- Pay heed to the technical details of the donation. Offer several options but take care not to confuse the reader. Most importantly, make sure everything is correct and there is no room for doubts or questions.
- Do not forget the follow-up. If you get no response, send a second letter after a set period of time, or even better: put in a phone call.
- Make sure your administration is in order, so people who have already donated do not get a follow-up phone call or a second letter.
- In some parties the size of the membership fee depends on a member's income. If you know who the richer party members are, spend extra efforts on them, for instance by writing or phoning them more often.

Public funding is usually strictly regulated. Because each country has its own regulations, no general advice about this can be given, except that strict adherence to the rules and regulations is very important. Especially during campaign times parties are extremely vulnerable to accusations of inaccuracies, mistakes or misuse. Openness and transparency are essential. Have an accountant audit all the books. Stick to all the deadlines. Make sure you have legal assistance available when problems arise.

Funding by businesses or special interest groups: it is hard to give general advice about this too, because once again the rules vary in each country. In some countries there is an absolute ban on donations from businesses, trade unions or special interest groups, while in other countries there are no limitations at all. It is important that parties adhere both to their own rules on this issue and to the national laws, and that they seek legal advice in case of doubt. Even when allowed by the rules, this type of funding does of course have certain disadvantages:

- It is difficult to avoid the semblance of favouritism. What do the interest groups or the businesses get in return for their contribution? Will decisions be made in their favour or will they get certain people appointed?
- Loss of political independence. You will inevitably start to take your sponsor's interests into account in your political agenda.
- The public image of the company or special interest group contributing to your campaign will reflect on your own party. How do the party's supporters like this?
- If you become too dependent on this type of funding, you will get in trouble when these funds are cut off. There are countries where businesses only finance parties with a seat in parliament. If such a party is thrown out of parliament during the elections, it is suddenly without funds.
- Non-financial contributions (free broadcasting time, free locations, free food and drink etc.) are essentially the same as financial contributions.

In the United States it is standard practice for companies and interest groups to buy political influence. Senators spend millions of dollars on campaigning. If you are not rich yourself you have to find one or more "sugar daddies", who will demand – and be granted – substantial political favours in return for a campaign contribution. The tobacco industry, for instance, invested heavily in the Republican party – seven million dollars in all. And it paid off: since Bush came into power they have not been bothered by any major class action lawsuits, which saved them an estimated hundred billion dollars in damages.

Donations from supporters: in 2004 the American presidential candidate Howard Dean surprised everyone by collecting large amounts of campaign money through small donations from a large number of ordinary citizens, while his opponents depended on the traditional large donations from a small group of rich people. Obama has built on Dean's example and in 2008 managed to raise more than 600 million dollars mainly from small donations. Internet fund-raising works well in countries where internet use is widespread: it is an easy and fast way to make a donation. However, you do have to convince people that your goal is worth spending their hard-earned money on. Dean hit a nerve because he was a passionate politician with outspoken views (against the war in Iraq), and he managed to use his website not only to inform, but also to move and mobilize people.

Another way to collect donations from supporters is by organizing parties, dinners, barbecues or the like. In the 2006 Dutch municipal elections in Amsterdam, local PvdA party leader Iping gave dinners at her house where guests had to pay a 100 euro entry fee for the campaign chest. Oprah Winfrey organized a huge fund-raising party on her ranch for Obama. The most expensive tickets to that event, guaranteeing a moment alone with Obama and Winfrey, cost 25,000 dollars.

Campaigning on a small budget

In many countries political parties have very limited campaign budgets or have no direct access to the media. What other options does that leave you? Even with a limited budget it is possible to campaign. It does require a lot of creativity and it forces you to make choices. Here are a number of options:

- Do your own research. Organize your own focus groups, street interviews or door-to-door polls. Use free research data, like the EC's Eurobarometer (see the chapter about research).
- Organize activities that cost little or no money, like an information stand at a

market or canvassing door to door (see the chapter about canvassing).
- Try to get as much free publicity as possible, and do not forget the local media.
- Make use of new media, which can be both cheap and effective (see the chapter about new media).
- Recruit volunteers. The more volunteers you have, the easier it is to get out there and contact individual voters. Especially in countries where there is no freedom of the press this direct interaction is important. And the costs of volunteer labour are limited to catering and travel costs or expenses.
- Find allies, both in politics and in society. This is especially important for small opposition parties: they should try to collaborate with other parties. A good example is the Ukrainian president Yushchenko, who came into power with the support of the student movement.

Exercises

Have small groups brainstorm about fund-raising activities.
Have small groups draw up a letter to ask party members and supporters for a donation.
Or have them brainstorm about low-cost campaign activities.

Chapter 9
Volunteers

9

No political party can do without volunteers. They are especially indispensable during campaigns. The volunteers are the driving force in canvassing and other campaign activities, and they can make the party look good. A large army of volunteers is in itself a boost to the party's public image. If you want to appeal to young voters in an election, it is important that you have young volunteers to deploy. Local party chapters often have difficulty recruiting volunteers, and sometimes they have difficulty integrating the volunteers they do recruit. This is usually caused by not having a single person in charge of coordinating the volunteer effort. Over the years all the party work has then traditionally been assigned to existing members, making additional volunteer labour seem superfluous. As a result, volunteers who have expressed an interest are sometimes never contacted again or left to their own devices without being given a clear task. This is a waste of valuable resources.

The coordinator

The recruitment and involvement of volunteers is crucial to the success of a campaign. In order to make good use of volunteers in a campaign, you need to have volunteer coordinators operating at both the national and local levels. These coordinators are responsible not only for the recruitment of volunteers, but also for coaching them. Of course it is up to all the party members together to make the volunteers feel at home within the organization, but the coordinator has to supervise the entire process, from the very first contact up until the words of thanks for their effort after the elections.

These are some of the coordinator's duties:
- Drawing up a recruitment plan for new volunteers
- Inventorying the various tasks that can be performed by volunteers
- Making sure each volunteer is assigned a suitable task
- Coaching the volunteers (mediating if they have complaints, relaying their concerns to the party)
- Motivating the volunteers
- Organizing travel cost arrangements, catering, a volunteer kit

The ideal volunteer coordinator has excellent people skills, knows how to inspire people, gives (constructive) feedback, listens to what people have to say, is able to read their deeper motivations and respond to them, defends the volunteers' interests and is good at delegating. In addition the coordinator should have a thorough knowledge of how the organization works and what the tasks in a campaign are.

In order to really involve people in the campaign it is important that the volunteer coordinator informs all volunteers about the campaign plans. He also has to make clear which tasks they are to perform and when they are scheduled. Do not just tell them: "We will start distributing leaflets three weeks before election day", but give them specific dates and times. Volunteers need a clear view of what is going to happen in order to stay motivated.

It is highly recommendable that you draw up a Q&A list with the most commonly asked questions and answers about the party's policies. This will arm the volunteers against awkward questions from the public, and ensures that they will give uniform answers.

Recruitment

Before you start recruiting volunteers, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What exactly do we need the volunteers for? What kind of tasks, what kind of people?
This is less straightforward than it seems. You need to know in advance exactly which activities you are going to organize during the campaign, and which of these will require volunteer labour. In the case of specialist tasks like writing for a website, you need volunteers with know-how and skills in that area. And why restrict the use of volunteers to "old-fashioned" campaign tasks like handing out leaflets? You can also give them more complicated tasks like writing texts or chairing a debate. If some volunteers do not possess the necessary skills but are very eager to do a particular kind of work, you might consider having them trained by an experienced party member.

2. Who are our potential volunteers and how do we get their attention?
Potential volunteers include anyone sympathetic towards the party's ideology. These may be people who have plenty of spare time for volunteer work, but they may also be people with busy schedules who are nevertheless willing to take some time off for this work. There are always people who see it as a chance to develop themselves. It may be a good idea to recruit volunteers in specific target groups of your campaign, like young people, elderly people, immigrants or women. In other words, the target groups for recruitment are directly linked to the target groups of the campaign strategy. The way in which you try to recruit them will depend on the specific target group.

For example: Dutch research showed that the most effective way to recruit volunteers was through family and friends. This research yielded the following statistics:

Through family and friends	41,5 %
Through institutions (e.g. leaflets found there)	25,0 %
Through colleagues and business acquaintances	15,5 %
House-to-house newspapers	5,6 %
Articles in daily newspapers	2,0 %
Through local radio and TV	0,7 %

The message is clear: make sure every party member motivates their own friends and family, and distribute attractive party leaflets at places like the town hall, the headquarters of other volunteer organizations (like sports clubs or youth organizations), community centres, at schools and in pubs.

All party members who have only recently joined the party are potential volunteers as well. Actively approaching new party members is a good way of mobilizing a huge volunteer workforce. Many local party chapters organize a telephone drive stimulating party members to recruit volunteers well before the elections.

3. What are people's motives for becoming a volunteer?
Volunteers can join up for a variety of reasons. Knowing what their motivation is can help you find suitable tasks for them. They may sympathize with the party's ideology or feel politically involved, but other motives may be at play too: they simply like the work, or they want to meet new people, gain work experience, have a say in local politics, they want to be involved in the party and feel like an insider, or do something useful for society.

When recruiting, coaching and motivating volunteers, always try to find these underlying motives and use them to your advantage. Someone who wants to gain work experience could be made assistant to the campaign coordinator (of the local chapter); someone who would like to have more influence in politics could assist candidates on visits to neighbourhood meetings; and someone whose main motivation is mee-

ting new people could even take on the role of volunteer coordinator. These are all ways of encouraging people to become a volunteer and to play an active role in the party.

One of the most frequent reasons people do volunteer work, however, turns out to be simply the fact that they have been asked to do so. People do not always necessarily have a clear motivation – often simply asking them for help is sufficient.

Finally, people's motivations may change in the course of time. It is important that you always lend an ear to your volunteers and respond to any changes in motivation.

4. What should you offer volunteers?
Volunteers may work for free, but that does not mean they are not valuable. They are of great value to the party, and this inevitably means they come at a cost. The fact that they are not paid for their work is all the more reason to reward them with attention, respect and, of course, some drinks and refreshments. It is also up to the party to see that the work does not actually cost the volunteers any money. So if they incur travel costs, have to buy special clothes, or if an activity takes place during dinner time, the party should give them financial compensation. And although material rewards will hardly be a reason for people to become volunteers, they are a good way of rewarding them. Besides which, it strengthens the feeling that they are part of one big, united party, and it is a clear token of appreciation. This will in turn stimulate new volunteers to join up. It is a good idea, therefore, to allocate some money in the budget for a volunteer kit to be issued to all new volunteers. Besides all this, a handshake and a personal word of thanks of the partyleader and/ or campaign manager make a world of differance to all volunteers.

Planning

Recruiting volunteers
- Take stock of what kind of people you need for given tasks
- Opt for a recruitment strategy based on the kinds of volunteer you have available (target group)
- If necessary, train the volunteers
- Listen to volunteers and involve them and give them responsibilities
- Make clear agreements
- Give the volunteers the necessary facilities, such as access to information and compensation for travel expenses
- Make sure they have someone they can turn to with questions: the volunteer coordinator

Motivating volunteers
- Organize a meeting for volunteers so all new ones can acquaint themselves with the party (the local chapter or the national campaign team) and get to know each other, and so they can be updated on all the campaign plans
- Personal interaction is essential
- Have volunteers do something they enjoy, something they are capable of doing and something they want to do
- Make sure that volunteers have added value and feel useful. If you recruit them in vain you will never see them again

Retaining volunteers
- Thank the volunteers by organizing a party after the elections (even if you lose)
- Show them recognition ("you accomplished this"), acknowledge their efforts ("you did this well") and express appreciation ("thank you for your dedication")
- Try to retain these volunteers in the party ranks after the election, after all you invested so much time and energy in them

Exercise

Draw up a recruitment plan for volunteers: Whom are you looking for? Where and how will you approach them? Where and when do you need them?

Chapter 10
Materials and events

10

There are many ways to communicate your message: by appearing in the media, publishing ads, going into the street and talking to people, or by organizing meetings and handing out information material.

The poster

No elections without posters. When designing a poster, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the poster fit in with the strategy?
- Is the poster clearly visible to passersby?
- How well-known is your party leader? If you have a new leader voters are relatively unfamiliar with, it might be better to opt for a poster with a well-known logo. Do not fall into the trap of thinking: "It is precisely because the new leader is not very well-known that we will make a poster with his/her face on it. That will increase his visibility." Do not overrate the voters' interest: they only throw a passing glance at the billboards and do not stop to study all the individual posters.

In addition, the poster should always contain these elements: slogan, name and logo of the party, and a reference to the central message.

Leaflets, information brochures and gadgets

Handout material can be divided into three categories:

- Material that you can use to explain your message and that is easy to hand out on the street, like leaflets, information brochures, coasters, little flags
- Material that party members and volunteers can wear that makes them recognizable on the street (hats, scarves, bags, raincoats, umbrellas)
- Fun gadgets like a nice button or brooch, pens, key rings, or a baby romper with the text "When I grow up I will vote social democrats"

Events

In a political campaign various activities and events are organized. These activities may vary from information stands on the market to huge political stage events. You have to try to reach out to as many people as possible. Possible activities are visits to neighbourhoods or businesses, town hall meetings, festivals and huge party gatherings. Do not expect people to come to you, but actively go out and meet the people. That means you should not organize meetings in some obscure little backroom, but in a big venue in the centre of town that is well-known and easy to reach. To be successful, the activity should meet the following criteria:

- There is a direct relation between your party/candidate and the voter
- It is interesting and relevant for the media, thus providing some extra free publicity
- It offers the opportunity to communicate your message
- It addresses a specific target group, members of which are invited
- There is a link between the message and the location: e.g. a meeting about health care is held at a hospital or a GP surgery
- You have inspected the location beforehand and organized the appropriate technical facilities (monitors, beamers, microphones)
- How do you want the meeting to look on TV? Picture the location in your head the way the camera will see it, make sure the party logo and a website address are clearly visible in the shots

Exercises

- *Plan an appealing event for a specific target group.*

- *Design an appealing poster using the slogan of your campaign. Inform the other trainees about your considerations while designing. Did you use a picture of the party leader? Did you use the logo of the party?*

Chapter 11
Canvassing

11

Canvassing in electorally important neighbourhoods is an excellent way of finding out where your voters live and getting into direct contact with them. Historically, the links between voters and elected representatives are getting weaker. People no longer vote for the same party all their lives, they often switch allegiance in between elections. This means we have to try and strengthen our ties with voters wherever we can. For it is also true that voters who have voted for your party once before, are likelier to vote for your party again.

Many people feel that politicians "are all alike", they have given up hope of being able to change anything by casting their vote. You will hear them say things like "Politicians do not listen to our needs" or "It doesn't matter who you vote for, nothing ever changes anyway." Traditional media campaigns are not an effective way to turn this around – in fact they merely tend to increase these voters' distrust. That is why it is important to invest in direct contact with the voters, and canvassing is a good way to do this. If you go out to meet the voters, you strengthen your ties with them. And if you can get them to take an interest in your party, this may increase the chance that they will vote for you in the next election.

Canvassing is useful not only to stimulate people to vote for you, but also to intensify their ties with the party. This has several positive results:

- New members. Which people are likely to become party members? Usually these are people that have voted for your party in the past. If you have demographic data about which neighbourhoods are electorally important for your party, you know where these people live. If you compile a database of sympathizers, you can approach these to ask them to become party members.
- New volunteers. The same database of sympathizers is also useful for recruiting volunteers. This can have a snowball effect: if you visit a neighbourhood with 10 people, and everyone manages to recruit 10 volunteers, you already have 100 new volunteers.
- More financial means. More members means more membership fees. In addition, the database of sympathizers can be used to ask them for a donation in campaign times.

Final tips – do's and don'ts

Do's:

- Show that you enjoy canvassing; display an interest in people's concerns, but do not get tangled up in lengthy discussions (time is scarce).
- It is a waste of time and energy to try to convince professed opponents.
- Do not forget to ask your voters if they want to play a more active part in the party.
- Do it in a group, with the parliamentary candidates setting the example for other volunteers.
- Draw your own boundaries: you do not have to tolerate outright insults or racist or sexist remarks. A warning like "We can't have a discussion if you talk like that" is usually enough. If not, you'll just have to resort to: "Let's end this conversation right here."
- Write scripts for possible conversations before you start canvassing.

Don'ts:

- Do not cast a slur on other parties.
- Do not keep insisting if people have indicated they prefer not to talk to you.
- No breaches of etiquette: wearing sunglasses while you talk to people, picking your nose.
- Do not ring people's doors after dark, and certainly not late at night.
- If a woman opens the door, never say: "Can I speak to your husband, please?"

Exercise

Do a role-play where candidates canvass door to door. Write a script to go canvassing.

Chapter 12
Policy development

12

Political parties represent a certain ideology – the political tenets and ideals that make a party what it is. Social democratic parties tend to stress employees' rights, equal opportunities in education, good health care for everyone, fighting poverty and lessening the gap between rich and poor. Liberals will probably tend to stress the freedom of enterprise, open borders and rigorous repression in the fight against crime. Christian democrats and conservative parties tend to focus on family values, the civil society, ethical issues and morals. An infinite number of variations and combinations of all these different tendencies is possible, depending on the specific historic and social context in a country. A party's ideology informs its political programme and, especially, its election programme. These are usually attempts to describe an ideal world ruled by the party's tenets. The programmes often also resemble a seemingly endless grocery list of everything a party would like to change if it assumed power. There is quite a gap between these ideals and desires, and the eventual policy. Once a party is in power or represented in parliament, it will start developing actual policies. MPs' powers to do this are fairly limited, at most they can put forward a bill proposal every now and then (private member's bill). For a government developing and implementing policies is daily work.

Political parties play a major role in policy development. The parties have to pour their voters' desires into concrete policy proposals – both before and during a term in government. Developing policies is a good way of involving the people in politics. There are various ways a party can develop policies.

The policy department

Many parties have their own policy department. The party leadership can ask this department to gather information about a particular issue. The easiest way to gather this information is to question party members, but they can also consult special interest groups or conduct an opinion poll. The information then has to be converted into new policies. For this task, the party hires policy assistants, who have a purely facilitating function and are not expected to publish articles or make public statements in a personal capacity.

The research institute

Many political parties have their own research institute or think tank. These are generally independent organizations affiliated to the party in various ways. In contrast with the party's own policy division they are usually (semi) autonomous. This allows them the freedom to be critical of the party's policies, make proposals that advance beyond what the party has currently dared advocate and involve people outside the party in the development of policy ideas. The organizational structure of these think tanks and research institutes varies. Sometimes they are foundations that are both organizationally and financially dependent on the party, but they can also be entirely independent organizations with independent means of support. In the Netherlands the parties' research institutes are funded by the government, and the size of the subsidy depends on the number of seats a party has in parliament. These think tanks often play an important role in the development of new policy proposals by the party, and they provide members for the various committees active within it.

Permanent advisory board

Many parties have permanent advisory boards with experts from the party (and sometimes also from the outside) to provide advice in specific policy areas. They can provide this advice both on demand and by their own accord – advice about political developments concerning a specific issue, or spontaneous suggestions for new policy. Thus, the Dutch PvdA has two advisory boards concerning international affairs, the European Policy Advisory Board and the North South Committee, focused on development aid. The members of this latter committee are also active in NGOs, have an academic background and bear political responsibility in these areas. In addition, the PvdA has a women's network, a lawyers' network, a gay network, a network for the aged, a health-care work group and an environment work group. All these networks aim to influence the policies of the party and effectively consolidate all the available knowledge within the party.

Temporary advisory board

The party conference or the executive committee can also decide to instate a temporary advisory board concerning a specific issue. These boards are usually set a clearly defined task and are expected to produce a result (a policy document) within a set period of time. They may, for instance, be asked for advice about the future of the integration policy, the future of labour migration, about the participation of women in politics and society, etc. The chairman chosen for this type of board is usually a politician with considerable experience (such as a former minister). It has to be someone who has sufficient authority to successfully defend the committee's findings, since the recommendations of such temporary committees usually receive a lot of attention, both inside and outside the party, especially if they concern a sensitive issue or policy area. In the PvdA, for instance, a committee reporting about the social integration of minorities created a big stir with its recommendations.

The election programme committee

One well-known and important example of a temporary advisory board is the committee writing the election programme. Party statutes usually stipulate how the eventual election programme is to be determined. Local party branches and sometimes individual party members can offer amendments to be discussed at a party conference, where the final text is eventually decided upon. What is usually not stipulated is who should come up with the first draft of the programme. Sometimes this is written single-handedly by the leader of the MPs, or by a number of well-known political scientists. The most usual method, however, is to instate a special committee to do this. Such committees are hand-picked by the party leadership. They tend to be cross sections of the party's administrative elite (prominent politicians on the local and national level), with the addition of scientific experts, scholars and representatives from NGOs, trade unions or businesses. The election programme is of course very important for the party, as it announces the party's ambitions for the coming term. In addition, it plays a crucial role in the election campaign, which is why campaign managers and strategists keep close watch on the development of the programme. The campaign team, the party leadership, the MPs and the government all want to exert influence on the committee. There are many vested interests at stake: politicians in office are usually less than eager for radical policy changes, since this could be construed as criticism of their existing policies.

Acquiring support and collecting input for the programme in the party and in society

The more widely a policy is supported in both the party and the society at large, the bigger the chance that it will actually be realized. To gain support the parties have to start a public debate with their own supporters and other people. As we have seen in the chapter about meetings, the decision-making process consists of three stages: information, debate (opinion-forming) and decision-making. It is very important that the party keep this process as fair and transparent as possible. Dialogue with the outside world belongs in the information and debate stages. The decision-making process usually is an internal party affair. During the information stage a party committee has to gather as much information as possible. This can be done

by visits to companies and organizations, hearings, interviews with experts, or by studying the relevant literature. The information thus gathered will be the basis for the eventual policy proposal. The debate stage is meant to elicit as many opinions as possible from party members, voters, special interest groups, NGOs, academics, etc. The debate can be orchestrated in various ways, but the main thing is that as many people as possible walk away with the feeling they have been able to contribute to the debate and their voices have been heard. During this stage the debate can focus on a number of theses, documents for discussion or even a preliminary draft of the final report. Some ways in which you can organize a debate:

- On the internet: people can input their opinions or enter into debate via open or closed forums on the web or intranet.
- Town hall meetings organized at the request of the committee, where as many people as possible (members and non-members alike) can give their opinion. This is a place where one would expect many different views to be expressed.
- Written contributions: the committee can ask certain people and organizations for a written contribution to be discussed in the committee.
- Interviews and consultations: interviews with experts whose input is highly valued by the committee.

To gain sufficient support it is essential that the committee explains how the final report has come about and acknowledges the contributions from the various people and organizations in the information and debate stages. If all goes well, this method eventually results in a new policy, a change of existing policies, or an election programme.

Exercise

The trainees draw up a brief election programme with three policy priorities, based on the party's ideology or manifesto.

Chapter 13
Meetings

13

One activity politicians never seem to get enough of is holding meetings. Sometimes it seems to have become a goal unto itself. In politics you have member meetings, party conferences, committee meetings, parliamentary meetings, cabinet meetings, etc. This chapter consists of three sections. In the first, we present some general tips for conducting a good meeting. In the second we discuss a number of interaction models that can help make meetings successful. And we conclude with a number of stratagems to watch out for.

- A *great* meeting is a meeting where everybody agrees with the outcome
- A *good* meeting is a meeting where everybody can live with the outcome, even if they don't always fully agree with it
- A *bad* meeting is a meeting where people disagree with the outcome and keep wanting to contest it

General tips for a good meeting

It is very important that a meeting is conducted well, especially in politics. A good meeting is conducted as efficiently as possible and results in resolutions being passed. In this context, a good resolution means that everyone present at the meeting feels that everything that had to be said about the question has been said, and that everyone was given an opportunity to voice their opinion. In an ideal situation everyone present at the meeting also fully supports the adopted resolution, but of course that is not always feasible. In this context, when we talk about a good resolution we are not referring to the outcome of the resolution but to the way it was negotiated during the meeting. Arriving at a resolution in a procedurally correct way lowers the risk of its being contested or rejected later on, either within the party or by outsiders, and increases the chances of its gaining the support of others. This is because a resolution arrived at in a procedurally correct way will in all probability take into account many more facts and circumstances (like the balance of power), ensuring that the weaker partners also feel they have had their voices heard during the discussion. Arriving at resolutions in a way that is procedurally sound is no guarantee for arriving at resolutions that are politically sound, but it is a prerequisite for attaining them.

The tips in this chapter are aimed at anyone who ever needs to chair meetings, moderate focus groups, give training courses or preside over debates and public meetings.

Shared responsibility

The chairman is not the only person responsible for the success of a meeting. He plays an important role but will get nowhere without the cooperation of (at least part of) the other participants. Everyone present at a meeting is at least partially responsible for the way the meeting proceeds. This means that everyone has to enter the meeting with a constructive frame of mind, follow the chairman's instructions and treat the other participants with respect – even when (or especially when) the other participants are less experienced, less knowledgeable or less articulate.

Preparing a meeting

Good preparation is crucial for a successful meeting. The first thing to make sure of is that you have a good agenda containing all the issues that require attention. An agenda is not just a bare enumeration of keywords. Each point on the agenda should be accompanied by information that explains the crux of the issue, so participants know what to expect and can prepare for it. There are three possible reasons for putting something on the agenda:

- To provide or exchange information about an issue
- To form an opinion about an issue
- To arrive at a resolution

Sometimes people attempt to achieve all three things at once in a single sitting. It is advisable, however, especially if the issue is difficult or complex, to go through these stages in three separate meetings. If you do want to deal with all three stages in a single meeting, it is very important to distinguish between the separate stages and to ensure that everyone in the meeting is always clear about what stage they are in.

It helps if the agenda specifies which of the three goals is being pursued. This helps the participants know what to prepare for. It makes quite a difference, after all, if an item is merely something you will be informed about – i.e. something you do not have to make up your mind about yet, so you can focus on another item on the agenda, about which the meeting *will* have to pass a resolution.

Finally, of course, the chairman has to ensure that the agenda and all relevant information reaches the participants well in advance, giving everyone enough time to prepare (and consult their own support base if necessary). And for their part, the participants are expected to prepare for the meeting, read all the relevant information and try to form an opinion about the issues.

Meeting procedure

After preparation it is time for the real deal: the meeting itself. You start by running through the agenda. Are all the issues listed, in the right order? Does everyone agree with the goals that have been set for each item on the agenda (providing information, forming an opinion or arriving at a resolution)? How much time do we allot for the meeting? Start the actual meeting only after everyone present has approved the agenda and the time schedule. This gives the chairman a little more clout: the agenda and the time limit are now a shared responsibility of all participants, and they are something the chairman can fall back on when he wants to round off the discussion about an item (because the meeting is running out of time). The chairman would also do well to introduce each item on the agenda with a proposal about procedure: "I would like to discuss this item as follows: we'll start with a little background information. For this we have invited expert X, who will give a brief exposé about the subject. After this you can ask him some questions. Then we can have an exploratory round of opinion-forming, and I propose that we try to come to a decision about the issue at the next meeting." Then the chairman asks if everyone agrees. This enables the goal of each item on the agenda to be raised again.

The three stages of a meeting

The first stage in a meeting is the ***information stage***. This stage is meant to ensure that all available data is brought to light and everyone in the meeting is equally well informed. The discussion should focus on whether there is sufficient information to form an opinion about the subject. What is to be avoided in this stage is a debate about the issue, let alone the adoption (or enforcement) of a resolution.

The second stage is that of ***forming an opinion***. This is when the actual debate takes place. This stage is all about giving the individual views of the participants free rein while trying to find a consensus. People should be given the opportunity to sway each other with arguments, and are expected to open their minds to other people's views. This is also the stage where creativity comes into play, to make all the pieces of information and aspects of various people's opinions come together in such a way that you arrive at a (new) solution or consensus that satisfies all or at least most of the people present.

The third stage is ***passing a resolution***. When the debate no longer produces any new arguments it is time to make a decision. This can be done in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is possible to reach a consensus (everyone agrees), but often this is not attainable. In that case the issue has to be put to the vote. This too should be carefully managed. As chairman you must make sure there are no doubts about what is being put to the vote. So do not use double negatives or woolly phrases; do not say "Who is not in favour of saying no to this?" but instead: "Who is in favour of the proposal?" Then put it to the vote, either by a show of hands or by individually asking each participant what their vote is. When the vote concerns a person, it is customary to have a ballot (so the vote is secret). Whatever the procedure is, it should be clear before you start.

Make sure that all resolutions are adopted deliberately and with care. If a resolution is passed too casually or as a matter of course, this may give rise to confusion or discontent afterwards. This may happen, for example, when at the end of the opinion-forming stage one particular opinion clearly carries the day. This may prompt the chairman to simply conclude: "All right, that's how we'll do it then." This is a huge source of potential conflict, because some people will be left with doubts about what they have actually decided, or even wonder whether anything has in fact been decided at all. Such doubts will rankle especially in the minds of those who disagree with the casually adopted resolution. If they have a support base to cater to, this will cause tensions. It often results in the entire process having to be repeated, allowing all the frustrations to crop up again. Either that, or the legitimacy of the resolution continues to be contested by certain elements within the party or organization. That is why clarity and transparency are essential when adopting resolutions.

It is not unusual for people in a meeting to want to return to a stage of the discussion that has already been completed. When the time comes to arrive at a resolution, participants sometimes feel the need to return to the information stage: "Do we actually have enough information to decide about this?" This can also happen in the course of the opinion-forming stage, when some participants turn out not to have all of the available information at their disposal. The request to return to a previous stage often originates with people who anticipate that their views are not going to prevail in the meeting. However, it is generally advisable for the chairman not to object to this too strongly but allow the discussion to return to the previous stage, if only briefly. The chairman does have to point this out explicitly, so that everyone present remains aware of the stage they are in. If there are no grounds for procedural

reproaches afterwards ("we were being pressured," "we lacked the necessary information"), this improves the chances of support for the eventual resolution. The chairman should only reject such a request if the return to a previous stage is being used as a tactic to frustrate the passing of a resolution.

The dissidents

Whenever decisions are made, certainly in politics, there are bound to be people who would have preferred a different outcome. This has to be managed with care. The ground rule is that resolutions that have been properly passed ought to be defended to the outside world by all those involved. Internal discord has little or no (electoral) appeal. There are exceptions to this rule, however, especially in the case of fundamental ethical issues (e.g. a feminist will never vote for a ban on abortions) or instances when people find themselves at odds with their own supporters for defending a particular proposal. In such cases they are entitled to openly admit having voted against the resolution, providing they do defend its legitimacy. If an individual or a group within the party is not prepared to do this, it can lead to a schism. Of course the party would prefer to avoid such a situation from arising, but if the resolution has been passed in a correct way and this is the only option, then this too is an acceptable outcome.

Implementing resolutions

Quite often resolutions are passed without being properly implemented afterwards, usually because the task of implementing them has not been properly assigned. The implementation of a resolution naturally takes place *after* a meeting, but it is important to establish the consequences of the adopted resolution *during* the meeting: Who is to take action and when?

The chairman

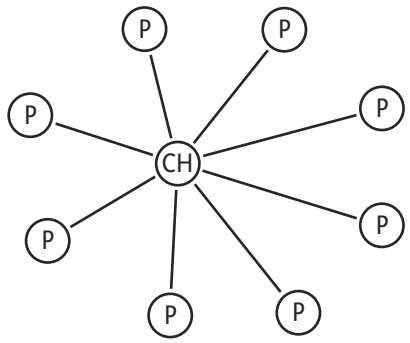
As already mentioned, the chairman is the one primarily (but not solely) responsible for the proper conduct of a meeting. He or she has to supervise the interaction between the participants and try to ensure that the previously agreed upon goals are actually met. The main prerequisite for a successful chairmanship is neutrality. That is not to say he is not entitled to his own opinion, but he should take all participants seriously and never favour one particular point of view (e.g. his own) over others. The chairman must enforce the rules and be neutral in the same way a sports referee is. If he falls short in this respect, there will be a growing amount of unrest at the meeting and he may even run the risk of having his authority called into question. Such meetings rarely produce good resolutions. If a chairman feels particularly

strongly about an issue and/or has a vested interest in the topic under discussion, he is well-advised to appoint someone else as temporary chairman for that part of the discussion.

Interaction models for meetings

It's possible to steer the communication between participants during a meeting. Basically, there are two interaction models that can be deployed: the star model and the web model. Which of these will be most effective depends on the stage the meeting is in (information, opinion or resolution). We will briefly discuss both models.

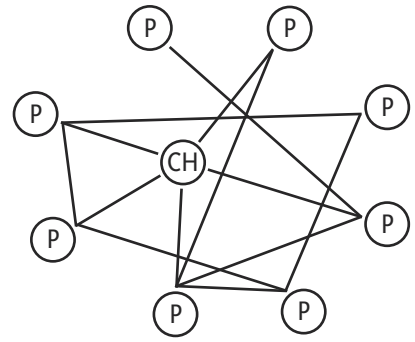
The star model
In this model the communication between chairman and participants is strictly regulated. The participants do not communicate directly with each other but do so "through the chair": it is the chairman who decides who is given a turn to speak, and all remarks are addressed to him. An example of this type of interaction is the debating procedure in most parliaments or town councils. Rendered in a diagram, the model looks like this:



The aim of this model is to take stock (of opinions, of the available information) without immediately having a debate erupt. Either everyone is given a turn to speak, or the chairman invites anyone who has something to say to speak up. This model is used during the information stage, during the first part of the opinion-forming stage and when passing the resolution. The chairman is the centre of the interaction and keeps a tight rein on the proceedings. This is done by maintaining eye contact with the person who is speaking, possibly summarizing what has just been said and then giving someone else a turn to speak. Sometimes the chairman has to prevent

different participants from responding to each other directly. The star model is a relatively rigid, top-down model.

The web model
In the web model the interaction is much freer and less structured than in the star model. People directly address each other and the chairman, who limits his interventions to what is required to prevent total chaos. The aim of this type of communication is to enable people to sway each other by the force of arguments and to create room for creativity. The opinions gradually take shape by "thinking out loud" in a (creative) dialogue. Everyone present can join the discussion at any point and does not have to suspend his or her own flow of thought while waiting to be "given a turn" to speak. Rendered in a diagram, the model looks like this:



The web model is the best model for the opinion-forming stage. The chairman could use the star model in the initial phase by giving a couple of people a turn to speak, just to get the debate going. The main difficulty for a chairman is making the transition from one model to another. At the start of the meeting he will impose the star model, and the participants will subsequently be inclined to behave accordingly, addressing only the chairman and remaining formal even during the opinion-forming stage. The chairman can ease the transition by explicitly announcing it and by gradually withdrawing from the discussion. Good ways of doing this are reducing the amount of eye contact with speakers and leaning back in one's seat – within a short time the dialogue will take care of itself. The chairman ought not to fear a certain degree of chaos sneaking in at this point, with people talking all at once and not listening to each other. Only if total anarchy threatens to break out should the chairman intervene – but lightly, taking care not to abandon the web model altogether.

Chairman's interventions

There are three ways for a chairman to intervene in the discussion.

Summarize and ask questions

The first way a chairman can intervene in a discussion is by summarizing what has been said or putting further questions to a speaker. By summarizing we mean give an accurate account of the main elements in a speaker's contribution. This has a number of positive effects. To begin with, it gives the chairman the opportunity to check whether everyone has properly understood what the speaker intended. (If necessary, the speaker can make corrections or additions to the chairman's summary.) Besides which, it shows the chairman evincing an interest in what is being said, thereby encouraging the other contributors to listen more attentively too. It also signals to the speaker that his message has been heard and prevents unnecessary repetitions. Furthermore, it shows that things can be phrased more concisely and sets a good example in that respect. And finally, it promotes calm and order during the meeting – but only if the summary is accurate, otherwise it will be a source of tension and disagreement.

Asking questions refers to the chairman's attempt to get more information from a speaker or ask him to clarify a certain point. Typical questions would be: "How does that work? How do you mean? Do I understand this correctly? Why do you think that?" Here, too, the chairman implicitly teaches a lesson: try to understand what someone is saying before you respond.

Intervention aimed at bringing out differences

In a certain phase of the discussion (especially at the start of the opinion-forming stage) it may prove fruitful to give free rein to the differences between the participants in terms of their views, analysis and solutions regarding the issue at hand. This is especially important if it is a complex, multifaceted issue bearing on many different segments of society – issues that are the bread and butter of politics. To arrive at a good resolution that will gain support from people both within and outside the party, all aspects of such an issue have to be discussed and all possible solutions explored. The chairman's first inclination, however, will be to structure matters in such a way as to achieve full agreement as quickly as possible, and therefore to emphasize common ground rather than differences. At this stage of the meeting, the chairman must attempt to suppress this inclination. The best way of uncovering all the differences is asking participants to present their vision or opinions ("What do you think?") or even to make a point of asking for opinions which are different from those just heard.

Intervention aimed at finding common ground

Interventions aimed at establishing common ground, i.e. jointly held opinions and ideas, will take the opposite form to those described in the preceding paragraph. These interventions are used in a phase of the meeting in which participants are working towards a resolution or a shared view (often at the end of the opinion-forming stage). The chairman now focuses on the common ground in each of the various contributions. He does this by offering a rough summary of what has been said in which he glosses over the differences as much as possible. It is important, however, that no one feels the chairman is misrepresenting what they said. Interventions of this kind start with phrases like: "Who agrees that this is the direction to take?" Or: "I hear a number of you saying..." Even a negative wording can be appropriate here: "Since no one here seems to be advocating..." This approach will encourage the participants to start looking for common ground themselves.

Stratagems

Meetings are designed to get people to influence each other and be influenced by others. They are designed to arrive at solutions, preferably solutions everyone present can agree with. Changing people's minds is an essential part of this process. However, this should happen fairly and transparently. That is certainly not always the case, especially in politics. In this last paragraph we examine a number of stratagems often used to influence the outcome of a meeting. We do so to provide a means of defence against such tactics, enabling students to recognize them for what they are: spoil-sport strategies that give politics a bad name.

Procedural stratagems

The first procedural stratagem is attempting to confuse the boundaries of the various stages described above. For instance, someone may try to put forward an opinion in the information stage by presenting it as a fact, or by presenting a fact and immediately charging it with a strong personal opinion, e.g.: "There are very few women in senior political positions (fact) and of course that is totally unacceptable (opinion)." Another way of crossing the boundaries between various stages is by trying to enforce a decision in the opinion-forming stage: "I think we should impose a gender quota of 50% for senior positions. Surely everyone here

agrees that is the only possible solution. So let's stop arguing and decide this issue right now."

The second procedural stratagem is disrupting the flow of the meeting, for instance by returning to items on the agenda that have already been dealt with, by starting debates about informative announcements or by introducing a new item on the agenda at the very end of the meeting and demanding that it be dealt with immediately. Another way to disrupt the order is to criticize the manner in which the chairman is conducting the meeting.

The third procedural stratagem is trying to ruin the atmosphere, for instance by starting to read the newspaper when certain people hold the floor, or by waiting until the meeting has started before opening and reading the relevant documents. Sometimes people even start telephone conversations or repeatedly get up and leave the room.

Debating stratagems

Of course there is no shortage of debating stratagems. One tactic is to start disputing facts which have long since been established: "Everyone claims that the constitution gives men and women equal rights but is that really the case?" Another stratagem is to pass off opinion as fact: "...and finally the simple fact that politicians are unreliable." Instead of: "I don't trust politicians." Nor is it uncommon for people to browbeat others with real or imaginary "knowledge", e.g. with references to experts or reports which cannot immediately be verified. Another trick is to suddenly spring a proposal on people, or to burst out in anger, tears or laughter when there is no immediate cause for such emotions. Other contributors, instead of staying focused on the issue, get personal in their attacks: "What the previous speaker just said is outrageous, for he stands to gain by this personally and he ought to know better." Sometimes people summarize parts of the meeting in such a way that it promotes their own point of view at the expense of all others. Exaggeration is another common ruse, i.e. demanding far more than is needed or wanted. And finally, people are often addressed in a different capacity from the role they have at the meeting: "No wonder you're in favour of a multi-storey car park, you have a shop in that neighbourhood."

Stratagems employed outside the meeting

Sometimes secret deals are made even before the start of the meeting: "If you back me on item A, I will back you on proposal B." Another tactic is creating facts and

choreographing situations, for instance by talking to the media or leaking certain matters before a resolution has been arrived at, thus putting the other participants on the spot.

As already stated, meetings are an indispensable ingredient of politics. However, always consider whether any given meeting is really necessary, or whether it has just become part of a ritual dance. During a campaign, time is scarce and efficiency is of the essence. Information can be exchanged and decisions can be made without holding a meeting too, as long as all the relevant players are involved in the decision. If the culture in your organization has caused a proliferation of time-consuming meetings, you need to change that. You could start by putting a time constraint on meetings: schedule them immediately before lunchtime or shortly before the end of the workday. Or hold a meeting without chairs, where everybody has to stand!

Exercises

Role-play is an ideal way to practise meeting methods. The exercise can be set up in such a way that the participants have to pass through the three stages and apply the web and star models. A number of participants will play at having a meeting, while the others observe whether the theory is being correctly applied. The participants can pick an issue to debate, but you have to instruct them to choose something simple, for instance whether they will go and see a film that evening or go to a club. This usually provides more than enough material to practise all aspects of the theory. Of course you could also choose a more complex issue. In that case, do pick an issue close to the participants' experience. For instance: a youth organization having to determine its strategy with regard to the parent party, or the campaign team deciding on an election poster.

Chapter 14
Negotiating

14

In this module we look at the skills needed to negotiate with others. Negotiating skills are important in politics, where negotiation is part of everyday life. Not only do parties frequently negotiate to build a coalition with other parties, but a continuous process of negotiation takes place inside the parties too: about the stand the party should take on an issue, or about the list of parliamentary candidates. And not only in politics, but all through society negotiating is part of life: between employers and employees, between special interest groups and the authorities, between men and women, parents and children, and so on and so forth.

What exactly do we mean by negotiation? In a successful negotiation two (or more) parties with conflicting points of view are moved to shift their positions – by exchanging information about their views and gaining insight into each other's positions and the prevailing balance of power – to such an extent that they can join in a fruitful collaboration. The aim is to avoid an escalation of conflict causing a permanent rift between the parties. Negotiating is part and parcel of any functioning democracy, and skilled negotiators are an invaluable asset to any organization.

Broadly speaking, there are three styles of negotiation: negotiation based on arguments (persuasion), negotiation based on power (the strongest wins), and negotiation based on exchange ("if you do this, I will do that"). The style you adopt will depend on the position you attribute to the negotiation partner and the position you believe yourself to hold. If you choose the wrong style of negotiation at the start of the talks, this will probably take a high toll later on. Choosing the appropriate negotiation strategy is half the battle.

Negotiation based on arguments

Argument-based negotiation is the "purest" style of negotiating because it is wholly directed at finding the best solution. That is to say, both parties truly strive to find the best solution for the issue that divides them. They both present all the argu-

ments they can muster, and the best arguments (i.e. those which persuade both parties) win.

To arrive at this kind of negotiation two preconditions must be met. Firstly, the parties must trust each other, and both must intend to maintain a good relationship in the future. Secondly, both parties must be prepared to adjust or even abandon their own point of view in the face of overwhelming arguments. They may both set out to win the other party over, but must also both put faith in the other party's being open to sound argument, and be open to sound argument themselves. This is not always easy. After all, the outcome of the negotiation might be that the opponent's point of view is accepted, and that you will have to defend this to the rest of the world, including your own supporters. Which puts you in the position of having to explain that the other party was right all along.

Fortunately, the end result of argument-based negotiations often is a mix of arguments from both sides, and it often really is the best solution for precisely that reason. It rarely happens that one of the parties is totally right and the other completely wrong.

This type of negotiation only works if there are no secret agendas, no stratagems, no threats. Mobilizing supporters will be counterproductive as well. Another important condition is that none of the parties hold back any information: only someone who feels he has been given all the facts will allow himself to be persuaded by arguments. If you want to sway another party with your arguments, you should not only muster all the arguments in your favour, but also try to understand how the solution proposed by the other party serves their interests. After all, you not only have to convince them that you are right, but also that your solution works best for them. Finally, the negotiator must be confident that the other party is able to implement the solution agreed on. It may be that the other party is perfectly willing, but proves unable to do so because their supporters just cannot accept the solution, or because it is too big a change to make in one single step.

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to adopt this style of negotiation. That is when the other two negotiation styles come into play.

Negotiation based on power

Firstly, this type of negotiation does not rely on sound arguments ("what is the best solution?") but on the question of which of the negotiating parties is the stronger. Secondly, in this case the parties will generally not be open about the shortcomings of their proposed solution. Indeed, they will try to conceal those as much as possible. Both parties will tend to keep their cards close to their chest and keep insisting that they are right and the other party is wrong. They will not consider the merits of the other party's arguments, except if these have any appeal for the general public and, especially, their own supporters. In fact, the negotiation process is nothing more than a contest of wills in which each party attempts to impress the other with power play. Sometimes those threats may actually have to be carried out to prove superior strength. But often just making a (credible) threat is enough to keep the negotiations going. Nevertheless, it is important that if you make a threat, you are both willing and capable of carrying it through. If this proves not to be the case, it will seriously undermine your position. Take for instance a trade union threatening with an all-out strike, and then failing to mobilize enough labourers to effectuate that strike. This is fatal for the negotiating position of the union, whose threats will no longer be taken seriously by the employers.

There are a wide variety of means that can be used to put pressure on the other party during negotiations: attracting media attention, calling in expert opinions, holding protest meetings, strikes or legal proceedings, or even suspending the negotiations altogether. The decision about which instrument you employ will depend on the importance of the issue at hand. The means must not be disproportionate: you do not call a strike because you want the cafeteria at work to serve another brand of coffee.

In this type of negotiation most of the work is done before the actual talks begin. You have to take stock of all the means you have for putting pressure on the other party, and make sure you have them on standby. Secondly, you have to gauge how much pressure the other side could bring to bear on you. A SWOT analysis may be useful here (see the chapter on strategy). You should also determine what your parameters are for the negotiations. Not only should you set a goal ("what do we wish to achieve?") and of course make it public, you should also establish a permissible lower limit ("what is the absolute minimum we will accept?"). Of course you keep this lower limit to yourself. Let us call the goal the "target point", and the lower limit the "resistance point". There has to be some margin for negotiation be-

tween these two points. Only a party that has absolute power can afford to have the two coincide. Obviously the other party will also have a target point and a resistance point, inversely mirroring your own. This can be represented as a diagram:

Target point A _____

_____ Resistance point B

Resistance point A _____

_____ Target point B

The margin for negotiation lies between resistance point B and resistance point A. The closer the end result is to your own target point, the bigger your negotiation success is.

Negotiations based on power may well fail, e.g. if no agreement of any kind can be reached. Failure may have serious consequences: it can lead to a permanent rift between parties, or parties resorting to violence to impose their views – for instance if the interests of an ethnic minority in a given country are not respected and they take up arms to start a struggle for independence.

There are various ways in which power-based negotiations may break down. The most frequent reason is that one or both of the parties have such high demands that no agreement is possible. Consider the diagram above: if resistance point A is positioned firmly above that of resistance point B, and resistance point B is equally immovable (so that the very least A will accept is nowhere near the very most B is willing to concede), the negotiations will inevitable break down. Fortunately such a deadlock rarely occurs at the outset. If it becomes apparent during the course of the negotiations that no immediate agreement is likely, parties will start to make good on their threats (e.g. the strike will be called). The experience of seeing threats actually carried out usually moves parties to adjust their resistance point (and occasionally also their target point). Often this will cause resistance points to approach each other, until they coincide or at least create a margin for negotiation. And because negotiations usually proceed in several rounds, there is generally enough time for this adjustment to take place. A good negotiator always reserves time for this.

There is an additional reason why it is important to set aside enough time for negotiations: to prevent another major cause of failure in this type of negotiation, which is escalation. Conflict and hard bargaining is inherent in negotiation based on power (since both parties are, after all, trying to force the other to back down). Parties may sometimes respond unnecessarily harshly or emotionally. This may happen because tempers actually flare up, or because the party wants to rouse its supporters. If this escalates, however, the party becomes captive to the emotions of its support base. Also, harsh words or a display of emotions can in itself constitute power play. And sometimes the breakdown of negotiations simply arises out of an error of judgement. One party demands too much, starts to believe too firmly in its own arguments without considering the other party's position, starts to feel itself wronged, and so forth and so on. Finally, negotiations may fail because of subjective factors (fear, anger, feeling insulted) even though an agreement would, from an objective point of view, absolutely have been attainable. That is why it is advisable to negotiate in several rounds, giving negotiators sufficient time to regain their composure and take stock of the situation.

One final remark about power-based negotiations: even if your side has won (or has achieved the bigger success) it is wise not to rub it in by claiming the victory too conspicuously, since you will most likely have to collaborate with the other party again at some future date. If they are publicly humiliated now they will no doubt seek revenge the next time around, even if only to placate their supporters. That is why it is advisable, even after acrimonious negotiations, to present the final agreement to the outside world in a way that does not embarrass the opponent, by using phrases like "there are no losers in this fight", "both parties stand to gain by this agreement".

Negotiation based on exchange

In addition to argument and power-based negotiation there is a third style of negotiation: negotiation based on exchange. This type of negotiation (horse-trading, you could call it) shuns the extremes of the other two styles. The parties neither try

to sway the opponent with reasoned arguments or bully them with threats and power play. The exchange method starts with the pragmatic acceptance that both parties have points of view that are not always compatible. They then try to combine their conflicting opinions in a whole package of measures catering to both parties' tastes. In this style of negotiation, it is important that the parties respect each other and attempt to understand which interests the other is serving by the stand they take. Because in the end the negotiation is not about the stand a party takes: what is really at stake are the underlying interests. These interests must be taken absolutely seriously by all concerned, and both parties have to seek creative solutions that serve each other's interests. It is important to find a package of agreements that satisfies both parties well enough to serve as a basis for further collaboration. Not surprisingly, this negotiation method is often used when trying to form a coalition government. Each party enters negotiations with a wish list and tries to realize as many of those as possible. One party wants more money for education, another party wants to cut back the defence budget. One party wants to legalize same-sex marriages, the other party wants to build more roads. The main drawback of this method is that part of the agreement may prove unfeasible in practice. This will lead to tensions between the parties and may even result in a permanent rift.

Example: Turkey and Croatia's EU candidate membership

In October 2005 tough negotiations were taking place in the EU about whether Turkey and Croatia should be granted candidate membership. Austria kept resisting Turkey's candidate membership. It eventually relented and promised to agree, but only on the condition that Croatia be granted candidate membership as well. This was the final outcome of long and tough negotiations. Obviously, Austria employed the power-based negotiation method, and could do so because the EU requires a unanimous decision in these matters; and it is equally evident that a compromise was ultimately reached based on an exchange of wishes.

Conclusion

Which style of negotiation should you select in any given circumstance? As mentioned before, it is important to map out a good strategy before negotiations begin. A wrong choice at this point may cause considerable grief later on. If the other party decides to opt for power play, a strategy of persuasion is unlikely to have any success. And if you do not discover the disparity until the discussions are well under way, you will already have lost considerable ground. So it is crucial for political parties to gauge their opponent's attitude in advance. There are a number of guidelines for this. The leading principle is that you look at the existing relations between the parties. Do they completely trust each other or do they not trust each other at all? Does one party believe the other is both willing to make concessions and able to carry them through? Does one party believe that the other wishes to maintain a good relationship, perhaps even improve it? And is this feeling mutual? Are the one party's proposals not diametrically opposed to everything the other party stands for? If the answer to all these questions is no, this firmly suggests that power-based negotiations are the way to go. In the case of a mixed answer, the parties may consider exchange, but only if there is some measure of mutual trust. If the answer to all of these questions is positive, negotiating on the basis of reasoned arguments might well be on the cards.

Negotiation checklist

Three negotiation methods:

1. Argument-based (persuasion)
2. Power-based (pressure)
3. Exchange (win-win situation)

How to choose:
Do you have a good relation with the other party?
Are both parties open to argument?
Do both parties want to maintain a good relationship, or even improve it?
Is there a measure of correspondence between the two parties' interests?

If all answers yes = persuasion
If all answers no = power
If answers mixed = exchange

1. Persuasion (arguments)
List your arguments.
Be prepared to be convinced by the other side's arguments.
Be honest about both the weak and the strong sides of your case.
Do not use dirty tricks and avoid putting pressure on the other party.
Try to incorporate the other party's interests in the proposed solution.

2. Power play
Determine the target and resistance points.
Determine and prepare your means for putting pressure on the other party.
Be selective with information, hide your weaknesses.
Make sure there is enough time (several negotiation rounds).
Do not humiliate a defeated opponent.

Tips:
Use proportionate means.
Do not be swayed by arguments.
Be tough on the issues, but amiable in contact.

3. Exchange (win-win)
Be pragmatic.
Accept the legitimacy of the other party's point of view.
Look for the interests motivating their point of view, recognize the importance of those interests and try to find common ground.
Look for creative solutions that serve both parties' interests.
Strive for agreement between both parties.

Exercise

Role-play is ideal for practising negotiation. Focus on the skills that have been taught and especially on the choice of negotiation method: argument-based, power-based or exchange. Have the trainees choose a subject within the framework of the rest of the training. If it concerns the EU, we often stage the European Council deciding on a new country's membership. This is fairly complicated, so only do this if you want to use it as an opportunity to highlight the roles of the different European institutions. There are simpler options as well. A youth organization or a women's organization can negotiate with the party leadership about getting their candidates higher on the candidate list for the elections. An even simpler example is to have trainees negotiate about when they are going to have their group excursion.

Divide the group in two. One group is given a million euros. They can keep this money if they can agree on how to share this money with the other group. They are given no time to negotiate. Group 1 has to estimate what would be acceptable for group 2. Group 2 also has to determine in advance what they would consider an acceptable outcome. For instance, group 2 may decide that half of the money is something they can live with, but no less than that (and they write this down). If group 1 offers no more than 40% they lose and the money goes back to the treasury. The aim of this exercise is to improve your ability to know your opponent and gauge his intentions.

Chapter 15
Forming a coalition

The ultimate challenge for every political negotiator is the formation of a coalition government. Coalition building is an important feature of politics, especially in countries where parties cannot gain an absolute majority in parliament. In that case, two or more parties will always have to reach an agreement about what policies to implement and whom to appoint as ministers. But in addition to that, parties have to find support in society, for instance by collaborating with special interest groups and non-profit organizations. Even in countries with a majority voting system (such as Great Britain or the United States) coalitions are a prominent part of political life. The two major parties in such countries tend to represent a wide variety of organized groups with an equally wide variety of opinions. Many parties not only have diverging ideologies, but also accommodate several special interest groups (young people, women, the elderly, etc.). This obliges the leader to build coalitions within his own party as well. Such coalitions are crucial to one's survival within the party. But how do you build a successful coalition? A lot depends on your timing, your ability to seize the right opportunities. Also, you are dependent on the willingness of other parties to form a coalition.

Ten ground rules for successful coalition building

1. Time and patience. You need time to build trust. Initially the parties will want to make clear their positions and not make any concessions. They will explore each other's positions and try to determine how they are going to negotiate (arguments, power or exchange – see the chapter on negotiation). Granting each party a few small victories in the initial stages can really speed up the process. A good negotiator who is accepted by all parties will start by stressing what the different parties have in common. It helps if he takes it slowly and tries to accomplish small steps. This increases the chance of a successful outcome.

2. The participants in a negotiation must have at least something in common and share a few common goals. If two parties' goals are diametrically opposed, a co-

alition is out of the question. On the other hand, two parties' goals do not have to be identical to make a coalition possible; if so, there would be no need to have different parties. To form a coalition you need parties whose goals are roughly similar and who share a few goals that coincide entirely. In Holland, for instance, coalitions between the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats are not unusual. This is because both parties advocate an altruistic and a strong civil society.

3. It is a great help if there is a common enemy. This is not enough in itself, but in a certain phase it can act as the glue that binds parties with different ideologies. An example is the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, where Liberal Democrats and Socialists joined forces. When questioned about his collaboration with the liberal Yushchenko, the Socialist leader Moroz said: "Better a liberal than a criminal." The problem with these kinds of coalitions is that they will not last once the common goal (in this case: regime change and democratization) has been achieved.

4. The negotiating parties must have some respect for each other. They have to respect the legitimacy of the other party and its goals. Old grudges resulting from a fierce election campaign have to be buried.

5. The leaders of the respective parties do not have to be friends, but they do have to respect each other, and they have to respect the fact that they each represent a support base. They have to make allowances for each other and accept that the coalition must give some latitude to the leaders of the different subgroups within their support base. Many coalitions fail because the leaders jealously guard their own territory. If one leader cannot accept the other's presence in the coalition, negotiations are doomed to fail.

6. The negotiators have to be highly skilled and respected by all participating parties. Coercion is not an option during coalition talks. Exchange is the most logical negotiation method here, but ideally the parties arrive at an agreement on the basis of reasoned argument: in that way you create a common goal, which helps to guarantee the coalition's viability.

7. All parties have to be willing to make concessions, but they should never lose sight of the desires of their support base. The participants in a negotiation are usually prepared to make concessions, otherwise they would not have entered the negotiation. But caught up in the momentum of the negotiations, leaders sometimes find themselves running too far ahead of the troops.

8. It is easier if you do not set your goals too high. Small steps are easier to take than big ones, and many small steps eventually result in one large step forward. The advice not to be too demanding applies not only to the policies you want to implement, but also to the projected duration of the coalition.

9. It is easier to form a coalition when there is an obvious shared national task (e.g. economic recovery and the creation of jobs). In the Netherlands the Liberal and Social Democrat parties formed a coalition in 1994 that lasted eight years. The principal slogan was: "work, work, work" – a slogan that was acceptable for left- and right-wing parties alike.

10. It is important not to disclose any inside information about the negotiations to the press. Before starting negotiations, the parties should lay down strict rules about who will talk to the press and when. All negotiating parties should obey these rules or the negotiations will fail. In 2003, for instance, one of the reasons the coalition negotiations between the Dutch CDA and PvdA failed was that every time a little headway was made, the media immediately caught wind of it. When three years later both parties made a second attempt, they had learned their lesson. Not a shred of information made the news without explicit permission from both parties. Too much openness and media attention is dangerous because it encourages parties to act tough in order to satisfy their supporters. It reduces their willingness to compromise because they feel the voter is looking over their shoulder, effectively minimizing their margin for negotiation. On the other hand, parties can report tentative achievements to the outside world by mutual consent in order to keep their respective supporters satisfied. Be careful, however, not to give political opponents the opportunity to denounce your plans before a final agreement has been reached. It is usually best to wait and present the coalition agreement in its entirety upon completion. At that point it is easier to argue that, although some concessions were inevitable, the agreement's achievements in other areas more than make up for them.

Conclusion

After you have successfully formed a coalition you can start implementing the agreed programme. This is where the media battle begins. You will doubtless have been forced to make concessions, maybe even to break promises (to your voters). In a

coalition system, election promises had better not be too emphatic anyway. If you have too many non-negotiable items in your programme, you will never be able to be part of a government. "Selling" the outcome of the negotiations requires clever communication and a well-considered media strategy. Emphasize the achievements, and while you should not ignore the failures, do not exaggerate their importance either. After every mention of a concession made, immediately balance it with a result achieved. And consider carefully which arguments you will use to defend your concessions: is it in the national interest, to prevent a greater evil, because you were given so much in return, etc.?

Exercise

Once again role-play is the ideal exercise for this subject. Have two parties conduct a coalition negotiation. First each party analyses its own position and that of the opponent, sets itself goals to achieve and determines a negotiation strategy. Then they can work out a communication strategy together and practice giving a joint press conference. Adapt the exercise to a country's specific situation.

Chapter 16
Lobbying

16

Non-profit organizations and companies try to influence decisions politicians make in their favour. They do this by lobbying. Lobbying is a strategy to achieve a certain goal. A great deal of lobbying takes place inside political parties as well: groups with a clearly defined interest try to get the party leadership to change course on certain issues. Women's organizations are a classic example of this. The political influence women enjoy today did not materialize spontaneously. It is something they fought (or campaigned) long and hard to achieve. Youth organizations, ethnic minorities, gays, the elderly, the disabled, these are all examples of specific groups with clearly defined interests, lobbies trying to get parties to act in their interest. Just like meetings, lobbying can be divided into three stages: the information stage, the discussion or opinion-forming stage and the decision-making stage. And there are three groups of people involved in lobbying: the stakeholders (the people whose interests the lobby represents), the decision-makers (the lobby's target group), and the influencers. Decision-makers are people like cabinet members, members of the European or national parliament, mayors or council members, congress members or members of party committees at all levels. Influencers are people who can, sometimes unwittingly, exert influence on potential decisions, like civil servants, political assistants, journalists and other interest groups.

Timing is crucial

Maintaining a good network of formal and informal decision-makers will help you to perfect your timing. It is not always publicly known when a decision is going to be made. So when should you start lobbying? It is also of vital importance that you know which road to take to achieve your goal. For instance, what party regulations should you be aware of in order to get a resolution adopted at the party conference? Start planning as soon as you know when the conference is going to take place. The next step is determining who the decision-makers are: that will be your target group. At a party conference the most important formal decision-makers are the leadership and the voting delegates. Make sure you also draw up a list of the informal decision-makers: the people who work at party headquarters, prominent party members, committees, etc. Then take stock of the instruments at your disposal for influencing

the decision. Again, timing is crucial. Decide when to employ what instruments, and do not use disproportionate means. It does not make any sense to mobilize your supporters for a protest meeting in front of the party headquarters at the outset. A protest meeting generates negative publicity for the party, reducing the willingness of party members to listen to your demands and creating tension in your relation with the leadership, who might otherwise have met you part of the way in a negotiation.

Strategies for special interest groups inside or outside politics

The theory discussed in chapter 1, although geared mainly to election campaigns, is more widely applicable. We have seen that a campaign can have a variety of objectives. This also goes for special interest groups, either outside politics or within political parties. For instance:

- Women's organizations try to increase the number of women in politics and in senior positions
- Youth organizations try to increase the number of young people in politics and get a minimum number of younger politicians elected in parliament
- Both young people's and women's organizations try to get certain issues higher on the party's agenda
- NGOs and businesses try to get their concerns incorporated in the party programme

These organizations develop strategies to make the party adopt certain views or make certain policy decisions. How does this work?

Who decides? The formal and the informal decision-maker

A strategy is always aimed at getting someone to make the decision you want. In an election campaign it is the voters you want to sway – they are the "decision-makers". Sometimes the decision-maker is one individual, but often it is several people, or several government agencies, having to agree on a policy decision. The persons officially responsible for the decision, the "formal decision-makers", are not always the ones who actually make the decision. Quite often they are assisted by people who, although not formally responsible, are in fact more influential in the decision-making process – the "informal decision-maker". A minister's adviser often has a bigger say about the issues in his department than the minister himself. So you always have to determine first whether the formal decision-maker is really the one making the decision, or whether it would be wiser to approach the informal decision-makers.

Another problem is how to gain access to the people making the decisions. If this proves impossible, you should try to contact people acquainted with them, and aim your efforts at people or organizations who do have access to them. If there is no way to gain direct access to the prime minister, you can try to approach special interest groups (young people, women, elderly people) within his party. And once you do have access to decision-makers, you have to decide on a strategy to get them to make the decision you desire. Basically, there are three ways to go about this:

- Convince them with good arguments
- Force them to take the desired decision
- Generate an exchange of wishes that satisfies both parties

The differences between these three methods, and how you determine which of them to use, will be discussed at length in the chapter about negotiating.

Profiling the decision-maker

Once a decision-maker has been identified, it will be useful to compile a profile of this decision-maker in order to determine the most effective approach. For this, you need to answer these four questions:

- What does s/he know (about the issue s/he is to make a decision about)? KNOWLEDGE
- What are his/her views on this issue? OPINION
- What does s/he feel (what is his/her emotional involvement)? EMOTION
- What will s/he do? ACTION

In most if not all cases our decision-making process passes through various stages. Before we make a decision, we have to know that there is an issue that *requires* a decision, and what the nature of the issue is. We need *knowledge* about the decision. Political organizations often make the mistake of immediately asking people to *act*. But asking people to act without having them pass through the preceding stages of knowledge, opinion and emotion tends to be counterproductive – it inspires a defensive reaction. Make sure not to skip these four stages.

Choosing the right tools

So we have a goal that is concrete, measurable, feasible and inspiring, and we know whom we are targeting (the decision-maker). That is only the start. Now we still have to choose the right means to achieve our goal (influencing the decision-maker). All good strategies automatically imply certain means, but these means have to be

appropriate for the goal. In other words, the end does not justify all means. If the means actually undercut the goal, this will sooner or later compromise the persons employing those means. People will also start to doubt whether people who use these means deserve their support, whether their cause is just. For example: using violence to protest against police violence defeats the purpose.

In addition, the means ought to be proportionate. The weight of the means you employ can have a positive or negative effect on your chances of gaining support for your cause. If the goal is good but the means are disproportionate (too large or too small) your goal will lose credibility. For instance, you don't demand the president's resignation because of a mistake made by a fellow party member who is the mayor of a small town. A good example of a tool intrinsically proportionate and winsome is petitioning. Once you have collected enough signatures you can hand these over to the decision-makers and engage in dialogue with them about the issue you are fighting for.

Proposals for a political programme that latch onto current trends in society are always easier to sell than ideas that go against the grain of the dominant social trends. Of course that does not mean that political parties should never try to achieve goals that go against the grain of the dominant trend and only go with what is fashionable. Things can change, and that is actually what your party is there for: to influence the social trends. But it is important that the members of a political organization take the dominant trends into account and make use of them where they can. You can do this by making your own proposals dovetail with dominant trends wherever you can. For instance, ever since Al Gore came out with his film about climate change, An Inconvenient Truth, it has become much easier to advocate stringent environmental policies than it used to be.

Once you have decided what means you are going to employ, you should think about how you are going to ask the decision-maker to make the decision you desire, and about the extent to which this will constitute a change from that person's previous behaviour. Once again, a couple of rules of thumb apply here. Firstly, the bigger the step you ask someone to take, the smaller your chances of success. It is no use asking an avowed opponent of a certain measure to change into a supporter overnight. Goals are often achieved incrementally. Also, it helps immensely if you can somehow incorporate people's own interests into the way you phrase your request. Put yourself in the other person's shoes and stress how the decision you desire will work in their interest. This advice almost invariably yields good results. All too often politicians

are too focused on their own views and what they think politically desirable, forgetting to take the views of voters into account.

Information
Inform the formal and informal decision-makers/target groups about your point of view. Support it by presenting "neutral" information, i.e. paint a picture of the state of society, current trends in international affairs or the relations between parties. It's important to convince all decision-makers/target groups that you paint an accurate picture, so make sure you provide high-quality information, without factual errors that may undermine your credibility. Of course do not restrict yourself to presenting only your own point of view, but also touch on those of your opponents. However, do ensure that the emphasis is on your own point of view, that it really stands out. A clever way of committing decision-makers is to make them think the information you have presented gives them an edge. Politicians thrive on publicity, and they may feel your information has given them an opportunity to "score points" in the media. You therefore stand to gain both an ally and media exposure for your point of view. At this stage also try to whip up support by publishing articles about the issue in the press and paying visits to local party departments. Every new supporter counts and may make the difference in the next stages of your lobby.

Lobby messages
The lobby messages are the views you advocate. Make sure you adhere to the same rules that apply to the central message of a campaign (see the chapter on strategy): three messages at the most, to be repeated as often as possible, in varying wordings and with varying emphases depending on the different target groups you are addressing.

Discussion
Now that everyone is convinced of the importance of the issue, it is time to put forward your views on it and initiate a debate. You can do this by organizing talks with the party leadership and the regional committees of the party, organizing public debates and publishing op-eds in the papers. The more debate the better. In this stage also intensify the rallying of supporters and allies and step up the recruitment of volunteers. The lobby is now really taking shape.

Decision
In stage three we approach the moment when the decision is made. The party leadership will issue a recommendation to the party conference. A positive recommen-

dation means your lobby has been successful: break out the champagne! If this isn't the case, it is time to start working the delegates at the conference, time to force through the decision. Try to gain leverage and use publicity where you see fit, approaching all the decision-makers individually and forging alliances with other special interest groups. This final stage may be the right moment to call in the heavy artillery: protest meetings, unrelenting op-eds, etc. At this point, you may also have to accept that a compromise is the best possible result.

Example: a women's organization lobbying in a political party

Target: 50% women in senior positions in the party.
Information: to convince the leadership of the importance of the issue, they have to be apprised of all the facts concerning the current situation: how many women are active in the party, in politics in general and in other parties? How many of them hold elective offices and at what levels?

When they have been informed, a debate is initiated with the party leadership, the conference delegates and the party members, in which the women's organization tries to advocate its views. During this stage they try to generate as many allies and supporters as possible, swaying people with arguments and appraising the opposition's strength.

Final stage: a decision is made by the party leadership and/or the party conference.

Rules of thumb:

- Don't give up hope. Lobbying can be a long and wearisome process.
- Timing is crucial.
- Provide information long before you start to seek publicity.
- Your network of decision-makers is your capital and your address book is your main weapon.
- Try to commit decision-makers to your goal.
- Do not spend most of your energy on your supporters or your opponents, but on the undecided people in the middle.
- Provide decision-makers with information that gives them an edge they can use to their advantage.
- Do not put decision-makers in an impossible position by asking too much or declining each and every alternative.

- Do not employ disproportionate means; the goal does not justify all means.
- Throw a party if you win, but do not gloat. Make sure no one feels "used".

Exercises

- *Have the trainees form smaller groups, each drawing up a lobby plan. This plan should contain targets, means, time schedules, a list of decision-makers, objective information, arguments for the debate and a special activity to step up the pressure in the final stage.*

- *Role-play:*
  1) A formal decision-maker (e.g. a minister)
  2) An informal decision-maker (e.g. a political adviser or a civil servant)
  3) An action committee of three people, with a specific target group

  Situation: the three activists are invited for a meeting with the minister. How do they prepare for this? How do they plan to achieve their goal and by what means? In the feedback session everything is evaluated and judged on effectiveness, with reference to the theory.

Chapter 17
The art of political opposition

Being politically successful when you are in the opposition is one of the biggest challenges political parties can be faced with. This holds true for democracies, but even more so for semi-democratic or undemocratic systems, where being a member of the opposition may even be physically dangerous and demands a lot of courage from everyone involved. This chapter is mainly about the art of successful opposition tactics in a democratic system.

If you are in the opposition, the biggest problem is that government parties simply ignore you. Your ideas and proposals do not stand a chance, no matter how good they are. The slightest positive response to any of your proposals would undermine their own authority, and that alone is reason enough for ignoring you. In fact, they will go out of their way to stress the weakest points in your proposals and use them against you. The only time you stand a ghost of a chance of influencing policy decisions is when the government is nearing the end of its term and elections are approaching. If your opponents suspect they might need your party after the elections, they may start to take your plans more seriously. If, in other words, they are contemplating the formation of a new coalition for the next term.

This makes being in the opposition a very frustrating experience. Still, it is something you will have to get used to, because in a functioning democracy it is normal for your party to be sidelined from time to time. Here is how to make the best of a period in the opposition:

Focus on the future: Use your time in the opposition to prepare for a future time in government. Being in the opposition is not a goal in itself. All your actions as opposition party should be aimed at getting back into government. Sometimes this even means supporting the government's policy decisions, if you agree that they are in the national interest. But of course you cannot accept policies that violate your principles.

Be patient: Being in the opposition can be a long and drawn-out affair, so do not be impatient for results. Keep faith in your cause and avoid feeling frustrated. This is especially hard immediately after having lost an election, when you face a long journey through the desert of opposition benches. With patience and perseverance you will eventually get a new chance. When voters start longing for change, you have to be well-prepared – mentally, and in terms of your election programme and organization. Also, a period in the opposition often provides a good opportunity to make changes in your own party and have new people advance in the hierarchy. Stir up the dust and make a clean sweep where necessary, because this is the ideal time for some new faces to appear and for former ministers to retire from politics. Especially if your party has been in government for a long period, it will take time to get used to the new role as opposition party. Being in government generally means soiling your hands in one way or another. A period in the opposition gives your party time to recover and refuel, and most importantly to plan the next election victory.

Do not lose sight of the electoral majority: The only way to achieve success as an opposition party is to stay in touch with the needs of your own support base or at least of a large subgroup of the entire electorate. You will never triumph if you stay focused on the interests of a small and very specific group of voters. If you do, this will make you seem like a small protest party representing only the interests of a small minority, whereas you should be trying to gain the support of as many voters as possible.

Fight the government on all fronts: You can only emerge victoriously from a period in opposition if you engage in battle with the government. You will be defeated if you get bogged down in internal conflicts – whether they are conflicts within the party or conflicts with other opposition parties you have tried to form an alliance with.

Keep your promises realistic and reliable: Make sure that you offer realistic alternatives to the government's policies. Do not start making promises you would not be able to keep. It undermines your credibility, which will prove fatal come election time. The voters are not stupid, they do not believe in fairy tales. Show that your party can offer a realistic alternative and has a chance to be successful. People like to vote for a party that has a real chance at winning, they do not like to vote for losers. Everybody likes to feel part of a winning team, and people are more willing to vote for change if they think change is really on the cards. So an opposition party has to demonstrate it offers a viable alternative, for instance by constructively collaborating with other opposition parties.

Offer a clear alternative: As the opposition party you should not only focus on what you oppose, but also come up with positive proposals and show what you are in favour of. Even if voters do not entirely subscribe to your denunciation of the government's achievements, that does not mean they are not willing to vote for you. Many people vote out of a feeling of "better the devil I know". Voters want to know your party's plans and have to trust you before they will even consider voting for you. If your alternative is not clear and alluring, they will prefer the stability even of a bad government over the unknown. Or they can decide not to vote at all, or vote for another opposition party. You have to convince them to vote, and to vote for you. That is why it is crucial to offer a positive and realistic alternative. This does not mean you cannot criticize the current government. Its shortcomings have to be pointed out. Negative messages can be very effective too, especially if they correspond to strong undercurrents in public opinion.

Local support: Even if your party is in the opposition at the national level, you still have other ways of contributing to your country's administration. Your party could make a big difference on the regional or local levels. The local level in particular presents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the value of your party to the people and interact directly with voters by offering services, such as helping them with their individual problems (like filling in complicated forms). Make sure also to keep campaigning throughout the opposition period. You cannot sustain the intensity of an election campaign for a full four years, but you can intermittently organize protest marches or try to get media attention. This will keep your party members and volunteers motivated and demonstrate to the voter that you are not there for them only when there is an election.

Find allies and build a coalition: There are many organizations and people in society you can form an alliance with. Trade unions, famous and influential people, employers' organizations, environmental organizations, consumer organizations, etc. Alliances with NGOs can help bring in more voters, but do be careful what you promise. If you win the elections, these organizations will keep you to your promises. So do not lose sight of your election programme and do not make promises you cannot keep. In addition, you can build a coalition with other opposition parties.

Build a good relation with the media: Criticizing the government is no use if nobody takes any notice of it, so you will need an effective media strategy. Creativity is crucial here. It is important that the media, too, consider you as a viable alternative, a potential future government party. Although the media always tend to be more inte-

rested in what cabinet members have to say (because their plans can actually be implemented on a fairly short term basis), they cannot totally ignore a credible opposition party. After all, they may have to depend on ministers from your party to get their news in the future.

Exercise

Have the trainees draw up an alternative government policy and/or mount a permanent opposition campaign. You can also have them practise a so-called "rapid response system". This means you watch the political opponent's every move in the media and try to offer a quick response to their public statements and alternatives for all their plans. The trainees have to follow the news, report on political news and try to generate publicity by responding to the government's actions and offering alternative plans.

Chapter 18
Fighting your political opponents

As a party you face competition from other political parties and organizations on various levels – national, regional as well as local. Some opponents you know of old, others may be new kids on the block. This chapter contains a few tips about how to deal with opponents (e.g. during a campaign). Of course this depends on the actual circumstances, but a few ground rules do apply. Traditional, consensus-oriented centrist parties often have a hard time dealing with protest parties that stretch the traditional boundaries and overstep the limits of political decorum – in their choice of words or in the tone of the debate. Competing with opponents requires a certain amount of tact and political sixth sense. Never forget that when you confront an opponent, you are also communicating with the voter. This should always be foremost in your mind when confronting the opponent. Aside from scandals and opinion polls, political quarrels are the media's favourite political subject. The more fiery the debate, the more attractive they find it. This is not necessarily a problem, but use it only if it helps you gain attention for your message. Do not join in a media hype just for the sake of it.

Rules for survival:
Always build on the strength of your own message. What does your party have to offer your town, region or country? Always keep your own ideas at the centre of the debate when you engage in battle. You can dispute the opponent's arguments and ideas, but never do so without simultaneously communicating your own.

Take close note of your opponent. What have they achieved over the past years? Look at what they promised and what they have actually achieved. But be careful when criticizing a coalition partner if your own party has been in government: criticizing their policies easily undermines your own credibility. In this case, you had better focus on the promises kept and successes achieved by your own party.

When criticized, do not glibly turn the tables by ignoring the issue at hand and merely focusing on your opponent's failings instead. That amounts to little more than

finger-pointing: “You say we have achieved nothing in the fight against crime, but in the past four years you have made a mess of the garbage disposal issue.” Ignoring your opponent’s criticism will make it stick in people’s minds, more so than if you simply rebut it point for point.

Always contest the issues, do not focus on the style and tone of the debate.

- Do not say: “I do not like your tone,” “Your behaviour merely serves to escalate the conflict.”
- But instead: “We understand the concerns of your voters, but our party offers them an entirely different solution…”

Always show that you respect your opponent and do not make attacks personal. Keep in mind that if you belittle an opponent, you also belittle their supporters. Emphasizing the personal failings of the other party’s political leader is also something you should avoid.

- Do not say: “Our party boasts a long line of excellent administrators both locally and nationally, whereas you have no administrative experience at all.”
- But instead: “I really appreciate your willingness to dedicate yourself to this town, that is something we share. The problem is your actual plans: it is those we don’t like.”

Do not use excessively harsh terms to denounce the opponent, e.g. racism, fascism, deportation, “this reminds me of WWII,” “Hitler was democratically elected too”, “prevent history from repeating itself…” etc. First of all this demonstrates a lack of respect for the suffering of WWII victims. Secondly, exaggeration is often counter-productive, only serving to antagonize the voters (“Apparently your party doesn’t want people to speak their minds”). Choose your words wisely and do not blow things out of proportion.

Do not play down the importance of your own culture’s values – defend your country’s fundamental ethical tenets.

- Do not say: “In certain communities it is customary for fathers to marry off their daughter. That is a cultural difference you have to respect. After all, our own cultural values are not universal.”
- But instead: “Our constitution guarantees equal rights for everybody, and that is what we have to stand for. That is a core value of social democracy.”

However, watch out for other people’s sweeping statements. Do not concur with your opponent if you do not really agree with what he says, just because you think it will go down well with voters. If your party has been in government in recent years, do not agree with your opponents’ anti-establishments rants, for it will undermine your credibility. Continue to be authentic and accurate.

- Do not say: “Yes, foreigners are criminals.”
- But instead: “We have to fight crime caused by immigrants. That is our top priority. But we also have to fight the causes of that crime by providing more opportunities for those groups, creating more jobs, fixing up old neighbourhoods and training a police force that is closer to the people it serves.”
- Do not say: “Yes, politicians are only out to get rich, they don’t care for the man in the street.”
- But instead: “We are there for the people. Unfortunately, people’s wishes sometimes go unrewarded. We have to acknowledge that regrettable fact. We always have to involve the people in the decisions we make. But you can never please everyone. Politics is all about making choices.”

Do not profile yourself merely as the exact opposite of your opponent, but demonstrate instead that you have a more plausible alternative to offer on their own favourite issues. Cuddle them to death on successes they have achieved. In a campaign, try to set the agenda. The party setting the agenda is the party that has the initiative and the best chance of winning the elections. Keep re-emphasizing your central message!

Exercise

Make a SWOT analysis of your opponent (see the chapter on strategy). This SWOT analysis is important for determining the strategy against your opponents. Compare the results of this SWOT analysis with the SWOT of your own party, and try to think which moves will strengthen your own party’s position and weaken the others’.

Chapter 19
Political crisis management

"France in crisis after saying no to European Constitution." "Serbian government plunged into crisis over Kosovo's independence." "Holland in crisis after murder of politician Pim Fortuyn." "Prime Minister Olmert corruption scandal causes government crisis in Israel. "

It can happen from one day to the next. A crisis breaks out, journalist come flocking and the next day your party is front page news. There are plenty of instances of politicians creating a scandal: visits to prostitutes, irregular expense accounts, concealing one's involvement in a company, or receiving money from shady businessmen.

How does a crisis start?
It usually begins with ignoring or downplaying the symptoms. The people involved are too close to the drama unfolding to see things clearly, or they underestimate its importance ("Oh, this will pass"). The PvdA plunged into crisis after their spectacular loss in the 2002 Dutch elections because they had underestimated the potential of political novice Pim Fortuyn and his movement.

The speed of modern communication can cause a minor local issue to blossom into a national row overnight. Reporters of local papers have access to the world media via internet. And every public appearance of a politician, however insignificant, is being recorded nowadays with digital cameras or mobile phones. In addition to which the media are irresistibly drawn to anything that carries a hint of crisis: disasters, bust-ups, personal tragedies, those are the stories that sell. And politicians are usually caught unawares by the lightning-speed at which such developments escalate. They are afraid to lose their reputation or their job, and they feel cornered and start to deny the truth or blame the media.

Ten golden rules for political crisis management

1. Be prepared. Invest in good communication, both internally and externally, also in times when no crisis is at hand. Thinking about crisis management and crisis communication should be part of your everyday work.
2. Understand the goals and the machinery of the media. Be sure to maintain good contacts with journalists.
3. Take care to keep your supporters apprised of all facts and developments. Internal communication is no less important than external communication.
4. Take action as soon as the first symptoms of a crisis become apparent. Do not sit and wait "until it blows over", but immediately assume the worst-case scenario.
5. Be honest and open. Eventually the truth will always come out – whether it be through leaks, whistleblowers, zealous journalists or an investigative committee.
6. Act promptly. Silence is rarely golden in these cases. Tell the whole truth at once, do not gradually portion it out bit by bit.
7. Put a crisis team together and appoint one spokesman.
8. Never blame the media. Do not use words like witch hunt or conspiracy.
9. Acknowledge the public's emotions (the voter is always right).
10. Demand rectification if the accusations are unfounded, but also try to get the issue out of the public eye as soon as possible. Even if you are totally in the right, and justifiably angry and frustrated, it is often wiser to just put up and shut up rather than keep harking back to the issue.

Exercise

Role-play. A crisis breaks out. Your party's leader is accused of corruption, the party is accused of receiving illegal campaign donations or your party leader is crushed in the main TV debate of the election campaign. What do you do now? Put a crisis team together, draw up a plan and organize a press conference to minimize the damage.

The Alfred Mozer Stichting is the international foundation for social democracy of the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA). In this manual 20 years of experience in international training is collected in 19 chapters. With this manual you will be able to become a better politician or improve your performance as a political professional.

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