



THE SHOWALTER GROUP'S *FORTUNE* "POWER 25" GRASSROOTS BENCHMARKING INVENTORY - HOW THE BEST RECRUIT, RETAIN, AND MOTIVATE THE GRASSROOTS

The Showalter Group has developed a new, original research-based tool for corporations, associations, and non-profit organizations to compare their grassroots recruitment, retention, and motivation strategies.

Why Quality Grassroots?

Abundant use of any type of communication technique dilutes the impact. Most organizations with any type of public policy concern have in-house lobbyists or retained counsel who watch over and promote their legislative concerns. Most groups have a web advocacy portal for advocates to get legislative information and contact their lawmakers via e-mail. This is an example of another abundant technique used to influence the legislative process.

What groups must remember is that their opposition also has an in-house lobbyist, a trade association lobbyist, retained counsel, a PAC, and a web site. They, too, conduct focus groups, opposition research, belong to coalitions, conduct PR campaigns, have a grassroots program, etc. Thus, there is an abundance of similar tactics on each side of any public policy debate.

The abundance of these tactics has diluted their impact. What is not abundant is quality grassroots activism, which is more likely to produce an organization's desired public policy result, precisely because it takes more effort. To lawmakers, effort equals sincerity.

In fact, lawmakers rate certain types of constituents as more influential than others. Research we conducted with lawmakers across the country revealed that they consider most influential, in order: a family member, a personal friend, and a campaign worker.

In my quest to help organizations increase the quality of their grassroots participation, I wanted to test my hypothesis relative to my life experiences in recruiting, retaining, and motivating quality grassroots advocates. I was pleased to find that my hypothesis was indeed valid.

Quality is the operative word in the research. We did not seek to find out how they recruit "warm bodies" for astroturf-type campaigns, or how they add new names to their database. Quality is defined as a grassroots volunteer who exhibits two of more of the following characteristics:

- Has, or is in the process of developing, a credible, trusted working relationship with his or her elected officials;

- Consistently responds to your requests (Action Calls) for legislator contact on critical legislation/ issues;
- Communicates the correct message to lawmakers;
- Communicates the correct message in a timely manner;
- Is influential in their community or profession;
- Keeps staff aware of their interactions with their lawmakers; and,
- Recruits new advocates for your cause.

Methodology

Many of us are familiar with Fortune magazine's "Power 25" list. It's a list of the 25 most powerful lobbying groups. The list is a result of surveys completed by members of Congress and their staff, Washington lobbyists, and other D.C. "insiders." The groups on the list are extremely diverse – from the National Restaurant Association, to the AFL-CIO, to the National Right to Life Committee, to the American Bankers Association. I conducted personal interviews with leaders of these organizations. All interviews were conducted on the condition of anonymity, thus, I had very candid conversations with the members of the "Power 25" list.

We conducted personal interviews with directors of field operations, grassroots, federal affairs, vice-presidents of government affairs, as well as association CEO's. We interviewed only those groups who made the list in 1999 and 2001. (Fortune did not publish a list in 2000).

We interviewed every group that made the list those two years except for two. The Association of Trial Lawyers of America declined our request for an interview, and the Motion Picture Association of America

failed to respond to phone and written inquiries for an interview.

New Benchmarking Tool Available

We have developed a benchmarking tool for organizations that wish to compare and improve their organizational competencies relative to quality grassroots recruitment, retention and motivation. The benchmarking tool reveals the 20 organizational competencies that the "Power 25" consistently practice which result in motivated, reliable, grassroots networks.

Based on the organizational competencies of the "Power 25," you will learn:

- How you should motivate your grassroots volunteers beyond plaques, trophies and luncheons;
- What senior organization leaders consistently must do to recruit and retain their best advocates;
- The one communication method that greatly increases the probability that a grassroots volunteer will become a quality grassroots evangelist;
- What type of information you must provide to your grassroots volunteers to keep them engaged year round;
- What the "Power 25" tried relative to recruiting, retention and motivation that did not work; and,
- What challenges they still face as they seek to improve their grassroots prowess.

The benchmarking inventory includes further options for coaching, consulting, and implementation services, as well as staff facilitation workshops to set goals based on your benchmarking results. Contact us for more information on these options —
513-762-7668 / www.showaltergroup.com

**Top Lobbying Groups on the Fortune
“Power 25” List in 1999 and 2001**

Since the exact rankings vary over the 1999 and 2001 lists, the groups are listed in their approximate order.

National Rifle Association
American Association of Retired Persons
National Federation of Independent Business
American Israel Public Affairs Committee
AFL-CIO

Association of Trial Lawyers of America
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
National Beer Wholesalers Association
National Association of Realtors
National Association of Manufacturers
National Education Association
National Association of Home Builders of the United States
National Right to Life Committee
American Medical Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
Motion Picture Association of America
National Association of Broadcasters
Health Insurance Association of America
National Governor’s Association
American Bankers Association
National Restaurant Association
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

The Showalter Group, Inc. works with organizations that want to increase their grassroots and PAC effectiveness through strategic grassroots program development and training for public affairs staff and volunteers

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