

THE SHOWALTER GROUP, INC.  
ROOTS OF SUCCESS  
The Resource for Grassroots and PAC Productivity  
www.showaltergroup.com

Winter, 2003

Volume 5

Issue 4

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- Want to Get Your Career in Gear? Join us at Innovate to Motivate 2004 – January 20–23 on Captiva Island, Florida PAC, Grassroots and Career Acceleration for Senior Government Relations Professionals
- Quarterly Quick Tip



**Amy Showalter**  
Grassroots and PAC  
Productivity Expert

- Failing Forward: How to Overcome Common PAC Management Errors and Grow Your PAC
- See what people said about TSG's "10 Commandments of Influence" TeleClass with TSG associate, Kelton Rhoads, Ph.D.

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*"The Innovate to Motivate curriculum speaks for itself. You all do a wonderful job of expanding beyond the PAC/grassroots boundaries into the "business skills" areas such as sales and marketing, speaking, writing and persuasion that make any PAC or grassroots effort more of a success. You just don't see those development opportunities being offered elsewhere. It makes a difference...and it gets my vote!"*

*Corey Kerr  
Director, Government Relations  
Cardinal Health*

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### **Failing Forward: How to Overcome Common PAC Management Errors and Grow Your PAC**

*"If we all worked on the assumption that what is accepted as true is really true, there would be little hope of advance."  
—Orville Wright*

I read the results of a recent BIPAC (Business Industry Political Action Committee) member survey. It outlined the BIPAC member's PAC practices and potential for growth. The survey was conducted with business-oriented PAC's, but the lessons can serve all PAC professionals. Read the whole article on page 3.

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### **Quarterly Quick Tip**

#### **Quick Tips for PAC and Grassroots Goal Setting**

1. Be firm on your results, rather than the activities to get the results. I find that very successful people are firm about their intended results, and flexible on the process to achieve the results. Less successful people are firm about the process and flexible on the results.

Read the entire list on page 2



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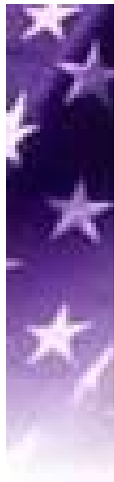
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### About The Showalter Group, Inc.

The Showalter Group works with associations and corporations that want to increase their grassroots and PAC productivity. We provide highly customized solutions via grassroots consultation, public affairs staff and volunteer training, coaching for public affairs staff, keynote presentations, and grassroots project management.

To book Amy Showalter to speak at your next meeting, or to inquire about our grassroots or PAC consulting services or other products, contact us at:



### The Showalter Group, Inc.

250 East Fifth Street  
1500 Chiquita Center  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

513.762.7668  
Fax: 513.553.9777  
amy@showaltergroup.com  
www.showaltergroup.com

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## PAC and Grassroots Goal Setting

people are firm about their intended results, and flexible on the process to achieve the results. Less successful people are firm about the process and flexible on the results.

2. Work backwards from your envisioned goal. Planning is taking what you have and generating activities. Strategy is working backwards from your envisioned goal.
3. Create implementation metrics and accountabilities.
4. Determine the level of organizational change needed to meet the goal and secure appropriate sponsors in key departments, as well as key grassroots and PAC volunteers.

### En route to your goal:

1. Communicate like crazy. Make the grapevine is the "truthvine."
2. Demonstrate early successes.

Continued on Page 5

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# Failing Forward: How to Overcome Common PAC Management Errors and Grow Your PAC

*"If we all worked on the assumption that what is accepted as true is really true, there would be little hope of advance."*

*—Orville Wright*

I read the results of a recent BIPAC (Business Industry Political Action Committee) member survey. It outlined the BIPAC member's PAC practices and potential for growth. The survey was conducted with business-oriented PAC's, but the lessons can serve all PAC professionals.

I wasn't surprised to read that the average rate of PAC participation was 30% of those who were asked. I was luridly shocked to read further "This is consistent over the last twenty years." The good part of that statistic is that despite mergers, acquisitions, and economic downturns, PAC's have a constant participation rate. This statistic is also cause for concern.

Despite decades of conferences, retreats, list servs, newsletters and panel discussions, PAC participation levels remain the same. It's not consistent with the proliferation of PAC best practices and knowledge over the last twenty years. Would any other profession tolerate the same results over twenty years of knowledge sharing? Is it a conspiracy that cries out for its own Oliver Stone movie? Perhaps it's because we are not sharing the best "knowledge" to be successful. The following are but a few ways the profession has impeded its own PAC progress. Many of them are what I refer to as "day one deviations;" the standards for performance and productivity were never right in the beginning. Thus, rather than being able to innovate, we are constantly fixing the PAC. This affects a PAC's productivity, results, and reputation.

## The "S" Word

Does the word "solicitation" conjure up a positive experience? When we use the "s" word when referring to PAC recruitment, we harm our PAC's brand. When have you happily submitted yourself to being solicited for anything? Yet, the term persists.

## Amyism #43

**PAC Recruitment:** "When we think of "solicitation," the mental picture hardly conjures up welcoming images. By removing the "s" word from your PAC vocabulary, you will subtly alter your PAC's image. Think of recruiting, instead of soliciting, for PAC membership.

Think recruitment, not solicitation. If we use the "s" word, we are not doomed to PAC failure, but we are not positioning our PAC in the most advantageous position possible. Many of my best friends in this business use the "s" word and we still respect each other. My clients, however, have had their Road to Damascus experience on this topic.

Nevertheless, as my associate and influence expert Kelton Rhoads, Ph.D., has observed through his research: "Whoever frames the issue or topic, usually wins the issue." In this example, PAC professionals have ran full speed sideways into making "solicitation" a part of their lexicon, and naively using it when promoting their PAC campaigns. We have unconsciously framed our request, albeit to our detriment.

## The Good "S" Word

The good "s" word in PAC leadership is sales. The most successful PAC professionals know that they have to be superior salespeople. They sell their PAC like crazed weasels (that's a compliment) to PAC eligible employees and members, and also sell its' virtues and results to senior organization leaders who can help or hinder their PAC development. They take nothing for granted. Unfortunately, many government relations professionals don't practice this discipline. My observation is that PAC professionals either do not believe in the PAC enough to be persuasive salespeople, or they believe in their PAC, but don't know the basics of sales.

## Change Management

For any government relations professional who must establish or reinvigorate their PAC, they are

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## Change Management

For any government relations professional who must establish or reinvigorate their PAC, they are essentially in the change management field. This is a management discipline unto itself, but many neglect the importance of working the seams of change. The PAC then de-orbits and becomes a former “program of the month.”

Success in creating change is rooted in respect for the resistance to it. Mary Schell, Vice President of Government Affairs at Wendy's International, Inc., started her PAC from scratch in 2003. She knew that she would need the support of senior managers, even those from departments not typically associated with PAC success. Rather than sending an email to all key company leaders and asking them to “contact her with any questions about the new PAC,” she took the time to personally meet with each of them and asked them: “What are your personal concerns about the PAC?” These company leaders were asked for feedback and suggestions. This contributed to her impressive PAC receipts since starting the Wendy's PAC. Wendy's PAC is nearly at the half-million dollar mark in just two years.

Take time to master the basics of change management and engendering cross-departmental cooperation. Your PAC will be larger than if you ignore this vital component of PAC development.

## Emphasis on Rewards as Motivation

Why do intelligent, articulate government relations professionals spend time in meetings and at conferences talking about the comparative value of a plaque vs. a mug to their PAC prospects? It's as if their PAC will thrive or thrash based on the reward. I'm not against rewards, but they do not motivate participation. (See our previous article on this topic)

They are meant to recognize those who contribute at a higher level, and to serve as a visible reminder to others that the PAC is a sanctioned entity, nothing more. Our time would be better spent learning about the science of motivation and how to apply it to PAC recruitment.

## Failure to Customize PAC Messages

Believing that what motivates a particular organizations' PAC eligibles to join the PAC will motivate our organization has always intrigued me, and not in a positive way. Be wary of any generic “Motivating PAC Messages” workshops or consulting packages. Context is paramount in any successful influence campaign. The motivation depends on the environment, the organizational climate, the political climate, and with some PAC audiences, whether they are having a bad hair day or a bad horoscope.

“This is the number-one influence mistake,” said Kelton Rhoads, Ph.D. “Everybody knows you are supposed to focus on the mindset of the audience, and not on the mindset of the persuader, but people still do it in droves! The key is to conduct good audience research and find out how the audience is thinking. This isn't startling advice, I know, but it's so widely ignored that it gets my number-one position for the most common influence error.”

Emily Diedrich Foster, PAC Manager and Washington Representative at Cummins, Inc., also started a PAC in a company with no corporate political involvement history. She and her team adroitly recognized that the most persuasive message to senior managers was the impact that the government relations environment, process, and pending legislation would have on corporate results.

Do you know what motivates your PAC audience? It's different for each employee group and managerial level. Too many government relations professionals hear what a colleague at another organization did to motivate PAC contributions and have copied it for their company or association. It's like Courtney Love conducting the New York Philharmonic. There's no fit.

## Additional Message Mistakes

I don't like to mix business and pleasure, but I also must alert you to a common PAC mantra that has made the rounds for the last twenty years. Exclaiming that, “Everyone hates politics, but you need to join the ABC PAC” is a Jurassic refrain that has deleterious effects on PAC recruitment. Kelton Rhoads believes this is a clear de-motivator for PAC involvement. “This is what we in the social sciences refer to as misuse of normative information. The research on this type of communication shows that it actually de-motivates people to comply with your request. Anyone who uses that type of language in their promotional materials or presentations needs to revise that message.”

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## En route to your goal:

1. Communicate like crazy. Make the grapevine is the "truthvine."
2. Demonstrate early successes.
3. Share credit and emphasize the role of internal partners.

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This type of language may make people feel like "one of the group" by hating politics, but it doesn't engender long-term PAC commitment. As the science fiction writer Stanislaw Lem observed, "Is it really progress if we've taught a cannibal to eat with a fork?"

Even more uninspiring is the coma inducing: "The cost of campaigns has increased." This begs the "So what's your point?" response. Campaign expenses are not a compelling reason to contribute to the PAC. Go ahead and delete this from your PAC promotional materials. Recruiting for the PAC without this fact is like playing tennis without your accordion.

## Raise The Bar

My colleague and Innovate to Motivate National Conference [www.InnovateToMotivate.com](http://www.InnovateToMotivate.com) co-founder, Peter Kennerdell, shares this observation: "Throughout my 26 years of counseling PAC professionals, I find that about two-thirds of them aren't serious about PAC success. They know basic techniques, but they don't apply themselves to the task of continuous improvement." We all must assiduously examine whether we are developing the necessary PAC leadership skills beyond traditional government relations skills.

This is the very reason Tony Kramer, Peter Kennerdell, and I co-founded and co-produce our annual Innovate to Motivate Conference for Political Involvement Professionals. In addition to raising the bar on existing grassroots and PAC conference curriculum, we pioneered the inclusion of career acceleration topics and influence practices. We look forward to helping you move to the next level in 2004.

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## TSG's "10 Commandments of Influence" TeleClass with TSG associate Kelton Rhoads, Ph.D.

"I found most valuable Kelton's instruction on the latitudes of acceptance, the six ways to arm your troops, and the problems that come from faulty segmentation. I'm using this information to review and entertain changes to our solicitation communications."

Jeana Hultquist, Legislative Specialist  
US Ag Bank, FCB

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"I thought each point was useful. In particular, I found the section on framing helpful. I can use this information to adjust our techniques for mobilizing voters."

Stan Scott  
Executive Communications

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