

How to engage with government effectively

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Presentation at the VakaYiko
Consortium Meeting
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Objectives of the Session (s)

- **By the end of the two sessions you should have learnt:**
 - **Importance of engaging with government**
 - **Tips on effectively engaging government**
 - **Communication with influencers and decision makers**

Who is Government and who are you?

- **Who is Government?**

- **The system by which a state or community is governed.**

- **Normally consist of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary**

- **It is the means by which the state policy is**

Who are you?

- **Why does your organization exist and is it serving its purpose?**
- **Whose needs is the organization intended to serve and is it serving these needs?**
- **What is the organization supposed to deliver and is it delivering this?**

Government and the Politics of the Country

Before you start the engagement process understand the Government and Politics of the Country you work in:

- **How is the Government of Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe constituted ?**
- **What are the political dynamics of the country?**

Government and the Politics of the Country

- **Where does the power reside?**
- **Who are the decision Makers?**
- **What are the roles influencers and their staff?**
- **What is the accepted protocol?**

Government and the Politics of the Country

- **Read both government and independent newspapers**
- **Listen to local news**
- **Talk to the cab driver**

Getting Started – The strategy

- **Identify what you are trying to influence – legislation policy etc**
- **Create your strategy taking into consideration the political environment, intergovernmental opportunities and challenges and communication**
- **Your strategy should consider how you work with all facets of state: the executive, select agencies and the legislature**

Execution

- **Any engagement with government officials need to be proactive, honest, transparent, responsible and sustainable**
- **Be aggressive – there is no substitute for personal contact**
- **Be persistent – your calls and e mails are not returned keep trying**
- **Be Patient – vultures benefit most**
- **Establish internal contacts- If offered the opportunity to meet with the deputy director and not the director don't say no**

Execution (II)

- **Get to know the people who are likely to work with your organisation and build a positive relationship**
- **Gather stories about your potential partner :- good stories break the ice and challenges offer opportunities for your intervention**
- **Present the heroes they know- give examples of interventions they know and not rocket science**
- **Invite them to visit your office**

Execution (III) getting influencers to listen

- **Relationships will get you in the door but substance will help move the agenda**
- **Establish relationships by sharing your expertise be credible and honest, don't over promise**
- **Remember the way you approach or present one issue will impact your relationship on all future issues**

Execution (III) getting influencers to listen

- **Harvest pennies and show appreciation- small things add up to big results**

- **Deliver on promises: “White cat or Black cat, whichever catches the rat is a good cat”**

Execution (III) getting influencers to listen

- **Mastery of subject matter – be clear of the work you do, what relationship want and what support you need**
- *As she came to the cross- roads , she saw the Cheshire Cat and asked “which way do I go?”*
- *“Where do you want to go?” asked the Cheshire Cat*
- *“I don’t know” replied Alice*
- *Then it doesn’t matter which way you go”*

Execution (III) getting influencers to listen

- Respect all applicable laws of the land
- Don't assume
- Beware of weapons of the week: gossip and pilferage
- Not everyone has a price: Expose don't bribe

Execution: how to communicate

- **Be consistent with your strategy don't criticize the Clerk of Parliament today and expect him to sign your MoU tomorrow**
- **When you disagree with someone whose support you need, don't blindside them by going public**
- **Advocate for something rather than against someone**

Execution: how to communicate

Think out of the box, its not only that which you see and touch that matters in engaging with Government:

“Who has seen the wind?

Neither you nor I.

But where the trees bow down their heads,

The wind is passing by”

The Wind, Christina Rosetti, 1830-1894

Execution: how to communicate

- **Communicate effectively:-**
- **A wife asks husband, a programme manager “ *would you please go to the store for me and buy a carton of milk, and if they have eggs get six*’**

A short time later the husband comes with 6 cartons of milk

The wife asks him “Why the hell did you buy 6 cartons

Issues to ponder...

- **Effectively engaging government takes time**
- **Recognize and fill gaps in knowledge**
- **Offer training to help if Government actors are unfamiliar with the proposed intervention**
- **Legitimacy- are you a legitimate organization manned by legitimate officers**
- **Calculate the risk of your actions: Never test the depth of a river with both legs**
- **Expectation: Honesty is a very expensive gift don't expect it from cheap people**

Issues to ponder

- **Project a professional first impression by dressing well and use “established rules of dress” as a general guideline**
- **Clothes should be appropriate – sense of occasion**
- **Observe etiquette- i.e. rules governing socially acceptable behavior regarded as correct or acceptable in social or official life**

Issues to ponder

- **Project positive values such as professionalism in all aspects of your life i.e. appearance, behaviour, work etc**
- **Always be punctual for meetings. If you are an attendee, be on time. If you cant make it to a meeting or you are going to be late let someone know.**
- **If you are the one who is running the meeting,**

Issues to ponder

- **Don't arrive late and ask for a recap its disrespectful.**
- **Always watch the volume of your voice on the phone, along the corridors and in meetings**
- **Take responsibility of your mistakes, apologize and go about correcting the mistakes**

Global Trends...

No single institution can resist critical influences around it. Global trends signal the direction we should face, the concerns we should think about and how we should position ourselves to remain effective and relevant to our contexts.

Adaptation for Survival

- **Adaptation and evolution to public expectations is an a necessary ingredient to effective engagement.**

The End

Siyabonga!!