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## LOBBYING AS A METHOD OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

**Abstract:** *The purpose of lobbying is to influence government policy and its implementation, and to help set the political agenda, in favour of political, social, ecological, business, and other aims. Lobbying is often an efficient way of influencing decision-makers, but the success depends on our knowledge, our resources and our contacts. Lobbying is used to influence knowledge, values and action among decision-makers. The lobbyists can strong support the decision-makers by giving them well-documented and credible facts and analyses for free, and thereby influence them to make decisions that suits the lobbyists. Lobbying is certainly new and legal form of communication. The Internet is a new technology which this process significantly improves.*

**Key words:** *lobbying, business, communication, lobbying techniques, Internet*

## LOBIRANJE KAO METOD POSLOVNE KOMUNIKACIJE

**Sažetak:** *Cilj lobiranja je uticanje na vladinu politiku i njeno sprovođenje, kao i na stvaranje političke agende u korist političkih, socijalnih, ekoloških, poslovnih i drugih ciljeva. Lobiranje je najčešće efikasan način uticanja na donosiocje odluka, ali uspeh ipak zavisi od našeg znanja, naših resursa i naših kontakata. Lobiranje se koristi radi uticanja na znanje, vrednosti i akcije donosilaca odluka. Lobisti mogu snažno da podrže donosiocje odluka dajući im dobro dokumentovane i pouzdane činjenice i analize kako bi ovi doneli odluke koje odgovaraju lobistima. Lobiranje je svakako nova i legitimna forma komunikacije. Internet je nova tehnologija koja ovaj proces značajno unapređuje.*

**Ključne reči:** *lobiranje, poslovanje, komuniciranje, tehnike lobiranja, Internet*

### Introduction

The concept of lobbying and lobby firm is differently explained in the professional literature. Since there are many different kinds of lobbying (political, economic, legal, etc.), main differences in the definition of the term lobbying are made depending on the area in which lobbying takes place. Lobbying in the global aspect represents the interests of individuals or interest groups articulated in order to realize their goals.

Lobbying is a word with many possible definitions, but will in this paper be defined as public or private actors legally trying to influence legislators or other public officials and politicians for or against a specific cause. The word comes from the English "lobby", which is a foyer or public room next to the assembly chamber of a legislative body. It was used in the beginning as a term for the journalists waiting in the lobby for the English parliamentary sessions to end, so that they could talk to the politicians.

Lobbying is the practice of trying to persuade legislators or officials to propose, pass, or defeat legislation or to change existing laws. Lobbying may be done by constituents, organized groups, or other legislators. Governments often define and regulate lobbying by organized groups. Lobbying takes place on international, national, state, local, and municipal levels, wherever a government or organization of any kind makes decisions on public policy. A lobbyist may be a professional paid to work on behalf of a special interest group such as a trade association, labor union, or nonprofit organization, or a private individual who acts out

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of personal commitment to a particular cause. *Direct lobbying* involves meeting personally with political people or decision makers and attempting to persuade them. *Indirect lobbying* can take the form of advertising campaigns, media publicity, the filing of lawsuits, and public relations initiatives; or of influencing the people who are in direct contact with the decision-maker.

There is a problem of understanding for “lobbying”, especially when it comes to the attitude towards the activity. In some countries (such as the USA), lobbying is seen as a natural part of the political system, and the word has therefore a neutral meaning. In other countries, the attitude towards the concept is negative and the word is connected with illegal attempts of influence, such as bribing or “buying” decisions.

### **What is lobbying and why use lobbying?**

The media often writes about lobbying at a national and international level, but the most frequent lobbying takes place at the local level. The thought behind lobbying is that if you want your interests to be satisfied, you have to influence the decision-makers. The decision-makers cannot represent all interests in the society, and therefore it is important to tell them what you and your group wants. However, not all attempts on influencing decision-making can be called lobbying. There are some specific characteristics that separate lobbying from mere influencing:

- Lobbying is directed towards public affairs – not the private sector.
- Lobbying aims at influencing these decisions, laws and rules in specific matters - not in general.
- Lobbying is made by an organization or stakeholder groups - not by private persons.
- Lobbying includes communication – the opinion has to be actively supplied to the decision-maker.

Lobbying can be used at all stages of the decision-making process. A division can be made between *proactive* and *reactive lobbying*. Whereas proactive lobbying aims to influence a matter before it is even on the agenda, reactive lobbying concerns concrete law proposals. These types can also be called *upstream lobbying*, that is attempts to influence a matter before a decision has been made, and *downstream*, which attempts to influence the practical implementation of a decision. Most lobbying is made reactive or downstream, although this often can be too late to bring a significant result.

### **Types of lobbying**

As mentioned, lobbying can be direct or indirect. Direct lobbying involves meeting personally with decision makers and providing them with information pertinent to a bill or policy on which they will be voting. Lobbyists representing particular groups may give presentations to legislative committees. Indirect lobbying can take the form of advertising campaigns, media publicity, the filing of lawsuits, and public relations initiatives; or of influencing the people who are in direct contact with the decision-maker. Grassroots lobbying is the mobilization of large numbers of ordinary citizens to sign petitions, write letters, participate in demonstrations and otherwise make their opinions known to their political representatives. Grass-top lobbying involves the mobilization of community leaders, professional associations, celebrities and well-known figures who are able to influence public opinion and apply substantial pressure to political figures.

Lobbying is often direct, meaning that it attempts to influence decision-makers through personal contacts. Networking is crucial. The lobbyist has to present his opinions to the decision-maker in a convincing way. This can be made by meetings, telephone calls etc. Therefore verbal skills are essential for lobbyists. A lobbyist can however also make use of indirect channels such as the media or political commercials, as a way of influencing also the public opinion and thereby influence the decision-makers elected by the public. Another indirect method can be to use informal contacts, during dinners and lunches and other events. It often brings more success to combine both approaches.

**Direct lobbying** is defined as a communication directly to a legislator or certain other government officials that:

- 1) refers to a specific legislation, and
- 2) reflects an organizational view on that specific legislation.

**Indirect, or grassroots lobbying** is defined as a communication to a general audience that has three key elements:

- 1) reference to specific legislation,
- 2) reflection of an organizational view on that legislation, and
- 3) encouragement for the recipients to take action on that legislation with a legislator, a government official, or a government employee.

Methods of direct lobbying include personal meetings, telephone conversations, individually written letters or faxes, mass mailings, and petitions. The most effective techniques are personal meetings and telephone conversations. To help make direct lobbying more effective the lobbyist may use graphs, charts, polls and reports to get the information across to the politician. The information is used to help cast the matter in a light favorable to the interests that lobbyists represent. A lobbyist who works in Washington, whether that is on Capital Hill or at the White House, uses mostly direct lobbying techniques. However that is not always the case. When the issue is far-reaching, sometimes indirect lobbying techniques are used in conjunction with direct lobbying.

Grassroots lobbying, which is also known as indirect lobbying, enlists the help of the community to influence politicians. Although there are many people involved in this type of lobbying, a professional lobbyist is often needed to set up and organize the different methods being used. Many of the organizations that use direct lobbying techniques also use indirect lobbying. Most of this takes place at the state and local level.

Methods of indirect lobbying include writing and calling your member of Congress, officials in EU institutions, local government etc. For this to be effective a large number of people need to be involved. Ten or twenty is not enough to persuade a member to vote a certain way. The more people that participate in these methods the more the issue will be listened to, and because of this, indirect lobbying is very time consuming.

The use of the media is one of the most powerful tools that can be used in grassroots lobbying. In the age that we live in, the media has a large and powerful influence over the government and their agenda. This means that the more media attention that a cause receives the more likely that Congress is going to take up the cause. Lobbyists gain media attention by writing stories for newspapers and magazines. Lobbyists also often pop up on talk shows to discuss their issue this enabling the public to obtain a greater understanding and awareness of the issue.

## Types of Lobbyists

According to the literature, the activities of lobbyists and pressure groups can usefully be grouped in four categories:

- *service functions*, i.e. the provision of specific (and often exclusive) services for their members (e.g. the gathering of information);
- *lobbying functions*, i.e. attempts to influence decision-making processes from outside (e.g. by meeting Commission officials or participating in public hearings);
- *decision-making functions*, i.e. the attempts to influence decisions from within (e.g. by direct participation in the decision-making process of expert committees selecting research project proposals);
- *implementation functions*, i.e. the participation in policy implementation (e.g. by taking over management functions in programme implementation).

Some authors also use next classification:

1. Consultant Lobbyist

A consultant lobbyist is an individual paid to lobby on behalf of a client. Consultant lobbyists can include lawyers, accountants and other professionals. A client is a person, partnership or organization that hires a consultant lobbyist for an undertaking. Each undertaking requires a new registration. An undertaking is defined as a contract or agreement between the consultant lobbyist and a client. Contracts that have significant changes (not including address changes) or differences in subject matter represent a new undertaking.

2. In-house Lobbyist (company)

An In-house Lobbyist (company) is an employee of a person, partnership or company whose lobbying activity is a significant part of their duties or whose lobbying activity along with that of other employees' would amount to a significant part of one staff member's duties. An employer is a person, partnership or company that carries on business for financial gain and pays (in whole or in part) specific employees to lobby on their behalf.

3. In-house Lobbyist (organization)

An In-house Lobbyist (organization) is an employee of an organization such as a professional association, society or chamber of commerce whose lobbying activity is a significant part of their duties or whose lobbying activity along with that of other employees' would amount to a significant part of one staff member's duties.

## **The lobbying process and techniques**

The lobbying process include:

- preparation of coalition position papers and statements on each issue
- selection of credible and vocal spokespersons to speak on issues
- meetings and dialogues with government delegations
- providing government delegations with draft statements of interventions on each issue
- providing counter-statements for any oppositions

The basis for successful lobbying is in forming credible partnerships and effective communication. The seven basic rules (seven Cs) of effective communication, adopted from standard advertising practices, offer a convenient guide:

- **Command attention** – messages should be daring enough to attract attention and elicit comment while at the same time remain sensitive to cultural context, social values and political priorities. Slogans are often used. Sometimes it is the medium even more than the message that is the attention-getter e.g. using the Goodyear blimp or the sides of the elephant as billboards to promote condoms.
- **Cater to the heart and head** – most people are moved at least as much by emotions as by reason. Personalize the message and appeal to the audience's consciousness and values.
- **Clarify the message** – Focus and freedom from clutter are crucial. A key message should convey a single, important point.
- **Communicate a benefit** – People need a strong motive to do something or change a behavior.
- **Create trust** – A message that people will act on their own accord must come from sources that they trust.
- **Call for action** – After hearing or seeing the message, the audience should know exactly what to do. Prepared statements of actions or a draft legislation or policy helps.
- **Consistency counts** – Repeated messages and sustained dialogue is important.

There are different ways of lobbying ranging from the writing of letters to key target audiences expressing the issue or having face to face meetings to discuss the issue to a large scale campaign involving multiple groups and spokespersons using various media channels including public rallies. Some examples of lobbying techniques used are shown in chart below.

Lobbying techniques
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Letters / Press releases / Press conferences</li><li>○ Fact Sheets / Briefing packs / Posters / Flyers</li><li>○ Public service announcements</li><li>○ Public Forums and debates</li><li>○ Petitions</li><li>○ Public rallies</li><li>○ Face to face meetings</li></ul>

The most common lobbying methods / techniques are:

*a. Support base*

You should never, never lobby alone. Try to get organizations or individuals who support your cause to also use the methods discussed below. Whilst politicians are always sensitive to organizations, they also respond well to lots of appeals from individuals.

*b. Letters*

Letters are the easiest method to use to lobby but they are not always the most effective. Many people in positions of power have administrative staff who read their mail and summarize it for them. Make letters as personal as possible and avoid getting different organizations and individuals to all send exactly the same letter. See the format under submissions for the issues that should be covered in a letter.

*c. Submissions*

Submissions are usually made to committees, or chairpersons of committees in government, and it is important to structure them in such a way that you get your points across powerfully. Here is a recipe you can follow. State clearly:

1. The group or organization you represent, and contact details.
2. The topic or issue that you want to make a submission about
3. Why your group is making the submission e.g. your concern, how you are connected to the issue and your expertise or experience on the issue.
4. The specific actions you would like the committee to take.
5. The reasons why you would like them to take this action – this is where you give the facts and make your main points. Be as brief and accurate as possible.
6. The reasons why the actions you recommend will be good for the interests of the committee – e.g. how it will improve the quality of service, make a contribution to the welfare of the community, save money or generally please their constituents.
7. It is sometimes useful to outline briefly what would happen if no action is taken. Be careful not to sound as if you are threatening the decision-maker.

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8. Offer further information or face-to-face meetings on request

*d. Aides and secretaries*

Most decision-makers have staff that deal with documents, do research, and prepare briefings and programmes. Sometimes it is important to influence these people as their bosses. Make sure that you get to know them and spend time explaining your issues to them and building relationships. If they take you seriously it will be easier to get access to, and attention from, the decision-maker.

*e. Meetings*

Ask if you can have face-to-face meetings to present your case. Visit the person in their office or invite them to attend a meeting in the community. Always state the importance of the meeting clearly and provide an agenda and a list of possible outcomes from the meeting. Remember to stress what is in it for the decision-maker e.g. "This meeting will provide you with the opportunity to make direct contact with more than 100 people from the community and to hear their concerns on the issue."

*f. Inspections*

Invite decision-makers to come and make on-site inspections if it is appropriate, e.g. to come and look at the bad condition that the school is in. It sometimes helps to get publicity for inspections and you can then say in your invitation that you have also invited the press to witness the inspection.

*g. Phone calls*

Get as many people as possible to phone the decision-maker. Also use faxes and e-mail if possible. Try to get some influential and well-known people to also phone. It will not always be possible to speak to the decision-maker and everyone who phones should leave a clear message e.g. "We are phoning to object to the council closing the local clinic."

*h. Publicity*

Media attention is a powerful persuader and the more publicity you can get for your issue the better. It always helps to make individual contact with a reporter who is prepared to follow the issue through.

*i. Petitions*

Petitions are a useful way of showing popular support for your issue. You can use a petition to get as many signatures as possible from people in the community who are affected by the issue or you can get a smaller number of key individuals or organizations to sign a petition in support of your submission.

In the recent time the Internet offers amazing resources to help figure out both what is needed, and who to ask. Clearly, the most effective web-based lobbying include links to talking papers, briefing materials, fact sheets on a particular issue, and other relevant documents. Using the Internet to create a network and use that network to develop personal messages is one of the most effective "cyber-lobbying" techniques around. Through a combination of list serves, web-based content, chat rooms, and other tools, effective advocates can build a community of like-minded individuals, and encourage broader action. However, as with all methods of communication and information gathering, there is a right way and a wrong way to use the Internet in efforts to influence policy.

## The 9 P's of effective lobbying

As a summary of analyses which concerns activities of lobbying firms, and employees of those firms working in front row, we came up with the unique matrix of 9P's. The model of 4P's of Marketing Mix was used as inspiration to a model which outlines combination of characteristics which make lobbying efforts more likely. This model applies for both-firms and individuals.

P	<i>P</i>	P
P	P	Ⓟ
P	Ⓟ	<b>P</b>

- PROMPT
- *P*ATIENT
- PREPARED
- POLITE
- POLITICAL
- ⓅATIONABLE
- PROFESSIONAL
- ⓅERSISTANT
- **P**RIVATE

- PROMPT- show up on time, if note early for your meeting with the person you want to discuss certain issues
- *P*ATIENT- remember that your counterpart and his/her office staffers have incredibly demanding schedules and do not be offended if arranged meeting starts late or is sometimes interrupted
- PREPARED- be familiar with issue and the arguments of your opposition against the issue. Have supporting documentation and personal stories on the issue. Be aware of your counterpart stance and have background materials on the issue available to leave with your contact or her office colleagues.
- POLITE- *listen* to what your counterpart has to say about the issue, be cordial, respect your counterpart time, remember to thank to your counterpart if she understands or supports the issue, and agree to disagree if your counterpart is not in line with your position on the issue
- POLITICAL- remind your counterpart that you have been involved in the process for some time and that you have acquired support from other relevant individuals and institutions.

- **ADAPTATIONABLE**- Remember that sometimes your counterpart has some other important issue to deal with, and that every process is interactive. Other process and individuals can affect actions of your focused individual
- **PROFESSIONAL**- dress professionally, act professionally, and keep your meeting concise and organized
- **PERSISTANT**- Remember to send minutes of meeting or follow up thank you letter that briefly summarize your visit, and to follow through with any promises of additional documentation or answers they requested from you.
- **PRIVATE**- no matter how transparent your activity is requested to be, you should be aware to the fact that there are many opponents to your standpoint. The less information they have the more chances for you.

We believe that this model gives good analytical frame for efficacy lobbying as an important sub-function of each business process. Its full application can significantly improve competitiveness of enterprise.

## Conclusion

Lobbying as a process of influence on decision makers getting an increasing importance in contemporary business practice. Although possible abuses make certain dilemma towards this, we believe that lobbying, as special way of business communication, should be introduced in our business practice. Modern information technology can significantly improve business lobbying. In sum, lobbying and influencing are long term strategies. Therefore, they must be planned, proactive and personalised.

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