

What Makes a Successful Environmental Campaign?

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Introduction

Definition: An environmental campaign is an initiative that seeks to achieve certain specified environmental objectives. Environmentalism is marked by a history of campaigns seeking to tackle a particular problem or looming crisis. These include topics such as climate change, destruction of forests, biodiversity loss and oceanic pollution. Campaigns have frequently sought to challenge the capitalist way of life which underpins so many of these problems. We may have been impressed by some campaigns and left disappointed by others.

What is it that makes a successful or unsuccessful campaign? Are there common lessons that can be learnt to improve the prospects of success or at least reduce the risk of failure?

This paper examines some environmental campaigns in order to distil lessons for the benefit of future campaigners. A biblical perspective is also provided.

1. Types of Campaign

Campaigns are marked by different characteristics:

- They may be local, national or international.
- A campaign may have as its goal simply to inform and educate the public, leaving us to make our own response.
- Some will go further by directly challenging people over their lifestyle¹.
- A campaign may seek to persuade governments or local authorities to change policy or legislation.
- Campaigns may tackle human injustices emerging from environmental problems (e.g. the disproportionate impact of global warming on human populations living in low lying areas of South East Asia or the Pacific Islands).
- Campaigns may of course feature several of the above – these will be more complex to deliver.



'The Wave': Stop Climate Chaos – 5 December 2009

Campaigns should be assessed against their original objectives. It is important not to do this too soon after their completion, and the passage of time may reveal further impacts that can be credited

to them. Notwithstanding the above, some campaigns, even though they may appear to have failed against their main objective (e.g. to shift government policy) may nevertheless have educated people about an issue of importance, and their mission may be taken up by others at another more opportune time.

Campaigns may be led by faith-based or secular groups. The motivation for campaigning may be variously influenced by an ecocentric, biocentric, anthropocentric or theocentric view of the world². The immediate environmental and political targets associated with different campaigns may be indistinguishable, and contrasting world views should not by themselves rule out collaboration.

2. A Look at some Successful Campaigns

Restoration of the Ozone Layer

The potential for chlorofluorocarbons to deplete atmospheric ozone was identified in 1974³. This led to the setting up of a number of campaigns run by organisations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth that highlighted a significant problem, and were ultimately successful.^{4,5} In 1978 CFC-based aerosols were banned in USA, Canada, Norway and Sweden. In 1985, under the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the groundwork was laid by 28 countries for the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Protocol was signed by 46 countries on 16th September 1987, and came into force from 1st January 1989. It now has over 200 signatories, and relies on national regulations to implement the necessary changes in manufacturing practice. Full recovery of the damaged ozone layer is not expected until 2049 in middle latitudes, so there is no room for complacency. Nevertheless, the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan described the Montreal Protocol as “the single most successful international agreement to date”⁶.

The main factors behind the campaign’s success are seen to be:

- The science has not been seriously contested by any of the major countries.
- National regulations to ban CFC-based aerosols were being put in place long before the Protocol was signed, so momentum was already building.
- The scope of the problem was relatively well-bounded (compared to say the complex ramifications of climate change).
- The image of a hole in the Antarctic atmosphere was easy for the average person to understand and be concerned about. Public opinion was readily behind action to be taken.
- It potentially affects everyone, even the affluent West.

International Debt Relief through the Jubilee 2000 campaign

Jubilee 2000 was founded in the early 1990s⁷, drawing on the Biblical principle of debt cancellation. The campaign called for cancellation of 3rd world debt by the year 2000, and an international coalition movement of over 40 countries emerged. Debt has an important environmental connection because debt-ridden developing countries may take expedient measures to generate cash in order to repay debts; such as the clearing of tropical forests for monoculture followed by the growth and export of cash crops.

The overall goal of Jubilee 2000 was to remove \$90bn of debt worldwide. By 2000, rich countries had promised to write off US\$110bn of debt, 20 countries were promised some debt relief, and the campaign duly disbanded as it had promised to do⁸.



Bob Geldorf, Jeff Sachs, Bono & Ann Pettifor, 1999

The effectiveness of Jubilee 2000 could be attributed at least in part to:

- A well evidenced and clear theme, with an effective franchised logo.
- An informal coalition approach, allowing rapid spread of the idea and encouraging local initiatives to be organised.
- Some imaginative ways of communicating the message e.g. “Drop the Debt!” coalitions of music bands; getting people to send the Chancellor a £1 coin sellotaped to a postcard, as a contribution to paying off international debt owed by developing countries.
- Some well know supporters (e.g. Mohammed Ali and Bob Geldof).

The “Make Poverty History” campaign in the UK was founded in 2005 partly on the work of Jubilee 2000, but also on the Trade Justice Movement and Aid Budget reform.⁹

Biodiversity Protection through the work of the TRAFFIC Campaign

Many organisations have been involved in campaigns to protect the dwindling biodiversity of the world. One such organisation is TRAFFIC. Formed in 1976, TRAFFIC is a wildlife trade monitoring network working across 5 continents. Its mission is to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature. TRAFFIC is governed by two major conservation organisations, WWF¹⁰ and IUCN¹¹, whose priorities it shares. TRAFFIC helps to ensure successful implementation of two International Conventions:

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

TRAFFIC has 120 staff placed in key locations across the world.

Target species and sub-species in recent years have included the African rhino, Asian tiger, and a number of diminishing shark and manta ray species. TRAFFIC is undoubtedly an influential organisation in a very challenging space.

The impact of TRAFFIC can be attributed to:

- A clear message that engenders a lot of public support, from school children to senior citizens.
- A long list of institutions supporting it, including two powerful parent bodies that bring considerable expertise, resources and experience to bear.

- A multi-national team who are well connected to local decision makers.
- Activities include scientific analysis, reporting, lobbying, co-ordination and opinion forming. These are all referenced in an excellent web site¹² with access to TRAFFIC's large library of publications.

3. Biblical Example of A Successful Campaign for Social Change

The Reformist King Josiah

In marked contrast to his father and grandfather, who had been Kings of Judah before him, Josiah directed a campaign to eradicate idol worship from the kingdom.¹³ He was convicted to do this when a scroll containing the Book of the Law was discovered during repairs to the temple. The resident prophet was consulted, and shared a message of impending judgement.¹⁴ Josiah proceeded to read the Book of the Law to an assembled crowd in the temple, and renewed the covenant with God on behalf of the nation.

Josiah took practical measures by removing and destroying objects of idol worship. He denounced and removed pagan priests. The Passover feast was celebrated in a grand style following a long period of neglect. However, some of the mountain top shrines remained, along with their associated pagan activities. Notwithstanding the spiritual cleansing that Josiah carried out, it did not go far enough in terms of genuine repentance for God to relent from his plan to remove Judah from his sight. Josiah's actions nevertheless delayed events until after his death¹⁵.

4. Common Success Factors for Environmental Campaigns

Some common themes can be derived from a review of the above campaigns.

Firstly, it requires wisdom to pick the right issue at the right time. This involves good political insight and accurate sources of intelligence. It helps to have an area of focus which is understood not just by politicians but also "ordinary" people. An ability to pull the right political levers is also crucial¹⁶. Effective communication of not just the problem but how it can be solved is needed. Support from some well-known stakeholders is useful. A governance structure needs to be developed which is fit for purpose according to the nature and longevity of the campaign.

From the biblical example, additional success factors are obedience to the will of God and prophetic people taking opportunities to influence those in politically high places. In addition, effective dictatorship by kings and leaders who were convicted and convinced of what was right.

5. Less Successful Environmental Campaigns

It would rarely be fair to judge any campaign as a complete failure. As mentioned previously, a campaign may have limited objectives to do with communication and awareness, and it is against these objectives that it should be judged. And a campaign that does not meet its end objectives but does deliver against its intermediate ones could be seen as partially successful.

The following campaigns/initiatives are generally regarded as having been less than successful.

Attempts to Progress Climate Change Mitigation

In the year or more before the Copenhagen climate change meeting in 2009 many environmental organisations ran major campaigns, there were large marches across the world, and governments were intensively lobbied. The aim of the environmental organisations was to persuade government leaders to take prompt action to cut carbon emissions. The summit comprised of the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the 5th meeting of the parties to the Kyoto Protocol. A framework for climate change mitigation beyond 2012 was to be agreed at the summit.¹⁷ 115 world leaders attended.

Despite good intentions, no general consensus was developed on how exactly to advance the battle against climate change, and there was mistrust between a number of countries. There was even evidence of spying between delegations. In an attempt to retrieve something from the conference, the USA worked with the BASIC Countries¹⁸ to create a draft “Copenhagen Accord”. Its key recommendation was to set a long term goal of limiting temperature rise to no greater than 2oC above pre-industrial levels. No approach was defined on how this target might be achieved, however. The Accord was seen as weak, and the Conference did not adopt it but merely “noted it”.

There were a number of factors that led to the relative failure of Copenhagen. An effective climate change sceptic lobby was embedded in a number of state teams including the USA. The underlying science was not undisputed (e.g. the large number of factors that can cause climate change over and above man-made greenhouse gas emissions, and uncertainty over the relative impact of each factor). In addition, there was mistrust between developed and developing nations over the differentiated goals that might be imposed on them as a result of their different industrial/pre-industrial histories. Furthermore, the cost of clean energy was relatively expensive in 2009. The "goal" in the text of the Copenhagen Accord for the world to be able to raise \$100 billion per year to help developing countries cut carbon emissions was considered insufficient and too late.

The Biblical principle of Jubilee and its lack of implementation

Under the Mosaic Law, every seven years was to be a Sabbath year when debts were cancelled and Hebrew slaves made free¹⁹. Beyond this, every seven Sabbath years was to be a year of Jubilee, when agricultural land was to be returned to its original owner. People were to re-settle on the basis of their original tribal and family communities.²⁰ There are recorded examples of other land and property “clean slates” or “resets” in different cultures pre-dating and post-dating the Jewish people.²¹ However, the Jubilee law was probably unique in specifying a fixed interval of 50 years, rather than a period that was at the discretion of the ruler.

The Biblical Jubilee represents one of the most radical programmes for land reform from the ancient Near East, yet it is understood that it was never practised in ancient Israel.²² Perhaps it proved too much for a “capitalist” people. By the time of Jesus, leaders of the Sanhedrin had devised a way to circumvent it legally, and it was considered as something that would arise with the future Messiah. Hence the amazement that met Jesus’ forthright statements in the synagogue at Nazareth amounting to an announcement of Jubilee in fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy.²³

In Church history, the Roman Catholic tradition has perhaps celebrated Jubilee the most frequently, usually in the context of the remission of sins. Many Protestant evangelical churches have incorporated the word “Jubilee” in their name. Whilst the full implementation of Jubilee has not been evident, the message itself has proved a source of inspiration to many.²⁴

6. Good Practice from Industry

Many of the leading campaigns (e.g. for climate change mitigation or biodiversity loss reduction) are akin to movements of people seeking to rectify a problem or an injustice that affects society or the planet as a whole. These can go on for many years and precipitate a sequence of initiatives. Some campaigns however bear a closer resemblance to projects, in that they have a fairly well defined goal or problem that they wish to address, a start and end date, and a rough budget to work within.

Prince2²⁵ (**Projects in Controlled Environments**) is an accredited project management standard which provides a store of good ideas that if taken into account could help improve the prospects of success in a campaign. This section summarises a number of its main elements that campaign leaders could take advantage of.

Risk Management

A “risk” is an uncertain future event which, should it occur, will have an effect on the achievement of goals/objectives. All opportunities have risks associated with them. Risks need to be managed if a campaign outcome is to be positive. Risk events that become a reality are known as “issues”. Risk needs to be assessed at the strategic level of a campaign and this may affect the decision on a) whether or not to proceed with the campaign, or b) if it is to proceed, how much control should be applied to the campaign so as to contain the risk of failure or maximise the chances of success.

Risk also needs to be managed at a tactical level when the campaign is up and running. The three main variables²⁶ used to calculate the importance of a particular risk are: the probability of the risk occurring; the impact if the risk does take place; and the closeness in time of the risk. Actions need to be taken to mitigate the most serious risks, either by reducing the likelihood of their occurrence, or reducing their impact should they occur. Different organisations are likely to have different “risk appetites”, in other words their degree of willingness to take risks²⁷.

Biblical reflection: In the words of the writer of Proverbs, “a prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.”²⁸ Jesus’ parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins is instructive.²⁹ The wise virgins planned for the possibility (risk) of a late arrival of the bridegroom by taking a spare supply of oil with them, unlike the foolish virgins. The foolish virgins ultimately missed the wedding feast because of this.

Stakeholder Management

A stakeholder is a person or external organisation that can influence the outcome for better or for worse. Stakeholders need to be identified, profiled and engaged appropriately. Two questions should be asked for each stakeholder: are they supportive, indifferent or in opposition to the goals of the campaign?; and how much influence do they have over the campaign’s outcome? The answers will

decide how each stakeholder should be engaged with. Including them on mass mailings may be sufficient. On the other hand, one-to-one contact at a senior level may be necessary to allay their concerns or to win their active support. The attitude of key stakeholders towards the campaign needs to be monitored, and responded to as necessary³⁰.

Scope

A campaign must have a clear and agreed scope. It should be large enough to make an impact, but not so ambitious that it founders. Are any other campaigns underway with the same aim? Do you want to duplicate what they are doing, perhaps competing for attention and resources? On the other hand, there may be opportunities for collaboration with them. Jubilee 2000 fostered a collaborative, multi-regional approach. Later on, a divergence in scope and ambition arose between Jubilee North and Jubilee South. The Jubilee campaign suffered from serious internal tensions as a result.³¹

Change

Adjustments in the scope, organisation or tactics of a campaign are likely to be required during its passage.³² Triggers for change can come from diverse sources: external factors such as a change in government regulations or a new scientific finding; internal factors such as a change in top leadership or a significant new cost that was not previously anticipated.

An interim campaign review may recommend changes. Alterations to a campaign will have a financial impact, and timescales may be impacted. Whilst change may be essential, the overall goal should be kept in sight.

Planning

There is an old adage that “what doesn’t get planned doesn’t get done”. It is important that for any significant campaign a plan is developed, followed and updated. Steps that should be taken to derive a plan are³³:

- Identify the deliverables³⁴ from the campaign, including intermediate deliverables;
- Identify the activities required to complete the campaign deliverables and any inter-dependencies between the activities;
- Estimate what resources (time, technology and skills) will be required for the various activities. Make sure the estimates are independently reviewed, as people are generally over-optimistic about how much can be done in a given amount of time.
- Develop a schedule or timeline of the activities, taking account of their inter-dependencies and the estimates that were derived. This schedule forms the road-map for the campaign.
- Ensure the team understands the main features of the approved plan.

Plans should avoid going down to an unnecessary level of detail as “the wood might be missed for the trees”. Plans need to be kept under regular review against campaign progress, agreed changes and external events. Re-planning may be required from time to time, but the original³⁵ plan should be retained for reference.

Biblical Reflection: Jesus talked of the importance of counting the cost of following Him, and alluded to a man who started to build a tower but who through poor planning was not able to finish it because he ran out of resources. The man was mocked by others for having to abandon his undertaking³⁶.

Team Building and Team Roles

A campaign team is likely to be less structured than a business project, but some important team building principles apply:

Newly formed teams typically go through a series of phases before being able to work well together. Bruce Tuckman identified these phases as “forming, storming, norming and performing”³⁷. An additional phase “adjourning” was added later³⁸. If a team has worked together in the past these phases may be accelerated. People bring their own personalities into any role that they fill, and the underlying roles that they fill will have as much impact as their official job titles. These hidden roles were described by Maurice Belbin as “team roles”³⁹. As an example, someone’s official job title may be “campaign co-ordinator”, but they may fulfil a team role of “resource investigator”. Belbin identified 9 team roles, and advised that a successful team will have all 9 represented in one way or another. One person can fulfil more than one team role. Belbin found that the balance of team roles within the team is more important to its success than the team’s academic level.

Example of an Effective Team

Daily Bread Co-operative (Northampton) was founded by a team of nine Christians in 1976, who wanted to demonstrate a different way of doing business. The team developed a vision for a workers’ co-operative which would supply whole foods and other ethically sourced products in line with a number of social objectives.



These objectives include rewarding staff based on need more than job status; willingness to employ those with mental health issues and other disabilities; and contributing some of the wealth of the co-operative to local and overseas development projects. The strong team ethos has continued to date and around 25 staff are currently employed, with a turnover of £1.3m.

Biblical Reflection: When Jesus appointed the twelve, roles seemed to emerge over a period of time as Jesus perceived their destiny and potential. Peter’s leadership role was highlighted quite early on⁴⁰. Judas Iscariot was later described as treasurer⁴¹. The twelve had a shared role of announcing the Kingdom of God on Earth through preaching the gospel, healing and deliverance⁴².

Monitoring Progress⁴³

The campaign plan will be the benchmark, against which to monitor progress. Progress can be monitored through written reports, update meetings and the hitting or missing of campaign milestones. External suppliers need to be monitored particularly closely. Examples of problems identified may include: cost overruns (e.g. publicity costs have escalated); delays to key deliverables e.g. an important report will not be ready on time, or quality problems (e.g. publicity materials are error-ridden). A risk may turn into an issue. For example the risk of opposition to the campaign from a key stakeholder group has now materialised. There may be people issues (e.g. a

key team member hands in their notice). The earlier problems are identified the better; corrective action and re-planning should be taken promptly to help redress matters.

It is important to recognise and celebrate successes, for example the achievement of a key milestone.

7. Communications and Publicity

Effective communications are a hallmark of a well-run campaign. The goal of communications is to share the right message with the right people at the right time, so as to win support and maintain momentum. Channels for communication and publicity, over which you have control include email bulletins to members and supporters, briefings to sponsor and board members, web site updates, blogs or reports, and one-off initiatives to win support and raise awareness. You have less control over social media (who says what about you and how messages get dispersed), and of course press and news reports. Choices over the channels used may depend on the budget, duration and reach of the campaign. Another factor will be the degree of central control applied to the campaign. There is no “one size fits all”.

Jubilee 2000 and its spin-offs drew much of their impetus from effective and imaginative communications techniques.

Barack Obama utilised the full breadth of social media tools to drive his presidential election campaigns in 2008 and 2012. He was ahead of his rivals in understanding the potential of social media to build and grow a campaign. A number of Facebook demographic groups were catered for e.g. “Women for Obama”, “Latinos for Obama”. His campaign was able to convert ordinary people into enthusiastic volunteers, donors and advocates through the use of social networks⁴⁴.

8. When things get tough...

Campaigns will inevitably encounter difficulties and challenges during their course. A few suggestions are tendered below:

- Seek advice from the sponsor or advisory board for the campaign.
- Christian individuals within an organisation should pray for God’s wisdom.
- Maintain team cohesion as far as possible.
- Carry out brainstorming to identify solution options.
- Take action, introduce a change and re-plan if necessary.

Biblical Reflection: The account of Joshua’s conquest of the city of Ai⁴⁵ contains elements of the above. The campaign met with initial failure because of over-confidence and a sin issue. Joshua humbly sought God over the failure and received insight into its causes. Once the causes behind the failure had been dealt with, Joshua received a modified campaign strategy from God⁴⁶, which proved highly successful.

9. Conclusion and Final Reflections

Because of the diversity of types of campaign, it will never be possible to define a single best practice approach to campaigning. What we can do for those campaigns which have a well-defined boundary and timescale, is to define factors which are likely to increase the chances of success - based on the experiences of those which have gone before, as well as guidance from industry.

Synopsis of Success Factors

Harnessing public support is important combined with the ability to work the political system in your favour. Campaigns should have evidential and scientific backing. Support from “big name” stakeholders can be essential, particularly for more controversial topics. A realistic plan against which progress can be monitored is important. A strong, cohesive team with all the key skills represented will provide resilience and momentum. Maintaining overall focus is important, whilst also being willing to adjust the approach when needed. The ability to learn from failures and successes on the campaign journey is a hallmark of a mature organisation.

In addition to all the above, Christian organisations might also wish to reflect on the importance of prayerfully hearing from God and obediently responding to His will in a situation. They may wish to seek the Holy Spirit’s empowerment to see the campaign through despite obstacles. They should not forget the injunction to pray for national leaders⁴⁷ who have to take major decisions affecting the environment.

Biography

Rob Hitchcock is a retired quality management consultant with extensive experience in the public and private sectors. He has worked in several government departments and the NHS in areas of policy, quality assurance and operations. In the private sector his clients have included insurance, utilities and IT consultancies. He is a member of the Chartered Quality Institute. Rob is a graduate of the Christian Rural and Environmental Studies course.



Photo Credits

Photograph of ‘The Wave’ - Dr Martin J Hodson

Photograph of Bob Geldorf, Jeff Sachs, Bono, and Ann Pettifor in Cologne September 1999 taken from <http://advocacyinternational.co.uk/featured-project/jubilee-2000>

Logo for ‘Daily Bread Co-operative’ taken from www.dailybread.org

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The *JohnRay Initiative* promotes responsible environment stewardship in accordance with Christian principles and the wise use of science and technology. JRI organises seminars and disseminates information on environmental stewardship.

Inspiration for JRI is taken from John Ray (1627-1705), English naturalist, Christian theologian and first biological systematist of modern times, preceding Carl Linnaeus.

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