THE CAMPAIGNER JOURNEY: *step by step*

December 2019

HUMANKIND RESEARCH

"we want your vote"

As the election nears, organisations are increasingly targeting voters with a plea to put their issue first at the polling station

But what do we really need to say to people to convince them to take campaigning or political action on your issue?

voter mindsets

We recently conducted qualitative research (focus groups) on this question... speaking to people from three different ideological mindsets

Educated liberals

- Greatest appetite for collective action
- Belief in government as agent of change

Lower income left wing

- Appetite for collective action, mainly at local level
- Cynicism about government as a change agent – feel let down

Centre right

- Overall belief that change needs to start bottom-up
- Believe in broadest scope for individual action as possible, with government only acting to protect that freedom

Whilst mindsets differed, we saw everyone face the same 8 beliefs or questions before committing to changing their vote or making a heartfelt campaigning action...

#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
LOYALTY	ISSUES	AGENCY	CARE	PROMISES	IMPACT	NAVIGATION	POWER
I always vote for the same party	Other issues matter more	Is this really government's responsibility?	Does my MP really care?	Will they keep their promises?	Do things ever really change?	Who I should vote for?	I don't really believe my vote counts

#1. LOYALTY

"I always vote for the same party"

Moral tribalism (the tendency to make quick knee-jerk 'us and them' judgements) is a well documented phenomenon in social science, a 'necessity' to cope with the complex world we face

This is exacerbated by the equally well documented 'media bubble effect' (Image ref Wall Street Journal's 2017 *Red Feed Blue Feed* experiment)

So for many years switching one's political affinity was as unthinkable as switching their football team, party politics was passed down the generations

But things are changing… Brexit affinity is currently disrupting long held party loyalism - political volatility is at an all time high (ref British Election Study)

The opportunity to disrupt the tribalism of political affinity is higher than ever before, the main hurdle is breaking into the echo-chambers and speaking to new audiences rather than preaching to the converted

Capitalise on the unravelling of party loyalties to break into the echo-chambers and reach new audiences (not just the typical swing voters)

#2. THE ISSUE(S)

"Other issues matter more to me"

Of course they need to believe your issue is important. But how important is obviously highly subjective

In our research seeking to encourage people to vote (on CC), we hypothesized that most of those we recruited (to already care about it) would prioritise it, given the existential risk it poses

But even if they believed this (and not everyone did), other issues continue to feel more urgent; particularly housing, poverty (domestic and global), the NHS and knife crime

Finding the intersections of your issue with other bigger, existential concerns (like Oxfam has done with climate change and poverty in image) is key

Don't just keep saying your issue is important: show how it intersects and affects other issues voters care about
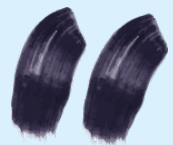
"What's the point of caring about the planet if my kid is going to be stabbed? Then they wouldn't be able to appreciate it anyway"
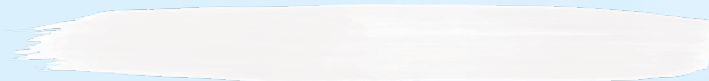
Lower income, left-wing
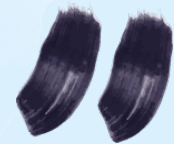
#3. AGENCY

"Is this our government's responsibility?"

If people have decided to prioritize your issue per se, the next step is convincing them that UK *political*-level change is needed

With many centre right voters instinctively fearful of a bigger state, they can prickle at the suggestion that the government is necessarily the answer

And indeed voters of all stripes want to know exactly what is being proposed: More money? Specific targets e.g. net zero by… / building social housing? Regulation?

As well as how this change will be actioned e.g. on climate change most believe a key govt. role is influencing *other* world govts. (esp. China & India)

Important to be as specific as possible about how MPs and/or government will further your agenda to get people on board

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Be clear about the role of political change in progressing the issue beyond just 'the government must act'

OUR DEMANDS:

1. CLIMATE ACTION:
ZERO EMISSIONS, DRAWDOWN & 100% RENEWABLES BY 2025

2. PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY:
END LAND CLEARING AND GIVE NATURE LEGAL RIGHTS.

3. TELL THE TRUTH:
SPREAD THE SCIENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND REPORT ALL FACTS HONESTLY

4. DISMANTLE COLONIAL SYSTEMS OF EXPLOITATION:
DECOLONISE AND REPLACE OPPRESSIVE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES WITH SYSTEMS OF SELF-MANAGEMENT AND TRUE PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY.

TO JOIN THE REBELLION:
VISIT FACEBOOK.COM/EXTINCTIONREBELLIONSEQ AND SHOW UP TO A LOCAL EVENT TO LEARN ABOUT HOW YOU CAN TAKE NON VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION TO PROTECT THE CLIMATE.

extinction rebellion

#4. ADVOCATES

"Does my MP really care?"

The 'talk to your MP' approach only resonated with a small number in our research, the majority were skeptical (at best)

The idea of a genuine 2-way conversation with MPs was perceived to be only for the passionately engaged minority, not 'normal people like me' (nearly half of people polled say MPs don't care about people like me)

Not only do people (allegedly up to 75% according to some newspapers) struggle to name their local MP but more-over the people we spoke to struggled to imagine their MP as a real person, with real life human cares

Changing the discourse to politicians as individuals feels like an important move towards deeper engagement, even from a campaigning level

Image: They Work For You

Normalising MP drop-ins as a positive mainstream behaviour and talking about them as individuals is likely to increase propensity to engage with them

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#5. PROMISES

"Will they keep their promises?"

Trust in government and politicians is at an all-time low - a 2018 OECD survey showed that out of thirteen possible people and experts, the UK public have *least* trust in journalists and politicians

And the people we spoke to cited many examples of recent political betrayals including the Lib Dems on tuition fees, and Boris' NHS Brexit bus

People struggle to believe politicians mean what they say, that it isn't all just self-interested careerism (esp if their commitment to the issue is 'new news')

Talking positively about MPs and reversing the continual negative discourse of cheats, liars and hypocrites feels like an essential frame-changing narrative

As well as demonstrating how you are working in collaboration and will hold them to account, preventing MPs and parties paying mere lip service to important issues

Be clear on how you will hold the government and MPs accountable once in office

At this time of political change and beyond, we'll keep fighting for better mental health.

mind
for better mental health

#6. IMPACT

"Do things ever really change?"

A concern at two levels:

- Campaigning has little effect on MPs / government policy

- MPs can't effect change within their party / government

Especially in a time where things seem to be getting worse - rise in NHS waiting times, rise in knife crime – with seemingly no good news stories

And most of the people we spoke to had signed petitions on more than one UK issue but hadn't yet heard reports of success

Where possible there is a need to demonstrate not only the potential success of the campaigning action i.e. voting, but the positive track record of your charity and the MP / political party on the issue

Show clear examples of campaigning having a positive impact, or at least tangible progress you have made

> **Oxfam International** ✓
> @Oxfam
>
> [Follow]
>
> Victory in #Tunisia: law for eliminating ALL forms of violence against #women and girls adopted oxf.am/2w5yFAM
>
> 11:20 AM - 31 Jul 2017
>
> 27 Retweets 42 Likes
>
> 27   42

> "Writing to my MP hasn't been that effective, she gave me a bureaucratic answer, but I guess her hands are tied too? She can't really make the decisions

Lower Income Left-wing

#7. NAVIGATION

"Ok, but who I should vote for?"

It would take a lot of individual effort and time to find and decipher each party's manifesto

It involves understanding the detail of the issue and being able to compare different parties' approaches to it

In general people are looking for as much guidance as possible

they are looking for authoritative, objective assessments, conducted with rigour and transparency, that allow them to make an informed choice

And not only assessing what parties on what they say they will do, but their ability and track record to deliver the promise (to points #5 & #6)
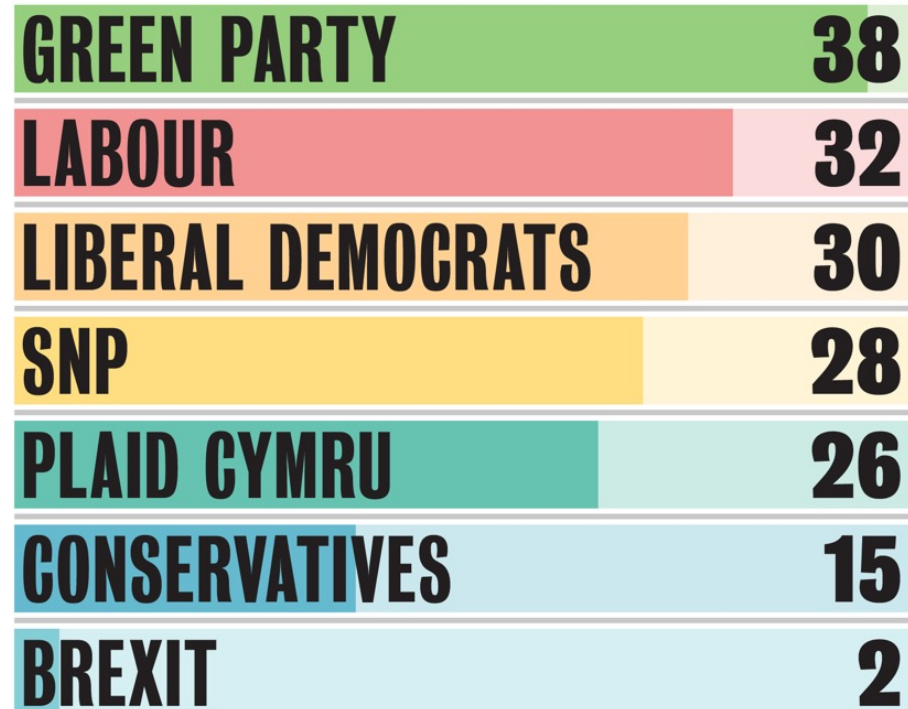
Image: Greenpeace

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Provide guidance that is as transparent as possible on who to vote for (within the law)

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CLIMATE & NATURE
✳ ✳ ✳ FACT DECK ✳ ✳ ✳

HOW DO THE PARTIES COMPARE?

Party	Score
GREEN PARTY	38
LABOUR	32
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	30
SNP	28
PLAID CYMRU	26
CONSERVATIVES	15
BREXIT	2

#8. COLLECTIVE POWER

"I don't really believe my vote counts"

Even if someone has overcome the mental barriers to get to this stage, they may not believe their vote has power locally

Especially in non-marginals where the incumbent has a large majority

There is the fear that voting tactically or in a different way than you usually would might get lost

People need to know that not only others are taking the same action, but that the votes are being aggregated in some way and given meaning

Talking about the collective also normalises what is potentially an unfamiliar or uncomfortable behaviour behind a common goal

Image: Fridays for Future strikes

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Show how your organisation is uniting votes at scale in the constituency … and beyond

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So we can summarise with 8 guidelines for more effective engagement with campaigning asks

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LOYALTY	ISSUES	AGENCY	CARE	PROMISES	IMPACT	NAVIGATION	POWER
Capitalise on unravelling of party loyalty to reach new audiences	Show how your issue intersects with other issues voters care about	Be clear about the role of political change in progressing the issue	Humanise and normalize MP drop-ins to build more engagement	Be clear on how you will hold MPs and the govt to account	Show clear examples of positive outcomes of campaigning	Provide guidance that is as transparent as possible on who to vote for	Show how your organisation is uniting votes at scale in the constituency

Concluding thought

Whilst there is clearly no single strategy that guarantees supporter or campaigner engagement, there are many tactics we can be using to optimise comms... not just in the run up to an election, but in general campaigning too

If more of this sort of thing is of interest to you, please get in touch. We cover a wide range of research and insight briefs, and we're always open to new challenges

Comms and Campaign Development	Exploring public engagement with key issues	Positioning and Strategy	Segmentation and audience profiling	Attitude and Behaviour change

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