HOW TO RUN AND REPRESENT A PARTY

REACHING OUT AND CONNECTING

Communication, agenda setting and organising election campaigns

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Introduction

What is a political party?

In most democratic political systems in the world, political parties play a crucial role in the way in which democracy functions. It is political parties that stand for election, who provide lists of candidates, and who write policy platforms for voters to consider. It is political parties that legislate and make decisions that affect all citizens. It is political parties that can be held accountable for their decisions and whose power can be taken away in free and fair elections.

Political parties' function as a link between citizens and political power. They organise people so that they can have a role in making political decisions. They can bring together voters, make them members, educate them on social issues, and mobilise them to make their own voices heard. When political parties function well, they are not only involved in creating policy in parliaments or running campaigns, they also help to make political and democratic influence a living reality for more people. They become a tool for people to influence social development, and to take control over their own lives.

What kind of party does a social democratic party aim to be?

There are many different types of models for political parties. If you want to learn more about how to form and develop a party, you will first need to define what party model you intend to use. Is it a party that consists mainly of a group of elected politicians representing various interest groups? Is it a party controlled from the top down – termed a cadre party? Or is it perhaps a populist party centred around a strong leader, with supporters rather than full members in the party's base?

In this course material, we of course assume that a social democratic party is basically and ought to be a popular movement party where the power in the party derives from its members and moves upwards through its organisation. It needs an inclusive and democratic way of working that features internal democracy, representativeness, and transparency.

The basis of such a party is the democratic grass roots movement and substantial popular participation. It is a party that brings together people of flesh and blood, who have commitment and a common vision of how our society should function and develop. In this sense, there is no difference between a popular movement party and other popular movements. People join forces to play football or put on plays in a theatre group, to form a cooperative, or to learn to sew or weave. Those who want to be involved in changing the conditions under which people live in a broader sense become active in a political party. That is the foundation of a popular movement party. s

The organisational focus of such a party is on developing strong local structures with a lot of active members. It is based on the idea that parties in a democracy should not only play an important role in parliaments but also in the surrounding community and civil society. Political parties, especially if they are also in power, are often seen as representatives of parliament or the government and not as representatives of people in everyday life. To avoid this situation, parties must create broad, inclusive organisations with democratic structures and ensure that they work in a way that is visible and which makes a difference in people's everyday lives.

But how do you do that?

Democratic parties in different parts of the world can learn a lot from each other's experiences and practices. This introductory course and its modules focus on how a party can strengthen its organisational and political capacity to become a strong and democratic party with active members and inclusive structures and activities. The strength of a party depends to a large extent on how democratic it is and how well the organisation functions. This requires organisational structures and ways of working that function well, and a culture of openness to people actively sharing in and participating in the political work of the party. A strong democratic party that is confident in itself encourages debate, active participation and criticism, and self-criticism.

An introductory course in running a party

This course is intended to provide an introduction to and an overview of how to form, organise, develop, and represent this kind of democratic popular movement party – from the top down and the bottom up.

Its target group is leaders and active members of social democratic parties. You might be leaders in many different areas at the national, regional, or local level. The course emphasises the local level, however, since the local level forms the base of a social democratic popular movement party, and is the level that involves the most people. The material for this course is also useful for active members who are not leaders, in which case it can be used for self-study or as part of local member courses.

A six-module course

The course is divided into six self-contained modules. Each module has its own course material, which is intended to be used for 3–4 meetings of leaders and active members in the party in the form of a study circle to discuss the questions and ideas that the module raises. But the number of meetings to cover each module is flex-ible. One meeting per module is also an option, although you will then need to pick out which of the topics and questions you are going to discuss, as you will probably not have time to cover everything. As a participant, you can of course choose to take the entire course or to focus specifically on one of its modules.

The six modules in this introductory course are:

Module 1
Forming and Structuring a party

Module 2
Holding Elections and Reaching Decisions

Module 3
Formulating Policy and Leading the Way

Module 4
Reaching Out and Connecting

Module 5
Growing and Consolidating

Module 6
Representing and Governing

Module 4: Reaching out and Connecting

This module deals with the strategies, methods and activities employed by political parties to reach out and establish contact with their surrounding communities. Successful communication and advocacy are fundamental for parties to be able to change society in practice. So in this module we go through what communication and advocacy can look like and highlight different methods that parties can use.

The first part deals with fundamental strategies and methods to position and differentiate your party – creating its profile based on its ideological and political orientation, as well as its main target groups and opponents.

The second part deals with fundamental points of departure and methods for outreach, setting the agenda and advocacy. It also talks about how to define and find your target groups and how to adapt your communication accordingly.

In the third part we study how parties can reach their target groups in practice. The usual channels, methods and tools for communications and how they interact.

The fourth part goes through how all these elements can become part of the party's election campaigns and what basic election planning and organisation looks like.

The main focus of this module is to provide an overview and introduction to this area. How you, as leaders and active members, can design these activities at different levels of the party. How you can think about and be able to plan for it all. How parties communicate can be broken down in detail in a great many different areas. This would, however, require its very own introductory course. The aim here, however, is to give you the opportunity to be able to assess and discuss how you can work with your own party's communications and outreach activities. In particular by offering tips on methods for developing the party's local communications activities.

The Swedish Social Democrats' Party Chair Stefan Löfven with Party Secretary Lena Rådström Baastad, Minister of Finance Magdalena Andersson and members of the Swedish Social Democratic Youth League.

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN SWEDEN

The Swedish Social Democratic Party was formed in 1889 as part of a broader popular movement and organising process with the aim of demanding political and economic rights for workers. The party's founders included trade union organisations who believed that the labour movement needed a voice in parliament. In the first few years, it was about demanding democracy, universal suffrage, and better social conditions for workers. The party formed its first government in 1920 and has since then been in government for a total of over 70 years. During these years, the party's main project has been to develop, and further develop, within the framework of 'the Swedish model'

– a modern welfare state aimed at increasing citizens' equality, social security and freedom. For a long time, there were only five parties in Sweden's *Riksdag* (national parliament) and the Social Democrats often received over 40 per cent of the votes in elections. Today there are more parties, and the Social Democrats Party has lost some of its broad support, and often has to form coalitions with other parties in order to be able to govern.

90,000 members
290 local branches
26 regional organisations

The party currently has about 90,000 members who are organised in 290 local branches (*Arbetarekommuner*). Under these are a large number of associations and clubs, in residential areas and city districts in particular, which together with the local branch make up the basic organisation of the party. The local branches are in turn organised into 26 regional organisations called Party Districts (*Partidistrikt*). The party is classed as a mass-based party and its organisation is based on federal principles, where the regional organisations together constitute the party nationally, with the National Conference as the highest decision-making body. ■

The key role of communication for political parties and democracy

Reaching out and connecting – with sympathisers, voters and other important actors in society – is one of the most fundamental tasks for political parties. To make people more aware of what the party stands for and to have confidence in the party, build a strong political movement, and develop strong partnerships with the wider community. It has an important role to play so that the party can fulfil its democratic mission.

Democracy is a form of governance in which the power lies with the people. Citizens participate in decision-making in free and fair elections, where political parties have aggregated and formulated the policies from which voters can choose.

Parties play a connecting role between citizens and their representatives and act as the most important means of holding governments accountable for their actions and performances. Thus, the process by which political parties formulate their policies, differentiate them from those of other parties and seek support for implementing their policies is central to the functioning of representative democracy.

It is therefore important for your party to communicate well within the context of this mission – for several reasons. For example, your party needs to be able to:

- Collaborate and conduct a dialogue with the community at large, get input, proposals and opinions that can improve the party's policies and organisation.

- Set the agenda in policy debate and garner support for the party's values and politics.

- Build a strong organisation by attracting members and sympathisers and encouraging them to engage in the party's activities by contributing their time, money and efforts.

- Strengthen the party's support among voters and win elections.

In short, the party's communication efforts are essential if the party wants to be able to be a political force capable of changing society.

In order to succeed, the party needs to be able to differentiate itself, reach out, convince and engage the constituents. The party and its representatives and members must secure the greatest possible confidence in the party's policies and its ability to lead. They need to engage and inspire others in order to create momentum with many members and sympathisers. It's a job that never ends.

All this while there are many other parties and actors with a different agenda who want something different. So the competition is tough, and if you were to lay it on the line, you could say that parties' communications efforts are a constant battle for people's *hearts and minds*.

Good, effective communication is fundamental to relationship building. It should reach its target audience and engage with them emotionally, and generate trust and interest and inspire identification. This is true regardless of what kind of communication you are talking about. It applies to big election campaigns, when the party is trying to win as many votes as possible, or to everyday communication in the local community, where the party should be present and listening. It's about creating a relationship and a 'collaboration' that stands the test of time. A 'we' – together. Therefore, at every step it is important to bear in mind that the communication should go in both directions.

By the way, did you know that the word 'communication' comes from the Latin communis, common, via communicare, which means to share, or to make common?

Different types of parties' communication

Policy must always come first. It is the fundament. A party must have answers to people's questions about the future, identify solutions to society's most burning political problems, and then be involved in influencing the conditions for people's everyday lives. In the previous modules of this introductory course, we describe what it means to be a programmatic party. That it differs from being a cadre party, which is ruled by a small group at the top, or a personified party, with a charismatic leader at the helm. A programmatic party is one that relates to the voters as a group as a political alternative. The voters pick the party because they like the policies it presents to them. These kinds of parties help to build a stronger democracy because it is easier for voters to evaluate whether they have lived up to their promises which in turn allows voters to hold them to account. For this kind of party, it is always policy that is the basis for their communication.

Parties that have nothing to say have nothing to communicate either. Parties that do not know what they want have a content problem, not a communication problem.

But if it were that simple – that good policy was enough – the world would look very different. Parties would present their policies, the citizens of the country would actively seek to find out what alternatives they think are best and hand power to the party that they feel most closely aligns with that they think is best. But as we know, there are plenty of examples of parties that have had clear policy but have nevertheless failed to communicate this to the voters. Political communication is about doing both. It is about having a clear message and using effective methods of communication.

> **❝ Policy without communication is simply not possible. It's like having blood without veins and arteries. ❞**
>
> Tarjei Skirbekk

Communication in a democratic popular movement party

In a democratic popular movement party, there are demands on communication that differ from other types of parties, as well as companies and other organisations that do not have an internal democratic process. In parties without a democratic tradition, governed by a charismatic leader or a small group at the top, communication is often based solely on the analysis and desires of the party leadership. They do not have to take the views of members or internal processes into account.

There is no communication without dialogue, as often said, and this saying summarises how you ought to view communication in a democratic popular movement party.

Firstly, communication should always be based on the party's internal democratic process. Policy decisions made at National Conferences, annual meetings and members meetings are the basis for policy and the messages that the party communicates.

Secondly, communication is also part of the democratic process. Its purpose is to open channels within the party, for members to have their say, and to ensure many people are pulling in the same direction.

Thirdly, its purpose also is to create a dialogue with citizens and make it possible for them to conversed with the party's representatives and ultimately to influence policy. In this context, it is also important that the party's communication about its methods and techniques is open and transparent. It should be clear who is the sender, what is being said and what channels the party uses to establish a dialogue with the community at large.

The importance of working strategically

In all parties, communication is happening all the time in many different forms. In discussions at meetings, in policy texts that are written, in posts published on social media, in field work initiatives out on the street, and in the mass media when the party's representatives make statements on behalf the party. This is inevitable. In a modern society, we have to communicate more or less continuously. That calls attention to two things.

- Everything the party does is part of its communication. As soon as you say something or do something, it communicates something.
- There is a difference between communication in general and strategic communication.

Strategic communication is a term that describes the role communication plays in an organisation's efforts to achieve its strategic goals. It can include target group analysis, general messages schedules, choice of communication channels, and other foundations for continuous communication efforts and more temporary campaigns. In short, strategic communication means that those of you involved with the party's communication should know:

- What you want to achieve – what is the purpose of the communication?

- Who do you want to communicate with – what target groups do you want to reach?
- What are you going to communicate – and how do you want it to be perceived?
- How are you going to reach your target groups – with what narratives, messages and arguments?
- How are you going to communicate – via which channels, using what methods and techniques?
- When you have achieved your goals – how are you going to follow up and measure the results of your efforts?

It is particularly important for parties with complex organisations, many members and elected representatives, and with broad spheres of activity with many messages, message bearers, target groups and clear opponents, to work strategically with their communication.

This might appear to be a cold and calculating; a conflict-focused perspective on how parties relate to the community at large. But, as we have already concluded, it is an important part of the democratic mission of political parties to be as clear a political alternative as they can. Competition also leads to parties and their policies being carefully reviewed so that they can develop for the benefit of society as a whole. But that said, parties also have a mission to engage in dialogue, to cooperate and to create solid foundations for a constructive democratic culture. This is a responsibility which falls to each and every one of us who is active in politics, as it does to the citizens who elect their representatives in free and fair elections.

? DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What role does a political party's communication and advocacy efforts play? For the parties' own objectives and for democracy? What is this intended to contribute to?

- Fundamentally, what characterises good and effective communication?

- How does a democratic party's communication efforts differ from those of other types of political parties?

- Why is it important to work strategically with your communication? What is the actual meaning of working strategically with communication?

Building the party's profile from the ground up

Most members of a political party are members because they like its ideological profile, policies and activities. You will probably recognise yourself in this statement. As an active member, you do not need to be convinced of how good the party is, even though you may, of course, be critical of some things and want to change them. But basically you know what the party stands for and you are convinced that it is the best one for you. But for outsiders, it is not as obvious that your party is the best party. In fact, other people's picture of the party is probably much less clear than most people in the party would want to believe.

In order to reach out and persuade more people to vote for it, the party must work actively and consciously on its profile and image, or its 'brand' as it would be called in a commercial context, in order to gradually increase knowledge about, and confidence and interest in the party; so that people listen to, argue for, engage with, and vote for it. In short, a good brand may be said to increase knowledge and build trust in the party, and be attractive and engaging. It should allow citizens to identify with the party and encourage them to take action and be loyal to the party. It must also be distinct from other parties and actors. The party should stand for something unique

among the voters and have a clear position in the country's political life if it is to have a good chance of standing out and being successful.

There are similarities between political parties and companies when it comes to branding and creating a profile, but naturally there are also fundamental differences. A private company can carry out a market analysis, identify where it has the greatest opportunity to take market share, and then develop the company's offering and market profile based on this information. A party's brand and profile must always emanate from its ideological base, its internal democratic process and from the policy stands it takes on concrete issues continuously. But fundamentally, there are needs and challenges that are similar between companies and political parties. Parties also need to work actively to ensure that the image they want to convey is also the image that voters apprehend. They also need to present their ideas methodically and clearly. All communication should be coherent and not out of step with each other. In order to succeed in this, some fundamental and strategic choices need to be made first.

A clear position in the minds of the electorate

To be able to work strategically on the party's profile and political communication, it is first necessary to map the political landscape and get a good idea of the party's position there. Primarily, we don't mean by this what position the party takes on every political issue. We mean the party's ideological place in the political landscape. And then of course, the party's policy positions on concrete issues proceed from and contribute to this fundamental position so that the party's policies overall are in step with one another.

Why is this important? Let us start by answering this question in simple terms with a sailing metaphor. If you are somewhere on the high seas, it doesn't matter how good your map is, how good your vessel is or how accurate your compass is – you will still not find your way to the port of your destination unless you also know where you are on that map.

The clearer the political position is, the easier it is to communicate it clearly, and the easier it is for people to grasp what the party stands for. For a programmatic party that bases its policy and policy development on a clear ideological footing, this generally feels more self-evident than for other types of parties. An ideological profile automatically creates a fundamental political domain and distinctive place on the political map.

The fundamental values of the party play a particularly important role. They are the foundation stones on which the party's ideological base and profile rest. These values, or core values to use a marketing term, must always be made manifest to the outside world for the party's position to be and remain clear. They must, of course, be reflected in the party's policy priorities and policies, but also in how the party and its representatives express themselves and act – and in the choices that are being made in all of the party's activities and communications. In the form of expressions, arguments, illustrations, channels and tonality that create meaning. Clear values-based communication is important to be able to achieve and secure a position in people's minds. It is therefore important to know who you are, and then practise what you preach, and be consistent and clear about this in order to stand out and be credible to the voters.

A party's position is relative to others

When we talk about positioning, we are talking about relative positions. Like private companies, parties also compete with other actors, mainly other parties, in the struggle to be perceived as the foremost political force to confront people's and society's challenges, and to be elected to lead the government.

To carry out a proper analysis, the party's relationship to other political parties therefore needs to be taken into account. If an analysis of a party's position shows, for example, that the party is in the same place in the political landscape as another party, this is a factor that must be taken into account in its communication and election strategy. In that case, it is important to ponder how our party can be distinguished from the other party. How does our party differ from them? It is important here which of the parties is strongest and enjoys the greatest confidence among the voters. Only one actor can hold the same position successfully.

It is also important for the party, in its analysis, to address its main competitors that are ideologically and politically very different. Where are they in the political landscape? What makes them so different from our party? This is where the major conflict lines on policy will lie, as well as the crucial debates about the future. There is always a need to create contrast in political debate and this is an effective way of clarifying our own position in relation to precisely these others.

There are a number of ways in which to analyse the party's position. One is to use the classic right–left political spectrum. The terms right and left are usually about issues related to the power of the state over business, economic issues such as taxes and income, and the size of the welfare state. In recent years, the GAL-TAN spectrum has become common in analyses of the political landscape and the positions of parties. GAL stands for Green-Alternative-Libertarian. TAN stands for Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist, reflecting a more conservative view of society. Combining these two conflict lines results in a four-cell table in which the party can be placed based on its values and policies.

THE POSITIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES
ON THE LEFT-RIGHT AND GAL-TAN SPECTRUMS
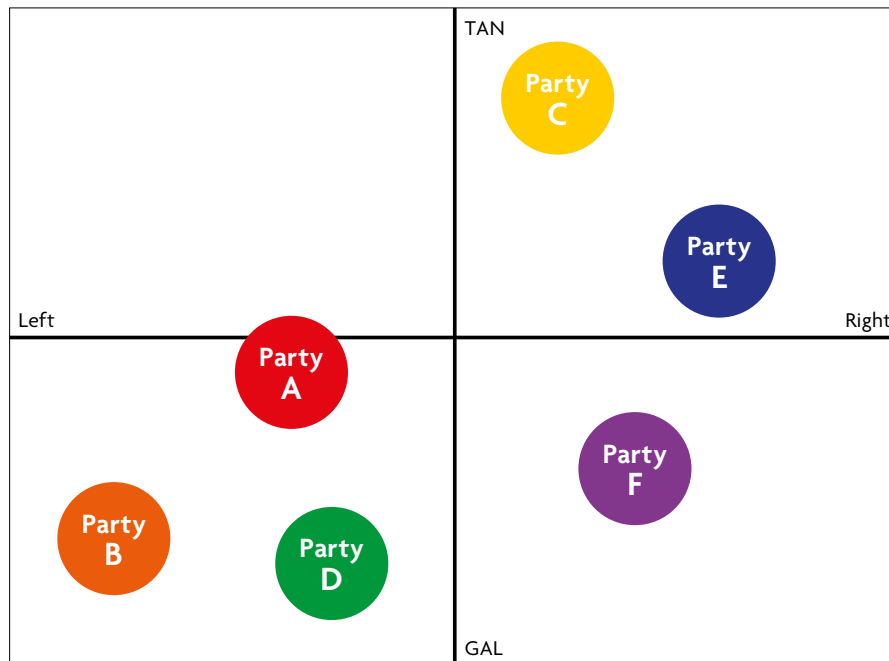
The classic ideologies can be placed on the political spectrum from left to right, with conservatives and neoliberals usually on the right and socialists on the left. Issues associated with this spectrum:

Left
- Economic equality
- Taxes high enough to provide good welfare
- Strong public sector
- Rules to protect wage earners

Right
- Economic freedom
- Low taxes
- Weak public sector
- Few rules governing the labour market

In recent years, a new spectrum of values in politics has been talked about more and more: the GAL-TAN spectrum, where *GAL* stands for *Green-Alternative-Libertarian* and *TAN* stands for *Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist*. Issues associated with GAL-TAN:

GAL
- Open migration policy
- Engaged environmental policy
- Women's rights
- Safeguarding LGBTQ rights
- Multicultural society

TAN
- Safeguard the nation
- Retain traditions and traditional hierarchies
- Tougher action on crime
- Negative to supranational and international solutions
- More negative to migration

The right-left spectrum and GAL-TAN spectrum are two of the more compound systems for overall political positioning. However, the analysis ought to be based on the conflict lines surrounding policy that are present in the political environment in which a party operates. In many countries, conflict along ethnic lines is apparent. In such countries, social democratic parties are usually careful to be and be perceived as a party for all, and this becomes an important element in the party's position. Locally, one or more very specific issues may define the political debate and determine voters' attitudes to political parties. These kinds of issues can often also be interpreted on the basis of a more ideological framework, but there is no need to make the analysis more theoretical than necessary.
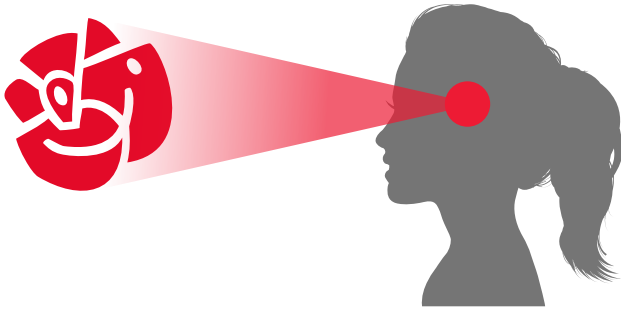
Groups of voters reflect the positions of parties

It is important to stress that this is all about positions in people's minds. No party, organisation or company has any physical position. These positions are entirely in people's heads. They determine how people perceive an actor. The people are who the party must reach.

Political parties often think that voters know and understand what they stand for. The fact that you are in the know yourself creates a kind of subjective blindness, which can be devastating when the party communicates externally because you take things for granted that are not common knowledge at all. It is therefore essential to include an analysis of how voters and citizens view the party and the party's position. Here are a few methods for doing this:

Opinion polls: This may be expensive for smaller parties and difficult to do locally, but it has become cheaper with digital technology.

Focus groups: Gather a group of voters from the groups you are particularly interested in, prepare open-ended questions about how they view the party, and do not talk about your own values or facts during the conversation. This may generate new knowledge about people's image of your party and of other parties.

Interviews and surveys: Collect data by asking people. Approach people in public, knock on doors or call them and ask them to answer questions.

This work should focus on the overall image of the party's policies and values, where people believe the party wants to take the society, policy on individual concrete issues that contribute to positioning the party in the political landscape, and how the parties are perceived to relate to each other. It goes without saying that there may also be issues in the political debate on which the party has a position, but this does not really say anything about the party's position in the political landscape. This kind of analysis can help us obtain a reasonable idea of the position of the party in people's minds. The key questions then become: Does it match the party's own image? In what way does it differ? What is the reason for this? What are the consequences of this?

All parties have an interest in the image that they themselves have of the party being the image that reaches and is grasped by the target groups they want to reach. The next stage is therefore about developing a strategy for how to align the public's image of the party and the party's image of itself.

Adjusting the party's position

The party's position in the political landscape is determined by the interplay between the policies the party represents, which are often the result of many years of internal democratic processes; and political debate, public opinion and societal development outside the party. It takes time to form the party's position and the defining frames of this position are often evidently ideological. This does not prevent most democratic parties from adjusting their position regularly, both politically and in terms of communications, within these frames. Nevertheless, most parties have an interest in changing in pace with societal development without falling prey to populism in doing so. Sometimes they change along the right-left spectrum, sometimes along the GAL-TAN spectrum or along one of the conflict lines that characterise the society in which they operate. When the position of the party has been assessed and the positions of other parties have been analysed, as well as the voters' actual image of the party, it is therefore time to ask ourselves some questions:

1. Do we have the position we want? Does it reflect our policy direction and potential in the competition for voter confidence?
2. Is it clear to voters and to people outside the party?
3. Is it distinctive or are there other competitors with similar positions?

If the answer to the first question is no, then you need to discuss what is wrong. In a democratic party, substantial internal work will be needed for an overall shift in the party's position. This requires consultation, motions to National Conferences or annual meetings and decisions after thorough, in-depth debate within the party. The party's internal democratic process and ideological domain determine the framework for this debate. Ideology may be likened to a values-based anchor, where the anchor chain prevents the party from drifting too far away from its political identity. There are many examples of such shifts in position that have also strengthened the party in subsequent elections.

However, if the answer to the first question is yes, but then no to the second, it will instead be necessary to strengthen and hone the party's communications in order

EXAMPLES OF SHIFTS IN POLITICAL POSITION

The Swedish Moderate Party

In the 2002 elections, the Moderate Party, Sweden's largest liberal conservative party, suffered historically poor results. At that time, the party had been in opposition since 1994, but had failed to perform its opposition role to generate stronger support for the party. After this loss, the party changed leadership and analysed its position and how it was perceived by voters. The party was further to the right on the right-left spectrum and was not seen as a party for 'ordinary people'. The party leadership concluded that this needed to change if it were to be possible to upset the Social Democrats' grip on power.

Over a few years, the party changed its policies. It promised increased support for welfare, dropped its previous demands to reduce legislated protections in the labour market and put a lot of effort into producing policy intended to increase employment and reduce unemployment. In practice, they were often the same policies that had been pursued in the past, in particular major tax cuts, but they were presented not as a way of increasing economic freedom and inequality but as a way of creating more jobs. It also began to call itself 'the new workers' party' to make its new position clear.

The change resulted in a rapid increase in support and the party won the 2006 elections with an alliance of centre-right parties, and then remained in government for eight years.

The Danish Social Democratic Party

From the 1990s onwards, the Danish Social Democratic Party gradually moved closer to the centre of the right-left spectrum. This was mainly in relation to its views on tax and welfare. The shift led to several political deals with liberal parties, and the party had a relatively open view on immigration.

The party's electoral strategy was to win back groups where the centre-right parties had taken voters from the party. These were mainly liberal-minded voters in the big cities, with a great interest in environmental issues and other issues on the GAL side of the GAL-TAN spectrum. At the same time, the right-wing populist Danish People's Party was growing in strength. They were demanding stricter immigration policy and won over large groups of traditional working-class voters, in particular outside the big cities.

In the 2015 elections, the Social Democratic Party did very badly, and when it had licked its wounds after the loss, the party changed its leadership. Mette Fredriksen was elected as the new party leader. A process to change the party's position was also initiated. Its immigration policy was changed, shifting closer to the TAN side of the GAL-TAN spectrum. In other matters too, the party shifted towards a more traditionalist and nationalist viewpoint. At the same time, the party began to pursue more traditional social democratic welfare issues, in particular the issue of improving pensions. The result was that traditional working-class voters came back to the Social Democratic Party. At the same time as the big cities' more GAL-oriented progressive voters went to other left-wing parties. This resulted in an overall left-wing victory in the 2019 elections.

to clarify the party's policies and what distinguishes it from the rest to the public. Much of what we discuss in this study material will touch on this.

If the answer to the third question is no, a separate discussion should be initiated. It is difficult to play second fiddle if a stronger competitor holds or is close to your own position in people's minds. This also makes the party less clear as an entity which risks the party being perceived more as just one of many.

In this case too, it is necessary to develop your communications and work harder and be better than your competitor. It is also necessary to make the contrast with your competitor even clearer so that people can see the differences between your party and the other party. This is true both in the party's communications and messages and in the development of its policies. Or, as in the case above, you will need to try and develop your position.

No matter where your party is in relation to these questions, a political party's activities are always characterised by an interplay between its policy and communications based on changes in the community at large and competition. In practice, small adjustments to the party's position are made continuously, in policy area after policy area, which have a combined impact on the overall position of the party over time. It is also important to emphasise that the party has a coherent position and profile nationally – and which marks the image of the party at all levels of its organisation – but that there may also be a wide range of positions at regional and local levels that are slightly different. For example, in a given municipality and its local municipal politics. It is therefore important for a party to analyse and discuss its position on an ongoing basis – at all levels of the party and locations where the party operates.

Regardless of whether you intend to adjust your position or not, it is important to be aware of what it looks like in the minds of the voters – as well as how the party's policy and communications affect it and the political playing field.

Finding your flock

One result of the analysis and the work aimed at making the party's position on the political map clear is that it will also become easier to find and understand the group that might be called the party's 'flock'. These are the core voters who feel a great sense of affinity with the party and its policies and who therefore tend to vote for it loyally.

This is ultimately about identity. In order to feel confident enough and open to establishing a closer relationship with a person or an organisation, we need to feel that we recognise ourselves in that person or organisation and consequently feel a sense of belonging. Shared values, with shared views about people and society, are what fundamentally make people trust a political party. In particular since they will represent their values and opinions in

elected assemblies. Groups with certain values therefore feel an affinity with parties that largely stand for the same values. In short, birds of a feather flock together. The party's core voters share the party's values and policy positions to a particularly high degree, and this group can therefore also be said to reflect the party's fundamental position.

So why is it important to find and know your core voters? Because they are the party's electoral base. While other looser, more sensitive and less engaged groups may come and go, this group remains for the party. They are also important as sympathisers who speak for the party with people in their everyday lives, and they are the basis for those who take the step of actively engaging with the party – as members and elected representatives. The latter also means, by extension, that they have a greater impact on the political profile and position of the party. It is in amplification process, and you ought to be aware that the members of the party are usually not fully representative of all the voters who vote for the party. This may be significant in relation to how the party profiles itself to win elections.

Historically, the core voters of social democratic parties were found among workers and wage earners who believe in democracy, equality and solidarity. A partly class-based group that feels that cooperation and collective action are important for solving the problems of people and the society. That freedom is something that we only can create together, through solidarity, and equal opportunities to participate in society.

In modern times, there are also studies of people showing that voters are often divided between community-oriented individuals who believe in politics, collective action and common solutions – and those who believe more in individual solutions. The 'us-voters' versus the 'me-voters', the former tending to appreciate political communication that:

- Is inclusive and emphasises solidarity, security and community
- Emphasises collective action to solve common problems
- Is aimed at the whole country and society – not just certain groups
- Puts values first, but links them to concrete solutions.

Those who believe in collective action are highly likely to form part of the core voters or potential voters for social democratic parties. This has also been a key feature of the Swedish Social Democrat party's election campaigns over the years, since this has been the main values-based conflict line in Swedish politics: Collective investment in child care, health care, pensions and universal welfare – versus low taxes, more individual choice, more market-based solutions and privatisation – as the main driving force and goal for societal development.

Once a party has identified its electoral base, people who recognise themselves in the party's profile, it is easier to proceed as it is then largely known to whom, how and what the party should communicate. It is then necessary to break this down into even more specific groups to communicate what is particularly important to each of these groups. For example, one group might be families with children, another pensioners and another young adults. You can read more about how to do this work in the next chapter of this module.
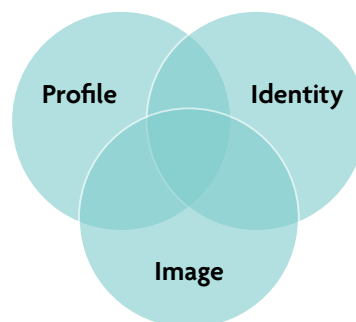
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTY'S IDENTITY, PROFILE AND IMAGE

The party's profile – the way it wants to present itself externally – should, as we have seen, be closely associated with its identity and the values that the party has internally (how the party sees itself and what it wants) in order to function and be clear. Further, the goals is for the image that society has of the party should be close to this profile.

If work to build the party's profile does not relate to the party's identity, the party's image becomes unclear and inconsistent. It is not based on the party's values and actions.

If the profile does not relate to the party's existing image, then the step is too far for people, at least in the short term, and the party's communication will then not come across as credible.

If work to build the party's profile does not relate to how the party sees itself nor to its public image, then it will have considerable problems clarifying and communicating the party's position and messages. In good communication, all these elements are interconnected. You need to reach or be in the middle of the figure for it to work well, as this is where the voters' image of the party connects with the party's identity and desired profile. ■

Building a consistent profile together

As we have seen, positioning and building a profile are ultimately about obtaining and claiming a clear position in people's minds. About gaining people's trust, in your policies and vision for society, and their votes to govern the country or municipality. It is about showing who you are and what you want. About communicating based on your political position and fundamental values. Attempting to build a profile that does not take this into account will be less effective. At best it will create ambiguity and disinterest; at worst confusion and distrust.

The party's profile is not something that is developed overnight. It is fashioned and built over time, in relation to target groups and opponents, on the basis of the party's values and policies. In a democratic party, it is particularly important that the position is based on decisions made within the democratic base structure. This means that it ought to be processed internally to ensure that it is well supported. The party's elected representatives and members must feel that they have been involved in the decision-making process about what is to be communicated and why. They must see the link between position, policy and messages. A party's communications are ultimately based on teamwork. Everyone has to feel to engaged and able to pull in the same direction. In order to achieve this, you need clear internal communication on what, how and to whom you mainly intend to communicate. The party's leaders play a key role by leading this work, engaging the party's members, and personifying the party and its position in the party's external communications.

It is also necessary to continuously express the party's profile and make it concrete in the form of engaging messages and narratives based on the position it holds or is trying to take. Political leadership is about gaining people's trust to lead – trust that your party is best suited to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the future. Therefore, an effective method of reaching out with the party's key messages on societal development is to design your communications as a 'narrative'. This makes it easier for people to understand the big picture and conveys the values of the party in a powerful way. You can also build contrast to your opponents into your narrative as well as the choices that society is currently facing. We will therefore take a closer look at value-based communication and create narratives and messages based on the party's position in the next chapter.

Everything communicates

For a political party, it is natural to focus mostly on concrete policy. Policies in local, regional and national parliaments. Discussions, debates and decisions in the internal party organisation. We then think that this is what should be communicated to the community at large to increase support for the party. We therefore plan strategies, create messages and implement communications. But it is not just this that conveys what the party is and stands for.

Everything the party does is seen by the community at large. How it sets its priorities, how policies are produced, how the party behaves and how it expresses itself. If, for example, the party pursues the line that taxes are important to fund welfare, and it then turns out that a leading party representative has committed tax fraud, this affects the image of the party's tax policy and its credibility. If the party wants to convey an image that it is energetic and a credible alternative to govern the country, that image can be completely smashed if it turns out that there are major internal conflicts and rows. It is also worth noting that the choice of leaders is of particular importance. Their background, life situations and leadership styles will largely represent and 'embody' the party.

But it's also about how you communicate in practice on a daily basis – for example, what kind of language you use, what channels you choose, what images you select and the visual identity you have. The tone of your communications activities should be considered. Tone is about how we say something. Not what we say. But what words we use to express our messages, convey our arguments and communicate our narratives. And that this should be linked to the message. If, for example, the party wants to appear very forward-looking but does not have an online presence in social media, that message will not be credible. For the party's profile to be clear and vivid, everything needs to be linked to the party's position – the values, standpoints and messages that you aim to convey.

You have to practise what you preach. Those who are outside the party must feel that the party is consistent and credible.

Important features and characteristics of a vivid party profile

In addition to a clear, attractive policy position, voters often need to see some basic features and characteristics in a vivid party profile. For example, successful parties in Sweden need to be perceived to be:

- Clear,
- Competent,
- Energetic,
- Forward-looking.

It is important for voters to know what the party's aims are, and see that the party understands societal development and social problems, and that it has the energy and the ability to actually implement its policies. When the Swedish Social Democratic Party has won elections, it has been very much seen as having these characteristics in the eyes of the voters. Issues are subordinate to the narrative, and the narrative is largely about competence.

But there are also soft values. It's not just about winning as many minds as possible, but also hearts. We do not feel any connection to parties – or people – that are perceived to be cold, power-hungry, self-important know-alls. Parties also need to be seen to be present, open and listening. This is of particular importance for the party organisation to be able to attract new members and sympathisers, but also to create trust and build relationships with groups of voters. One way to include relevant characteristics is to analyse and decide which characteristics, feelings and emotional drivers will best reflect the party's personality and position, and then consciously work to convey these in the party's communications.

The importance of being visible and present

As we noted, there is no quick fix for creating and maintaining the party's profile. People's image of the party and how they relate to it take time to create, and this demands consistent, cohesive collaboration in the party. The party and its representatives need to be outgoing, visible and present in people's everyday lives. In particular by actively and deliberately working to be visible in the mass media, on social media and in other mass communication channels. However, this can never replace the party's local, direct presence.

A party that is only visible on indirect channels will, by definition, be seen as more abstract in the voters' minds. Therefore, nothing beats the personal interaction. The local branch plays an important role here, since a vivid profile is largely built through everyday encounters with people. In the local supermarket, in the town centre or at club and association meetings, in schools and workplaces. These encounters enable the party's representatives and members to be seen as part of the local community, rather than being an abstract part of those who hold power in the society. They become 'ordinary' people who have been entrusted with representing the local community. These kinds of relationships create bonds with people in a way that contacts through the media or other channels cannot do. This is particularly important in a party that wants to be a democratic popular movement party.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is it important to work actively on how the party is seen by the voters and society at large?

- What can be said to be the hallmarks of an effective, strong profile for a political party?
  What does it look like in practice, and what does this lead to in turn?

- What is the voters' image of our own party? Does it match how we in the party want to appear?

- What is meant by a party's 'position'? What is this in practice, and why is it important to know about it?

- What determines the position of a party? What is the role of the party's ideology, values and practical policies?
  What other factors are involved?

- What is a favourable position and what is not? How is it influenced and how does it relate to other parties?

- How can a party establish and clarify its position? What things are important to consider in order to succeed?
  What are the limits of this work?

- What is the position of our own party in the political landscape? What are the main factors that define this?
  How can we work to evaluate it and to be consistent with it?

- For a political party, it is natural to focus mostly on concrete policy and related messages.
  What other factors and activities convey what the party is and stands for?

- What features and characteristics are important for a vivid, successful party profile among voters
  in our own political context?

- What does this mean for the way in which we communicate with voters in practice and the tone we employ?

- The profile and position of the party are not something that arise overnight. What is required for the party
  to successfully reach out and build its profile in practice?

- What is the role of the mass media, social media and other mass communication channels?
  Are we being successful today in reaching out in the way we want?

- What is the importance of our efforts to be visible and present locally in people's everyday lives?

- How can we get the party's outreach work to function as teamwork? What is needed for everyone in the party
  to feel involved, responsible and motivated to pull in the same direction?

- How are our party's strategic communications efforts working? What is working well and what needs
  to be developed and improved most urgently?

Outreach, agenda setting and advocacy

Political parties work constantly to reach out and influence public opinion. A party that seriously wants to set the agenda in social debate and gain support for its policies needs to work strategically and consistently with its communications. It needs to analyse social debate, make plain the party's target groups, adapt its communications to be effective in reaching its target groups, and engage its entire organisation in these efforts.

Why is the agenda important?

In order to understand how to work effectively to influence public opinion, it is important to start by analysing the factors that actually do influence people's values and opinions.

In early research into the impact of the mass media, many concluded that the message conveyed through the mass media, at the time mainly newspapers and radio, had a direct impact on what people thought about political issues. If, for example, the newspaper said that taxes were bad, and the writer argued their point well, it was thought that many readers started to think in the same way. Arguing well is, of course, important in shaping public opinion. It is always important to have a good message, formulated in a rhetorically skilful manner. But that is rarely enough. Instead, you need to look more deeply into the impact of communications and advocacy, and over time media research has increasingly come to the conclusion that its main effect is to set the agenda for political debate.

'Agenda' refers to the topics and areas that we are mainly talking about. In newspapers, on radio and television, on social media and in political discussions with the people around us.

Why is this so important? Well, research shows that this in turn affects our opinions and values. Let us take an example. In the 2020 presidential election, US President Donald Trump wanted the debate to be about immigration, or as he would have put it: 'the threat from immigration'. He also wanted the political debate to be about Joe Biden's son, who he tried to assert was corrupt, and about the left wing of the Democrats, who Trump thought had made the whole party socialist. For his part, Biden wanted it to be about US management of the coronavirus crisis, economic inequality, and the way in which Trump ran the presidency.

The party that is able to put its issues at the top of the agenda will have an advantage with the electorate. It is really quite simple. If the political debate is about immigration, it will lead to different conclusions than if it is about economic inequality. In other words, for a party, it is a matter of influencing the agenda so that the political debate is about the issues it wants to talk about.

How to influence the agenda

The reasons why an issue or a policy area is at the top of the agenda vary. Sometimes it is a matter of reality having changed. Major natural disasters, financial crises or accidents with many victims. These are all examples of the changing nature of the political debate when big things happen in a society. In this kind of situation, the party must analyse how its narrative and message are affected by the new situation.

The coronavirus pandemic that started in 2019 is a good example of this. Such a radical, global development can mean that the party's main issues rapidly fall into the background and the party must re-prioritise. If the party's message has been about reducing unemployment and there is a pandemic that puts health care in focus, it will be difficult to get the party's agenda across. But the pandemic is also hitting employment hard, so the party can easily turn its message around so that it works in the new debate climate. The main message may be the same, but it must be changed so that it does not feel outdated. In this kind of situation, it isn't possible to influence the fact that we are talking mostly about the pandemic, but it is possible to influence how we talk about the pandemic. In other words, a party that wants to be involved in influencing the agenda, and thus shape public opinion to suit its own world view and its own policies, must become good at formulating the problem in public debate. What questions that are being asked and what perspectives are being applied.

A party that wants to influence the political agenda in the long term also needs a long-term strategy. It needs a well-developed policy platform; functional, effective strategies and communication plans; and a thorough work to strengthen the networks around the party and make more people talk about the issues that the party prioritises. Here are some examples of methods that the party can use to influence and take advantage of the agenda:

1 *Follow developments and plan ahead*
A party with good business intelligence monitoring trends and changes increases its chances of staying one step ahead, developing forward-looking policies and taking initiatives to set the agenda and tone of the ongoing social narrative. Measure and analyse changes in public opinion and the electorate. Review trends in the economy, assess risks and opportunities. Then you can be proactive, rather than just reacting to what is happening.

2 *Do not stray too far from the voters' priorities*
It is important that the priorities of the members guide the political focus of the party. But for a party that wants to be involved in setting the agenda, it is also important not to stray too far away from the main issues of the wider electorate. The party may otherwise be perceived as introverted and detached. It is important to know where the voters' greatest concern lie and what they themselves think is wrong with society. The issues raised by the party should be seen as important by many, not just by those who are most active in the party.

3 *What questions does the party 'own'?*
In all political systems, voters have different views on how strong or 'good' the different parties are on different issues. One party has the greatest confidence of the electorate on economic policy, another on health care, or on the ability to create new jobs. For a party, it is more difficult to set the agenda on an issue if the voters see you as the second or third party on that particular issue. It is difficult to challenge the party that the electorate trusts most on that issue. If you are the leader, it is much easier to steer the debate on these issues. Of course, it is also possible to strengthen the party's position on an issue, but it requires solid, carefully considered policy development and clear communication. However, it may take time and sometimes it is wise instead to seek conflict in those areas that the party already 'owns' and wants to talk about.

It is also wise to study changes in public opinion. When public opinion and the agenda change, there may be major shifts in voter confidence and there may be openings to focus on issues other than those that had been dominant up until that point. This is why it is not only important to have one or more policy areas in which the party enjoys great confidence among the voters. Larger, more dominant parties also have a need to be broader and have laid claim to several of the highest priority policy areas in order to win public opinion and elections, while it is wise for smaller parties to try first to become the most trusted party on one of the more important issues.

4 *Be focused and prioritise issues*
Decide which issues you want to prioritise and stick with them. A party that tries to make a lot of moves in all policy areas across the policy spectrum, without prioritising them, can easily come across as unclear and unfocused. If everything is presented as equally important, the risk is that nobody will really get an overall picture of what the party wants. Maintain the party's messages over time – advocacy involves constant repetition of messages if they are to hit home. Even though you might have started to get tired of these messages internally, it usually takes a little longer for the broader society to start to grasp and understand them.

5 *Use the media logic to your advantage*
As mass media and social media largely shape the political agenda, a party can benefit greatly from knowing how these media work and using them to its own advantage. Even small parties which are not the most trusted on any political issue can make large numbers of people talk about their core issues by clever use of media logic. We will write more about media logic in the next chapter.

6 *Find influencers in everyday life*

In all societies there are groups and individuals who are more aware and more interested in influencing people in the world around them. You probably know who they are in your own daily lives. Those who like to talk politics with people at work, perhaps teachers at school or those who are active in other clubs, associations and organisations. A party that is able to reach these people with their communications and make them the party's ambassadors has a greater chance of being involved in setting the agenda. Many of the most successful changes in the agenda of the political conversation have begun with a strategy to change the agenda of these particular groups and individuals.

7 *Involve the party's members, sympathisers and networks*

A party's members, activists and committed sympathisers are always important to the party's ability to influence social debate. A party must try to have many contacts with people, organisations, businesses and other groups. Direct and indirect contacts should not be underestimated. Surveys show that your ability to influence in your everyday life, your social networks, reaches as far as three degrees of social separation from you. You talk to someone, who in turn talks to someone, who … and so on. Three degrees: maybe that doesn't sound like very much. But then you should bear in mind that studies show that there are only six degrees of separation between all people on the planet. If we say that you have thirty friends that you influence, and they in turn have the same number, etcetera, then you reach 27,000 people in three degrees of separation. Imagine the power of several thousand active individuals in the party's immediate network acting as ambassadors for the party's agenda and messages!

VOTER

PERCEPTION

EXTERNAL PARTNER

YOUR PARTY
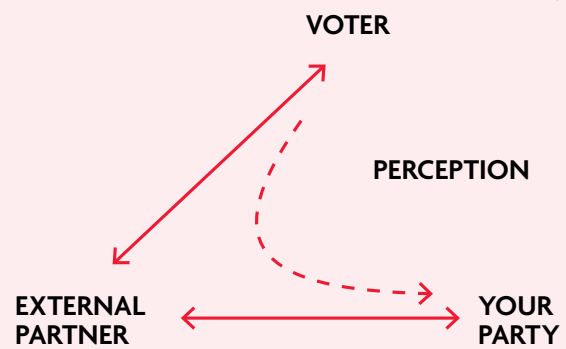
COLLABORATE WITH OTHER ACTORS AND CLOSE FRIENDS

An effective form of advocacy is to collaborate with other actors. These could be trade unions, lobby groups in various areas or individual companies and influencers. Strategic collaborations and relationships are effective in part because you share resources and gain access to the channels and networks of your partners. And they can often help strengthen the credibility of the party in the area in which the actors operate.

This influences the party's brand in a wider context. What happens when the party is seen or highlighted by these actors is that the positive image of the actor in wider society spills over onto the party to some extent. This is particularly important if the party is experiencing a challenge in a particular area, or if it is unknown to its target groups. In this case, carefully considered collaboration may quickly lead to increased awareness and to the image of the party being 'charged' by this collaboration.

Define and get to know the party's target groups

Parties should, in principle, be open to communication with all citizens. However, as we saw in the previous part, all communication occurs on the terms of the recipients. It is therefore important to be able to adapt your communication to ensure that it reaches its target audience. In addition, not everyone is going to be attracted by the party's political profile. This forces the party to choose. This is part and parcel of rules of the democracy game. No one can appeal to everyone. If you try to do that, you end up not reaching anyone, because no one feels targeted or attracted by that kind of communication – or politics. This also deprives voters of the option to choose between clear alternatives if the dividing lines between the parties disappear. If you want to be clear, relevant and interesting, you need to give up on reaching certain groups. It is therefore important to define the party's priority target groups. A target group analysis may take several steps. The first is about understanding voters in general.

Values and convictions

In the previous part, we talked about the importance of finding your 'flock' or loyal core voters who identify and sympathise with the values and political profile of the party to a high degree. This is an important starting point. However, in order to increase its support and share of votes – and win elections – a party usually needs to broaden its voter base further.

A broader target group analysis involves understanding the whole group of voters and deciding who you want to try and reach. Here too, identification and shared values play a clear role. It is easier to reach and influence those who share values with the party and are open and curious about it. The American political consultants and writers David Morey and Scott Miller created the following model to describe this:

Negative attitude

| Hard Opposition |
| Soft Opposition |
| Undecided |
| Soft Support |
| Hard Support |

Positive attitude

- **Hard Opposition:** Those who really don't share the party's values and will therefore vote for another party, probably the party's main opponent, whatever happens. A campaign or communications strategy should not be aimed at persuading this group, as it is very difficult to do so. However, it is important to analyse how the members of this group might react to your communication, what its best arguments are and how these arguments influence other groups of voters. In elections, they are often activists who influence public opinion against your party.

- **Soft Opposition:** These people sympathise with your opponents and will most likely vote for them, but they do not have the same value-based conviction as the previous group. They might abstain from voting if the weather is bad, or for some other reason. It is important not to communicate in a way that activates this group. In addition, you should not put too much energy into directing messages and communications at this group to try to persuade them to change party. This rarely succeeds.

- **Undecided:** A large group of voters who are not sure how they will vote, or which party they sympathise most with. This group is growing in many countries as identification with political parties is generally declining.

  Most political campaigns are about finding and convincing voters who have not yet decided and who think that there are good policies in several parties. In election campaigns, these are often the main targets of the parties' efforts, and a great deal of resources are devoted to getting these votes. However, they are volatile and may easily be lost in the next election.

- **Soft Support:** If the party's 'flock' is the same as 'hard supporters', there is, of course, also a group of supporters on your side who are somewhat less convinced. They will probably vote for your party, but are not yet fully convinced.

  As with the undecided voters, campaigns are often directed at this group, and it is important to secure and mobilise them. According to the research, it is also six times easier to move this group to hard support than to move undecided voters to soft support. Identifying and reaching these people and moving them from soft support to hard support is important for all parties.

- **Hard Support:** Very loyal sympathisers and voters who should still not be taken for granted. Ultimately, they are essential to the party's success, not least because they can help win sympathisers and voters from the Soft Support and Undecided groups.

Interest and knowledge

Another way of grouping the electorate is by defining them according to their political interests and their knowledge of politics and political issues. It is generally easier to reach those who are better informed and more interested, but depending on the strategy chosen by the party, it may be the least interested who are the most important target group for its communication. The pyramid below shows a general and relative division in different groups, based on people's interest in politics, which applies in most societies around the world. It can be a difference of a few per cent up or down, depending on where the party operates. The important thing is the overall situation and principles.

Directly Interested (1%)

Indirectly Interested (9%)

Well-informed Citizens (15%)

Undecided/ Non-Committed (75%)
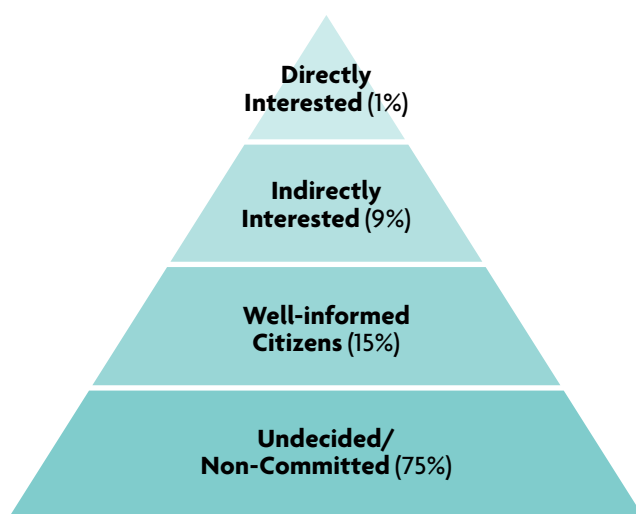
Source: NDI Campaign Skills Handbook

At the top of the pyramid are those people who are very interested in politics, which is part of their lifestyle. They often have a direct interest in advocacy and election results, as it may also affect their jobs. This group represents approximately 1 per cent of the population and includes political leaders, activists and actors who spend a lot of their time on policy work and campaigns, or political analysts who make a living out of commenting on what is happening in politics. These people will listen to every word your party communicates, no matter how complicated you make it sound.

The next segment consists of people who indirectly are very interested in politics. They represent around 9 per cent of the population. This is a broad group that includes members of political parties, civil society organisations and employees of government agencies and other public institutions that may be directly affected by a change in policy. This group is also very interested in what you have to say.

The next group is well-informed citizens and makes up around 15 per cent of the population. It includes all those who like to read beyond the most eye-catching headlines and stay informed about what is happening in society. It includes, for example, journalists and teachers, but is not limited to these professions because you can find well-informed citizens in almost any social group. They are in-

terested in what the parties say and they will make sure that they learn a bit more about your party and its policies almost regardless of how you frame your messages.

The top three groups in the pyramid often know what they are voting for and usually already have a political standpoint that is not likely to change very much based on how the party communicates. There is a link to the more difficult-to-move groups in the earlier values model who are supporters of different political parties. All in all, they make up only about a quarter of the population, but because they are so active and involved, they often influence social debate and public opinion, and through this the policy direction and communication of the parties. However, it is the next group in the pyramid, the largest, that determines whether parties win or lose elections.

These are ordinary citizens who live their lives like most others. They work, socialise with family and friends, watch TV and engage in everyday activities and hobbies. They do not feel they have the time or interest to engage more deeply in political issues, but of course they have opinions and ideas about most things. A relatively large proportion of this group does not vote. When elections are approaching, they get lots of information from the parties and are also usually courted by advertisers, businesses, organisations and others who want them to notice them and what they are offering. This may mean that when it comes time to vote, they have not been able to form a clearer picture or gain deeper knowledge. They may therefore support a party based on information that is easily accessible to them. This may sometimes be based more on a sense of belonging, on how friends and family vote, personal style and appearance, or on who is likely to win the elections. You do not have all that many opportunities to reach this group. That is why the party's message must be simple and straightforward, and above all relevant to those in the group that you want to reach. They will not listen unless you talk about issues that are important to them.

Break the target group down into smaller groups

Based on a more general target group analysis, it is time to break the broad target groups down into smaller parts. Even if the first people you should try to reach are determined on the basis of their political values and interests profile, they represent a very large proportion of voters from a wide range of areas and backgrounds. They are of all ages, from rural areas and from cities, with more or less education, and they may work as industrial workers, teachers, health professionals and civil servants. No matter how hard the party tried, it would not be able to design communications suitable for all these groups at the same time.

In order to succeed, the party must therefore target and adapt its communications and messages to different groups. By focusing, the party can establish contact with

the voters who are most likely to support the party, not least by drawing more clearly on their particular needs and values.
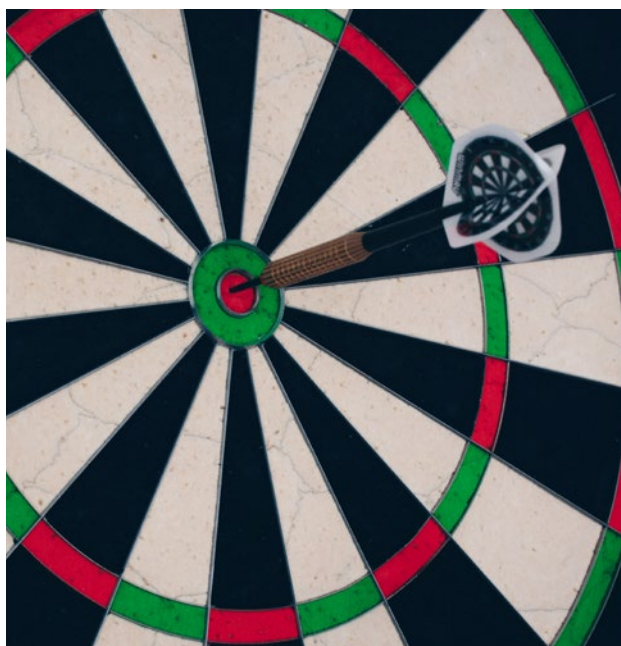
And it cannot focus on too many groups at the same time. This would become hard and muddy the waters for all communications.

So who are you actually trying to reach? What are the issues and problems they care about most? And in the next step – how are you going to reach them? Before you start planning communications and formulating your messages, it is important to understand the wishes, habits, preferences and life situations of these voters. That way, you can then present the party's goals and policies and link them to what is important to them.

How do you find your target groups?

An analysis of previous election results is a good place to start. How did different groups vote? Who chose to support your party? Who supported other parties? Find out also the extent to which the various groups actually voted. Voter participation is an important measure of how to define your target groups. Most electoral systems have local, regional and national elections, and the same target group may behave differently from election to election. This is true of the level at which the elections are held, and can also vary over time. Analyse several elections in a row and you will quickly identify the voting behaviours in different groups. Most of what you need in the form of hard facts are things that can often be found by studying statistics and public registers. There is also a lot of data available via social media and the like. Of course, it is also possible to conduct your own studies, distribute surveys and ask the target group questions to find out more about it.

To ensure that its position and message are right, a party must constantly be aware of what is happening in society at large. The agenda, target groups and opponents are subject to constant change. A party should try to stay one step ahead. Otherwise, there is a big risk that it will become and be seen to be reactive, less independent and thus less credible. It is necessary to monitor public opinion, through opinion polls and voter studies, and through active local efforts to establish a direct dialogue with the voters.

Geographical analysis

In political campaigns that involve meeting potential voters, it is easiest to start with a geographical analysis. This technique helps you identify where your supporters and potential supporters live. Study electoral registers and electoral statistics from different areas of your local community, or regions and cities at national level, to find out where you have the strongest support and opposition, as well as the trends that can be seen in the last elections. If legitimate elections have not been held recently, or if you do not have access to election statistics, work with your party's local branches or your supporters to assess the level of support by neighbourhood or polling station. Experienced local party activists often have the kind of knowledge you need.

Then use your new knowledge to determine who are your hard supporters, soft supporters, etc. Then divide into:

A Areas with many core voters where your party did much better than other parties in the most recent elections. These are areas that your party won easily and will probably win again. However, the more you have to compete to maintain the lead, the more an area belongs to the next category.

B Areas with voters who can be persuaded relatively easily. Where your party has done well, but there also seems to be potential to grow as there are many soft supporters and undecided voters. In such areas there is good reason to work hard to reach them.

C Areas with a small group of voters who can be persuaded. There are undecided voters here, and your party probably has some support and voters, but not enough to win the election in the area. A great deal of effort is needed here to be successful.

D Areas where your opponents have many core voters. Here, your opponents win almost whatever happens, and it is perhaps not a great idea for you to expend energy trying to persuade them.

This division will give you important information about where you should focus valuable resources, how to achieve your goals and which voters will help you achieve them.

Demographic analysis

Each society can be divided into different groups based on characteristics such as gender, age, education and occupation. By doing a demographic analysis, the party can divide the population and predict which groups and different types of people will support you to a greater extent. Just as people from similar geographical areas often make similar choices, people from the same demographic groups do so too.

The reason is that similar people have very similar concerns and challenges and are therefore more attracted by parties with a political profile that appeals to these. There is also a link between socio-economic group affiliation (level of education, profession, income and class background) and voting. This involves factors such as financial interests and shared class identity. Studies have also shown that people of lower socio-economic status tend to be less inclined to vote in elections, and generally less politically active than people of higher socio-economic status. This is particularly important for social democratic parties, as these have often been developed by and for ordinary workers and employees who are also their core voters.

A demographic analysis helps you focus on your target groups, policies and messages, so that you talk about the issues that your supporters and potential supporters care about. What kind of people already support us? Who would be more inclined to support us if they knew more about us? Who are the supporters of our opponents? Some useful questions to answer are:

- Are they men or women?
- What is their age?
- What level of education do they have?
- Do they work?
- What level of income do they have?
- Do they live alone or with others? What type of family constellation?
- Do they have children or other dependants?
- How do they live? Do they own their accommodation, rent it or something else?
- What type of city, village or rural area do they live in?
- What is their ethnic origin?
- Where do they live? It is often possible to define the districts or quarters in which different target groups live.

As socio-economic groups often live in the same areas, a combined geographical and demographic analysis often makes it easy to predict certain things and find what you need to know in your target group analysis, communications and election strategy. However, it is also important to analyse demographic and geographical trends. What is the voting behaviour of young people and first-time voters?

! CREATING THE TARGET GROUP'S 'PERSONAS'

It can be helpful to understand target groups by creating personas. This means creating an archetype that represents an audience and their lifestyle, opinions and values. This makes the group more vivid, and you see a real person in front of you when planning and drafting communications. In creating these personas, it is good to focus on the demographic factors of the group (age, work, marital status), lifestyle, values, interests, driving forces, goals and outlook on life. Practical issues such as media consumption and availability during the day are also important. You can also invite a small selection of people from the target group to a focus group, and ask them questions and discuss with them to find out more about them.

Even if they are fantasy figures, they must be credible. A good way to test whether a credible persona has been created is to allow people who are themselves part of or close to the target group to assess whether they recognise themselves or people close to them in that persona. If you find mistakes here, there is a high risk that you will also design the communications incorrectly in the next step.

1 Start by writing down your priority target groups.

2 Then form a picture of which people are in the different groups. Age, gender, profession, education, what 'style' they have, what they do in their leisure time and so on.

3 Now you have started to create a persona for each target group. Now name each of these personas. This may be a name that also says something about the group the person represents. For example Climate-Catherine, Tradition-Thomas or Social-Steven. You choose. Under each name you can write as many characteristics as you can think of for that persona.

Now you have created personas. But have you done it right? Are they really representatives of the group you want to reach? Or have you created a persona based on your own prejudices about the group? Check your personas with people who are part of the groups they are supposed to represent.

Does urbanisation affect the party's electoral base? Is the proportion of elderly people in the population increasing? Is the voting rate going up or down among the party's groups of voters?

In the past, it was often necessary to combine this analysis with a geographical one to understand the electoral group in the areas that the party wanted to approach. That is still the case when you physically go out to meet the voters. But with today's technology it is also possible to reach target groups via social media and other channels online, and geography is not always the best or at least not the only possible factor there.

Microtargeting

New technology makes it possible to collect more information, mainly by using the data that is continuously recorded from people's Internet use. By accessing this personal data, political parties, or other actors, can gain a better understanding of the habits, preferences, opinions, values and networks of different groups – thus anticipating their behaviour and future choices. At the individual level, this data may not say much, but on a large scale it is possible to identify behavioural patterns and determine which people are susceptible to which messages. In the next step, you can tailor and target advertisements and information with facts, opinions and subject areas to each specific group. These can then be distributed via social media so that they are only exposed to the intended target group.

This method is called microtargeting, and the more detailed the information about each voter, the more targeted the messages from the campaigns can be. Thanks to the level of detail in the data collection, microtargeting is a completely new way of conducting political campaigns. Often it involves using social media as a channel, targeted online advertising or publishing, on Facebook, Instagram, etc. However, it can also be combined with messages in letters or other printed material, as well as in canvassing and physical meetings and conversations.

The point of political microtargeting (PMT) is that you further shrink the target group and refine your knowledge about it. From the very broad target group analyses, in which each group may contain hundreds of thousands or even millions of people, you can narrow down to a few thousands or hundreds.
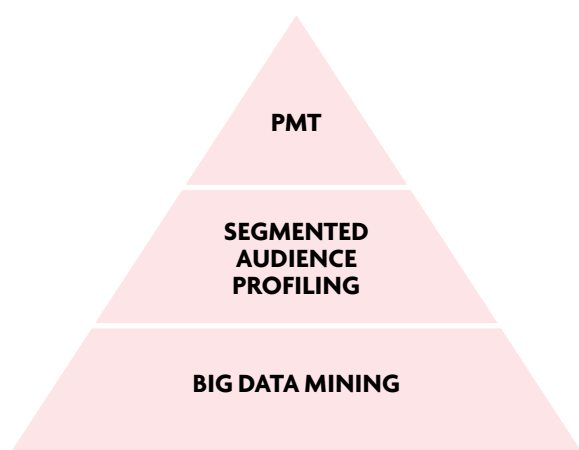
The pyramid of Digital Political Communication Strategy

Bruce I. Newman, professor of marketing and business ethics, has developed an educational model that describes the process.

Not without risks

Microtargeting is a powerful communication tool and therefore entails both opportunities and risks. Parties have always tried to influence citizens, and that is not a bad thing in itself. For example, with tailored messages you can expose them to information that they really consider to be relevant. As a result, previously inactive citizens can become motivated to participate in the political process and to vote. This can be positive as long as it is done by legitimate players acting honestly and in good faith. However, the effect of PMT becomes unacceptable when it turns into manipulation, exploits people's weaknesses and plays on their fears, and if it takes to spreading lies and using illegally obtained personal data. After the US presidential elections in 2016, analysis found that microtargeting was used to denigrate opponents and spread fake news. This method has thus increased polarisation in society and made it more difficult to have a reasoned debate about important social issues. The scandal surrounding Cambridge Analytica, which acquired vast volumes of data from social media platforms and used it in a morally dubious way in the campaign against Hillary Clinton, is a good example of how PMT should not be done. PMT places new ethical demands on those who conduct political campaigns. Some things that are important to bear in mind when working with microtargeting:

- **Legal limits:** Make sure that you collect and share personal data in legal and ethical ways. Go well beyond simply what is required by law.
- **Ethical limits:** Decide on a policy for the services you want to use and the type of information you want to collect or share. Establish a code of honour that you teach and build understanding for throughout your organisation. Always try to be 'top of the class' in your ethical considerations.
- **Be open and transparent:** Anything that cannot be made public to the voters is probably not something you should be doing either. Always keep everything in the open.

Even if parties do not actively collect their own data, they use data when, for example, they sponsor a Facebook post. There are different methods and levels of data processing:

- Collect your own digital data and use it in your own marketing.
- Use the marketing tools available on, for example, Facebook.
- For example, use Facebook's advertising tools to collect your own data – e-mail addresses collected through lists of names or from the member register.

Maintain a continuous dialogue on the choices you make. What you collect, which services you use, and how you process this information. The Swedish Social Democratic Party, for example, chooses not to upload membership data or e-mail addresses to the advertising tools of social media platforms for privacy reasons. Maintain an open dialogue with other political parties and agree on a transparent way of working. Used correctly, microtargeting is an instrument that can help to improve dialogue between citizens and political parties, thereby strengthening democracy in a society.

Adapt communications to reach your target groups

Once you have identified your main target groups, and have a better idea about how you should communicate to be relevant to them, you have come a long way. But it is still a great challenge to reach people, to be heard and to be understood. People in these groups receive thousands of messages every day – from news media, family and friends, social media and all kinds of advertisements. You are competing not only with your opponents; you are competing with all the other messages your target group receives. The fact that most citizens are not particularly interested in politics, or so sure about what they think and how they intend to vote, makes this even more challenging.

Because you have limited time and resources, you must do your best to make them remember you, understand what your priorities and how these affect them and society, as well as what makes you different from your opponents. Many people in these groups should think that the issues you raise are important. Your policies should be understandable, endorse a context that says something about what kind of society the party wants, and be about policy and not organisation. It is also important to prioritise among your initiatives and messages. They should be meaningful, memorable and persuasive. But that is not enough. The messages need to be repeated consistently if they are to hit home. Every time the party communicates, it is an opportunity to repeat and reinforce its main messages.

What works to gain trust and win over broad groups varies depending on the groups you want to reach and the circumstances in the community at large. However, some basic characteristics can still be identified. A party should:

- See people's problems and challenges
- Propose concrete measures to resolve them
- Clarify differences in policy

- Convey a clear vision of what kind of society it wants their children to grow up and grow old in.

The importance of narrative

Of all the ways of communicating, there is one that has proved to be better than all the others throughout history. It is the narrative. This is why storytelling has become an important method in contemporary communication, politics and management. In concrete terms, it means communicating messages (whether it is the story of the party as such, specific policies or candidates for election) through narratives linked to a background, the present and the future. To create the narrative you use symbols, emotions, people, contrasts and other elements that exist in all forms of dramaturgy.

Why has the narrative become such an important part of communication today? The answer is that it affects recipients more deeply than short, fragmented messages, however much people agree with these messages. Narratives are meaningful and easy to understand, they cause us to empathise with the message and identify with it. Basically, it is about creating a drama, as in all storytelling. A political narrative is also based on well-known dramatic themes such as: Those down there against those up there, revenge, modernity defeating conservatism, good against evil.

Storytelling is a simple and effective way of linking ideology and a political position to an understandable and engaging context for your target groups. Political leadership is fundamentally about being trusted to lead the country or municipality. It is about large groups of voters trusting that the party is best suited to solve social problems and meet the challenges and opportunities of the future. An overall 'meta-narrative' about the society makes it easier to understand the big picture and societal development, and strongly conveys the party's vision and values. Your narrative can also incorporate contrast in relation to your opponents – and the choices that society is facing.

IN CLASSICAL RHETORIC, A NARRATIVE CONTAINS A NUMBER OF COMMON BUILDING BLOCKS

INVITATION
Empathy
"I know how you feel"

FACTS
Analysis
"I think I know why"

THEORY
Vision
"It can be like this"

REJECTION
Opposition
"The others are wrong"

SUGGESTION
Next step
"Come with us"

'Example of a story from the Swedish Social Democrats' election campaign in 2014, when the party was in opposition.

"Sweden is a good country. But something is breaking down. Unemployment has become entrenched. School results are declining. Employees in the health care sector need to take care of more and more elderly and sick people. Many people are worried about the future. >

The government is prioritising tax cuts and privatisation despite the fact that one in four young people are unemployed, and schools and care services are being taken over by private profit-making companies. >

We Social Democrats want instead to see a country in which we are united in the development of our social model. Where we make demands of each other and help each other. Where competitiveness and decency go hand in hand. We want to live in a country in which women and men go to work, take responsibility, feel safe and feel free. This is why one goal is more important than every other: Sweden must have lower unemployment. This requires more cooperation and investment in the future so that Swedish companies can grow and create jobs. This is how we can best address the major challenges of the future, such as reducing climate change and securing growth in global competition. With more jobs, we can also afford welfare that we can be proud of. >

The government promised to lower unemployment and reduce social exclusion. The ambition was not wrong. But reality shows that their response to every social problem – cutting taxes and privatising – does not work. Now they no longer see what is happening in our country. >

Sweden needs a new direction. Our priorities are clear: Jobs are the most important thing. Then education and welfare. Smaller classes and care that works come before more tax cuts. On 14 September 2014, you decide Sweden's way forward."

There are plenty of political narratives in the well-known election campaigns of recent years. In the US presidential elections in 2016, Hillary Clinton ran with a narrative about her life in the service of gender equality, from her years as a student in the 1960s to her time as a Senator and presidential candidate. She made a big point about women having stood in the shadows since time immemorial, but now it was time to put a woman in the White House. Her opponent, Donald Trump, ran with a populist narrative about the establishment versus the people, with him representing the people. How the elite corrupted power and now it was time to put things right. We know how things turned out that time, and we know that Joe Biden defeated Trump four years later. This time Trump's narrative was not enough. Perhaps four years in the White House made fewer people believe in a narrative that placed Trump himself out of the powers that be. In 2020, Biden, in turn, ran with a narrative about his own humble beginnings to where he is today, which could represent the story of the entire USA, how he has stood for dignity and cooperation during his time as a politician, while Trump divided the country and lowered the moral tone of the White House.

All of these narratives contain elements we recognise from classic stories. The difference from the classic story is that a democratic party must create this drama based on reality. To be effective, a narrative should:

1. Make the audience recognise themselves in the narrative. A narrative that describes things they cannot relate to at all has less chance of hitting home.
2. Connect history and the present to an imagined future. Be possible to understand, discuss and retell in everyday language.
3. Make the target group identify with the person telling the story.
4. Confirm the perceived collective identity of the target group, rather than contradicting it or trying to invent a new identity.
5. Work equally well with many different themes and topics that fit into an overall narrative.

If you have studied political ideology, you will quickly realise that this could also be the basis of an ideological narrative. It is no coincidence that ideologies have been so successful in shaping people's consciousness. But classic ideologies often fail because they are old, poorly updated in relation to people's identities today and told in an abstract, theoretical language. Modern political narratives need to be more direct and concrete.

AVOID 'TECHNOCRATIC' TALK

Social democrats are committed to building the society who often risk getting bogged down in questions of what methods to use, how to organise, and technocratic language. This is good when you need to going in and actively repair social systems, but not so good when talking with citizens because it is difficult to understand these things without a lot of in-depth knowledge. It also engenders distance and gives the impression that you are not 'like them'.

So you need to think about the level you use in your communication. It is not always best to describe in detail how you intend to implement each policy. Instead, it is often more effective to speak on two other levels. The first is the visionary, which deals with the values the party represents and where the party wants to take the society. The second is how policies affect people more directly in their everyday lives. If you combine these two levels, communication becomes both more understandable and more engaging.

Visions/Values

↑

Implementation in practice

↓

How it affects people in their everyday lives
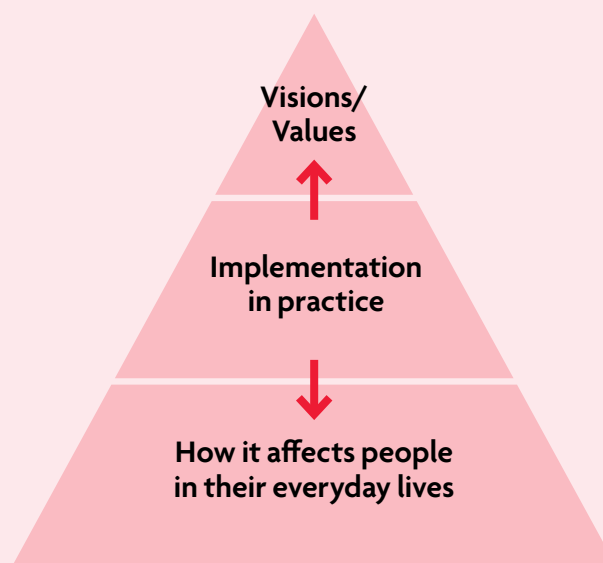
Creating messages

Few things are as important to a party as finding the right message for their communications. Most parties have limitations in terms of time, money and active members, and that is precisely why it is so important that, in every situation in which the party communicates, the message reaches the recipient in the best possible way.

A strong message is a short, clear, truthful statement explaining to citizens why your party's policy is the best, why they should vote for you, or any other goal you have chosen for that particular communication.

A good message also explains the difference between your party and your main competitors. Creating and consistently using a persuasive message is central to persuading your voters to vote for you. A good message should:

- **Be adapted to the target group:** As we have already stated, it is important for communication to have a target group. Information directed at all voters will be less effective and is more easily forgotten by the recipients. This also applies to your specific messages. As a party, you need to analyse which messages are suitable for which target groups. Of course, your policy does not change on that basis, just the way in which it is presented, and the areas you prioritise must vary between target groups. For example, a message about education policy is more difficult to communicate if your audience is pensioners. Care for the elderly is not as important for first-time voters. The same applies to tone, the specific examples you use in the messages.

- **Answer basic questions:** Why should I vote for your party or candidate or support the party in some other way? The exact wording of the question must, of course, be determined by the objective you have with each specific message. A good way to test whether a message is effective is to find out whether your supporters and activists can use the message to answer these questions. If the most committed activists, the ambassadors of your party's policies, cannot use the messages to answer such questions, there is good reason to review their wording.

- **Keep it short and simple:** A good basic rule is that a message should take no more than a minute to convey. Preferably even less. If it takes longer, then the listener or reader will get the feeling that it is a bit confused and perhaps not very well thought out. They will stop listening, or start formulating counter-arguments in their heads before you are done. It is also good if the message is worded in a simple, easily comprehensible way that most people in the electorate will understand. There is nothing that kills a message more effectively than if it contains difficult technical terms, academic language or complicated reasoning.

- **Speak to people's hearts and minds:** Rational arguments are good and important. Intellectual reasoning is decent and fair and creates credibility. But to really reach a person, it is good if your message speaks to both their heart and mind. It is good if the message relates to their own everyday lives, a reality they can experience and recognise, rather than tables and theories. Creating a visual image in the minds of the voters is much better than talking about abstract ideas.

- **Back it up:** A message should be brief, easy to understand and demonstrate a conflict line in relation to the party's main opponents. The message is a start, a way of raising awareness of the party's values and priorities. But it is not enough. The message needs to also be credible and backed up by concrete proposals that show how the goals in the message can be transformed into real policy and real change. If, for example, the party produces a message saying that the party wants to invest in the future of our children, and that the opponent does not want to do so, it must also be possible to show concrete proposals for how education, childcare, health and similar areas will be better under your party's policies.

- **Repeat it:** Repeat it in all modes of communication. However good a message is, it will still be forgotten if the recipients only hear it once. Research into communication and the way we process information shows that we need to be exposed to the same message many times, and in different variants, for it to really sink in and influence us. That is why you should ensure that you repeat the message on as many occasions as possible. It may seem pointless and boring for those who are part of the campaign, but most voters do not have the same exposure to the party's messages as those who are active within the party.

To formulate an effective message, it's a good idea to answer some basic questions that most voters want a party and its representatives to be able to answer: What problems do we want to solve? How will they be solved? Why are your solutions better than those of other parties?

When you answer the question about the problems you want to solve, it's a good idea to first check that the target group sees them as problems. If your message is that health care needs to be improved in your local community, but the target group you have chosen believes that the biggest problem is job shortages, you have less chance of reaching them. When you answer the question of how to solve problems, the aim is to help citizens see that your party has realistic solutions to these problems. During election campaigns in particular, your task is to distinguish your party from the other parties by offering realistic plans and a clear strategy that clarifies how you will achieve your goals.

The answer to the question as to why your solutions are better than those of the other parties is important to ensure that there is a clear contrast with your competitors' policies. This does not mean talking negatively about your opponents. It means providing clarity about the difference between your values and priorities and theirs – so that the voters can choose. In a programmatic party system, a basic conflict line – which makes it probable that there will be a difference in principle, depending on the path taken – is

often associated with the political position and ideology of the parties.

One way to manage your messages is to put them in a Message Box. This method is good when you need to formulate why your policies are better than those of your main opponents. It is a way of finding the right words for you, but also a way of analysing how you will likely be attacked in public debate, and how you are going to counter the other parties in terms of rhetoric.

There are a few pitfalls here. It is easy to put obvious things in the Message Box for what you will say yourselves, such as 'We want to create a better society' or 'We want to take the country into the future'. Who doesn't want that? How would this be responded to by your opponents, and what prevents them from saying much the same thing? Here you must be thorough with the early steps in the process. What does the party want? What does the target group look like? What are their needs and feelings about politics? It is particularly important that your claims about your party indirectly also says something about your opponents. If you say that 'We will bring order to the country's economy', that implies that you think that your opponents are worse at it.

In this process, there is also reason to take a closer look at how your messages and conflict lines respond to your opponents and their policies at different levels. Part of creating messages related to your narrative and contrasting with your opponents involves the ability to make your policy line coherent – at the ideological level, in terms of the main direction of your policies, and in terms of your policies on concrete issues.

Basic areas of conflict at different levels in the Swedish Social Democrats' election campaign in 2014.

Framing, choice of illustrations and language

The message is important, but how, when and in what context it is presented can often be equally important. Depending on how you present something, people will have different points of reference and make underlying assumptions, which in turn affect how they interpret what is said. If you are going to debate defence spending, and say that 'defence spending has doubled', people will have an idea in their heads that there has been a lot of investment in the armed forces. If instead you say 'defence spending has gone from 1% to 2%', you are actually saying the same thing, but few will think that this is a significant increase. How you choose to present the same thing will affect how people perceive it. It may encourage some interpretations and discourage others.

This is called 'framing'; setting the framework for how a question or proposal should be interpreted and understood. By framing large, complex, difficult questions, and placing them in a particular context or perspective, you can more clearly link them to the party's message, the challenges and concerns of your target groups, and your solutions to them. For example, it makes a big difference whether you present the increase in defence spending as a means of securing national freedom, or as expenditure in contrast to new investments in health care and education.

A good example of framing is when the media put a headline to a news story. Their choice of words and angle sets the framework for how we as readers interpret what we then read. And since the media want to reach many readers, they often choose a negative angle, because that generally attracts more people. In order to work with framing as a politician, just as with the message as a whole, you need to understand what the target group you want to reach value highly. If the target group values security, it's a good idea to present your policies as a means of increasing security.

In other words, it helps the party to talk about its policies in a way that allows you to convey your message in the way you have chosen, so that the target group feels targeted by these policies. The economy is a good example. A debate on the economy can be about a variety of things. If you have chosen to focus on the potential of the economy to create jobs, you must constantly focus on this in your message. Your framing of the economy is about jobs and their importance to your voters and the development of society. A candidate can then also frame the debate on their terms by highlighting their own experiences of being unemployed, or by drawing attention to another person who is affected by the party's policies. The following questions should be answered by those who want to frame the problems that the policy is designed to solve:

- Focus on how the problem affects your local community.
- What caused the problem?
- Who is responsible for it?
- What do you want to do about it?

This is not only relevant when new policies or messages are to be used. Often political parties keep their political positions and variants of their policies and messages over time. They then need new ways of framing these policies and illustrations to reach their targets after a while. The agenda changes and voters cannot just hear the same arguments as before if you want them to reassess the party's policies.

In communications in practice, the framing and messaging can also be strengthened by consciously choosing when, how and where to present new policies by choosing a time, place and spokesperson that all contribute to the framing of the initiative. Language and choice of words also play a major role. Political messages usually result in no reaction at all. In order to be successful, the language used must relate to people's everyday lives. To persuade the voters, the message must be made clear and dramatic.

As described in the previous chapter, everything the party does communicates. The language you use, who uses it, the channels you choose, the images you pick and the tone different efforts convey. For the party's message to be clear, and for the party to be perceived as clear, consistent and credible, everything needs to be as coherent as possible.

The importance of your party organisation

In order to be successful, it is essential that the party's organisation and members are active in the party's external communications and advocacy. They act as the party's local ear to the ground, and as its committed representatives and field workers who convey the party's policies and messages in the workplace, in schools, in the home or in their own social media networks.

This is particularly true in a democratic popular movement party. The policy direction and communications of the party should be firmly established in the party's organisation. Policies are decided in the party's internal democratic process, discussed at meetings and voted on. The communications strategy is rarely processed in the same way, but it also needs to be firmly anchored with the party organisation.

Firstly, everyone must understand how the policy direction that has been decided is linked to the message. This may require courses and themed meetings and carefully considered internal communication. If the party's members are aware of only the most superficial part of the communications, the simple messages, but cannot answer any follow-up questions and argue in greater depth, they risk becoming disenchanted and the whole party risks appearing less credible.

Secondly, everyone must understand why the chosen strategy is the best available. They must be involved in the discussions about target groups, who they are, where they can be reached, and how the party should approach them.

The party's leadership has a special role to play in conducting a dialogue, bringing the whole organisation with it. Such a process enables the party to lay the foundations for more people to commit to its strategy and for the party's communications to be as good as possible and you've the party a lead over other parties.

When the party's electoral or communications strategies have been decided, they may often still feel like purely national-level matters. This is true, but when decisions are made, it is important that the whole organisation works on the basis of the agreed messages and priorities. However, the strategy now also needs to be adapted to the party's local activities. Within this broad direction, the local position, policy, agenda, target groups, narrative, messaging and framing must be clarified so that they work together in practice. All politics is ultimately local, and elections are won on the ground where the local branch and members are active.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- A political party works constantly to reach out and influence public opinion to gain support for its policies. Why is success so dependent on the agenda in social debate? How is this agenda set in practice?

- Why is it important to prioritise the party's policy on concrete issues and not to stray too far away from voters' views on what is most important in societal development?

- In what ways can parties have a practical impact on the agenda? How, for example, can they turn how the media work to their advantage in various ways? What other ways may be effective?

- How is the agenda set in our own country and where we live? In which areas and in what ways do we mainly work to influence it? Are they working?

- Parties must, in principle, be open to communication with all citizens. But why is it important, at the same time, to prioritise those citizens that they primarily want to target? What are the risks of not doing so?

- How can parties define, get to know, and find their target groups? What factors are particularly important to base this analysis on?

- What is our work with target groups like? Who are our main target groups? Why?

- How do we find and reach them best? How do they affect our communication and how it differs between these groups? What is the common core of our communications to all groups?

- Even after adapting communications to different target groups, it may be a challenge to reach out, be heard and be understood. What roles do narrative, messaging and framing play in the success of communications?

- What are the characteristics of good political messages? What are the characteristics of good local messages where we operate?

- What does our own narrative say? How is it structured? Is it working?

- The way a question is framed also affects how people perceive it. What is the best framing for our own work on our highest priority policy issue at the moment?

Reaching your audiences in practice

We have now studied how a party can work strategically with its profile through positioning, target group analyses and message development in order to succeed in its communication and advocacy. It is now time to move into the methods, channels and tools that it can use in practice in its regular activities to get its message across.

A political party communicates in a variety of contexts and in a variety of arenas every day. It reaches out to influence public opinion and create relationships – both nationally, regionally and locally. It holds press conferences, organises public gatherings with citizens, talks with journalists, is out and about campaigning in the field, and conducting a dialogue on social media. As the party's communication includes so many areas, levels, channels and parts of the party, it's a challenge to work consistently and collectively with all of this. All efforts will be better and more effective if they are based on a well thought out strategy, where these efforts are guided by the previous steps in the process: who we want to reach with what message, using what channels and methods and when they should be used.

The need for a strategy – and a plan

To ensure clarity in the organisation, what practical decisions to make in the communications work from day to day, and to get everyone in the party to work together towards the same goals, it is essential to create a communication strategy – one that is not overly complex or difficult to implement. And a communication plan. But what is the difference between these two documents?

A strategy describes how to move from where you are now to where you want to be – where you are going or what you want to happen to achieve a longer-term goal.

It contains declarations of intent, talks about basic choices and the overall long-term direction. A plan is more about the details that you need to have right in front of you. It is concrete and practical, with a budget. It should achieve specific goals within a predetermined time frame. When we compare a strategy to a plan, we can see that our strategy helps us understand *what* we want to achieve, and our plan describes   we will achieve the strategy's goals. In brief, the main differences are:

- A strategy is about high-level thinking; a plan is more about ground level execution.
- A strategy is flexible; a plan is fixed.
- A strategy answers the questions of 'why' and 'what'; a plan answers the question of 'how'.
- A strategy is ongoing until review; a plan is based on the time frame for a specific project or period.

It's a good idea to remind the team to hold back on the details when discussing strategy, and encourage them to focus on the practicalities when they are doing the planning. For the most part, however, a communication strategy ought not to be developed solely by a 'communications team'. It should be developed in close contact with the party's management. On the other hand, the specific plans for individual communications projects should be left to the specialists in these areas.

If you want to set up a simple process for how a party can develop a communication strategy, it might look like this:

The starting point must be the party's goals for its policies or for the development of the party organisation.

What do you want to achieve? This is followed by an analysis of what you need to have in place to achieve this, and then the target group or groups are defined and analysed. The next step will be to set more concrete and measurable communications goals, such as how many people should be reached or persuaded to change their behaviour.

At that point, it is time to think about what strategies and methods the party should use to achieve its communications goals, followed by what messages, channels and senders or spokespersons should be used.

Then it's about deciding on the activities. What should the party actually do to achieve its goals? Many people who work with communications in different organisations start with this point. They go straight down into the toolbox. That is the easiest and most concrete thing to do. But it also entails a risk that your initiative will not be strategic, but just a bunch of loosely put together communications activities.

Finally, an evaluation should be carried out, analysing whether your efforts have achieved your communications goals and whether these efforts have contributed to the achievement of the party's overall goals.

Of course, you need to have more than one communication strategy to cover different party levels and activities, and to fulfil their different purposes. But it is important that all these strategies are subordinate to the overall communications strategy of the party.

GOALS

| Analysis | Target groups | Communi-cation goals | Strategies and methods | Messages, channels and actors | Activities | Evaluation |

The communications plan

To be more concrete and useful, the strategy needs to be broken down so that each individual communication activity, campaign or initiative is adapted to the specific context and the aim it is meant to fulfil. The best way to do this is to develop a time-limited and more specific communications plan. It can relate to an activity running for a certain period or an individual effort. It can also contain more detailed objectives.

Here are a few points that may be useful to include in a communications plan:

1 What is the problem? A plan begins with an analysis of the problem that the communications activities are intended to solve. What is the current situation? What needs do you want to satisfy? It should be linked to the analysis of the communication strategy.

2 What is the aim and objectives? Why do you need to communicate? What do you want to achieve with your communications? Is your objective for the voters to know more about what you want to tell them? Or do you want to change a behaviour (for example, make someone who did not vote for your party vote for you next time)? Communication is a means, not an end in itself. What measurable objectives for your communications activities should be set?

3 Who are the target group? Who are the people you are trying to reach with the communications? How do they relate to the party's overall target group analysis? What are their values and behaviours today? And what do you know?

4 What is my message? Without a good message, no communication is going to work. So analyse thoroughly what you want to say, how it should be said, and how it is going to be relevant, comprehensible and interesting to the target group. Think also about how to frame it and illustrate it.

5 Which channels are the best for these particular communications activities? This is about adapting channel choices to your target group. What media do they use? What are their social media habits? Where do they physically move around? A combination of channels is often needed to be really effective. For most groups and most channels, once is not enough either. You need to repeat your communications.

6 Who should your messengers be? Here, too, the party's aims and objectives for its communications must meet the needs of the target group. Are there people who are particularly good at conveying your message to the particular group you want to reach?

7 For what period of time? What is the best time and when is the deadline? It might be a matter of choosing your timing in a wider perspective (season, period before elections, one month or the like) and in more detail (what time of day).

8 How much will it cost? Make a budget. Find out how much money you have for this particular communications activity and invested in what can be considered to have the greatest impact.

9 What activities should be done, when and by whom? Make an activity plan that describes in more detail what to do, when to do it, what it can cost, and who is responsible for each activity.

10 How will it be evaluated? Each effort should be evaluated. Did we achieve our objectives? Was it the right channel? Did we have a good grasp of the target group? Be honest and you will make an even better communications plan or implement an even more effective initiative next time.

Plan your political moves

For political parties, policies are the foundation for communications efforts. In order to reach out to the electorate with policies in different areas, to consolidate or shift its political position, a series of news media moves are therefore carried out in which the party presents its policies. No matter what channel or media mix you choose. In this respect, it may also be useful to draw up a general plan for these moves within the framework of the party's communications plan, in order to coordinate these moves. Like a communications plan, this plan answers the questions what, who, where, how, when and by which spokesperson. But is much more concise and general in nature. It is primarily a matter of acquiring an overview of all of the party's political moves. It's about prioritising and ensuring that these moves don't clash with each other. Then a smaller communications plan is often drawn up for each individual political move.

It is also about being able to respond quickly to changes in public opinion, as well as being aware that there is always a great deal of competition when it comes to political moves in attractive policy areas. In addition to closely tracking developments in public opinion, it may also be important to monitor developments in other political parties in a structured way. Some individuals in your party organisation – employees, elected representatives or members – may be tasked with regularly following debates, party conferences and reading texts from your main opponents and parties that are close to your own in the political landscape. If political moves are made there, it will also affect the way in which you work. Their ways of reaching out and shaping public opinion directly affect your communication.

What channels should the party use?

A key part of planning and implementing communications efforts is to choose which channels to use for these. In general, a distinction is made between direct channels – channels which the party itself has at its disposal – and indirect channels, which are channels operated by other actors, also known as media.

Media selection

The majority of all political communications that citizens encounter is via different types of media. Traditionally, this was mostly more traditional media in print and broadcasting. But the Internet and social media are becoming more and more central for parties who want to reach out to voters.

What channels, and what media mix, are used in your political moves or other communications activities are guided by your overall communication strategy and which target groups you intend to reach in which contexts.

The fundamental question is what is going to be most effective – both in order to get your message through in different contexts and how much it ultimately costs to implement an activity or campaign. You will often need a combination of channels and media to make your communications really effective. And remember, again, everything communicates. Even your choice of media, or as the legendary Canadian communications scientist Marshall McLuhan put it: "The medium is the message".

On an overall level, different types of media can be divided into the following categories:

- **Print media:** Media printed on paper, based primarily on the written word and images, such as newspapers and magazines.
- **Broadcast media:** Media that transmits with audio or audio and video, such as radio and TV.

Print and broadcast media are both part of traditional media and have previously played a dominant role in the distribution of news, and to a large extent continue to do so, since it is often these media that have news desks with journalists and political commentators. In addition, these media are also accessible on the Internet today. In fact, in most societies, they have almost as many readers, viewers or listeners via their Internet channels as they do through their more traditional channels. However, the news cycle

looks different in print media, as the news that comes in the newspaper has usually already been published in other more immediate news channels. The trend is that less and less news and information is conveyed via paper, and there are also fewer and fewer news desks due to competition from other types of media. More media actors are also choosing to publish their content only online. Internet based social media work in a way that is somewhat different from the traditional media.

- **Social media:** The major social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok, have billions of users and many people today get their main news and information about society and politics through these media platforms.

These channels are more network-based and dialogue-oriented than traditional media, but at the same time there is a strong tendency for people who are active on these platforms to end up in 'filter bubbles', where they communicate primarily with others who think like them, share the same information and form the same world view. Regardless, these channels are increasingly important for political parties. It is important for them to follow, reach out and be seen on social media, as well as to cover and conduct a dialogue about what is said about the party on social media. They are also cheap; you can involve more people in the party to be engaged in this work, and that has advantages, in particular at the local level of the party where funds are often limited. However, there is a requirement that the content is adapted for the media if you wanted to go viral.

In discussions of media strategies, people also tend to distinguish between the media space you pay for and the media space you earn by presenting material that is attractive to these media. The term public relations (PR) is often used to include the latter.

- **Paid media:** Media time and place that the party pays for, usually ad space in newspapers; and on radio, television and social media.
- **Earned media:** The media space your party gets free of charge by making political moves, arranging media events, participating in debates and starting debates that spread across the various media available.

Paid advertisements are seen more as marketing than information about the society and therefore are liable to lose some of their credibility. However, during election campaigns, when citizens are lining up to cast their votes, one strategy may be to be seen widely with clear messages for a limited time, in order to compete for attention with the other parties. But that is expensive. Advertising on social media is cheaper and often more effective, as it is more easily targeted and as people are spending more and more time on online. Or cultivating good relationships with journalists or influencers who are active in the local community debate – as well as creating events that receive broad coverage across many media channels.

All of these channels are important, and which you choose is primarily driven by your target group. Here you need to know about your target group's media habits, just as you need to take your own budget into account. Most parties have to rely more on earned media for financial reasons, and it is usually better to invest heavily in a strategy that allows you to get a lot of space without buying ads.

Your strategy should aim to maximise your media coverage, but it should also support the party's overall messages and goals. In order to be able to reach out effectively, and in the right way, you have to know how the media work in practice, and perhaps the most important component is to understand what is termed media logic.

Media logic

Mass media logic is based on the fact that during the 100 or so years that mass media have existed, a way of talking about reality that works in these media has developed. A way of describing news, events and policies that makes many people want to see or hear about it.

So, what is the logic? Most important is that there must be an angle that captures the interests of media consumers and helps them to understand the content. Something that draws them into the text or the segment. If what you have presented to a journalist or news editor lacks a possible angle, they will probably not make any news items out of what you are presenting. That is why it is preferable if yourselves plan and think through what a possible angle might be and 'sell' your political move with that as an argument. Fundamentally, it is a kind of drama, where a number of stories have been hammered out that most journalists are looking for. The Swedish public relations company Westanders has produced a list of examples of common angles:

1 **Small to large:** Journalists love to help upstarts and smaller players who challenge monopolies, government agencies and other 'giants'. Help the media to tell a David and Goliath story.

2 **Fresh news:** It is easier to get publicity about a matter if you link it to a fresh news event.

3 **Revelations:** The media love revelations about things that powerful people, government agencies and businesses are trying to hide. Put yourself on the side of the journalist and help them do their job.

4 **Proximity principle:** People like to read and hear news that is about things close to them geographically and in terms of subject matter. Here, those of you who work locally in the political landscape can find a string of ideas. If something happens in national politics, identify a local angle. Connect your political moves to local schools, hospitals, roads and other things that affect people's everyday lives.

5 **The unexpected:** Journalists are happy to report on the unexpected, things that will startle the media consumer and cause them to pay attention. This could be statistics that explode myths, unexpected statements, or role reversals.

6 **Comparisons:** The media love comparisons. Has something improved, or perhaps got worse? How do school results or the quality of health care in your municipality compare with other municipalities, or other countries if you work nationally? How does your municipality stand up against others in the other policy areas you work with?

7 **Shock factor:** Journalists like to draw attention to injustices and manifestly unreasonable conditions. Help the media uncover wrongs in society.

8 **Trends:** The media is interested in what's trendy. Provide them with new angles and examples of the trend currently being discussed in the media.

9 **Difference:** What stands out interests the media. If the news is also visual, it will help to increase attention.

10 **Personalities:** Strong personalities are always good for making an impact. The recognition factor is important for the media. Therefore, a person who is already well known will more easily make an impact, but even an unknown person who has charisma can be a success factor in the party's communication.

This list may sound cynical. As if it doesn't matter what content the party actually wants to present. As if it's all about spin and packaging. And yes, of course this method can be used for cynical and underhand purposes. But this does not mean that it is always bad.

If you believe in your policies and values, there is no reason not to use the rules of the game and the methods available to you to reach out to your target groups. The important thing is that you are honest and transparent and do not pursue angles in a way that does not allow you to be honest or that compromises your values.

How can the party work at the local level?

How to work locally with media contacts must be guided by what kind of local community you are active in. If there is no newspaper, there is probably a local TV or radio station or other media channel. Start by doing a survey. What media are available in different areas that the party's target groups use. Which of these media outlets do you want to reach, in what contexts, and in what ways? There are a number of ways to explore the answers to these questions. Ask a local advertising agency or the media outlet's own sales department. Opinion polls also often ask the voters where they get their information. You too can ask citizens this in your own questionnaires and surveys. Their answers will make it easier to choose the right media channels for your efforts. Also, make a list of your preferred media outlets, those that are generally of particular importance to the party locally. The outlets that you will make a special effort to reach and build good relationships with. Then make a list of other types of media such as blogs and social media and the influencers on these. Many journalists draw attention to news, political conversations and narratives through these.

Although local mass media are often more easily accessible and cover more everyday issues than the national media, in principle they apply the same media logic. However, it is often easier to reach out via the mass media in smaller local communities. The competition for attention is not as great. Often it's just a matter of calling, or sending a press release about the activity or the political move you want the media to take notice of. If you send a press release, it is important to follow it up with a phone call or an e-mail that reminds the news desk or the individual journalist that you have sent it. They live in a constant flow of information and even if they have systems for keeping track of what is happening in their coverage areas, reminders are a good idea. It can also be a good way to establish a closer relationship with the journalist.

FACTS

DEVELOPING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA

Developing good working relationships with journalists will result in more and better coverage of the party, its policies and activities. Therefore, maintain contact and think about how these relationships can be mutually beneficial to both parties. Who knows? Maybe you will be called up without sending a press release next time.

- By understanding the role and needs of journalists, you will be better able to provide the media with what they need. It's important here to find out what is newsworthy, and to try to anticipate their need for content and narratives.

- Be available and tell them that you are happy for them to call you when working on articles that relate to your area. Monitor your phone and e-mail. If you cannot answer immediately, make sure you tell them that you will come back to them as soon as possible. A good rule of thumb is to call or answer within at most one hour.

- Help with their research, such as providing background information, statistics and important contacts, and give them information in a format they can easily use.

- Do not overestimate journalists' prior knowledge in a matter. Their job is to make things understandable to their readers, not to be an expert. Use simple language and avoid using technical terms.

New media and the party's online presence

Until 10–15 years ago, the communications work and the media landscape in which parties had to operate were simpler than today. There were a number of broad mass media outlets and parties also had access to a number of channels of their own, such as printed matter and the organisation's external field activities. It was easier to have an overview of communications. This also had a major impact on the work of political parties, resulting in a major focus on mass media and more unidirectional and uniform information. The contemporary media landscape is much more fragmented and difficult to grasp.

Social media have contributed to the emergence of new media spaces and game rules for interaction and communication. The diversity of the media and media noise are huge, the pace is a lot higher and people are confronted with information and opinions that are completely different depending on the networks they are in. People have shifted from being passive recipients of mass media communications to being co-producers who actively choose what information they receive and what conversations they participate in. This means that they largely control what overall picture of reality, or of a political party, is conveyed there.

In such a media landscape, it is difficult to try to control the narrative about the party or to predict how and which parts of the party's politics and activities the voters will be exposed to. This means that communications must be operated in a different way than previously. Today, it is about being well prepared, staying one step ahead, and managing a number of perspectives in parallel. It's also about having more personal communications that are engaging, foster dialogue and inspire people to communicate your messaging to others. Political parties must also have a presence in more arenas and on more platforms than previously, and their members and sympathisers have acquired an even more prominent role as active messengers in these arenas and on these platforms.

Online channels and digital tools

Today, parties often use a range of online channels and digital tools every day. In particular, their own channels such as the party's website with its regional and local sub-sites. They often act as a hub or home for the party's online presence where people can find basic and statistical information about the party's policies and organisation. This does not mean that they need to be dead pages: they need to be updated and offer news and up-to-date information. But they can't match the party's social media channels in terms of topicality, information flow and presence. Websites should be linked to the online communications of the organisation as a whole. They should offer information

and more detail about the party's policies, as well as how people can get involved in the party in practical terms. Websites need to be high in the rankings of the big search engines like Google in order to lead visitors to the websites.

Today, many parties are represented on some of the major social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, as well as on content hosting services such as YouTube, Vimeo and Flickr. Together, these have billions of users worldwide. In addition to these platforms, there are other services, such as distributing your own podcasts with leading representatives of the party, or storing and sharing images and files. Google Drive is often used in field work to disseminate information and to conveniently organise campaign leaders and sympathisers through the use of various forms and templates. Some parties have also taken the step of developing their own intranets for communication with members, or their own apps for members, field workers and sympathisers. The goal is to be able to quickly reach these groups with targeted information and mobilise them. In short, online channels and services are not just social media; they constitute a wide range of tools that offer easy opportunities to create content and to reach target groups in a cost-effective way.

The party's presence on social media

Being present on the most common social media is a cheap and effective way for parties to get their messaging across to a large number of supporters and potential supporters. Either by offering interesting content that has the capacity to go viral – in other words readily shared – or through targeted advertising. As we have seen above, these platforms also offer great possibilities for getting to know your target groups in more depth as well as customising and targeting your communications and messaging in a more relevant and accurate way to different groups. You can design messages based on data about people's interests, occupations and lifestyles, thus building stronger relationships with these target groups.

Today, more and more people are getting their information about society and politics mainly through these media, and many people spend much of their day connected to social media. But social media are not just a new channel where you can choose to communicate with your target groups. If something goes viral on the Internet, it will be a news story in the newspaper as well. Major debates on social issues and politics often start online and then find their way to other media channels. In other words, there are good reasons to learn how to deal with these new media and use them in your communication strategies. In order to do this, you need to understand how they work.

The media logic of social media

In the section on mass media, we described how the media logic of mass media usually requires a clearly defined angle and that this angle is often about things like conflict, rapid change, personalities or contrasts. Social media are driven by the same logic – in part. If you study which debates, questions or posts have become big on social media, you find that it is the same kinds of stories that draw many readers and viewers to traditional media. Social media requires an even more fine-tuned angle as space is limited to a small number of characters, an image, or a short video. This applies if you want to reach a broader group. If you want to reach smaller, specially selected groups, it is also important to highlight content that will appeal to them based on their interests, life situation, values, and the like.

Communication and dialogue

The main difference between social media and 'old' media is that social media is just that – social. Social media require communication – not a unilateral dissemination of information. Social media build networks and relationships. If you're going to use social media, you should encourage engagement and be generous with answers and conversations. Bear in mind that it is relationships that you are creating. How do you do that in real life? If you are at a party, for example, you would mingle and network. You probably don't just walk around showing off a slick surface of yourself and hold long monologues. You have to interact. Listen. Be responsive. Respond personally and openly. That's how you make friends. This is also how you must act on social media. Those who view social media as a press room where carefully reviewed statements are posted or as a place solely for the purpose of posting texts that would otherwise be published in the newspaper will fail. Stop thinking about it as "digital" and start thinking about the people on the other end.

Plan and improvise strategically

Basically, social media require the same strategic thinking as for any other communication initiative. As always, your core values and policy positions are the foundation. Then it is a matter of defining target groups and – in this case – finding the social media channels that will target them best. Then the message and form must be adapted to suit the specific social media.

But social media is also a constantly changing communication landscape, especially among young people who often switch to new platforms and change their media habits fairly regularly. To communicate successfully when conditions are constantly changing, you need an approach that combines improvisation with a predetermined set of rules. As an actor who wants to have an impact on social media, you have to be clear about your framework – what you want to say, and what your purpose is in being present there. Within this framework, you must be able to follow trends, improvise and be nimble.

Speed kills

"Speed kills, Bush", wrote Bill Clinton's campaign manager in the US election campaign in 1992. He was saying that Clinton's campaign would respond directly to all attacks, all counter-arguments and moves from the opponent's side. It was a strategy that worked then, and over the last 20 years, social media and the Internet have made its truth even clearer. The speed of the Internet means that a lie, an attack or political move that you will want to respond to immediately will have enormous spread very rapidly. And that means you will also have to respond immediately. Otherwise, you will come into the conversation just when others have left it. The same is true if you want to comment on an event or a news story. If you wait even one day to make your comment, everyone will have already read a thousand comments from others, and you will lose an opportunity to be part of setting the agenda or framing for an event in a way that is preferable to you.

FACTS

SUCCEEDING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The costs of setting up your party's presence on social media are relatively low, while social media have the potential to allow you to reach a broad audience very rapidly. This is particularly interesting for new, small parties that lack the resources for traditional forms of communication and media activities, as well as for local branches. But it also takes time to create and maintain relationships with many groups and interested individuals on social media. Here are a few tips for how to succeed on social media:

1 **Be active:** Be active: If you post once a week on social media, you won't be successful. You need to be active, share other people's posts, write your own, write comments and respond to comments.

2 **Prioritise:** Don't invest your efforts in all social media channels. Let your target group guide which ones you choose. Get good at using the social media channels you are active on.

3 **Adapt your messaging to the target audience:** You should also adapt the format of the messaging. Bear in mind that moving images are good on social media, as well as images in general.

4 **Streamline and adapt the content:** It may be tempting to post everything the party does, but boring pictures from everyday meetings are not necessarily the party's most engaging communication and less likely to have viral spread.

5 **Social media are personal media:** Emphasise people, emotions, humour and seriousness in a way that suits the medium. Test as you go. Get to know the limits and possibilities of these kinds of media. Speak to the brain and the heart.

6 **Welcome debate:** If the goal of your communication is to touch people, stimulate emotions and reach out to voters and make an impression – it is important that you latch onto reactions. Where there is no debate or discussion, there is no interest or interaction either.

7 **Encourage action:** Write a post and discuss, share this post, invite more of your friends, donate to this or that, come and campaign with us, etc.

8 **Respond rapidly and respectfully:** Social media are, unfortunately, full of criticism and attacks. Do not fall into the trap of using this kind of language. Respond quickly to criticism, be sure to remove any posts that express racism or contain threats, establish your own policy for your tone on social media. And don't get bogged down in trench warfare with your opponents instead of focusing on your target groups.

9 **Be conscious of the filter bubble:** Your focus and reach will easily be limited by the group and network in which you operate, as well as by algorithms, on each platform. Be conscious of these realities, and react, interact and actively link to outside this bubble.

10 **Capture data and evaluate regularly:** It's easy to follow the traffic on your social media accounts, see how many people have seen your posts, shared them, and interacted. If you are not satisfied with these figures, try new methods and try out different types of posts to determine which ones work best.

Allies, online campaigning and digital organising

Social media with its people-to-people communication represent powerful tools, but they are more difficult to control and have an overall grasp of. A post is commented on, shared, interpreted and spread in virtually no time at all, and the debate can often get tough. This kind of media landscape requires you to have many allies and ambassadors, people who are active in the party and party sympathisers, who can spread the party's messaging and argue on its behalf.

How can you deepen your engagement, build a group of activists and establish communities for the party's presence and activities on the Internet? By working with engaging and action-driven content as we have previously highlighted, and by having a clear recruitment and engagement strategy. The development of organisations' online activities and communication has gone from being initially run by isolated individuals to then becoming more centralised and controlled by internal specialist teams, and finally to currently becoming increasingly decentralised and integrated into the party's other activities. Successful digital leadership is distributed, it features a culture of trust, and has open communication, where you are confident enough to relax control and involve more groups in your digital activities.

The Swedish Social Democratic Party has established a community for online campaigning. It is a national group on Facebook for all who want to be involved in running online campaigns on social democratic policies. In this community you can share information, encourage and help each other to share posts and respond to questions in comment fields. The group helps the party to be involved in ongoing public debate. In the group people share tips and materials, and coordinate joint actions on key occasions. The group is coordinated nationally by the Party Executive Secretariat, but it relies on local participation and you can also easily organise and establish local groups.

Targeted social media activities can also work together with other local field activities. For example, through online campaigns or online advertising in the residential areas where the party is currently door-to-door canvassing.
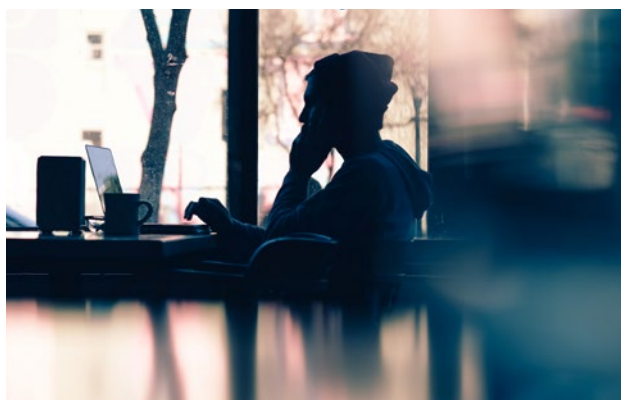
Engage people to participate in the party's work

All online campaigns, as well as all communications activities that the party carries out, are ultimately about establishing contact, influencing and building relationships with people – with the aim of developing these relationships into actual collaboration. Strategic communication is in fact about having a predetermined purpose for your communications, and for political parties is about people feeling motivated to act in some way collectively with and for the party. Besides voting, this might be something that helps the party to become stronger and increase its chances of winning elections. For example, encouraging people to discuss the party's policies online, campaign online and share posts on social media. But the party's work online ought to also be very clear about mobilising online groups to participate in offline actions. For example, by recruiting donors, volunteers and party members. So besides reaching out to, engaging and motivating people, good digital communications always need a clear call-to-action with the aim of activating their target group: Talk to your family and friends about voting, participate in the field campaign work in your neighbourhood, donate money to the election campaign, or take the step to become a party member and get more involved in the party's local activities.

Working strategically with the party's contacts

A common way to coordinate and activate people is to create specific pages or groups on social media where you can stimulate your supporters to take action. It might be Facebook groups that focus on how you can go door-knocking together, campaign online, or participate in some other party activity. Another common and inexpensive way is to keep in touch with different groups via e-mail, where you can share targeted information via mailing lists and invite sympathisers and interested people to various activities. In order to reach and engage new sympathisers and potential voters, contact details and e-mail addresses are continuously collected, both online and offline, to connect people to the party, deepen their knowledge and engagement, and to stimulate them to act in some way. This is done on an ongoing basis by:

- Steering traffic to the landing pages of various campaigns or forms on the party website and getting visitors to sign up to get more information or to perform some activity.

- Collect e-mail addresses from the contacts you get through canvassing and at events.

If you work systematically with this, you can quite quickly establish mailing lists to tailor communication and process different key groups that you want to engage.

GOOD E-MAILING SPURS ACTION

In order to succeed with your e-mails, they need to be clear about motivating and spurring action. Avoid long e-mails about policies where the reason for sending the e-mail is unclear. Instead, refer the recipients to more information on the website for those who want to read more about your policies. The fundamentals of designing e-mails can be found in a classic campaign narrative:

- The story of our movement
- Our vision
- The threat from our opponent
- The individual who participates and makes a difference with their concrete action
- Why this is important right now.

A good e-mail is short, direct and adapted to the target group. It arouses interest, stimulates emotions and engagement in the recipients and leads to concrete action by persuading the recipient that taking action is important and will make a big difference. It should build a context, and a feeling that we are working together towards a common goal, as well as creating momentum and a sense of urgency.

And it should be clear how the recipient can help solve the problem by means of a clear call to action (CTA) in order to achieve the goal. Concrete CTAs must be clearly linked to the party's efforts to generate resources so that the party's activities can reach out to constituents regarding the issue – for example, to share information, be active in the field and donate money.

You evaluate what is a good e-mail based on the number of visits, clicks, shares and discussions on social media as well as sign-ups. And remember to work with a well-considered number of e-mails. Do not spam the recipients.
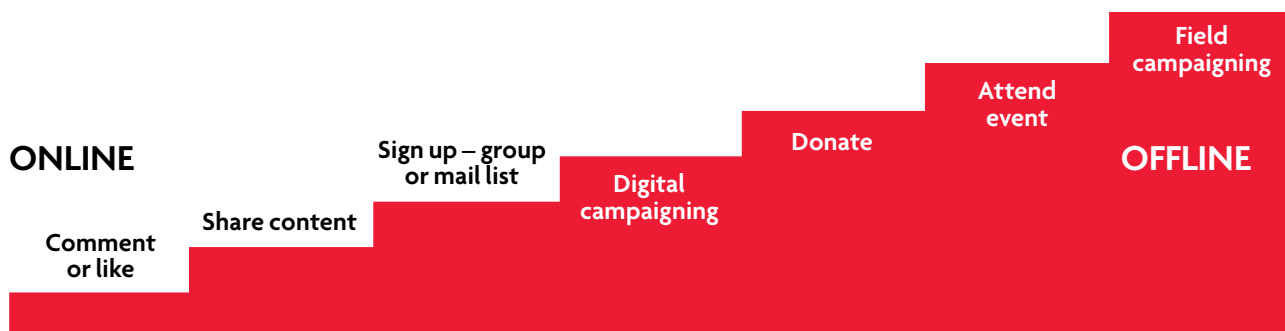
Ladder of engagement

Engagement can be many different things. What we call the ladder of engagement show some of the fundamental levels.

The point of using a ladder as a symbol of engagement is that it is rare for people to step straight into one of the upper steps. Most begin with a smaller commitment. With the right communication and the right opportunities to get involved, the party can get people to take one or more steps up. This is about offering people at every step the opportunity to take another step and do a little bit more. Not everyone will. But if they do not see a clear opening or get a positive invitation to do so, there is a great risk that they will not move forward from the first step. So the basic rule is: Always ask them to get a bit more involved. Show why this is crucial for the party, or any of the issues the party is pursuing. The information needs to be targeted to them in a simple and concrete way, where each activity has a clear time and place. It also needs to be clear how to respond positively.

What does your party's ladder of engagement look

like? How does someone go from the first step of liking your Facebook page to become a party member? Or an elected representative of the party?

CRM – more than a contacts database

An easy way to coordinate and connect the party's contacts both online and offline – and to systematically work towards gradually increasing the engagement of members, sympathisers and those who are curious about the party – is to use a simple CRM system. CRM is a concept that comes from the business world and refers to a database for Customer Relationship Management. In political parties we usually talk of Constituent Relationship Management. CRM helps the party with its administration, organisation and the management of target group relationships. CRM is not just software or contacts database, but rather a process that influences how the party is organised and its activities with the intention of leading to better relationships with its various target groups.

In the CRM system, you have all the party's contacts. In particular the contact details of members, sympathisers

who have signed up in some context, or citizens who are curious about the party and who want more information. The system also contains information about the contacts they have had with the party, what information they have received, and what level of activity in relation to the party each individual is at. This information can then be segmented in different ways and, based on criteria specified by the individuals themselves, such as place of residence, age or what policy areas they are interested in. This helps the party to direct e-mails and other information in a relevant and purposeful way to them. You can also build automatic systems for when different people and groups receive a certain type of information in order to help them take a further step up the ladder of engagement. For example, when someone donates money to the party, it can be followed up with an automatic email inviting the person to take the step of becoming a member.

In addition, today information about people's activity on the party's website or social media accounts can be added to many systems (if the people already exist in the system), which makes it easier to assess different people's levels of engagement and thus be able to follow up leads. However, it is important to point out here that the legislation regarding storing personal data differs between different countries. Especially when it comes to people's political values and activities. In Sweden and Europe there is restrictive legislation to protect citizens. Regardless of whether or not there is effective legislation in this area, the party should always adopt a clearly ethical stand on the matter so that people are not registered in their databases unless they are made aware of it, nor in a way that is against their will. It is also necessary to have a rigorous approach to the security surrounding these systems, with secure hosting, internal processing and login.

Field work and the party's presence in the local community

Both the mass media and the new social media are effective channels through which you can quickly reach many people. However, these are mainly indirect channels, where an editor, newspaper management or algorithm stands between you as the sender and the people you want to establish communication with. However, the work of reaching people via the mass media or the Internet cannot replace direct face-to-face contact with voters. A party that is only visible in indirect channels will, by definition, be seen as more abstract in voters' minds. Nothing beats the face-to-face conversation for those who want to build a long-term and strong relationship between a party and its voters. The local branch has a particularly important role to play here.

The role of face-to-face meeting and conversation

If you are a local politician, you need to meet many people. In the local supermarket, in the town centre or at club or association meetings, schools and workplaces. This is how people will get to know you, and their image of you will influence their image of the party. As a local politician, you need to be a good listener, interested in people's everyday lives, be able to answer questions, explain political decisions and receive criticism in a constructive way. What happens when the party is present in this manner is that the party will be seen as part of the local community, rather than being an abstract part of the powers that be. It becomes about 'ordinary' people who have been entrusted with representing the local community. These kinds of contacts engender real relationships between the voters and the party. This in turn leads to people talking about the party in their own conversations with the people around them. With their colleagues, family and friends. These conversations are particularly valuable as people often tend to recognise themselves in and trust their friends, colleagues, and neighbours more than politicians and experts on TV.

There are a number of different ways for parties to be present in people's everyday lives. Canvassing, phone calls, town hall meetings, open party events, information tables at shopping centres, home meetings, and the like. In addition, most people are involved in various networks and associations and clubs, and often visit markets and sports events. Find them there and identify issues of common interest and start a dialogue. This local work gives the local party members an important role to play in the party's outreach work. The members become both the party's feelers out in the community and its foremost spokespersons.

Field campaigning

The face-to-face conversation has the ability to engender trust and understanding between the people who are talking with each other, and to do something that many perceive as complex easy and engaging. It is a good way to build a relationship between the voters and the party. This is why the Swedish Social Democrats' collective term for field campaigns is 'conversation campaigns'.

The most effective way to carry out conversations is to go from house to house and door to door to talk to individual voters. This is where you can learn about people's life situations and tailor your messaging to engage with them where they actually are. Canvassing door-to-door is a form of systematic, face-to-face communication between the party and its voters. It is practised by the party's local representatives/candidates and sympathisers in areas that are important to the party. This is also the main local method used by the Swedish Social Democratic Party. There are many reasons for this:

1 It is possible to link local and national politics, pick up electoral mood and increase knowledge about the party's target groups, and how they are thinking and what they are talking about.

2 It is possible to conduct qualitative conversations in a structured and systematic way over time – and to concentrate on the party's target groups by identifying these based on local target group surveys – rather than being guided by who comes forward at various public activities and events.

3 You can also increase the volume of these activities as required. Many field campaign leaders and volunteers can be recruited and trained to increase the spread of the campaign. Using this method, you can also recruit new members from outside the circle that actively seek out the party themselves.

4 You can return many times to these target groups, which is an important part of carrying on a dialogue, building relationships and persuading voters to vote for your party. This can also be combined with online advertising or the distribution of promotional material. In order to be able to follow up these contacts, e-mail addresses can be collected to get the contacts into the party's communications activities.

5 Of all forms of direct voter contact, this activity has the greatest impact and gives the biggest dividends. It is the most effective method of getting people to vote for the party in elections, even when time and cost are taken into account.

Consequently, other methods that you use in field work are primarily supplementary with the aim of making the party and the party's campaigns as visible as possible locally. To attract attention and to energise the campaign and to its field workers.
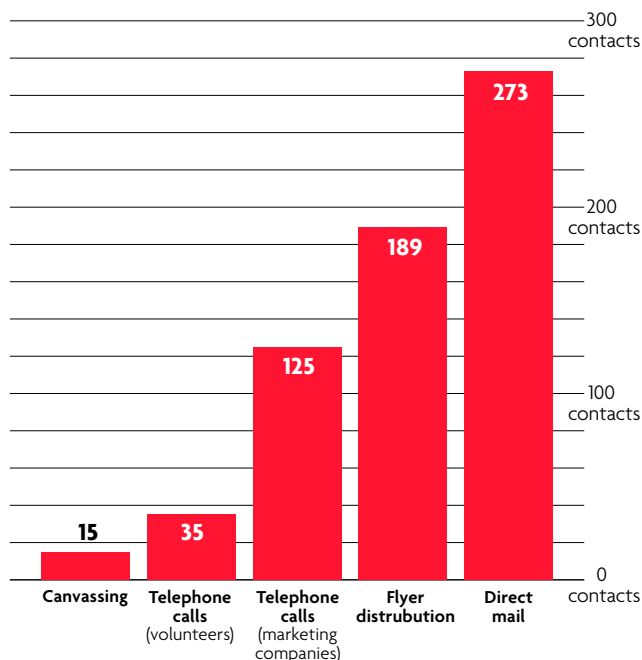
Door-to-door canvassing is the most effective method as it takes 15 voter contacts to get a voter to go and vote, compared to 35 for telephone calls.

Source: Green & Gerber, Get Out the Vote

Different types of canvassing

Regular dialogue with voters is one way of developing the party's policies, shaping public opinion, increasing voter turnout, persuading more people to vote for the party in elections, and recruiting more members. There are different types of canvassing which complement each other and have different purposes:

- **Survey canvassing:** When political parties converse with constituents to find out what issues they consider to be the most important to them, and learn more about the image that they have of the party. These contacts are made before elections.

- **Electoral canvassing:** When parties visit voters during election campaigns to get them to vote for them:
  - It's about persuasion – about increasing the number of undecided voters to vote for your party.
  - Get Out The Vote (GOTV) – to increase voter turnout among sympathetic and undecided voters.

- **Integrated Voter Engagement:** In order for your voter contacts to be effective, you should also have conversations with them systematically between elections. To increase awareness of the party, to engage the voters in a dialogue on the party's policies, to contribute to the party's policy development and to build deeper trust and relationships. The studies that have tried to measure the impact of this show that you can increase voter turnout by almost 30 per cent if you canvass between elections.

How do you work with canvassing?

In 2008, a compilation of field studies was released which examined methods for increased participation in elections. It showed that a number of methods are effective and others have no significant effect. In short, you could say that activities that involve face-to-face contact are the most effective. This is particularly true in areas where political activists are generally absent. This method is most effective for mobilising supporters to go and vote, and not quite as effective in persuading undecided voters to vote for the party. At least in the short time perspective. However, although canvassing is the most effective method, it is also a method that requires a lot of planning and a lot of human resources. If you're going to organise a canvassing campaign, you'll need to think about a few things before the work of actually knocking on doors and speaking to people begins.

In the adjacent picture you can see the steps that can be useful to go through together before starting your outreach activities: analysing, training and mobilising. All in all, successful targeting of groups and volunteer engagement can be said to be the keys to successful, large-scale field campaign work. The use of election data and campaign analyses helped to make this method more effective, as does a good infrastructure for support from field campaign volunteers. It is therefore a good idea to develop a clear mobilisation and organisation strategy for volunteers.

Analyse	• What is your overall campaign strategy? • What are your overall and local objectives for the voter mobilisation campaign (e.g. nb of volunteers to recruit, nb of voters to contact)? • How can we use available electoral data to build a targeting strategy? • In which areas should you focus your efforts and resources to maximise the number of voters gained?
Train	• How many active party members can be expected to join the mobilisation campaign? • How experienced are they when it comes to mobilisation? • Does the party have any staff specialised in training?
Mobilise	• How centralised is the party organisation? • How is your campaign team organised, (I) at the headquarters and (II) in local units? • Would you like to open the campaign to non-party members?

Source: Liegey Muller Pons

Field campaign work require good organisation, in particular locally. There must be responsible field organisers who divide up the area and lists between the campaign teams that will have conversations with the voters. Read more in the next part about organising the field work using the snowflake model.

The field organisers and field workers who participate in the campaign also need to be trained. This training should be about how to organise yourselves, implement activities efficiently, as well as useful conversation techniques. You also need local maps and lists from which your campaign workers can operate, as well as a basic conversation guidance sheet available for those involved in the work. This helps those involved in the field work to prepare themselves, converse with people effectively, and deliver the same basic messaging. As well as knowing what information they should be gathering. In particular, during election campaigns, the information and data that the campaign organisation collects is important for the field work to be implemented efficiently and in a structured manner.

Call voters

Telephone calls to voters are a complement to door-to-door canvassing for person-to-person conversations. The method offers many of the benefits of that method but is ultimately not quite as effective in mobilising and persuading voters. However, more calls can be made if you have only a limited period of time, and telephoning might be better suited to certain areas (e.g. sparsely populated areas) where door-to-door canvassing can be more difficult to do. Calling voters is often used to identify party supporters and encourage them to go and vote. It is also an excellent method for recruiting campaign volunteers among party members and sympathisers to participate in the field campaign.

Today, there are also a number of technical tools that make it easier to call constituents. Field workers download an app to their computer and then use their own mobile phones. The app displays new phone numbers systematically and stores statistics. Phone numbers are often found in public registers or lists can be purchased from marketing companies. As with e-mail, it may also be useful to ask people to give you their phone number in other forms of contact with the party so that you can call them when they are part of the target group for some specific campaign.

HOW DO YOU BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND CONVINCE PEOPLE IN CONVERSATIONS?

In the party's outreach activities in general, and in campaign conversations in particular, it is important that those involved in the activities are aware of the fundamentals of what make a good and effective conversation. There are a few simple starting points for this, but it is basically a question of social skills:

1 Listen – ask questions and show interest
If you want the other person to like you, trust you and open up to you: Be open and get them to start talking about themselves, so that they feel seen and heard and important. Listen, ask questions and show interest. Be aware of body language, it can be a good idea to mirror the other person's body language.

2 Acknowledge – concentrate on what unites you
Acknowledge the person you are talking to. Confirm that you understand, and try to find a common denominator between you and them in what the other person is emphasising. Concern about the future, a desire to change something, thoughts about a development in society. Connect with the person where their feelings, engagement and values are. Many people who are politically engaged themselves get it wrong here because they are often particularly knowledgeable, committed and happy to debate themselves. But is there anything more off-putting than talking to someone who thinks that they already know everything? And if you respond by telling the person that they are completely wrong, there is a great risk that you will not get any further. The person you are talking to will close down and start defending themselves instead of being open and ready for dialogue.

3 Reinforce – create a sense of belonging and clarity
Relational communication is about making the person you are talking to realise that you understand them, that you are like them, that you think the same, and that together you need to do something. Once you have found shared values or position, continue to build consensus, but make sure that you also drive the conversation forward. Connect that shared value to the party's policy in general or a particular policy and ask the person whether they might not be thinking the same way as you do.

4 Get people involved – together we can do it!
Move from words to action so that you can achieve the aim of the conversation. Ask if the person could consider voting for the party, becoming a member, or being active in the field. ■

Events and outreach meetings

Being out and about and meeting people and arranging outreach activities is key for the party being visible and having a local presence.

The primary aim is to generate attention and a big impact with the public and in the media, as well as to engage and mobilise the party organisation and the party's sympathisers. Good meetings require good planning and resources as well as knowing when and why to use them. But being visible at different events does not just mean that the party has to do all the work itself. It can be more effective to collaborate with other actors and participate and be visible in other ways:

- Meet with the leaders of other organisations, and make sure that the party's representatives visit different areas of the community to get a better idea about those who live or work there and their lives and circumstances.

- Participate in other organisations' local field activities and work with them to find solutions to people's problems.

- Help other organisations with their activities. Use your party's influence in local government to assist them with contacts and knowledge about how to best implement their efforts.

- Contact parts of the local community such as associations and clubs, trade unions, welfare organisations, workplaces, upper secondary schools or religious gathering places. Identify contacts and ask them to invite you to come and talk to their groups.

- Concerts and sporting events are other opportunities to be visible and meet people in positive contexts. Set up an information table or party flag and have leading representatives of the party visible on site to distribute brochures, answer questions, and talk to people before and during breaks.

This type of meeting is important as your party needs to keep an eye on and be aware of what is happening in your neighbourhood. You should therefore participate regularly in forums and meetings on developments in your local community. Then of course there are different types of meetings that the party itself can hold to complement the party's efforts to be visible locally, and as part of the party's more active field work:

Town hall meetings: Invite interested citizens to public meetings where topical issues are discussed by the party's leading representatives. These meetings are sometimes referred to as Town Hall meetings – an expression that originates mainly from North America and is a way for local and national politicians to regularly meet their con-

stituents. Either to consult them on topics of interest to them, or to discuss future legislation or reforms.

Community forums: It's a good idea to hold community forums in the local community that focus on a particular issue or problem in that community, where those who attend have the opportunity to participate and share their views and ideas. The main role of the party is then to listen, build relationships and facilitate a dialogue on the issue covered. The issue might concern security in the area, education, local development plans that affect the local community or something else. Include local representatives – representatives from the police, social services, companies or other participants, depending on the topic to be discussed at the community forum.

Report-back meetings: Your local party can organise regular report-back meetings to inform people about what is happening in the municipality. At these meetings, local representatives ought to inform the meeting about important plans and programmes and people should have the opportunity to ask questions and be given time to discuss the issues being raised. This is a good opportunity for the party to note the questions that people raise so that the party can come back with answers to these questions at the next meeting.

These types of meetings attract people who are interested in the party and in politics but not enough to go to other types of party meetings. They can be linked to the party's policy development and current campaigns. And don't forget to recruit new members or field workers at these meetings. Then there are meetings that are more suited to the party's active field work:

Campaign events: These are events that the party can use to attract attention and promote its policies and representatives in a variety of contexts. This kind of event can be anything from a small gathering in the town square where representatives speak and hand out campaign material, to larger gatherings with a more extensive programme, or street demonstrations to protest or to promote something that the party wants to highlight in particular. They can be carried out during election campaigns and between elections for advocacy.

House meetings: This method is based on someone who is locally active inviting friends, acquaintances and people who live in the same neighbourhood, or are active in the same area, to their home to meet and talk to a politician. The advantage of this model is that the conversations are everyday and informal. More people will have the courage to questions, and confrontations are very unlikely, which can otherwise arise in larger and more formal meetings. Use your local representatives, candidates or local parliamentarians as speakers.

Rallies: The most expensive and largest type of party event, mainly used during election campaigns to motivate and mobilise election workers and sympathisers, and to generate momentum in the election campaign and gain maximum attention.

Fundraising events: In many parties, it is common to organise events to raise funds. Different countries have different fundraising cultures and opportunities. The national legislation in your country determines what kinds of fundraising methods are permitted. Fundraising events can include dinners, parties, sports competitions or similar functions. You can also combine fundraising with the party's other types of meetings and forms of field work – such as when canvassing and online.

TOURS AND VISITS WITH THE PARTY'S LEADING REPRESENTATIVES

Organising tours with the party's national and regional representatives or candidates in your municipality is a good way of making them known on the one hand, and of deriving benefit from their presence for the local branch's own communications.

On tours organised by the local branch or regional party organisation, visit workplaces, neighbourhoods, schools and the like. Political campaigns are largely about launching the party's candidates in elections. In this situation, of course, a large part of the party's communication should focus on people getting to know them and forming a relationship with them. But this kind of activity is also useful between elections in order to influence public opinion on party policy.

In an election campaign, it's also a good idea for the local branch to arrange tours for each and every one of the local candidates. The more people who tour, the more voters will meet a social democrat politician. Visits by national representatives in Sweden are coordinated by the Party Executive Secretariat in cooperation with the regional party organisations, which in turn have contact with the local branches.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is it important to clarify and structure your communication and advocacy work? What is the role of a communications strategy and communication plan, and how do these documents relate to each other?
- In a party, active communication efforts are going on at different levels and in different parts of the party organisation all the time. Why is it important to coordinate these efforts? Where are the limits on this coordination?

- There are a number of channels and methods that a party can use. What should mainly guide the channels and methods you ought to use?
- What are the circumstances like in our party? What types of media are available to us? What does the media landscape look like?
- What are our main direct and indirect channels? How are they working?
- Based on our goals, target groups and circumstances, what channels and media work best for us? Are they the ones we are using today?

- How do social media differ from traditional media? What opportunities and challenges do they entail?
- What is our party's presence on social media like today? What digital channels and methods are we using? Which ones should we be using?
- Do we have many people who are active in spreading the party's messaging? How can we deepen engagement and establish communities for the party's online presence?
- Are we working strategically with the party's contacts? What does our ladder of engagement look like for people who come in contact with and show interest in the party?

- What role does the visibility of the party's representatives in the local community play? How can parties be more present in people's everyday lives?
- Is that the same in our party or not? What are the different ways that we are present and visible in the local community? What is the role of our outreach events and meetings?
- Field campaign work and canvassing are the most effective ways to meet your constituent, going from house to house and door to door, and to talk about politics. Why is this such a successful method?
- How are we working in the field? What are the conditions like for us to work with canvassing?
- What do we need to think about when organising a field campaign? What are the ways in which we could work and organise ourselves to implement canvassing campaigns?

Election campaigning and organising

For political parties, elections and election campaigns have a special status in their activities, and the parties' organisations are impacted greatly by the electoral cycle in the surrounding community. During election campaigns, things get going seriously. In a short period of time, the entire party organisation gets converted into a campaign organisation, is mobilised and does its utmost to reach the maximum number of voters. The party gears up to meet voters, argue for the party's policies, and persuade as many people as possible to go and vote for the party in the election.

In this part, we outline the basic structure of an election campaign and focus specifically on the election strategy and organisation, as well as how it differs from the more fundamental and regular work presented in the previous parts.

Electioneering never really takes a break

Planning for the next elections starts immediately after the last ones have been held. The party should then appoint both an external and an internal group to analyse the election results and the party's election campaign. The external group has knowledgeable members who have not themselves participated in the leadership of the party's election campaign, while the internal group consists of those who have actively participated in leading the various sub-areas of the election campaign.

After drawing conclusions about what went well and what went wrong, it is time to formulate an inter-election strategy. This is not about describing everything that the party should do right up until the next election. It's about drawing up a strategy for what the party needs to do in order for it to have the best conditions for the next elections. In what ways should the political profile of the party be strengthened? What groups do you need to achieve better results next time? How does the image of the party need to

change? What methods and tools does the party need to get better at using? It takes time to change people's perceptions of the party, and to develop how the party organises itself within different areas. That's why you need to use the entire inter-election period to work on this. Of course, there may sometimes be rapid changes in public opinion in some elections, but the time is often too short during the election campaign itself to achieve major changes in the support of the electorate for the party.

Active and strategic policy development is also important during the inter-election period – in order to take the initiative in the debate and to be credible in the political position that the party is attempting to fortify. In this context, it's also good to think about how the party ought to be working to set the agenda in the political debate during the current term of office. This will affect the party's prospects once the next election campaign begins. Once it does, it will be more difficult to change the agenda, even though the aim of the strategy in the electoral campaign itself is, of course, to make the election debate about your party's priorities and the problems that you want to raise. You should also plan in regular field work with the voters during the inter-election period. Voters are often sceptical about parties that are only visible when they want their vote. If you show that you are interested in regular dialogue and actively building relationships with the voters, you have an advantage in relation to other parties once the election campaign starts.

The closer the next elections are, the better it is if the party moves into a more active phase and starts working on the basis of a pre-election strategy. Firstly, to update the inter-election strategy, and secondly to more actively test and fine-tune different approaches and messages, and push more intensively to set the agenda so that the party ends up in a good place by the time the election campaign rolls on. This is also a good way of getting the party organisation to start preparing itself in time for the more active phase of working on an election campaign. In short, you should start in good time and work strategically and in a structured way together. Electioneering never really takes a break.

Keeping track of general trends

As we have seen above, it is vital to follow trends in social debate – what policy areas are particularly important for the electorate and what the party's position is on these. However, there is also good reason to raise your sights a bit higher and keep a lookout for other trends that may impact the agenda during the forthcoming election campaign. For example, are there phenomena and factors in societal development that could lead to change? Is there, for example, a growing awareness of and concern about issues related to climate change, or any other issue, that currently is not a feature of social debate or how voters plan to vote? Are people more and more inclined to talk about these issues and vote for parties with a clear profile in this area? If that

is the case, it may be a chance for the party to prepare itself to highlight these aspects of its policy even more clearly in its communication.

Other important long-term developments relate to demographic trends. How is the composition of the electorate changing in the country and in the different constituencies? Are there more young people? Fewer people living in rural areas? More people with higher education? Is the ethnic group composition changing? What level of support does the party have among these groups, and how does this affect the party? It is also a matter of keeping a check of ideological trends, how voters define themselves ideologically, for example on the right-left spectrum, and what the trends are in voter turnout. In particular in key groups for the party.

The party's election strategy and electoral planning

Each election campaign is unique and must be adapted to the conditions and circumstances of different political parties. In particular, the size of the parties and their role in the political contexts in which they operate and stand for election. However, it is possible to talk about basic methods and approaches in parties' election strategies. A good way to start is to write down an election strategy. This is an internal document aimed at creating clarity and collaboration in the party's electoral process:

- It should establish the direction, priorities and goals of the election campaign.
- It should clarify how the election campaign should be organised and communicated, what methods should be used in the first instance, as well as who is responsible for what.
- It should enable and provide guidance on how the party can bring together and utilise the party's resources in the best possible way.

In the work of developing the strategy and its more concrete plan, the party will go through a process in which important conditions and circumstances, goals, priorities, target groups, messages, methods and phases of the election campaign are analysed and defined. The work begins with the appointment of a political election campaign management by the Party Executive and then an operational election campaign management led by a national election campaign manager. It is the national election campaign manager who begins the work of developing an election strategy through the party's national level decision-making processes. The goal is that the end result should be the whole party's strategy – at all levels and in all parts of the country. However, the overall strategy needs to

be broken down into regional and local election campaign plans. It is therefore important to make the overall election campaign strategy as relevant and useful as possible for the whole country. Even if it is the party at the national level that ultimately leads this process, continuous internal dialogue should be a strong feature of this process.

❶ GOALS:
Election campaign goals

For the purposes of clarity, it is a good idea to summarise the overall goals of the party's election campaign. It is ultimately a question of what election result the party wants to achieve and how many votes or seats the party wants to win in order to make this possible. But it is also a matter of the underlying objectives such as how many people need to be reached via the various channels and activities in the field work, how many election campaign workers need to be recruited therefore, and how much money needs to be raised. For example, the goals of the election campaign could be broken down on the basis of the following:

- **The ultimate goal of the election** – the definition of what the party wants to win, what the party needs to achieve in order to gain a stronger and real political influence after the elections. For example, what it takes to form government, alone or in a coalition, or to take a first seat in the elected assembly.

- **Goals for the number of votes** – the number of votes that the party needs in different areas, groups and parts of the country to achieve its ultimate goal in the elections.

- **Objectives for policy areas** – the area(s) in which the party wants to achieve a win or a draw.

- **Goal for the party's image** – how important characteristics such as fitness to govern and how the electorate's perception of leading representatives of the party should develop.

- **Goal for spreading the party's messaging** – how the campaign organisation, its resources and channels are to develop and deliver, as well as how many actions it will carry out in different parts of the organisation and geographical areas.

Measurable and concrete goals create distinctive benchmarks to strive towards and measure oneself against during the various phases of the election campaign. Whether you are keeping up and whether what you are doing in the election campaign is working or not. An important part of the work will therefore be to create simple systems for measuring and following up on the election campaign.

CALCULATING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN'S VOTE GOAL

The vote goal is the number of votes the party needs to win the election, or the number of seats it aims to win. This is important for the planning, follow-up and control of the election campaign. The goal must be broken down and set for each constituency separately. Parties that have collected sufficient data can then break the goal down by electoral district, that is smaller areas that together make up a constituency, as well as specific goals for the number of votes in the priority target groups. How you calculate your vote goal depends on whether your country' electoral system is a proportional representation system (distribution of seats between parties in proportion to each party's share of votes) or majoritarian voting system in single-party constituencies. In general, however, the steps to follow are:

- Identify the number of seats in the constituency/constituencies. How many seats is the party competing for?

- Identify the number of eligible registered voters by checking the electoral roll for the constituency and its electoral districts. If this information is not readily available, then the turnout in previous elections for the area can also be checked.

- Estimate what the turnout is likely to be, that is, the percentage of registered voters who will actually vote. Both at an overall level and among your key groups. Base your estimation on an assessment of the turnout in the last three elections. You can also base it on reliable and recent opinion polls. Include your assessment of the prevailing mood/trend in the electorate – the degree of polarisation, dissatisfaction and momentum for change. Turnout also tends to be different for each type of administrative electoral level (municipality, region or nation), so it is not possible to make assumptions about an election based on a different level of government.

- Calculate how many votes are required to win a seat/mandate based on the estimated turnout. As described above, this will vary depending on the electoral system.

- The number of votes a campaign needs to win the number of seats you aim for is your vote goal. Compare this figure with previous results in the area and the party's position in current opinion polls: Do you have the support you need to achieve this goal? If the answer is no, how many voters do you need to persuade or mobilise to reach the goal?

- If you are able to conduct your own opinion polls, it might be a good idea to initially measure how many people could even think of voting for the party. This will give you an idea of the maximum opportunities/limitations of the campaign, and from this it will be possible to assess whether specific efforts need to be made to increase this level, generally speaking and among key groups in the elections.

The analysis of the vote goal then guides planning, staffing and resource utilisation. If, for example, door-to-door canvassing to mobilise supporters has a conversion rate of 15 door-knocks to get one person to go and vote, it means that you can estimate how many people you need to talk to in a certain area during a certain period of time. This means you can calculate the number of field organisers and election campaign workers who need to be involved in the party's field work in that area. ■
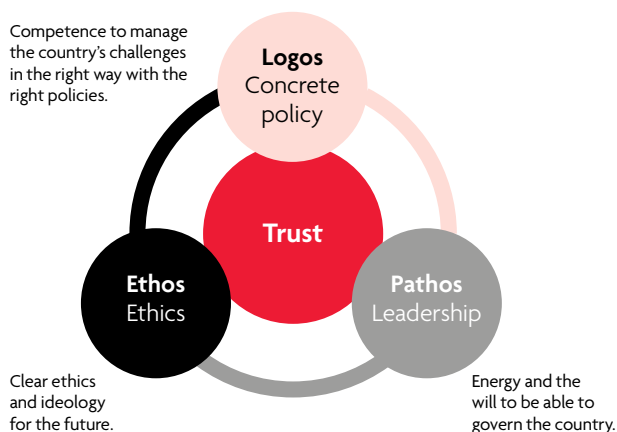
❷ ANALYSIS:
Overall analysis and strategic conclusions

This part highlights analysis and its strategic conclusions as tools for determining how the party should best prepare for going to the polls in order to achieve its vote goal. The overall analysis studies the electoral landscape, i.e. the political, social and economic conditions that together form the environment in which the elections are held. The goal of the analysis is to understand this landscape in order to determine the strategies, tactics and day-to-day activities of the election campaign. Important areas of focus are the state of public opinion and the current political agenda, the strengths and weaknesses of different parties, and what the elections should be about. What the main issue in contention will be and ought to be in the elections.

Fundamental to the analysis is that the voters vote with the future in mind. The party that most credibly presents the best solutions to the problems perceived by the most voters will win the election. In the simplest terms, the answer to what decides an election is the winning party's ability to:

- See people's problems and challenges.
- Propose concrete measures to help people in the areas they themselves see as the most important.
- Make clear the choices and differences in policy between parties – and in voters' vision of what kind of country their children should grow up, form their own families, and grow old in.
- Getting the right message to the right people efficiently and effectively.

However, each election campaign is unique and must be adapted to the conditions in circumstances in the country, region or municipality where the elections are being held. Besides winning the social debate by choosing the policy areas that are the most crucial for voters, and having the highest voter confidence in these areas, and conducting a strong and distinc tive election campaign, in politics *trust* is paramount. Not only must the voters feel that the party and its representatives are the most relevant and most capable of governing the country well, they should also be able to identify with the party and its leaders.

Competence to manage the country's challenges in the right way with the right policies.

Logos
Concrete policy

Trust

Ethos
Ethics

Pathos
Leadership

Clear ethics and ideology for the future.

Energy and the will to be able to govern the country.

The political situation – how you view the social debate and the main issue in contention

As we have already concluded, a party cannot position itself entirely without regard for the voters' priorities. It will then find it difficult to enter into the debate and at best the party will be perceived as inward-looking and with its back turned to the world – at worst as irrelevant and incompetent. The party needs to highlight the problems that the voters are concerned about and demonstrate clear ways to solve them. The party that presents the best solutions to the main problems that the voters themselves see as important will have the greatest chance of winning the social debate and thus the voters' votes. That is why it is important to know where the voters' greatest concerns lie and what they themselves think is wrong with society. Is it unemployment, health care or law and order? Or is it education, pensions, migration or the environment? The party should monitor this trend, and in particular the views of its own voter groups and the undecided voters that the party is trying to win over in the elections. What agenda will shape the election campaign? Do the voters have a clear picture of the political positions and policies of your party and the other political parties in these areas? Where is the main conflict line? What conclusions can be drawn from this? In this analysis, it is important to choose a distinctive main issue in contention that will be to the advantage of the party and its agenda.

The voters' views on the leadership qualities and fitness to govern of the parties also play a role in this analysis. What are the main characteristics and skills of political party leaders they value the most? How do the voters perceive the party and its representatives in comparison with the party's competitors? Do they perceive them as competent, capable of action and credible in being able to deal with the identified social problems? The character traits of the party contribute greatly how credible the party is in terms of its policy on concrete issues.

Change or status quo election?

One important factor affecting voters' attitudes to political parties and candidates is their view on whether society needs a change versus sticking with the status quo. How many voters think that things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction in the country? Here it is important whether the party is in government or in opposition, and what the momentum for change, that is the willingness to change policies and/or government, is in the electorate. It is normal that after a few years, the pendulum swings and the voters want to change the government and try out a new alternative. This is particularly the case if the parties in government are not perceived as delivering what they promised in terms of policy, do not see the same social challenges as the voters themselves, or have not been perceived at all as fit to govern. If the party is in government, it is therefore important to measure the

momentum for change on a regular basis, to renew itself, to maintain the initiative in social debate, and to deliver in terms of practical policy. The Swedish Social Democratic party, which has been in government for long periods of time, also has a particular policy communication angle on this: the party is constantly 'in opposition' in relation to social problems and injustices. Through this attitude, the Swedish Social Democratic party has to some extent managed to remain in opposition while also ruling.

If, on the other hand, the party is in opposition, strong momentum for change is a golden opportunity that can be used in the elections and built on to show that the government is not capable of leading and tackling society's challenges. However, there are also situations where the electorate instead is craving stability, order and security. In this situation, crises and disasters can instead reduce the momentum for change. At least in the short term.

This also has a direct impact on turnout and thus on the chances of the parties participating in the elections. The further the pendulum swings towards either side, change or the status quo, the higher the turnout can be expected to be. It is the strength of this feeling that tends to mobilise voters rather than whether that feeling is predisposed towards change or the status quo.
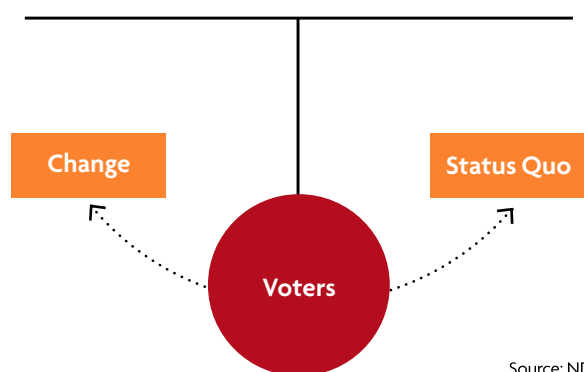
Source: NDI.

These conditions can change in each election and they can also have clear impacts on different groups of voters. For example, during times of change, young people and first-time voters may be more motivated to vote than they would be when it seems that an election is unlikely to lead to any major change. Similarly, women and men may feel different about voting. It is therefore important to analyse the voter engagement of the party's different key groups, taking into account how it might affect their participation in the election and their choices of parties and candidates.

Voter turnout

An important part of the analysis is to estimate the voter turnout. The difference between the number of people who are entitled to vote in elections and those who will actually do so ultimately has a major impact on political parties and their ability to win elections. In Sweden, voter turnout is usually around 80–90 per cent in national elections, while in the USA it is often around 50–60 per cent.

They can also be very clear differences in turn out between different voter groups and the priority groups of different political parties.

If the party has large groups of supporters or sympathisers who do not vote, it is easier to get them to go and vote because you do not first need to persuade them or change their perceptions of your party and its policies. This means that the party really needs to focus on getting these groups to vote.

To know who these potential voters are, parties need to calculate voter turnout and determine which groups of people are more likely not to vote. You can find this out by reviewing the statistics from previous elections and by looking at the turnout among different groups and in different areas in a number of elections over time. Besides official statistics, you can get statistics and information on trends in voter turnout from, for example, opinion polls, previous exit polls and your field workers' own communications with voters.

❸ TARGET GROUPS: Selection of priority groups of voters

Defining who the main groups of voters are that the party needs to win over is a key part of any election strategy. In the analysis phase, these groups influence how the party reasons in relation to the party being able to achieve its vote goal. It's also important to define who these groups are so that you can use your limited resources well and efficiently. As we have already talked about, a target group analysis has a number of steps. Firstly, it's a matter of understanding the whole group of voters, based on their interests and knowledge of political issues, as well as their personal values and political convictions. If we start from the in-depth reasoning that we did in chapter 2, we can simplify this considerably for an election campaign, defining the party's target groups based on three main categories:

Your Supporters	Persuadable or Undecided Voters	Your Opponents' Supporters
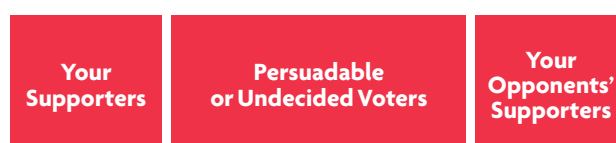
Supporters – people who sympathise with your party, talk about it positively, and who are likely to vote for you in elections. However, it is important to secure and mobilise all of this group – to vote, and to contribute to efforts to reach other voters during election campaigns.

Undecided voters – Voters who are not sure how they will vote, or which party they sympathise most with. A large and significant group of voters who are more or less persuadable but whose votes are more mobile and therefore can be lost at any time. This group of voters is often crucial to the outcome of the elections.

Opponents' supporters – Voters who sympathise with your competitors, talk positively about them and will probably vote for them in elections. Your electoral strategy should not take aim at this group, as it is very difficult to change their minds and therefore their votes.

Consequently, election campaigns have primarily two goals: identifying and persuading undecided voters and mobilising the party's supporters to go and vote. As we have seen before, the focus of an election campaign differs when attending to these two tasks depending on the phase of the election campaign. The initial focus is on identifying supporters and persuading undecided voters, and then in the final stage of the election campaign, the focus is on targeting all the party's sympathisers in order to mobilise them to go out and vote.

Researching voter groups

It is generally easier to get your own sympathisers to vote for the party (if they actually go to the polling station), and more complicated and time-consuming to persuade undecided voters. But ultimately, the party's own supporters are not enough to achieve the party's goals in the elections, and it is therefore essential to target the large group of undecided voters. There are groups within this group that are more sympathetic to your party, open and curious about your party, and it is therefore important to identify and define these voters more clearly by starting from election statistics, opinion polls and the party's own communications with voters before and during the election campaign. They may be swing voters who have a pattern of often switching parties at each election, voters who previously voted for your party but who are now more undecided, or voters who previously voted for your party's opponents but who are now more inclined to change their vote.

These voters are analysed and broken down according to their demographics, geographical locations, and politics so that they can be grouped into clearer target groups. What distinguishes them in terms of age, gender, education level and family constellation? Where do they stand on the key issues in the elections, and what do they think of your party? This information allows the party to make assumptions and predictions about how different voter segments will vote. For example, many young voters in their twenties may sympathise with your party, while you know that this is a group with a lower voter turnout. You should then use these two patterns, together with others, to estimate how many votes this could give to the party and design your strategy and communications accordingly. It may also be a matter of studying voters who are more inclined to change who they vote for, and who have previously voted for your opponents, in order to identify patterns in this group.

The goal is always to create clear profiles and segments. In part to get answers to where they can be reached/found, and in part to find out what concerns and motivates them. This is information that can then be compiled into communications guidelines for messages and conversation guidance sheets for field work, as well target group maps of the areas where these voters mainly live and the media that they can mainly be reached through. These groups can then also be reached more specifically via the party's microtargeting on social media.

❹ POLITICAL AGENDA: Choice of priority concrete issues, spokespersons and political moves

In this part, we look at the issues that the party is going to go to the elections with to meet the challenges in society, and how the party intends to work with these in light of the main issue in contention and the party's target group analyses. This is one of the most important aspects of an election strategy, since it is of great importance for how the party will be able to interact with the agenda of the social debate, reach its target groups and thus win popular support.

Increasing, amplifying, changing/improving or avoiding focus?

So what is the starting point? In what areas and on what issues does the party have the greatest confidence of the electorate and wins out against its opponents? On what issues are your opponents strongest, and therefore want the election to be primarily about? Until the election, a jockeying for position will take place between the parties. It is more difficult for a party to set the agenda on an issue when the voters have less confidence in that party on that issue. It is difficult to challenge the most trusted actor. Of course, it is also possible to strengthen the party's position on the issue, but it requires solid, carefully considered policy development and communication. It takes time and is perhaps not at all in the interests of the party, ideologically or politically.

The party should try to ensure that the issues that the voters and its target groups perceive as most important – those in which the party has the most credibility with the electorate – remain on the debate agenda, and further clarify the differences between it and its opponents, and thus strengthen its position on these issues. The party's political opponents have the opposite interest, and will try to get these issues off the agenda and talk about the issues that they 'own' instead.

In order to manage and influence the debate agenda, we generally talk about Increasing, amplifying, changing/improving and avoiding focus on different issues. In the first three cases, it is about continuing to highlight and talk about these issues, as well as building trust and clarifying with good proposals and political moves, as well as forcing your opponents to respond to and relate to them. Chan-

ging/Improving is also about critically examining and confronting your opponents in the area to demonstrate that your party actually has a better policy in these areas than your opponents.
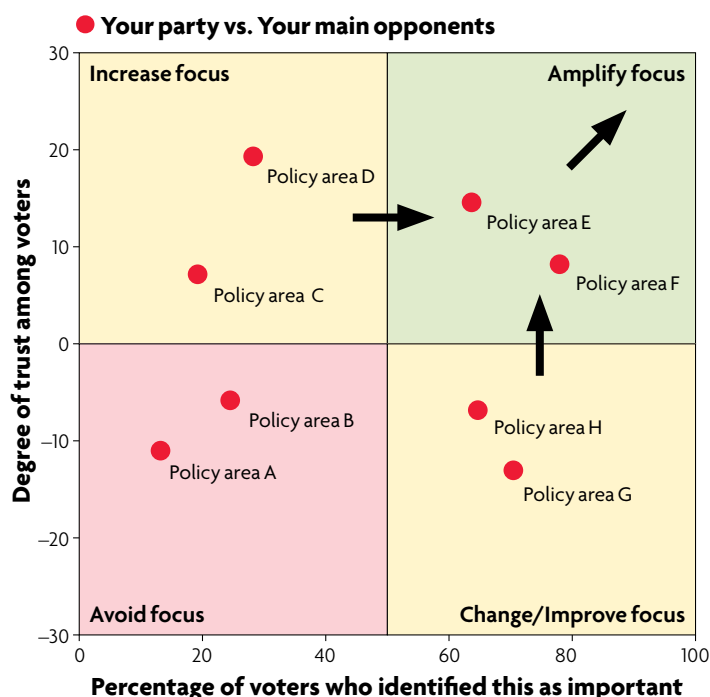
An overview of what voters think is important and their confidence in your party versus your main opponents in different areas.

However, there is a difference between large and small parties. A small and perhaps newer party must work harder to increase voter awareness and trust more generally as well as in different policy areas. This means that you need to prioritise more and become more well-known and first gain greater trust in one important area of policy. Larger parties that have a clearer influence during election campaigns – and with the ambition to be the most dominant and overall trustworthy parties – need to be strong and compete in more of the most important policy areas.

Prioritise among your issues, representatives and political moves

It's not just important to pick the right issues. The party's messaging and narrative must also be coherent. It is therefore important to prioritise among your priority issues. Elections are often very focused on one area of policy and a specific issue within it that is on the agenda and much debated. In order to win the election, you need to be particularly clear and strong concerning this issue.

It's also important to prioritise the number of political representatives and spokespersons for the party at the national, regional and local levels in the election campaign, and limiting these to a few 'electoral locomotives' who have high voter confidence in order for the party to achieve its goals. There is also a clear link between being well-known and having the trust of the electorate, although of course it is not the only factor that is important. There

may therefore be reason to further increase awareness and trust in the party's foremost leaders by focusing even more on them. These leaders have a very important role in how the party's character is perceived, and that contributes to the credibility of the party's policy on concrete issues. It is just as important to be perceived as at least as clear, competent, capable of action, and credible as your opponents as it is to maintain a head start on these concrete issues.

In the work of strengthening your position on concrete issues, and maintaining the focus of social debate on them, it is important to clearly show how the party intends to confront these challenges and solve the problems related to these issues in practical terms. A significant portion of the electoral campaign therefore consists of producing and presenting policies and making political moves that attract attention. Here, too, it is important to keep to your priorities, as well as to limit the number of political moves of this type that you make. A party that becomes a popcorn machine that spews out masses of political moves will easily come across as vague and unfocused. The voters will not get what the party's line is and what the party thinks is most important. Therefore, it is important to plan your political moves well and to stick to your plan, and that this planning is guided by the operational election campaign management. Here too, the work needs to be coordinated with the regional level of the party, which in turn coordinates the local branches.

Election manifesto

To make it clear what policy the party is taking to the elections, and what combined policies the party is taking to the election campaign, parties usually present an election manifesto. It is a policy platform for the election that can be described as the party's vision and plan for the country with concrete reforms to achieve it. It shows what electoral promises the voters should be able to evaluate your performance against if you win the elections. It is adopted democratically by the Party Executive, but it is also good if the local branch of the party adopts its own local electoral platform, based on the electoral strategy with local issues. This makes it easy for voters who want to learn more about the party's policies at different levels, and the members of the party who are actively engaged in the elections will have a tool that they can use in their more detailed conversations with the voters.

Exactly when this is made public is a tactical issue. It can be made public as a starting point for the election campaign, but it may also be useful to wait for a period of time into the election campaign, since there will then be more people talking about the elections and political issues and it will be easier to get attention for the policy platform. Today, it is more and more common for the reforms and policies contained in an election manifesto to be released issue by issue, thus generating maximum attention and maintaining the media's focus and the voters' attention through the election campaign.

❺ MESSAGING: From narrative to slogan

Once you have identified your main target groups, and know more about what and how to communicate with them, it is time to put the campaign's narrative and messaging into concrete terms. As we have seen previously, it is a challenge to reach voters and to be heard and understood. This is particularly true in election campaigns, where the messaging machinery of all parties is operating at maximum capacity. That is why it is important to clarify the choices made by the party and for the election through a meaningful narrative, clear and distinctive messaging, and an interesting and memorable slogan. Read more about how to work with narrative, messaging and communication in chapter 2.

Narrative

What is the narrative about your society that you want to take to the electorate and the voters? This question needs to be discussed in good time before the elections. It should be a narrative that captivates those who listen to it, that reflects the path taken by society to where we are today, what the problems and current choices are, what the party wants to do about these problems, and why the party's solutions are better than those of its opponents. This kind of narrative must be short, formulated in everyday language and capable of being used by those involved in the field work in their conversations with the voters.

Messaging

But most voters do not read the narrative or the party's policy platform. They encounter the party's representatives, follow the media's reporting and see the party's advertisements and posts on social media. Without effective and coordinating messaging, the party will come across as scattered and vague. The party's election messaging can be said to be a very brief depiction of the campaign's core arguments, which clarify the advantages of the party and its candidates compared to those of its opponents. It answers in a simple way the question of what your party thinks is most important and wants to do after the elections, and why you are better than the others. In short, why a person should vote for your party.

Good messaging is easy to understand, consistent, credible and the same, regardless of where it is used. The messages aim to persuade and mobilise voters, as well as to engage your own party organisation and its election campaign workers and sympathisers. All your communication and all your outreach activities during an election campaign should be shaped by and include your messaging. A campaign will only have a limited number of opportunities to communicate with each voter. If its messaging is repeated, then the chances are that the voters will ultimately understand what you want and then remember it. It is therefore important to stick to your messaging even when other parties or the media try to get you to change focus. The party that sticks to the message controls its own communications and what people are talking about, and thus what the voter hears, to a greater extent.

Slogan

A slogan is the short, distilled and catchy phrase that you use to frame your messaging and arguments in the election campaign. A promise that the voters can easily relate to and that they will remember long after the election is over. It is an effective way to clarify your party's position, to get your main message across, and to set yourself apart from the rest. There are plenty of examples of slogans in election campaigns that have been so effective that they have spread across the world. *Change we can believe in*, from Barack Obama's election campaign in 2008, is one such example. The ANC's slogan *A better life for all* is another.

How the party communicates

In an election campaign, messages and reforms must be supplied with images, advertisements and posts need to be published, and many policy texts need to be written and speeches need to be made. In order to strengthen the image of the party, it is also a good idea to think carefully about your choice of framing, illustrations and the language used in these communications – so that they support the party's messaging and help to reinforce important characteristics of your party in the eyes of the voters. It can therefore be useful to set goals for how you want the party to be perceived and to clarify which aspects of the image of the party need to be changed or strengthened, as well as the tonality to be used in your communications to achieve this. In addition to fundamental characteristics such as competence, capacity to act and fitness to govern, it might be, for example, that you want to avoid being perceived as 'part of the establishment' or as 'naïve' by the electorate.

❻ OPPONENTS: Choice of primary political opponents

In your party's choice of political agenda and the main issue in contention that you prioritise, as well as in the formulation of the messaging and communications for your election campaign work, it is important to clarify the policy choices that the voters are facing in the elections. You can do this most clearly by pointing out your political opponents in the elections. It is important here to make ideological and strategic choices. Ideological in that it is there that the big dividing lines will be found and this will characterise the election debate. Strategic because your party's choice of opponent will influence how the party and its messaging will be perceived, as well as how your opponents will be perceived.

Your choice of political opponents should assist the party in guiding the debate on the basis of the agenda and the dividing line established in its analysis and in its choice of strategic starting points for the elections. In this process, the party's main opponent will generally emerge more or less in parallel. But you should take things one step further and define your opponent's position and agenda clearly as this is what the party needs to be prepared for. You should also outline the main arguments that you would be best to use.

Here you can use a Message Box along the lines of what we described in chapter 2. The method is good when need to formulate why your policy is better than that of your main opponents. It is a way of finding the right words for you, but also a way of analysing how you will be attacked in the debate, and how you will counter the other parties rhetorically.

Your party's choice of opponents also affects your opponents and the political playing field during the elections. Besides choosing an opponent who makes the dividing line between you and your opponents clearer and engages people in the field, you also need to include it in the analysis of with who you are primarily competing for votes. In most cases, you should choose one main opponent and not several, and your opponent should be a party or coalition that matches your party in terms of its profile in the political landscape. For example, a larger party ought not to invest campaign resources in 'helping' less important parties into the spotlight.

In the election campaign, the pace is high and all parties are actively advocating for themselves and their policies. That is why it is a good idea to appoint a special group that actively monitors the campaigns and political moves of your main opponents and reports on these to the campaign leadership and the party's top candidates.

❼ ELECTION ORGANISATION: Management and organisations

The election strategy should also clarify how the party is going to be organised and led during an election campaign. In a relatively short period of time, the entire organisation will be converted into an electioneering and campaign organisation whose resources will be used as far as possible for outreach activities. The pace of an election campaign is high, and the activities of the media and the other parties involved in the elections also rev up. The whole election organisation needs to work as closely as possible together. This places special demands on the organisation, methods, and what should be prioritised and therefore on how the party should be led during election campaigns.

Type of leadership during election campaigns

A social democratic party can be described as two parallel types of organisation. We have the basic popular move-ment party organisation, and we also have a campaign organisation that has a separate hierarchical leadership structure. In day-to-day party activities, democratic leadership with a greater focus on meetings between people, learning and development processes are some of the key elements, whereas in the campaign organisation rapid decisions, efficiency and clarity are more important. The members and election campaign workers cannot get caught up in long internal meetings: they must be out and about meeting voters. But that said, it is also important to delegate tasks clearly in the campaign organisation so that it functions well and can grow. Clear leadership and an electoral strategy that identifies the political and organisational direction of the election campaign also help to make this possible.

The need for a coherent election campaign

The election strategy should be the whole party's strategy. This means that it is the basic strategy for all organisation levels and all parts of the party. It can be supplemented with a few topical regional and local issues that fit into the strategy's overall focus, and it can be adapted to include relevant angles on the strategy's concrete issues and messaging. But everyone has a responsibility to keep the communication coherent. If different levels and parts of the party begin to prioritise and communicate without taking into account the party's overarching common strategy, the party's profile and the party line will become vague and incoherent. One of the important tasks of the election campaign organisation is therefore assisting the party to conduct a coherent election campaign.

Differences in how election campaigns are organised between different types of parties

The organisational work of the election campaign lays the foundation for the party to be able to effectively reach out to the voters with the party's policies. Here, it is important to point out that every party organisation is unique and so too is the context in which it operates. Some parties have well-developed party organisations, excellent resources, many members and employed staff. Other parties are smaller and have fewer resources. It goes without saying that this will also impact the way in which the party organises itself for elections. In the first case, the party will need to reorganise an existing organisational structure; in the second case, the party will be more dependent on building up a campaign organisation from scratch and depend even more on voluntary election campaign workers and its own fundraising.

The way in which a party organises itself is also different between parties that are going to the polls as parties with lists of their candidates, and parties that are mainly going to the polls with their candidates in specific constituencies. In short, the election campaign organisation will be determined by your circumstances and the electoral

system within which you are operating. The review below is based mainly on the Swedish Social Democratic Party's election organisation and thus on the first category of parties outlined above. However, in the examples there are points of departure that can be used regardless of the type of party you have.

Management and division of responsibilities

The election campaign is ultimately governed by the *national political election campaign management* appointed by the Party Executive. In Sweden, this group usually consists of a handful of key individuals, such as the party chair, the party secretary, the group leader in the national parliament, the spokesperson on economic policy, and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) President, reflecting the party's traditional cooperation with the trade union movement. The election campaign is then run operationally by the *national operational election campaign management*, which managers the national election campaign organisation at the Party Executive Secretariat. This group consists of a handful of key individuals at the secretariat and is led by a national election campaign manager appointed by the Party Executive. This person is recruited more than a year before the election is due to take place.

This overall structure is similar at the other levels of the party. The regional and local election campaigns are managed by a smaller political campaign management, as well as an operational campaign management. At the regional level, these are appointed by the District Executive, and the Local Branch Executive, and are composed of the chairs and leading representatives (in practice the Executive Committee and leading representatives in elected assemblies) of the regional or local branch organisation.

At regional and local levels, special operational campaign managers can be appointed; otherwise the Chief Ombudsman in the party district and in the local branch take on that responsibility, and form operational election campaign managements which may include staff at the party's office. If there is no staff, particular individuals are appointed from among the members. Often the chair of a smaller local branch will act as the local campaign manager.

Organisational responsibilities

Different levels in the party organisation then have different responsibilities and roles in the election campaign. A summary can be seen in the adjacent facts in brief box. In short, these can be summarised by highlighting that the national election campaign organisation has a particularly important strategic and leadership role. There are functions at this level that do not exist at other levels, or are not as well developed. For example, those parts that work with the ongoing campaign follow-up, measuring public opinion and the impact of the party's messaging, monitoring opponents and their messaging, news production and the

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN ELECTIONS

The Swedish Social Democrats' division of organisational responsibilities in election campaigns is based on the basic party structure as follows:

National election campaign organisation
- Responsibility for and coordination of the national election campaign – keeping the election campaign together at the national level in terms of policy, communications, and organisation.
- Management and support to the party organisation through:
  - The national electoral strategy with policy action programs
  - National messaging and campaign platforms
  - Development, operation and maintenance of common tools and methods
  - National courses, tours with leading representatives of the party and major events
  - Planning support locally through templates, support materials and campaign manager training.

Regional election campaign organisation
- Responsible for the regional election campaign and its coordination – keeping the election campaign coherent at the regional level in terms of policy, communications, and organisation.
- Regional election campaign plan with regional policy action program – particular responsibility for elections to national and regional parliaments within the party district.
- Regional messaging and campaign platform – responsibility for regional communications and for contact with the party at the national level.
- Coordinating function of the entire labour movement (trade unions and affiliated organisations) and the local branch election campaign organisations within the party district.
- Training of representatives, election campaign managers, field organisers and election campaign workers in priority messages, methods and tools.
- Organise and support regional representatives through candidate support (tours, news production and political moves).
- Allocate national and regional politicians to tour in the party district.
- Organise activities and hold events in cooperation with the local branches.

Local election campaign organisation
- Responsible for the local election campaign and its coordination – keeping the election campaign coherent at the local level in terms of policy, communications, and organisation.
- Local election campaign plan with municipal policy action program – special responsibility for elections in the municipality.
- Responsible for the party's local communications and contacts with the party at the regional level.
- Coordinating function for the party's local associations and clubs, and for local cooperation with trade unions and the party's affiliated organisations.
- Principal responsibility for mobilising the party's members/volunteers and maximising contacts with voters in the party's field work.
- Organise and support local candidates.
- Train local representatives and election campaign workers in the use of priority methods and tools.
- Organise local activities and participate in visits by central and regional party representatives.

coordination of the party's political moves, the visual identity for the campaign and national ad templates, as well as training, support and templates for regional and local campaigning and field campaign work. In the Swedish party, the national election campaign organisation is usually divided into four units: Policy, Communication, Organisation and Strategy/Planning with managers responsible for each unit. This also reflects the basic organisation of the party secretariat.

The regional level is defined primarily by the fact that it is a coordinating, intermediate level between electioneering at the national and local levels. The local level is defined by this being where the members are. The local election campaign organisation has the main responsibility for mobilising the party's members and maximising contacts with voters in the party's field campaign work.

Key roles in the local election campaign organisation

In an election campaign, some members, elected representatives and employees have a particularly important role to play at the local branch level:

- **Election campaign manager:** Each level of the party needs to appoint its own election campaign manager. These have a special responsibility for the practical planning and implementation of the election campaign. In consultation with the political campaign management at each level, they take the steps necessary to make the election campaign a success. The local election campaign manager has a strategic operational role to manage the election campaign at the local level and to ensure that it is coherent in terms of policy and messaging with the decisions of the election campaign management.

The election campaign manager also has the organisational responsibility for running the election campaign and using the skills and resources of the local branch in the best possible way. This means being responsible for the planning and running of the election campaign together with elected representatives, the members, and volunteers. An election campaign manager needs to be a respected person in the party who can act quickly and effectively. An election campaign requires both the capacity to act, flexibility and the ability to quickly analyse changes in social debate and the electorate. As well as to encourage election campaign workers and create a positive atmosphere in the campaign work.

- **Communicators – candidates and spokespersons:** All elected representatives of the party have a responsibility for ensuring that the party's messages reach the voters during an election campaign, but a small group of representatives have a particularly important role in meeting with the voters and in the campaign organisa-

tion. They are the party's candidates and main political spokespersons at the local level. The local election campaign management has a responsibility to support these 'faces' of the party with documentation, tour plans, political moves to attract the mass media and the like. It is usual practice to have these candidates complete special training before the elections. As well as signing a candidate's declaration. This is an agreement to stick with the party's election campaign, that those who are candidates share the party's policies and fundamental values, and that they do not have a background that could harm the party.

- **Field campaign leaders** – field campaign managers and field organisers: The field organisers are responsible for planning and conducting the party's field work in a specific area with campaign volunteers. They participate in the recruitment, training and management of the election campaign workers. Either directly under the local election campaign manager or under a specifically appointed local field campaign manager. These people play a key role in the success of the local campaign.

- **Election campaign workers** – party members and volunteers: The strength of an election campaign lies in its ability to engage many. By activating your members and by recruiting new volunteers to be election campaign workers, the chances of achieving your campaigns goals will increase. Without these people, the party will not be able to conduct a local field campaign. The main responsibility for mobilising election campaign workers lies with the local election campaign organisation. This requires efforts to recruit, activate and train party members to do local field work. Appoint a volunteer coordinator, and develop a volunteer management system to recruit and activate election campaign workers, and remember that a specific part of the election campaign communications will aim to recruit election campaign workers and to encourage engagement in its field work.

- **Election campaign employees:** If there are sufficient resources to hire someone specifically to work with the election campaign, that person can be a very useful resource. To assist the campaign manager in various areas. This is an effective way of increasing the capacity of the election campaign organisation in the final run-up to the elections or during the preparatory phase of the election campaign.

The names given to these different roles differ considerably from party to party and between different types of election campaigns and electoral systems. There are also differences in the composition of field campaign teams and how they work. You can compare how different parties and election campaigns work to find the way that best suits your party.

ORGANISING A FIELD CAMPAIGN LOCALLY

In order to carry out a local field campaign, solid planning work is of great importance. It is about creating a common picture of the upcoming election campaign, being on the same page, and defining what needs to be done in a few fundamental steps:
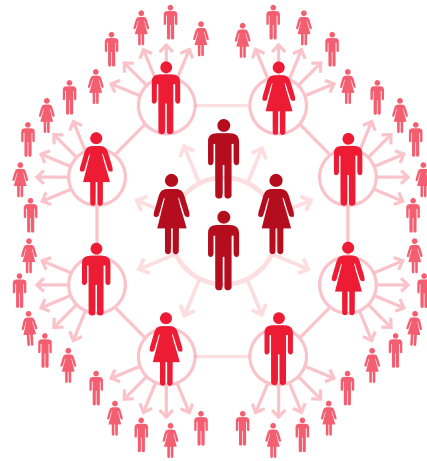
- **Planning** – Break down the strategy to apply at the local level; how many voters you need to engage with, find target groups, allocate responsibilities, and plan activities for the different phases of the election campaign.
- **Recruitment of field organisers** – Find committed party members who want to take on more responsibility in the campaign and lead field campaign workers.
- **Recruitment of field campaign workers** – Add in activities to recruit party members and volunteers who want to participate more actively in the election campaign. Create recruitment lists, call people and organise social media activities aimed at members and sympathisers, and organise mobilisation meetings for them to get started.
- **Training** – Plan basic training courses for field organisers and field campaign workers. The quantity and quality of their conversations with voters will depend on the training they have been given .
- **Activities** – Draw up a plan for your canvassing rounds, evenings where you call constituents and outreach meetings: when, where and by which team.

Field campaigning is a method that requires many hands and a flexible organisational structure that can grow as you conduct the election campaign. Traditionally, party field work has been based on a rather traditional model. The party guides the election campaign nationally, and there is a local established party organisation that has basic knowledge about the issues that the party views as important and which is called in to work for election campaigns. There is limited capacity to establish a field campaign organisation, as there are a certain number of 'organisers' with varying campaign experience and a fixed number of active members.

Distributed organising

What is called the snowflake model, also called grassroots organising, was devised by Marshall Ganz in the USA. It was the basis of how Barack Obama's field campaigns were organised in the 2008 and 2012 elections. The core of this scalable model is organising field campaign work in teams of activists and campaign volunteers. As illustrated below, the model gives them the opportunity to shape and take ownership of their own teams as field organisers. Leadership is delegated downwards in the local organisation. Instead of having an organisation model where a single leader communicates with everyone in the field campaign organisation, this is a model where the leaders are multiple, at more levels and connected in a network. In essence, it is no more complex than the usual party work in a popular movement party, where every local branch of the party organisation is self-organising with its own leaders and a degree of autonomy.

The model is based on there being a centre hub for the campaign, a campaign management. A group of representatives from different parts of the country, or different parts of the city if it is in a local branch, are then trained to become organ-

isers/field campaign managers. They each recruit and train a team of 3–6 field organisers who then recruit and train additional field organisers around them.

These new field organisers then form new teams which recruit election campaign workers and lead their own campaign efforts such as door-to-door canvassing, calling voters and carrying out campaign activities in their suburbs and neighbourhoods. Each team has a clear responsibility for a geographical area, and roles and duties are allocated regarding who will organise canvassing, calling voters, recruitment and goal follow-up in the team's area.

Millions
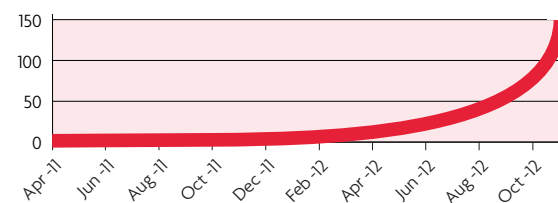
Door Knocks and Phone Calls by Day in the Obama's field campaign 2012.

This dynamic organisation model enables the field organisation to grow exponentially, as well as its results in terms of numbers of voter contacts. Generally, the curve of successful voter contacts will look like the adjacent figure, with a steep increase in capacity and results towards the final phase of the campaign and its massive final push and GOTV campaign.

Read more about the model, the importance of leadership and relationship development, the value of working in teams, and the five basic leadership exercises in Marshall Ganz's and the Leading Change Network publication "Organizing: People, Power, Change" on the Internet.

> " *Developing leadership requires structuring the work of the organization so it affords as many people as possible the opportunity to learn to lead.* "
>
> Marshall Ganz

Internal communications

In order to bring the organisation with you, get everyone to pull in the same direction and be able to systematically increase the energy and engagement in the election campaign organisation, you need a specific strategy and activity for the party's internal communications. The information is then adapted to the different phases of the election campaign.

There is virtually nothing that can sink an election campaign as effectively as a lack of internal communication. If things happen without those who are active in the election campaign being informed, and understanding why or how something has been done, their willingness to engage will drop off and their energy risks being directed towards the lack of information instead of outward to the voters and your party's opponents. It's important therefore that you establish functional channels for the flow of information internally well in advance of the start of the election campaign. The Swedish Social Democrats have a simple and secure intranet that acts as the national hub for internal election campaign information. There you can find all the templates and tools to be used in the election campaign work.

Election campaign cooperation with other organisations

If social democracy in your environment works closely with trade union organisations, it will be greatly beneficial to include them early in the election campaign planning process. What are they able to contribute? Should they be part of your election campaign, or should they run their own campaign? The unions could be responsible for the election campaign in workplaces. There, the party can offer support, their candidates for visits, etcetera. If there are trade union organisations that are close to the party, it is important that the party has a function or a person who can be responsible for the trade union cooperation with the party. In a similar way, the party can work with its own affiliated organisations or other groups and networks that have close ties to the party. The local election campaign organisation should have regular coordination meetings with them in order to avoid doubling up and doing the same things.

Resources of the election campaign and fundraising

In elections, the party or candidate who has the strongest support from the electorate wins. But to achieve this is a matter of how and to what extent people get involved in the campaign. The more people are involved, the more ambassadors the party has in the election campaign and the more support the party has the opportunity to win. As we have seen before, it is crucial to be able to engage and motivate supporters and sympathisers to speak for the party in their own environments, to share the party's posts on social media, to donate to the election campaign and to participate actively in the campaign where they live. This requires systematic work and a separate responsibility in the election campaign organisation – at all its levels. Return to chapter 3 and the description of how the party can work to engage people to participate in the party's work, and how to work strategically and systematically with the party's contacts by using a ladder of engagement.

For most parties, fundraising is also key and a necessary part of the electoral process in order to conduct successful election campaigns. In order to succeed, you need systematic work to be done to this end, a person appointed with specific responsibility for this at each level of the party, and the development of a fundraising plan. The customs, culture and legislation related to fundraising vary from country to country, so these kinds of activities need to be adapted accordingly. But aim to find creative and positive ways to raise funds and for people to donate money, and connect the fundraising clearly to the campaign's overall communication, messaging and initiatives. No email should be sent or contact made without it being accompanied by a clear and engaging call to action. And one such possible initiative should be that people can donate to the campaign. Today, the trend in many parties is that large sums are raised by more people giving smaller amounts of money. Grassroots fundraising also engenders ownership of the campaign for those who donate, as well as minimising the risks of receiving larger amounts from individual actors. Always be transparent about fundraising activities and maintain your integrity. Confidence built up over decades can evaporate in a moment if you put a foot wrong. Today, more and more countries have developed specific legislation on campaign funding and this is needed to keep elections free and fair.

❽ CAMPAIGN WORK: Priority channels and methods

Once you have decided who to speak to and what to say, the next step is to decide how best to reach the voters. Before deciding which channels and methods to use, there are a number of factors that should guide these choices. The party has limited resources and you need to assess how much different methods will cost in terms of time, money and people. Your choice of methods will also be affected by the number of voters you need to reach and thus how much work you need to do to identify, persuade and mobilise them: how large are your target groups in different areas and how can you reach them in practical terms? How many voters can you reach per instance? What impact do different methods have on voters? How can different methods work together and reinforce each other? What can you handle and cope with all in all?

Different methods are also more effective or less effective in achieving different goals during different phases of

the election campaign. It is therefore necessary to analyse what mix suits you best. The impact of these also depends on the local political and cultural context and the type of target group you are trying to reach. For example, your online presence on social media can be more effective in reaching younger people than older people. It is important to find out from where your target groups primarily get their information, where they generally congregate and where they communicate. Calculate the resource consumption versus your return on the investment, and use your good judgement to determine which methods will have the greatest impact where you operate and for those you are trying to reach. There are some general starting points for assessing the effectiveness of different methods, which, however, may vary from country to country:

- The greater the impact and deeper the impression a method makes on the voters, the more effective it is.

- The more personal the method is, the more persuasive it will be and the greater impact it will have.

- The more targeted the method, the better adapted it is and the more it targets the right people, the more effective it will be.

The better adapted the voter contact is to communicate directly with the target group, the more effective the communication will be in other words. Canvassing is therefore the method that tends to have the greatest individual effect, especially when it comes to getting party supporters to vote; partly because it is personal and can be carried directly with voters you have identified in your geographical target group analysis.

But that does not mean that the election campaign should only spend time doing this. Firstly because there are other methods that can more easily and more often reach far greater numbers of voters, and secondly because it is the combined mix of voter contacts that ultimately creates the voters' image of the party and its policies. People are persuaded when they often hear the same thing from many different sources, and from the right messengers. If they hear that you have a good policy from a respected influencer or friend, read a convincing article in the newspaper about your latest proposal and meet you at their front door when you are out and about electioneering, they will most likely remember you and your message and vote for you.

You simply need to have a bigger toolbox and work on several fronts to achieve the best total contact based on the resources and local circumstances of your party. And balance work and resource consumption with the effectiveness and results of the methods you use, as well as what phase the election campaign is in and what the primary goals are for the different phases.

The election campaign toolbox

There are a number of different channels and methods that you can use to reach out with your messaging in an election campaign, and in chapter 3 we went through some of the main types and how to work with them. It's a good idea to return to that part of this module for an update and then think about how they can be used specifically in an election campaign. In short, in an election campaign, these can be divided up as follows:

- **Earned media:** Reaching voters via the mass media (press, radio and TV) is one of the most key areas of activity in an election campaign. The goal is to contribute as far as possible to setting the agenda, getting the party's pictures of what the problem is and what the solutions are out in the media, as well as clarifying the differences in policy based on the party's common election strategy. This work is carried out both proactively and reactively at different levels within the party, and priority methods are intended to generate news, political moves, presentations of reports, press contacts with backgrounding conversations, the production of facts and arguments, crisis management and media support to leading representatives of the party. These activities also build the brand of the party's leading representatives and works in tandem with all other channels and methods. In particular the party's tour schedule for leading representatives and outreach events. Do not forget that the narrative about the party's own election campaign work frames the news and is in focus during the election campaign. It also has an impact on the image of the party.

- **Paid media:** One way to easily increase the party's exposure during an election campaign is to place advertisements and conduct other marketing activities. In newspapers, radio and TV, on social media and outdoor media. Advertisements in the local newspaper, and radio advertising, for example, are effective ways of reaching voters locally. Election posters and outdoor advertising are also a way of reaching voters with the party's message widely, generating awareness and recognition of the party's main messages, its leadership and showing voters that there will soon be elections. More and more people are spending more time on social media, which is often also their primary source of information. Advertising on Facebook or other social media is cheaper than in traditional media, as there are better opportunities to tailor advertising and to publish posts that target a particular audience.

Advertising, in particular on television, can work together with other methods by setting the tone of the campaign to a large extent with emotional arguments and messages. This will help the party reach more voters and a wider group of voters than those who are

already 'the converted' – those who are already convinced that you are the best party to lead. The party can reach out to larger groups of voters rapidly, and unlike in earned media, the messaging is also unfiltered. However, it is expensive and for it to have an effect, your advertising really needs to succeed in making some major impressions on the voters. There are many advertisers and your communication needs to be innovative and authentic in order to break through the media noise. In addition, in order not to shout down each other, creating confusion, it is best that your advertising is coordinated so that, for example, several parts of the organisation do not end up buying advertising with separate messages. The national election campaign organisation can develop a visual identity platform for the elections as well as simple templates for advertising, posters and digital sharing of images for the entire election campaign organisation.

- **Social media:** The importance of social media has increased dramatically and they represent huge opportunities for the party to reach out to voters with the messaging of the election campaign, build recognition and relationships, and increase engagement with and active participation in the party's own election campaign work. This particularly applies in the local context. Election campaign work entails regularly posting up-to-date content that is relevant and engaging for your target groups, and as well as creating images and short videos that can be shared on the party's various accounts on important social media platforms. Networks and communities of sympathisers should also be established and organised to campaign digitally together – by sharing messaging and participating actively and in a coordinated form in discussion threads in comments fields and in various groups.

  Social media is often an important channel for winning the debate about the main issue in contention. It is therefore wise to focus in particular on disseminating facts and arguments. Social media are also good for reaching new voters and fine-tuning their image of and relationship with the party. How you do this depends on the platform involved. Twitter, Instagram, or some other platform, with a different type of target group and user profile. In this context, it is therefore particularly important to clearly target your messaging and communications to different target groups, and to have a well thought-out strategy for each platform, depending on what you want to achieve and have the resources to cope with. Otherwise there is a risk that you will only be 'preaching to the converted' and not to any potential new voters. To get around this, you can use advertising, as well as actively participating in and linking to other types of groups and comments fields. This activity also works in tandem with the party's other marketing efforts, contributing to your overall coverage and impact as well as recognition of the party and its messaging. It can also contribute to other campaign activities such as canvassing where targeted advertising can be done in the areas where people are out talking directly to voters.

- **Your own media:** Parties' own channels include their websites, e-mailings, direct mail and campaign material (brochures, leaflets, flyers, banners, and the like). Through their own channels, parties have an opportunity to more fully adapt and bring their policies directly to different groups of voters and election campaign workers, without first being filtered by journalists and political commentators. They are also important for actually conducting the election campaign, and being able to adapt communications locally to target groups – easily and inexpensively. The party's intranet and specially developed apps for the party organisation and its candidates, election campaign managers and election campaign workers are excellent tools for coordination, providing more in-depth information, and increasing engagement with and participation in the campaign.

  The national website is the home of the party's broad-based online activities with up-to-date news and

in-depth information about the party's policies. It is also the hub and landing page for various campaign initiatives to get more people to register their interest in donating, campaigning or getting more information about the party's policies and activities via e-mail. A good way to follow up on voter contacts is also to systematically collect e-mail addresses in both offline and online campaign efforts. This is an inexpensive way to target different groups – you can use different mailing lists to target customised policy information during elections, as well as to call on sympathisers and interested people to participate in various election campaign activities. E-mail is an inexpensive means of communication that can be customised and can function in tandem with many different election campaign activities, both externally and internally. But remember to target your communication – do not spam the recipients.

If you have access to postal addresses, or have many very committed election campaign workers, you can distribute campaign material directly to selected voter groups. This could be a supplementary way of reaching many voters, as it works in tandem with other campaign efforts. In particular before and after canvassing in an area. Election campaign workers also need to carry material with them to their conversations on the doorstep as well as to party election campaign gatherings and events. The party should therefore produce basic leaflets and flyers. Here, too, the national election campaign organisation can reduce simple templates that can be used for local campaign material.

- **Your own events, tours and outreach meetings:** Being out and about, meeting people in person and holding outreach activities is a key part of every election campaign. The aim is to have a major impact on those who participate in these activities directly, the mass media and social media, and to mobilise the party organisation and its election campaign workers, and raise funds. Specific events in the very first days of the campaign and the very last days leading up to the elections can strengthen self-confidence and mobilise the campaign at key points in the election campaign process. This can work in tandem with other local campaign activities, such as before or after canvassing in an area, and be part of the party's field campaign. A good way to attract attention and to profile the party's leading candidates is to conduct tours with them. Many of the party's events and activities are also carried out in connection with these tours in the places they visit. All the gatherings of the party during the election campaign should have a clear election focus.

- **Field campaign:** An increasingly important and bigger part of many parties' election campaigns is their field campaigns. Field campaigns involved many of the party's members and sympathisers, and the local branch has the main responsibility for their implementation locally. Success depends on having an active, structured grassroots organisation with many recruited field organisers and election campaign workers and the training that they have received. During implementation, there should be ways to report back on the campaign team's performance up through the election campaign organisation. As we have seen, this is also one of the most effective campaign forms for getting voters to go out and vote for the party. Meeting people in real life and in person and discussing politics with them, explaining the party's issues and its stands on these issues, and conveying the party's messages and explaining its differences from other parties. The main aim is to identify sympathisers, persuade as many undecided voters as possible, and finally to mobilise your supporters to vote. You can actively and systematically seek out voters through:

- *Door-to-door canvassing:* Election campaign workers and candidates go from door to door to door to talk to targeted voters.
- *Phone campaigning:* Systematically phone up voters in the target group – often using call centre software.
- *Text campaigning:* Send text messages (SMS) to voters in the target group – often to remind them to vote in the final phase of the election campaign.

Each type of voter contact can achieve three things to varying degrees: persuading voters in the target group to vote for your party, identifying supporters, and finally getting them to go out to vote. These three factors determine the effectiveness of the various kinds of voter contacts and it is important that the campaign chooses methods which, when combined, perform all of these three tasks. In field campaign work, all these elements are clearly apparent and included, and this kind of campaign work follows the different phases of the election campaign aimed at achieving this. Read more in the adjacent facts in brief box about differences between identifying and persuading sympathisers (canvassing) and then mobilising supporters (GOTV) during the final lead-up to the elections.

When planning how to achieve your election goals and your vote goals, you should define which channels and methods to prioritise in your work to reach your target groups. For example, a first step could be to create a simple matrix listing the different channels and methods, then scoring each of these on a scale of 1-5 with regard to their financial cost, need for workers, timing and planning, the impact they have on voters, and their effectiveness. This will give you an initial general overview of these, and what choices you make in practice will then depend on your resources and the need to reach voters based on the vote goal you set for the campaign.

FIELD CAMPAIGN WORK AND THE PHASES OF AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Election campaign work is impacted by different focuses during the phases of the election campaign. This is particularly evident in its field campaign work. How different parties conduct their field work varies from country to country, and from party to party. It depends on the country's legislation, cultural factors concerning what is considered acceptable, and the party's resources and traditions. Below we focus on door-to-door campaigning to identify supporters, persuade undecided voters and getting your voters to register for the election. Steps that are central to the final phase of the election campaign, in which the party mobilises its supporters to go out to vote through a widespread mobilisation campaign (GOTV).

The campaign work is based on the party's vote goals and target group analysis with maps of the areas where the party's target groups live. You either make a distinction between areas where undecided voters need to be persuaded and areas where the party's supporters primarily need to be mobilised (this depends on the extent to which your different target groups are concentrated in the areas); or you apply the same approach to all areas. In the Swedish case, the Social Democratic Party makes a distinction between different types of areas. Their focus is on areas where the main need is to persuade undecided voters and then save those areas that clearly need mobilisation until the final days leading up to the elections.

Door-to-door canvassing: The party goes from door to door to identify supporters (and get them to register to vote in the elections if necessary), and to identify and persuade undecided voters that they should vote for the party. A key aspect of this method is collecting information about whether the voter is a supporter, an undecided voter, or a supporter of your opponents. Ideally the party will then return on a number of occasions to follow up on the contact in order to possibly persuade the undecided voters who the party assesses are persuadable.

A large part of this phase focuses on persuading undecided voters. As the election campaign nears its end, there will be a time when this work should instead focus on getting the people who support your party to actually go and vote. In order to do this, you must have identified those who support you. You must have spent time identifying your supporters. It is also important to know how you can reach them and how to reach them quickly when the time comes.

Get Out the Vote (GOTV): This is often seen as a separate phase in an election campaign. It should instead be seen as the phase that all the other phases and all the work done in the campaign builds to and results in. The work of identifying, persuading and registering supporters of the party to vote in the elections will all be wasted if your voters do not actually go out and vote. Although this is a simple goal in itself, it's a big undertaking to coordinate and implement the GOTV phase of the campaign and involves a lot of election campaign workers and intensive effort over a short period of time. It is therefore important to budget enough time, money and people and to have a realistic plan for this.

The GOTV campaign takes place immediately before and during days when voters can vote. During these days, the campaign devotes maximum resources to getting all its supporters to go and vote. In addition to door-to-door canvassing, you can call or send text messages to your supporters and use voting commitment cards, early vote events and special rallies. The focus of your communication is that every vote is needed as well as where, how and when you can vote – the practical details. In the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the election campaign shifts to pure mobilisation of voters during the last week of the election campaign and reaches its peak in an intensive 72-hour spurt just before election day.

You can conduct your GOTV campaign in many different ways, but the methods you can use differ on one important factor: whether the campaign knows who to contact or not. In areas where your party has a very high level of support, it is not as necessary to have identified supporters as there is a great likelihood that the people you meet actually are your supporters. And a simple initial question at the door can be whether the person supports your party. If they say no, you can simply move on. In other areas where support for your party is not as assured, it is important for you to have spent time identifying which voters will support you.

The extent to which the party can work on this and collect data on the voters in an area depends on the country's legislation. In Sweden, for example, it is not legal to collect this type of personal data, and so the party confines itself to visiting areas with many voters in the party's more undecided target groups in the canvassing phase. Then during the final phase of the election campaign, the party focuses on areas with many supporters but with lower voter turnout. On the other hand, general information is collected at the national level on how many people election campaign workers have spoken to and in which areas.

The phases of an election campaign

The most important resource in every election campaign is time and the commitment of many people. The aim should therefore be to prepare for the election campaign in good time to enable you to plan for the best possible use of every minute until election day. In order to benefit from synergies between the different levels and areas of activity of the election campaign organisation, it is important that all participants know what to focus on and to do at different points in time in the election campaign.

One way to plan an election campaign is to divide it into different phases that are common to the entire election campaign organisation and to break down the election campaign goals for each phase. From taking the first steps in appointing an election campaign management and developing and deciding on your campaign strategy, through developing the election campaign organisation with its preparations and training courses, to finally ending up in the most intensive phase during the weeks leading up to election day. The nature of the phases, in particular terms of timing, will vary of course from country to country and between different types of elections. But there are some fundamental steps that you can take into account in the planning of an election campaign.

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                                    Mobilise
                          Persuade
                 Position
        Organise
Prepare
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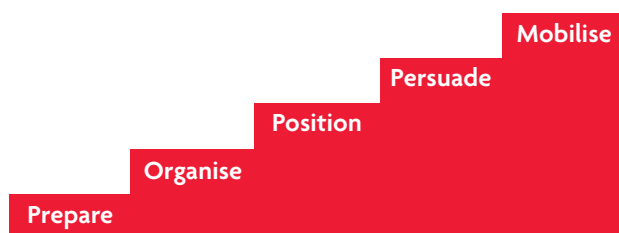
The different phases in an election campaign should clarify what the main focus is in each phase and can be constructed as a logical chain of events. The phases can also be defined according to which target groups are primarily in focus during each phase, i.e., internal target groups that are part of the election campaign organisation such as campaign managers and campaign workers, as well as external target groups of undecided voters and the party's supporters.

1 Prepare: This phase involves intensified work in analysing, deciding and planning the forthcoming election campaign. Since the previous elections, you will have been analysing the previous results and then formulating these in the party's interim and pre-election strategies. But it is at this point where you nail down what the party's policy and communications priorities are going to be in relation to target groups, concrete issues, the main issues in contention and messages to be used in the upcoming elections. This is done by deciding the party's election campaign strategy and by forming the national political election campaign

HOW TO CONDUCT AN EFFECTIVE MOBILISATION CONVERSATION

In chapter 3, we highlighted what you ought to think about when focusing on persuading a voter in your conversations with them. But what about when you are talking to someone with the aim of getting your supporters to go and vote? By the simple act of knocking on the door of voters you further reinforce your supporters' motivation to vote. Being motivated to vote has a lot to do with how included a person feels in the society. Individual voters often feel that their individual voice do not matter. They need to know that they are part of something larger and that their support is crucial. But you can make even more impact by structuring the conversation in the right way.

1 Tell the person that most people are going to vote: A common error is to tell people that voter turnout is likely to be low. On the contrary, you should highlight the obvious expectation that the person should vote like most other people are doing, how crucial the election is and that your opponents are mobilising too, and that much is at stake.

2 Boost the feeling of wanting to be an active member of society: Perceived expectations of how a person ought to act have a major impact on how a person ultimately acts. By emphasising people's good sides and what kind of people we really want to be, you can nudge people in the right direction – that is, to go and vote. "You seem like a socially engaged and aware person who thinks it's important to vote…"

3 Get them to make a promise to vote: Ask a direct question, such as "will you vote in these elections?" It is important that the voter feels that there is a clear expectation, and be sure to wait for the voter's response to this question. It is when you get a 'Yes' that you have together made that promise, but it must clearly come from the voter themself.

4 Make a practical plan together: Research shows that an effective stratagem for getting people to vote is to get them to make a mental plan for how they are going to do it. So it's a good idea to ask questions about where and when the voter is going to cast their vote. Follow this up with practical questions such as whether they know where their local polling station is, and ask them if they can bring along their family and friends of voting age.

Conversations with your own sympathisers are easier and will go faster than conversations where you first have to persuade the person of the merits of your party. And conversations with your sympathiser will also give your election campaign workers a boost of energy in the final lead-up to election day when they will also really need that to push through to the end.

management, which in turn proposes an operational election campaign management and national campaign manager, which are then ratified by the Party Executive. In this phase, decisions are also made on how the election campaign should be organised and on the priority channels and methods to be used, as well as a budget. It is at this point that the regional and local election campaign organisations start receiving their directives, which means that similar decisions and preparations start being made at these levels.

2 Organise: During this phase, the party organisation shifts into an election campaign organisation with an adjusted organisation where there is now a growing focus on preparing for the elections. The national election campaign organisation begins its work. Guidelines for how the election campaign will be run are clarified, goals are set and tools and documentation are produced for the entire election campaign organisation. There is now a major focus at the national level on training different parts of the election campaign organisation, such as regional and local election campaign managers and staff from around the country. This can be done by organising a national election campaign conference which reviews the election strategy and its guidelines and messaging, as well as the methods, tools and conversation guidance sheets to be used in the election campaign. The participants then take this with them and conduct their own regional and local training efforts. Local efforts to mobilise and crew the field campaign organisation then take off through an increased focus on recruiting, training and encouraging field organisers and election campaign workers. The organising work then continues throughout the election campaign, but it is during this phase that the foundations are laid.

3 Position: This phase focuses on creating clarity and the best foundations for shaping public opinion in terms of policy and communications, and on continuing the mobilisation of the election campaign organisation within the party. The party's positioning work will have been going on for a long time, but it is during this period that the priority issues, messaging and main issue in contention in the election strategy – what the party wants the election campaign to be about – emerge and get properly tested. The task at this point is to establish in the best possible way the issues and the version of reality that will give the party the best chance to win the vote among as many people as possible. Opponents are attacked and key political moves are being made, which then continue right up until election day. These efforts might also aim to start working on your target groups to make them change their attitude towards your party to in-

crease the group of voters who might consider voting for your party. They might also be about starting to win over those voters who tend to decide a long time before election day.

The external communication and the political moves made also have significance for clarifying the party's agenda and boosting engagement within the election campaign organisation, and among the party's sympathisers. The work of organising and building up the party's election campaign organisation then enters an even more active phase and a pre-election campaign can be carried out. Firstly to help achieve the party's goal of setting the agenda and testing the party's messaging and arguments, and secondly to test-drive the campaign organisation and get it to start shifting up another gear. Field campaign work can also be used actively to identify and capture undecided and hesitant voters so that the party can return to them later in the actual election campaign. The mobilisation of the election campaign organisation gears up and preparations enter their final phase.

4 Persuade: During this phase, the election campaign begins in earnest. The party and its members and candidates are mobilised for maximum outreach work. This phase can start with an inspiring election campaign kick-off, regional and local election campaign meetings and intensive internal communications in which leading party representatives participate. The main communicators of the election campaign are presented and go on a national tour. A full election campaign uses all channels and there is a substantial presence of the party leadership at each level, political moves aimed at attracting the attention of the media and setting the tone, a comprehensive advertising campaign including posters on billboards, gearing up of social media posts, and an active field campaign with door-to-door and phone canvassing. The goal is to reach out broadly with the party's messaging, to dominate social debate, and to get the biggest coverage of your target groups as possible. It is largely a matter of identifying and winning over undecided voters who often decide closer to election day.

5 Mobilise: The campaign to persuade ceases and the final days focus on securing a high voter turnout among the party's supporters. Particularly among those where turnout can be expected to be low. During the final run-up to the election, during the party's mobilisation campaign, the campaign organisation has to perform to the maximum. Work in the field campaign has switched focus to a fully GOTV campaign to get the party's supporters to go out and vote. This is when internal communication reaches its maximum heights

in terms of inspiring and encouraging the campaign workers. At the same time, it is full speed ahead on communication across all the party's external channels. During the final days, the election campaign is running at its hottest with election debates and intense media coverage. During this period, or just before, some of the party's key political moves for the election are made. The party's election campaign should continue write up until the polling stations have closed.

Planning the operations and activities of the election campaign

Finally, it is now time to plan which activities should be done when and by who. It is important to remember that you can often use different resources and different methods to achieve the same goals. Different campaigns use different combinations of voter contacts to reach the voters. Your planning is based on the goals set for the work of the election campaign and the messages you want to communicate to your target groups. The goals are set nationally – based on the party's resources and needs and to achieve the party's vote goal – in the party's voter contact plan. These goals are then broken down by channel/method and phase and assigned to the various parts of the election campaign organisation.

When you break down the national goals for the campaign, you create clarity in the election campaign work and increase your chances of being able to monitor and control the campaign. An important part of the campaign work is also being able to create simple systems for measuring and following up field work that are easy to comprehend. Basic key figures and data that can be aggregated and say something about how the election campaign organisation is delivering in relation to the goals set, such as the number of voter contacts. In particular in the campaign's field campaign work.

It is also at this stage that the election strategy shifts into becoming more of an election campaign plan, or in other words a communication plan for the party's campaign work in practice.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why does electioneering never take a break? In what ways should you systematically prepare for the next elections? Why is it also important to keep track of overall trends in the electorate?

- What is the purpose of the party's election strategy and election campaign planning? Who is responsible for it and who are affected by it?

- How should it be developed in order to be useful to the whole party? How does this work in our own party?

- What is the role played by the overarching goals set for the election campaign? Which areas are particularly important to target and how can you best do this?

- Why does breaking down vote goals play such a strategic and practical role in shaping the election strategy?

- The analysis of and strategic conclusions about the election strategy set the framework and direction for the party's election campaign: What basic areas does it need to address?

- An important focus is the state of public opinion, the political agenda and ultimately what the elections ought to be about. How can parties create the best possible conditions for being able to set the agenda in the elections on the basis of its own policies?

- What role does voter confidence play in the party's competence and capacity to govern the country? What important factors influence voter confidence in this area?

- The fundamental voter groups are the party's supporters, undecided voters, and supporters of the party's opponents. How would these groups normally be identified in our party?

- How is the undecided voter group broken down and defined further? Do we know who these voters are and how we can reach them?

- The election strategy clarifies the party's priority issues based on its overall strategic conclusions and the target group analysis: What is important for being able to reach out with our messaging about these? How should the party act in the political conversation?

- Why is it necessary to prioritise among issues, representatives and political moves? What is the role of the party's narrative, messaging and slogan?

- How important is the choice of the party's main political opponent? What should be considered when choosing them?

- The election strategy also clarifies how the party should be organised and managed during the election campaign. What guiding principles should you consider when developing the party's election campaign organisation? What kind of leadership is needed?

- How is our own party structured in election campaigns? Which parts of this are working well? What parts might need to be further developed?

- What is our local election campaign organisation like? Are we employing a systematic way of working to identify and activate people who want to participate?

- What impact does our choice of preferred channels and methods have in an election campaign? How can you assess the effectiveness of different methods?

- The mix of all voter contacts ultimately creates the voters' image of the party. What should be considered when combining different methods and tools to achieve your vote goal?

- What is the situation like in our own party? Which methods are working best here? What toolbox do we have?

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Notes

Notes

An introductory course in how to run and represent a party

In this module, we look at the strategies, methods and activities that political parties can employ to reach out and make contact with their communities. Successful communication and advocacy are fundamental for democratic parties to be able to change society. We go through what communication, advocacy and agenda setting can look like:

- Fundamental strategies and methods you can use to position and differentiate your party – creating its profile based on its ideological and political orientation, as well as its main target groups and opponents.

- Points of departure and methods for outreach, setting the agenda and advocacy. In particular, how to define and find your target groups and how to adapt your communications to these.

- How parties can reach their target groups in practice. The usual channels, methods and tools for communications and how they interact.

- Finally, how all these elements can become part of the party's election campaigns and what basic election planning and organisation looks like.

You can read more about the course and find all of its modules here:

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