

Social Change Movements: Key Success Factors

WAN studied other social change movements when developing our Strategic Advocacy course covering [Social Change and Social Change Movements](#). Indeed, we made this the subject of the first Module of our course because we believe that the Animal Protection (AP) movement can learn valuable lessons by studying other successful movements (and also social change theories and models). Now, as part of our “Movement Building” analysis, we have drawn out what we feel to be the most relevant **Key Success Factors** of these movements:

Mission & Purpose

- A common sense of mission and purpose (*to borrow the words from John Hoyt, former HSUS and WSPA President*): capable of uniting and engaging the entire movement (international, regional, national and grassroots).
- Moral force and values: a strong case based on justice and ethics, which can be easily transmitted.

Questions:

- Does the movement have a common mission and purpose? If not, how can one be achieved?
- Do we communicate a strong case on justice and ethics? If not, how can we improve messaging? To what degree does audience segmentation (speaking to key audiences in a relevant fashion) play a role in our communication? Should it play one?

Leadership

- Inspirational leaders or persuaders to engage people.
- Bravery and dedication: being prepared to take on challenges, whatever the cost.

Questions:

- Who are the movement’s leaders that connect with and engage the movement/public/target audiences?
- How can these voices be elevated?

Structure

- Structure appropriate for purpose: movement structures do not depend exclusively on political settings/structures – social and cultural structures/systems are also important, which may imply the need for regional, language or religious-based groupings. *Also, we need to remember that movement structure is an outcome of many trial and error processes in which more than national/international contexts come into play.*
- Democratic structures support identity: excessive professionalism and bureaucracy – and autocratic leadership - can detract from strong unity and identification with the movement and cause.

Questions:

- What are the appropriate structures, and how can they be developed or supported?

Cooperation and Collaboration

- Willingness to cooperate for the cause: the ability to put the cause before individual and organisational egos.

Questions:

- Is this currently happening?

Advocacy Strategies

- Political initiatives/lobbying: strategic advocacy needed, with targeted messages, to influence political power structures. Movement links to institutional opportunity structures.
- Effective and well-designed advocacy strategies (e.g. Wilberforce using [incremental changes](#), based on national interest/security measures, before finally achieving abolition of slavery; and [Gandhi's Salt March](#)).
- Involvement/negotiation with other interest groups: politicians, civil servants, industry, public, media, scientists/academics, other social change movements, etc.
- Mobilisation: mass campaigning to build momentum.
- Grassroots organisation: using/creating grassroots organisations to spread widely.
- Effective diffusion: spreading through targeted communications and motivation.
- Engagement/support of ordinary people.
[See Obama's [farewell speech](#) (7.10) "This is where I learned that change only happens when ordinary people get involved and they get engaged, and they come together to demand it."]

Questions:

- Which strategies does the movement already use well, and which are important to develop in the future?

Realism

- Not being tempted to be too radical/revolutionary as you need to reach the masses: the need for public engagement (see above) means making demands and messages broadly acceptable. Reform movements can build towards revolution, whereas revolutionary movements tend to stay niche (as with Martin Luther King and Malcolm X).
[Studies show that a radical front can help a movement, but it is the moral pull of a case which attracts wide public support which helps to move social change.]

Questions:

- Has the movement struck a balance between being realistic, but not being too soft or conservative?

Availability/Economics of Alternatives

- A practical vision for the direction of change, supported by concrete examples and economic arguments.
- Alternative models: need for alternative models (e.g. alternatives to animal experiments, vegetarian foods/meat substitutes/cell cultured meats, human circuses, more humane systems etc.) and economic arguments/modelling.

Questions:

- Is the movement dedicating appropriate resources to creating alternatives to the animal use paradigm and to presenting case studies and arguments based on economics, etc?

Initiating Event

- An initiating event: sometimes a book, such as Rachel Carsons' Silent Spring, or an action, such as the Rosa Parks bus protest.

Questions:

- Does the movement use coalescing events effectively? [For example, has the Canadian hearing of Anita Kranjc for providing water to thirsty pigs been utilized effectively?]
- How can the movement better create, or identify, and act on such coalescing events in the future?

Patience

- Patience (one of Gandhi's principles of non-violent action): having a long-term strategy and commitment, and not giving up too early.

Internationalisation

- Global coordination: taking advantage of new technologies and social media, and international political opportunities. Linkages between regional and international movements, with support from international organisations.
Contemporary movement building analyses point to the rise in transnational activism, with increasingly international actors and targets.
- Think global, act local: social movements exist in a larger political, societal and cultural context, and need to resonate in that context. This includes framing and vocabularies/messaging.

Questions:

- Is our movement creating strong national, regional, international linkages? If not, how can this be improved?
- Is our movement creating and communicating animal protection in a global context? How can it accomplish this?

Commentary

Looking at the key success factors we have identified above, we clearly have a lot of work to do for our movement to reach its potential of becoming the next great social change movement! WAN is committed to helping the movement to consider the steps we need to take reach this goal.

WAN Resources on Movement Building/Social Change

Top Tips: <http://worldanimal.net/our-programs/strategic-advocacy-course-new/module-1/top-tips>

Social Change Movements: <http://worldanimal.net/social-change/31-uncategorised/158-social-change-movements>

Frameworks for Social Change Movements: <http://worldanimal.net/social-change/31-uncategorised/159-frameworks-for-social-change-movements>

The Animal Welfare Movement: <http://worldanimal.net/social-change/31-uncategorised/160-the-animal-welfare-movement>

Further Resources: <http://worldanimal.net/social-change/31-uncategorised/161-further-resources>