

## Lobbyists Turn to 'Adhocracy'

BY MICHAEL J. KERRIGAN

In the global marketplace, there is a clear movement in corporate governance toward the democratization of information in place of the old command-and-control reign of management of information by a technical elite. There is also a convergence of advocacy and marketing skills in corporate campaigns for governmental contracts or policies.

Understanding how the age of networked intelligence drives these movements is critical to the future effectiveness of both advocacy and marketing.

Corporate clients now view advocacy as an information business with lobbyists as knowledge workers. The need for intelligence gathering is growing, while the marketplace itself is changing dramatically. Information technology is driving the smart lobbyists into the age of networked intelligence—and it has changed the way that lobbying and law firms compete, communicate, and view their business.

From the corporate client's viewpoint, information technology is fueling several systemic pressures in the marketplace: global competition, rapid technological change, political realignments, institutional re-engineering and transformation, and volatile effects on dollar, demographics, and governmental devolution.

Consequently, the allocation of control over the creation, distribution, and use of information is becoming increasingly important to business, bringing the politics of who controls information into the corporations itself.

And competitive intelligence now is seen as offering corporations a comparative advantage in the public and commercial marketplaces as evidenced by the development of corporate war rooms and other political tools.

Corporations are also responding to the age of networked intelligence by creating innovative management forms not unlike their computer networks, creating local, autonomous ventures electronically linked to headquarters. The vision is that these agile entities can better compete for market share against lumbering giants who react more slowly with every new costly acquisition.

### NEW MODEL

The systemic pressures brought to bear on the governmental marketplace by information technology also have changed the advocacy business. The profession has witnessed the birth of a new model of "adhocracy" as the modus operandi for just-in-time intergovernmental marketing campaigns.

Adhocracy refers to problem solving by imitating tactics commonly used in political campaigns, assembling just-in-time teams with multidisciplinary skills for as long as necessary to reach a successful result and, then, disbanding at victory time.

For lobbying advocacy, it is no longer advisable to organize corporate government relations in cumbersome, vertical functions around federal, state, and local departments. It is wiser to organize around horizontal intergovernmental campaign teams functioning in a borderless world.

Corporate advocacy programs orchestrated as a vertical alignment with the centralized government are as outdated today as the mainframe is to problem solving in much of the computing world. But creating a distributed, horizontal intergovernmental alignment of networked advocates—adhocracy—is quite effective for the age of networked intelligence.

For example, an adhocracy approach enables a local advocate to represent an international network in a local procurement or privatization business. The agility of adhocracy makes possible a timely custom response at the local level when delivering solutions to clients.

Defense contractors have been aware for years of the benefits of combining political and marketing teams to win federal contracts.

Whether motivated by the agility factor or not, other industries' corporate advocacy campaigns are also adopting an adhocracy model as reflected in widening coalitions, developing team alliances, and the introducing complex partnering.

Corporate campaigns increasingly are moving from traditional, defensive, cost-center-focused campaigns to offensive teaming in adhocracy-style campaigns. They are headed by sophisticated managers and have evolved from intuitive lone rangers to team-based, knowledge-focused collegial decision-making efforts.

Some recent examples of corporate adhocracy campaigns include The Business Round Table addressing education reform; telecommunications companies targeting public utility commissions for the long-distance carriers' penetration of local markets; and business plans for electricity deregulation campaigns targeting state utility commissions.

### SYNERGISM

Yet another effect of the age of networked intelligence on the business-advocacy dynamic is the convergence of corporate marketing and adhocracy campaigns in the intergovernmental economy.

Companies are adding marketing techniques to offensive just-in-time political teaming. Fully integrated corporate campaigns are using television, radio, cable, satellites, telephone banks, blast faxes, the Internet, congressional score cards, professional organizers, training schools, "watch-dog groups," and direct mail. Such well-organized examples of adhocracy have much to teach those who want to work the intergovernmental marketplace.

Proactive advocacy campaigns now play a large role in capturing intergovernmental markets. This is why one increasingly sees such actions as defense contractor Lockheed Martin hiring Michigan Gov. John Engler's top welfare expert.

Changing advocacy even further is the fact that the age of networked intelligence is also merging business and government issues. For example, health care, welfare, and educational reform models are also converging as block grants and decategorization are allowing states new flexibility in providing services.

The sorting out of coalitions is now occurring in interlinked industries. In the health care industry, managed care organizations, health maintenance organizations, preferred provider organizations, and insurance companies are driving new organizational forms.

And other business segments like telecommunications, utilities, education, and entertainment industries are also seeking out new partners. The telecom/entertainment industry is searching for content providers by distribution companies; cable/entertainment companies are actively seeking partners to provide online information, "edu-tainment," and other content.

The impact of the age of networked intelligence is far-reaching in impact on both lobbying advocacy and the businesses served by the profession. Lobbying, other advocacy services, and corporate marketing are rapidly converging in the marketplace. Responsiveness and flexibility are keys to competitiveness for both business marketers and their hired advocates in this age.

Both professions must continue to network their respective skills to prosper.

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