Motorcyclists Confederation of Canada
Confédération motocycliste du Canada

Pursuing a better riding experience for all.

Obtenir une meilleure expérience de conduite pour tous.

Utilizing Research to Support MCC Advocacy

OVERVIEW

The *Motorcyclists Confederation of Canada (MCC)* and its member organizations wish to undertake a more robust advocacy role, raising our profile and demonstrating a higher value proposition to on-road and off-road motorcycle riders across the country. While the MCC has a long history of supporting its members, its efforts have been primarily focused internally, to our motorcycling audience. Increasing advocacy requires that the MCC get our message out to external audiences.

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is the act of gaining public support for, or recommendation of, a particular cause or policy. Its primary objective is to have your cause understood, adopted or acted upon by those with influence to do so. In a public policy environment, the typical matrix of Advocacy Targets consists of:

- Government Officials (political and civil servant decision makers)
- Media
- Other Stakeholders
- The Public

A successful presentation to these audiences requires that you have four things in place: relationships, credibility, facts, and dedication.

RELATIONSHIPS

Each advocacy effort requires an understanding of the key influencers and decision makers. Asking a question as simple as, *"Who do we need to have a conversation with?"* is a good starting point. For many issues, the advocacy process begins and ends with government officials. Depending on the complexity, range of impact, and intended audience, some advocacy campaigns will include media, other stakeholders, or the public. The MCC and its member associations need to develop relationships with key government ministries and agencies, motorcycle and mainstream media, and other like-minded stakeholders who may share similar opinions and policy positions.

CREDIBILITY

To be successful as an advocate, the MCC and its member associations need to be taken seriously by the people it wishes to influence. This is not as ominous as it sounds. The MCC has a long organizational history. We have a professional website that communicates who we are and the work we do. We are an accountable, not-for-profit corporation, and we have a board representing all provinces and regions of Canada. Any cursory research into the MCC would establish our credibility in the eyes of external audiences. The struggle is often demonstrating organizational credibility beyond the first encounter by:

- Speaking professionally
- Following up
- Being reasonable and flexible
- Presenting win-win-win scenarios
- Using sound information and statistics
- Admitting mistakes (if any occur)

FACTS
Speaking with conviction and passion is important in any advocacy effort, but a solid foundation of facts is key to winning the day. If facts presented by an organization are questionable or not easily confirmed, an advocacy effort can quickly become derailed. Facts or data from reliable third party sources are often viewed more favorably than information solely from within an organization.

DEDICATION
Some organizations underestimate the amount of time, energy and financial resources required to begin and sustain an advocacy effort. Successful organizations build advocacy into their corporate culture, so it is only a matter of turning up the advocacy efforts when a particular issue is at stake. Setting realistic goals and assigning a proper budget helps ensure success and lessens disappointment if circumstances beyond your control cause delays or change the nature of the outcome being pursued.

INTEGRATING RESEARCH INTO ADVOCACY
The socio-economic study prepared by Smith-Gunther provides the MCC and its member associations with valuable third party data based on widely accepted research methodology. The report data can be used for many years as part of advocacy efforts at the national, provincial and local levels. In the fall of 2016, MCC board chair Dave Millier utilized data from the report to create briefing notes for introductory meetings with minister's staff at three separate federal departments.

The range of opportunity to use the report is extensive and might include some of the following:

- News releases
- Speeches or talking points
- Briefing notes
- Columns or letters to the editor
- Pamphlets or brochures
- Advertisements
- Letters
- Websites
- Social media

Each of these are tools in the advocacy toolbox that can be deployed to make your association’s case, depending on your audience.

BRIEFING NOTES

1. Get the meeting:

- We recommend that you begin your journey at the bureaucrat level. Arrange a meeting with a political staff member(s), and build their confidence in the MCC and in your association. This provides the bureaucrat with the opportunity to do pre-checks.
- Ask them how to best navigate the government channels with your objective being to make your presentation to an MP or MLA.
- When you do meet with an MLA or MP, the first thing that will be done after your meeting is to have their staff check into everything that was said at the meeting. So verify your facts, and identify anything that may be politically controversial.
- Remember, a politician only has one job and that is to get re-elected, so they will rarely do anything to jeopardise that.
- Nothing political is ever guaranteed! In many cases, it is brought to the forefront because of pressures from an external source.

2. The Presentation:

- Come prepared. You will be given 15 to 30 minutes to state your position and your request.
- Enter the meeting, introduce yourself and present your business card. Pay special attention to who else is in the room. Small talk can take place during this portion of the meeting.
- Be respectful of the meeting time. If they extend the meeting time by continuing to ask questions it is fine to continue. Set your watch to notify you when you are 5 minutes away from the time allotted. Acknowledge to your audience that your time is almost up so you can invite questions.
- Send all documentation ahead of the meeting so they have the opportunity to pre-read it. DO NOT bring handouts.
- Your presentation should focus on the most important points of the information that you provided. Present with the assumption that they have read it.
- Part of your presentation can include economic data provided in the MCC info-graphics package. Include the most relevant sheet or two (maximum) in your presentation.

3. What to include:

- The overall economic impact of motorcycling in your province is a very important figure. Combine accommodation, sales, parts, gasoline, etc. into a total. The other important figure is how much tax those sales generate. The third is how motorcycling benefits the region, so the charitable donation figure is great way to demonstrate that.
- The Economic Study portion of your presentation should be no longer than two minutes.
- Have the PowerPoint presentation ready to play and all electronics pre-tested. Nothing is more embarrassing than technical difficulties when you are on a timed clock.
- Your presentation should introduce the association that you represent, who you are, how long you have been involved with the MCC, and why they should care that we exist (about three minutes).

4. Your Ask:

- Be very clear, as your audience is likely sitting through their fifth presentation for that day, and they have extremely limited knowledge of what you do. Spend the majority of your time on this part so that your audience leaves with a good understanding of why you are presenting to them.
- DO NOT USE ACRONYMS. Acronyms are very often specific to your sport/industry. They will have no clue what you are speaking about. It is considered disrespectful to use industry-specific acronyms.
- Provide other pertinent info such as info-graphic information, and possibly mention an upcoming event.
- Provide your social media links and website URL in the presentation. Remember to allow enough time for it to be recorded by the viewers.
- Close the meeting with a summary of your ask.
- Allow time for questions.
- Thank them for their time.
- Find out whom you should follow up with and if they require additional information not provided in the presentation.
- Ask how long they expect to take to provide you with a response to your request.
- Make it clear that you are available to answer any questions.
- Send a thank you message after the meeting and follow up on the prescribed date.

5. Meeting follow-up:

- Wait until the time has elapsed. If they indicated they needed six weeks, do not contact them looking for an update until the six weeks has lapsed.
- Send a soft request by email after the time is up using wording like "when we met on [month/day] you indicated that you would be able to provide an update and/or answer within six weeks. That time has lapsed and we are wondering if you could provide us with an update on where this issue stands/our request.
- Most government offices have an "out of office" automatic reply, or a "no longer works here reply please contact ____", so you can assume that if you do not get an automated response your message was received.
- If you do not receive a response after three days try calling the contact for an update, leave a voice message, and document the time and day of all correspondence.
- You must be persistent, without becoming annoying. Someone will eventually respond.
- Do not mention their tardiness. It is best to just forget that you have been ignored.
- Once you get a response (positive or negative) request another in-person meeting to discuss next steps. This lets them know that you are not prepared to drop the issue/request until satisfactory resolution has been achieved, and that you are motivated to move forward with them as a partner.