

Proposed Coalition Strategies and Tactics

Summary

The Coalition faces the daunting task of trying to win support for an issue in which publishers are not sympathetic – continuing to charge fees for access to scientific journals. It's hard to fight an adversary that manages to be both elusive and in possession of a better message: Free information. There is no magical sound bite that will cure this issue, however, at the present time, there is little to no "pushback" from the publishing industry. To inject the industry's position into the debate, we recommend bypassing mass "consumer" audiences in favor of reaching a more elite group of decision makers employing strategies that emphasize "high-concept" rhetoric and in-the-trenches political-style communications.

Challenges

- There are no clear villains
 - Government is looking to give taxpayers free access to the research that they fund and publishers are trying to protect their business and the integrity of the research they publish.
- The free internet movement is strong and getting stronger
 - With the growing availability of free information on the Internet, the public feels that this is one more thing that should be accessible to all people at no charge.
- The public access issue is dry, bloodless, complex and, to most, uninteresting

Opportunities

- The publishing industry provides genuine value-added in its production of scientific journals
 - Publishers invest considerable resources through the peer review process to ensure that only the best articles are published in their journals.
- There is an epidemic of bad information on the internet and elite media know it
 - With the number of surveys and studies available on the Internet, it is difficult to separate genuine science from junk science. Peer reviewed journals are the only reliable source for sound science.

Strategies

- Supplement the Coalition's lobbying efforts with communications "air cover"
- Simplify the Coalition's arguments into easily digestible concepts (e.g., censorship)
- Mobilize a discretionary campaign-style team to inform key influentials about the risks associated with supporting the public access movement
- Communicate directly on some issues, but seek the support of third-party support on others (e.g., dangers of censorship, threats to free enterprise)

Target Audiences

- Members of Congress
- Targeted regulators
- Key media

- Think tank community
- The larger publishing community, librarians, researchers and scientists to reach more potential allies

Tactics

1. Form a Single-Issue Coalition

A coalition of concerned publishers must be formed as the industry's collective point-group on the public access issue. A spokesperson must be selected and media-trained and a clearinghouse for information must be established. A website should be strongly considered.

2. Rhetorical Campaign Points

- Develop simple messages (e.g., Public access equals government censorship; Scientific journals preserve the quality/pedigree of science; government seeking to nationalize science and be a publisher) for use by Coalition members
- Develop analogies that put the public access issue into a context whereby target audiences will understand its pitfalls and perilous implications not to mention the hypocrisy of science leaders getting salaries and honoraria but declaring the publishing industry's need for capital as being somehow immoral
 - Paint a picture of what the world would look like without peer reviewed articles.
 - In theory this may provide free taxpayer access to research that they fund, but they will pay eventually with substandard articles and their money being used to develop and maintain an electronic article depot rather than to fund new research.

3. Opposition Analysis

Inventory the Coalition's adversaries, their arguments and weaknesses prior to launching communications.

4. Enlist Think Tank Support

Seek studies, white papers and public commentary from think tanks that may quantify the risks, the societal price tag of public access. Groups that may be considered include the American Enterprise Institute, Brookings, Cato, Competitive Enterprise Institute and National Consumers League.

5. Media Briefings and Placement

Conduct a fresh round of media briefings with high-end editorial, health and science writers and reporters. Conduct op-ed article placement.

6. Targeted Advertising

To trade journals and Beltway publications (e.g., The Hill, Roll Call) emphasizing key rhetorical points.

Estimated Budget

\$300,000 - \$500,000 for a six month program.