Part 3

How to formulate enabling environment reforms

3.3
Advocacy Tool **6**

Section 3.3: Advocacy Tools

Communicating strategies

Purpose

This tool will assist EOs in the 'presentation' of their message'. Explaining its key benefits to the array of stakeholders that it needs to influence.

How to use this tool

This Assessment Tool is designed for use by EOs. It is best used as a guide for employers and enterprise development specialists who will facilitate the assessment process with the EO and among other actors.

Step 1:	Presenting a clear message
Step 2:	Using Information
Step 3:	Using the media


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Step 1: Presenting a clear message

Interest groups can be portrayed in a negative light, so positioning an issue in terms of the wider public good is therefore important. EO Policy proposals should, where they can, be advocated in terms of their total impact and wider economic benefits.

The EO needs to ask itself as it sets out on its advocacy campaign: what image does the proposal portray? If the public sees the EO as protecting a vested interest it will have little chance of success. The EO therefore needs to change the storyline. It could for instance shape its issue around a potential impact on a small business owner which would be more likely to garner wider sympathy the any impact on a large enterprise. The EO should explore wider linkages and try and connect the impact to the man or woman in the street, i.e. a tax increase will cause higher prices.

Demonstrating the knock-on effects of policy change can be extremely useful in appealing to a wider base of support. This helps in making the EO's efforts look less isolated than those of an 'interest group' that has targeted regulations that impose operating costs that directly interfere with business development and profits, even if that is what the EO is in fact doing.[1]

The EO should try to present its position in terms that ordinary people can empathize with. For example, if it has identified business registration as a key constraint on enterprise, it could be useful to describe the

1 The Development Communications Division of the World Bank identifies five steps for managers to consider in thinking about communications, Communicating Economic Reform: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTDEVCOMMENG/Resources/carnegie3.pdf

impact of current legislation on a micro entrepreneur.

Often ordinary people can be faced with the same constraints as business: harassment from officials, dissatisfaction with public services, bribery, corruption, and an unnecessary and overly-prescriptive bureaucracy. Getting public support for the business agenda is feasible. Surveys of the wider public on specific issues can be used to emphasize this point. Arguments can then be based on the effect of laws on ordinary people.

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Present a clear vision of the new reality the EO is proposing.
- ✓ Do not make public announcements without appropriate preparation.
- ✓ Agree with any partners before making public pronouncements.
- ✓ Put forward persuasive arguments and a clear view of the new situation.
- ✓ Engage in efforts to broaden marketing and understanding about the changes.
- ✓ Be as public as possible about the benefits of the new proposal and the problems caused by the current.
- ✓ Study, document, and research the problems of the existing system and present clear solutions.
- ✓ Counterbalance self-interested and legalistic reasoning with credible economic arguments.
- ✓ Link the proposal to policy priorities (unemployment, competitiveness).
- ✓ Communicate a clear vision of how the proposal will work.
- ✓ Exploit, construct and deploy comparative indicators.
- ✓ Use information from other countries to show that alternatives can work.
- ✓ Target the message to specific stakeholders.
- ✓ Enlist the aid of the media in getting the message out.
- ✓ Do not talk about the proposal in loose generalities.
- ✓ Present a clear vision of the proposals workability and practical application.

Step 2: Using Information

The EO needs to communicate information in a manner that is understandable to the groups it wants to influence. The aim should be for the information provided to enable people and organizations to make informed judgments. This may mean that information will be required in different formats in order to meet the needs of various audiences.

Its proposals should not lack relevant information. A lack of information can lead to the spread of misinformation about a proposal that can be damaging to the EO's reputation.

The EO needs to tailor its messages to other stakeholders. Communication from the EO is most effective if it addresses the incentives that drive specific interest groups as interest groups have different incentives for action.

EOs should generate and communicate factual and credible information about the costs of the status quo and the benefits of reform. The most effective and lowest-cost way to mobilize support is by generating and disseminating information.

Passive supporters can be energized by precise and credible information that explains the benefits of a new system and the rationale for change, while documenting the costs of the system, the benefits of change, and the experiences of other countries.

2.1 Deliver messages strategically

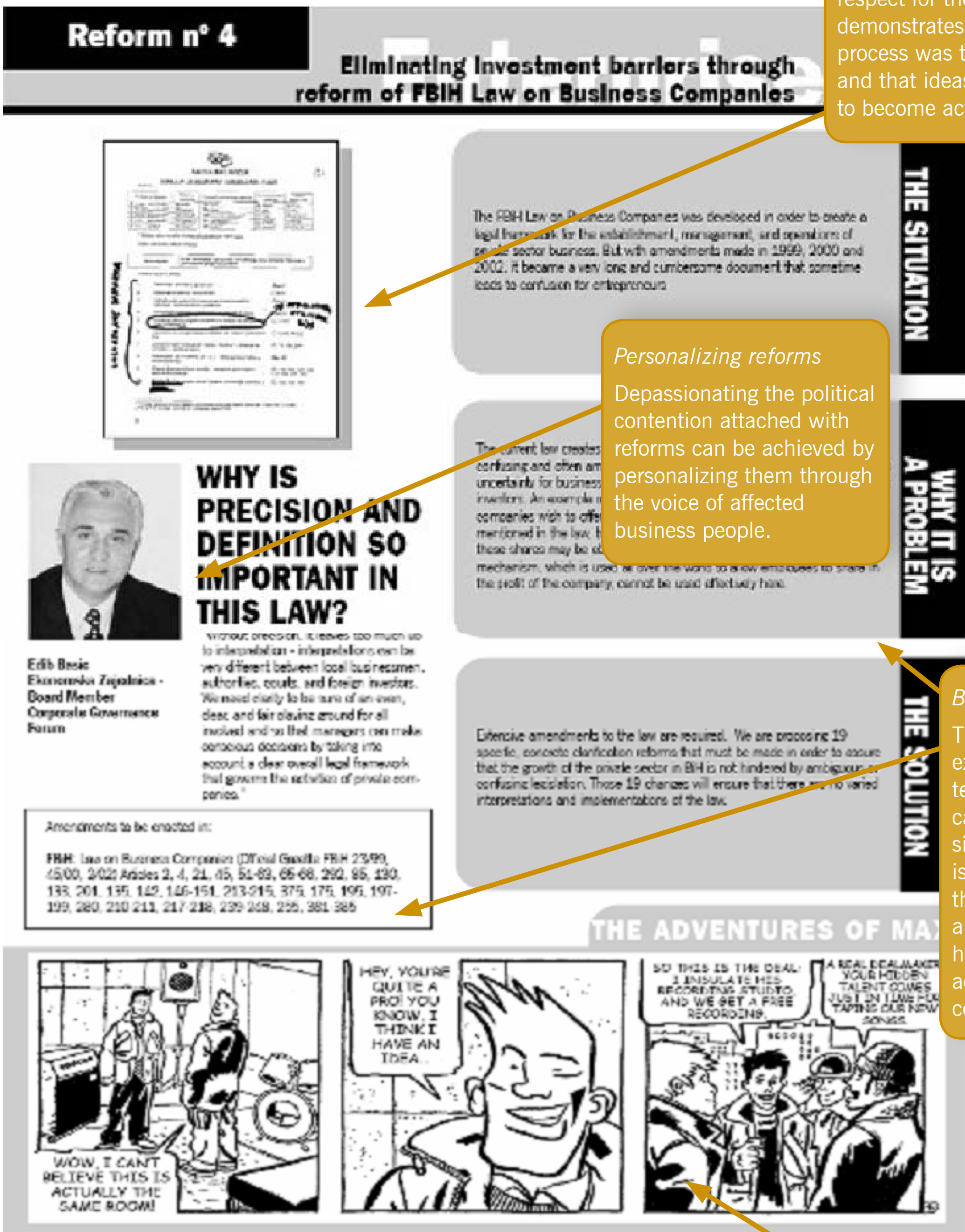
Credibility means that other people trust and value what you have to say. credibility is a prerequisite for advocacy. It is also something you need to consider when you are deciding how to deliver a message and who delivers it. Some things you can do to establish your credibility when delivering a message are:

1. *Know the facts.* Conducting analysis, learning from organizations that do have credibility, or initiating programming that helps you gain expertise are three ways to build up credibility.

2. *Choose the best messenger.* Just like your target audience is a person, so is the messenger. When delivering an advocacy message, you need to determine who will be the most credible source in the eyes of the target audience. Sometimes policy skills are important, but other times first-hand knowledge of the problem, technical expertise, or seniority within an organization matter even more. Also, it can be effective to have two messengers who complement each another, one knowledgeable about the subject matter and the other knowledgeable about the target audience.

There is no fixed and hard way to communicate your message. It needs to be adapted to national circumstances. But a variety of options exist. Overleaf is an imaginative example of communicating the need of changes in barriers to enterprises.

Communicating complex Reforms in simple ways[2]



Legitimizing proposals

Even though it is too small to read, including the original reform proposal first submitted in its original facsimile shows respect for the reader. It demonstrates implicitly that a process was thoroughly followed, and that ideas have the potential to become actual reforms.

Personalizing reforms

Depassionating the political contention attached with reforms can be achieved by personalizing them through the voice of affected business people.

Being clear and concrete

The core of the brochure explains in very simple terms the problems caused by the current situation, why the reform is a good idea, and what the specific action items are for the government. It helps make the authorities accountable vis-à-vis their constituencies.

Making it engaging

Even if everybody is concerned, not everybody likes politics or economics. An innovative device, such as this comic strip educating the reader on the difficulties that bad business environments create for entrepreneurs, can help engage the reader.

[2] International Finance Corporation: Public-Private Dialogue, 2009.

Step 3: Using the media

The media is a vital organ in delivering the EO's message. It needs to be nurtured and engaged with so as to deliver the EO's interpretation of an issue and raise its profile with the wider public.

The media is an essential player in the advocacy process. It is a vehicle to get the EO's issues into the public domain and policy discourse. Using the media can help the EO to reach multiple audiences. The media need stories of national relevance to fill its pages. The EO as a national policy actor has important information to help them in this role; while you need them, they also need you.

The principal benefits of using the media are:

- The ability to deliver the message to a large number of people;
- it may increase the EO's profile and credibility with policy-makers, and therefore improve your access to them.

Like any approach, use of the media also carries certain risks; for example:

- The possibility that the coverage of your organization or issue will be unfavourable or inaccurate;
- the possibility that media coverage will motivate opponents to increased activity on the issue.

There is a wide range of techniques to choose from. Which method you choose depends on the nature of your message, the audience you hope to reach, media that are accessible to you, and your own level of skill and experience in dealing with the media.

3.1 Planning the approach

In every country, the media is different. Some media are controlled by government, some outlets have wide distribution, others very are very small. In some countries, it is appropriate to work with newspapers; in others, you may want to work with TV or radio stations. Before deciding to use the media, it is important to consider how important the media is, and which media outlets are influential with policy-makers. You also need to consider the 'means'. Are newspapers widely read? Is radio still the most effective means?

Once you have decided to use the media, you should first ask:

- What is the main message?
- Who needs to receive it?
- Why should the media be interested in what you have to say? For example, are you using the media to publicize a position or opinion, or is there also an aspect of your story that is news?
- Do you have dramatic new information that would be of substantial public interest or, are you making a principled argument in order to contribute to public debate?

The answers to these questions will help determine which types of media you should target and which news organizations to contact.

Once you know what kind of media you want to target, you can start to focus on strategic considerations such as how to reach your target audience, whether the timing is right to contact the media, how to find media contacts, and how to avoid bad press coverage.

3.2 Making media connections

When choosing a media source, the first thing is to know something about the organization you are contacting: is the organization credible, reliable, and well-known? In particular, does the news organization usually cover stories similar to yours? Another key question is whether your target audience is likely to see, read or hear the coverage provided by that news organization.

A common way to obtain media coverage is to interest a reporter in your story. In some cases, you may already know a reporter (i.e., someone who has covered the EO or its partners in the past).

Like other relationships, it can take time to get to know journalists, editors, and others in the media. Consider meeting reporters in informal settings where you have time and space for a conversation. What reporters value most is good information.

3.3 Forms of communication

The following are some of the traditional forms of communication with media.

Press Advisories are communications designed to alert the media to an upcoming event. The main purpose of news advisory is to tell the journalist: who, what, where, when, and why. Advisories are issued before an event, usually several days ahead of time, to accommodate reporters' schedules. Ideally, a follow up call should be made to priority outlets the day beforehand, reminding them of the event.

Press Release is a written statement that alerts the press to a public announcement you are making, or an event. Whereas a news advisory goes out ahead of time, a news release is usually issued at the time of an event, or immediately afterward.

A news release should contain all the information a reporter might need to write an article, as well as contact information in case he or she has some follow-up questions. Frequently, a press release includes quotations that could be used as part of a story. Keep in mind that the press is likely to use your release immediately upon receiving it. Some rules of thumb for press releases include:

- Stick to the facts, avoid overstating the case. (news releases might be reprinted word for word.)
- Try to answer the basics: Who, what, when, where, why, and how?
- Make the case why your story is newsworthy (the first target audience for your release is the reporter, editor, or producer, not the public.)
- Keep it short (one page).

Interviews. Once you have attracted the media's attention, be prepared to receive it. As soon as you issue a news release or contact a media organization, someone should be ready to conduct an interview. A good way to prepare is to be ready for both questions you would like to be asked, as well as those you would like not to be asked.

An interview is not a test. If you are contacted by the media and you are not prepared to hold an interview, simply explain that no one is available to answer questions at that time; find out what the reporter is looking for, and arrange a time to call back. Many media outlets have deadlines every day. Ask the reporter when you need to get back to them, then honour their request.

A good way to get ready for a press interview is to prepare talking points. These are very short statements that summarize the main points that you hope to make during the interview. These points should contain the main message you hope to get across.

In addition, it is common to prepare written "questions and answers" that anticipate possible questions and then map out the best responses.

News Conferences. News conferences are events in which many members of the media are invited to come hear an important announcement. This is an appropriate format when you want to reach a range of different media, and when you have something truly newsworthy to report. However, reporters tend to see these events as contrived or “packaged” and will often prefer formats in which they can ask more questions individually. A news conference should not be called simply for the purpose of making your organization or message “seem important.”

The EO also needs to actively monitor the press for opportunities to ‘piggyback’ on other issues. For example if another organization has come out in favour of one of the EO’s key objectives the EO can capitalize on this situation. However, if an organization comes out against an EO’s objective, the EO then needs to decide whether it takes on the issue openly or seeks damage control. Taking on the issue could ‘fuel’ the position against the EO and aggravate the EO’s chances of future success. The latter silent approach could equally damage the EO as it could be seen to have ‘no answers’ to the position put forward by opponents, which then becomes the dominant and accepted one. Careful individual judgement in all cases is required.

3.4 Dealing with negative press coverage

Negative press is something that can happen whether or not you are engaging in advocacy. It is important to distinguish between media coverage that you disagree with, and coverage that portrays the EO, or its partners, unfairly. It is also critical to determine whether the story is true before you respond. The following are useful guidelines for dealing with a negative or hostile press:

- If the news agency has made an error, ask them to correct it. Sometimes, news agencies will run a correction or retract a statement if it is a mistake.
- If the negative coverage is true, don’t lie or try to cover up (this only makes for a better press story.) If necessary, issue a statement presenting your perspective and leave it at that.
- Don’t make a bad situation worse. Sometimes, it is better to let things “blow over” than to call more attention to the problem by complaining and possibly attracting more negative coverage.
- If the negative coverage seems to be the result of an individual reporter, avoid any future contact with that person.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A MEDIA STRATEGY

How to ensure you reach your your target audience	▪ Does the media organization you have chosen reach your target audience? ▪ Have you chosen a story or issue that will appeal to both your target audience and decision-makers in the media source you have targeted?
How to find the right media contacts	▪ Do you know someone who has covered your organization, or the issue, before? ▪ Can you identify a journalist with knowledge and a positive attitude toward the issue? ▪ Have you followed local outlets to see who is covering your issue and others like it?
Whether the timing is right for media coverage	▪ Does the story relate to other current or newsworthy issues? ▪ Does the story or issue offer something new?
Who within the organization should speak to the media	▪ A qualified spokesperson authorized to speak for the organization/coalition? ▪ Will a person be readily available to media when needed?
How to avoid negative or inaccurate coverage	▪ Do you have your facts straight? ▪ Before talking to the media, ask yourself, what is the worst thing that can happen, and how likely is it? ▪ How has this media outlet covered similar subjects in the past? ▪ Are they fair and accurate? ▪ Have they covered the EO before? ▪ Do we have a long-term relationship with the journalist? ▪ Will he or she let us see the story before it's published? ▪ Are you prepared to counter what our opponents might say about you? ▪ Will others support us ?

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY: CHECKLIST

✓ *Is the message the EO wants to communicate perfectly clear?*

Even if the EO is proposing a complex regulatory proposal – the message still needs to be conveyed in a way that makes it clear what the EO's goal is.

✓ *Is the EO's message consistent?*

The overall message must be the same. There can be no confusion that the EO's proposal could mean different things to different individuals or groups.

✓ *Is the message the EO wants to communicate targeted effectively?*

There may be different audiences to which the EO wants to emphasize different elements of its proposal. The general public will be more interested for example in the impact on transport services of the EO's proposal to break up the national public transport monopoly. Trade unions will want to need to hear about the impact on its members. Government will want to know about how services will be improved with lower costs.

The EO needs to determine, to the extent possible, the agendas shaping the policy process. It should align the purpose of its communication with the policy process and important agendas that affect the policy?

✓ *Have channels of communication been assessed and will the EO use primary or secondary communication channels?*

The EO may need to disseminate its message through different communication channels. Does it want to promote its message directly in the media? Perhaps it wants to use a secondary way; for example, by utilizing relationships with a wide range of influencers – policy makers, political figures, journalists, who could promote the issue.

✓ *Can the EO promote its position through op-eds?*

Opinion-editorial pieces in newspapers (op-eds) can be an especially valuable way of using the media to get a message across. EO staff can draft op-eds for senior business figures and place them in the local media. Op-eds have been found to be particularly useful where an argument has to be laid out in logical detail. Once it is published, it can be given a considerable and useful afterlife: circulated by e-mail, photocopied and handed out to journalists, and used to summarize arguments for a particular policy at a particular time. The op-ed is also an ideal instrument for engaging policy-makers and opinion-formers on specific issues.

✓ *Resources are targeted to ensure the message is heard by the most important audiences?*

Most EOs have limited financial and human resources. They need to assess the most important audiences and deploy their resources accordingly. The quantity of the organizations' coverage is less important than the quality.

✓ *The messenger is carefully chosen?*

Depending on the issue the EO needs to consider how the message is delivered. Should it be through a press release? A speech by a prominent member at a conference? An interview by the EO's Director General or other prominent member to the media? Care needs to be given that the 'messenger' does not have a public image or public position that will in any way dilute the message.

✓ *The EO has identified itself in the communication?*

The EO must accurately represent its role and expertise in the policy process. For a policy communication to be taken seriously, to have influence, and for it to influence in the right way, the communicator's role and status – the national representative organization of business – must be accurately epitomized.

✓ *The integrity of the message is ensured?*

The policy message MUST be grounded in empirically sound facts. The facts the EO presents cannot be open to question. The EO also has to adopt a tone in the communication appropriate to the situation and document type.

✓ *The issue has strong resonance throughout the business community?*

In preparing its position the EO needs to ensure that the position is capable of receiving wide support from throughout the business community. It would be disastrous if certain sectors or even large enterprises were to come out against the EO's proposal.

✓ *Launch of position is well-timed*

Policy processes often have several phases and multiple policy processes can be underway simultaneously and timing matters as agendas can change quickly. Therefore, specifying a communication's purpose and relevance makes it more likely to get timely attention.

Is the policy the EO is seeking to influence public knowledge? If it is not, and the EO makes this public before official announcements, this can result in a government digging its heels in. Conversely, having that information first and getting it into the public domain before the government can prepare itself can also work to the EO's advantage. The EO needs to judge the situation for itself.