

Advocacy Campaigns: The Power of Effective Legal Communication

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ABSTRACT

Advocacy campaigns are increasingly vital in shaping public opinion, influencing policy, and promoting social justice. Within this dynamic landscape, legal professionals play a crucial role in advancing causes through effective communication. This paper examines how legal advocacy, particularly through social and digital platforms, can be optimized to reach diverse audiences, foster coalitions, and shape legislative outcomes. Legal communication, as both an art and a strategy, involves more than mere transmission of facts; it requires understanding the audience, crafting persuasive messages, and choosing appropriate channels to mobilize support. By analyzing case studies, communication strategies, coalition-building practices, and ethical considerations, the paper demonstrates how legal advocates can responsibly and powerfully engage in public discourse. It emphasizes the need for a shift from traditional court-bound narratives to more inclusive, multimodal approaches that bridge the gap between law and society. Ultimately, this study presents a comprehensive framework for enhancing advocacy through effective legal communication, aiming to democratize access to justice and inspire systemic change.

Keywords: Legal advocacy, legal communication, social justice, digital platforms, audience engagement, coalition-building, public policy.

INTRODUCTION

It is common for attorneys to engage with governmental and administrative agencies regarding pending matters, often advocating effectively by aligning their positions with public sentiment. Social media serves as a platform for expressing these voices on public issues, enabling lawyers to address the longstanding question: "How do you reason with the reasonable?" Through social media, attorneys can advocate for clients or broader social causes that individuals or small groups may not efficiently represent. Calls to action allow less powerful individuals to voice concerns and advocate for their interests. As non-attorneys utilize social media to communicate with governing or electoral bodies, lawyers are likely doing the same. Text messages and Tweets have not completely replaced traditional communication methods, indicating that some advocates still use those channels. Lawyers working with marginalized communities can rally around public advocacy platforms to share knowledge about social issues, amplifying their voices. These outlets provide a way for critical masses to advocate for shared interests or grievances, promoting social justice and better access for the less fortunate. The law acts not just as an entity for judges or attorneys but as a means of social oversight and a public benefit, requiring collective societal responsibility. As communication barriers have been reduced, lawyers now face the challenge of effectively utilizing these platforms for advocacy. For attorneys, embracing social media as an advocacy tool poses unique difficulties, such as potential embarrassment or conflicts with clients' interests. As traditional media declines, advocacy groups are increasingly leveraging social media for consistent, cost-effective message dissemination. Faculty members can aid advocacy groups, especially those focused on underserved communities, to navigate the complexities of social media's growth. Historically, outreach has relied on methods like political pamphleting and door-to-door campaigns. Currently, while attention prevails, authenticity in outreach is often lacking. Nevertheless, 'speaking truth to power' may only be part of the equation; well-crafted messages encouraging 'voting with feet' and resource reallocation are also essential [1, 2].

The Role of Legal Communication

Effective legal communication, the delivery of messages attuned to the audience and medium, enables societal leaders to properly advocate for causes or interests associated with their work. Law is a deeply communicative social practice, often perceived as a vessel for ideas but experienced as a complex and unequally accessible communication system. The embodied and material aspects of legal venues, documents, practices, and instruments matter deeply for how law operates, is negotiated, and understood. This communication channel can begin as early as the writing of laws and contracts, and with proper timing and user feedback, legal communication can influence societal concerns. Knowing when to speak, pause, raise tone or inflection, or otherwise interpretively act is essential to effective action in the concern of social justice. Each legal communication delivery medium (written, visual, oral, spatial, social, and multimodal) comes with differing features, audiences, and purposes. In and of themselves, law and its technologies are often unjust and are used to perpetuate inequity. Effective legal communication can come from individual lawyers, mass communication tools, and communication practices intended to flatten previously hierarchical constituent access to formal law. Knowing that laws leaving the handedness of decision-makers may not be just or accessible, lawyers can become advocates, activating the audience and medium effectively and ethically. However, legal communication would not be effective if situated in a far-removed courtroom office in stone, nor with static and unreadable scrolls of parchment. Would-be advocates, or even those already advocating, could utilize a wider range of communication tools in and beyond the law rather than being relegated to the binary of “taking them through channels” or “calling the media,” with the means of advocacy often deceptively tied to the spotlighted social issue advocated [3, 4].

Understanding Your Audience

Effective advocates and counselors excel at communicating with their audiences in ways that are designed to produce the desired outcomes they seek. This is true regardless of whether the audience comprises one individual or a more substantial group, whether they are gathered together in a courthouse, a corporate boardroom, or another setting, or whether they come from educational backgrounds that are highly knowledgeable or less informed. The differences in their upbringing, whether they are well-bred individuals or display crass characteristics, are secondary to an essential consideration: what impression does the audience wish to receive or cultivate? What specific words, compelling arguments, evocative images, and subtle gestures can you utilize to create a favorable impression? In addition to the way one communicates, another significant aspect of advocacy and counseling that is influenced by the audience is the need for restraint during interactions. For instance, one can engage in a lecture directed at a class of youths for an entire hour and possibly maintain their attention throughout the session. Conversely, a powerful piece of advocacy may lose its impact and the strength of its message when delivered in a debate setting among trained minds and experienced logicians. The conclusion is clear: the audience is, by far, the most critical factor influencing the effectiveness of communication, and possessing a deep understanding of the audience is the foundational first step toward achieving successful and impactful advocacy [5, 6].

Crafting Your Message

The first three chapters of this talk focus on the profession of law and policies most conducive to effective advocacy, counseling, and negotiation. This chapter turns to the substance of advocacy—the logic, content, and rhetoric of argument. There are three themes: First, the lawyer must appreciate the special role of advocacy in the legal system; it resembles that of a team captain rather than that of an arbitrator. Second, the lawyer must focus the student's attention and either one of two degrees—medium or narrow on the latter's strong point. The burden of proof then shifts to the latter. Each point must be an argument as well as a fact or an agreed-upon proposition. Each argument must either be supported by reason or rebutted as unreasonable. Writers often loudly protest this well. The legitimate roles of advocacy, counseling, and negotiation in the legal system resemble those of a team captain in organized and cooperative sport. Counsel must have clients participate and cooperate. They represent them, explain their positions, advise them on how to play the game, and, thus, on strategy and tactics. They must help each client orient and operate within the rules of the game. This is the quiet role of the counselor. The more public role of a team captain is advocacy. They are selected because they are the team's best players and use their talent to win. Thus, they stand before the referee, without armor or disguise, and deliver their case in uncompromising terms. The captain tries to find the opponents' weak point, attack, exploit, and provoke any error. They hold a leap of faith in teammates. There is no whisper, no indecision, and nothing out of the ordinary. Captain, along with the right team and trust, can win it with all the brilliance and sense of it. But it can bring about a public and personal humiliating defeat. The opposing captain must take an equal leap into oblivion, betting that the opponent can make no sense out of the captain's

public presentation. The job description is similar in law, but it is generally a mix of team player and team captain. When the game is on, the counselor must have clients participate and cooperate. Counselors are their clients' team players, explaining their clients' positions, advising them how to play the game, and, thus, on strategy and tactics [7, 8].

Channels of Communication

The traditional approach in a legal context is to email a memo or a request for an attorney-to-attorney conversation, neutrally calling for a meeting. Applying some strategies from competitive campaign contact from the political arena can have a significantly broader impact in these conversations. There should be a brief intro that clearly states one's ask or rival position, the reason why this request is important, and why now is the time for action. The temptation is to roll out a backstory and lay out all the reasons. Trust that the "ask" is understandable and direct. And remember the other side and its needs. Most people think of their own "invite" research, understanding, and priorities first and foremost. Generally speaking, when asking for something open-ended, limit the time frame to one or two weeks. This way, the interest can land and really be considered, win or lose. Give the attorney time to think through what is being asked and how they want to respond. People don't like to feel pressured to answer on the spot, but they also like the feeling that they have been allowed to weigh in on something and that the opportunity is time-limited. Next steps for follow-up calls, wishes, and so forth should be offered. This will make it feel less like simply asking for something and more like an honest conversation. Scripts for these meetings need to remain flexible. The goal is to create a dialogue, hear from the attorney, and get them invested. Inquiries should be tiered, so once the most delicate and probing ones have been parsed out, the backup questions can follow if it gets too wobbly and off-topic. Advocacy efforts that take advantage of digital platforms must attend to the unintended consequences of that power. That said, the legal workplace struggles to take advantage of this power. An agenda for leveraging the full potential of digital advocacy in this context must acknowledge and respond to the barriers that lawyers face in connecting with everyday people. Taking up the challenge to reconceptualize the relationship between law and social movements can contribute to reshaping and redesigning the practice of law in innovative ways [9, 10].

Building a Coalition

Coalitions formed in response to advocacy opportunities galvanize support, pool resources, target messaging, and enhance mobilization. Before the 2017-2018 9th Circuit *Korematsu v. United States* litigation, coalitions emerged, particularly after September, for litigation against the "no-fly list" for Muslims and Arab-Americans. Organizations came together to develop strategies for litigation, evidence-gathering, community education, and actions outside the courts. Many lessons from coalition-building and advocacy apply to responses against government racial profiling. Research is needed on how institutions allocate resources for coalition development. The Tea Party groups proactively built coalitions for district-level challenges in health care, while unions responded with media-focused coalitions addressing ethical concerns. Before launching the "Stop Repeating History" amicus strategy, there was a comprehensive analysis and discussion on engaging a broad set of coalitions, establishing accepted goals, a timeline, and effective leadership across organizations. Concerns included message framing, barriers to engagement, and leadership selection. Subgroups promoted coalition-building, outreach to supportive lawyers and litigants to unify efforts. Racial minority bar associations were recognized as potential leaders due to historical connections. Planning included developing materials and a timeline for phased engagement. This resulted in a resource-rich coalition of dedicated lawyers, inspiring broader involvement. The coalition integrated local minority bar groups to boost visibility and foster beneficial engagements, providing essential historical context. Involvement in the project enhanced knowledge and commitment among like-minded lawyers, leveraging resources and creating a dedicated community for future advocacy. Other organizations also engaged meaningfully, establishing a foundation for ongoing coalition efforts against future challenges [11, 12].

Case Studies of Successful Campaigns

Advocacy campaigns are important marketing tools to persuade the public toward an idea. They can be single advertisements or ongoing marketing plans. Advocacy campaigns involve using a variety of media, including television, radio broadcasts, and magazine ads. Nonprofit organizations or organizations that attempt to change the law usually use advocacy campaigns. Advocacy campaigns effectively involve the public or target audience to influence the masses and impact future decisions, show commitment, and serve as an alert mechanism. Advocacy campaigns capture the attention of the public, raise advocacy issues, and persuade individuals. While advocacy issues vary, significant campaign themes include peace, social action, public health, children's issues, women's rights, and civil rights. Advocacy campaigns can also be used to encourage vigilance in response to exogenous or endogenous threats and disadvantages.

The debate regarding the need for an advocacy campaign should be underscored, and appreciation and gratitude regarding the systems and people supporting the status quo must be expressed. Advocacy campaigns are either one-shot advertisements or a series of advertisements with a common thematic family. Advocacy campaigns to exert social control are important but require constant vigilance and encouragement. The nature of the campaign and the expected outcomes differ. Past success can provide a sense of assurance or arrogance regarding the future. The case of war in the United States shows how vastly divergent considerations are not experienced uniformly and highlights marker values and time dimensions as analyses not previously utilized in explaining advocacy campaigns. Advocacy campaigns are used more often in a marketing setting. They can be for-profit or non-profit, dealing with various issues even outside a marketing or advertising context. Advocacy campaigns can also take the form of participation in sporting events for those with mobility impairment and setting aside a day of commemoration, as happened in South Africa regarding the past. Advocacy campaigns can be used to influence public opinion regarding political candidates [13, 14].

Measuring Campaign Effectiveness

Campaigns seeking to change public opinion or contribute to public debate are, however, difficult to evaluate. For instance, advocacy may consist of speaking but also (and often) practicing actions. It may occur openly through media debates or behind closed doors in private negotiations. Such informal settings are difficult to access, and little evidence can be established about the actions taken and their direct development vis-à-vis the changes registered. This also means that advocacy efforts cannot be planned straightforwardly: meanings are negotiated, coalition is very often sought quickly in reaction to opportunities and threats, and advocacy must be ready to act upon changing contexts. This ever-receding horizon of details includes a vast grey area of well-known uncertainties about the evaluation of advocacy effectiveness. Some levels of understanding have been achieved through recent general explorations. Advocacy interpretation is subjective and multi-faceted. Each advocacy coalition has its own internal and shared definitions of how it sees advocacy being effective. This is similar to measurements, which are (in part) socially constructed and necessarily depend on negotiated rational opportunities to study advocacy effectiveness. It has been indicated that advocacy effectiveness is produced, negotiated, or contested in an interaction space during a pre-determined period, and that this is more than just the negotiation of meaning, has implications for the quality and accuracy of the evaluation. A social constructionist notion of effectiveness as a process that takes place in such a space legitimizes the approach used and invites a review of the further specification of this space [15, 16].

Ethical Considerations in Advocacy

Effective public and legal advocacy demands attention to both internal and external processes, particularly outside the courts. While legal advocates commonly focus on written communication forms like briefs and affidavits, public advocacy strategies for cause lawyers lack substantial discourse. Broad suggestions to improve advocacy exist, but they fall short compared to the extensive literature on legal competency and communication within courts. A distinct "legal public advocacy" genre is necessary, involving any formal or informal communication related to the law. This genre encompasses legal writing intended for public consumption but extends beyond mere written material or speeches. Traditional legal communication's focus on formal documentation seldom addresses the new public advocacy genre's potential. A deeper understanding of the communication efforts by cause lawyers and legislators is crucial for addressing their ethical responsibility in public advocacy. Professionals in this sphere, including journalists and lobbyists, illustrate successful practices within the genre. Landmark public advocacy cases highlight the genre's scope, revealing that simply employing message strategists or assessing effectiveness through polling is insufficient. Effective framing mechanisms underpin successful public advocacy, anchoring issues and viewpoints in the public and legislative consciousness. Without grasping their practical application, meaningful public advocacy efforts cannot be undertaken [17, 18].

Challenges in Legal Communication

Legal communication involves both attorneys and laypersons, influenced by their respective characteristics. Two main dysfunctions affect lay communication: linguistic and cognitive. Lay individuals may struggle with legal English, stemming from socioeconomic or demographic factors, and those who speak non-standard English dialects often lack advocacy skills. This disconnect is amplified in regions with diverse dialects linked to racial or ethnic groups. Cognitive dysfunctions also hinder legal comprehension, including neuro-developmental disabilities and hearing impairments, complicating assessments for attorneys. Therefore, persistent communication dysfunctions undermine effective legal communication, irrespective of lawyers' skills. The legal field acknowledges that traditional legal representation may not adequately assist laypersons, who struggle to articulate or recognize their rights.

Legal nuance tends to be lost when lay individuals leave a lawyer's office, impacting understanding, especially in adversarial contexts like criminal or civil cases. The legal system requires active engagement from citizens, yet accessible legal communication services are lacking, akin to the proliferation of call centers [19, 20].

Future Trends in Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy campaigns play a crucial role in promoting dignity and justice within the legal system. Participants range from affected individuals to lawyers and activist groups, with efforts that can be local or global. Lawyers are essential in these campaigns, leveraging their expertise while amplifying the voices of those impacted. Collective advocacy strengthens issues by coordinating multiple stakeholders, focusing on localized solutions while showcasing the wider implications. Advocacy tools are evolving, with some past methods losing relevance while new strategies gain traction, reflecting ongoing changes in technology and the legal landscape. A major challenge for lawyers in advocacy campaigns is bridging the communication gap. Their knowledge of legal barriers is invaluable, yet it can obscure the real human impact of issues. Effective activism requires more than legal expertise; it needs to resonate on a human level, especially during crises. Individuals often connect emotionally with issues, but accessing legal solutions poses difficulties, particularly when the law is used against them. When lawyers engage personally, they risk appearing either overly mechanical or straying into non-legal territories. As advocacy shifts towards public-facing legal roles, the ability to navigate this gap becomes crucial. Increasing numbers of lawyers are stepping up as public advocates, fostering a collaborative approach through networks focused on public advocacy. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, online engagement has become more significant in advocacy strategies. Skepticism around digital communication has diminished, and the shift from in-person to online interactions has sparked new forms of advocacy. The uptick in social media engagement has revitalized discussions that had previously been stalled. Moving forward, online strategies will remain central, even as a return to in-person advocacy is integrated, potentially enhancing campaigns that have thrived in the digital sphere [21, 22].

CONCLUSION

Effective legal communication stands at the heart of impactful advocacy campaigns. As legal professionals increasingly engage with the public beyond courtrooms, their ability to craft compelling narratives, choose the right mediums, and build strategic coalitions becomes essential. Whether advocating for marginalized communities, shaping public discourse, or influencing policy, lawyers must understand their audience and utilize both traditional and digital tools ethically and strategically. This shift requires embracing the broader social functions of the law and moving beyond the confines of formal legal systems. By doing so, legal advocates can amplify underrepresented voices, drive meaningful reform, and fulfill their role not only as legal technicians but as champions of justice. In an age of information and activism, the law's power is no longer measured solely by statutes and verdicts but by its resonance with the public and its capacity to catalyze collective action.

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