

Issue-Driving



What is an issue?

- A very **specific** question of policy or public debate.
- Something that will make the **news** or get **attention**.
- It should **matter**.
- Different from '**themes**'
 - A theme is a **more** general area of policy or debate
 - The news covers issues, not themes
 - For example:
 - Corruption is a theme, Nkandla is an issue.
 - HIV / AIDS is a theme, access to antiretroviral drugs is an issue.

Why do issues matter?

- The **public** does not (always) **engage** with politics on an **academic level**, but **rather** on a **grass-roots level**.
- They identify **issues** that **matter** to them in their **daily lives**.
- To **connect** with voters and supporters we must **talk about things that matter** to them.
 - For example, talking about corruption in general is good, but talking about how students at a specific university are being denied bursaries because of corrupt officials is more effective.
- By talking about issues the **ActionSA** can **show** not only **that we care**, but that we **can make a difference** if we can solve problems within specific issues.

Issues in Campaigning

- The best way to **build** a **political brand** is to **identify** an **issue** that **reflects** that **brand** and then to **own the issue**.
- The aim is to **build** an **intrinsic association** between the **issue** and the **brand**.
 - When you think of the issue in question, you must immediately think of the party driving it.
- **Issues** can be used to **win votes** in campaigns if voters believe that you are the party or person that cares the most about the issue in question.
 - For example, #FeesMustFall

Identifying an Issue

- The most difficult part of driving issues is often identifying the right one.
 - Is it **reactive** or **proactive**?
 - Does it **represent** or **reflect our brand** – is it strategic?
 - Do we have a **clear position** – FOR or AGAINST, YES or NO!
 - **Newsworthiness** – will it get attention?
 - Voter **impact** – do people care?
 - **Exclusivity** – can we own it?
 - Does it create a **wedge** or **conflict** – this helps to get attention.
 - Must have a **lifespan** with **multiple angles** – one hit wonders not ideal

Driving an Issue

- Issues need to be **driven** over **time through** multiple **actions** to give it 'legs'.
- Driving an issue therefore requires a **solid plan** and **timeline**.
 1. **Identify** issue
 2. **Develop** subject **knowledge** to become credible
 3. **Craft** a clear **position**
 4. **Identify** potential **action steps**
 5. **Implement** you plan and **do not relent**.

Action Steps

- **Issues** are **driven through actions**.
- It is vital to use a **multipronged approach** using many actions, including:
 - Events and photo opportunities
 - Media briefings and statements
 - Speeches
 - Letters and op-eds
 - Social media
 - Direct marketing campaigns

Winning the War

- The key to driving an issue is to **communicate on message, in volume, over time.**
 - 1. Create the story.**
 - 2. Be first** – if you are first, it is easier to own the narrative.
 - 3. Generate conflict** by differentiating.
 - 4. Be creative** and original – interesting angles grab headlines
 - 5. Own the space**