

# PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND THE ART OF INFLUENCE: Making bold decisions in collaborative environments





# Introductions

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## Dave McCullough

Managing Director · Riverside Communications

- 1 MD of Riverside Communications since 2012
- 2 Have been in consultancy for 16+ years
- 3 Background in Westminster and European Parliament
- 4 Worked for a political party on the 2005 General Election
- 5 Work with private companies and member organisations including CIEEM, RES, ICAS, NFU and IATA.



**Experience across Westminster, European Parliament, consultancies and member organisations.**

# Agenda & Overview

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- 1

Research, messaging, strategy and tactics toolkit

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- 2

Hybrid public affairs

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- 3

Persuasion principles

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- 4

Listening and engagement

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- 5

Media engagement

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- 6

The role of public affairs consultancies

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- 7

Ethical issues

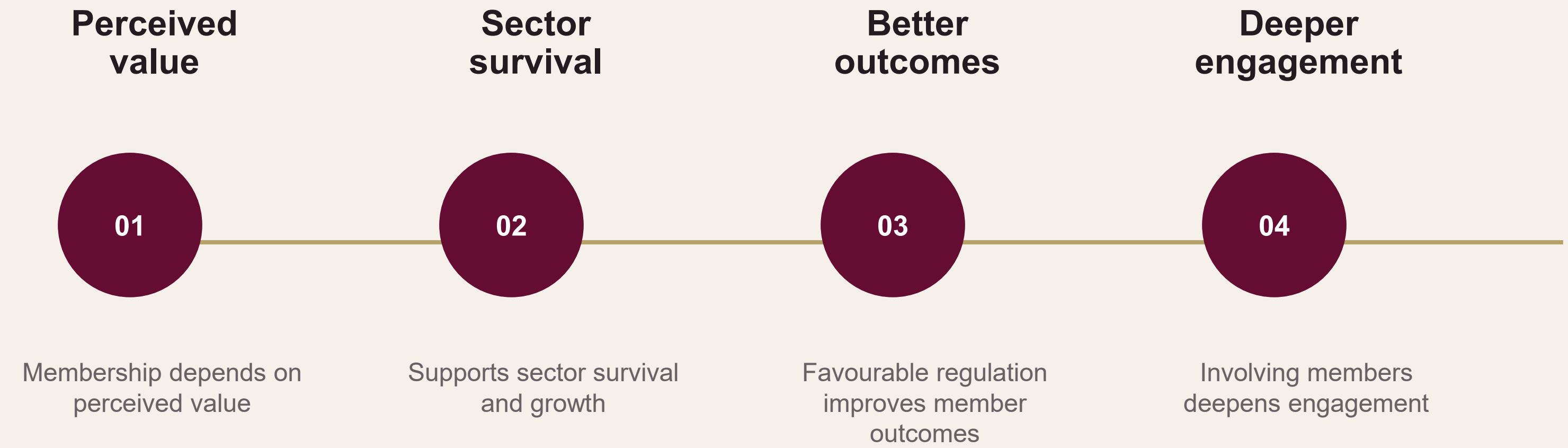
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Trade association lobbying strengths and weaknesses

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# How public affairs grows membership

Membership growth becomes visible when lobbying activity is connected to tangible value for the sector and its members.



THE ORGANISING THOUGHT

**Public affairs is not just defence. It is a visible source of member value.**



# The fundamentals

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**Most success comes from doing the hard yards — not waiting for a “lightbulb moment”.**

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01

**That is both a pro and a con**

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02

**You must be organised,  
strategic and thorough**

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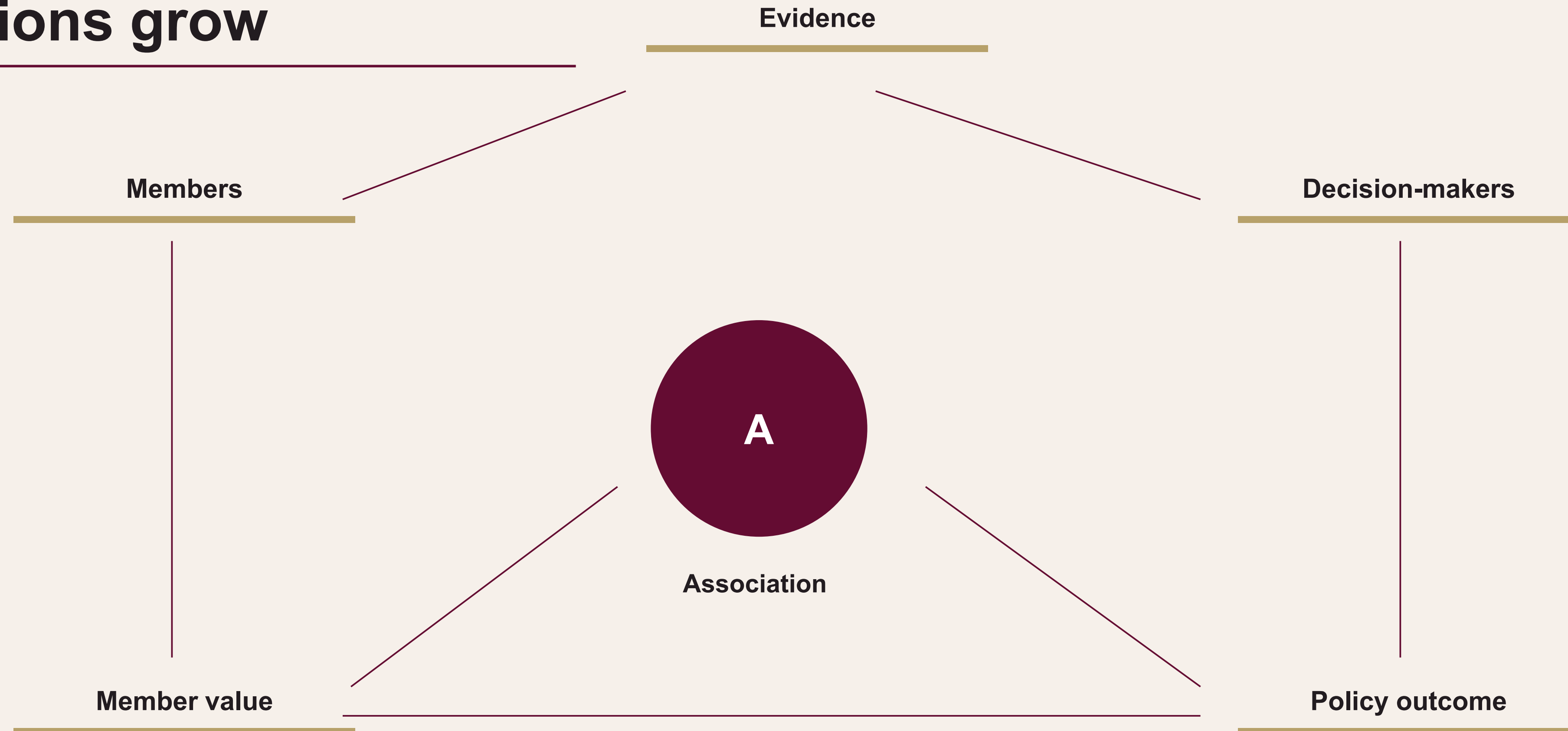
03

**“Process” is your friend, not  
something to be ignored**

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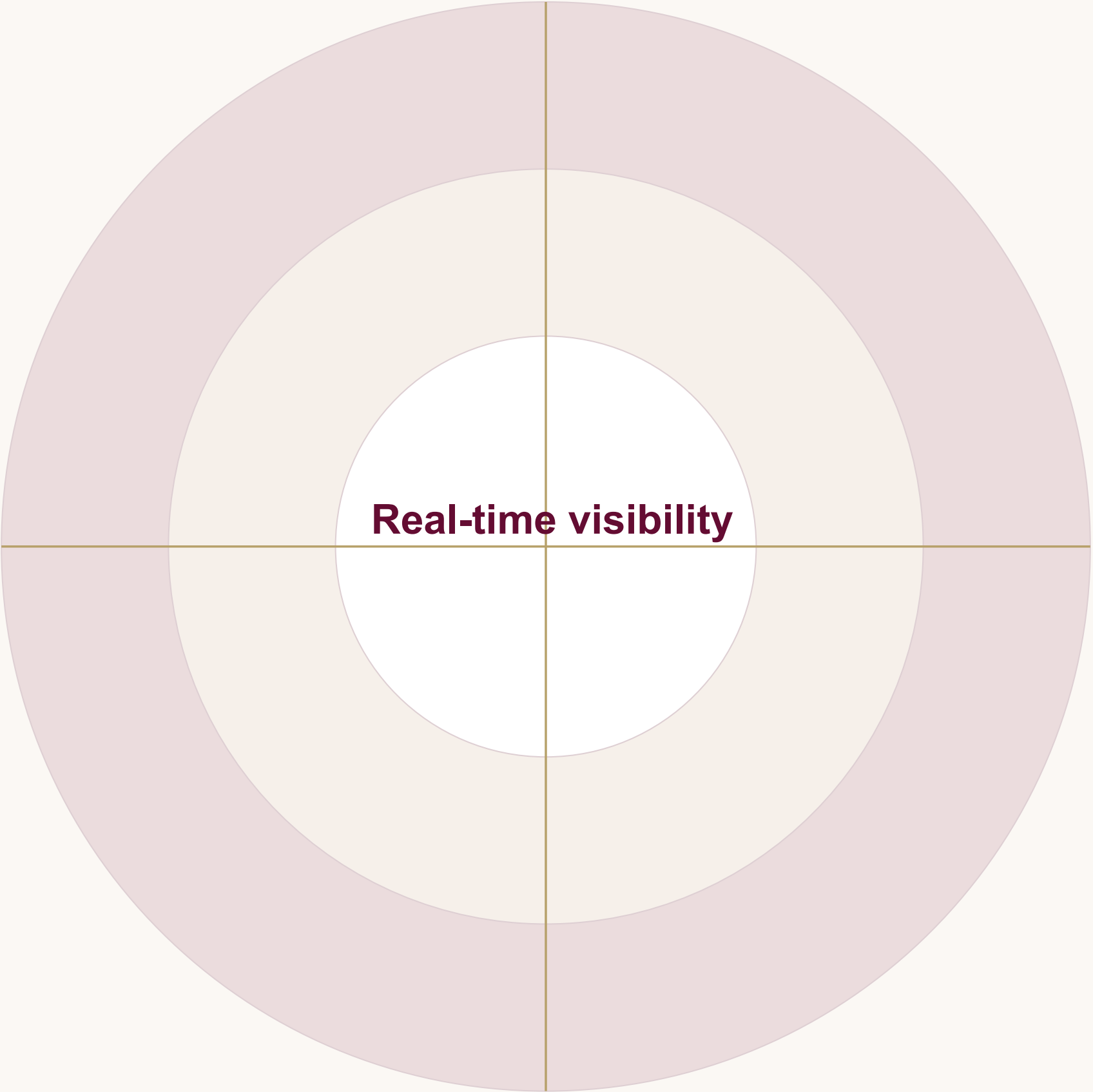
**Process is your friend.**

# How lobbying helps associations grow



Turn member insight into evidence, evidence into influence, and influence back into visible member value.

# Political monitoring



- 1 Technology enables real-time monitoring
- 2 Track parliamentarians and social channels
- 3 Cross-country, multilingual tracking



# Local differences

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01

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## Public affairs varies by location

The same message may land differently depending on the political setting.

03

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## Local expertise adds value

Local knowledge helps avoid assumptions and improves judgement.

02

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## Institutional and cultural differences matter

Process, language and decision routes change from place to place.

04

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## Failure to adapt can be damaging

A generic approach can weaken credibility and reduce impact.

**Failure to adapt can be damaging.**



# Messaging

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1

## Clear, brief, no jargon or acronyms

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Make the point easy to repeat.

2

## Evidence-based and compelling

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Give people reasons to believe.

3

## Simple, memorable, positive

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Make the message stick.

4

## Images add impact

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Photographs, videos and infographics make public affairs messages more powerful and appeal to the heart.

**Always consider where visuals can strengthen the narrative.**

# Messaging (timing)

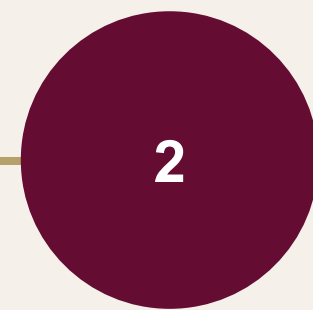
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**Timing is critical**



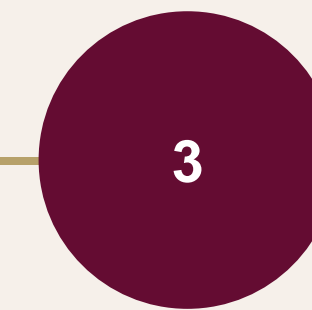
Spot the moment

**Deliver when audience is  
receptive**



Meet the audience where they are

**Act before opportunities  
pass**



Move before the opportunity closes

# Strategy vs tactics

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## Strategy

**Defines the destination and logic for action.**

Avoid reacting without plan

## Tactics

**Turn the plan into specific moves and engagement.**

Balance planning and execution

**Strategy first, then tactics, then action**



# Strategy

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01

**Long-term action plan**

02

**Define clear objectives**

03

**Align reality, policy asks, resources**

04

**Adapt over time but keep core priorities**

# Tactics

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01

**Build allies early**

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03

**Understand decision-makers**

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02

**Choose timing carefully**

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04

**Find common ground**

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# Tactics (execution)

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- 1 Officials are influential
- 2 Be ready: who you are and the ask
- 3 Respond quickly
- 4 Listen actively
- 5 Use media to reinforce lobbying

**Be ready to explain who you are, what you want, and the specific ask.**



# Hybrid engagement

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1

**Online engagement can  
widen access**

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2

**In-person builds stronger  
relationships**

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3

**Hybrid model persists**

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Use online where helpful — but do not default to it when relationships matter.



# Principles of persuasion

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01 Reciprocity

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02 Scarcity

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03 Authority

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04 Consistency

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05 Liking

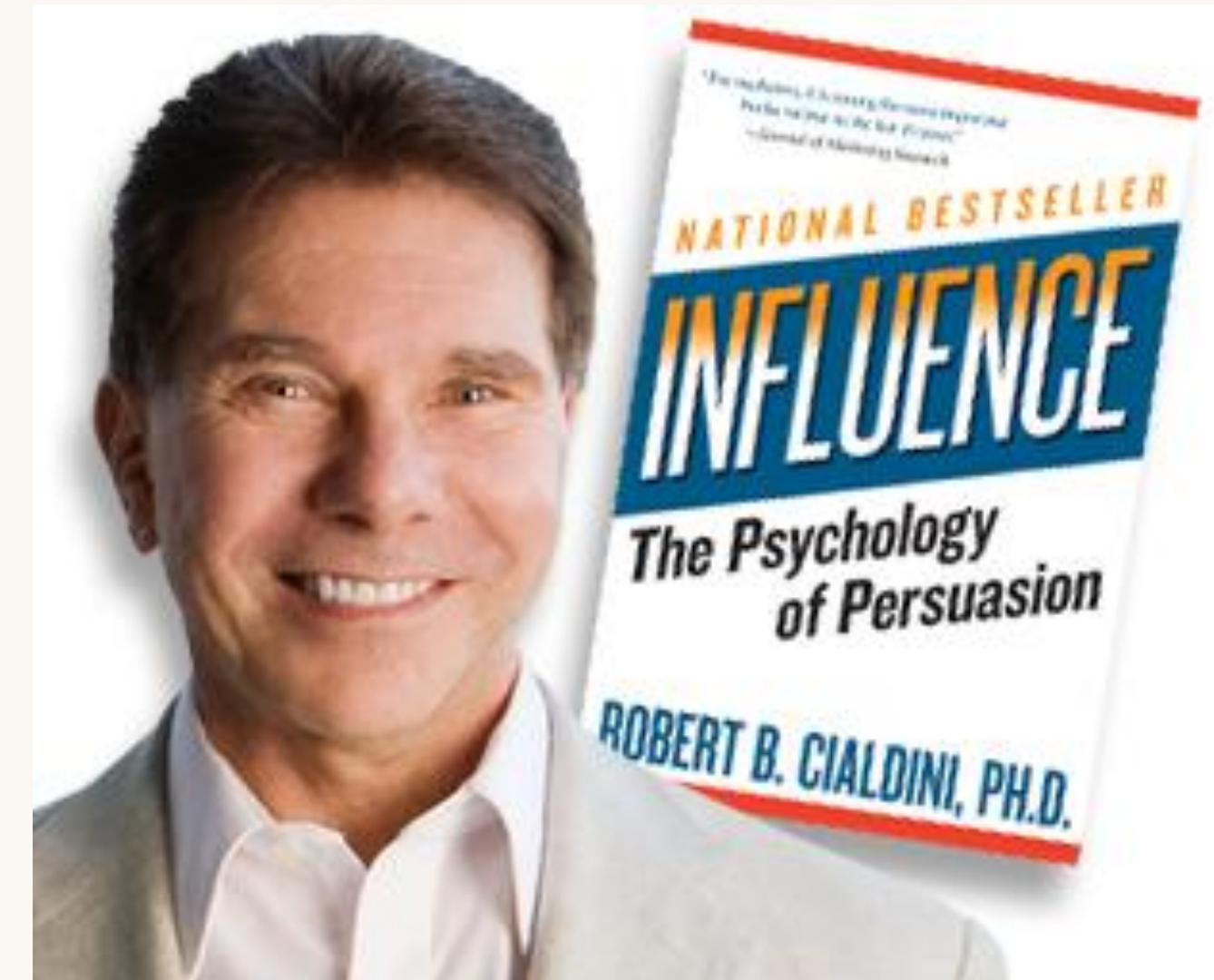
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06 Consensus

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07 Unity

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Cialdini's seven principles frame influence as a practical checklist.

# Listening

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**The best lobbying is done with  
your ears**



Leave time to hear the answer

**Adapt the message**



Respond to feedback

**Ask better questions**



Do not spend the whole meeting talking.

# Media engagement

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## Use when...

### Useful if momentum needed

Momentum is needed and the message is ready.

## Pause when...

### Risky if premature

Depends on context and opposition



# Consultancies

THE CONSULTANCY ROLE

**Sharpen strategy.  
Expand capacity.  
Keep judgement in-house.**

The best consultancy work sharpens strategy and expands capacity — it does not replace organisational judgement.

WHERE EXTERNAL SUPPORT HELPS

- 01

Provide strategic perspective
- 02

Support stakeholder mapping
- 03

Assist execution

# Ethics

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**01 Transparency is essential**

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**02 Avoid financial conflicts**

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**03 Truth is non-negotiable**

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Trust is the asset public affairs cannot afford to lose.



# Trade associations

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## Strength

### Collective voice

A shared platform can make the sector harder to ignore.

## Weakness

### Diluted positioning

Focus on shared interests; let members add detail.

# Discussion

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Q1

Was the session useful?

Q2

Too basic or too complex?

Q3

How to improve?

Q4

Additional points

# THANK YOU

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## GETTING IN TOUCH



### Dave McCullough

Managing Director

6th Floor, 52 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1A 0AU  
dave@riversidecomms.com  
+44 (0) 7793 594 785  
www.riversidecomms.com

