



European Women's Academy for Political Leadership and Campaigning

Varna, 15-18 March 2018

Summary

The European Women's Academy for Political Leadership and Campaigning is a training programme, divided into two sessions and targeting liberal female politicians, who plan to participate in general or local elections in the coming two years. The focus of the first session is on values, targets and strategy and provided the participants with useful tools and knowledge on how to lead their campaigning teams, build credibility and trust with the voters. A special session was devoted to budgeting and fundraising for the campaign.

The opening discussion round was used for participants to introduce themselves with one word, which will best describe their future political brand and to share their vision as for future position or political aspiration with the group. Annika Arras presented the concept of the canvas, which is a future search methodology, used by the trainees to strategize their future campaign.

As Radu Magdin, CEO of Smartlink Communications gave useful tips and tricks to the participants about their personal strategies of becoming a political leader.

Wording is really important when conveying a political message, since people you convey it too often think in specific frameworks, hence put specific words or terms in specific frameworks. People are programmed to remember just some soundbites or specific expressions, which normally get quoted, than actually listening to the full content of the speech. Quite as important is the wording, which is in the name and of political parties and slogans of political leaders. Radu made an analysis of the names of each party present at the workshop and share potential improvement points in their branding strategies, which for confidentiality purposes cannot be included in this report.

Framing and reframing your message is essential when debating with an opponent. Positive wording should be used even when negating. Two of the participants volunteered to showcase a mock debate using the tips and tricks for framing a message using your words and body language in front of the group.



Important when establishing yourself as a female political leader is also the story telling. Radu introduced the concept of the 7 basic plots, which says that all of us during our childhood, irrespective of our culture pretend subsequently to recognise specific patterns of how we define success, the most basic plot of which is the “from rags to riches” story. Using some of these basic 7 plots could help audiences identify with you. The most important thing when talking to your voters is to understand how they see their future, the direction in which they see or would like to see their country going. This is how you can easily realize what the mood in the country is.

In conclusion, the most important steps to position yourself as a female political leader is to clearly state your objectives, put them in the right wording and formulate specific soundbites, while thinking of the framing and perception of the audience at the same time.

Strategy is a combination of ends, ways and means – objectives, tactics and resources. When strategizing your campaign, you have to be aware of the so called “black swans” – matters which are not necessarily in our control. Enter a debate on a topic, which is widely discussed only if you can present a new, unique angle to the issue at hand – the so called “rule of scarcity”. However try to be among the first to comment or intervene on a so called “black swan event” in order to be able to frame the future debate. Perception is projection and credibility. Credibility is created through repetition and consistency. Your interest is to create a network – in the media, expert circles, and civil society; so that you can pick a fight only when you are sure you will get the support needed to win it. Find a niche of supporters, which is close to your values, appearance, image, to establish your initial power base and use it to expand your future audience/ voters. Try to anchor yourself in an important time.

The participants elaborated in a discussion round about the topic they are passionate about and can be part of their campaign with the help of Radu Magdin to put it in the right strategic framework.

Ian Marquardt, consultant from ALDE party spoke in his first session about the importance of data gathering in campaigning. The first step is to be able to distinguish what data is important for your campaign, and what data can be ignored in the process. Data research should answer three specific questions: it should give you the exact amount of votes you will need to achieve your objective, the specific profile of your voter (socio-economic data), where and how to contact and convince the voters to vote for you and how to start and maintain your conversation with them. It should also help you identify your vote core. It will help you identify regions or core groups where you are most



likely to experience problems and allocate your resources accordingly and if needed ignore a certain group of voters.

Data research is worth investing in if you know your objective clearly. Ian Marquardt showed as an example a Pan-European poll, which ALDE party did in year 2013. The data should be used as a constructive way to confirm or reject a gut feeling you have regarding a specific group of voters or issue when campaigning. Also important is to use the data to target your campaign in a way which address issues which are important for the specific region you are campaigning in.

In the fundraising session Ian Marquardt gave some tips and tricks on how to attract donors for the campaign using the personal example of a former EWA Alumna from Norway. The more specific you are when searching for financial support as to where and for what the money will be invested, the more likely it is people to trust you not only with their vote but also with their money.

Annika Arras shared with the group her successful campaign with the Estonian Reform Party, as an example of how important storytelling and political branding is while campaigning. The brand creates a very specific perception about an organisation or an individual, the service they provide or ideology they represent. The clear brand and brand story creates an emotional connection with the voter, builds loyalty with time. Even though visuals are important when creating or establishing a brand, the reality is that a brand is more than just a logo – it is a promise and a personality. The examples of Annika Arras introduces how the brand personality of her party has been adapted to the situations and current events in Estonia, without losing the promise and values of the party.