



case study:

HELPING PASS AN ANTI-TRAFFICKING LAW

RALLYING PEOPLE AROUND A CAUSE

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THE IDEA

Because of studying human rights and some of the circles I ran in, I was aware that there was a Member of Parliament trying to pass a bill into law that would create mandatory minimum sentencing for anyone caught trafficking minors in Ontario. At this point, we did not have any mandatory minimums, so perpetrators were getting away with little or even no consequences for their crimes.

Now, because it was a private member's bill, it was stuck in the Senate. It simply wasn't moving.

And I knew I had to do something. So, I emailed the Member of Parliament who was spearheading the bill and I requested a meeting. I went to Parliament Hill, met with her, and left that meeting with a promise to gather as many people as I could to write letters to Senators.

THE MESSAGE

I crafted the message behind this small movement to be, "write a letter, change the world." I wanted people to realize that they could make a mark on anti-trafficking work today and all they had to do was send a letter. I made it simple.

THE CONCEPT

The concept was clear; you sign up to send a letter! I wrote email templates and you literally just had to print the letter out, sign it and stick it in the mail. You didn't even have to pay for postage because it is free to send mail to Parliament Hill. There was a Facebook event where people could invite others in their circles to get involved.

THE STEPS I TOOK TO CREATE A TIME-SENSITIVE MOVEMENT



Here's the literal break-down of what I did to grow the movement.

1. MET WITH THE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

With blind passion, I emailed requesting a meeting with a Member of Parliament. When they asked why I wanted to meet, I said that I wanted to do all I could to help. The politician asked me how many people I knew, and I for some reason threw out this lofty number of eight hundred. She said get eight hundred people to write to the Senate and I said, no problem. ;)

2. CREATED A SIMPLE STRATEGY + CONTENT

I knew that to do this well, I would need to find a simple way to get people taking action quickly. I thought the best way to do that would be to write a template letter, have it approved by the member of Parliament's office and give that to people to print and sign. I would spread the word through a Facebook event.

3. LAUNCHED FACEBOOK EVENT

I launched the Facebook event, invited all my friends, created links with downloads and encouraged people to invite their friends into it as well. By the end, churches and groups had gotten involved and it was going way beyond my circle of influence.

4. WROTE TO THE PRESS

As my grassroots efforts started to create momentum, I knew I wanted to get the word out in an even bigger way. So, I drafted a letter to the press and encouraged people to get in touch with me if they wanted to be a part of the solution.

The draft read like this –

Selling Our Kids: Who's going to step up?

I wonder if it would disturb you if tomorrow someone took your nine year old daughter to sell her for sex three times a day. When she was finally back in your arms, you took the case to the police to find out that the trafficker had a smaller debt to pay than the hundreds of thousands of dollars he made off her. To him, she would be a product fallen to the way side. But to her, he would be the man that stole her childhood and dignity.

These are vivid realities in Canada. Banish the image that human trafficking happens across the ocean and replace it with the image that it is happening to your children, in your neighbourhood by people you know. An estimated 15,000 Canadians have been victims of human trafficking and many of them are children.

Bill C-268 otherwise known as Mandatory Minimums for Child Trafficking was recently put forward by MP Joy Smith (Kildonan-St. Paul). This bill would amend the Criminal Code to create a mandatory minimum prison sentence of five years for anyone who traffics a person under 18. Last week this bill was passed through the House of Commons and now will come before the Senate. Unbelievably, this bill has not received the kind of support from our politicians that one would imagine. The Bloc Party and a significant number of the NDP have voted against a bill that promotes human dignity and justice.

The statistics of the trafficking of children is alarming, but what raises my state of concern is that Canada is a popular transit, destination and even source nation for the process of trafficking. Canada has been critical and instrumental in trafficking minors, while being one of the easiest places to traffic with a low rate of penalty. It surprises me that a nation that has prided itself on equality, empowerment and progression is now also leading the way in disabling and degrading thousands of children every year.

This is not a time to slap traffickers on the wrist; rather it is time to see some of the greatest criminals in our nation pay the price for the crimes they are committing. We are finding that a generation of children are looking to be protected, but instead are finding themselves violated and destroyed by an industry that is unstoppable.

I am writing to keep the government of Canada accountable for their decision in the Senate and to urge the public to engage in this issue. I am persuaded that if we let this bill fall through the cracks in our system by the people who represent us in Parliament, we have condoned that the literal enslavement of our children is okay and that is a choice that will we have to be accountable for. We will carry the consequences of that on our backs. If you are interested in sending a letter to your Senators, please e-mail me at ashley.beaudin@gmail.com.

5. WE SEND OVER 1500 LETTERS

I double my goal and we send over 1500 individual letters and get a slight mention in the Senate.

6. BILL PASSES + WE HELP MAKE HISTORY

We get to help this member of Parliament make history by being one of the first people to pass a private member's bill into a law to amend The Criminal Code. We raised a voice and we were heard.

LESSONS WE CAN TAKE FROM THIS MOVEMENT

SIMPLE MOVEMENTS CAN BE POWERFUL MOVEMENTS.

What I love most about this case study and example is that this is a very simple movement, but it was so effective. When you're thinking of creating a movement with your message, it doesn't need to be complicated. It doesn't need to have a million pieces, it can be designed with one call to action in mind. In this case, sending a letter.

WHEN IT IS TIME SENSITIVE, ACT FAST.

Sometimes there can be this tendency to really procrastinate on getting your movement out in the world, but honestly, you have no time to waste. In this case, we were dealing with timelines way beyond our control and we needed to create some noise as fast as possible. My encouragement is to always act faster than what is comfortable.

CREATE A SIMPLE CALL TO ACTION + MAKE IT EASY FOR PEOPLE TO BE INVOLVED.

The beauty of creating a simple call to action is that it is easy to follow.

People aren't confused on what to do first. They know there is only one thing to do - that one call to action. Sometimes if you have a lot going on, like post on Instagram, join this Facebook group, make this daily habit, then people are so overwhelmed by the choices that they don't know what to do first. And then, they do nothing.

On top of that, make it as easy and empowering as possible for people. This means that you can think about what would make people feel more supported in the journey of saying yes. Can you write something out for them? Can you give them resources? Can you do it with them?

COMMUNICATE THE CAUSE.

It is always bigger than a task or a community, there is a deeper message and there is often a cause. And even if it doesn't have a social justice focus like in this case, there is likely still a cause at hand. So, think about what the potential cause is in your movement.

What do you want to disrupt? What do you want to invite people into? What do you want to change or transform? Speak that. And it'll light some fire in people. Trust me.

next month's
CASE STUDY



Running a Virtual Summit