ASSESSING ACTIVIST CAMPAIGNS

With the rise of the digital age, anyone can be an activist and any issue, any place, anywhere is vulnerable. Activists are looking to build alliances that impact supply chains, from source to post-consumer and everything in between. Our experience has shown well-known companies are targeted because these activists perceive a weakness and hope to tie it to a variety of disparate campaigns and NGOs.

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGY & TACTICS

All single-issue activist campaigns are focused on getting their target corporation to first engage them directly and to then build a larger alliance through a web of interconnected issues. In this effort, activists aim to create a legacy campaign with mass support around a single global issue. Three standard tactics are employed by activists to elevate the initial single-issue campaign:

1. Create the perception of many voices through various tactics including social media, letter writing and protests
2. Target and sow seeds of doubt amongst leadership
3. "Fish" for a response and use it to create momentum to roll out additional tactics and targets.

SFI PROGRAM

RIGOROUS

The SFI Standard is science-based and tough – 115 indicators developed by professional foresters, conservation and societal groups, academia and scientists.

INCLUSIVE

SFI is governed by an independent Board of Directors that has equal representation from environmental, economic and social organizations.

INDEPENDENT

Certification to the SFI standard is conducted by independent third party auditors.

LEADERSHIP

70 percent of all certified forests in North America is certified to the SFI Standard or a standard SFI recognizes.

CONSERVATION

The SFI Standard requires protection of animal habitats, biodiversity, water quality and soil quality in our forests.

ASSESSING ACTIVIST CAMPAIGNS

EVALUATING AN ACTIVIST CAMPAIGN

Cutting through the false noise and doubt created by an activist campaign is key to effectively assessing the actual threat. Our experience has shown that when assessing the perceived versus material impact of a campaign two questions are critical:

1. **Noise vs Impact** – Is the activist campaign only an annoyance or is it yielding measurable results?
2. **Stakeholder Impact** – Are mainstream investors, consumers or regulators engaged?

MANAGING AND MITIGATING A CAMPAIGN

1. Do not give the activists anything to feed off - let them do all of the hard work
2. Be agile and act in unexpected ways
3. Monitor and evaluate their ability to reach your key stakeholders
4. Inoculate your key stakeholders from being impacted by the activists
5. Measure material impact – not the noise
6. Have an escalation plan in place

LONG-TERM IMPACT

Direct engagement is often the fuel an activist campaign needs to move from a single issue campaign to one that connects a web of issues and NGOs. Our experience has taught us that meeting an activist group's demands typically results in four outcomes:

1. The brand becomes tied to the campaign as a success story of the activist movement.
2. The activist group is given the opportunity to tell the brand's story through the lens of the campaign.
3. The activist group is able to elevate pressure on brands in wider campaigns.
4. The brand is viewed as a target by other activist groups.

RECOGNITION

As an independent organization, SFI brings together numerous stakeholders who depend on sustainable North American forests and who represent a wide range of interests. These include forest companies, conservation groups, aboriginal communities, small landowners, loggers, universities and governments. While activist campaigns can be disruptive and frustrating, it's important to focus on our own web of influence and work together to promote the value of our partnership.

The trend toward recognizing all forest certification standards is on the rise. In 2013, GreenBlue, The Sustainability Consortium, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the National Association of State Foresters and the Consumer Goods Forum all put out statements supporting an inclusive approach to recognizing certification.

The UK Green Building Rating Tool BREEAM has officially recognized SFI as a "Responsible Sourcing Certification Scheme" in their guidelines as recently as September 2014.

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

SFI-00001

September 2014

At SFI we're dedicated to making sure you have the tools available to best understand the value provided by your participation and membership.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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