

It's Not a Movement Until it Moves

Engaging the Public Through the Media

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Traditional philanthropy focuses its resources, efforts and expertise on creating programs and capacities. As a result, it is not rare for foundations to experience disappointment when "we built it, but they did not come." When the Trump Foundation was established, it adopted the catalytic approach, which believes that systemic and sustainable change will not occur only by influencing the supply side. The Foundation prepared a strategy that engages an eco-system of stakeholders, ranging from policy makers, through the professional community, up to its target audiences, and the general public.

The Foundation's strategy presented a clear and measurable roadmap that was articulated in continuous consultation with teachers, scholars and policy makers. It incorporated a variety of tools complementing a hands-on grant-making portfolio, including creating a marketplace for sharing knowledge, convening partners for joint learning and collaboration, and engaging the target audiences and the general public through the media. The following chapter will present and analyze the Trump Foundation's media strategy, its

successes as well as the insights and lessons learned, gained by taking this pioneering road.

Step 1: Alarming the Public

Israel is a country of multiple emergencies and concerns. Negative trajectories fill the news headlines; the public's attention span is shaky and time-limited. When the Foundation was first established, its team brainstormed on how to make the Israeli public aware that it will soon lose its scientific and technological edge. The Foundation wanted to alarm the public about a severe decline in the number of high school students graduating the advanced five-unit track in mathematics. This track generates the talent pool for high-tech and science that Israel relies on for its future. However, with military and economic priorities competing for attention, it was not a simple task.

The Foundation commissioned a longitudinal study that revealed the contribution of

five units in mathematics to future success in life, and collected data showing the decline in five-unit graduates. By working with media consultants, the Foundation reached the editors of newspapers, radio shows and television stations. They became convinced of the high importance of the matter and immediately published the data in their headlines and prime time slots. Soon after, the Knesset's Education Committee convened an emergency meeting and the government discussed the emerging crisis in a cabinet meeting.

After analyzing the public's response to this message, it turned out that the urgency around a "national crisis" and the "the startup nation is at risk" was accepted with credibility and concern. The message was repeated by different broadcasters, adding more and more data and fuel to the troubling decline. As a result, many Israelis reacted with skepticism and apathy, concluding that no one would give this problem serious treatment. The Foundation's media team became concerned that instead of driving people and systems to take action and improve, the negative message was now so loud it would drive the public to complain, blame, and despair.

The team therefore decided that after generating an initial sense of urgency, the momentum should be transformed from negative to positive and embrace notions of hope and optimism towards a better future. The media strategy was one of "scattering droplets," ensuring that there was a continuous stream of stories coming out in a variety of news outlets with no necessary or obvious connection between them. The idea was to shed light on inspirational stories of individuals and organizations who "made it" and achieved success. The Foundation's portfolio of programs was thoroughly analyzed to seek out those "heroes" and portray them as pioneers. We wanted to highlight the emerging buds, so that a

national program, when it arrived, would connect to the reality already sprouting on the ground.

The Foundation built its own brand by becoming the "problem solver." It was careful not to claim the fame but rather, to create a brand that relies on the quality of interactions with its design partners. Intentionally, the Foundation started with big and ambitious projects in collaboration with the Weizmann Institute and the Center for Educational Technology, two of the most distinguished educational institutions in Israel. These projects required significant funding from government, which soon after decided to join in. The fact that the Foundation had its own resources freed it from the need to advertise itself and allowed it to always prefer "message over brand," focusing its media activity on the issue, rather than on itself.

Step 2: Call to Action

When in 2015, the Ministry of Education decided to adopt this issue as a top priority and lead a national program, the Foundation changed its media strategy. By this time, it had already prepared the ground for government policy to take the wheel. Professional capacity had been nurtured with hundreds of new teachers coming in as career changers from high-tech, and through learning communities of veteran teachers sharpening their expertise together. The teachers felt a sense of identity and ownership and applauded the government for joining and leading their shared effort.

In addition, a wide coalition of stakeholders (titled: "5x2") convened to support the new policy. One hundred organizations including universities, government agencies, municipalities, and school networks, joined hands with assistance from Sheatufim,

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in order to embrace and support the new policy and create an effective ecosystem around it. The leaders of those organizations raised their voices in the media and expressed their enthusiasm and conviction that the new policy was important and on-point.

The Foundation's media team figured out that the time was ripe for a public call to action to trigger students and their parents to register for the five-unit mathematics track. A public opinion survey commissioned by the Foundation found a gap between the parents, who felt they were irrelevant to the decisions their teenage children made about their studies, and the children who emphasized the great importance they attributed to their parents' perspective. Both groups were insufficiently aware of the significant contribution made by studying five units of mathematics to future prospects in career and life.

In collaboration with Keshet Broadcasting (formerly Channel 2 and currently Channel 12) the Foundation designed a three-month campaign. Its content had a very clear message: "Choose five, it's worth it." Executives from high-tech, successful entrepreneurs and renowned celebrities portrayed a joint story of investing in advanced mathematics in school and succeeding in life. The campaign used advertisements broadcast during peak prime-time television viewing hours, documentaries, testimonials, as well as blog posts and banners on social media; 2.7 million households in Israel were directly exposed to the content of the campaign.

At the end of the 2015-2016 school year, the Ministry of Education published the number of graduates in the five-unit track. The figures had slightly increased as of 2013; however, as of 2016, they leapfrogged. Many observers and commentators attributed this jump to the media campaign. It definitely

generated awareness among partners, teachers and students of the high value of five units and led them to sign up. At the same time, it also aroused criticism, as many felt it favored a small group of talented students and was neglecting other students and different abilities (the major section of this case study, below, will present the campaign in detail).

Step 3: Social Movement

The policy of government and the catalytic role of philanthropy generated a halt to the decline and a course reversal toward a positive trajectory, resulting in doubling the number of graduates of the five-unit track in mathematics. This was a remarkable and unprecedented success; however, the ultimate test of this endeavor was yet to come. The challenge was for the trend in the high number of graduates to continue even after government and philanthropy changed priorities and the media returned to its day-to-day issues. The big mystery was whether public behavior changed only superficially and temporarily, as a result of external intervention. Or, did the change truly penetrate the core of systems with convincing messages that met with solid infrastructure and effective practice on the ground?

The Foundation's International Advisory Council, chaired by Lee Shulman, highlighted the importance of a smart exit. The council emphasized the role of the Foundation as scaffolding, which needs to support temporarily, while ensuring that the educational structure is strong enough to hold the larger weight. It recommended several steps that required investment in infrastructure and collaboration with central government and local authorities as well as with universities, colleges and educational institutions. In addition, it recommended that the Foundation assist

in the creation of a data system and a monitoring apparatus to keep track of the trajectory and continuously inform the public about the trends. The Foundation seeded such a data system, called "Israel's Excellence Map," which showed the five-unit graduation rate over time in each city in Israel. Every year, the Foundation approached the media and the data was published in national newspapers and websites, as well as in the local press. In 2018, the Foundation transferred the responsibility of preparing the map to the "Cities of Excellence" network it had created at Tel Aviv University.

However, the main recommendation of the Advisory Council went even deeper than data. It challenged the Foundation to touch the hearts and minds of people and restore the value of excellence as a core Israeli value. This was an even more difficult task than persuading parents, teachers and students to study in the five-unit track in mathematics. It required grit and persistence, effort and determination, and many more competencies and skills that tend to dissolve in developed Western societies. It was challenging because in order to influence such traits, the Foundation team needed to expand the boundaries of its highly focused portfolio.

One pioneering step the Foundation decided to take in response was to initiate the first "Israel Excellence Week." The Foundation issued a call for proposals, inviting 150 organizations from all aspects of life, ranging from science to sports, music and art, to join hands and showcase their excellence to the public. Over the week following Independence Day, in partnership with Channel 12 on television and on its website (Mako), 3.5 million Israelis were exposed to the initiative and tens of thousands participated in local events.

The thinking was that by including a diverse range of issues, people will accept

the notion of excellence with a sense of belonging and pride. The hope was that some of those who criticized the message of promoting excellence in a narrow (yet important) field of science and technology, would feel more comfortable with it when it was part of a larger movement gathered around the value of excellence.

The Choose Five Campaign

The Message

The media strategy team decided to focus on positive and motivating messages:

- 1) higher-mathematics studies (five-units) opens doors in the future
- 2) its importance for the future of the country

In the context of Israel as a "startup nation" we defined five-unit mathematics as the first step on the road to achieving the new Israeli dream. We hoped to inspire the public, starting from the young student and all the way up to successful CEOs. In addition, we made it clear that actively choosing five-unit mathematics and making an effort is something that will be worthwhile and recognized. We wanted to make the students feel like we believed in them and their capabilities.

Potential Fallout of the Messaging

While the campaign advocated the idea that every parent should seek to enhance their child's opportunities by getting them into this exclusive club of advanced mathematics, we were touching an exposed nerve. For some our message implied that if you do not study advanced mathematics, you won't succeed in life.

Buildup

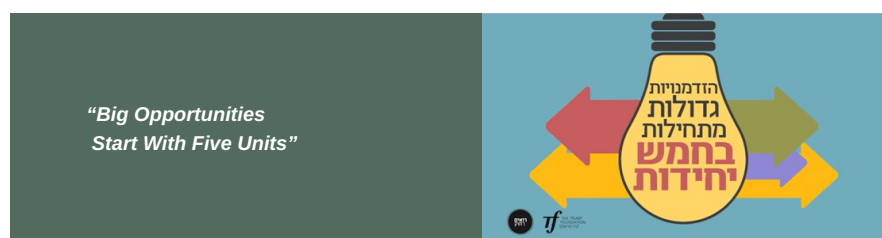
We approached Keshet, an Israeli media enterprise that operates various media channels: TV (Channel 12- the highest rated channel in Israel), web (Mako website), and mobile (Mako App). With approximately 20 million video views per month, it was the number one Israeli video website among young Israelis aged 18-35.

Structure

The campaign was spread over a few weeks during the spring of 2016 and it included: interviews and appearances on morning

talk shows, TV ads, interviews on “soft news” shows (tech, afternoon, and late night shows), transitional clips on Israel’s most viewed satirical comedy show “Eretz Nehederet,” in-depth profile interviews with leading figures in Israeli society and industry, and an ad-hoc update page on the Mako website and social media.

It was planned to reach its peak just before two important events in the education system calendar: the national mathematics matriculation exam (the bagrut), and the date on which students choose their advanced classes for the following year.

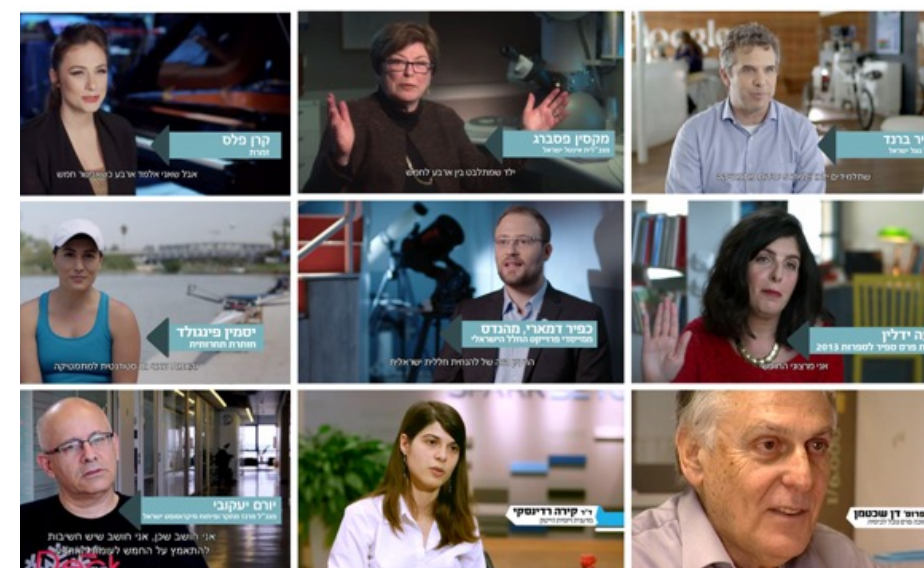


This was a relatively late addition once we saw the surveys that emphasized the contribution parents can make to their child’s decision and the parents’ lack of awareness of the role they play.

A variety of scientists, CEOs of the largest multinational tech companies operating in Israel (Microsoft, Google, Intel, etc.), members of elite army intelligence units (8200), musicians, TV personalities, Nobel Prize winners, athletes, politicians and even authors — all gathered to showcase that it

does not matter which path you choose in life, by choosing high-level mathematics (five units) you are ensuring your future and promoting excellence in any field you may ultimately pursue.

Having successful adults call on the students to join them in the future might build the narrative of “the new Israeli dream,” but that would mostly resonate with the students who were already studying advanced mathematics. While we pointed at the “prize” of working in the great Israeli



tech ecosystem, we also needed a follow-up call made by other figures who were not the typical advanced mathematics graduates. We recruited famous personas such as Keren Peles, a singer songwriter. She demonstrated how mathematics studies taught her the meaning of perseverance, determination and striving for excellence.

In a way the Israeli DNA played in our favor. Officially, everyone says they should play by the rules, but behind the scenes no Israeli wants to be a “freier” (sucker/loser), every parent wants their child to have the ability to “cut the line” and get a head start. With that said, that same Israeli DNA also meant that the common approach is that when it comes to mathematics, you either have it or you don’t.

Outcomes and Implications

Public Reaction

A real change is one that comes as a result of an open public debate. We would need to cause some level of controversy in order to ignite public interest and discussion. Once the televised campaign began, the criticism grew more intense, doled out mostly by those who had not studied advanced mathematics, such as journalists and even school principals. They all resented the (misconstrued) notion that only those who study advanced mathematics can be successful.

It is looked upon as some kind of “defining subject”; if you are good at it then it means you are smart, and that it is an innate ability. Obviously, that mindset deters many people from even attempting to tackle it. The campaign emphasized that it is possible, with some effort and perseverance, and it can lead to excellence and achievement. It meant changing the attitude that was ingrained for so many years among the students themselves, but also by the education system which encouraged students to drop out of advanced mathematics in order not to lower their average percent grade for their overall Matriculation Certificate.

The Ministry of Education's Reaction

In record time after the campaign launched, the Ministry of Education launched its own campaign, "Give Me Five," led by then President of Israel, Shimon Peres.

At that point there was not one person in Israel unaware of the planned and orchestrated campaign.

Their Give Me Five campaign message was perceived as more aggressive and less inclusive towards those who did not study advanced mathematics. It seemed that while

the MoE campaign got everyone talking about it, most feedback was negative, and a few months later then Minister of Education Naftaly Bennett admitted "the campaign was too aggressive."

The MoE rushed into their campaign to reassert control over the narrative and communication with the public. Their involvement enhanced the debate in a way that brought it into each home and school in Israel. Now everyone had to take a stand and contend with the issue.



Outcomes

According to Keshet data approximately 2.7 million households in Israel were exposed to the Foundation's campaign. Our first goal of reaching the Israeli public was accomplished. In a post-campaign survey, we were pleased to discover that parents had more faith in their own children's capabilities; most parents (over 60%) thought the campaign was important. The fact that we got parents to understand that they are a significant factor in their children's future showed the huge impact of our efforts. This could open the way to more parent-led opportunities and involvement going forward.

Another development was noted with teachers, who suddenly experienced the internal mechanics of their classrooms becoming a matter of public interest. A sense of alarm among the teachers was quickly translated into the professional responsibility they felt for their students and for the profession itself. The teachers were also able to connect between their work and its impact on the future of Israel as a country. The spotlight on teachers was not to scrutinize them, and many felt their work was valued.

Insights

Now, six years after the campaign, we can appreciate the long-lasting effect of our work. There are more children in middle-school opting for the advanced tracks once they enter high school, which will allow them to study five-unit mathematics later on. This means that not only was the campaign successful while it lasted, but that it had a longer-term effect on the public and on future generations. There is no doubt the effectiveness of the campaign was a result of the deep emotions it stirred, negative or positive. The years following the peak of the campaign (2016-2018) marked an unprecedented increase that surpassed the original goal of doubling the number of students learning five-unit mathematics. If we needed reassurance, we received confirmation that the campaign was the right step at the right time. ■

References

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