

Part V. Chapter 1. A Fistful of leadership Roles

Visionary

Visionaries. Policy advocacy campaigns take flight through visionaries. Visionaries inspire, lift the horizons of others, setting goals that have never before been imagined or seen as realistic. Visionaries challenge the conventional view of the possible, aim high, take risks, and rethink priorities.

Is DeMarco a visionary? Not as we normally understand the term. Baltimore Health Commissioner, Peter Beilenson, who recruited DeMarco to health care advocacy, was more of what we think of as a visionary, in his vision and eloquently espousal of long term radical reform of the health care system in the form of a single –payer system, abolishing the role of private insurers. Though he went along with Demarco’s evolving strategies, he never abandoned that vision. And continued to speak of it.

DeMarco, by contrast, was more focused on what was politically attainable in the foreseeable future. he abandoned a single-payer goal when confronted with insurmountable political hurdles.

This difference led more than once to an uncomfortable clash of messages.

Yet DeMarco was not without a kind of visioning. As one of the group of Hopkins activists who took over the Maryland Young Democrats in the late 80’s, Bernie Horn recalls an initiative in which DeMarco was both visionary and lobbyist. One day he received a call from DeMarco:

He said, “We’re going to introduce a bill to ban Saturday night specials. And I probably said these very words, ‘You’re crazy. Nationally, nobody had passed any gun control legislation on the state or federal level for a decade. By 1987, deep into the Reagan years, it was perceived politically impossible. There were all these awful things happening at the congressional level. Overall gun control seemed impossible.

Yet, with the rest of us dragging our feet, he pulled us into this effort. It was quite a process through the summer to write a bill.

Then, miraculously, he passed it. It was an election year, and there were a good number of extremely lefty legislators who could jump up and down about this; create a lot of energy; and gun control is good very press, so you can get a lot of attention. Passing this bill was a miracle.

It was Vinny's best lobbying. He was just incredible. It was more of his personal lobbying than anybody else's.

Twenty years later, when DeMarco took on the leadership of the Health Care for All campaign, Horn – the consummate pragmatist – was equally skeptical:

How do you decide what's the next issue? Vinny. There's nobody else who participates in that. Vinny gets the inspiration. I certainly thought he was crazy to do the health thing. I thought it was politically impossible, that he was biting off more than he could chew. But he had vision.

Sometimes, there's no apparent reason why he picks a campaign, except inspiration - and finding something that will work.

Not Quite a “Reckless Optimist”

“Vinny,” says his young and iconoclastic team member, Matt Celentano, “is a “reckless optimist.”

How reckless? Bernie Horn recalls DeMarco's determination as a leader of the Maryland Young Democrats in 1987 to launch the legislative campaign to ban the Saturday Night Special handguns:

He said, “We're going to introduce a bill to ban Saturday night specials. And I probably said these very words: “You're crazy.”

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We've seen Glenn Schneider convinced that DeMarco had taken leave of his senses in asserting to the Smoke Free Maryland Board on their very first meeting he could raise large sums of political funding to fuel an election-centered campaign in 1997 to raise the cigarette tax.

“People started asking questions” about where the money would come from, Schneider recalls. He remembers saying to himself, “This is a great mistake to end this way. Why did he do this? Why did he come up with such an unrealistic proposal? There's no way in the world we can raise that kind of money.”

After DeMarco left, Schneider remembers, “everyone said, ‘Can you believe this guy?’”

He raised the money.

Even Celentano's reproach was spoken more in awe than criticism. In the same breath he marvels at the power of DeMarco's vision. The full quote:

One thing that always blows me away is what I call reckless optimism. Perfect example is this year [2007], about ten days from the end of the session and our elected friends were telling us that there was no chance the cigarette tax/Medicaid expansion bill was going to pass. The next day we are at the office and Vinny is doing radio interviews saying anything can happen in the last days....Anything. He *really* believed it as well. It just blew me away. That is one thing that I have never seen out in any person in my entire life. If he had any clue or care about sports whatsoever, I think he could be Vince Lombardi. [One of the he winningest football coaches in history].

And DeMarco's optimism was validated – if not in April, then by November, in the 2007 special session.

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Strategist

Strategist. Strategists sort out that part of the vision that is realistically attainable, and develop a road map to get there. Strategists understand the political environment – what can be changed, what cannot be changed in the short term; anticipate obstacles, including those laid by unruly coalition members. They plan, but leaven planning with flexibility, able to change course radically when circumstances require. They recognize the need for short term success to maintain morale, but make certain that incremental change will not deflect progress toward long-term goals. .

Having devoted the first chapters of Part IV to DeMarco's strategies, it comes as no surprise that I place him firmly in the leadership role of strategist. But perhaps, we can better define the qualities that fit that role, reflecting upon – without repeating - the analyses in Part IVA.

Planning

Of course, all advocacy campaigns begin with a plan. Some are more developed than others. Many plans begin – and end - with the beginning, without the planning of campaign stages through the desired ending.

Not DeMarco's plan. DeMarco arrived at his very first meeting – in effect, his job interview - with the Board of SmokeFree Maryland, with all the elements of the plan for the Maryland Children's Initiative already drawn out, from start to the finish line.

Though he struggled, polled, consulted, held town meetings, tested different approaches, for more than two years in developing the concrete Health Care for All proposed legislation, he had from the beginning, all the elements of the campaign to achieve that legislation in mind.

An evolving Campaign Template

As a strategist, DeMarco is empirical, not imitative. Beginning with the first, tentative legislative campaigns in which he participated, and sometimes led, as a student leader of the Maryland Young Democrats, he tested strategies and tactics, learned from the experience of fellow advocates like Len Lucchi and Bernie Horn. He integrated that learning into a campaign template, which evolved as he adopted new lessons from each successive campaign, from the role of media advocacy to the essential recruitment first of labor, then the Faith community, to his singular non-partisan focus on elections.

For example, in the 1997-99 cigarette tax campaign, DeMarco learned from his long time legal mentor, Mike Pretl, the complex rules – governing tax-deductible (C (3)) contributions and activities and non-tax deductible political contributions. He subsequently integrated both categories of funding and action into his campaign template. As Bernie Horn notes:

It was in this campaign that Vinny learned all about the rules of C3 funding and what you can do with a c3 and what you must do with a c4. He didn't e invent this, but did it in a more sophisticated way than anyone had done on the state level.

Len Lucchi boils the template down:

He has perfected the ultimate formula for, for building progressive coalitions and advancing the progressive agenda. It's hard work, but it's also very simple: He takes a problem, defines the problem, gets who have power to commit to collusion. He runs a campaign to educate the voting public about it. Then, hopefully, HE elects some people in the process. then, just as important, HE holds the people who pledge in the campaign to do the right thing to stay on board. That's obviously a gross simplification of what it is. But that's the essence of it. It's been highly successful, and it's a brilliant way to do it.

Empirical, not imitative

DeMarco does not do what other advocates have done or what those who would teach advocacy – I’ve been among them – tell advocates to do. Bernie Horn contrasts what DeMarco does in campaigns with many other political issue campaigners

They think that you do politics a different way than Vinny does. You do it quieter, in back rooms. They completely misunderstand how Vinny gets anything done with his kind of bull in the china shop method. Everybody in politics – or let’s say 99 out of a 100 in politics – think that doing a good job is doing things the way it’s been done before.

They have a very difficult time with new ideas. But the only way to improve things is to do something different. And Vinny never cares about how it’s been done before. I think that really grates on people. He just thinks of things. Sometimes, there’s a tactic that people do, but he takes it to a different level. .

For example, there’s this business of getting 2,000 groups to endorse a resolution. Well of course, organizations have always had coalitions and they’ve had sign-on letters. It’s common. But nobody that I know has ever gone anywhere near what Vinny has done at that level. Because he just doesn’t accept that what’s been done before is the way to do it. If something to him seems right, it’s okay. He just won’t give a second thought doing it differently. And in politics, almost everybody is there doing what everybody else is doing.

If you were to ask Vinny [what strategies he invented] he probably couldn’t tell you. He’s not aware of his own inventions. When he gets an idea, he just does it and doesn’t realize that it’s unique.

Bernie Horn goes even further. He told me that “while Vinny’s a great strategist. Sometimes he doesn’t know why he’s doing what he’s doing.” I asked DeMarco about this, and he laughed:

That’s funny Bernie should say that, but he’s right. I do get these instinctive feelings. [In 2006] I just had a feeling that we needed to do something different than what we were doing, and we had to go for

the healthy Maryland initiative, dollar tobacco tax, for healthcare. It just was a deep instinctive feeling for me that that's the way. Sometimes I see a road ahead - we all have that - without *analyzing it through*. There's an instinctive feeling that this other road is blocked for now, that we have to go this other way.

Not From the Mountaintop

Though the inspiration for developing an election-centered strategy based upon a candidate pledge did indeed strike DeMarco as he sat vacationing on the shores of an inspiring lake, DeMarco does not normally descend from the mountaintop (or ascend from the waters) with a strategy intact.

As Bernie Horn says, "Vinny's not threatened by people having different ideas. He doesn't insist on doing things his way. Especially when he has an idea, but somebody else has a better idea than he does in an arena that's not his expertise."

DeMarco is not unduly modest, but he delights as much in the ideas of others, as his own:

One of the things I've always liked about myself is being able to recognize a good idea; Not always the one to have them, but to be able to recognize and know how to take it from a good idea to implement it, to take it the rest of the way.

I love Bernie. As soon as he proposed the name Maryland Children's Initiative, that was it! Similarly, a group of us were on the phone once/ What are we going to name this assessment on the big companies? and someone said, "Fair Share Healthcare." And I yelled, "That's it! That is it!"

I remember the day I asked Vince Wilmore, "What are we going to call our national faith leaders group? How am I going to identify myself?" Says Vince, "Identify you as National Coordinator of Faith United Against Tobacco." Okay!

For example, many years ago, this wonderful woman, Maria Pekoe, was working with me on the 1994 gun control campaign on, and we're trying to figure out how to raise the gun issue during the

election campaign. And we just couldn't figure out how to do it. And then Maria said, "Why don't we get mothers involved. And it struck me, that's brilliant! And we ended up having these mothers who had lost kids to guns do a vigil in front of [Republican gubernatorial candidate] Ellen Saubrey's house. Got tremendous media attention, and may have contributed to that election.

Though he had the outlines of the 1997-99 tobacco tax campaign in hand when he interviewed for the job, the final strategy and plan was only finalized after intensive consultation with a wide group of colleagues and partners. The Health Care for All Campaigns all evolved out of even more extensive consultation.

While he can be stubborn and resist challenges to a plan once he has embraced it, he *will* listen. And no one who works for or with him is ever exiled or marginalized for confronting him fiercely. Rosanna Miles continues:

I love working with him. I do. But sometimes Vinny has to be made to be quiet so that we can voice our opinion and our feelings, too. Because he will come up with something and he wants it done right then. Glenn and I were the ones that would say to him, "No, you can't do it that way. "

You have to talk to him and get him to look at it from our point of view. And sometimes he'll say, "Well, OK, I'll go ahead and do it your way, but I'll still say this or say that."

And we'll say, "Okay, but we're all going to do it this way: we're looking out for you and the whole organization!" And he will listen.

Integration of the tactical into the strategic

Issue campaigns tend to be designed piecemeal; There's an organizing component, a lobbying component, a communications component. As Bernie Horn observes, "Too many advocates learn the craft of particular pieces of a campaign: How to put on a conference; how to do a TV ad; how to do a TV campaign. This they learn it over time. And so, their idea of good is doing the thing that they've learned very well."

DeMarco's plans, as we have seen, seamlessly integrate the components into the whole: public education through the media stimulates coalition building. Progress in coalition building creates media advocacy opportunities. Lobbying waits upon both, and builds upon both.

Political

Scrupulously non-partisan in his issue campaigns – never endorses candidates or raises money for them – DeMarco nonetheless understands that state elections determine well the legislative environment that his campaigns meet in Annapolis. Of course, his pledge campaigns are designed directly to spur the election of candidates who will support his initiative. But, beyond that, he quietly participates in broader efforts to support progressive candidates and rid the legislature of reactionary roadblocks.

Maggie McIntosh, herself a highly skilled political leader, illuminates this side of Vinny's long term strategy:

Vinny is highly political. He has great political skills. His calculation is that 'm going to take this issue and I'm going to use it to get the right governor, the right set of people elected, *building*, and continuing to expand a progressive legislature.

He made a very strategic decision one year *not* to let a bill pass, and used that as an organizing tool then, for the elections. Having legislators, candidates, everybody sign on, sign the pledge, use it in polling. He made the polling very public. So if I were running in a district and I knew that my opponent hadn't signed the pledge, I could use it against him. So it was highly political.

He used the election to raise money and to do radio ads about those candidates who signed and those who didn't. You know, that helped one candidate or another. But it was legitimate, it was legal, and it was real. And so, when the governor and the state offices are elected and we come back, he gets his bill. And we also because of it have a more progressive legislature.

Vinny is also part of a loose coalition, it's not a formal coalition of teachers unions, other labor unions, environmental groups, Quality Maryland,[V.?] and other progressive groups that meet toward

election campaign time, and say to each other, “Here’s an area where we need to elect somebody more progressive, how can we do that?”

He has been a part of that ongoing dialogue for decades: quiet groups, no real affiliation formally, but who send their best political strategist and Vinny’s been at that table.

Responsive to challenges and opportunities.

Yes, most campaigns commence with some plan based upon an assessment of the campaigns strengths and weaknesses, the political environment, perceived obstacles and opportunities – all of which begin to change the moment the campaign gets under way.

There are two tendencies among advocates faced with significant change in any of the above: One, stick to the plan rigidly; two – the opposite - abandon the plan; start over.

DeMarco does neither. When confronted with the single most devastating, plan-challenging event, the defeat of strong ally Kathleen Kennedy Townsend in her race for Governor she was widely anticipated to win, but lot, DeMarco certainly changed the course of the Health Care for All campaign, *but* he did not abandon the plan, or its goal. He did develop a series of interim, incremental objectives, with discreet campaigns. But, never abandoned the long term plan – the term just got longer,

Compromise, the Movement Killer

Nothing induces more pain in a campaign leader than confronting the perceived need to compromise – to accept less than the full campaign objective and, if so, confronting the question, *how much less?*

A coalition- especially a DeMarco coalition - is painstakingly built to support a very specific, concrete objective: e.g. a \$1.50 cigarette tax increase whose proceeds are to allocated in precisely enumerated ways, meeting the priorities of each element of the coalition – the glue that keeps the coalition coalesced.

Pulling back any element of the objective thus threatens at worst the participation, at best the fervor, of those coalition members who had bargained for just that element.

This is also where the ideal confronts the pragmatic, and the subterranean schism between idealists and pragmatism surfaces. True believers, like the single payer advocates, have a hard time *hearing* that compromises must be made if any significant advance is to be made within the foreseeable future.

Sometimes, they don't even care: one member of the Health Care for All coalition told DeMarco that he would *oppose* the cigarette tax/Medicaid expansion effort *extending medical coverage to the most needy would undermine public pressure* (almost non-existent) *for single payer legislation!*

There is also, commonly, a perverse disincentive for campaign leaders to compromise, even when the necessity is plain: In the world of public interest advocates, blame for failure to achieve *any* success can be blamed on many external causes, e.g., powerful, secretive lobbies, weak inside political leadership, a hostile media. Thus the leader who fails to win is rarely blamed or held accountable – *and* lives on to fight again, and again. Some issue organizations, Right and Left, have thrived for decades by never quite winning.

By contrast the leader who proposes a compromise which is achieved can always be second guessed by rivals or malcontents who can claim, after the fact and with no evidence to rebut, that the compromise wasn't necessary, that the full objective could have been achieved without backing way.

When the \$1 cigarette tax increase and Medicaid expansion both passed in the November 2007 special session, DeMarco had to confront coalition leaders who grumbled that more could have been achieved towards a full blown single payer system, and many of DeMarco's closest allies found it hard to forgive DeMarco's neutrality on the authorization of slot machines, not convinced that neutrality was the price that DeMarco *had* to paid to achieve the tax increase Medicaid expansion.

DeMarco is a pragmatic strategist. We have observed him negotiate or accept compromise time after time – the serial erosion of the 1999 cigarette tax increase from \$1.50 to \$.36 (though he won more than a total \$1.50

increase in subsequent years); the elimination of the desired allocation of tax proceeds to the priorities of his coalition members both in 1999 and 2007; agreeing in 2007, to sever the cigarette tax increase from Medicaid expansion; and giving up for the foreseeable future, as a political mirage, the initial vision he and Peter Beilenson had shared of an uncompromising single payer system.

Bishop Miles agrees with the necessity of these compromises:

The single don't live in the world as it is. They live in the world as it should be. And when you live in the world as it should be, solely, then you become irrelevant. I think that's what's happened to single payers, that they become irrelevant to the argument. Good politics is the ability to compromise. And if you can't strike that balance, then you soon become irrelevant to the issues of the day.

I think it was Martin Luther King who said if you love without power, it's sentimental; and power without love is crass. You need to be able to strike the balance. You need your zealots to keep you reminded that what you are ultimately aiming for is the world as it should be and to move the world as it is in that direction. But understand that you don't achieve that overnight. And many times it's baby steps that you take. And sometimes you take three steps forward and four steps back.

David Cohen, known for almost five decades as the “Dean of Public Interest Lobbyists” on Washington’s Capitol Hill has observed DeMarco’s campaigns with growing respect and delight. He sums up his strategic playbook, in the language of a (multi-sport) coach:

What's terrific about Vinny is that he has taken organizing beyond Alinsky--Vinny can rough people up politically, but it's a nuanced and strategic tool rather than just plunging into the line. He develops passers and shooters, playmakers and defense so there's constant motion with direction, and to mix all the sport metaphors, he can call audibles and develop strong relays (think baseball and the stamina to run track).

Strategic Communicator

Strategic Communicator. Strategic Communicators are public teachers, masters of media advocacy; gaining the media's attention while framing the story in ways that support the policy objective. They are skilled at formulating key simplified concepts within "sound bites". They translate complex scientific data, complex public policy, and basic concepts of truth and justice into accurate, powerful metaphorical messages, the significance of which can be instantly grasped by the broad public. They understand the power of stories and embed their policy objectives within stories that resonate with broad publics.

We have already observed and analyzed – at length – DeMarco's role as a communications strategist. But Strategic communicators also display a gift *as* effective *communicators* themselves: as persuasive in whatever media they are participant in delivering the messages they need to deliver to the target audience.

In Chapter [X] "How Do We Get Them to Hear It?" we write of direct communication, in particular lobbying. And indirect communication, media advocacy: delivering messages through the mass media. Here, we focus on DeMarco's effectiveness as a media advocate. In the next section, the Insider advocate/Lobbyist, we'll assess his communications skill as a lobbyist.

No one calls DeMarco an *eloquent* speechmaker. His speaking style is direct and unornamented But almost all call him "*convincing*," if not at a grand podium but in smaller settings: in recruiting new allies one on one, or in small groups of potential allies, or restive, even rebellious old allies; and as a lobbyist We have seen how he can persuade independent-minded coalition leaders and members to turn, swerve, change course drastically in mid-campaign, *endure* over decades.

Communications skills are requisite in almost every category of campaign leadership – we will touch upon DeMarco's communications skills especially as we discuss his roles as lobbyist and organizer. Here, we focus on his role as media advocate

As we shall see, some DeMarco critics in Maryland, even some allies in issue campaigns, complain that he is a "presshound," whose name and voice saturate the state's media because of his hunger for personal publicity. We'll deal with the truth or falsity of that accusation a little later, but for now it's

important to recognize that 2/3^{rds} of his media advocacy work never results – or is intended to result – in his name appearing at all in the news coverage.

This is true, first, because, as we have seen, DeMarco spends much time and effort cultivating the comfort and trust of key journalists and producers *when he has no story at all to push*, so that when the time to write or produce a story on a matter that he *is* concerned with, the writer will automatically reach out to him – not necessarily, or primarily for a quote.

Vince Wilmore is the deeply experienced Communications Director for the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. He's observed DeMarco's media advocacy work closely and he explains why the reporters come to him, and why he is such an effective media advocate even when silent in print or on the air:

Vinny is very media savvy. He knows how to work with the media. He knows how to talk about issues in a very accessible, media friendly way, yet it doesn't come across as spin. It comes across as accessible, forthright, and I think that makes him a very credible source for the media. It's a combination of him going to the media and the media going to him, because the media knows they're going to get good information and a good quote from him.

From everything I've seen he's very well respected by the Maryland media. But he also understands how to work effectively, how to do effective media advocacy, everywhere he works. He does it well himself, but he's also very good at helping others do it effectively and understanding how the faith component of our work appeals to the media - the credibility the faith community brings to the issue, and a new angle for the media - the media's always looking for a new angle.

Vinny will credibly tell a reporter where a story is heading, which reporters need and they want. They're guides for their readers and they like to have sources who can help them be good guides, accurate guides for their readers. A very effective way of doing advocacy is when you can credibly talk to a reporter and tell them where a story is going. There's an element of objectivity to it and an element of advocacy to it. And Vinny's good at doing both. He's telling them the direction he sees something going in a way that's credible but in a

way that also helps him make the case for whatever it is he's working on.

I don't want to downplay his uniqueness, but I think probably in most state capitols and state government, there are few trusted people who work with government as advocates that reporters go to whom they understand are advocates, but who they can also go to as credible guides to what's happening. And in fact, I think that's a key part of being an effective advocate: if a reporter thinks they can always go to you and you're not just going to give them your spin on your issue, they're not going to find what's really interesting. If they need that kind of a quote, they'll go to you. But if they need someone who's going to credibly tell them, "This is what you should be looking for; this is where this is going, what's really going to happen here. Whether *it's on or off the record*, those are the most valuable sources. And Vinny has clearly carved out that kind of a role for himself in Maryland, that people go to and they know he's an advocate. But he's also someone who's going to give you a savvy view of the lay of the land on an issue.

Though DeMarco is not a credentialed expert on any of the issues he campaigns on, his long time colleague Maggie McGinnis, Chair of the House Environment Committee observes that he becomes *enough* of an expert so that reporters covering the issue instinctively turn to him:

He does use the media, and he uses it very effectively. He has used it, not only effectively, but politically. And now he is viewed as one of the leading experts on healthcare in the state. For the press, he is a go-to person on healthcare in the state of Maryland, and he has tremendous command of the issue and is very well respected.

Spokesperson

And, yes, DeMarco is *also* an effective spokesperson.

Looking far back at DeMarco's success with the first gun control campaigns, in which he served as spokesperson, *his* media strategist, Bernie Horn, sums up: "One thing that he did was the media. He is a really wonderful spokesman. And it's because he is very authentic and is very comfortable speaking and interesting things come out of his mouth."

The Baltimore Sun's Fraser Smith comments, "Vinny is not a First Paragraph guy." By which, he means, quotes from an eloquent authority figure or a novel newsworthy source, like the ministers or Health Commissioner Beilenson, often lead the story. But DeMarco's quote, down in the body of the story frames the message.

For example, the first paragraph of The Cumberland, Maryland story on community support for the 1999 cigarette tax increase, les with reference to the sponsoring group, a "children's advocacy group working to gather support for an initiative aimed at curbing teen smoking by boosting the Maryland state tax on cigarettes by \$1.50 a pack."

But it was followed by this quote from DeMarco: "Too many people are dying because of cigarettes, and the best way we can protect people is by decreasing teen smoking. We're kicking off our statewide campaign in Cumberland because we've gotten a lot of support in Cumberland. We want to go from one end of the state to the other."

Though buried in the body of a story, it will often be DeMarco's quote that seizes the attention of the headline writer or the editor who chooses what quotes to highlight in a sidebar outside the body of the story.

So in highlighting a story in the same campaign featuring a new poll, one local Maryland paper chose this sidebar, "What the legislature of Maryland will see is that the people of Maryland want this to happen."

Not subtle; but targeted, and clear.

Presshound

Let's examine this complaint that DeMarco is an ego driven "Press Hound." His young colleague Matt Celentano offers a closely viewed perspective:

Some people accuse him of being a press hound. It's not that he's a hound and wants coverage for his ego; he just knows that the more coverage he gets pushes our issues further along and he's *good* at it.

Here's a perfect example. We spent two years campaigning for the Wal-Mart bill, Fair Share Healthcare. It was a lot of work; there was a

team of about 15 people or so that were doing the work. Finally, the state Senate voted to approve the bill. I turned around, and Vinny was gone.

Everybody else is high-fiving and hugs. “We finally did it!” But Vinny’s He’s in the media room, with 6 different versions of releases ready to go, right after the moment. And I’m just thinking, “Wow!”

He wants the story framed the way he wants to frame it: that we wanted that law because it’s a portion of the healthcare for all bill. It’s not healthcare for all yet. It’s just the next step in the journey. He also wants to get the coalition’s name back out there for the victory. This will help us get more funding, more visibility to go and complete the job.

If proof be needed that Vinny’s media presence is not motivated by an insatiable need to see his name in print, hear his voice on the radio, see his animated face on TV, it would lie in his total invisibility, or lowly placement, in news events featuring stronger messengers for his causes, most notably whenever he has organized allied clergy to speak out. And when authority or expertise are required to substantiate the message the campaign needs, it is Johns Hopkins experts or Health authorities such as Baltimore Health Commissioner Beilenson, or key policy makers, credible celebrities, and cogent victims who are put forward, with Vinny invisible or in the far background.

In the 1997-99 campaign, biggest news event was the Ministerial Alliance. The Faith leaders were up front in the Press Conference, and in the story. But down in the body of the story, DeMarco was briefly, cited – though not quoted – with the message the whole event was calculated to deliver to legislators:

Vincent DeMarco, executive director of the initiative, said the ministers joined a group of more than 290 state and local organizations that have endorsed the tobacco tax increase. DeMarco said every candidate for the General Assembly is being asked to endorse the \$1.50-per-pack cigarette tax increase, and his organization will publicize which candidates agree to support it and which don't.

In most of his National and State Faith United Against Tobacco media advocacy, DeMarco does everything possible to get media attention, *except for himself*. It's the Southern Baptists Dr. Land or the Methodist's Jim Winkler who lead the stories, because they *are the story* Demarco needs and wants told. Winkler

I must say, I find Vinny and Patricia to be amazingly modest. There are plenty of activists who would make sure that they are up there, they're making a statement. "Okay, I've got Land, I've got Winkler, whoever, but *I'm* going to be up there, too." But they don't; no, uh-uh. They are very shrewd and they're very modest. And what they do extremely well that too often church leaders don't do, is that they cultivate the media.

Sosa reports:

Many times, Vinny's the one that gets invited to speak. He says, "Oh Patricia, you go ahead and do this, I can't do it." Or, "You do that." But most important is that it is the faith people that are bringing the message forward. He made them believers; they now own it; they own it as much as much as we do. All he does is facilitate their involvement. That's all it is. But it's really their message."

During the Fair Share Health care campaign, it was important for DeMarco to showcase support *other* than his own campaign. Giant Food's Barry Scher recalls, "When Vinny was called because he was the leader, he would often delegate press calls to others. He would say to the reporter, "Here's the answers to your questions, but I want you to talk to Barry who represents Giant. I want you to call Bishop so-and-so; he represents all the churches in Baltimore."

And the media would say, "Sure." He gave them the names of credible individuals that the media was quick to respond to, because they always wanted more comment.

Tobacco Free Kids Gilmore concludes, "Vinny's bottom line is being effective and achieving his goals. If it makes sense for him to be out front in doing that, he will be. If it makes sense for him to be working with others to be out front, he will do that."

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend reacts with impatience to the charge that DeMarco seeks personal fame and glory – though she acknowledges that ego plays some part.

First of all, I don't mind if people promote themselves through good. We're born with egos. You're talking to a politician – I'm certainly not going to sit there and say, "Oh no, one shouldn't get in the paper; one shouldn't have an ego."

The issue is what you use your ambition for. We all have ambition, and some of us have more than others. But the question is how we use our ambition. And I think Vinny uses it very basically, the common good. And so, halleluia! Isn't that great?"

If he wasn't in the paper, nobody would hear about his campaigns! What's the classic question? "If a tree falls in the forest, who hears it?" you've *got* to be in the paper. So halleluia! I'm glad he's in the paper."

I wish others could get into the paper as well as he can. I think it's important to be, to have a voice. It raises his stature when he's in the paper. It means that other people know who he is. They have to deal with him. And it means that he has the stature without to give money to the legislators, because they know he can be in the paper.

The *Baltimore Sun* and the *Washington Post* put him in the paper because they know what he's saying is important and worthwhile. There are lots of issues that are important and worthwhile. Why aren't those people in the paper?

Bishop Miles sharply dismisses the charge that DeMarco is a presshound, "Vinny has been very effective at utilizing the press. This not about him; no it's not about Vinny. It's about the issues that he's passionate about."

Insider Advocate.

Insider Advocates are those veteran lobbyists, trusted political advisors, financial supporters, and others close to and wise in the ways of the political process. They understand – and keep up to date – on the internal politics of

government, the political alliances and feuds, the “powers behind the throne, the political debts, and the motivations below the surface. They are vital sources of intelligence to advocacy campaigns. They intuit the approaches and arguments that resonate with policy makers, and press them in ways that are not easily dismissed. They are skilled negotiators, and positioned to influence and open doors to key policy makers

Is lobbying really a **leadership** role, even if the lobbyist is well-connected, learned in the ways of the legislature, trusted by key legislators/ truly a campaign **leader**? Maybe; maybe not. But what we do know is that a campaign which cannot draw upon such inside advocates is severely, perhaps fatally, handicapped.

Lobbyists come in a wide range of relative effectiveness. When public interest groups with a policy agenda simply shop for a well-known professional lobbyist in the state capitol, they may well be buying a door opener to a legislator’s office, but not necessarily his or her mind. “Access” does not equal influence. Worse, a lobbyist who indiscriminately takes on a roster of clients may be negative drag on a campaign that needs to be confrontational, counseling caution in order not to burn bridges needed to serve other clients.

Far better is a lobbyist like Eric Gally, who has served as the American Cancer Society’s lobbyist – and **only** ACS lobbyist – for many years, building trustful relationships, knowing who to trust and who to be wary of, learning the dynamics of the legislative process, understanding the tailored messages each legislators needs to hear to be moved, serving as a reality check for colleagues less steeped in the ways of the Capitol. He has influence because he represents a substantial and respected organization. Gally is certainly a key member of the Cancer Societies policy leadership team.

DeMarco lobbies. He can be an effective lobbyist. As far back as 198?, when DeMarco was a leader of the Maryland Young Democrats, and spearheaded the passage of the bill to ban the notorious crime weapon, the Saturday Night Special, Bernie Horn credits his lobbying as the key to enactment over the frenzied opposition of the National Rifle Association:

Passing this bill was a miracle. It was more of his personal lobbying than anybody else’s that got this bill passed. He was just incredible

Is DeMarco a *great* lobbyist? Not exactly. Bernie Horn draws a distinction between DeMarco as lobbyist, and Len Lucchi. Lucchi, among the closest advisors to DeMarco, a key member of his brain Trust, has been a professional lobbyist in Annapolis since he was 24, operating independently out of his law offices in Annapolis. Unlike the majority of professional lobbyists, he will represent only clients that fit comfortably within recognizable liberal parameters: labor unions, municipalities, and, as we have seen, any campaign that DeMarco is engaged in.

“DeMarco,” says Bernie Horn “is a fine lobbyist in his way. But he’s a very straight-forward, almost bull in a china shop lobbyist., but when it comes to a more delicate approach, our friend Len Lucchi is a truly great lobbyist. Len has stepped in and out of the story, but when some real lobbying know-how has been needed, he’s been the one.”

Veteran Giant Food lobbyist, Barry Scher observes:

Once you sit down with Vinny DeMarco, you get to understand that he has, indeed, done his homework. He’s very good with facts and figures, and his research was really second to none. I gained an appreciation for a guy that really was driven, but he had the facts, figures and backup materials to prove all the points that he mentioned.

I remember at that time saying to myself, “He’s really an astute individual,” He has continued to be very professional, and he’s gotten more attention from legislators because of his doing his homework on issues.

But is DeMarco truly an influential “insider?” He certainly didn’t start out as one – and may never really be one, in the usual sense. Ironically, whatever influence DeMarco has as a lobbyist, he may owe to tobacco lobbyist, Bruce Bereano. Barry Scher explains:

I’ve been in Annapolis representing Giant on issues since 1973. Four or five years ago, I started hearing about this guy named Vinny DeMarco, and what I heard from other lobbyists was, “He’s a kind of off-the-wall guy. He always has a relentless pursuit of whatever he

goes after. But he's a little nutty. You don't want to get associated with that guy. He's really strange, he's really weird; looks like he just got out of bed, and is kind of off the wall."

When I first got to know him, he was looking at healthcare issues as well as smoking issues, I recall. And his proposals, because of his demeanor, weren't really accepted in Annapolis circles, because it was a white-shirt-suit atmosphere in Annapolis four or five years ago. It's a little more informal today, because we have younger politicians.

It used to be the "good old boy" network in Annapolis. But at the same time, four or five years ago, the system itself in Annapolis, the lobbying profession, was changing dramatically. There were some missteps by a number of other lobbyists that caused the State Ethics Commission to finally, after many, many, many years, sit up and take notice of lobbying practices in Annapolis.

And the good old boy network slowly changed to what you have today in a very professional lobbying cadre. We can't even buy a cup of coffee for a legislator. Five years ago, you would easily pay for a meal and buy drinks for the whole bar if it was full of legislators. And you could buy tickets to sporting events for them. It was definitely out of control.

Bruce [Bereano] was the one who too many times put his toes over the line, and got in trouble. And the reform started, a lot of people say, because of Bruce's missteps. So, today, you have a more professional cadre of lobbyists, and the good old boy days have been changed because the Ethics Commission came up with extremely tight restrictions on what we can and cannot do as a registered lobbyist.

But even Scher acknowledges that DeMarco is not exactly the smooth, ingratiating lobbyist that makes legislators feel comfortable, "Vinny's style is still a little rough at the edges; but not so much of a nut as was depicted by many of my peers."

Many legislators remain uncomfortable with DeMarco. Bishop Miles has a simple theory: "When he's on an issue, he won't be put off. He's tenacious, and that irritates people, especially politicians. Politicians don't want people

who are consistently in their face. But that's Vinny. He has a way of just being persistently there."

Len Lucchi, though invariably on the same side of issues as DeMarco, is very much an insider. Unlike DeMarco, he dresses professionally; behaves soberly; is measured in his approach. He has been lobbying even longer than Bereano. He is as much an insider as Bereano.

David Weaver, [job], a veteran, highly respected Maryland political communicator, draws the distinction between DeMarco and Lucchi, "Len provides the polish. Vinny is a very excited and excitable guy. He burns hot, red hot, all the time. Not Len, Len is a much more reserved."

When asked to respond to the suggestion that he plays the role of "good cop" to DeMarco's unnerving "bad cop," Lucchi, smiling, responds:

Oh yeah; many times: He'll be in the House of Delegates building, His hair is wild; he has his papers under his arm, falling out of his briefcase, and he sees several delegates across the hallway. He yells, "Delegate!" He starts running in their direction.

All of a sudden, the whole hallway clears out; they all run in and hide in their offices. Then I started harvesting each office, It's like putting depth charges in the water and having the fish pop up.

...

Weaver sums up the DeMarco/Lucchi working relationship:

Len is the lobbyist of the team. What Vinny does is create the environment for the legislation to be enacted or to be advanced. He's working, a year or two in advance to set the stage for a bill to be enacted. And while Vinny's there during the session, of course, and very much involved in the debate, Len's involved in the strategy from the outset; then he's the guy walking the halls, the on-the-ground lobbyist.

Vinny's the air traffic controller for the ground troops. If something changes in the legislative dynamic, Vinny has the ability to rally the

troops at the push of a button or pick up the phone and you've got a whole coalition marching on Annapolis.

You mention Vinny's name to most legislators, and either they groan or they look physically uncomfortable, because they know he is going to hold them accountable. He's going to ask them for something. Obviously, every lobbyist in town is asking him for something. But most of the lobbyists in town don't have a proven record of making people pay.

The rap on Vinny among people in power is that he is a pain in their ass; he's a thorn in their side. And that's exactly what he *has* to be. If they're comfortable, things aren't going to happen. Obviously, every lobbyist in town is asking them for something. But most of the lobbyists in town don't have a proven record of making people pay. They don't have the hammer.

What do they call lawmakers who oppose Vinny? "***Former legislators.***"

DeMarco, then, in his own way, is a highly effective lobbyist. But he hardly seems to fit the notion of an advocacy leader with *inside* influence.

Throughout this book, I've drawn sharp distinctions between DeMarco and Bruce Bereano, of whom Senate President Miller could say, even after Bereano's conviction for campaign financing abuse, "I'd be less than candid if I didn't say he was one of my closest friends." And who could exit his halfway house confines in the morning to lunch with two former governors.

Throughout this book, I've drawn sharp distinctions between DeMarco and Bruce Bereano, of whom Senate President Miller could say, even after Bereano's conviction for campaign financing abuse, "I'd be less than candid if I didn't say he was one of my closest friends."

When Miller first met DeMarco, his opening salvo was, "Oh, you're that bomb-thrower".

Yet there is a side to DeMarco's relationship to power, which our case studies have highlighted. Not drinking buddies. Not, "One of my closest friends;" never made a campaign contribution. Instead of picking up the tab

for lavish lunches and dinners, the only comestible DeMarco ever parts with – and that sparingly – is a jar of mother Rose’ tomato sauce.

Yet over the years he has developed - sometimes only after a painful start – a “tappable network” of truly strong and trusting collaborative relationships with key executive and legislative leaders – and their most influential staff members and others

One revealing example of DeMarco’s ability to activate his network in a direct tug of war with Bereano at the climax of his 1997-99 cigarette tax campaign over the support or opposition of the state Comptroller, William Donald Schaefer:

Bruce Bereano was very close to Schaefer. But an equally close Schaefer friend and advisor was Lainy Lebow-Sachs, whom DeMarco had come to know well and saw as the voice of Schaefer’s good angel. “While Bruce tugged Schaefer in the pro-tobacco and pro-business direction, Lainy always pushed him to do things like fight for gun control and other social justice causes,” he says. “I spent months meeting with Lainy to convince her of the importance of the tobacco tax effort to reduce teen smoking, and when she was convinced she helped me reach out to Schaefer. Luckily, Schaefer sided with Lainy on the tobacco tax and not Bereano.”

In the same way, despite cool personal relations with Governor O’Malley during the 2007 cigarette tax/Medicaid expansion campaign, DeMarco made it his business to develop and nurture good relationships with key O’Malley staff, and then, to honor and applaud the Governor – not neglecting the ceremonial presentation of the honorary jar of tomato sauce – laying a firm foundation for future collaboration.

We’ve also seen how DeMarco so alienated delegate Mike Busch when Busch was serving as Chair of the House health committee that Busch was prompted to delivered a fierce public scolding of DeMarco. Yet Busch told me several years later,

[Busch quote]

State Senator Thomas M. (“Mac”) Middleton, close to Miller and from a tobacco growing region, opposed DeMarco in the 1997-99 tobacco tax fight, yet nearly a decade later, as Chair of the Senate health committee, Middleton

worked closely with DeMarco to push through the cigarette tax/Medicaid expansion legislation. DeMarco saw to it that Middleton was presented with one of the annual Martin Luther King awards for his Senate floor leadership of the Fair Share bill – cementing a close working relationship of mutual trust.

Another illustration is DeMarco’s close friendship with Maggie McIntosh, Chair of the House Environment committee. She says:

And, one more, Chris Van Hollen

[quote]

[Add Vinny comment on close working relationship now with Pete Hammen]

Together with Len Lucchi and others among his close working allies, such as Glenn Schneider, Eric Gally, Bishop Miles, Scher, DeMarco has indeed succeeded in forging a formidable network of influence within the power structure in Annapolis.

So he fits, if somewhat awkwardly within the category of *inside* advocate, though he still retains the many of the qualities – for both good and ill - of the unwashed *outsider*.

Fundraiser

Fundraisers find ways to secure the essential minimum resources to mount a broad citizen campaign.

[To be written later]

