
FULL COURT PRESS

*A Full Service Public Relations, Public Affairs
and Crisis Communications Agency*

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

FCP started as a dream in 2000, a plan in 2001, and business in 2002.

Reflecting back on ten years in the Bay Area as a social change communicator, I believe there are five big things I've learned along the way that will guide our work in the years to come.

1. Mentors matter

I can still recall a cup of coffee on a cold Washington evening with a woman who is both a competitor (friendly) and mentor in 2002. In the years since, she has never failed to give good advice, share the challenges she faces as a business owner, or even trade war stories about shared clients. Another mentor has continually reminded me that FCP is a business first, and sometimes that requires hard decisions about people power, expenses and even the services we provide. A third has challenged me to continually think big and long-term for our clients, even when our clients can't do it themselves. Through it all, these friends and others like them have always been an email or phone call away. As a small business, this team of experts has been crucial.

2. There are no competitors - only collaborators

It seems counterintuitive in a highly competitive professional services market to say that there are no competitors. However, the world of social change communications is very small. There are no shortage of problems to help our clients solve, and always a need for more talented folks to help out in the marketplace. We are a small network of service providers and I am continually amazed at the generosity of my peers. I believe we all share a primary challenge to continually broaden the field of potential providers and customers -- and to continually preach the importance of smart and strategic communications. With this, the work will come.

3. Go Slow, Go Fast

On behalf of a client, we worked for 5+ years on one issue. We helped shape a strategy that patiently laid the groundwork so that when the window of opportunity opened to make the change they wanted, we were able to mobilize quickly and be an active player in the public and policy dialogue. For another, we waited over a year until the NYTimes and a major TV news broadcast could find the time/talent/resources to do a story timed to the Copenhagen talks. As a learning for clients, it's ok to be patient and invest in laying good groundwork. For us, it's important to be ready and able to go fast when the moment calls for it.

4. It's all changing, it's all the same - no matter what happens in media revolution, good planning & strong implementation win every time

Early in this decade, we sold press conferences and news clips. Today, clients are still demanding visibility...just in a lot more places - on-line, blogs, social media and yes, even in newspapers. What continues to amaze me is how we are all tempted to run before we are ready to walk on an issue. Often, when we are first called in to a client, regardless of the situation the client thinks they are in, there is always a need to step back and do some strategic thinking before we dive in. It's how you win...and a good practice anyway.

5. We aren't the first, and won't be the last (thank goodness)

There are giants in our "industry" that have invested decades of time and effort to help social changemakers become more effective communicators. In recent years, many Funders, national and regional firms have also invested time and energy to train a new generation of advocates and philanthropists on the importance of strategic communications. We at FCP are lucky to be able to ride in this jet stream and are doing everything we can (pro-bono trainings, mentoring, building friendships) to ensure that the young advocates of today are ready to invest in planning and implementation of communications in the years to come.

Bonus item: Its about People, not the work

Our field attracts the most passionate, talented, bright and loyal communicators out there. My FCP colleagues have provided me with a small microcosm of the folks I've met across the country working as strategic communicators for social change. To a person, each has demonstrated a restlessness with the status quo on the issues they felt needed to change and set out to do so with relentless effort. Each has always been humble enough to seek counsel and improve themselves as communicators and advocates. Many thanks to all the colleagues that have come through our firm and to the many friends I've made along the way. We look forward to another decade and more of social changemaking through communications.

Thank you to our clients, our peers, our collaborators, and all our employees past & present for a wonderful decade. Here's to many more to come.

Happy Holidays.

All my best,
Dan Cohen

