

From We-Think to We-Do

Keeping your strategy secret is one thing - but by reflecting and collaborating with other campaigners, you can bring the whole movement forward.

Campaigners don't often get together en masse. But when we do as a sector, I've always found it incredibly interesting. Seeing die-hard activists, e-campaigners, lobbyists, PR experts, policy officers, evaluators, hackers and more take an active interest in each other's work has inspired me to listen to my peers and work alongside them even more.

That's why I became the Chair of the [Campaign Benchmarking Forum](#) three years ago. I took on a mission to help campaigners from across the sector to share best practice and try to establish benchmarks for campaigning. Meeting one Friday afternoon every quarter, we shared outputs, challenges, successes and failures, and heard from leading figures across the campaigning world about their work.

I found that sharing of ideas, results and lessons learned to be incredibly useful. The level of detail that we could process in the time we had unfortunately meant that we didn't benchmark outcomes, but we did separate what worked from what didn't.

Charles Leadbeater put forward in his fantastic book [We-Think](#) back in 2008 that 'In the economy of ideas that the web is creating, you are what you share.' The Benchmarking Forum for me took us as a sector beyond the creation of social capital, to positive collaboration to solve problems and learn from each other's mistakes.

If we hadn't got together as a group, my campaigns wouldn't have been able to optimise split testing or best balance mass e-actions with personalised emails and letters; I might not have avoided framing them around the concept of Gordon Brown's first 100 days as Prime Minister, which created minimal response from the public; and I wouldn't have checked my spelling in case my campaign name during election time had the letters 'cruel...tory' in it. The Charity Commission told the unlucky organisation in question to change the name!

These are just a few of the lessons learned from the forum - there have been many more, including from the invited speakers. The group is now called the Campaigning Forum, but continues to focus on sharing, learning and best practice. I've stepped down as Chair to focus on my consultancy work - but I'd encourage you to sign up [here](#).