

Communication Skills Development for Political Canvassers

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to study the development of communication skills for political canvassers in terms of 1) communication problems; 2) communication patterns; 3) necessary communication skills; 4) approaches for developing. This was a qualitative research based on in-depth interviews with 8 key informants, chosen through purposive sampling. The results were as follows: **1) Communication problems:** canvassers lacked a deep understanding of the candidate's policies and vision; canvassers lacked knowledge of the principles and practices of presenting information; canvassers lacked persuasion skills; and canvassers lacked a system for taking records of voters' concerns and desires. **2) Communication patterns:** (a) giving information about the candidate and his or her policies; and (b) responding to criticisms or accusations from other political parties or opposing candidates. For both purposes the methods used were group discussions, door-to-door visits, public speaking and social media. **3) Necessary communication skills:** storytelling, giving reasons and justifications to counter attacks, giving examples for clearer explanation, persuading, creating phrases that are short, to-the-point, easy-to-understand, meaningful and grabbing, and creating infographics. **4) Approaches to developing better skills:** workshops to change attitudes; build confidence in the candidate and the political team; give detailed information about the candidate's vision, ideals, knowledge and abilities; teach about the principles and practice of all the necessary communication skills; provide practice by giving mock talks several times in different scenarios until the canvassers are experts at it; and follow up on the canvasser's progress and give tailored pointers on how they could further improve.

Keywords: developing communication skills, canvasser, local politics, election campaign