

How to effectively control politicians who fear of losing their positions

This is an excerpt from the book

How to make your Government do the Right Thing;
3 common marketing strategies that can help citizens control
political performance

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2. How to effectively control politicians who fear of losing their positions

Regarding the fear factor there are only two potential outcomes; politicians¹, will either fear of losing their positions or will not. For those that do fear of losing their positions, elections are unlikely to evoke the degree of fear necessary to positively influence their political behaviour. Politicians who hold public office and decide to run again as candidates are aware of the fact that the public can be persuaded into voting for them again even when what they really deserve is to be banned for life from any further involvement in politics. With the right mix of propaganda, deception, lies and promises, all politicians in power stand a chance of winning the next elections and this can serve them even more as they develop close ties with media and journalists. Moreover, when a prime minister or president is elected for a period of four or five years, they can always take

¹ Meaning those politicians who are members of government or parliament.

advantage of a gullible public's short-lived memory to remain in power. Even as they dedicate the greater part of their term exploiting and misusing political power, they may still win the elections if they allow just a fraction of this power to be used for the public good towards the final few months of their term. In case their attempt to remain in power and get re-elected is not successful at once, their second attempt may stand greater chances to be victorious as the public will have forgotten their old mistakes and their successors in power will most likely have been proven equally if not more disastrous during their term.

Hence, what I intend to stress out here is that although politicians may fear of losing their positions they will not have this fear due to elections. We cannot expect politicians to act today, right now, for the benefit of society based on an event that will follow after a few years and which event they can always manipulate to a lesser or greater extent so that it turns out

on their favour. What we, as citizens, need in order to take advantage of politicians' fear of losing their positions, and make them work for the betterment of our societies, is to make it impossible for politicians not only to get re-elected but also to remain in their positions and exhaust their term in office, if they do not perform as well as they should. Thus, if holding on to their positions is their primary concern, then in order to make politicians act responsibly in favour of citizens today, tomorrow and every day, we need to make them live constantly in the fear of losing those positions. Instead of making this fear a one time thing during the elections period, when they know it is coming and they can prepare themselves to deal with it, we should make it a daily issue. This is the only realistic way, we can rightly expect governments that consist of politicians who are attached to their positions to be forced to look out for what is the best for society in every matter, challenge or problem, and decide to take action and implement it.

However, if this is what we need to do, then how do we do it? How do we make politicians who are clung to their offices, become so feared they will lose their positions so that they produce results for the benefit of society and its citizens? To put it more bluntly, how can we set up a system that exploits their fear for society's benefit? These are questions that torture the mind not only of political thinkers, but even the minds of regular citizens who see politics, politicians and political parties as the most distrusted institutions of society. Strangely enough, the answers to these puzzling questions lay far closer than we could ever imagine.

Obviously, one way to achieve this goal would be to hold elections more frequently, let us say every two years, or even annually. But in this case again politicians would have plenty of time to exploit power for their own benefit, and make a couple of last minute decisions that would meet the public's demands and make them favourites for re-election. Well, if this is the case, then

I am afraid the only possible way to take control of the situation would be to hold elections every day. But this, apart from being practically impossible, would see political decisions on each matter repealed every day bringing chaos not only into politics, but into day to day life itself. It seems then that in order to avoid this chaos we would reluctantly have to accept a gap of several months or years between elections. This however, should not restrain us from thinking of other possible ways to put a president, minister or member of parliament in the risk of losing their position. If elections cannot make this work for us we ought to discover other means to hold politicians accountable to society.

After all, constitutions and political systems of the modern era were formed in the basis of protecting several inalienable rights of citizens against abusive politicians and governments. Protectionism is thus at the heart of our political culture. What is missing though is the right type of measures that will protect people from their

governments and the misuse of political power. The best way to make protectionism work is to formulate a set of proactive measures that will direct the exercise of political power into the right path before it becomes exploitative and abusive.

In today's politics, elections results are considered as the final verdict of voters. This verdict cannot be changed or challenged no matter the circumstances, before the expiry of the presidency or governmental period. This of course gives politicians the upper hand and puts society in a rather unpleasant position where it has to withstand and cope with their government's policies no matter how much these oppose the general will of the people. However, this should not necessarily be the case. If we want to make politicians, who are fearful of losing their offices, to work for the good of their society, elections results should no longer be seen as a conclusive result that cannot be repealed or cancelled. A president, prime minister, minister, or a member of parliament, should

never again rest assured on his/her chair, knowing that whatever decisions he makes, whatever laws he votes for, whatever policies he adheres to, his position is not at risk. Even though a prime minister or MP may be elected for four or five years, this should not secure him/her of their position for the full period of their term in office. Actually it should not secure them the position they got elected into at all.

After they get elected, all politicians should be examined for their eligibility and capacity to perform the duties that society expects them to perform. Only after they have been tried and tested should politicians be given the clearance to undertake the political duties they were voted for. When they do, politicians should then be responsible for their political actions and performance from the first day of their term. From that point onwards, all politicians should be periodically examined every several months or even weeks and give accounts for all their decisions. Even though free will, personal judgment and the

conscience of each elected official should never cease to guide political decision-making, we must make sure that these are used to serve the common good of society and the interests of the people. Hence, the way politicians use their conscience when given the opportunity to serve their country, should become the decisive factor by which all public officials are being held accountable. As long as they honour their position and serve society they should be allowed to complete their term. In any other case they should be forced out before its completion and consequently get a fair trial for the actions that caused their removal from office. Of course, putting together the right measures that will have the desired effects in improving the performance of politicians who are fearful of losing their positions in power is a challenge in itself. How are we going to check whether politicians are performing well or not? Who is going to perform these checks? How often will they take place? What should we do with those politicians who are deemed to

perform ineffectively? These are only a few of the questions that we have to deal with when considering our options in improving the way politicians and governments perform.

Now, fortunately for us the ideas discussed above are not new. Actually, we use them every day in the way we conduct our business and in the way we behave as consumers of goods and services. Consider for example how businesses operate today. Every business and employer would be justified to terminate their contract with an employee if he/she is not productive, or does substantial damage to the business, or simply does not comply with the rules of the company. In the same manner, we are justified to terminate the supply of a service we are no longer satisfied with, or simply substitute a damaged product with a proper one. However, no matter how natural this seems to us as consumers, as citizens we have been taught to consider elections as the only way to control and discipline our politicians. In a business context, this

would be the same as saying to business owners and employers that they would have to keep at their payroll a reluctant to work, disobedient, unproductive employee until the end of his/her contract which may extend to several months or several years. There is not the slightest chance that a restaurant owner would keep paying a waiter who does not know what the menu is, talks impolitely to guests or turns up with stained uniform or poor hygiene, whatever contract he/she has signed with him. Why then should we keep our politicians for the full time of their four or five-year term when they are obviously incompetent or reluctant to solve problems and find solutions to society's problems and challenges? This absurdity becomes even greater when we consider that the damage a politician can cause with one signature or vote, affects not only one person, household, company or business but the whole of society. Nonetheless, the treatment the political system reserves for politicians is as if their incompetence and

failures have no negative effects on any part of society whatsoever.

The argument of holding politicians accountable for their actions with means other than elections, from the moment of their appointment to the last day of their term, may be better understood if seen from a consumer perspective. Everything we interact with that entails choice, selection and purchase is a transaction by which we acquire a product or service. When we choose a product or service that we wish to acquire we use some type of currency to buy it. Politics, no matter how peculiar it may seem, is not any different from this kind of transaction where we choose a product and buy it. Hence, even when we vote for our governments or members of parliament we are really performing a transaction for which we use our currency of trust to buy the service of this political party instead of another or this candidate instead of another. Politicians and political parties can thus be seen as products or services that we buy with our vote of

confidence in them in order to improve our quality of life and level of well-being. As we do with any product or service before we buy it, we first examine thoroughly the available options to see which ones have the specific traits we are looking for, in the same way we examine a mobile phone's or tablet's memory space, camera quality etc. After that preliminary process we end up with a couple of choices and we compare the parties and the politicians that lead them, read through their political programmes and decide to buy the one that is more convincing in performing more effectively the service that we as citizens require.

This makes electoral processes no different than the processes consumers use to buy goods and services; elections have been commercialised to such a great extent that results seem to depend heavily on how well the political products of parties and candidates are being marketed. However, unlike our consumer-based societies, political marketing is extremely limited in

scope and is centred exclusively on the electoral process. Normal products are promoted with a mixture of marketing strategies that go well beyond just persuading consumers to buy them; businesses are also equally interested in making products and services that provide the desired results for buyers, are efficient, and ensure customer satisfaction. The political system, on the other hand, is a business which is only interested in making sales, i.e. having voters participating in general elections and buying one of the political parties-products that run for public office. This is why political parties and their leaders who run for presidents and prime ministers are restrained to persuasive communication; propaganda, advertisement and promises are the only tools they use to entice voters into buying them instead of their adversaries. As a result of its sales-making orientation, the “political system” business uses only a fraction of the marketing strategies available to promote its products. This complacency occurs not

only because it is a monopoly and there is no competitor political system to choose from, but because politics is essential to our life and citizens' participation in the political or electoral process is vital to run the country. However, although politics are far more important and influential in our lives than any product or service will ever be, the framework within it operates makes people abstain from the processes that bring into power the people who determine the quality of our lives and our future. But because politics literally rules our lives we do not have the luxury to abstain from the processes that decide how our lives will be ruled. Thus it is imperative to develop a political system that encourages citizen engagement in the process of electing governments and MP's. In order to achieve this we need to reform our political systems in Europe so that they produce political parties and politicians that provide efficient service to the citizen-consumers and ensure their satisfaction.

Another paradox that has allowed our current political system to thrive is the fact that the harsh reality of the business world does not apply to politics. Whereas any company that does not provide good service and demand for its products is falling will be soon gone from the business map, this is not the case for the political system and its supporting elements. No matter how disillusioned citizens may become with politics, politicians and political parties, the political system will never cease to exist. At worst it will just keep renewing itself by providing constant change of its central political figures, party leaders etc, in order to maintain citizens' hope that one day something maybe will change and politicians will miraculously start to care for them, serve their societies well and work for the public's general interests. Of course this day never comes, and where it does it is only a short break from "business as usual".

This lack of threat to its own survival makes the business of politics uninterested

in undergoing a deep transformation which would put politics in the service of our societies. But unlike all other businesses, the politics business is really our business and we are the only ones who can change it. This change can only happen if the people themselves awake to the political reality they are living in and start to actively demand reform of the political system so that its products (political parties and politicians) begin to fall into the laws of consumerism. And what do those laws of consumerism tell us? They tell us that we human beings, as consumers are free to choose, buy, and use the products and services we like and need for as long as we want. They also tell us that we are free to replace or throw away these products if they are no longer useful, they are not as efficient as they were, or we simply want to get rid of them. But human beings, as members of a society are not only consumers, they are also citizens. As citizens we should be even more free and powerful to choose, buy and use the

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