

# Wendy Riemann: Advantageous Advocacy: The FUP

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During my first week as speechwriter for then Florida Governor Jeb Bush, a letter landed on my desk that said, “Wendy – FUP – Jeb.”

Confused, I strolled over to the beloved communication director’s office to ensure FUP did not mean I had somehow gotten myself fired in week one. She informed me that FUP was the governor’s way of asking someone to follow-up (and that I still had a job). In what would become my first of many FUPs (Follow Up Please) from the governor, and a valuable lesson in responsive customer service, I immediately followed-up with the letter writer and resolved the issue.

If LOL and OMG have been added to the Oxford English Dictionary, then FUP makes it into my personal dictionary. First as a word, and second as a critical best practice.

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Advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint, and the FUP is a critical tool for success in the endeavor.

No meeting is ever one-and-done. As explained in last month’s column, we should always say “thank you” after a meeting. Expressing thanks is a perfect first FUP in advocacy. For example, “Thank you for taking the time to meet with us about school choice... Here is that information you requested about positive academic gains...”

FUPs continue the dialogue and demonstrate a person is willing to put some skin in the game on behalf of the cause.

Previously, 1492 Communications surveyed dozens of Capitol Hill and state government staff about the follow-up. An overwhelming 75 percent said that they task at least 50 percent of their group meetings with providing them some sort of additional information before the staff member follows-up on the request. For instance, please send me that article mentioned, or the study referenced earlier, so I can consider this further.

Staff temporarily pass the buck to the group. If the group sends the requested material, then the staff person FUPs on the items. If a group lets the task fall to the wayside, often the staff does too, perceiving it as an indication of the group's lack of commitment to the cause.

When I served as the Director of Federal Relations for Wisconsin, I personally tasked groups with a FUP on more than one occasion for various reasons: sometimes I was busy at the moment and wanted to buy myself a couple of days waiting for the reminder to appear in my inbox, other times I did not sense the group was going to help carry the water on the issue so I first wanted to check their engagement level, and still other times I genuinely needed more information to make a sound decision or run it up the flagpole. Whatever the reason, as one person with a limited number of hours in the day to work on only so many important issues, tasking the FUP is a popular way for staff to let the cream naturally rise to the top.

A concerning part of the survey was that 75 percent of staff also reported that less than half of all groups FUPed within one week of the meeting. That means not even half of groups sent a thank you note within a week to someone who took the time to meet. That is not an effective way to build relationships or advocate for a cause.

We can complain all we want about slow government bureaucracy, however if our groups are not even doing the very simplest FUP of expressing thanks and sending relevant materials that were promised, are elected officials the only ones at fault for a lack of progress?

Alternatively, if the majority of groups are doing a poor job at following-up in support of their cause, it presents a huge opportunity for engaged groups to capitalize on getting noticed and move the needle.

FUPs are an important and natural way to improve relationships and gain trust - and they are easily done. After sending the original thank you FUP, consider marking the calendar to FUP a month later by sending a relevant article to the staff person to

keep the issue in the forefront. Continue FUPing until you sense you should not. Most often, the advocate and the issue will be better off because of such tenacity and customer service.

FUPs demonstrate a person is engaged, cares about outcomes, and is willing to pound the pavement on the issue. Start marking your calendar with FUPs today and a positive outcome will be noticed soon.

— *Riemann is president of 1492 Communications, a consulting firm. Like [1492 Communications](#) on Facebook to learn more.*