

Lobbyists' role

Respect the process, deliver the facts

By **DON HARRIS**

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Webster's Random House College Dictionary says a lobbyist is "a person who tries to influence legislation or administrative decisions on behalf of a special interest."

Like it or not, lobbyists represent special interests, whether in the public or private sector. Furthermore, Webster defines special interest as "a body of persons, a corporation or an industry that seeks or receives benefits or privileged treatment, especially through legislation."

Nevertheless, lobbying is a vital component of government at all levels, and Arizona practitioners of this profession agree that to be successful, a lobbyist, above all, must be truthful and should explain all sides of an issue, even the "other" side.

Firms

Stan Barnes Jr., president of **Copper State Consulting Group**, has been on both sides. A former legislator, Barnes served two terms in the House and one in the Senate starting in 1989. "From that vantage," he says, "I got to see everything."

Barnes' approach to lobbying and maintaining credibility is basic. "Tell the truth, tell all sides of the story and treat elected officials with the honor and respect they deserve," he says. "And every now and then, push hard and read them the riot act when they deserve it."

He sees an advantage in being what he calls "a smaller shop." Barnes explains: "You can be more particular about your clients because in the big outfits there is great demand for more volume, to make the financials work. We don't have that pressure. It allows Copper State to have the freedom to work for clients that we want to work for."

Bigger does not equate to better when it comes to political consulting. "In some industries, the Wal-Marts of the world have an advantage. In lobbying, the reverse may be true," he says.



PHOTO BY BILL COATES

Stan Barnes Jr.

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— Stan Barnes Jr., president, Copper State Consulting Group, on his approach to lobbying

Like most lobbying operations, Copper State's successes involve securing passage of favorable legislation and defeating measures that aren't so favorable. "Over the years we've saved clients millions of dollars by defeating bad legislation that was adverse to their interests," Barnes says. "The Legislature on occasion desires to regulate or tax or otherwise negatively affect an industry, and we've been in a position to help prevent that from happening."

On the positive side, Barnes recalls a legislative success in the field of energy.

"Some years ago we had done a lot of work in energy, electricity generation and other kinds of energy issues," he says. "One that I am most proud of is having helped in efforts to give consumers a choice in their energy purchases. It's an ongoing political battle not only at the Legislature but at the Arizona Corporation Commission. It has been rewarding to work on that and it has been good for Arizona."

Kristin Cipolla, a rookie by any standard, joined **The Aarons Company** last September and began lobbying with another Phoenix firm a year ago. Yet she learned fast under the tutelage of **Barry Aarons** and **Mike Williams**.

"I definitely find it very important to take time to meet each legislator, especially the new ones," Cipolla says. "I try to spend five or ten minutes with them in a social setting, finding out if they're married and if they have any kids. Then when the session rolls around they know who

you are rather than just on a professional level."

To maintain credibility, she says, "Admit when you don't have a complete understanding of an issue, take the time to do the research, and ensure that you keep legislators and clients up to date on things going on at the Legislature."

"Of course, tell the truth — that applies to just about everything."

Cipolla's first year of lobbying was as an assistant. "I was behind the scenes, tracking bills and arranging meetings," she

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