



FUELING A MOVEMENT OF FREEDOM AND FAIRNESS FOR FAMILIES AND SMALL BUSINESS

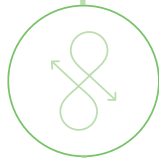
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As an independent government watchdog fighting for hardworking taxpayers, Illinois' comeback story starts with the Illinois Policy Institute – a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that generates policy solutions to unleash Illinois' talent and entrepreneurial ability.



ASSIGNMENT

Devise a comprehensive brand strategy that fosters holistic marketing campaigns



CHALLENGE

How can the Institute move beyond public policy to become more marketing-centric and consumer relevant?



RESULTS

Engagement levels went through the roof for digital, social, grassroots, and donor targets.

- Three legislative victories for Illinois families
- Giving increased 30%
- Triple-digit increases in website visitors (250%), Facebook fans (254%), YouTube views (654%), and Twitter followers (129%)
- Five brand awards for marketing content including a prestigious Peter Lisagor Award

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Consumers don't often realize that they are impacted by public policy every day:

- The pothole on your street? Public policy.
- Hailing an Uber? Public policy.
- Eating from a food truck? Public policy.
- Overcrowded school? Public policy.
- Starting a small business? Public policy.

The Illinois Policy Institute focused its efforts on achieving positive public policy for several years. If property taxes are too high, or pension debt rises, the Institute has a solution.

Confronted with the problems of public policy, a small (but dedicated) audience was prepared to fight. However, that audience wasn't large enough to make any significant impact. Public policy was lost amidst politicians, media, consumer apathy, and the Institute's own messaging. It was time for a radical shift.



JOHN TILLMAN

CEO Illinois Policy

“We had a great product (in our people, policy, and research), but needed to market the institute like a consumer brand.” This was something not seen in the industry.”

COUNTER CULTURE

Tillman and team looked to AE Marketing Group to transform the Institute into a marketing-centric organization, to allow for a more dramatic penetration of its policy solutions. As AE Marketing Group CEO Brian Walker noted, “I was impressed by the talent inside of the Institute. They were some of the smartest people I had ever met and were passionate too. But we had two major hurdles from day one – operationalize the brand to become a holistic marketing machine and a culture war.”

A strong brand is only as good as its internal and external forces. The Institute had to shift its internal forces away from just policy, and toward stories that real people could relate to and more easily understand.

Since relationships cultivate over time, and the Institute corporate culture was embedded in legacy thinking, the new approach required a sustained effort. However, by working together through the development of department collaboration and promoting 1-on-1 coaching, the operational process was slowly reengineered, solving the internal brand challenges.

REAL PEOPLE, REAL STORIES



A MOVEMENT OF FREEDOM & FAIRNESS

The Institute's internal focus started shifting away from strictly policy work to focus more heavily on marketing strategy. It was critical to create a series of stories that involved real people, showing the Institute's policy in a new light. Messaging was everything. The series needed to be simple, emotional, and authentic.

The halo effect of this strategy was that it demonstrated to Institute staff that people, not policy, were at the heart of their work every day. For example:



James Nuccio and Gabriel Wiese wanted to bring their food truck, Beavers Donuts, to Evanston, IL, but couldn't because city code only allowed existing brick-and-mortar restaurants to operate food trucks.



Jailyn Baker, like many Illinois students, just wanted a quality education, but didn't have access to one in her neighborhood.



Pam Harris was happily working as a mother and home-care provider for her son until the SEIU tried to intrude upon her home and the supervision of her son.

MARKETING CENTRIC

Over a period of just 90 days:

- **Research** heads **became** campaign **marketing** managers
- Editorial processes were aligned to **maximize reach** and content impact
- Storytellers were tapped to recruit and **document real people** around the state
- Those stories were layered on an **integrated media and grassroots plan**

What happened next was truly transformational:



3 victories against legislation negatively impacting Illinois families



30% increase in donor acquisition



Triple-digit increases in website visitors (250%), Facebook fans (254%), YouTube views (654%), and Twitter followers (129%)



5 brand awards for marketing campaigns and content