

Three Effective Tips From Brexit Campaign: Is Fear Manager's Ultimate Weapon?

IN JUNE BRITAIN WILL DECIDE ABOUT STAYING IN OR LEAVING THE EU IN A HISTORIC VOTE. WE BELIEVE THERE IS MUCH THAT MANAGERS CAN LEARN FROM THE OPPONENTS' ARGUMENTS



Breeding sheep is in danger in Britain.



The moorlands will dry up without the subsidies...



Export of the Scotch whiskey? In the ruins!

In June Britain will decide about staying in or leaving the EU in a historic vote. We believe there is much that managers can learn from the opponents' arguments?

Our best days lie ahead! An independent Britain would set an inspirational example to the world," says Michael Gove, the Eurosceptic justice secretary. "Leaving EU's Single market would be 'one way ticket to a poorer Britain'," predicts Chancellor George Osborne in his speech. "A 'No' vote means a jump into the abyss!" evaluated the expected referendum chief economic commentator of the Financial Times, Martin Wolf. Both sides use very pathetic weapons. Vote Leave employs a visually and emotionally striking video on their website: "Let's spend our money on our priorities like the National Health Service. NHS is in danger by £350m sent to the EU a week! ...the euro is a broken currency; we will pay for the euro bailouts and immigration from the new countries!" Against this stands 280 artists, among them actors Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley, who signed an open letter in support of the UK membership in the EU bloc in May. The UK membership in the EU, among others, was endorsed by the U.S. President Barack Obama and Pope Francis. Both main campaigners work with fear in their rhetorical mix: On the Vote Leave web

back with solid and rational arguments. Yet, in May, a month before the moratorium on the political campaigning, it launched an aggressive 'fear campaign'. If the country leaves the EU, then following events will happen (in a chronological order): British pensioners will get poorer by hundreds of pounds a year, farmers will lose their subsidies, the cost of a family holiday is about to rise by £230 a year, threatened are financial sectors in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, the British wine exports are in great danger, the sterling depreciates by 20%, Britain enters recession and some 500,000 jobs disappear, home prices will fall by 10%, it's also bad for sheep breeding and export of scotch whiskey, UK energy prices may pop up, all of which would result in loss of the entire young generation. Will the intention of Her Majesty's government to convince the voters to stay be successful? Heaven only knows. Managers should however be aware that too much fear employed in arguments harms your impact on the public, as some psychology research says. Why? Fear is often the ultimate negative motivator, when we want to make someone to put things in motion. Alas, as a method of persuasion it only properly works when it's used with a pinch of salt. The danger of 'country-wide scaremongering' is its uncertain effect: When people are scared, they often respond in three adverse ways: They flee, fight, or remain paralyzed, undecided. For higher turnout in the referendum, it's certainly not an encouraging vision...

Yet how can –if at all – managers use fear to persuade someone effectively? Here are our three tips:

- 1. Fear works as a method of persuasion, but only to a limited extent.** Do not scare everybody about everything! Thus, your impact is significantly reduced. Spreading fear should be measured and should be based on a deeper analysis of the audience, for example your clients or employees. To scare people and make them do what you want, four conditions must be met according to the Protection Motivation Theory of psychologist R. W. Rogers (1983): a) The consequences of disobedience must be very unpleasant, b) adversity has to have a direct impact on your audience, c) disaster can be avoided by following your advice, d) it is in their power to comply.
- 2. To enforce your ideas, work with emotions.** Show a picture or video, tell a joke or use an exaggeration. The British government initially chose a laced rational approach, and then it employed a strong campaign built on fear. In contrast, Vote



How much fear is it necessary to induce in the voters to avoid Brexit?

Leave employed some witty and peppery rhetoric: Its cartoons make fun of the rigid EU. It uses simple (not so kosher) comparisons, for example, the £350m spent on the EU weekly equals one unbuilt large national hospital.

3. Be cautious when using third-party opinions to answer a sensitive, e.g. patriotic question: You risk making your audience angry. For advice on whether Britain should remain 'British' or stay in the EU, do not ask the IMF, OECD, President Barack Obama, the G7 or the Vatican, as did the British government. Foreign recommendations on how to vote in the poll may have just the opposite effect on any undecided British voters...

–mf–

” *How can one take a considered view of the pros and cons of Britain's EU membership when we are being warned of war, recession and aiding Isis, all in the space of a single week?*
—Sebastian Payne, FT editor, April 2016

page, this is represented by the threats of immigration and permeable borders with the EU. It is accompanied by clear demands: Let's make our own laws. Take our money back from Brussels! At the beginning of the year, the British government held somewhat

scaremongering' is its uncertain effect: When people are scared, they often respond in three adverse ways: They flee, fight, or remain paralyzed, undecided. For higher turnout in the referendum, it's certainly not an encouraging vision...