

## The Two Levers Required to Enable the British Men's Movement to

Move Forward...

***By Peter***

I strongly think that to genuinely get heard, we need two things:

### **1. Enough coherent voices**

### **2. Funding. Lots of funding**

In order to get both, what is absolutely critical is an umbrella group (as you mentioned as one of your suggestions). There are many men that have been affected by, and grown up with, the anti-male bias across society. I'm sure they would like to help, but, for now, it is not clear where they should get involved. The men's movement is (as a fledgling movement) highly disaggregated.

This umbrella group should have representatives from the different men's societies. It should act as a coordinator of the groups. It must recognise that different groups have different goals and thus should leave them to act autonomously. However, on particular issues that unite the group - such as man-bashing or misrepresentation in the media (cf the Panorama 'mockumentary') - it should provide a unified voice. This is the only way to bring a coherent, singular, large and more compelling voice to the issues facing men.

Moreover, it should 'feed downwards'. If particular member groups need support capitalising on an opportunity (e.g. petitions, talking in parliament), it should use this men's umbrella group to quickly and effectively reach out to other support groups.

This would also go a long way to resolving point 2 on funding. There would be a stronger voice to attract financial support. Through funding, it is possible to raise awareness in the public. The majority of men and women are decent, upstanding individuals who abhor discrimination. However, they aren't as aware of the issues as one would hope - and, in the case of many men, they aren't sure how to voice their dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs.

They are also concerned that if they do, it will reflect negatively on them (just look at all the slander and libel that kicked off on the innocuous men's societies in the Oxford and Manchester Unis). Attracting funding will enable pioneers like yourself to (1) raise awareness, (2) build media contacts and (3) help propel men's issues into the mainstream. Once in the mainstream proper, there will (hopefully) be a virtuous circle of financial support as more become aware of the plight of men and, thus, more will donate

## **Designing a Men's Umbrella Group...**

### **The target market**

We need to recognise who our target market is. As we are aiming for growth with limited time and resources, we can't start by blanketing the populus (whenever such an approach doesn't have synergies with our target market). I would posit that the most likely to empathise with men's issues are:

1. Men aged less than 30. They have been most exposed to the misandry in their youth and thus it is more deeply rooted in them
2. Women aged less than 30. They may be less likely to empathise as they haven't been as exposed directly to the system. But they also haven't grown up in the previous misogynistic system and are thus less likely to take a 'tit for tat' view
3. Fathers who have been exposed to the courts system
4. Mothers with sons
5. Partners of men who have observed the bias

Of course, the above would not preclude others potentially supporting the men's movement. It simply represents a hypothesis on those most likely to do so

### **The channels**

Once recognising the target market, we need to access channels and forge links with other entities that speak most to them. Universities, colleges, men's magazines, popular internet portals like [askmen.com](http://askmen.com) and men's health.

### **Communications strategy**

We need to be balanced and fair in our communications strategy. I understand there is a lot of anger and frustration out there. But the reality is that the only way to create change is to relate to the general population. No company, politician or well-to-do individual will associate themselves with an organisation that propounds fringe or extremist views. Especially on masculism, when it is only emerging and still a partial (though less and less so) taboo to discuss.

If there is a clear point that the 'umbrella group' only focuses on supporting men's issues (rather than lambasting women's issues), it will minimise the political risks of being associated with such a group. I know many men who recognise the problems, but will not involve themselves with extremism because either (1) it's too risky for their careers or (2) most commonly and importantly, they don't empathise with such extreme views and chalk off those with such concerns as angry, marginal elements of society.

We need to recognise that the movement is new and has a behemoth blocking it, that will make growth hard until a certain level of momentum is built. For the avoidance of doubt, I think people like yourself are doing wonders to enable this momentum. As a result, we can't just expect to have the same voice attributed to us. We should encourage anyone who speaks up for men's issues. They will not always be able to propound the depth of the problem. The behemoth will prevent that. But when they do, we should be supportive of his or her points, not critical of the exclusions. We should offer to work with them going forward to help them get their views across. This once again, would be the purpose of the umbrella group - acting to foster external support that covers a wide range of men's issues

## **Clear goals**

In order to avoid free floating, any group of individuals must have goals and timelines. It can't just be reactionary. Each member of the group should submit its 'top three' goals for the year to the umbrella group.

In aggregate, this would result in a long list, where men can more clearly see what the organisation is trying to do. The umbrella group should have inwards and outwards facing goals. Inwardly - supporting member groups on flagship initiatives. Outwardly - raising finance and liaising with large external organisations (in conjunction with its members of course)

In line with the above themes, the umbrella group must stick to its mandate. There are organisations out there which support men's rights, but, for example, far too often veer off course into other issues such as global politics and heated, contentious areas (e.g. unions, capitalism, taxes, marriage vs. single parenting).

The organisation needs to avoid alienating members by trying to represent them on issues that do not reflect the 'statement of purpose'. It needs to respect members by not trying to speak for them on issues they did not join the society for. Any organisation can only be successful if, in its entirety, it works towards its mission statement.

## **Recognise we can't make all men happy all at once**

Different men will have different priorities, based on what they've been through in life and the injustices they've faced. Not all are fitting in the current climate. There are many that are though. Such as (1) men's health, (2) education for boys (3) father's rights (4) certain aspects of law (e.g. rape anonymity) (5) man-bashing the media. Other aspects, while important, can be too easily twisted and at all costs, we must work on the matters that broader society will accept more readily as issues

Simultaneously, and as I touched on some paragraphs above. We have to have a selective membership. If your organisation is focused on (1) lambasting women, (2) going off topic, (3) skewing the facts - then that wont do. You have to be a balanced, respectable representative on the issues that face balanced, respectable men in society today.

## **The product**

At the very least, I can see a website. This website would be well structured. It would have sections on the various issues facing men (such as the 5 above). Contributors would be the varying member groups and anyone who directly works in the umbrella organisation.

A periodical should be provided for members - emailed to their accounts

It needs to actively provide mechanisms such that members can voice their concerns on any articles in a way that affects change. E.g. online petitions that will subsequently be submitted to relevant bodies.

It should contain various resources for men. As an umbrella group, it will primarily source these from the member societies (e.g. support in providing a better education for your son, support in divorce cases, domestic violence). This creates the scope to produce a 'one stop shop' for supporters of the men's movement

It should also carry positive elements that celebrate being a man (as with the point of 'clear goals', this should not put down women - that's not the purpose).

The group must also reflect the successes we have had. This is of course motivational. But also, the only way to attract funding and membership is to clearly demonstrate that the organisation is making headway. It will be slow at first, change always is, but with a clear organisational strategy and multi-year plan, members can take comfort knowing they are building towards something fantastic, something colossal and something unprecedented

**End**

*Published by The Rights of Man ([www.therightsofmantypepad.co.uk](http://www.therightsofmantypepad.co.uk)) on 14 February 2011*