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# Grassroots for Hire: Public Affairs Consultants in American Democracy (Business and Public Policy)

*Edward T. Walker*

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Although 'grassroots' conjures up images of independent citizen organizing, much mass participation today is sponsored by elite consultants working for corporations and powerful interest groups. This book pulls back the curtain to reveal a lucrative industry of consulting firms that incentivize public activism as a marketable service. Edward Walker illustrates how, spurred by the post-sixties advocacy explosion and rising business political engagement, elite consultants have deployed new technologies to commercialize mass participation. Using evidence from interviews, surveys and public records, Grassroots for Hire paints a detailed portrait of these consultants and their clients. Today, Fortune 500 firms hire them to counter-mobilize against regulation, protest or controversy. Ironically, some advocacy groups now outsource organizing to them. Walker also finds that consultants are reshaping both participation and policymaking, but unethical 'astroturf' strategies are often ineffective. This pathbreaking book calls for a rethinking of interactions between corporations, advocacy groups, and elites in politics.

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