

# New Labour

## Reconnecting New Labour and the public

With Promise's help, Tony Blair and New Labour set a political precedent by winning the general election for a historic third time. In the months running up to the election, Promise helped turn a declining party into a winning force. A powerful reconnection strategy was launched which increased the female vote by 8% and provided new insights into future election strategies. Having won the elections, Mr. Blair said outside Number 10 "I have listened and I have learnt. And I have a very clear idea of what the British people now expect from this government for a third term." This opening sentence was inspired and drawn directly from the reconnection strategy devised by Promise.

### The Problem

Promise identified the disconnect between the public and the Labour Party as the underlying reason why they faced such animosity from voters. What caused this disconnect? Part of the problem was that the public's idealisation of Mr. Blair in 1997 turned into a negative view by 2005, with female voters characterising this broken relationship as a 'damaged love affair'. Also, Britain was faced with a new climate of insecurity. People's views of brands often depend on the environment in which they exist and our research showed world events such as the 9/11 attacks and lawlessness, disrespect and antisocial behaviour among our own people to be the main drivers behind this climate. Moreover, people's wants, needs and concerns were very different then than they were in 1997 and 2001. For these reasons, Promise's hypothesis was that the New Labour brand, personified by Tony Blair, had lost its attraction for the British Public. The solution we proposed was the 'reconnection' strategy.

### Our Strategy

Having presented these ideas to the party, they were intrigued with the idea of how to reconnect Tony Blair with the electorate and saw this as the key challenge. The reconnection strategy included:

- Reconnecting Tony Blair to the electorate.
- A strategy to deal with Tory competition.
- Enhancing the New Labour brand.

### Our Solution

- We ran two three-hour workshops to look at the issues in more detail and from more perspectives. It was clear from the workshops the issues were multilayered. Our analysis focussed on the developments in respondents relationships with Mr. Blair personally, and how this was a crucial aspect of the disillusionment that typified those who were no longer likely to vote Labour in future.
- The Prime Minister carried out the reconnection strategy by facing difficult discussions with live audiences on Channel 5 and, most notably, BBC's Question Time. Mr. Blair was undoubtedly worried, perplexed and even shocked by these encounters, but he did not lose his temper, demolish or humiliate his critics. He endured the trials of reconnecting with people who had a tarnished opinion of him right up until polling day, using local radio phone-ins as a means of reconnecting with the regions.

*"I am often presented with things that are challenging and wrong. What you have discovered is both challenging and right." – Tony Blair on Promise insights*