A Guide to Tactics

We are somewhat reluctant to present a guide to tactics for the same reason that we would not peddle biographies of characters in movies. The characters have no real existence that is independent of the movie script. Similarly, tactics have no meaningful existence outside the strategy of which they are a part. When a given tactic is standing alone, it is impossible to say that it is right or wrong, good or bad, clever or dumb. That’s why tactics come at the end of the strategy chart.

All too often, organizations allow a tactic to take on a life of its own, independent of any strategic context. A group will hear of a clever tactic that worked someplace else and use it without considering either why it worked the first time or how the current situation might be different. For example, word arrived from a nearby state that because people had mailed Band-Aids to their legislators, progress was made on a bill to lower auto insurance rates. Mailing Band-Aids became the new “in” tactic. All sorts of groups started doing it. No one realized that in the nearby state, the legislature was up for election, while their own state elections had been completed just before the Band-Aid frenzy began. Tactics do not work just because they are smart or funny, although it helps.

The worst mistake an organizer can make is to act tactically instead of strategically.

Criteria for Tactics

Once a tactic has been placed in its strategic context, it should be evaluated against five basic criteria for a good tactic.

1. It Is Focused on the Primary or Secondary Target of the Campaign. The tactic is not focused on someone else.

2. It Puts Power behind a Specific Demand. The weakest tactic is one that is not aimed at anyone and makes no demand, for example, a candlelight vigil to save the whales that doesn’t call on anyone to do anything in particular. (If a quarter of a million people show up, as they well might, that is a different story and some politician will rush to implement a measure on behalf of the whales.)

3. It Meets Your Organizational Goals as Well as Your Issue Goals. That is, it builds the organization as well as helps to win the issue. As far as we know, the Boston Tea Party dramatized the problem of taxation but did not help to build an organization. No group took credit for it because it was illegal. Since then, many organizations have used the tea party tactic by dumping something into an appropriate body of water. Usually the press is called and the group’s name is prominently displayed, indicating that the practice of this tactic has improved over the years.

4. It Is outside the Experience of the Target. An organization demanding equal access to Postal Service jobs for Hispanics made hundreds of copies of job application forms for people in the community to fill out. The local Postal Service administrator was taken off guard as this tactic was outside his experience. He blundered by disqualifying the copied forms, insisting that only original Postal Service forms would be considered. This seemed so unfair and so prejudiced that he was forced to back down, thus handing the organization an easy first victory.

In another example, the new owners of a hotel laid off workers and refused to honor their union contract. The workers called on the Religion-Labor coalition for help. The coalition decided on a tactic that was definitely outside of the hotel management’s experience. They came and prayed in the hotel lobby. After four days of lobby prayer, the hotel manager called the union and asked if recognizing the union would end the praying. The union won and the workers were rehired.
5. It is within the experience of your own members, and they are comfortable with it. A citizen organization brought several hundred members to a meeting at a church, from which they were to march to the office of a state official. The members were not comfortable with the idea of the march, which they associated with "protesters." They refused to leave the church. Had the organizers better understood the members' attitude, they might have arranged to have the state official meet with the group at the church.

Considerations in Using Some Popular Tactics

Petition Drives

If you haven't already heard this, you soon will. A politician will tell you, "Don't bring me petitions. I would rather see one or two well-thought-out, spontaneous, handwritten letters than one thousand signatures from an organized group." This is the truth. In fact, what the politicians would really rather see is no signatures, no handwritten letters, and no organized group, and then they could do just as they please. Of course they want you to talk to two or three thoughtful people instead of thousands.

When used properly, petitions are very powerful, and collecting signatures is a good organization builder as well. Petitions and letters in which people pledge to vote on the basis of a politician's stand on your issue are the strongest kind, especially when they are delivered by a large number of people with media coverage. Petitions that are simply mailed to a politician are basically useless.

Where the Power of Petitions Comes From
1. Numbers
2. Strategic Location and Timing

Organized Follow-up
- Signatures gathered from around in a very little impact unless the media, really overwhelming. Signatures gathered in one district where the state Rep. with narrow margins have considerable impact that Rep.
- Signatures presented to an elected official have much more impact than those given to appointed officials (unless the person is likely to run for office in the future or was appointed by someone elected who will be embarrassed).
- Signatures presented to a store owner are of great deal if they come from customers.
- Community petitions the owner of a wholesale plumbing supply company, the signatures will have very little impact.
- Petitions presented a month before an election are much more powerful than twice as many signatures presented a month after the election.
- Every official to whom petitioners are presented should be made aware that the names come from a well organized group and that the signers will be informed of the response that their petition received.

Petition Tips
- Keep the message short and simple. Just a couple of sentences followed by two or three bullet points is enough. You want to quickly get the problem to the reader, not spell out every detail for the person receiving the petition.
- Signature page should be no more than ten signature lines on a page. If you use the petitions in a media event, you will want the page to look large. This is not the time to save space by cramming twenty names on one page. In addition, you want the names to be legible in order to contact those signers interested in volunteering.
- Ask everyone who signs if they want to volunteer. Take phone numbers and e-mail addresses of those who do. (After being called, probably only one in ten will actually show up, but that's fine.) Leave everyone with a piece of literature. You can also ask for a donation.
- Emphasize quantity, not quality. You are going for numbers, so don't spend a lot of time trying to "educate" one person.
- Go out in teams. It's more fun. An organized petition day is much better than asking everyone to do it individually at their own pace.
- People can meet at a common location, be briefed quickly, and then meet back for refreshments and to exchange stories.
- Never give away signed petitions without having made copies. They are useful for follow-up mailings and phone calls. The same petitions can be used again on another occasion with a different decision maker.

Letter Writing

The power of letter writing comes from the same sources as that of petitions. The letter represents a slightly larger commitment on the part of the writer, and where appropriate, it gives you a longer period of contact in which to recruit the writer as a volunteer or get a contribution. Whenever you have a meeting with an official, get dozens of letters written beforehand. Mail in half during the week before the meeting and bring the rest with you. This always makes an impression. Remember, though, that many office holders actually answer letters and thus will have the last word with your supporters. They may use it to explain why you are wrong.

Choose letter writing over petitions whenever an audience is sitting down. Congregations, for example, will often agree to do letter writing for you, either in the lobby or actually in the pews. Letter writing also works well on a busy street corner if you set up a card table. By themselves, form letters on which people sign their names to preprinted letters have the same impact as petitions. Handwritten letters show a greater commitment by the writer.

Letter-Writing Tips
- Have a sample text of not more than three sentences. Print it on slips of paper with the decision maker's address, and tape it to the clip of the clipboard on which people will write their letters. Tell each person to either use the sample or put it in their own words.
- When working with a group or congregation, consider bringing a laptop so that people can dictate short letters.
- Tell the writer to include a return address and the decision maker will probably send a reply. This may give the decision maker the last word, but it also keeps people engaged.
- Ask each person to address an envelope after they finish the letter. Then say, "We'll mail it for you. Would you make a contribution for postage?" Many people will give more money than the postage costs. Collect and mail all the letters yourself. Discourage people from walking away with their letters: they won't make it to the mailbox.
- Combine petition and letter-writing drives with selling something such as buttons or T-shirts, and you can keep the petty cash box full. When you mail the letters, spread them out over a week. They are more likely to be noticed.
- An outdoor letter-writing table requires a minimum of three people. More is better. One
 Meeting with Council Member

Goal: 10 People

Your regulars: 15
From other groups: 10
From phones: 35

Necessary confirmed names: 70
Number of calls to get confirmed: 400 (70 x 7)
Number of calls per person: 20
Number of hours calling: 25

Number of calling nights and people: 5 people x 5 nights

Other notes:
- Stress the past connection—the petition.
- Mention a previous success of the campaign—getting the meeting.
- Indicate that you will be playing a role, even if it is not a speaking role—“By being there, you can show him how you feel.”
- Talk about why the person is needed—numbers matter: Mr. Bookish is elected.
- Indicate that everyone will go in together as a group.
- Ask for a definite commitment—“Can you come?”
- Indicate a reminder call and be sure to make one.

Turnout Events

Getting people to come to events is the core of organizing. It doesn’t matter how good your ideas are, the groups that attract attention are the ones that get people to come and keep them coming back. For a community group, getting people to turn out is almost entirely a matter of good telephone work. This means developing lists of people who have ever shown interest in the organization or its issues and writing down the date and time of every contact and attempted contact with them. Phoning is best done from an office with several phone lines where you can coach the callers. (Borrow an office for a few hours in the evening if necessary.) Having people call from home will also work as long as everything is explained beforehand, but it is not as good as having a central location.

Every organization develops its own telephone success rate over time. The general rule is that of the people who say you’re on your second (confirming) phone call to them that they will come at an event, half will actually come. The calculations that you need to make for a turnout event appear in the chart that follows. Of course, the number of calls you need to get one person to come will be different from group to group. Seven calls to get one “yes,” is the national average. Don’t count anyone “yes” who says, “I’ll try to come.” This is no. The chart shows the necessity of phoning on a factory basis. It can’t be left up to people to do when they get a chance. The call may need to include an appeal for volunteers to make more calls. This is good to do in any way.

Notice the following elements in the call:
- Stress the past connection—the petition.
- Mention a previous success of the campaign—getting the meeting.
- Indicate that you will be playing a role, even if it is not a speaking role—“By being there, you can show him how you feel.”
- Talk about why the person is needed—numbers matter: Mr. Bookish is elected.
- Indicate that everyone will go in together as a group.
- Ask for a definite commitment—“Can you come?”
- Indicate a reminder call and be sure to make one.

Turnout Tips

- Don’t start with the words “Hello, Mrs. Smith. Your name appears on a list in our office.”
- This is traditional but deadly. Instead, something like this:

Hello, Mrs. Smith. This is Steve from United Parents. Two weeks ago we signed our petition to get eye exams screening for the children at Public School 165. As a result of the petition we have a meeting with a member of the School Board, Mr. Bookish. It will be a chance for you to show him how you feel about the screening having been cut from our community. Of course, the more people who come, the more he will have to listen to us. He’d better listen, he is elected. It is next Tuesday, the 17th, at the school. The room is 315. We will all meet outside the building at 5:30 p.m. and go in together. We will be finished by about 6:30. I’ll be there, can you come? . . . Oh, that’s wonderful. We’ll give you a reminder call a day or two beforehand if that’s all right.

Visits with Public Officials

Nothing beats actual face-to-face meetings between your members and public officials. These can be held with fifteen to twenty-five people. If you can, show larger numbers of supporters through petitions or letters. These meetings are usually held in an official’s office. Most elected officials hate these meetings but can’t avoid agreeing to hold them if you have sufficient community support.

Famous Elected-Official Lies

“1 was just about to do what you want, but because you act like this, now I won’t.”
- “I never respond to pressure. I always make up my own mind.”
- “Look, I’m your friend.”
- “I can’t vote for money for your disease group. I’d prefer to let the NIH decide. They have a better understanding of the science.”

Tips for Visits with Public Officials

- Try to meet with elected officials rather than appointed ones.
- Know what the last election results were (general and primary) so that you have an idea of how secure the official’s seat is.
- Because the meeting is small and everyone must be “with the program,” don’t recruit people whom you don’t know.
- Have a single spokesperson who may call on two or three other people to speak. The rest of the group should be introduced, indicating
which other organizations or congregations each person represents. (Don’t say, “I’m a homeowner.” Say, “I belong to the homeowner’s association.”)

- Come with a specific demand, usually that the elected official support some legislation. Have a fallback demand (for example, hold a hearing, do a study).
- Think of the forms of power that you have:
  - Numbers
  - Support of campaign contributors or workers
  - Support of influential people in the community
  - Ability to embarrass the official for not acting in the interest of the community
  - Conflict of interest on the part of the official
  - The official is yielding to pressure or money from special interests
- Try to pin down the official to a specific agreement.
- If you can’t get an agreement, get another meeting.

Public Hearings

Two kinds of public hearings are held: those that you sponsor and “official” ones held by public agencies.

Holding Your Own Public Hearing

The first victory in holding a public hearing lies in getting the public official to come. The virtue of this tactic is that it is very difficult for an official to refuse such an invitation. To do so would be an admission that the community’s opinion doesn’t count. To your own members, the appearance of an important decision maker at their event is a sign of growing power. Often, a group uses actions and other pressure tactics just to force someone to attend its own hearing. If an official does refuse to come, the hearing can be held anyway with a panel of prestigious allies listening to testimony. These might include members of the clergy, other elected officials, educators, heads of organizations, or people in special fields connected with the issue. This type of hearing has several advantages:

- It establishes your group as a focal point on the issue.
- It is an opportunity to do outreach to other groups, individuals, or neighborhoods.
- It shows off your influential supporters and leaders. They can sit on the hearing panel to testify.
- It can showcase a potential candidate.
- It is a display of numbers.
- You control almost every aspect of it, which makes it a fine forum for your point of view.
- It is fun and not very hard to do.
- It is good training for your own leaders.
- It will probably get media coverage.

In planning your hearing, write and practice testimony in advance. It need not be ‘expert’ testimony; in fact, it’s better that it not be. By telling your own stories of how the issue affects you, it makes it a fine forum for your point of view.

A good job of decorating using handmade signs naming the organizations present is one of showing strength. As with most tactics, a small, large turnout makes up for what is lacking in option, so don’t spend too much time with testimony that you neglect recruitment.

Hearings, like any other meeting, should be open within two hours. The trick is to avoid the hearing dribbling away at the end by your strongest speaker until last, and end with a call to action and an announcement of the next step in the campaign.

Tips for Holding Your Own Hearing

- This is not a “town meeting” where all points of view are represented; it is to present your case to the public, to public officials, and to the media.
- To use this tactic, your group must be able to turn out a crowd of at least 100 people.
- Pick a hall of a size that you know you can fill to overflowing. Take out any extra chairs. The goal is to have every seat filled and a few people standing in the back.
- Get the name, address, phone number, and e-mail address of everyone who comes.
- Testimony should be prepared in advance and given by people who represent organized groups. A few individuals can also be recognized to speak.
- Bring letters and petitions to show support from people who can’t come. Conduct voter registration in the back of the room. Read messages and greetings from allied groups.
- Appoint one press person who gives out your release and points the media toward other spokespeople for interviews.
- Close with a roasting statement and give everyone something to do after the event. It could be a leaflet to hand out, a poster to put up, or another event to attend.

A variation on an organization’s own hearing is the Workers Rights Board, created by Jobs with Justice to parallel the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Workers Boards have no legal authority, but they do have moral authority. Respected community leaders, such as a business ethics professor, a Bishop, or the head of the local League of Women Voters, are recruited to serve on these boards. The boards hear cases and make “rulings” about what should be done. The boards are a tactical vehicle for recruiting new people and helping to publicize worker grievances at specific companies.

Attending an Official Hearing

As a result of organizing activity during the 1970s, a great expansion of legally required citizen participation in government decision-making processes occurred. Often this participation takes the form of an official public hearing. Although the hearing is usually meaningless and the decision makers intend to ignore it, it can still be a useful arena in which to move the campaign forward. Where not required by law, groups often demand hearings as a way of opening the debate, delaying a decision, or creating an arena in which to show their strength.

Try to get the hearing held on your own turf at a time when your people can attend. Most official hearings are held downtown at 9 A.M. Fighting to get evening hearings held in your neighborhood is often a good way to build the campaign. It is the type of demand that is hard for a public agency to refuse. If you win, however, you are obligated to produce a crowd.

When you are stuck with the morning time slot and downtown location, try to get on the agenda at the very opening of the hearing. That is when the media will come, and they will not stay long. Also, your people will get tired. Often you must register to speak weeks or months in advance. (This is particularly true for environmental hearings on big state or federal projects.)

Official hearings are boring. Do not plan on keeping a crowd at one for long. Consider having a picket line, press event, or demonstration outside until it is time for your spokesperson to testify. Technical hearings are super boring. It is often not useful to bring large groups to them.

Use tactics that are humorous but that are also in good taste and make a political point. This is particularly important for gaining media coverage at an otherwise unnewsworthy event. A leader of a citizens’ group, for example, appeared at a utility rate hearing dressed as King Corn, the
Electric Gorilla (Commonwealth Edison). A public housing tenants'' organization appeared in the City Council chamber with mice that had been caught in their apartments. Gimmicks like these are good for morale and press but have little inherent power. They are no substitute for large numbers of people.

If the goal of appearing at the hearing is to get media coverage for your position, avoid appearing at a time when opposition groups will also be present. A confrontation between rival organizations will be covered, but the substance of your position is likely to be even more lost than usual. If you want television coverage, you will need to have something ''visual'' for the cameras.

The assumption here is that hearings are theater. Occasionally this is not true. Some legally mandated hearings can be used to build up a case for later court action or to win major delays. Some technical hearings really can modify the rulings of regulatory agencies. Someone on your team should know how to play it straight, which often requires expert technical and legal advice. If your technical testimony is required, try to find a public interest or advocacy group to provide it. And at any hearing, have printed copies of your testimony available for the media, the official record, and general distribution.

A group fighting a utility rate increase discovered that the hearing was being held so far out in the suburbs that people from the city couldn't even find it. The organization called the press and TV news to an event where it released homing pigeons, which, the media were told, were being sent to search for the hearing. The point was made: The stunt got good coverage and embarrassed the utility.

Tips for Facing an Initial Hearing
- Everyone in the group should be easily identified. If your group has buttons, T-shirts, hats, wear them. Point out your group''s or a slogan in large type on big signs that people can stick on their doors.
- Set up a literature table outside the hearing room or on the street. That way you can talk to supporters among the crowd who you do not know. Give them a sticker to identify them as being with your group inside the hearing.
- Prepare a fact sheet or a leaflet to hand out at the hearing in order to explain to everyone just what your group is and what you want. Have the same information in the form of a press statement with quotations from your spokesperson.
- At really big events, appoint one or two ''applause managers'' to make sure that people support speakers with whom you agree.
- At events where there are several floor phones, line your people up all at once. Give them an index card with talking points questions to ask. The first person to be called on makes the first point on the list, the second person the second point, and so on.
- If your group feels it appropriate, don't hesitate to bring large signs or posters. Be able to turn the hearing into your event.
- If the crowd is really with you and the decision makers are actually present, try to get them into making commitments on the spot even though that is not the official purpose of the hearing. Ask that the audience be able to stay and hear what is said on record by voting on the issue and letting officials know that they are allowed to vote.

Mass Demonstrations
Mass demonstrations are a good show, but they are also a lot of work. If you hold more than one during an issue campaign, each must be larger than the preceding one.

you will appear to be losing support. This tactic works best when a single individual is the target. When aimed at a legislative body, it can lose focus and fail to apply pressure to individual members. Consequently, such demonstrations should be combined with direct lobbying.

The nice thing about a mass demonstration is that it is like money in the bank. Once you have produced a thousand people, or a million, you do not need to do it again for a long time. Your reputation will carry you.

Location is critical. You want a place where passing street traffic will feel the event. It is cheating, however, to claim that everyone eating lunch on the mall at noon was part of your demonstration. Eventually, the truth will catch up with you. (What is actually considered a large turnout depends on where you live and on how many people usually come to such events.)

Accountability Sessions
An accountability session is a meeting that you hold with an elected official where you control the agenda. During the session, people from your constituency present information and say why they expect the official to support a certain measure. Then, a panel of your leaders makes specific demands on the official. An immediate and positive response is expected. This tactic's ability to succeed is directly proportional to the numerical strength you can show in relation to the elected official's margin of victory in the last election. High numbers count, as does having speakers who represent large groups. Often, petitions or letters are presented to demonstrate even wider support. The assumption, of course, is that the official is vulnerable and that many of your people either voted for him or her or did not vote at all but will now. If all of your people always vote for the opposing party anyway, you will have much less leverage. Because this is such a useful tactic, an entire chapter of this book is devoted to it.

Educational Meetings and Teach-Ins
An educational event should not be designed solely to inform people. It should also generate publicity and show strength. The measure of successful education is that it leads to action, and this should be built into the meeting. One speaker should present the organization's plans and tell the audience how people can become active. Everyone should leave the meeting with something specific to do.

You are under no moral obligation to represent the other side's position at an educational meeting. The only reason to hold a debate is if you think you can convince an opposition spokesperson or win over his or her followers. And as with all events, whenever you get more than five people in a room, take up a collection.

Civil Disobedience and Arrest
Civil disobedience, like all tactics, should never be seen as an end in itself but always as a way of moving forward a larger strategy. In the early part of this century, when the members of the legendary Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or "Wobblies") packed the jails of the Northwest during the free speech fights, they were not simply assuming a moral posture. Packing the jails in response to the arrest of their organizers really did create a crisis for many towns that had no place to put additional prisoners and no budgets to cover all the extra food and guards. This tactic also brought publicity and built solidarity among the members, who might otherwise have been isolated and intimidated.

In the civil rights movement, civil disobedience often took the form of exercising legal
rights, registering to vote for example, that were recognized nationally but not locally. One part of
the movement's strategy was to force the federal
government to intervene and protect local
activists. When students protesting a tuition
increase seized college buildings, their strategy
was to force the Governor either to increase fund-
ing or to risk violence by causing the arrest of
students who were asking for more than an afford-
able education. In part, the strategy worked
because the Governor had presidential ambitions
and was very image conscious. In the Pitsston coal
miners strike, the miners sat on the road to stop
trucks from moving coal. They took over a breaker
building to attract national media attention to the
injustice of the use of strikersbreakers. Both acts of
civility were part of a careful strategy to
out the company's profits and build national sup-
support for the strikers' demands. Civil disobedience
works as part of a well-thought-out strategy. It is
not an end in itself, as some romantics might sug-
gest. In fact, in many organizing situations civil
disobedience frightens people and may hinder
your ability to recruit members and consequently
your ability to win on an issue.

America, and other countries as well, has a long
history of government agents infiltrating citizen
organizations and advocating violence. This is
done to create a pretext for arrests or to limit the
public appeal of an otherwise popular movement.
Civil disobedience and violence are two different
things. Civil disobedience is doing something that
is morally right and is either legal, or ought to be,
but is wrongly interpreted as illegal by the author-
ities—blocking loggers from clear-cutting a forest,
for example. Civil disobedience can also mean
challenging the illegitimate authority or immoral
acts of the state—for example, by not paying
taxes for war. If violence ensues from such chal-
lenges, it usually is initiated by the authorities.
Legitimate violence by citizens' groups is always
a defensive response. Symbolic displays of
violence, such as throwing rocks at a Jew
or breaking windows, are altogether different
and seldom justified.

You must carefully consider whether civil
obedience is an appropriate tactic for your
Civil disobedience can be effective when:
• Your constituency is comfortable with
tactic.
• Visible leadership roles are available
who don't choose to participate in
civil disobedience. (Many people are
because of family obligations.
• The tactic demonstrates power to the
large persons. Civil disobedience shows your power by
taking into a company's profits or denying
the ability to do so. Civil disobedience
can work if large numbers of people
express support. Politicians realize
people feel strongly enough about an insti-
ged to take a stand, they will feel strongly enough
to vote on their election day.

Legal Disruptive Tactics

With tactics such as strikes, sit-ins,
withholding of rent, the power actually in
the implementation of the tactic itself. Such
tactics are qualitatively different from its
being designed to imply an electoral threat by say-
ing numbers. Picketing, when it succeeds
keeping people out of a place of business, it
beyond the symbolic to create financial
These forms of economic/consumer power,
rather than political power, must be carefully
focused on specific targets.

Boycotts

The popularity of the Montgomery bus
boycott, the United Farm Workers' grape
boycott, and infant's boycott of Nestle makes boycot
one of the first tactics that many groups consi
In general, however, most national or interna-
tional boycotts against products don't work. A
careful analysis of the product and your ability to
actually affect the company's profits is required.
As corporations merge and become larger, the
requirements for a successful boycott are being
raised. They include:
• A moral issue of national or international
importance.
• A product that
• Everyone buys frequently.
• Is easily identifiable by a brand name.
• The company spends a great deal of money
promoting or is at least easily identifiable.
• Is non-essential, or better, for which com-
peting brands or substitutes exist.

It should be clear from the above that if someone
suggests that you boycott cement, there is a
good chance that you are talking to a silly person.

Boycotts of a local retail business are more
manageable than are boycotts of specific prod-
ucts. Communities have successfully taken
action, for example, against franchises that put
locally owned stores out of business.

A boycott, like a strike, is similar to a revolver
with one bullet in the chamber. The threat of
using it is more powerful than the weapon itself.
But don't make the threat unless you are pre-
pared to carry it out.

A Method for Planning Tactics

The strategy chart is as useful for planning
individual tactics as it is for planning your over-
all campaign. To use it in this way, simply place
the tactic (holding your own rally, for example)
in the first column (Goals). The Organizational
Considerations column becomes the budget and
organizational goals for the event itself (organiz-
ational goals are always considered separately
from issue goals). The Constituents column
becomes the turnout plan for the event. The
Targets column is used to identify the people
with power at whom the event is aimed. Pay par-
ticular attention to secondary targets whom you
may want to involve. The Tactics column then
becomes a list of the things you will do at the
event to show your own power, make the target
uncomfortable, get media attention, and create an
exciting activity.
### Using the Strategy Chart to Plan a Tactic
#### Newton Save Our Schools Rally

After using the strategy chart to plan an overall campaign, any tactic from the last column can become the basis of a new chart that is used to plan that particular tactic. The following chart demonstrates how this works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Organizational Considerations</th>
<th>Constituents</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Short-Range Hold rally of 400 people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Designing Actions

An action is a tactic in which an organized group of people with a common grievance meet with the person who has the power to give them what they want. At the meeting, they place their demands before that person and expect to gain a victory on the spot. The person is often called the "decision maker" or "target" of the action.

This tactic is used after "proper channels" have been tried and failed. Your group has already written letters, filled out forms, left messages, and attempted to be heard. In the course of those activities you recruited additional people into your campaign. Now people are getting a little mad and it is time to move to the next step.

An action is a tactic. In organizing, the word "action" has a special meaning for reasons that have been lost to history. While other people might take action or get a piece of the action, organizers do an action. Worse yet, we do it "wisely." Someone. Don't blame the Midwest Academy—we didn't invent this language. We are merely reluctant to change it, so great is the burden of tradition. As with other tactics, actions come at the end of the strategy chart. Actions are one of the things that the people listed in the Consistency column do to the people listed in the Targets column. The key to successful actions is for people to develop real power over the target and show that power during the action.

No other tactic does as much to win short- and medium-range demands or to build the organization. In days, the use of actions can cut through months, and sometimes years, of bureaucratic red tape. Equally as important is the impact on the participants. People come away with a heightened sense of their own power and dignity, while their opponents are made to appear smaller and more vulnerable. At the same time, relationships of power are clarified because problems that might have been attributed to misunderstanding or lack of communication are seen sharply for what they really are—the conflicting interests of public good against private greed. In the process, loyalty to the organization is built up because people see it actually working for them and realize that their participation is essential to its success.

Why Actions Work

The principle of this tactic is deceptively simple and direct. You ask for something, and more often than not, you get it. It's like magic and you say, "Why didn't we do this months ago?" The answer is that it probably wouldn't have worked months ago because you hadn't built up your organized strength, nor had you made the necessary strategic calculations.

The real reason that actions work arises from a set of calculations about the relationship between your group and the target. It can best be described, from the target's point of view, as a cost-benefit analysis. The target, the decision maker, considers the expense of giving you what you want and the damage you can cause if you don't get it.

The damage might be that pressure from your organization would result in a loss of votes or that the target fears a problem that was supposed to be kept quiet will make it into the media. Perhaps the target's company will lose business or government contracts, a regulatory agency will step in, or an official investigation will be launched. If you are able to make anything like this happen, there is a clear and measurable benefit to the target in giving you what you want and getting rid of you.

What you want has a cost to the target. It might be a financial cost like the expense of removing asbestos from a school, cleaning up a toxic dump, or providing child care. It might be a loss of campaign contributions from people who oppose the position you are trying to get the
decision maker to take. It might mean lost credibility if giving in means admitting a mistake was made. The target is therefore put in the position of having to balance two sets of costs: the cost of giving you what you want versus the cost of not giving it to you. Your strategy is to raise the cost of not giving you what you want so that the benefit to the decision maker of having you go away happy is greater than the cost of what you are asking for. The whole process is a bit like finding a way to stand on someone’s foot until they pay you to leave.

Fortunately, most of the time the target is a public official who doesn’t have to spend his or her own money to meet your demand. Actions usually don’t work in situations where the target must personally pay any financial cost. (Actions on landlords are an exception. Often, tenants don’t fully realize the extent of the landlord’s vulnerability because of violations, illegality, hoarding, or financial manipulation. The landlord may therefore decide it’s cheaper to meet tenant demands for a specific repair or service than to risk greater exposure.) Sometimes workers conduct actions on employers, making demands such as bathroom breaks, clean restrooms, safety equipment, or fair treatment. Actions on employers are more effective on issues that will not cost large amounts of money or when the actions are about violations for which the company could be fined by a government agency or taken to court. (We are using the direct action organizing definition of “action.” A boycott against an employer or a strike are different tactics.)

Public officials usually expect that your group will give them something in return for the concession they make to you. They’ll want a positive gesture, usually a public affirmation that they did the right thing, not in response to pressure but because they are such good people. Negransing on these lines is not necessarily bad. You are, after all, trying to convince elected officials that they have more to gain by coordinating with group than by opposing you. If you really want a particular elected official to sort in favor by taking credit for doing your demand, then don’t ask in the first place. If the official is one whom you ultimately have to deal with in office, make demands you know you win, or raise the issue in other ways.

Actions can also be used to pressure indirectly. For example, when a bank forecloses on one local company, the company closes for a week, putting 400 minimum wage workers out of work, who make demands you know you win, or raise the issue in other ways.

Actions are a good measure of an organization’s ability to show power on people, and they test the ability of the leadership. This gives the members a criterion for judging leaders and leaders others than by how well they speak at meetings. In addition, publicity from actions will bring in new recruits. The expectation should be that over a period of three months, as you take on more important targets, each action will be a little bigger than the one preceding it. Actions are used to build up to large turnout events of your own, such as public hearings or accountability sessions.

One of the reasons that actions work is that they take the organization outside established channels for getting things done and move it to a terrain where officials are less sure of how to handle the situation. It is always wise to make the effort of going through the proper channels first. Send letters, fill out the proper forms, file formal complaints, and generally do whatever is necessary to establish that you tried the “normal” way and didn’t work. If this step is skipped, some of your members may feel that the action is not appropriate. Most people want to give the other person the benefit of the doubt.

The strategy chart is an excellent tool for planning a single action as well as a whole campaign. Just plug in the information that is relevant to this particular activity. Here are some considerations for each column of the chart.

Action Planning

Goals (Demands)

Success in formulating demands depends on understanding the power relationships involved. This means not only accurately assessing the strength of your forces but also understanding the self-interest of the other side. Knowing what the cost of a citizen victory will be to the other side and who will have to pay it brings you to an estimation of the amount of opposition that your organization will receive. This, in turn, is the basis for deciding what demands you will make. Every increase in the cost of the organization’s demands must be matched by a corresponding increase in the organization’s power.

Because the whole process is logical, an underlying assumption is that the target is rational and will act in his or her self-interest. If the target is not a rational person or acts to pressure by stonewalling, or if the citizens make it clear that their negative view of the target will never improve no matter what, then this tactic is short-circuited and will probably not work. A short-circuited action can have some advantages, however. After dealing with a target over a period of time, you may learn what makes that person “pop”; that is, go berserk or act inappropriately in public. Such a display of odd behavior can discredit a public official, but be sure that you have another target to move on to, and remember that officials are often trying to do the same thing to you.

Demands are ranked according to whether they are main demands or fallback demands. A fallback demand means asking for something that is useful but less than you wanted. Often, procedural and information demands are used as fallbacks. Every action should have one main or substantive demand (for example, “Clean up the dump”) and several fallbacks (“Hold hearings on cleaning up the dump” “Release your study on dump site hazards”). Part of the role of the spokesperson is to decide when to switch from one to another.

The information demand is the easiest to win and is a good type of demand for your first action. In later actions, it would probably be a
fallback. Your final fallback demand, if you get nothing else, should always be a commitment to another meeting. This gives you an opportunity to regroup and increase your strength.

Any agreement that is reached should include the following specifics:

- How much will be done.
- When it will be done.
- Who will do it.
- What the review process is if it isn’t done or is done improperly.

In addition, longer-term changes can be won and included in the agreement. Some are administrative: “Inspections must be done every six months forever.” Others involve a structural reform that increases citizen power: “A permanent citizen oversight board will be established.”

Organizational Considerations

As action, like every other event, should be assigned an own budget and staff. Because recruitment is done by word of mouth and by phones, the biggest expense will usually be staff time.

In addition to bringing victory on the issue, an action will strengthen the organization if you build that into the plan. Actions are most useful for leadership development. Speaking to the target or the press develops leadership skills, and the planning process teaches strategy as well. As a role, speaking roles should be awarded to those who bring out the most people. The long-term result will be a leadership composed of people who actually have a base rather than of people who merely speak well. The ability to mobilize people, be it six friends or stewards from a union local, is the most important criterion for leadership in a citizens’ organization.

As with other events, the organizer should know who the potential leaders are and build action roles around them. During the planning process, the group should set modest goals for the number of leaders it would like to see gain experience, as well as for the number of new people thought to be recruited from the membership.

Constituency (Turnout)

The people who come to an action should be active members of your organization or coalition. Because the event needs to be tightly controlled, this is not the time to advertise publicly. Participants should be representative of all of the different types of people who are affected by the problem and who will benefit from the solution if your organization is a coalition, the heads of member groups should be clearly visible at the action.

Consider bringing people who are influential in the community, such as clergy, political supporters, or heads of major civic organizations or unions. Always be sure to explain the nature of the action to them first. No one should be surprised by unusual tactics. People who are surprised sometimes start apologizing to the target or criticizing the organization.

If you invite sympathetic office holders to join you, figure out a way that they will get recognition in the media because what they must want a publicity. Discuss this with them in advance. If you don’t, the moment a TV camera shows up they will try to grab the spokesperson role, which should always go to a leader of your own group.

The media have a tendency to focus on “important” people. Think twice before you invite one.

The Target (Decision Maker)

The decision maker is always a person who has the power to give you what you want. In real life, several such people often exist for an issue. For example, in public housing, a building manager could order repairs, as could someone at the Housing Authority or a higher-up at the federal level. In this case, the choice of target is usually made according to what is most convenient for the group and what location will favor the strongest turnout. People usually want to stay close to home in their own neighborhood; as the group gains experience, it becomes an adventure to go to City Hall, the Capitol, or some agency’s regional headquarters. The problem in the above example is that none of the potential targets are elected. The question is, What power might a tenant group have over appointed officials? Here are some possibilities:

- Money was already allocated for the repairs but the person in charge failed to spend it or misspent it.
- The repair involves health issues such as lead paint or lack of heat, which can bring into question the competence of the administrator.
- The administrator was appointed by an elected official who needs to cultivate a “liberal” image.
- Other political forces are out to get the job of the head of the agency and this problem just adds fuel to the fire.
- The repair or service was subcontracted to a company that has political connections or that gave campaign contributions and failed to perform the work.

Because for them, as for us, there is safety in numbers, at any action there should be only one target. The exception is if at several previous actions the targets all denied responsibility and pointed to some other official, then getting them all in the same room can end back passing.

Some community-based organizations will hold a neighborhood meeting and invite several local officials to come. These events are not actions but accountability sessions, and while it is better to have just one target, inviting several can bring together people from different parts of the neighborhood that have different problems.

Direct action organizing has two types of targets: “primary” and “secondary.” The primary target, such as the Mayor, can give you what you want but you may not have enough power to challenge him or her directly. The secondary target is a person who can’t deliver what you want but who can pressure the main target better than you can. The secondary target need not either want to cooperate or be someone over whom you have a degree of power, such as a campaign contributor to the elected official whose position you want to change, a state representative who is on the committee that approves the budget of the university where you are organizing, or a local business owner who belongs to a trade association you are trying to influence. Individuals such as elected officials’ staffers or corporate executives’ assistants are not secondary targets. They may have some influence over the target, but as employees they do not have actual power. Consider them to be allies if they are willing to cooperate.

Remember, though, that the job of such people is to try to influence you or to gather information on you while pretending to help.

Actions may be used against secondary targets to secure their help in pressuring the main target. You might say to the ward (district) leader, “We have come to ask you to pick up the phone and tell the Mayor that next November your party is going to have a revolt on its hands in this district unless she sets up a meeting this week to hear our complaints.” (The fallback demand in this case is, “Would you send a letter to the Mayor making this point and send a copy to us?”) Your power in this situation comes from the fact that the ward leader is responsible for getting out the vote in your neighborhood and is more sensitive to public opinion than is someone elected citywide. The ward leader will also look bad if the Mayor’s vote drops in that ward, even if the Mayor wins anyway. Of course the ward
leader has no direct power over the Mayor, but because the Mayor relies on the ward leaders for
two seats, he is able to try to help one of them,
at least to the extent of giving you a meeting.

Tactics
Every action must meet two requirements:
- It must be fun.
- It must demonstrate real power.

Tactics used during an action should reflect these goals. You may be saying “Wait a minute! You said that an action is a tactic. Can a tactic have tactics?” Can a flea have fleas? Yes, and not only
that, but a tactic can have a strategy. An action is a
tactic in a larger campaign, but a mini-strategy is
needed to carry out each tactic. A particular tactic
takes your goal for the day, the steps to carrying it out and becomes the tactics for the day.

Tactics for use in actions fall into three categories:

Tactics Aimed at the Target That Show Your Power. These include presenting petitions, let-
ters, voter registration forms, and statements of support from important people in the community.

Other power tactics include demonstrating the size of your organization by a large turnout, showing the media the nature of the man
using clever visual props. Controlling the air and setting the tone of a meeting demonstrate internal strength of your group.

Tactics Aimed at Running the Meeting’s Members. These include singing or drum
standing rather than sitting, displaying funny props, and, when appropriate, display
anger at the target. Tactics in this category, while important, must always be subordinate to be
that show power and to the overall goal of action. Actions have fallen apart over side
acts such as a test of the democratic right to call someone’s office. If you don’t have real pro
these tactics are not a substitute.

Tactics Aimed at Getting Media Cover. Understanding the self-interest of the media
is important in getting coverage. Editors want
short, punchy event in which everyday people who are like their own audience, do something visually interesting. In other words, you
should have a gimmick. This doesn’t always have to be
funny. A dramatic way of showing the sensi
sibility of the problem or the toll it is taking on the victims is very effective.

A song, chant, emotional speech, or
will get covered whereas someone just isn’t
it. Challenging the target to actually “drink this cup of dirty water” will get covered whereas saying “I’ll bet you don’t drink
water at home” won’t. Bringing a severe
thermometer showing the rising anger of the
community as the action progresses will get cov
ered, whereas saying “People are really hot about
this” won’t. Because the media usually don’t mention the names of citizen organization
be sure that yours is prominently displayed on a
sign with someone assigned to hold it where the
camera can’t avoid including it in the scene.

Tactics give you a small edge during the
action, because of your power, based on the size of
your support. If you lose, it is because you either
didn’t have the power or failed to show it. Perhaps your costume was lost on the way to the
action and when the spokesperson said, “It was
so cold without any heat that the cat froze,” you
got up looking frozen but not at all like a cat. The
lost costume was not the reason you failed to win
and got the heat turned on. Winning does not
depend on your degree of resemblance to any
particular species.

The tone of the action must be appropriate to
your community and constituency. People in
small towns and suburbs are often much more
polite to the target than are city dwellers. The key
factor is that everyone must feel comfortable about what occurs.

Action Planning Reminders
The following paragraphs include some helpful
guidelines for planning an action.

Stay within the Experience of Your Group. Don’t
confuse loudness, rudeness, or vulgarity with
power. Don’t suggest that, as a sign of contempt,
your spokesperson sit at the target’s desk and steal
the target’s lunch unless there is some purpose to
it. (If your issue is about hunger and homelessness,
you actually might make a point this way if
everyone will go along and understand why it is
being done.) Never make your own people feel
uncomfortable at an action.

Try to Get outside the Experience of the Target. The fact that you have come in person and are no
longer just sending letters is a good start. The tar-
get is usually not accustomed to losing control of
a meeting or to seeing confident, articulate, and
knowledgeable people who will not be intimi-
dated. If the action occurs on your own turf, all
the better; your neighborhood itself is often out-
side the target’s experience. Media that respond
to you, not to the target, is also outside the tar-
get’s experience, as showing up with a group at
the target’s home. Publicizing that the law has
not been followed or that the job someone is paid
to do is not being done is often, but not always,
outside the target’s experience.

Try to Make an Appointment to See the Target
Rather Than to Try for a Surprise Encounter. If
you try for a surprise encounter, the target may
not be there and your group members will feel
dumb and get mad at you.

“Case the Joint.” Organizers should look over the
building and make a floor plan. Check the location
of the target’s office as well as elevators, stairs,
bathrooms, pay telephones, and parking/transit
facilities. Is the location accessible to disabled
members?

Hold a Dress Rehearsal for Participants. You
play the role of the target. Keep the action short
(about twenty minutes, sometimes less). Remember that an action is not a negotiation.
You can tell the target why you are morally right,
but being right is rarely a substitute for power.

Have Only One Spokesperson in an Action. That
person may call on a small number of others to
present specific information. Have the group
decide beforehand on the one or two people
authorized to make decisions during the action.
Inform everyone of this. If your organization
believes in decision making by consensus or that
everyone has the right to say anything at any
time, forget about doing actions until the mem-
bers are willing to delegate responsibility during
an action to one or two trusted leaders.

Ask People to Come to the Action Fifteen
Minutes Early. Have a quick briefing meeting
outside the building.
If Media Are Wanted (They Aren't Always), Send a Press Release a Week Ahead of Time. Include a "notice of photo opportunity" highlighting your gimmick ("Councilman Jones will be presented with a three-foot apple symbolizing his inability to resist the temptation of commercial development"). Phone all assignment editors (City Dolea, daybooks) the night before. Hold the action in the morning and at a place convenient to the media if possible. Assign someone to speak with the press and provide a press release describing what you are doing and why.

Keep Your Demands Clear and Simple. Run with both main demands and fallback lines. Have a note taker write down the positive responses. Try to get any agreements.

At the end of the action, use the note taker to summarize what has been agreed to. Hold a debriefing outside after the action to fill in anyone who couldn't hear, take attendance, and announce the next event.

For action planning, be sure to use the information in chapter 14 in conjunction with this one.

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Checklist for Planning an Action

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Will your action be both fun and based on real power?

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Is everyone in your group comfortable with the plan? (Is it within the experience of your group?)

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Will the plan be outside the experience of the target? Are you going outside the "official channels"?

---

Are your demands clear and simple?

---

Do you have several fallback demands?

---

Do you have an appointment?

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Have you scouted the building and made a floor plan? Do you know where to find

- Elevator and stairs?
- Bathrooms?
- Pay phone?
- Parking or nearest transit stop?
- The target's office?

- Can the site accommodate disabled members?

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Has the group selected who will present information at the action? Are people prepared for their roles?

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Has the group selected its spokesperson for the action?

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Have you held a dress rehearsal for the spokesperson and the participants?

---

Have you calculated how you will demonstrate your power? Do you plan to have symbols with you (letters, petitions)?

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Do you have a good turnout plan for the action, including last-minute reminder phone calls?

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If you want the media, have they been notified? Have you

- Sent a release, including a notice of your photo opportunity highlighting your gimmick, a week ahead of time?
- Called the daybook a week ahead of time?
- Called assignment editors the day before the action?
- Prepared a release for distribution on the day of the action?
- Assigned someone to talk with the media at the action itself? (Your spokesperson may be busy.)

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Have you selected someone to take notes during the action and write the confirmation letter to the target?

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Do you know who will debrief the action with participants and where the debriefing will occur?

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Building and Joining Coalitions

Wouldn't It Be Loversly? If you're thinking about building a coalition, beware! Coalitions are not built because it's good, moral, or nice to get everyone working together. Coalitions are about building power. The only reason to spend the time and energy building a coalition is to amass the power necessary to do something you cannot do through an organization.

A coalition is an organization of organizations working together for a common goal. An individual member organization can technically be a coalition, although the term is used more loosely in common parlance.

Coalitions come in a variety of forms. They can be permanent or temporary, single- or multi-issue, geographically defined, limited to certain constituencies (such as a coalition of women's organizations), or a combination of some or all of the above (e.g., a Midwestern coalition of farm organizations). Some coalitions are permanent and multi-issue. Their goal is to bring together major progressive organizations to build a base of power capable of winning on issues of mutual concern. Other coalitions are best set up on a temporary basis—such as a coalition to increase funding for the state EPA, for example. The reason for this is that apart from a common interest in this one issue, the programs and constituents of the member groups could be very different. One of them might be working on wildlife preservation, another on blocking construction of an incinerator, and the third on preventing the use of pesticides.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Coalitions

In Midwest Academy training sessions, participants are asked about their coalition experiences. Below are some common responses.

Advantages
- Win what couldn't be won alone. Many issues require large numbers of people and many resources to win. Coalitions can pool people and resources to win important victories.
- Build an ongoing power base.
- Increase the impact of an individual organization's efforts. Not only does your involvement help win a campaign, but you make the work you undertake more effective.
- Develop new leaders. Experienced leaders can be asked to take on coalition leadership roles, thereby opening up slots for new leaders.
- Increase resources. If the coalition's issue is central to your organization, you may directly benefit from additional staff and money.
- Broaden scope. A coalition may provide the opportunity for your group to work on state or national issues, making the scope of your work more exciting and important.

Disadvantages
- Distracts from other work. If the coalition issue is not your main agenda item, it can divert your time and resources.
- Weak members can't deliver. Organizations providing leadership and resources may get impatient with some of the weaker groups' inexperience and inability to deliver on commitments.
- Too many compromises. To keep the coalition together, it is often necessary to play to the least common denominator, especially on tactics.
- Inequality of power. The range of experience, resources, and power can create internal problems. One group, one vote does not work for groups with wide ranges of power and resources.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Coalitions

Principles for Successful Coalitions

Do You Really Want to Join or Form a Coalition?

Questions to Consider before Joining a Coalition

Working for and Building the Coalition: The Organizer's Job

Advantages

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Working for and Building the Coalition: The Organizer's Job

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Weak members can't deliver. Organizations providing leadership and resources may get impatient with some of the weaker groups' inexperience and inability to deliver on commitments.

Too many compromises. To keep the coalition together, it is often necessary to play to the least common denominator, especially on tactics.

Inequality of power. The range of experience, resources, and power can create internal problems. One group, one vote does not work for groups with wide ranges of power and resources.
Individual organizations may not get credit. If all activities are done in the name of the coalition, groups that contribute a lot often feel they do not get enough credit.

Dull tactics. Groups that like more confrontational, highly visible tactics may feel that the more subdued tactics of a coalition are not exciting enough to activate their members.

Obviously, not all of the experiences are positive, but almost everyone agrees that when an important shared goal exists, the benefits can outweigh the problems. Recently, it has become fashionable in the foundation world to insist that groups form coalitions in order to get funding. While this has proven positive in many cases, it has also forced groups with little in common to try to work together. Before accepting funding on such a basis, ask yourself, "Is there any reason to form an alliance with these groups other than for money?" The rest of this chapter will look at ways to emphasize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of working in coalitions.

Principles for Successful Coalitions

Choose Unifying Issues

A common issue, not just a desire to work together on each other's separate agendas, is a must. A shopping list of issues will result in chaos and bad feelings. For example, a coalition of groups representing people with particular disabilities can be built around issues involving the civil rights of all the disabled. But an issue that meets the needs of people with only one type of disability may be of no interest to other participants in the coalition.

If your goal is to build a permanent coalition, you may be willing to make short-term compromises. For example, you may agree that the coalition will not work on certain specific issues that divide the coalition's membership and prevent unity on other issues.

Hire Neutral Coalition Staff

It must be someone's primary responsibility to work for the whole coalition, and that person needs to be politically astute and understand organizational self-interest of the main groups. Ideally, money should be raised in an impartial, experienced organizer. Link resources, however, may make it necessary to hire this staff member to be contributed by one or more member organizations. When this is done, it is important that staff member needs to make an effort to be impartial and to appear to be acting as the agent of one of the organization staff person running a coalition part time out of their desk drawer while working full time for the organization is headed for trouble.

Understand and Respect Institutional Self-Interest

Each organization brings its own history, structure, agenda, values, culture, leadership, and relationships to a coalition. It is important for all members of the coalition to understand each other in order to build on their strengths and avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Help Organizations to Achieve Their Self-Interest

Organizations need to believe that they are benefiting from a coalition. Many organizations' self-interests are relatively easy to accommodate if they are clearly understood by the coalition. For example, a neighborhood organization working to better its local schools may find it beneficial to join a statewide tax reform coalition rather than go it alone.

Agree to Disagree

Seldom do all member organizations of a coalition agree on all issues. Focus on your common agenda, the issues on which you agree. Agree to avoid the issues on which you do not agree. If disagreements are so fundamental that they color everything else, then working together may be impossible.

All organizations must accomplish seven basic functions if they are to survive. A coalition can be a help or a detriment. For example, an organization may join a coalition only to find that the funding and publicity that it had previously obtained are going instead to the coalition. The seven basic functions are these:

- Gain new members
- Be perceived as powerful
- Get media coverage
- Build relations with other groups
- Provide the members with an exciting program
- Build internal morale
- Give its leaders a public role

A successful coalition works to help the members accomplish these seven functions and avoids competing with its own members as much as possible.

Develop a Realistic Coalition Budget

The coalition's budget should include all of the anticipated expenses and income necessary to carry out the coalition's agenda. If staff is being contributed by a member organization, their salary should be included on the expense side and listed as an in-kind contribution on the income side. This will give members a better understanding of the real cost of the campaign and the real contribution that each group is making.

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Play to the Center with Tactics

When developing tactics for a coalition, it is usually necessary to play to the groups that are toward the middle. At certain points in an issue campaign, the coalition's strategy may be to encourage the appropriate organizations to act independently in their own names, utilizing more militant tactics. This can make the coalition appear more reasonable.

Recognize That Contributions Vary

Organizations will bring different strengths and weaknesses to the coalition. As long as each member understands and accepts what other members bring, problems should be minimal. For example, one organization may be able to contribute large sums of money, but be unable to turn out its membership, while the opposite would be true of another member organization. A third group might have members in a critical legislative district where no other group does. All can be essential to the success of the coalition effort and should be valued for the resources they bring.

Structure Decision Making Carefully

Unless all groups contribute relatively equally, decision making cannot simply be one vote per organization. Those contributing the most usually want the most say in decisions. This is often done through an informal understanding among the leaders, but some coalitions write it into the rules and give weighted votes to the more important organizations on the basis of size or some other characteristic.

Achieve Significant Victories

Although it's obvious, coalitions must achieve important victories if they are to be successful. Groups will continue contributing only if they see concrete, measurable results.
Urgent Stable, Senior Board Representatives

As organizations join the coalition, their choice of representatives to the board is an indication of how seriously they take the coalition. If the presidents of the respective organizations do not participate, they should send a high-ranking board member or staff person as their regular representative. Some coalitions make participation dependent on sending an "important" representative.

Having a series of individuals "fill in" for the president is very disruptive. It is enough of a problem that organizations in a coalition may not meet often. It is enough of a problem that their levels of participation may vary widely without enough compensating that difficulty by having inappropriate representatives at board meetings.

If high-ranking officers of major organizations don't see their peers at meetings, they will drop out and start sending lower-level staff or interns who lack the power to represent the organization. This will lengthen the time it takes for the coalition to make a decision because many board members must report back to someone in authority and wait for an answer.

Clarity Decision-Making Procedures

Depending on the level of the coalition, different working arrangements are necessary. For example, in a large national coalition, and even in state-wide coalitions in large states, it is very cumbersome and expensive to bring the whole board together regularly. Such coalitions often choose a working group or committee to meet with the staff to develop strategy. As long as the board is clear on how policy is set and trusts the working group to check back at appropriate points of the process, this method can be helpful. Whatever the structure, it should be clear to all coalition members.

Distribute Credit Fairly

One of the most frequent problems in this kind of building is that of giving and receiving credit. To those who haven't had the experience of working in a grassroots organization, it is easy to forget what it is like to be on the ground and for what is often seen as petty, vulgar, and mean. Some coalition organizers may feel that it is something that groups need to be cautious about. But the proper "attitude" will make it easier. Quit the contrary. These problems are not just basic survival instinct. They will not go away. They should be discussed.

When the issue of the coalition is of the same level of importance to a particular affiliate as it is to less of a problem. But when the issue is the main issue of the affiliate, then credit is a big problem. The group may be expected to be structured so the affiliates do not do things jointly as a coalition and the coalition helps them do other things in their own name. For example, a study done by the coalition on released local papers to local groups is in its own name at the same time that it is released in the statewide media in the name of the coalition. Each local release features the impact of a problem on that particular area. This is not more work for the coalition staff, but it keeps them happy and, above all, helps.

Organizational self-interest is legitimate, but saying among organizers is that "Group ins" coalitions to gain power, not to give it away.

Do You Really Want to Join or Form a Coalition?

Before joining a coalition, determine if it is appropriate for what you want to accomplish. Will you be able to advance your own organizational agenda? If yours is a new organization that needs to establish an independent identity, avoid coalitions for at least a year. Instead, choose smaller issues that you can win on your own. This leads to a strong membership-based organization that can eventually work in a coalition when necessary.

If the group is strong enough, with a well enough developed leadership structure, to carry on two campaigns at once? If it is, then working in a coalition may be appropriate for you. If not, you can do only one thing at a time, then there is a danger that the coalition's program will become your only activity. Of course, you could join a "letterhead" coalitions that makes very few demands on the members.

When considering building a coalition, remember that this creates another level of organization or bureaucracy that requires separate resources. It is certainly not in your organizational self-interest to develop a separate entity with which you will later have to compete for resources. Nor do you want to devote scarce staff time to building a coalition instead of your own organization.

Questions to Consider before Joining a Coalition

Is it Permanent or Temporary?

When you decide that your group should form or join a new coalition, determine whether it should be permanent or temporary. If temporary, consider calling it something other than a coalition. Using a more temporary-sounding term, such as "campaign" or "Countdown 2004," connotes a shorter lifespan. The reason for giving a temporary coalition a temporary-sounding name is that coalitions tend to take on lives of their own. This is particularly true of coalitions with paid staff, who will find new functions to keep the group alive after its initial purpose has been served.

Organizations do not have to join every coalition that is formed. Many organizations develop formal policies for joining coalitions and criteria for different levels of participation. Some organizations will agree to participate in a coalition only if they are actually prepared to work on the coalition's issues. Others are willing to endorse a coalition, by lending it their name and stature, without participating in its program. Below are some questions to consider before joining a coalition.

Who is behind the Coalition?

If you have been invited to participate in a coalition, approach the table understanding that you will have to give something to get something. The question, then, is to whom are you giving it and who is responsible for what you get back? Look around. Who else is participating? Who called all of you to this meeting? Why? Where are the expenses of the meeting coming from (e.g., staff time, travel, room rental)? It is important to know the driving force behind the formation of the coalition. If it is funder driven, is the funder committed for the long haul or just willing to give enough to get the work started? If led by a few organizations, will they get the bulk of the benefits and credit? In return, will they do the bulk of the work? All of this information helps to determine not only if the effort is worthwhile but also if an organization of your size can benefit by being in it. If you are participating in
a coalition you consider a priority, make sure that a critical number of other organizations are also participating so your efforts will not be in vain.

What's Your Organizational Self-Interest?
It is important to assess whether you should play a leadership role or merely be a member. Both leaders and members are essential, but decide where you want to fit in. If you intend to be a leader of the coalition and to have your own members participate in its program, then make sure the coalition's issue affects your membership deeply. If the coalition's issue is also one of your main issues, it is essential that you play a leadership role.

Be up-front and clear about what you expect in exchange for your participation. For example, a local community group in a large city joined a citywide coalition to improve mass transportation. The group set the following conditions for joining the coalition: (1) It was to be the only affiliate in its geographic area. This gave it a sort of exclusive franchise on citywide transit activity, and people wishing to participate in the campaign had to join the group in order to do so. (2) Its leaders were to be among the principal spokespersons for the coalition. (3) It was to be the host organization for the coalition's first major citywide event, and people from other neighborhoods being bused into its community.

Needless to say, the community organization had to be quite strong and capable of significant turnout in order to negotiate this arrangement.

How Can Your Members Participate?
Make sure that coalition tactics or activities will be designed so that your members can and will want to participate. Decide where you are most comfortable in the range, from low key to militant, and make sure there is agreement from the other organizations that they will stay within that range.

How Will Participating in the Coalition Build Your Organization?
Because participating in a coalition will be more work for your organization, it should help you build your organization. You will get credit for your work whenever possible. Members will serve as spokespersons, so you want their organizational identity made known. In reality, all members of a coalition can and do get equal credit. The media, always relevant to the names of organizations, may pick up coalition's name but will rarely list all its members.

For example, when two prominent organizations agreed to combine in a coalition to win auto insurance reform, the subsequent campaign received a flood of media coverage. The survey of the newspaper clips showed that in the city where the coalition name was mentioned, the names of the two coalitions co-owners were mentioned only 40 percent of the time despite the fact that all coalition materials consistently used the names of the partners in conjunction with the name of the coalition (i.e., "Citizens Auto Revolt, a joint campaign of New Jersey Citizen Action and New Jersey Public Interest Research Group"). This problem will have been compounded in a coalition of groups instead of only two.

Generally, the organizations that are strongest and that have the most visibility independent of the coalition will also tend to get most recognition. If your organization has a spokesperson who is clearly identified with the public mind, you will get some credit even when that person appears for the coalition and your group's name isn't mentioned by the media.

Is It a Letterhead Coalition?
Often the board members of a coalition are seen to no one but themselves. This is what is known as a letterhead coalition. The telltale indicator is that after the board members' names the text indicates “organizations listed for identification purposes only.” There is nothing wrong with a letterhead coalition; however, it usually means that resources will not be coming from the coalition members, and another plan needs to be in place. Your organization's participation should be on the same basis as the other groups.

Working for and Building the Coalition: The Organizer's Job
There is a difference between organizing an individual membership organization and a coalition. With a coalition, you are not creating an entity in which anyone who so desires may participate. You are carefully pulling together the appropriate groups in the appropriate order, to ensure that all who "should be in "on the ground floor" are invited, seemingly simultaneously. This must be done carefully, and it requires a skilled organizer who can juggle a number of things at once. You must talk to all the key players at about the same time to avoid anyone feeling as if they are "the last" to be consulted or invited.

Staffing a coalition board is different from staffing a community organization's board. Your job is not to develop "new leadership." Rather, it is to figure out how to work with the leaders who are seen from the membership organizations and help them participate fully. It is also to minimize tensions among board members. Most of the people you deal with already know how to be leaders. What they may not know is how to work with each other and how to function in a coalition so that it builds the coalition and builds their own organizations. Often you will need to demonstrate how to do this.

Never become involved in the internal politics of any coalition member organization! This is a cardinal rule. Because you will have to work with the winners, stay neutral during members' internal election campaigns or fights. Be particularly careful not to become involved in jurisdictional fights between rival unions on your board or in turf battles between community groups. If you are unaware of these problems, it is easy to fall into the trap of having the coalition take an action that favors one side or the other (or that the other side thinks does).

The program of the coalition should be carried out by and through the affiliates. The staff should be getting information to the affiliates and helping them to mobilize their own members to support the issue. Staff should avoid the temptation to set up another operation on the side or to start organizing individuals unless this is explicitly part of the strategy.

In addition to knowing the principles of building successful coalitions and guidelines for joining coalitions, before beginning your organizing, you should ask yourself the following questions:

Who Hired You? If your answer is "The coalition board or steering committee," then who is on the steering committee? How did they get there? Who do they want collectively and what is the organizational self-interest of each member? The mere fact that there is a beginning "core" group will give you some sense of who will control the coalition. If the core is too narrow and you must broaden the base to win, will the founding board agree? All organizations are not created equal. Which organizations are playing the leadership roles in the coalition? The lead organizations will probably have the most to say. You have to decide if you agree with their perspectives and will be able to work with them.

Who Makes Decisions? Do any organizations have a veto? Why? In some coalitions, member groups look fairly equal on the surface until you discover that some groups have a veto. This veto power usually indicates that they are making...
extraordinary contributions and therefore want some ability to control the direction of the coalition. This may be fine, but you need to understand the self-interest of the controlling members if you are to help build the coalition.

To Whom Do You Report? Who's the boss? It is almost inevitable that you will get requests from many board members to do too many things, some of them conflicting at least to the extent that they all take time. All board members should clearly understand to whom you report (for example, to the Executive Director if you are a staff member or to a top elected officer if you are the Director). All requests for your time should go through that person. A written campaign strategy and clear work plan will ensure that all board members understand what you are doing.

All too often, a coalition board member will try to involve the coalition staff in some extra project for the member's own organization. This amounts to a subsidy from the coalition as a whole to that group. The group may feel justified in making such requests because of what it gives to the coalition, but this practice should be against the rules. An executive committee that meets at least monthly and reviews the staff's work can protect against this to some degree.

What Competing Organizational Self-Interests Exist between Members? This is important to know before any strategy decisions can be made. For instance, some homeowner groups may want to defeat a proposed property tax increase, but the public employees union may be for it because the tax increase will provide money for better salaries.

Which Organizations Are Contributing the Most, and Which Are Gaining the Most by Participating? If those contributing the bulk of the resources are not getting what they eventually want or go for items that are not a high priority to and will stop participating.

Where Is the Money Coming From? All the questions surrounding money are crucial for understanding who has influence within the coalition. If the bulk of the income is from the coalition partners, they will have the control. More often, additional money will be raised to support the coalition.

If the money is coming in from a foundation, whose money is it? Who is actually raising it? What is the interest of the basic source, and what role will that source have in the coalition, both formally and informally?

Who Is Being Excluded and Why? If no groups are being excluded, this may be fine. If you want to understand why to help you understand the politics and self-interests surrounding the issue.

Coalition building is a skill that an organizer can develop. If there is adequate communication a coalition and a clear understanding of the interests and relationships of the member organizations, one can build powerful coalitions capable of accomplishing what none of the parties can do alone.

Coalitions in and of themselves are not "the answer" for progressives. Strong individual membership organizations must be built to mobilize large numbers of citizens on progressive issues. Nonetheless, major social issues, particularly at the state and national levels, require broad-based coalitions in order to win. Building coalitions that are strong enough to challenge political structures and making them work effectively requires tough, analytical strategic thinking, a clear understanding about how coalitions work, savvy staff, hard work, and tender loving care. With such attention, coalitions can change the political landscape for this new century.
How come I do all the work and here?" Well, either you're being punished, or you're not recruiting members and volunteers. Every task that an organizer does—every envelope stuffed, every piece of mail sent, every page typed—is labor of recruiting someone else to do that job. Many organizations would be far stronger if they used all leaders to do nothing else but find others to volunteer for all the jobs.

In some ways, recruitment is the most important subject we deal with in this manual. If we had entitled this chapter "Organizing" instead of "Recruiting," that would have given it the proper emphasis. We know organizers who are surrounded by people because they instinctively draw people into their work. Other organizers are very successful at all the technical skills, but they don't involve anyone. Indeed, they often consider members a bother and seem to believe that the goal is to present the perfect testimony at a hearing or to write the world's finest press release. What such people do may be very valuable, but it isn't organizing. Recruiting and involving people comes naturally to some, but all can learn to do it by incorporating the techniques outlined here. Of course, this isn't a contest to see how much work you can get out of doing: it is the way that organizations are built. More and more people take on more and more responsibility (including financial responsibility). This makes them feel that they own the organization and that it is the product of their efforts. The more that staff and leaders do for members, the less ownership the members feel and the less commitment they have. You can produce the best array of services, projects, activities, or publications for your members, but if they haven't been involved in the planning, making it happen, and paying for it, they will say, "What is that all?"

Basic Recruitment Principles

In addition to recruiting individual members, canvassing, fundraising, and coalition building are forms of recruitment. This chapter deals with recruiting individual members, but its basic principles apply to all forms of recruitment.

Often, but not always, the first step in getting new people or groups to help is asking them to join. People want to join and to be active; they want to put time and effort and money into useful projects.

In 1832, when the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville came to America to chronicle life in the "New World," he marveled at the way Americans set up voluntary organizations for every form of social betterment. "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations," he observed. Comparing America to Europe, de Tocqueville noted that projects undertaken by the government in France or the nobility in England were done by citizens' associations in America. This tradition is no less strong in America today.

Your job isn't as hard as it may seem. You don't have to figure out how to get people to be active, to care about their community, or to be concerned with larger issues. They are already doing that. Your job is mainly to make sure that your organization gets its fair share of all the volunteer activity that is going on. Yes, that requires a special skill, but you don't have to change human nature. It is already working with you on this one. Once your group starts getting results, you will have more members from among the ranks of those who wanted to be active but stayed home because they thought that nothing they could do mattered. (Although most individuals
are joiners by nature, there is no indication that organizations have the same tendency to join coalitions.)

**Appeal to People’s Self-Interest**

If I am not for myself who is for me?  
And if I am only for myself, what am I?  
And if not now, when?  
—Hillel

Giving time, money, and loyalty to an organization involves giving so much of one’s self that saying it is motivated by self-interest seems not only a contradiction but slightly mean. In fact, it is neither. People do the most selfless acts out of self-interest, including joining unions, voting, inventing computer chips, and walking dogs. Indeed, self-interest generalized becomes class interest, and few things beat class interest for making history, but that is another story.

**If you want to move people, it has to be toward a vision that’s positive for them, that taps important values, that gets them something they desire, and it has to be presented in a compelling way that they feel inspired to follow.**  
—Martin Luther King

By self-interest we don’t mean being selfish. The word “interest” comes from two Latin words, *inter esse*, meaning “to be between or among.” So self-interest means self among others or how we are aware of our selves and our own needs in the context of our relationships with others.

When recruiting people, always appeal to their self-interest. This is very different from telling them what you think is in your self-interest for them to help you. (In truth, certain kinds of people just want to help you, but they are more like joiners than members. The problem with groups is that they get jealous if you have more than them.) So interest takes several forms, which together add values, vision, and relationships underpin organizational involvement:

**Personal.** People join organizations working on issues that personally affect them. Lower utility rates or lower taxes are examples of immediate self-interest, while global warming or disarmament exemplifies longer-term self-interest. People join to stop the oppression, prejudices, discrimination that affect their lives. Such activities are often accompanied by the feeling that they are doing it for their children or grandchildren, which brings a kind of satisfaction beyond the issue itself.

Senior citizens often join groups for companionship and a desire to continue to be useful after retirement. They enjoy an opportunity to apply the skills of their former occupations. They often seek activities that are multigenerational rather than confined to seniors. Then there are people who volunteer for additional social self-interest reasons such as meeting people, making new friends with similar values, getting out of the house, taking a break from young children, having fun, or even dating. A few people join for all of these reasons.

People also volunteer because organizations are fun. They are exciting and, particularly with direct action, very often a form of theater.

**Professional.** Many people volunteer for career self-interest reasons. They want to develop new skills that can enhance their resumes, or they want to test out possible new career options. They may want to make contacts that lead to jobs. Members of certain professions sometimes join organizations in the hope of finding clients. You will also meet people who are looking for work experience, such as students, or homemakers trying to get back into the workplace. A chance to learn word processing or spreadsheets, which may be a challenge for you, can be a real inducement for them.

Some people volunteer for the power that comes from being part of an organization. They are interested in revenge against political crooks, landlords, and polluters of the environment. They enjoy the opportunity to be a spokesperson, to get on TV, or to speak at a rally. Some are considering running for office.

**Moral.** To sustain commitment, people must volunteer based on their values and vision. They believe that their time to help bring justice to the world is the right thing to do. They think that “doing without works is dead.” Many people feel that they have a civic responsibility to do something for their community and that this is indeed a lifelong obligation, along with voting or paying taxes. In fact, moral values usually go along with all of the other reasons that people join groups. Moral values can be religious, ethical, or ideological.

**Negative Forms of Self-Interest.** A few individuals become identified with an organization in order to sell out for a price, to promote their own interests at the expense of the community, or simply to provide themselves with an audience for crackpot ideas or abnormal behavior.

Ninety-nine percent of the time, however, self-interest works on the side of the organization, and if you understand what people desire, you can structure your recruitment appeal and your program accordingly. Self-interest is rarely one-dimensional. People are motivated by combinations of needs, wants, and rewards. They join and stay with the organization that reflects their humanity and values and addresses specific forms of self-interest.

**Recruit to an Activity, Not a Business Meeting.**

Organizations often try to build their recruitment around meetings. This is probably the least effective method for drawing people in, and if meetings are the only activity of your group, they may be a cause of dwindling membership.

Most of the time we are looking for people who want to do something more than come to a business meeting. What organizer has not offered prayers to be saved from the person who says, “I
have no time to do anything, but I’d love to help you make policy. When is your next meeting?" By recruiting to an activity, you get action-oriented people rather than chronic meeting-goers.

Some very successful organizations rely on a program of house meetings as their major outreach method. This is not at all the same as recruiting to a business meeting and has produced dramatic results. House meetings are action oriented. Those attending hear a brief talk on the issue, then they are asked to write a letter, give money, and sponsor a meeting in their own home. The follow-up involves recruitment to other activities.

Have an Ongoing Entry-Level Program for New People

A major obstacle to successful recruitment is that new people feel that they are arriving in the middle of a party. Everyone knows so much about the issues and has learned all the jargon, they can talk about the "bi-modal split," "Mr. Parker at CHA," or "parts of particular matter per billion". No one wants to be around folks who talk in code. It creates an instant in-group, with all the new people automatically excluded. For this reason, when you recruit new members it is important to involve them in something in which they can immediately feel useful. For example, one successful community organization maintained a regular program of weekend letter writing at street tables. Because the issue was very popular and the tables were highly successful, working at them was a fine entry-level activity. Anyone could do it. New volunteers worked as equals alongside the organization’s veterans. Passersby put dollar bills in the donation can, the weather was fine, and everyone felt good. All letter writers were also asked to volunteer for an hour. They knew what would be expected of them because they saw the activity going on. They knew that they could successfully get others to write letters because they themselves had written one. Maintaining this operation required that several nights each week be spent contacting volunteers. Coming in and making calls was so next step of organizational involvement. Although this particular issue campaign drag on for ten years before victory, the outreach program ensured a small but steady stream of results.

Offer Childcare

Increasingly, the strongest volunteers programs in the country are addressing the obstacles to volunteering and are adjusting to reach the changing face of volunteers. A key issue is childcare. Consider ways your organization can coordinate a childcare program at certain times to enable parents of small children to participate as active volunteers. Some volunteers may be interested in providing childcare.

Your Image as a Recruiter

Because the best recruitment is done in person, your image is important. Try to look as much as possible like the people you are trying to recruit. If this is impossible, then try to look like someone they would want to bring home to dinner. (No, you do not have to wear the national costume of another culture unless it truly becomes you.) The rule of thumb on appearance is that people shouldn’t be able to remember what you looked like. Remembering, regardless of whether it was good or bad, means that your appearance distracted from the message instead of blending in with it.

"What did that young man in the three-piece suit wear?"

"You mean the young man in the pin-stripe and red tie?"

"Yes, the one with the crimson pocket handkerchief and alligator Guccia."

"I don’t know. He said something about the world coming to an end. I didn’t really get it. The handkerchief clashed with the tie."

Of course, eye contact is important, and language, like dress, should be appropriate, but the rules for many of these factors change with the constituency you are organizing in. In some ethnic communities, averting the eyes, not eye contact, is a sign of respect. So do what everyone else does. However, you must still be yourself. The goal is to adopt the behavior and customs that help you gain acceptance, but don’t try to "become" the people you are organizing.

Sound confident by knowing the subject, but don’t try to impress with a blizzard of facts. Most important, be enthusiastic. This will happen naturally if you are recruiting to an important activity. Convex urgency. Avoid starting with hysteria. Don’t say "Our organization was formed in 2000 because in 1998, the City Council passed a master zoning plan for the year 2010. In section (b) there was a major flaw that wasn’t noticed until 1999 during the Streetfogle Commission hearings when ..." Instead, start with the main point: "They are building a sewage treatment plant right in this community, and our homes won’t be worth, ...!"

Practice explaining your organization’s issue in terms of upbeat fashion. In a few sentences, you should be able to convey the essence of the organization, the issue, and how you intend to win. Having a clear message is important for recruiting people as it is for speaking to the media.

Six Steps toward Successful Recruitment

The following sections discuss the six steps you need to take to successfully recruit volunteers for your organization.

1. Be Prepared

Recruitment requires solid preparation. Have in your mind how you will explain your goals and what you want the recruit to do. Consider areas of self-interest to which you will appeal. Have a few fallback requests as well. These are jobs that need to be done but require less of a commitment: "If you can’t chair the newsletter committee, can you help with the layout? Of course, we can list you on the masthead: Layout and design by ..."

When you are acquainted with your potential recruit, review what you know about the person—his or her interests, experience, past activities, family, and anything else that will help you identify self-interest. If this is a "cold contact," someone you have never met and don’t know anything about, then prepare some questions to bring up in the conversation that will get the person talking about himself or herself. Look for visual clues, for example, parents of small children usually have chairs on their clothing. This can lead you into a discussion of day care, baby-sitting, schools, taxes, playgrounds, traffic lights, crime, housing, and almost anything else. You might observe that a person’s clothing is covered with cat hair. This leads to a more limited range of social issues.

If you are recruiting an organization to join a coalition, research its history and program. Know its funding sources and tax status.

Whether recruiting an individual or an organization, you should approach the first meeting as if it is the beginning of what you hope will be a long-term relationship. You really want to get to know the individual and bring him or her into the organization in a way that benefits both of you. Preparing for the meeting with this mind-set will help shape your recruitment strategy.

2. Legimize Yourself

Particularly with people who don’t know, you need to gain quick credibility. You can do this in several ways.
First, if it is true, explain that you are from the same community, workplace, school, ethnic group, or whatever the appropriate division is and that you have the same problem that they do. It is important to show that you are not using your problems to advance some other agenda (e.g., "We can get this toxic dump cleaned up if all functions of government are assumed by one big industrial union of all workers regardless of craft").

Second, be able to say that you got a person's name from a mutual friend, church leader, or public figure in the community who suggested that you contact him or her.

Third, mention other people on the block (in the office, etc.) who have already agreed to join, sign, or come to the event.

Last, remind people that they really have heard of your organization. For example, you were the group that blocked McDonald's from coming in.

A key part of your recruitment strategy is explaining why that person's participation will make a difference. What is the unique role you can play that someone else can't? Even if it is just a matter of boosting turnout, explain why turnout is important: "Representative Smith won by only 150 votes. If 76 votes had gone the other way, she would have lost. We need 76 people who voted for her to get up and say that they are now ready to switch. We have 75. Will you do it?" (OK, so things really aren't made to order like this, but you get the idea.)

3. Listen

Think long-term relationship! Draw people out, identify their self-interests, clarify their concerns, and establish rapport. If you are whizzing along selling your story, you won't be able to do any of this. Listening is how you get information and show your concern. It is not simply the absence of talking, it is asking people good questions and providing encouraging remarks and body language to convey your interest in them. It is also part of listening to the responses when you ask questions. If you mention a person, what is their reaction to that name? If you mention a past campaign of your group's, has the person heard of it? If you feel that you are not coming across, ask an open-ended question like, "How long have you lived in the neighborhood? What changes have you seen?" Or ask about children or grandchildren.

Other details to listen for include specialties the person might have, useful contacts, and organizational networks such as a civic club or synagogue. Perhaps a meeting with other group can be arranged for you.

4. Agitate

When you agitate, you are trying, as Weaver defines the word, "to stir up people so as to produce change." You are not trying to offend or be obnoxious, but neither will you passively accept excuses for people not getting involved. If someone says, "Oh well, I don't like the idea of a gas pipeline coming through here, but it has to go somewhere, and I'm afraid to discriminate," then you agitate by saying, "Yes, but it was originally designed to go through vacant land that happened to belong to a wealthy contributor to U.S. Senator Jones. The contributor went to Jones, who leaned on the gas company to move the pipeline into our neighborhood. That guy didn't think it was progress, and he's a millionaire, so he should know. Here's the clipping that tells the whole story." By agitating, you make people anger. Not only is the thing bad, but it's unfair. You can say, "No schools are not closing all over town, just in certain places. Some schools with far fewer students in the communities have more pull than we do. Is that fair to our kids?"

5. Get a Commitment

Don't have a conversation open-ended. Get a commitment. Remember, you are trying to match the organization's needs to the person's self-interest and talents. If you can't get an actual agreement, at least try for a date by which the person will decide. If you do get an agreement, it should be to do one specific task on a specific day. Write it down. Make a note to call and remind the person. Clarify what will happen next, who will call, who will drop off the materials, and anyone who wants to plan around it. Thank people and give public recognition. Don't look disappointed when they go home. In short, make an evening in the office more interesting than staying home and watching TV.

Practice Makes Perfect

At the Midwest Academy, students often role-play situations in which they recruit people. Consider having your staff and leaders practice on one another. Work on a few opening lines because getting started is the hardest part. Don't forget, most normal conversations begin by talking about the weather, sports, kids, or some other everyday subject. Practice answers to typical questions that you will be asked. If you can't adequately explain the program in role-playing, consider the possibility that you don't have a recruitment problem but an organizational problem, because your program, solution, or strategy really isn't clear enough to appeal to anyone.

Recruitment is the lifeblood of an organization. What kills groups fastest is that they stop recruiting new people. Growing, thriving organizations must train staff and leaders on how to recruit others and build recruitment strategies into their ongoing program work.
Using the Media

Using the media is a direct action organizing tactic that goes in the last column of the strategy chart. As with other tactics, there is always someone who does it and someone to whom it is done. Granting the ungrammatical nature of "doing media to someone," the concept is nonetheless accurate. Using the media is another way to put pressure on the target of a campaign and to build the strength of the organization. Of course, this is not to say that every media activity has to mention the decision maker by name. One might, for example, issue a report proving the target's position wrong. Although the report may be scientific and objective and may make no reference to the target, its release is still a way of applying pressure.

Because the use of the media is a direct action tactic, the phrase "media strategy" is not used. Media work is developed as part of the overall issue campaign strategy. We cannot stress this too much. Unfortunately, it has become quite fashionable to talk about a "media strategy." To speak of a media strategy implies that the issue can be won through the use of media alone. In the military sense of the word, strategic weapons are those that can totally wipe out an opponent and end a war. For example, hydrogen bombs are called strategic weapons. Conventional bombs are called tactical because their use has to be part of some larger plan. The concept of a media strategy is valid in fields such as marketing and some electoral campaigns where paid media alone can determine the outcome. This is seldom the case in direct action organizing.

Who Controls the Media?

Increasingly, the print and TV news shows are highly monopolized segments of international conglomerate entertainment empires. They have the same two goals as any other large corporation: They want to make money, and they want to promote a political climate that allows them to make even more money without interference. Unlike other companies, the news media also have corporate sponsors, advertisers whose interests are placed above others. Those companies, like the media, are heavily invested in the careers of certain political figures who do their bidding. Needless to say, the media is not the neutral reporter of the daily lives of average people that I would like to have us believe. It fosters a culture of consumerism and political passivity in which the responsibilities of citizenship are reduced to shopping and voting. Democracy is defined as the right to choose among competing "products" or candidates and sometimes the lesser of two political evils.

Even the television and newspaper personalities who intercede to get people's money back or their heat turned on, contribute to the erosion of democracy. They focus on the problems of single individuals instead of the larger patterns of corporate abuse. They help one person a week when they should be pressuring public agencies to help thousands. They rely on voluntary action instead of law and they make it appear that government isn't necessary because you can always call the TV station. In a recent Chicago newspaper column reporting how current property tax laws were used to "legally" seize an elderly woman's home for "non-payment" of back taxes, the reporter told how his article forced the city to save the woman from this abuse by publicizing her plight. He ended by saying, "I guess everyone needs his/her own newspaper reporter."

Having said all this, we believe the media is nonetheless useful in organizing. Too often groups use "corporate control of the media" as an excuse for not doing good media work. Only after we have done all the relationship building with reporters and taken all the basic public relations steps can we blame the media if we still don't get covered.
Citizens' groups can and do get good media coverage. The secret lies in understanding the narrow self-interest of the media, which is always to increase its audience. It wants to portray what its audience considers to be interesting things. If you sell newspapers, you will get press as long as you aren't threatening any of the media's vital interests.

Your issue campaign timeline should include media work where it will be the most effective. Sometimes groups focus on media work at the beginning of a campaign in order to garner enough support to get a bill introduced into a legislative body. An example is New Jersey Citizen Action's campaign to lower auto insurance rates. As a means of building broad-based support for the campaign and generating enough interest among legislators to introduce strong legislation, a three-month media campaign was developed. To dramatize the point that insurance rates were so high that people were forced to choose between their homes and their cars, the group furnished a car like a home with the toilet in the trunk. This series of media "hits" (stunts, press conferences, and releases of studies) helped build the momentum necessary for getting legislators to introduce legislation.

Options for Using the Media

An organization can get media coverage in many ways. Some are more appropriate for particular issues and particular issue campaigns. As you plan an organization's issue campaigns, consider ways to use the media to help you in developing leaders, and build the organization's visibility. Events. Sometimes groups plan events, such as media hits, stage solely for media's benefit. At other times, the media is invited to cover an action or an accountable session in which specific demands will be made on a decision maker. Regardless of its type, there are opportunities for the organization in itself and its position in the community. They are discussed in detail in the "Media Section of this chapter."

Press (News) Conferences. A press conference is similar to a media event, except that it revolves primarily upon "talking heads." Many groups fail to draw press to a press conference unless they have really hot news, a national story, or a tie-in to a breaking story. A press conference can also be successful if the spokespeople are famous personalities in their own right. The conference format lends itself best to the release of studies that include a lot of detail, background papers, and visual chart presentations and you really want the reporters to absorb the content rather than take a picture and run.

During a famine in Africa, Bread for the World had been lobbying for increased food and aid for hungry countries but with limited results. All of a sudden, the media "discovered" the famine. Bread for the World knew that a more generous U.S. government response was critical to preventing even wider starvation. It decided to use the opportunity to focus the public's concern on the government's miserly response. Twenty-five chapters volunteered to organize local press conferences within the week. Key religious and civic leaders were recruited to speak, statements were drafted, media contacted, and successful press conferences held. In spite of the fact that no local Bread for the World chapter had ever held a press conference before, every press conference generated media coverage, most in both print and television. The conferences focused attention on the issue and helped Bread for the World further its strategy to triple the government's contribution to international relief effort.

The logistics of a press conference are similar to those of a media event (see the checklist at the end of this chapter). If possible, have only a few speakers and don't try to make more than three points. One main spokesperson should make a statement and then introduce the others who are making statements. If you need additional people present for political reasons, have them stand in the background so as to be visible in pictures.

Features. All media regularly run feature stories on specific people and issues. If you are engaged in an issue campaign that you expect to run for several months, check with the local media to see if they have any features scheduled that relate to your situation. You could end up becoming the subject of a lengthy special.

A suburban Chicago group, for example, was trying to get a local school board to start an after-school day-care program in the public schools. The town was too far from the city to attract news crews to a local hearing, but when calls were made to the television stations, one indicated that it was filming a feature on parenting to air the next month. The station was eager to cover the group's work and provided in-depth coverage. The media presence at the hearing strengthened the resolve of the leaders and increased the importance of the event in the eyes of the community and the school board. It also assisted in winning the board's vote because even though the television program was not shown until weeks after the victory, it was just before the school board election.

Simple Press Release. Sometimes a group will get coverage simply by sending out a release if it has hard news to announce or a report to issue. Organizations often make it a point to send out a release every month because, in addition to getting into print, it reminds reporters that the organization exists and the organization may get asked to comment on topics related to its issues.

Interviews/Talk Shows. Both radio and television talk shows are always looking for interesting new angles, people, and issues to cover. Local television and radio talk shows are particularly accessible. Get to know the producers and assistants, even if only by phone. If you provide interesting guests and material, they may ask you back regularly. Try to cultivate relationships that
cause them to call you when they are looking for the "consumer" or "citizen" response to events as they happen. Some publications will also interview people for "human interest" angles on stories.

Letters to the Editor: Don't forget letters to the editor. This is the most widely read section of the newspaper, except for the front page. Work with leaders as a meeting to draft your letter. Especially, write in response to articles about your organization or articles on your issue. Newspapers like to make themselves look fair by running your three-inch letter in response to their misleading front-page story. Look at the letters section to see what the typical length is. Shorter letters have a better chance of being printed, and longer ones are apt to be cut.

Op-Eds: These longer pieces on the editorial page, oppose the editorial, give you a chance to make a more substantive statement than a letter to the editor. However, because you are being given more space, your article needs to be of more general interest. Unlike a letter to the editor, it should be about what you were misquoted: "I didn't say twenty-five cats." I said "up to twenty-five cats." Instead, write more broadly (in this case, on a new scientific breakthrough): "Healing with cats—how our municipal housing code can encourage it."

Meetings with Editorial Boards: Small newspapers have an editor who writes the paper's editorial. Large papers have an editorial board that shares the editorial responsibilities. It is always wise to schedule a time to talk with editors about your issue. This is when you pull out the academics and researchers who support your positions. It is a situation in which you have absolutely no power other than the strength of your arguments. Speak from the viewpoint of typical readers of the paper and explain why your position will be good for them. Cities that are off the celebrity circuit, editors will allocate a meeting if your organization brings a person of national reputation. One key relationship with editors is to send them press releases. Sometimes they will write in this that looks remarkably similar to your name.

Announcements/Bulletin Boards: Bulletin boards and radio stations offer free space on bulletin boards or meet announcements. Don't rely on them to draw people, but use them another means of building name recognition for your group. They will also reinforce your recruitment efforts. The goal is maximum always to have people hear the same message from as many sources as possible.

Video Press Releases (for Big Stories): If stations cut back on the number of up people, the stations are more interested in being supplied by outside organizations. If you are to develop a short professional-quality press release, your issue will have a real chance of being covered in the television media.

Radio Activites: These are essentially packaged radio interviews that your organization distributes to radio stations. These are intensive and very effective for most organizations.

Media Tips

The following points will be useful for planning media hits and press conferences as well as for getting coverage at other events. Keep in mind the distinction. Media hits and press conferences are events held for the media. Media events are the audience and the purpose of the event is to be covered. If the media hit is not covered, that isn't useful and it is almost as if it didn't happen. Other events such as a rally, a picnic for a fundraising picnic have a purpose of their own. Although their usefulness will be enhanced by media coverage, they still have a real function without it. This doesn't mean that a media hit can consist of just your group making a statement. It is usually better to try to engage the decision makers in the hit, for example, by holding it in front of the mayor's office and then going inside to present a petition or make a demand. Usually, you don't expect to win at this point. Rather, you want to increase the pressure by forcing the target to take an unpopular position in public.

Sure Planning by Writing a Headline. When you want to plan the media event, ask yourself what you would like the headline to say. Of course, you don't want to write the real headline, and although you put one on the press release it usually isn't used. But to form the plans for the event ask, What would be the best headline? Then set up the event so that those attending draw the conclusion stated in your headline. (Avoid headlines such as that notorious one from the entertainment industry publication Variety: "Hicks Nix Hicks P'"")

Write a Strong Media Advisory. An advisory is the noise of a media event that goes out in advance. It tells who, what, where, when, and why. Put a prominent subhead in the media advisory that says "Phooey opportunity." Then say what the opportunity is: "A working model wind turbine will demonstrate the technology of alternative energy."

Groups often make the mistake of giving out too much information in the media advisory. We have seen groups that are holding an event to release a study actually mail out the whole study in advance. If you send reporters enough information to write the story without coming to the event, that is what they will do, or they may decide not to cover the story because the study seems uninteresting without the human interest elements, visuals, and your explanation, all of which are presented at the event.

Make Sure Your Event Is Hard News. Unless you are the President, a rock star, or the head of the Mafia, your opinion isn't news. You can't call a media event just to say how upset you are about something. There must be news. News can be any of the following:

- A large number of people come together to do something. The media's view is this if it was interesting enough for these people to come, then more people will want to read about it.

- Someone who is actually news speaks for you. However, using celebrities is not the best idea for groups that are trying to develop their own leadership. You want your leaders to become local celebrities who are considered newsworthy. This will be short-circuited by bringing in outside people.

- People who can actually carry it out announce a new activity: "We are starting a drive to recall the Mayor!" Actually being able to create a credible recall threat is the key to making this hard news. If you simply got up and said, "In our opinion, the Mayor ought to be recalled," that would not be news.

- New information is revealed as part of an ongoing story. For example, the construction company that gave the tribe is actually owned by the Mayor's cousin.

- The really unexpected is often news: "Reading scores rise by 10 percent."

- A new treatment of an old story can be news. Taxes are an old story. A 16-foot pyramid of tax forms on April 15 is new news.

- A tie-in with national news makes your local event more newsworthy. For example, your organization is demanding a patient's bill of rights at a local facility while Congress debates a national patient's bill of rights. Try to make the timing coincide, because news editors will often welcome a local tie-in.
Think Pictures. Even the print media are increasingly visual in their writing. Ask yourself, How will this event look? The media hates talking heads, so move the event outdoors and produce interesting visuals and exciting people. Even if a newspaper doesn’t run a photo, part of the story will include what the reporter saw. One organization that was trying to pressure a member of Congress into taking a position held a “get off the fence” demonstration at his office. Each person carried a section of white picket fence from the garden store, making a walking fence around the block.

Make sure that signs are everywhere with your organization’s name on them. Hang banners behind speakers. Ask people throughout the crowd to hold signs. Place placards on the podium. It is a good investment to have small menus made up displaying the name of the organization that fits at the top of a podium. Spokespersons may also wear buttons with the organization’s name. If you don’t have buttons, bright sheets of paper bearing the organization’s name and worn by all attending can be quite noticeable when the cameras scan the crowd.

Good visuals also include a large sign with a slogan and a big drawing or chart or graph to illustrate the main point. Add people with signs with the group’s name or slogan. The visual needs to work as a still photo, as a snapshot; it can’t be an activity that takes time to unfold.

Before the start of a press conference or event, cup your hands around your eyes and pretend you have a camera. What do you see? For a press conference, focus in on the speaker. Too often, the sign you placed behind the speaker is too high to be seen. Or all that is visible are two or three letters surrounding the speaker’s head and the “Holiday Inn” plate on the front of the podium. A podium sign with your organization’s name is the most important sign in the room!

Have a Quotable Quote or Sound Bite. This consistent theme that runs throughout the event is reflected in the visuals. Each speaker should use the same quote. On National Secretaries Day, working woman’s organization used the quote “Raising not roses.”

Help Reporters Do Their Work. Like most everyone else, reporters are overworked and feel stressed. If they can take your release and run it as their story, they are more likely to use the story that the have to make notes and write something themselves. Study the length and style of stories in the local paper and learn to write that way. Develop a reputation for issuing factual, well-written material.

Know the Staff. Having a personal relationship with reporters and editors is helpful in many ways. Find out who covers your program area and surround yourself. Respect reporters’ integrity. Do not want to cover news that is happening. They don’t want to feel that you are jugging up news just to cover their story. You do have a relationship with reporters, remember that nothing is over really confidential or off the record. If you don’t want it printed, don’t say it. If you don’t want it on TV, don’t do it. We usually think that information flows from us to the reporter, but if you can build relationships and reporters decide to help you, they can be great sources of all kinds of information. Reporters who regularly call your topic will call you for comments if you build an ongoing relationship.

Include Human Interest. A study about some emotions is boring. A statement in a family whose child was exposed to the emotions is human interest. Every news media should have a human-interest element, with real people telling their own stories. A media kit that is made up just of experts or politicians can get covered but it is not part of the direct action organizing philosophy because it doesn’t build up the group’s own leadership.

Bypass Luck. As in all of life, luck plays a role. As good and bad. You may have the greatest story to tell or the best event in town, but if an earthquake strikes San Francisco or new revelations of presidential misconduct surface, you won’t be covered that day. On the other hand, you may schedule an event on a slow news day and be the star of the evening news. Such is life.

Be in Control at the Event. You don’t have to be a career public relations person to appear professional. Have a press table where reporters, photographers, and camera crews sign in (so you can add them later to your press list). Hand out press kits containing a press statement and background pieces on your organization and the issue. Assign someone to greet the members of the press and direct them to your spokespersons. Everyone should know who these people are.

Distribute a list of all spokespersons with names split correctly and, if part of a coalition, their organizations identified. The media people will take care of their own equipment. If you are giving audio or visual equipment, be sure you have spare batteries and projector bulbs. Never go anywhere without an extra extension cord and a three-prong adapter. Some citizen organizations require their staffs to carry a media box of these materials in their cars at all times. They include a folding easel, a large sign with the group’s name, copies of the group’s basic brochure, markers, and other equipment mentioned above.

Appreciate Reporter’s Writing Skill. Some good press reporters have stronger writing skills than personal skills. Don’t be offended when you are interrupted mid-sentence.

Hold a Reporter-Friendly Web Site. Increasingly, reporters will go to your organization’s Web site for background information and to view past press releases prior to calling you for a statement. The site should include background on the organization and on the issue as well as past releases and links to other resources. The Web site is a necessary part of your overall media plan.

Avoid Getting Sued. The simplest tips we have heard for avoiding getting sued are to use the phrases “according to” or “allegedly” to state things you know or have heard but would be hard-pressed to prove, even though you know you are right. Don’t state anything that is gossip and/or untrue.

Developing and Using a Media List

Your press list should be computerized in such a way that you can generate blast faxes, e-mails, or mailing labels at a moment’s notice. Divide or code your lists by category. Make sure you have included the personal contacts described above, news reporters, specialty editors or “City Desks” for television (local, network, and cable), radio, daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, ethnic newspapers (Black, Hispanic, or others), student newspapers (in your are in a large college town), and religious and union publications. Large cities will probably have an Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) reporter and a “daybook.” The daybook lists all scheduled events for the day and is used by most media. Organizations are increasingly using faxes and e-mail to send material to the media. Do whatever reporters prefer (some don’t like e-mail), but remember that the key to coverage is the follow-up phone call and the personal relationship. Call assignment editors (the City Desk at newspapers) twice for every event: once the day before and once the morning of the event. If you know the reporter, call earlier.

Media advisories (the notice of your media event) should be sent to the wires, daily papers, and television and radio stations two to four days
Preparing Spokespeople for a Media Event

People love seeing their names in print. Pictures are even better. Nothing gives leaders a stronger sense of power and a conviction that what they are doing is important than to see themselves on television or in the paper. When interviewed and who is photographed. For community organizations, the volunteer leaders, not the staff, are the people who speak before the media. Leaders sometimes resent staff who "bog" the media.

The person who speaks before the media or gives an interview should be a leader in your organization, someone who does real work, and not simply an articulate person. Don’t allow people who do little work to “volunteer” to be the media spokespersons.

Some leaders may be bashful about working with the media, but they should be encouraged to practice (perhaps in special training sessions that are videotaped) and then supported in their initial efforts. Everyone who is good at working with the media was scared the first time. Besides getting in the media is a small “perk” for longtime committed leaders.

One public housing group was demanding that lead paint be removed from its development. As part of the campaign, the Health Department was asked to test children in the development for lead poisoning. The media was called and asked to cover the testing. The testing and the issue got excellent print and television coverage. The few leaders involved were surprised to find themselves quoted in the paper and began to take the work and the issue much more seriously. This coverage enhanced their self-image and raised them to talk more freely with their neighbors about the importance of the issue.

In some large organizations, particularly national or large statewide coalitions, the Director is often the spokesperson because it may be impractical, if not impossible, to have volunteer leaders play this role. In large organizations where press releases are sent to numerous places throughout the country or state, local leaders in the releases to media in their area. Be sure to get the leaders to approve the quotes first. This takes a little longer but is well worth it. The local media are more likely to pick up the story, and your leaders and local membership will feel better about being part of a larger organization. The same “mail merge” word processing function that is used to personalize the mailings can be set up to customize press releases by inserting local names and addresses. In this way, a statement can be attributed to a different leader in each city. Alternatively, the list can be e-mailed to local leaders who customize it and send the release.

Before the event, practice with the leaders. Assign someone to play the press roles and ask questions. Develop short statements that use your quotable quotes. Encourage people to stick to your script. Remind them that they are representing the organization and should only give the organization’s position. If they don’t agree with the position, they shouldn’t act as spokespersons. They also don’t have to answer every question, particularly ones for which they don’t have an answer. It’s OK to say, “I don’t know, I’ll get back to you on that” or “our organization has not taken a position on that issue.” Anticipate the obvious questions and make sure that all spokespersons have answers. Train leaders in how to stay on message by repeating the basic point instead of answering a question that goes in a different direction. For example:

**Leader:** The Coalition for Better Transit is here to ask Representative Max to vote for the transit bond issue.

**Reporter:** Isn’t it dangerous to ride the bus in high crime neighborhoods?

**Leader:** Representative Max can improve transportation throughout the city by voting for the transit bond issue.

Everyone should be prepared to mention the name of the organization in his or her answer. When asked the question, “Why are you here today?” all organization spokespeople should respond “USAction is here today to . . .” Too often news coverage is generic. How many times have you groaned as you read in the paper “a local citizens group said . . .” The name of the organization was left out!

If your national membership organization, the voter media coordinators were trained on how to get the organization mentioned and how to push membership. Its leaders knew that in the next minute of radio or television interviews, they should give out the organization’s address and Web site membership number. In talking with spokes for print media, they would specifically ask if the address and phone number could be listed at the bottom of the article.

Writing Press Releases and Media Advisories

Anyone who can write a simple declarative sentence can write a good press release, the statement that you hand out at the media event and forward afterward to reporters who didn’t attend. Here are the steps:

1. Make an attractive letterhead on the computer. Put the word “NEWS” on it in very big type or “NEWS FROM” and your organization’s name. Add a simple drawing or your logo. Of course, you can use your regular letterhead.

2. Add the traditional leading:
   - Your address and today’s date.
   - The words “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” or the words “HOLD UNTIL . . .” followed by a date. Put a “hold” on a press release when you want the story run at a specific time in the future. For example, you are holding your state convention and a famous speaker is coming to talk about toxic chemicals in children’s toys. You might prepare an article on the life and work of the speaker and send it to feature editors and columnists a few days in advance so that they know they have it and can plan to use it. But you put a hold on it until the day of the convention. At the convention, you distribute another press release about what the speaker actually said to your group, which you hope will be carried in the press on the following day.
   - “For Further Information Contact . . .” Add the name and phone numbers of your spokesperson. This needs to be someone who will actually be easy to reach and who can field any kind of question. When an organization wants leaders, rather than staff, to be quoted in the press, there can be a problem if the leader can’t take calls at work or has to go out to pick up the kids. In that case, put down the name of the leader and the phone number of the organization’s office. The staff will answer the call and say, “That person isn’t here at the moment. I’ll see that she gets right back to you.” Then you can hunt down the leader, find another leader, or decide to have staff talk to the reporter. Ask the reporter, “Are you on a
deadline?" If the answer is yes, you have only a few minutes to call back, after which you have blown it. Cell phones can speed this up, but it is still good to have the call come first to the office. Several contact people can be listed. Add daytime and nighttime phone numbers, cell phone numbers, and e-mail addresses if e-mail is checked often.

3. Write a headline. It probably won’t be printed. Newspapers usually have a special person to write headlines in order to give each page a consistent style and tone. You are writing the headlines to catch the reporter’s eye. Avoid passive headlines such as “The Parents’ Response to Governor’s Statement.” Instead say, “Angry Parents Picket Governor.”

4. Set your word processor to double space for the body of the release.

5. Write a lead paragraph. This is the most critical paragraph in the whole release. It must grab the attention of the reporter or editor, and if all the rest of the release is cut, this must stand on its own. Start with a dateline, which is simply the name of your city and the date without the year. The lead paragraph answers the questions who, what, when, where, and why? You don’t have to do this all in one sentence, but get all the information in quickly.

Mt. Rushmore, February 24—Seven members of the organization Healing with Cats today picketed the office of Mayor Lincoln protesting the city’s newly imposed limit of ten cats to each residential unit. The organization demanded that the limit be raised to twenty-five.

6. Write a second paragraph with quotes from your spokesperson.

“Ten cats are far below the critical mass needed to cure most diseases, and the Mayor is clearly being influenced by the big pharmaceutical companies,” said Healing with Cats President, Felix Domesticus. “By invoking this 1997 ordinance prohibiting raising livestock with the city limits, Mayor Lincoln contravenes the latest scientific evidence that cats do heal,” he added.

Put in quotation marks any statement other than completely non-controversial matters of fact. For example, in the lead paragraph above, the point that picketing took place is a matter of fact. In the second paragraph, the point that ten cats is less than a critical mass for healing is really a matter of opinion that is best attributed to a specific person as a quotation. The reason for doing this is that reporters usually feel responsible for the accuracy of all the information that goes into an article under their names. They don’t want to print statements that can’t be easily verified. However, they are not responsible for the accuracy of material in a quotation, the person quoted is responsible for that. The paper is merely asserting that a certain quotation was made, not that what was said is true. Reporters are therefore much more likely to print your point of view if it is in the form of a quotation. No reporter had any problem printing Richard Nixon’s famous statement “I am not a crook,” but few reporters wanted to write, “Richard Nixon is not a crook.”

7. Continue to develop the story using quotations from the same and other leaders. The third paragraph would be the place to document the scientific evidence that cats have healing powers. “According to a recently discovered papyrus from an Egyptian tomb...” Mention the name of your group in each paragraph.

It’s bad if the release by trying to get in a plug for your next meeting or activity, or give your phone number or Web site address for more information. Media seldom give the phone number but often give the Web site address. It probably won’t be printed, but on a slow news day, you may get lucky.

Try to limit the release to two sheets of paper. If you have a report or study to back up your position, hand it out in addition to the release.

A typical media advisory

The Peoples Insurance Campaign
668 Lower Road Crossing
New York, NY 12345

Feb. 27, 2002

For Further Information
Nick Quick
P (000) 866 6297
F (000) 866 6298
Nicky666@oo.com

NOTICE OF MEDIA EVENT
The Peoples Insurance Campaign will release a report directly to campaign contributions from the insurance industry.
9:00 AM, Monday, March 3rd
668 Lower Crossing Road
New York, NY 12345

Photo Opportunity
See the bent steering column from a totaled car declared “fit to drive” by Commissioner Mott.

In writing a media advisory to notify reporters of your event, use the same heading. Add the words “Media Advisory” or “News Advisory” in large type. Then state the nature of the event, with the time and place. In addition, in bold type say, for example:

NOTICE OF PHOTO OPPORTUNITY
A Mark Twain look-alike will read aloud from the chapter of Tom Sawyer in which a dead cat is used to cure warts.
Checklist for Press Releases

— Is the release on organizational letterhead?
— Is the release dated and marked for immediate release or held until a specific date and time?
— Is the contact person’s name and phone number (day and evening) listed at the top of the release?
— Is the headline short and pithy?
— Is the copy double-spaced?
— Does the first paragraph explain who, what, why, when, and where?
— Have you quoted key leaders in the second and third paragraphs? Have you cleared the quotes with them first? (Remember, who you quote is an organizational decision.)
— Have you listed your organization’s name several times?
— Are all names, titles, and organizations spelled correctly?
— Is each sheet marked with an abbreviated headline? (Try to keep your release to two pages. One is fine.)
— Did you put “. . .” or “# # #” to indicate the end of the release? (Why? Because “they” say so.)

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Checklist for Media Events

— Have the date, time, and place been cleared with all the speakers?
— Are there other media conflicts (e.g., another major event or press conference)?
— Is the room large enough?
— Will you need a public address system?
— Have volunteers been recruited to set up and clean up the room before and after the press conference?
— Do you plan to serve refreshments? If so, have people been asked to bring them?
— Who is sending the media advisory?
— Who is making follow-up phone calls?
— Is a script available for those making follow-up phone calls to the media?
— Are visuals, charts, or graphs needed at the press conference?
— Who is writing each person’s presentation? Are there good quotable sound bites?
— Do you need translators?
— Is someone drafting a question-and-answer sheet for anticipated questions at the press conference?
— Is a time set for speakers to rehearse their presentations and answers to the anticipated questions?
— Are materials being prepared for the press kit?
— Press release
— Background information on speakers
— Fact sheet
— Organizational background
— Copies of speakers’ statements
Will your organization's name be projected well through signs, posters, buttons, and so forth?

Is someone assigned to hang a banner? This can take a while.

Is there a podium sign?

Who will greet the media and staff the sign-in table?

Is someone in your group going to take photos and videos?

Who is assigned to assist the speakers with details at the press conference?

Who will send releases to those who don't attend the press conference?

Who will call reporters who don't attend but will need the information immediately or to use it? Are volunteers assigned to watch for stories in various media?

Will thank-you notes be sent to all spokespersons and volunteers?

Fun tactics, and winning on issues, help keep people involved for the long haul.
Designing and Leading a Workshop

So you’ve been called on to lead a workshop. Well, that should be easy; everyone has been to a workshop and knows just what it is. It’s about twenty people sitting all day in the most uncomfortable chairs. The workshop leader gets up and says, “For the next seven hours I will speak about international woolen garment shipments.” Or else someone says, “Let’s break down into groups of three and spend the next seven hours really getting in touch with our feelings about international woolen garment shipments.” Whichever style is chosen, the result is the same. Little comes of it, and given what Freud said about woolens, one should never get in touch with them in public.

A workshop can be great or it can be dreadful. If your organization has a reputation for conducting good workshops, people will come and they will develop into stronger leaders, candidates for office, or coalition partners. If you are known as a good workshop leader, you will get requests to conduct workshops all the time.

The starting point for a great workshop is understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the workshop format as a tool for educating people. By workshop, we mean a group of ten to thirty people meeting for several hours, a day, or at most, a weekend. Unfortunately, you will be asked too often to lead a one-hour workshop. Little can be accomplished in this short period. It’s good to set aside longer periods of time for workshops; three hours is preferable.

A workshop is very good for accomplishing the objectives.
1. Giving People a General Orientation, Conception, or Overview of the Subject. For example, “This is how the campaign for public financing of elections will work.” “This is how you set up an election day operation.” “This is how a group chooses an issue.” People can work out the details of their own specific situations later.
2. Teaching People to Do One Thing Well. For example, “This is how to talk to your legislator about state aid to education.” “This is how to hold a press event about state aid to education.”
3. Creating a Common Language, Attitude, or Approach. By doing exercises and planning strategy together, people learn a system for analyzing and solving problems. They come out of the workshop better able to communicate and work with each other because they are speaking a common language.
4. Creating Enthusiasm and Momentum. If passing the bill in the legislature requires forming a committee in each of nine legislative districts, for example, hold a workshop. Bring in people from the nine districts and discuss how to set up the committees. They will go home far more committed to the idea and to each other than if you met with them one district at a time. Bringing people together from several districts, cities, or states shows how big and exciting the whole plan is. It helps to convince people that if they each do their part, it will really happen.
5. Building Confidence. Most people lack self-confidence, at least when it comes to acting politically. Role-playing a situation gives people confidence in their abilities, especially when the workshop leader and other participants praise and support them. Frequently, people “know” how to do something, but they need the confidence that they know it.

Workshops are bad tools for teaching involved subjects such as nautical navigation, Latin, and solid geometry. Think back to grade school when you learned long division. Yes, you were in a class with other children, but you really learned from a skilled teacher, and there wasn’t much the group could have done to help you. Now, contrast learning to do long division with learning to explain long division to the community. A
group can actually do a great deal to help you learn to explain long division. People can brainstorm ways to put across a complex concept in simple terms. Some can role-play community members while others practice explaining long division. You can improve your own technique by listening to others practice theirs. Watching videotapes of people explaining long division to the community might also be helpful.

OK, here comes the point! Workshops are best for subjects where group participation aids the learning process. They work less well when they are a substitute for old-fashioned one-on-one teaching. So, plan your workshops to make the best use of the group. Use methods in which the group is a necessary part of the learning process. Avoid methods in which a group is actually a hindrance. If people want to learn nautical navigation, send them to the Coast Guard.

Advance Planning

Leading a good workshop takes time for preparation, as well as skill in leading. The "safest" workshop is usually a presentation followed by a discussion, but it is also the least interesting. Think creatively about the main points you are trying to convey. Find ways to convey the material that will help people better grapple with or absorb the material.

The danger in trying to design an innovative workshop is that it may become cutsey and/or cluttered ("We will now skip rope to demonstrate the relationship between economic growth and full employment"). Ask several people for their feedback on the workshop design. Does it make sense to them? If so, try it. If what you designed doesn't work, revise it for next time. In this section we present some of the basic elements you should take into consideration in planning a workshop.

What Are Your Goals?

Clarify your specific goals, taking into account the areas in which workshops are most helpful. Consider the overall concept with which you want people to leave. Then, identify no more than four ideas or skills that you want people to learn at the workshop. Think about developing a common gauge and enthusiasm for the issue or project.

Often, the main goal is to build up the audience of the group members so that they are able to understand, talk about, and try out new ideas. A confidence-building workshop with role-playing and videotaping presentations is going to require different design from an information workshop.

The workshop must reflect the overall goals and strategy of the sponsoring organization. There is no such thing as just teaching skills independent of an organizational context. Perhaps if the topic is "How to eat a good breakfast," you could discuss it without any organizational considerations. But the moment the topic becomes "Eating a good breakfast at your desk," you must put it in an organizational context.

Who Should Come?

The selection of participants greatly affects the success of the workshop. Even if you are leading a program for another group, make it clear that you want to be consulted about who is invited. Not all workshops are appropriate for everyone.

For example, a tenants' group sponsored a workshop on organizing through direct action methods. The group's leaders debated inviting people from other housing organizations. The workshop leader urged them not to, knowing that a frank discussion of their own group's problem would be impossible with others present. The leaders also considered whether to invite only board members or all active members. It was decided that because expanding the board was a major organizational goal, they would invite all active members. But some board members objected, saying that the portion of the workshop devoted to this was so specific that it was really making plans, which was the board's function. It was therefore decided to hold a formal board meeting early after the workshop to ratify the plans.

Decide whether the guidelines for who should come.

Participants Should Have Similar Backgrounds and Levels of Experience. Unless the workshop is an mergence relations, the more homogeneous the participants, the better it will be. Without our meaning to, college-educated people tend to put others out of a discussion. Younger people often not ahead of seniors. Native-born people use slang words that foreign-born people don't understand. People with a lot of experience use jargon and acronyms that make inexperienced people feel dumb. If such differences exist within your group, you can hold a workshop for board members and another for new members. You can hold the workshop in the afternoon when mostly users will come and another in the evening for working people.

Participants Should Have the Same Relationship to the Organization. Discussions with leaders, staff, members, allies, or people off the street are going to be different. Members may be more interested in discussing an issue, while staff will be more interested in the details of strategy. Leaders will be called on to accomplish one set of tasks, all the other. Not every discussion is appropriate for everyone. The more types of people who attend, the more difficult it becomes for you to establish a perspective from which to speak and the more disjointed the discussion.

What Are the Participants' Backgrounds?

What do people already know? Have they been given training or had experience in the subject of the workshop? What are their ages and backgrounds? Is everyone literate? Are there particular problems or issues people want addressed in the workshop? If no one can answer these questions for you, mail the participants a short questionnaire or application form ahead of time. Use the answers to these questions in designing both the content and the style of the workshop.

What Is the Organization?

If the sponsoring group is not your own, learn as much as you can about it before designing the workshop. Learn its history, style, and program by looking over its literature, newsletters, and press clippings and by talking with officers or staff. If the group's leaders are participating in the workshop, should they have some special function? How free are you to disagree with them? Be sure that your goals for the workshop and the organization's are the same. Does the leadership have particular problems it is trying to solve by holding the workshop? Are there major divisions in the organization over the problem? Will they be brought out at the workshop?

Preparing the Workshop Program

Adults learn best by "doing." So, seek hands-on "doing" opportunities. The second-best way adults learn is by both seeing and hearing. If you can supplement presentations with visual aids, they will retain more information. The goal is to present each major piece of information in at least five different ways. You can say it; write it on the chart; ask a question about it; include it in a role-play, quiz, or written exercise; tell a story that makes the point; and summarize it again at the end. (In the language of workshop experts, these are called "non-repetitive redundancies.")
The worst way for people to learn is just by listening to a presentation. Few of us are so interesting that people want to listen for much longer than twenty minutes. Most really good workshops are a combination of presentation, exercise, role-playing, and discussion. The form of a workshop and how material is presented are as important as the actual content. Develop an outline of time use for each section of the workshop. Start by estimating the time slots. Then write a separate content outline that includes exactly what you will say, what the group will do, and what points will be made. Now go back and see if it all fits into your original time estimate. The time outline for a workshop on writing a press release might look like this:

**Press Release 3 Hours**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debriefing</td>
<td>60 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra time</td>
<td>20 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The assumption here is that you have fifteen people in the workshop. The exercise will consist of each person writing a short, press release from a long background paper that you will give them. In the debriefing, each person’s release will be read to the group and commented on. The evaluation is a short form that people fill out. This is a tight schedule, but an extra 20 minutes is built in.

Using Exercises and Role-Plays

Both exercises and role-plays are effective ways of teaching workshop participants.

**Exercises.** Exercises can be practical, such as actually designing a newsletter or mailing a short-minute speech. They can also be non-conceptual.

A problem-solving exercise is usually done in small groups. Participants are given the basic background of a problem and are asked to devise a solution, plan, or strategy. This provides opportunities to reinforce the principles and guidelines you’ve explained in the presentation part of the workshop and helps people grapple with the use of the material. Sometimes exercises are used to demonstrate how much people already know, which builds confidence.

The key to success is to keep the exercise simple and make its problem true to life. The start is based on actual situations in which you were involved, the more real it will sound and the better you will be to lead the discussion. Don’t use situations with which some members of the group have actually had experience. These members will short-circuit the reasoning process by stating what actually happened and then argue with people who have a different idea. The goal is not to have people reconstruct the original circumstances but to learn a method for finding a workable solution.

**Role-Plays.** Like exercises, role-plays can be more practical or more conceptual. A role-play is a way of recreating a bit of outside reality within a workshop. An exercise is really the first step in a role-play. After solving the problem on paper, the group acts out the solution as a way of testing it. If you are using the workshop to prepare people to sell raffle tickets, for example, they can write a short sales pitch on paper. Role-playing the sales pitch shows who mumbles, looks at the floor, and plays with his ears—problems that you wouldn’t spot from the writing.

In shorter workshops, usually only short one-on-one role-plays are used. Larger teams use a role-play where the goal is to develop a strategy not introduce an event such as an action or accountability session, take a great deal of time to plan, produce, and debrief. Two and a half to three hours are required. If people are being prepared for a specific meeting with certain individuals, then use a role-play to simulate the meeting, even if it takes up a lot of time. Nothing else will better prepare people.

Most adults complain about having to do role-plays, but really enjoy them once they get going. The main concern is that they don’t want to embarrass themselves in front of others. The purpose of a role-play is not to demonstrate how great someone is. Role-plays done well give people experience and build their confidence. Make sure that everyone is given adequate information and that they understand the frame of reference of the role-play. For example, after a role-play dealing with a trade union problem, upper members of the group asked the trainer exactly what a union was.

All materials to be handed out in connection with exercises and role-plays should be color coded. The way to make sure that everyone is looking at the right sheet of paper and that no one isn’t walking off with another team’s background information. With small role-plays, assign major parts to people who will make the role-play work. Listen to the teams prepare. Prompt if necessary, but be sure to be impartial and give the same information to both teams.

Role-plays should always be debriefed. Begin by asking people who played key roles what their thought was and how they felt they did. Explain to people what was done well and what could be improved upon. With few exceptions, as long as these components are generally encouraging and supportive, people are eager to hear about what they could do better. It is very bad form to set up a role-play that doesn’t work so that you can sound smart when you debrief it. If you do that, we will publicly deny that you read this book. Also avoid the temptation to give characters in role-plays silly names like Ms. Ina Floopy and Mr. John. It makes people act silly and diverts them from the main point.

**Handouts.** Workshop participants love receiving handouts. Use them to provide the details and backup information that would otherwise make your presentation long or boring. Also, be sure to provide detailed information in handouts about how to get a more in-depth knowledge about the subject material. An annotated reading list and guide to Web sites is always helpful.

If you are copying someone else’s materials, such as this manual, be sure to get permission and give appropriate credit.

**Conducting the Workshop.**

**Atmosphere.** People care about how things look and feel. They appreciate rooms that are comfortable and attractive. The setting in a room will greatly affect the tone and outcome of a workshop.

Tables are essential. Put them in a big square or horseshoe with chairs around the outside so that the participants can see one another and the charts, videos, or overheads. If the tables are unattractive, cover them with tablecloths or sheets to improve the setting. Remove unneeded chairs.

Clean up a room before you begin any session. Make sure that coffee cups or napkins from previous groups have been cleared away. You might put a hard candy or piece of fruit at every participant’s spot to welcome people to the workshop. As the workshop progresses, keep removing previously used charts and posters from the walls in order to avoid visual overload.
A bouquet of flowers adds a touch of class to any workshop. Set the bouquet in a vase near the podium or table for the workshop leader.

Adjust the temperature before you begin the workshop. It should be a bit cool before everyone enters the room. If there is noise from adjacent rooms, try to have it stopped or muffled.

If you are working alone, recruit someone to assist you in setting up for the workshop. That person can serve as the "staff" during the workshop and assist you in handling logistical difficulties and equipment.

An Academy staffer once led a workshop in a large hall where a second group was meeting on the other side of a movable partition. The other group turned out to be the Eastern States Ferret Convention, which brought dozens of these furry little relatives of the skunk. As the flames came through the partition, people's eyes began to run and there were choking noises. Now, ferrets are fine in moderation, but the point of the story is that if you didn't anticipate the unexpected or can't do anything about it, end early!

Making Introductions

Unless the workshop is very large, take a few minutes to get to know people's names and backgrounds. People are more comfortable in a room if they know others or something about them.

Ask participants to answer a question that gets them talking and that provides you with useful information about their experience. For example, if your workshop is about press releases, ask how their organizations use press releases or if they have ever written one. Avoid icebreakers that don't relate to the workshop's content, such as asking everyone to dance like the flower of their choice.

You may choose to use your introduction period as a way of getting into the material. For example, in a workshop on how to lobby elected officials, you might ask participants to explain when they feel that they are being good lobbyists and when they feel uncomfortable about lobbying. Then use that information to develop a talk about when all of us feel good about lobbying (when we're knowledgeable, prepared, have numbers of people and power) and when we're uncomfortable (when we don't have enough of what we don't have power). The key point is that the introduction period should be used to substantiate and not just to get names from people.

During this time, draw a rough diagram of the room and put people's names on the diagram at the approximate spot where they are sitting. This map will help you call people by their name. Another suggestion for getting names is to list stuff 8-5-by-11-inch paper and ask people to fold it in half and make name tags to pin on the table in front of them. The most popular-by-3-inch nametags are readable only with shaking hands.

Your Presentation

Even though adults learn least well from listening to a presentation, some presenters can't be avoided. Use the presentation time to outline principles, steps, or guidelines to your subject materials. (Sometimes good films or slide shows are available that can be substituted for your presentation. If you can use them, participants will learn from both seeing and hearing.)

Use whatever outline, notes, or script aids you feel most comfortable. If you like having every sentence written out, do it and try practice giving the presentation without appearing that you are reading it.

You may want to write an additional set of notes for the discussion period with question you will ask in order to start the discussion or keep it going. Put down additional points to make or statistics for people who request them.

Most inexperienced presenters tend to provide so much detail and information on a subject. After you have written your first draft of a presentation, go back and cut out the extraneous material. Add in examples and stories that illustrate your main points. Keep it lively and entertaining. Frequent jokes or funny stories are helpful in keeping people's interest. Don't just use them rattling off statistics.

Feedback during the Workshop

Workshop leaders are always wondering, "Is anyone getting this?" Exercises and role-plays will give you a clue. Check with other staff or officers frequently during the session. Ask the prep questions that will help you figure out what people have learned.

One tool that Midwest Academy trainers use is a written one-page multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank quiz distributed during the session. Names are not put on the quiz. The quiz is really more a test of the workshop leader's communication skills and the structure of the workshop than of the participants' comprehension skills. For example, if most people missed two particular questions, then the material related to those questions wasn't presented clearly or wasn't presented in a manner that helped people retain it.

Note Taking by Participants

With one exception, which we shall discuss, encourage note taking during presentations. When you put key ideas on a board or newpaper, get the triple effect of the participants hearing the words, seeing them, and writing them—a true memory boost (non-repetitive redundancy!). Note taking can be encouraged by handing out paper or pads.

There are two options for displaying key ideas. You can write them as you speak, which has the disadvantage of slowing you down and placing your back to the group much of the time. It also leaves you at the mercy of spelling fanatics. If you choose this method, a good trick is to prepare all the notes beforehand, writing them in light penciling on flip charts. They can be read by you but will be invisible to the group until you trace them with your marker. The second way is to prepare the notes beforehand, either on flip charts or overhead projector transparency. The disadvantage is that as soon as they are displayed, the group will start to copy them without waiting for your explanation. There is no ideal method.

College graduates and professionals instinctively take notes. Those with very little education will do the same, particularly if they see others taking notes. Unfortunately, for very poorly educated people, writing may be sufficiently difficult that it distracts them from what you are saying. With such groups consider discouraging note taking. One method is to hand out a bare-bones outline of your presentation. Tell people to follow along with it and then take it home and that they don't need to take notes unless they want to.

Audiovisuals

Audiovisuals are used in a workshop to support a presentation. Slides or overheads are relatively easy to make and use, especially with computers. While 35-mm slides are often clearer than overheads, they are more expensive and have the disadvantage of placing you in the back of the room with the lights out. Overheads allow you to stand up front with the lights only dimmed. Films also work well but are rapidly being replaced by videos. These are fine, but very few places are equipped with the superlarge screens needed for groups over fifteen people. A four-dollar beam splitter and some cable from Radio Shack will let you quickly connect two or three TV sets to the same VCR and place them around the room. The most frequent problem
encountered by Midwest Academy staff is rooms that cannot be darkened. Inquire about this well in advance.

Increasingly, as more people have access to laptop computers they are making presentations with programs such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Corel Presentations, which are shown on large-screen TVs or projected. Most hotels rent the equipment for an outrageous sum, or you may be able to borrow it from a university or union. No doubt time and experience will improve the technique and lower the cost, but from what we have seen so far, something always seems to go wrong.

In fact, Murphy’s Law, “If anything can go wrong, it will,” certainly applies to all audiovisual equipment. Set up and check all equipment ahead of time. Arrange equipment in the right position so that time is not wasted during the workshop. Have extra bulbs, batteries, fuses, extension cords, and three-prong adapters available.

In general, don’t show slides or films and let it go at that. No matter how good the material is, the greater value is in the discussion. As with exercises and role-plays, audiovisuals give people an immediate common experience to which they can react. Sometimes it is the only thing a group has in common, so use the opportunity well. Plan the points to be made in the discussion. Ask questions to see if everyone has the same reaction to the material. Are there patterns in people’s reactions that can be traced back to differences in their organizations, issues, jobs, or experiences that can lead to a deeper discussion?

Do not try to substitute a film for an exercise or a role-play. It is not the same. A film does not engage people like a role-play. A film may present material better than a speaker might, but it is still a one-way communication. The group could have shown the film without you.

Discussion

Discussion in a workshop can be exciting involving, but it needs to be focused on specific topics and facilitated by the workshop leader. Too often, workshop leaders use group discussion as a way to fill up time when they haven’t really prepared well. We’ve all been at group discussions that are a collective thing of ignorance.

Clarify in your mind the purpose and direction of any group discussion. Prepare the points you want stressed and then design questions for the group that will elicit response around those points. Don’t say: “Has anyone anything to say?” “How did you like it?” “What would you like to talk about?” “Are you getting anything out of this?” Instead ask: “What was it that gave the group the courage to go out?” “What might have damaged them?” “What power did they have?” “What leadership roles could you identify?”

When you set aside time for discussion, facilitate well. If not, one or two people will dominate most of the discussion. Groups appreciate some facilitators who encourage broad participation while keeping them to the subject at hand.

Style

Your style is part of your personality. Therefore, some aspects of your style can difficult to change. However, almost every good workshop leader conveys humor, enthusiasm, optimism, knowledge balanced with motion and structure. (If none of these are part of your personality, we suggest a long period of reflection.) Good workshop leaders are enthusiastic. They don’t have to be able to tell jokes, but they do have to find ways of laughing at themselves & breaking the tension in a group, particularly when serious material.

Good workshop leaders are enthusiastic about fire material. You must convey energy (particularly if your workshop is scheduled right after lunch! Watch yourself on video sometime. If you are less expressive than you thought, practice being a bit more dramatic in expressing your point. It’s often just a matter of raising your voice and speaking more distinctly.

Good workshop leaders are optimistic. Workshop participants want to know that they can do things. Workshops that focus on the negative aspects of a subject are debilitating.

Good workshop leaders must be realistic but optimistic and must find ways to convey that optimism in workshops. A good workshop leader praises the efforts of workshop participants and maintains the group’s energy and spirit.

Good workshop leaders are knowledgeable about their subject material yet modest. If the participants are not familiar with your background and expertise, a subject and it is important to share why you were asked to lead the workshop. Giving yourself credentials for leading a workshop is similar to legitimizing the one who is teaching the workshop. Simply introduce yourself, sharing a bit about you and why you are qualified to head the workshop. Don’t claim to know everything about the subject.

Good workshop leaders provide structure. If you’ve followed the outline suggestions made earlier in the chapter, you will have a good structure.

Evaluation

Without fail, prepare an evaluation sheet for participants to fill out at the end of the session. It can be as simple as asking people to list what they found most useful and least useful, or it can go over the workshop section by section for more detailed responses. Some leaders encourage oral evaluations. Others don’t. In any event, the evaluation lets you improve your workshop method in the future. It also protects you when the one person who didn’t like the workshop goes around saying that no one liked it.

No workshop is ever perfect; things can always be changed or added to make it more effective. Think of your workshops as artistic products in process.

Obviously, the best measure of success is when a participant puts the workshop materials to use or acts on particular insights. Nothing is better evidence of achieving goals than having someone try something you suggested and having it turn out well. As we always say at the Academy, our goal is organizing, not training.
Working with Religious Organizations

Religious organizations are some of the most powerful institutions in many communities. They also offer moral leadership to both their members and much of the community at large. Organizers who are active members of religious denominations find it perfectly natural to work with religious organizations. Others with more secular backgrounds have concerns and questions.

Long before there were community action organizations, congregations played that role. It is more recent years, religious and non-religious activists have functioned in separate worlds. Although many of their concerns are the same, as organizers, we need to bridge these worlds and help the religious and progressive communities work together more closely.

Why Work Together?

Steps to Take toward Working with Religious Organizations

Guidelines for Working with the Religious Community

Selected Forms of Address

Selected Denominational Terms

Why Work Together?

Mutual Self-Interests

It is in the mutual self-interests of religious and non-religious groups to work together. Why do community organizations, unions, and statewide citizens organizations want to work with religious groups?

People. Lots of people are affiliated with religious groups. In fact, 42 percent of the U.S. population attends church at least once a week. Fifty percent of the Jewish community consider themselves "religious," Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities are growing rapidly.

Organized Institutions. Religious organizations are organized. They have volunteers and structures that can be mobilized for social justice.

Resources. Religious institutions have lots of material resources in addition to their human ones. They have money, buildings, buses, office equipment, and many other financial and in-kind resources that are needed in organizing work. The largest recipients of donor dollars are religious institutions, and about half of those funds are used on charitable activities and community service.

Respect and Credibility. Few institutions bring as much respect and credibility as religious groups. Many organizing campaigns need respect and credibility, especially at the beginning stages.

Human Rights. Religious institutions provide leadership on issues of moral concern and provide arenas in which large numbers of people discuss their fundamental values.

Social Diversity. The religious community as a whole, and some national denominations in particular, cross racial lines. Very few other national institutions reach all sectors of U.S. society. By working with religious organizations, progressive organizations increase their opportunities for working cross-culturally and building multicultural organizations and coalitions.

Why do religious groups want to work with citizen organizations and unions?

Ministry. The most fundamental reason why religious groups want to work with community and state organizations is that they share values and by working together can help religious organizations meet their goals of ministry. Most religious denominations and faith bodies believe that part of their ministry is to be a witness in the world. Justice is a fundamental theme for most denominations and faith bodies. And yet at the local level, congregations are confused about how to act effectively on their concerns and values. State and community social action groups as well as Labor groups can provide concrete strategies for putting their faith into action.

Congregational Development. Local congregations are concerned about their own growth and development. Working with community groups helps them make the surrounding area a more desirable place to live. In addition, many
congregations have found that social action and community involvement revitalize their congregations and encourage more people to join.

**Leadership Development.** Congregations, like most institutions, are concerned about training and developing their leaders. Organizing provides opportunities for leaders to be trained and develop new skills.

**Recognition/Visibility.** Like most institutions, congregations want to receive recognition for the work that they do. If a congregation is active on a particular issue, it will want the visibility that results from participating in a larger coalition or organization.

> If you understand a congregation's self-interest, you are better equipped to address how your organization's work can assist the congregation. By all means, stress the moral aspects of your endeavor, but don't forget to mention the direct benefits to the congregation.

**Involvement in Issues.**

At the turn of the millennium, President Bill Clinton and Congress finally agreed to some modest debt relief for the most indebted countries. There is no question that this occurred because of a national campaign launched by the major faith groups in the United States based upon the " Jubilee" themes of the Old Testament, which call for releasing people from debt (and servitude) every fifty years. Thousands of people of faith met with their members of Congress. They urged the International Monetary Fund headquarters and prayed. They held a 3,000-person prayer service during the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle, Washington, and generated thousands of calls and letters in support of debt relief.

Several states in the 1990s saw significant low-income housing campaigns to secure additional funds to create a Housing Trust Fund. All of these campaigns had programs that made out and mobilized the religious community. Techniques included placing inserts in church bulletins, congregational letter writing, prayer services, and forums with legislators in congregations.

In 1999, San Jose, California, passed the nation's highest living wage bill. A key component to the passage of the bill was the pressure on city council members by members of the interfaith community. Over Labor Day weekend, 500 postcards supporting the living wage bill were sent to residents from congregation members.

At a Jobs with Justice action at the headquarters of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) in Louisville, Kentucky, the involvement of religious communities provided a useful test. Hundreds of worker justice activists asked the annual Jobs with Justice Conference in Louisville were asked to hold a rally outside KFC headquarters. A small delegation of five people, including ten or so religious leaders, went inside to find the person in charge and get him to come out to talk with the group. Unfortunately, the man in charge was not available before all the buses of demonstrators were unloaded. The religious leaders were asked to delay things. They began a prayer and for another prayer and yet another, keeping the KFC executive well occupied until the group had assembled and was ready for the morning to meet.

**Concerns/Possible Problem Areas.**

Working with religious organizations is not necessarily easy. Indeed, there are problems that you should prepare for and concerns that you will want to consider. However, most of these can be addressed or avoided.

**Separation of Church and State.** One of the first questions you will hear raised when you try to involve religious organizations in social justice and organizing efforts is, "Well, what does the separation of church and state mean?" (You will hear this issue more in White churches than African-American churches or synagogues.) The phrase is highly misunderstood and misused. The proper response for an organizer to this issue is: "Yes, we fully support the separation of church and state. You do not want people controlling the state, nor do you want religious leaders controlling religious groups. We support Article I of the U.S. Constitution, which says, 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.'"

The "separation of church and state" phrase is sometimes raised to justify not getting involved in organizing or social justice issues, but no denomination except perhaps the Jehovah's Witnesses is consistent on this matter. Religious leaders and their faith with them into the public arena. Churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues are involved in a wide range of political issues, ranging from off-track betting to abortion to peace. The real issue is not whether religious groups are involved in political issues but how they are involved and on what issues.

**Decisions within the Congregation.** Frequently, the real reason why congregations won't get involved in social justice issues is that people within the congregation disagree on the issue. A small segment of the congregation may work on the issue, like a peace committee, but the entire congregation doesn't because of the fear of splitting the congregation. Where there are major divisions of an issue in a congregation, it is likely that it will become involved. Congregational leaders cannot ignore congregational issues that will divide the congregation.

On the other hand, dozens of progressive issues are not controversial for congregations, especially if presented properly. Most individual congregations are both racially and economically segregated. The more homogeneous they are, the more likely that the whole congregation would agree or disagree on a particular issue. Thus, there are clearly congregations that will want to work with you and congregations that won't. Go with those that do want to work with you.

**Differences on Other Issues.** A number of progressive organizers hesitate to involve congregations in organizing campaigns because they disagree with the congregations' positions on other issues, such as abortion or gay rights, or they maintain inaccurate stereotypes about religious people. Stick to the issues at hand and don't feel obligated to share your personal opinions on other issues unless they actually are organizational positions. It is very unlikely that you will be asked about anti-semitic issues; however, if you are, simply respond that the organization does not have a position on that issue (assuming it doesn't).

You do not have to agree with everyone on every issue in order to work together on issues of mutual concern. Find the areas of commonality and move on. Avoid requiring litmus tests before you work with people.

**Tax Concerns.** Some congregations are concerned that by becoming involved or supporting an action organization, they will lose their 501(c)(3) tax status. If the organization is a 501(c)(3) or a 501(c)(4), it is almost inconceivable that there could be a problem. A congregation would have to devote more than 20 percent of its resources to lobbying before there would be a problem. There are some legitimate concerns about partisan electoral work, although non-partisan electoral work is fine (such as non-partisan voter registration). Tax-deductible funds,
such as congregations receive, are not to be used for partisan electoral work. (See chapter 24.)

Style. Frequently, the biggest barrier to involving religious congregations is not a matter of substance but of style. All groups have their own language, dress, and appropriate mode of behavior. Religious organizations are no exception. Talk with people active in the religious organization and get advice on how to approach the denomination or congregation.

Steering Leaders. Congregations may be concerned that your group wants to steal their active leadership. Find ways to support and develop the congregations’ leaders. Help them involve and draw the entire congregation into your organization’s activities in ways that build and unify the congregation.

Overworked Staff. Many small urban congregations are struggling for survival. Their pastoral staff and key lay leadership are overwhelmed. They may not be able to consider another issue, no matter how worthy, unless you suggest simple ways the congregation can be involved that don’t rely on already overworked personnel.

Segregation. Even though the religious community as a whole is racially diverse, individual congregations are not. They tend to reflect the segregation of the community. If you seek racial diversity, you will need to select congregations and denominations carefully.

Steps to Take toward Working with Religious Organizations

Assessing Your Community

If you want to involve religious groups in your organizing work, you will need to assess which denominations or faith groups are likely constituents (or allies) and which you want to approach first. You can either try to involve those

most important politically and numerically or those most likely to become involved. You groups do a combination of the two.

The easiest way to find out which denominations are numerically strongest in your community is to count the number of listings in the Yellow Pages under “church.” (Synagogues, mosques, and temples are usually listed there as well.) If the community you’re trying to organize is the state, call the State Council of Churches (sometimes called by Conference of Churches or the Lutheran Council). Most counties are heavily denoted by one or two denominations, reflecting historical settlement and migration patterns.

Unfortunately, the most prominent denomination in an area is not always the easiest to be involved. The leaders tend to be the most deeply tied into the region’s power structures and consequently are reluctant to challenge the status quo. When a denomination is smaller in numbers or power, the leaders tend to be more open to coalition work.

Some denominations have strong position on social justice issues and good internal systems for activating congregations. These are likely to be the easiest denominations to involve. Try to identify the more active ones and approach the leaders on your issues either at the regional or local level.

Even though some denominations may be the most likely to get involved, there are always congregations that are far more active and progressive than their denominations might suggest. Don’t write off any congregation per se because the denomination tends to be a more conservative one.

It is also critically important to seek out religious centers and congregations that serve immigrant communities. Islamic mosques and Buddhist and Hindu temples may be the

gates to much many Asian, Middle Eastern, and African immigrant communities.

Most communities have a council of the religious leaders in the community. In fact, there are usually a number of these bodies. A standard set of councils is the Interfaith Council (primarily mainline Protestants, Catholics, and Jews), the False Ministerial Alliance, and the Evangelical Christian Association. Larger cities are likely to have a Rabbinical Council and an Islamic Council as well.

If you are in a small town, none of these councils will have staff; thus, the appropriate person to meet with is the president of the council. In large towns, some of the larger councils or associations will have staff. Staff people can give you a good assessment of the denominations and faith groups in the area and which to contact for your issue.

If you want to talk with the entire council, ask if there is one of its meetings (which are usually held monthly). Do not have high expectations for what you can achieve by meeting with these councils. They tend to be more networking groups for the clergy than agencies with programs. Appropriate things to ask for include names of contacts within local congregations, and the names of ministers who would like to become involved. The councils themselves often “organize.” Nor do they give money.

Consider passing a sheet around the room during your presentation asking people to sign their names if they want you to meet with them and others in the congregation about the issue or the organization. Be sure to highlight any resources that are granted for congregations, like bulletin boards or adult study programs.

Making the Right Request of the Right Person

Each denomination or faith group has its own regional structure, congregational decision-making body, style of worship, and committees for social action. The best way to learn about them is simply to ask people within each denomination. Ministers, in particular, like to talk about their denominations.

In general, most denominations or faith bodies have a regional structure. For some, it is a state; for others, it is a metropolitan area. For example, there is the Illinois Baptist Association for the Baptists and the Archdiocese of Chicago for the Roman Catholics. Others for the national regions are synod (Lutheran), presbytery (Presbyterian), and conference (Methodist). (See the charts at the end of the chapter for an introduction to terms.) At this regional level, many denominations have a staff person assigned to peace and justice, social action, community concerns, or some such category. In addition, there may be a regional committee within the denomination, like the African Methodist Episcopal Conference Social Action Committee. Such committees will be composed of lay and clergy members from across the region. Their members are usually some of the most active leaders within the denominations. When you meet with your regional social action staff or committees, ask about the following:

• Mailings. Most regional groupings send out mailings to portions of their membership. Ask them to include information about your group or issue in one of their mailings.

• Money. Regional denominations may have small amounts of money for local projects. Consider asking for money to cover the costs of involving their members or designing materials especially for religious groups.

• Key People/Congregations. Regional leaders can put you in touch with the people and
congregations that would be most concerned and active.

- **Speaking Opportunities**: Find out if the group has any regional gatherings. If so, see if you can be on the program to present your issue.

- **Articles**: Ask if the denomination has a regional publication. If so, ask if it can arrange to publish an article on your issue.

At the local congregational level, you almost always want to talk first with the minister, priest, imam, or rabbi. Frequently, these are not the people who will be the most active in your organization, but you need their “blessing” to talk with others in the congregation. When you meet with these members of the clergy, find out about the general direction and programs of the congregation. Also ask for the following:

  - **Introductions**: Ask the pastor to introduce you to the key people in the congregation. Ask for suggestions on ways to involve the entire congregation. Find out about social action committees, women’s committees, and other active groups.

- **Prayer/Speaking**: Most members of the clergy like to speak in public. They are good people to open meetings (with a prayer), close meetings (with a prayer), or speak about the moral implications of an issue. You might also want them to participate in a press conference or press event.

- **Notices in Bulletins**: Ask if you can place announcements in the congregation’s bulletin or newsletter. Find out to whom the notices should be sent.

- **Other Contacts**: Ministers know other ministers. Get the names of other religious leaders concerned about these issues.

Occasionally the clergy are good organizers, but more often, they are simply too busy. Get the clergy’s support, but work more closely with leadership within the congregation. Sometimes the social action committee (also called Carl and Society or the peace and justice committee) members are the best people with whom to work.

In other congregations, the social action page are perceived as unrepresentative of the congregation. In this situation, you may be more effective working with the women’s committee, the parish board, or the adult education committee. Seek out the most powerful committee. Below are the kinds of things you can ask from the key committee members:

- **Announcements**: Congregations have ways for getting the word out to members about upcoming activities. Some may include bulletins, newsletters, announcements boards, telephones trees, and “ministers for action” (a short time during a service in which community announcements and congregational missions are mentioned).

- **Material Support**: A congregation can support your organization or work in many ways. Some committees will have small pots of money for which they are responsible (the authorization to request funds from the congregation decision-making body (board, vestry, council). Even if no money is available, you can usually get some kind of contributions. The dollar value of these can be enormous. Items in this category include buses, meeting space, photocopying, faxing, supplies, refreshments, and donated goods to grassroots fundraising events.

- **Meetings**: In addition to asking for meeting space, ask for groups of people to talk with about your issue. Appropriate forums might be adult education classes, Lessons Study, family night suppers, women’s meetings, and special forums. In some congregations, you might be another member of your group might be able to deliver a message (sermon, homily) in the regular service. If so, ask for additional time after the service to meet with people who have questions. This way you will know who really cares about your issue and will be able to answer questions they might have.

- **Letters/Calls**: There are a number of different ways to get congregations to write letters or make phone calls to elected officials. Standard tactics include letter-writing tables in the vestibule or during coffee hour, times set aside for letter writing during committee meetings, activation of prayer chains for letters, “offeringofletters” during services, or requests for letters and calls in bulletins and newsletters.

  - **Tact**: If a congregation is really concerned about and involved in an issue, the leaders can help turn out people for community meetings and events.

**Teaching Diverse Communities**

The United States religious community is becoming much more pluralistic, and thus it is important in many communities for organizers to learn more about Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other faiths, as the growth of which reflects increased immigration.

Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in America, with an estimated six to eight million Muslims in the United States, with approximately 1,000 mosques. Although no one has exact figures, it is estimated that 25 to 50 percent of the Muslims in the United States are African Americans and the balance are Middle Eastern, African, or Asian immigrants. All major cities have some mosques that should be approached about being involved in social justice issues. Large cities can have an Islamic Council that includes leaders from many mosques. The Islamic community does not have denominations and movements like the Christian and Jewish communities do, so it is best to work directly with mosques and their clergy and lay leadership.

In many Asian communities, Buddhist and Hindu temples are important gathering places. They often do not have structured worship services in quite the same ways that the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religions do, but they are important centers nonetheless.

**Guidelines for Working with the Religious Community**

- **Develop an Ongoing Relationship**: Don’t approach religious leaders or congregations only at a point of crisis. Develop a relationship with them. Get religious leaders on your board or other appropriate bodies.

- **Involve the Religious Community in Your Organizational Planning and Strategies**: The religious community likes to help plan how to mobilize itself. Refrain from developing organizing campaigns for congregations without involving them in the planning. It is also important to develop special materials and organizing strategies for working with congregations. You can’t realistically expect a congregation to adopt your resources if they are not designed with congregations in mind.

- **Recognize Past Involvement**: If you know of a congregation’s or denomination’s past involvement, acknowledge it. If you know of statements it has made on social issues that support your concerns, mention them; however, don’t wait until you know this information to contact the congregations.

- **Be Aware of Religious Holidays**: Purim, Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, and Sukkot are important to the Jewish community. Note that the Jewish Sabbath begins Friday evening at sundown and runs to...
Saturday evening at sundown. Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas are important to the Christian community. Many congregations also have special events and services around Mother’s Day and Thanksgiving. The Feast of the Epiphany or Three Kings is important in the Latino community, as is Ramadan and Eid in the Muslim community.

Avoid Non-germane Issues. Do not raise issues of controversy within the religious community unless you are working on those issues. Do not discuss the Middle East in synagogues or abortion in churches.

Ask about the Order of Service and Appropriate Dress If You Are Speaking to a Congregation. Go through all the details of what you might need to know, such as where to stand, appropriate things to begin and close with, usual length of time, and special procedures for entering and exiting.

Stress Basic Religious Themes. Don’t try to pass yourself off as a Bible or Torah or Quran expert; however, do stress basic themes of justice, charity, stewardship, and concern for the well-being of the whole being (both spiritual and physical).

Avoid Theological Issues. Avoid complex theological concepts such as soteriology, predestination, and any other big-word concepts! Don’t quote theologians unless you are sure they are acceptable (e.g., Martin Luther to Lutherans or John Wesley to Methodists).

Understand Scriptural Context. Too often, organizers unfamiliar with religious texts pull material and quote it totally out of context. Be sure to check with a member of the clergy if you have questions about a particular passage.

Avoid Saying or implying that “God Is on Our Side.” Organizers hope God is on their side, but avoid claiming it, particularly in matters of public policy. Implementation of God’s will is tough to mere mortals to assess, although groups certainly want the religious community’s prayer and faithful guidance.

Pray at Appropriate Times. If religious practices are involved in your activities, arrange to use prayers led at appropriate times, such as at the beginning or end of meetings or before meals. Avoid clapping at the end of the prayer, no matter how moving and inspirational. It is inappropriate.

Involves Key Jewish Organizations. In addition to synagogues and denominational structures, you might include the following:

- National Council of Jewish Women, 53 W 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010, (212) 650-4048. The Council operates programs in social and legislative action. Contact the local chapter in your community.
- Jewish Federations. There are approximately 200 Jewish Federations in the United States and Canada. All major metropolitan areas have Jewish Federations that coordinate programs for the community. Some are more socially active than others. Frequently, Women’s Divisions of the Federations serve the most socially active people.
- Jewish Fund for Justice, 260 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, (212) 212-212. The Fund supports organizing and social justice efforts, particularly ones that link Jewish communities with Black and Hispanic communities.

Involves Key Islamic Organizations. In addition to the denominations, there are “parachute” organizations. Some of them are quite active and can put you in touch with activist-oriented church leaders.

- United Women for Justice, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 500, New York, NY 10115, (212) 870-237 Che Women United is a laywomen’s group with approximately 1,200 chapters across the country. This is one of the more racially integrated organizations among churches. It is a good source for active churchwomen.
- Call to Action, 4419 N. Kedzie, Chicago, IL 60625, (312) 604-0800. Laypeople, religious, and clergy working together to foster peace and justice. The group sponsors a large annual conference linking small faith communities and church renewal organizations.
- Evangelicals for Social Action, 10 Lancaster Avenue, Winnetka, IL 60096, (600) 645-690. This small organization is a good entry for finding evangelicals who are concerned about social action. There are local chapters in your community.
- Sojourners, 1401 15th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20009, (202) 714-7474. Begun as a magazine, Sojourners is now a network of people putting their faith into action.
- Pax Christi, 52 West 6th Street, Erie, PA 16502. (814) 453-4935. Pax Christi is a Catholic social action group that works on peace and justice concerns. There are 250 local chapters.

Involves Key Islamic Organizations. The following are good resources for understanding and working with the Islamic community:

- American Muslim Council, 1212 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20015, (202) 789-2262. The American Muslim Council works with the Islamic Councils all over the United States. The American Muslim Council publishes many documents, including a simple brochure on the fundamentals of Islam that is particularly helpful.

Religious organizations are institutions, complete with bureaucracies, strengths, and weaknesses. They may not always be as easy to involve as you would like, but they are important in many communities and can greatly strengthen your work. Some will support you. Others won't. Do your best to find the support. Identify the mutual self-interests between your organization and the religious institutions. Work with the congregations to put their members' faith into action. The fundamental values of justice and compassion are the ones we strive for in our work. Call on the religious institutions to join you in “loosing the bands of wickedness, undoing the heavy burdens, letting the oppressed go free, breaking every yoke, and giving bread to the hungry, shelter to the homeless, and clothes to the naked” (Isaiah 58:6-7).