



Mobilising for Change

WORKSHOP RESOURCES

Pre-workshop preparation	2
Workshop objectives	2
Workshop agenda.....	2
What is community organising?	2
What is an organiser? It's a skill, not a mystery	3
Active listening tips and process	5
Factors that influence participation in activism	6
Movement building & alliances strategic questions	8
Framework of union-community coalitions.....	9
Accountability session checklist.....	10
Alliance building and coalitions.....	12
Relational meetings (one-on-ones).....	15
Ten rules for relational meetings	17
Act-recruit-train	19
Recruiting people & building the movement	20
Door knocking: 9 steps to success	21
Door knocking: script example	22
The Relational Meeting	33

Pre-workshop preparation

This participants' resource collection includes an outline of the workshop and a detailed description of some of the exercises we'll be doing together. You don't need to read it all now, and a hard copy will be provided for all workshop participants.

If you facilitate groups from time to time and would welcome some supported practice, we're looking for a couple of participants to lead a game or icebreaker. We'll have time for a few of these during the two days. There's a collection of games and icebreakers available from tCA's website:

http://www.thechangeagency.org/01_cms/details.asp?ID=58

Workshop objectives

1. Develop an understanding of community organising as an approach to social change
2. Reflect on experiences and observations of community organising and other approaches to mobilising for social change
3. Practice and apply community organising tools and techniques.

Workshop agenda

Day 1
Gathering (to start by 9.30am)
Opening & expectations
Experiences and perspectives
Comm-org case studies
Campaign interviews
<i>Lunch</i>
Defining and understanding comm-org
Recruiting
Case studies
Evaluation & close

Day 2
Open and check in
Relational meetings
Coalition building
Movement building
Coalitions and alliances
<i>Lunch</i>
Accountability sessions
Turnout
Taking it home
Evaluation & close

What is community organising?

Community organising is the process of building power through involving a constituency in identifying problems they share and the solutions to those problems that they desire; identifying the people and structures that can make those solutions possible; enlisting those targets in the effort through negotiation and using confrontation and pressure when needed; and building an institution that is democratically controlled by that constituency that can develop the capacity to take on further problems and that embodies the will and the power of that constituency.

Community organising suits situations where you and your group...

- Are clear about your issue (or 'ask') and target (decision maker/s)
- Have an ask that is achievable – that the target can make and implement
- Know that mobilising is necessary (other approaches had been tried and failed)
- Are working on an issue that people feel deeply and strongly about and you can organise around. (Are you confident that people will actively participate in your public meetings, rallies and other activities?)

One of the most basic questions we must ask ourselves is how to conceive of the role we play in making social change. Most of us have an instinctive understanding at some level of what this means. It is important, though, to take a step back and really take a hard look at the nature of our organising work so that we can do it more effectively. The following lessons are expanded from a guide which my SEAC (Student Environmental Action Committee) group, the University of Minnesota Campus Greens, developed.

What is an organiser? Is it a mystery? No. But it is not an innate skill one is born with, either. Being an organiser is something you must learn. Obviously, then, consciously examining how to organise will be much more useful than just hoping you will somehow accidentally pick up what you need to know somewhere along the way.

- An organiser has a commitment to a vision of how things might be different, and is always trying to figure out the best way to make his or her vision come about. If you are dedicating a significant space in your life to making change, it is important to have an idea of what we are trying to change society into. This is called “vision” (also known by certain former president’s as “that vision thing”). It is what drives all of the most energetic and committed organisers. Figuring out how to get there is known as “strategy.” Both of these together is called “theory,” and we need both if we are to be successful.
- An organiser is a person who organises: lectures, study groups, panel discussions, rallies, speeches, conferences, demonstrations, protests, and so on. Sitting around in meetings doesn’t in and of itself change anything. Organising consists of getting out and doing events and actions that have the dual objectives of being a part of a focused campaign to make a concrete change in society, and being designed to bring more people into organising.
- An organiser is reliable and dependable, shows up on time, and follows through on responsibilities. It is easy to have a laid-back attitude about showing up for meetings and carrying out tasks you have agreed to take on, but this can be very problematic. We all need to very clearly understand the commitments we make to a group when we become involved in organising, and the concomitant degree of discipline required of us to follow through on those commitments. When people frequently flake out, it puts a heavy burden on the rest of the group and makes it harder for them to do their part.
- An organiser does all different kinds of work cheerfully, and is committed to learning organising skills. It is dangerous to let the attitude develop that certain things are beneath you once you have learned a certain amount about organising. A lot of the work involved in organising is fun, but by no means all of it. The responsibility of rolling up one’s sleeves and doing the distasteful and tedious work should fall equally on everyone’s shoulders. In addition, don’t for a second believe that you “know it all” about organising. Always be open to new lessons.
- An organiser doesn’t speak out of turn and listens carefully to others. Respect the thoughts of others, and develop the patience to actually listen to and think about what they are saying. Remember that the more you speak in a group setting, the less others get to speak. Men, especially, have been conditioned to interrupt and to contribute more than their share, and should be extra careful to watch for this dynamic in themselves.
- An organiser examines her work self-critically and asks others for criticism on how it could be better. Critical self-awareness is a necessary prerequisite to improving your work. Fight the tendency to be defensive if someone is trying constructively to help you improve what you are doing. On the other hand, if you are giving criticism, you should be as positive and constructive as you can. Create a “criticism sandwich:” a slice of praise, followed by a slice of criticism, followed by another slice of praise.
- An organiser is accountable; gives reports on work done; and keeps in contact with other members of her group by phone, mail, and personal contact. When you take on responsibilities in the name of the group, you are accountable for your actions to the other members of that group; they have a right to know everything that’s being done in the group’s name. In addition, your work will gain from other people’s input and participation. Think of communication as the nutrient cycle flowing through the ecosystem of your group.
- An organiser makes an effort to involve her group in organising beyond the local level. By communicating and working with other groups in our own states, across the country, and around the world, we become more than

just a bunch of local groups each doing its own thing; we become an interconnected and united movement that has the potential to change the whole world.

- An organiser studies other times and places where other organisers tried to make social change. By learning about past struggles for change, we can learn from the past successes of others, and, equally importantly, we can avoid making the same mistakes that have been made countless times in the past. As George Santayana said, “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it;” so learn about how your group fits in with the long history of people’s movements in this country.
- An organiser remains grounded in the community he or she is trying to organise; is constantly watching, hearing and taking part in community life. By becoming a part of the community you are trying to change, you will come to understand much more about all the particularities of it and will learn much better about how actually to help change it.
- Liberals always talk about “leadership” in the sense of a dichotomy—a hierarchy—between the “leader” and the “led.” A true “leader” doesn’t reinforce his or her hierarchy, but is always oriented toward empowering others and making everybody into a “leader.”
- An organiser is patient and persistent; don’t let his or her commitment turn into self-righteousness. Don’t develop the attitude that you have all the answers and that everyone else is wrong unless they listen to you. The trick is to help others learn for themselves through their own experiences. This requires patience—a great deal of it. Egotism is also very destructive. Other people can sense when you are placing yourself on a pedestal above them in your mind.
- An organiser speaks in a language that the people she is trying to reach can understand. People involved in activism quickly pick up a lot of jargon that people outside of our sphere don’t share. Translate your thoughts back into plain English before you speak them.
- An organiser realises that social change is not made by loners or superstars, but by people working together. Our society teaches us individualism and competition—getting ahead in the “rat race.” Let’s flush those attitudes down the (water-conserving) conceptual toilet where they belong. Learn about cooperation and working in a collective manner; we are here to help each other, not to compete with each other.
- An organiser realises that knowing all about an issue and knowing how to organise are two very different things. Memorising facts and statistics is sometimes useful, but knowing the facts alone doesn’t change things. We must put the knowledge of the issues together with the knowledge of what to do with it, and then put it into action.
- An organiser takes care of his or herself, doesn’t take on too much and get burned out. As important as the work that we are doing is, it is not so important that we should kill ourselves trying to do too much. Find a healthy, sustainable balance between the personal, social and political sides of your life. It’s especially a male thing to brag about how hard you work and how much stuff you do. This can easily set up a bad dynamic of competition between people.
- An organiser is always educating himself or herself about sexism, racism, and homophobia. Try as we might, we can’t just eliminate these “isms” by wishing them away. We have spent all our lives in a sexist, racist and homophobic society, and these patterns are far more deeply ingrained in our psyches than we understand, or even want to understand. To undo a lifetime of oppressive patterns literally requires the rest of a lifetime of committed effort.
- An organiser is always teaching other people how to become organisers. An “activist” is someone who is “active”—they go out and engage in work that has the ultimate goal of making some kind of change. An organiser, on the other hand, is always someone who is looking to get as many other people as involved in activism. This may frequently mean that you are doing things which don’t seem superficially to be of maximal utility in making immediate changes, but which ultimately are vital in building the movement. An organiser, for example, will spend extra time helping someone else learn how to produce a flyer even when she can do it faster and better on her own.

As you do your organising, think constantly about your role as an organiser and how you can be more effective at it. Think about how you can help others to learn these same lessons. If we can get enough people doing this same thing, we can turn the world upside-down.

Source: Eric Odell, Threshold, Student Environmental Action Coalition, North Carolina.

Active listening is a critical component of communications inside and outside facilitated spaces. The Change Agency use active listening in a number of ways. One of our favourite processes is to break people into pairs and give them one or two really great questions about a topic related to a session we are facilitating (see strategic questioning notes on our site). Tell people this is an exercise in active listening and that they will both have an opportunity to listen and be heard. Ask people to decide who will go first, let them know how many minutes they have, say five each, tell them you will keep time, and remind them that active listening might not involve speaking if you are listening, or asking questions. We like to encourage people to be silent as they listen and focus completely on the person they are hearing. When you bring people back to the bigger group, debrief the process a little before heading into discussion about what people heard or said. "How was that?" "How was it being listened to?" "How was listening?"

10 Tips to Effective & Active Listening Skills

Active listening is about really hearing people. Listening makes people feel worthy, appreciated, interesting, and respected. Ordinary conversations emerge on a deeper level, as do our relationships. When we listen, we foster the skill in others by acting as a model for positive and effective communication. In relationships, greater communication brings greater intimacy. Listening helps us learn more about others and helps to prevent misunderstandings.

1. Face the speaker. Sit up straight or lean forward slightly to show your attentiveness through other body language.
2. Maintain eye contact, to the degree that you all remain comfortable.
3. Minimise external distractions. Turn off the TV. Put down your book or magazine, and ask the speaker and other listeners to do the same.
4. Respond appropriately to show that you understand. Murmur ("uh-huh" and "um-hmm") and nod. Raise your eyebrows. Say words such as "Really," "Interesting," as well as more direct prompts: "What did you do then?" and "What did she say?"
5. Focus solely on what the speaker is saying. Try not to think about what you are going to say next. The conversation will follow a logical flow after the speaker makes her point.
6. Minimise internal distractions. If your own thoughts keep horning in, simply let them go and continuously re-focus your attention on the speaker, much as you would during meditation.
7. Keep an open mind. Wait until the speaker is finished before deciding that you disagree. Try not to make assumptions about what the speaker is thinking. Ask more questions to understand more deeply.
8. Avoid letting the speaker know how you handled a similar situation. Unless they specifically ask for advice, assume they just need to talk it out.
9. Even if the speaker is launching a complaint against you, wait until they finish to defend yourself. The speaker will feel as though their point had been made. They won't feel the need to repeat it, and you'll know the whole argument before you respond. Research shows that, on average, we can hear four times faster than we can talk, so we have the ability to sort ideas as they come in...and be ready for more.
10. Engage yourself. Ask questions for clarification, but, once again, wait until the speaker has finished. That way, you won't interrupt their train of thought. After you ask questions, paraphrase their point to make sure you didn't misunderstand. Start with: "So you're saying..."

As you work on developing your listening skills, you may feel a bit panicky when there is a natural pause in the conversation. What should you say next? Learn to settle into the silence and use it to better understand all points of view.

Source: Adapted from an article by Susie Michelle Cortright <http://www.iamnext.com/people/listen.html>

Source: Sam La Rocca (2004) Making a difference: factors that influence participation in grassroots environmental activism in Australia > http://www.thechangeagency.org/01_cms/details.asp?ID=69

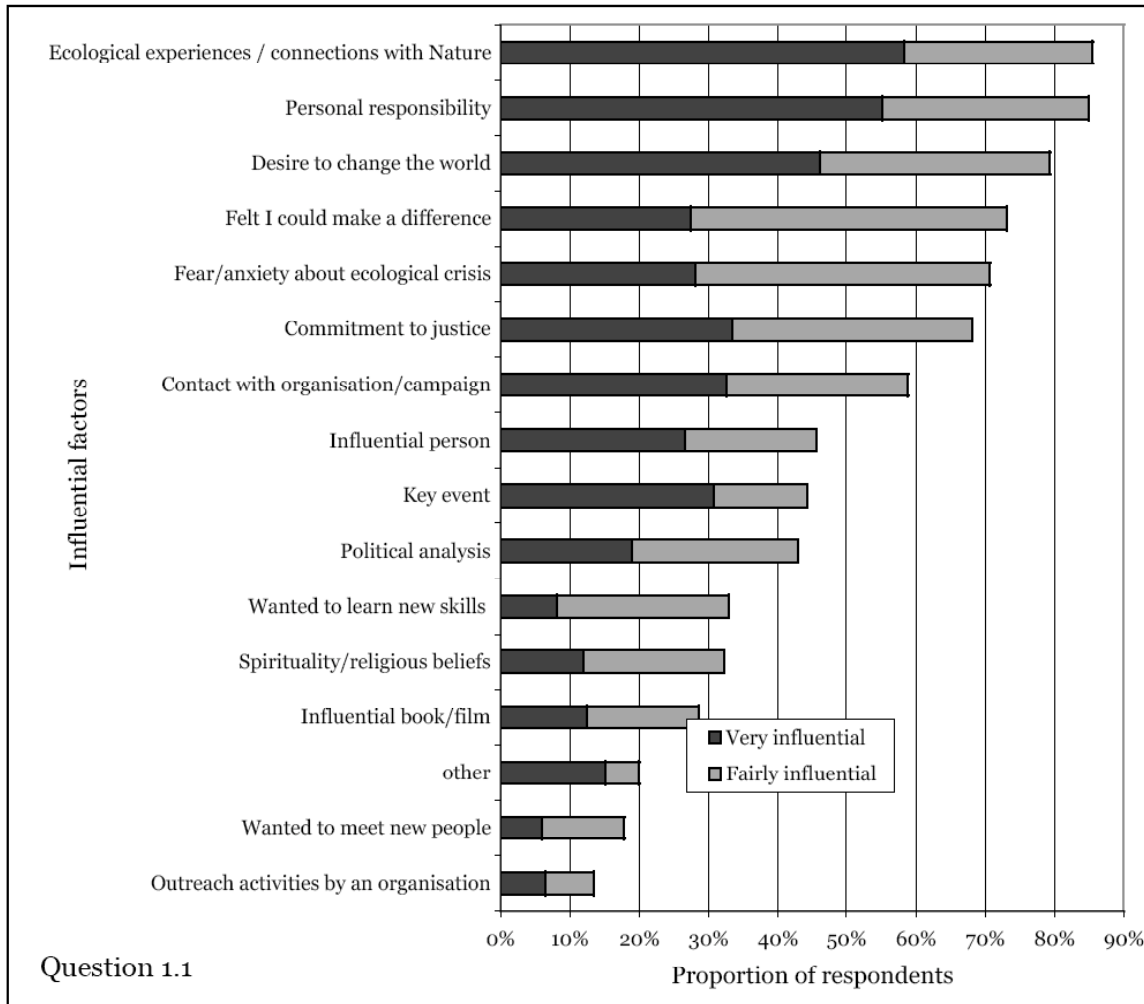


Figure: Factors that inspire grassroots activists' initial involvement

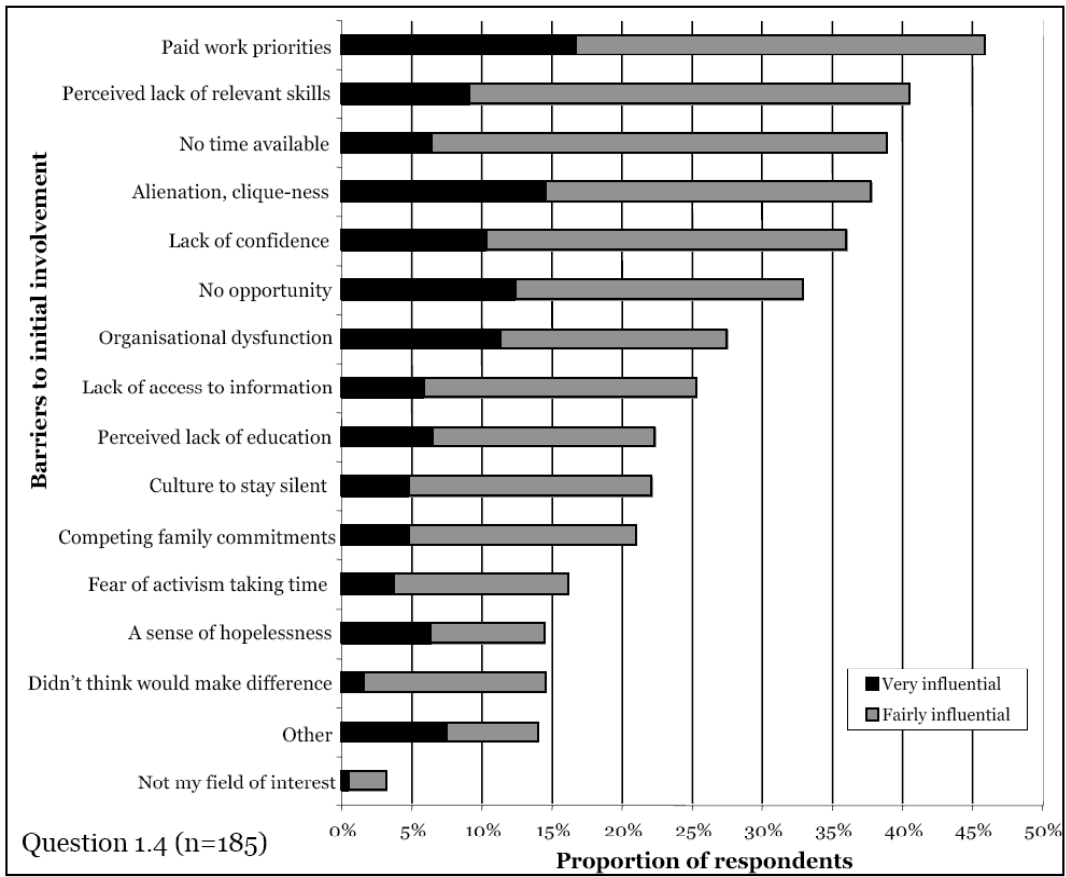


Figure: Barriers to initial involvement

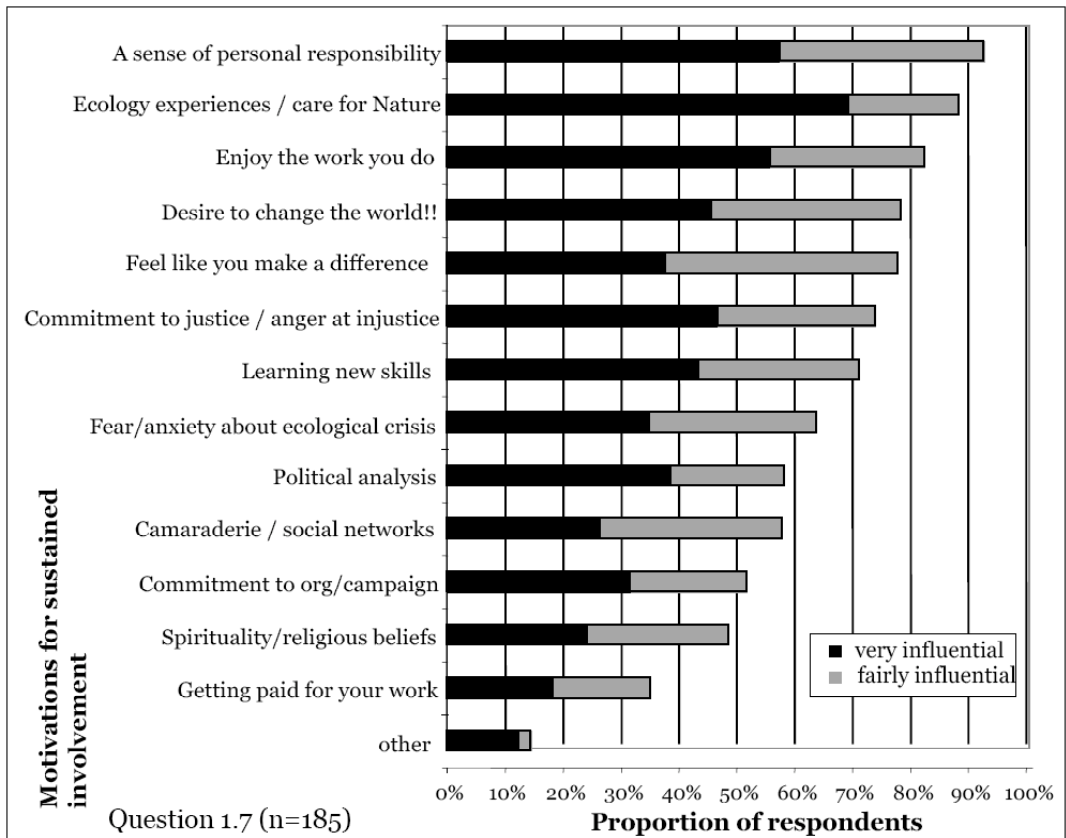


Figure: motivations for sustained involvement

Objectives

1. Explore participants' experiences of movement building
2. Support campaigners to prepare for movement, alliance and coalition building

Strategic questions

- What roles of activism are you/your group least embracing? Is this a limitation?
- In terms of overall movement, what roles are being least covered?
- What other campaigns should you be linked with?
- What other campaigns could you learn from?
- Who are your natural allies? Who are your unnatural allies?
- What is keeping you apart?
- What culture might you need to understand if you are to work together?
- What are the main strengths you can offer the overall campaign?
- What are you not doing so well and who else might do it better?
- What is the most creative step you could take?
- What are you doing to empower others within the movement?
- Do you have skills, talents or interests that you could be contributing to the wider movement?
- What assumptions are you making about what it takes to motivate people?
- How might you be focussing on your group at the expense of the wider movement?
- How might you be promoting the idea that the movement is failing rather than succeeding (albeit slowly)?
- What sort of message are you giving about what it is like to do the work that you do? Is it attractive?
- What might turn other groups off working with you?
- What sort of leadership is needed to influence the movement/alliance positively at this time?
- Who is not being reached who could be part of the movement?
- What are you doing to build the long-term strength of the movement? (It might take decades to bear fruit.)
- Who could give you some wider perspective?
- How will you sustain yourself and your allies for the long haul?
- What are you doing together to have fun?

Source: These discussion questions were developed by Katrina Shields for the Queensland Conservation Council 'Movement Building and Alliances' Workshop, May 1998.

Framework of union-community coalitions

	Ad hoc Coalition	Support Coalition	Mutual-support Coalition	Deep Coalition
Common Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiated by request to support a specific group's agenda, issue or event. Initiated by either union or community organisation. Issue not necessarily connected to union members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driven by the issue or interest of a specific organisation's agenda Initiated by either union or community organisation. Issue not necessarily connected to union members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mutual direct interest of participating organisations is the basis of coalition. Issues have direct connection to organisation members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues are direct to interest of participating organisations and to a broader social vision for all working people.
Organisational commitment and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One organisation requests others to support their strategy. Campaign distant from members "rent-a-collar". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition dominated by initiating organisation. Campaign distant from members "rent-a-crowd". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Union issues framed broadly as "community issues". Deeper mobilisation and participation of organisation members. Greater member and organisational buy-in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Union and organisations actively engaging rank-and-file members. Significant buy-in and financial and staff resources committed.
Structure and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episodic and tactical rather than strategic engagement. Initiating organisation develops strategy No joint decision making or coalition organisational structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term coalition Some formal organisational structure and some shared decision-making. Informal union dominance of coalition or limited union engagement. Hasty, reactive engagement – short term rather than long strategic Organisations do not necessarily share similar political practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint decision-making and strategy setting structure involving leadership and officers built on trust between partners. Mid-term focus on planning. Participating organisations share similar political and cultural practices that lead to mutual interests. Shared power; each organisation brings significant resources to coalition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decentralised structure based on deep connections between union and community groups at membership level. Long term strategic plan to build power. Movement building
Political opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reactive and short-term and limited to specific immediate opportunity or threat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed around immediate opportunities or threats, but set medium timeframe for influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for engagement calculated and strategic and created by coalition/movement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for engagement created by movement actions/strategy which opens up new opportunities for engagement
Scale/ power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement of power occurs at any level – can be at a level not related to actual decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement of power occurs at the same level as the decision makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement of power is sustained and long-term on level of the decision makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement of power occurs on various levels including the level of decision making and the local level
Strengths/ weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can provide valuable tactical resources, boost campaign morale, and lead to longer term, more strategic coalition relationships Do not themselves build powerful strategic relationships and may create resentment over being "used" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can effectively coordinate and direct resources to a reactive, single issue campaign but reflect a relatively superficial solidarity Can be one-sided and make deep participation more difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deeper bonds may narrow the number of organisational partners Easier to activate and mobilise membership due to direct interest connection – can open up deeper coalitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build upon a shared social vision – is decentralised and can be explosive, but difficult to "direct" because of decentralised actions on multiple levels of power Require organisations to see themselves in a broad social vision beyond their own self-interest

Source: Amanda Tattersall (2005), There is Power in Coalition. *Labour and Industry*, 16(2).

- Are your key leaders on the planning committee?
- Have you used strategy to plan the accountability session, taking into account your power?
- Do you have main demands (usually substantive), a list of demands, and some fallback demands (usually procedural)?
- Are the proposed date and time for the accountability session suitable for your constituency?
- Have you confirmed the date and time with the target?
- Do you have an appropriate site that is accessible, centrally located, and equipped to handle your needs?
- Have you made a realistic "turnout" plan? Are there enough people assigned to work on "turnout"? (Turnout refers to the number of people who will come to the event.)
- Is there a good press plan? Have you arranged for the:
 - Initial press release
 - Follow-up calls to media
 - Press packets at the session
 - Visuals for photographing
 - Press table and person staffing it
 - Special area for television crews
 - Post-session press release
 - Calls to press people who did not attend
 - Thanking press people who covered the session
- Does the agenda demonstrate power over the target and give your leadership visible roles?
- Does the agenda include the following components:
 - Welcome and purpose
 - Opening prayer, song, or words that inspire
 - Community residents speaking
 - Collection
 - Demands and target's response
 - Summary statement
 - Adjournment
- Have you taken care of logistics? Have you arranged for:
 - Refreshments
 - Room set-up
 - Room decorations (posters, banners)
 - Music or entertainment
 - Baskets or buckets for collecting money
 - Words for chants or songs
 - Demands scoreboard
 - Audiovisual equipment
 - Microphones
 - Extension cords
 - Sign-in sheets and sign-in table
 - Room clean-up
- Will you provide childcare? Is there a good room available?
- Are there carpools or transportation arrangements available?
- Do you have a dress rehearsal schedule?
- Is someone assigned to greet the target as she or he enters the building?
- Are your key leaders and staff assigned to the following roles:
 - Chair (leader)
 - Chair's messenger (leader or staff)
 - Scorekeeper (leader)
 - Chair's organiser (leader)
 - General organiser (leader)

- Target greeter (leader)
- Press contact (leader or staff)
- Press spokesperson/s ((leader)
- Speakers on the program (leaders)
- Have you recruited other volunteers and emerging leaders to the following roles:
 - Ushers
 - Microphone holder
 - Person with the sign-in sheets
 - Person to distribute hand-outs
 - People to collect money
 - Refreshment servers
 - Music or entertainment fill-ins
 - Childcare
 - Applause and audience participation starters
- Does your follow-up include
 - Sending a confirmation letter to the target
 - Sending thank-you notes to everyone who helped
 - Celebrating key people
 - Checking attendance lists against those who said they would come and/or deliver people
 - Meeting with the planning committee to evaluate the session
 - Adding names, addresses, numbers from attendance list to your potential membership and fundraising lists.

Source: Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller (2002) A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: the action guide for advocacy and citizen participation, World Neighbors, Oklahoma.

Coalitions and alliances bolster advocacy by bringing together the strength and resources of diverse groups to create a more powerful voice for change. They help get people get to the decision making table. But coalitions and also difficult to form and sustain. This section focuses on their dynamics and ways to strengthen them, specifically how to improve communication, decision making conflict management and accountability.

Coalitions and alliances often have difficulty managing differences. They sometimes suffer from unrealistic expectations, such as the notion that that people who share a common cause will agree on everything. As they evolve, members of coalitions and alliances often realise the importance of not only finding points of agreement, but also agreeing at certain points to disagree.

For our purposes, it helps to have some basic definitions that distinguish coalitions, alliances, and networks. But in practice, these terms are used flexibly.

Coalitions often have a more formalised structure, an office, and full-time staff. They usually involve long-term relationships among the members. Their permanence can give clout and leverage.

Alliances generally involve shorter-term relationships among members and are focused on a specific objective. Being limited in time and goal, alliances tend to be less demanding on members.

Networks tend to be loose, flexible associations of people and groups brought together by a common concern or interest to share information and ideas.

There are different types of coalitions and alliances. Geographically, they may be local, national, regional, or transnational. They may be formed to achieve one short-term objective. For example, the National Women's Coalition in South Africa was set up to influence the gender content of the post-apartheid constitution. But, coalitions may also be set up to address one or more long-term issues. Examples include the Coalition to Save Rainforests and national NGO coordinating committees that work to advance the common interests of their members in many countries.

Coalitions and alliances also differ in terms of structure. Some may be formally organised and highly structures with headquarters and permanent staff. Others are informal and flexible, relying on volunteers.

Donors who support advocacy are often eager to support to support coalitions. Coalitions have, in some cases, been promoted as the "magic bullet" for NGO collaboration. As a result, some coalitions are donor-initiated or donor-created. But coalitions are usually strongest if they grow organically out of common interests. Experience shows that they are unlikely to survive if they are externally imposed.

Groups form alliances and coalitions for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons are general in nature and some are specific to advocacy. General reasons include: to share information and resources:

- to provide training and technical assistance;
- to respond to a local crisis;
- to facilitate more coordinated planning and implementation;
- to avoid duplication or fill gaps in service delivery.

Advocacy-specific reasons include:

- to publicise an issue and educate constituencies;
- to strengthen political voice and power;
- to ensure a consistent message and widen the coverage for community-based civic, voter, and legal education initiatives;
- to support policies or political candidates;
- to achieve a political victory that might not happen otherwise.

The difficulties of coalitions and alliances

Coalitions offer many advantages for groups that need to combine strength and resources to advance their cause. If not organised well, however, they can drain resources and undermine members' advocacy efforts. The headaches associated with being in and maintaining coalitions and alliances are so serious that it probably is not advisable to join or create one unless you have done a careful analysis of the major pros and cons.

Before joining a coalition or alliance, organisations should consider the following challenges:

Communication barriers

These can include technological barriers such as unreliable phone systems or the lack of a common language. Without good, ongoing communication, some members will be uninformed and excluded from decisions. This can cause the break-up of the coalition or the departure of the marginalised members. To address these kinds of differences among groups, the core members may have to use resources and time to reach out to those lacking technology or a common language.

Credibility

Organisations will not want to be formally associated with groups that may harm their reputation.

Undemocratic decision-making

Decision making in advocacy rarely flows in a smooth, predictable pattern. Generally, processes and relationships tend to work better when they are more democratic. However, in ever-changing environments, decisions sometimes need to be made quickly without consultation. There needs to be some agreement about this among the coalition members. In general, when groups feel marginalised from decision making, they tend to withdraw. While not an easy task, the decision making system must address both representational concerns and the frequent need for quick decision making in advocacy.

Loss of autonomy

Smaller organisations may be reluctant to join a coalition for fear that they will be overwhelmed by the collective.

Competition between a coalition and its members

Coalitions can become counterproductive if their activities become too similar to those of the member groups. In such instances, instead of adding value, the coalition can usurp members' functions and funding base.

Money tensions

Money is often a source of distrust in coalitions and is one of the most common reasons for their break-up. Often, groups are unwilling to share information about funding sources. Sometimes those with greater fundraising skills feel entitled to more control.

Expectation of unity

In some cases, coalition members assume they share similar principles, perspectives, and priorities beyond the issues that bring them together. When differences arise over message, tactics, or goals, they may view disagreements as political betrayals. These kinds of ideological tensions can create stubborn divisions that undermine citizen power.

Considerations for building advocacy coalitions and alliances

Setting up a working relationship with other organisations involves dealing with many practical matters. For example, it is important to define group roles and relationships while maintaining the integrity of each member organisation. The structure should allow for the active participation of all members in both decision making and action whenever practical and possible. At the same time, a coalition must be stronger than its constituent parts to sustain active membership and attract new organisations. Members need to feel there is a high return on their investment.

In a larger, more formal or permanent coalition, a board of directors may be helpful to determine roles and responsibilities and to monitor the coalition's program, finances, and management. They may also need to create a secretariat with separate staff to coordinate coalition operations. Such coordinating structures can serve as "honest brokers" and facilitators that represent the concerns of all members. In an informal, short-term alliance, a board of

directors may not be necessary unless the alliance seeks outside funding. Instead, an advisory board can be useful for visibility, credibility, and liaison with others.

Time is often a key factor in determining the arrangements of the relationship. In many advocacy campaigns, groups come together informally in response to a political opportunity or threat. Then, with time, success, and relationship-building, they may adopt a more formal structure. There are occasions when groups may jump straight into a formalised structure, but this can be risky because it can truncate the ability of groups to build trust and effective operating relationships.

Tips for establishing a coalition

There is no single way to form a coalition or alliance, but the following guidelines may be useful:

1. Be clear about the advocacy issue proposed as the focus of the coalition. A written issue or problem statement can be helpful for this purpose.
2. Develop membership criteria and mechanisms for including new members and sustainability. These criteria can help members decide whether organisations or individuals can join, whether individuals must represent a particular segment of the community, and other guidelines. Mechanisms for sustaining the interest and active involvement of the membership are key for survival.
3. Resolve what the coalition will and will NOT do. Invite potential members to come together to determine, as a group, the alliance's purpose, scope, and priorities. Decide how it will make decisions.
4. If the group is large, select a steering committee of five to seven people that is representative of different membership interests or member organisations. Use the steering committee to facilitate advocacy planning and strategy decisions, ensure communication and consultation among members, resolve problems, and conduct outreach. It is important to set up a process for ensuring that the steering committee is accountable and responsible to the broader group. Avoid designating the steering committee or any single person as the sole spokesperson for the coalition. Rotating opportunities for visible leadership can avoid resentment about who gets the credit.
5. Establish task forces to plan and coordinate different activities, such as advocacy priorities, specific agendas, publicity, outreach, lobbying, fundraising, and procedural matters. Involve all members of the coalition in at least one committee and encourage development of new leadership.
6. Assess progress periodically and make whatever changes are necessary. This assessment should examine decision-making structures, the effectiveness of the coalition in meeting the advocacy objectives, opportunities for constituents to take on leadership roles, and other relevant areas. Assessment is often neglected, but it can be a useful opportunity for building shared understanding and commitment to a coalition's directions and activities. Ongoing consultation among members helps avoid duplication of activities and acrimony caused by misunderstanding of actions and motives.
7. Develop a code of conduct to ensure mutual respect and responsibility. If this is drawn up collectively, member organisations can more easily be held accountable without finger-pointing and resentment. Remember that each member will have different strengths. Ensure that your rules of collaboration acknowledge diversity in capacity and resources. Ideally, coalitions operate on the basis of written principles. In particular, clear policies on leadership and decision making should be established from the beginning. Coalitions may want to allow members to opt out of positions taken on specific controversial issues.

Source: Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller (2002) *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: the action guide for advocacy and citizen participation*, World Neighbors, Oklahoma. pp.311-316 <http://www.wn.org>

What is a one-on-one meeting?

A pre-scheduled, face-to-face meeting between an organiser or trained leader and someone they are interested in recruiting into active or increased participation in the organisation.

In the meeting we learn people's:

- self interests (motivations, passions, worries, concerns) and
- potential for leadership

... and challenge them to act with us to further these interests.

Why do we do one-on-ones?

1. **To learn a person's self-interest** -- what drives them? Motivates them? Turns them on? What makes them move and create in the world?
2. **To develop some trust.** What does it require? Calculated risk -- tell them a little bit about yourself.
3. We are looking for the **private grounding** to their public life.
4. **One-on-ones are the vehicle for leading our lives and doing our work at a deeper level** - getting beyond chit-chat to a deeper understanding of what makes a person tick.
5. **They act as an energiser battery** for our work. We get new energy by seeing other people, meeting new people, connecting with them, getting new ideas for our work, getting "un-stuck".
6. **To explore "potentials"** -- new leaders, strategies, ideas
7. **To get clearer** about our own ideas and interests
8. **To help ourselves and others go from private experiences to public action.**

The relational meeting	
<i>Is</i>	<i>Is not</i>
An art	A science
Planned	Casual
Face to Face	Over the phone
Time-limited	Hours long
A conversation with a point	Chit-chat
Dialogue	Interview
80% ears, eyes and body, 20% mouth	Monologue
"Why" questions that lead to values, motivating forces, foundational stories	
What drives you	
What you want out of life...	

It's a process of exploration, moving outward from the self

You want to be mostly asking questions and listening. But to build trust and establish a relationship you have to speak about yourself and invite the other person to do the same. You're looking for common ground, a "mixing of spirits", becoming public soul mates.

1. *The individual:* Discovering people's individual stories
2. *The self in context:* Moving to an understanding of how individual stories lead to bigger stories
3. *Collective action:* Seeing ways to act together based on a shared understanding

Some tips for doing one-on-ones

1. **Ask "what" questions** to get the basics but always follow them with the "why" questions to keep taking you deeper into motivations. Silence is good, it gives a person time to collect their thoughts and puts a little bit of tension in the air.
2. **Err on the side of listening**, be more like a sponge -- absorbing information -- than a mouth -- willing to go on and on.
3. **Take risks and share something about your own history and motivations** -- that will also help others to do the same -- but keep the focus on them! There is nothing more "un-relational" than someone who feels the need to respond to every feeling or story expressed by a person not with questions and curiosity but with a parallel story of their own.
4. **Know the difference between "agitation"** -- putting tension into the conversation on the other person's terms -- **and "irritation"** -- putting tension into the conversation on your own terms. What agitates? Silence, "why" questions, pointed questions, risks.
5. **People's stories are often powerful and painful**. Remember, we are not there to "admire" people's struggles, or just to empathise, but to learn what brings them to the work, share what brings us there and contemplate the possibility of working together.
6. **After the Meeting**: make some notes with some of the information you gleaned about this person right away while the meeting is fresh in your mind (like a quick stick figure summary). Ask yourself:
 - **"Is this person a potential new leader**, a potential new member, a possible conduit to other potential members and leaders?"
 - **"What should my next step be?"**
 - Think about the next step you want to take with this person.
 - Decide whether you want to stay in contact or refer the person to someone else or some other group.
 - Is there something coming up that would be appropriate to invite them to?

Relational meetings

One goal for relational meetings is to try to identify a member's:

- motivation for being active in the organisation
- hopes for the future
- fears about the present or future
- past transformational experience that helps spur activism in the group
- anger about the problems that the member works to solve
- family history
- work history

Some tips for relational meetings:

- set appointment
- have a clear agenda and time frame for the meeting
- ask questions, don't give "updates"
- don't tightly script your discussion

Understanding who someone is and why they are active can be helpful in focusing the goals of the organisation and each member's role in helping to achieve those goals.

Source: Northeast Action <http://www.neaction.org/>

So, what is a "one-on-one" or "relational" meeting?

It's a face-to-face conversation between two people (organiser and potential leader OR leader and potential leader) for the explicit purpose of exploring a relationship between a potential leader and a power organisation; done well, it's a conversation grounded in passion, vision, stories and self-interest, NOT issues and programs; at the end of the day, the goal is to increase the power of the organisation by getting the person – who presumably has something to offer (passion, a following, etc.) -- to join the collective.

These simple guidelines will help you make the most of this tried and true technique:

1. An effective organiser

To be an effective organiser, you have to be "relational." In all, three characteristics describe a good organiser:

1. Relational – the ability to develop formal but meaningful relationships with diverse people – black, white, poor, rich, liberal and conservative;
2. Has "pull" – by itself, being relational doesn't cut it. At the end of the day, an organiser has to have the "pull" to turn people out to meetings and actions ... to get people to act on their self interest;
3. Makes things happen – can translate hundreds of one-on-one meetings done over a period of time into a solid core team or action. *Note -- This document applies to #s 1 and 2 above. In addition, although one can fake it, to perfect relational meetings as an art form requires that you have a genuine interest in people.

2. Purpose of relational meetings

In many organising circles, relational meetings are used as a recruitment and teaching tool. But they also serve the purpose of making the organiser whole, replenishing energy, filling up the bucket. A veteran organiser once told a talented organiser on the verge of burnout to take a few months off. He asked her to make a list of 100 people she found interesting and to do relational meetings with them. These meetings (through the stories and energy exchanged) had the effect of reinvigorating the organiser. They made her whole, again.

3. It's about selection

Organising in general, relational meetings in particular, is about selection. You don't just meet with anyone. You're looking for leaders – people with a following; people who can relate well to others; people who have passion rooted in anger (cold anger, not rage); people who will stand for the whole, not just their particular issue or their race or ethnic group.

4. Probing vs. Prying

You don't do relational meetings for chit-chat. Nor do you go into them with the goal of selling something – membership or affiliation with your organisation. Instead, you're going after a person's core, their spirit. You want to know what makes them tick. You're looking for the personal stories behind their public persona. When probing, the most radical thing you can do is to ask the person "Why?" "Why teach?" "Why do you do social justice work?" To reiterate, relational meetings are NOT an indiscriminate search for information. You're looking for something very specific – talent, passion, vision and energy.

5. Agitate vs. Irritate

In a relational meeting, you're agitating people to act on their own self-interest and to look at power differently. But there's a fine line between agitating and irritating. In a relational meeting, the best way to agitate isn't to lecture or to construct a win-lose argument. Instead, as explained above, the way to agitate is by asking the "Why?" question.

6. Time is important

When done well, two people doing a relational meeting find and mix each other's energy. However, there's only so much time that you can sustain this mixing. Thus, relational meetings should last no more than 30-45 minutes. If a conversation is really interesting, schedule another appointment. To avoid an abrupt end to the meeting, ask the

person you're meeting with, prior to the meeting, if they have 30 – 45 minutes. Tell them this gives you enough time to get to your next appointment.

7. Cues and Clues

Venue or place counts with relational meetings. People aren't always comfortable inviting you to their home or office. If not, fine. Meet at the local Starbucks. But if they are, grab the opportunity. Going into a person's home or office allows you to identify cues and clues that tell you something about the person and may provoke deeper probing questions – "That picture on the wall. Tell me about it? What significance does it have to you?" "All those trophies and awards in sports or science. Where does the interest and passion come from?"

8. Use your whole self

Relational meetings are not a cerebral exercise. You use your whole self – eye contact with the other person that doesn't stray every time someone walks by; leaning forward or nodding the head to communicate particular interest in a story being told or point being made; physically standing or pounding a table while telling a story in order to paint a picture, provide imagery.

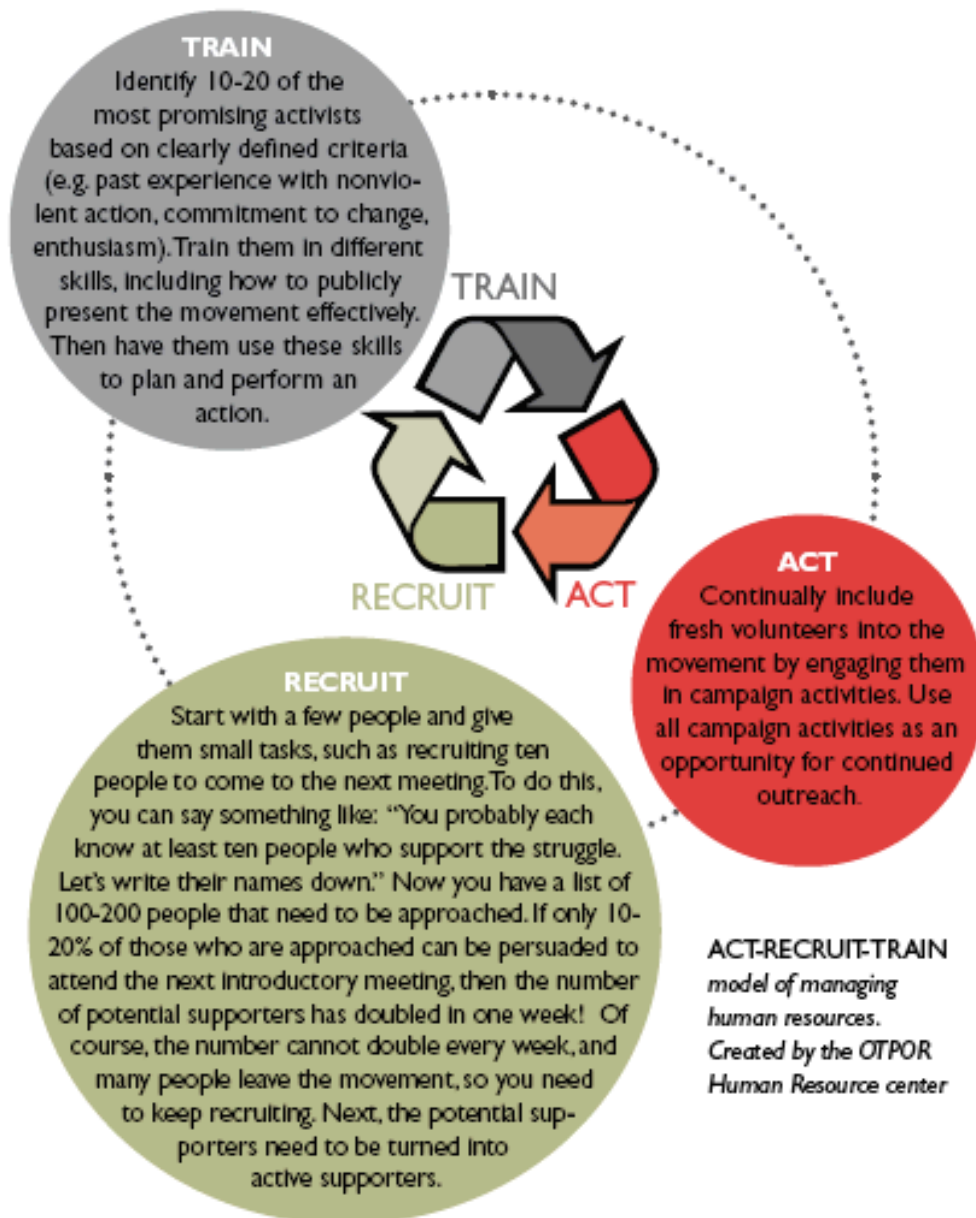
9. It's a dance

When done well, there's a dance between two people doing relational meetings. The meeting should not be about the organiser asking probing questions and the other person responding. Along the way, the organiser should have awakened enough curiosity in the other person that they, too, are probing and sharing stories. This is why selection is important. Chances are, if you meet with someone who's a dud, this dance won't happen.

10. Key tools for the organiser in doing relational meetings are:

- Sleep – to do a large number of relational meetings a week (each 30 – 45 minutes) and to listen attentively to another person's story and be able to probe those stories requires incredible focus. You can't do this on four hours of sleep;
- Stories – the organiser should have a repertoire of stories that help to explain who s/he is and why s/he does this work. Stories are the most effective way of communicating with people. Stories have the elements of plot, antagonist and climax. Stories transmit imagery and pictures. People will remember stories even if they forget your name or the name of your organisation;
- Being "on" – a veteran organiser once said that organisers should treat each relational meeting like a "job interview". In other words, go into the meeting with my best self, with the type of focus and intensity that I would have if I was determined to get a job. You have to be "on";
- Step out of your comfort zone – organiser has to be willing to intentionally, and on a daily basis, put him or herself in the uncomfortable position of relating to diverse people ... purposely removing yourself outside of your comfort zone. For most people, this kind of risk taking isn't natural. It's a behavior that has to be learned and practiced;
- Develop the habit of relating - to perfect relational meetings, you have to make doing them a habit. 25 may be too much, but a few each week is definitely doable.

Source: Fair Immigration Reform Movement <http://www.fairimmigration.org/learn/black-brown--beyond/bbb-10-rules-for-one-on-ones.html>



Source: This model of Train-Act-Recruit was developed by Otpor! – the Serbian Resistance movement that successfully overthrew Milosevic in 2000.

Objective

- Develop practical plans for short-term movement recruitment

Step 1

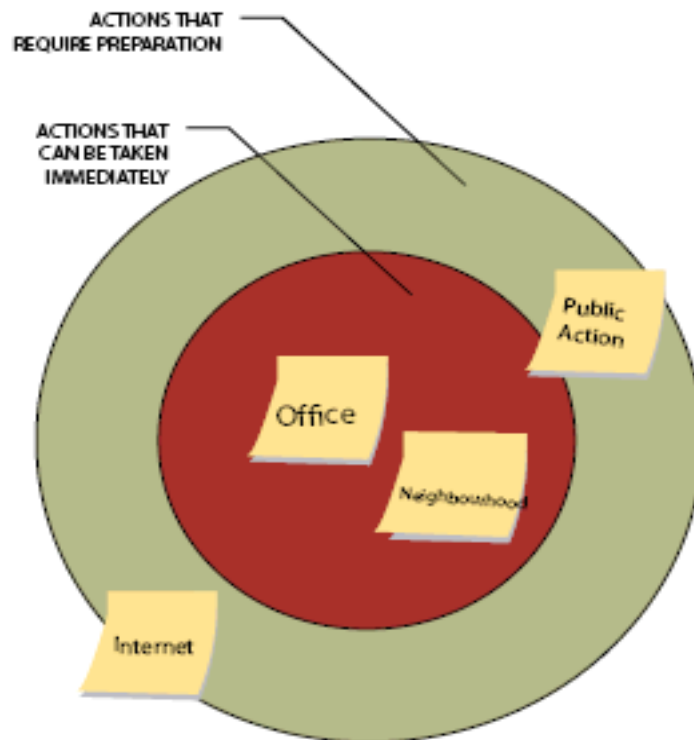
Develop a “mind map” to consider what action can be taken to recruit new people and build the movement.

Step 2

The **first circle** represents actions that can be taken almost immediately, for example: make your movement’s office visible so people can find and join you; think about religious based events, since they may attract large numbers of people; put a promotion table at a soccer game next week and try to persuade visitors to join, etc.

Step 3

The **second circle** represents potential sources of human resources that could be reached, if the movement invests time and energy. For example, in order for people to join via the movement’s website, it is necessary to first request the building of a website and find a person to manage it, etc.



Source: CANVAS Core Curriculum: A Guide to Effective Nonviolent Struggle, pg 226.

1. Be prepared
All doorknockers should be trained well in advance on how to engage participants effectively and efficiently
REMEMBER: you only have fifteen minutes, so respect people's time!!!
2. Introduce yourself
 - Introduce yourself, the organization and explain why you're at their door
3. "Get in the door"
 - Ask to come in or sit on porch/stoop/front steps to talk about their neighbourhood
4. Break the ice
 - Repeat your name and organization
 - Get their name, confirm address and phone #
 - Ask them how long they've lived in neighbourhood,
 - Do they know their neighbours?
5. Identify self-Interest
 - Ask them what 3 things they like about the neighbourhood,
 - What 3 things that needs to be changed
 - Ask them which is the #1 thing that they are willing to work on to help change
6. Practice active listening / Get them involved in the conversation
 - Get them to freely express themselves, then really listen to what they say,
 - Ask them to clarify if needed
7. Build relationships
 - Share a little about why you do this kind of work (REMEMBER: you only have fifteen minutes, so keep it brief and respect people's time - door knocking is not about you!!!)
 - Identify things that connect you to the person
 - Identify things that could connect the person with others in the group
8. Get them involved
 - Share how your organization brings people together to work on issues
 - Share what you think can be accomplished by working together
 - Let them know how they can benefit from being involved
9. Follow-up
 - Get back to the person with any requested information or action

Source: Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore

You should be prepared to convey the ideas on this script without reading it word-for-word. Note that all underlined items can be changed to reflect the community group you are working with. Feel free to revise this training to meet all of your local needs.

Hi, my name is _____. I work with the Irvington Community Association, or ICA for short (give them an info flier). We are here today to learn more about how we can work with residents to make a difference. Can I talk with you for 15 minutes about ICA and this neighbourhood? Thank you. Again, I'm _____. What's your name? How long have you lived here? Do you know your neighbours?

ICA is working in Irvington to ensure residents have a voice in the planning process and feel a sense of ownership over their community. We believe that people can work together to make the place they live the best it can be. In the last few months, ICA has been talking to residents to get feedback and get them involved. They've connected with some of the teenagers and adults, and they are working together to create positive neighbourhood projects. ICA has held meetings the past few months to get ideas from residents. Did you attend?

(If YES). Great! Did you fill out the survey (if you administered a survey)? That information is helping us get a sense of what's needed and the time people have to be involved. Thanks for attending.

(If NO). We wished you could have been there. It was a chance to meet other residents who care about this neighbourhood.

I don't know much about your block. What can you tell me about it? What's it like to live here? When do you see people most active? We really want to get people involved, what things could we do to be successful? What are 2-3 things you really like about this neighbourhood? What are 2-3 things you would change if you could? What is 1 thing you would work with others to change? (PRACTICE YOUR ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS IN THIS SITUATION)

I believe things can be better when residents make a commitment to work together. I see positive changes in Irvington, due in part to the efforts of ICA, and it makes a difference. Your block can be safer, and Irvington can become a neighbourhood where people care about each other. Irvington can be an example of a safe, affordable community. We want and need residents like you to get involved. In the next six to twelve months, ICA will be working for residents to develop a community plan for Irvington. We will send out fliers and will make doorknocking visits to inform and update residents and to ask for their participation. Can we count on you to participate and get involved in the Irvington community planning process? We know people are busy and we'll keep that in mind.

(If YES) Great! I will need to get your contact information for ICA to follow up.

(If NO) What would keep you from participating (PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING)? I believe you can make a positive contribution. We can work around your schedule and use whatever you are willing to offer. We need your help. Earlier you said that you want Irvington to be cleaner and safer. I think that is a great idea! We can work together to make that happen but I will need your help. Your ideas and time can make a big difference. Can we call you if there is something happening that involves something you are concerned about?

I've asked you lots of questions. Do you have any questions for me? When we have meetings or events, we would like to make sure you're invited. What is your full name, phone number? Please call Dorothy Cunningham if you any questions about the ICA or the Irvington community plan. Thank you for your time.

Source: Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore

Community organizing: people power from the grassroots

Contents

The Four Strategies
What is Community Organizing?
The Principles of Community Organizing
The Ten Rules of Community Organizing
Defining an Action Strategy

THE FOUR STRATEGIES

There are four fundamental strategies available to neighborhood groups to address community problems: community organizing, advocacy, service delivery or development. There is no right or wrong strategy - each organization has to choose among them constantly. Each group should specialize - the skills needed to do a good job in one are seldom those needed for another. Sometimes, groups use a combination of strategies. What is important here is that you know what you're doing - that the method matches the strategy you've chosen and they both match the mission the group has adopted. This article will focus on defining and developing the ideas behind community organizing.

Community organizing is characterized by the mobilizing of volunteers. Staff roles are limited to helping volunteers become effective, to guiding the learning of leaders through the process, and to helping create the mechanism for the group to advocate on their own behalf. Community organizing almost always includes confrontation of some sort. The people who want something get themselves together to ask for it, often the people who could give them what they want get jumpy. Community organizing strategies include meeting with corporate or government decision makers to hold them accountable for their actions, designing programs for others (not the group) to implement that meet the needs of the community, and aggressive group action to block negative developments or behaviors (highway construction that leads to neighborhood destruction, etc.).

Advocacy and **Service Delivery** are both characterized by doing FOR people. Often professionals like lawyers or social workers will attack a problem on behalf of those perceived as unable to speak for themselves. Job referral services, social work, training for job readiness, homeownership counseling, business plan preparation training - these are methods which fit into the Advocacy or Service Delivery strategy.

Development is a strategy that gets the group directly into the business of delivering a physical product. Generally, groups select a development strategy because the normal course of events is not meeting the areas needs. The profit motive either does not bring private developers into the area - they can't make enough money - or it brings them in to do the wrong thing - they are converting moderate cost rental units into yuppie condos. Development could mean housing or commercial or even industrial development. Development methods require, like the other two strategies, particular skills. Many groups have struggled to achieve good results in housing development with staff whose training, experience and interests are in community organizing, causing pain and suffering for the group and the staff. This is unfair. If we understand the distinction between the strategies, we can see the different resources needed for the methods that fit within them.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ORGANIZING?

Community organizing is the process of building power through involving a constituency in identifying problems they share and the solutions to those problems that they desire; identifying the people and structures that can make those solutions possible; enlisting those targets in the effort through negotiation and using confrontation and pressure when needed; and building an institution that is democratically controlled by that constituency that can develop the capacity to take on further problems and that embodies the will and the power of that constituency.

Heather Booth, founder of the Midwest Academy and legendary community organizer, expressed the fundamentals in this formula:

OOO = Organizers Organize Organizations.

Community organizing is NOT a technique for problem solving. Those who would use simple confrontation or mass meetings to meet their own selfish need for power, and skip the step of democratic involvement and control in the selecting of issues, the crafting of demands or the negotiating of the victory are called demagogues. Their organizations are a hollow sham, without the empowering aspect that humanizes and ennobles the effort.

Community organizing is not merely a process that is good for its own sake. Unless the organization wins concrete, measurable benefits for those who participate, it will not last long. The groups that content themselves with holding endless meetings and plod along involving everyone in discussions that never lead to action or to victory are doomed to shrink into nothing. People want to see results. That's why they get involved. There is a theory (isn't there always?) that says that folks join up if two things are true. First, they must see a potential for either benefit or harm to themselves if the group succeeds or fails. Second, they must see that their personal involvement has an impact on the whole effort. This makes sense to me. Winning is critical, but if the group's going to win whether I get involved or not - if my personal involvement is not critical - then I can stay home and watch TV.

Community organizing is not just a neighborhood thing, not just a minority thing, not just a 60's thing. Many - especially those uncomfortable with a particular community organizing effort because it's confronting them at the time - seek to 'label' organizing as somehow out of date or out of place. The fact is that the method, the strategy the science of community organizing has been applied all over the world in situations as disparate as Solidarity in Poland, Welfare Rights in the US and 'comunidades del base' in Brazil. The simple principles of community organizing are being applied right now in the barrios of San Antonio and in the ghettos of Baltimore. They are winning victories and building power. We can too.

The Principles of Community Organizing

What are these simple principles? What is the essence of the science of power, applied through the art of community organizing?

FIRST, people are motivated by their self-interest. This is important to motivating involvement from the community that's being organized. It's also key to developing effective strategies to pressure the opposition into giving up what the community wants. Many people are uncomfortable with self interest. They'd rather focus on values, on selfless giving, or on mutual aid as the highest virtue. All these may be true, and we might hope that human beings could somehow be changed into angels. Human nature fails the angel test every time, though.

Effective community organizing can develop a broader sense of self interest - this is where hope comes in to the picture. How can we broaden the sense of self interest? Through a process of building up the horizons of the people we are organizing. It seems to me that people are taught everyday in countless little ways that the system is not going to change, no matter what they do. We learn to stand in line and fold our hands on our desks in school. We see politicians betray promises daily, with very little regard for the faith that voters place in them before the election. We see the rich get richer, the powerful escape the consequences of wrongdoing. In all these ways, we learn that nothing we do will change the way things are. Out of simple self preservation, we begin to lower our horizons, to shrink into a world we define by our ability to have an impact.

Think about the last time you were in a meeting, and the room was too hot or too cold. You may have looked around for a door to open, a window to crack, or even a thermostat. I'll bet, if you found none of these, you stopped being bothered by the room, though. What if you were right next to the thermostat, but it was locked? Wouldn't the heat bother you more, and if you knew where the key was, or who could turn down the heat, wouldn't the temptation to DO SOMETHING become almost irresistible? In the same way, our view of our own self interest gets shrunk down to the arena in which we believe we can have an impact. Community organizing seeks to teach people, through experience, that they can be effective in a larger and larger sphere - their own block, their own neighborhood, their city, their state, and so on. In the process, we redefine our idea of self - who else is 'us' - and thus, of self interest.

SECOND, community organizing is a dynamic process, that requires constant attention and effort. It is impossible to use community organizing to get to a certain point and stop, or to build a community organization up and then stop reaching out for new folks and taking on new issues. The process of development that we described above - broadening peoples' view of their own self interest - is mirrored in the political arena.

We see this dynamic aspect in the initial stage of building a group. At first, some people will want to take on big issues, and some will identify more achievable goals. The organizer will push for a winnable project so that the group can get stronger slowly. The formula for building a new organization is:

FWFWFLFH

This stands for Fight, Win, Fight, Win, Fight, Lose, Fight Harder. Any group that can pick its issues - and this is sometimes impossible - needs to take this process seriously.

What's necessary in these early stages to grow a strong group? Although simpler, lower risk issues could be addressed quickly and behind the scenes, it is especially important that they be handled the same way the big ones would. For example, even if you know that the city will put up a stop sign upon request, you should still hold a press conference on the street corner and a march to city hall to demand it, then negotiate with the traffic engineer over which tree it will be posted on. A musical mom I know tells her children that 'practice makes PERMANENT, GOOD practice makes perfect!' If people in the early stages of a group learn that all it takes is a phone call to get things done, they'll look to the same strategy next time. Community organizing is a process of teaching people to work together, and how to be effective.

THIRD, it's important that, at an early stage of the development of any group, they learn to deal with conflict and confrontation. Some people see this as manipulation, as tricking people. Obviously, some groups and some organizers are guilty of this. In the final analysis, though, groups must learn confrontation and negotiation because they'll eventually have to use both. Many of the problems that confront low income and minority communities can be solved by coordination and determination, simply by focusing people of good will on a commonly understood problem. But most of the fundamental problems are deeply rooted in greed and power, and there are those who benefit from the status quo. Slum landlords might make as much or more providing decent, safe housing, but not many will see it that way. If we are to build organizations that can have any serious impact at all, they will eventually have to come up against a situation where there will be winners and losers. The potential losers are not likely to lay down and roll over because of the righteousness of our cause. If the group has never stood strong before, if they have never made a demand before, if they've never faced a target that really had to be forced into complying, they're more likely to back down when the going gets tough. If confrontation is not one of the tools in our toolbox, then we're likely to ignore problems that require toughness to be addressed.

FOURTH, in selecting an issue to work on, every group has to take into account the fundamental definition of an issue. A neighborhood, a minority group, a group of workers or people who share any common complaint can be a community that wants to get organized. Typically, there is a tangled web of problems - complaints, irritations, bad situations, oppressions, difficulties, injustices, crises, messes. An issue is a problem that the community can be organized around. I learned a formula to describe this distinction from Stan Holt, Director of People Acting through Community Effort, in Providence, RI in 1971, when he gave me and another raw recruit our 6 hours of basic training before he sent us out door to door. He used the initials I S R on the chalkboard in the dingy little office at Broad and Public (I thought it was a pretty apt address for a community group - and I'm NOT making it up!). Immediate, specific and realizable. (I never could spell that last one) An organizer 'cuts' an issue - interprets or massages perceptions or manipulates situations until they fit these criteria as closely as possible. The thought process was to become automatic after a dozen years.

Immediate, he said, in terms of either the benefit folks would get from victory or, preferably, the harm they would suffer from inaction. 'The bulldozers are coming and you'll be out on the street tomorrow' is far better than 'would you like to be part of a community planning process'.

Specific refers to both the problem and its solution. Vacant buildings are a problem. That building that we want torn down by the end of the month is an issue.

Realizable (it's easier to spell winnable, but it's not the way I learned, what can I do?) is the toughest of all. It's easy to describe the extreme, the global problem beyond the reach of a Block Club or a neighborhood organization. That's not a good issue, especially not in the early stages. Most effective community organizations can point to victories that any sane person would say were far beyond their reach, though. Who would have thought that a handful of neighborhood folks concerned about their children would get the government to buy their homes and relocate their families, putting Love Canal into the language as a symbol of environmental disaster in the process. Who would have said that East Toledo could get agreement and construction on a \$10 million dollar road project that would open up employment possibilities for their neighborhood, and only five years from concept to construction? It remains true, though, that calculating the odds on winning is an important first step.

The key to this aspect of 'cutting an issue' is calculation. The organizer - volunteer or staff - has to look with a cold, hard balancing of accounts at all the factors on our side and their side of the issue, and determine whether it's worth starting out on. Some factors to consider include: who is effected by the problem, and can I get to them? How much does the problem hurt them, and how hard are they likely to fight? Are they able to escape easily, or is standing and fighting their only option? What resources are we likely to need and can we get them? On the other side, who benefited from the problem the way things are, and how much? Could they easily give us what we want, or would it cost them, and how much? Who else is peripherally hurt - or helped - by the way things are? How would the solution we seek change this equation? Could we go after something that would help us just as much, but get us more friends? In the end, all we can do is step out. The more we've tried to peer ahead, the less likely we are to stumble.

THE TEN RULES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

1. Nobody's going to come to the meeting unless they've got a reason to come to the meeting.
2. Nobody's going to come to a meeting unless they know about it.
3. If an organization doesn't grow, it will die.
4. Anyone can be a leader.
5. The most important victory is the group itself.
6. Sometimes winning is losing.
7. Sometimes winning is winning.
8. If you're not fighting for what you want, you don't want enough.
9. Celebrate!
10. Have fun!

The **first rule**: Nobody's going to come to the meeting unless they've got a reason to come to the meeting. Like many of my ten 'rules', this seems self-evident. All of them, however, represent lessons that I have learned over twenty years of making the same mistakes, taking the same basics for granted, and paying the price over and over again, until the lesson is finally learned. I have observed this rule being broken by groups all across the country, groups with experience, groups with talented staff and leaders, who know better, or should. Giving folks a REASON to attend means two things. First, interpreting the issue as related to them. This means developing a 'line' or a 'rap' that sells the issue simply and personally. Even if the issue has been thought through, if the story can't be told simply and quickly in an exciting way, the people are less likely to respond. The organizer has to be able to answer the question 'what's in it for me?' We must GIVE people the reason - this should have been thought through in the planning stage, but in the actual implementation of a campaign, there must be considerable attention to how it's going to be communicated. For example, if the issue is the need for better equipment at the local park, there should be more than one approach, going beyond the obvious. Kids who might use the park will be attracted because the new equipment might be fun. How to sell the issue to their parents? What about neighbors who don't have kids? People who live too far away to benefit directly? A planning group usually grapples with this problem when they're putting together the flyer and the phone call 'rap' sheet - or they should. In this case, a phone rap might look like this:

Call Sheet - Parks Meeting - call in results to : Joe Schmoe, 123-4567 by Wednesday at 7 pm.

"Hi, my name is _____, and I'm calling for the MidRiver Neighborhood Organization. Do you have children in school?"

IF YES: We're having a meeting about the playground tomorrow night over at the school at 7:30. Have your children ever been injured on the broken equipment? (LISTEN) Have they ever been cut or hurt on the asphalt? (LISTEN) Would you like to have a safe, well equipped facility to send them to? Well, this is what we're working for. We have the head of Parks for the City coming, and we want to show him just how many people want action. Will you be able to come to the meeting?

IF NO: Have you ever been bothered by the kids hanging out on the corners or playing on the street? (LISTEN) Does it bother you that the parks on the other side of the river have brand new equipment, and kids here in MidRiver have to play in the glass and asphalt, on broken swings? Did you know they just spent \$28,000 to put grass in the park on River Road, and it's been 14 years since they spent a dime on our park? We're having a meeting about the playground tomorrow night over at the school at 7:30. We have the head of Parks for the City coming, and we want to show him just how many people want action. Will you be able to come to the meeting?

Names & Numbers----- Yes -----No -----Ride

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

These two 'raps' seek to interpret the problem in terms of the self interest of the person you're talking to, and thus to get their interest aroused enough to come out.

The second aspect of a REASON to come to the meeting is what happens at the meeting. If the people in the audience are there just to cover a chair, and they are not asked to participate, or there's no chance to ask questions or tell their story, they will find it easier and easier to drop out. The agenda for the meeting should always include a time for individual stories to be told, to put a human face on the problem. Mrs. Schultz should be lined up in advance to come to the mike and tell about poor little Otto who went to the hospital for stitches after he fell off the broken swing. The chair should ask if anybody else has had kids hurt, and ask them to stand, or raise their hand, or even come to the mike. The agenda should include parts for lots of people - not just one chair who speaks and leads and asks the questions of the city folks or the other targets, but plenty of folks trooping up to do their pre-assigned parts -- the more folks who have a part, the more are likely to come out. Even spectators can get the feeling that, next time, they could have an important part in the group, if there are obviously lots of parts being given out. A one-person show, however, tends to stay that way.

The **second rule** is: Nobody's going to come unless they know about it. This is another painfully obvious point. Time after time, though, I have helped groups analyze their shrinking participation, and found that they've ignored this rule. They publicize meetings through the newsletter. The newsletter is distributed door to door by block captains. Half the blocks have no captains. On the other half, the newsletters were delivered for distribution on Tuesday night after 7, and the meeting was held on Thursday. Even where the conscientious block captains actually went to every house on the block and dropped one off on Wednesday afternoon when they got home from work, about a third of the folks didn't go to the front porch until the next morning, another third read the story about crime on the front page, but missed the meeting notice, and another third thought it MUST be next Thursday they're talking about. Many groups rely on a regular meeting night and a telephone tree to get people out. Others just invite the ones who came to this meeting to come back to the next one.

In fact, there is an almost unbreakable ratio - for every one hundred folks who get a timely, well crafted written notice and a follow-up personal contact by phone or in person, ten will come out. Late notices or wordy, unclear ones cut further into the final count. No personal contact cuts even further. Organizing is hard work, and there are

few shortcuts worth taking. A group that doesn't plant seeds with effective outreach should not be surprised when the harvest is sparse.

The **third rule** is: if an organization doesn't grow, it will die. A good outreach effort will bring out new recruits. These folks must be put to work. Somebody has to recognize their effort in coming out, and talk to them, welcome them, give them a chance to get into things. Could they do calls for the next meeting? Would they like to help with posters for the fundraiser? What did they think of the meeting? Each issue should bring in new folks, and there should always be a next issue on the horizon, to get out and touch the community with, to find yet newer folks to get involved with. People naturally fade in and out of involvement as their own life's rhythms dictate - people move, kids take on baseball for the Spring, they get involved with Lamaze classes, whatever. If there are not new people coming in, the shrinkage can be fatal. New issues and continuous outreach are the only protection against this natural process.

Rule four: anyone can be a leader. I have had the privilege of working with a wide variety of very talented community leaders in twenty years of community organizing. I can safely and in all humility admit that not one new leader was 'developed' because of my foresight and careful cultivation and training of a new recruit who showed clear promise. Almost without exception, the best leaders have been people who rose to the occasion of a crisis. The priest who spoke at all our news conferences got sick at the last minute. Who can take his place? Mrs. H., you're the only one at home, and the thing starts in five minutes - let me pick you up and brief you in the car. What do you mean, Mr. President, you're not going to run for reelection? This organization is big, it's new, and nobody else is ready! Mr. T., you have to run, or else we'll have those guys from UpThere in charge of the group, and we can't have that, can we? The only wisdom or craft I can claim in any of these scenes is an ability to convince people to step into a tough situation and give it a try, coupled with a shameless willingness to praise and support a person after their first shaky performance. They did the rest. Anybody can be a leader. A good community organization provides a lot of people with a lot of opportunities to practice, to try it out, to learn by doing. A broad team of folks who can lead is built by constantly bringing new people into leadership roles and supporting them in learning from this experience.

Rule five. The most important victory is the group itself. This starts a series of rules about winning. Winning is what organizing is about. Winning without building is a hollow process, though. We need to celebrate the simple fact of survival, given the odds most groups face. The way to ensure that a group is built out of activity on issues is to create a structure that governs the group and bring people who work on issues into the governance of the group. In a mature organization this happens through elections, and the elections should at least bring new people in, even if they are not contests where folks vie for the votes to outdo their 'opponents'. A growing organization should pay close attention to this as well, through steering committees or leadership meetings where folks who are mostly involved in issues get brought into the deliberations on priorities, strategies, structure and the 'business' of the group. Even if they choose to say no, the opportunity to join in setting the course of the group makes it more their own. A group that is governed by one set of folks and involves a whole different set as beneficiaries or volunteers is never going to be a real people's organization. No empowerment ever comes from well meaning outsiders helping the helpless.

Rule six: Sometimes winning is losing. Remember in our initial discussion of the process of organizing we talked about the FWFRLFH method. A group that never loses is probably just too naive or nearsighted to understand what's happening. Part of the political literacy that community organizing ought to impart is the ability to stare the facts in the face and understand that the politician who just talked for twenty minutes didn't really mean that he supports us - he really said he wasn't going to do what we want. Beyond this, we need to be careful that we ask for something we really want. A community organization that I worked with in Providence once undertook a two year campaign to open up membership in the United Way to more minority and non-traditional agencies. One result was that the group itself became a member agency! We thought this was the ultimate victory! No more spaghetti suppers, no more grant writing, no more scratching around for free paper for the mimeo - easy street. When a big Federal grant came down for anti-crime organizing, all other fundraising ground to a halt, everybody got a raise, the group bought a van and moved into a nice office. The dark side soon surfaced, though. The highly motivated but formerly low paid staff started to get resistance from leadership when it came time to challenge the real power brokers downtown - these folks are big in the United Way! We're going to be cutting our own throats!

Leaders started to bid for the job openings, which now were much more lucrative - and those who didn't get hired felt that they had been put down unfairly, and stopped volunteering - if their fellow leader was now going to get to take home all that money, well he could make the phone calls! The final straw was the fight over the van. Who gets to drive it home at night -the new director of the anticrime project or the president - the fight was vicious and bitter, and the staff that thought they'd signed on for a crusade left in disgust, and the organization took a two year nosedive, leading to de-funding by the United way and death. This group thought they wanted respectability and acceptance, and were willing to pay any price to get them. In the end, they lost their power and they lost their integrity, and finally they lost their very existence.

Rule Seven - sometimes winning is winning. Most community organizations take on little slices of the problems that confront their community. The achievements seem insignificant, and the progress seems so slow! A good organizer knows how to build a sense of power and accomplishment, while not ignoring the problems that still remain to be solved. Every group has a cynic, who says 'okay, we got a million for our loan program. There's still vacant buildings out there we won't be able to fix!' This can lead to discouragement. Nobody can fight day after day without some hope, and acknowledging the victories along the way builds that hope. The East Toledo Community Organization fought for three years to get a new road built to open up the industrial potential of the area. There were plenty of reasons to complain about what we didn't get - no job guarantees from new industry, no required hiring of neighborhood folks on the road construction. The victory was that we got a ten million dollar road built, though, and we worked very hard to let the whole community - inside East Toledo and outside - know that that's what we wanted, and that's what we got. This rule - know when to stop and claim the win - leads very directly to the ninth, but that's not coming until after the next one.

Rule Eight - If you're not FIGHTING for what you want, you don't want enough. We've talked before about the purpose of community organizing - building power. It's a lot like lifting weights. If you stay with the little baby weights, you'll never get the strength to do really heavy work. Community organizers know that it's possible to keep busy doing stuff and still get nowhere. It's possible to define your goals by what's achievable, and look like you're succeeding. The tragedy is that a group that never defines a difficult goal will never achieve a meaningful accomplishment. This extends, in the arena of power, to conflict, which we've talked about before. For now, remember the rule and check up on your group to make sure SOMEBODY thinks you're too strong, too forceful, too demanding, too abrasive. That probably means you're getting close to where the real power is.

Rule Nine - celebrate! I once ordered a young organizer in a new group to find some excuse and hold a victory party within a week or face firing! This young woman could only see the tough part - the half empty glass. She was starting to infect the neighborhood leadership with this negativity, and the group was sinking fast. Much to her surprise and delight (it saved her job), when she started talking to leaders, they came up with lots of reasons to celebrate! They wrote a VICTORY flyer, organized a block party with a cookout and games and awards, and turned the whole spirit of the group around - now they were winners! Everybody wants to be with a winner!

Finally - **rule number ten** - have fun! I started organizing with an all business attitude that looked at a meeting as being over when the gavel fell, and at the hanging out and laughing and drinking coffee afterwards as a distraction and a waste of time. I missed the community part of community organizing. These people were building a community, and sharing their fears, their hopes and their vision of the future over a beer at the club after the action was just as important as the planning meeting. I learned that meals and birthdays and Christmas parties and the summer picnic are organizing too. I learned that the posters that got made in the office with pizza and pop by the gang of volunteers we could scare up on a Friday night were far more important to the organization than the same posters made separately in peoples' homes. I learned that using humor to embarrass a public official brought a feeling of power to our folks that straight, serious conversation about our rights and their responsibilities could never come close to. I learned the power of FUN! and I vowed to try to make organizing at least as much fun as TV.

DEFINING AN ACTION STRATEGY

Every group should plan. This is not to say that things don't change, and often in ways that have not been anticipated. Real community organizing, though, is an educational process of action and reflection that puts people

into the power game as players. Planning should be a participatory process, then. A leadership group, with staff participation if there is an organizer on board, should plan out the strategy and steps on an issue.

First, the issue is defined, the goals for the campaign set, and the target selected. All these three factors are interrelated. As we discussed in the section on choosing and cutting an issue, there needs to be careful calculation involved, but finally the group needs to settle on their best guess as to just how broadly to define the issue, and on what to go for and who to go after.

Generally, the best plan has one target, a person who could take action to deliver what the group wants. This person needs to be within reach - a Toledo group shouldn't build its whole plan around getting somebody in New York to make a decision, but rather should find a local target that they can put pressure on in a variety of ways. The more you know about the target, the more you can develop pressure tactics.

In developing a plan, look to cover the 'what ifs.' There are usually three possible outcomes to any plan. If you've invited the mayor to your meeting, either he'll come or he won't come or he'll send somebody else to represent him (a variation on #2, but we'll call it a third alternative). The planning group needs to talk about what the groups' response will be in all three eventualities. If the mayor comes, how will he be welcomed, where will he sit, how many minutes will he be given, will we let him talk first or only in response to our questions, will he stay for the next part of the meeting or should we ask him to leave - all these questions need to be dealt with. If he doesn't come, when will we know, and is there anything we could/should do to get him to change his mind, like maybe an action at city hall or at the golf course? If they send a representative, who will it be, and do we accept him/her or not? In the same way, there are three possible responses from the mayor to our demands - yes, no or mushy/maybe. If he says yes, can we pin him down to a specific and enforceable commitment, and if he says yes right away, is there any follow-up that we should ask for while he's in an agreeable mood? If we get an outright no, do we have any recourse, or a fallback position? Can we get the mayor to recommend that somebody else do something instead? Can we lay out our next step, that will try to change his mind? Who will be chairing the meeting at that point, and can we get some mileage out of a no, with booing and hissing and so on, rather than just roll over and play dead? Finally, if the mayor says maybe/mushy, can the chair characterize this as a no, to push the mayor to a clearer yes statement? Can we pin the mayor down on the next step, so we know when the maybe/mushy might be converted to a yes or no? In fact, the planning group needs to talk about the fact that most maybe/mushy answers really mean NO, and they can be prepared to reject this kind of answer. A planning group could review peoples' experience with meetings and agreements and talk about just what constitutes a yes or a no. It's especially important to be prepared with your next step, so that a no or a maybe/mushy doesn't end the meeting, but rather you can announce that we'll all be down at council on Tuesday to protest this lack of cooperation, or we'll be calling for a new state law requiring the city to do this, starting on Monday with a press conference, or whatever...

In developing the plan, never make empty threats. Threats are very valuable, but if once you are unable to make good on them, your credibility will be weakened for a long, long time. I worked with a neighborhood organization in the Black community in Providence, Rhode Island in the early '70's. They were concerned about the lack of good jobs for young people. A group of leaders had identified the beer distributor that was located in the heart of the area as a particularly bad actor, with lots of minority beer drinkers but no minority drivers, warehouse personnel or sales staff. We held a long series of revival style planning sessions, invited the company to a public meeting that they ignored and declared a boycott on Narragansett beer, statewide. I was excited - this was my first organizing job, and already we're taking on the big guys, big time. Unfortunately, boycotting Narragansett beer in Rhode Island is like trying to boycott air. It's a great target, but we didn't have the troops to carry it off. The first night, 30 of the 100 folks who signed up at the meeting to come and picket showed up. We downsized our plan - less pickets, less stores - and went out anyway. The next night, only ten arrived. We did one store. The third night, only the picket leader and me were there.

We were demoralized. I went to my Director, a legendary organizer, trained in Chicago. What's wrong with these people, why don't they want to fight? He pointed out, in language clear and straightforward (that better be the last time, or you're out) that I was looking in the wrong place for blame. As the organizer, it was MY job to design a campaign that could work, so if it wasn't working I should try to figure out why, and fix the plan, not blame the

people...He led me through an analysis that identified the weak points of the plan. First, the group was made up largely of people who cared in general terms about getting more and better jobs for minority neighborhood residents, but very few actual job seekers, so the self interest was weak, and the commitment level low. Second, the tactic of a boycott is a long term, people-intense one, requiring a vast network of willing workers, and likely to succeed when there are lots of alternate products that folks could use. Narragansett was the cheapest brand, the locally produced brands, and held intense brand loyalty - tough to take on. In the end, we developed a quick and dirty approach to saving the campaign - and the reputation of the group. We did a week of outreach with a flyer that said, "Need a job? Come to the Meeting!" We took actual applications from people, explaining that we would turn them all over to the company at a certain time and in a group. We sent a letter demanding that the company meet us, in the street in front of their place, at noon on Friday. We called all the original leaders, and all the job applicants, and got a hundred folks there. The leaders presented a package of applications and a list of demands: accept these applications and pledge to give everybody an equal chance at all your job openings and we'll call off the boycott. Refuse at your peril! Needless to say, the media loved it, the company bought it and the organization declared a victory and got the heck out of the issue. A number of folks actually got jobs, too, and my career was preserved, with a difficult lesson learned.

Plan to build on the reaction from the other side. One of our most successful campaigns grew from an almost disastrous failure, through taking advantage of the reaction. Parents at the Southside Elementary were concerned about cars speeding by the playground. They were interested in a little activism, but not much. They asked our help in developing a petition for speed limit signs, and I met with a committee and urged them to make an appointment to deliver the petitions to the traffic engineer as a group. They agreed, made the appointment, and got the petitions signed. I arrived at the school at 3 pm on the appointed day, to find not five parents but only one - a short, meek, VERY pregnant mother who was also very reluctant to go alone to a big city office and talk to the official city traffic guy. As I had her in the car already, she found herself at the door of the city office before she could convince me to take her home and just mail the petitions. "While we're here, we might as well keep the appointment." The traffic engineer, a young, brash Italian-American, proceeded to treat Mrs. M like dirt. He made us wait, he dismissed her concerns as unimportant, he didn't offer her a chair, he said the petitions probably wouldn't make a difference, he generally disregarded and disrespected the whole situation. In the car, on the way home, I agitated Mrs. M mercilessly. "Did you hear the way he talked to you? The nerve of this guy, who pays his salary, anyway! I'll bet he wouldn't treat a white person that way! And you six months pregnant! Doesn't he have any manners?" I urged her to call the four other ladies who couldn't make it, and tell them the story. I asked her to call the neighborhood leadership and tell them the story as well, and ask for a few minutes on the agenda of the next area public meeting. By the time she'd told the story a half dozen times, and those folks had told it a few more, it came back to me as a physical attack, with racist slurs! The issue took off like a rocket - it led to a public meeting with 75 parents and over 100 children, and a hit on the installation dinner of the traffic engineer as the Grand Master of the Masons' lodge...but that's another story.

Finally, when a meeting is designed to get an agreement from a person, the meeting should be structured to tie that agreement down, tight. Two tried and true techniques for this are the written agreement and the report card. Often, an official or a target can be asked to sign a written agreement that embodies the demands. If they do, you know that their answer is really yes. If they don't sign, they will usually get much more specific about what they DO mean, and sometimes will sign a revised version so you know what they ARE agreeing to. The other approach is to post a list of demands, with a check-off spot marked YES and another for NO. This gives the chair a technique for concentrating the target on a specific answer that goes beyond "I'll do my best". The meeting can be focused around the list of demands very simply with either of these methods.

Evaluating the success of your effort is a critical part of any organizing campaign. Don't wait until the end to find out if you were effective. As you carry out your strategy and tactics, assess and evaluate your efforts. One approach is to have the group members answer the following three questions:

1. Is our strategy achieving the desired results--are we closer to the goal?
2. What's working, what isn't?

3. Are our tasks (actions) working--are they helping the group gain support?

An evaluation of the strategy and its results may lead a group to conclude that the reason why they have not met their goal is that the strategy was not fully developed. For example, the "target" of the group's efforts may not have had the power to make the change the group sought, or perhaps the timing of the campaign was not right; or a group may conclude that the strategy and tactics used were correct but not sufficient in number or frequency.

If your assessment indicates that your strategy is not working, you may need to revise your approach. Re-evaluating and changing tactics is completely acceptable. The bottom line for assessing success is: Did your efforts create the change you wanted? You will want to know what might the group do differently next time. Knowing what worked can help in planning your next organizing campaign.

Source: Dave Beckwith, with Cristina Lopez, Center for Community Change
<http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers97/beckwith.htm>

The Relational Meeting

Whatever one's philosophical or even theological position, a society is not a temple of value-idols that feature on the front of its monuments or on its constitutional scrolls; the value of a society is the value it places on human relations... to understand and judge a society, one has to penetrate its basic structure to the human bond upon which it is built; this undoubtedly relies upon legal relations, but also upon forms of labor, ways of living, loving and dying.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

The most radical thing we teach

You have just finished the main chapter on *why* we organize. This chapter is the key one on *how* we go about doing it. Relational meetings are the glue that brings diverse collectives together and allows them to embrace the tension of living in-between the two worlds. I organized full time for either years without understanding what I was experiencing or being able to explain it. It was only when I tried to teach others that I had to reflect and outline an approach to building power organizations. To me, the relational meeting is the best IAF offers. Properly understood, it's not a science, not a technique, but an art form. It's one organized spirit going after another person's spirit for connection, confrontation, and an exchange of talent and energy.

In the sacred texts of the Abrahamic religions, we find God holding relational meetings at critical moments. The stories of Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3), Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), and Muhammad in the cave on Mount Hira (Koran 96) are classic accounts of relational meetings. When people asked the Buddha in his later years what sort of being he was, he replied, "I am awake." A good relational meeting wakes somebody up.

Modern IAF defines a relational meeting as an encounter that is face-to-face – one to one – for the purpose of exploring the development of a purposeful relationship. You're searching for talent, energy, insight and relationships; where these are present you have found some power to add to your public collective. Without hundreds and thousands of such meetings, people cannot forge lasting public relationship based on solid social knowledge or build lasting citizens organisations. Other parts of organising, like caucuses, conventions and demonstrations, only have lasting effects if they emerge and take their lead from what happens in relational meetings.

James Madison said, "Great things can only be accomplished in a narrow compass." The IAF relational meeting is narrow in compass – one person face to face with another – but significant in intention. It is a small stage that lends itself to acts of memory, imagination, and reflection. It constitutes a public conversation on a scale that allows space for thoughts, interests, possibilities and a talent to mix. It is where a public newness begins.

A solid relational meeting brings up stories that reveal people's deepest commitments and the experiences that gave rise to them. In fact, the most important thing that happens in good relational meetings is the telling of stories that open a window into the passions that animate people to act. In a relational meeting with an African-American leader, an organizer asked why she seemed so willing to take risks, and why she was willing to step up and lead when others held back. She is, by nature, a shy woman, not at ease in the public arena, happier in her home and among her family members. In response to this simple but pointed question, she told the following story.

When I was a young girl in North Carolina, my sister and I began to attend the local Roman Catholic church. In those days, blacks sat in the back pews. Now I was a very large young girl, rather heavy, and so was my sister. When we went to that church, I saw no reason why my sister and I should sit in the back. So one Sunday we went right up and sat in the first pew. The pastors and ushers were upset. The pastor came over before Mass and asked me if we would please sit in the back, like all other blacks. I was scared as I could be, but I just couldn't see where God would care where we sat, so I said no. Finally, the ushers came and carried me and my sister to the back. Carried us right down the aisle of the church.

On the next Sunday, my sister and I sat in the front pew again, and the priest came and the ushers came and they hauled us off again, huffing and puffing. On the third Sunday, the same thing happened. By this time, we were pretty well-known. Two black girls who got carried away to the back every Sunday. My

family, my mother particularly, was frightened at what we were doing, but she said we were doing the right thing.

On the fourth Sunday, the priest and the ushers didn't do a thing. The Mass started, the choir sang, we took our seats, and from then on we sat where we wanted in that church, and in any Roman Catholic church we ever attended.

After tens of hundreds of relational meetings, every experienced IAF leader and organizer carries in his or her memory a set of precious stories like the one you just read, stories that sustain us through difficult and often thankless work.

Discovering a new Foundation for Organizing

Beginning in Chicago's racially polarized neighborhoods in the late 1950s and early '60s, Dick Harmon and I crafted the art of the relational meeting in the streets and taught it to organizers in Saul Alinsky's training institute. Saul's way of organizing, which we had inherited, was influenced by electoral politics and the CIO labor organizing of John L. Lewis. In this approach, where one person equals one vote and all votes are equal, the ability to mobilize large numbers of people is the key. Under Alinsky, organizing meant "pick a target, mobilize and hit it." In the modern IAF, it's "connect and relate to others," Issues follow relationships. You don't pick targets and mobilize first; you connect people in and around their interests. The inspiration for most of the best public tactics I've ever created came from relational meetings.

It was a chilly Friday night in the Fall of 1959 on Chicago's racially changing St. Sabina's neighborhood on the Southwest side. I had asked for and finally got the name of a key bomb thrower committed to keeping Negro families from moving into the all-white neighborhood. When I called the person whose name I had, he suspiciously agreed that I could come by at 9:30.

It was dark when I nervously rang the doorbell of a small white bungalow. I was greeted with, "Let's go to the kitchen," where four items were prearranged on the table – a full bottle of Jim Beam, two shot glasses, and pistol. I began the meeting by pointing out that violence just frightened white mothers who put up "For Sale" signs the next morning. "They're not gonna raise their kids on a battlefield," I told him. His response was to have a shot, and, as he raised his glass to his lips, he made it clear that I was to do the same.

About a half hour passed this way, when the back door screeched opened suddenly, and three big guys silently walked in and joined the meeting, standing. The house owner said, "have another shot and tell them what you're telling me." After two or three minutes of my analysis, one of the standing guys interrupted with, "This guy is a nigger lover." I sensed the relational meeting was over, and I was next.

Instinctively, I countered (where it came from, I'll never know). "You guys are stupid. You don't even know who pays me to this full-time." Then I volunteered, "Monsignor P.J. Molloy of St. Leo's [a tough, keep-'em-out local priest]." "Let's call him now," I said, motioning toward the telephone.

We went back and forth for another hour and half. Finally, I stood and said, "I gotta go." I left in silence and wobbled to my car but was alert enough to check underneath it then, and every day for the next two weeks, before starting it.

The beginnings of the IAF relational meeting weren't churchy or academic, but in places like that kitchen on the Southwest Side of Chicago.

After engaging in 250 or 300 relational meetings in the mid-1950s on the racially changing Southwest Side of Chicago, it dawned on me that I had stumbled onto a very useful tool, something that Alinsky had not figured out. These dialogues had provided me with a blueprint for organizing toward a free and open society, a way to break through segregation democratically. Here was an alternative to violence, disruption and fear. It wasn't until I was confronted in the late 1960s with creating a training institute that I fully digested this experience. Teaching rookies

how to organize through the selective, systematic use and careful evaluation of relational meetings made me realize that I had discovered a treasure. Building on the social knowledge I had gained under Alinsky during the 1950s allowed me to teach and develop the relational meeting in the 1960s. For the last forty years, senior IAF organizers have modelled the art form for trainees. In local and national training, leaders have been taught to do them. We have come to understand the relational meeting as the basic tool for all effective broad-based organisations.

Laying the Foundation for a Broad-Based Citizens Organization

In the process of constructing a broad-based citizens organisation, thousands of one-on-one meetings will be held.

Upon returning to Chicago to build a broad-based organization in 1994, I did half a dozen relational meetings with a charismatic priest who had started with Alinsky forty years earlier. Fifteen minutes into the sixth one, I sensed an old man with old connections, old stories; a worn-down veteran, but still having lots of passion. Painfully, I took a risk and followed by instincts. I said, "The problem, Jack, is you. You can't be center stage. The young priests can't develop – you're in the way," His face dropped. I paused. After a minute or two he said, "Ed, what should I do?" I said, "Give me the names of 12 to 15 successful young pastors in the city and suburbs." "Why the suburbs?" he asked. "It won't work without them," I answered. This painful relational meeting had triggered in me the next step. Three months later we had the nucleus of a sponsoring committee, with Monsignor Jack Egan, the IAF treasurer, on the sidelines, where he stayed until he died.

The implication of asking for a relational meeting is that the other person's perspective is of value, that listening to the stories and insights, the memories and struggles, of another is more important than hustling their name for a petition or getting them out to vote. In contrast to prestructured, carefully controlled and impersonal strategies like opinion surveys and focus groups, the relational meeting is a risky, reciprocal event. The relational meeting is a two-way street. The person requesting such a meeting isn't a sponge, soaking up information about the other person's life. He or she must be prepared to be vulnerable about his or her own social passions, values, frustrations, and concerns because inside relational meetings, people will turn the tables with their own questions:

- Who are you?
- What do you do?
- Why do you do what you do?
- Who pays you?
- Are you running for office?

Effective leaders in their own right will want to know something about what makes *you* tick. They will test, probe, and agitate you. You need to be able to reciprocate, to have the ego, clarity, and flexibility to respond to someone else's initiatives. That's why we need to see the relational meeting not as a rigid structure but as a plastic form that can be bent, shaped and changed spontaneously in response to unpredictable demands and possibilities. No two relational meetings are alike.

While the dominant culture tells us that cell phones, beepers, fax machines, e-mail, and Internet chat rooms have made face-to-face communication obsolete, organizers and leaders who regularly do the intense work of relational meetings understand that these disciplined conversations touch our depths in a unique and irreplaceable way, even if one never sees the other person again. In relational meetings, the "why" questions so often avoided by people have a space in which to surface.

- Why are things like this?
- Why am I doing what I do?
- Why don't I spend more time on what I *say* is most important to me?

Having these disciplined, existential dialogues is no waste of time; it is one of the highest and most valuable ways to spend our time. There is no chance for community without the relational meeting.

A relational meeting isn't selling or pushing an issue or membership in an organization. We must listen rather than talk and ask questions based on what we are hearing. What is the other person thinking and feeling? What makes them tick? What's their number-one priority? Your basic tools for the meeting are your eyes, ears, nose, instinct, and intuition.

Short succinct questions are the key.

- Why do you say that?
- How so?
- What's that mean to you?
- How come it matters?

You must be prepared to interrupt with brief, tight questions like these, but not to make your own speeches. Once you ask a probing question, shut up and listen, and be alert for the next question. The artistry of relational meetings has to do with this in-and-out movement.

In relational meetings, we look for interests, talents and connections across the spectrum of race, class, religion, and politics. Those who initiate them are particularly alert for people in the "moderate middle" of the political spectrum, who must be found in large numbers to form the core of an effective broad-based organization. The relational meeting is the entry point to public life. It is never merely done "to get to know" another person. Face-to-face meetings that lead to the development of an ongoing public relationship form the core of collective action the common good.

The relational meeting isn't chitchat, like the usual informal exchange over coffee or drinks. In casual meetings, we take people as they present themselves. We don't push. We don't dig. We don't raise possibilities. We don't ask questions that engage the imagination: "Well, what if you looked at it this way?" "How would your parents have reacted?" "How would you feel if you were the other person?" In everyday, casual talk, we don't show depth of curiosity or interest, and we don't expect curiosity and interest to be demonstrated toward us. Those who become proficient in holding public relational meetings learn that they must be "on" while they do them – intentional, focused, and prepared to agitate and be agitated in return.

The relational meeting is not voyeuristic. It's not an occasion to pry into the private life of the other person. The difference between prying and probing is important. When people pry, they show excessive curiosity; they try to force the other person open. Curiosity becomes an indiscriminate end in itself. A probe is more focused. It is an attempt to find the other person's center.

In a relational meeting, probing reveals the underpinnings of someone's public action or inaction. If a neighborhood resident is angry about the abandoned building on the block and has attempted to organize others but stopped short of direct action, it's important to discover why. The personal reasons that motivate action are revealed in stories: a grandfather who immigrated during the Depression to establish a family in America; a mother who served as a model of courage and strength during the anxiety and deprivation of wartime; a brother gone bad who exerts a negative pull that the person is resisting. Stories like these don't rest on the surface, to be picked up in casual chatter. Only concerted and intentional encounters will bring them to light.

The relational-meeting approach is selective. Unless I get fooled, I have relational meetings with leaders only. And I go up the food chain, toward more power. You can't get to power without a credential.

In 1986 while on an organizing trip to Johannesburg, South Africa, I requested and got a relational meeting with newly elected Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It was friendly enough, but the archbishop was agitated by the refusal of President Botha to meet with him. After several minutes of listening to him, I said, "If I were Botha [God forbid]. I wouldn't have met with you either." He spit out, "Why did you say that?" I said, "because if he recognized you, he might have to recognize all other black South Africans." Apartheid wouldn't allow white power to recognize blacks. Boldly, I said, "You should have had 100,000 black South Africans waiting outside Johannesburg Cathedral when you were made a bishop in the Anglican

Church.” He responded, “We had some blacks present in the cathedral.” “Bishop,” I said, “had you come out after the installation and addressed 100,000 black Anglicans militantly, Botha might have given you a meeting.”

Archbishop Tutu and I parted on friendly terms, but that was a confrontational relational meeting. I had challenged him on power, courage, and not understanding the opposition’s interests.

Why have relational meetings with leaders only? First, a leader is someone with relationships who can delivery his or her followers. The point of relational meetings in broad-based organizing is to find leaders and connect them up, not to duplicate preexisting relationships or replace leaders. Second, people who are followers will tend to dump their problems on you, which is deenergizing for you. Interested followers will be invited to assemblies and actions and be given the opportunity to grow into leaders inside a broad-based organization over time, but you can’t build an organization or organizations around followers. In real estate, the mantra is “location, location, location”. With relational meetings, it’s “selection, selection, selection.” If you get caught with a follower, there’s an easy way out. Just say, “Take me to your leader.”

The relational meeting is not a search for those who share our faith, class, politics or other views. Ideologues on the right or left tend to seek consistency and certainty. The disaffection with politics of the vast moderate middle of American society is in large part a reaction to the increasing insularity and narrowness of far-out liberals and right-wing conservatives. Both groups end up preaching to their ideological clubs, using their own language, their own fabricated theology, and their own single agendas. Both extremes communicate, “If you want to join us, you have to be like us – follow the party line.” Neither extreme sense the message that its agenda has some fluidity, that its tone or strategy might be altered, that newcomers are expected to bring something to the group’s agenda. Neither group does much organizing, in the sense that the term is used in these pages. Instead, they pressure people by means of direct mail, television ad campaigns, op-ed pieced, focus groups, and market research studies, with an ever watchful eye on public opinion polls. But polls cannot measure people’s intensity or passion for change, nor can they bring people into real relationships.

Finally, the relational meeting is not a technique or an electronic shortcut, but an art form. Relational meetings aren’t social science surveys for gathering data, or one more focus group for dissecting the public. In sharp contrast to the purpose of an isolated and arbitrary opinion polling, relational meetings let us discover something of the wholeness or spirit of the others.

Who are they?
Who are their heroes and heroines?
Who don’t they like?
What is their dream for their family or congregation or neighborhood?
What would they call a life well lived?
Can they deliver their institution?
Are they open to public life and organization?
Do they have some appetite for action?

Like art, the relational meeting has a certain form and requires certain skills. But relational meetings have to be used flexibly and creatively by those initiating the meetings rather than following a rote method in a formalized manner. Those who become skilled in the art of the relational meeting have learned to use their whole selves – body and spirit, charms, compassion, wits, humor, and anger – in these intense, focused encounters.

To summarize these points, the relational meeting

- is for the purpose of developing a public relationship
- focuses on the spirit and values of the other
- requires an intentional focus that goes beyond ordinary conversation
- necessitates probing and agitating the depths of the other
- demands a measure of vulnerability on both sides
- applies selectively, with leaders only

- bridges the barriers of race, religion, class, gender, and politics
- is a form of art that requires patient development and use of particular skills.

When a good relational meeting occurs, two people connect in a way that transcends ordinary, everyday talk. Both have the opportunity to pause and reflect on their personal experience regarding the tension between the world as it is and the world as it should be. And in that moment, a new public relationship may be born, through which both will gain power to be truer to their best selves, to live more effectively and creatively in-between the two worlds. Most of the tactics for action that I've come up with in the last fifty years came partly from something that somebody said during a relational meeting.

After the meeting

At the end of the individual meeting, the leader or organizer asks herself or himself some serious questions.

- Does this person have any animating passions about the state of the world as it is or as it ought to be?
- Does he or she have any anger, grief, memory, and vision about the state of our public life?
- What about a sense of humor?
- Is there a healthy tension between his or her values and reality?
- Did the person ask me anything or exhibit any curiosity about me? Was he or she properly wary of my reasons for seeking a meeting? Was he or she sceptical?
- Would personal problems in family or work prevent this person from participating in and contributing to a collective?
- What would he or she bring to the building of an organization of organizations?
- Who are the person's connections? To whom did he or she refer me?
- Is this person integrated – able to cross racial, religions, and class lines?
- Was there a beginning of some trust or liking between us?
- Is this someone I should contact again next month or forget?
- How should I follow up?

Developing the disciplined habit of setting aside a brief time for careful reflection on questions like these and jotting down a few key words in a notebook or on index cards to be reviewed before the next meeting is critical to reap maximum benefit from the time and energy involved in scheduling and carrying out relational meetings. Otherwise, after 50 or so relational meetings you'll forget what happened in meeting number sixteen.

A Challenge to You

The relational meeting is a sophisticated approach to effective organizing in any area of life. It's simple, but it's not easy. It's a small stage on which the two worlds of is and ought come together for a moment. If the tension between the two worlds that I laid out in the previous chapter, and the possibility of relational meetings in this one, have captured your imagination, the next step is to develop your experience-based social knowledge of the relational meeting. To do this, you must act. Ask for a meeting with someone outside your usual circle of family and friends. Give yourself a credential. Make a phone call to get a date and time at the other person's convenience. Take thirty minutes to seek out that person's interests and values as they relate to the larger community you both share. Be prepared to be open about your own concerns and priorities. When the meeting is over, use the questions above to reflect on what happened. Imagine the person you met with in a collective with others acting for change on some issue that touches his or her self-interest.

After about thirty of these meetings, you'll begin to get the idea. Why not try it? What's the worst thing that could happen? They throw you out? Get a public life. Take a risk. You may like it.

Source: Edward T. Chambers 2004. *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for power, action and justice*, Continuum, New York. pp. 44-54.¹

¹<http://books.google.com.au/books?id=iSq38VYKCb4C&pg=PA47&lpg=PA47&dq=We+have+come+to+understand+the+relational+meeting+as+the+basic+tool+for+all+effective+broad-based+organisations&source=web&ots=hbv00ygSdw&sig=GCJCSLnRVx9bWUjQymty9xyiRLw&hl=en#PPA110,M1>