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Effective Community Organizing

1. Community Organizing

- The most basic definition would be a group of ordinary people working together to address a problem.
- Professional “Community organizers” often see their work as empowering residents of a community with the skills and strategies needed to address a problem.

2. Why is Community Organizing Important?

- Seizes opportunities
- Mobilizes and involves non-traditional activists
- Develops leaders
- Strategy to win
- Community wins can motor state and national policy

3. Key Components of a Community Campaign

- Campaign Plan- Goals and strategy
- Message & Materials
- Group and Group Building Plan
- Media Plan
- Fundraising Plan

Campaign Planning

Things to Know Before Developing a Campaign Plan:

1. The process(es) that could solve the problem- ex. Regulatory, corporate, legal, legislative, and the steps in those processes.
2. Extent and history of the problem.
3. Who you want in the room. Usually campaign planning is done with a core group, and not with VIP’s, media or elected officials.
4. Information about probable targets.

Principles of Campaign Planning:

1. Set Achievable Goals

When setting achievable goals, differentiate your long-term goals—what you ultimately want to achieve—from your short-term goals—smaller steps along the way.

2. Secure The Support Of Your Community

Democracy still works—and when your community is on your side you are more likely to win. As you work to gain the support of the community, consider both quantity (demonstrating a large amount of public support) and quality (demonstrating the support of specific influential people in your community).

3. Build Your Group Along The Way

It will take an organized group to secure the support of your community. A sizable and powerful group will legitimize your issue and give you the resources to run your campaign.

You need to use opportunities along the way to bring in new people. For example, hold open meetings, use sign in sheets at all your events, and make sure you personally invite new people to join. Your group should be stronger at the end of your campaign than it was when you started.

4. Escalate Your Campaign Over Time

Start your campaign with simple steps and build momentum with your group and the public over time.

5. Craft a Message Using the Four C's

In order to win your campaign, you will need to effectively tell your story in such a way that any reasonable person has only one choice—to side with you. Your story should have a **Concise, Compelling, and Consistent** message that **Controls** the issue.

6. Evaluate

Always take the time to step back and evaluate your campaign plan periodically. Are you still on the right track to achieve your goals? Do you need to switch targets or switch strategies for influencing your target?

Steps in Campaign Planning:

1. Brainstorm Goals
2. Outline Decision-Making Process (regulatory, corporate, legal, legislative)
3. Power-map Decision Maker & Influences
4. Outline Tactics
5. Develop a Plan/Timeline
6. Evaluate Your Campaign Plan

Group Building

Principles of Group Building:

1. Set Clear Campaign Goals And Have A Plan To Reach Them

The best way to build a strong group is through your campaign. Be clear on your goals and make a plan. Recruit people for roles and activities that implement the campaign plan. People will participate when the activities are important to reach an agreed-upon campaign goal.

2. Have A Depth Of Campaign Activities

Think about each member of the group, and make a plan for their development. Raise the sophistication of upcoming activities, and people will continue to learn and participate.

3. Have A Breadth Of Campaign Activities And Delegate

Everyone in the group needs a role if you are going to win your campaign. Have a range of activities that play to different people's interests and strengths. Ask people individually to participate. Everyone should always leave a meeting with something to do.

4. Set People Up for Success

It's not enough to delegate. In order to get things done, group members must have clear roles, good training to perform the roles, and follow-up to make sure things are going smoothly.

5. Craft A Message Using The Four Cs

Developing your campaign message is important for recruitment. People will join a group that speaks with a **concise, compelling, and consistent** message that **controls** the issue. This benefits your campaign too, because decision-makers will see an organized, and more

powerful, constituency.

6. Get People Involved At Different Levels

Group members will always participate at different levels of intensity. Have a core group who meet regularly to plan and evaluate the campaign. Recruit active volunteers that will participate in organizing activities. Have a larger group of people who can show up at a public hearing.

7. Commit To A Clear Decision-Making Process

Assign someone to facilitate each meeting. Keep the group to an agenda and make sure everyone is heard before decisions are made. Conflict is healthy, but everyone in the core group must be on the same page before moving forward. It's reassuring for new members to join a group in which they can quickly understand how things work; if the process is transparent, they'll be more likely to participate in it.

8. Recruit and Retain Members

Constantly recruit through campaign activities and community meetings. New people add ideas and energy to a group. The more people you have, the more you can get done, and the more likely you are to win. Your group should reflect the makeup of your community.

9. Conduct Periodic Evaluation

Take time to step back and evaluate your campaign plan and your group. Address issues and tensions that come up in the group.

10. Celebrate Often

Set benchmarks in your campaign and celebrate when you hit them. Publicly recognize and appreciate individual achievement. People will look forward to group meetings and events.

Why People Join Groups:

- 1. Self Preservation-** Affects person directly.
- 2. Altruism-** Desire to help, to do good for the community.
- 3. Social Need-** Desire to join a community, interest in meeting people.
- 4. Experience-** Learn new skills, do something new and different.

Why People Stay In Groups:

1. The campaign and group are making progress.
2. Group members continue to learn about the issue and/or gain new skills.
3. The group members and activities are fun and interesting
4. They are integral members of the group. They have specific roles and responsibilities and feel needed.

Ideas for Recruiting New Members:

- 1. Petitioning-** Ask people if they want to join the group if they seem excited. Have a volunteer check-off box on the petition.
- 2. Media Event-** Include a statement inviting people who wish to participate to call/email.
- 3. Public Hearing-** Table at the entrances with a group member getting people to sign an attendance sheet. Attendance sheet should include email, phone number and checkboxes people can use to volunteer for the campaign effort
- 4. Group Meeting-** Invite one or two new people who have taken on some more responsibility to attend the group planning meeting.
- 5. Getting Endorsements-** Bring along new folks to all meetings, even if just to watch.

6. **Flyering/Postering**- Invite people to help you. It's an easy way for someone to start out.

Sample Agenda for Recruitment Meeting:

- I. Welcome *5 minutes*
- II. Campaign Overview *15 minutes*
 - i. Problem
 - ii. Solution
 - iii. Action
- III. What People Can Do *10 minutes*
- IV. Small Group Breakdown *15 minutes*
 - i. Goals
 - ii. Brainstorm Activities
 - iii. Divide Tasks
 - iv. Next Meeting and Send Off

Developing a Message & Materials

Principles of Developing Your Message & Materials

1. Compelling

Tell your story in a way that excites and engages people. Talk about the problem, the solution, and the action. The most compelling stories have a hero, a villain, and victim.

2. Concise

While you might be fully engaged in this campaign, others in your community have limited time and interest and cannot always listen to a ten-minute spiel with all of the details. Make sure your message is simple, jargon-free, and passes this test: if you told your story to your brother-in-law, he would easily understand it and be interested. You should be able to tell your story in 15-30 seconds.

3. Consistent

When advertisers sell their product, they know that people need to hear or see their message nine times before it sinks in. Saying it once is not enough. Instead, you must say the same thing so that people hear it or see it **nine times**. In addition, every person in the group needs to be saying the same thing.

4. Control the Message

Stay within the basic framework of your concise and compelling message. Frame the debate and control the message. When asked a question on a subject that is not part of your key message, such as job loss or economic impacts, always answer the question within the framework of your main message.

Sample Agenda for Developing an Effective Message & Slogan

1. Revisit campaign goals
2. Define the target audience
3. Brainstorm words that help your cause and hurt your cause
4. Condense the brainstorm into problem, solution, and action sentences, using the words that help your cause.
5. Condense further into a one-sentence sentence describing your message.
6. Condense further into a slogan.

Determine What Materials You Need to Convey Your Message

- One Page Fact Sheet
- Event Flier/Poster
- Petition
- Question and Answer Sheet
- Lawn Sign
- Bumper Sticker
- Website
- Buttons/Sticker
- Mailbox Sign
- Door Hanger

Media Events

Principles of Media Events:

1. We Make The News

Many people believe that journalists are constantly doing in depth exposés and undercover stories based solely on their own sleuthing. In reality, most reporters simply cover the stories that come across their desk. If we create an event, plan well, and make sure reporters know about it, we are likely to make the news.

2. Develop Relationships With Reporters

It's important to remember that reporters are people. Take the time to get to know them. It is important that they trust you as a good source of information. Never lie or exaggerate. Appear more reasonable than your opponent, deliver what you promise, and call them back immediately. Be friendly yet persistent. Remember that they are very busy people.

3. Keep It Simple And Repeat Yourself

Do not try to explain everything. Boil your issue into a sound bite. Repeat your message over and over again. Remember that everything you say to the press, no matter what the circumstances, is for the record. The simpler the message and the more times you repeat it, the more likely they will get it straight.

4. Respond To Questions With Your Key Message

No matter what question a reporter asks you, always respond by bringing it back to your key message. Do not simply answer the question. Always find a way to wrap the conversation or question back to your main point, and never say "no comment." Use phrases like, "The real question is. . ."

5. Make It Newsworthy

Create hooks to make your event newsworthy. Reporters cover stories with conflict, visuals, a new angle, or a personal viewpoint to the story.

6. Go Beyond Your Event

Don't just get your event on the evening news. Continue to reach your audience and take advantage of the press attention by holding an editorial meeting, printing letters to the editor and building relationships with reporters long before and after your news event.

Seven Steps To Planning a Media Event:

1. Review campaign goals, and set media event goals.
2. Determine how to make your event newsworthy. What's the hook?

3. Determine target audience.
4. Craft your message, sound bite and quote. Find visuals that compliment your message.
5. Outline the event details- who, what, where, when, why?
6. Research media outlets.
7. Craft a timeline.

Sample Media Event Planning Timeline:

Two Weeks Ahead

- ❑ Decide if the event is newsworthy.
- ❑ Choose the message and plan the event details.
- ❑ Schedule editorial board meetings.

One Week Ahead

- ❑ Prepare visuals.
- ❑ Get quotes from speakers.
- ❑ Write the news advisory and the news release.

Four Days Ahead

- ❑ Fax advisory. Send embargoed release to weekly papers if the event is after their deadline.

Three Days Ahead

- ❑ Go through the presentation with speakers.
- ❑ Role-play the event, including questions from reporters.

Two Days Ahead

- ❑ Fax news advisory again and call reporters to “pitch” the story.
- ❑ Write your radio feed—your sound bite recorded by radio stations over the phone, done in conjunction with sending them your release.

One Day Ahead

- ❑ Fax news advisory and call reporters again.
- ❑ Reconfirm speakers.
- ❑ Make media packets (release, fact sheet, other important information).

Day Of Event

- ❑ Arrive 30 minutes before to set up.
- ❑ Have someone greet media with packets and a sign-in sheet.
- ❑ Deliver (or fax) news release to reporters who did not attend.
- ❑ Call reporters who did not attend.
- ❑ Do radio feeds (call stations and have them record your “sound bite”).

Day After Event

- ❑ Thank speakers.
- ❑ Clip articles from newspapers.
- ❑ Send or fax letters to the editor about your issue to newspapers.

Fundraising Tactics

Tactics	Pros	Cons	Min Time Required	Average Net	Donation Rate
Hand Written Letter	More personal than typed letter and better return rate.	Requires more time than typed letter and upfront costs are the same.	1 month	\$35-\$45 per return	20%-50% return rate
Personalized Printed Letter	Relatively inexpensive and easy. Good for building membership/showing local support. Following up with a phone call can double income.	Requires money upfront (\$0.75 per letter sent) and names/addresses of potentially interested people.	1 month	\$20-\$25 per return	5%-15% return rate
Form Letter	Inexpensive and easy to send.	Return rate is considerably less than personalized or hand written letters.	1 month	\$15-\$25 per return	.05%-1% return rate
Face-to-Face Meetings	The quickest and easiest way to raise large amount of money in a short period of time.	Requires good prep, prospect names/phone numbers/address, and good follow-up.	1 month	\$250/ pledge	60-75% pledge rate per meeting
Door-to-Door Canvassing	Great for visibility, education and recruiting new people. Builds political strength.	Time intensive. Best if done in groups with training.	1 month	\$15-\$20/ donation	10-12% donation rate (1 yes for every 8 doors)
Phone calls	Personal, easy to reach many potential donors in a short amount of time.	Time intensive to plan. Best if done in groups with training.	1 month	\$15-\$20/ donation	10% donation rate (1 yes for every 10 contacts)
Pass the Hat	Versatile and easy to use. Good for small amounts of money.	Doesn't raise a lot of money.	On going	\$20-\$50 meeting depending on size	25% -50% will donate

Tactic	Pros	Cons	Min Time Required	Average Net	Donation Rate
House Party	Good for visibility, education and building your group. Best if host covers costs.	Time intensive. Logistics need to be well planed.	3 months	\$500-\$1000 (\$25-\$50 per donation)	50% or more will donate
Silent Auction	Fun way to raise money and good way for businesses to contribute. Best if done with another event.	Time intensive. Need a large group of people in order to be successful.	3 months	\$500-\$1000 (raises 50%-75% of the retail cost of donations)	N/A
A-Thons	Walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, etc. can be good for visibility and for attracting new people. Can be fun.	Extremely time intensive and not very lucrative.	6 months	\$500-\$2000 \$35-\$100 / participant	N/A
Free Drawing	Can be a fun and easy way to raise money. Good way for local businesses to help. Best if done in conjunction with another event. Low overhead cost.	Time intensive. Raises money in small amounts.	2 months	\$500-\$1000/ event \$1-\$5 per ticket sold	30%-50% of people asked will buy a ticket
Special Events/ Benefits	Can be good for visibility and attracting new people. Can raise money if all other expenses are covered. Best if the attraction of the event is interesting enough to draw a crowd.	Time intensive. Bad for recruitment and moral if turnout is low. Often times are “fund losers.”	6 months	\$500-\$3000	N/A
Foundations	Raises relatively large amounts of money. Adds legitimacy to a campaign.	Time intensive and difficult. Does not add to political clout of group and restricts lobbying work.	6 months to 1 year	Amounts vary	5%-10% chance depending on foundation
In-Kind Donations	Great for needed items or for silent auctions/raffles.	It is not cash.	On going	N/A	N/A

Sample Tactics

Grassroots Pressure

Accountability session with decision-maker
Birthday parties/ anniversaries
Bird-dogging
Call-in/Fax-in days
Canvassing
Celebrity endorsement
Choir/Caroling
Delivering waste/unwanted items to decision-maker
E-mail/Fax action
Endorsements
Event at decision maker's house
Gas masks/ moon suits
Guerrilla stickers
Hands/Ribbons around a facility
Honor polluter with an "award"
Large scale props
Letters
Lobbying
Lockdown
Petitions
People's public hearings
Phone banking
Postcards to decision-maker
Rally/March
Sign holding
Street theater
Strike
Toxic "cocktails"
Toxic tour
Vigil

Strategic

Air/Water testing
Ballot initiative
Boycott
Health survey
Lawsuit
Polling
Recall vote
Town resolutions

Organizational

Create a new organization
Coalition building
Membership building

Public Education

Display at library
Group presentations
House party
Highlight alternatives
Movie viewing
Speaker series
Tabling at events

Messaging/Visibility

Banners
Bumper stickers
Editorial cartoon
Flyers/Posters
Lawn signs
Leaflets
Media work
Merchandising
Newsletter articles
Nick-name target
Report release
Sky writing
Voting charts
Wanted poster
Web site