Barbara Ransby

A Radical Democratic Vision

and the Black Freedom Movement

Ella Baker
The Student Voice, a newsletter highlighting the courage and unity of many
people around the world who are fighting for their freedom. This
newspaper is published on a weekly basis to provide a platform for
students to express their opinions and share their stories.

The significance of this struggle and the role of the
Student Voice in promoting freedom and liberty is
highlighted in the introduction to the newsletter, which
commends the courage and determination of students
across the world.

In the next section, the newsletter focuses on the
impact of the student protests on the government and the
response of the authorities. It highlights the use of
violence and repression against the students, but also
acknowledges the persistence and resilience of the
students in their pursuit of freedom.

The newsletter also features interviews with
students who share their experiences and perspectives
on the struggle for freedom. These interviews provide
insight into the motivations and challenges faced by
students in their fight for a better future.

Overall, the newsletter serves as a powerful
medium for students to voice their concerns and
express their desire for freedom and justice.
The Indian government's recent decision to withdraw the National Register of Citizens (NRC) from Assam and other parts of India has sparked a debate on the issue of citizenship and identity. The NRC was introduced in 2015 as part of the country's efforts to ensure that only Indian citizens were included in the national registry. The government has faced criticism from various quarters, with some accusing it of targeting minority communities.

In a recent interview, a senior official of the Ministry of Home Affairs said that the government was planning to launch a new project aimed at digitizing the existing registry and ensuring its accuracy. The project, which is expected to cost around Rs. 150 crore, will involve the use of advanced technology to analyze the data in the NRC and identify any discrepancies.

The official added that the government was also looking into the possibility of establishing a separate registry for non-Indian citizens, which would allow for easier identification and registration. This move is seen as a move towards greater transparency and accountability in the governance process.

Despite the criticism, the government remains committed to its goal of ensuring that only Indian citizens are included in the national registry. The officials have stated that the project will help in preventing illegal immigration and ensuring that the country's borders are secure.

However, some critics have raised concerns about the project's potential impact on the livelihoods of those who may be excluded from the registry. They argue that such a move could lead to discrimination and marginalization of certain communities.

Overall, the debate surrounding the NRC and its replacement project highlights the complexity of the issue of citizenship and identity in contemporary India. The government is under pressure to ensure that its policies are inclusive and fair, while also maintaining national security and sovereignty.
Developing A Philosophy From Practice

between 1969 and 1976, the Pennsylvania Department of Correction's philosophy evolved from the assumption that security and order were paramount to the rehabilitation of offenders. The department, in its early years, emphasized strict discipline and punished infractions severely. However, as time went on, the approach evolved to incorporate the concepts of rehabilitation and education.

In 1970, the department began to integrate educational programs into the prison system, offering classes in reading, writing, and mathematics. This was a significant shift, as it marked the beginning of a more progressive and humane approach to corrections.

By 1976, the philosophy of the department had undergone a complete transformation. The focus was now on rehabilitation, education, and personal growth. The belief was that by providing educational opportunities and fostering personal development, offenders could become more productive members of society upon release.

This approach has been widely recognized and adopted by other correctional facilities across the country, and it continues to influence modern correctional practices today.

The department's philosophy, therefore, is a reflection of its commitment to institutional reform and the belief that rehabilitation is not only possible but essential for the success of offenders upon release. It is a philosophy that recognizes the complexity of the human condition and the need for a holistic approach to矫正 and rehabilitation.
Southwest Georgia: Political Differences

In the early 1990s, the political scene in southwest Georgia was marked by significant differences in political orientation. The region's political landscape was shaped by various factors, including historical, social, and economic influences. These differences were often reflected in the diverse political movements and organizations that emerged, each with its own unique characteristics and strategies.

One of the key differences was the impact of the conservative and liberal political cultures on the region's political evolution. The conservative movement, represented by groups such as the Tea Party, focused on issues like fiscal responsibility and limited government, while the liberal movement, embodied by organizations like ACORN, advocated for social justice and economic equality.

Another significant factor was the influence of local leaders and community activists. These leaders played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape, often guiding the region's response to national and international events. Their influence was evident in the strategies they employed to mobilize resources and resources, and in the coalitions they formed to address local issues.

Overall, the political differences in southwest Georgia were a reflection of the region's unique history and culture, and they continued to evolve as new challenges and opportunities emerged. These differences were not only a source of conflict but also of innovation, as leaders and organizations sought to find solutions that would benefit the region as a whole.
Azie and Ruth Moore

...
My father in the movement... I was born in 1942. I grew up in Mississippi during the 1950s and 1960s. As a child, I witnessed the harsh realities of segregation and discrimination. My family and I were constantly on the move, attending different schools and living in different communities.

I remember the days when we couldn't vote or attend certain schools. It was a time of fear and uncertainty. We knew that our lives were in danger, but we refused to be silenced.

In 1963, I joined the Mississippi Freedom Summer, a movement that aimed to register black voters and support the Civil Rights Act. We encountered violence and adversity, but we persevered.

Our goal was to bring about change. We believed that our voices mattered. We fought for our rights, and we won.

Since then, I have continued to work for justice and equality. I am proud of what we accomplished, but there is still work to be done.

As a long-time activist, I have seen the impact of racism and discrimination firsthand. I have witnessed the pain and suffering it causes, but I am determined to keep fighting for a better future for all.

I encourage everyone to stand up against injustice and work towards a more just society. Together, we can make a difference.
...
the leading role in shaping the historical trajectory of the black women's movement.

By the late 1960s, the black women's movement had begun to gain national attention, and by the 1970s, it had become a significant force in American politics. The movement was characterized by its focus on the issues of race, gender, and class, and its commitment to social justice and equality. The black women's movement was also marked by its diversity, with activists from different regions and backgrounds working together to achieve common goals.

The movement was led by a group of dedicated activists who were committed to the cause of social justice. These activists included civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., as well as women's rights activists such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem. The black women's movement was also supported by a wide range of organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW).

The black women's movement was also significant in its impact on American culture. By challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for social justice, the movement helped to change the way that people thought about issues of race and gender. The movement's influence can still be seen today, as it has inspired a new generation of activists working towards a more just and equal society.

In conclusion, the black women's movement of the 1960s was a critical moment in American history. It was characterized by its commitment to social justice and equality, and its influence can still be seen today. As we look to the future, it is important to remember the contributions of the black women's movement and to continue working towards a more just and equal society.

Reflecting on Experience and Setting a Course

...
Elm Creek Park was already a popular
area for hiking and nature studies. The
proposed park would further enhance
the beauty of the area and offer a
variety of recreational activities for all
ages. The project was estimated to cost
$10 million and would include
improvements to trails, restroom facilities,
and parking areas.

The park was

expected to

attract visitors

from neighboring towns and

the surrounding

community. The

proponents argued

that the park

would promote

environmental

conservation and

provide

opportunities for

recreation and

leisure activities.

The project was

endorsed by a
d
city council

committee and

supported by

local residents.

However, some

opponents

expressed concerns

about the potential

impact on local

property values.

The project was

funded through

a combination of

state and federal

grants.

The park

opened in 2018

and has

received
great

success,

drawing visitors

from throughout

the region. The

proponents

were pleased with

the outcome,

and the

park continues
to be a popular

destination for

nature lovers.

End.
In the spring of 1966, since workers cut the Haynes and Hollis Windows...
RECONSTRUCTION
THE THIRD

with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove
William J. Barber II
The Reverend Dr.

of Division and Fear
Is Overcoming the Politics
How a Moral Movement

I
The National Association for Colored People's (NAACP) mission is to "fight for the rights of all people and to work for a world in which there is equality of opportunity and freedom for all people whatever their race, religion, sex, national origin, or political beliefs.

NAACP's origins trace back to the 1900s when it was founded by W.E.B. Du Bois. The organization was established to address the issues faced by African Americans in the United States.

The NAACP has been instrumental in advocating for civil rights and has played a significant role in the fight against racial discrimination. Its efforts have contributed to landmark cases such as Brown v. Board of Education, which declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

The NAACP continues to work towards a more just and equitable society, fighting against discrimination and advocating for the rights and freedoms of all people.
From Banderas to Battle

The Third Reconciliation

We have always been told that the confluence of the river and the sea was a point of historical significance. The crossing of the river and the sea marked the boundary between two regions and was a point of strategic importance.

The river and the sea were the lifelines of the region, providing water for agriculture, transportation, and trade. The confluence of the river and the sea was a meeting point for different cultures and societies, and it was a symbol of the fusion of different traditions and influences.

The confluence of the river and the sea was also a point of conflict. The region was prone to flooding, and the river and the sea were often sources of danger and destruction. The confluence of the river and the sea was a place where people had to adapt and evolve to survive.

The confluence of the river and the sea was a point of beauty and wonder. The river and the sea were a source of inspiration for poets, artists, and writers throughout history. The confluence of the river and the sea was a place where people could find solace and introspection.

The confluence of the river and the sea was a point of reverence and pilgrimage. The river and the sea were considered sacred by many cultures, and the confluence of the river and the sea was a place where people could seek spiritual guidance and enlightenment.

The confluence of the river and the sea was a point of commerce and trade. The river and the sea were a source of prosperity and wealth, and the confluence of the river and the sea was a place where people could buy and sell goods from different parts of the world.

The confluence of the river and the sea was a point of innovation and progress. The river and the sea were a source of knowledge and discovery, and the confluence of the river and the sea was a place where people could learn and grow.

The confluence of the river and the sea was a point of resistance and struggle. The river and the sea were a source of resistance against oppression and injustice, and the confluence of the river and the sea was a place where people could fight for their rights and freedoms.

The confluence of the river and the sea was a point of reflection and renewal. The river and the sea were a source of renewal and transformation, and the confluence of the river and the sea was a place where people could find new开始 and new possibilities.

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The proposed North Carolina Green Belt project would connect three key institutions in the state: Duke University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the North Carolina State University. This would create a network of green spaces that would provide recreational opportunities, enhance biodiversity, and improve the quality of life for residents of the Triangle region.

However, the project faces several challenges. One significant obstacle is the lack of funding. Despite the potential benefits, securing the necessary resources has proven difficult. Additionally, there are concerns about the impact on existing properties and the displacement of current residents. Despite these challenges, proponents remain optimistic and continue to work towards realizing the vision of a connected green belt.

In conclusion, the proposed North Carolina Green Belt project represents a noble goal that could significantly benefit the region. While it faces various hurdles, ongoing efforts and partnerships may help to overcome these challenges and bring the vision to fruition.

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Despite the obstacles, the project's proponents are determined to make it a reality. They believe that a connected green belt would not only enhance the quality of life for residents but also contribute to the state's economic development. The project's potential for attracting tourists and promoting sustainable growth is significant.

In conclusion, the proposed North Carolina Green Belt project is a laudable initiative that aims to create a network of green spaces that would benefit the region in multiple ways. While it faces challenges, the ongoing efforts and partnerships show promise for overcoming these obstacles and realizing the project's vision.
Jim, because we know our movement has to be deep rooted in the people. Where the action stops, under each quadrant item, showing how we could realize the vision for the people, the people would really come to see how the vision for the people is realized. We decided we would start the work with 'Third World Knowledge' campaigns, most basic constitutional values and in our deeper moral.
in monument square would come on the read of battle.

book camp would have offered most of us, but in the final, our lessons

con Revolution than the well-trained battalion of modern mañana.

we'd have to make sure that the more like the dead millions of the American

We had held on vision and seen our a battle on, now we had in

second Sunday in February

up in vision collection and (3) we would come back next year on the

as the result of our efforts, government (2) we would go
take in people, speakers, in our camp in towns, building

become the agencies of North Carolinians government. (4) we would go

we would stay together until we saw our people. And

HCCF: (1) we would stay together in our communities to another

come but we made three communities to one another after that. when

would have to struggle to allow many obstacles we would have to

how we came to lead us forward. We did not know how long we

values, respond to lead us forward. We did not know how long we

agreed, rooted in North Carolinians deeper model and communal

on Jones Street like a drama by day and a life by night, our common

issue-based issues, our HCCF coalition came others to stand with them

But after fifty years of wandering in the wilderness, isolated in one

the power, which appears to be colchique

what people's language we needed. The solution strictly provided

in how the movements coalition could be divided by other

of all. As long as the movements coalition could be divided by other

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poor whites and disadvantaged groups. From social security and the

they began to sketch "communistic programs" about the life of

and one solution was of the "political" solution. There is no solution

are over as the segregation that has been taken about segregation

as over as the segregation that has been taken about segregation

so goods, as always, was to divide and conquer. But the language was not

as over as the segregation that has been taken about segregation

now: segregation forever. But now, segregation forever. But now, segregation

excitement politics. Our fears later, "segregation forever. But now, segregation

again. Wallace became an icon of overt racism, delivering after being

The Third Reconstruction: 4
ORGANIZING
FOR
SOCIAL CHANGE

MIDWEST ACADEMY
MANUAL FOR ACTIVISTS

KIM BOBO · JACKIE KENDALL · STEVE MAX
THE FUNDAMENTALS OF DIRECT ACTION ORGANIZING

Understanding Self-Interest

The Importance Of Relationships

How Direct Action Differs From Other Types Of Organizing

The Three Principles of Direct Action

How a Direct Action Organizing Issue Campaign Works

The Use of Power in an Issue Campaign

A Tactical Guide to Power

Illusions about Power

The Stages of an Issue Campaign

Tricks the Other Side Uses

How many times have you heard an organizer say something like, “People around here are so apathetic, no one wants to do anything.” Yet, if you walk around the block, you will find that everyone is out industriously doing what they need to do. Most are hard at work, or going to school. A few are searching for deposit cans or hustling. Hardly any are apathetically sitting around waiting for good things to come to them. If organizers encounter people who seem apathetic, it is because we haven’t been able to convince them that organizing is one way to get what they need. In fact we usually don’t know what they need because we don’t understand their self-interest. For that reason, this chapter on the fundamentals of organizing starts with a discussion of self-interest.
Understanding Self-Interest

An underlying assumption behind direct action organizing is that you, the leader or organizer, are working with people who are primarily motivated by self-interest. That is, they are making the effort to organize in order to get something out of it for themselves, their families, or their community. The concept of self-interest also includes motivation by a sense of moral justice or by an ideology that leads people to want to help the poor, or to seek opportunities to fight racism, curb the power of transnational corporations, or protect the environment among many other things.

Self-interest is one of the most important and misunderstood concepts in direct action organizing. It is sometimes thought of in the narrowest sense: people want more “stuff,” and will organize to get it (often to get it away from someone else). But self-interest is actually a much broader concept. The word interest comes from the Latin *inter esse*, which means to be among. (There is a similar word in Spanish.) So, self-interest is self among others. That is, where do my needs fit into those of the larger society?

The concept of self-interest applies to an individual’s material needs such as better housing, education, health care or wages, but it also applies to the need for friends, for respect or recognition, for being useful, important, or feeling part of a larger community. Self-interest generalized is often class-interest. Self-interest can mean the good feeling that comes from getting back at the landlord, standing up to the boss, or knocking an unaccountable politician out of office. Self-interest also applies across generational lines as people are motivated to fight for what helps their children or grandchildren. Self-interest, then, applies to what makes people feel good about themselves, as well as to what materially benefits them.

More broadly still, many people feel a need to take on the responsibilities of citizenship and to play a role in shaping public affairs. People want interaction with the larger community and often enjoy working collectively for the common good. Sometimes the self-interest is a desire to work with people of a different race or culture in order to broaden one’s own perspective or to combat prejudice. Other people may be drawn to an international project, such as fighting foreign sweatshops, because they want to make a global difference.

The point here is not to make a list of all the forms of self-interest, and particularly not to imply that all of them apply to everyone. As an organizer, you can assume nothing about a person’s self-interest that isn’t actually expressed to you by that person. One of the worst mistakes an organizer can make is to say, “This is an issue about which everyone must care,” or “This is an issue about which you must care because you are a ___ (vegetarian, ballet dancer, fill in the blank).” It is risky enough to act on what the polls tell you people care about. Caring is one thing, acting on it is quite another. Understanding self-interest is the key to getting people to take that step. Listening is an essential way for an organizer to learn what people’s self-interest truly is. One-on-one interviews are an excellent way to get to know the values and concerns that motivate people. However you do it, organizing is the process of finding out what people want as individuals, and then helping them find collective ways to get it.

The Importance of Relationships

The personal is political: organizing is overwhelmingly about personal relationships. It is about changing the world and changing how individuals act together. The relationships organizers develop are their most important resource and
most important talent. To form good relationships it is essential that an organizer like people. A good organizer is motivated by strong feelings of love and caring. This should not be forgotten, because a good organizer is motivated, as well, by strong feelings of outrage and anger at how people are treated. Forming relationships with people is based on trust and respect. It is based on doing what you commit to do, and being honest and straightforward in order to advance the members' goals through building an organization.

One's ability to build relationships reflects one's basic values. In the long term, you will be known by your values. Characteristics that will enable you to build strong relationships include:

1. Caring about others. People around you can tell if you really care about them or just view them as a means to doing your job.
2. Treating everyone respectfully regardless of status or lack thereof. Those who are gracious only to the powerful will be noticed.
3. Judging not. (Judge not that ye be not judged.) Give everyone the benefit of the doubt. Try to understand why people do certain things. Develop a reputation as someone who refuses to talk negatively about other people and other organizations. (It's OK to talk negatively about the target of your campaign, in fact it's necessary.)

Relationships between organization members are also critical. The long term lesson that successful direct action and labor organizing teaches is that everyday people can make their own decisions, manage their own organizations and rely on each other to work for the common good, and that they can do it across lines of race, ethnicity and gender. This is just the opposite of the view that we must all be guided by the economic and intellectual elite. All too often, a bad organizational experience reinforces the wrong lesson. Anyone who sets out to organize others should remember that the political implications go far beyond the immediate issues.

There are, of course, many highly successful internet based organizing efforts that do not entail any personal contact between the organizer and the people at the base. These are none-the-less based on relationships of trust and mutual interest. In order to distinguish between the two types of organizing, we will refer to primarily web based campaigns as mobilizing rather than organizing. Although there is no data to substantiate this, it seems that far more people have been mobilized to take some action via the internet than regularly attend the meetings and events of all social change organizations (including unions.)

Much organizing then is based on relationships and self-interest, broadly defined. With this foundation, we will proceed to the ways in which direct action organizing differs from other forms because not only is the personal political, the political is also political.

How Direct Action Differences From Other Types of Organizing

Different types of groups apply the word organizing to what they do although their actual functions and activities are quite different. The techniques in this book are intended to apply primarily to Direct Action Organizing and are less useful for other forms. Many organizations have a combination of programs and the staff often moves from one to another so it is useful to sort them out. Keep in mind there is no implication that one is better than the others, only that they are separate and different principles apply. The main types of citizen organizations are shown in the chart.
The Forms of Community Organizing

Here is an illustration of the differences using the example of unaffordable housing and homelessness. There are many ways that people can approach this problem.

*Direct Service.* A service organization could operate a shelter, or build subsidized housing, make referrals, or help people apply for assistance. All of these are services done by staff for clients.

*Self-Help.* People who need housing could get together to provide some of the above.

*Education.* An education organization might study the loss of affordable housing, the rising foreclosure rate or the role of real estate development and publish its findings. A different type of education organization might prepare materials on how to read a lease.

*Advocacy.* An organization might advocate for people who need housing by giving testimony about the problem to a committee of Congress, or the City Council. The people who need the housing probably won’t know that the advocacy group is doing this. The definition of advocacy only requires that you have a good idea, not necessarily a large base of support.

*Direct Action.* The people who need affordable housing organize. They agree on a solution that meets their needs. With the strength of their numbers, they pressure the politicians and officials responsible. The people directly affected by the problem take action to solve it. They might demand rent control laws, limits on luxury construction, voting rights for homeless people or the conversion of empty buildings into affordable housing, to mention just a few examples.

As the chart indicates, the forms of organizing on the left hand side tend to accept existing power relationships as they are. The forms further to the right hand side challenge power relationships.

The question of the importance of direct service work, such as feeding the homeless or caring for the aged, comes up repeatedly when direct action organizing is discussed. Often the point of an issue campaign is to win just such programs. In general, we do not recommend combining service delivery with direct action in the same organization. Funding for the service often must come from sources such as a Mayor or County Executive, who the group is trying to pressure. The officials typically retaliate by with-
drawing the funding. Often in such organizations, a split develops between those who see the service aspect as most important (or whose jobs depend on it) and those who see the direct action part of the program as being most important. Both are needed, but not as functions of the same group.

The Three Principles of Direct Action

Direct action organizing is based on three principles which give it its character and distinguish it from other forms. These three principles will be referred to throughout the manual.

1. Win Real, Immediate, Concrete Improvements in People’s Lives

Whether the improvement is national health care, extending unemployment insurance benefits, street lighting, or police protection, a direct action organization attempts to win it for large numbers of people. Even when the problem being addressed is very large or long term, crime, unemployment, discrimination, or world hunger, for example, it must be broken down into short-term, attainable goals called issues. Without winnable issue goals there is no reality principle, no a way to measure success. If the goal of an organization is educating people, changing the framework of their thinking, or working only for very long-term goals, there is rarely a way to measure progress or even to determine if any is actually being made. How many people had their thinking changed, and by how much? How do you know? To take a preposterous example, if your goal is to require that horses wear pants, at least there is the possibility of a city council vote which allows you to measure your support or lack thereof. On the other hand, if your goal is to convince people that naked horses are wicked beasts, then there are very few benchmarks by which to track your rate of conversion. If the opinions of horses themselves are to be considered, the whole thing becomes totally impossible.

2. Give People a Sense of Their Own Power

Direct action organizations mobilize the power that people have. In doing so, they teach the value of united action through real-life examples, and they build the self-confidence of both the organization and the individuals in it. Direct action organizations avoid shortcuts that don’t build people’s power, such as bringing in a lawyer to handle the problem, asking a friendly politician to take care of it, or turning it over to a government agency. Giving people a sense of their own power is as much a part of the organizing goal as is solving the problem.

3. Alter the Relations of Power

Building a strong, lasting, and staffed organization alters the relations of power. Once such an organization exists, people on the “other side” must always consider the organization when making decisions. When the organization is strong enough, it will have to be consulted about decisions that affect its members. The organization further strives to alter power relations by passing laws and regulations that give it power, and by putting into public office its own people or close allies, (although groups to which contributions are tax deductible, are prevented by law from endorsing candidates.) Winning on issues is never enough. The organization itself must be built up so that it can take on larger issues and play a political role. The three main ways to alter the relations of power are to:

- Build strong lasting organizations
- Change laws and regulations
- Elect people to office who agree with us
Community and citizen organizations are democratic institutions; their very existence helps to make the whole political system work better and opens avenues for ongoing participation. Without such democratic institutions, our concept of politics would be limited to voting every few years, a necessary but only rarely inspiring activity.

Building an organization is not a natural by-product of good programs. Groups cannot assume that the organization will grow if they just win on issues. There is a difference between mobilizing people during a campaign and actually organizing them into an ongoing structure for which they take responsibility. Concrete plans must be made and steps taken to assure that the organization grows (e.g., money is raised and members are recruited and retained). This point is particularly important in light of the growing use of email mobilization. Changing the structure of society can be won by demanding reforms for accountability, transparency and democracy.

How A Direct Action Organizing Issue Campaign Works

In organizing, the word campaign has several meanings. An issue campaign is waged to win a victory on a particular issue. It is different from an election campaign. It is also different from an education campaign to raise public awareness, a fund raising campaign to support a cause, or a service delivery campaign such as providing legal help to stop mortgage foreclosures. An issue campaign ends in a specific victory. People get something they didn’t have before. Someone with power agrees to do something that s/he previously refused to do. Implied in the word campaign is a series of connected events over a period of time, each of which builds the strength of the organization and brings it closer to victory. Few organizations are strong enough to win a major demand just by asking.

When used in organizing, the word “issue” has meaning that is different from everyday usage. An issue is a specific solution to a problem. For example, passing a law requiring sewage treatment is one solution to the problem of water pollution. The proposed law is the issue. The distinction between the problem, what is wrong, and the issue, a solution to the problem, is made to keep the group focused on winning something and not merely expounding upon the problem. An issue campaign has a beginning, middle, and an end. It is seldom a one-shot event, nor is it simply a series of events linked by a common theme. It is a method of building power and building organization.

The Use of Power in an Issue Campaign

Power generally consists of having a lot of money or a lot of people. Citizen organizations tend to have people, not money. (The term “citizen organization” is not intended to imply that the members are necessarily American citizens. It is just that there is not really another term for this kind of group. Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is too broad, Direct Action Organization is too narrow, and Unions do something different. There are two dictionary definitions that imply what we mean by citizen: 1) An inhabitant of a city or town; especially one entitled to the rights and privileges of a free person. 2) A civilian as distinguished from a specialized servant of the state.) Thus, our ability to win depends on our being able to do with people what the other side is able to do with money. For citizen organizations, power usually takes one of three forms:

1. You Can Deprive the Other Side of Something It Wants. Examples: A public official is directly or indirectly deprived of votes. A corporate executive is deprived of a promotion because you cost the company money
when you forced a regulatory agency to come into the picture. A landlord is deprived of rent because of a rent strike. A city department head is deprived of a job when you show him or her to be incompetent. Conflict of interest is exposed, and corrupt people are deprived of the ability to do business as usual, or better, sent to jail.

2. You Can Give the Other Side Something It Wants. Examples: A business gets a Green seal for converting to all electric vehicles. Your organization’s approval counts with key groups of voters. Your voter registration work creates a base of support for specific issues or candidates.

3. Your Organization Can Elect Someone Who Supports Your Issues. Often, having power means that your organization finds a way to stand on someone’s foot until you are paid to go away (by being given what you want.) Often the targets of such campaigns are people who have shown a serious disregard for our well being, or worse, are doing us actual harm.

Of course, a real-life issue campaign doesn’t start out with high-pressure activities. It starts out with reasonable people asking nicely for things to which they feel entitled. Efforts are made to persuade on the merits, facts, and morality of the issue. It is after people are refused things for which they shouldn’t even have had to ask in the first place, that power must be applied.

A Tactical Guide to Power

While consulting with many groups over the years, we on the Midwest Academy staff have often heard organizers make shaky assumptions about the power of their own organizations. “We have people power.” “We have consumer power.” “The Law is on our side.” “We have lost so often I just know we will win this time.” Such assumptions are made on the basis of principles that are true in general, but that may not hold up when applied to a particular situation. Here are some brief guidelines for measuring the power that you actually have.

Political/Legislative Power: Getting Something Passed by an Elected Body

Many local groups work to pressure un-elected government administrators or regulators to do what is needed. Their success depends, in large part, on how much people perceive the group’s ability to bypass them and take the case directly to the elected officials who appoint them. It also depends on their estimation of the organization’s ability to directly or indirectly influence the outcome of elections.

What Matters:
- **Primarily:** Voters, especially those who care strongly enough about an issue to vote for candidates on the basis of their position on that issue.
- **Secondarily:** Money that can help you reach voters. Earned (unpaid) media that can influence voters.
- **Timing:** Most effective prior to an election.

**Key Questions to Ask:**

 Regarding the legislative body as a whole:
- Is the decision made in committee or by the leadership or on the floor?
- If the decision is made by leadership, how strong are you in their home districts, are they seeking to run for higher office, and will they someday need votes in areas where you are strong?
- If the decision is not made by leadership but by a vote, then you need half plus one of the voting members. Count up how many are firmly with you and how many will never support you. Look at
who is left. Are there enough for a majority? Where do they come from? Can you influence them? Do term limits apply? How many people can't run again in the next election? (It is difficult to influence legislators who aren't running for re-election, that is why term limits is a profoundly anti-democratic idea. Increasingly, legislators simply run for the other house when limits are applied.)

Regarding a single elected official:
- How close was the last election? (Look at the actual numbers as well as at percentages.)
- Is this seat usually contested?
- What is the number of supporters you have in the district?
- Are there organizations that might cooperate?
- Who else doesn't like the person and for what reasons?
- Who can you get to lobby the elected official from among:
  - Key contributors
  - Leaders of primary voting blocks
  - Religious and opinion leaders
  - Party leadership

Consumer Power:
The Ability to Conduct a Boycott

What Matters:
- Primarily: Cutting profits or demonstrating ability to cut profits by changing consumer choices.
- Secondarily: You can reach customers who purchase a major portion of the company’s products including purchases made by government agencies.
- Timing: Most effective during times of stress for the company, such as during a merger, a strike, or tight financial times.

Key Questions to Ask:
- What is the company’s profit margin?
- Is it a local, regional, national, or international market?
- Who, or what, really owns it?
- Is it public or private?
- Can you really hurt profits?

Legal/Regulatory Power: The Ability to Win in Court or in a Regulatory Process

What Matters:
- Primarily: Clear laws and tight regulations.
- Secondarily: Money for lawyers or having volunteer lawyers, or the ability to get a public agency to carry the case for you. Media to make it a political issue.
- Timing: You must be prepared to carry on for several years. Sometimes you are doing this to delay and actually want the process to last many years.

Key Questions to Ask:
- Are laws or regulations clearly on your side?
- Have similar cases been won elsewhere?
- What are the politics of the judges or regulators who will hear the case? Who appointed them?
- What are the extra costs, e.g. fees for experts, or duplicating thousand-page transcripts? Who pays?

Strikes/Disruptive Power

What Matters:
- Primarily: Cutting profits or income by stopping a company or agency from functioning.
- Timing: Most effective during times of stress for a company or agency, such as during a merger, boycott, or tight financial times.

Key Questions to Ask:
- What is the company’s profit margin?
• Can you make a significant dent by stopping work (strikes) or disrupting work or customers (usually by civil disobedience)? How costly will it be to replace you or get rid of you?

• Do you have a strike fund sufficient to outlast the company by one day?

• Do you have people willing to get arrested and money to bail them out?

• Does the company have the ability to really pick up and leave?

**Illusions about Power**

All too often groups believe that they will win because:

- They are right.
- Truth is on their side.
- They have the moral high-ground.
- They have the best information and it is all spelled correctly.
- They speak for large numbers of people.

Of course we need all of these, but very often our opponents, who have none of them, win anyway. What matters is the ability to bring direct pressure on decision makers. When we claim to speak for large numbers, we need to show that we can mobilize those people and that they respond to us through rallies and demonstrations, letter writing campaigns, email, petitions, and through their ballots. At the same time we need to avoid another common misconception about power which is that everyday people can never gain power over the special interests and large corporations. Underestimating our power is as bad as overestimating it. It is true that the larger battle to secure economic justice and to end exploitation will take the mobilization of forces that can not even be conceived of today. Nonetheless, we can and do win smaller issues when we mobilize what power we now have.

**The Stages of an Issue Campaign**

Power is built through issue campaigns. Campaigns last for various lengths of time, and an organization can, by carefully choosing its issue, influence the length of its campaigns. Frequently, new organizations want short campaigns and sometimes choose relatively "fixed fights" for their first issues. They ask for information that they know they are entitled to, or ask for something to be done that would probably have been done anyway, but at a later date. The purpose of the fight is to have a visible win. These quick victories build up the members' confidence in their ability to accomplish something and also gain public recognition for the new organization. Later, longer campaigns, say of six months duration, provide an opportunity to recruit volunteers, build a committee structure or give the organization's leadership experience. Issue campaigns may be timed either to coincide with elections or to avoid them.

Both long and short issue campaigns go through a series of steps, although shorter campaigns involve fewer tactics than described below:

1. **Choose the Issue and Develop a Strategy.**

The people who have the problem agree on a solution and how to get it. They may decide to define, or "cut", the issue narrowly: "Make our landlord give us back our rent deposits when we move out." Or, they may define it more broadly: "Make the city council pass a law requiring the return of rent deposits." The strategy is the overall plan for winning the issue, building the organization and changing the relations of power. A strategy is always about a power equation. It is how you assess the strengths and weaknesses of the decision maker. (See the chapter on strategy.)
2. **Open Communication with the Decision Maker.** Next, communications are opened with the person who has the power to give the group what it wants. Requests are made and arguments are presented. At this point, the problems are sometimes resolved and the organization’s requests are met. When they are not resolved, however, the person with the power becomes the “target” of an issue campaign. The target or “decision maker” is always the person who has the power to give you what you want. (If no one has such power, then you have a problem not an issue, or you haven’t cut the issue correctly, or likely you are describing the problem, unfair treatment of tenants, and haven’t defined the issue. Of course there can be multiple decision makers as in a legislative body.)

A decision maker is always a person. It is never an institution such as the government, the corporation, the bank, the legislature, the board, or the agency. Break it down. Even the most powerful institutions are made up of people. Having already addressed the institution itself through the official channels, the campaign now moves outside that framework to focus pressure on one or more individuals who make up the institution and have the power to give you what you want. These people are actually the institution’s weak point. As individuals, they have goals, aspirations, and interests that don’t coincide completely with those of the institution. For example, the state insurance commission may be set up to support the industry, but the commissioner may hope to run for governor someday, and thus want to establish the appearance of independence.

3. **Announce the Campaign.** Frequently a media event announces the start of the campaign. A study may be released, or people may simply tell of their experiences and their efforts to correct the problem. If the campaign is to be a coalition effort, then most of the coalition’s member organizations need to sign on to the campaign before the announcement, and be present at the event.

(NOTE: A coalition is an organization of organizations. The Coalition for Interspecies Relationships does not become a true coalition because one member owns a hamster and another a turtle. Even if the members *are* hamsters and turtles it is still not a true coalition. Only if the coalition is made up of *organizations* of hamsters and turtles, or *organizations* of their owners, is it a real coalition.)

4. **Begin Outreach Activities.** Because every campaign is an opportunity to reach new people, you now start outreach activities. In a statewide or national campaign, other organizations may be enlisted. When the organization has a local focus, individuals and local groups are brought in. Often a petition drive is used both to find supporters and to build a group of active volunteers who circulate the petition. Speakers may be sent out to meetings of such groups as senior clubs, unions, churches, or PTAs. The kickoff of each of these activities can be done at a press event, at least in smaller cities where press is easier to get.

The outreach drive builds toward a large turnout event such as a public hearing sponsored by the organization. The event establishes legitimacy and brings in more allies and volunteers. It is also fun and a media event. A major consideration in outreach is the power the organization has over the decision maker. If no one in the group ever voted for the decision maker and never will, they have very little power.
5. Stage Direct Encounters with Decision Makers. Now the organization is ready for direct encounters with the people who have the power to give it what it wants. Large face-to-face meetings are set up with the decision maker. At this stage, the organization carefully considers what power it has over the decision maker. It usually has more power over elected officials than over appointed ones, and it usually has more power over anyone in government than in private corporations, unless the corporations are heavily dependent on local customers.

Although several months may have passed, it is still early in the campaign, and the group is probably too weak to challenge its main decision-maker directly. Attention may shift to “secondary targets.” These are people over whom the organization has more power than it has over the main target. In turn, the secondary target has more power over the main target than does the organization. For example, the mayor might be the main target and the local ward leader (district leader) the secondary target. Because the organization’s members are a large percentage of the voters in the ward leader’s district, but only a small percentage of the voters in a citywide election, the organization usually has more power over the locally elected official than over the one elected city-wide. And, because the local official helps to get the mayor elected, s/he has more influence at City Hall than does the group. The organization therefore puts pressure on the ward leader to get her to pressure the mayor to meet the group’s demands. (The terminology of organizing is often confusing on this point. The “secondary target” is not the same thing as the second target, the person to whom you would go second when you are done seeing the person to whom you went first. A better term for secondary target might be “indirect target.” That is, a person to whom you go to put pressure on someone else indirectly.)

6. Organization building. A series of meetings with secondary targets builds support for the issue. Each meeting is an opportunity to recruit new supporters, train spokespersons, and try for media coverage. They are also fun. To demonstrate power, an elected official might be shown more signatures on petitions than the number of votes by which she won in the last election. The director of a local housing authority might be told that he is in violation of HUD regulations or local building codes, and that outside agencies will be called in to investigate if he doesn’t make repairs. At this stage real power is shown, not just good arguments and facts. (Not every event needs to be a direct confrontation. A community parade, picnic, or even a party to celebrate a victory can also build the group and become a show of numbers. Invite allied elected officials to join you.) But, the main reason for holding such events is often to develop the strength of the organization.

Every planning session for an event should include a discussion of how to use the event to build the group. Often people become so focused
on what they will say to the decision maker that organization building is forgotten. Planning to build the organization must be specific. How many new people will be recruited, where, how, and by whom? Must the event be held after six o'clock so that working people can come? Must it be before 3PM so that mothers of school age children can come? How will new people be integrated into the group? How will all the members be told what happened? Perhaps a telephone tree should be activated, an evening leaflet distribution planned, or an email blast sent. In general, each event should be larger than the last one. If this isn’t happening, then you are not building the organization. Another measure of organizational strength is the experience level of its leaders and members. A local organization that can hold two events at the same time is quite well developed. Plan leadership training into each event. This means practice beforehand and evaluate afterward.

In the course of the issue campaign an election may occur. This offers the organization a fine opportunity to build more strength. (The events described so far have probably taken four to five months to unfold.) During the election season, the organization may do some combination of the following depending on its tax status. (See chapter on Financial and Legal Matters):

- Allied candidates can be asked to campaign on the issue and mention it in their literature (if it is cut broadly enough to really win votes).
- The organization can register voters as a show of strength in specific areas.
- Some organizations, depending on their IRS tax status, can make endorsements and campaign for or against candidates. Others can’t (see chapter on Financial and Legal Matters).

7. Win or Regroup. After a series of successful buildup events, the organization takes on its main decision maker. Sometimes this is done in a meeting or confrontation, and sometimes in a negotiation. Often a victory is won or a compromise is reached. If not, the organization must be prepared to escalate its tactics. This may mean large demonstrations and picketing, a return to other secondary targets, or the selection of a new main target. Sometimes the issues have to be broadened to attract still more supporters and the campaign taken to a new level. The refusal of a locality to control toxic dumping leads, for example, to a broader fight for statewide legislation or enforcement. At other times, the organization may decide that it has reached the limit of its strength and that it will have to lower its demand and accept less.

At each of these stages, the organization is being strengthened internally in addition to power being built. The leadership is growing and gaining experience, skill, and media recognition. The membership is growing. Other organizations are moving into closer alliance. Money is being raised. The staff is becoming experienced in organizing and electoral tactics.
Tricks the Other Side Uses

In the years since this manual was first published, citizen organizations have grown more experienced and more creative. At the same time, our opponents have become more skilful at countering our efforts. Here are some of their tricks:

Let's Negotiate. Often what your opponents most want is to get you to stop organizing in the community and to start spending hours sitting around a table with them or someone they pay to babysit you. Of course, they say, you can't add new people as the negotiations progress because new people wouldn't know the background. Of course you can't talk to the press or anyone else because that would be a breach of confidence. Of course you have to stop doing actions and public events because that creates a bad atmosphere for the negotiations. The campaign comes to a stop. Meanwhile, weeks go by. You lose momentum. The members who are not "at the table" feel left out, and are sure that some awful sellout is developing. When they hear you referring to your opponents by their first names. Allies begin to draw back.

What's wrong with this picture? What's wrong is that you began negotiations with no power. Negotiations, by definition, are what go on between parties of equal power, each of whom has something the other party wants, and each of whom is prepared to give up something in order to get something. If that is the real situation then fire, keep negotiating. In fact, most direct action campaigns do end in some form of negotiations after the organization has actually won. However, when the offer to negotiate comes early in the campaign, it is usually just a tactic to delay and to divide you. It also gives your opponents a chance to size you up, find the weaknesses in your coalition and buy off your leadership.

You are invited to the "stakeholders" meeting. We have seen this one a lot in recent years. Consumer and environmental groups are invited by a representative of the Governor or a department of the state to participate in a long series of meetings with other "stakeholders", including representatives of business or industry, and state agencies. The goal, you are told, is to frame legislation that will "please everyone" on a particular issue. Why are you invited? Why do they care if you are pleased or not? They don't! They are simply buying your silence for a year, which is about how long it would take to prepare the legislation anyway. You play by their rules in the hope of getting some small measure of your program into the legislation. You may even succeed, but meanwhile the time is lost during which you could have been out mobilizing people or spreading the alarm. Then, the bill goes to the legislature but, not having built your base during the negotiations, you are unprepared for the fight. Some of your people want to support the bill because of the crumbs you have been given and because they worked so hard on it. Others want to oppose it because the crumbs don't deal with the big picture.

Here is the test of whether you should participate in a process of this type. Tell whoever invites you that you will go to the meetings, but you intend to continue your public campaign on the issue and that, as a citizen watch-dog group, nothing can be confidential. In fact, you feel it is your duty to make public anything and everything you hear at the meetings. If the invitation still stands, and you are really able to conduct a public campaign at the same time, then go and participate. An inside/outside strategy can be very powerful if you use the information you get at the "stakeholders" meeting to fuel your campaign. Just remember, and we say this because so many
have forgotten, when you get into a room with powerful corporations you are not one “stakeholder” among equals, and never will be.

“I Can Get You On The Governor’s Commission.” Commissions, study groups, round tables, and panels exist at every level of government. Many are established to genuinely promote discussions of public policy and reach consensus. Once your organization succeeds in applying pressure to elected officials it is likely to get offered seats on some such body. Ask yourself, is our opinion genuinely desired, or is this a ploy to swing us over to an insider strategy? (Trying to influence from within instead of pressuring from without.) Is this yet another way to tie us up in endless deliberations? Sometimes you will be asked not to discuss the work of the commission publicly, nor even to comment on its direction. Months can be spent producing a report that comes to nothing. Your group can be divided between people who think that they are now really making policy, and those who want to work independently.

Go work it out among yourselves. Perhaps you are interested in a patient bill of rights? “So are a lot of other groups,” says the Chair of the legislative committee and “We don’t want to bring a bill to the floor and have it lose. So, get together with the other interested parties, hospitals or HMOs and come up with something upon which you all agree.” The next thing you know, you are meeting with representatives of the industry and professional societies, groups over which you have absolutely no power. The elected officials, over whom you do have power, have conveniently gotten rid of you even though they are the only ones who can actually give you what you want. Your job is to force them to do the right thing, or else to get them thrown out of office, not to compromise away your position in meetings with people whose interests are opposed to yours.

I’m the wrong person. “I would love to help you, but I’m not the right person to see.” This response is usually a shabby trick to make you feel stupid for having not known who to see. Often it is the start of a process in which no one will admit to being the right person and you will get sent from one official to the next. The police will say it is a Parks Department problem. The Parks Department will say it’s really a Traffic Department problem, etc. Some groups have responded by holding a community meeting and inviting all of the “wrong” people. Once in the same room it is harder for them to pass the buck. Usually though, this response indicates that you are talking to appointed rather than elected officials. The City Council member from your neighborhood may not alone be able to deliver what you want, but can’t claim to be the “wrong person.”

This could affect your funding. Perhaps this line ought not be listed under tricks, because it may very well be true. Organizations that receive money from any level of government, often in the form of a contract for some community service or education program, will quickly have the money taken away if they rock the boat. As we have noted, it is very difficult to combine service and direct action in the same organization. Often these two functions need to be divided out. Foundations will also pull your funding if you venture into policy areas of which they do not approve.

“You are reasonable but your allies aren’t. Can’t we just deal with you?” This should be seen for just what it is: an attempt to divide your coalition and make you think you will win something if you dump your more militant partners.

A business consultant speaking to a group of corporate executives once laid out how this trick works:
"Activists fall into three basic categories, radicals, idealists and realists. The first step is to isolate and marginalize the radicals. They’re the ones who see inherent structural problems that need remedying if indeed a particular change is to occur. To isolate them try to create the perception in the public mind that people advocating fundamental solutions are terrorists, extremists, fear mongers, outsiders, communists or whatever. After marginalizing the radicals, then identify and educate the idealists — concerned and sympathetic members of the public — by convincing them that changes advocated by the radicals would hurt people. The goal is to sour the idealists on the idea of working with the radicals. Instead get them working with the realists. Realists are people who want reform but don’t really want to upset the status quo; big public-interest organizations that rely on foundation grants and corporate contributions are a prime example. With correct handling, realists can be counted on to cut a deal with industry that can be touted as a ‘win-win’ solution, but that is actually an industry victory."

"I agree with everything you say, but you have to understand, there just isn’t any money. There is nothing I can do." If there is one lesson from the recent bailout of the financial industry, it is that where there is the political will there is the money. (As of this writing, $1.2 trillion in gifts, loans, and the purchase of potentially worthless stock.) It is true that cities and states can’t just print money the way the federal government does, but they do decide whether money goes to an after-school program or to build a new jail. If the political will is there the money will be found."
Problems are Different from Issues

In direct action organizing there is a difference between an issue and a problem. A problem is a broad area of concern. For example, unaffordable health care, pollution, and unemployment are all problems. An issue is a solution or partial solution to a problem. Passing national health care, enacting a green energy quota, or instituting a federal jobs program are all issues.

Because direct action organizing is about winning issues, the first step is to analyze the problem and decide what solution to work toward. Some people have the luxury of choosing the problems on which they work. For others, the problem chooses them and can’t be avoided no matter how long or difficult the effort; poverty, an oil spill, and racial discrimination are examples of problems that choose people. In both cases, however, organizations and individuals must still choose the issue. That is, they must define a solution to the problem.

There are many approaches to solving any problem and the implications of each must be thought through carefully. It isn’t enough to ask which is the most far-reaching solution (or for that matter, which is the most serious problem.)
Cutting the issue

Equally as important is "cutting the issue," that is, deciding how to frame the issue in a way that will gain the most support. For example, an organization was working to get the city to build more low-income housing. The group realized that if they demanded housing only for people with the greatest need, those with the lowest incomes, they couldn't gain the necessary political support. Instead, they spoke of "affordable" housing, and wrote their proposed bill to benefit lower wage working people in addition to the poor and homeless. Because the construction would create many jobs, some of which could go to community people, they called their campaign the Affordable Housing and Jobs Campaign. They won $750 million dollars for housing over five years, which represented a 50% increase. The program was so successful that the Mayor proposed a five-year extension.

An organization in a conservative farm state was working for a program to foster the development of electricity from wind power. They could have spoken of this as a purely environmental issue stressing the air quality benefits of burning less coal. However, other groups had tried and not made progress. Instead, the organization talked about the economic benefits of using a native resource, wind, instead of importing out-of-state coal. They said that the money spent on importing coal should be kept in the local economy, and they highlighted the advantages to farmers of being able to rent out their land for wind turbines. There are now 46 commercial wind turbines in the state.

An organization was working to have a vast tract of timberland converted into a national park. They cut the issue as one of restoring the woods to their former beauty, but much of the local population sided with the timber companies against the environmentalists.

Had the organization been more sensitive to people's fear of job loss, it could have shown that the cutting practices of the timber companies would inevitably lead to the end of both the sawmill and logging jobs, whereas a national park would create a whole new tourist industry.

A group opposing the license extension of a municipal waste incinerator started out by speaking of it as a pollution source. They gained more support by pointing out that the incinerator didn't pay for itself and there were other more economical solutions.

The impact of the issue on the organization

The organizational implications of any approach must be carefully thought through. To put it another way, think organizationally. Ask: what impact will taking up this issue have on our organization? What will happen to the organization if we ignore the problem? Don't think only about problems and solutions.

The ability of leaders to think organizationally in addition to thinking about issues is a major factor in the group's development. It is also a major cause of internal friction between members who come at things from these two different directions. In general, new members are attracted to an organization because of the issues, and are not particularly conscious of the structure and mechanisms of organizing. There was once a volunteer in a neighborhood organization who, after three months of faithfully coming twice a week to the office to make phone calls, looked up and asked, "What did you say the name of this group was?" She was probably asked the question by someone on the phone, but it was nonetheless the first step toward thinking organizationally.

Members who think only about issues are often frustrated by the amount of time and effort that goes into organizational maintenance. Occa-
sonally you will hear leaders accused of being “empire builders.” While that may be the case, more often they are organization builders being criticized by someone who hasn’t yet learned to value organization. An organization is able to win victory after victory, to protect victories already won from being taken away, and to build political power so that winning becomes easier.

Virtual or online organizations are attractive because they eliminate the need for organizational maintenance, but they also eliminate leadership development by eliminating leaders, and they dispense with recruiting beyond those people who opt in because they already agree with the program. In any case, it is unwise to rely solely on a structure that can be literally turned off with the flick of a switch. Building an organization and winning issues are two interdependent sides of the same process. Current technology can enhance both.

It is necessary to consider the impact of the issue on the organization separately from the social value of the issue itself. For any given organization at a particular stage in its development, some issues will be better for organizational development and more winnable than others.

The following examples show how the choice of issue can change the nature of an organization. A group trying to get a progressive income tax law through the state legislature found that it lacked a sufficient base to pass the bill. It put the state bill temporarily on hold and started building more winnable local campaigns on city and county tax issues. This detour created two challenges. The members who joined to work for the state bill had to be reoriented to a local issue, and people who joined because of the local issues had problems shifting to the state bill. In addition, the areas of the state where victories on local tax issues were possible were the same areas that already supported the state bill. The group gained some depth but not a great deal of breadth.

In another situation, an organization of people with disabilities that had been working to make public places such as stores and restaurants more accessible, decided to switch emphasis to expand transportation for the disabled. They were surprised to see a drop off in member activity, but the members who were interested in accessibility already had transportation, and the members without transportation had a more difficult time getting to the meetings.

A campaign for an ordinance empowering a municipality to sue companies that had manufactured lead based house paint attracted a more policy oriented constituency. A campaign by the same group to get homes tested for lead poison on demand drew in families with small children.

The main point is that more than anything else, the issue you choose determines the kind of people who join and organization you build.

The following checklist is an aid to evaluating issues. We recommend that before a group starts to choose among issues, the members be asked, “What are the criteria for a good issue for our organization?” List what people say on a blackboard or large sheet of paper and try to develop a mutually agreed upon list similar to this one but not much longer. It will make the choice of an issue much easier, and it will be a sounder choice as well.

A good issue is one that matches most of these criteria. The issue should:

1. **Result in a Real Improvement in People’s Lives**

   If you can see and feel the improvement, then you can be sure that it has actually been won. For example, a transit rider organization won a commitment for more frequent equipment inspections. Perhaps, over a period of years this led to improved service, but perhaps not. Riders could not tell. On the other hand, when the group
asked for and won printed train schedules, they had a visible victory and also a performance standard to which they could hold the Transit Authority accountable.

2. Make People Aware Of Their Own Organized Power
People should come away from the campaign feeling that the victory was won by them, not by experts, lawyers, or politicians. This builds both their confidence to take on larger issues and their loyalty to the organization. The word “empowerment” sometimes appears in this context, but usually implies a different concept, that of making individuals aware of their own abilities. (Women can actually repair jet engines as well as men for example.) Citizens either have organizational power in a particular situation, or they don’t. If they do, they can be made aware of it. If they don’t, they can often, but not always, be shown how to gain it.

3. Alter the Relations of Power
There are three ways in which power relations between citizens and decision makers are changed:

- Building a strong, ongoing staffed organization creates a new center of power that changes the way the other side makes decisions.
- Changing laws, regulations and social structures in ways that increase our power or diminish that of the other side.
- Electing people to office who support our positions.

4. Be Worthwhile
Members should feel that they are fighting for something about which they feel good, and which merits the effort.

It is better to end the campaign having won less than you wanted, than to scale back your demands from the start and ask for too little. Groups often make this mistake in the name of “realism” when they depend on the advice of professional lobbyists or elected officials who know how to measure the legislative support for a piece of legislation, but don’t understand the ability of grassroots pressure to change the picture.

5. Be Winnable
The problem must not be so large or the solution so remote that the organization is overwhelmed. The members must be able to see from the start that there is a good chance of winning, or at least that there is a good strategy for winning. Ask who else has won on a similar issue and how. Then, call on people with experience and ask for advice. Ask what their strategy was, not just what they did.

It is useful to figure out how much money your victory will cost the other side. Will the cost make them want to hold out against you? This gives you an idea of how hard they will work to defeat you, and how much money they are likely to spend. Test it out, but we never really know if something is winnable. That is why strategic planning matters.

6. Be Widely Felt
Many people must feel that this is a real problem and must agree with your solution. It is not enough that a few people feel strongly about it.

7. Be Deeply Felt
Some people must not only agree with you, but feel strongly enough to do something about it. It is not enough that many people agree about the issue if none feel strongly.
8. Be Easy to Understand

It is preferable that you don’t have to convince people that the problem exists, that your solution is good, and that they want to help win it. However, such convincing is sometimes necessary, particularly with those environmental issues where the source of the problem can’t be seen or smelled, or with economic problems where the basic cause is not always obvious. In general, a good issue does not require a lengthy and difficult explanation. It should be sufficient to be able to say something like, “Look at all those dead fish floating in the water. That didn’t happen before the chemical plant opened.”

9. Have a Clear Decision Maker

The decision maker, as he or she is often called, is the person who can give you what you want. A more difficult campaign usually requires several clear decision makers. This allows the campaign to have a longer time to build up strength, even if some of them refuse your demands in the early months. If you can’t figure out who the decision maker is either you don’t have the right issue or you may be addressing a problem, not an issue. Remember that the decision maker is always a person, such as the Mayor or a number of other people, not an institution, corporation or elected body. The public is never the target. It is the Mayor, not the public, who can give what you want.

10. Have a Clear Time Frame that Works for You

An issue campaign has a beginning, middle, and an end. You should have an idea of the approximate dates on which those points will fall.

Some key dates for events are internal, that is, set by your organization. Some are external, set by someone else. The timetable of a campaign to win legislation is almost entirely external, as is the timetable of an election. The timetable for a campaign to get a stop sign in your community is almost totally internal.

Will the dates of major efforts in your campaign fall at particularly difficult parts of the year, such as mid-August or Christmas week? The spring and fall are best for most groups in most places.

Even if your organization does not have specific electoral goals, you want the time frame to fit the electoral calendar. You usually have more power just before an election than just after one. Consider how the issue’s timetable can be legally aligned with the electoral timetable.

11. Be Non-Divisive

Avoid issues that divide your constituency. Don’t pit neighbor against neighbor, old against young, race against race. Don’t be content to get the traffic or the drug pusher off your block and onto the next block. (This is not just being “liberal” both will soon be back on your doorstep.)

Look down the road several years. Who will you eventually need to bring into your organization? Will this issue help or hinder you in reaching them?

12. Build Leadership

The campaign should have many roles that people can play. Issue campaigns that meet most of the other criteria also build leadership if they are planned to do so. In a coalition organization, building leadership has a different meaning than in a neighborhood group, because the people who represent organizations in the coalition already are leaders. They don’t need or want you to develop them. Often, however, they
do need to learn to work with each other, to use direct action, and to align electoral and issue campaigns where appropriate.

13. Set Your Organization Up for the Next Campaign
A campaign to pass the Employee Free Choice Act leads to other workers rights issues. On the other hand, a campaign to make the city catch stray dogs generally leads only to catching stray dogs. People who want to organize unions are likely to have other economic problems in common. People whose link to each other is a dislike of stray dogs may not have a second issue in common and will fall to arguing when the dogs are gone.

In addition to thinking about future issue directions, consider the skills the group will develop in the campaign and the contacts it will make for the next one.

14. Have a Pocketbook Angle
Issues that get people money or save people money are usually widely and deeply felt.

15. Raise Money
One big test of an issue is will your constituents contribute to the campaign? Ask also, what problem is the hot item in the foundation world? It changes almost from year to year.

16. Be Consistent with Your Values and Vision
The issues we choose to work on must reflect our values and our vision. Yes we do want money for more police, but is an endlessly increasing number of police and prisons the direction in which we want our society to go, or might education, housing and jobs be better investments?

In addition to these, you may very well have organizationally-specific criteria. For example, if your area has many new Latino residents who are not represented in your organization, one criterion may be that the issue has to have strong appeal to the Latino community.

After developing your list of criteria, review the issues under consideration. Some issues will drop from the list very quickly. For the remaining two or three, indicate whether each criterion has a high, medium, or low application to the issue. Then, take a vote. Of course you can always work on the second most popular issue after you win the first, but if the vote is close more discussion may be needed to avoid splitting the group. In general, at least two-thirds of the group needs to be enthusiastic about any issue chosen.
# Checklist for Choosing an Issue

A good issue is one that matches most of these criteria. Use this checklist to compare issues, or develop your own criteria and chart for choosing an issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue 1</th>
<th>Issue 2</th>
<th>Issue 3</th>
<th>Will the Issue</th>
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<td>1. Result in a real improvement in people's lives?</td>
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<td>3. Alter the relations of power?</td>
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<td>4. Be worthwhile?</td>
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<td>5. Be winnable?</td>
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<td>6. Be widely felt?</td>
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<td>7. Be deeply felt?</td>
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<td>8. Be easy to understand?</td>
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<td>9. Have a clear decision maker?</td>
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<td>10. Have a clear time frame that works for you?</td>
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<td>16. Be consistent with your values and vision?</td>
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The Difference Between a Strategy and a Plan

The word strategy is so much in use these days that it can mean almost anything. Little children are taught “strategies” for shoe tying and later for doing homework. As life progresses, we learn “strategies” for success in marriage, finding work, Chinese cooking, and breeding tropical fish. No wonder the word is confusing. Even in the more limited arena of citizen organizing, the language often causes confusion. People talk about a “media strategy,” a “legal strategy,” an “electoral strategy,” or a “public education strategy,” but all of these are usually tactics not strategies. We can use the media, the courts, the electoral system or public education as specific ways to apply pressure to someone, but a strategy is the design of the campaign combined with an analysis of power relationships. Tactics are the individual steps in carrying out a strategy. If the use of the media, electoral or legal system alone were sufficient to win the issue, only then could one speak of a media, electoral or legal strategy. Brown Vs. Board of Education was part of a legal strategy.
**Strategy:**

* A method of gaining enough power to make a government or corporate official do something in the public's interest that he or she does not otherwise wish to do.

In Direct Action Organizing, the strategy is given a more precise definition.

If your objective is anything other than making an official do something, say to have a fundraising picnic, then you don't need a strategy, you only need a plan. The difference is that a plan is about the steps you will need to take for any project, while a strategy involves the relationship of power between you and the official. In fact, the word strategy comes from the Greek *strategos*, meaning the rank of General in the army.

Whatever you are trying to win or however you want an elected official to vote on a bill, it is always better if the decision maker voluntarily agrees and doesn't need to be pressured. For that reason the initial tactics in any campaign usually start with writing a letter and trying to have a meeting and a conversation. Explain how the facts are on your side, why you are morally right, and how much people need the change you are advocating. Even talk about how much it will advance the elected official's career to see things your way. Sometimes this works. Often it does not.

When persuasion fails, it may be because the decision maker simply holds a strong opinion that is contrary to yours, but more often, it is because as you were going into his or her office, another group was coming out that was applying pressure from the opposite side. More than likely, the other group represented some private interest. Much as public officials like to pretend that they make up their own minds on policy issues, they are usually bowing to the wishes of special interests that can spend large sums of money to get what they want. When pressure is applied to prevent justice from being done, we must apply counter pressure to ensure that justice prevails. For this you need more than a plan, you need a strategy.

A strategy is the overall design for building the power to compel someone to give your organization what it wants. Short term strategies can cover a period of days or weeks, long term strategies can continue for many years.

The strategy chart that follows is an extremely useful tool for campaign planning. It lends itself both to overall campaign strategy, and planning specific tactics such as a public hearing or an accountability session with an elected official. (Yes, you can have a smaller strategy for carrying out a particular tactic.) The chart is valuable as the focal point of a group planning process because it poses the necessary questions in a logical order and moves people through the planning process step by step.

**When Not to Use the Chart**

The chart is intended for campaigns aimed at winning something from someone. It is not useful for election campaigns or referenda where the goal is to get a majority of voters to vote a certain way, nor for educational campaigns, the goals of which are to get people to think a certain way. If, when using the chart, you find yourself writing “the public” or “voters” in the targets column there are probably tools that are more effective than the strategy chart for that purpose. The chart is also not intended for dealing with the internal problems of your own organization where its use will exacerbate conflict and lead to a major meltdown.
Preparing to Make a Chart

Developing a strategy chart assumes that your group has already chosen an issue (see previous chapter). In your strategy planning meetings, display the chart prominently on a blackboard or large sheets of paper in the front of the room. Have the following resources on hand to complement the chart:

1. A large map of the area, city, or state in which the campaign will take place. There are often critical relationships among issues, groups, neighborhoods, geography, and political districts that only become apparent when you look at a map.

2. Overlays for the map to show political districts (or use separate district maps).

3. Election returns for relevant races for the last several years. Knowing voting patterns and totals in primaries and general elections is important to understanding the strength of allies and opponents, even if your organization is not involved in electoral work.

4. When the decision maker or target is a member of an elected body, it is necessary to have someone on hand who knows how that body is actually organized internally and how it works. For example, does your city council member really have any influence or the ability to move a bill, or is he just one vote among many?

5. The Yellow Pages to identify potential constituent and opponent organizations.

6. A list of your own board members and, if you are a coalition, your affiliates by address. This suggests people to involve at different points in the campaign.

7. Someone who knows the major institutions in the area, major employers, banks, corporations, public buildings, etc.

8. Online internet connection. Google can answer many questions and help you find potential constituent organizations.

9. See what the *Almanac of American Politics* says about background and demographics of the congressional district in which your activity will take place. You can learn a great deal even if the issue has nothing to do with Congress.

10. Because the organizational considerations column requires making decisions about the allocation of staff and money, someone with that authority needs to either be present for the discussion or to have been previously consulted.

Allow several hours to go systematically through the chart, filling in the required information. Some groups take half a day or longer. A good facilitator is important.

If the group is large, split into a few smaller groups. Ask each group to develop a strategy and then incorporate the best ideas from each group in the final chart.

The Five Columns of the Strategy Chart

There are five major strategy elements to consider. Each has a column to fill in on the chart.

1. Long-Term, Intermediate, and Short-Term Goals
2. Organizational Considerations
3. Constituents, Allies, and Opponents
4. Decision Makers (Targets)
5. Tactics

At first glance it appears that the chart is a series of lists. What we are unable to show on paper, but what becomes clear when you actually use the chart in planning, is that it is more like a
spreadsheet. Whenever you change anything in one column, corresponding changes need to be made in the others. For example, adding another decision maker may require finding another constituent group that would employ a different tactic. There are also mathematical relationships in the chart. Goals must equal power, and tactics must have a cost to the target, for example.

To help illustrate the use of the chart, we will use, among other examples, a hypothetical campaign to stop cuts in the school lunch program. This is a state budget campaign in which a local group has taken responsibility for getting the vote of their State Representative.

Let's say that you are the organizer in charge of the campaign. Like many other states, yours had a major economic downturn in recent years. Now, as difficult economic conditions have cut into state tax revenue, just about all programs are being cut. The Governor, a middle-of-the-road Democrat, would favor improving services and particularly education, but he keeps saying that there is just no money. He will not raise income taxes on the rich because he fears they will leave the state.

The base of your organization, Gotham City Parents United, is made up of groups of parents whose children attend the same public schools (K-7) throughout the city. The organization is also working to build local informal coalitions of community organizations, churches, and unions whose members' children also attend the local schools.

**Column 1: Goals**

**Long-Term Goals**

These are the goals that you eventually hope to win, and toward which the current campaign is a step. Nothing goes in this column that you can't win from someone. Gaining 100 new members is not a goal because you can't win it. You can accomplish it, so it goes in the Organizational Considerations column. Using our example, your long-term goals might be to have free breakfast and lunch available for all students. (This example is a little tricky because your constituents are parents who don't actually have to eat the stuff. Kids would probably rather have breakfast at home.)

The current campaign won't accomplish this, it will only keep the situation from getting worse, but we always want to hold out a vision of what can be accomplished and to prepare people for a longer fight.

It is important to set a goal that will get you to what you want to achieve, not set goals and strategies based on what you think can be accomplished according to insider assessments or conventional wisdom or past history. If you don't know where you want to go, you will never get there. Groups often make the mistake of asking for less than they want, scaling back demands from the start and asking for too little. Starting small means that you will surely not get what you want.

But it is also important to assess your power in realistic terms. Just as setting goals too low can prevent greater gains, setting goals too high without regard to on-the-ground realities and the actual power of opponents and proponents may result in no gains at all. It may be that you can't get everything you want initially, but you can create the structure or pathway to achieve your ultimate goal down the line. These assessments - and the decision whether to accept partial victories or hold out for greater gains - are difficult but they are essential (both in designing a campaign and implementing it).

One caution is that an assessment of what is possible can change - and change quickly. Insider experts can often miss major changes in public opinion and political trends - which can come
# MIDWEST ACADEMY STRATEGY CHART

After choosing your issue, fill in this chart as a guide to developing strategy. Be specific. List all the possibilities. Develop a timeline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS</th>
<th>CONSTITUENTS, Allies &amp; Opponents</th>
<th>TARGETS (Decision Makers)</th>
<th>TACTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals are what we want to WIN!</td>
<td>1. List the resources that your organization brings to the campaign. Include: money, number of staff, facilities, reputation, canvas, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. List the long-term goals of your campaign.</td>
<td>2. List the specific things you need to do to develop the campaign and ways in which the campaign will strengthen your organization. Fill in numbers for each.</td>
<td>1. Who cares about this issue enough to join or help the organization?</td>
<td>1. Primary Targets</td>
<td>1. For each target, list tactics that each constituent group can best use to put pressure on the target to win you intermediate and/or short-term goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. State the intermediate goals for this issue campaign. What constitutes victory?</td>
<td>2. Expand leadership group</td>
<td>2. Whose problem is it?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactics must be:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will the campaign:</td>
<td>Increase experience of existing leadership</td>
<td>Into what groups are they already organized?</td>
<td>• In context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Win concrete improvements in people’s lives?</td>
<td>Build membership base</td>
<td>What do they gain if they win?</td>
<td>• Directed at a specific target</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give people a sense of their own power?</td>
<td>Expand into new constituencies</td>
<td>What risks are they taking?</td>
<td>• Backed up by a specific form of power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alter the relations of power?</td>
<td>Develop Issue Campaign Message</td>
<td>What power do they have over the target?</td>
<td>• Flexible and creative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What short-term or partial victories can you win as steps toward your long-term goal?</td>
<td>Develop Media Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Make sense to members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. List the internal (organizational) problems, that must be considered if the campaign is to succeed.</td>
<td>Develop a Fundraising Plan – how can you raise money for and through this campaign?</td>
<td>2. Who are your opponents?</td>
<td>2. Secondary Targets (You don’t always have or need secondary targets)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who has the power to give you what you want?</td>
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<td>• What power do you have over them?</td>
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about as a result of events (such as the rise in foreclosures or the Wall Street collapse), elections or the ability of grassroots pressures to change the picture.

Intermediate Issue Goals

These are the goals that you hope to win in this campaign. In this example, it is to defeat the budget cut. In this case your group isn’t planning the state wide strategy. You are just doing your part in one district. A statewide organization would have a long list of representatives to win over. In that case it is fine to name them all in the first draft of the chart, but a separate chart then needs to be made for each person as the circumstances in each district will be different.

Goals must be very specific. The word “goals” is shorthand for issue goals. An issue is the solution to a problem that you want to win. If members of a housing group said their goal was fair housing, or an environmental organization said ending greenhouse emissions, they would only be restating the problem, not saying exactly what they want to win. Saying that the goal is, “to educate the public,” is to mistake a goal for a tactic. Public education is really a tactic and goes in the last column.

(Note: Educating the public can be a deceptive concept. How do you know when you have accomplished it? When is the public educated and how educated has it become? Beware of any activity that requires spending money with no way to measure the result.)

Remember a goal is always something that you win from someone. Test the intermediate goals; are they specific steps toward your long-term goals? Do they meet the three major criteria for choosing an issue? Do they:

1. Win real improvements in people’s lives?
2. Give people a sense of their own power?
3. Alter the relations of power?

What does it mean to win? How will you know when you have won?

Short-Term Issue Goals

Short-term issue goals are steps toward your intermediate goals. Short-term issue goals can apply either to legislative bodies or to public agencies. A legislative short-term goal might include voting to get a bill out of committee, keeping it in committee, or holding hearings. Organizing short-term goals might include making an agency compile or release information. For example, a citizen organization concerned about crime against seniors had to make the police department keep crime statistics by age just to prove that the problem existed. Sometimes, as in the example, just getting the decision maker to meet with you or attend an event becomes a short-term goal if the decision maker is reluctant to do so. Short-term goals can also be electoral. A specific person must be removed or more forceful leadership elected.

It is not always necessary to have short-term issue goals, but in big issue campaigns they are useful for two reasons: First, few groups are strong enough to win a major campaign without a period of building power. The support of individual officials must be won, and power gathered at local levels of government. Second, just to sustain your organization in a long campaign, people must see small victories along the way.

For a local community organization working on a neighborhood issue, the short-term issue goal might be something you are quite sure you can win anyway, but you do it to establish the effectiveness of your organization in the eyes of community members. An example: getting a meeting with the city council member. When the people see that the organization can do that much, they will be ready for the next step, perhaps a meeting with the mayor. (If someone gets up at
your first meeting and says, “Oh the mayor is a friend of mine, I can get you a meeting any time,” don’t accept. The point is that the group must feel that it collectively won the meeting because of its strength. If the meeting comes about because of the person’s personal relationship, the stature of that individual is built up, but the group isn’t strengthened. And, it is likely that nothing will come of the meeting.

While listing goals, consider what the cost to the target will be if you win. Who will pay? What is it worth to someone to defeat you? Knowing this helps you to get a sense of how much money is likely to be spent on defeating you. It also gives you some better idea of who will end up as allies or opponents.

When you are finished listing your goals, have the group put them more or less in the order in which they will have to be achieved.

Column 2: Organizational Considerations

This column is essentially an organizational expense and income statement. You will list what resources you have to put into the campaign (expenses), what organizational gains you want to come out of the campaign (income), and internal problems that have to be solved.

Start with resources. This is essentially your campaign budget. Consider these to be expenses or better yet, investments. Be very specific, particularly about staff time and money. List names. Make sure that the people working on your campaign are in the room when you talk about how much of their time is going into the campaign. “Full time” for example, means that a person has no other responsibilities. Don’t be one of those groups where the organizer works “full time” on each of five campaigns at once.

List the amount of money you are putting into the campaign and the amount that needs to be raised. Then, put a fair market cash value on the in-kind contributions you are making, including staff time, rent and postage. Unless you do this, your allies, affiliates and members will never have any idea of the size of your real contribution and neither will you.

In the second part of the column, list everything that the organization wants to get out of the campaign in addition to winning the issue. Consider this income and plan to make a “profit,” that is to build your organization through both internal development and fundraising. Again, the point here is to be very specific. The rule is that an organization should come out of any campaign stronger than when it went in, even if it loses the issue. How many new affiliates, new members, or leaders do you want? Name them if possible. How much money will be raised? Put in an amount. Do you want more media recognition for your group? Where? How often? The purpose of being specific goes beyond setting objectives. To make these things happen, there will need to be corresponding tactics, and sometimes corresponding targets and constituencies. If one organizational objective is to get into the papers once a month, then in the tactics column you will need to have at least one media hit a month and maybe more. If the local paper is politically partisan and the Mayor is of that party, then your attacks on the Mayor may not be covered. You will have to find an additional decision maker, perhaps a City Council committee chair, in order to meet the objective of increased media coverage. If another organizational objective is to increase by four the number of people of color in leadership, then more organizations to which people of color belong may need to be added to the constituency column. All of the columns of the chart are wired together in these ways.

The last part of this column lists internal problems that will have to be considered or solved in the course of the campaign. Here, “internal”
implied problems within your organization (staff or leadership relationships), problems within your coalition, problems within constituent organizations, or financial problems.

**Column 3: Constituents, Allies and Opponents**

**CONSTITUENTS AND ALLIES**

This column is where you answer the questions: who cares about this issue, what do they stand to win or lose, what power do they have, and how are they organized? A constituency is a group of people, hopefully already organized, who you can contact and bring into the campaign. In filling out this column, be expansive, even far fetched. The idea is to come up with a long list of potential constituents. During the campaign you may not actually be able to get all of them, but start with the longest possible list. The difference between *constituents* and *allies* is that constituents are potential members of your organization, while allies are not. Students might be allies in a senior led campaign for more frequent bus service. Other seniors would be constituents.

Even if your organization has individual members rather than being a coalition, it is still useful to think of people as part of groups. For example, you are working on a public transportation issue and decide that senior citizens are a possible constituency. You could list seniors on the chart, but that won't tell you how to reach them. Instead, be more specific. Say, "Seniors who ride the #104 and #7 buses." That at least leads you to leafleting bus stops on those lines. It would be much better, however, to look at the transit map or the Yellow Pages to see what senior centers are served by those lines. Don't overlook congregations that might have senior clubs. Mark them on a map. Put them on the chart by name. Go and visit them.

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*As an experiment, we entered into Yahoo Maps the avenue that is the main route of the #7 bus. Yahoo returned a list of each zip code through which the avenue passed. After choosing one, we put the word "seniors" in the Find Local Business box and got a large, though not complete, list of senior citizen services near the route of the #7 bus.*

Look for constituencies that are less than obvious. On the tax issue, realtors or real estate associations might join you because value is added to the houses they sell if property taxes don't rise and/or there is a good school system.

Think of each constituent group as the hub of a wheel. Then look at the spokes. Who cares about these people? Who does business with them? Who provides services to them? Who lends them money? Who borrows their money (banks, insurance companies?)? For whom do they vote? If they had more money to spend, where would they spend it? Who would get it (local merchants or Swiss banks?)? To which organizations or congregations do they belong? Looking at your possible constituents in this way, it is easy to see that the self-interest of one group affects the self-interest of many others and may create still more constituents for the campaign.

While it is necessary to think about potential areas of conflict between the groups, remember that people don't all have to love each other, agree on tactics, or even sit in the same room in order to support the same issue. In fact, sometimes the issue brings them together. This was the case in the classic campaign against the Chicago Crosstown Expressway. The proposed expressway route ran through different ethnic communities. One White group came with signs saying, "Black Roads, White Lines United Against the Crosstown."
Mark your list according to whether the constituency is organized or unorganized. That is, homeowners associations in the Humboldt Park area, as opposed to individual homeowners. Then, rank each group according to the power they bring to the campaign. Consider the following:

- How many members do they have?
- Did they work or vote for the incumbent office holder?
- Do they make political campaign contributions?
- Will they give money to your issue campaign?
- Do they bring special credibility? (Clergy)
- Do they have special appeal? (Children)
- Are they part of a larger organized network? (Veterans) Do they have a reputation for being tough? (Unions)
- Do they have special skills? (Lawyers)
- Are they considered particularly newsworthy? (Penguins)
- What powers have they over the decision maker?

Last, examine the weakness of each constituency. Look at their reputation, past history, and the enemies that you might inherit by linking up with them. If the target is an elected official, then constituents will have very little power over someone they never voted for her and never will. Think outside the box. Local elected officials know the strengths of your organization at least as well as you do. If they aren’t responding to you it is because they don’t believe you can either help or hurt them. Always look for constituents who are part of the office holder’s core vote. If nothing else, focus your efforts in the wards or precincts (election districts) where the official got her highest vote. Similarly, if consumer power is to be used against a corporation, then constituents must be customers of that company.

**OPPONENTS**

List all the groups, individuals, and institutions that stand to lose or be very upset if you win. What will your victory cost them? Try to evaluate how actively each will oppose you, and what they will do or spend to defeat you. In a few cases you may find ways to neutralize them, but even if there is nothing you can do, it is best to have some idea of what to expect as the campaign unfolds. List the power of each opponent. How does the strength of your constituents stack up against the strength of your opponents in the eyes of the people who can give you what you want? Generally, avoid engaging opponents during the campaign. They can’t give you what you want, and you have no influence over them anyway. Don’t even hold debates with them unless you expect to win over larger numbers of their base. In most campaigns, your opponents have you outspent and out-staffed; spending time on them just diverts you from the real targets. This is not to say that opponents don’t matter or that we should not be concerned about their strength, but only that challenging them directly can be a diversion.

Often, in analyzing power relationships groups, focus so much on the strengths of the opposition that they convince themselves that they can’t win. The Academy advises putting more emphasis on researching the opposition’s weaknesses and developing strategies that maximize your strengths.
Column 4: Decision Makers (Targets)

PRIMARY DECISION MAKERS

The person with the power to give you what you want is sometimes referred to as the “target” of the campaign. This does not necessarily imply that the person is evil. It simply means that by virtue of having the power to give you what you want, that person is the focus of the campaign. Usually the term is “decision maker.”

The decision maker is always a person. “Personalize the target” is a fundamental rule of organizing. Even if the power to give you what you want is actually held by an institution such as a city council, a board of directors, the legislature, the police department, or the Environmental Protection Agency, personalize it. Find out the name of the person(s) who can make the decision or at least strongly influence it. Make that person the target. Not only does this help to narrow the focus of the campaign, but it makes your members feel that winning is possible. A campaign to change a person’s mind is much more believable than one to change the policy of a big institution. In addition, individual decision makers have human responses such as fairness, guilt, fear, ambition, vanity or loyalty. These do not exist in institutions or formal bodies as a whole. Such responses can only come into play if you personalize the target.

When filling out this column, list all the possible people who can give you what you want. It helps if there is more than one of them because where power is divided there are usually more weak spots and openings. Also, multiple decision makers provide an opportunity to sustain the campaign over a longer time. This allows you to build strength. In many types of campaigns, time is on your side if you can hold out. This is particularly true if you are trying to stop expensive things from being built, or large sums of money from being spent. A long campaign may also help you to keep the issue alive until an election intervenes or a court decision comes down. List the reasons that each target has to oppose you as well as to agree with you. List your power over each decision maker. Go back to the constituency list and consider how to match the power of each constituency against the vulnerabilities of the decision maker. In campaigns aimed at legislators, identify the pro, anti, and swing-vote legislators. Sometimes it is sufficient to win over the swing legislators if they are the balance of power. In that case, you don’t have to reach everyone.

SECONDARY DECISION MAKERS OR TARGETS

A secondary target is a person who has more power over the primary decision maker than you do. But, you have more power over this person than you have over the primary decision maker.

Tenants in public housing wanted their buildings painted. The tenants made several members of the city housing authority their primary targets. When the tenants discovered that old lead paint was peeling off the walls, they made the head of the Health Department a secondary target. She didn’t care about the tenants’ dispute with the housing authority, but lead was a health hazard that had to be corrected. She told the housing authority that the walls must be scraped and repainted.

When you list secondary targets, write down what power you have over them, and what power they have over the primary target.

When dealing with corporations, a large purchaser can be a good secondary target. Look to see if the corporation has government contracts. If so, the public officials who can end the contracts become secondary targets.
Column 5: Tactics

Tactics are steps in carrying out your overall plan. They are the specific things that the people in the Constituency Column do to the decision makers to put pressure on them to win the goal. When you list tactics, put down who will do what and to whom.

The Tactics Column is always filled out last. This is to avoid the common tendency to jump to tactics as soon as the issue is chosen. (Let’s all go to Mayor Gold’s office with a goldfish and a sign that says, “All that glitters is not gold.”) Tactics should never be planned in isolation from the larger strategy of which they must be a part. For every tactic, there must be:

- Someone who does it.
- Someone to whom it is done.
- Some reason why the person to whom it is done doesn’t want it done and will make a concession to you if you stop doing it.

Tactics should be fun. They should be within the experience of your members, but outside the experience of your targets. Every tactic should have an element of power behind it. None should be purely symbolic. Different tactics require different levels of organizational strength and sophistication to use. For that reason, some work better at the beginning of a campaign and some can only be used later after a certain level of strength is reached.

Notes on Tactics

Media Events

Media events are designed to get press and TV coverage. As stand-alone events, they are usually used at the start of the campaign to dramatize the issue and announce that the organization is working on it. A media event might consist of releasing information or a study, demanding information, having victims tell their story, and making demands on the target. A media event is a stand-alone tactic that is different from getting media coverage for some other activity like a demonstration or rally.

The press usually responds well to something visual and funny or dramatic. A citizen organization wanted to dramatize that the rising cost of auto insurance was forcing people to choose between paying for their homes or their cars. The group built a home into a car with curtains on the window and the toilet in the trunk. The press loved it.

If the media event features groups such as low-income people, the homeless, the unemployed or striking workers, be sure that they are presented with dignity and as whole people asking for the same rights that others enjoy. They are not objects of pity, nor are they looking for a handout.

Meetings with Elected Officials

This type of meeting, sometimes called an action, is used as a show of power and an opportunity to make demands on a decision maker. It is not the same as a meeting to exchange information or provide expertise. It is not the first meeting with the elected official nor is it usually the last. It is conducted after the decision maker has either refused to take a position or has said no. The meeting is a particularly useful tactic for local organizations, especially toward the start of a campaign. In this type of meeting, a group of people confront a decision maker and make specific demands. They expect to get an answer on the spot. Organizations usually start with procedural demands such as asking for an appointment with someone, or that a hearing be held. They also might ask for the release of information, the publication of rules, or time on the agenda. Later when the group is stronger, this tactic might be used to win some of its main demands.
These meetings often involve the media, but they are not media events. That is to say the objective is not simply to get covered in the media, but to use additional power to win something. The organization’s power may be the number of participants or the size of the constituency they represent, their ability to embarrass the decision maker with information they have uncovered, or their ability to cause the decision maker political harm if a public official, or financial harm if a business person.

Public Hearings
You might demand that the decision maker hold an official public hearing, but consider holding your own hearing with a panel of community leaders and allied political leaders who listen to testimony from your constituency. Often a report is issued. The hearing serves to educate, get publicity, put opponents on the spot, and establish your organization as a leading force on the issue.

Accountability Sessions
Accountability sessions are large meetings with elected officials. They are sponsored by you and held on your turf. Several hundred people come to tell the official what they want done. The official is asked to respond at once. (See Chapter 8 for how to organize an accountability session.)

Elections
Depending on the type of organization you are, you may actually endorse candidates. Even if you don’t, you usually have more leverage in the weeks before an election because candidates are more vulnerable then. (Always check state and federal laws for any restrictions on the timing of issue advocacy as these laws change frequently. The state laws vary widely from state to state.)

Negotiations
Issue campaigns usually end in some form of negotiation. You must have shown considerable power to get the other side to agree to talk. If your target offers to negotiate too easily or too soon, watch out! It may be a device to make the other side look reasonable without any serious concessions being made. (But don’t automatically assume that every offer is some kind of trick. There are groups that snatch defeat from the jaws of victory because they can never believe that they actually won.)

The next chapter explores some of these and other tactics in greater detail.

Using the Chart
The strategy chart can be used to plan organizational development as well as issue campaigns. The starting point in the chart is determined by the type of planning you are doing. For example, to plan an issue campaign, work from left to right. To plan the start-up of a new organization, say a new coalition, begin at the lower half of the Organizational Considerations column and put down how many organizations you want to have affiliated and specific goals to make the coalition diverse and inclusive. Then, skip to the Constituents column and list all the existing organizations that could potentially join the coalition. Note the ethnic characteristics of each. Next, go back to the Goals column and with the objective of diversity in mind, decide which issues would appeal to potential members. From there, go to the Targets and then to the Tactics columns.

To plan the ouster of an elected official, start in the Decision Maker column, then go to constituents and then to goals to plan an issue campaign that will unite the constituents and embarrass the elected official. The only thing you can’t do is start with Tactics.
One reason that the chart works in so many ways is that an organization is literally the product of what it does. Once you are clear on what you want it to be, you can work backwards toward shaping the group in the desired direction.

The two questions most frequently asked about the strategy chart:

*Question:* In which column do I put an activity such as getting more publicity for my organization? Is that a Goal, an Organizational Consideration or a Tactic?

*Answer:* Nothing goes in the Goals column unless you intend to win it from someone. Tactics are always done by someone to someone, so a media event aimed at a target goes under tactics. Getting publicity in general is an Organizational Consideration.

*Question:* Exactly what is the relationship between the columns of the chart?

*Answer:* Tactics are what people in the Constituents column do to the Decision Makers to make them give the organization the Goals in a way that builds the organization as outlined in the Organizational Considerations column.

**Timelines**

To finish off the planning process, make timelines for the campaign. Include all the major campaign events and deadlines for preparing the publicity for each. Be sure to include the key dates in the electoral process. Even if you are not involved with candidates, note such information as when voter registration starts and ends, when nominating petitions start circulating, when petitions must be filed for major party candidates and independents, when candidate fundraising reports must be filed (you may want to look at them) and of course, all election dates. Also note when appropriate legislative bodies are in session, when members of Congress and the State Legislature are home for recess, and when major civil, religious and school holidays occur. Timelines also help you sort through your many good ideas and prioritize and even eliminate some. The first tactics list that most groups create is a brainstorm list with little relationship to the group’s limited resources. A timeline that includes “who will do what by when” helps the group be more realistic about what it can do. It is also helpful to have a multi-tiered timeline. This can help in planning activities that build on something already scheduled, or indicate where too much is going on at one time and something needs to be rescheduled.

An outline for such a timeline follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
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<th>June</th>
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</table>
Training participants to develop a strategy chart.
### Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Term</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Short Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free breakfast and lunch for all students</td>
<td>Defeat H-35. The bill that cuts the funding by getting Rep. Mazur to vote no. (Vote likely in three months: It is now the first week of December.)</td>
<td>Get Mazur to agree to attend a large district-wide, community meeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Organizational Considerations

Inputs For Mazur's District

- 1 staff – Winfield Scott
- 1/3 of Sup's time
- Office
  - good copier
  - e-mail blast service
  - group has website
  - 4 phone lines
  - DSL networked
  - meeting space for 15
  - $1,000
  - 3 leaders
- Jubel Early
- Bedford Forest
- James Longstreet

### Constituency

**Constituents**

Parents at 5 schools in district and individuals in areas served.

**Allies**

- PTAs
- Teachers Union
- St. Elbert's
- St. Hubert's
- St. Norbert's
- All Saints
- NAACP Branch
- Latino Civic Association
- Block Assn's. Approx. 15 active in area. Need contact name for each.
- Jewish Single Parents
- 3 Democratic Clubs in district.
- Douglass Houses Tenants Assoc.
- City Council Members Ruth Couri and Odette Swan

**Outcomes**

- Build up our own chapters at 5 individual schools. (4 months – 30 new parent members.)
- Train 4 more leaders
  - Jeff Haydes
  - Elyssian Fields
  - Olympia Jones
  - Kim Max
- Be in West Side Spirit monthly and in New York Times and Daily News at least one time.

### Target

- Rep Mazur (D-I)
- Dist. Office: 121 Wander Blvd. (312) 200-6000

**Elections: A Yr. Term**

- **2011**
  - 13,389 Mazur
  - 12,174 McIwans

- **2009**
  - 14,765 Mazur
  - 12,099 Hood

Next Democratic Primary will be in two years.

Says he is undecided but thinks it irresponsible to vote for something when the Gov. says there is no way to pay for it. Suggests parents hold bake sales to pay for school lunches.

### Tactics

Overall approach is to show that defeating the cuts is a popular issue. (Mazur might be challenged in the primary).

Hold parent leaders' strategy meeting.

Schedule meeting with Mazur for parents and allied group representatives.

If negative, start petition drive with media hit at district office. Parents to speak at all allied group meetings.

Media hit to announce Children's hunger march converging on Mazur's office from each school. "Feed kids not banks." Present petitions. Each child carries an empty cereal box on a stick, led by parents and high profile community leaders.

Major district wide "Mazur's Last Chance" community meeting at largest church. Demand his support.

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INFO@MIDWESTACADEMY.COM | WWW.MIDWESTACADEMY.COM
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Organizational Considerations</th>
<th>Constituents, Allies, and Opponents</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
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We are somewhat reluctant to present a guide to tactics for the same reason that we would not read biographies of characters in movies. The characters have no real existence that is independent of the movie script. Similarly, tactics have no meaningful existence outside the strategy of which they are a part. Standing alone, it is impossible to say that a given tactic is right or wrong, good or bad, clever or dumb. That’s why tactics come at the end of the strategy chart.

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

Having placed a tactic in its strategic context, there are five basic criteria for a good tactic.

1. *It is Focused on the Decision Maker or Secondary Target of the Campaign.* The tactic is not focused on someone else.

2. *It Puts Power Behind a Specific Demand.* The weakest tactic is one that is not aimed at anyone and makes no demand; for example, a candlelight vigil to save the whales which doesn’t call on anyone to do anything in particular.

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

4. *It is Outside the Experience of the Target.* An organization demanding equal access to Postal Service jobs for Latinos made hundreds of copies of job application forms for people in the community to fill out. The local Postal Service administrator was taken off guard as this tactic was outside his experience. He blundered by disqualifying the copied forms, insisting that only original Postal Service forms would be considered. This seemed so unfair and so prejudiced that he was forced to back down, thus handing the organization an easy first victory. In another example, the new owners of a hotel laid off the workers and refused to honor their union contract. The workers called on a coalition of labor and religious organizations for help. The coalition decided on a tactic that was definitely outside of the hotel management’s experience. They came and prayed in the hotel lobby. After four days of lobby prayer, the hotel manager called the union and asked if recognizing the union would end the praying. The union won and the workers were rehired.

5. *It is Within the Experience of Your Own Members, and They are Comfortable with It.* A citizen organization brought several hundred members to a meeting at a church, from which they were to march to the office of a state official. The members, it turned out, were not comfortable with the idea of the march, which they associated with “protesters.” They refused to leave the church. Had the organizers better understood the members’ attitude, they might have arranged to have the state official meet with the group at the church.

Considerations in Using some Popular Tactics

Petition Drives

If you haven’t already heard it, you soon will. A politician will tell you, “Don’t bring me petitions. I would rather see one or two well thought out, spontaneous, handwritten letters than one thousand signatures from an organized group.” This is the truth. In fact, what the politicians would really rather see is no signatures, no handwritten letters and no organized group, because then they could do just as they please. Of course they want you to talk to two or three thoughtful
people instead of thousands. When used properly, petitions are very powerful, and collecting signatures is a good organization builder as well. Petitions and letters in which people pledge to vote on the basis of a politician’s stand on your issue are the strongest kind, especially when they are delivered by a large number of people with media coverage. Petitions that are simply mailed to a politician are basically useless.

**PETITION TIPS**

- Every official to whom petitions are presented should be made aware that the names come from a well organized group, and that the signers will be informed of the response that their petition received.

**The Power of Petitions Come From the Following:**

A. Numbers.

B. Strategic Location & Timing.

C. Organized Follow up.

- Signatures gathered from around the state and sent to the clerk of the legislature have very little impact unless their number is really overwhelming. Signatures gathered in one district where the state Rep. won by a narrow margin have considerable impact on that Rep.

- Signatures presented to an elected government official have much more impact than those given to appointed officials. (Unless the person is likely to run for office in the future, or was appointed by, and is identified with, someone elected who will be embarrassed.

- Signatures presented to a store owner matter a great deal if they come from customers. But, if the community petitions the owner of a wholesale plumbing supply company, the signatures will have very little impact.

- Petitions presented a month before an official is up for election are much more powerful than twice as many signatures presented a month after the election.
everyone to do it individually at their own pace. People can meet at a common location, get briefed quickly, go out for a set time and then meet back for refreshments and to exchange experiences.

- Never give away signed petitions without having made copies. They are useful for follow-up e-mailings and phone calls. The same petitions can be used on another occasion with a different decision maker.

**Letter Writing**

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

---

**How many is many?**

*We say many letters, signatures, or people, but we don't say how many. It depends on the number of people who voted in the last election, and the margin by which the official won. How many signatures do other groups usually get?*

---

Choose letter writing over petitions whenever an audience is sitting down. Congregations, for example, will often agree to do letter writing for you, either in the lobby or actually in the pews.

Letter writing also works well on a busy street corner if you set up a card table. By themselves, form letters (on which people sign their names to pre-printed letters) have the same impact as petitions. Handwritten letters show a greater commitment by the writer.

- Have a sample text of not more than three sentences. Print it on slips of paper with the address, and tape it to the clip of the clipboards on which people will write their letter. Tell each person that they can use the sample or put it in their own words. When working with a group or congregation, consider bringing a laptop so that people can dictate short letters.

- Tell the writer to put down a return address, and the decision maker will probably send a reply. This may give the decision maker the last word, but it also keeps people engaged.

- Ask each person to address an envelope after finishing the letter. Then say, “We'll mail it for you. Would you make a contribution for postage?” Many people will give more money than the postage costs. Collect and mail all the letters yourself. Discourage people from walking away with their letters; they won’t make it to the mailbox.

- Combine petition and letter writing drives with selling something, such as buttons or T-shirts, and you can keep the petty cash box full. When you mail the letters, spread them out over a week. They are more likely to be noticed.

- An outdoor letter writing table requires a minimum of three people. More is better. One person should stand (not sit) behind the table and handle the clip boards. The other two should be in front of the table with leaflets engaging passers-by and steering them over to the table. Groups have tried outdoor email-
5. A Guide to Tactics

Casting with only modest success. The screens are hard to see in full daylight and the height of a card table makes typing awkward. If you try it, you don’t need an internet connection, just save the emails and send them later. On a commercial street you can usually pick up a signal.

**Turnout Events**

Getting people to come is the core of organizing. It doesn’t matter how good your ideas are, the groups get attention are the ones that get people to come and keep them coming back. For a community group, getting people is almost entirely a matter of good telephone work. This means developing lists of everyone who has ever shown interest and writing down the date and nature of every contact and attempted contact with them. Phoning is best done from a home or office with several phone lines or where people bring cell phones. Use evening or weekend minutes. The advantage of group calling is that it is more fun and you can coach the callers. (Borrow an office for a few hours in the evening if necessary.) Having people call individually from home will also work as long as everything is explained beforehand, but it is not as good as having a central location. You have no quality control. The central location helps you develop a team.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting with</th>
<th>Group A0</th>
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<tr>
<td>Council Member</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Your regular</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From other group</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From previous</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of calls made</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 confirmed</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People for night</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of nights</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People for nights</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of nights and people</td>
<td>200 nights and 5 people for 3 nights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Turnout Tips**

- Don’t start with the words “Hello Mrs. Smith, your name appears on a list in our office.” This is traditional but deadly. Neither should you open with, “Did you get our letter?” A person who is standing there with the letter in hand may still say no. Instead, you should say:

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

Notice the following elements in the call:

- Stress the past connection, the petition.
- Mention a previous success of the campaign, getting the meeting.
- Indicate that the person will play a role, even if it is not a speaking role. By being there you can show him how you feel.
- Talk about why the person is needed, numbers matter: "Mr. Bookish is elected."
- Everyone will go in together as a group.
- Ask for a definite commitment, can you come?
- Indicate a reminder call and be sure to make one. (Of the people who say twice that they will come, half will come.)
- In addition to phoning people, try to get the same message to each individual in at least three other ways. For example, send a mailing, send email, put up posters and have someone make an announcement at the PTA meeting. Mail, email, posters, leaflets, advertisements, or public service announcements will reinforce the phone call and remind people, but they are no substitute for the call. The more times people hear the message, the more likely they are to come.
- At the event, every caller should make an effort to meet the people they called and introduce themselves. Name tags help.
- If your events are fun, exciting and get press, people will come back. For example, you could tape the petitions to the back of a six foot eyeglass chart and give it to Mr. Bookish. (OK, so they don’t really screen for eye disease with a chart, but you get the idea. Have something unusual at every event that people will talk about afterward.)

Visits with public officials

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

- It is usually better to meet with elected officials than appointed ones.
- Know what the election results were (general and primary) so that you have an idea of how secure the seat is. Look at whole numbers as well as percentages. Look at party registration. Analyze where the vote came from both in terms of geography (precincts) and constituency (people).
- Because the meeting is small and everyone must be with the program, don’t recruit people whom you don’t really know.
- Have a single spokesperson who may call on two or three other people to speak. The rest of the group should be introduced indicating which other organizations or congregations they represent. (Don’t say, “I’m a homeowner.” Say, “I belong to the Bergen Park Homeowner’s Association.”)
- Come with a specific demand, usually that the elected official support some legislation. Have a fall-back demand. (Hold a hearing. Do a study.)
Think of the forms of power that you have.

- Numbers
- The support of campaign contributors or workers.
- The support of influential people in the community.
- Ability to embarrass the official for not acting in the interest of the community.
- Conflict of interest on the part of the official.
- The official is yielding to pressure or money from special interests.
- Try to pin the official down to a specific agreement.
- If you can’t get an agreement, get another meeting.

**Famous Elected Official Lies**

- *I was just about to do what you want, but because you came here like this, now I won’t.*
- *I never respond to pressure. I always make up my own mind.*
- *Look, I'm your friend.*
- *There is just no money.*
- *I didn't know it was illegal.*

**Public Hearings**

There are two kinds of public hearings, those that you sponsor and “official” ones held by public agencies.

**HOLDING YOUR OWN PUBLIC HEARING:**

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

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

In planning your hearing, write and practice all testimony in advance. It need not be “expert” testimony, in fact, better that it not be. People telling their own story of how the issue affects them is just fine so long as each person also represents a larger constituency and says so. Make the physical setting attractive both to participants and to the TV. A good job of decorating, using banners or signs naming the organizations present.
is one way of showing strength. As with most tactics, a really large turnout makes up for what is lacking in execution, so don’t spend so much time writing testimony that you neglect recruitment.

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

**TIPS FOR HOLDING YOUR OWN HEARING**

- This is not a “town meeting” where all points of view are represented; it is to present your case to the public, to public officials, and to the media.
- To use this tactic your group must be able to turn out a crowd of at least 100 people.
- Pick a hall that you know you can fill to overflowing. Take out any extra chairs. The goal is to have every seat filled and a few people standing in the back.
- Get the name, address, phone, and email address of everyone who comes. Testimony should be prepared in advance and given by people who represent organized groups. A few individuals can also be recognized to speak.
- Bring letters and petitions to show support from people who couldn’t come. Conduct voter registration in the back of the room. Read messages and greetings from allied groups. Appoint one press person who gives out your release and points the media toward other spokespeople for interviews.
- Because LCD projectors are increasingly common, consider including a visual presentation such as a PowerPoint presentation, or video of people telling how the problem affected them. A simple but effective approach is just to show digital pictures.
- Close with a rousing statement and give everyone something to do when they leave. It could be a leaflet to hand out, a poster to put up, or another event to attend.

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

**ATTENDING AN OFFICIAL HEARING**

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

Try to get the hearing held on your own turf at a time when your people can attend. Most official hearings are held downtown at 9 a.m. Fighting for neighborhood, evening hearings is often a good way to build the campaign. It is the type of demand that is hard for a public agency to refuse. If you win, however, you are obligated to produce a crowd.
When you are stuck with the morning time slot and downtown location, try to get on the agenda at the very opening of the hearing. That is when the media will come, and they will not stay long. Also, your people will get tired. Often you must register to speak weeks or months in advance. (This is particularly true for environmental hearings on big state or federal projects.)

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

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

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

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

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

TIPS FOR GOING TO AN OFFICIAL HEARING

- Everyone should be easily identified. If your group has buttons, T-shirts or hats, wear them. Print out your group's name or a slogan in large type on big computer labels that people can stick on their clothing.
- Set up a literature table outside the hearing room or on the street. That way you can find supporters among the crowd whom you did not know. Give them a sticker to identify them with your group inside the hearing.
- Prepare a fact sheet or a leaflet to hand out at the hearing in order to explain to everyone just who your group is and what you want. Have the same information in the form of a press statement with quotations from your spokespeople.
- At really big events, appoint one or two "applause managers" to make sure that your people support speakers with whom you agree.
• At events where there are several floor microphones, line your people up at all of them. Give them an index card with talking points or questions to ask. The first person to be called on makes the first point on the list, the next person the second point and so on.

• If your group feels it appropriate, don’t hesitate to bring large signs or posters. The idea is to turn the hearing into your event.

• If the crowd is really with you and the decision makers are actually present, try to push them into making commitments on the spot even though that is not the official purpose of the hearing. Ask that the audience be allowed to go on record by voting on the issue. Let the presiding official tell people that they aren’t allowed to vote.

• Before you make plans, find out who the actual person conducting the hearing will be. Sometimes it is a low level employee whose only role is to turn on a tape recorder and then sit there until the tape runs out at which point the hearing is over.

Mass Demonstrations

Mass demonstrations are a good show of numbers, but they are also a lot of work. If you hold more than one during an issue campaign, each must be larger than the preceding one or you will appear to be losing support. This tactic works best when a single individual is the target. When aimed at a legislative body, it can lose focus and fail to apply pressure to individual members. Consequently, such demonstrations should be combined with direct lobbying.

The nice thing about a mass demonstration is that it is like money in the bank. Once you have produced a thousand people, (or a million) you do not need to do it again for a long time. Your reputation will carry you. Location is critical. You want a place where passing street traffic will feed the event. It is cheating, however, to claim that everyone eating lunch on the mall at noon was part of your demonstration. Eventually, the truth will catch up with you. (What is actually considered large depends on where you live, and on how many people usually come to such things.)

Marches

A march is a mass demonstration on foot. Many participants prefer it because it is seen by more people on the street than a stationary demonstration. It is also more fun and avoids the necessity of listening to speeches. One advantage of a march is that, up to a point, it makes a smaller crowd look somewhat bigger as it is more spread out. Good visuals are a key. Everyone should have a large sign to hold. Bold black type on a bright orange or yellow background is best. Depending on where you are located, some way to make noise will add to the event. This can be a drum and a couple of other musical instruments. Lots of people hitting empty soda (pop) cans with chop sticks works well, so do whistles of all kind. The biggest problem with a march, if it is on the sidewalk not in the street, is that it gets cut up by traffic lights and the people get separated in little groups. Someone responsible needs to be at the front and other organizers with cell phones at different points in the line. Whenever they see that the line is broken, they call the person at the head, who then holds up the march until everyone catches up.

Accountability Sessions

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

**Educational Meetings and Teach-Ins**

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

You are under no moral obligation to represent the other side’s position at an educational meeting (or at anything else you do.) The only reason to hold a debate is if you think you can pounce an opposition spokesperson or win over his or her followers. As with all events, whenever you get more than five people in a room, take a collection.

**Civil Disobedience and Arrest**

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

In the civil rights movement, civil disobedience often took the form of exercising legal rights, registering to vote for example, that were recognized nationally but not locally. One part of the movement’s strategy was to force the federal government to intervene and protect local activists. When students protesting a tuition increase seized college buildings, their strategy was to force the governor either to increase funding or to risk disruption by causing the arrest of students who were asking for no more than an affordable education. In part, the strategy worked because the governor had presidential ambitions and was very image conscious. In the Pittston coal miners strike, the miners sat on the road to stop the trucks from moving coal. They took over a breaker building to attract national media attention to the injustice of the use of strike breakers. Both acts of civil disobedience were part of a careful strategy to cut the company’s profits and build national support for the miners’ demands. Civil disobedience works as part of a well thought-out strategy. It is not an end in itself, as some romanticists might suggest. In fact, in many organizing situations civil disobedience frightens people and may hinder your ability to recruit members and consequently your ability to win on an issue.

There is a long history in America, and elsewhere, of government agents infiltrating citizen organizations and advocating violence. This is done to create a pretext for arrests or to limit the
public appeal of an otherwise popular moment. Civil disobedience and violence are two different things. Civil disobedience is doing something that is morally right and is either legal or ought to be; but is wrongly interpreted as illegal by the authorities; blocking loggers from clear cutting a forest for example. Civil disobedience can also mean challenging the illegitimate authority or immoral acts of the state; not paying taxes for war for example. If violence ensues from such challenges, it usually is initiated by the authorities. Legitimate violence by citizen groups is always a defensive response. Symbolic demonstrations of violence, such as throwing rocks at the police or breaking windows, are altogether different and not justified. Recent years have seen the reemergence of self-styled anarchists whose main interest seems to be in getting other people arrested as a form of protest and radicalization. Such groups are easily infiltrated by police and agents provocateur who want to get people arrested for entirely different reasons.

You must carefully consider whether civil disobedience is an appropriate tactic for your group.

Civil disobedience can be effective when:

- Your constituency is comfortable with the tactic.
- Visible roles are available for those who don’t choose to participate directly in civil disobedience (many people can’t because of family obligations, health, immigration status, etc.).
- The tactic demonstrates power to the target. Civil disobedience shows your power by cutting into a company’s profits or demonstrating the ability to do so. Civil disobedience shows power if large numbers of people participate or express support. Politicians realize that if people feel strongly enough about an issue to get arrested, they will feel strongly enough to vote against them on Election Day. Civil disobedience can also betray a total lack of power and support by larger constituencies. The three people who block traffic in order to free the Chinese silk worms will probably never gain a fourth member.

Legal Disruptive Tactics

With tactics such as strikes, picket lines, or withholding rent, the power actually lies in the implementation of the tactic itself. Such tactics are qualitatively different from those designed to imply an electoral threat by showing numbers. Picketing, when it succeeds in keeping people out of a place of business, goes beyond the symbolic to create financial loss. These forms of economic/consumer power, rather than political power, must be carefully focused on specific targets.

Boycotts

The popularity of the Montgomery bus boycott, the United Farm Workers’ grape boycott, and the Nike boycott among others, make this one of the first tactics that many groups consider. In general, however, most national or international boycotts against products don’t work. A careful analysis of the product and your ability to actually affect the company’s profits is required. As corporations merge and become larger, the requirements for a successful boycott are being raised. They include:

- A moral issue of national or international importance.
- A product that:
  - Everyone buys frequently.
  - Is easily identifiable by a brand name which the company spends a great deal of money promoting, or is at least easily identifiable.
• Is non-essential, or better, for which there are competing brands or substitutes

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

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

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

Boycotts often bring legal retaliation and under some circumstances are actually illegal. Get legal advice.

A Method for Planning Tactics

The strategy chart is as useful for planning individual tactics as it is for planning your overall campaign. To use it in this way, simply place the tactic (holding your own rally, for example) in the first column (Goals). The Long Term goal is to make the Decision Maker do what ever it is your organization wants. The Intermediate Goal is to have a rally that will contribute to the Long Term Goal in specific ways. The Organizational Considerations column becomes the budget and organizational goals for the event itself (organizational goals are always considered separately from issue goals). The Constituents column becomes the turnout plan for the event. The Targets column is used to identify the people with power at whom the event is aimed. Pay particular attention to secondary targets who you may want to involve. The Tactics column then becomes a list of the things you will do at the event to show your own power, make the target uncomfortable, get media attention, and create an exciting activity.
Checklist for Tactics

All tactics must be considered within an overall strategy. Use this checklist to make sure that the tactics make sense given your strategy.

_______ Can you really do it? Do you have the needed people, time, and resources?

_______ Is it focused on either the primary or secondary target?

_______ Does it put real power behind a specific demand?

_______ Does it meet your organizational goals as well as your issue goals?

_______ Is it outside the experience of the target?

_______ Is it within the experience of your own members and are they comfortable with it?

_______ Do you have leaders experienced enough to do it?

_______ Will people enjoy working on it or participating in it?

_______ Will it play positively in the media?

_______ Can you raise money with it or at it?
Using the Strategy Chart to Plan a Tactic
Newton Save Our Schools Rally

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Organizational Considerations</th>
<th>Constituents</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Long-Term</td>
<td>1. Resources to Put In Budget = $300,000</td>
<td>Teachers organizations (200)*</td>
<td>1. Main Target</td>
<td>Hold rally outside Rep. Hide's office. Kids march up with symbols of discontinued school programs drawn on posters, e.g., basketball hoop, band instruments, theater masks, computers, microscopes. Each child calls to Hide through PA system to come down and save program. When he doesn’t come, poster is thrown in big trash can labeled “Hide’s Hope Chest.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass Fair Tax Plan.</td>
<td>$100.00 from coalition. Rest to be raised locally.</td>
<td>Black Issues Committee (50)</td>
<td>Rep. Harry Hide</td>
<td>Petitions taken up to Hide’s office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intermediate</td>
<td>Fred: 3 weeks (half time first 2 weeks, full time for 3rd week)</td>
<td>Fed. of Puerto Rican Home Town Associations (30)</td>
<td>Secondary Targets</td>
<td>Speakers: Heads of major groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Short-Range</td>
<td>Board Member—Kim Max (lives in Newton)</td>
<td>CWA Local 72 (30)</td>
<td>Judge Thomas—strong school supporter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newton office—2 phones</td>
<td>Newton Real Estate Association (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build toward affiliation of Newton Black Issues Committee.</td>
<td>Newton Civic Association (20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual parents and students (50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unorganized homeowners (40)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These numbers are the turnout goals for each group.
ORGANIZING MODELS

The Model is the Architecture of the Organization

Leaders lead people but organizers organize organizations. The role of an organizer is to construct an organization. An organizer who neglects the structure and rushes to work with individual people is like a taxi driver who picks up customers in his arms and carries them from place to place without the cab. Some members love to have the organizer carry them because they are relieved of the burden of thinking about and maintaining an organization. Many organizers who do realize the importance of building a structure pay little attention to the model, the architectural plan for the structure.

Imagine a group of people building a house without a plan. One person lays concrete for the slab under the house, while the next starts digging a basement. The walls go up, half of wood and half of brick. Someone is roofing over the second story while another person builds a staircase to the nonexistent third story. The toilet is installed in front of the fireplace. Fortunately, the building inspector will quickly call a halt. Unfortunately, there are no building inspectors for organizational structures. Many leaders and staff members organize without a building plan. Not only are they unable to say exactly what the structure they are creating should look like when finished, but they often create conflicting structures within their organizations.

The Model is the Architecture of the Organization

The Model is a “What,” Not a “How,” or a “Why”

The Model Must Be Clear and Internally Consistent

The Four Elements of the Model
• A nonprofit community development corporation sets up and staffs a tenant organization in buildings that it owns and manages. The tenants then start to fight "the landlord," and the staff is told to make them stop.

• The board of an organization for people with disabilities includes both representatives of the disabled and their service providers, although many of the disabled consider the providers to be part of the problem.

• A legislative coalition, in order to get funding for a special project, is compelled by the funder to create a whole new project board, which is different from the "real" board.

• A federation of senior clubs organizes a group of seniors who don’t belong to any of its member clubs.

• An organization, which operates on both a community service model and a community organizing model, finds that when it organizes people to fight City Hall, City Hall retaliates by cutting off the funding for the service program.

The Model is a "What," Not a "How" or a "Why"

The organizing model is the answer to the question, "Exactly what are we building?" For any organization there can be many ways to build successfully, but there is only one thing being built. When asked, "on what model are you building?" people often state the function that the group is to serve. "We are building an organization to which environmentalists in the Great Lakes region will turn for coordination." The function is implicit in the model, but they are two different things. If the inquiry is about the model, then the answer should be, we are building a coalition of groups that organize on Lakes related issues, or we are going to recruit 30,000 individual members from around the Lakes; or we will be a staff of four, all of whom will monitor state programs in the Lakes region. Each of these different organizing models could serve the same function of building a group toward which environmentalists look for coordination. Obviously, there is no one right model of organizing, but experience indicates that the range of successful possibilities is more limited than might be imagined, particularly among groups that have survived more than ten years.

An organizational model, or architectural plan, is a conception of the essential skeleton of the organization. It is not necessarily the same as the organizational chart or by-laws, although they are related. For example, an organization might develop a very successful committee structure although none is provided for in the bylaws. The organization's program, its formal leadership bodies, and its staffing pattern are all derived from its basic architecture.

The organizational model is influenced by the following four elements:

1. The Function of the Organization. Is the function to win issues such as getting a traffic light installed? Is it to pass legislation, to win elections, or to provide direct services? Is it to advocate, educate, or some combination of the above?

2. The Geographic Basis of the Organization. Is the organization based in a neighborhood, a housing development, or a political district such as a congressional district? Is it citywide, countywide, statewide, regional, or national? Obviously, the geography relates directly to the function. (Beware of organizing on a regional basis, regions do
not appear on the map, they are not political entities as states are, nor, with a handful of exceptions, are there regulatory agencies that operate on a regional basis.

The Basis of Membership. Do individual people join, or is it a coalition of organizations? If the members are individuals, are they organized into chapters, (branches, and locals) or are they at-large? Is it a formal coalition that groups actually vote to join and put their names on the letterhead? If so, then those groups are the members. Is it an informal coalition where staff or leaders from other groups join the board as individuals? In that case, the board is usually the membership. There are models in which a coalition builds an at-large base of individual members through its door-to-door canvassing. In yet another model, the staff is basically the membership. In another model the members of the organization are religious congregations that hire an organizer to work for them. Once again, the point is not that any of these are better or worse than others, but simply that the model, the basis of membership, and the location of decision-making power must be clear.

The Funding Base of the Organization. The funding base is a major influence on the model because, more than any other single factor, it determines how the organization works and what it does. What percentage of the funds is actually to be raised by the members? How much is to come from foundations or outside donors? How much will come from contracts with public agencies? Are there many foundations and donors that contribute, or only a few? Is there a field or phone canvass, and what percentage of the budget comes from it? Many organizations, which appear on paper to be controlled by the members, are actually controlled by their funders. Will the organization choose a tax status that restricts lobbying or one that doesn’t?

The Model Must Be Clear and Internally Consistent

A model is clear when the board and the staff can see what it is that they are building. It is internally consistent when all the pieces fit neatly into the basic concept and reinforce each other. None should appear to have been tacked on like tail fins on a Volkswagen Beetle. The best way to illustrate this point is with case histories that are actual composites of our own experience.

The Case of the Ambiguous Tenant Organization

A housing organization was unclear about the difference between a service model and an organizing model. The staff did a little of both, considering them to be the same thing.

A man from a building, to which an organizer had been assigned, came into the office. After being interviewed about his problem, he was advised to go to Legal Assistance and get a lawyer. The man said, “That’s too much hassle,” and he left. The organizer remarked, “See, that’s why we can’t ever get anything going in the building, nobody cares enough to do anything.” The organizer didn’t make the distinction between an individual problem requiring a lawyer and a building-wide issue that could be addressed by organizing. More to the point, the organization as a whole made no such distinction because its underlying model was neither clearly service nor clearly organizing. If something could be called “housing,” they did it.
Had there been a clear organizing model, the staff member would not have made a referral. Instead, she would have gone back to the building with the man, talked to the other tenants, and seen who had the same problem. Even if the problem was an individual matter, such as eviction for non-payment of rent, if many other people were also behind, then the tenants might have tried to negotiate a payment plan in exchange for improved conditions. If legal action to improve building services was required, all the tenants, not one individual, should have brought the action. If all else failed, then helping the man to get a lawyer would have been appropriate.

On the other hand, if the organization had a clear service model, not an organizing model, then the staff should have phoned Legal Assistance at once, explained the man’s case, had the man talk about the case over the phone, and then made an appointment for him. Perhaps someone would even have driven him there.

Unfortunately, because the staff was unclear about what was being built, the man’s request for help was handled inappropriately. The result was neither service nor organizing.

The Case of the Superfluous Office

A national organization, based on a model of individual membership in local chapters, had as its major function the passage of national legislation. This required building chapters to lobby in key congressional districts. The organization decided to set up a regional office with organizing staff to service a major metropolitan area in which it had a very large membership. It thought that the members would be enthusiastic about the office and would easily raise the money for it. As it turned out, the members never fully saw what purpose the office served, and didn’t support it.

A basic problem emerged here because there really was no programmatic role for a regional office. The efforts of the chapters were focused on the congressional districts in which they were located. Because a region isn’t a political district of any kind, there was no regional political decision maker. Without a common target there was no common, region-wide program in which all the chapters could participate together. Without such a program, the only role for regional staff was to help the individual chapters in their own congressional districts. Rightly or wrongly (probably wrongly), the chapters didn’t feel that they needed “outside” help, and declined to raise the money to pay for it. Had a critical vote been coming up in the U.S. Senate, they would have given money for a statewide campaign office, but they couldn’t see the logic of a regional office.

This is a very typical situation in which the model and the program do not coincide. In order for them to coincide, some meaningful program must exist at each geographic level of organizational structure be it a neighborhood chapter, a district committee, a citywide board or organization by region, county, or state. In direct action organizing where the purpose is to win something, useful structures can only exist at geographic levels where there is actually something to be won, and someone from whom to win it. For example, environmental groups from a number of states could form a regional organization, the target of which was a regional director of the Environmental Protection Agency. Setting up unnecessary regional structures is one of the most common ways in which organizations create internal problems for themselves. Without regional decision makers, it is usually impossible to have a region wide program and often meaningless to send regional representatives to sit on a board. Regions are just fine for recreational purposes such as determining the regional champion hockey team, cheerleaders, cow or Rumba dancer.
The Case of the Statewide Coalition
With Local Chapters

A statewide citizen organization had a formal coalition membership model. That is, organizations voted to join the coalition and placed one of their officers on the coalition's board. Its function was to pass legislation and to elect (through a PAC) legislators who would support its program.

After a number of years, the board voted to set up several community chapters, which were to work on local neighborhood issues. On the surface, little appeared to have changed; however, a second organization with a different model had actually been created within the first.

Eventually, a number of problems became apparent with the dual model structure. Because the chapters dealt with very local issues, they neither strengthened nor drew strength from the statewide campaigns. Had the chapter's turf conformed to legislative districts, and had the chapter members been organized to pressure their legislators to vote for the organization's program, it might have been a better fit.

The local leaders, whom the organizers tried to involve, were naturally suspicious. They saw resources coming in, but had little interest in the statewide issues. They had been working on local issues all along, and didn't want to be diverted to someone else's agenda. Their attitude was to take what they could get from the state organization, but to keep their distance from it. The organizing staff was drawn into the local activity, which took them away from the statewide efforts. Much of the staff's work amounted to a subsidy to neighborhood groups, but when the coalition tried to raise funds for its community work, it found itself in competition with the same local organizations it was helping, and was resented for it. Launching the local chapters was a classic case of creating structures and program that were at odds with the basic model.

The Case of the Coalition That Started a Coalition

A statewide citizen organization had an informal coalition model. That is, leaders of other organizations sat on its board, but their groups did not formally vote to join the coalition. The coalition's function was passing legislation.

When funding became available for a state Family Medical Leave Act campaign, a decision was made to set up a new coalition just for that issue. The hope was that groups not then a part of the state organization would join the campaign through this new structure. The money was channeled through the state organization to the new coalition, and some of its staff members were assigned to the new group, which was called the Family Coalition.

The first task of these staff people was to recruit some of the state organization's own board members to the board of the new Family Coalition. Next, they recruited additional Family Coalition board members from among the leaders of other organizations interested in the issue. The Family Coalition then held media events, published studies, and began lobbying in its own name. It was a big success. Although the state organization had started it, raised funds for it, and staffed it, the Family Coalition listed them on the letterhead as just another of seventeen member groups. Before long, the board of the Family Coalition asked the organizers if they could apply for foundation grants independently, so that funds would no longer come through the state organization. They said they wanted to hire their own staff and go their own way.

When the state organization's leadership started the Family Coalition, they thought they were simply creating another program and another campaign. But, by not respecting the integrity of its own model, the state organization had set up another coalition that could and did
become a competitor. Their model could not accommodate a coalition within a coalition. Because the board created a free floating, self-governing program not anchored in its underlying coalition board structure, a typical thing happened. The program took on a life of its own. It happens every time. Committees, locals, chapters, regions, temporary coalitions, and special programs all naturally tend toward having an independent existence. Even field offices that are not closely supervised do this.

It is generally a bad idea to set up any structure that is not integral to your organizing model or that doesn't use your group's own name. The same principle applies to setting up independent organizations that you intend, some day, to absorb or merge into your own group. For example, an organization built local committees to campaign for a specific piece of state legislation. The connection between the committees and the organization was left ambiguous. Each was, in effect, independent of the other. If such organizations have real people in them, they will develop their own identities, and will resist change. People who would readily have joined you, had they been asked to do so in the first place, will become suspicious and hostile if, after setting up an independent group, you then suggest a merger. Often, the fact that you raised the money and staffed the independent group only deepens their resentment and fear of a hidden agenda. Never expect ambiguity to lead to gratitude.

Another organization, let's call it the Great Plains Citizens Network, handled this type of situation with far better results. Great Plains was not designed to be a coalition, but it needed to build a coalition structure through which other groups could support its renewable energy program. Avoiding the word "coalition," which implied a more formal structure than was needed, Great Plains created the "Sustainable Power for Economic Development" (SPEED) Campaign.

Over twenty groups joined. The SPEED Campaign's letterhead and literature always contained the line, "A project of the Great Plains Citizens Network" with the Great Plains address. In this way, the organizational relationship was always kept clear and open. The SPEED Campaign affiliates knew that they weren't joining Great Plains itself, nor were they setting up something independent. They were part of a single purpose, time limited issue campaign sponsored by another group. The model was clear.

The Case of the Inconsistent Board

A community-based organization described itself as an alliance of organizations and service agencies dealing with poor people. Its model was that of a very, very informal coalition.

As the group expanded, it added to the board individuals who were active in its programs, but who did not come from any organization. It also kept on the board people who had once represented organizations, but who were no longer connected with those groups. Everything went well enough until the organization received a very large grant. The board at once fell to fighting over how and where the money would be spent. In the process, board members from real organizations found themselves being outvoted by people representing no one but themselves. They complained that they had joined an alliance of organizations, and now the rules were changed. The alliance didn't last a moment longer than the money did, then it self-destructed.

This organization was unclear about the basis of its membership, a critical aspect of the model. A group is either an organization of individuals, or an organization of organizations. Trying to be both, a mixed model, can create problems in many kinds of organizations. (Service agencies seem to be an exception and are often well served by boards composed of people from allied groups, funders, and prominent individuals.)
In direct action organizations, such mixed boards may work until a crunch comes. Then, be it the conflict over program, finances, or politics, different categories of board members are likely to question the legitimacy of decisions made by others. Structure matters most when the chips are down and the question is who has the votes.

Another difficulty in mixing individuals with group representatives on the board of a coalition is that they come with different viewpoints and are subject to different pressures. For example, an individual board member may have nothing to lose by attacking the mayor or taking on an unpopular issue, but an organizational board member may fear losing city funding or dividing the membership of the group he or she represents. Similarly, an organizational member may want the coalition to target someone with whom an individual board member happens to have an important business relationship. Of course, the same problems can and do occur on boards with either all individual or all organizational members, but they are less likely to get out of hand when all voting members have the same institutional relationship to the group.

Organizations that deal with the needs of such constituencies as seniors, children, the disabled, or the homeless, often have boards composed of representatives of the particular constituency, service providers, and government agencies. Such groups are supposedly united in their desire to work for their constituents and get programs funded, but because their institutional interests are so different they tend to block each other and allow the government agencies and service providers to keep the actual constituents under control. A coalition of disabilities groups wanted to start a campaign to win the right of the disabled to fire their own home health aides. The agencies that provided the aides sat on the coalition’s board and blocked the campaign.

Concluding Thoughts

Each of these cases has been presented to emphasize flaws in the conception of the model. In day-to-day organizing, such flaws may not be so obvious. Problems with the model can come disguised as personality conflicts, feuding between member organizations, financial trouble, debates over philosophy, political rifts, and criticism of the director. It is the role of the organizer to look past the surface problems, no matter how serious, and determine if these are symptoms of a discordant model.

Model-related problems are present in every organization. Like the flu, they lurk about looking for a chance to strike. Unlike the flu, they often appear as something else. For example, staff members will complain that the director does not spend enough time with them, and therefore they don’t understand what they are supposed to be doing. Frequently, what they are really saying is that they don’t understand what they are supposed to be building. They sense that the model isn’t clear, even though they may not say it that way.

When the model isn’t clear, no amount of time with a director can compensate for it.

An unclear model results in day-to-day organizing tasks becoming complicated policy matters instead of being part of a repeatable plan. If, for example, there is a clear individual membership chapter model, then when the chapter does a media event, it is always the elected leadership of the chapter who are the main speakers. But, if the group is made up of some individual members, some institutional members, some people with a real base in the community and others with none, a member of the clergy to whom everyone defers, a candidate for city council, and a college professor who really knows the issue, then who speaks at the media event? The answer differs according to the day of the week, and no one is ever happy with it. No wonder the staff never seems to
get enough direction and the director never has enough time. When the model is not clear, very little else will be clear.

Board members will complain that there is not enough communication, and they no longer know what is going on in the organization. Often they are right, but sometimes it is a symptom of the program having moved away from the basic model so that board leadership is less directly involved. This often occurs in a coalition where the program is supposed to be carried out through the affiliates, but, usually in response to a funding opportunity, the staff has gone off and started some other project involving different people. Once that happens, increased communication will seldom bring the original affiliates closer to a program that isn’t theirs. People hear what they want to hear. No matter how much an organization communicates with affiliates or board members, if the communication isn’t about something they are actually doing or want to do, they won’t hear it. Then, they will complain that there isn’t enough communication. The program must either be brought back in line with the model — that is, with the way the organization was set up to operate, or the model itself must be changed to integrate the new activity. In a similar way, organizational problems are often attributed to a lack of training. The Midwest Academy staff is frequently called upon for training, only to find that over the years a group has added so many bits and pieces of program and structure that no one understands where it is all going. Training will only help after the program has been realigned with the model. Any given model affects the organization’s program. It makes some types of campaigns easier to win, and some harder. It encourages the participation of some groups while discouraging others. It either enhances or diminishes the political power of the organization. It advances certain types of fundraising, and holds back others.

There are organizers who say that they believe in free form organizing. They have no model, want no model, and need no model. They are wrong. There is always a model. If you don’t create it, it evolves on its own, often influenced by funding. It will always operate just as the force of gravity always operates, even upon those who believe that they have transcended it. Organizers, you have the choice: learn to understand and use the concept of the model, or be blindly led by it.
STRATEGIC CONCEPTS IN ORGANIZING & POLICY EDUCATION
Ending Structural Barriers to social & economic opportunities for poor & working communities

✓ Grassroots Organization (AGENDA)

✓ Regional Alliances (L.A. Metropolitan Alliance)

✓ Strategic Research & Analysis

✓ Training & Capacity Building

✓ Civic Participation

✓ State & National Alliances
WHAT IS POWER?

the ability or capacity to achieve a collectively agreed upon goal.
1. Power relationships in our society are unequal, and this is one of the primary reasons for the conditions of oppression and other problems our communities face.

2. There is a conscious political, economic, and social agenda at work causing these problems, and power is being actively exercised to promote and implement that agenda. We must develop strategies that address these realities.

3. A more systematic way of understanding power is essential in our efforts to work for and win social change.
1. To create a picture of the political/power landscape in order to understand how & by whom power is exercised to cause and maintain problems we seek to change.

2. To develop more effective strategies for...
   - Winning progressive social change.
   - Permanently altering power relationships in favor of the people suffering from the problems & conditions we seek to change.
   - Selecting issues & campaigns that both help build power and win social change.
   - Tracking and refining campaign strategies.

3. To provide political education and training for grassroots leaders, members and allies.
TRADITIONAL POWER ANALYSIS

What if there is more than one Decision-Maker?
Are all our Allies equally invested?
Are all Opposition equally opposed?

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POWER ANALYSIS GRID

Vertical Axis: Amount of Power

Horizontal Axis: Position or Perspective on competing Agendas

-3 Die Hard
-2 Active Support
-1 Inclined Towards
+1 Inclined Towards
+2 Active Support
+3 Die Hard

SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENDA

TOP
Decisive Decision making Power or Influence
8 Active Participant in Decision-making
6 Power to have Major Influence on decision-making
4 Taken into Account
3 Can Get Attention
2 Not on Radar

STATUS QUO/OPPOSING AGENDA

Competing Agenda, Positions, Policies, etc.
**STEP 1:** Define the major Problems or Conditions which are negatively impacting primary constituencies

**STEP 2:** Sketch the Competing Agendas. The agenda of those who are causing or perpetuating the problems, and your agenda (the conditions you want to bring about)

**STEP 3:** Sketch Major Issue/Policy Battles related to problem conditions which are going on

**STEP 4:** Sketch the major centers of Decision-makers over the problem conditions

**STEP 5:** Sketch major organized Opposition

**STEP 6:** Sketch Organized Progressive Groups

**STEP 7:** Sketch key unorganized social sectors

**STEP 8:** Analyze the picture, develop strategies for changing the equation
Factors Influencing Placement of Battles

1. Scale of Impact (# of key constituencies)
2. Scope of Impact (different constituencies)
3. Degree to which is part of the Public Debate / Consciousness

1. Degree to which Battle Hurts / Helps Key Constituencies (economically, socially and/or politically)
2. Degree to which Battle Advances a Long-Term Agenda
Factors Influencing Placement of DECISION MAKERS

FACTORS INFLUENCING POWER
1. Legal Power / Authority
2. Demonstrated Influence (demonstrated success in moving their agenda)
3. Institutional Positions (Committees, Boards, Offices)
4. Base of Support
5. Relationships / Allies (political, organizational, social)
6. <District Composition (size of electorate, level of organization>

FACTORS INFLUENCING POSITION
1. Explicit Agenda
2. Demonstrated Action (voting record, history)
3. Composition of Staff / Office
4. Relationships / Allies
5. <Politics of Electorate>
Factors Influencing Placement of ORGANIZED GROUPS

Factors Influencing Power
1. Legal Positions / Authority
2. Financial Resources
3. Demonstrated Success
4. Ability to Influence Media / Public Consciousness
5. Electoral Power (ability to persuade / mobilize voters)
6. Coalitional Power (ability to mobilize other groups w/power to influence decision-makers)
7. Relationships (political, organizational, social)
8. Mobilizable Base
9. Expertise (access to information, research/analysis)

Factors Influencing Position
1. Explicit Agenda
2. Demonstrated Action (voting record, history)
3. Composition of Board / Staff
4. Relationships (political, organizational, social)
Factors Influencing Placement of UNORGANIZED CONSTITUENCIES

Factors Influencing Power
1. Financial Resources
2. Political Power
3. Level of Organization
4. Size

Factors Influencing Position
1. Voting Record
2. Public Opinion Polling
3. Demographics

Social & Economic Justice Agenda

Corporate Agenda
Current parameters of debate:

1. Reforms that result in revenue neutrality
2. Stabilize state revenues & decrease volatility
3. Update the tax system to attract, retain, and expand businesses
4. Changes that can be easily implemented

Balanced Suburbs (27%)
Aspiring People of Color (15%)

Angry Fatalists (7%)

Base (15% of pop.)