

# Launching a Campaign

A good campaign must be based on a coherent idea of what is going to be achieved and a plan of to achieve it. For a campaign to succeed, there must be set goals, an examination of how those goals will impact your organization, how your constituents and allies will support those goals, knowledge of the opponents or targets, tactics to achieve your goals, and timelines for when you will achieve your goals. If that sounds like a lot, thats because it is. Luckily there are many tools available for free to help guide us through the process of strategically planning campaigns.

The Midwest Academy’s Strategy Chart is an excellent guide to developing a strategy that will ensure a good campaign or project, and this chapter is based on their organizing model. For a major campaign, your group should set aside a weekend afternoon (naturally followed by a weekend party) to flush out all the details using this approach. This investment of time will prove well worth it in the long run.

Here is the [Midwest Academy Chart](#).

## Midwest Academy Strategy Chart

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

Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituents, Allies, and Opponents	Targets	Tactics
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List the long-term objectives of your campaign.</li> <li>State the intermediate goals for this issue campaign. What constitutes victory?</li> </ol> <p><i>How will the campaign</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Win concrete improvement in people's lives?</li> <li>Give people a sense of their own power?</li> <li>Alter the relations of power?</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What short-term or partial victories can you win as steps toward your long-term goal?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List the resources that your organization brings to the campaign. Include money, number of staff, facilities, reputation, canvass, etc.  What is the budget, including in-kind contributions, for this campaign?</li> <li>List the specific ways in which you want your organization to be strengthened by this campaign. Fill in numbers for each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand leadership group</li> <li>Increase experience of existing leadership</li> <li>Build membership base</li> <li>Expand into new constituencies</li> <li>Raise more money</li> </ul> </li> <li>List internal problems that have to be considered if the campaign is to succeed.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who cares about this issue enough to join in or help the organization? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whose problem is it?</li> <li>What do they gain if they win?</li> <li>What risks are they taking?</li> <li>What power do they have over the target?</li> <li>Into what groups are they organized?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Who are your opponents? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What will your victory cost them?</li> <li>What will they do/spend to oppose you?</li> <li>How strong are they?</li> <li>How are they organized?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary Targets  A target is always a person. It is never an institution or elected body. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who has the power to give you what you want?</li> <li>What power do you have over them?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Secondary Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who has power over the people with the power to give you what you want?</li> <li>What power do you have over them?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>For each target, list the tactics that each constituent group can best use to make its power felt.</p> <p>Tactics must be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In context.</li> <li>Flexible and creative.</li> <li>Directed at a specific target.</li> <li>Make sense to the membership.</li> <li>Be backed up by a specific form of power.</li> </ul> <p>Tactics include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media events</li> <li>Actions for information and demands</li> <li>Public hearings</li> <li>Strikes</li> <li>Voter registration and voter education</li> <li>Lawsuits</li> <li>Accountability sessions</li> <li>Elections</li> <li>Negotiations</li> </ul>

## Power

Before you can develop a good campaign, you must understand power. Who has the power? and over whom? Organizing is about redistributing power, taking it back from the few who have too much of it, and giving it back to the people.

There are many different forms of power. Students have people power, whereas our targets usually have financial and decision making power within the institutions that need reform. Thus, students will often want to mobilize people (like in a rally), since that is where we have the most power. Occasionally students can use institutions, like the courts or the political system, to achieve good (e.g., suing a corporation for its pollution or forcing an increase in the minimum wage). Elites might use their institutional power to remove decisions from the public realm by making them behind closed doors, arresting demonstrators, or even having dissenters brutalized (particularly in the developing world). To summarize, in your campaign you should look at what kind of power your

members and allies have, compare it to your opponents', and then pick an area where you can over-power them and win. For instance, instead of trying to outspend corporate campaigns to influence politicians in government, it may be more strategic to mobilize your people power by waging a public pressure campaign to reform campaign financing.

A brief note here: this chapter may sound antagonistic to those who may have been socialized to "work within the system." But if there is an elite that controls most institutions and is using its power to oppress people while the masses are relatively powerless, then we need to take action to restore a democratic balance. In many cases, its good to start with asking directly for the change you seek and initiating whatever bureaucratic process the system mandates; but often times achieving your goals will require diverse tactics, which may require conflict and most likely working outside the system.

Also it is important to remember that you don't always have to compete against others to regain a balance of power; cooperation is often an effective means. For example, if you have allies within the administration, you are empowered by your good relationship with them. This is why it is important to evaluate all of the power dynamics at play.

---

### **Setting Goals**

Begin every campaign by setting a clear goal. Your goal is your definition of victory. You need to be able to look back over it, after a set amount of time, and answer the question "Have we won?" This should be defined as concretely as possible, with long-range, medium range and short-range goals that build directly into your long term goals. One acronym often used for goals is SMART, which stands for Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time Bound.

For instance:

Short range goal: Work with administration to get campus-wide energy audit (by end of this year).

Medium range goal: Get campus to commit \$\_\_\_ towards campus efficiency per results of energy audit (by fall next year)

Long range goal: Reduce our campus' coal dependency by 15% by 2015.

Now winning is great, but how you win is important to your success in the long term.

Aside from meeting the goals of your campaign, you might also consider how and if your campaign will:

- 1) Achieve concrete improvements.
- 2) Give people a sense of their own power.
- 3) Change the relations of power.

In other words, getting your school to start recycling is great, but you should also give campaign participants a sense that they were able to make a difference and increase the level of student input. If this is achieved, you have changed the relations of power between students and the administration. Ask yourself how your goal will fulfill these three criteria. Then consider how your organization can conduct a campaign in a way that will best achieve its goals and, in the process, also empower itself. Remember: Victory is important, but group empowerment and enrichment of the individuals involved is just as critical in a well-run campaign. People have to be 'into it' to support an effort, so work to ensure everyone is heard and has ownership in the campaign and its associated victories.

---

**Your Organization:** The campaign should build your organization.

How can this campaign create new leaders and strengthen the ones you have?

How can it bring in new members?

How can it involve members at a variety of levels of commitment?

You should think about how many people your project needs to engage. This is especially important when planning for the introductory meeting, since you want new people to get involved. If you don't involve them, they won't stick around long.

There should be a range of roles/tasks, from light to heavy, to make it easy for new people to get involved without signing their life away. It's important to give people ways to "start small" and build up to more involved tasks. Of course, some folks are ready to take it on! Meet people where they are and work to create an organization that is supportive and encourages growth and development.

**Helpful hint:** Encourage people to lean into different things, but really listen to the interests and desires of the individual. Help them cultivate the skills that they want to cultivate, not the ones you want them to cultivate. This approach goes a long way in building trust and ensuring sustainability of your campaign.

**When planning a campaign, it's good to list what resources your group has.**

- How many members does your group have?
- Who are the other supporters (allies) of the group?
- How much money does the group have?
- What facilities can the group use?
- What is the reputation of the group? How do others perceive your organization?
- \*Also ask what internal problems may keep your group from winning. Are there group dynamics that are destructive or oppressive? Is there clarity and consensus around goals of the campaign?
- \*\*Be sure to take notes on these conversations and discuss plans collaboratively.

**Constituency**

It is important to know who could help your group with its campaign. Anyone who is affected by the issue that inspired your campaign or could benefit from your proposed solution is a potential ally.

Some good questions to ask are:

- 1) Whose problem is it? Who is affected? What groups are potential allies organized in?
- 2) What would they get out of collaborating with you? What do they have to risk in order to collaborate with you?
- 3) How could they help? What power do they have? What resources do they have to offer?

The whole point is that the more people and groups that you can involve, the more powerful you'll be. But remember that groups join for their own reasons. It is important to understand the mission and goals of ally organizations and find places that they intersect with your goals. When collaborating and building coalitions, everyone involved should be working toward a common goal and not feel that their efforts are distracting them from their mission.

-----  
-----

**Targets**

A target is always a person. It is never an institution or elected body.

Who are you going after anyway? Who are you trying to influence? In other words, who can give you what you want? This person is your primary target.

How can you influence him or her? What kind of power do you have to do it? If you can't influence the target directly, who can you influence that might be able to influence your target? These people are secondary targets. They act as channels through which you can

extend your power to your main target. To decide these targets, "Power Map" the primary target.

What is a power map? A power map is where you list the target and then think through all those people who 'have that persons ear.'

### **Examples of picking strategic targets:**

Rainforest Action Network (RAN) has been turning up the pressure on Wall Street, asking the biggest US banks to stop financing mountaintop removal coal mining, which involves literally blowing the tops off historic Appalachian Mountains and poisoning drinking water to extract a relatively small amount of dirty coal.

### **Why did RAN target Banks to help stop Mountain Top Removal coal mining?**

From January 2008 to June 2010, nine banks provided more than \$3.9 billion in loans and bond underwriting to companies practicing mountaintop removal coal mining. RAN further urged all private banks involved in commercial lending and investment banking services for the mining sector to end their relationships with the following companies: Massey Energy, Patriot Coal, Alpha Natural Resources, International Coal Group, Arch Coal, CONSOL Energy, TECO Energy and James River Coal.

In response to their campaigning, as of 2010, four of the biggest players on Wall Street: Chase, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley and Citi, have developed environmental due diligence protocols on lending to mountaintop removal mining companies. Meaning that they're either no longer funding these companies or have imposed stricter regulations in providing funding. RAN continues to monitor all three banks' lending, to ensure that their positions on mountaintop removal coal mining impact the reality on-the-ground for the people of Appalachia.

The biggest financiers of mountaintop removal mining currently (as of June 2010) are Swiss bank, UBS (who since January 2008, has provided more than \$275 million of financing to MTR companies) and Philadelphia-based PNC (who has provided over \$80 million in financing to the MTR sector).

---

### **Tactics**

Now that you have a sensible strategy in mind, you can choose your tactics.

Tactics should:

- Fit into an overall strategy.
- Make sense to the group's members and supporters.
- Be flexible and creative. If your methods fit the same old patterns, you'll get the same old responses. If possible, do something that is outside the experience of the target. Befuddle them if you can.
- Have a follow-up plan built into them. How often have you done something, had fun doing it, and then wondered where it got you? Each step should set you up for the next one, just as a good pool player sets up for the next shot.

Consider the following when determining your tactics:

- Who are we trying to influence with this tactic?
- How will it influence them?
- What kind of power are we bringing into this situation?
- How are we applying it?
- How are we following through?
- How does this tactic build our power for the next step?

You need to be clear on these things if your tactic is to have any long-range impact.  
Is your rally to influence the public or the administration?  
Will the media you get from it raise awareness for an upcoming vote?  
Why should the President care about 100 students on her front lawn anyway?

**Follow-up is especially important.**

Are you demanding a meeting and setting a deadline or just making some noise and walking away?  
What will you do if they do nothing?

**Timelines**

Sometimes projects drag on with no real sense of progress. To avoid this, draw up a timeline. This is simply a schedule for when you expect to get things done. This is especially important when preparing for things with definite dates, like rallies and talks. Think carefully about all things that need to get done and when they need to get done by. Decide on a reasonable amount of time for assignments to get done by at meetings.

The items on the time line should be specific.

For example: (Be sure to put names of committed persons here too, keep each other accountable!)

2/7 Talk about proposed event at group meeting

2/7 - Assign roles for people to do posters, draft press release and advisory, tabling, media calls, etc..

2/8- Press release and advisory drafted

2/9- poster reviewed/approved and x # of copies printed

2/10- Press release and advisory approved by group/accountable person(s)

2/12 - 5 people hand out posters for x hours at x locations, x # of persons assigned to do x # of class raps in x # of buildings.

2/13- press advisory sent to media outlets

2/13 Follow up calls made to media outlet contacts to make sure they got the advisory and gauge initial interest in attending/covering

2/15- group meets to discuss logistics and remaining needs

2/19 - Deliver press releases to local papers (get confirmations of persons who say they will cover the story).

2/21- (day of event) - Follow up calls to media (best to do this 2-3 hours before the event), speeches/tactics prepared, follow up calls made to everyone in your groups network to confirm they are attending/make ask to bring 1-2 friends, hold awesome and well planned event!

\*\*For more information on working media for your campaign, including press advisory and release templates.

**Helpful Hint:** Look at the student calendar before you set a timeline. Be aware of vacations, holidays, weather, major sports events, and so on. Try to avoid conflict with other people's meetings, events, and exams. Also consider the student power cycle. It peaks at the beginning of semesters and ebbs during exams.

**Helpful Hint:** When writing your timeline, work backwards. This helps be sure your covering all your steps.

If you start from the end objective, you can more realistically see the steps that should lead up to it and consider the time each step will take.

**Example Campaign Plan**

The Issue: Energy Conservation in student and low-income housing apartments in Gummi Gucci.

The Target: Mr. 'Pinko' Pinkerton

Power

Mr. Pinkerton owns most of the apartments in town, so he basically has a monopoly. Students are the consumers. This means that both Mr. Pinkerton and the students have some economic power. The problem is that Mr. Pinkerton (a.k.a. "Pinko") makes his tenants, the students, pay the utility bills. Therefore he has no incentive to invest in energy-saving measures like insulation.

Pinko is certainly a wealthy and "honored" citizen in Gummi Gucci, so he has a lot of clout on the town council. Then again, about 40% of the population are students, so the students have some electoral power too. Pinko can spend money advertising to get good public relations, but the students can counter that with leafleting, postering, and media events.

### Goals

Long-range: reduce the town's energy consumption by 20% by the year 2015.

Short-range: Get Pinko to commit to getting an audit on the buildings to find potential savings/document current barriers to efficient problems.

### Your Organization

You have about 10 steady members with maybe 20 more who come to meetings occasionally. You have about \$200 to spend this year on printing, phones, and materials.

### Constituency

Low-income people, students, and some students' parents are paying high bills for heating in the winter and air conditioning in the summer. They could sure use a break. Local workers could also use the temporary jobs that would come from insulating and retro-fitting all of Pinko's apartments. This means you could appeal to local labor groups. The Black, Latino, and non-traditional (students who are married, have children, or are older) student groups might be interested since these groups often have even less economic entitlement to good housing. Service organizations like Habitat for Humanity might also be interested in this campaign.

### Target

Basically, Pinkerton is the one you need to influence. But if he doesn't budge, maybe the town council could pass a local law. Perhaps the renters could use their power as consumers. Encircle your primary target with secondary targets!

### Tactics

You decide to begin with a friendly meeting to explain the virtues of energy conservation, its environmental effects, and how it pays off after a year or two. You explain to him how it will make his apartments more attractive to potential renters. Estimate the costs for him, and give him the names of local businesses that could do the job. Ask him to at least give the tenants rental credits for the price of insulating themselves. At the same time you could organize the tenants to request insulation or rent credit. Ask for a response within a week of your meeting.

If he refuses, start publicizing that fact and tell him you intend to do so. Mention him by name, and lament the fact that he's not willing to do this little bit to save his tenants money. Conduct a survey of the cost of utilities for various apartments, especially energy efficient ones. Compare his apartments to those of the other apartments and publicize it.

If he still refuses, you might try to get the Town Council to pass a local law saying that either: A) all utility bills should be paid by the landlord or B) tenants should get rent credit for any energy-saving investments they make in the apartment. This would actually change the economic relationships between the tenant, the property owner, and the environment!

If that fails and you have to play hardball, leaflet and poster during renting season, protest at his offices, and/or tell people not to rent from him. People typically hate bad

publicity.

### Timeline

Sep. 20-26: Contact potential coalition partners. Attend their meetings, try to feel out interest, and invite them to the planning meeting.

Sep. 30: Meeting with Pinko. Representatives from each group in the coalition are invited.

Oct. 7: Deadline for Pinko. If he does it, celebrate. If not continue with your plans.

Oct. 10: Send out press statements from the coalition expressing dismay at Pinko's policies. Each group in the coalition should send out their own statement, but it should refer to or be signed by all of the others. Announce the beginning of a new study on neighborhood utility costs.

Oct. 14-21: While others are working on the study, go door-to-door to all of Pinko's apartments and explain the issue to the tenants. Ask them to request insulation from him.

Oct. 24: Announce the results of the study. Mention Pinkerton by name as the worst renter in town.

Oct. 31: Halloween! Have someone dress as Pinko and walk through the streets burning Monopoly money.

Nov. 3: Town Council meeting. Raise the issue and talk to sympathetic members afterward. Get on the agenda for the next meeting.

Nov. 4: Draft a bill with coalition partners.

Nov. 10: Bring the bill to the meeting and present it. Ask for a vote within two weeks.

Nov. 14: Have the coalition write letters and call town council members. Get endorsements from school officials, friendly legislators and small businesses. Publicize the endorsements you receive.

Nov. 24: The Vote. Hopefully you've won and can hold a big party.

-----  
-----

### **Regrouping**

What if you didn't win? You have several options. You might want to escalate your tactics so as to put enough pressure on your target for them to give in. By broadening the issue, you can build a stronger coalition on your side. You might want to try changing your main and / or secondary targets. Alternatively, you could choose an easier goal that would be a step towards getting your original one. Don't be discouraged if you lose (it happens). At least you've learned about the issue and about how to organize, and will be better prepared for the next campaign.

Maybe you can use the voting power of the students to elect your own candidates to the town council. Sometimes it is worth it to fight a campaign, even if you are likely to lose because in the process you will get many people involved and transform their lives by showing them their power and turning them into activists. For instance, in the case of a war, you might not be able to stop it but by educating hundreds of people about US foreign policy you will build opposition and decrease the likelihood of future wars.

Finally its very important to debrief with your group and the persons involved in your campaign. A debrief should be an opportunity to let everyone share their input and "lessons learned" from the campaign.

Some questions you may consider asking:

What went well?

What didn't go well?

What would we do differently next time?

How was the workload distributed? Was it fair?

Learn from your efforts, celebrate your victories and plan for future success!

