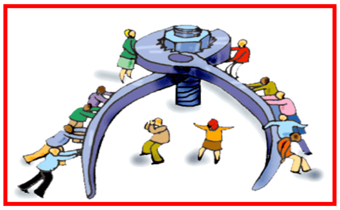
Delta Communities in Action Webpage Tool Kit



Organizational skill-sets

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1. Leading

Good leaders are the key to large-scale community organizing. They do not tell other people what to do, but help others to take charge. They do not grab center stage, but nudge others into the limelight. They are not interested in being The Leader, but in trying to create more leaders. They recognize that only by creating more leaders can an organizing effort expand.

Lead by creating an example to follow

Some leaders are larger-than-life heroes. Some deliver inspirational speeches. Others are excellent organizers. But many leaders inspire others to follow by setting an example. When Rosa Parks refused to give up a bus seat reserved for white people, others followed her example in such numbers that it blossomed into the civil rights movement.

Divide-up and delegate work

Divide tasks into bite-sized chunks, then discuss who will do each chunk. Make sure everyone has the ability to carry out their task, then let them carry it out in their own way. Have someone check on progress. People do not feel good about doing a job if nobody cares whether it gets done.

Appreciate all contributions, no matter how small Recognize people's efforts in conversations, at meetings, in newsletters, and with tokens of appreciation: thank-you notes, certificates, and awards for special efforts.

Welcome criticism
Accepting criticism may be difficult for some leaders, but members need to feel they can be critical without being attacked.

Help people to believe in themselves
A leader builds people's confidence that they can accomplish what they have never accomplished before. The unflagging optimism of a good leader energizes everyone.

Inspire trust. People will not follow those they do not trust. Always maintain the highest standards of honesty. Good leaders reveal their potential conflicts of interest and air doubts about their own personal limitations.

Herald a higher purpose
People often volunteer to serve some higher purpose. A leader should be able to articulate this purpose, to hold it up as a glowing beacon whenever the occasion demands. A good leader will celebrate every grassroots victory as an example of what can happen when people work together for a common good.
Heralding a higher purpose may require some practice at heralding. Recognized leaders are usually good at public speaking. In Canada, a surprising number of activist leaders belong to Toastmasters!

Avoid doing most of the work
Don't try to run the whole show or do most of the work. Others will become less involved. And you will burn out.

2. Communication with your Members/Supporters

When you're working on a campaign it's very easy to get caught up in your own world and forget about what's going on around you. The passion can drive you, but it can also give you blinkers.

It's important to have structures in place that mean that you communicate with your members and supporters in an effective and timely manner. By keeping your members and supporters up to speed with your activities you're showing them just why they're supporting your good work, and you're letting them know how they can get involved and help out.

Newsletters

Newsletters are probably the most common way for advocacy groups to keep their members and supporters informed.

They can include many things - a list of activities, an editorial, a list of upcoming events, links to various media items, and much, much more.

Think carefully about the purpose of your organization's newsletter, and refine its targeting. There are some fantastic newsletters out there, so have a look at them and pick the bits you think best align with your needs.

eBulletins/Email Newsletters

Email has seen the humble newsletter turn into an ebullition. Whilst the two formats - hard copy and electronic - are often quite similar, there are important differences that must be taken into consideration when choosing between the two.

Email is cheaper, and therefore more disposable. The barrage of emails that people get daily means that they are less likely to be read than a physical newsletter. Physical newsletters also tend to hold more clout.

On the other hand, email is cheaper and eNewsletters can be easily forwarded, potentially amplifying the reach of your message.

A lot of people just take for granted that these days email is always the best option. Often it is. Just be sure you give it plenty of thought beforehand.

The level of production that goes into each also needs consideration. Is it worth spending hours to make your hard copy newsletter or eNewsletter look good? Or is all that is really needed just a quick reminder about the activities of your organization or campaign?

Opening up meetings

If you're holding regular campaign meetings, why not open them up to your members, instead of just your staff? It's a great way of getting more people to help out and to widen your reach and gain access to the various skills that your members may have. (The potential downside of this is that it can be difficult to make quick decisions.)

Email groups/discussion lists

Some organizations like to facilitate open discussion and decision-making amongst their members. The most common way of doing this to is to hold regular meetings open to all members. Some groups, however, choose to use email groups, also known as discussion lists. In these cases a system is set up so that if you send an email to one central email address, everyone on the email group list will receive a copy of the email.

These groups can be fantastic. They can also be a nightmare. The discussion can very quickly flood your inbox and leave you with too many emails a day to get through in order to keep up.

However, when various people's areas of knowledge come together in a civilized fashion to generate some genuinely important and engaging debate this can lead to better policy outcomes. If you decide to try this method, be sure to appoint a list monitor who keeps track of what is being said and enforces strict guidelines to enable a constructive discussion.

There are quite a few sites that provide free software to set up email groups. Both Yahoo (http://groups.yahoo.com/) and Google (http://groups.google.com/) offer free email groups

Blog

'Blog' is short for 'Weblog' - websites that are sometimes known as Web Diaries or Online Journals. They basically consist of 'posts' (the online equivalent of a diary entry) which are listed in chronological order, often include provision for readers to comment, and have other elements of interactivity. Advocacy organizations and advocacy campaigns are increasingly turning to blogs to allow their people to keep up to date with campaign developments in real time.

Phone/SMS Tree

Some advocacy organizations use phone or SMS trees to mobilize a large number of people in a very short period of time. The idea is that **s**o**m**eone **s**ends out 10 SMSs or calls 10 people. Those ten then each call or SMS 10 more people and so on. This allows a lot of people to be mobilized in a very short period of time and at a relatively small cost to each individual person. They're more effective on the small scale, and they're renowned for breaking down when someone doesn't do their bit, but they've also been known to be remarkably effective.

Who, What, When, Why ... will give you How

When choosing which communication methods to use you need to ask yourself "Who is my audience? What am I communicating? Why am I communicating it? When am I communicating it (i.e. what sort of time frame is needed)?" Asking and answering these questions should answer the question of how you should communicate, at which point you can pick one or more (or all) of the above methods.

3 Keeping the Network Alive Over Time

Issues come and go and their importance or urgency will come and go as well.

As an issue falls off the radar, it is not uncommon for your networks to fade away as well. So it is important to keep your networks alive over time in order to be able to mobilize them when they are needed. Without them, campaigning will be a lot harder.

Call people

It sounds silly really, but it can be that simple. If you haven't heard from someone for a few months give them a call and see how they are getting on. You do not need a reason to call them, just ring to check in. Set aside some time to do a ring around every so often. Networks are often as much about personal relationships as they are about professional relationships so don't be shy.

Show that you are still active

Just because your issue is not on the front page of the paper anymore, does not mean that you are not still busy behind the scenes. It is very easy to continue working away unnoticed by those around you. So be sure to keep communications out of the office regular and ensure that your networks are all on your mailing lists. (See the Communications with your Members link on this web site for more details.)

Remind people that the issue hasn't gone away

This is often one of the harder things to do - particularly in a media soaked world that is obsessed with the 'sound bite'. One of your biggest challenges will always be to keep an issue alive, and keep it on the radar of your networks. Networks are always about cross collaboration so make sure that your networks know how their issue fits in with yours. Keep up a range of actions to remind people that your issue hasn't gone away.

Help others out with their work

The importance of supporting the campaigns of others cannot be overstated. Networks are a two-way street so when someone turns to you for help it is important to give them as much support as possible. Endorse their rallies, sign their petitions, promote their events and so on. It's a great way to keep in contact with these people and it means that when you call on them, you are much more likely to receive their support.

Remember that this is a cross-campaign issue

Of course issues do actually completely go away - you win or lose campaigns and some simply become no longer relevant. In these cases it is still important to keep your networks alive. Activists are usually activists for life. Other campaigns will come up that you will get involved in, and when they do you'll be particularly grateful that you have kept in touch with your networks over time.

4. The Inner, Middle and Outer circles of an Advocacy Campaign

Most advocacy campaigns have an inner, middle and outer circle. It is important to understand the roles of these circles when running your campaign.

The Inner Circle of people are your core activists. They may be an organization, a section of an organization, a collection of organizations or just a loose affiliation of people who run the campaign. These people call the rallies, write the letters, paint the banners and so on.

The Middle Circle are the converted. These are the supporters, the ones that have signed the petition, marched at the rally, and provide your donations and support. These people are vital to a successful campaign as they show there is the community backing for what you are doing. They have taken on the issue and are helping you spread the word.

Finally, the Outer Circle comprises those that you are trying to influence. These are the people who you want to vote differently, and whose awareness levels you want to increase. In many senses these are the most important people in your campaign. They may be hostile to your cause or they may just be unaware of it. They may be all of Canada, they may be a small regional community or they may be just a couple of politicians or senior public servants. Whatever the case may be, if you don't influence these people, or at least a good number of them, your campaign is doomed.

The Inner Circle

The roles of the Inner Circle are outlined throughout the Advocacy Centre. However there are a few central points that need to be made here. Firstly, it's a good idea, if you can, to get a paid worker to run the inner circle. Obviously whether or not this is possible will depend on the size of the organization, the size of the campaign, and the resources at your disposal, but if it is possible, the advantages are immeasurable and the return in terms of the success of the campaign is very high.

Whether paid or not, it's a good idea to have one person coordinating the whole campaign. Within this core circle you should be meeting regularly and have designated roles. Someone should be keeping an eye on the finances and someone else on the media.

The inner circle should be mobilizing the middle circle and maintaining their enthusiasm whilst trying to engage and influence the outer circle.

The Middle Circle
Your Middle Circle are your converts. If you do not already have them onside it probably will not take much to get them there.

The first thing people in the Middle Circle provide you with is networks. Few things are more important. Also see **Identifying and using support networks** link on this web site.

The Middle Circle provides you with free advertising when they pass on your emails or advertise your events. They are the ones you can call on to volunteer to do a letter drop or attend your rallies. They provide the support you need on the ground

The Outer Circle
In many senses the Outer Circle is the most important. This is your target group so you must engage them as much as is possible. A campaign's success can be measured by the level of penetration into the outer circle.

Engaging the Outer Circle can take many forms. Sometimes you can benefit from an osmosis-like effect, where people in the Outer Circle who are exposed to an issue and discussions around that issue absorb information about the campaign. However this is not something you should rely on.

You need to raise awareness within the Outer Circle by getting their attention, and there are a range of methods described in the Advocacy Centre for doing this. Once you have their attention, education is the key so you need strong communication methods in place.
Using the Inner, Middle and Outer Circle framework to understand your advocacy helps to put things in perspective and will help you focus your campaign.

5. How to Research an Issue

Sometimes you'll start a campaign in your own specialist area. You've based your life's work on this particular issue, and you know pretty much everything there is to know about it. More often, however, you'll be sitting around the kitchen table with a few other like-minded people and decide that something must be done about a particular issue.

You need to get on top of the issue quickly, and you need to be able to keep up with the various developments. This includes the background, the major players, the relevant legislation, government policy, and similar campaigns or precedents for your action.

You'll often be up against people who are significantly better resourced than you and will probably have better access to the nodes of power than you do. They'll have an endless stream of statistics at the ready, with flash presentations and a well-honed line to sell.

You've got to be prepared to come back at them with your own research. Here are a few pointers on how to research an issue.

Internet
The internet is possibly the best resource available. There's just so much information out there on the web that most, if not all, issues can be researched in detail using the web.

The internet is ideal for getting a basic grasp of an issue - establishing who the key authors or theorists are, what's happened with these sorts of campaigns before, and so on. It's great for making contacts with people in similar situations and for providing you with some decent leads to research further.

On the other hand, the fact that anyone can have a web page means that the quality of information on offer is highly variable. Buyer beware - use your better judgment to decide whether a particular source can be trusted.

Email lists/Newsletters
While you're on the internet you'll probably find organizations that deal with issues similar to yours. A lot of these groups will have an email list which you can sign up to. These lists are a great way to be kept up to date with new information as it becomes available and will often open you up to a much wider range of opinions on an issue.

Library
Where else would you go to research something but the library? Most public libraries are pretty good, and library staff are usually quite helpful in assisting you with your research.

If you can, get prepared before you go and take to the library a list of authors or books that you know are significant for your issue. Take note of the authors your initial sources refer to so you can expand your research.

It also never hurts to punch some keywords into the library's database and see what comes up. Often this can be done from home via the internet, allowing you to check ahead to see whether the library is carrying the books you want. Most libraries are hooked up to a central database, so if one library doesn't have the book you want it may be able to get it from one of the other libraries in the area.

And don't forget that you can walk into most university libraries - you can't borrow, but you can photocopy relevant chapters, and their collections will generally be considerably bigger than those available at your local library.

Journals
Local libraries and university libraries will carry academic journals. These deserve a special mention, for several reasons. Firstly, when someone is writing an academic book they'll usually write a few journal articles to go with it, and this can be a good way of getting the main arguments in a book by only reading 10 or 20 pages. In addition they will be heavily referenced, so you will be able to establish key authors in your field.

Most importantly, however, journal articles are highly specialized and are peer-reviewed. The information in these articles has been tested against the relevant academic standards, and the research methods used are sound. For this reason, referenced journal articles carry extra weight in any argument.

Hansard

Hansard is the verbatim record of all parliamentary proceedings. This can sometimes be a fantastic research tool. Hansards from the modern era have a detailed search facility, and all the documents are readily accessible on the web.

An electronic version of Legislative Assembly of British Columbia Hansard is available at http://www.leg.bc.ca/index.htm and the link for a record of Canadian Federal Parliament proceedings can be found at http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/chamber.asp

Freedom of Information

Government departments, municipal councils, public hospitals, statutory authorities and boards are required to make most government documents publicly available.

However it's not uncommon for public reports, for example, to be hidden away or not publicly announced, particularly when the findings are considered unfavorable. It's obviously a strong argument to be able to show that the authorities' own research into an issue supports your position, and in these cases a FOI request can really bolster your campaign. Used in conjunction with Hansard, FOI enables you to track down material that can be very helpful for your cause.

To access this information it's necessary to lodge a freedom of information request with the relevant body. These bodies vary from province to province and federally. Not all information will be released: the FOI Acts allow for a number of exemptions, including Cabinet confidentiality and commercial confidentiality.

FOI requests are notoriously slow and a good deal of patience is often required. If you start down this road, be prepared to be vigilant and keep pushing to ensure you finally get the information you need.

You should also note that the government doesn't have to give you information if it hasn't collected it, doesn't hold it, or has already shredded it.

Similar examples

Seeking out other examples of similar campaigns is often a very important way to improve your campaigning.

Usually people who have been in a similar situation are more than happy to share their knowledge and insights and to give you a few pointers on how they ran their campaign, what worked, and what didn't. Nothing is more valuable than first-hand knowledge of this kind.

Public Meetings
A public meeting - a forum that is open to the public to discuss an issue - is a great way to gauge public opinion and to listen to voices from the community that you might otherwise not have the opportunity to hear.

For more information please see the link to 'Holding a Public Forum.'

Surveys
Sometimes the information you want simply isn't available. In these circumstances you will need to establish your own facts and figures. One key way of doing this is by running a survey. These can establish what the current situation is, how many people will be affected, and what public opinion on the topic is. Be careful to ask the right questions, and make sure you adhere to the relevant statistical standards with regards to your sample size and the questions you ask. Surveys are even easier now with the various free online facilities available, including;

- Survey Monkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com)
- Petition Online (http://www.petitiononline.com)

Census information and statistics
The Statistics Canada website at http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html is also an excellent source of information. Stats Canada has a huge body of statistical analysis is able to cross-reference a significant amount of data as well. This is a great way to determine your demographic, as well as to determine how many people will be affected and to what extent.
Local governments are also often a great source of statistical data.

Scientific studies and surveys
It seems like science has an answer for everything these days, but it's important to acknowledge that there are still large gaps in our knowledge. If you're concerned about pollution levels in a river, for example, you may need to undertake your own scientific study to get some figures. Even where some data exists, it may come from the government or a person you're advocating against. If you want to dispute their figures for any reason you may wish to undertake your own independent scientific study.

These studies vary in time, cost and difficulty. Some studies will be expensive to undertake, as highly specialized equipment or expensive expertise might be needed. Don't be afraid to contact a local university campus and see if there are any students or staff working in that specialty who may be willing to undertake the study for you.

The Media
Keep a close eye on the media - the forum which provides the widest range of opinion, in an easily digested form. It can be problematic to overlook a key development, so encourage people in your inner circle to share things like newspaper articles (made a lot easier now with the internet and email) to ensure that nothing is overlooked. It can also be helpful to look back through old newspapers, magazines, journals, etc.

Framing

It is important to give consideration to the way you frame your arguments. 'Speaking truth to power' is very important - that's why we undertake research. That said, if you're to reach the broader public and help to shape debate it's important to frame your arguments in a way that will help to shape public opinion.

6. Internet Advocacy:- The Basics

The Digital Age has changed advocacy for ever. Communication has never been so instant and prolific. There are countless way to utilize the internet for your advocacy campaigns, and these days you'll be left behind if you are not using them.

Wikis, blogs, websites, emails, bulletin boards, and more - all mean that we have huge amounts of information to consume.

Webpage - the basics

The importance of the internet in Australia has grown enormously over the last few years. Chances are you already have a website or at least a webpage - most organizations do.

If you don't, why not? There are plenty of free services available that require little technical knowledge. Getting a webpage hosted is also increasingly cost-effective, so you might like to talk to your Internet Service Provider to see what services they provide.

Now that you have your web page, what do you put on it? What tactics do you employ?

The first thing you will need to consider is your layout. Keep it simple - easy navigation is essential to an effective webpage. It shouldn't be too hard to find anything. Using frames (a bar on the top or on the side that is consistent throughout the webpage, often containing key navigational links) is an effective way of ensuring that it's easy to find information wherever you are in the website.

So what is it important to include in your webpage? Firstly, your webpage must get your message across loudly and clearly. You need to have a clear statement of your intentions, including any significant limitations or considerations regarding your standpoint. That way people looking to get involved in the issue you're addressing will be able to tell almost straight away if your organization is one they'd like to be involved in. It is also a good idea to have a few slogans or catchphrases that people will remember.

Education is also central to presenting your message. For those who read your brief statement and want to know more, an extended version is also a good idea. As we all know, it's important to have a good grasp of the facts and the arguments behind your campaign, so be sure to include all the vital information and illustrative facts and figures. Don't make outrageous statements - you will come across as irrational and unreliable; be factual and succinct. Try not to alienate your reader, try to make your information as accessible to as many people as possible. Don't use jargon or emotive language that leaves the reader feeling stupid or guilty. Most of all, present your information in a way that will ensure people will remember it.

Next it's vital to have contact details. People need to know how to get in contact with you if they want to take their interest further (and you almost surely want them to do that). A webpage is often the first place people will look for you (grassroots advocacy groups often

aren't listed in the phone book). If you can't be found, you won't be included in the debate.

People need to be told how they can get involved and what they can do to make a difference. Are you looking for volunteers? Are you holding a protest? Are you holding regular meetings? Give people an opportunity to be part of the campaign.

Closely tied to this is your need to advertise events. If you're holding a rally and it isn't on your webpage, people will assume that it isn't on. Details of locations, including maps, times, speakers and so on need to be readily available to the casual browser. And they need to be updated quickly if anything changes.

The "News" section of your webpage is probably the most dynamic part of your site - at least it should be. If you haven't put a new news item up for a while it looks as if your organization isn't active any more. Campaigns can be very slow-moving, but it's important to maintain enthusiasm. After a demonstration, for example, you might like to add items on such things as how the protest went, pictures, transcripts of speeches, newspaper articles, press releases, attendance numbers, and a brief overview by someone within the organization. Have there been any new developments in the campaign? Are there any new events coming up?

You should also include on your webpage information on how to donate and how to sign up to an email list. Remember, it's important to look professional. Try not to use fonts like Times New Roman in a large font size - it looks like you've put no effort into it. Often a simple minimalist approach is the neatest way to present your web page.

Email Advocacy

The great thing about email is that it costs the same amount to send one email as it does to send 500. This is a very effective tool in whatever battle you're fighting.

General day-to-day emails should provide the basic information about your organization. This is usually as simple as having a signature block at the bottom of the email. This signature should contain your postal address, your phone and fax numbers, your hours of operation, your web address, and how people can donate. Include a quote or a slogan or an advertisement for your next event as well. Don't miss this opportunity to convey your message.

Email is probably the most effective way of mobilizing people on a mass scale very quickly. If you have a petition to sign or are organizing a rally, use your email list to reach a large number of people instantly.

The other great feature of email is that the people you inspire can forward your message on to other people they think will be interested. This sort of word-of-mouth recommendation is invaluable.

Your use of email does, however, need to be carefully regulated. Try not to email people too often - once a week at the absolute maximum. The quickest way to bore people with your campaign is to bombard them with emails - you'll only annoy them. Be realistic about how much people will want to read about your one issue (keep it short), and how often.

Many groups opt for irregular emails to alert people to various actions. This can be an effective way to run an email campaign as people know they will only hear from you if something important is happening.

7. Internet Advocacy - The Tactics

The internet facilitates many different tactics. Some are just adaptations of non-electronic advocacy, others are only possible with the use of the internet.

Your ability to utilize these methods will depend on your technical abilities. All of the following tactics have been used successfully by others, in different contexts. Remember, creativity is the key. Don't be afraid to mix and match approaches.

e-Petition

The internet has ushered in a new age of user-friendly petitioning. There is a wide range of software programs available on the internet (often free) which you can put up on your webpage to get the e-signatures of thousands of people. You can also put a link in your emails which will send them straight through to your petition page. This is a particularly user-friendly way of collecting signatures.

Be warned, though - it's not quite as easy or as effective as it sounds. Because it's easier to get signatories on an ePetition, you'll require more of them - quite a few more - to make the impression you're hoping for. Where you might have needed 2,000-3,000 handwritten signatures to make an impression, with an online petition you'll need to get something like 5,000 to have the same effect.

The other key thing to remember is that without some way of identifying each signatory the petition will be ignored. It's best to get the person's physical address. This way you can verify every name on your list. Just putting down a country or a suburb will simply not do - there's no way of checking with the signatory. An email address will do at a pinch, but a physical address seems to hold a much greater level of legitimacy.

This is also a good opportunity to build up your database of email addresses. Make sure everybody has the opportunity to sign up to your database when they sign the petition.

Email writing
The next step up from the online petition is to email the minister/corporation/perpetrator that you're lobbying. You can do this using your petition software, which generally allows you to provide a space for personal comments. Many online petitions include a pre-written letter which you have the opportunity to edit or amend.

It's more effective, however, if a large number of people email individual messages to the appropriate person. To make this easier, you might like to send out a mass email with your subject's contact details and suggest some points that could be made.

These e-letters tend to be more effective than an online petition, but are probably not as effective as a paper letter.

Networking
The internet has of course facilitated a much greater ease in networking. You can instantly email someone with similar ideas on the other side of the world. Emailing and surfing the web provide great opportunities for collaboration and solidarity.

Email Alert
Email action alerts are a very effective way to communicate with a lot of people very quickly, enabling mobilization and education. In addition it will often hit a much wider cross section of the community than other more traditional methods will.

Blog
'Blog' is short for 'Weblog' - websites that are sometimes known as Web Diaries or Online Journals. They basically consist of 'posts' (the online equivalent of a diary entry) which are listed in chronological order, often include provision for readers to comment, and have other elements of interactivity. Advocacy organizations and advocacy campaigns are increasingly turning to blogs to allow their people to keep up to date with campaign developments in real time.

Wikis
Wiki stands for "what I know is". Wiki is also the first Hawaiian word meaning "quick" or "fast". In essence, a wiki is a web page that anyone can easily edit using a web browser. The various "wiki pages" are all hyperlinked to create a web of information that can be collectively edited.

The best known and biggest wiki is Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org).

Wikis are being used more and more frequently by advocacy groups to develop any number of things from policies to training manuals. They act as a working document that is continually refined by this group editing process. Conveniently, all changes can be tracked, and people can leave notes explaining why a particular change has been made.
Popular wiki software packages include Media Wiki (www.mediawiki.org), which is used by Wikipedia, and Tikiwiki (http://tikiwiki.org/) which probably has the most comprehensive list of features but is less aesthetically pleasing.

Publishing

Finally that report, newsletter, idea, essay or book that you want the world to know about is easily accessible. With the use of the internet you can automatically become your own publisher, without going to all of the expensive of undertaking a large print-run.

Fundraising

The task of raising funds has been made that much easier with the arrival of the internet and email. Check out Our Community's free online donations service at;

- http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/giving.

Education/News service

It's very important to keep your supporters informed about what is going on. Again, the internet and email provide a great opportunity to facilitate this.

Events Listing/Mobilization

If you're having an event or trying to mobilize support it's important to send out a mass email. Don't forget to include all the important details: who, what, when, where and why. And send a test email to a few different people to check for bugs before you commit to the mass version.

A word of caution

The internet has brought about a level of communication, an astronomical level of dissemination of information, and a whole new area of creative activism across the full range of the political spectrum. It is accessible to a large majority of Australians, and will undoubtedly help you in your quest to have your voice heard.

But there are limitations to internet and email advocacy. It is important to bear this in mind and be aware of the shortfalls. There's no substitute for face-to-face coordination, and in the end you need to actually show up to the protests.

Remember, those you are campaigning against also have this technology. If they have better resources (which they nearly always are) they'll probably going to use the technology more effectively than you have the ability to.

8. Advocacy and the Media

Whether you like it or not, the media has never been more influential than it is now. The media can make or break a campaign - so knowing how to deal with it is extremely important.

Getting started

The first step to take when running an advocacy campaign - and one of the biggest - is to generate awareness of the issue. More often than not the most significant barrier to your cause is the lack of understanding of your issue among the general public. An active engagement with the media should be part of any advocacy campaign.

You'll need to work on two different levels. The first is to raise awareness amongst your contacts. Most issues that gain media coverage start as a murmur amongst activist circles. The second level, of course, is direct engagement with the broader community through the media. This can be done in a wide variety of ways.

Develop a Media Strategy

You need to develop a media strategy very early in your campaign. In doing so you're trying to devise a plan that will attract maximum media coverage for your issue. You need to think strategically about the long term, and your strategy needs to grow and evolve with time.

Press Release

A press release is the most obvious way of alerting journalists and the media to your campaign. Local media, in particular, can present a good opportunity to get your voice heard (particularly for local issues).

With media outlets increasingly under-resourced, go out of your way to present the best press release possible; you'll have a better chance of getting it printed.

When writing a press release, be concise. A press release should generally not be more than a page long. All the important points should be in the first two paragraphs, as this is probably as far as a journalist will read before deciding whether or not to run the story. These first two paragraphs should contain the who, what, where, when, and why of the campaign.

It's also a good idea to personalize your campaign. How will it affect particular people? Quotes are an ideal way of getting this information across. If you can provide pictures, better still.

Media Contacts

Developing a relationship with a journalist (or, better still, a number of journalists) is one of the most useful things you can do as a campaigner. By doing so you can ensure that coverage of your organization’s campaigns is more likely to be positive and more likely to get a run. To maintain the relationship, be as punctual and compliant as possible. Respond promptly and enthusiastically to any requests for an interview, pictures, or information.

It also never hurts to throw a story their way from time to time that doesn't involve you but that you know will make a good article.

The best possible outcome with regards to media contacts is to actually have a journalist as a member of your organization, or better still, as part of your **inner circle.** (see the link to The inner, middle, and outer circle on this web site.)

A Media Stunt - getting attention

To grab the attention of the public and the media, advocacy organizations will often stage a media stunt. Usually this comes in the form of some sort of direct action or public display.

Media stunts can be sit-ins, rallies, public performances, hunger strikes, people chaining themselves to something, or just generally making life difficult for those you're protesting against, or anything that will draw a crowd or a camera.

Beware, though, that any stunt you stage needs to be handled carefully. There may be legal ramifications, people may get hurt, people might get arrested or get sent to jail. If things go badly, media stunts can have the opposite effect to the one they want. Instead of drawing attention to the important issue at stake, media reports will talk instead about annoying protesters causing trouble and endangering others, whereas the public presentation of a petition or the opening of a building may be greeted with a little more sympathy. Pick your audience, and match the action to it.

It's also vital to make sure the media knows about your event so that they can be there when it happens. Make sure you put out a press release, or tip off a sympathetic journo so that they're on hand for an exclusive.

Spokesperson

It's important to have a spokesperson who will be the key contact for the media and to make public announcements on behalf of your group or coalition.

This position should either go to someone with a strong media background or to one of the more prominent, public and senior members of your group.

It's important that people know who the spokesperson is. Direct the media to this person; don't let just anyone answer the media's questions. This way you can be sure that your side of the story will come across well and a clear and consistent message will prevail.

Your media spokesperson should be particularly well briefed on the issues involved in your campaign and have a strong, concise message to make. You need to develop an 'elevator speech' for the campaign - a quick 30-second spiel that can be delivered in the time it takes an elevator to go three floors, and that sums up what it is you're doing and why.

Surviving the Media Storm
Sometimes things get ugly - we all make mistakes. Unfortunately, this is when you tend to start generating more media interest than you may have bargained for. If this happens, you need to react; the worst thing you can do is just bury your head in the sand.

Recognize that there's a problem and you're going to have to deal with it. "No comment" is not an appropriate response. You have to develop a strategy, and then try to stick to it. You're going to have to weather the storm, so don't start blaming the media for all your troubles. You need to take responsibility for your actions. This means staying calm and avoiding public outbursts.

Once you've acknowledged there's a problem, use the media to address the public. Speak in language that's easy to understand, and show genuine concern.

The final point here is to determine as quickly as possible what information you can legally release. Once you've established this, release as much of that information as quickly as you can to show you're being upfront about your problem and can be trusted. It's then important to stick to the facts - don't guess or speculate. If the information you're handling is incorrect, make sure you correct it.

9. Facilitating Meetings Effectively

Before the Meeting
Make sure everyone knows the time and place.

It helps to establish a consistent meeting day, time and location, so people can make it a habit. If they have to search for you or keep track of an ever-changing meeting time, they're far more likely to forget or not to bother.

Develop an agenda.
An agenda gives people time to plan, to think over things that will be discussed, to do assignments and bring necessary information and materials. It doesn't have to be set in stone - you can always add and adjust as needed, even during the meeting.

The agenda can be printed and distributed, either in advance or at the meeting. Or, it can be written on a chalkboard or whiteboard where everyone can see it. This helps keep people on topic and lets them know what will be covered and when.

An agenda should include all of the following items that apply to your group:

1. additions and approval of the agenda
2. reading, corrections, and approval of the previous meeting's minutes
3. announcements
4. treasurer's report
5. committee reports
6. unfinished business (issues left over from previous meetings)

7. new business

Make sure the room is open and set up properly.
Have you ever arrived at a meeting only to find the door locked, and everyone had to stand around waiting while the facilitator scrambled to find the key? Or have you ever been in a meeting where there weren't enough chairs, and each time a latecomer arrived, they had to interrupt and search for one and move it in? Not especially effective ways of inspiring confidence and credibility or getting things done efficiently, are they?

During the Meeting
Start on time

Make sure someone is taking notes.

Encourage group discussion to get all points of view.

Turn questions back to the group for their input. Ask people to comment on something just said. Compliment people on their ideas and thank them for their input.

Ask open-ended questions. You may need to ask the more quiet people for their thoughts, and tactfully interrupt the longwinded ones to move the discussion along.

Encourage people who just want to agree with a previous speaker to say "Ditto" rather than taking the time to repeat her/his point.

Set a positive, enthusiastic tone.
Expect people to be motivated, creative, and productive. They will usually live up - or down - to your expectations.

Stay on top of things.
It's part of your job as facilitator to manage the traffic and help the discussion move along.

If several people are trying to talk at once, ask them to take turns. Try to identify who was first, second, etc. to speak up, and make sure to get back to everyone in their turn.

If the discussion is getting off-topic, point this out and redirect it back on course.

If someone is getting hostile, argumentative, or needlessly negative, tactfully intervene and try to turn the discussion in a more constructive direction.

If necessary, ask the group to agree to a time limit on a discussion that might take too long. You might want to agree to limit each speaker's time, or say that no one can speak a second time until everyone has spoken once.

If the group is spinning its wheels and people are only repeating themselves, restate and summarize the issues and ask if there is at least the beginnings of consensus.

If it just doesn't seem that the group can make a good decision right now, suggest tabling the matter until another time. You may want to ask someone to bring back more information, or form a committee to work on the issue.

Don't use your position as facilitator to impose your personal ideas and opinions on the group.
If you have strong feelings on a particular issue, you may want to step aside and let someone else facilitate that discussion. At the very least, keep your own comments to a minimum, try to let others speak first, and identify them as your personal beliefs, outside of your role as facilitator. Avoid criticizing the ideas of others--your position gives your comments undue extra weight.

Nonverbals are important, too.
Be attentive to people who are speaking - look at them, lean forward, smile, nod. Make eye contact with people who may need encouragement to speak.

Don't be afraid of silence.
It's a very useful tool. It gives people a chance to consider and collect their thoughts. It may encourage someone to voice a comment they've been thinking about but hesitant to say.

Guide the discussion toward closure.
Restate people's comments to make sure everyone understands their point.

Ask for clarification.

Summarize what has been accomplished or agreed and what is left to resolve.

Suggest when it's time to wrap up and make decisions or take action.

Take time at the end of the meeting to process.
Reflect on what went well and what people appreciate about others' input and actions. Check out assumptions. Encourage people to share any lingering concerns or things that just don't sit right.

End on time.
Nothing makes people dread and avoid meetings more than knowing they're likely to go on and on and consume far more of their time than they want to give.

After the Meeting
Make sure the minutes are written up and, if necessary, posted or distributed.

Follow up with people.

Thank them for their input. Make sure they understand assignments and have what they need to do them.

Start getting ready for the next meeting!

10. Holding Public Forums

Public Forums are a great way to involve the public and to provide a space for democratic engagement.

They can be used as an open forum that gives the community a chance to have its voice heard. Alternatively, a public forum can feature a panel discussion or a keynote speaker.

Public Forums serve the purpose of informing the public - and of informing you.

A few points to keep in mind when running a public forum:

1. Ensure you are holding one for the right reasons. Will a public forum establish what you want it to?
2. Book your venue early and make sure it's an appropriate venue.
3. Get a speaker. The key here is to find someone that you **know** is a good public speaker. If they're high profile as well they'll draw a bigger crowd and possibly some media, but the most important requirement is the ability to inspire a crowd.
4. Advertise widely. The success of a public meeting will always be measured by its attendance.
5. Keep costing in mind. How much does the room cost, and how many people do you realistically expect to attend?
6. Make sure you have all the right equipment. Will you need an overhead projector? Will the software you are using be compatible with the equipment at the venue?
7. Establish the format of the discussion. Will it just be questions from the floor, or will it be a panel discussion?
8. Be specific and stay on point. It's always best to have a fairly narrowly defined topic that can be fully explored.
9. Keep to the allocated time. This is where a good moderator comes in.
10. Allow questions from the floor and discussion. This way the discussion is much more democratic and rewarding.
11. Moderate questions if necessary. Ensure that questions are asked, not statements made.
12. At the end of the meeting be sure to provide some concluding remarks and let people know if you'll be holding another public forum soon, or what the next step will be.
13. Public Forums are also a good place for recruitment, so make sure you get everyone's email address and see if anyone there wants to volunteer for your organization.

11. Taking Meeting Minutes

Minutes of meetings form a historical record of a group's work. They serve as a record of decisions and details when people's memories fail or when they disagree. They remind people of assignments they've taken on and deadlines they need to meet. They inform those not present of what happened at the meeting. They give future members of the organization a way to build on past successes and avoid reinventing the wheel.

Some groups designate one person to take the minutes at every meeting; others rotate the job.

Do what works best for your group, as long as the information gets recorded and preserved somewhere.

The minutes of a meeting should include the following (if they apply to your particular group and your meetings):

- date, time and place of meeting
- list of people attending, and any members who were absent
- time the meeting was called to order
- approval of the previous meeting's minutes, and any amendments
- summary of reports, announcements, and other information shared
- proposals, resolutions, motions, amendments, a summary of the discussion, and final disposition (if you are using formal parliamentary procedure, record who made the motion and who seconded it)
- time of adjournment
- next meeting date, time and location
- name of person taking the minutes.

Motions and resolutions should be recorded verbatim and should be read back during the meeting to make sure they have been accurately transcribed.

Summarize the discussion, capturing key points and decisions reached. When someone takes on an assignment, a deadline is set, or other important agreements are reached, make sure to record them. This will serve as a reminder when the minutes are read later on.

Separate fact from opinion. Facts are objective and indisputable; opinions are personal views. Take this sentence: "The low turnout for the event could be due to poor advertising." Whose idea is this? Attribute opinions to their source (e.g. "Jane suggested that..." or "The group concluded that...")

Sometimes, it can be helpful to distribute the minutes before the next meeting. This gives people a reminder of assignments and deadlines, as well as when and where the next meeting is.

Distribute copies and read the minutes near the beginning of the next meeting. Any corrections or additions should be recorded in the minutes of that meeting. The group should then approve the minutes, meaning that they agree that they are accurate and complete, either as read or as amended.

12. Tips for Successful Delegation

Be specific

It's easy to give someone a vague assignment ("You take care of publicity") only to find out later that what they understood this to mean is very different from what you intended. People need to know what tasks they're responsible for and what the finished product should look like. Example: "Prepare a press release and send it to the local newspapers, TV and radio one month before the event."

Don't micromanage.

Tell them enough so they understand what's expected of them, but not so much that they have no chance to think for themselves. Leaving the person room to make some independent decisions lets them choose a style of doing things that suits them best. It makes them feel respected and trusted and part of the team. It builds a greater sense of pride and ownership in the project, and it gives them a chance to develop their skills and confidence. They might not do the outstanding job that you think you would have, but it might still be good enough--and the benefits to the person doing it are probably worth the tradeoff. So learn to let go!

Agree on deadlines.

Make sure the person understands when they can expect things they need from other people, when their part of the task needs to be done, and how this fits in with the larger timeline for the whole project.

Follow up.

Check back with the person you've delegated to, to find out how it's going. Ask if any questions have come up since you last talked. Make sure they have what they need to do the job, and that they're getting the necessary assistance and cooperation from others. Sometimes people are reluctant to admit they didn't understand something, or that they're having trouble. Asking gives them an opening and permission to say so. It's also a way of finding out if someone simply isn't doing the job, before it's too late.

Match assignments with people's skills

Some people write well, but *hate* to talk on the phone. Some people can schmooze anything out of anybody, while others would rather do *anything* besides ask for donations. Find out what people are good at, and what they like to do, and make the most of it.

Don't let people get typecast against their will

People with particular skills (artistic, computer, etc.) often get stuck with the same jobs over and over, because they do them so well. If they like it that way, that may be fine (although you might want to encourage them to stretch a bit and do something unfamiliar once in a while). But they may be more than ready for a change--and someone else may be just waiting for a chance to do "their" job.

Make sure assignments get handed out fairly and realistically
Most groups have at least one workhorse who tends to take on too much--sometimes to the point of exhaustion and burnout. Another problem is the person who gets carried away with the enthusiasm of a moment and volunteers for things, then finds her/himself unable to follow through. Encourage people to take a realistic look at their workload and abilities, and to take on the jobs they can reasonably handle.

Give accurate and honest feedback
People want to know how they're doing, and they deserve your honest opinion. Praise effort and good work, but also let them know where they might have done better. Encourage risk-taking and growth by treating mistakes and less-than-successful efforts as a chance to learn and do better next time.

13. Handling Difficult Behaviors in Meetings

how they behave	why	what to do
heckler	aggressive, argumentative, gets satisfaction from needling others	Don't let him/her upset you. Try to find merit in one of his/her points; express your agreement, and then move on to something else.
overly-talkative	These people usually fall into four categories: • an "eager beaver" • a show-off • someone exceptionally well-informed and anxious to use it • just plain talkative	Wait until he/she takes a breath; then thank him/her and say something like "Lets hear from someone else." Or say "That's an interesting point... what do the rest of you think?" Try slowing the person down with a difficult question If he/she makes an obvious misstatement of facts, toss the comment back to the group and let them correct the person. In general, let the group take care of him/her as much as possible.
griper	They may have a particular pet peeve, or may just gripe at random, for the sake of complaining. In some cases they may have a legitimate complaint.	Point out that the purpose of the meeting is to find better ways to do things by constructive cooperation. In some cases, have a member of the group answer instead of you.

won't talk	This person may be: • bored • superior • timid, uncertain	Arouse interest by asking directly for his/her opinion Ask for his/her view after indicating respect for his/her experience (but don't overdo this!) Compliment or encourage him/her the first time he/she talks
personality clash between members	Sometimes differences of opinion get too heated; other times, people just don't get along.	Compliment the individuals on their enthusiasm and participation, but ask them to focus on constructive solutions. Emphasize points they agree on. Toss out a question to the rest of the group, bringing them back into the discussion.
side conversations	May be commenting on the discussion, or may be having a personal conversation.	Don't embarrass the person, but call him/her by name and ask an easy question. Or, call him/her by name, then restate the last opinion expressed or the last remark, and ask what he/she thinks.
definitely wrong	This person may be confused or misinformed.	If he/she is confused, say something like "Let me see if I understand you..." and tactfully restate the comment more clearly. If misinformed, thank him/her, then ask for another comment on the same subject. This permits a member of the group to do the correcting.

14. The Art of Evaluation

Meetings can often be a time when some people experience feelings of frustration or confusion. There is always room for improvement in the structure of the process and/or in the dynamics of the group. Often, there is no time to talk directly about group interaction during the meeting. Reserve time at the end of the meeting to allow some of these issues and feelings to be expressed.

Evaluation is very useful when using consensus. It is worth the time. Evaluations need not take long, five to ten minutes is often enough. It is not a discussion, nor is it an opportunity to comment on each other's statements. Do not reopen discussion on an agenda item. Evaluation is a special time to listen to each other and learn about each other. Think about how the group interacts and how to improve the process.

Be sure to include the evaluation comments in the notes of the meeting. This is important for two reasons. Over time, if the same evaluation comments are made again and again, this is an indication that the issue behind the comments needs to be addressed. This can be accomplished by placing this issue on the agenda for the next meeting. Also, when looking back at notes from meetings long ago, evaluation comments can often reveal a great deal about what actually happened, beyond what decisions were made and reports given. They give a glimpse into complex interpersonal dynamics.

Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation provides a forum to address procedural flaws, inappropriate behavior, facilitation problems, logistical difficulties, overall tone, etc. Evaluation is not a time to reopen discussion, make decisions or attempt to resolve problems, but rather, to make statements, express feelings, highlight problems, and suggest solutions in a spirit of cooperation and trust. To help foster communication, it is better if each criticism is coupled with a specific suggestion for improvement. Also, always speak for oneself. Do not attempt to represent anyone else.

Encourage everyone who participated in the meeting to take part in the evaluation. Make comments on what worked and what did not. Expect differing opinions. It is generally not useful to repeat other's comments. Evaluations prepare the group for better future meetings. When the process works well, the group responds supportively in a difficult situation, or the facilitator does an especially good job, note it, and appreciate work well done.

Do not attempt to force evaluation. This will cause superficial or irrelevant comments. On the other hand, do not allow evaluations to run on. Be sure to take each comment seriously and make an attempt, at a later time, to resolve or implement them. Individuals who feel their suggestions are ignored or disrespected will lose trust and interest in the group.

For gatherings, conferences, conventions or large meetings, the group might consider having short evaluations after each section, in addition to the one at the end of the event. Distinct aspects on which the group might focus include: the process itself, a specific role, a particular technique, fears and feelings, group dynamics, etc.

At large meetings, written evaluations provide a means for everyone to respond and record comments and suggestions which might otherwise be lost. Some people feel more comfortable writing their evaluations rather than saying them. Plan the questions well, stressing what was learned, what was valuable, and what could have been better and how. An evaluation committee allows an opportunity for the presenters, facilitators, and/or coordinators to get together after the meeting to review evaluation comments, consider suggestions for improvement, and possibly prepare an evaluation report.

Review and evaluation bring a sense of completion to the meeting. A good evaluation will pull the experience together, remind everyone of the group's unity of purpose, and provide an opportunity for closing comments.

Evaluation Use
There are at least ten ways in which evaluation helps improve meetings. Evaluations: Improve the process by analysis of what happened, why it happened, and how it might be improved.

1. Examine how certain attitudes and statements might have caused various problems and encourage special care to prevent them from recurring.
2. Foster a greater understanding of group dynamics and encourage a method of group learning or learning from each other.
3. Allow the free expression of feelings.
4. Expose unconscious behavior or attitudes which interfere with the process.
5. Encourage the sharing of observations and acknowledge associations with society.
6. Check the usefulness and effectiveness of techniques and procedures.
7. Acknowledge good work and give appreciation to each other.
8. Reflect on the goals set for the meeting and whether they were attained.
9. Examine various roles, suggest ways to improve them, and create new ones as needed.
10. Provide an overall sense of completion and closure to the meeting.

Types of Evaluation Questions
It is necessary to be aware of the way in which questions are asked during evaluation. The specific wording can control the scope and focus of consideration and affect the level of participation. It can cause responses which focus on what was good and bad, or right and wrong, rather than on what worked and what needed improvement. Focus on learning and growing.

Avoid blaming. Encourage diverse opinions.

- Some sample questions for an evaluation:
- Were members uninterested or bored with the agenda, reports, or discussion?
- Did members withdraw or feel isolated?
- Is attendance low? If so, why?
- Are people arriving late or leaving early? If so, why?
- How was the overall tone or atmosphere?
- Was there an appropriate use of resources?
- Were the logistics (such as date, time, or location) acceptable?
- What was the most important experience of the event?
- What was the least important experience of the event?
- What was the high point? What was the low point?
- What did you learn?
- What expectations did you have at the beginning and to what degree were they met?
- How did they change?
- What goals did you have and to what degree were they accomplished?

- What worked well? Why?
- What did not work so well? How could it have been improved?
- What else would you suggest be changed or improved, and how?
- What was overlooked or left out?